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“FILLED WITH THE GIFTS OF GOD”: THE HOLY SPIRIT AS
AGENT OF VIRTUE FORMATION IN THE PARTICIPATORY
PNEUMATOLOGY OF DIDYMUS THE BLIND

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PREFACE

On a number of levels, this project represents the culmination of other people's investments. In reflecting on the contributions of so many friends, mentors, and family members, I can only praise God for his grace in using these other people to prepare me to undertake the challenge of pursuing theological education and producing an academic thesis, in addition to supporting me, materially, emotionally, and spiritually, along the way. The investments of my mother, Lois Mascotti, and stepfather, Mitch Mascotti, are especially prominent in my mind. My grandmother, Iris Masters, has also been a constant source of help.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Thesis

Didymus the Blind's (313–98) detailed treatment of the formation of virtue and his theology of the Holy Spirit are the key features that distinguish his system from both the largely Neoplatonic metaphysical framework which he otherwise adopts in describing, on the one hand, the nature of God and the progress of Christian experience, and, on the other hand, contemporary Christian pneumatological conceptions that were, in his view, theologically deficient. As a thinker renowned for his mastery of both classical modes of philosophy and the techniques of biblical exegesis, Didymus unified these practices into a coherent system, which he taught to a circle of faithful students in Alexandria for decades.

In his system, Didymus rejects the limitations of traditional Hellenistic conceptions of virtue as totally distinct from the transcendent first principle, and he fills the gap by developing a pneumatology which assigns the active role in virtue formation to the Holy Spirit—a radical break with the minimal “role” played in that domain by the impersonal Neoplatonic third hypostasis (Ψυχή). In this he follows the precedent of earlier Alexandrian theologians such as Clement (c. 150–215) and Origen (c. 185–254), who likewise modified the secular metaphysical and philosophical frameworks that they inherited and adapted them to fit the theological concerns of their specific Christian contexts. Simultaneously, however, Didymus subtly critiques and further develops a Christian pneumatology which was only latently present in the writings of Origen and other Alexandrian predecessors, offering a stronger articulation capable of meeting the emerging challenges of the Trinitarian and pneumatological controversies of the fourth

century.

He connects these key strands of his thought—the conception of virtue formation and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit—by constructing a participatory pneumatology in which the individual believer experiences union with Christ, the substance of virtue, by partaking of the Spirit as “undiminished giver.” This pneumatology, to be explored below, also functions as a new and formidable argument for the full divinity of the Spirit along pro-Nicene lines.

The present study will examine both Didymus’s conception of virtue formation, developed primarily in his exegetical commentaries, and his pneumatological doctrine, as laid out in his *De Spiritu Sancto*, to demonstrate that a single theme can be traced consistently across Didymus’s systematic and exegetical works. Furthermore, it will argue that this link—virtue-forming participatory pneumatology—is in fact the only theological priority that can sufficiently integrate Didymus’s disparate writings into a coherent whole in a manner that Didymean scholarship has, to the present, largely failed to attempt (much less to accomplish).

Methodologically, it will be necessary, after a brief overview of the state of Didymean scholarship and a cursory biographical sketch, first to establish the conception of virtue formation that Didymus expounds in his exegetical commentaries—chiefly, those on the biblical books of Genesis and Zechariah, noting both continuity and discontinuity with earlier pagan and Christian virtue traditions. A similar procedure will then consider the unique contribution of the pneumatology that Didymus outlines, primarily in his treatise *De Spiritu Sancto*, again in contradistinction to both the metaphysical “triads” of classical philosophy and the ill-defined pneumatologies of contemporary Christian theology. Finally, this study will summarize and synthesize the insights of these analyses to show their mutual dependency, connective links, and organic relationships with the best currents of recent Didymean scholarship—further confirming the subtle but extraordinary originality which it has only begun to recognize in him.

State of Scholarship

Introduction

In one sense, Didymean scholarship begins with Jerome (347–420), who paid scrupulous attention to the exegetical commentaries of his former teacher and frequently cited him as an authority in his own (at least, until the outbreak of the Origenist controversy) in addition to producing the Latin translation of his major pneumatological treatise in which it now survives. In the centuries following Didymus's conciliar condemnation and the resultant destruction of his works, however, his memory became so faint as nearly to disappear entirely from the pages of fourth-century Christian history, with the exceptions of a few well-intentioned but inadequately-equipped dissertations of the twentieth century. Subsequent to these, the indisputable dividing line for phases in the study of Didymus the Blind is the year 1941, when the chance discovery of surviving papyri containing previously unknown writings revolutionized the traditional portrait of this enigmatic figure. Indeed, only now, some seven decades later, are the true contours of his thought beginning to emerge, and, as this thesis will argue, his system as a coherent whole has yet to receive adequate attention.

Writings

Scholarship on Didymus begins, naturally, with his surviving writings. For centuries, only two systematic treatises (in addition to scattered quotations and minor fragments) could be identified with certainty as his work: the polemical *Contra Manichaeos* and the topical *De Spiritu Sanctu*, translated into Latin by Jerome. The historian Socrates (c. 380–450) also credits Didymus with a treatise *De Trinitate*, and as a result, a manuscript on that subject discovered in the eighteenth century was quickly ascribed to him. Debate over its authenticity continues inconclusively into the present

day, though recent arguments have trended in the direction of support for this traditional identification.¹

However, when British soldiers stumbled upon a collection of papyri in the stone quarries of Tura, outside Cairo, during the second World War, Didymus's extant corpus expanded dramatically to include portions of his commentaries on Genesis (Codex 4), Job (Codex 7), the Psalms (Codex 5), Ecclesiastes (Codex 3), and Zechariah (Codex 6).² The Psalms and Ecclesiastes writings appear to be reconstructed from notes taken at Didymus's lectures, providing invaluable insight to the fourth-century Alexandrian instructional model.³ Scholars quickly recognized the enormous importance of the find and set to work preparing critical editions.⁴ Since 1941, no further unattested writings have been discovered. Because of the significance of the find, scholarship on Didymus can be most clearly divided, and its development most effectively analyzed, between the stages preceding and succeeding the Tura discovery.

¹See, for example, Alasdair Heron, "Studies in the Trinitarian Writings of Didymus the Blind: His Authorship of the *Adversus Eunomium* IV-V and the *De Trinitate*, Volume 1" (PhD diss., University of Tübingen, 1972); Alasdair Heron, "Some Sources Used in the *De Trinitate* Ascribed to Didymus the Blind," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 173-81; Lewis Ayres, Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Athanasius and Didymus: Works on the Spirit: Athanasius's Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit and Didymus's On the Holy Spirit*, trans. Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Lewis Ayres, Popular Patristics Series 43 (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011); Lewis Ayres, "The Holy Spirit as the 'Undiminished Giver': Didymus the Blind's *De Spiritu Sancto* and the Development of Nicene Pneumatology," in *The Holy Spirit in the Fathers of the Church: The Proceedings of the Seventh International Patristic Conference* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 57-72.

²On this discovery, see Louis Doutreleau, "Que Savons-Nous Aujourd'hui Des Papyrus de Toura," *Recherches Des Sciences Religieuses* 43 (1955): 161-93.

³As analyzed in Anne Browning Nelson, *The Classroom of Didymus the Blind* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 1998).

⁴These include Louis Doutreleau, *Didyme l'Aveugle sur Zacharie: Texte Inédit d'après un Papyrus de Toura*, Sources Chrétiennes 83-85 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1962); Ursula Hagedorn et al., *Didymos der Blinde: Kommentar zu Hiob*, Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen 1, 3, 33 (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1968); Adolphe Gesché and Michael Gronewald, *Didymos der Blinde: Psalmenkommentar*, Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen 1-8, 12 (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1968); Michael Gronewald et al., *Didymos der Blinde: Kommentar zum Ekklesiastes*, Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen 9, 13, 16, 22 (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1969); Pierre Nautin and Louis Doutreleau, *Didyme l'Aveugle sur la Genèse*, Sources Chrétiennes 233, 244 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976).

Pre-Tura Scholarship

The earliest knowledge of Didymus has been transmitted, apart from his own writings, by means of the documentation provided by his contemporaries—specifically, a number of his former students who later became influential figures in the history of the church. These ancient witnesses, along with a handful of secondary studies that pre-date the Tura discovery, are considered in sequence below.

Ancient witnesses. In his role as an exegetical teacher, Didymus instructed a number of students who later became influential ecclesiastical figures, including Jerome, Rufinus (c. 345–410), Palladius (c. 363–431), and Evagrius Ponticus (c. 346–99). Any attempt at the nearly impossible task of reconstructing even a cursory biography of Didymus has been based upon the scanty extant primary source materials of these writers. Jerome praises Didymus and boasts of his own tutelage to him in letters and prefaces to commentaries written before the outbreak of the Origenist controversy, but distances himself considerably thereafter.⁵ Rufinus, a staunch defender of Origen throughout it, criticizes Jerome’s change of heart and emphasizes the much longer duration of his own course of study with Didymus.⁶ Palladius provides a brief personal account of his four visits, and Evagrius labels Didymus his “great gnostic teacher.”⁷

Ancient histories. On the basis of these firsthand witnesses, the early Christian historians transmitted a fairly consistent depiction of Didymus as a blind mystic and ascetic renowned for his knowledge of the scriptures and his wide range of learning. Common features of the accounts of Socrates, Sozomen (c. 380–450), and Theodoret (c.

⁵Jerome, *Epistula* 50.1–2, 68.2, 84.3, 9; Jerome, *Chronicon* 372; Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 109. See also, for example, the prefaces to his commentaries on Galatians, Zechariah, and Hosea.

⁶Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 11.7; Rufinus, *Apology against Jerome* 2.15.

⁷Palladius, *Historia Lausica* 4.1; Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 4.8.

393–460) include Didymus’s blindness from childhood, his mastery of a wide range of classical disciplines, and the episode of his visit from the legendary desert monk Antony the Great (c. 251–356).⁸

Secondary studies. In modern times, these limited historical details, combined with the sparsity of his extant writings prior to 1941, produced an early portrait of Didymus that emphasized his dependence on the far more familiar Origen (criticized as a lack of originality) and left him otherwise shrouded in mystery. Indeed, only a handful of full-length studies even attempted to offer a scholarly account of him.⁹ These pre-1941 studies relied almost entirely upon *De Trinitate* as the largest then-available work attributed to Didymus; they therefore now hold relatively little value given the uncertainty of that ascription and, more importantly, an influx of exegetical writings which challenge the conventional conception on a number of points.¹⁰ No pre-1941 publications factor significantly in the analysis of this study.

Post-Tura Scholarship

The discovery of five previously-unattested exegetical commentaries at Tura permanently changed the landscape of Didymean scholarship by enabling new research in the areas of his exegesis, theology (specifically Christology and pneumatology), and pedagogy.¹¹ A few significant studies have also focused on his asceticism and conception

⁸Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.25; Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.2; Theodoret, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.30.

⁹Primarily these include Johannes Leipoldt, *Didymos der Blinde von Alexandrien*, Texte und Untersuchungen der altchristliche Literatur 14.3 (Leipzig: J.C. Hirichs, 1905); Gustave Bardy, *Didyme l’Aveugle*, Études de Théologie Historique, vol. 1 (Paris: Les Éditions du Beauchesne, 1910); William J. Gauche, *Didymus the Blind: An Educator of the Fourth Century* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1934).

¹⁰Grant D. Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind: A Fourth-Century Origenism*, Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 46.

¹¹Scholarship has also occasionally analyzed Didymus’s writings for their value to fields unrelated to his own system of thought, such as textual criticism; see, for example, Bart D. Ehrman,

of virtue (ethics). Regrettably, discussions of his philosophy often occur tangentially in the broader context of analysis of Origen's system and tradition, though Didymus has also received more independent attention in recent years.

It is not surprising, given the exegetical nature of these relatively newfound writings, that the bulk of subsequent scholarship has focused on his method for interpreting scripture.¹² Allegory has, of course, been a dominant fixture of early church studies generally, and indeed the Origenist tradition has been one locus of such research. While the new commentaries confirmed the longstanding identification of Didymus as an heir to that tradition, they also shed light for the first time on his distinctions from it. The first major study of his interpretive method from the twentieth century was that of Wolfgang Bienert, who attempted to trace distinctions between the concepts of allegory and anagogy in Didymus's exegesis.¹³ Many scholars have remained unconvinced that Bienert's scheme adequately explains the seemingly interchangeable—if not arbitrary—senses in which Didymus sometimes employs these terms, but the study was a crucial first step in identifying the method's key features. Shortly thereafter, J. H. Tigcheler proposed a more promising “vertically-structured” hermeneutical process supporting Didymus's exegesis (progressing “upward” from text to fact to figure to true meaning.)¹⁴ The work of David Runia, in his work on the legacy of Philo (c. 20 BC–AD 45), expertly demonstrates the continuity between the interpretive approach of Didymus and the earlier

Didymus the Blind and the Text of the Gospels, The New Testament in the Greek Fathers 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

¹²This section is partially indebted to the overview of studies of Didymus' interpretive method in Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind*, 56–60.

¹³Wolfgang Bienert, “*Allegoria*” und “*Anagoge*” bei Didymus dem Blinden von Alexandrien, *Patristische Texte und Studien* 13 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972).

¹⁴J. H. Tigcheler, *Didyme l'Aveugle et l'Exégèse Allégorique: Étude Sémantique de Quelques Termes Exégétiques Importants de Son Commentaire Sur Zacharie*, *Graecitas Christianorum Primaeva* 6 (Nijmegen, Netherlands: Dekker & van de Vegt, 1977).

Alexandrian allegorical tradition (including Clement and Origen.)¹⁵ Finally, Blossom Stefaniw has thoroughly questioned such conventional conceptions of “allegorical” interpretation, and suggested instead a “noetic” model of exegesis to describe the approach of Didymus.¹⁶ This understanding certainly comports well with the observable inclination of Didymus to present biblical interpretation as an activity that is parallel to the individual’s growth in virtue—a connection which the present study will argue is grounded in Didymus’s participatory pneumatology. Beyond these landmark contributions, a wide range of more narrowly-focused articles have examined specific aspects of Didymus’s exegesis with great fruitfulness.¹⁷

Beyond his interpretive method, modern scholarship on Didymus has investigated his theology mainly with an eye toward discerning his positions on two of the most divisive issues of his era—Christology and pneumatology. Various studies have confirmed the initial judgment of Jerome that “certainly on the subject of the Trinity, he is catholic.”¹⁸ Although the straightforward orthodoxy of Didymus’s general Trinitarian theology has failed to attract much scholarly attention (setting aside *De Trinitate*

¹⁵David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey*, *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum: Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature*, Sect. 3; vol. 3 (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1993), 197–204 .

¹⁶Blossom Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary: Noetic Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius Ponticus*, *Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity* 6 (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang, 2010). This contribution is considered more fully in the discussion of Didymus’s hermeneutical influences below.

¹⁷Philip Sellew, “Achilles or Christ? Porphyry and Didymus in Debate over Allegorical Interpretation,” *Harvard Theological Review* 82, no. 1 (1989): 79–100; Richard A. Layton, “Propatheia: Origen and Didymus on the Origin of the Passions,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 54, no. 3 (2000): 262–82; A. C. Geljon, “Philonic Elements in Didymus the Blind’s Exegesis of the Story of Cain and Abel,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007): 282–312; Mark DelCogliano, “Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, and the Anti-Pneumatomachian Exegesis of Amos 4:13 and John 1:3,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 61, no. 2 (2010): 644–58; Byard Bennett, “The Person Speaking: Prosopopoeia as an Exegetical Device in Didymus the Blind’s Interpretation of Romans 7,” in *Studia Patristica* 48 (2010), 173–77; Justin Rogers, “The Philonic and the Pauline: Hagar and Sarah in the Exegesis of Didymus the Blind,” *Studia Philonica Annual* 26 (2014): 57–77; Kellen Plaxco, “‘I Will Pour Out My Spirit’: Didymus against Eunomius in Light of John 16:14’s History of Reception,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 70, no. 5 (2016): 479–508.

