

“One Inseparable Power in Heaven”¹

“It is wrong, therefore, to understand
the Spirit and the Power of God
as anything else than the Word,
who is also the first-born of God...”
Justin Martyr

This essay has three parts. In the first part I will briefly treat the exegetical roots of *dunamis* theology in Trinitarian theology by highlighting four important NT passages that will support “Power” Trinitarian theology. I begin the second part of this essay by considering, briefly, the philosophical roots of the *dunamis* theology that figured in Trinitarian theology before I continue, still in the second part, to provide a narrative of the role *dunamis* played in the development of Greek Trinitarian theology – a narrative I may have invented, at least in its contemporary form. (The narrative can be expanded to include Latin Trinitarian theology by following *virtus* and *potentia* in Latin texts.) The third part is a close examination of a specific engagement by Gregory of Nyssa’s (392+) with what he explicitly identifies as “Philonic theology”. Given the great length of what once upon a time was thought of as the topic for a communication-length paper, the third part – Gregory’s engagement with Philonic power theology – will constitute my oral communication, and is not included here. Monday’s oral communication will be as self-contained as is possible.

Christian Exegesis of New Testament Power Christology: 1 Corinthians, Epistle to the Romans, Epistle to the Hebrews, and Gospel of Luke.

A conventional chronological ordering of the four key NT *dunamis* texts for Patristic exegesis would be 1 Corinthians, Epistle to the Romans (Paul’s writings), then Epistle to the Hebrews, and finally Gospel of Luke. I do not see any means by which to compare the Pauline correspondence and Epistle to the Hebrews (an ex-Ps. Pauline correspondence): geography can function as well as chronology for any conceptual and linguistic comparison between the two sets of texts. Putting the Gospel of Luke last, as is conventional (except for Harnack), necessarily raises the question of Luke’s knowledge of any of the three prior writings.² For my purposes here I will treat the four texts as three discrete “traditions of witness”, none of which know the literature of the other

¹ If so minor a work as this essay, written by so minor a scholar as myself, can be written as a memorial without seeming fraudulent or vain, then I would like to dedicate this essay to the memory of Alan F. Segal, who was for me helpful and gracious: helpful when my mind need help, and gracious when my ego needed grace.

² I have never seen Luke 1 placed among potential Q material, so my concern is with the Gospel.

two.³ Such a chronology means that the bulk of my comments will touch on the “last” two texts, Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Luke.⁴

When I was writing my dissertation on the “Trinitarian” use of *dunamis* I could not find any commentary on 1 Corinthians that understood 1:24 to be referring to (God’s) Power and Wisdom: power and wisdom were strictly “horizontal” terms here in Paul.⁵ (Ringgren frightened a lot of biblical scholars.) I think the important observation to make is that 1 Cor 1:24 links God’s “Power” with God’s “Wisdom”, and identifies them both with Christ, “the Power and Wisdom of God”. Romans 1:20 is both a more conspicuous and subtle statement:

τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, ἢ τεὰ ἰδίοις αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θειότης, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους

This is not a statement about Christ (“the Son”, “the Logos”, etc) but about God (the Father, YHWH). The RSV offers clarity in exchange for integrity: ⁶ “Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.” It is better to translate avoiding familiar conceptualizations or expressions: “For since the creation of the world His invisibility [existence] -- his eternal power and divinity – has been seen, has been known, in the things He made....” What God is invisibly, (namely) his eternal Power and Deity, can be *seen* and be *understood* [a Platonic doublet?] in the things he has made.... I lack the knowledge to say whether Philo could have said this – or, more exactly, whether he would have used this structure. He could have said, “The power and divinity of ‘God’ (being our title for Creator) is known through the things he makes”? Are “power” and “divinity” close enough to both be revealed by the same effects (the same works, ἐργα)?⁷ Paul’s straight-forward (not even complete sentence) statement and the categories he uses make me wonder about what kind of relationship exists with Philo’s language/conceptuality. The questions I ask about conceptual congruency with “divine” “power” and “divine” are obviously simple, perhaps even crude, questions such as the

³ This is not a judgment I would take a bullet for; it is, however, the cleanest hypothesis to work with in this paper.

⁴ I personally hold that Epistle to the Hebrews is not “late”. (During a Ph. D. comprehensives examination that I participated in, one of my NT colleagues referred in passing – but with gravitas riding on the presumed answer – to the “earliest text we have in the New Testament”. Before the candidate could answer I said, quizzically, “Epistle to the Hebrews?”)

⁵ I persisted in that judgment, and could only provide a footnote references to Alan Segal’s *Two Powers in Heaven* and the two NHL texts, *The Concept of Our Great Power* and *On the Eighth and the Ninth*. I could now use, for example, George H. van Kooten’s *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

⁶ Douay-Rheims can barely render it in English. Barely.

⁷ Could Philo invoke the one Power without ever alluding in the same text to the other one?

two I just posed.⁸ However, what I do not wonder about is this: I think that Galen (approximately one hundred years later) would have understood Paul’s terminology, and agreed with both the positive content and the implicit boundaries operative in the statement.⁹

I turn now to Epistle to the Hebrews, the great mystery text. In tracing the history of the Christian understanding of “*dunamis*” for Trinitarian thought, no other NT passage is as important as Hebrews 1:3a.¹⁰ That Ep. Hebrews 1:2-3 incorporated material from the Wisdom tradition, and in particular the appropriation of Wisdom of Solomon 7:25-26 at Ep. Hebrews 1:3a, was recognized by early Christian readers of the latter.¹¹ The similarities of language between Wisdom of Solomon 7:25-26 and Ep. Hebrews 1:3a has led to a difference of opinion among scholars as to which text, if either, Clement of Rome is “citing” in his *Epistle to the Corinthians* 36. Clement is the first text not presently included in the canon of the NT to make use of this language, and while *dunamis* carries no emphasis or conceptual freight in his description of Christ’s status, its premier status requires some mention.¹² (It may be interesting to note in passing that there is a strong push among some Clementine scholars to push the date of the letter’s composition much earlier than the conventionally-accepted 95, and in consequence, Clement’s *Epistle* may pre-date the *Epistle to the Hebrews*.)

ὅς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης
καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως
αὐτοῦ φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι
τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ

⁸ I also wonder about Wisdom tradition influenced Paul’s statement at Romans 1:20 as I believe it does that of 1 Cor. 1:24.

⁹ It is very strange that John Dillon’s invaluable – indeed now foundational -- book, *The Middle Platonists*, has nothing to say about Galen. It is as if the man never existed.

¹⁰ I have my own reasons for giving Epistle to the Hebrews 1:3 this kind of “Second only to John 1:1” status (to put it melodramatically), but the wealth of the epistle is not just a figure of my imagination: see Rowan Greer’s *Captain of My Salvation*. (My “John 1:1” comparison qualifies as “melodramatic” because in fact many NT passages, most of them in the Gospel of John, are more significant for Patristic Trinitarian theology than John 1:1 -- such as John 5:19, 10:20, 9:14 and 14:10.)

¹¹ I will not add anything to what the reader can find in Harry W. Attridge’s *Hebrews* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989) in Fortress’s wonderful Hermeneia series – on pp. 39-46, in particular. It suits my purposes, however, to be specific about what part of 1:3 was so influential – and what part of 1:3 was *not* so influential: I am not making a blanket statement about all of 1:3: Ep. Heb. 1:3b was not nearly as influential as Ep. Heb. 1:3a – though one can imagine circles (“communities”) where the latter “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” was very important indeed (not to mention the fact that 1:3b is much closer to important descriptions of Christ in the rest of the Epistle).

¹² See Appendice One for a verbal comparison of Hebrews and 1 Clement.

