

The Son of Man and the Ancient of Days

Observations on the

Early Christian Reception of Daniel 7

Bogdan G. Bucur
Duquesne University, Pittsburgh

Abstract: The divergence between the two textual variants of Dan 7:13 (“Old Greek” and “Theodotion”) and their distinct ways of understanding the relationship between Daniel’s “Ancient of Days” and “Son of Man” is insufficiently studied by scholars of the Book of Daniel, and is neglected by translators of the LXX. This article offers a critical examination of the status quaestionis and a discussion of the exegetical, doctrinal, hymnographic, and iconographic productions illustrating the rich reception history of Daniel 7 in Late Antique and Medieval, especially Byzantine, Christianity. While one exegetical strand distinguishes between the Son of Man (identified as God the Son) and the Ancient of Days (identified as God the Father), an equally, if not more widespread and influential, interpretation views Jesus Christ as both “Son of Man” and “Ancient of Days.” The article argues against the thesis of a direct correlation between the two textual variants of Dan 7:13 and the two strands of its reception history.

Introduction

The Christian reception history of Daniel 7:13 is complicated by the existence of two authoritative Greek variants of this verse. The pages to follow review the state of scholarship and argue that this textual divergence actually had a minimal impact on the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Dan 7:13. This article is also concerned with the best ways to describe the multi-layered reception history of Greek Daniel 7, its diverse modes of symbolisation and strategies of appropriating the sacred Scriptures of Israel as Christian Bible. Expressed in a condensed form, which will be explained below, my thesis is that, in the exegesis of this text, Christological polymorphism gave way, gradually and not without some confusion, to Trinitarian symbolism.

PHRONEMA, VOL. 32(1), 2017, 1-27

The Greek Texts of Daniel 7:13

There is a notable difference between two extant Greek versions of Dan 7:13. While Theodotion, faithful to the Aramaic text, speaks of “one like a son of man” being presented to the Ancient of Days (ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενος ἦν καὶ ἕως τοῦ παλαιοῦ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐφθασεν), the so-called Old Greek (hereafter OG) depicts “one like a son of man” traveling, in godlike fashion, “upon” the clouds of heaven (Ps 103/104:1; Isa 19:1), and approaching “like the Ancient of Days” (ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἤρχετο καὶ ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν παρῆν). The text is somewhat ambiguous, since it is not immediately clear whether the one approaching is *compared to* or *identified with* the Ancient of Days; whether “Son of Man” and “Ancient of Days” should be taken as symbolic characters, as real heavenly entities, or as two symbolic representations of a single heavenly entity. This ambiguity led to debates among exegetes.¹

The OG version, ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, is witnessed in two extant Greek manuscripts: the incomplete Chester Beatty papyrus codex 967 (ἤρχετο ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου καὶ ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶ(ν) παρῆν καὶ οἱ παρεστικότες προσήγαγον αὐτῷ), which predates Origen, and the 9th-11th century Codex Chisianus MS 88 (ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἤρχετο, καὶ ὡς

1 For identification of the two figures: James A. Montgomery, ‘Anent Dr. Rendel Harris’ Testimonies’ *Expositor* 22 (1921) 214-219, at 215; John J. Collins, *Daniel* (Hermeneia 40; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993) 311; Pierre-Marie Bogaert, ‘Relecture et refonte historicisante du Livre de Daniel attestées par la première version grecque (Papyrus 967)’ in *Etudes sur le judaïsme hellénistique. Congrès de Strasbourg, 1983* (ed. R. Kuntzmann and J. Schlosser; Paris: Cerf, 1984) 197-224, at 206; Johan Lust, ‘Dan 7,13 and the Septuagint’ in *Messianism and the Septuagint: Collected Essays by J. Lust* (ed. K. Hauspie; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004) 1-8, at 4; 7. For the similarity between the two figures: Seyoon Kim, *The Son of Man as the Son of God* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983) 24; Martin Hengel, ‘“Setze dich zu meiner Rechten!”: Die Intronisation Christi zur Rechten Gottes und Psalm 110!’ in *Studien zur Christologie: Kleine Schriften IV* (ed. Claus-Jürgen Thornton; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 281-366, at 159, 332; 160n.139; Benjamin E. Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 37; idem, ‘The “One Like a Son of Man” According to the Old Greek of Daniel 7,13-14’ *Bib* 89 (2008) 70-80.

παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν παρῆν, καὶ οἱ παρεστηκότες παρῆσαν αὐτῷ).² It is not clear whether the phrase “as the Ancient of Days” came about by mistake – “ἔως was changed into ὡς, with the resulting change of the following genitive to the nominative,”³ aided perhaps by the monophthongal pronunciation of αἰ and, therefore, the homophony of καὶ ὡς and καὶ ἔως⁴ – or whether this is, indeed, what the writer intended. In the latter case, it becomes important to consider the theological *Tendenz* of Dan 7:13 (OG), including the hypothesis of Christian editorial intervention.⁵

- 2 More information in Alfred Rahlfs and Detlef Fraenkel, *Verzeichnis der griechischen Handschriften des Alten Testaments, vol. 1: Die Überlieferung bis zum VIII. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004) 98-103; Alexander A. Di Lella, ‘The Textual History of Septuagint-Daniel and Theodotion-Daniel’ in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (2 vols; ed. John J. Collins, Peter W. Flint, Cameron VanEpp; Leiden; Brill, 2001) 2:586-607; Siegfried Kreuzer, ‘Papyrus 967’ in *Die Septuaginta: Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D) Wuppertal 20.-23. Juli 2006* (ed. Martin Karrer and Wolfgang Kraus; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 64-82, esp. 64, 76-78 (on Daniel 7).
- 3 Montgomery, ‘Anent Dr. Rendel Harris’ 216. After being reprised in Montgomery’s *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1927) 304, the conjecture of a “mechanical error followed by hypercorrection” became widely accepted in scholarship. Collins, *Daniel*, 311; Sharon Pace, ‘The Stratigraphy of the Text of Daniel and the Question of Theological *Tendenz* in the Old Greek’ *BIOSCS* 17 (1984) 15-35, at 30 (= Sharon Pace Jeansonne, *The Old Greek Translation of Daniel 7-12* [Washington, DC: CBA, 1988] 98); David E. Aune, *Revelation* (3 vols; WBC 52A; Dallas: Word, 1998) 1: 90-91. The hypothesis of a scribal error underlies the choice of “correcting” ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν back to supposed original ἔως παλαιοῦ ἡμερῶν in the critical edition (Ziegler, *Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco*, 170) and is maintained in Munnich’s second edition of 1999 (81, 338, 340).
- 4 For evidence that αἰ was pronounced as ε long before the Christian era, see Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Development of Greek and the New Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck) 374.
- 5 Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter* (Berlin: Reuther&Reichard, 1903) 250 n. 4 (Dan 7:13 OG as the result of pre-Christian apocalyptic views). In his *Kyrios Christos*, Bousset finds that the translation ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου is evidence of a theological process, namely the transformation of the Son of Man as a symbolic representation of Israel into the figure of the pre-existent Messiah (Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* [tr. John E. Steely; Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1970] 44); he does note, however, that “the wording of the LXX could of course rest upon a simple scribal error” (*Kyrios*

At any rate, as Adela Yarbro Collins notes, even if the OG reading of Dan 7:3 originated as a scribal error, “it is likely that, once it was in circulation, theological meanings were attached to it.”⁶

We know that the language of Rev 1:13-14, where the exalted Jesus is called “son of man” but is depicted in terms that correspond to the Ancient of Days of Dan 7:9 (“white hair”),⁷ was shaped by Dan 7:13 OG, while other allusions to Daniel 7 – most notably in the Gospels – presuppose the clear distinction between the two characters found in the Aramaic text and Theodotion.⁸ We also know that Origen thought