¹⁸Jerome, *Apologia adversus Libros Rufini* 1.6

momentarily), his perspective on Christ, especially in connection with virtue formation, has received some consideration. Crucially for this study, Placid Solari provides an excellent discussion of the role that Christ plays as the “image” of virtue in which the Christian increasingly participates on the way to achieving *homoiosis*, or likeness to God.¹⁹ With respect to the Holy Spirit, a few important articles are now correcting a longstanding neglect of Didymus’s pneumatology that is surprising, given the centuries of access that scholars have enjoyed to his undisputed treatise on that subject. Most critically, Lewis Ayres demonstrates that Didymus employs the notion of the “undiminished giver” in his view of the Spirit to explain the means by which participation in him can occur.²⁰ Andrew Radde-Gallwitz additionally shows that Didymus follows Origen, with modification, in defending the personal agency of the Spirit over against conceptions of the Spirit as abstract *energeia*.²¹ Finally, Mark DelCogliano examines the polemic that Didymus utilizes in defending the Spirit’s divinity against the Pneumatomachi, including its potential influence upon Basil of Caesarea (329–79).²²

Scholars have also explored certain pedagogical aspects of Didymus’s career. Reasons for this interest include the fact that Didymus gained esteem primarily in his role as a teacher, rather than holding an official ecclesiastical position, and also the fact that the codices of his commentaries on the Psalms and Ecclesiastes were discovered in the

¹⁹Placid Solari, “Christ as Virtue in Didymus the Blind,” in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays in Honour of Juana Raasch, O.S.B.*, ed. Harriet Luckman and Linda Kulzer (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 67–88. See also Peter Bouteneff, “Placing the Christology of Didymus the Blind,” *Studia Patristica* 23 (2001): 389–95.

²⁰Ayres, “The Holy Spirit as the ‘Undiminished Giver’.”

²¹Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, “The Holy Spirit as Agent, Not Activity: Origen’s Argument with Modalism and Its Afterlife in Didymus, Eunomius, and Gregory of Nazianzus,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 65, no. 3 (2011): 227–48.

²²DelCogliano, “Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, and the Anti-Pneumatomachian Exegesis of Amos 4:13 and John 1:3.”

form of lecture-notes, recorded, possibly, by a student. The longest-running debate in this sphere surrounds the mysterious assertion of Rufinus that as a result of his extensive learning Didymus became the “teacher of the church-school, being completely commended by Athanasius and the other wise men of the church of God” (*ut scholae Ecclesiasticae Doctor existeret, Athanasio Episcopo, caeterisque sapientibus in Ecclesia viris Dei admodum probatus*).²³ Sozomen similarly describes Didymus as “official in the sacred school of sacred learning in Alexandria” (προϊστάμενος ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ τοῦ ἱεροῦ διδασκαλείου τῶν ἱερῶν μαθημάτων).²⁴ Early Didymean scholarship naturally sought to connect these vague references with the renowned Alexandrian “catechetical school” of earlier centuries, and tended to err in interpreting this term in an overly formal institutional sense.²⁵ This excess stems from an uncritical identification of the phrase with what is known of Alexandrian Christianity in the days of Origen and Clement—which provides an important background context but fails to account for Didymus’s unique circumstances.²⁶ Thus more recent scholarship has preferred to see in these phrases a reference to a particular group of students receiving regular teaching from Didymus quite apart from the official commission of the church under Athanasius (though not in conflict with it, as indicated by Sozomen’s agreeable mention of the bishop).²⁷ Nevertheless, due

²³Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 11.7 (my translation)

²⁴Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.15 (my translation)

²⁵Gauche, for example, likens it to a modern university, officially commissioned by the church to combat pagan institutions, in William Gauche, “Didymus the Blind, an Educator of the Fourth Century” (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1934), 35–38.

²⁶For this background, see Edward Jay Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Robert Wilken, “Alexandria: A School for Training in Virtue,” in *Schools of Thought in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Patrick Henry (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 15–30.

²⁷Grant Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind: A Fourth-Century Virtue-Origenism*, Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 12–16; Annewies Van de Hoek, “The ‘Catechetical’ School of Alexandria and Its Philonic Heritage” *Harvard Theological Review* 90, no. 1 (1997): 59–87; Frances M. Young and Andrew Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010); Richard A. Layton, *Didymus the*

to the availability of these lecture notes, interest in Didymus for analysis of early Christian pedagogy has persisted.²⁸

With respect to philosophy, the towering figure of Origen has overshadowed Didymus, even subsequent to the Tura discoveries, due to the latter's dependence upon the former in several philosophical respects. Debate usually centers around the doctrines for which both were condemned in 553, such as the pre-existent nature of the soul and *apokatastasis*.²⁹ Beyond the basic acknowledgment that Didymus demonstrates genuine familiarity with the major classical schools of thought (at the least, Pythagoreanism, Neoplatonism, Stoicism, and Aristotelianism), his philosophy has attracted little independent examination. However, Byard Bennett has focused attention on his polemic against Manicheism,³⁰ Kellen Plaxco has examined some crucial aspects of his metaphysics³¹, and Paul Woodruff has considered his relation with Protagoras and his school.³²

Finally, the prominent role that virtue formation plays as the *telos* of Didymus's enterprise (exegetical, theological, pedagogical, or philosophical) has invited

Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

²⁸Nelson, *The Classroom of Didymus the Blind*; Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary*.

²⁹H. S. Schibli, "Origen, Didymus and the Vehicle of the Soul," in *Origeniana Quinta*, ed. R. J. Daly (Leuven, Belgium: Uitgeverij Peeters and Leuven University Press, 1992), 381–94.

³⁰Byard Bennett, *The Origin of Evil: Didymus the Blind's Contra Manichaeos and Its Debt to Origen's Theology and Exegesis* (Toronto: University of St. Michael's College, 1997); Byard Bennett, "Didymus the Blind's Knowledge of Manichaeism," in *The Light and the Darkness: Studies in Manichaeism and Its World*, ed. Paul Mirecki and Jason BeDuhn, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 38–67.

³¹Kellen Plaxco, "Didymus the Blind and the Metaphysics of Participation," in *Studia Patristica* 67 (2013), 227–37; Kellen Plaxco, "Participation and Trinity in Origen and Didymus the Blind," in *Origeniana Undecima: Origen and Origenism in Western Thought*, ed. A. C. Jacobsen (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2016), 767–82. Plaxco's work is particularly important for the arguments below.

³²Paul Woodruff, "Didymus on Protagoras and the Protagoreans," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23, no. 4 (1985): 483–97.

deserved analysis from the most recent studies of his thought. Virtue formation typically receives tangential consideration insofar as it relates to one of the aforementioned disciplines, but Richard Layton has provided the first book-length treatment of its fundamental import for an understanding of Didymus, noting especially the connection between virtue formation and social exegesis.³³ It has already been seen that this dynamic is also developed by Stefaniw.³⁴ Above all, Grant Bayliss masterfully incorporates the insights of a wide range of prior research to present a definitive survey of Didymus's exegesis, demonstrating the centrality of virtue formation—in the tradition of Origen, but with his own unique adaptation—as the fundamental concept which both motivates and fulfills Didymus's entire instructional and theological system.³⁵ While Bayliss demonstrates the priority of this theme in the exegetical writings with great clarity, he does not sufficiently attend to its role in *De Spiritu Sancto*, nor does he seek to integrate the emphases of these works, elucidate the mechanism that connects them, and present them as a coherent whole. This will be the agenda of the present study.

Indeed, what remains, given the preceding survey, is for Didymean scholarship to take its next step by explicitly analyzing connections between the works of Bayliss, Layton, and others who have recognized the primacy of virtue in his thought, on the one hand, and the insights of scholars who have focused exclusively on his pneumatology, on the other hand, such as Lewis Ayres and Kellen Plaxco, all in the pursuit of a truly holistic representation of the multifaceted thought of Didymus the Blind. The arguments below offer a suggestion for such synthesis by considering the participatory virtue formation as the link between the Genesis and Zechariah commentaries and *De Spiritu Sancto*.

³³Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria*.

³⁴Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary*.

³⁵Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind*.

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Life

By all accounts, Didymus of Alexandria, better known as Didymus the Blind, was a renowned and highly accomplished Christian teacher who combined a proclivity for the asceticism of the Egyptian monastic communities with a rigid commitment to theological orthodoxy, expressed across a broad corpus of exegetical and systematic writings. There is no indication that he ever left Alexandria, and indeed there was little need, when such notable theological figures as Antony the Great, Evagrius, Jerome, Rufinus, and Palladius were willing to travel there to receive his instruction directly. It is from the pens of these last three writers that most of the primary source material concerning the biographical details of Didymus has come.

If the ancient witnesses agree on one fact concerning Didymus, it is that he was blind.¹ He lost his sight at the age of four, rendering him “illiterate,” but he nevertheless maintained a voracious appetite for education.² Jerome claims that Didymus never learned the alphabet, though the further removed Sozomen states that he did learn it by feeling engravings on stone tablets.³ In any case, Didymus clearly compensated for his lack of vision with the ancient equivalent of a photographic memory⁴, which he applied

¹Jerome, *Epistula* 68.2; Jerome, *Chronicon* 372; Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 109; Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 11.7; Palladius, *Historia Lausica* 4.1.

²Jerome, *Chronicon* 372.

³Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 109; Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.15.

⁴Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 11.7; Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.23, quoting Evagrius Ponticus.

to acquiring an impressive range of apparently auditory classical learning.⁵ Astronomy, dialectic, geometry, arithmetic, philosophy, grammar, rhetoric, music, and poetry all receive mention in the sources as subjects which Didymus had mastered.

However, it was not Didymus's training in the "syllogisms of Aristotle and the beautiful style of Plato"⁶ that elicited for him such far-reaching renown; rather it was his legendary knowledge of the Christian scriptures, and his power to explicate them. Jerome was especially eager to claim Didymus as his teacher (at least, before this became unfavorable during the Origenist controversy), making reference to the Alexandrian's influence in the introductions of nearly all of his commentaries, as well as several of his letters.⁷ Jerome also credits himself with requesting that Didymus should write commentaries on Zechariah and Hosea, the latter allegedly "dedicated" to Jerome himself.⁸, and he later translated some of Didymus's works into Latin. He relates that the great desert monk Antony himself was impressed with Didymus's scriptural "insight," praises him as the most "eloquent" follower of Origen, and names him the author of "very many distinguished works."⁹

Rufinus was unimpressed by the amount of time that Jerome spent with Didymus, dismissing it as a mere month, which paled in comparison with his own total of eight years as a student in Alexandria,¹⁰ but he too regarded Didymus as a "lamp shining with divine light" whose "illumination of the heart" yielded "expert knowledge of things

⁵Rufinus, Socrates, and Sozomen all specifically refer to Didymus's ability to retain what he heard read aloud by others.

⁶Theodoret of Cyrus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.30 (my translation.)

⁷Jerome, *Letters* 50.1-2, 84.3, 9; prologues to *Commentarii in Epistulam Pauli ad Galatas*, *Commentariorum in Zachariam Prophetam*, *Commentariorum in Osee Prophetam*, and others.

⁸Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 109.

⁹Jerome, *Letters* 68.2; 84.9; Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 109, respectively.

¹⁰Rufinus, *Apology against Jerome* 2.15.

divine and human.”¹¹ Palladius asserted that Didymus “surpassed all the ancients in knowledge” of scriptural interpretation,¹² and Evagrius agreed that he was a “great and gnostic teacher.”¹³ The consensus of his former pupils, then, identifies Didymus as a preeminent biblical exegete.

Later ancient historians rely largely on the accounts of the primary witnesses surveyed above in rendering their own portrayals, which therefore typically include standardized references to his blindness, his learnedness, his exegetical ability, and his legendary encounter with Antony. Socrates additionally likens him to Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330–390) in his resolute rejection of the Arian heresy,¹⁴ and Sozomen includes an apocryphal tale in which Didymus prophesies the death of the Emperor Julian (331–363) on the basis of a night vision.¹⁵ Theodoret draws attention to his deployment of classical education as a weapon against heresy.¹⁶

Modern secondary studies of Didymus have done little to modify these received accounts, focusing nearly exclusively on his exegetical works and thus providing only cursory examinations of his biography. However, some debate has centered around the comment of Rufinus, repeated by Sozomen, that Didymus served as “president of the school of sacred learning in Alexandria” (προϊστάμενος ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ τοῦ ἱεροῦ διδασκαλείου τῶν ἱερῶν μαθημάτων),¹⁷ which has been variously accepted or rejected as a reference to the well-known catechetical “school” of that city, founded,

¹¹Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 11.7.

¹²Palladius, *Historia Lausica* 4.2.

¹³Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 48.

¹⁴Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.25.

¹⁵Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6.2.

¹⁶Theodoret, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.30.

¹⁷Rufinus *Historia Ecclesia* 11.7, Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesia* 3.15.

according to early legend, by the apostle Mark and administered, according to verifiable history, by such prominent Alexandrians as Clement and Origen.¹⁸ The weight of scholarly opinion has settled against interpretations that make Didymus a “president” of this school, at least in any formal or institutional sense, preferring to understand the “school” along the more classical lines of philosophical groups formed around renowned founders or teachers.¹⁹ Regardless, a few studies have focused on the educational component of Didymus’s work (especially in his commentaries on Psalms and Ecclesiastes, which have survived in the form of lecture notes), as a window into the broader Alexandrian context.²⁰

The fact that among the contemporary sources only Rufinus alludes to this catechetical connection (and vaguely, at that),²¹ despite the writers’ general efforts to eulogize Didymus, is the best evidence that the comment should be taken in a sense similar to the statements of Jerome, who calls Didymus in a general sense a “teacher of the church”—probably in reference to his role as a simple orthodox exegetical instructor.²² Indeed, it would be surprising for Jerome to fail to mention any official capacity that Didymus may have held in the “catechetical school” since, within his early

¹⁸For an overview, see Robert Wilken, “Alexandria: A School for Training in Virtue,” in *Schools of Thought in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Patrick Henry (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). See also Annewies Van de Hoek, “The ‘Catechetical’ School of Alexandria and Its Philonic Heritage,” *Harvard Theological Review* 90, no. 1 (1997): 59–87.

¹⁹For example, Grant Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind: A Fourth-Century Virtue-Origenism*, Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 12–16; Richard Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 15.

²⁰William Gauche, *Didymus the Blind, an Educator of the Fourth Century* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1934); Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria*; Anne Browning Nelson, *The Classroom of Didymus the Blind* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 1998).

²¹The historical reliability of a fifth-century fragment of Philip of Side, which includes Didymus in a purported list of the successive heads of the Alexandrian school, has been widely discredited, as in Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria*, 16.

²²Rufinus, quoting Jerome in *Against Jerome* 2.13.

writings, Jerome tends to embellish the length and nature of his tutelage under Didymus as evidence of his own competency.

It is clear from Rufinus's comment that Didymus enjoyed the support of the Alexandrian church in general and the endorsement, in whatever form, of its bishop Athanasius in particular, and certainly, concern for the preservation of orthodoxy in the local church permeates Didymus's extant corpus. However, some scholars have recognized that Didymus should be associated rather more closely with the ascetic movement of the monastic desert communities than with the city's institutional church.²³ Layton insightfully traces the development of the story of the visit that Didymus received from the famous desert monk Antony the Great across its various versions.²⁴ Noting that this story features far more prominently within the most contemporary accounts of Didymus's life than does the mention of Athanasius's approval (which appears in the later historians), Layton concludes: "The widespread dissemination of the Antony tradition among his students suggests that Didymus placed more weight on the insight of the desert saint than on the approval of the bishop."²⁵ This certainly harmonizes with a close monastic affiliation.

Lastly, the very nature of the early Christian educational tradition in Alexandria weighs against the identification of the catechetical school as a church-sanctioned institution. As will be elaborated below, the Alexandrian Christian "school" followed, to a large degree, the contemporary model of the city's philosophical schools, where training in the classical disciplines remained fully integrated with an emphasis on

²³For example, Placid Solari, "Christ as Virtue in Didymus the Blind," in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays in Honor of Juana Raasch, O.S.B.*, ed. Harriett Luckman and Linda Kulzer (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999); Frances M. Young and Andrew Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

²⁴Or three visits, according to Palladius, *Historia Lausica* 4. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria*, 19–26.

²⁵Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria*, 26.

moral formation. Thus Robert Wilken asserts, “‘School’ in the context of Alexandria at this time refers to a free association of students under the guidance and direction of a sage in a relation best described as master to disciples.”²⁶ While the Alexandrian episcopate doubtlessly recognized these teacher-centric “schools” as fertile training ground for potential clergymen, it is unlikely that they shared an institutional relationship. The school of which Didymus was the “head,” then, was, in keeping with his predecessors Clement and Origen, a private group of students organized around the instruction of a widely-respected tutor, mainly in the areas of biblical exegesis and spiritual formation.

Little else is known about the historical life of Didymus of Alexandria. He consistently opposed Trinitarian formulations that were contrary to the pronouncements of Nicaea, but only marginally contributed to the early stages of the Christological controversies which took shape in the fifth century.²⁷ Palladius states that he died at the age of eighty-five (usually dated to the year 398), presumably of natural causes.²⁸ The works of Didymus were posthumously condemned for their assumed Origenism at the second council of Constantinople in 553.

Works

As a result of this condemnation, the majority of Didymus’s writings did not survive the late antique period. In fact, it was once believed that, in addition to many fragments of various levels of veracity and an abundance of scattered quotations, possibly only his treatises *Contra Manichaeos* and *De Spiritu Sancto* had been preserved. On the basis of its polemic against Eunomius’s first *Apology* (c. 360), its parallel treatment to Basil’s *Adversus Eunomius* of Amos 4.13 and John 1.3 (c. 365), and its use by Ambrose

²⁶Wilken, “Alexandria,” 18.