The “conceptual freight” carried by, and the theological work performed by, both Wisdom of Solomon 7:25-26 and Ep. Hebrews 1:3a turn largely on their aetiological language. The importance of these two passages as key “proofs” or conceptual foundations for early Trinitarian theology is found in the production language and implicit logic of production in which Wisdom literature abounds (see, e.g., Proverbs 8:22--30).¹³ Later, in the second half of the fourth century, when power/causal language becomes even more important as it is taken up within a new logical context,¹⁴ Philo's use of *dunamis* appears to have been too limited in application. (See my last section on Gregory of Nyssa's engagement with “Philonic causality”.) Also, running through Latin Trinitarian theology from Tertullian to Augustine is an explicit linkage of causal (generation and creation) language, degrees of union language, and sight-of-God language.... Can one even ask the question whether the Philonic Powers know/see the essence of God? I think not – because the question makes no sense: unknowable-in-their-own-essences Powers are not knowing entities like, e.g., angels or (later) aeons and archons.¹⁵

I can illustrate what I mean by the “conceptual freight” and theological work of Wisdom of Solomon 7:25-26 and Ep. Hebrews 1:3a by briefly jumping ahead to Athenagoras. Chapter 10 of Athenagoras' *Embassy for the Christians* (sometimes called

¹³ The Septuagint of Proverbs 8:22-25 duplicates the richness of causal vocabulary that one finds preserved in the MT. Anyone familiar with patristic trinitarian theology will recognize Proverbs 8.22 as a central text in the controversies of the fourth-century. It is this passage from Proverbs that Arians and anti-Nicenes will focus upon in their argument that the Son (Whom all sides recognize by the title, “Wisdom”) is a creature: “In the beginning of His ways the Lord *created* [κτιζειν] me [i.e., Wisdom]....” But second-century B.C.E. exegetical hermeneutics is not fourth century C.E. exegetical hermeneutics. Wisdom's full speech, 8.22-26, is a complex, ambitious and ambiguous description of Her origins. God “established” -- [θεμελιουν] -- and “made” [ποιειν] Wisdom “in the beginning” -- [εν αρχη]. Wisdom was “generated/born” -- [γενναν] -- by God. In my opinion, no second-century B.C.E. (or C.E.?) reader could imagine that God performed four separate actions upon Wisdom, so the four verbs must be understood as synonyms; the question is which of the four verbs can be said to govern the sense(s) of the other three: γενναν or κτιζειν, θεμελιουν and ποιειν.

¹⁴ The phrase “[new] logical context” should not be understood to imply or presume some development of ideas frame of thought: there is no Hegel here. Rather the phrase – as used by Lewis Ayres and me, and our students – is a recognition of the fact that concepts, clusters of concepts, and resulting scriptural exegesis carry within them a set of presuppositions about how a given concept, cluster, exegesis and constellation of exegeses relates to how the elements of each relate to each internally (that is, within the concept or cluster) and how a given concepts, clusters of concepts, scriptural exegesis or a constellation of exegesis, relate externally to other discrete concepts, etc. The “logic” of internal relations is usually more articulated while the “logic” of external relations is usually more presupposed, and consequently more difficult for a reader outside the texts' context to recognize.

¹⁵ The older scholarship on Philo – I am thinking of Drummond through Brehier to Wolfson – actually approached questions like this as they worked through the “Powers are Platonic Ideas/Forms” logic they thought was fundamental to and determinative of Philo's theology/philosophy. See, as an introduction, Wolfson's “Extradeical and Intradeical Interpretations of Platonic Ideas,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 22 (1961), 3-32.

his *Plea* and normally dated to 176 to 180 for reasons that do not bear much scrutiny¹⁶). One sees immediately in the chapter the common debt Philo and Athenagoras have to “Middle Platonism”¹⁷ – but just as immediately the production language witnessed to in Wisdom literature. (Note that here Wisdom 7:26 is used to describe the generation of the Holy Spirit!) The “unity of power, distinction in rank” language that Athenagoras uses will appear again in Tertullian.

ἀλλ’ ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν ἰδέᾳ καὶ (5)
 ἐνεργείᾳ· πρὸς αὐτοῦ γὰρ καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ πάντα ἐγένετο, ἐνὸς ὄντος
 τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ. ὄντος δὲ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐν πατρὶ καὶ πατρὸς ἐν
 υἱῷ ἐνόηται καὶ δυνάμει πνεύματος, νοῦς καὶ λόγος τοῦ πατρὸς ὁ @1
 υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. (3) εἰ δὲ δι’ ὑπερβολὴν συνέσεως σκοπεῖν ὑμῖν
 ἔπεισιν, ὁ παῖς τί βούλεται, ἐρῶ διὰ βραχέων· πρῶτον γέννημα
 εἶναι τῷ πατρὶ, οὐχ ὡς γενόμενον (ἐξ ἀρχῆς γὰρ ὁ θεός, νοῦς
 ἀίδιος ὢν, εἶχεν αὐτὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸν λόγον, ἀιδίως λογικὸς ὢν), ἀλλ’
 ὡς τῶν ὑλικῶν ξυμπάντων ἀποίου φύσεως καὶ † γῆς οχίας † ὑπο- (5)
 κειμένων δίκην, μεμιγμένων τῶν παχυμερεστέρων πρὸς τὰ κου-
 φότερα, ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς ἰδέα καὶ ἐνεργεῖα εἶναι, προελθόντων. (4) συνάδει
 δὲ τῷ λόγῳ καὶ τὸ προφητικὸν πνεῦμα· “κύριος γάρ”, φησὶν,
 “ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ.” καίτοι καὶ αὐτὸ
 τὸ ἐνεργοῦν τοῖς ἐκφωνοῦσι προφητικῶς ἅγιον πνεῦμα ἀπόρροιαν
 εἶναι φαμεν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀπορρέον καὶ ἐπαναφερόμενον ὡς ἀκτῖνα (5)
 ἡλίου. (5) τίς οὖν οὐκ ἂν ἀπορήσαι <τοῦς> ἄγοντας θεὸν πατέρα
 καὶ υἱὸν θεὸν καὶ πνεῦμα ἅγιον, δεικνύοντας αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν ἐν τῇ
 ἐνώσει **δύναμιν** καὶ τὴν ἐν τῇ τάξει διαίρεσιν, ἀκούσας ἀθέους
 καλουμένους;

¹⁶ He is post Justin Martyr, probably pre-Irenaeus, and even more likely pre-Clement of Alexandria.

¹⁷ Gretchen Reydams-Schils has recently argued that “Middle Platonic” thought does not exclude “Stoic” thought, and during this era Middle Platonism subsumes Stoicism (or something like that). While I do not agree with the details of her argument – such as a refusal to be concerned with the dating of major Stoic figures or an argument-by-dismissal of the methodology employed by John Rist and Brad Inwood – her over-all point has to be taken. The philosophical thought of the different schools (the Academy, the Porch) during the Common Era look to us more alike than different and we may be straining at a gnat or working with unnecessary antinomies. On the other hand, it needs to be said that the philosophical figures writing during the “Middle Platonic” era certainly were convinced that there were real differences amongst them, and that fact cannot be ignored. It may be that a happy methodological compromise could be reached presently in the judgment that during “the Middle Platonic era” (which functionally stretches well past Plotinus) philosophers conceptualized and articulated their thoughts via a polemical, *this-not-that*, hermeneutic, and that they perceived (intuited) a deep conflict of foundational logics that we cannot replicate in our reading (or which was pure epiphenomenon).

Finally, I turn to Luke 1:35-36 as a resource for Patristic Trinitarian theology: Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σέ, καὶ δύναμις ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοι: διὸ καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον ἅγιον κληθήσεται, υἱὸς θεοῦ.

