The Early Rule-of-Faith Pattern as Emergent Biblical Theology

Tomas Bokedal
Lecturer, University of Aberdeen
t.bokedal@abdn.ac.uk

This article discusses the Rule of Faith (*regula fidei*) as a normative hermeneutical tool that promotes the textual and theological unity of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. It is argued that the close connection between the Rule of Faith and scriptural interpretation in Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and other early church teachers may be understood as expressions of an incipient biblical theology. Two editorial characteristics of Christian Scripture appear to be linked to this notion of *regula fidei*: the triadic system of *nomina sacra* ("God," "Jesus" and "Spirit" written in contracted form) and the bipartite OT–NT arrangement. Such textual–interpretative features, as well as creedal and ritual practices associated with baptism, are presented as integral to the early church's Rule, or Rule-of-Faith pattern of biblical reading.

Key words: Rule of Faith, regula fidei, biblical theology, *nomina sacra*, creed, baptismal teaching, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria

A major function of the early church's Rule of Faith (*regula fidei*), largely synonymous with the Rule of Truth or Ecclesiastical Rule,[1] was to guarantee that the faith community "read the Old Testament as the promise of the Gospel and the Gospel as the fulfilment of that promise."[2] As a key to such a reading of old and new Scriptures as a unified whole, the *regula fidei* was used as a summary of the faith,[3] or as the teaching foundation for Christian belief as revealed by Christ and handed down by the apostles.[4]

Following an introduction to the early Christian notion of a *regula fidei*, and a brief comment on a few passages in Irenaeus (*Haer*. I, 8.1-10.1; III, 1.1-2; *Dem*. 6), this essay explores certain practices integral to the church's Rule of Faith, namely: Scripture interpretation (focussing on the *nomina sacra* practice and the bipartite OT–NT arrangement), creedal formulation, and the rite of initiation. It is argued that these basic textual,[5] creedal[6] and ritual expressions[7] of early Christian existence shaped common features of the majority church's emergent biblical theology. "Biblical theology" is here understood in broad terms as the distinct Christian theology held to be contained in the Jewish (OT) and specifically Christian Scriptures (NT) when perceived jointly as a textual unity.

Due to their defining qualities, Scripture and Rule of Faith emerged within the faith community – to use the German theologian Karlmann Beyschlag's phrasing – as "two sides of one and the same norm" (*zwei Seiten einer Norm*).[8] As

such, the *regula fidei* could even be seen as a property of sacred Scripture, emphasizing the arrangement of the Old and New Testament texts into a whole, with special attention given to reading biblical passages in their intra-scriptural context (Clem. *Strom*. VI, 15.25.3; Iren. *Haer*. I, 8.1-10.1).[9] Alternatively, when associated more with baptismal confession or apostolic tradition in the broader sense, the *regula* could be viewed as a scripturally defined or aligned Rule.[10] Applied to various types of scriptural exegesis, this Rule of Faith, or Rule-of-Faith pattern of biblical reading, occurs around AD 200 in Irenaeus of Lyons,[11] Tertullian of Carthage and Clement of Alexandria, as well as in other early Christian writers.[12]

Introductory Remarks

Regula fidei and the Mosaic of Scripture

Christ himself is said to be the originator of the Rule in Tertullian (ca. AD 160-220) and Clement of Alexandria (ca. AD 150-215/21).[13] Clement describes the Ecclesiastical Rule in a frequently quoted passage as "the agreement and unity of the Law and the Prophets and the Testament delivered at the coming of the Lord."[14] As such,[15] it provides the key hermeneutical guideline for his Scripture principle and biblical theology.[16] Clement's concern to relate the old Jewish and new Christian Scriptures to one another may here be concretely linked not only to the Ecclesiastical Rule, but also to the actual titles of the two major text corpora – "The Old" and "The New Testament" – introduced by Christian editors towards the end of the second century.[17]

A couple of decades earlier, in Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. AD 125-202), standard characteristics of his Scripture-linked Rule of Faith include adherence to apostolic origins,[18] close association with defining monotheistic belief and other creedal material (*Haer*. I, 10.1), as well as with baptismal teaching and confession (*Haer*. I, 9.4).[19]

However, in a manner similar to Clement of Alexandria, the bishop of Lyons evinces a Rule that teaches the church to read the Scriptures as a literary unity with a particular sequential ordering and textual arrangement (*Haer*. I, 8.1-10.1).[20] Irenaeus employs the classic hermeneutical rule of the parts relating to the textual whole, and *vice versa*, in one of his famous illustrations in *Against Heresies*. He likens the arrangement of the biblical material to a beautiful mosaic of a king – in contradistinction to an unappealing fox, where the textual bits and pieces of the artwork have been misplaced, as in the Gnostic Valentinian Scripture interpretation (*Haer*. I, 9.4).[21]

Scholarly Views on the *regula fidei*

The *regula fidei* attained a multivalent function during the period we are looking at, and could be equated with Scripture, baptismal confession, or apostolic tradition more broadly.[22] Thus, the tension posed between Scripture and unwritten Christian tradition in the Western churches since the Reformation and Counter-Reformation does not appear in the early Christian centuries, neither in the New Testament,[23] during the New Testament period, nor subsequently.

In *1 Clement*, an epistle addressed to the Corinthian Christians towards the end of the first century, the author appeals to the church in Corinth to "conform to the renowned and holy rule of our tradition" (*1 Clem*. 7.2; τῆς παραδόσεως ἡμῶν κανόνα). As the equally renowned second-century *regula fidei* tradition

became part of central Christian vocabulary as testified by Dionysius of Corinth (ca. AD 170), Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria,[24] we shall seek to understand their precise intent concerning this novel expression.[25]

Notable scholars of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries attempted to provide answers concerning the *regula's* profile. Theodor Zahn held the *regula fidei* to be "identical with the baptismal confession."[26] Adolf von Harnack, on the other hand, sought to broaden Zahn's understanding. He argued that the earliest *regula* should be defined in terms of the apostolic tradition rather than baptismal confession per se.[27] Harnack's position opened up for clearer association between the Rule of Faith and the Scriptures.[28] However, only with Johannes Kunze's monumental 1899 study *Glaubensregel, Heilige Schrift und Taufbekenntnis*[29] is the scholarly horizon helpfully broadened, and a clearly positive relationship between Christian Scripture and Rule of Faith posited.[30]

Key aspects of Kunze's approach have been discussed afresh by the Swedish theologian Bengt Hägglund.[31] With his distinctive emphasis, Hägglund affirms the early Christian notion of Rule of Faith as referring ultimately to the revelatory events themselves, stemming from God and Christ and passed on by the apostles.[32] In the first and second centuries, these events were held to be codified primarily in Scripture, apostolic tradition and baptismal confession. The rather abstract and flexible definition of the *regula fidei* that Hägglund suggests fits well with our main source texts discussing the early Rule of Faith.[33] Concerning the *regula* in Irenaeus, Tertullian and Clement, Hägglund writes: "Baptismal confession (as a brief summary of the contents of revelation), sacred Scripture, apostolic tradition

– all is comprised by the *regula fidei* or *regula veritatis*. Thus, this regula can be equated with one or the other property, however with neither of them being fully identical."[34]

Some more recent scholarship has continued to emphasize the close relationship between Scripture and *regula fidei*. Karl-Heinz Ohlig, when reflecting on the canon-formation process, holds the view that "the Rule of Faith is not an independent principle and norma normans beside Scripture," but the usage "of that which one already recognized through the appropriated Scriptures, as applied to what was still disputed."[35] Paul Blowers, who understands the connection between *regula* and Scripture in yet stronger terms, writes: "For Irenaeus and Tertullian alike it is imperative to identify the Canon of Truth or Rule of Faith as Scripture's own intrinsic story-line."[36]

The focus of the present essay is the *regula fidei* as incipient biblical theology. I thus discuss the Rule of Faith (or Rule-of-Faith pattern of biblical reading) as a normative hermeneutical tool – implemented through Scripture, catechesis and baptism – that promotes the textual and theological unity of the corpus of Old and New Testament Scriptures.

Scripture and *regula*: *Haer.* I, 8.1-10.1, III, 1.1-2, and *Epid.* 6

To illustrate my primary assertion – that the *regula fidei*[37] is intimately linked to the (emerging) biblical theology of some major early church writers[38] – I shall appropriate the following representative formulation of the Rule of Faith (here referred to as "the faith") as phrased by Irenaeus in his First Book *Against Heresies*:

> The church, though spread throughout the whole world, … received (π αρα-λαμβάνειν) from the apostles and

their disciples the faith (πίστις) in one GOD the FATHER Almighty, who made the heaven and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; and in one CHRIST JESUS, the SON of GOD, who became flesh for our salvation; and in the HOLY SPIRIT, who through the prophets proclaimed the economies (οἰκονομία), and the coming and birth from the Virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension of the beloved CHRIST JESUS our LORD in the flesh into the heavens, and his coming from the heavens in the glory of the FATHER to recapitulate all things and to raise up all flesh of the whole human race. (*Haer*. I, 10.1)[39]

As a summary statement of the faith and the baptismal teaching, the Rule is directly linked to Scripture and its exposition. First, our passage's immediate textual context in *Against Heresies* treats the Rule of Faith as part of a discussion on scriptural hermeneutics (*Haer*. I, 8.1-10.1).

