

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

*By the Word of the Lord the heavens were established,
by the Spirit of his mouth all their power [Ps 32.6 LXX].*

*You send forth your Spirit, and they are created,
and you renew the face of the earth [Ps 103.30 LXX].*

Who is the Holy Spirit, especially in relation to the Father and the Son? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and in the life of individual Christians? Broadly speaking, these two questions animated reflection upon the Holy Spirit in early Christianity.¹ Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion* and Didymus's *On the Holy Spirit* are among the earliest Christian texts dedicated exclusively to the Holy Spirit, reflecting the pneumatological debates of the mid fourth century. Although the Holy Spirit only became the object of sustained theological reflection in the fourth century, there were earlier Christian pneumatologies. In fact, the pneumatological developments of the fourth century constitute what can be considered a *third* stage in the history of the theology of the Spirit.²

¹ For standard accounts of the history of the theology of the Holy Spirit, see H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* (London: MacMillan, 1912; repr. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1996); J. Patout Burns, and Gerald M. Fagan, *The Holy Spirit, Message of the Fathers of the Church 3* (Wilmington: M. Glazier, 1984; repr. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2002).

² See Lewis Ayres and Michel René Barnes, "Pneumatology: Historical and Methodological Considerations," *Augustinian Studies* 39 (2008): 163–236, a collection of four papers, with an

In the first and second centuries there was no single Christian pneumatology, but rather a variety of continuations and developments of diverse, pre-existing Jewish pneumatologies.³ The most important of these is Spirit as Creator pneumatology, according to which the Holy Spirit was identified as co-Creator on the basis of texts such as Psalms 32.6 and 103.30. Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Irenaeus are adherents of this pneumatological tradition.⁴ Other early Jewish-Christian pneumatologies identified the Spirit as an Angel, as Wisdom, as the Consort of God,

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³ Michel René Barnes, “The Beginning and End of Early Christian pneumatology,” *Augustinian Studies* 39 (2008): 169–86 at 171–80. On Jewish-Christian pneumatologies, see Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, Translated by John A. Baker (London: Darton, Longmann & Todd; Chicago: The Henry Regnery Company, 1964); Marie E. Isaacs, *The Concept of Spirit: A Study of pneuma in Hellenistic Judaism and its Bearing on the New Testament*, Heythrop Monographs 1 (London: Heythrop College, 1976); John Levinson, “The Angelic Spirit in Early Judaism,” *SBL 1995 Seminar Papers*, 464–92; Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnostics* (Leiden: Brill, 1977; repr. 2002); idem, “Two Powers in Heaven and Early Christian Thinking,” in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O’Collins, eds., *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 73–95.

⁴ On Irenaeus’s pneumatology, see J. Armitage Robinson, *St. Irenaeus: Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching* (London: SPCK; New York: MacMillan, 1920), 24–68; and Michel René Barnes, “Irenaeus’s Trinitarian Theology,” *Nova et Vetera* 7 (2009): 76–106.

and as others. Angelic pneumatology is particularly relevant for our purposes since both Athanasius and Didymus were compelled to refute a fourth-century version of it.

The second stage, beginning in the third century, sees the end of this “high” pneumatology. In this period significant figures such as Tertullian and Origen abandoned earlier Jewish-Christian pneumatologies in response to a variety of doctrinal pressures.⁵ Monarchians, who viewed Christ and the Spirit as identical with the Father, differing only in name and in their mode of manifestation, may have been particularly important. For Tertullian and Origen, monarchian accounts threatened the priority and uniqueness of God, the Father of Jesus Christ and Creator of all things. In response they tried to distinguish the Son and the Spirit from the Father with greater clarity and order. As part of this shift, they neglected scriptural passages about the “Spirit” as Creator (such as Psalms 32.6 and 103.30) and reinterpreted other key scriptural passages about the “Spirit” (such as Luke 1:35), so that they were no longer understood as statements about the Holy Spirit, but about the pre-incarnate Son.⁶ Scriptural texts about the Wisdom of God were reinterpreted in a similar way. Such neglect of some passages and reinterpretations of others thus undercut the exegetical basis for the “high” Jewish-Christian Spirit as Creator pneumatology. In these “low” pneumatologies of the third century the Holy Spirit was considered subordinate to the Son, largely on the basis of John 1:3, *All things came to be through him*, i.e. the Word.⁷ Such subordination is in fact a key feature of the anti-monarchian Trinitarian theology of Tertullian and Origen, who employed the idea of Trinitarian order (*gradus* or *taxis*) to understand the unity and diversity of the three: Father, Son, and Spirit, while

⁵ Barnes, “The Beginning and End of Early Christian pneumatology,” 180–6.