²⁷Young, however, credits Didymus with an early anti-Apollinarianism in Young and Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, 99.

²⁸Palladius, *Historia Lausica* 4.1.

in composing his own *De Spiritu Sancto* (c. 381), Ayres and others suggest for the latter work a date of composition in the range of 360–65, strengthening the case for Didymus’s originality and importance.²⁹

However, the most significant development in the history of Didymean scholarship remains the discovery of the Tura papyri, mentioned above. These eight codices, which were shockingly well-preserved given their lack of care, contained extracted writings of Origen (dialogues, commentaries, and sermons) and, more importantly for the present purpose, large portions of previously unattested exegetical works of Didymus—commentaries on Job (Codex 7), Psalms (Codex 5), Ecclesiastes (Codex 3), Genesis (Codex 4), and Zechariah (Codex 6). The latter two works provide the basis for the analysis of Didymus’s teaching on virtue formation in the present study. Following the discovery, Louis Doutreleau prepared a critical edition of the Zechariah commentary, while the Genesis commentary was edited by him and Pierre Nautin.³⁰

These modern discoveries further confirmed what had long appeared to be the case on the basis of the fragments and general references: Didymus had produced commentaries on an astonishing number of biblical books, including: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job, Hosea, Zechariah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Hebrews, the Catholic Epistles, and Revelation. These writings laid the foundation for the reputation of Didymus as primarily an exegete, since within them he never shirked from the texts’ well-known interpretive difficulties. Indeed, this is likely

²⁹Ayres, DelCogliano, and Radde-Gallwitz in the introduction to Athanasius and Didymus, *Works on the Spirit*, 40–42.

³⁰For a firsthand account, see Louis Doutreleau, “Que Savons-Nous Aujourd’hui Des Papyrus de Toura?” *Recherches des Sciences Religieuses* 45 (1955): 161–93; the critical editions are Louis Doutreleau, *Didyme l’Aveugle Sur Zacharie: Texte Inédit D’après un Papyrus de Toura*, Sources Chrétiennes 83–85 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1962); Pierre Nautin and Louis Doutreleau, eds. and trans., *Didyme l’Aveugle Sur La Genèse: Texte Inédit D’après un Papyrus de Toura* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976).

the reason that Jerome beseeched him to write specifically on Hosea and Zechariah—prophetic books with troublesome connections to the New Testament.³¹ Moreover, Didymus wrote a number of topical treatises: *On Lot and David*, *On the First Principles of Origen*, *On Dogmas*, *Against the Arians*, *Against Eunomius*, *On Sects*, *On the Son*, *On the Soul*, *On Faith*, *On Virtues*, *To the Philosopher*, *On the Incorporeal*, *On the Odd Number*, *On the Revelation of God*, and *On Why Children Die*. Only *On the Holy Spirit*, has survived, along with the more polemical *Contra Manichaeos*.³²

Beyond these, the historian Socrates avers that Didymus wrote a treatise *On the Trinity*³³—a matter which deserves separate attention. On the basis of Socrates’ remark, Ferdinando Mingarelli in the mid-eighteenth century ascribed a newly discovered manuscript on the subject of the Trinity to Didymus. It is printed in Migne’s edition as the *De Trinitate* of Didymus due to the parallels that Mingarelli observed between it and Didymus’s *On the Holy Spirit* (the only major work then available for comparison).³⁴ The few major studies on Didymus that were published before the discovery of the Tura commentaries found little reason to question this traditional ascription.³⁵

Following the Tura find in the mid-twentieth century, however, scholarship on Didymus largely turned against the idea that he authored *De Trinitate*, believing the differences in style and content to be irreconcilable—a change of opinion that “would revolutionize scholarly conceptions of Didymus.”³⁶ In subsequent decades, focus has

³¹Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 109.

³²This list is based on the useful table compiled in Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind*, 54–55. The table also provides the source of each work’s attestation and its status of preservation.

³³Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.25.7.

³⁴PG 39.269-922. The parallels that Mingarelli noted are also printed there.

³⁵For example, Johannes Leipoldt, *Didymus Der Blinde von Alexandrien* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1905); Gustave Bardy, *Didyme l’Aveugle*, *Études de Théologie Historique* (Paris: Éditions du Beauchesne, 1910); Gauche, “Didymus the Blind, an Educator of the Fourth Century.”

³⁶Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind*, 46.

shifted nearly exclusively to these commentaries, leaving the matter of *De Trinitate*'s authorship unresolved.³⁷

More recently, however, compelling arguments in favor of Didymus's genuine authorship of *De Trinitate* have been offered by Alasdair Heron.³⁸ In brief, Heron demonstrates detailed parallels which link *De Trinitate* with Didymus's *De Spiritu Sancto* and the *Adversus Eunomium* IV–V (additions to an original work of Basil) on the basis of such shared features as “long and complex arguments,” “identical or very similar combinations of biblical texts,” and “points argued in the same or remarkably similar terms.”³⁹ Heron's graphical comparisons illustrate the use of common sources in the composition of each work, which employ the same biblical texts to make theological arguments, use the same strategies to refute particular heresies, and describe orthodox viewpoints in the same terms. While he admits that these commonalities do not conclusively prove Didymean authorship, Heron demonstrates in his dissertation that the evidence in support of it is stronger than the case against it.⁴⁰ His argument is endorsed by Lewis Ayres, Mark DelCogliano, and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz in their introduction to a recent English translation of *De Spiritu Sancto*.⁴¹ Indeed, Heron avers: “whether or not Didymus was the author. . .there are so many parallels [with *De Spiritu Sancto*] that it

³⁷Louis Doutreleau, “Le De Trinitate: Est-Il l'Oeuvre de Didyme l'Aveugle?” *Recherches Des Sciences Religieuses* 45 (1957): 514–57.

³⁸Alasdair Heron, “Studies in the Trinitarian Writings of Didymus the Blind: His Authorship of the *Adversus Eunomium* IV–V and the *De Trinitate*, Volume 1” (PhD diss., University of Tübingen, 1972); Heron, “Some Sources Used in the *De Trinitate* Ascribed to Didymus the Blind,” in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honor of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 173–81. The latter is a highly condensed summary of arguments that Heron first produced in the former, his doctoral dissertation.

³⁹Heron, “Some Sources Used in the *De Trinitate* Ascribed to Didymus the Blind,” 174.

⁴⁰Heron, “Some Sources Used in the *De Trinitate* Ascribed to Didymus the Blind,” 178–79.

⁴¹Introduction to Athanasius and Didymus, *Works on the Spirit: Athanasius's Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit and Didymus's on the Holy Spirit*, trans. Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Lewis Ayres, Popular Patristics Series 43 (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 34–35.

would be possible to attempt a partial reconstruction of at least some passages in the original Greek by drawing upon the *De Trinitate*.”⁴²

Although the question of Didymus’s authorship of *De Trinitate* obviously bears significantly upon any consideration of his conception of the Holy Spirit as an aspect of his Trinitarian theology more generally, it nevertheless relates only tangentially to the present topic: Didymus’s view of the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of virtue formation. It is also the case that, whoever its author, *De Trinitate* deals far more extensively with the relation between the Son and the Father (in response to Arian concerns) than with matters pertaining to the Spirit. Thus, while I accept the thrust of Heron’s argument in defense of the traditional ascription of *De Trinitate* to Didymus, I restrain discussion of Didymus’s pneumatology here to the much more detailed dogmatic framework which can be clearly (and indisputably) established from *De Spiritu Sancto*.

Influences

Beyond his general fourth-century Alexandrian setting, identification of specific influences on key components of Didymus’s thought (namely, for the purposes of this study, in the areas of philosophy, hermeneutics, theology, and ethics) derives from three source types: his own explicit references, the assertions of his approximate contemporaries, and modern inferences based on his extant writings, which receive consideration under three areas of discipline below.

The curriculum that Didymus offered to his students likely followed, to a large degree, the curriculum that he himself had mastered in his early years.⁴³ The foundation

⁴²Alasdair Heron, “The Holy Spirit in Origen and Didymus: A Shift in Perspective from the Third to Fourth Century,” in *Doctrines of God and Christ in the Early Church*, ed. Everett Ferguson, David Scholer, and Paul Finney, *Studies in Early Christianity* 9 (New York: Garland, 1993), 256.

⁴³For an excellent survey of the classical *paideia* curriculum (traces of which are clearly discernible in Didymus) and the influence that it exerted on both the pagan and Christian intellectual traditions of Alexandria, see the indispensable Edward Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

was a background in the classical secular disciplines of philosophy, logic, and rhetoric. For Didymus, however, these concepts were subjected to a governing Alexandrian theology, which was itself developed and refined through a complex hermeneutical method. The ultimate goal of these various areas of education was ethical and spiritual application, or virtue formation. Key influences in philosophy, hermeneutics, and theology are surveyed below.

Philosophical

The exact extent of Didymus's philosophical training is unknown. However, various references and terminology within his corpus firmly establish his familiarity, at the very least, with the major classical schools of Aristotle, Plato, and the Stoics. Since Didymus does not appear to subscribe wholly to any one of them but rather picks and chooses somewhat eclectically, it is safe to assume that he simply incorporates those precepts which, in his view, best comport with his developing Christian theology. The explication of biblical doctrines, and the formation of virtue on the basis of them, is the ultimate end to which the instrument of philosophy is consistently applied—when useful.

There can be little doubt that Didymus's metaphysical outlook is fundamentally Platonic, or Neoplatonic, to the extent that this can be reconciled, in his own mind, with his Christian commitments—and this is in keeping with Alexandrian Christianity generally. A basic divide between the physical and the spiritual realms widely permeates his writings and provides the foundation for both his exegetical method (a trajectory from literal to spiritual meaning) and the process of virtue formation that is its ultimate goal (a progression from earthly to heavenly realities). Scattered references to the role of the reasoning faculty in exercising dominion over bodily impulses and passions, the connection between names and essences, and the reality of “forms” and “ideas” (of goodness, for example) further confirm his indebtedness to Platonic modes of

thought.⁴⁴ Indeed, as previously noted, it was Didymus’s acceptance of such speculative Platonic notions, shared by Origen, as *apocatastasis* and the pre-existence of the human soul which contributed the condemnation of his works at the Second Council of Constantinople.⁴⁵

Beyond these general Platonic features, metaphysical issues play an extraordinarily important role in the analysis of Didymus’s theology, as demonstrated in new articles by Kellen Plaxco.⁴⁶ Plaxco has astutely analyzed the way Didymus both inherits and modifies the Neoplatonic metaphysical account of participation featured in Origen, applying it to the contemporary defense of a pro-Nicene Trinitarian theology. A key point of contact between the metaphysic that supports Didymus’s argument concerning the deity of the Spirit in *De Spiritu Sancto* and that of Plotinus, for example, is the doctrine of the “undiminished giver,” which characterizes the cosmic First Principle as capable of experiencing the “participation” of other or lesser beings, but not itself capable of participating in them—a correlation which has received significant attention from Lewis Ayres.⁴⁷ As Heron notes in summarizing the use of this concept in Didymus’s *De Spiritu Sancto*, where it is expressed in Jerome’s Latin by the terms *capabilis* and *capax*: “what is being spoken of is the concept of μεθεξις, of ‘participation’

⁴⁴For examples, see Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis* 110, 137, and *Commentary on Zechariah*, 87, respectively.

⁴⁵However, see the weighty criticisms of the designation of Origen as a Platonist in Mark Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, Ashgate Studies in Philosophy & Theology in Late Antiquity (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002).

⁴⁶See especially Kellen Plaxco, “Didymus the Blind and the Metaphysics of Participation,” in *Studia Patristica* 67 (2013): 227–37; Kellen Plaxco, “‘I Will Pour Out My Spirit’: Didymus against Eunomius in Light of John 16:14’s History of Reception,” *Vigilae Christianae* 70, no. 5 (2016): 479–508.

⁴⁷Lewis Ayres, “The Holy Spirit as the ‘Undiminished Giver’: Didymus the Blind’s *De Spiritu Sancto* and the Development of Nicene Pneumatology,” in *The Holy Spirit in the Fathers of the Church: The Proceedings of the Seventh International Patristic Conference* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 57–72.

in the Platonist sense.”⁴⁸ The contributions of both Ayres and Plaxco on this subject feature prominently in the primary arguments below.

Didymus reveals his familiarity with Aristotle mainly in his discussions of the natural world, and human interaction with it. He makes reference to tautologies and particular forms of Aristotelian logical argumentation, often to demonstrate to his students the contradictions within the views he opposes. These citations occur, as Layton notes, “in all the commentaries,” and derive largely—and sometimes explicitly—from the six treatises of the *Organon*.⁴⁹ In his descriptions of the material world, Didymus invokes Aristotle’s Ten Categories, especially with regard to the fundamental category of “substance” (ὕποστασις).⁵⁰ Hill also observes an Aristotelian influence in Didymus’s conception of divine inspiration reflected in the term θεοληπτούμενος.⁵¹ All of this, however, is relatively standard classical fare.

More significant for the present purpose is the strong reliance that Didymus exhibits on Aristotle’s conception of virtue formation, as developed especially in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The dependence is clearest in the references that Didymus makes to virtue as a “mean” between two undesirable “extremes” or passions.⁵² The “middling” notion of virtue expressed here employs the explicit Aristotelian terminology of “excess” and “defect” for the vices, but unsurprisingly receives its ultimate justification from biblical exegesis in the form of Didymus’s discussion of the phrase “on the left and on the right” in Zechariah 12.6.⁵³ Didymus himself composed a treatise *On the Virtues* that

⁴⁸Heron, “The Holy Spirit in Origen and Didymus,” 256.

⁴⁹Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria*, 28.

⁵⁰Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, trans. Robert C. Hill, Fathers of the Church 111 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of American Press, 2006), 207.

⁵¹Robert C. Hill, introduction to Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 10.

⁵²Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 208.

⁵³Hill’s translation: “On that day I shall make the commanders of Judah like a firebrand in wood and like a burning lamp in stubble, and they will devour all the peoples round about on the right and

is now lost, to which he alludes in this passage, and the one example that he provides concerning the virtue of liberality suggests that the topical treatise relied heavily upon the Aristotelian conception.⁵⁴ However, it is probable that these concepts entered and characterized Didymus's thought as a result of their presence (and assumption) in the writings of Philo, Clement, and the later Alexandrian Christian tradition, rather than his own direct study.

The same can probably be said for the Stoic influence that appears in Didymus's writings. While less prominent than the influence of Plato and Aristotle, the occurrences of a few traditionally Stoic terms and concepts do indicate that Didymus possessed, at the least, some familiarity with their modes of thought.

Once again, the most pertinent aspect of influence for the purpose of this study is the Stoic conception of virtue, reflected, for example, in Didymus's references to the mutual entailment of the virtues (ἀντακολουθία).⁵⁵ This doctrine may have been mediated to Didymus by way of Plotinus or other Neoplatonists, who also make use of it and whose thought permeates that of Didymus more thoroughly, but it is likely that he followed his usual custom of selecting doctrines for incorporation into his system in a piecemeal fashion according to his needs and their compatibility with his fundamental

on the left." The "commanders" are identified with those who apply the divine word to deviant human wills.

⁵⁴Didymus describes the virtue of liberality (ἐλευθεριότητος) as the mean between the excess "wastefulness" (ἀσωτία) and the defect "miserliness" (φειδωλία). The first two of these terms correspond to the vocabulary of Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books II–IV, precisely, while in place of the third, Aristotle uses the simple negation ἀνελευθερία, suggesting that Didymus either makes the allusion from memory, or knows an alternative reading. It is also possible Didymus has learned the concept indirectly, though he was doubtlessly aware of its heritage.

⁵⁵Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, trans. Robert C. Hill, *Fathers of the Church* 132 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 37–38: "It is virtue, in fact, that is productive of unity, containing a mutual attraction (ἀντακολουθίαν) as it does; the temperate person is courageous, prudent, and just, and in possessing one virtue possessing the other. . . .The person possessing one in a perfect manner possesses also the others."

theological convictions.⁵⁶ In any case, the belief that the virtues mutually imply one another harmonizes well with the conception of virtue as identified personally with Christ, as will be discussed further below.

Hermeneutical

Until the discovery of the Tura papyri, early church scholarship tended to regard Didymus as a mere imitator of Origen in his exegetical approach. While it is now possible to identify many unique strands within Didymus's writings, they still typically receive consideration within the broader framework of the "Origenist" tradition, with focus on Neoplatonic metaphysics and allegorical interpretation. Certainly, the legacy of Origen is a weighty factor in the shaping of Didymus's exegetical approach, but it must not be allowed to overshadow the influences of the earlier writings of Philo and the Alexandrian social context that are equally important.