Secondly, the faith "received from the apostles and their disciples" (I, 10.1) could be taken to refer to the revelatory events themselves (Hägglund) or a summary statement of that faith which was transmitted orally and then in written form. We recall the bishop's description of the transmission of the oral and written gospel in the introduction to Book Three of *Against Heresies*: This gospel, he states, was "handed down to us in the Scriptures, so *that* that would be the foundation and pillar of our faith." (*Haer*. III, 1.1) In the following section, Irenaeus connects these apostolic texts (the four Gospels) directly with the Rule-of-Faith pattern in its binitarian form: "These [the Gospel writers] have all declared to us that there is one GOD, Creator of heaven and earth, announced

by the Law and the Prophets; and one CHRIST, the SON of GOD." (*Haer*. III, 1.2) Thereby, he evinces the close connection between Rule of Faith (binitarian summary of the faith), Jewish Scripture (the Law and the Prophets), and New Testament text (the fourfold Gospel). The intimate connection between Scripture and *regula* in *Haer*. (I, 10.1; III, 1.2) and *Epid*. (6ff.) lends support as well to a narrative approach, along the lines suggested by Paul Blowers: "The Rule of Faith served the primitive Christian hope of articulating and authenticating a world-encompassing story or metanarrative of creation, incarnation, redemption and consummation."[40] Irenaeus' catechetical piece, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* (*Epid*. 1-100), renders such joint metanarrative employment of Scripture and Rule into one of our earliest "proto-orthodox" biblical-theological contributions, focusing on "the revelatory events themselves." (cf. *Haer*. II, 28.1; n. 52 below).

Thirdly, as indicated in these passages from Book I and III of *Against Heresies* (I, 10.1 and III, 1.2) and in *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* (6), the Jewish Scriptures are repeatedly referred to as an integrated part of the *regula fidei* formularies (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3f.).[41] Phrasings like "[proclaimed] through the prophets," (*Haer*. I, 10.1) "announced by the Law and the Prophets," (III, 1.2) and "shown forth by the prophets according to the design of their prophecy" (*Epid*. 6) also serve to connect the old Scriptures (OT) with key events in the new (NT).[42] The bishop of Lyons closely affiliates the fourfold Gospel discussed in *Against Heresies* (III, 1.1 and 11.8) with the Rule "announced by the Law and the Prophets." (III, 1.2)[43] And in *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, in Oskar Skarsaune's phrasing, Irenaeus devotes himself to

an Old Testament proof of the main points in the Rule of Faith, mainly its Christological part. ... The extensive summary of biblical history in chs. 11-42a clearly demonstrates the *catechetical* nature of Irenaeus' treatise ... this biblical history is the very *content* of the apostolic preaching and the Rule of Faith ... It is, so to speak, a fleshing out of the three articles of the "creed" comprised in short format in the Rule of Faith.[44]

Fourthly, the so-called *nomina sacra* word group, most likely marked off in Irenaeus' Scriptures (in small caps below),[45] provides a common textual pattern for Christian Scripture and the Rule of Faith; that is, the special demarcation by abbreviation (contraction or suspension with a horizontal stroke drawn above the abbreviation) of the Greek words for GOD (*ΘΕΟΣ*; *ΘΣ*), LORD (*ΚΥΡΙΟΣ*; *ΚΣ*), JESUS (*ΙΗΣΟΥΣ*; *ΙΗ, ΙΗΣ, ΙΣ*), CHRIST (*ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ*; *ΧΡ, ΧΡΣ, ΧΣ*), FATHER (*ΠΑΤΗΡ*; *ΠΗΡ*), SON (*ΥΙΟΣ*; *ΥΣ*) and SPIRIT (*ΠΝΕΥΜΑ*; *ΠΝΑ*). These, and few additional specially written Greek short forms,[46] are found in contemporary OT manuscripts, e.g. P. Chester Beatty VI (second/third century AD),[47] and NT manuscripts, such as P[46] and P[66] (both ca. AD 200).[48] We also know that Irenaeus himself (or his scribe) most likely made use of these "sacred names," or *nomina-sacra* demarcations, in his own works, in line with Christian writing practice of the day (see P.Oxy. 405).[49]

Both the *nomina sacra* convention and the *regula fidei* pattern place a limited number of theologically significant names and words centre stage: GOD, FATHER, LORD, JESUS and CHRIST (cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; John 20:28); GOD/FATHER, JESUS/SON/CHRIST/LORD and SPIRIT (cf. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; *1 Clem.* 46.6);

JESUS, CHRIST and SON of GOD (cf. Matt. 16:16; John 20:31). As we will see below, the resemblance between these (dyadic/triadic) *nomina sacra* demarcations and the major names being part of the (dyadic/triadic) *regula fidei* formulary in *Against Heresies* I, 10.1 (one GOD the FATHER, one CHRIST JESUS; FATHER, SON and SPIRIT; the beloved CHRIST JESUS our LORD) is conspicuous.

In the following, I shall attempt to demonstrate the close link between certain features of Irenaeus' classic formulation of the Rule of Faith (*Against Heresies* I, 8.1-10.1 and elsewhere)[50] and an emergent biblical theology. I will discuss in brief: 1) the catechetical and ritual context of the *regula fidei*; 2) the creedal context of the *regula fidei*; and 3) the *regula's* textual–scriptural contextualization associated with the scribal nomina sacra demarcations.

Catechetical and Ritual Context: The Rule of Faith Received through Baptism

The close link between Scripture and *regula* can be seen in Irenaeus' critique of the Gnostic Valentinian reading of individual Bible passages, which were taken out of their original literary framework (*Against Heresies* I, 9.4). The bishop of Lyons complains, describing their exegetical method in rather derogatory terms:

> After having entirely fabricated their own system, they [the Valentinians] gather together sayings and names from scattered places and transfer them, as we have already said, from their natural meaning to an unnatural one. They act like those who would propose themes which they chance upon and then try to put them to verse from

Homeric poems, so that the inexperienced think that Homer composed the poems with that theme, which in reality are of recent composition. … In the same way, anyone who keeps unswervingly in himself the Rule of Truth received through baptism will recognize the names and sayings and parables from the Scriptures, but this blasphemous theme of theirs he will not recognize. For even if he recognizes the jewels, he will not accept the fox for the image of the king. He will restore each one of the passages to its proper order and, having fit it into the body of the Truth, he will lay bare their fabrication and show that it is without support. (*Haer*. I, 9.4)[51]

Irenaeus' way of countering Valentinian text interpretation, as he presents it here, is by appeal to the Rule of Truth (*regula veritatis*). A correct reading of the Scriptures, he insists, must be pursued according to the *regula veritatis* pattern: "Anyone who keeps unswervingly (ἀκλινής) in himself the Rule of Truth received through baptism (διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος) will recognize the names and sayings and parables from the Scriptures." (*Haer*. I, 9.4; cf. *Epid*. 3) Baptism, Rule of Truth and Bible reading are here closely linked. True appropriation of Scripture – including an understanding of its names, sayings and parables – takes place in those who adhere to the Rule of Truth. Such is in contradistinction to Gnostic Valentinians and others who have abandoned the Christian *regula* – or "Truth itself" (*Haer*. II, 28.1)[52] – and the pattern of scriptural reading closely associated with it.

However, what, more precisely, should we presume the baptizand to have received "through baptism?" The Rule of Truth, to be sure. But what would that have entailed in the Irenaean church setting?