⁶ For example, see Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 26.

⁷ For example, see Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John* 2.73-88.

distinct, are unified in an ontological hierarchy. As Michel Barnes notes, while this new emphasis on Trinitarian order resulted in “a curtailment of previous pneumatological options,” it contained “its own tensions and possibilities that were played out in subsequent centuries.”⁸ Indeed, no one in the fourth century questioned this hierarchical Trinitarian order as such, though its meaning and significance was heavily contested.⁹

The third stage covers the mid to late fourth century and is characterized by the continuation, retrieval, and clash of older pneumatologies and their reconfiguration within the new context of Pro-Nicene Trinitarian theology.¹⁰ A comparison of the creeds of Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381 gives a sense of the development of pneumatological doctrine in the mid fourth century:

Nicene Creed (325)

We believe ... in the Holy Spirit.

Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)

We believe ... in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, who spoke through the prophets.

⁸ Lewis Ayres and Michel René Barnes, “Conclusions,” *Augustinian Studies* 39 (2008): 235–6 at 235.

⁹ Barnes, “The Beginning and End of Early Christian pneumatology,” 186.

¹⁰ Lewis Ayres, “Innovation and *Ressourcement* in Pro-Nicene pneumatology,” *Augustinian Studies* 39 (2008): 187–206. For a survey of other theories why controversy about the divinity of the Holy Spirit broke out at this time, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Spirit of God* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 1–3.

By the time of the Council of Constantinople in 381, the original Nicene pronouncement was deemed no longer sufficient and was expanded in the light of the Pro-Nicene clarifications about the Holy Spirit that had developed in the interim. Pro-Nicene Trinitarian theology viewed the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three irreducible agents who share or constitute one indivisible divine nature or power and operate inseparably.¹¹ Most significantly, this new context led to a recovery of pneumatology which emphasized the Spirit's status as Creator as part of the inseparable and unmediated creative activity of God.

This new Pro-Nicene theology of the Holy Spirit was, however, resisted by those who still adhered to the ontologically subordinated Trinitarian order developed by the anti-monarchians, by those who believed that the Holy Spirit was a creature. Such theologians appealed to the fact that scripture itself lacked clear support for the claim that the Holy Spirit was God, and drew upon a variety of older Jewish-Christian pneumatologies to establish their position for the created status of the Holy Spirit. For example, they retrieved Angelic pneumatology but rejected Spirit as Creator pneumatology, resulting in a "low" Angelic pneumatology in contrast to its earlier "high" Jewish-Christian precedent. These theologians may also have been influenced by wider currents in Homoian doctrine of the late 350s -- the ecclesial alliance out of which the Heteroousians would emerge.¹² The subordinationist impulse of Homoian theology was surely extended to the Spirit, and the Heteroousians followed this impulse to its logical conclusion by completely depriving the Spirit of divinity.¹³ And so, we

¹¹ On the meaning of "Pro-Nicene," see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 236–40.

¹² On the Homoians and Heteroousians, see Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 138–9 and 144–9.

¹³ See Eunomius, *Apology* 25-26.

may posit a dual context for those who opposed Pro-Nicene pneumatology: (1) the continued presence of some older Jewish-Christian pneumatologies filtered through the low pneumatology of the anti-monarchians, and (2) the vitalization of these pneumatologies by Homoians and Heteroousians. The writings of Athanasius and Didymus on the Holy Spirit are the first Pro-Nicene writings directed against such groups, refuting both older (Jewish-Christian and anti-monarchian) and recent (Homoian and Heteroousian) pneumatological themes.