Christos, 44n. 34); Montgomery, ‘Anent Dr. Harris’ 215: “the error precedes the day of the Christian Church and is of Judaistic origin ... this error was a proof text for the early Christians”; F. F. Bruce, ‘The Oldest Greek Version of Daniel’ *OTS* 20 (1977) 22-40; for Christian influence, see 26. John E. Goldingay (*Daniel* [WBC 30; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989] 145n. 13c) speaks of “OG midrash, perhaps subsequent to the main translation” designed to suggest that the human figure is divine. Similarly, T.J. Meadowcroft, *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel: A Literary Comparison* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995) “partly through translation choices and partly through working with a variant *Vorlage*, the LXX does exhibit some tendencies ... the son of man is an inherently divine figure” (244); “the son of man in the LXX seems to bear the mark of a divine figure in a way that the MT son of man does not” (229). See also Loren Stuckenbruck, “‘One like a Son of Man as the Ancient of Days’ in the Old Greek Recension of Daniel 7,13: Scribal Error or Theological Translation?” *ZNW* 86 (1995) 268-76, who draws attention to the fact that “παρῆν [in ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν παρῆν] cannot be explained as a textual corruption” and that “it is difficult to conceive of the change from παλαιοῦ to παλαιός apart from any theological intentionality (272) and Stuckenbruck suggests that the translation itself betrays “a monotheizing tendency” inasmuch as “the humanlike figure, though not necessarily the same being as God, is nevertheless made functionally identical to God as God’s heavenly representative in judgment” (275).

6 Adela Yarbro Collins, ‘The Influence of Daniel on the New Testament’ essay in John J. Collins, *Daniel*, 93-123, at 103.

7 Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 4.20.11 (SC 100:664) “He [John the Divine] sets forth something of the glory [which He received] from the Father, as [where He makes mention of] the head.”

8 See August Bludau, ‘Die Apokalypse und Theodotions Danielübersetzung’ *TQ* 79 (1897)1-26, (7-8 for the influence of OG at Dan 7:13); Adela Yarbro Collins, ‘The “Son of Man” Tradition and the Book of Revelation’ in *The Messiah: Developments in the Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 536-68; Kreuzer, ‘Papyrus 967’ p.

it necessary to emend the OG toward the MT, which is why Dan 7:13 in the so-called Syro-Hexapla – a Syriac translation of the fifth column of Origen’s Hexapla undertaken by Paul of Tella in the early seventh century – conforms to the MT.

Most scholars view ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν as “possibly the earliest extant interpretation of the Aramaic text of Daniel 7,”⁹ and Theodotion as a revision of the Greek, intended to correct it towards the Aramaic text by “standardizing roots, more closely mirroring syntax and grammatical forms, employing transliteration, and eliminating paraphrases.”¹⁰ Kreuzer argues that this interpretive alteration proposed by the OG cannot be ascribed to Christians, since they preferred the clear distinction between Son of Man and Ancient of Days (as in the Gospels!).¹¹ It would, then, more likely have originated with pre- or non-Christian Jewish exegetes who sought to undermine the dangerous binitarian (“Two Power”) theology suggested in the MT by merging of the two Ancient of Days and Son of Man.¹² (As an interesting aside, Boyarin sees this “monotheizing”

78 and 78n. 25; Darrell L. Bock, ‘The Use of Daniel 7 in Jesus’ Trial, With Implications For His Self-Understanding’ in *Who is This Son of Man?: The Latest Scholarship on a Puzzling Expression of the Historical Jesus* (ed. Larry Hurtado and Paul L. Owen; London: T&T Clark, 2011) 78-100. Mathias Delcor (‘Les sources du chapitre 7 de Daniel’ *VT* 18 [1968] 290-312, at 304) described the inverse influence, that is, from Revelation to Dan 7:13 (OG).

9 Reynolds, The “One Like a Son of Man” 71.

10 Pace, ‘The Stratigraphy of the Text of Daniel’ 26-7.

11 Kreuzer, ‘Papyrus 967’ in *Die Septuaginta* 78.

12 This hypothesis is among those noted in passing by Lust, ‘Dan 7,13 and the Septuagint’ 5: “the Septuagint may present us with a correction of the MT and Theodotion, a correction that may have had a theological intention. The translator could not accept the messianic character of the ‘one like a son of man’ in the MT and Theodotion. He therefore transformed the One ‘like a son of man’ into the ‘Ancient of Days.’” It was developed by Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977) 202: “The LXX apparently translated “the son of man” vision in such a way as to make one suspicious that very early “two powers” traditions were being challenged. One version says that the “son of man” approached as the Ancient of Days, instead of *until* the Ancient of Days, coalescing the two divine figures by changing *heos* to *hos*. Such a change can be explained as a scribal error, but since the text is well-attested, it may also have been a

tendency already at work in the inner-biblical exegesis of Dan 7:15-28, where the angelic *pesher* explains the Son of Man as an allegorical image for the people of Israel.¹³

But what if ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν is not derivative and secondary? Meadowcroft argued that “the reading ‘one like the ancient of days’ must be allowed to stand in the LXX,” because in this instance as well as in general, the OG very likely “provides a literal translation of the material in its *Vorlage*.”¹⁴ In a thorough but rather more speculative study, Johan Lust proposed the thesis that the current MT is, in fact, an “early Targum” of the original Hebrew text of Daniel, and that the OG translates, accurately, that original Hebrew text, now lost, in which the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man were, indeed, “one and the same symbol.”¹⁵ In this case, the distinction between the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man would have been *introduced* by the current MT – the Aramaic that supplanted the original Hebrew – in order to give voice to the apocalyptic-messianist agenda of that “early Targum.” The weakness of Lust’s intriguing proposal is, clearly, the absence of a Hebrew text to verify it.

purposeful change to defend against heretics.” Similarly, Stuckenbruck, “‘One like a Son of Man as the Ancient of Days’” 275: “It is thus tempting to attribute a monotheizing tendency to the translator, who may have seen a theological difficulty in the presence of two heavenly figures in a passage that mentions a plurality of thrones.”

13 See Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012) 43, 46.

14 Meadowcroft, *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel* 223, 230, 26. Pace (‘Stratigraphy of the Text of Daniel and the Question of Theological Tendency’ 28) also notes that the OG “may also be simply a faithful translation of a variant *Vorlage*.”

15 Lust, ‘Dan 7,13 and the Septuagint’ 6: “It has been noticed that the translation of the Septuagint is freer and that its style is more paraphrastic in the Aramaic sections of Daniel than in the Hebrew sections. The explanation of this phenomenon may be that the Septuagint did not try to render our actual MT but an older form thereof, written completely in Hebrew. The divergences between the Aramaic MT and the Septuagint would then be due to the fact that the Aramaic MT is itself an early Targum presenting a more or less free translation of the Hebrew.”

Reception History of Dan 7:13

In what follows, I intend to move away from the text itself, its possible history and its logic, and enquire about how Dan 7:13 has fared in the early Christian history of interpretation, in exegetical, homiletical, polemical, hymnographic, and iconographic materials. Collins's *Hermeneia* commentary offers the following summary: "the traditional interpretation of 'the one like a human being' in the first millennium overwhelmingly favor the understanding of this figure as an individual, not as a collective symbol"; "Early Christian interpreters assume the identity of the 'son of man' with Christ ..." Similarly, Kathleen Corrigan states that "[f]or most Christian commentators, the Ancient of Days is God the Father and the Son of Man is Christ."¹⁶ As we shall see, the picture is considerably more complicated, because the major exegetical strand of the Christian reception of Daniel 7 seems to move in a very different direction.