If the consensus of the first three centuries of Christian exegesis hold any authority as to the plain sense of a NT passage, then we can say that the title and identity of God’s Son as “Power of God” is affirmed in the Gospel of Luke 1:35.¹⁸ The first explicit exegetical statement of this identification is found in Justin, and the identification remains predominate and even normative until the second half of the fourth century.¹⁹

*It is wrong, therefore, to understand **the Spirit and the Power of God** as anything else than the Word, who is also the first-born of God, as the foresaid prophet Moses declared; and it was this which, when it came upon the virgin and overshadowed her, caused her to conceive, not by intercourse, but by **power**.*²⁰

(8) ἡ γὰρ κεκλημένη ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεύματος διὰ τοῦ προφήτου στολή οἱ πιστεύοντες αὐτῷ εἰσιν ἄνθρωποι, ἐν οἷς οἰκεῖ τὸ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ σπέρμα, ὁ λόγος. (9) τὸ δὲ εἰρημένον Αἷμα τῆς σταφυλῆς σημαντικὸν τοῦ ἔχειν μὲν αἷμα τὸν φανησόμενον, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρωπειοῦ σπέρματος ἀλλ’ ἐκ θείας δυνάμεως. (10) ἡ δὲ πρώτη δύναμις μετὰ τὸν πατέρα πάντων καὶ δεσπότην θεὸν καὶ υἱὸς ὁ λόγος ἐστίν.

This mention of Justin allows me to segue into another significance he has for the development of Trinitarian theology and the Christian appropriation (or better, embeddedness) in the Wisdom tradition. Justin Martyr is the first Christian author to apply Proverbs 8:22-20 to Christ in any way;²¹ his argument for the cosmic identity of

¹⁸ “Spirit” likewise refers to the Son.

¹⁹ What has been called the “Regula of Rome” and usually dated to c. 175 attributes the “overshadowing” of Mary to the Holy Spirit (“person #3 not person #2), so I am loathe to say that 100% of all Christian invocations or exegeses of Luke 1:35 written before 360 (circa) identified the Spirit and Power as the Son or Word; none the less, one can safely and securely say that any potential case of an alternate exegesis (among the Valentinians?) was a rare event indeed. (Given Justin’s presence in Rome perhaps ten years earlier – if you trust the datings at all – the fact of the texts’ incompatibility on the “Holy Spirit” is interesting. A full account of the prima facie character of this exegetical identification involves not only an account of “Spirit Christology” but an account of the vacillating (high? low? High again?) status of the “Holy Spirit” prior to 381 (circa). (Sometimes I prefer the old title “Holy Ghost” for the “Third Person of the Trinity” because the title avoids the ambiguity of “holy Spirit [of God]”. No one but a docetist would call the Son a “holy ghost”.)

²⁰ Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 32. See also c33.

²¹ See Skarsaunne, pp. 387 & 389.

Christ based on Proverbs 8:22 occurs principally in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter 61, where the argument appears in two phases: first Justin articulates his understanding of the identity and origin of the pre-existent (i.e., pre-incarnational) Son, and then Justin quotes Proverbs 8:22-30 in support of the understanding he has just given. A sign of how significant Justin considers Proverbs 8:22 ff. to be for the Christian understanding of Christ's identity and origin is that Justin offers his summary and then quotes Proverbs 8:22 ff on both days of the debate. See Appendix Two for a detailed outline of Justin's exegesis in the *Dialogue*.

God – i.e., YHWH, the most High -- caused the existence of a specific rational existent in a unique and distinct way. This existent is identified with the αρχη, a term which carries the sense of a causal relationship between this existent and “creation”. This αρχη stands προ κτισματων and the existence of this rational existent precedes the existence of the “creation” it causes. Justin claims for the unique and distinct way God caused this existent a specific aetiological vocabulary, i.e., προβαλλοντες and γεννωμεν.

Justin *develops* the exegetical grammar: he is concerned to show that this causality does not entail a lessening or diminishment of the cause, and he offers two similitudes to illustrate the kind of causality he is naming. This concern is undoubtedly the result of his fear of seeming to endorse any kind of materialist derivation, but it is also because more than Proverbs or ben Sirach, Justin explicitly emphasizes continuity between cause and product: we have an implicit *X from X* causality even if not an explicit one; for whatever reason he does not use the emanationist terminology found in Wisdom of Solomon and Ep. Hebrews. However, like Wisdom of Solomon, Justin avoids the identification of this causality as κτισιζειν, and he too sets the product of this causality over-against παντων κτισματων. Justin takes one of the verbs from Proverbs -- γενναν, which translates *chuwl* and not *qanah* – and makes it normative for understanding the two αρχη-verb expressions, ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν and ἔθεμελίωσέν με ἐν ἀρχῇ.²²

At *Dial.* LXI the identification of the Word with Wisdom is explicit; at CXXIX Wisdom isn't mentioned at all. In *Against Praxeus* 6 (etc.) Tertullian treats the passage as testifying to the existence of Wisdom, identifies that Wisdom with the Word, and then uses Prov. 8:22 ff. to support his “two-stage Logos” theology. Prov. 8:22 ff. testifies to the second stage, when the Word-Wisdom comes out of God's consciousness and stands “beside” Him. The topographical descriptions in the Proverbs passage of Wisdom

²² Frankly, while I have a confident sense of how to translate “με ἐν ἀρχῇ” I do not have this confidence about “με ἀρχῇ”.

being “set up” (i.e., established), beside or “with” God, all locate the Word-Wisdom in His own existence outside of God’s mind.²³

At this point in my essay I will turn my attention away from the Scripture-structured account of *dunamis* for early Trinitarian theology – that is to say, identifying those NT passages which through their reception-history figured in some important way for using *dunamis* to speak of the Second Person. I will move now to presenting authors’ use as *dunamis* within their accounts of the Trinity, whether linked to exegesis or not. However I will offer this summary view of “power” in the first two centuries of Christian reflection on the Trinity – or the Binity: If the “Two Powers” trope of Philo had any influence in early Christianity the most likely candidate, in my opinion, is in terms of liturgy or what be called “liturgical exegesis”: exegesis that shapes or responds to its liturgical setting (or to an imagined liturgical setting).²⁴ It is widely recognized that most of Philo’s references to the “Two Powers” are linked to exegesis of the two cherubim over the mercy seat.²⁵ If there is a continuation of this Philonic trope I would see it in early Christian interpretations of Scriptural accounts of divine agents or two principal courtly ministers as two angels which have been interpreted in (and into) a liturgical setting.²⁶ I am thinking of *Ascension of Isaiah*, the *Book of the Elkasi*, Irenaeus’ *Demonstration* chapter X,²⁷ and the exegetical references to such in Origen’s *Peri Archon*²⁸ – and, more importantly, in Origen’s *Commentary on Isaiah* translated by Jerome -- and “left intact”

²³ Evans, *Against Praxeus*, pp. 216-19, has an excellent discussion of the role of Proverbs 8.22 in Tertullian’s theology, and, as well, a useful list of second-century expositors of the scriptural text. Evans, p. 218, remarks that Tertullian “is almost the last to make *positive* use of it: later writers needed to interpret it allegorically.”

²⁴ I would regard royal ceremonial as “liturgical”.

²⁵ Most recently by Francesca Calabi, *God’s Acting, Man’s Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2008), pp. 73-109 (i.e., Chapter Four). Calabi does much more than connect the Two Powers to Philo’s exegesis of the two cherubim, and we are indebted to her for the book and her dissertation.

²⁶ Some years ago Rowan Williams argued that the Egyptian “Liturgy of St Mark” is also an example of Christ and the Holy Spirit identified as the “Two First Worshipers”.

²⁷ Scholarly judgments on *Demonstration X* go like this: Robinson, Lanne, Danielou and Strousma – the Armenian of *Demonstration of the Apostolic Teaching X* is correctly translated as identifying the Son and Holy Spirit as the first two Angelic worshippers of God, the only inhabitants of the seven heaven, God’s immediate presence; Briggman -- the Armenian of *Demonstration of the Apostolic Teaching X* is **not** correctly translated as identifying the Son and Holy Spirit as the first two Angelic worshippers of God. I need not offer equal testimony to the fact that the dating of *Ascension of Isaiah* is controverted, though I tend to go with the early range of dates. (Wholly unnecessary exposing of a vulnerable flank: I see *Odes of Solomon* as early, not late.)