Introduction to Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion*

Life and Legacy

Narratives of the fourth-century Trinitarian debates have, until quite recently, been dominated by the figure of Athanasius. Traditional accounts of these debates corral its participants into two competing camps: the beleaguered Athanasius and his supporters, who formulated an unalterable theological vision enshrined in the Creed of Nicaea in 325, and the Arians, who maliciously oppose Nicene theology at every chance in order to promote their shameless heresy. These two parties battle it out through the fourth century, with Athanasius bravely and resolutely at the helm of the ship of orthodoxy, however rocked by Arian waves it may be. Efforts on the part of the Nicenes to defend their theology is made all the more difficult by various Arian emperors who thwart them at every step. The denouement of this war-drama occurs at the Council of Constantinople in 381, where Nicene Orthodoxy -- as defended by the Cappadocian Fathers who inherited the legacy of Athanasius -- finally triumphs and is given imperial sanction. Ancient fourth- and early-fifth-century church polemicists and historians such as Gregory Nazianzen, Epiphanius, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret preserved this narrative.

Hence from shortly after his death Athanasius has been hailed as the unflinching Champion of Nicene Orthodoxy, “the Holy Luminary of Egypt,”¹⁴ “the Pillar of the Church.”¹⁵

Athanasius continues to fascinate, but modern scholarship has approached him more critically, less hagiographically. Athanasius still has strident defenders, but has acquired a legion of harsh critics. His character and methods have been scrutinized and found suspect.¹⁶

Athanasius’s polemical polarization between his own orthodoxy and “Arianism” that he developed in the 330s and ceaselessly promoted thereafter has been deconstructed as a fiction.¹⁷ His theological influence upon the Cappadocians and his contributions to Pro-Nicene orthodoxy

¹⁴ Evagrius of Pontus, *Gnostikos* 46 (ed. A. Guillaumont and C. Guillaumont, *Évagre le Pontique. Le gnostique ou à celui qui est devenu digne de la science*, SChr 356 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1989), ###).

¹⁵ Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio* 21.26.

¹⁶ See R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 239–40, for a summary of the different opinions on Athanasius’s character and methods. Duane W.-H. Arnold, *The Early Episcopal Career of Athanasius of Alexandria* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), stands out as one of his modern defenders; Eduard Schwartz, *Zur Geschichte des Athanasius, Gesammelte Schriften* III (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1959), and Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), crown 20th century scholarship on the unsavory aspects of Athanasius. See also David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

¹⁷ David M. Gwynn, *The Eusebians. The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the Arian Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

have been called into question.¹⁸ In particular, the influence of Athanasius's pneumatology upon subsequent Pro-Nicene theologians such as Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus must not be overestimated.¹⁹ At the same time, Athanasius has also been studied as a theologian significant in his own right, one with a distinct theological vision.²⁰ Though Athanasius may

¹⁸ E.g. Marina Silvia Troiano, 'Il *Contra Eunomium* III di Basilio di Cesarea e le *Epistolae ad Serapionem* I-IV di Atanasio di Alessandria: nota comparativa,' *Augustinianum* 41.1 (2001), 59–91; Mark DelCogliano, "Basil of Caesarea on Proverbs 8:22 and the Sources of Pro-Nicene Theology," *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 59 (2008): 183–90; idem, "Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, and the Anti-Pneumatomachian Exegesis of Amos 4:13 and John 1:3," *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 61 (2010): 644–58. On the issue more generally, see Hanson, *The Search*, 678–9; Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 221; Stephen M. Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea: A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 80 n. 10.

¹⁹ In the past Athanasius's influence in pneumatology was exaggerated; see, for example, Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*, 220; Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, 7. For recent reassessments of the influence of Athanasius's pneumatology upon the Cappadocians, see the studies of Troiano and DelCogliano in n. 18 above, as well as Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God* (New York: Oxford, 2008), 277–83.