The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man: Father and Son

Similar to the Gospels, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyon, and Hippolytus of Rome distinguish the two figures and identify the Son of Man as the Logos, and the Ancient of Days as the Father. Some decades later, Eusebius of Caesarea also identifies Daniel's Son of Man with the Logos, God's First-Born, Wisdom, and Divine Offspring, "called 'the Son of man' because of his final appearance in the flesh," and foreseen as end-time universal judge. Cyril of Jerusalem, too, in his efforts to equip his catechumens against the Marcellan notion of Christ and his kingdom eventually ceasing to exist and being (re)absorbed into God, points to the universal, indestructible, and everlasting kingship of the Son of Man in Dan 7:14, explicitly identifying Christ as Daniel's Son of

16 Collins, *Daniel* 308; 307; Kathleen Corrigan, 'Visualizing the Divine: An Early Byzantine Icon of the "Ancient of Days" at Mt. Sinai' in *Approaching the Holy Mountain: Art and Liturgy at St. Catherines Monastery in the Sinai* (ed. Robert S. Nelson and Sharon E. J. Gerstel; Turnhout: Brepols, 2010) 285-303, at 293-94. See also Boyarin, *Jewish Gospels*, 40: '[t]hose two divinities would end up being the first two persons of the Trinity'.

Man and, implicitly, the Father as the Ancient of Days.¹⁷ This theology, encompassed by the widely shared view of Old Testament theophanies as “christophanies,” could on occasion be articulated in statements of a certain hymnic resonance.¹⁸

It is noteworthy that several of the writers mentioned so far – Justin, Hippolytus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Eusebius – represent a manner of thinking the Christian faith which emphasises the full hypostatic distinction of the divine *Logos* from the Father. Whether we are talking of Justin’s invocation of the “Logos,” “power,” “second God,” and “another God and Lord,” or of Hippolytus’ anti-monarchianism, or of Cyril’s and Eusebius’ rejection of Marcellan *mihypostatic* theology (which earned both Hippolytus and Eusebius the accusation of ditheism), the exegesis of Daniel 7:13 discussed so far fits the mold of a *dyohypostatic* theology, forged in the heat of polemics against Jewish or Christian “modalism.”¹⁹

17 Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 31.1-4; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.20.11; Hippolytus, *Noet.* 4.13; *Comm. Dan.* 4.11; Eusebius, *Church History* 1.2.24-26; *Prophetic eclogs* 1.44; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 15.27, 30. See also *Apostolic Constitutions* 5.20.5-7, 11.

18 Consider the following resurrectional hymn ascribed to Anatolius of Constantinople (+ 458): “This is the stone which God placed in Sion, the God who made water spring from the rock in the wilderness, and poured immortality for us from his side; this is the stone which was hewn from the Virgin mountain, with the will of man, the Son of man who is coming on the clouds of heaven before the Ancient of days, as Daniel said, and his Kingdom is eternal” (Sunday Matins in Tone 7, sticheron at Praises). Note the influence of both OG and Theodotion: ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ... πρὸς τὸν Παλαιὸν τῶν ἡμερῶν. I will be using the Greek text printed in the ecclesiastical editions of the *Oktoēchos*, *Triodion*, *Pentēkostarion*, and the twelve *Menaia*, and the English translation by Ephrem Lash, used in the Greek Archdiocese of Great Britain, available online at www.anastasis.org.uk.

19 Hippolytus, *Noet.* 10-11, 14 (Butterworth 68-71, 74-77); Eusebius, *Eccl. theol.* 2.7, 19 (GCS 14:104-106, 123-127). For the terms *mihypostatic* and *dyohypostatic*, see Joseph T. Lienhard, ‘The “Arian” Controversy: Some Categories Reconsidered’ *TS* 48 (1987) 415-3-437. See also the discussion in Boyarin, ‘Justin Martyr Invents Judaism’ *CH* 70 (2001) 427-61, and, in an extended format, in *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Bogdan G. Bucur, ‘“Early Christian Binitarianism”: From Religious Phenomenon to Polemical Insult to Scholarly Concept’ *MT* 27 (2011) 102-20.

Aside from its polemical utility, however, this line of exegesis becomes part of Christian theological tradition, as affirmed by significant writers such as Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Jerome, and John of Damascus.²⁰

Christ as the Ancient of Days

Just as the distinction between Son of Man (Christ) and Ancient of Days (Father) proved useful in polemics against Judaism and various types of “Modalism,” so also did the identification of Christ as the Ancient of Days play a role in anti-Arian and anti-Eunomian polemics. One strategy in this respect was to emphasise the adaptive character of all visionary reports, and thereby to foreclose any inferences from visionary imagery to the reality of God in godself. This approach to biblical visionary reports is especially characteristic of John Chrysostom, who distinguishes between God as οὐσία, which, indeed, “no one has ever seen,” and God in his συγκατάβασις, condescension, expressed in the rich and manifold theophanic visions of the prophets. In conclusion, Daniel 7, just like the visions of Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, is as an instance of divine συγκατάβασις: “all these were instances of (His) condescension, not the vision of the Essence itself unveiled.”²¹

Sometimes, however, Daniel 7 is invoked as part of a positive statement about the divinity of the Son. The argument, as it is expressed by Athanasius and John Chrysostom, is that the Son must be fully divine because Daniel’s vision presents him seated on the divine throne, attended by thousands upon thousands of angelic ministers (like Daniel’s Ancient of Days).²² The most significant and numerous instances of Christ being

20 Cyril of Alexandria, *Ep. 55.21, 23 (On the Creed); Fragmenta in Daniele* (PG 70, 1461B); John Chrysostom, *In Daniele* (PG 56:231-233); Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel 7* (CCSL 75:845-846); John of Damascus, *On Divine Images*, 3.26 (PTS 17:132).

21 John Chrysostom, *Homily 15 on the Gospel of John* (PG 59:98).

22 Athanasius, *CA 1.38 (Athanasius Werke I.1, 2:148)*, in a passage that invokes Daniel 7 alongside Genesis 18 and Exodus 3; John Chrysostom, *On the Equality of the Father and the Son 11*.

identified as the Ancient of Days occur, however, in liturgical texts. A homily on the Meeting of the Lord ascribed to Cyril of Jerusalem, and another one circulating under the name of Methodius of Olympus,²³ delight in the paradoxical identification of the enthroned and omnipotent Ancient of Days with the fragile baby in the arms of Symeon. (As a sidenote, the visual counterpart – the festal icon – bears, quite literally, the same message: “This child has created Heaven and Earth.”)²⁴

Although the interpretive framework of the discourse is provided, not surprisingly, by Isaiah 6,²⁵ Ps-Methodius also invokes the Sinai theophanies (the burning bush and the giving of the Law) and Daniel 7. Thus, the aged Symeon receives in his arms, as an infant, the Ancient of days, τὸν ἐν νηπιότητι παλαιὸν τῶν ἡμερῶν, “the preeternal one as an infant,” τὸν ἐν νηπιότητι προαιώνιον, who is none other than the

23 Ps-Cyril of Jerusalem, *Homilia in occursum domini* (PG 33:1183-1204); Ps-Methodius of Olympus, *De Simeone et Anna* (PG 18:348-381). Ps-Cyril’s homily was probably written around 450 (Michel Aubineau, *Les homélies festales d’Hésychius de Jérusalem* [2 vols; Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1978] 1:4n. 2). See the translation and thorough discussion of the text by Ellen Alex, ‘Die Homilie *In occursum domini* des Ps-Cyrrill von Jerusalem: Übersetzung und Kommentar’ (MA thesis, University of Regensburg, 2012). For the authorship of *De Simeone et Anna* (PG 18: 348-381) see the thorough stylistic and doctrinal analysis of Vinzenz Buchheit, *Studien zu Methodios von Olympos* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958) 133-40. This homily is a deliberate pseudepigraphon (since the homily opens with a first-person reference to Methodius’ *Symposium*: “Having some time ago, in my Symposium on Chastity, as briefly as possible, done enough to lay the foundations, as it were, for a discourse on virginity, today...”), composed after 325 (given its rather technical christological language) but before the middle of the seventh century, since John of Damascus quotes the homily, presumed to be by “the holy Methodius, the bishop of Patras and martyr” in his *Tome Against the Jacobites* (PG 94:1489 B = PG 18:360 C).