We shall consider a couple of things that may have crossed Irenaeus' mind. First, the claim that the Rule is "received through baptism" most certainly refers to the whole process of baptismal teaching.[53] This includes catechetical instruction to literate as well as illiterate catechumens (*Haer*. III, 4.1-2), and externally transmitted (i.e. teaching) as well as internally appropriated dimensions (i.e. reception) of the *regula*. Irenaeus appears to be summarizing the faith received at baptism (*Epid*. 7; *Haer*. I, 21.1). He does that by using dyadic/binitarian or triadic/Trinitarian short forms for the received faith, linked with scriptural exposition (cf. *Haer*. III, 1.2; *Epid*. 1-100, esp. 1, 3, 7, 98-100). J. N. D. Kelly emphasizes, "the catechetical preparation was dominated by those features of the impending sacrament which constituted its essence, the threefold interrogation with the threefold assent, and the threefold immersion."[54]

Secondly, the bishop of Lyons can still maintain a dual emphasis, on the binitarian/Trinitarian faith in which the catechumens have been instructed (cf., e.g., *Haer*. I, 10.1; III, 4.1-2; 11.1; 16.6; IV, 33.7), and on the formal reception of that faith through immersion in the name of the Triune God (*Haer*. I, 9.4; *Epid*. 3 and 7; cf. Just. *1 Apol*. 61). In this connection, Alistair Stewart has recently argued that a christological profession of faith may have been recited just before the actual baptism, whereas the binitarian or Trinitarian Rule may have been part of the pre-baptismal instruction.[55] In line with such christological formulary, we notice the wording of what is probably the earliest profession of faith linked to baptism that we know of, namely the Western text of Acts 8.

At the baptism scene in Acts 8:36-37, as the Ethiopian eunuch is baptized, the

following dialogue is presented: "What is to prevent my being baptized?" (8:36). "And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he replied, 'I believe that JESUS CHRIST is the SON of GOD.'" (8:37, inserted)[56] In fact, Christ-confession, in one form or another, appears to have been associated with baptism from the beginning (cf. Heb. 4:14; 1 John 4:15; 5:5; Mark 3:11; 5:7).[57]

If we assume that Stewart is right about a christological profession immediately prior to baptism, Irenaeus may have chosen to combine various confessional formularies in *Against Heresies* I, 10.1: pre-baptismal dyadic and triadic, and the older christological, confession.

On a general note, different formulas seem to have been used for the catechetical preparation (pre-baptismal teaching), and for liturgical profession of faith and the threefold interrogation at baptism.[58]

First- to Fourth-Century Baptismal Accounts

Now, more light may be shed on Irenaeus' talk of the Rule being "received," as we study later baptismal accounts, such as Egeria's *Diary of a Pilgrimage* (46).[59] Egeria describes her impressions of catechesis and baptism from the Jerusalem church in the years AD 381-84.[60] Egeria's notes from her Jerusalem visit may be instructive when discerning what Irenaeus meant by the Rule being "received through baptism:"

> It is the custom here [in Jerusalem], throughout the forty days on which there is fasting, for those who are preparing for baptism to be exorcised by the clergy early in the morning, … Beginning with Genesis he [the bishop] goes through the whole of Scripture during these forty days, expounding first its literal meaning and then explaining the spiritual meaning. In the course of these days everything is taught not only about the Resurrection but concerning the body of faith. This is called catechetics.
>
> When five weeks of instruction have been completed, they then receive the Creed. He explains the meaning of each of the phrases of the Creed in the same way he explained Holy Scripture, expounding first the literal and then the spiritual sense. In this fashion the Creed is taught. … Now when seven weeks have gone by and there remains only Holy Week … each one recites the Creed back to the bishop. (*Itinerarium Egeriae* 46)[61]

The intimate connection that we meet – e.g. in Irenaeus' *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* – between Scripture and regula/creedal material also encounters the reader of Egeria's rendering.[62] According to her diary notes, Scripture is read within a creedal and ritual framing. Just as in Irenaeus (*Haer*. I, 9.4), the Creed (or creedal sequences of the *regula*) is "received" during the course of pre-baptismal instruction (the so-called *traditio symboli*). In Holy Week each of the catechumens are then expected to "[recite] the Creed back to the bishop" (the so-called *redditio symboli*).[63]

A difference between baptismal teaching in the fourth as compared to the late second century is that the fixed Creed and the *redditio* symboli had not yet seen the day at the time of Irenaeus and Tertullian. Yet, as the highpoint of the Catechumenate, baptism in the Triune name seems to unite several authors/writings, even at the early period we are concentrating on here: Matthew (28:19), *Didache* (7.1), Justin (*1 Apol*. 61), Irenaeus (*Epid*. 7), Clement of Alexandria (*Strom*. II, 11.2; V, 73.2; *Paed*. I, 42.1) and Tertullian

(*Bapt.* 6.1; *Prax.* 26).[64] In Irenaeus' catechetical treatise we thus read:

> Now, this is what faith does for us, … it admonishes us to remember that we have received baptism for remission of sins in the name of GOD the FATHER, and in the name of JESUS CHRIST, the SON of GOD, who became incarnate and died and was raised, and in the Holy SPIRIT of GOD; and that this baptism is the seal of eternal life and is rebirth unto GOD. (*Epid.* 3)[65]

Forceful additional testimony to an emerging Christian Trinitarianism and the benefits of the new birth is found in *1 Clement* (ca. AD 96),[66] referring to "one GOD and one CHRIST and one SPIRIT of grace that was poured out upon us" (*1 Clem.* 46.6; cf. 58.2).

From the above considerations of first- to fourth-century writings, we note the following overall implication for biblical theology: Scripture is read, taught, interpreted, and edited (bipartite OT–NT structure; use of the dyadic/triadic system of *nomina sacra*) within a christological and binitarian/Trinitarian *regula fidei* framework, closely tied to baptism in the Triune name (cf. *Epid.* 1-100).[68]

Creedal Context: Rule of Faith and Christological Monotheism

Regula fidei's broad appeal to core textual,[69] ritual[70] and interpretative elements[71] of Christian faith placed this condensed theology of the early church on the same level of earnestness as that attained by the Jewish confession expressed in *The Shema* (Deut. 6:4-9). In the Roman context, this confession had immediate political and religious implications embodied in the Jewish exemption from imperial cultic worship.

With regard to phrasing, bishop Ire-naeus demonstrates a striking parallel between the Jewish *Shema* and his own formulation of the Rule of Faith in *Against Heresies* III, 1.2 and elsewhere.[72] Having told his readers how the gospel had first been preached orally, but later "by GOD's will," had been "handed down [*tradiderunt*] to us in the Scriptures," (*Haer.* III, 1.1)[73] he goes on to account for the authorship of the texts of the four Evangelists. Following on this brief report, Irenaeus makes an interesting claim pertaining to the Rule of Truth (*regula veritatis*): "These [the four Gospel writers] have all declared to us that there is one GOD, Creator of heaven and earth, announced by the Law and the Prophets; and one CHRIST, the SON of GOD" (*Haer.* III, 1.2; also quoted above).

We see here a second-century phrasing of Christian monotheistic faith that in various forms had first been formulated in the previous century, during the apostolic period. This had amounted to a "reconfiguring of Jewish monotheistic practice and thought" to accommodate Jesus with God as rightful recipient of devotion.[74] The characteristic binitarian structuring of early Christian faith, as found already in Paul (1 Cor. 8:5-6; cf. 1 Tim. 2:5 and Phil. 2:9-11) and John (John 1:1), was thus shaped in a profound way by Early Jewish monotheism.[75] As the New Testament scholar Larry W. Hurtado underlines, "What became 'Christianity' began as a movement within the Jewish religious tradition of the Roman period, and the chief characteristic of Jewish religion in this period was its defiantly monotheistic stance."[76]

Emphasis on monotheistic belief – found as a standard component of the *regula fidei* in the late second century – was an essential part of the Christian movement from the beginning. Not unsurpris-

ingly, only in the New Testament we find the theme of God's oneness addressed some 49 times.[77] Paul and the Gospel writers assume the Jewish confession of God as one. For our purposes, it is particularly worth noticing that the confession of the God of Israel as the only God becomes a defining boundary marker; this is indicated by the early Jewish adoption of *The Shema* as a daily prayer (perhaps alluded to already in the NT; cf. Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:29-30, 32; Luke 10:27; John 10:30; Rom 3:28-30; 1 Cor. 8:6; Gal. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:5; Jas. 2:19).[78] Several Early Jewish authors testify to the central place attained by monotheistic belief and confession (*Let. Aris.* 131-32; *Jub.* 12:19-20; Jos., *AJ* 4:201).[79]

Also in Christian circles, the oneness and uniqueness of God is emphasized from the New Testament period onwards. As pointed out by the late Jaroslav Pelikan, in a discussion on "Creeds in Scripture,"

> [I]n response to a challenge, Jesus recites the primal creed of *The Shema*: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one." In response to another challenge, the apostle Paul also recites *The Shema*, in order then to be able to say that for him and his fellow believers (employing a formula that does sound as though it might itself have come from an earlier Christian creed or hymn), "there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." The profession of faith of the first ecumenical council of the church, convoked at Nicaea in 325 likewise in response to a challenge, opens not with a passage from the Gospels or from any other portion of the New Testament but with a Christian version of the same pri-