²⁰ E.g. E. P. Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius. Synthesis or Antithesis?*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1975); Charles Kannengiesser, *Athanase d'Alexandrie. Évêque et Écrivain: Une lecture des traités contra les Ariens* (Paris: Beauschesne, 1983); J. Rebecca Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Peter Widdicome, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*

have lost some of his luster in the eyes of scholars, his theological achievements are considerable, his tenacity in pursuit of orthodoxy remarkable, and the esteem in which Pro-Nicenes held him undeniable. While much work remains to be done on Athanasius, we now have a clearer, more accurate portrait of the man and his thought, a man who for many remains a profoundly important Saint and Father of the Church.

When conflict erupted around 318 between Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, and a popular presbyter named Arius over the relation between the Father and the Son, Athanasius, then a young deacon, wholeheartedly supported his bishop.²¹ After a series of failed attempts to reconcile the feuding factions within the Alexandrian church, in 325 the emperor Constantine convened a council at Nicaea to resolve the controversy -- now spread throughout the churches of the east -- once and for all. The council ratified a creed designed to exclude the theology of Arius and secured his excommunication. Athanasius attended the council as a member of Alexander's entourage. When Alexander died a few years later, Athanasius succeeded him, though not without steep resistance from the Melitians.

(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of his Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); idem, *Athanasius* (London: Routledge, 2004); Xavier Morales, *La théologie trinitaire d'Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2006); Thomas G. Weinandy, *Athanasius: A Theological Introduction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

²¹ For accounts of the fourth-century Trinitarian controversies, see Hanson, *The Search*; Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*; and John Behr, *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004).

Though Athanasius wrote theological tracts against “Arianism” (as he perceived it) from ca. 339 onwards,²² nothing much is heard from him on the Nicene Creed as the standard of orthodoxy until the early 350s.²³ In the meantime Athanasius was charged with violence and other crimes, tried and convicted at the Council of Tyre in 335, and exiled to Gaul. For the remainder of his ecclesiastical career, these charges would dog Athanasius, rendering him suspect and tainted in the eyes of many eastern bishops. Before his death in 373, Athanasius would spend five periods of exile outside of Alexandria, about seventeen years in total. By the time of his death, however, a viable Pro-Nicene alliance had emerged which viewed the Nicene Creed as a cipher for a Trinitarian theology in which the three, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are irreducible and one nature, power, and will. Gaining impetus in the late 350s in the face of the splintering of the old Eusebian alliance²⁴ into several mutually opposed alliances (the

²² His three genuine *Orationes against the Arians* are dated to 339-346.

²³ Lewis Ayres, “Athanasius’ Initial Defense of the Term Ὁμοούσιος: Rereading the *De decretis*,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12 (2004): 337–59.

²⁴ ‘Eusebian’ is a problematic term, as recently discussed by Gwynn, *The Eusebians*. Here ‘Eusebian’ is used in contrast to the Athanasian usage deconstructed by Gwynn and in line with other recent usage to name the *ad hoc* alliance of eastern bishops and theologians initially formed around the figures of Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea that lasted from ca. 320 to ca. 355. For a definition of the category, see Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 52; and Joseph T. Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum. Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth-Century Theology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 34–5. On the theological and ecclesio-political cohesiveness of the Eusebians, see Mark DelCogliano, “Eusebian Theologies of the Son as Image of God,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14 (2006): 459–84;

Heteroousians, the Homoiousians, and the Homoians), in subsequent decades the Trinitarian theology of the Pro-Nicene alliance finally received imperial sanction at the Council of Constantinople in 381.

The Context of the *Letters*

Athanasius wrote three letters on the Holy Spirit.²⁵ He addressed his letters to Serapion, the bishop of Thmuis in Lower Egypt since the late 330s at the latest.²⁶ A former monk and

“The Eusebian Alliance: the Case of Theodotus of Laodicea,” *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 12 (2008): 250–66; and “George of Laodicea: A Historical Reassessment,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* [forthcoming].