²⁸ Strousma offers the Ptolemy’s *Letter to Flora* as another example supporting a two powers doctrine: i.e., where Ptolemy says, “The essence of the Demiurge, however, produced a twofold power....” I think the context in the Letter weakens Strousma’s interpretation of the passage from Ptolemy, and in any case, this one not-even-a-sentence is all that Ptolemy says about “twofold power”. The better frame of reference would be to ask, *Is there anything like Philo’s “Two Power” trope in the Valentinian tradition?* (On the basis of Clement’s *Excerpta Theodosius* I would say “No”.)

by Jerome. (I claim no originality in fashioning this list.) It is, of course, not necessary that each of these examples reflect the influence of Philo specifically instead of simply expressing a similar sensitivity articulated in a particular line of Jewish thought, and of course the likelihood of Philo's influence would vary from text to text. While I would not go so far as to say that the *only* early Christian traditions that adopted Philo's "Two Power" trope were those that used Angelic (or "Angelomorphic") categories for both Son and Holy Spirit it is my judgement that the *prima facie* evidence supports a conclusion of this sort.²⁹

PART II. THE POWER OF GOD

The beginnings of what I call the "technical" sense of *dunamis*, power, lie in the literature of the medical authors who lived a generation or two before Plato. Among the medical authors - belonging predominantly to the Hippocratic school - power means the affective capacity (or capacities) of any given existent distinctive to the identity of that existent. This sense of power is developed in the Hippocratic literature through associating power with the concept of nature: *power* is the affective capacity of the nature, or, nature as affective capacity. Already the reader can sense the kind of unity presupposed in the Hippocratic play between power and nature. And already the reader can imagine the kind of play "power" and "nature" might have in Christian discussions of God's existence - "God's nature, God's power". The presence of power causality in discussions of the divine is a general feature of classical theologies. For the early Hippocratics *dunamis* means the distinct and distinguishing causal capacity of a material entity. In Hippocratic cosmology, everything that exists is composed of individually subsistent affective qualities or powers: the fundamental level of existence is an irreducible unit of powers. It is mixtures of powers which produces everything that we perceive to exist, for it is the existence of specific powers in a mixture that determines the identity or nature of an existent, and it is the action of these powers upon other mixtures that determines all the causal relations that we perceive and know. For the Hippocratic philosophers, the concept of power(s) describes everything that really exists.

²⁹ Danielou discusses a similar significance to "two angels" talk in his *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, pp.121-134. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, pp. 119-20, provides a helpful list of passages in which an angel is called the "Power of God," which I will summarize: Yahoel, in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*; in the *Prayer of Joseph* Israel/Jacob calls himself "the archangel of the power of God"; in *2nd Enoch* the angelomorphic Melchizedek is the Power of God, and Michael is called the Power in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. See also Fossum, *Name of God*, pp. 180-191, where the appearance of "power" in the aforementioned texts is elaborated upon. (See especially p. 185 n330, where Fossum discusses "power" in the *Gospel to the Hebrews* and raises the possibility that in this *Gospel* the power Michael is identified with the Holy Spirit.) I have a chapter on angelic pneumatology from 200 to 200 in my yet-to-have-a-sexy-Amazon-worthy-title study of continuities in pneumatologies from late Second Temple to Tertullian and Origen. The monograph will be published pre-millennially.

Two specific doctrines are particularly important for both Hippocratic philosophy and the later Christian appropriation of power causality. The first doctrine is that these powers are organized or understood as opposites, insofar as one power (or collection of powers) acts to destroy, drive off, or reverse the action of another specific power (or collection of powers). The second significant doctrine is a distinction which is made between the unique power of an existent which is distinctive or peculiar to a thing and thereby identifies the nature of that existent ("power" in its proper sense), and the power which belongs to a thing as one of a number of powers, and which is not unique to the existent ("power" in its secondary sense). For example: there is a difference between fire's $\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$ of hot and fire's $\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\mu(\epsilon)\iota\varsigma$ of dry or ever-moving. Hot is distinctive to fire's nature; it reveals fire's nature because it is unique to fire. Other elementals have the power of dry or ever-moving (e.g., air). The power hot is the power of fire insofar as fire is fire. This kind of power is always singular. The power dry, like the power ever-darting, belongs to fire but not only to fire. This kind of power is understood to always exist in the plural. The first kind of power is connatural to the existent, for wherever this kind of power is the existent must necessarily also be (where ever there is heat there is fire). The second kind of power may be understood as natural in the broad sense of that term, but the presence of one of this kind of power does not necessarily indicate the presence of a specific existent: the presence of ever-moving alone does not necessarily indicate the existence of fire the way the presence of the hot does.³⁰

However, the role played by the concept of power in classical philosophies and theologies is not due simply to the Hippocratic use of the term. The other, more important stage in the development of the technical sense of power owes to Plato. In the Hippocratic writings power causality remains wholly materialistic. Plato takes this understanding of cause, strips it of explicit material associations, and develops it to describe immaterial causes: virtues in the soul, faculties of knowledge in the mind, and the Good (at *Republic* 509B). The action of virtues in the soul and knowledge in the mind are both described as power causalities, for example. One of the most important examples for theology of this development occurs in the *Republic*, when Plato compares the action of the sun to the action of the Good. This passage marks Plato's clear appropriation of medical causal language in an application that leaves behind the explicit materialistic context of that language.

³⁰ I did not originally intend to pass over the question of which traditions or texts of Hellenized Judaism give us the most significant antecedent use of $\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\mu(\epsilon)\iota\varsigma$. Baudouin Decharneux suggests the *Letter of Aristeas*, *III Maccabees*, the *Third Sybillne Oracle*, and *Joseph and Aseneth*. I believe one would better served with the fragments of Aristobulus, and, most importantly, the OG/LXX of psalms 66, 68, and 150 (MT numbers). See Baudouin Decharneux, "De l'evidence de l'existence de Dieu et de l'efficacite de ses puissances dans la theologie ohilonienne," in *Dire L'Evidence*, Carlos Levy and Laurent Pernot, eds. (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1997), pp 321-334.

Plato takes over the Hippocratic understanding of *dunamis*, and applies it to a wide variety of causes not previously included in the earlier materialistic accounts. He uses *dunamis* to describe the causal capacity of virtues in the soul, for example, and the different knowing capacities of the mind. Among the most significant developments by Plato of the concept *dunamis* are his adaptations of its traditional cosmological connotations. In both middle and late dialogues Plato refers to Anaxagoras' doctrine that the universe is governed by a *dunamis*.³¹ Whether or not Anaxagoras actually used the word *dunamis* for the transcendent Mind that gives purpose to the cosmos is not at all clear; what is certain and particularly significant is that Plato's own concept of a teleological cause develops from his reflection upon "Anaxagoras'" cosmic *dunamis*.

Plato's second important development of the Hippocratic understanding of *dunamis* is his appropriation of their understanding that whatever exists *exists as a cause and as the recipient of causal actions* from other existents. In the *Sophist* 247d Plato abstracts the fact of this mark of existence from any specific (material) case of being a cause or receiving from a cause. His debt to the Hippocratics is clear in this dialogue, as in other dialogues where the Hippocratic distinction between *causing action or receiving action from a cause* is used to classify existents.

The third of Plato's developments of *dunamis* also shows the influence of previous Hippocratic cosmological accounts. At *Republic* 509 B Plato describes a transcendent cause that exceeds *being (ousia)* in *power (dunamis)* and *dignity (presbeia)*. Plato's entire account of the Good as transcendent first cause is given in terms taken over from the power causality of the Hippocratic philosophers. Plato has stripped away the materialist presuppositions of Hippocratic *dunamis* causality, and "transcendentalized" it.