24 Dionysius of Fournna, *The Painter’s Manual of Dionysius of Fournna: An English Translation With Commentary of Cod. gr. 708 in the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library, Leningrad* (Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood, 1989 [1974]) 32.

25 The connection between the Christian feast of the Meeting of the Lord and Isaiah’s vision is based on at least three elements: both encounters occur in the Temple; both constitute a ‘meeting of the Lord’; Christian writers typically identify Isaiah’s ‘Lord’ with the ‘Lord Jesus’ of Christian worship. On the latter, see the material discussed in Bucur, ‘I Saw The Lord: Observations on the Early Christian Reception of Isaiah 6’ *Pro Ecclesia* 23 (2014) 309-30.

God of Abraham, the Holy One of Israel, the Mystagogue of Moses and Lawgiver.²⁶ (Ps?)Cyril, very similarly, exhorts his readers to “sing and chant and glorify the infant-and-God, both forty-day old and pre-eternal, both a little child and Ancient of Days (παιδίον μικρὸν καὶ παλαιὸν τῶν ἡμερῶν), both a baby at the breast and the maker of the ages.” For this homilist,

It is this child who, of old, parted the sea for Israel, and drowned Pharaoh, and gave the Law to the Israelites, and rained down manna, and led the Hebrew nation by a pillar of fire, and rent the rock asunder, and kept the bush unconsumed in a flame of dewy fire.

Consequently, he calls on all things to glorify “the God-child, forty days old and eternal, the small child and Ancient of Days, the suckling child and maker of the ages.”²⁷ Another homily, this time one on the Nativity, ascribed erroneously to both Athanasius of Alexandria and John Chrysostom, emphasises the paradox even more:

I behold a strange mystery: in place of the sun, the Sun of Righteousness placed in the Virgin in an uncircumscribed manner ... Today God, He-Who-Is and preexists becomes what he was not; for being God, he becomes a human being without stepping out of his being God. ... The Ancient of Days is born as a child.²⁸

This straightforward christological identification of the Ancient of Days became a standard occurrence in Byzantine hymnography. Consider the following exquisite example of hymnographic theology, drawn from a stanza in Romanos the Melodist’s Second Kontakion on Theophany:

Let us all raise our eyes to God in heaven, as we cry like

26 Ps-Methodius of Olympus, *De Simeone et Anna* 8 (PG 18:365B); 6 (PG 18:360C).

27 Ps-Cyril of Jerusalem, *De occursu* 12 (PG 33:1200 AB); *De occursu* 4 (PG 33:1192A).

28 PG 28: 960A-961A = PG 56:389.

Jeremiah: The One who appeared on earth, this is our God, who also willingly lived among men (cf. Bar 3:38), and underwent no change, who showed himself in different shapes to the prophets, whom Ezekiel contemplated like the form of a man on the fiery chariot, and Daniel as a son of man and ancient of days, proclaiming the ancient and the young to be one Lord: The One who appeared and enlightened all things.²⁹

According to Romanos, then, Daniel 7 proclaims *one Lord* – specifically, the one-who-would-be-incarnate, Jesus Christ – simultaneously young and old, son of man and ancient of days: ἀνθρώπου υἱὸν καὶ παλαιὸν ἡμερῶν, τὸν ἀρχαῖον καὶ νέον ἕνα Κύριον.

Many of Romanos' own compositions, as well as some by John Damascene and Kosmas of Maiuma, and many other anonymous hymns, entered the stream of liturgical worship in the course of seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, thereby enshrining the christological exegesis of the Ancient of Days as theologically normative. The hymnography of Presentation, for instance, identifies Jesus of Nazareth, brought to the temple as a newborn baby, with the Lawgiver on Sinai and Daniel's Ancient of Days,³⁰ while Byzantine hymns of Advent and Nativity reprise the imagery and words of Ps-Methodius, Ps-Cyril of Jerusalem, Ps-Chrysostom: "a strange and wondrous mystery"; "He-Who-Is become what he was not"; "without stepping out of his nature," "the Ancient of Days becomes an infant for my sake."³¹

29 Romanos, *Second Kontakion on Theophany* 15 (SC 110:288).

30 Great Vespers of the Presentation, Sticheron at the Lity: "The Ancient of Days, who also gave the Law to Moses on Sinai, today appears as a babe. And according to the Law, as Maker of the Law, fulfilling the Law, he is brought to the temple and given to the Elder. The righteous Symeon, having received him and seen the accomplishment of the decrees completed, cried out with joy, 'My eyes have seen the Mystery hidden from eternity, made manifest in these last times: a light that dispels the dark folly of the unbelieving nations and the glory of the newly chosen Israel. Therefore, release your servant from the bonds of this flesh for the wondrous life that is ageless and unceasing, O you who grant the world your great mercy.'"

31 "I behold a strange and wondrous mystery" (Eirmos of Ode 9 in the Nativity

An important Trinitarian turn in the interpretation of Daniel 7 occurs in the hymns of the Sunday Midnight Office. The author of these hymns, the ninth-century writer Metrophanes of Smyrna refashions Daniel into a trinitarian theologian *par excellence*: “Mystic initiate of the triple light of the one Lordship, Daniel saw Christ as judge going towards the Father and the Spirit who revealed the vision.”³²

Christological Polymorphism

The OG reading of Dan 7:13, especially if understood in the sense of an identification between the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days, raises the common-sense objection that the character who comes upon the clouds subsequently receives authority from the Ancient of Days; in context, then, the absolute identification of Son of Man and the Ancient of Days is incoherent. Similarly, when the texts discussed in the previous section interpret the Ancient of Days as Christ, are they not thereby introducing the ineptitude and incoherence of either denying the christological interpretation of the Son of Man, or affirming that Christ is, somehow, both the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man?

It is important to note that on both points the hymnographic and iconographic compositions of Late Antique and Medieval Christianity have roots in much earlier traditions. Vision-reports abound in early Christian apocalyptic writings and their theological message is almost always conveyed through dream-like, fluid, symbolic imagery. The impression of literary roughness and logical inconsistency is often the

Canon); “He-Who-Is becomes what he was not, and the Fashioner of all creation is fashioned...” (hymn sung at the Lity on the Sunday before Nativity); “And for our sake He-Who-Is become what he was not; and without stepping outside his nature, he mingles with our clay” (Kathisma Hymn of Nativity); Matins of Meeting of the Lord, Kathisma: “The Ancient of Days becomes an infant for my sake. God, who is most pure, shares in purifications that he may confirm my flesh, which he took from a Virgin. And Symeon, initiated into the mystery, acknowledged him as God who had appeared in flesh and greeted him as Life. As an old man with joy he cried, ‘Release me, for I have seen you, the Life of all.’”