Philo of Alexandria exerted an enormous influence over the interpretive tradition that took root in his city and spread elsewhere in the following centuries. David Runia's definitive study of his exegesis traces Philo's legacy through Clement to Origen and Didymus (and beyond).⁵⁷ As a Jew, Philo applies a dualistic interpretive method to the Hebrew Bible which follows the Platonic allegorizing of the Homeric epics. As Runia notes, "Philo distinguishes between two ways of reading scripture, generically best described as literal (*κατὰ ῥῆμα*) and tropological (*κατὰ διάνοιαν*) exegesis. The fundamental assumption is that the interpreter will not be constrained to elicit any meaning that is unworthy of God or his prophet."⁵⁸ Philo's exegesis additionally

⁵⁶See, for example, the discussion of the earlier incorporation of this theory into Middle Platonism in John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 76–77.

⁵⁷David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey*, *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum: Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature*, sect. 3, vol. 3 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993).

⁵⁸Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 38. The idea of the "worthiness" of the interpretation is important for Didymus as well.

emphasizes many of the same themes that receive attention in the commentaries of later Alexandrian Christians, such as the nature of the soul, the freedom of the will, the pursuit of virtue, and the value of asceticism.⁵⁹ Philo's integration of the insights of various classical traditions (Platonism, Stoicism, Neopythagoreanism) also set a precedent for early Christian interpreters who shared both his educational background and commitment to scriptural authority. Runia counts at least seven explicit references to Philo in Didymus's commentaries, along with a variety of indirect ones.⁶⁰ Didymus is especially prone to invoke Philo in discussions of biblical numerology and etymology, probably due to his lack of knowledge of Hebrew.⁶¹ A. C. Geljon reaches similar conclusions in his study of Philo's influence on the exegesis of the story of Cain and Abel in Didymus's Genesis commentary.⁶²

Of course, the contributions of Philo were indeed mediated to Didymus primarily through the expansive influence of Origen.⁶³ Like his more direct Alexandrian predecessor Clement, Origen incorporated aspects of Philo's allegorical and "philosophically mature" exegesis into his own hermeneutical approach.⁶⁴ However, there can be little doubt that Origen's own method, classically expressed in his *De*

⁵⁹Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 41.

⁶⁰Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 198. The explicit references are found in the commentaries on Genesis (4), Ecclesiastes (3), and Zechariah (1). Thus in his appendix, Runia lists eight rather than seven.

⁶¹Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 202.

⁶²A. C. Geljon, "Philonic Elements in Didymus the Blind's Exegesis of the Story of Cain and Abel," *Vigilae Christianae* 61 (2007): 282–312.

⁶³On the exegesis of Origen, see Henri Crouzel, *Origen: The Life and Thought of the First Great Theologian*, trans. A. S. Worrall (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989); Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture within Origen's Exegesis* (New York: Brill, 2005); Henri de Lubac, *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture according to Origen*, trans. Ann Englund Nash (San Francisco: St. Ignatius Press, 2007).

⁶⁴Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 163.

Principiis, exercised a far greater influence on the exegesis of Didymus. The fact that Didymus never cites Origen by name in his commentaries can easily be explained by the rise of anti-Origenist sentiment during the period of their writing—a sentiment that resulted in Didymus’s own condemnation decades later. The strong association between the two exegetes finds archaeological attestation in the fact that the Tura papyri include manuscripts of several of Origen’s own writings.

Wolfgang Bienert has traced Origen’s influence on Didymus through an analysis of the latter’s hermeneutical terminology.⁶⁵ While Didymus does not regularly employ the three-level interpretive scheme of *De Principiis*, Book IV (a model that Origen himself does not consistently follow), Didymus certainly subscribes to the underlying *principles* of Origen’s exegesis in his commitment to engaging the “literal” level of the text to whatever extent is possible, and then proceeding from that reference point to a higher non-literal meaning (variously described as “allegorical,” “anagogical,” “tropological,” and in other terms), both of which must conform to the established orthodox rule of faith.⁶⁶ Beyond this general methodological similarity, Didymus offers Origen’s specific interpretations in a number of passages (for example, in commenting on the pre-existence of the soul in Job, the image of God in Genesis, and the use of such philosophical concepts as *propatheia* in the Psalms.)⁶⁷

However, Bienert’s analysis has been challenged by the more thorough study of J. H. Tigcheler, who disputes Bienert’s methodology and his conclusion concerning the theological difference between the terms related to *anagogia* and *allegoria* in

⁶⁵Wolfgang Bienert, “*Allegoria*” und “*Anagoge*” bei Didymos dem Blinden von Alexandria (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1972), cited in Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria*, 67–68.

⁶⁶Origen, *De Principiis* 4.3.

⁶⁷These examples are collected in Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria*, 71, 86–87, and 123, respectively, and are merely representative.

Didymus's writings, arguing instead that the distinction is simply hermeneutical.⁶⁸

Tigcheler also offers technical descriptions of the four levels of interpretation that Didymus employs, demonstrating points of both comparison and contrast with the traditional threefold scheme of Origen.⁶⁹

Finally, Blossom Stefaniw has offered a “thick description” of the exegetical practices of Didymus (alongside those of Origen and Evagrius Ponticus) that attempts to transcend traditional uninformative (and often imprecise) terminology such as “allegorical” and instead to engage directly with the specific social contexts and assumptions which gave rise to those practices.⁷⁰ She uses the term “noetic exegesis” to emphasize that each aspect of the interpretive process pertains, ultimately, to the formation and application of the *voũç* as the human faculty which is uniquely capable of perceiving the “intelligible truths” that a divine text contains.⁷¹ As she explains: “Noetic exegesis can be preliminarily defined as exegesis which is concerned with perceiving the noetic content of an authoritative text by means of noetic comprehension of the higher significance of the text and with a view to rehabilitating and cultivating the interpreter’s *voũç*.”⁷² So-called allegorical interpretation is only one tool among many that may be applied toward this end.⁷³ Stefaniw thus identifies several key assumptions of Didymus’s

⁶⁸Jo Tigcheler, *Didyme l’Aveugle et l’Exégèse Allégorique: Étude Sémantique de Quelques Termes Exégétiques Importants de Son Commentaire Sur Zacharie*, Græcitas Christianorum Primæva (Nijmegen, Netherlands: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1977), 151.

⁶⁹Tigcheler, *Didyme l’Aveugle et l’Exégèse Allégorique*, 30–35.

⁷⁰Blossom Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary: Noetic Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius Ponticus*, Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 6 (New York: Peter Lang, 2010). The term “thick description” derives from the work of Clifford Geertz, where it refers to an effort to understand societal beliefs and practices from the subjective perspective of the subscriber, rather than attempting to offer definitive judgments from the outside.

⁷¹Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary*, 29.

⁷²Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary*, 12.

⁷³Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary*, 29–30.

exegesis: the nature of the biblical text as a divine revelation capable of imparting moral and spiritual truths (60); a dualistic conception of reality itself as the motivation for seeking both literal and non-literal referents within that text (150); a particular psychology, rather than a consistent and objective methodology, suited to the apprehension of these referents (221-25); and, finally, the need for a social and institutional context in which all of these assumptions could be taught, reinforced, and applied through the skillful guidance of a teacher (300-305).⁷⁴ Such a thorough analysis of the specific conditions and assumptions which *shaped* Didymus's exegesis proves more useful in reconstructing his theology than previous efforts to establish an objective terminological account of his interpretive methodology.⁷⁵

Theological

Despite the indisputable influence of his training, at whatever levels, in classical philosophy, ethics, and exegesis, the writings of Didymus reveal a definite subjection to the authority of Christian scripture generally, and to the Alexandrian theological tradition specifically. Of course, the Alexandrian milieu itself represents a highly eclectic atmosphere in which the direction of influence of ideas across the lines of various traditions and communities can be difficult to determine. However, there can be little question that for Didymus, the system of theology which he inherited and sought to uphold, of which his conception of the Spirit's role in virtue formation was a crucial component, was shaped and articulated most profoundly by his two most notable Alexandrian predecessors: Clement and Origen.⁷⁶ It is impossible to situate the

⁷⁴These assumptions are defined at Stefaniw, 60, 150, 221–25, and 300–305, respectively, and correspond to chaps. 2-5, which outline the “What,” “Why,” “How,” and “Where” of noetic exegesis.

⁷⁵Such as Bienert offers, for example, in attempting to delineate between Didymus's use of “allegory” and “anagogy.”

⁷⁶While Didymus's contemporary Alexandrian Athanasius also produced significant pneumatological writings, direct influence between them (in either direction) has not been textually identified. Ayres, Radde-Gallwitz, and DelCogliano assert that Didymus may “know Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion*, but he also demonstrates an independent engagement with a variety of sources, especially

theological purview of Didymus properly without giving some cursory attention to their thought, particularly in the relevant areas of pneumatology and virtue formation. The following survey highlights one important tendency: the reception, synthesis, and modification of Hellenistic modes of thought, resulting in original and distinctively Christian theological expressions. This process, reflected in the writings of Clement and Origen in the midst of their disputations over the nature of divinity and the second divine *hypostasis*, respectively, set a crucial precedent for Didymus, who adapted their example to the needs of his own time during the emerging controversy surrounding the nature of the Spirit.

Clement of Alexandria represents the first great Christian writer of the Alexandrian tradition. The point of departure for analyzing his method of engagement with contemporary philosophical traditions must be the study of Salvatore Lilla, who thoroughly investigates the sources of Clement's system, and his development of them—most pertinently, in the area of ethics.⁷⁷ Lilla is especially concerned to explore what it means to call Clement an “eclectic.” He concludes that it is Clement's view of Greek philosophy as being rooted, like Christian scripture, in the divine *Logos* that allows him to acknowledge philosophy's capacity for truth and usefulness in the construction of Christian theology.⁷⁸

Lilla notes Stoic, Platonic, Aristotelian, Middle Platonic, and Neoplatonic influences, observable in at least six components of Clement's ethical system: (1) a conception of the nature of virtue as a “harmony of the soul” between reason and the inferior faculties, ultimately grounded in the *Logos*; (2) articulation of the four

Origen,” in Lewis Ayres, Mark DelCogliano, and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Works on the Spirit: Athanasius's Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit and Didymus the Blind's On the Holy Spirit*, Popular Patristics Series 43 (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 46–47. Thus, without denying the possibility of Athanasian connections, the present survey focuses on the far greater Origenian influence.

⁷⁷Salvatore R.C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

⁷⁸Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 54.

interrelated and mutually-implied “cardinal” virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice; (3) the Stoic doctrine of πάθος; (4) a lower ethical stage of μετριοπάθεια; (5) a higher ethical stage of ἀπάθεια, which is also to be identified with moral perfection and Clement’s central doctrine of γνῶσις; and (6) deification (ὁμοίωσις θεῶ), attainable on the basis of humanity’s creation in the image of God and achievement of “likeness” through the twofold ethical process.⁷⁹ These doctrines and terminologies obviously owe significant debts to classical philosophical systems. However, Lilla indicates significant points of divergence between Clement and his sources, such as Clement’s identification of the “principle” of the *Logos* with the personal nature of Christ, as well as the active roles assigned to Christ in exemplifying and actually imparting the ethical ideals of ἀπάθεια and γνῶσις. Thus, while Clement exhibits substantial conformity to the prevailing metaphysical and philosophical assumptions and schemes of his intellectual milieu with respect to the nature of divinity and its ramifications for notions of ethics and virtue formation, he also offers a uniquely Christian modification of those themes—one which sets the trajectory for the Alexandrian theology of future generations.

Before its application in the writings of Didymus, Clement’s precedent first found a renewed expression in the theology of Origen. It is well known that Origen’s classic exegetical method as described in *De Principiis* finds a clear resonance in the biblical commentaries of Didymus, though the precise methodology is nowhere applied. Rather, the sharp distinction between the literal and spiritual levels of the text, though without the threefold divisions typical of Origen, is representative of the Origenian legacy, and Didymus does also maintain Origen’s scheme for the three levels of spiritual progress (“beginners,” “those who are more advanced,” and “those who have arrived at perfection”) that result from the application of this exegetical method.⁸⁰

⁷⁹Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 60.

⁸⁰Tigheleler, *Didyme l’Aveugle et l’Exégèse Allégorique*, 30–34.

It is primarily in the metaphysical realm, however, that Origen's influence on Didymus is most apparent. The participatory hierarchy that underlies Origen's Trinitarian theology certainly reflects a number of Platonist assumptions, but it functioned in his context as an instrument for refuting monarchist conceptions which failed to distinguish the divine persons adequately.⁸¹ Plaxco has shown that Didymus both inherits and modifies Origen's doctrine of participation to meet the demands of his own era and Nicene Trinitarian theology, maintaining the concept of participation as a central feature but seeking to correct the subordinationist effects of Origen's articulation, and shifting the emphasis of participation to the human capacity to partake of God's attributes.⁸² This adaptation positions the pneumatology that Didymus develops in *De Spiritu Sancto* to function as an effective polemic against both pagan and Christian misconceptions.

⁸¹However, see the strong caution against overgeneralizing these features in Edwards, *Origen against Plato*.

⁸²Kellen Plaxco, "Participation and Trinity in Origen and Didymus the Blind," *Origeniana Undecima: Origen and Origenism in Western Thought*, ed. A. C. Jacobsen (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2016).

CHAPTER 3

DIDYMUS ON VIRTUE FORMATION

It has been necessary above to establish the dominant background influences to Didymus's thought in the domains of ethics, virtue formation, and pneumatology so that his original contributions to them can be clearly recognized. The primary arguments that follow aim (1) to summarize Didymus's teaching on virtue and its formation in his exegetical commentaries; (2) to summarize Didymus's teaching on the nature of the Holy Spirit in his pneumatological treatise; and (3) to synthesize these observations in order to identify the connective link between them. The results firmly establish the originality of Didymus's thought, in which the Holy Spirit is the active agent in the participatory process of human virtue formation. Finally, it will be observed that such a synthesis also successfully integrates the best insights from recent scholarship on Didymus.

Didymus on Virtue Formation

As described above, Didymus shares the conviction of Origen, grounded in Plato and mediated via Philo, that the inherent "structure" of Christian scripture reflects the inherent metaphysical "structure" of reality as a whole. Thus, the proper method for engaging in biblical exegesis is directly parallel to the proper method for experiencing spiritual growth and progress. Given these facts, it is not surprising that Didymus's biblical commentaries, rather than his systematic writings, are the primary source materials for his teaching on virtue and its formation. Prepared, variously, as collections of lecture notes taken by his students or even written at their request (as for Jerome), these commentaries reveal a serious concern for practical application of the truths that they explain. In contrast to Clement, Didymus consistently expresses the conviction that

spiritual γνῶσις cannot truly be achieved until it transcends mere intellectual enlightenment and finds concrete manifestation in corresponding activity. Because they include the most extensive and frequent descriptions of this process, the commentaries on the books of Genesis and Zechariah serve as the subjects of analysis here, though the themes can be also be identified in the other Tura commentaries.¹ The central topics that combine to form Didymus’s concept of virtue formation across these works are (1) the image and likeness of God; (2) human psychology; (3) the nature of virtue and vice; (4) the motif of spiritual ascent; and (5) participatory deification as the human *telos*.

The Image of God

Following both Clement and Origen, the doctrine of humanity as created “in the image and likeness of God” (κατ’ εικόνα καὶ ὁμοίωσιν Θεοῦ) is fundamental to Didymus’s theological anthropology, and like them, Didymus makes a crucial distinction between these two terms. Together, they form the foundation for the human capacity for virtue. The obvious point of departure for examining his teaching on this subject is his commentary on the first chapter of Genesis. While Didymus reveals a high view of the body by including it as part of the “composite” that together with the soul comprises the human being, he clarifies that it is exclusively the intellect and the soul (ὁ νοῦς καὶ ἡ ψυχή) which should be identified with the “image of God” of the all-important Genesis 1.26—“since God does not have a human form.”² Didymus locates the “image” in humanity’s governing function—specifically, in the rational (λογικὸς) capacity.

¹The commentary on Job is, in general, concerned with more philosophical themes than these two, while the commentaries on Ecclesiastes and Psalms survive in the form of frequently fragmentary lecture-notes recorded by students and thus do not lend themselves to the systematic analysis of a concept such as virtue formation. Unless otherwise noted, English quotations follow Hill’s translations in Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, and Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*.

²Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, trans. Robert C. Hill, Fathers of the Church 132 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 63.

