

# THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD IN THE OPERATION OF THE DIVINE TRINITY

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In addressing each of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, Christ designates Himself as having specific attributes and characteristics that relate to the condition of that particular church. Of all the designations provided in these two chapters, perhaps the most revealing, yet most misunderstood, designation is the one spoken to the church in Sardis. In the epistle to Sardis, John was instructed to write, “These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead” (3:1). To counteract the deadness of the church in Sardis, the Son of Man who walks in the midst of the lampstands emphasized that He “has the seven Spirits of God” (1:13; 3:1). *The seven Spirits of God* is a specific term used only four times in the Bible—all of which occur in Revelation (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). The implications of this unique title are profound because this designation points to the judging, enlightening, redeeming, life-dispensing, building, administrating, and reigning operation of the Divine Trinity in His economy.

## Three Interpretations of the Seven Spirits of God

Among Bible commentators there are generally three distinct interpretations of the seven Spirits in Revelation, each of which can be found in some of the earliest extant commentaries on Revelation. The first interpretation considers that the seven Spirits refer to seven angels.<sup>1</sup> In his sixth-century Greek commentary Oecumenius, referring to 1:4, says that “the seven spirits are seven angels” but clarifies that “they are not to be regarded as of equal honor or co-eternal with the Holy Trinity, by no means, but as true assistants and faithful servants” (Weinrich 4).

The second interpretation considers that the seven Spirits correspond with the sevenfold gifts, energies, virtues, or powers of the Holy Spirit. For example, Andrew of Caesarea, another early sixth-century Greek commentator, while acknowledging the first understanding of the seven Spirits as angels, indicates, when commenting on 3:1, that the seven Spirits may also refer to what he calls “the energies” of the life-giving Spirit given by Christ: “We have said before that the “seven stars” are divine angels. The “seven spirits” are either the selfsame angels or they are the energies of the life-giving Spirit. Either way, both are in the hand of Christ, for he governs the former as Lord, and as the ἰσοούσιος<sup>2</sup> he is the supplier of the Spirit” (Weinrich 40).

The third interpretation is that the seven Spirits of God refer to the one Holy Spirit Himself with a sevenfold operation. The mid-sixth-century commentary of Primasius, referring to 4:5, may be among the earliest extant utterances of this interpretation: “These seven lamps are the seven spirits of God. Even if he had not explained it, we