This "transcendentalized" sense of *dunamis* appears in a number of texts at or about the time of the turn of the eras. It may be found, of course, in Philo's writings, as well as in the writing then attributed to Aristotle, *On the Cosmos (de Mundo)* – which is not to equate the use of *dunamis* in these very different theologies. It also appears, as I already remarked, in the *Wisdom of Solomon* in the famous passage at 7:25, and in the fragments collected under the name of Aristobulus. But at the end of the second and the beginning of the third centuries of the Common Era we see a widespread theological and cosmological use of the term among both Pagans and Christians. For example, in the *Chaldean Oracles*, *Dunamis* is the second God in the transcendent triad of Father, Power and Intellect. The Father, the *Oracles* say in one fragment, "did not enclose his own fire in his intellectual Power."³² Or again, "Power is with Him [the Father], but

³¹ See, for example, *Cratylus* 400 B and *Philebus* 28 D -29 A.

³² Frag. 3, *The Chaldean Oracles*, Ruth Majerick, ed. trans. and comm. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), pp. 49-50.

Intellect is from him."³³ And again, "For the first Transcendent Fire does not enclose its own Power in matter by means of works but by means of Intellect."³⁴ Similarly, power is a central term descriptive of transcendent causality in the writing of Plotinus, as the following quotation will illustrate:

If the First is perfect, the most perfect of all, and the primal power, it must be the most powerful of all beings and the other powers must imitate it as far as they are able. ... [F]ire warms, snow cools, and drugs act on something else in a way corresponding to their own nature - all imitating the First Principle as far as they are able by tending to everlastingness and generosity. How then could the most perfect, the first Good, remain in itself as if it grudged to give of itself, or was impotent, when it is the productive power of all things? [³⁵]

Plotinus' argument here is that the Good is productive because, being what it is, it must be productive. The language that Plotinus uses to describe this causality, and the character of this causality should already be familiar to you: the naming of the Transcendent causality a power or *dunamis*, the paradigm aetiological cases of fire, snow, and pharmaceuticals, and the echoes of *Republic* 509B. It must be noted, however, that of all the Christian authors I will mention or discuss in this essay, Plotinus can figure only for Ambrose of Milan (commented upon in passing) and Gregory of Nyssa. All other Christian authors are living in a Middle Platonic world.

“Power” in Christian Trinitarian Theology

Among authors like Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Hippolytus and Origen we find three kinds of "power" based trinitarian theologies commonly articulated. These three doctrines of divine power will play fundamental roles in the trinitarian controversies of the fourth century. *The first doctrine of divine power holds that in God there is only one power, a power that is co-extensive with His nature, such that to say "power" is to say "nature"*. Power and nature together make up the existence of divinity. Tertullian, for example, uses "power" (often *potestas*, but also *virtus*) in doctrinal formulations in which the sense is "one power, one substance". This understanding and use of the term appears particularly in the *Against Praxeus*, when Tertullian, having insisted upon the distinctness of the Divine Persons, draws back to affirm their substantial unity: the three are "one substance, and one condition, and of one power...."

³³ *Ibid.*, frag. 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, frag. 5.

³⁵ Armstrong, Loeb V:143.

³⁶ Hippolytus similarly remarks that "that [God] has a single Power; and that as far as Power is concerned, God is one...."³⁷

In the second doctrine of "divine power" the term is understood as a title of the Second Person specifically and exclusively. The second person, whether otherwise called the Son, the Word, or Christ, is *the* Power of God the Father. God, like everything that really exists, has a power, and Christ his Son is that power. This second doctrinal sense of a "power" trinitarian theology appears in Tertullian's writings, and in Hippolytus' *Against Noetus*, where the concept is understood as being descriptive of the Word, who is then identified by the title "Power", which is to say, "the Power of the Father".³⁸ In this understanding, Power, Word and Wisdom are all considered to be roughly synonymous as titles for the second person: "He was Word, he was Spirit, he was Power" is how Hippolytus puts it. Origen can serve as an example of a proponent of this kind of power theology as when he says:

... the will of God comes itself to be a power of God. There comes into existence, therefore, another power, subsisting in its own proper nature... a kind of breath of the first and unbegotten power of God. [³⁹]

Origen here makes explicit is the third connotation, and here there is a "second power": *the Son is identified as the "Power of God" but that power is not God's own power but a power from that power.* ("X from X".) Origen sometimes claims divinity for the Son by identifying Him as the *Power of God*, but the "Son as power" is not the "Son as the very connatural power of God, but a second power produced by God's own power. We may see Origen's doctrine as a solution to the problems posed by the famous "two stage" theologies of Origen's predecessors, but it also serves as a precedent for one side in the controversies of the fourth century. Given that in both cases Origen's argument is offered as exegesis, and turns on notions of causal language in two of the four NT texts I discussed at the beginning – all constellated under Wisdom 7:25-26 – I will focus on Origen's argument in the rest of this part of the paper. However, I want to be very clear on one point: a single author can, at one point, speak about "Christ as Power" moving back and forth two of the three kinds of attributions. Tertullian does

³⁶ *Against Praxeus (Adversus Praxeus)* 2, CSEL vol 47 230.2-3. ANF 598.

³⁷ *Hippolytus of Rome: Contra Noetum* 8.2, Robert Butterworth, S. J. (London: Heythrop Monographs, 1977), pp. 64-65.

³⁸ McFadden, *Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 1:24*, p. 60, relates Hippolytus' identification of titles in *Against Noetus* to a similar statement in his *Commentary on the Canticle of Canticle*. The *Commentary* also represents the only time Hippolytus clearly cites 1. Cor. 1:24.

³⁹ *On First Principles* I, 2, 9, Butterworth, p. 23.

this, for example. On the other hand, I know of no author who using the first kind of attribution will also use the third.

Origen's Doctrine of Production From the Power

In Origen's theology, the origin of that second power in the first is a guarantee of that second power's eternal existence; "since God always had both the power and the will, there was never the slightest reason or possibility that he should not always have had this good thing that he desired. This proves that there always existed that breath of the power of God, having no beginning but God himself."⁴⁰ Production from the will provides the same guarantee that the Son's generation is eternal, for God was never without His will. God's will alone is sufficient for production, and requires no other agent: "And on this account my own opinion is that an act of the Father's will ought to be sufficient to ensure the existence of what he wills; for in willing he uses no other means than that which is produced by the deliberation of his will."⁴¹

The power that the second Person is identified with is thus not the very power of God, that is, the power God has in his own existence, but a second produced or generated power: a power from a power. All sides in the early stage of the Nicene controversy could (and did) comfortably describe the production of the second Person from the first as an *X from X* causal relationship.⁴² Expressions like light from light or wisdom from wisdom occur in virtually everyone's writings. Clearly, in themselves, they do not specify that the cause reproduces its own nature or identity in the product. The value of *X from X* expressions turned upon the understanding one had of the meaning(s) of the two X's: were the two X's used in exactly the same sense, or were they used as a kind of homonym? Was X said of the cause in the same way as X was said of the effect? Clearly Nicenes and pro-Nicenes would answer yes to these questions, while anti-Nicenes and non-Nicenes would answer no. Differences in the argument over what exactly an *X from X* expression meant may have come down to preferred examples of such a relationship. Fire from fire seems to have been less open to an equivocal interpretation of the two appearances of "fire" than the "wisdom" in wisdom from wisdom. Radiance examples figure prominently in Athanasius' arguments, for example,

⁴⁰ *On First Principles*, I.2.9, Butterworth, p. 23. This argument is picked up later by Athanasius to show the eternal existence of the second Person; the argument from the eternal wisdom and power of God allows Athanasius to move away from the title of "Son", which can suggest a beginning, and which seemed too biological or materialist a description of the nature of the union. See Crouzel, SC vol. 253, p. 48, note 55 and also pp. 48-50, notes 55-61.

⁴¹ *On First Principles* I.2.6, Butterworth, p. 19. See Crouzel's note to this effect in SC vol. 253, pp. 41-42, note 37.

⁴² Normally *X from X* expressions can be understood as examples of "like from like" causality. However, to say "like from like" in the trinitarian controversy is still too ambiguous.

although Eunomius has no problem explaining the occurrence of "light" in light from light as homonyms.