> mal creed of Israel, which preceded the New Testament: "We believe in one God." And it does so as the foundation for everything that it then goes on to say about the Son of God as "consubstantial with the Father." [*homoousios toi patri*][80]

The Shema is here presented as a key element of Jewish (Jesus) and Christian faith (Paul and subsequent Christians), which, in its own particular way, unifies the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. Pelikan further notes that *The Shema* actually "dictates the language" for the opening lines of a broad spectrum of confessions, Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant.[81]

The *regula fidei* pattern in *Haer.* I, 10.1 that we have been considering above, complies with the creedal matrix laid out by Pelikan. The inclusion of "one" (εἷς) as part of the first and second articles ("in *one* GOD the FATHER" and "in *one* CHRIST JESUS . . . our LORD," *Haer.* I, 10.1), but not of the third ("in the Holy SPIRIT"), highlights the similarities between Irenaeus' second-century *regula* and later Eastern creeds, such as the fourth-century Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.[82] On this feature Tyrannius Rufinus (ca. AD 345-410) maintains that almost without exception the Eastern churches give the creed in this form, stressing the *oneness* of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ (*A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed* 4). Rufinus here gives credit to the Pauline influence (1 Cor. 8:6):[83] "They confess, you see, ONE GOD and ONE LORD, in deference to the Apostle Paul."[84]

With its stark christological monotheistic emphasis, the *regula fidei* contributes to biblical theology by unifying the monotheistic *a priori* in the Old as well as the New Testament, placing confession in the *one* God and the *one* Christ at the

heart of scriptural reading and application (cf. Deut. 6:4; Isa. 44:6, 45:22-23, 48:12, 1 Cor. 8:6; Phil. 2:5-11, 1 Tim. 2:5, Rev. 1:8. 17, 2:8, 21:6, 22:13).[85] Christological monotheism is at the heart also of our third practice (in addition to creedal formulation and the rite of initiation) integral to the church's Rule of Faith, namely the employment of *nomina sacra* as a scriptural supra-text.

Textual–Scriptural Context: Rule of Faith and *nomina sacra*

The scribal system of *nomina sacra*, introduced above, consists of some four to fifteen specially abbreviated words in Christian Bible manuscripts[86] supplied with a horizontal overbar (GOD, *ΘΣ*; LORD, *ΚΣ*; JESUS, *IH, IHΣ, IΣ*; CHRIST, *XP, XPΣ, XΣ*; SPIRIT, *ΠΝΑ*; CROSS, *ΣΤΡΣ*; FATHER, *ΠΗΡ*; SON, *ΥΣ*; MAN/HUMAN BEING, *ANOΣ*; JERUSALEM, *IΛHM*; ISRAEL, *IHΛ*; HEAVEN, *ΟΥΝΟΣ*; MOTHER, *MHP*; DAVID, *ΔAΔ*; SAVIOUR, *ΣHP*).[87]

The fourth-century Codex Vaticanus usually only makes use of the first four of these (GOD, LORD, JESUS, CHRIST),[88] whereas in Codex Sinaiticus, the five first normally are rendered in their *nomina-sacra* forms (GOD, LORD, JESUS, CHRIST, SPIRIT).[89] However, Codex Sinaiticus (fourth century) and also Codex Alexandrinus (fifth century) make use of the whole system of Greek *nomina sacra* (ca. fifteen words), which causes some scholars to interpret the scribal phenomenon in terms of an "embryonic creed" engrafted into the text.[90]

Already in the second and third centuries, these (originally) Greek short forms were present in basically all Christian Bible manuscripts. Their frequent occurrence on a typical Old or New Testament page makes the text not only specifically Christian, but their presence – as a form

of supra-textual markers – also helps weaving the Old and New Testament texts into a coherent whole. Furthermore, these four to fifteen words indicate a textual centre: 1) by consistently highlighting a strictly delimited number of names and words (the scribes of Codex Sinaiticus marked off the five standard *nomina sacra*, GOD, LORD, JESUS, CHRIST and SPIRIT in nearly every case); 2) by highlighting the connection between the variously rendered Tetragrammaton (the divine Name) and the *nomina sacra* (cf. esp. the binitarian *nomina sacra* configuration in 1 Cor. 8:6: GOD, FATHER, LORD, JESUS, CHRIST);[91] and 3) key terms from the *nomina sacra* word-group (here in small caps)[92] are commonly constituting the main building blocks of the *regula fidei* formularies, demarcating the three articles of faith, for example in *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* (6):

> And this is the drawing-up of our faith, the foundation of the building, and the consolidation of a way of life. GOD, the FATHER, uncreated, beyond grasp, invisible, one GOD the maker of all; this is **the first** and foremost **article of our faith**. But **the second article** is the Word of GOD, the SON of GOD, CHRIST JESUS our LORD, who was shown forth by the prophets … and through Him were made all things whatsoever. He also, *in the end of times*, for the recapitulation of all things, is become a MAN among MEN, visible and tangible, in order to abolish death and bring to light life, and bring about the communion of GOD and MAN. And **the third article** is the Holy SPIRIT, through whom the prophets prophesied and the patriarchs were taught about GOD and the just were led in the path of justice, and who *in the end of times* has been poured forth in a new manner upon huma-

nity over all the earth renewing MAN to GOD. (Iren. *Epid*. 6)[93]

We note the individual *nomina sacra* that may be associated with the three articles of faith mentioned by Irenaeus: the first article (GOD, FATHER), the second article (GOD, SON, CHRIST, JESUS, LORD, MAN), and the third article (SPIRIT, MAN).

We are now in a position to make the present essay's discussion of the *regula fidei* somewhat more concrete. As our focus is the *regula* as emergent biblical theology, we approach the Rule of Faith (or Rule-of-Faith pattern of biblical reading) as a normative hermeneutical tool that promotes the textual OT–NT dynamics and the theological unity of Christian Scripture. In terms of function, this Rule may to some degree even be equated with the two discussed editorial devices: the creedal pattern expressed through the *nomina sacra* in their intra-scriptural context, and the particular arrangement of the Scriptures provided by the titles "Old" and "New Testament." The creedal and hermeneutical concern of the *regula fidei* is expressed also through these two parallel editorial aids to Scripture reading. In this sense, the twofold title and the *nomina sacra* – being inscribed into the biblical manuscript tradition from the second century onwards – make the Rule-of-Faith pattern visible on the Old and New Testament page.

Nomina sacra and Biblical Interpretation

The four earliest *nomina sacra* introduced into Christian Bible manuscripts were the Greek abbreviations for "God" (*ΘΣ*), "Lord" (*ΚΣ*), "Jesus" (*ΙΗ, ΙΗΣ, ΙΣ*) and "Christ" (*ΧΡ, ΧΡΣ, ΧΣ*). The special demarcation of these within the New Testament context is particularly conspicuous in passages such as 1 Cor. 8:6, which

highlights the *nomina sacra* short forms, while keeping the plural forms "gods" and "lords" written in full (8:5). Most of the ca. 50 Greek manuscripts containing 1 Cor. 8:4-6 mentioned by Reuben Swanson in his *New Testament Greek Manuscripts* make this distinction between the singular (marked off as *nomina sacra*) and plural forms (written in full).[94] To the same effect, in Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, the use of "god" in the plural, *ΘΕΟΙ* (written in full), is found eight times in the New Testament (Joh. 10:34, 35; 1 Cor. 8:5 (twice), Gal. 4:8, Acts 7:40, 14:11 and 19:26).[95] In all eight cases the meaning is non-sacral. All other New Testament occurrences of the sacral word "God" are rendered in their contracted forms (*ΘΣ*).[96]

Forceful *nomina sacra* constellations involved in Scripture exposition concern JESUS and his CROSS. In our earliest NT manuscripts, these words are written in their *nomina sacra* forms ca. 100 and 95 per cent, respectively.[97] Our earliest example, however, comes from the *Epistle of Barnabas* and concerns a discussion of an OT manuscript – containing a *nomen sacrum* abbreviation for "Jesus" and the letter T, symbolizing the cross. The passage in *Barn*. 9 consists of a play with numbers, where the symbolic meaning of Abraham's 318 (written with the Greek letters *ΤΙΗ*) servants in Genesis 14:14 is pondered:

> The number eighteen [in Greek] consists of an Iota [*I*], 10, and an Eta [*H*], 8. There you have Jesus. And because the cross was about to have grace in the letter Tau [*T*], he next gives the three hundred, Tau. And so he shows the name Jesus by the first two letters, and the cross by the other. For the one who has placed the implanted gift of his covenant in us knew these things.