At the outset of the Genesis commentary, Didymus provides a crucial summary of his concept of virtue and its formation in the human being which connects this definition of the “image of God” with his participatory metaphysics by means of his doctrine of the person of Christ: “Sharing (μετέχουσα) in God, the soul becomes by virtue of this sharing (μετουσίας) his image, as we say that the person who participates in virtue (τὴν ἀρετὴν τὸν μετέκον) is a replica of it [or, “images (εἰκονίζεῖν) it”]³; Paul understood this when, speaking in Christ, he says to those whom he urges to be a replica of Christ, ‘until Christ is formed in you,’ making it known that the understanding of Christ that dwells in the soul stamps it with his image.”⁴

However, Didymus also identifies Christ himself as the true divine image on the basis of Colossians 1.15.⁵ These connections will be further explored below; suffice it at this juncture to note that the attainment of virtue is, for Didymus, the reception or even the replication of Christ himself, the true image of God, within that faculty of the human being which constitutes the divine “image”—namely the soul—by means of participation (μέθεξις), with the precise mechanics of this process yet to be elaborated. A hint, however, is provided in Didymus’s comment that being the image of God involves a certain “capacity: of being a representation [μιμήσεως] of God, of a share [μετουσίας] in the Holy Spirit, and of acquisition of virtue.”⁶

The divine “likeness” (ὁμοίωσις), on the other hand, is secondary in priority to the image and, in a sense, its fullest expression, appearing when the image “later gradually comes to perfection (τελειότητα).”⁷ Such perfection does not occur in this

³Following Doutreleau’s reading εἰκονίζεῖν.

⁴Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 64.

⁵Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 65.

⁶Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 69.

⁷Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 65.

lifetime, but only in the eschaton.⁸ Whereas the divine image is an inherent component of human nature as created, the divine likeness is to be achieved, progressively, across the course of life, reaching full potential only in the world to come. As Didymus states, “the fact that this interpretation is reliable Paul also confirms in encouraging some people to make progress in virtue: ‘In order that you may be in the image of the Creator’ [Col 3.10] although they were already so on the basis of substance.”⁹ This advancement from image to likeness is explicitly identified as the basis for Christian virtue formation through an analogy with the human potential for reason, which is latent in the infant but achieves actualization only with time and maturation.¹⁰ The primacy of the image over the likeness is further confirmed for Didymus by the fact that in Genesis 1.27, creation in the “image” is re-emphasized, but the “likeness” is not.¹¹

Discussions from the *Commentary on Zechariah* concerning the divine image are consistent with what is found in Didymus’s analysis of the Genesis passage surveyed above. The “image” is again identified with the human soul over against the body, which it must master.¹² Didymus continues to highlight the loss of rationality, resulting in the pursuit of sinful behaviors, as the key consequence of humanity’s fall from the original state of “image and likeness.”¹³

These two aspects of human nature thus comprise the basis for the scheme of virtue formation that Didymus articulates across his exegetical corpus. Created irrevocably in the divine “image,” humanity has nevertheless lost the divine “likeness” as

⁸However, Didymus does seem to suggest later that the first apostles achieved this status in Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 68.

⁹Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 66.

¹⁰Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 66.

¹¹Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 65.

¹²Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, trans. Robert C. Hill, *Fathers of the Church* 111 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 249.

¹³Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 211–12, 253.

a result of Adam’s sin, and is now set the task of recovering it through the acquisition of virtue.

Human Psychology

While the biblical terms “image” and “likeness” are clearly employed and defined in the *Commentary on Genesis*, Didymus also utilizes more traditional Hellenistic vocabulary to describe the faculties involved in them. Thus, it is important to survey his specific conception of human psychology—which includes reason, knowledge, conscience, and the relationship between these and divine grace—bearing in mind that for Didymus, these entities find their ultimate grounding in his theological doctrines of divine image and likeness. He offers a concise summary of this scheme in an allegorizing comment on Genesis 4.19-22: “the divine teaching brings out that human beings are living things endowed with free will (προαιρετικὰ) and gifted with knowledge [literally, ‘partakers of knowledge,’ μετέχοντες ἐπιστημῶν]; they do not live only by the senses (αἰσθήσει) like brute beasts—instead, the faculty of reason (λογιστικοῦ) is indicated.”¹⁴ Each of these components—free will, knowledge, and reason—is briefly considered below with respect to its role in virtue formation and, finally, the relationship between these and divine grace.

First, for Didymus, humanity’s creation in the divine image implies certain definitive knowledge (γνώσις)¹⁵ of God which is maintained despite the corruptive effects of the fall (and the resultant bodily existence): “God calls us once more even after our falls, not canceling completely the knowledge of good from our reasoning, even if we have rejected virtue by sin.”¹⁶ Following Philo, the *Commentary on Genesis* identifies the

¹⁴Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 131. The use of μετέχοντες again emphasizes the participatory nature of the faculties which provide the basis for virtue formation.

¹⁵Though clearly aware of it, Didymus does not use this term in the familiar technical esoteric sense of Clement, but rather employs it with a range of more standard meanings, including both personal “knowledge” (of God) and inherent “knowledge” (such as conscience, as explained below).

¹⁶Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 89.

expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden as an allegorical description of this event.¹⁷ The “knowledge of the good” (γνώσιν καλου) originally implanted within the human soul as the divine image remains, despite the loss of the “likeness” due to sin, “so that he might find virtue contained in its commands, put it into practice, and from it gain a realization of the divine and more pure life of paradise.”¹⁸ This retained knowledge of the divine constitutes the basis, during earthly existence, for the human conscience,¹⁹ which inherently recognizes the merits of virtue and is impelled to develop them to full expression. As aspects of this innate γνώσις Didymus variously mentions the contemplative [θεωρητικόν] faculty,²⁰ the sense of guilt,²¹ and the natural impulse toward prayer in times of need.²² The Zechariah commentary likewise equates the “theoretical” component of virtue formation with “simply knowledge [γνώσεως] of the truth,”²³ and virtue comes to the one who is “knowledgeable” (ἐπιστήμονι).²⁴

The discussion of free will, or the capacity for deliberation (προαίρεσις), in Didymus draws on the classical heritage and terminology,²⁵ but it finds a more immediate precedent within his own Christian tradition, where Origen had staunchly defended it

¹⁷Compare, for example, Philo, *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesis*, 1.56.

¹⁸Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 110.

¹⁹Didymus speaks frequently of the conscience as the seat of the permanent knowledge of God possessed by all people. See, for example, Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 88, 91, 121, 123–25.

²⁰Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 111.

²¹Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 94.

²²Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 125.

²³Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 113.

²⁴Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 29.

²⁵For example, in Book III of the *Ethica Nichomachea* or Book II of the *Ethica Eudemia* of Aristotle.

against Gnostic and Stoic determinism.²⁶ Didymus too sees a mutual entailment between the human capacity for virtue and genuinely voluntary action.²⁷ In the Genesis commentary he consistently emphasizes the human responsibility to exercise free will toward the preservation (or restoration) of the divine image in which it is rooted, symbolized archetypically in the choice to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.²⁸ Indeed, “The firstfruits of virtue. . . come from free will [γνωμής], from where movement toward virtue arises.”²⁹ Likewise in commenting on Zechariah Didymus observes: “People are independent, after all, with free and unfettered choice, and of themselves they do what brings on them either punishment or divine promises.”³⁰ The pursuit of either virtue or vice involves the intentional conformity of the will to the end in view.³¹ In one lengthy excursus, Didymus seeks to refute the views of an unidentified heretical group on the subject.³² Over against them, he affirms that Christ’s gospel, with its universal offer, “addresses people as though in possession of a free and independent will [ἐλευθρέαν και αὐτόνομον ἔχοντας προαίρεσιν]”—a necessary precondition for expressing repentance.³³

Didymus thus conceives of both knowledge (γνώσις, or ἐπιστήμη) and the will (γνωμή or προαίρεσις) as being rooted in the nature of humanity as divine image. The

²⁶Origen, *De Principiis* 2.9 and 3.1, for example.

²⁷This theme actually receives its most detailed treatment in Didymus’s *Commentary on Job*, where it more naturally arises in the context of theodicy.

²⁸Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 89.

²⁹Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 118.

³⁰Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 181.

³¹Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 137.

³²Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 144–46. Hill suggests the Valentinians at Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 145, on the basis of the reference to “different kinds of people”—usually described as *choic*, *psychic*, and *pneumatic*—who possess varying levels of moral capacity, and therefore responsibility.

³³Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 145.

connection between them is the rational capacity which, following the Platonic tradition, serves as the locus for human participation in the divine realities. The vocabulary of “reason” and “rationality” is the terminology that Didymus prefers for speaking of the subordination of bodily impulses and passions to progress in virtue—grounded in the inherent divine image (the *Logos*) and manifested in the divine knowledge and the exercise of the will to act upon it. Representatively, Didymus identifies the “faculty of reason [λογιστικοῦ]” as that feature which distinguishes humanity from the “brute beasts.”³⁴ Indeed, in commenting on the story of Cain and Abel, Didymus takes Abel’s shepherdly vocation as an allegory for this rational ability to subordinate animalistic impulses, “imposing reason [λογισμὸν] as a guide and organizer over the irascible and lascivious element,” in contrast to the “earthly”-minded farmer Cain.³⁵ Incidentally, Didymus also invokes Cain as a negative illustration of this point in the Zechariah commentary, noting that while “the rational soul of itself has the power of independent and constant movement” and is “unaffected by any disorderly turmoil when it moves properly and in a blessed manner,” Cain, by contrast, was “moved unjustifiably” and “act[ed] in a disorderly and riotous fashion.”³⁶

In an additional relevant passage, Didymus comments on Zechariah 2.13, “Let all flesh show reverence before the Lord, because he has roused himself from his holy clouds.” Here Didymus is concerned to distinguish the meaning of the term “flesh [σὰρξ]” and settles for a general sense of “humanity.” This prompts him to consider the term’s similar usage in Joel 2.28, “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,” which in turn leads him to conclude that it is the reception of the Holy Spirit that renders “flesh” (humanity) “rational [λογικῆ] and capable of reverence for God” in contradistinction,

³⁴Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 131.

³⁵Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 116.

³⁶Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 37.

once again, to “the brute beast.”³⁷ This correlation between the presence of the Spirit and the human capacity for reason is a crucial component of the broader scheme that will be sketched below.

Finally, a brief comment is in order on the relationship between, on the one hand, the faculties of knowledge, the will, and reason that are rooted in the divine image, and divine grace on the other. The explanations that Didymus offers on this subject reflect all the common tensions associated with it, without attempting to resolve any of them. His outlook is fundamentally synergistic, defending human autonomy, as surveyed above, alongside a robust view of divine sovereignty and the necessity of grace in the formation of human virtue. The system revolves around mutual reinforcement: Didymus upholds the indispensability of both human and divine contributions to virtue formation, but he clearly assigns the weight of priority to initial human overtures. As he puts it, “Virtue...requires effort, since people’s hearts are carefully set on evil.”³⁸ Yet once this effort is expressed, grace is the reward, since “these are the virtues which lend grace...and which ‘save by grace’ the person practicing them.”³⁹ Notably, the divine component is once again associated specifically with the Spirit: “It will be our lot also, by the grace of the beneficent God, to bear the fruits of the Spirit.”⁴⁰

The exegesis of Noah’s flood provides the most extended discussion of the relationship between human effort and divine grace. The victims of the flood received judgment because they pursued vice rather than virtue.⁴¹ Noah’s righteous life, by contrast, elicited God’s favor, “achieved on the basis of being pleasing to him.” Here

³⁷Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 63.

³⁸Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 102.

³⁹Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 119.

⁴⁰Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 54, 60.

⁴¹Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 147.

Didymus is explicit: “Now, God gives this gift only when we provide the basis for receiving it. . .it was thus of his own doing that Noah ‘found favor in the sight of the Lord God; he won grace for himself through the works of virtue, and for this he received grace from God. With those, in fact, who of themselves perform and achieve good works the God of all cooperates, and in addition he gives increase and leads to a great amount of good.”⁴² Didymus goes even further: “It is impossible, in fact, to receive the faith given by God as a grace without our having the faith that depends on us.”⁴³

The preceding survey of the human psychology that Didymus describes in his biblical commentaries reveals a detailed outworking of his theological commitment to the notion of humanity as an expression of the divine image. Specifically, this “image” includes the inherent faculties of knowledge, the will, and rationality, all of which operate, in conjunction with divine grace, in the formation of human virtue. The Holy Spirit receives frequent mention as the active divine agent in these processes.

Virtue and Vice

Before turning to the way Didymus conceives the actual process of spiritual ascent that results in virtue formation through the use of these faculties, it is necessary to outline the nature of their object: virtue (ἀρετή) itself. Indeed, “Virtue is the weightiest of the centres of gravity shaping the contours of his exegesis.”⁴⁴ Its formation and expression is the ultimate objective of every activity in which Didymus engages: the interpretation of scripture, the teaching of theology, and the contemplative experience of divine truths. Virtue forms a binary opposition with vice (κακία)⁴⁵ that corresponds to an

⁴²Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 150–51.

⁴³Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 151.

⁴⁴Grant Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind: A Fourth-Century Virtue-Origenism*, Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.

⁴⁵Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 128, 162–63.

abundance of other binary oppositions within his thought: temporal and eternal, invisible and visible, letter and Spirit, shadow and reality, darkness and light, earthly and heavenly, material and spiritual.⁴⁶ “Vice,” on the other hand, has no substantial existence of its own, but the term be used less technically to refer to a “highly malicious disposition” or “evil behavior.”⁴⁷

It has been seen above that Didymus reveals his debt to classical Hellenistic categories in affirming that the virtues “interrelate with one another” (ἀλλήλαις . . . ἀντακολουθοῦσιν)⁴⁸, and in picturing individual virtues as occupying “middle” (μεσοτήτων) positions between pairs of sinful extremes (“excesses” [ὑπερβολαί] and “defects” [ἐλλείψεις]).⁴⁹ He also invokes the standard fourfold “cardinal” virtues of “justice . . . temperance . . . courage and wisdom [τὸ δίκαιον . . . τὸ σωφρονεῖν . . . τὰ ἀνδρεῖα και φρόνιμα]” as prime examples.⁵⁰

Yet Didymus also makes a uniquely Christian departure from classical expressions by directly identifying the “substance” of virtue with the person of Christ himself. This identification, which is parallel to the correlation that Didymus draws between Christ as divine *Logos* and the rational capacity of humanity, has been expressed exceedingly well in the work of Placid Solari: “His connection of virtue with Christ is the way he mediates between the one virtue of God and the many expressions of this virtue in human beings . . . Humans are virtuous not by nature but by participation. Thus human virtue is a habit, not a quality.”⁵¹ Such participation is possible because Christ is also to

⁴⁶Virtue, of course, corresponds to the latter of each of these opposition. See, for merely representative examples, Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 41, 77, 115, 125, 214.

⁴⁷Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 191.

⁴⁸Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 158.

⁴⁹Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 295.

⁵⁰Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 187.

⁵¹Solari, “Christ as Virtue in Didymus the Blind,” 83.

be considered the true “image” of God, of which humanity is itself a reflection⁵². The shared quality of functioning as the divine image is the medium by which Christ himself, as true virtue, may be appropriated to the individual believer.⁵³ It will be argued below, as Solari himself merely hints, that in fact the Holy Spirit is the active agent in facilitating this process.⁵⁴

Spiritual Ascent

Like Origen, Didymus does not conceive of the nature of virtue in merely theoretical or intellectual terms. Rather, virtue also has a distinctively metaphysical component, reflected in Didymus’s seemingly obscure discussion of the “weight” associated with vice. He describes the “fall” of humanity rather literally, explaining that pre-existent souls, as punishment for wrongdoing, have “descended” into union with physical bodies for an earthly existence until their purification is complete and restoration to their original state becomes possible. This Origenist doctrine, later defined as the heresy of ἀποκατάστασις, contributed to Didymus’s eventual condemnation in 553.⁵⁵ In the Genesis commentary, the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden, along with their clothing in animal skins, is taken as an allegorical expression of this metaphysical

⁵²For example, Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 196, among many others.

⁵³Placid Solari, “Christ as Virtue in Didymus the Blind,” in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays in Honor of Juana Raasch, O.S.B.*, ed. Harriet Luckman and Linda Kulzer (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 87.

⁵⁴Solari, “Christ as Virtue in Didymus the Blind,” 72, 79–80.

⁵⁵However, Edwards has argued that while Origen utilizes this Platonic terminology, his doctrinal content is ultimately informed by Christian scripture, rather than Greek philosophy, in Mark Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, Ashgate Studies in Philosophy and Theology in Late Antiquity (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 87–114.