²⁵ Four letters are preserved in the manuscripts, and appear thus in Maurist edition. But it is now generally accepted that those traditionally called the second and third letters were originally a single letter. See Joseph Lebon, *Athanase d’Alexandre: Lettres à Sérapion sur la divinité du Saint-Esprit*. SChr 15 (Paris: Cerf, 1947), 31–39; C. R. B. Shapland, *The Letters of Saint Athanasius concerning the Holy Spirit*. (London: Epworth Press, 1951), 11–13; and Dietmar Wyrwa and Kyriakos Savvidis, *Athanasius Werke I/1. Die dogmatischen Schriften. 4. Lieferung. Epistulae I-IV ad Serapionem* (Berlin / New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 385. The new *Athanasius Werke* edition, on which our translation is based, reconstitutes the second and third letters as Letter Two. This has necessitated a new system for numbering the sections of the letters; see p. #### below. Note that in the manuscripts an independent treatise was attached to the three letters at a later date (now known as *Serap.* 4).

²⁶ On Serapion’s life and writings, see Klaus Fitschen, *Serapion von Thmuis: Echte und unechte Schriften sowie die Zeugnisse des Athanasius und anderer*, *Patristische Texte und Studien* 37

monastic superior,²⁷ Serapion was one of Athanasius's most trusted agents in the promotion of his ecclesiastical policies and theology. For example, in the late 330s Athanasius relied on Serapion to help him maintain control of his see during exile.²⁸ Athanasius also entrusted him with a delicate mission in 353, placing him at the head of a delegation to Emperor Constantius.²⁹ Besides the *Letters to Serapion*, Athanasius sent him a letter on the death of Arius (*Ep.* 54) to prove that Arius had not died in communion with the church. Hence Athanasius and Serapion were partners in the various struggles facing the Egyptian church. A few of Serapion's own writings survive: a treatise *Against the Manichees*,³⁰ a letter to the disciples of Antony after his death,³¹ and a letter of consolation to a bishop.³² Serapion was also an intimate of Antony the

(Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1992). Fitschen discusses Athanasius's letters to Serapion on pp. 135–47.

²⁷ Athanasius, *Letter to Dracontius* 7.

²⁸ Athanasius, *Festal Letter* 12; see Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 190–1.

²⁹ *Historia acephala* 1.7; Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4.9.6.

³⁰ R. P. Casey, *Serapion of Thmuis against the Manichees* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931).

³¹ René Dragüet, “Une lettre de Sérapion de Thmuis aux disciples d’Antoine (A.D. 356) en version syriaque et arménienne,” *Le Muséon* 64 (1951): 1–25; there is an English translation by Rowan A. Greer in Tim Vivian and Apostolos N. Athnassalis, *Athanasius of Alexandria: The Life of Antony* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2003), 39–47.

³² PG 40.924–925. Serapion's authorship of a *Letter to Monks* attributed to him (PG 40.925–941) is disputed.

Great.³³ On his deathbed (ca. 356) Antony bequeathed one of his two sheepskins to Serapion; the other went to Athanasius.³⁴ Jerome notes that Serapion was considered worthy of the appellation *Scholasticus* (that is, a man of culture and erudition) on account of his meticulous scholarship,³⁵ and Evagrius of Pontus called him “the Angel of the Church of Thmuis.”³⁶

From the *Letters to Serapion* we learn that Athanasius was responding to a letter that he had received from Serapion himself.³⁷ In his letter to Athanasius (no longer extant), Serapion reported that certain people had “set their minds against the Holy Spirit, claiming not only that he is a creature but also that he is one of *the ministering spirits* [Heb 1.14] and is different from the angels only in degree” (*Serap.* 1.1.2) and asked Athanasius to refute them. Athanasius obliged Serapion with a long letter (Letter One) that sought to correct those who held this “low” variety of Angelic pneumatology, whom Athanasius calls “Tropikoi” (the meaning of which is discussed below). Apparently the length of the letter was daunting to some members of Serapion’s church and Serapion passed along their request for an epitome. They sought a summary of the first letter “so that they might have a brief and readily accessible arsenal from which they can both answer those who ask questions about our faith and refute the impious” (*Serap.* 2.1.1). Hence it seems that within the church of Thmuis there was still ongoing dialogue between the Tropikoi and the orthodox. And so, Athanasius obliged them with a second letter (Letter Two). Yet the Tropikoi persisted in their opinions, for Athanasius was prompted to write

³³ *Life of Antony* 82.3.