No one has learned a more reliable lesson from me. But I know that you are worthy. (*Barn.* 9:8f.)[98]

The central place of Christ and his cross is found not only in the *Epistle of Barnabas*, or in Paul (1 Cor. 1:17; Gal. 6:14), but also in other early Christian writers, like Ignatius of Antioch. The latter makes some interesting comments on this theme when discussing Christ in the Scriptures: "For me, JESUS CHRIST is the ancient records [the Jewish Scriptures]; the sacred ancient records are his CROSS and death, and his resurrection, and the faith that comes through him."[99]

Similarly in Irenaeus, a hermeneutically revealing passage is found in *Against Heresies*:

> For if anyone reads the Scriptures with attention, he will find in them an account of CHRIST … for CHRIST is the treasure which was hid in the field … And, for this reason, indeed, when at this present time the law is read to the Jews, it is like a fable; for they do not possess the explanation of all things pertaining to the advent of the SON of GOD, which took place in human nature; but when it is read by the Christians, it is a treasure, hid indeed in a field, but brought to light by the CROSS of CHRIST … . (*Haer.* IV, 26.1)[100]

As the scribal system of *nomina sacra* soon included additional words beyond the initial four (GOD, LORD, JESUS, CHRIST), such as CROSS, SPIRIT, FATHER and SON, the appearance of the biblical text was affected. A passage like Matthew 28:19, which seems to have influenced baptismal and creedal formularies,[101] thus attained more prominence also in terms of its *nomina sacra* demarcations. Editorial variations of this Matthean passage can be seen, from no words marked off as *nomina sacra* in Codex Vaticanus, to one in

Bezae (SPIRIT), two in Sinaiticus and Washingtonianus (FATHER and SPIRIT), and three in Alexandrinus and the Majority Text: "in the name of the FATHER and of the SON and of the Holy SPIRIT" (Matt. 28:19). For comparison, we may consider also the scene of Jesus' baptism in Matt. 3:16-17. Words highlighted as *nomina sacra* in this passage are: JESUS, SPIRIT and GOD in Codex Vaticanus and Codex Washingtonianus (fourth/fifth century), and JESUS, SPIRIT, GOD, HEAVEN, and SON in Codex Sinaiticus.

From the above discussion of the scribal *nomina sacra* convention, the following themes may be considered when commenting and elaborating on the early faith community's biblical theology:

1) The centrality of Jesus' name and the cross of Christ: The theme of JESUS CHRIST and the CROSS appear in several key texts from the first to early third century AD (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17f., Gal. 3:1, *Barn.* 9, 11-12, Ign. *Phld.* 8.2, Just. *1 Apol.* 55, Iren. *Haer.* IV, 26.1, Tert. *Marc.* III, 22). "Cross" and "crucify" are highlighted as *nomina sacra* in second-/third-century NT papyri P^{45}, P^{46}, P^{66} and P^{75}. We note that reference to Jesus being nailed to the cross (*cruci fixum*) is part of Tertullian's account of the *regula fidei* in *Praescr.* 13. Particular attention is also given to the name of Jesus – arguably the "most important *nomen sacrum* of all"[102] – e.g. in *Barn.* 9.8f., and in several NT passages (John 20:31; Acts 2:38, 3:6, 4:12; Rom. 10:13; Phil. 2:9).

2) The early binitarian structure (christological monotheism): The common binitarian pattern "one GOD, the FATHER… and one CHRIST JESUS… our LORD", found, e.g., in *Haer.* I, 10.1,

highlights the same words that are emphasized through *nomina sacra* demarcations in 1 Cor. 8:6 (P⁴⁶).

3) The standard triadic structure (non-technical Trinitarianism): The triadic pattern "GOD the FATHER… CHRIST JESUS, SON of GOD/LORD … and the Holy SPIRIT," present in *Haer*. I, 10.1 and *Epid*. 6, seems to share a similar textual–creedal emphasis as that inherent in the *nomina sacra* found in Matt. 28:19 (Codex Alexandrinus and the Majority Text), Matt. 3:16-17 (Codex Vaticanus), *1 Clem*. 46.6 (Codex Alexandrinus), and 1 Cor. 12:4-6 (P⁴⁶).

4) The prominence of christological titles and sequences (including Old Testament prophecy, now fulfilled in Christ, cf. e.g. Iren. *Epid*. 42b-100): The frequently occurring Christ-sequences "SON of GOD… CHRIST JESUS our LORD" have the same words emphasized as those written as *nomina sacra* in central New Testament christologies (Rom. 1:4 (Codex Alexandrinus); 1 Cor. 1:9 (P⁴⁶); Matt. 16:16 (Codex Sinaiticus); John 11:27 (Codex Sinaiticus) and 20:31 (Codex Sinaiticus)).

The Early Rule-of-Faith Pattern as Emergent Biblical Theology: A Proposal

By the late first century, the *nomina sacra* – highlighting the sacred figures of Christian faith – had been introduced into the Scriptures, providing implicit guide lines for Bible reading and exposition (cf. *Barn*. 9.8; Clem. *Strom*. VI, 2.84.3-4). A century later, when the Rule of Faith attained pride of place in Christian discourse, the titles "Old" and "New Testament" were coined for the main sections of the Christian Bible.[103]

I propose that both these editorial devices could be understood as deliberate attempts by the early church to closely link Christian Scripture to the emerging "apostolic" *regula fidei* pattern.

By way of summary, within a Christian Scripture-based, creedal–monotheistic and ritual setting, a major function of the dyadic/triadic Rule-of-Faith pattern of scriptural reading was biblical-theological: To guarantee that the faith community "read the Old Testament as the promise of the Gospel and the Gospel as the fulfilment of that promise."[104] To this effect the *regula fidei* functioned as a normative hermeneutical tool, promoting the textual and theological unity of the corpus of Old and New Testament Scriptures (Iren. *Haer*. I, 8.1-10.1; Clem. *Strom*. VI, 15.125.3).

The ancient readers' decision to inaugurate the system of *nomina sacra* into their communal literature (probably first century AD),[105] and to designate the two main sections of their Scriptures by the labels "The Old" and "The New Testament" (probably late second century AD),[106] effectively helped to accomplish this task.[107] [108]

Notes

1. The three largely synonymous terms and their equivalents employed throughout the essay are 1) the Rule of Truth (*κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας/regula veritatis*), Irenaeus' main term; 2) the Rule of Faith (*κανὼν τῆς π ίστεως/regula fidei*), Tertullian's main term; and 3) the Ecclesiastical Rule (*κανὼν ἐκκλησιαστικός*), one of Clement of Alexandria's main terms (*Stromata* Book VI and VII). For the relationship between Scripture and Rule of Faith similarly treated in Irenaeus, Tertullian and Clement, see Bengt Hägglund, "Die Bedeutung der 'regula fidei' als Grundlage theologischer Aussagen," *Studia Theologica* 12 (1958): 30-34, esp. 31. Translation of source texts are my own, unless indicated otherwise. In line with the early Christian (Greek) manuscript tradition, I have chosen to highlight in small caps the following words among the so-called *nomina sacra* demarcations (names of central figures of the faith abbreviated and supplied with an overbar): GOD, LORD, JESUS, CHRIST, FATHER, SON, SPIRIT, MAN and CROSS.

2. Mark Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (Farnam, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 40.

3. Ellen Flesseman-van Leer, *Tradition and Scripture in the Early Church* (Leiden: Gorcum & Prakke, 1953), 165: "the regula is a summary, formulated according to the need of the moment, of the entire Christian faith;" Frances Young, "Christian teaching," in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, eds. F. Young, L. Ayres and A. Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004), 102. See Iren. *Epid*. 6 and Tert. *Praescr*. 13. Cf. also Tertullian's terminology in *Marc*. IV, 1: "Testaments," "Law" and "Gospel."

4. Clem. *Strom*. VI, 15.125.3; VII, 95.3. Cf. Philip Hefner ("Theological Methodology and St. Irenaeus," *The Journal of Religion* 44.4 (1964): 299), who argues that the Rule of Faith, and equivalent terms used by Irenaeus, points to "an organic system or framework which constitutes the shape and the meaning of God's revelation. Without the system, God's revelation is not intelligible." In this wider discussion on the Rule, however, Hefner has not given due consideration to Irenaeus' remarks on scriptural hermeneutics inherent in the scriptural account itself (cf., e.g., *Haer*. I, 8.1-10.1).

5. That is, scriptural.

6. That is, widely shared confessional formularies among Christians.

7. E.g., reception of the Rule of Faith through baptism.

8. Karlmann Beyschlag, *Grundriß der Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 1 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 170.

9. See n. 14 below. This conclusion becomes particularly attractive in light of the special demarcation of so-called *nomina sacra* (see further below), such as FATHER, SON and SPIRIT in the Greek Bible manuscripts, words that were specially emphasized, and, it seems, part of the early Rule-of-Faith pattern. These three words are found in their *nomina sacra* forms, e.g., in papyrus P[46] and P[66], both commonly dated to ca. AD 200 (cf. NA28, pp. 794-96).