32 Sunday Midnight Service, Tone 5, Ode 4, troparion 1.

result of applying to such texts a reading lens that automatically ignores their claim to religious, visionary experience.³³

The identification of Christ as the Ancient of Days, and, implicitly, the simultaneous symbolisation as *both* Son of Man and Ancient of Days, and the further paradox of the infant both forty days old and eternal – recall Romanos’s phrase ἀνθρώπου ὑιὸν καὶ παλαιὸν ἡμερῶν, τὸν ἀρχαῖον καὶ νέον ἕνα Κύριον – is also nothing new in early Christian literature. It falls, rather, within the category of “polymorphic Christology,” well known in scholarship on Christian Origins³⁴ as a good descriptor of what one encounters, for example, in the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*.³⁵ Perhaps the most striking anticipation of the “aged infant” or “infant God” theme of the hymns and icons is the following text in the *Acts of Peter*:

33 This point has been made repeatedly by Michael E. Stone, who is one of the leading experts in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature. See Stone, ‘A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions’ *HTR* 96 (2003) 167-180, and *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011) ch. 4: ‘Visions and Pseudepigraphy’ (90-121).

34 See Gedaliahu Guy Stroumsa, ‘Polymorphie divine et transformations d’un mythe: l’Apocryphon de Jean et ses sources’ *VC* 35 (1981) 412-34; Paul Foster, ‘Polymorphic Christology: Its Origins and Development in Early Christianity’ *JTS* 58 (2007) 66-99; Hugues Garcia, ‘La polymorphie du Christ: Remarques sur quelques définitions et sur de multiples enjeux’ *Apocrypha* 10 (1999) 16-55; idem, ‘L’enfant vieillard, l’enfant aux cheveux blancs et le Christ polymorphe’ *Revue d’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 80 (2000) 479-501.

35 In the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the Son appears in a series of visions under the mysterious μορφή of the ‘Church’ first as an old woman, later as a young maiden who retains, however, the white hair of her former appearance. See the discussion in Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses* (Leiden: Brill, 2009) 120-22. In the apocryphal Acts, Christ’s appearance is adapted to the spiritual abilities and needs of his interlocutors: *Acts of John* 73; 76; 87-90; *Acts of Peter* 5; 20; *Acts of Thomas* 27; 48; 153; *Acts of Peter and Andrew* 2, 16; *Martyrdom of Matthew* 1; 13; 24; 26. Justin describes Christ as an old man in the putative first-person account of his conversion from Platonism to Christianity (*Dial.* 8.1). See Andrew Hofer, ‘The Old Man as Christ in Justin Dialogue with Trypho’ *VC* 57 (2003) 1-21. Two of the visions in the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* describe Jesus as white-haired but with a youthful face (4.8; 12.1-3).

... that you may love him, this Great and Small One [lit. “smallest one,” *minimum*] ... this Young Man and Old Man, appearing in time, yet utterly invisible in eternity; whom a human hand has not grasped, yet is held by his servants, whom flesh has not seen and now sees; ... who was before the world and is now perceived in time ... to him be praise in all eternity. Amen.³⁶

The connection between the writings of the second and third centuries, often characterised by doubtful orthodoxy, and the hymnographic productions of later centuries should not surprise. Apocryphal texts featuring a polymorphic Christ retained their popularity and polymorphic Christology and remained a real theological option – albeit a heretical one – in the ninth century. As Kraehling-McKay puts it, “while Photius mentions these texts in order to condemn them as erroneous, his obvious knowledge of them suggests that copies of apocryphal literature were available for Byzantine theologians to study as late as the ninth century.”³⁷

The Theological Value of Exegetical Ambiguity

The history of interpretation also knows another way of using Daniel 7. A number of early Christian writers are not interested in determining which Trinitarian hypostasis is represented by “the Ancient of Days,” and prefer to see in this phrase a reference to divine eternity. Sometimes the same writer can show a certain ambiguity. Theodoret of Cyrus, for instance, can write that “the phrase ‘Ancient of Days’ conveys God’s eternity,” the white hair and resplendent clothing his “innocence and holiness, righteousness, providence, care, judgment,” and the river of fire and the myriads of angels God’s “power.”³⁸ Yet, Theodoret also writes,

36 *Acts of Peter* 20, English translation in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, ed. J. K. Elliott (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993) 414.

37 Kraehling McKay, ‘Christ’s Polymorphism in Jerusalem, Taphou 14’ 185. See Photius, *Cod.* 114 (Photius, *Bibliothèque* [ed. and trans. René Henry; 9 vols. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1960] 2:85). See also Éric Junod, ‘Actes apocryphes et hérésie: le jugement de Photius’ in *Les Actes apocryphes des apôtres. Christianisme et monde païen* (ed. François Bovon, Michel Van Esbroeck, et al.; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1981) 11-24.

38 Theodoret of Cyrus, *Comm Dan.* 7 (Greek text and English translation in Robert

immediately after, that a Christological application of the enthroned Ancient of Days “would not be out of place.”³⁹

Perhaps the most relevant example is found in the annotated Ps.-Areopagitic Corpus. Ps.-Dionysius, an anonymous fifth-century monk, possibly a bishop, well versed in Neoplatonic philosophy but also in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature, also offers an interpretation of the “Ancient of Days” as a general reference to God’s being eternal and the origin of all time and eternity.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, his mid-sixth century scholiast, the learned bishop John of Scythopolis, chooses to steer Dionysius’ theological reflection towards a Christological interpretation of the Ancient of Days.⁴¹

C. Hill, *Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentary on Daniel* [Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2006] 184, 186, 190).

- 39 Theodoret of Cyrus, *Comm Dan.* 7, p. 188: “if ... you think there is a reference to the Lord’s promise to the apostles, ‘Twelve thrones will be placed, and you will take your seat and judge the twelve tribes of Israel’ [cf. Mat 19:28] it would not be out of place, the promise of the reality being reliable.”
- 40 Ps-Dionysius the Areopagite, *DN* 10.2-3 (PTS 33:215-217; Colm-Luibheid 120): “They call him Ancient of Days because he is the eternity and time of everything, and because he precedes days and eternity and time. ... The two names, ‘Ancient’ and ‘New’ reveal that he goes forth from the beginning of the world through all things until the very end. Each name, as my divine sacred-initiator says, conveys the notion of the primacy of God’s being, Ancient signifying that he is first from the point of view of time, Young signifying that he is primary in the context of number, since the first one and those near it have primacy over the more advanced numbers. ... One can take eternity and time to be predicates of God since, being the Ancient of Days, he is the cause of all time and eternity. Yet he is before time and beyond time and is the source of the variety of time and of seasons. Or, again, he precedes the eternal ages, for he is there before eternity and above eternity, and ‘his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.’ Amen.”
- 41 Scholion to *DN* 10 (PG 4:385A; English translation in Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998] 237): “‘Omnipotent’ and ‘Ancient of Days’: God appeared to Daniel as a hoary old man with a head white like wool, for which reason he is called the Ancient of Days. He is younger than a hoary old man when as a man he appeared to Abraham with the angels (Gen 18:1-8) and as a youth (cf. Mark 16:5).” Since Daniel 7 is here associated with a *christological* reading of Genesis 18 (a strand of interpretation current for some

*Visual Exegesis of the Ancient of Days*⁴²

Byzantine iconography offers a very interesting visual counterpart to the hymnographic exegesis discussed above. A well-known icon from Saint Catherine's monastery on Sinai, dated to the seventh or eighth century, depicts Christ with white hair and beard, seated over the rainbow and resting his feet upon a translucent rounded structure, holding the Gospel with his left hand and blessing with his right. Kurt Weitzmann's describes it as follows:

In so far as the pose is concerned, the Christ is the type of the

five centuries before being gradually replaced by a trinitarian one), one may assume that the scholiast reads Daniel 7 in the same way – that is, identifying the Ancient of Days with Christ. As a matter of fact, the next scholion (not by John of Scythopolis, possibly by Maximus) comments Ps-Dionysius' phrase "ancient and new" by simply quoting Heb 13:8 ("Jesus Christ yesterday and today and to the ages" and adding "for "today" is newer than "yesterday").