“fall.”⁵⁶ Here Didymus also introduces the teaching that “a perishable body weighs down the soul” and “the earthly tent burdens the mind.”⁵⁷

This problem of the “weightiness” of the embodied soul, or the need for a solution to it, introduces the most frequent motif that Didymus uses to describe Christian experience and progress: the spiritual ascent. Indeed, progress in this ascent is the most fundamental objective that Didymus exhorts his students to pursue, and its future attainment represents the *telos* of his system as a whole. To be freed from the “weight” of vice in turning to virtue, and thus to be transported “on high” into the presence of God, so much as possible in the present existence, is the desired outcome for all of Didymus’s theological activity. The theme receives attention in the Zechariah commentary where it is identified with the injunction for all the nations to ascend to Jerusalem in Zechariah 12.17: “Those ‘who have their minds set on earthly things’ do not ascend because they are borne down by the weight of earthly deeds. Those who strive to ascend to the city with foundations that are unbreakable because they were laid by the Lord, ‘its architect and builder,’ will ‘worship the king, the Lord almighty”⁵⁸ In sum: “the devout person ascends and rises, whereas the one with a taste for pleasure and a materialistic attitude sinks downwards”⁵⁹

Because it occurs across the span of one’s lifetime, Didymus also characterizes the spiritual ascent as a “journey,” which features three well-defined stages, or levels of “advancement” (προκοπήν).⁶⁰ Didymus describes these three stages as “a neophyte

⁵⁶Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 104–5.

⁵⁷Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 104–5. See also Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 144, and Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 147, 229, 254.

⁵⁸Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 352–53.

⁵⁹Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 46.

⁶⁰Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 110, again following the scheme of Origen’s *De Principiis*.

[εἰσαγωγικότερον]; when progress has been made [προκόπτοντα]; and in a proper way at an advanced level [προκόψαντι], thanks to understanding of God.”⁶¹ The “introductory” stage is associated with instruction and initial exposure to divine truth in the form of Christian scripture (though only at the level of the “letter”) and purification from earthly attachments.⁶² The second stage involves “progress,” measured in terms of the attainment and practice of virtue. Naturally, the vast majority of the Christian lifespan unfolds within this stage. This is also where the process of deification, considered below, begins: “a share in the word of God does not come to the one at the beginning, but after some progress (‘gods’ is the name given to those to whom the word of God has come)”⁶³ Finally, the third stage occurs in the future age of fulfillment, when the believer’s “progress toward a proper goal will attain to perfection [τέλειον].”⁶⁴

The paradigm for this theme is the story of Abraham. In the *Commentary on Genesis*, Didymus traces Abraham’s prototypical experience of the scheme outline above. Before reaching the episode in his commentary, Didymus has already established “tents” as allegorical symbols for the journey toward the permanent dwelling place of God, drawing on the sojourning imagery of the Psalms: “The one who progresses from tents, in fact, longs for courts, and sings, ‘I shall pass through every corner of the wonderful tent as far as the house of God.’”⁶⁵ Allegorical association enables Didymus to apply this imagery to his commentary on the sojourn of Abraham, who in Genesis 12.8 “pitch[ed] his tent, which he used in his progress (as ‘tent’ suggests), whereas the house of God is permanent”⁶⁶ Having been commanded to travel to a new place of permanent residence in

⁶¹Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 192.

⁶²Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 215.

⁶³Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 218.

⁶⁴Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 216.

⁶⁵Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 132.

⁶⁶Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 195.

Canaan, Abraham passes out of the “neophyte” stage⁶⁷ and advances through the second stage as “one who is progressing and following the one calling him to leave country, kindred, and father’s house, becoming thereby worthy of seeing God”⁶⁸ Upon reaching the mountain of Beth-El (Hebrew for “House of God”), Abraham “pitches [his tent] in the house that abides forever, after which there is no further ascent.” It is not problematic that, on this view, Abraham obtains the third stage of the ascent during his physical lifetime Didymus is more concerned with the divine truth represented in the passage allegorically than with the historical experience of Abraham.⁶⁹ The symbolism constitutes the exemplar for every believer: “after moving by stages [Abraham] then achieved perfection.”⁷⁰

Deification

A final component of Didymus’s conception of virtue formation deserves attention at this juncture because it incorporates and completes all the others: the process of *θέωσις*, or deification. This concept, indeed, represents the fulfillment of various other components of Didymus’s scheme for virtue formation, including the restoration of the divine likeness (grounded in the image) and the culmination of the spiritual ascent. As usual, the theme boasts a Hellenistic heritage but probably descends to Didymus through the filtration of Philo, Origen, and others. By far the most thorough discussion of this development is that of Norman Russell.⁷¹

⁶⁷Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 187.

⁶⁸Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 193.

⁶⁹As he explains, “We should realize that in this is a symbolic reference to the divine way of life, even if the person of Abram still had room for perfection, not yet having had a change of name.” Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 196.

⁷⁰Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 195.

⁷¹Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Russell traces the concept’s lineage from

The divine element within humanity, as already established, is to be identified with humanity's creation in the divine image. The intended function of the human being "is to resemble God as far as possible [τὸ ὁμοιωθῆναι τῷ Θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν]."⁷² Moreover, the *Commentary on Genesis* confirms that in the pre-existent state allegorically depicted by the Garden of Eden, human souls inhabited "a divine place, a dwelling of blessed powers" from which they have been expelled following the advent of sin.⁷³ To regain this status, human souls embark upon the spiritual ascent already outlined, to which deification may be considered a parallel metaphor. Yet it is a metaphor that is grounded in a metaphysical reality of participation. Just as it was observed that humanity possesses the divine image by participation in Christ as the divine image, possesses reason by participation in Christ as the divine *Logos*, and possesses virtue by participation in Christ as the substance of virtue, so also humanity comes to possess and participate in divinity itself, in an equally derivative sense, through participation in Christ as divine nature. More specifically, it is Christ's nature as divine Word that enables human participation in his divinity. As Didymus explains, the divine inspiration of scripture and prophecy represents the highest form of this process, as exemplified by the oracles of Isaiah: "not all the words uttered are his [Isaiah's]; instead, since participation in God confers authority, and as a result of God's indwelling, the beneficiaries are called 'gods.'"⁷⁴

However, the experience of deification is not limited to writers of scripture and prophets. In the Genesis commentary, Didymus identifies Noah as a prime example of it,

classical, Jewish, and early Christian roots through the Alexandrian and monastic traditions and beyond. On Didymus specifically, see 154–63, to which this section is largely indebted.

⁷²Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 135. The phrase has a rich heritage in the classical tradition, beginning with Plato, *Theatetus* 176b.

⁷³Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 100.

⁷⁴Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 219.

and this explains his salvation from the judgment of the flood: “since Noah was not human in every respect, having surpassed the human condition, this meant that he was not numbered among human beings, and was a god, as it is said, ‘Those to whom the word of God came were called gods’.”⁷⁵ The reference is to the foundational text for nearly all Christians doctrines of deification, Psalm 82.6 (quoted in John 10.34). This transformation occurs, explicitly, “as a result of virtue.”⁷⁶

The *Commentary on Zechariah* is permeated with references to deification, beginning with its explanation of the inspiration of the prophet’s oracles. Zechariah was “divinized [θεοποιηθείς] by the word that came to him”⁷⁷ and “the word of God comes to people when they have a share [μετάσχη] in it.”⁷⁸ On the basis of the conflation of the divine Word with Christ, the apostle Paul is similarly characterized as “Christ-bearing [χριστοφόρου]”⁷⁹ Yet, once again, this quality of being “divinely-possessed” (θεολημπτουμένου) also extends to the saints generally.⁸⁰ All people who imitate Christ by manifesting virtue are “also called Christs on account of being sharers [μέτοχοι] in him”⁸¹ The commentary anticipates the completion and perfection of the process of deification as the *telos* of Christian experience: “when all receive the fullness of divinity [θεότητος], there is no one left who is cut off from this unity, outside and alone; then all ‘grief, pain, and groaning will disappear,’ and likewise in place of great numbers all will

⁷⁵Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 148.

⁷⁶Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 148.

⁷⁷Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 27.

⁷⁸Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 29. See also 247, 264.

⁷⁹Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 298, 304.

⁸⁰Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 32, 202. Hill notes the origin of this term in Aristotle’s *Ethica Eudemia* in Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 10.

⁸¹Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 121.

be combined in one single man.”⁸² This completion is parallel to the third stage of the spiritual ascent in the final state.⁸³

Lastly, the relevance of the doctrine of deification for the present study appears most clearly in considering the relationship between the divine Word, identified with Christ, and the activity of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit serves as the intermediary between that portion of the human being which is capable of participating in the divine realities and the divine person of Christ, who is himself the true “image of God.” On the most basic level, the Spirit’s inspiration of scripture enables the human being to encounter the divine Word through the practice of exegesis.⁸⁴ It is through dependence on the Spirit that the exegete advances from the “letter” of the text to its deeper allegorical or anagogical meaning.⁸⁵ However, such illumination results not only in the believer’s acquisition of intellectual truth but in the application of that truth toward practical expressions of virtue. Didymus expresses his concern for this outcome in a direct address to his students to close his discussion of Zechariah 2: “Interpreting what has been said above in a discerning way...let us practice reverence for God so that God may be still more favorable to hearts of flesh and not of stone, and may engrave on them divine characters with his living Spirit. Feeling the benefit of this, we may thus be made perfect so as to come face to face with the truth, surpassing a vision of it that is indirect or partial.”⁸⁶

⁸²Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 248. Again, both translator Hill and editor Doutreleau note the hints of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*, but see the discussion above.

⁸³Other imageries used to describe this final state in the *Commentary on Zechariah* include the perfection of divine vision (39, 78), contemplation (65, 221), and illumination/enlightenment (52–53, 76, 94).

⁸⁴Didymus makes constant reference to the Spirit’s inspiration of, and speech through, scripture. Merely representative are Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 54, 64, 75, 137, 189.

⁸⁵Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 77.

⁸⁶Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 65.

Moreover, in his interpretation of Zechariah's vision of the golden lampstand, taken to represent "the luminous doctrine of the Trinity," Didymus suggests three possible allegorical interpretations. All three identify the Holy Spirit as the conduit between the individual believer and the divine mysteries which require illumination.⁸⁷ Commenting on one of the few direct references to the Spirit within the text of Zechariah (Zech 4.6, "Not by great power, nor by strength, but by my Spirit"), Didymus again associates the Spirit with the inspiration and illumination of the divine Word, "conferred...to those who are worthy," and described as "no different" from the power of Christ himself.⁸⁸ Most intriguing, however, is the subtle statement that the Spirit's "attributes, though stemming from God, are sometimes styled the qualities of the possessor." Didymus cites the biblical descriptions of individuals who were "overpowered" by the Spirit (John the Baptist and Mary) to show that the Spirit functions as an interface between Christ/the divine Word and the virtuous believer. As noted previously, this is the central component of the divinization scheme that characterizes the commentary: "The word that came to the prophet is none other than God the Word. . . It comes to Spirit-filled men without remaining. . . then is the time they will also be gods whom he enlightens by coming."⁸⁹

⁸⁷Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 85–87. Alternatively: the Spirit is either the light of the lampstand itself, which is shared other lamps; the oil from one of the olive trees which fuel the fire (symbolizing spiritual insight); or one of two olive trees (the other being the Son) which together "shed light" on the lamp itself (taken as the Father).

⁸⁸Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 90.

⁸⁹Didymus, *Commentary on Zechariah*, 115. While the context suggests that "the word" is the likely antecedent for the phrase "whom he enlightens," the possibility that it refers to the Spirit is intriguing. In any case the ambiguity serves to highlight further the degree of cooperation and overlap that Didymus envisions between Word and Spirit in the process of deification.

CHAPTER 4

DIDYMUS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

Didymus represents one of the earliest Christian writers to dedicate an entire treatise to the question of the nature of the Holy Spirit. The following analysis of his *De Spiritu Sancto* gives particular attention to features that distinguish his conception from both classical models of the transcendent deity (specifically, its “third hypostasis”) as well as prevailing contemporary Christian pneumatologies.¹ The unique contributions of Didymus on both of these fronts are best explained by his commitment to the Spirit’s active role in participatory virtue formation, exemplified in discussions of the Spirit’s relational nature (intra-Trinitarian position), ontological nature (essence), and functional nature (activity).

Since the hierarchy of participation is such a crucial theme for Didymus, the most logical order in which to analyze these features is first to establish, from his scheme, the relational position of the Spirit within the Trinity, then to consider the implications of this position for the Spirit’s ontological nature, and finally to review the particular functions which the Spirit performs as divine. In short, it will be seen that the sustained defense that Didymus here offers concerning the full divinity of the Spirit is in fact also the foundation to his argument for the Spirit’s active role in the process of virtue formation that has been surveyed above: the Spirit is the agent responsible for the facilitation of the believer’s participation in Christ as the substance of virtue, the

¹For the best recent introduction to the work, see the comments by Lewis Ayres, Mark DelCogliano, and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz in their English translation of Athanasius and Didymus, *Works on the Spirit: Athanasius's Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit and Didymus's on the Holy Spirit*, Popular Patristics Series 43 (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 31–50. Unless otherwise noted, English quotations from *De Spiritu Sancto* in the present study come from this translation.

accomplishment of the spiritual ascent through illumination of the divine word, and the realization of the ideal of deification.

Relational Nature

In discussing the position of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity, Didymus is both a man of his times and in some respects ahead of them. He describes the Spirit unequivocally as proceeding from both the Father and the Son.² Moreover, he argues for the full divinity of the Spirit, in response to strands of the Pneumatomachian dissidents with whom Athanasius was similarly concerned.³ In this polemical context, Didymus employs the still-volatile terminology of ὁμοούσιος⁴ to define the relationship of all three divine persons, in correction of both his opponents and some within his own Trinitarian tradition.⁵ Several of these references occur in descriptions of the shared activity of the Spirit with Father and Son, which will be considered in greater detail as the Spirit's "functional nature" below. Generally speaking, however, they can be summarized by the statement that "those who are ὁμοούσια do not have an activity that is diverse."⁶

²Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, trans. Lewis Ayres, Mark DelCogliano, and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz in Athanasius and Didymus, *Works on the Spirit: Athanasius's Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit and Didymus's on the Holy Spirit*, Popular Patristics Series 43 (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 110–20.

³In his three *Letters to Serapion*, conveniently collected together with the treatise of Didymus in the recent translation of Ayres, DelCogliano, and Radde-Gallwitz. On the Pneumatomachian controversy specifically, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 27 (New York: Brill, 1994).

⁴On the complex history of the development and usage of this term in fourth-century circles, see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁵Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 16, 27, 81, 145. It should be noted that Didymus also employs ὁμοούσιος in the *Commentary on Genesis*, 188, and in the *Commentary on Zechariah*, 59, 236. While all three of these references comment specifically on the Son, the third one is also a description of the Trinity as a whole.

⁶Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 145.

Like Origen, Didymus envisions the internal economy of the Trinity in hierarchical terms. Unlike Origen, however, Didymus identifies this hierarchy not with the inherent “essences” of the three divine persons but with their proximity to human beings and degrees of interaction with them. The Holy Spirit is thus the divine person directly responsible for causing believers to be “filled” [*pleni esse dicuntur*] with the properties of God.⁷ This function is both commanded by the Father⁸ and commissioned by the Son, as confirmed by the fact that the “substances” with which the Spirit fills believers are those qualities of God with which the Son himself is consistently identified (such as the divine Word, virtue, wisdom, truth). Didymus classifies the Spirit as the divine “distributor” [*distributricem*]⁹: “This manifold fullness of gifts is produced by the Father, multiplied by the Son, and exists through the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰

The relationship between the Son and the Spirit is central to Didymus’s theological system, and it functions in a manner analogous to the relationship between the Father and the Son: “For the Son is nothing other than those things which are given to him by the Father, and the substance of the Spirit is nothing other than that which is given to him by the Son.”¹¹ Specifically, this “substance” includes the virtue (reflected in virtue formation) and the wisdom/understanding (reflected in greater spiritual perception) which the Spirit cultivates in believers by uniting them with the Son. Indeed, it has been noted previously that in his biblical commentaries Didymus describes a level of cooperation between the divine Word and the Holy Spirit, particularly in the processes of divine inspiration and scriptural interpretation, that often renders them indistinguishable. The

⁷Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 30.

⁸Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 35, citing Luke 11.13 and Matt 7.11.

⁹Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 97.

¹⁰Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 96.

¹¹Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 165.

Spirit is the immediate conduit by which the believer receives and experiences with “perfection” [*perfecte*]¹² these properties that are particular to the Son, since “the fullness [*plenitudo*] of the divine gifts is implied in the substance [*substantia*] of the Holy Spirit.”¹³ Of course, this description of the Spirit’s un-creaturely role in “filling” believers with the divine properties functions as part of Didymus’s broader argument for the Spirit’s full divinity, which itself hinges largely on establishing the Spirit on the Creator side of the creator-creature distinction.¹⁴

The result of connecting believers with the properties of the Son in this way is that the Spirit fosters in believers those attributes which are the specific prerogative of the Spirit—primarily, those pertaining to practical holiness such as “wisdom, knowledge, faith, and the rest of the virtues.”¹⁵ As Didymus says, “the gifts of the virtues always imply the Holy Spirit, in such a way that he who has him is considered to be filled with the gifts of God.” The biblical examples that Didymus adduces include the wisdom, faith and grace of Stephen the martyr,¹⁶ the miracles of the apostles,¹⁷ and the promise of Jesus that they would receive wisdom and knowledge to testify on his behalf during persecution.¹⁸ In these illustrations the intimate connection between the reception of the divine Word, identified with the Son, and its practical virtuous application by means of the Spirit is abundantly clear.