10. In Tertullian's *Prescriptions against Heretics* 19, the Rule of Faith is presented as the hermeneutical key to Scripture reading: "For wherever it shall be manifest that the true Christian rule and faith shall be, *there* will likewise be the true Scriptures and expositions thereof, and all the Christian traditions." (*Praescr*. 19 (ANF 3:251f.)). Clement of Alexandria as well as Irenaeus, place greater weight on Scripture's normative function than does Tertullian in this passage.

11. Irenaeus' *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, which attempts to integrate the Rule of Faith into the biblical expositon of the work (see *Epid*. 3, 6, 7, 98-100), is illustrative. Though I will deal briefly with Clement and Tertullian in this essay, my main focus will be upon Irenaeus.

12. See, e.g., Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1951, 1993), 373-91.

13. Tert. *Praescr*. 13; 21; 37; *Apol*. 47; Clem. *Strom*. VII, 16.95.

14. "*Κανὼν δὲ ἐκκλησιαστικός ἡ συνῳδία καὶ συμφωνία νόμου τε καὶ π ροφητῶν τῇ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ κυρίου π αρουσίαν π αραδιδομένῃ διαθήκῃ*" (*Strom*. VI, 15.125.3). Clement of Alexandria's use of the Rule of Faith or Ecclesiastical Rule comes close to that of Irenaeus and Tertullian, especially in *Strom*. VI and VII. For Clement's broader use of the concept elsewhere, see Hägglund, *Sanningens regel*: Regula veritatis. *Trosregeln och den kristna traditionens struktur* (Skellefteå: Artos & Norma bokförlag, 2003) 27f.; and Heinz Ohme, *Kanon ekklesiastikos: Die Bedeutung des altkirchlichen Kanonbegriffs*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, Bd. 67 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 122ff.

15. I.e., as the Lord's/Christ's teaching. Cf. Christ as the beginning and principle of the teaching (*ἀρχὴ τῆς διδασκαλίας*) in Clement (*Strom*. VII, 95.3). Hägglund, *Sanningens regel*, 28.

16. Cf. *Strom*. VII, 16.96: "We obtain from the Scriptures themselves a perfect demonstration concerning the Scriptures"; and VII, 16.95: "For we have the LORD as the first principle of our teaching, leading us to knowledge, from beginning to end, in many and various ways through the Prophets, through the Gospel and through the blessed Apostles." See also Hägglund ("regula fidei," 33), who emphasizes that for Clement the Scripture is ultimately selfauthenticating (*αὐτόπ ιστος*). Cf. Iren. *Haer*. II, 27.1; II, 28.2. On the notion of "the covenants" in Clement, see Einar Molland, *The Conception of the Gospel in the Alexandrian Theology* (Oslo: Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi, 1938), 69-75.

17. Cf. David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 43-44. As for the use of the titles "Old" and "New Testament" in Clement of Alexandria (e.g., *Strom*. I, 5.28.2; ANF 2:305), see Wolfram Kinzig, "Καινὴ διαθήκη: The Title of the New Testament in the Second and Third Century," *JTS* 45.2 (1994): 529.

18. *Haer*. I, 10.1: "the apostles and their disciples"; and *Dem*. 3 (ACW 16): "the elders, the disciples of the apostles."

19. See further below; cf. Tomas Bokedal, "The Rule of Faith: Tracing Its Origins," *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, 7.2 (2013): 233-55.

20. Cf. Reinhold Seeberg's characterization of Irenaeus as a "biblical theologian," *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1908; 2nd ed.), 290 (quoted by John Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of St. Irenaeus* (London: Epworth Press, 1948), 2): "Irenäus ist Biblizist und er ist der erste grosse Vertreter des Biblizismus." The quotation in Seeberg, however, continues: "… Aber Iren. ist zugleich Traditionalist, nur im Sinne der kirchlichen Überlieferung darf die Bibel ausgelegt." The argument of the present essay seeks to qualify the biblical theology of Irenaeus and others, without – as here in Seeberg – too quick recourse to tradition. See further Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of St. Irenaeus*, 97-118 and 292f. For Irenaeus as an interpreter of the Old Testament, see Oskar Skarsaune, "The Development of Scriptural Interpretation in the Second and Third Centuries – except Clement and Origen," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 1, ed. M. Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 422–429.

21. See quote below, n. 51.

22. Hägglund, "regula fidei," 4.

23. So F. F. Bruce, "Scripture in Relation to Tradition and Reason," in *Scripture, Tradition and Reason: A Study in the Criteria of Christian Doctrine. Essays in Honour of Richard P. C. Hanson*, eds. Richard Bauckham and Benjamin Drewery (London: T&T Clark, 1998), 37. Bruce's claim seems to apply only to the New Testament material and tradition.

24. Dionysius refers to the *regula veritatis/κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας* to counter Marcion; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl*. IV, 23.4; LCL, vol. 153, trans. Kirsopp Lake (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University, 1926), 378. Somewhat earlier, Polycrates of Ephesus (ca. AD 130-96) appeals to the *regula fidei* in the Quartodeciman controversy. Cf. Ohme, *Kanon ekklesiastikos*, 249-53.

25. The first time the expression *regula fidei/κανὼν τῆς πίστεως* is used by early church writers, seems to be in Polycrates of Ephesus. For further details on the use of *regula veritatis* in Philo and elsewhere, see Ohme, *Kanon ekklesiastikos*, 21-58; and Bokedal, "The Rule of Faith: Tracing Its Origins," 236f.

26. Theodor Zahn, "Glaubensregel," in *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (ed. Albert Hauck; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1899), 6:685; cf. Ferdinand Kattenbusch, *Das apostolische Symbol. Seine Entstehung, sein geschichtlicher Sinn, seine ursprüngliche Stellung im Kultus und in der Geschichte der Kirche. Ein Beitrag zur Symbolik und zur Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1894), 26-30; Jonathan J. Armstrong, "From the *κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας* to the *κανὼν τῶν γραφῶν*: The Rule of Faith and the New Testament Canon," in *Tradition & the Rule of Faith in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Joseph T. Lienhard. S.J.*, eds. Ronnie J. Rombs and Alexander Y. Hwang (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 33.

27. Armstrong, "The Rule of Faith and the New Testament Canon," 34. Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 1, *Die Entstehung des kirchlichen Dogmas* (Freiburg: Mohr, 1886, 1ˢᵗ ed.), 257; ibid (1909, 3ʳᵈ ed.), 355ff. For a different emphasis on Harnack's contribution, see ibid., 361, and Hägglund, "regula fidei," 3.

28. Armstrong, "The Rule of Faith and the New Testament Canon," 34.

29. Johannes Kunze, *Glaubensregel, Heilige Schrift und Taufbekenntnis: Untersuchungen über die dogmatische Autorität, ihr Werden und ihre Geschichte, vornehmlich in der alten Kirche* (Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1899).

30. As Armstrong points out ("The Rule of Faith and the New Testament Canon," 37), Kunze embraces Harnack's "insightful maxim:" "'Canon' was originally the rule of faith; the Scripture had in truth intervened." But, as Kunze indicates, Harnack's view on the relation between Scripture and Rule of Faith is rather ambiguous.

31. Hägglund, "regula fidei," 12f., 24, 27, and 33. For a similar approach to the question of Scripure and tradition in the early church, see also Flesseman-van Leer, *Tradition and Scripture*.

32. Iren. *Haer*. III, 3.4; 4.1. Hägglund, *Sanningens regel*, 11 n. 9. Heffner ("Theological Methodology," 295) describes Hägglund's understanding of the *regula veritatis/fidei* in Irenaeus in the following wording: "Bengt Haegglund understands Irenaeus' chief concern as establishing the regula fidei or regula veritatis, by which Irenaeus refers to the original, immutable truth which the church holds, the Faith itself which is revealed in Scripture, in the kerygma of Christ and the apostles, and which is passed on to the believer in baptism. This truth is absolute truth; it is the revelation which lies behind the creed, the content of Scripture, and the proclamation of the tradition of the presbyterial succession; it constitutes the right knowledge of God and his redemptive action in the divine economy."

33. For various scholarly interpretations of the *regula fidei*, see, e.g., Hefner, "Theological Methodology;" and Ohme, *Kanon ekklesiastikos*.

34. Hägglund, "regula fidei," 4. Cf. also idem, *Sanningens regel*, 10. With regard to Tertullian, similarly Flesseman-van Leer, *Tradition and Scripture*, 165-66; and L. Wm. Countryman, "Tertullian and the Regula Fidei," *Second Century* 2 (1982): 226.