- 42 The most extensive presentation and discussion of the relevant materials is offered by Gretchen Kreehling McKay, 'Imaging the Divine: A Study of the Representations of the Ancient of Days in Byzantine Manuscripts' Ph.D. dissertation (University of Virginia, 1997) and subsequent articles 'The Eastern Christian Exegetical Tradition of Daniel's Vision of the Ancient of Days' *JECSS* 7 (1999) 139-61; 'Illustrating the Gospel of John: The Exegesis of John Chrysostom and Images of the Ancient of Days in Eleventh-Century Byzantium' *Studies in Iconography* 31 (2010) 51-68. See also George Galavaris, 'An Icon with the "Epinikios" Hymn in the Benaki Museum (pl. 11-12)' *Δελτίον Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 28 (1981) 85-96; Steven Bigham, *The Image of God the Father in Orthodox Iconography and Other Studies* (Torrance, CA: Oakwood, 1995); Wilfred Sophrony Royer, 'The Ancient of Days: Patristic and Modern Views of Daniel 7:9-14' *SVTQ* 45 (2001) 137-62; Corrigan, 'Visualizing the Divine'; François Boespflug, *La Trinité dans l'art d'Occident (1400-1460). Sept chefs-d'oeuvre de la peinture* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2000); Idem, 'La Trinité dans l'art (Ve-XXe siècle). Un panorama critique' in *Dieu Trinité d'hier à demain avec Hilaire de Poitiers. Actes du congrès-colloque du Futuroscope de poitiers (15-17 novembre 2002)* (Paris: Cerf, 2010) 271-96; Idem, *Dieu et ses images. Une histoire de l'Éternel dans l'art* (Paris: Bayard, 2008) 142-77; François Boespflug and Yolanta Załuska, 'Le dogme trinitaire et l'essor de son iconographie en Occident de l'Époque Carolingienne au IVe Concile du Latran 1215' *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 37 (1994) 181-240; Saška Bogevska, 'The Holy Trinity in the Diocese of the Archbishopric of Ohrid in the Second Half of the 13th Century' *Patrimonium* 10 (2012) 143-77.

Pantocrator. However, not in conformity with this type are the white hair and beard ... The white-haired Christ is the “Ancient of Days” (Dan vii:7 and 22). This type of Christ, however, is not in accord with the inscription + E[MMA]NOHA], which calls pictorially for a very youthful Christ. ... We are presented with three manifestations of Christ: the Ancient of Days, representing Christ from All Eternity, the Pantocrator, the Ruler of the World, and the Immanuel, the Incarnate Logos. ... Our icon can thus be understood as a conflation of three originally independent types.⁴³

I would add to this description that the rainbow and the translucent dome evoke “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord” in Ezekiel 1: “something that seemed like a human form” seated on “something like a throne,” placed on “something like a dome, shining like crystal” and borne aloft by four living creatures, with splendor all around “like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day” (Ezek 1:22, 26, 28).⁴⁴

The Christological interpretation of the Ancient of Days in the mid-11th century Stoudite Tetraevangelon is also noteworthy. The illustrator uses it first in the frontispiece for the Gospel of Matthew (BnF Gr. 74, fol. 1 r.), where the Christ figure bearing the inscription “Ancient of Days” is joined, slightly lower, by two seraphim, whose acclamation (ἄγιος ἄγιος) is also noted (cf. Isaiah 6). In the frontispiece for the Gospel of John (BnF Gr. 74, fol. 167 r.), the illustrator chose to juxtapose the biblical references and Christological titles which he had previously used for the incipit of the Synoptics and which are the same ones fused in the Sinai icon: the first medallion shows a young man and is inscribed IC XC, the second one an old man, παλαιὸ[ς] ἡμε[ρῶν], and the third one an infant, Εμμα[ν]ουή[λ].⁴⁵

43 Kurt Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Icons. Volume One: From the Sixth to the Tenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976) 41. See also the discussion in Corrigan, ‘Visualizing the Divine’ with its very useful analysis of the term ‘Emmanuel’ as encapsulating the paradoxical union of the human and divine in Christ (295-97).

44 Corrigan notes (‘Visualizing the Divine’ 286) that “[t]he central figure’s position, seated on the rainbow with his feet resting on a partial sphere, may relate to Isaiah 66. 1: ‘The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.’”

45 For a detailed study see Sirarpie Der Nersessian, ‘Recherches sur les miniatures du Parisinus graecus 74’ *JÖB* 21 (1972) 109-17. The connection with the Sinai

The depiction of Christ in a visual combination of Daniel's Ancient of Days and Ezekiel's anthropomorphic Glory also occurs in a 13th-century illumination in a Constantinopolitan Gospel manuscript held at the Cambridge University Library (Ms. Dd. 9.69, fol. 139 r.), which bears the clear inscription IC XC, ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν. Visually, the framework is that of Ezekiel 1 – Christ is identified as the humanlike appearance born aloft by the four living creatures (reinterpreted, via Rev 4:7, as four creatures, and further identified with the four Evangelists), and he bears a scroll in his left hand (cf. Ezek 3:1) – but some visual details are borrowed from Daniel 7 (Christ's beard and hair are white as snow, identifying him as the Ancient of Days).

A similar process of fusion occurred between Daniel 7 and Isaiah 6.⁴⁶ An eleventh-century "Vision of Isaiah" illumination (Codex Athos Vatopediou 760, fol 280 v.), for instance, "enriches" the biblical text by showing not two, but four seraphim (cf. the four cherubim in Ezekiel 1) and depicting Christ as "the Lord seated on a high a lofty throne" (Isa 6:1) and white-haired Ancient of Days. Similarly, in the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts,⁴⁷ Isaiah's "Lord" has white hair (BnF Gr. 1208, fol. 162r.; Bibl. Vat., Gr. 1162, fol. 119 v.).

icon is noted by Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai* 41.

- 46 The combination of these two theophanic passages occurs very early in Christian tradition. By the time of 1 Clem 34.6 ("Ten thousands of ten thousands stood by^[1] Him, and thousands of thousands ministered unto Him: and they cried aloud, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Sabaoth; all creation is^[1] full of His glory") it was already traditional and probably part of liturgical celebrations (Bludau, 'Die Apokalypse und Theodotons Danielübersetzung' 17).
- 47 The Kokkinobaphos manuscripts (Parisinus gr. 1208 and Vaticanus gr. 1162) are two almost identical manuscripts produced by the same workshop in Constantinople around 1250 and containing homilies on the life of the Theotokos by monk James from the Kokkinobaphos monastery. See *Das Marienhomiliar des Mönchs Jakobus von Kokkinobaphos: Codex vaticanus graecus 1162* (ed. Irmgard Hutter and Paul Canart; Zürich, Belser, 1991); Kallirroé Linardou, 'Reading Two Byzantine Illustrated Books: The Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts (Vaticanus graecus 1162, Parisinus graecus 1208) and Their Illustrations' (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation; University of Birmingham, 2004).

