CHAPTER ONE

THE PNEUMATOMACHIAN CONTROVERSY: BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Origen

Swete, in the above-mentioned study of early Christian pneumatology, notes that the third-century authors from Alexandria played a particularly significant role in the quickening of Christian thought about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Foremost among these authors was Origen, by whom "the way was opened to the fuller discussion of the theology of the Spirit upon which the fourth century entered".  

Origen's princ. 1.3 and 2.7, written in 229-230, is the first systematic consideration of the Holy Spirit by a Greek author, though sketchy intimations of such a consideration can be found in Irenaeus. A deeper reflection upon the origin and nature of the Holy Spirit was offered by Origen in a section of his commentary on the Gospel of John, Jo. 2.10-12, written in Alexandria in 231. Needless to say, a complete examination of Origen's pneumatology, of which the texts just mentioned are the chief sources, would require a special monograph. For the present study, the following sketch of Origen's conception of the nature and status of the Spirit is sufficient to indicate the important position which he holds in the development of Greek patristic pneumatology.

1 *Holy Spirit*, p. 143.


5 For the date, see Nautin, *Origène*, pp. 366-368.
Origen begins his pneumatological investigation in *princ.* from the standpoint of the doctrines handed down by the Apostles:⁶

Then they [the Apostles] handed down that the Holy Spirit is associated with the Father and Son in honour and dignity. It is not yet clearly known whether he is begotten (*natus*) or unbegotten (*innatus*), or whether he is to be understood as a Son of God or not. But these are all matters which ought to be examined from the Holy Scriptures to the best of our ability and to be searched into by diligent study.

This promise of an investigation of the Spirit’s nature and relationship to God is fulfilled in *princ.* 1.3. The Scriptures testify to the existence of the Spirit, while the act of baptism bears witness to his importance; for baptism is only complete when administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁷ As Franco Bolgiani notes,⁸ Origen’s emphasis on the fact that the Spirit is named together with the Father and the Son in liturgical expressions is an implicit invitation to exclude the Spirit from the created realm. In fact, Origen admits that his research into the Scriptures has yielded no text which describes the Spirit as a created being.⁹ Following this admission, Origen devotes *princ.* 1.3.4 to an explication of the role of the Spirit in the revelation of the Father.

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⁶ *Princ.* 1. pref. 4 (p.82.84-89; *PG* 11.117C - 118A). Trans. G.W. Butterworth, *Origen: On First Principles* (New York: Harper and Row, Publ., 1966), p. 3, revised. In Jerome’s report of this passage the terms *factus* and *infactus* are used, instead of *natus* and *innatus* (*ep.* 124.2 (pp. 97.25-98.1; *PL* 22. 1061)). Origen almost certainly wrote γεννητὸς and ἀγέννητος (Crouzel and Simonetti, *Traité*, II, 14, n.21). It should be borne in mind however that Origen did not distinguish between ἀγέννητος and ἀγέννητος, γεννητὸς and γεννητὸς. In his day, no satisfactory distinction had yet been drawn between creation and derivation (Prestige, *God*, pp. 135-138). For further discussion, see pp.14-15.

⁷ *Princ.* 1.3.1-2 (pp. 114.18-146.51; *PG* 11. 146A-147C). With regard to the testimony from the baptismal formula, Origen probably has Mt 28:19 in mind, though he does not cite it. See Helmut Saake, “Der Tractactus pneumatico-philosophicus des Origenes in περὶ ἄρχων 1,3”, *He*, CI (1973), 95, n.1.


⁹ Hauschild (*Gottes Geist*, p. 143, n.21), followed by Jaschke (*Der Heilige Geist*, p. 75, n.59), believes that this statement reveals the hand of Rufinus. Rufinus, according to Hauschild, has suppressed Origen’s emphasis on the creaturely nature of the Spirit, lest his mentor appear as the source of the Pneumatomachian heresy. But the differentiation between the Spirit and the created realm is definitely an aspect of Origen’s thought. See pp.15-16. See also Henri Crouzel, “Chronique Origénienne: Wolf-Dieter Hauschild. Gottes Geist und der Mensch: Studien zur frühchristlichen Pneumatologie”, *BLE*, LXXXVII (1976), 145.