CHAPTER TWO

THE LARGER THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK
FOR CLEMENT’S ANGELOMORPHIC PNEUMATOLOGY

The discussion so far has largely confirmed the conclusions advanced by Christian Oeyen. His thesis of *Engelpneumatologie* in Clement of Alexandria seems to stand on solid ground. It will be further strengthened by a study of other Christian authors, writing before and after Clement, which will show that angelomorphic pneumatology was not a peculiarity of Clement’s but rather the continuation, in Christian thought, of the phenomenon that Levison termed “angelic spirit.”

At this point it is important to inquire about the place of angelomorphic pneumatology in the larger framework of Clementine theology. I shall argue that angelomorphic pneumatology occurs in tandem with spirit christology, as part of a binitarian theological framework.

1. Binitarian Monotheism in Clement of Alexandria

Clement’s theology was really binitarian…[although] he mentions the Spirit as the agent of Faith in the believer, there would appear to be little real place for Him in his system.¹

This blunt statement by W. H. C. Frend calls for some refinement. According to Osborn, even though “the centre of Clement’s understanding of God is the reciprocity of father and son,” which is similar “to the Platonic simple and complex unity,” Clement “sees the reciprocity of father and son proliferated in spirit.”² In other words, Clement’s starting-point is a “binitarian” structure, or, in Osborn’s language, the “reciprocity of father and son.” This divine reciprocity is made to “overflow” or “proliferate,” so as to account for divine economy, and especially God’s spiritual presence in the believers.³ Osborn highlights

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² Osborn, *Clement*, 107, 117, 128, 150. Osborn uses lower case for “father” and “son.”
³ Osborn, *Clement*, 150. The Father–Son reciprocity “overflows to the salvation of the world”; this proliferation is “from father and son to spirit and then to the ultimate union of believers in God” (Osborn, *Clement*, 141, 152).
the second element, and states, on its basis, that Clement has a “worthy theology of the Holy Spirit.” Yet if due consideration is given to the first element, the divine reciprocity of Father and Spirit, which Osborn himself regards as the “center” of Clementine theology, the conclusion can also be different. Clement’s theological intention is certainly trinitarian, and can be documented by his use of trinitarian formulas. The corresponding theological account, however, has not reached the concept of a triadic Father—Son—Spirit “reciprocity.” Clement’s thought remains determined in large measure by a binitarian framework.4

How do we recognize whether a monotheistic text is unitarian, binitarian, or trinitarian? I find it helpful to apply a principle developed by Larry Hurtado, which can be reduced to the following formula: that which is considered “God” is necessarily the object of worship, and that which is the object of worship is considered “God.”5 It is noteworthy, in this light, that Clement seems reluctant to include the Spirit as a recipient of worship. In the closing chapter of the Instructor (Paed. 3.12.101), the text invokes God as υἱὲ καὶ πατήρ, ἐν ἀμφῶ, κύριε; praise, glory, and worship are given “to the only Father and Son, the Son and Father, the Son—Instructor and Teacher—together with the Holy Spirit.”6 It may be true that in Clement’s thought the Father-Son reciprocity “proliferates from father and son to spirit and then to the

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4 According to Osborn (Clement, 150), Clement’s trinitarian theology is “well-grounded in the Johannine account of the reciprocity of father with spirit and son with spirit (John 14:15–20, 16:7–15),” and uses whatever it finds helpful in Middle Platonism (e.g., Ep. 2, 312 E). These “building blocks,” however, are quite problematic. Ziebritzki (Geist und Weltseele) has demonstrated that the Platonic tradition could not contribute to the articulation of the pneumatology of Clement and Origen. With respect to Clement’s use of Ep 2 in Strom. 5.14.89 as a proof text for the Trinity, Ziebritzki (Geist und Weltseele, 126) observes that Clement “dem Heiligen Geist... keine besondere Rolle zuweist,” even while to the Son he ascribes John 1:3 (“by whom all things are made”), implying that the Father made all things through the Logos. As for the Johannine sayings about the “other paraclete,” the relation between the two paracletes—the exalted Christ and the Holy Spirit—poses major exegetical and theological problems. I shall discuss Clement’s views in a separate section.


6 τῷ μόνῳ πατρὶ καὶ υἱῷ, υἱῷ καὶ πατρί, παιδαγωγῷ καὶ διδασκάλῳ υἱῷ, σὺν καὶ τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι (Paed. 3.12.101).