I argued earlier that the Christological interpretation of Daniel's Ancient of Days, especially when the exegetes emphasise the identity of the white-haired enthroned figure with Jesus in his human frailty, should be viewed as carrying on the venerable tradition of polymorphic Christology. The same holds true for the visual exegesis discussed so far. As a matter of fact, Gretchen Kraehling McKay has already applied the scholarly lens of polymorphic Christology to her analysis of Taphou 14, fol 106 v., which depicts the three magi, each of a different age, bringing their gift to Christ, who appears to one as a child, to the second as a mature man, and to the third as a white-haired old man. Aside from the strictly exegetical conclusions, she also remarked, more generally, on "the enigmatic concept of polymorphism and its contribution to the flowering of Byzantine manuscript illumination."⁴⁸

From Polymorphic Christology to Trinitarian Symbolism

It is quite clear that the visual exegesis of Daniel 7 was originally christological and that it interpreted both visionary characters (the Son of Man and the Ancient of the Days) as aspects of a polymorphic Christ. In the first half of the second millennium, however, the emergence of a Trinitarian iconography rooted in the two characters of Daniel 7 results in remarkable fluidity and ambiguity.⁴⁹

The vision of the protomartyr Stephen, as depicted in a 9th-century illuminated manuscript of the *Sacra Parallela* (BnF, Gr. 923, fol. 40 r.) shows Christ and the Father side by side, distinguished only by the cross-nimbus of the former and the white hair of the latter; clearly, for this illuminator, the Ancient of Days is the Father. By contrast, the 11th-century Pantokrator in the church of St. Stephen in Kastoria has a fresco of a white-haired Christ inscribed IX XC O ΠΑΛΕΟΣ (sic!) ΗΜΕΡΩΝ. Yet, a couple of centuries later (1260-

48 Gretchen Kraehling McKay, 'Christ's Polymorphism in Jerusalem, Taphou 14: An Examination of Text and Image' *Apocrypha* 14 (2003) 177-91, at 179.

49 The selection to follow cannot, of course, be exhaustive. The reader is referred to Kreaehling McKay's detailed analysis of all relevant manuscript illuminations ('Imaging the Divine' noted above).

1280), also in Kastoria, a fresco in the esonarthex of the Church of the Virgin “Koubelidike” shows Christ holding a dove in a medallion of light and himself being held in the arms of a much larger white-haired human figure – presumably the Father as “Ancient of Days”; left and right of the shoulders of the larger figure, in a clear declaration of the Trinitarian theological intention of the painting, are the words ο πατήρ, ο υἱος, και πνευμα το αγιον. Around the same time, the monastery church at Grottaferrata acquired a fresco bearing the inscription “the Holy Trinity,” which shows a white-haired figure holding a younger and smaller figure, who in turn holds in his arms a dove out of which rays of light proceed towards the apostles. Similar images can also be found in manuscript illuminations, such as the Vienna Codex (ÖNB, Suppl. Gr. 52, fol. 1v), whose “vertical Trinity” (the Father holding Christ who holds a dove: cf. John 1:18; Ps 109/110:3) bears the large inscription Η ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΙΑΣ, and explicitly identifies the Father as [π] αλαιδ[ς] ἡμερῶν.

Sometimes paintings of a chronologically later date are iconographically more conservative. Such is the case of the 14th-century Serbian Psalter in Munich (Munich Slav 4, fol. 97 v.), which is similar to the images at Koubelidike and in the Vienna codex, except for the absence of the dove. Galavaris explains this difference as pointing to an incomplete transition to the full trinitarian resignification of the older Christological theme of Christ both Ancient of Days and Emmanuel.⁵⁰ Other examples can be found in post-Byzantine Moldova, where the church of Saint John the New in Suceava, painted in 1534, and the church of the Sucevița monastery, painted in 1596, have frescoes in which Christ is depicted with white beard and hair, and inscribed IC XC, “He Who Is” and “Ancient of Days”; these representations are placed in the pronaos, distinct from the Christ Pantokrator in the nave, and are intended as Old Testament foreshadowing. Similarly, the exterior fresco of the Last Judgment on the Western wall of the monastery

50 Galavaris, ‘An Icon with the “Epinikios” Hymn in the Benaki Museum’ 90: the Munich illumination “forms another step towards the introduction of the Trinity to the theme which we are discussing.”

church of Voroneț monastery, painted in 1547, depicts Christ twice: on the top register, first, as the Ancient of Days rolling up the scroll of time (cf. Rev 6:14), then, slightly lower, as the eschatological Judge on a throne from which issues a river of fire (cf. Dan 7:10, which also refers to the Ancient of Days).

In the visual exegesis of Daniel 7, Christological polymorphism eventually gave way to Trinitarian symbolism. This transition seems be part of a more general Trinitarian turn in iconography, which has been noted and studied with respect to the iconography of the hospitality of Abraham (Genesis 18) and the vision of Isaiah (Isaiah 6).⁵¹ It was perhaps the coexistence, in the same worship space, of images of Christ as Pantokrator and Christ as the Ancient of Days that facilitated the reinterpretation of the white-haired Christ as an image of the Father, which then led to the additional depiction of the Spirit as a dove. Hans Gerstinger discussed, in a short but extremely rich article, the emergence, out of initially Christological images, of two distinct Trinitarian iconographic types “developed from certain binitarian preliminary stages by means of resignification and addition, and under the influence of Western models.”⁵² The first type, known as *Paternitas / Otechestvo*, depicts the Father as the Ancient of Days holding the Son (cf. John 1:18; Ps 109/110:3) who holds the Spirit/dove; the second and later (post-

51 For the visual exegesis of Genesis 18, see Gabriel Bunge, *The Rublev Trinity: The Icon of the Trinity by the Monk-Painter Andrei Rublev* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2007); Andrew Louth, ‘The Oak of Mamre, the Fathers and St. Andrei Rublev: Patristic Interpretation of the Hospitality of Abraham and Rublev’s Icon of the Trinity’ in *The Trinity-Sergius Lavra in Russian History and Culture* (ed. Vladimir Tsurikov; Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Seminary Press, 2005) 90-100; Bucur, ‘The Early Christian Reception of Genesis 18: From Theophany to Trinitarian Symbolism’ *J ECS* 23 (2015) 245-72, esp. 260-63, with much secondary literature. For Isaiah 6, see Galavaris, ‘An Icon with the “Epiniokios” Hymn’ 89-90; Bucur, ‘I Saw the Lord,’ noted above.

52 Hans Gerstinger, ‘Über Herkunft und Entwicklung der anthropomorphen byzantinisch-slawischen Trinitätsdarstellungen des so-geannten *Synthronoi*—und *Paternitas (Otécestow)*—Typus’ in *Festschrift W. Sas-Zaloziecky* (ed. Gertrude Gsodam; Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1956) 79-85, at 80.

Byzantine) development is the *Synthronoi* or “New Testament Trinity” type, which shows the Father/Ancient of Days and the Son side by side, with the Holy Spirit/dove between them.⁵³ The growing popularity of the *Synthronoi* iconography eventually raised concerns about its conformity with Orthodox dogma. It is quite interesting to note, however, that the Great Council of Moscow (1666-1667)⁵⁴ speaks forcefully, in its chapter “On Iconographers and God Sabaoth,” against the “uttermost insanity and impiety” of depicting the Father as the Ancient of Days and against the kind of “Trinitarian” imagery exemplified by Ioannes Moscos in the Benaki icon,⁵⁵ while those very views are presented as normative in Dionysius of Fournas’s *Painter’s Manual* (1730).⁵⁶ As a matter of fact,

-
- 53 Galavaris (‘An Icon with the “Epinikios” Hymn’) discusses two icons of the *synthronoi* type, dated to the very end of the seventeenth century and the very beginning of the eighteenth century. Both are icons of the “Epinikios hymn” that is illustrations of the thrice-holy “hymn of victory” found in Isaiah 6. The first one is the Benaki icon inv. no. 3011, painted by Moscos in 1702; the second is slightly earlier, and is simply referred to as one of the “Swiss icons” in the Amberg-Herzog collection in Koelliken, Switzerland.
- 54 For a detailed discussion of the social, cultural, and ecclesiastical context, and a penetrating theological analysis of the 1666-1667 Council of Moscow, see Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon* (2 vols; Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1992) 2:371-409 (‘The Great Council of Moscow and the Image of God the Father’).
- 55 *The Tome of the Great Council of Moscow* 2.43 (English translation in Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, 371-72): “To paint on icons the Lord Sabaoth (that is, the Father) with a white beard, holding the only-begotten Son in His lap with a dove between them, is altogether absurd and improper, for no one has ever seen the Father in His divinity ... And if the Prophet Daniel says that he has seen the Ancient of Days sitting on the throne of judgment, that is not taken to mean the Father, but the Son at His Second Coming, who will judge all the nations with his fearful judgment ... It is only in the Apocalypse of Saint John that the Father can be painted with white hair, for lack of any other possibility, because of the visions contained in it.” As Ouspensky remarks (*Theology of the Icon* 2:384), the interpretation of the figure in Rev 1:13-14 as the white-haired *Father* directly contradicts the earlier insistence on interpreting Daniel 7 christologically, and reveals “the confused thinking typical of this epoch.”
- 56 Dionysius of Fournas, *Painter’s Manual* 87: “We therefore depict Christ on an icon as a man, since he came into the world and had dealings with men, becoming in the end a man like us except in sin. Likewise we also depict the Timeless Father as an old man, as Daniel saw him clearly. We represent the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, as it appeared at Jordan.”