As I suggested at the beginning of this Part of my essay, the word used for the kind of cause which reproduces itself in an *X from X* causality is called a power, *dunamis*. True *X from X* relationships, in which a cause reproduces itself (or its nature), are examples of a power causality.⁴³ The earliest and most significant examples of such a causal relationship are those associated with elementals such as fire (the hot) and ice (the cold). The effect of fire is to make more fire: *X from X*. The most positive interpretation (from a Nicene point of view) of Origen's statement in *On First Principles* that the second Person is a power from God's power is that this is meant as a statement of an unequivocal *X from X* relationship, in which the power reference in "power from power" is offered not simply as an example of a like from like relationship but as a reference to the kind of causality a true *X from X* relationship is. The problem with such an interpretation of *X from X* statements in *On First Principles* is that elsewhere (i.e., *Commentary on John*) Origen refers to "power from power" as one example among many such *X from X* expressions, and the sense of such expressions is clearly that the effect is like the cause and not that the effect is the same (kind of thing) as the cause.⁴⁴

This latter understanding of *X from X* causality is a weaker statement of unity than if Origen had simply identified the Son with the power God has insofar as He exists; his is the kind of *dunamis* theology that one later finds in the theology of Eusebius and Asterius and, by implication, Arius. The strength of such an identification would have been the pre-empting of any need to search out the language of production models for proofs of unity: the existence of God's own power is apparently a given, just as it is a given in the case of any existent. As it is, Origen's theology emphasizes the importance of, first, the kind of generation which produces the second Person, but secondly, and more importantly, the very fact of the second Person's production or

⁴³ I will use the terms "generic" and "genetic" to distinguish between the use of power simply as one example of an *X from X* relationship, and the use of power in an *X from X* expression where power is used as a paradigm of all true *X from X* relationships. The theology of Marius Victorinus provides a clear example of a distinction being made between power from power as a genetic case of an *X from X* causality and other expressions that are generic examples of *X from X* causality. Victorinus' understanding of *X from X* expressions is that they are in fact examples of power causality. "The Logos, the Word, is Light from Light, Spirit from Spirit, and substance from substance, [not separated by time, but] insofar as one is the cause of the other, so that by power they are always together. For the shining of the light is not separated but is always in the light." *Against Arius* 1A, Mary T. Clark, trans. *Marius Victorinus: Theological Treatises on the Trinity*, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 69, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1981), p. 141.

⁴⁴ McFadden erroneously takes all *X from X* expressions as claims to common nature because he understands all such expressions to refer to relationships of true power causality; see "Exegesis", pp. 42-43. As a result of his failure to distinguish between an equivocal use of X in *X from X* expressions (such as one finds in Asterius and Eunomius) and the univocal use of X in *X from X* expressions (such as one finds in Athanasius and Gregory) McFadden interprets all *X from X* expressions as statements of consubstantiality.

generation. The second Person is understood fundamentally as a generated existent. While accounts of production may differ in the degree of union they offer between producer and product, by definition they all presuppose a logical priority in the cause or producer.⁴⁵

We must note, despite its seeming obviousness, that Origen's account of the relationship between the first and second Persons emphasizes the fact of the second Person's generateness. The nature of the second Person is described primarily in terms of the nature of his production by or from the First. Wisdom 7:25 and Heb. 1:3 are both understood to be accounts of the generation of Wisdom, Power, or Breath. It is this feature of Wisdom 7:25 and Heb. 1:3 which has highlighted their use by Origen for scholars.⁴⁶ 1 Cor 1:24, by contrast, does not use power and wisdom in the context of a production account; yet the effect of its exegesis *via* the Wisdom and Hebrews texts is as a support for a production account. In general, this is Origen's interpretation of 1 Cor 1:24. Athanasius, on the other hand, will use Power and Wisdom in 1 Cor. 1:24 precisely because they are terms describing the second Person's unity with the first that do not describe this relationship as a causal relationship. Although Origen's acceptance of production language as fundamental to Christology cannot be confused with, say, Eunomius' identification of the first Person with unproduced (*agennetos*) and the second Person with produced (*gennetos*), yet Eunomius' theology may be said to express a legitimate insight into the character of earlier trinitarian theology: namely, that its axis was the Son's generated nature.

There is a second problem inherent in the power from power causal model which Origen himself states. In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* Origen argues that the

⁴⁵ Williams, *Arius*, p. 138, takes care to explore Origen's argument that the Son is eternal because God's power was always effective (and thus, its products must have always existed). This causal relationship is re-stated in terms of relative predication: if God was always a Father, He must have always have had a Son. Thus, Williams says, "the necessity for creation depends upon the prior fact of God's defining himself as Father" and he emphasizes the role of Origen's doctrine that God creates by His own will in His Wisdom as a means by which Origen "avoids any suggestion of an automatic [i.e., involuntary] creation". Yet the reference Williams gives on p. 297 for making this comment, *On First Principles* I.1 (=2).9 ff. is that of Origen's account of a power from a power, etc. In short, Williams identifies the capacity which is the source of God's eternal creative act with the capacity which is the effect of God's eternal creative act. Williams is wrong to make this identification without working through his understanding of the content of Origen's power from power (*X from X*) argument, since (as he noted on p. 134) Origen gives a very different interpretation to the argument power from power in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*.

⁴⁶ Williams, *Arius*, p. 134, remarks upon Origen's use of Wisdom 7:25-26 with Hebrews 1:3 in the context of describing Origen's doctrine(s) of the Son production out of the essence. Williams suggests (p. 135) that in these accounts Origen has in mind certain Valentinian gnostic understandings of generation which he wishes to refute (or at least avoid). The judgement that Origen uses Wisdom 7:25-26 primarily as an anti-Gnostic text is shared by Grant, "The Book of Wisdom", pp. 471-472, and Logan, "Wisdom Christology", pp. 128-129. I would add that Origen's anti-Gnostic account of the second Person's generation has the side-effect of emphasizing the Son's generative nature.

Son comes not from God, but from the divine attributes: the Son is the breath of God's power, not of God Himself; he is an effluence of God's glory, but not of God Himself.⁴⁷

For he [the Son] is the image of his God, the Father goodness, and the effluence, not of God, but of his glory and his eternal light, and the breath, not of the Father, but of his power. [48]

This *Commentary on John* passage implies distinctions between God and His glory, light, and power, a distinction already hinted at in *On First Principles* I.2.9, where Origen's distinctions are analogous to the distinctions in *Commentary on John*. *On First Principles* says that Christ is said to be an effluence not of the light or the glory but of the power; *Commentary on John* says that the Son is an effluence not of God but the power of God. In *On First Principles* the difference between Power and the other attributes is important; Origen goes so far as to offer a definition of power (though not of the other titles). In *Commentary on John* what power means is not important, except to the extent that power, like wisdom, and light, is not God simply, but something else. In short, in *On First Principles*, *dunamis* is understood as a feature of God's own existence; in *Commentary on John* power is specifically distinguished from God's own existence. Indeed, in *Commentary on John* Origen uses power to develop another kind of argument entirely:

... to signify that the Word has his own individuality, that is to say, lives according to himself, we must speak also of powers, not only of power. `For thus says the Lord of the Powers' is a phrase which occurs in many places [in Scripture], certain divine spiritual beings being named powers. As, therefore, there are many powers of God, each of which has its own individual existence, so also Christ possesses substance in the beginning. [49]

⁴⁷ This language has caused some consternation among modern scholars. Greer, *Captain*, p. 47, contrasts the "subordinationist" exegesis of Wisdom 7:25 in *Commentary on John* with the exegesis of Wisdom 7:25 in *On First Principles*, which he finds less subordinationist. Similarly, Williams, *Arius*, p. 134, contrasts the exegesis in the commentary on John with the exegesis in the commentary on Hebrews fragment. Stead, *Divine Substance*, p. 213, also discusses the *Commentary on John* text and finds it "strongly subordinationist." I find the *On First Principles* text less 'proto-orthodox' than it is described in these scholarly accounts, and Origen's *Commentary on John* exegesis is consistent with the caveat I have tried to raise on the *On First Principles* material: namely, that the phrase power from power, if it is used only as an example of *X from X* causality, is not a statement of common nature, *pace* McFadden, "Exegesis", p. 42, who believes that the phrase power from power is a clear statement of consubstantiality.