¹²Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 35.

¹³Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 34. See also Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 35.

¹⁴Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 30, 34.

¹⁵Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 34.

¹⁶Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 37.

¹⁷Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 38.

¹⁸Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 39–41.

Relationally, then, the position that the Spirit inhabits within the Trinitarian order represents the immediate point of contact through which the believer's participation (*participationem*)¹⁹ in divine realities is initiated, bestowing the gifts of God on those whose souls have experienced preliminary purification and guiding them deeper (or higher) into divine communion (*communicat*)²⁰ by uniting them with the Son who is the divine Word, as well as the true image of the Father. The Spirit is further identified with the love of the Father, poured into the hearts of believers, as well as the wisdom, word, and truth of the Son.²¹ For Didymus, the formation of virtue by means of the Spirit is a sort of divine gateway which enables the contemplation of more profound realities: "Now whoever obtains the aforementioned goods in the power of the Holy Spirit also obtains the correct faith in the mystery of the Trinity [*rectam fidem in Trinitatis mysterio*]."²² Such a conception clearly explains why virtue formation is the prominent feature of Didymus's exegetical writings.

Ontological Nature

In arguing without compromise for the full divinity of the Holy Spirit, Didymus combats both the established Hellenistic philosophical conventions of his time as well as his own Christian tradition. Plotinus, of course, had outlined a view of the *Psyche* as a third divine *hypostasis*, deriving its being, ultimately, from the One, and less directly, from the *Nous*. In this scheme, the *Psyche*, in turn, gives rise to the material universe and in some sense indwells it, patterning it after the "forms" of the noetic realities which the *Psyche* itself continually contemplates.²³ Reflections of such an

¹⁹Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 78.

²⁰Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 80.

²¹Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 79.

²²Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 44.

²³See, for example, Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.2.

ontological hierarchy can be detected also in the writings of Origen—at least, in those cases where his translator Rufinus has not totally succeeded in polishing them with a more satisfactorily Nicene veneer²⁴—when he insists that every entity outside the Father derives its existence from him, and places the Spirit firmly at the bottom of the divine hierarchy.²⁵ Of course, Origen departs from Plotinus in identifying his third *hypostasis* specifically with the prerogative of cultivating holiness in human beings by means of participation²⁶—and this is the theme which Didymus retains and develops. Commonalities between these two systems are hardly surprising, given the possibility that Plotinus and Origen studied together under the Neoplatonist teacher Ammonius Saccas—and regardless of their divergent later careers.²⁷

In the fourth-century struggle with the Pneumatomachians and Eunomians, Didymus found it necessary to correct the Trinitarian conceptions of the Alexandrian predecessor whom he otherwise held in such high esteem, particularly with respect to the person of the Holy Spirit, as well as to continue to oppose the Neoplatonic metaphysics that had influenced him.²⁸ It has been observed above that Didymus is comfortable applying the terminology of ὁμοούσιος to the Spirit. Beyond this, he endeavors to establish two additional ontological facts, in which the former is in fact merely an

²⁴Indeed, “[t]hat Didymus has swayed Rufinus’s translation is a tantalizing prospect.” Kellen Plaxco, “‘I Will Pour Out My Spirit’: Didymus against Eunomius in Light of John 16:14’s History of Reception,” *Vigilae Christianae* 70, no. 5 (2016), 504. Heron makes a similar point in Alasdair Heron, “The Holy Spirit in Origen and Didymus: A Shift in Perspective from the Third to Fourth Century,” in *Doctrines of God and Christ in the Early Church*, ed. Everett Ferguson, David Scholer, and Paul Finney, Studies in Early Christianity 9 (New York: Garland, 1993), 264.

²⁵Origen, *De Principiis* 1.3.3, 1.3.5, respectively.

²⁶Origen, *De Principiis*, 1.3.8.

²⁷Scholars remain divided about whether the Origen who was a student of Ammonius in Alexandria should also be identified with the Christian Origen, but the chronology and the ideological similarities lend support the case.

²⁸Kellen Plaxco, “Participation and Trinity in Origen and Didymus the Blind,” in *Origeniana Undecima: Origen and Origenism in Western Thought*, ed. A. C. Jacobsen (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2016), 772.

implication of the latter: (1) that the Spirit is not an angel; and (2) that the Spirit is to be identified with the creator side of the creator-creature distinction.

It appears that at least one of the immediate occasions for the writing of *De Spiritu Sancto* was the suggestion by an unknown group (possibly the Pneumatomachi)²⁹ that the Holy Spirit should be considered an angel, or the preeminent angelic creature. Plaxco surveys a number of angelomorphic Jewish-Christian pneumatologies that may have provided precedents for such a view.³⁰ Moreover, he demonstrates how Christian writers, beginning with Origen and culminating, in Didymus's time, with Eunomius, appealed to these precedents in constructing subordinationist pneumatologies whose purpose was to distinguish the divine persons.³¹ The primary argument that Didymus employs to refute these lines of thought is recycled throughout *De Spiritu Sancto* to establish his own unique, pro-Nicene conception of the Spirit's ontology: unlike the angels, the Spirit is holy in essence, and not as a result of any participation in God.³² If this were not the case, the angels too would have to be recognized as ὁμοούσιος.³³ On the contrary, the Spirit, as fully divine, is the fundamental source of the sanctification of the angels themselves and therefore must be assigned a different nature.³⁴

In this refutation, Didymus relies on a concept that is fundamental to the entire program of his pneumatological treatise: the doctrine of the "undiminished giver." It has roots in Hellenistic thought, and its development and application to Christianity is traced

²⁹Compare the identical argument against them in Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion* 1.26.7–1.27.1. In the article discussed below, Plaxco suggests that Didymus responds specifically to Eunomius, *Apology* 25.

³⁰"Frequently enough, the question was not necessarily *whether* the Holy Spirit was an angelic creature, but with which angelic creature the Spirit should be identified." Plaxco, "'I Will Pour Out My Spirit': Didymus against Eunomius in Light of John 16:14's History of Reception," 483–90.

³¹Plaxco, "'I Will Pour Out My Spirit', 490–502.

³²Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 25.

³³Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 27.

³⁴Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 29.

by Ayres.³⁵ In brief, it establishes an irreconcilable opposition between the essences of beings in whom participation is possible, on the one hand, and classes of beings who participate *in* them, on the other. Jerome succinctly summarizes the doctrine in translating *De Spiritu Sancto* 55: “[Didymus] calls a substance ‘capable of being participated in (*capabilis*) when it is participated in (*capiatur*) by many and bestows on them a share in itself. But a substance is ‘capable of participating (*capax*) when it is filled through communion with another substance and participates in (*capiens*) something else, while not being participated in (*capiatur*) by another.”³⁶

This dynamic explains the relationship between the “substance” of the Spirit (conceived as the fundamental attributes of God which are the Spirit’s prerogative—specifically, virtue and holiness (*uirtutum et sanctificationis*)—and the individual believers to whom the Spirit imparts these “goods” (*bonis*).³⁷ The Spirit’s role in virtue formation is therefore crucial for Didymus in establishing the Spirit’s unity with the Father and Son, who are likewise capable of participation but do not themselves participate in any higher essence. Didymus unpacks the relationship between the Son, identified with virtue, and the Spirit, identified as the *producer* of virtue in human beings, not for the purpose of articulating the Spirit’s contingency on the Son (*à la* Origen and Eunomius) but rather for the antithetical purpose of demonstrating their basic unity of being. “For the Father and the Son are possessed rather than possessors” and “if [the Holy Spirit] sanctifies those who are capable of participating in him, then he should be placed with the Father and Son.”³⁸ Didymus finds further evidence for the Spirit’s divinity in the

³⁵Lewis Ayres, “The Holy Spirit as the ‘Undiminished Giver’: Didymus the Blind’s *De Spiritu Sancto* and the Development of Nicene Pneumatology,” in *The Holy Spirit and the Fathers of the Church: The Proceedings of the Seventh International Patristic Conference* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 57–72.

³⁶Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 55.

³⁷Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 10–11.

³⁸Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 18–19.

scriptural language of “filling” and “pouring,” since a mere creature can be said neither to “fill” another creature³⁹ nor to be “poured forth” upon many creatures.⁴⁰ Since there is no intermediary category in Didymus’s thought, these factors logically necessitate assigning the Spirit to the divine side of the creator-creature divide and undergird his identification of the Spirit as ὁμοούσιος. The Spirit, as God, is “impassible, immutable, and indivisible.”⁴¹ Fundamental to Didymus’s defense of the full divinity of the Spirit, then, is his conception of the Spirit’s role in participatory virtue formation, expressed via the doctrine of the undiminished giver.

Functional Nature of the Spirit

Finally, the priority of virtue formation in *De Spiritu Sancto* is apparent in the arguments that Didymus offers concerning the functions that the Spirit performs. Primarily these include the Spirit’s activity in creating, sanctifying, and teaching, though these tasks overlap significantly. It is worth observing that all of these roles are thoroughly personal—reflecting Didymus’s rejection of pneumatological conceptions that characterized the Spirit as mere ἐνέργεια. Andrew Radde-Gallwitz has demonstrated this point well, identifying it as another instance in which Didymus borrows from Origen’s thought yet also perceives the need to modify it, in accordance with pro-Nicene standards, to accomplish his polemical purposes.⁴² Didymus employs Origen’s arguments about the Spirit’s distinct personhood to further his own goal of demonstrating that this personhood is to be identified with that of God himself.⁴³ To solidify this position, he

³⁹Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 30.

⁴⁰Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 49–53.

⁴¹Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 36, 56.

⁴²Radde-Gallwitz, “The Holy Spirit as Agent, Not Activity: Origen’s Argument with Modalism and Its Afterlife in Didymus, Eunomius, and Gregory of Nazianzus,” *Vigilae Christianae* 65, no. 3 (2011): 227–48. While Origen argued vigorously, against the modalists, for the personal particularity of the Spirit, he did so by suggesting, problematically, that the Spirit is a distinct creation of the Father.

⁴³Radde-Gallwitz, “The Holy Spirit as Agent, Not Activity,” 241.

adduces three scriptural characterizations of the Spirit's activity that can only be interpreted as divine: creating, sanctifying, and teaching.

The act of creation is the most obviously divine activity, which is why the demonstration of the Spirit as creator rather than creature forms the crux of Didymus's argument. He finds a literal example of the Spirit's creative power in the scriptural account of the virginal conception of Christ, which the evangelists specifically attribute to the coming of the Holy Spirit (Matt 1.18, Luke 1.35). "Therefore, when the Holy Spirit came upon the virgin Mary, the creating power [*Creatrix igitur uirtus*] of the Most High fashioned the body of Christ: using it as a temple, he was born without the seed of man."⁴⁴ Through the lexical flexibility of πνεῦμα (maintained in Jerome's translation *spiritum*), Didymus also associates the Spirit with breath as the animating principle of physical life, citing Psalm 103: "You take back from them your Spirit, and they die and they return to the earth. You send forth your Spirit, and they are created [*creabuntur*], and you renew the face of the earth."⁴⁵ Didymus avers that he has already provided additional proof "that the Holy Spirit is the Creator [*creatorem*]" in a work that is now lost.⁴⁶ To remove any lingering doubt about his position, he concludes that "along with the Father and the Son [the Spirit] creates all things which the Father and the Son create."⁴⁷

While Didymus thus affirms unapologetically that the Spirit is involved in the divine act of physical creation, he primarily associates the Spirit, as has been seen, with the equally divine act of spiritual creation. This emphasis has roots in Origen's "concentric circles" of divine prerogatives, in which the Father is responsible for the existence of human beings, the Son for their rationality, and the Spirit for their

⁴⁴Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 144.

⁴⁵Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 145.

⁴⁶Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 145. The work was entitled *Dogmatum*.

⁴⁷Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, citing Ps 130.30: "Send forth your Spirit, and they are created."

sanctification or participation in holiness.⁴⁸ The lengthy interpretation that Didymus offers of the Genesis account of physical creation as an allegory for the divine work of spiritual creation (beginning with the Spirit's illumination of the primordial "darkness" while hovering over the waters) has already been discussed.⁴⁹ In *De Spiritu Sancto*, the abundant New Testament witness to the role of the Spirit in producing holiness functions in support of his presentation of the Spirit as undiminished giver.⁵⁰ The virtues, or "fruit of the Spirit," become manifest within individual believers when the Spirit "fills" them, and "indwells" them,⁵¹ yet the inherent virtue of the Spirit is in no way reduced. This phenomenon is possible, first and foremost, because the Spirit is the substance of the gifts which are imparted. "To put it simply, he exists in those goods which are conferred by the Lord."⁵²

Second, the sanctifying process occurs because the Spirit "forms" Christ, the true image of God, within this incorporeal dimension of believers by gradually restoring the "likeness" to God which they lost as a result of sin. This integration transpires in two logical stages. First, the believer receives the "seal" of the Spirit in order to "take on his [the Spirit's] form and likeness." In this way, "one who is made a sharer in the Holy Spirit becomes, through communion in him, simultaneously spiritual and holy."⁵³

⁴⁸Origen, *De Principiis* 1.3.6–8. "God the Father bestows on all the gift of existence; and a participation in Christ, in virtue of his being the word or reason, makes them rational. From this it follows that they are worthy of praise or blame, because they are capable alike of virtue and of wickedness. Accordingly, there is also available the grace of the Holy Spirit, that those beings who are not holy in essence may be made holy by participating in this grace." Butterworth's translation in Origen, *On First Principles*, trans. G. W. Buttersworth (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith Publisher, 1973).

⁴⁹Didymus, *Commentary on Genesis*, 27 and following. The entire hexameron is taken as a metaphor for the emergence of the gospel and the spiritual growth that results from it.

⁵⁰See, for example, Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 164.

⁵¹Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 10. "The Holy Spirit is not placed among corporeal substances, but indwells [*est...habitor*] the soul [*animae*] and the mind [*sensus*] as the producer [*effector*] of speech, wisdom, and knowledge."

⁵²Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 11.

⁵³Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 20.

Receiving the form (or seal) of the Spirit then enables union with the Son—it has already been noted that Didymus is comfortable designating all three divine persons as *homoousios*. The Spirit is thus the conduit which connects the believer with the virtue that is associated with the Son, who is in turn the “image” of the Father. Didymus makes this relationship quite explicit in an important passage at *De Spiritu Sancto* 95: “Since ‘the Son is the Image [*imago*] of the invisible God and the Form of his substance [*forma substantiae eius*], whoever is fashioned and formed [*imaginantur et formantur*] according to this Image or Form is led into likeness [*similitudinem*] to God (though attaining such a form and image only insofar as the capacity of humans to advance allows). In a similar way, since the Holy Spirit is the seal [*signaculum*] of God, he seals those who receive the form and image of God and leads them to the seal of Christ, filling them with wisdom, knowledge, and above all faith.”⁵⁴

Of course, some overlap exists between the virtues which are the prerogative of the Son and those which are identified directly with the Spirit. Indeed, this is precisely the point of the section in which the passage just quoted appears: it is “evidence” for the argument that since both the Son and the Spirit can be identified as the wisdom and truth of God, they necessarily share “the same circle of unity and substance.”⁵⁵ However, the Spirit is also responsible for producing virtue in ways that the Son is not. The most prominent example is faith, mentioned “above all” in the passage just cited, and elsewhere.⁵⁶ Other virtues that Didymus connects closely with the filling of the Spirit include hope, joy and peace,⁵⁷ grace, and love.⁵⁸ In his discussion of these latter two, the

⁵⁴Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 95.

⁵⁵Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 94. “*Eumdem circulum unitatis atque substantiae...*”

⁵⁶Ayres, et. al. likewise note the unique association of faith with the Spirit, as opposed to wisdom and truth, which are ascribed to both the Son and the Spirit, in their footnote to Didymus, *Spiritu Sancto*, 34. For other instances, see also Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 37–38.

⁵⁷Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 44–45.

⁵⁸Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 49, 75–78.

precise role of the Spirit emerges more clearly, as Didymus explains in commenting on 2 Corinthians 13.13 (“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all”) that the mutual work of the Father and Son is “perfected by the activity of the Spirit [*Spiritus Sancti operatione completa*]” and therefore “demonstrates that the Trinity is of one substance [*Trinitatis unius substantiae demonstrabitur*].”⁵⁹ By indwelling believers, the Spirit is the divine person who most directly accomplishes the work of instilling virtue—virtue which is produced by the Father and identified substantially with the Son. This arrangement is integral to the high pneumatology that Didymus intends to establish in *De Spiritu Sancto*.