within Orthodox and Byzantine Catholic communities, the matter is still unresolved today and the opposing views continue to be articulated with great passion.⁵⁷

Did the Textual Variation at Dan 7:13 Influence its History of Interpretation

The foregoing pages have discussed two distinct problems: the textual divergence between the OG and the Theodotian variants of Dan 7:13 and the two major strands of this verse's history of interpretation. It is interesting to note that both problems revolve around the relationship between the two major characters of Daniel's vision: at a textual level, Theodotion keeps the two clearly distinct, while the OG links them very closely, to the point of identification; similarly, one set of early Christian texts distinguishes between the Son of Man (identified as the Son) and the Ancient of Days (identified as the Father), while a different and broader tradition understands both "Son of Man" and "Ancient of Days" in reference to Jesus Christ.

One must wonder if these seemingly distinct issues are not related in some way. Royer, for instance, writing from an explicitly confessional perspective, suggested that the divergence between "the Fathers" as interpretive authorities of Dan 7:13, which he knows many find troubling, may perhaps be ascribed to the existence of two different versions of that verse.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, Kreuzer's strictly philological study of Papyrus 967 also concludes with an explicit linking of text criticism and *Wirkungsgeschichte*: "If the portals of medieval churches portray Christ as the judge come from heaven and as (exceedingly) old, this is

57 See Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon* 2:325-369 ('The Art of the 17th Century') on the general conditions of Russian iconography: "spiritual decadence" (326) and a process of "Latinization" that "encompassed theology, the vision of the world, and religious psychology itself" (327); Bigham, *The Image of God the Father in Orthodox Iconography* 1-2, 101-2. For a more irenic voice, Royer, 'The Ancient of Days.'

58 Royer, 'The Ancient of Days' 145-46, n. 18: "It may be the entire issue being considered in this article is the result of this decision by the LXX translators!"

due to the reception of Rev 1:14, but, through Revelation 1 we have here an echo of the original Septuagint as witnessed by p967.”⁵⁹

It is clear that the reference in Rev 1:13-14 to the exalted Jesus as “one like a son of man” and subsequent addition of traits corresponding to Daniel’s Ancient of Days was shaped by Dan 7:13 OG. It is also clear that this apocalyptic image of the white-haired Christ is at the root of the notion of Christ *as* the Ancient Days, documented above. Nevertheless, the findings in this article also show that, once articulated, this notion developed and spread without reference to the distant Danielic source. Whether they interpreted the two characters as the Father and the Son, or offered a robust identification of Christ as both the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days, Christian writers did so without problematising the Greek text of Daniel that had become standard, i.e., Theodotion.⁶⁰ Jerome explains this situation as follows:

The churches of our Lord Saviour do not read the prophet Daniel according to the seventy interpreters; they use the edition of Theodotion. But why this happened I do not know... This one thing I can affirm – that it [LXX] differs a great deal from the truth, and with good reason was rejected.⁶¹

59 Kreuzer, ‘Papyrus 967’ 78.

60 Irenaeus, for instance, is quite explicit in his embrace of the LXX and criticism of Theodotion (see *Haer.* 3.21), but uses the latter when discussing Daniel 9. Moreover, at *Haer.* 4.20.11 (“He [John the Divine] sets forth something of the glory [which He received] from the Father, as [where He makes mention of] the head”), Irenaeus assumes the clear distinction between Father and Son, and more than likely read εως του παλαιου των ημερων at Dan 7:13. Bludau’s explanation is that the OG had, already in pre-Christian times, been replaced by a different version, which Irenaeus, like most of his time, believes – wrongly – to be the LXX (‘Die Apokalypse und Theodotions Danielübersetzung’ 23-26). At any rate, Eusebius of Caesarea, who, using Origen’s Hexapla, quite often discusses differences between the Hebrew and the Greek readings, never mentions the OG reading of Dan 7:13, possibly because Origen had “corrected” it.

61 *Prologus in Danihele Propheta*, in Robert Weber (ed.) *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem* (2nd. ed.; 2 vols; Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1975) 2:1341; English translation by Di Lella, ‘Textual History’ 588. The *veritas* from which OG is said here to differ widely is very likely the *Hebraica veritas* – that is the Hebrew Scriptures, which Jerome, like Origen earlier, assumed to have

In short, then, the textual difference between OG and LXX seems to have been irrelevant for the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Dan 7:13 in the first Christian millennium.

Conclusions

I started this article by deploring the relative lack of interest in the Greek text of Daniel 7, more specifically the famous verse 13 where mention is made of “one like of Son of Man” and “an Ancient of Days.” After some remarks on the textual divergence between the “Old Greek” and the Theodotian variants of Dan 7:13, I presented and discussed at length its reception history in early Christianity.

Two main strands can be discerned in the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Daniel 7. A first exegetical strand distinguishes the visionary characters of the Ancient of Days and Son of Man, and interprets them as references to the Father and the Son. The second understands the two characters as two aspects of Christ in a way that scholarship has started to term “polymorphic Christology.” These two exegetical avenues are equally ancient and well-represented in the Christian writings of the first millennium. Nevertheless, since the Christological interpretation of the Ancient of Days (as part of a Christological polymorphism that also sees the Son of Man as Christ) has such a robust presence in Byzantine festal hymnography, it very likely was the more “popular” interpretation.

Paradoxically, Christian advocacy of the full divinity of Christ finds itself in agreement with Rabbinic polemics against “two-power” theology on this point: for the rabbinic texts investigated by Segal, the one and same God is “the one of the sea” (a young warrior) and “the one of Sinai” (the aged judge), and the two thrones in Daniel’s visions are for the two aspects of God, justice and mercy;⁶² for Christians, it is the one and same Christ who is “the one Lord, both ancient and new,” as

been transmitted unchanged from Moses and the prophets to his contemporary Rabbis.

62 Texts and discussion in Segal, *Two Powers* 33-59, ch. 2 (‘Conflicting Appearances of God’).

Romanos expresses it, both Son of Man and Ancient of Days, newborn child and eternal God.

The iconographic exegesis of Daniel 7 seems to have started by embracing the christological interpretation, often by inserting visual elements associated with the Ancient of Days into the iconography of Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1. The coexistence, in the same worship space, of images of Christ as Pantokrator and Christ as the Ancient of Days, led to the reinterpretation of the white-haired Christ as an image of the Father, and this in turn forced the additional depiction of the Spirit as a dove. In short, Christological polymorphism gradually gave way to Trinitarian symbolism.

Finally, even though a distant causality between the textual divergence at Dan 7:13 and the two major strands of this verse's history of interpretation must be assumed (since the "polymorphic Christology" option is found *in nuce* in Rev 1:13-14, which depends on Dan 7:13 OG), Christian writers never seem to have based their divergent exegeses on a textual choice (since they mostly used Theodotion).