⁴⁸ Greer, *Captain*, p. 47, gives this translation of Origen's conclusion in the *Commentary on John* XIII:25, 153. Similar language appears in *On First Principles* I.2.9.

⁴⁹ Origen: *Commentary on the Gospel According to John Books 1-10* trans. Ronald Heine (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), p. 94. See *Commentaire sur Saint Jean*, ed., trans. and comm., Cecile Blanc, SC, vols. 120 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1966), I:291, p. .

In short, in *Commentary on John* the understanding of power as external to God's own nature or existence serves as the conceptual support for the individual existence of the second Person. This is a very important point. Williams⁵⁰ gives a useful summary of Origen's concern with establishing the reality of the Son's separate existence which shows that this concern is expressed most clearly in *Against Celsus* (*Contra Celsum*) and the *Commentary on John*, and not in *On First Principles*.⁵¹ If again we look toward to the reception of Origen's language in the fourth century controversies, we can note that whatever the inherent subordinationism might have been in formulas such as power from power and power among powers, the inherent claim to a separate, real existence in such expressions was understood by Marcellus of Ancyra, for example, who rejected all such multiple powers and *X from X* language.⁵²

The Fourth Century

When we turn to the trinitarian controversies of roughly the first half of the fourth century, we can analyze the two sides as opposed adherents of different understandings of what it means that the Son is, as 1 Cor. 1:24 puts it, the "Power of God". Again I refer to Athanasius' recollections in *de Decretis* V.20 and *de Synodis* 18 (as well as the "Athanasian" *Ad Afros* V) that at Nicaea various titles were first proposed by his side as descriptions of the Son's union with God. The first of these titles was "power"; the debate over this title is the only episode that Athanasius gives any details about. When the term Power was proposed the "Eusebians" accepted the title because it was susceptible to an equivocal attribution: here we have the famous case of Asterius remarking that even the locusts of Moses' plague are called the "powers of God" by Scripture. That Asterius is the spokesman for this understanding of power returns as an echo when, in the *Discourse Against the Arians* and *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*,⁵³ Athanasius cites a fragment from Asterius' *Sytagmation* where he says:

⁵⁰ See Williams, *Arius*, p. 132.

⁵¹ Since both *On First Principles* and *Commentary on John* are early works, written in the order just given, and the *Dialogue* is late (245) but not as late as *Against Celsus* (248), it is impossible to suggest that Origen's opinion on the unity between Father and Son developed in a certain direction. It is interesting to note, however, that Origen's "weaker" statements on the unity afforded by the Son's generation "power from power" occur in a scriptural commentary, while the stronger statements are in more speculative or doctrinal works.

⁵² Despite Marcellus' repudiation of Origen's theology, he shares with Origen the basic assumption that statements in favor of the Son's full divinity are made at the expense of statements in favor of the Son's independent existence, and vice versa. The difference between Origen and Marcellus is that Origen preserves a positive understanding of the Son's independent existence at the expense of a doctrine of His full divinity, while Marcellus sacrifices the Son's independent existence for the sake of an unqualified statement of His full divinity.

⁵³ In the first *Discourse Against the Arians* (*Orationes Contra Arianos*) Athanasius elides Arius' text with Asterius': in the *Thalia* Arius says that there are two Wisdoms and another Word in God besides the Son, and in other texts "of theirs they" teach that there are many powers (*Discourse* I,2.5). In

... there are many powers; one of which is God's own by nature and eternal; but that Christ, on the other hand, is not the true power of God; but, as others, one of the so-called powers.... [54]

Literally-speaking Asterius does not propose that there are two types of divine power - he proposes many more, but he does allow that of these powers Christ is "the first born and only begotten". Functionally then, in terms of a trinitarian theology we have a "two powers" theology, the first is God's own eternal and proper power, the second is a derived power which has its own existence. Although Arius' own writings refer only to two classes or kinds of *wisdoms*, but not, specifically, to two classes or kinds of *powers*,⁵⁵ Athanasius nonetheless understands Arius' "two wisdoms" doctrine as equivalent to Asterius' doctrine of "two (kinds of) powers".⁵⁶ In each case a distinction is being made between the property as it exists as God's own, and the property as it exists as a derived property. The existence of these two kinds of properties is taken as indications of two kinds of existence, or as Eusebius of Caesarea put it, "two essences, two things, two powers".

At the time the alternative understanding of what it means that the second person is the "Power of God" is to identify the Son or Word with the very power of God's existence. The second person is the Power of God, the Father's *own* power, the power that the Father was never without. Such an identification can prove the full divinity of the Son in a variety of ways. Athanasius' argument is that if the Father was never without his power, then that power is eternal; and if eternal, then divine. Such an understanding does not fully exploit the conceptual unity of power and nature.

Discourse II, 18.37 Athanasius reports the same doctrine of power(s) and attributes it explicitly to Asterius. In the *Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia (De Synodis)* 17-18, Athanasius gives extensive quotations of this doctrine from Asterius' *Syntagmation*.

⁵⁴ *Discourse I*, 2.5 NPNF IV:309.

⁵⁵ In old Arius scholarship the nature of Arius' doctrine of *wisdom from wisdom* was the object of some debate. Stead takes pains, in his "The Platonism of Arius." *JTS*, 15 (1964), 16-31, to distinguish his opinion that Arius held to a "two-level" theory from Wolfson's opinion of Arius' "two-stage" Logos. In Arius' system, Stead says, "terms such as *wisdom* and *logos* [*sic*] have two meanings." These homonyms are attributed to both Father and Son, "... the Son's attributes are... parallel to the Father's; but his wisdom is a *generated* wisdom... the true and *ingenerate* wisdom is an inalienable attribute which belongs to the Father alone." (p. 20, emphasis added). It is surprising how much like Eunomius Stead makes Arius sound, for Eunomius' own explanation of the common attribution of titles such as Light, Power, and Wisdom etc., is precisely as Stead says: "Our response" to such titles, according to Eunomius, "is to say that the one `light' is unbegotten and the other begotten. When spoken of the Unbegotten, does `light' signify an entity other than that signified by `the Unbegotten'?" *Apology* 19:8-10, *Extant Works*, p. 57.

⁵⁶ "... there are two `Wisdoms', one which is proper to God and exists together with him, and [the other] the Son who has been brought into this Wisdom; only be participating in this Wisdom is the Son called Wisdom and Word. Wisdom came into existence though Wisdom, by the will of the God who is wise." *Discourse I*.2.5, Williams' translation in *Arius*, p. 100.

Marcellus of Ancyra has a better grasp of the ontological link between whatever exists and its power, and understands that two *dynameis* means two *hypostases*. Against this doctrine Marcellus asserts that the second person is "Power, he is Wisdom, he is God's own true Word... the inseparable power of God..." "I have learned," Marcellus says in his letter to Julius, "that the Father's power, the Son, is inseparable and indivisible." Nicene theology among its earliest defenders and proponents identified the single and only Power of God with the Son, and saw in this identification a way of describing the unity of the Father and the Son.

The opposition between these two different understandings of how the Son was "the Power of God" continues up to the 340's. The Second Creed of Antioch describes the Son as the "unalterable and unchangeable, exact image of the Godhead, substance, will, power and glory of the Father." It likewise includes a strong statement of the separate *hypostases* of Father and Son. Similar statements can be found in the so-called Third and Fourth creeds of Antioch. By contrast, the creed proposed by the westerners at Serdica says "that the Son is the power of the Father" and adds that the Son possesses all such titles uniquely and that "there is no other". Associated with this power theology is Serdica's statement that there is only one *hypostasis* and *ousia* in God. While Serdica is not quite Nicene, it follows the pattern of Nicene theology as represented in Athanasius and Marcellus of identifying the second person with the single very power of God, and understanding the numbers of powers as being indicative of the number of essences or hypostases.