The final aspect of the Spirit’s functionality that Didymus highlights is the Spirit’s capacity for teaching divine truth. This theme recurs throughout *De Spiritu Sancto*, but perhaps the most thorough and extended treatments of it come in the exegeses of John 14.26 (“But when the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, comes, he will teach you all things”) and John 16.12–15. Didymus explains that the Spirit is authorized by both Father and Son to share “what is proper to the persons [*proprietas personarum*]⁶⁰. The identification of Christ with the “wisdom” and “truth” of God is the key assumption that makes the Spirit’s work of uniting believers with Christ a matter of spiritual illumination.⁶¹

The content of the “sharing” mentioned in Didymus’s comment on John 14.26, in a sense closely parallel to the identification of Christ as the substance of the virtue which the Spirit instills, is the Son as the divine Word. Didymus surveys biblical examples of figures who, after receiving the Spirit, “progressed to better things.”⁶²

⁵⁹Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 76. See also Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 80.

⁶⁰Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 133.

⁶¹See, for example, Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 158–59, 162.

⁶²Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 136.

Specifically, the Spirit teaches “all things which are spiritual and intelligible—in sum, the mysteries of truth and wisdom. [*spiritualia. . . et intellectualia et, ut breuiter uniuersa concludam, ueritatis et sapientiae sacramenta.*]”⁶³ These terms, of course, are to be associated with the Origenian distinction between the literal (or physical) and spiritual levels of interpretation with respect to biblical exegesis, the proper understanding and application of which leads to the formation of a person who is truly spiritual, in the technical sense, over time. For each step of the process, Didymus highlights the Spirit as the active agent: inspiring scripture, illuminating its meaning, and implementing its content (in terms of both the divine Word and the virtue that it intends to produce) within the individual believer.

Second, in his examination of John 16.12–15, Didymus again associates the Spirit with the revelation of esoteric doctrines that can only be received when the believer has made sufficient spiritual progress. “When the Holy Spirit comes into the hearts of believers,” however, “they are filled with words of wisdom and knowledge. When they are made spiritual in this way, they receive the teaching of the Holy Spirit which can guide them toward the whole Truth.”⁶⁴ Again this spiritual “truth” is directly connected with both Christ himself as the divine Word (on the basis of John 14.6, “I am the truth”) as well as the divine Word related in scripture: “In [the Spirit] alone resides all the truth of Scripture.”⁶⁵ Didymus summarizes his conception of the process by depicting the work of the Spirit, as usual, in terms of the “perfection” (*perfectionem*) of an activity initiated by the Father and centering around the Son.⁶⁶

The teaching role of the Spirit thus fosters the “contemplative” side of the believer’s spiritual experience as a counterpart to the “active” component that is

⁶³Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 140.

⁶⁴Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 149.

⁶⁵Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 150.

⁶⁶Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 152.

developed through the Spirit's agency in virtue formation. The "gifts" of the Spirit that are primarily linked to the Spirit's activity of teaching are "wisdom" and "understanding." In a fashion that is parallel to the unification with the Son as the substance of virtue, resulting in virtue formation, the Spirit likewise unites believers with the Son as the divine truth and wisdom, resulting in increased spiritual understanding of the divine mysteries.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Synthesis

It remains now, after having briefly surveyed key exegetical and systematic writings from Didymus's extant corpus, to draw together the distinctive strands of his thought that have emerged—namely, the conception of virtue and its formation from his exegetical commentaries, on the one hand, and the pneumatology of *De Spiritu Sancto*, on the other—and then to identify the singular theme which unites them into a coherent whole: the active agency of the Holy Spirit in virtue formation.

From the overview of Didymus's conception of virtue and its formation within the commentaries on Genesis and Zechariah, five important considerations appeared as characteristic of his thought:

First, humanity's creation in the image of God directly constitutes the human capacity for virtue, both logically and metaphysically, and provides the basis for union with Christ, who is consistently identified as both the true "image of God" and the "substance" of divine virtue. Such union gradually results in the restoration of the divine "likeness," which, unlike the divine image, was lost as a result of humanity's fall into sin.

Second, the divine image in humanity involves and includes, specifically, the capacities of reason, knowledge, and conscience, which correspond to the divine nature and become increasingly reflective of it as a result of divine grace. This represents the formation of virtue, whereas vice represents the absence or neglect of these capacities (irrationality, ignorance, and the guilt of sin).

Third, the nature of virtue itself is conceived both in classical terms (such as the four "cardinal" virtues, which are necessarily interrelated) and also, distinctively, in

terms of direct identification with the person of Christ, who is its “substance.” The formation of virtue in the individual believer thus demands participatory access to Christ himself.

Fourth, the process of virtue formation over time is conceived primarily as a “spiritual ascent” or a “journey” of three progressive stages (those who are beginners, those who are advancing, and those who are perfected) which are not merely metaphorical expressions. The concept of participation explains their metaphysical dimensions in a vaguely Neoplatonic framework with significant Christian modifications.

Fifth, virtue formation may also be identified with the process of deification, in which the close cooperation of the divine Word and the divine Spirit in both the inspiration of scripture and the application of it through virtue formation and spiritual comprehension actually accomplish the believer’s increased participation in the divine nature, and thus the restoration of the divine likeness.

In reviewing these observations, it is evident that every aspect of the conception of virtue and its formation that Didymus develops in his exegetical commentaries depends absolutely upon metaphysical participation in Christ as the substance of the divine virtue and Word, yet without consistently articulating the precise mechanism by which this union occurs. However, the other side of the picture emerges clearly through the analysis of Didymus’s pneumatology in *De Spiritu Sancto*, from which the following three features were derived:

First, the relational position of the Spirit as ὁμοούσιος and “shared substance” within the Trinity both enables and requires shared divine activity. The most obvious example of such common activity with respect to the Spirit is the Spirit’s agency in virtue formation. This agency is also therefore a key argument for the Spirit’s full divinity.

Second, the ontological nature of the Spirit as fully divine precludes several incorrect pneumatologies, such as those that would identify the Spirit with the impersonal Neoplatonic third *hypostasis*, the order of angelic beings, or as a semi-divine created

being, as in the hierarchical scheme of Origen. The evidence that the Spirit does not belong in such categories is the biblical affirmation of the Spirit's activity in "filling" believers and thereby accomplishing their participation in Christ as divine virtue and wisdom. This participation, and the virtue formation that it produces, necessarily imply that the Spirit is an "undiminished giver"—capable of being participated *in*, but participating in no other being.

Third, the functional nature of the Spirit finds expression in at least three activities that can only be considered divine: creating, sanctifying, and teaching. The personal agency of the Spirit in each of these works is observed most clearly in virtue formation. With respect to creation, the Spirit physically creates humanity (most notably in the incarnation of Jesus) with the capacity to participate in God, and then spiritually creates by producing a spiritual nature. The latter is closely connected with the Spirit's role in sanctification, uniting the believer with Christ with the effect of forming him, as virtue, in the believer. A parallel phenomenon occurs in the Spirit's function of teaching, in which the Spirit unites the believer with Christ as the divine Word and Truth for the sake of deeper spiritual comprehension and teaching such truth to others in turn.

In summary, then: the exegetical and systematic writings of Didymus provide, in isolation from one another, only partial representations of his theological system. His biblical commentaries, such as those on the books of Genesis and Zechariah, develop a thorough conception of virtue and the dependency of its formation on participatory union with Christ without explaining the precise mechanism by which this occurs. Meanwhile, his treatise on the Holy Spirit constructs a detailed pneumatology that largely assumes such a concept of virtue and its formation as a key facet of its broader argument for the Spirit's full divinity. Thus, it is only in considering these disparate writings as a unified corpus that a coherent picture emerges and the singular theological priority of this otherwise enigmatic thinker becomes readily apparent: the personal agency of the Holy Spirit is the participatory link between the substance of Christ as divine virtue and divine

Word, on the one hand, and the resulting virtue formation and spiritual comprehension within the individual believer, on the other. Moreover, the role that the Spirit plays in this process is itself a clear and forceful argument for a pneumatology that accords the Spirit full divinity.

Conclusion

Modern scholarship on Didymus the Blind has uncovered a number of important insights concerning the man, his methodology, and his milieu, as indicated in the *status quaestionis* section above. In general, however, these studies have concentrated on one category of his writings or the other. Typically, they have either focused on his exegetical method as reflected in his biblical commentaries, seeking to establish points of continuity (or discontinuity) with the allegorical “tradition” of Alexandria and the legacy of Origen,¹ or, less commonly, they have analyzed his philosophical and systematic schema in the attempt to trace (for example) Platonic influence, again, usually in some relation to Origen.² Otherwise, Didymus has received scholarly attention rather

¹Into this category would fall Wolfgang Bienert, “*Allegoria*” und “*Anagoge*” bei Didymos dem Blinden von Alexandria (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1972); Byard Bennett, “The Person Speaking: Prosopopoeia as an Exegetical Device in Didymus the Blind’s Interpretation of Romans 7,” in *Studia Patristica* 48 (2007): 173–77; Mark DeCogliano, “Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, and the Anti-Pneumatomachian Exegesis of Amos 4:13 and John 1:3,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 61, no. 2 (2010): 644–58; A. C. Geljon, “Philonic Elements in Didymus the Blind’s Exegesis of the Story of Cain and Abel,” *Vigilae Christianae* 61 (2007): 282–312; Justin Rogers, “The Philonic and the Pauline: Hagar and Sarah in the Exegesis of Didymus the Blind,” *Studia Philonica Annual* 26 (2014): 57–77; Philip Sellew, “Achilles or Christ? Porphyry and Didymus in Debate over Allegorical Interpretation,” *Harvard Theological Review* 82, no. 1 (1989): 79–100; Blossom Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary: Noetic Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius Ponticus*, Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 6 (New York: Peter Lang, 2010); J. H. Tigcheler, *Didyme l’Aveugle et l’Exégèse Allégorique: Étude Sémantique de Quelques Termes Exégétiques Importants de Son Commentaire Sur Zacharie*, Græcitas Christianorum Primæva (Nijmegen, Netherlands: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1977).

²As simply scanning their titles suggests, these studies include Byard Bennett, “The Origin of Evil: Didymus the Blind’s Contra Manichæos and Its Debt to Origen’s Theology and Exegesis” (PhD diss., Toronto: University of St. Michael’s College, 1997); Alasdair Heron, “The Holy Spirit in Origen and Didymus: A Shift in Perspective from the Third to Fourth Century,” in *Doctrines of God and Christ in the Early Church*, ed. Everett Ferguson, David Scholer, and Paul Finney, Studies of Early Christianity, vol. 9 (New York: Garland, 1993); Richard Layton, “Propatheia: Origen and Didymus on the Origin of the Passions,” *Vigilae Christianae* 54, no. 3 (2000), 262–82; Kellen Plaxco, “Participation and Trinity in Origen and Didymus the Blind,” in *Origeniana Undecima: Origen and Origenism in Western Thought*, ed. A. C. Jacobsen (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2016); Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, “The Holy Spirit as Agent, Not

tangentially, his writings explored largely a means of answering questions that relate to the heart of his own theology only indirectly, in areas such as ancient pedagogy,³ biblical textual criticism,⁴ or the tracing of the development of a doctrine.⁵ While these contributions have had value, they have nevertheless neglected to approach the theology of Didymus independently or holistically.

A few notable recent exceptions to these general inclinations have set the stage for the present study by seeking to identify the core of Didymus's theological system. One is the work of Grant Bayliss, who has produced by far the most comprehensive and dedicated study of Didymus in his own right and correctly emphasized the extent to which the conception of virtue dominates his thought, both exegetically and systematically.⁶ Layton reaches a similar conclusion⁷, as does Solari, in a much smaller project.⁸ Together, these works have established the firm consensus that the formation and exercise of virtue are the clear priority of Didymus's exegetical writings. Yet they have attended little to the question of the precise mechanism by which

Activity: Origen's Argument with Modalism and Its Afterlife in Didymus, Eunomius, and Gregory of Nazianus," *Vigilae Christianae* 65, no. 3 (2011): 227–48.

³Anne Browning Nelson, *The Classroom of Didymus the Blind* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 1998).

⁴Bart D. Ehrman, *Didymus the Blind and the Text of the Gospels*, *The New Testament in the Greek Fathers* 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

⁵As in the treatments of Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, *Oxford Early Christian Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Frances M. Young and Andrew Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

⁶Grant Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind: A Fourth-Century Virtue-Origenism*, *Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁷Richard Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

⁸Placid Solari, "Christ as Virtue in Didymus the Blind," in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays in Honour of Juana Raasch, O.S.B.*, ed. Harriet Luckman and Linda Kulzer (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999).

this formation is accomplished, nor have they sought to integrate this insight with the systematic treatises (*Contra Manichaeos*, *De Spiritu Sancto*, and, if ascribed to him, *De Trinitate*.)

On the other hand, a resurgence of interest in the pneumatology of Didymus has inspired a newfound appreciation for the originality and even priority of his arguments for the Spirit's full divinity: Lewis Ayres has detailed the background and significance of his use of the doctrine of the undiminished giver⁹, and Kellen Plaxco has devoted substantial attention to his use of the metaphysical concept of participation.¹⁰ These developments have enabled, for the first time, a true explication of the participatory pneumatology that Didymus employs to describe believers' experience of the Spirit. Yet, because they focus largely on his systematic works, they have not thoroughly considered the relationship between this pneumatology and the conception of virtue that it largely assumes.

The modest ambition of the present study, then, has been simply to integrate these discoveries, and to suggest the contours, at least, of the profound theological scheme that emerges when they are permitted—and encouraged—to complement one another as divergent aspects of a unified whole. The conception of virtue and its formation from the exegetical commentaries and the participatory pneumatology of *De Spiritu Sancto* are, after all, the products of a common mind, and, perhaps more importantly, of a common heart—a heart which desired, consistently, and above all other priorities, to train young Christians in the interpretation and application of their scripture, and a heart which believed quite fervently that the Spirit of God personally empowered and accomplished both of these activities by uniting believers to Christ—the Word of

⁹Lewis Ayres, "The Holy Spirit as the 'Undiminished Giver': Didymus the Blind's *De Spiritu Sancto* and the Development of Nicene Pneumatology," in *The Holy Spirit and the Fathers of the Church: The Proceedings of the Seventh International Patristics Conference* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 57–72.

¹⁰Kellen Plaxco, "Didymus the Blind and the Metaphysics of Participation," in *Studia Patristica* 67 (2013): 227–37; Plaxco, "Participation and Trinity in Origen and Didymus the Blind."

God, and the substance of divine virtue. Indeed, it was only with this primary aim in mind that Didymus agreed to enter the polemical frays of his times, composing, on the one hand, biblical commentaries like the one on Zechariah at the request of Jerome, and writing, on the other hand, a treatise on the full divinity of the Spirit at the urging of his students “since blasphemy against him is without forgiveness”—yet even here he develops arguments which consistently appeal to the Spirit’s role in virtue formation to do so.¹¹ Thus, whatever credit for intellectual originality should be accorded to Didymus on the basis of his pneumatological contributions (and certainly some must be), it is increasingly necessary to recognize that the catalyst for their expression was an eminently practical concern for the spiritual growth and virtuous development of his circles of students. The concern of the present study is simply to demonstrate that, as with most of the great theologians of the church through the ages, divergent aspects of Didymus’s thought need not be pitted against one another.

¹¹Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, trans. Lewis Ayres, Mark DelCogliano, and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz in Athanasius and Didymus, *Works on the Spirit: Athanasius's Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit and Didymus's On the Holy Spirit*, Popular Patristics Series 43 (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 1.

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ABSTRACT

“FILLED WITH THE GIFTS OF GOD”: THE HOLY SPIRIT AS AGENT OF VIRTUE FORMATION IN THE PARTICIPATORY PNEUMATOLOGY OF DIDYMUS THE BLIND

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This thesis analyzes the pneumatology of Didymus the Blind as expressed in three of his writings: the *Commentary on Genesis*, the *Commentary on Zechariah*, and *On the Holy Spirit*. It attends specifically to the relationship between this pneumatology and Didymus’s concept of virtue formation. Chapters 1 and 2 provide a survey of the state of Didymean scholarship and a sketch of his biography.

Chapter 3 identifies the concept of virtue formation that Didymus espouses in the *Commentary on Genesis* and the *Commentary on Zechariah*, while chapter 4 describes the pneumatology of *On the Holy Spirit*.

Finally, chapter 5 draws together the observations of chapters 3 and 4 to demonstrate their interconnectedness and to argue that the pneumatology which Didymus constructs in *On the Holy Spirit* is, in fact, the underlying source of agency for the notion of virtue formation that he develops in his commentaries on Genesis and Zechariah.

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