35. Karl-Heinz Ohlig, Die theologische Begründung des neutestamentlichen Kanons in der alten Kirche (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1972), 174.

36. Paul M. Blowers, "The *Regula Fidei* and the Narrative Character of Early Christian Faith," *Pro Ecclesia* 6 (1997): 212. Cf. ibid., 202 (quoted below, n. 40). See also Bokedal, "The Rule of Faith: Tracing Its Origins," 248-54.

37. *Regula veritatis* as a major Latin expression used to render the Greek equivalent *κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας* (in *Against Heresies*) is complemented by the synonymous phrasing *regula fidei* (in *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*). However, one term can still be preferred over the other, as Eric Osborn helpfully points out (*Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2001), 145 n. 17): "Generally the latter term [*regula fidei*] was preferred for internal use within the church and the former term [*regula veritatis*] was preferred when argument was directed to heretics." For text critcal issues involved, see Ohme, *Kanon ekklesiastikos*, 61.

38. Cf. esp. Clem. *Strom*. VI, 15.125.3, cited in n. 14 above; and Iren. *Haer*. I, 8.1-10.1.

39. On Irenaeus' and the early church's use of *nomina sacra*, here in small caps, see below.

40. Blowers, "The *Regula Fidei* and the Narrative Character of Early Christian Faith," 202.

41. As in 1 Cor. 15:3-4, the reference to the Scriptures is usually part of a christology section (cf. *Haer*. I, 10.1 (where the christology is part of the third article) and *Epid*. 6). In the heavily abbreviated binitarian form in *Haer*. III, 1.2, the reference to Scripture is retained as central, but as part of the first article.

42. In *Epid*. 6, reference to the prophets is made in both the second and the third article of faith.

43. Cf. Hägglund, *Sanningens regel*, 17: Even if the Rule may refer to individual books of the Bible (*Haer*. III, 15.1), it still tends to focus on the scriptural contents, the basic doctrines of Scripture, rather than the biblical books as such; and ibid., 16: "As a matter of fact, the 'regula' always refers to Scripture, because through Holy Scripture – i.e. through the prophetic and apostolic message – and only through it [Scripture], truth has been revealed and handed down to us." See also Kunze, *Glaubensregel*, 100-27.

44. Skarsaune, "The Development of Scriptural Interpretation in the Second and Third Centuries," 423-24.

45. Scribal *nomina sacra* demarcations – present in basically all extant Christian Greek Bible manuscripts – were arguably introduced into the biblical manuscript tradition no later than the first century (Larry W. Hurtado, "The Origin of the Nomina Sacra: A Proposal," *JBL* 117.4 (1998): 660). The palaeographer C. H. Roberts opts for a pre-70 dating (*Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt, Schweich Lectures 1977* (London: Oxford University Press, published for the British Academy, 1979)). See also Martin Hengel, *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture: Its Prehistory and the Problem of Its Canon*, trans. Biddle (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2002), 41.

46. See below for a more complete list of early Greek *nomina sacra*.

47. The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts lists P. Chester Beatty VI (Ralphs 963) among second-century manuscripts; see http://www.csntm.org/manuscript [accessed 28/02/2015].

48. Cf. n. 9 above. *Nomina sacra* in P⁴⁶ and P⁶⁶ include GOD, LORD, JESUS, CHRIST, SPIRIT, FATHER, SON, MAN and CROSS/CRUCIFY.

49. P.Oxy. 405, which makes use of *nomina sacra*, contains portions of *Haer*. III, 9.2-3 and was produced in the late second or early third century, just a few years after Irenaeus wrote his *Against Heresies*. See Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les heresies* 3, Sources chrétiennes 210 and 211, edited and translated by Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau (Paris, 1974), Book 3/1, 126-30; Book 3/2, 104-08. In the transcription by Grenfell/Hunt of the fragments making up P.Oxy. 405 (reproduced in Book 3/1, 131), the following names are contracted as *nomina sacra*: "Christ" (*ΧΣ*), "Jesus" (*IN*) and "God" (*ΘY*). As part of the reconstructed section of the text of which the fragment was part, Grenfell/Hunt also included *nomina sacra* demarcations for "Lord" (*ΚΣ*), "Spirit" (*ΠΝΑ*) and "Son" (*YΣ*). See also Andreas Schmidt, "Der mögliche Text von P. Oxy. III 405, Z. 39-45," *NTS* 37 (1991): 160

50. Passages in Irenaeus mentioning the Rule of Truth/Faith include *Haer*. I, 9.4; I, 22.1; II, 27.1; III, 2.1; III, 11.1; III, 12.6; III, 15.1; IV, 35.4; and *Epid*. 3.

51. *St. Irenaeus of Lyons against the Heresies*, vol. 1, ACW 55, translated and annotated by Dominic J. Unger with further revisions by John J. Dillon (New York, N.Y./Mahwah, N.J.: The Newman Press), 47, modified. As for the expression "body of the Truth," see Hägglund, *Sanningens regel*, 12f.

52. *Haer*. II, 28.1: "And so, we have the truth itself as rule" (*habentes itaque regulam ipsam veritatem*). In this connection we note that Hägglund ("regula fidei," 5) and others rightly take the expression *regula veritatis* to be an epexegetical genitive: it is Truth itself that is the rule or norm. For a different rendering of *Haer*. II, 28.1 (based on *regulam…veritat(is)*, rather than *regulam…veritatem*), see ACW 65: 87, where Dominic J. Unger translates the opening line of the passage as follows: "Since, then, we possess the Rule of Truth itself and the manifest testimony about God."

53. Cf. *Haer*. I, 21.1; V praef.; and *Dem*. 3 and 7. Cf. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (New York: Longman, 3ʳᵈ rev. ed., 1972), 51f.

54. Ibid. Quoted also in footnote above.

55. Alistair Stewart, "'The Rule of Truth . . . which He Received through Baptism' (*Haer*. I, 9.4): Catechesis, Ritual, and Exegesis in Irenaeus's Gaul," in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*, eds. Paul Foster and Sara Parvis (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 153f. Cf. Kelly in footnote above.

56. Cf. Paul F. Bradshaw, *Reconstructing Early Christian Worship* (London: SPCK, 2009), 69-70. *Nomina sacra*, here marked off in small caps, corresponding to the tenth-century miniscule 1739. For the general occurrence of *nomina sacra* in Christian Bible manuscripts from the second century on, see e.g. Hurtado, *Artifacts*, 95-134.

57. See Kelly (*Early Christian Creeds*, 14-19) for additional one-clause christologies, such as Acts 8:16, 19:5 and 1 Cor. 6:11; and 1 Cor. 12:3, Rom. 10:9 and Phil. 2:11.

58. Cf. Bradshaw, *Reconstructing Early Christian Worship*, 69.

59. Cf. also Augustine, *De Symbolo Ad Catechumenos* 1 (NPNF I 3:1): "Receive, my children, the Rule of Faith, which is called the Symbol (or Creed). And when ye have received it, write it in your heart, and be daily saying it to yourself." For connections between the Jerusalem rite as testified by Egeria and Western rites, see Bradshaw, *Reconstructing Early Christian Worship*, 73; cf. ibid., 60. See also Skarsaune (*Troens ord*, 38-76) for an historical overview of various aspects of the Creed in various parts of the early church, with focus on the Apostles' Creed. Skarsaune notes that the *redditio symboli*, which we encounter in Egeria's account, is not present in early third-century accounts, e.g. in Tertullian.

60. See Oskar Skarsaune, *Troens ord: de tre oldkirkelige bekjennelsene* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1997), 45f. For a brief historical introduction, see also Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 30-33.

61. *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, translated and annotated by George E. Gingras, ACW 38 (New York, N.Y./ Mahwah, N.J.: The Newman Press, 1970), 123-24. As for continuities and discontinuities between Rule of Faith, baptismal interrogations and the content of the later declaratory creeds, see Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 40-52; and Liuwe H. Westra, *The Apostles' Creed. Origin, History, and some early Commentaries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 56-60, 37-43.

62. Cf. Skarsaune, "The Development of Scriptural Interpretation in the Second and Third Centuries," 423-24 (cf. quote above, n. 44).

63. See idem, *Troens ord*, 45. Ibid. 46: In Rome, the *redditio symboli* takes place before the whole congregation. Cf. Rufinus, *A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed* 3; ACW 20, trans. J. N. D. Kelly (New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Newman Press, 1954), 31: "[In Rome] the ancient custom is maintained … whereby candidates who are on the point of receiving the grace of baptism deliver the creed publicly, in the hearing of the congregation of the faithful."

64. The references are listed in Eric Osborn, *The Emergence of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 181.

65. ACW 16:49, modified.

66. "Trinitarianism" is here used in a non-technical sense.