In the middle and late 350's we begin to see another understanding of the doctrine of God's single power among those sympathetic to Nicaea. This doctrine may be found in the writings of Latin authors such as Phoebadeus and Hilary. Their development of Nicene theology can legitimately be distinguished from Athanasius' because they teach a doctrine of God's single power which never appears in Athanasius and thus cannot owe to his influence. Their theology argues that because the Father and the Son have the same power as one another, they have the same nature. Here we have the rise of pro-Nicene theology.

Phoebadeus' of Agenn (fl. 358) statement of this "one power" doctrine is explicitly cast as an exegesis of 1 Cor. 1:24: "We claim that both are one power. Concerning this the Apostle says 'Christ is the power of God'. That power... is said [to be] substance..."⁵⁷ So close is the conceptual unity between power and substance that Phoebadeus sometimes has trouble articulating the difference between the two. Hilary's argument

⁵⁷ "Et unam utriusque dicimus esse *uirtutem*. De qua idem Apostolus ait: Christus *uirtus* Dei est. [1 Cor. 1:24] Quae quidem *uirtus*, quia nullius extraneae opis indiget, dicta substantia est, ut supra diximus: quidquid illud est sibi debens." *Contra Arrianos* VIII.3, CCL 64.31.10-13.

that the Son has the same power as the Father is couched in his rebuttal of a Homoian⁵⁸ teaching which identifies God (the Father) as "true God" and so distinguishes Him from the Son (who is not "true God").⁵⁹ Hilary argues that the Son is included in the determination "true God" because Scripture shows the Son to possess the same nature, power and name as the Father.⁶⁰ According to Hilary, to determine whether two things are truly named by the same name one compares the "nature and power [*virtus*]" of a thing:⁶¹ if these are the same, the two existents have the same name in the same way, for "... natural powers are evidence of the truth [of a name]; let us see, by this test, whether He [the Son]... is God."⁶² The unity between the first and second Persons is discovered and articulated in terms of common nature and common power; this is Hilary's phrasing repeatedly. "[He] Who possesses both the nature and the *virtus* of God ... had at his disposal the *virtus* of the divine nature [s] to bring into being..."⁶³ or, "that by a bodily similitude [of "the Son's *hand*"] you may learn the *virtus* of the one divine nature which is in both; for the nature and the *virtus* of the Father is in the Son."⁶⁴

⁵⁸ "Homoian" now names what used to be – and too often still is – referred to as "Arianism from 357" and afterwards. "Arianism" now has the technical sense of "The beliefs of Arius and his immediate circle who allied themselves with him." "Homoian" theology taught that the Son was "like" the Father in will, i.e., the Son's will was perfectly congruent with the Father's will. No essence or substance talk. There were significant differences between Latin and Greek Homoianism.

⁵⁹ The original occasion of introducing this teaching is the creed contained in Arius' *Letter to Alexander*. In Book Five of his *de Trinitate*, at least, Hilary does not identify his opponents as "Arian" thereafter, and there are reasons for suspecting that the opponents he has in mind are of a more contemporary variety.

⁶⁰ Indeed, Hilary will argue that Old Testament appearances of God are appearances of the Son. Hilary puts much emphasis on the fit between nature and name. Although his understanding is that the only source of knowledge about God is God's own self-revelation, his emphasis on name is nonetheless striking in the context of Eunomius' own emphasis on the decisive character of the name in distinguishing essences. The positive presence of an understanding of divine name in Hilary's theology suggests that Eunomius' emphasis on names should not be understood as an isolated development in late fourth century trinitarian thought.

⁶¹ *On the Trinity* V:3, Smulders, CCL LXII, p. 153:15, NPNF IX:86. Hilary then offers the example of wheat as an illustration of nature and power: "true wheat is that which grows to a head with a beard bristling round it, which is purged from the chaff and ground to flour, compounded into a loaf, and taken for food, and renders the nature and the uses of bread. Thus natural powers are the evidence of truth" The example originates in the Hippocratic writings, where *physis kai dunamis* first becomes a description of that which exists, and from which Plato, as he says, borrowed his own understanding of *physis kai dunamis*. Hilary's acquaintance with this formula may have come from medical sources, as suggested by his use of *wheat* to illustrate the relationship of nature to power; wheat (and bread) is a favorite example of *physis kai dunamis* among the Hippocratics.

⁶² *de Trin* V.3.15, NPNF IX:86.

⁶³ *Ibid.* V.4.7, CCL LXII, p. 154:, NPNF IX:86.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* VII.22.48-50, Smulders, CCL LXII, p. 286, NPNF IX:128. Gregory of Nyssa has a similar exegesis of *hand*, though the scriptural text he works from is Psalm lxxvii:10, *the right hand of the most High*. Gregory says: "...by *right hand* we understand the Power [*dunamis*] of God, which made all things,

What we have here in these two representative pro-Nicene theologians is a return to an earlier doctrine of "one power, one nature". Aside from the very significant fact of the precedent to be found in earlier trinitarian theology, there is a conscious exploitation of the technical philosophical understanding of the connatural union that exists between nature (or substance) and power. An explicit invoking of the technical sense of power may be found not only in Phoebadius and Hilary, but in Ambrose as well. Phoebadius says "There... signified by means of the word substance, or power, or divinity."⁶⁵ and "That power, which is in need of no external aid, is said to be substance, just as we said above, that power is whatever it owes to itself."⁶⁶ Hilary says: "... since power is the very reality of the nature....".⁶⁷ Ambrose says: "What is power, but the perfection of nature?"⁶⁸ The mention of Ambrose allows me to turn to the 380's and the articulation of the pro-Nicene doctrine of "one power, one nature" by Gregory of Nyssa and his engagement with what he understands to be the Philonic doctrine of "Power".

which is the Lord...." GNO II:143, NPNF V:185. Or again at GNO II:170, NPNF V:194, Gregory interprets Is. lxvi.2, *My hand made all things*, as "... meaning by *hand*... the Power [*dunamis*] of the Only-Begotten."

⁶⁵ "Ibi enim per substantiae uocabulum aut *uirtutem* aut diuinitatem significari." Phoebadius, *Contra Arrianos* VIII.1, CCL 64.31.5.

⁶⁶ "Quae quidem *uirtus*, quia nullius extraneae opis indiget, dicta substantia est, ut supra diximus: quidquid illud est sibi debens." *Ibid.*, VIII.3, CCL 64.31.10-13.

⁶⁷ "... cum *uirtus* naturae res esset...." Hilary, *de trin.* IX.52.10-14.

⁶⁸ "Quid est enim *uirtus* nisi perfecta natura?" Ambrose, *de Fide* I.5.39, CSCL 78.17.

PART III GREGORY OF NYSSA AGAINST PHILO⁶⁹

After the Council of Constantinople, 381, the Emperor Theodosius issued a proclamation⁷⁰ from the Roman vicariate of Thessalonica (where he had encamped), normalizing the council's decisions: "We command that all churches shall immediately be surrendered to those bishops who confess that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are of one majesty and power,⁷¹ of the same glory, and of one splendor; to those bishops... who affirm the concept of the Trinity by the assertion of three Persons and the unity of the Divinity...." Neither *substantia* nor the Greek *ousia* are given as required norms; "one majesty and power... [and] three Persons" are.⁷²

(Part Three will constitute my oral presentation. See Appendix 3 for the relevant passage from Gregory.)

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⁶⁹ Appendix 3 contains relevant material from Gregory.

⁷⁰ Theodosian Code, July 30, 381

⁷¹ "qui unius maiestatis adque **virtutis** Patrem, et Filium et Spiritum sanctum confitentur".

⁷² If this fact should seem strange, I discuss it in "The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon," *Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, Studies in Christian Origins, vol. I, L. Ayres and G. Jones eds., (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), 47-67.