67. Codex Alexandrinus demarcates GOD, CHRIST and SPIRIT in *1 Clem*. 46.6 as *nomina sacra*.

68. Triadic first- and second-century formularies (related to baptism) commonly appear either as GOD, JESUS/CHRIST/LORD, and SPIRIT (1 Cor. 12:4-6; *1 Clem*. 46.6; Just. *1 Apol*. 61); or as GOD/FATHER, JESUS/ CHRIST/SON, and SPIRIT (Matt. 28:19; *Did*. 7.1; Just. *1 Apol*. 61; Iren. *Epid*. 7). *Nomina sacra* demarcations highlighting the former are present, e.g., in P⁴⁶ (1 Cor. 12:4-6) and Codex Alexandrinus (*1 Clem*. 46.6), and the latter, e.g., in Codex Alexandrinus and the Majority Text (Matt. 28:19). See further Bokedal, "The Rule of Faith: Tracing Its Origins," 284.

69. E.g., the system of *nomina sacra* and some key texts, such as 1 Cor. 8:6 and Matt. 28:19f.

70. In particular baptism; Iren. *Haer*. I, 9.4; Tert. *De Corona* 3; Hippol. *Traditio Apostolica* 21.9-18.

71. For example, pre-baptismal teaching; Iren. *Epid*.

72. Similarly *Haer*. I, 10.1; 22.1; III, 11.1; *Epid*. 6; and Tert. *Praescr*. 13; 36; *Virg*. 1; Prax. 2.

73. The quote continues: "so that *that* would be *the foundation and pillar of our faith*." Cf. 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:15, 19.

74. Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 33.

75. Ibid., 29.

76. Ibid.

77. Darina Staudt, *Der eine und einzige Gott: Monotheistische Formeln im Urchristentum und ihre Vorgeschichte bei Griechen und Juden* (Göttingen and Oakville, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 286-89.

78. See Reinhard Feldmeier and Hermann Spieckermann, *God of the Living: A Biblical Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 106; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2008), 94-106; and Larry W. Hurtado, "Monotheism," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. J. J. Collins and D. C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 963.

79. Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *God of the Living*, 107-8.

80. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 130-31.

81. Pelikan, *Credo*, 131-32.

82. Jaroslaw Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss (eds.), *Creeds & Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 1 (New Haven and London: Yale University, 2003), 162.

83. Cf. 1 Tim. 2:5, Eph. 5:5-6 and Gal. 3:20.

84. ACW 20:33.

85. Richard Bauckham helpfully comments ("Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John," in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2005), 148): "For many scholars the christology of the Fourth Gospel is the 'highest' in the New Testament. In my view, this is a mistake – not in the sense of exaggerating the extent to which true and full divinity is attributed to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, but in failing to recognize the extent to which this is also the case in most other parts of the New Testament. In my view, a 'christology of divine identity,' in which Jesus is understood to be included in the unique divine identity of the one and only God, the God of Israel, is pervasive in the New Testament writings." See also Martin Hengel, "Christology and New Testament Chronology," in idem, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf&Stock, 1983, 2003), 30-47.

86. *Nomina sacra* are also used in other early Christian writings and elsewhere.

87. For an overview of *nomina sacra*, see Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 95-134. Substantial criticism of C. M. Tuckett's critique ("'Nomina Sacra:' Yes and No?" in *The Biblical Canons*, eds. J.-M. Auwers and H. J. de Jonge (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 431–58) of the scholarly majority view concerning the significance of the *nomina sacra* is provided by Hurtado, *Artifacts*, 122-34, and Jane Heath ("Nomina Sacra and Sacra Memoria Before the Monastic Age," *JTS* 61.2 (2010): 518-23).

88. Occasionally the Greek word for "Spirit" (ΠΝΑ) is rendered in its *nomen sacrum* form in the NT portion of Vaticanus (some three per cent of the occurrences of the term). That Vaticanus is an exception in this respect was pointed out already by C. H. Turner in 1924 ("The *Nomina Sacra* in Early Latin Christian MSS.," *Studi e Testi* 40 (1924): 65), maintaining that of all our Greek manuscripts one hand of Vaticanus provides the only exception to the universal practice of abbreviating Πνεῦμα as a *nomen sacrum* (see footnote below).

89. Although the earliest formation of the *nomina sacra* word group included abbreviations of the Greek words for "God," "Lord," "Jesus" and "Christ" (commonly referred to as the "core group"), "Spirit" is very soon (arguably in the late first century AD, or earlier) added to the group. Thus, in our earliest second- to mid-fourth-century NT manuscripts (excluding Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus), Πνεῦμα is rendered in its *nomen sacrum* form in ca. 89-90 per cent of the occurrences of the word (Tomas Bokedal, "Notes on the *Nomina Sacra* and Biblical Interpretation," in *Beyond Biblical Theologies*, eds. H. Assel, S. Beyerle and C. Böttrich (WUNT 295; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 273-78). Scholars who opt for or consider placing Πνεῦμα as part of the core group of *nomina sacra* include Philip Comfort (*Encountering the Manuscripts: An Introduction to New Testament Paleography & Textual Criticism* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2005, 231), Scott D. Charlesworth ("Consensus standardization in the systematic approach to *nomina sacra* in second- and third-century gospel manuscripts," *Aegyptus* 86 (2006), 38), and Dirk Jongkind (*Scribal Habits of Codex Sinaiticus* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2007), 68).

90. The renowned palaeographer C. H. Roberts (*Manuscript*, 46) famously proposed that the *nomina sacra* "may be plausibly viewed as the creation of the primitive Christian community, representing what might be regarded as the embryonic creed of the first Church." The second-/third- century NT manuscripts P45, P46, P66 and P75 contain eight to eleven words frequently written in their *nomina sacra* forms. See further Bokedal, "Notes on the *Nomina Sacra*," 277-81.

91. Cf. C. H. Roberts, *Manuscript*, 28.f.; and Hurtado, *Artifacts*, 106: "although there is at least a certain broad phenomenological similarity between the *nomina sacra* and Jewish reverential treatment of the divine name, it seems most likely that the specific nomina sacra scribal practice represents something distinctive."

92. As for Irenaeus' or his scribe's likely use of *nomina sacra*, see n. 49 above; cf. also nn. 1, 45, 48 and 88.

93. ACW 16:51.

94. Reuben Swanson (ed.), *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines Against Codex Vaticanus. 1 Corinthians* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, and Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2003), 113f.

95. Similarly John 10:34-35 in P66 and P75, where the plural forms of "god" are written *plene*.

96. Bokedal, "Notes on the *Nomina Sacra*," 263–95, esp. 283-84.

97. Ibid., 273-76; the calculation is based on 74 second- to fourth-century NT manuscripts. For cross as a *nomen sacrum* occasionally containing the staurogram, see Hurtado, *Artifacts*, 134 and 135-54.

98. *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman, 2 vols., LCL 25 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2:45-47, modified.

99. *The Apostolic Fathers*, LCL 25, 291f., modified.

100. ANF 1:496, modified.

101. See, e.g., Wolfram Kinzig and Markus Vinzent, "Recent Research on the Origin of the Creed," *JTS* 50 (1999): 535-59, 554-55; cf. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 12: "The Trinitarianism of the New Testament is rarely explicit; but the frequency with which the triadic schema recurs . . . suggests that this pattern was implicit in Christian theology from the start." For the relationship between baptismal interrogations, regula fidei and the content of the later declaratory creeds, see ibid., 40-52; and Liuwe H. Westra, *The Apostles' Creed. Origin, History, and some early Commentaries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 56-60, 37-43.

102. John Barton, *The Spirit and the Letter: Studies in the Biblical Canon* (London: SPCK, 1997), 123.

103. According to Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl*. III, 3.1), Melito of Sardis (ca. AD 175) employs the term "Old Testament" as a title for the collection of the Jewish Scriptures (the Old Testament). A couple of decades later, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian use the newly introduced term "New Testament" (*Strom*. I, 5.28.2: ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη; *Marc*. IV, 1: Tertullian uses the Latin terms *Testamentum* or *Instrumentum* to designate the main sections of the bipartite Christian Bible).

104. Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy*, 40.

105. See n. 45 above.

106. Earliest use of "Old Testament" in this sense is documented in Melito of Sardis (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl*. IV, 26.12-14); and of "New Testament" in Clement of Alexandria (*Strom*. I, 5.28.2) and Tertullian (*Marc*. IV, 1). See Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament*, 43-44.

107. Scholars who have based their biblical theology/hermeneutics on the *regula fidei* include Peter Stuhlmacher (*How To Do Biblical Theology*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, 38 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 1995), 61-3) and Robert W. Jenson ("Hermeneutics and the Life of the Church," in *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*, eds. Jenson and Braaten (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 96-98).

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