³⁴ *Life of Antony* 91.8-9.

³⁵ Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 99.

³⁶ Evagrius of Pontus, *Gnostikos* 47.

³⁷ See *Serap.* 1.1.

a third letter to Serapion after their obstinacy had been reported to him. In this third and final letter (Letter Three), Athanasius's tone is no longer conciliatory. The intransigence of the Tropikoi had robbed him of his hope for a resolution based on persuasive arguments.

Athanasius uses the label “Tropikoi” without any explanation, seemingly assuming that Serapion would be familiar with it.³⁸ The appellation seems to be based from the fact that he thinks their “mode of exegesis” (*tropos*) fallacious when interpreting certain passages of scripture.³⁹ Indeed, the bulk of Athanasius's rebuttal is conducted on an exegetical basis. Thus one might translate “Tropikoi” as “Misinterpreters.”⁴⁰ Athanasius also refers to the Tropikoi as those who are “fighting against the Spirit” (πνευματομαχοῦτες; *Serap.* 1.32.2 and 3.1.2). Athanasius's description will later evolve into a label for those who deny the divinity of the Holy Spirit: οἱ πνευματομάχοι, the “Pneumatomachians” or “Spirit-fighters.”

The ecclesiastical origins of the Tropikoi are obscure,⁴¹ but Athanasius reports how Serapion described them: “you wrote that certain ones who have withdrawn from the Arians on account of their blasphemy against the Son of God have nonetheless set their minds against the

³⁸ *Serap.* 1.10, 1.17, 1.21, 1.30 and 1.32. See Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, 20 n. 50.

³⁹ See *Serap.* 1.2, 1.3, 1.7 and 1.10. See Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, 20 n. 50 a survey of the scholarly views on the label.

⁴⁰ In the ancient Armenian version of the letters, the epithet is translated as “changers” or “changers of the original.” See George A. Egan, *The Armenian Version of the Letters of Athanasius to Bishop Serapion Concerning the Holy Spirit*, Studies and Documents 37 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1968).

⁴¹ For an attempt to identify them, see Shapland, *The Letters*, 18–34. See Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, 20 n. 52 for references to additional literature.

Holy Spirit” (*Serap.* 1.1.2). Recall that “Arianism” is a polemical construct of Athanasius (and his supporters) that strives to link his opponents to the heretic Arius. We have no way of knowing whether the Tropikoi had formerly subscribed to the view that Athanasius labeled “Arian.” They most likely arose within the dual context mentioned above.⁴²

The Structure of the *Letters*

The three letters have a clear structure. Athanasius begins the first letter with a counter-exegesis of the scriptural passages on which the Tropikoi based their pneumatological claims. He traces the claim that the Holy Spirit is a creature to a misinterpretation of Amos 4.13, and the claim that the Holy Spirit is one of the ministering spirits different from the angels only in degree to a misinterpretation of 1 Timothy 5.21. The first is refuted in *Serap.* 1.3.1-10.3 and the second in *Serap.* 1.10.4-14.7 Athanasius next reports the Tropikoi’s objections to the Nicene teaching that the Spirit was not a creature:

If the Spirit is not a creature, nor one of the angels, but proceeds from the Father, then is he also a son? And are the Spirit and the Word two brothers? And if he is a brother, how is the Word only-begotten? How can they not be equal, but the one is named after the Father and the other after the Son? If the Spirit is from the Father, why isn’t it also said that he has been begotten and is a son, but is simply called Holy Spirit? If the Spirit is of the Son, then is the Father the grandfather of the Spirit? (*Serap.* 1.15.1-2).

Athanasius’s arguments against these objections reduce them to absurdity and accuse the Tropikoi of a defective understanding of how the language of “Father” and “Son” is applied to

⁴² See p. ###.

God (*Serap.* 1.15-21). The first letter concludes with an extended demonstration that the Spirit is unlike creatures based on both scriptural proofs (*Serap.* 1.22-27) and Trinitarian arguments (*Serap.* 1.28-31). In this first letter, Athanasius underscores how the belief that the Spirit is a creature destroys the Christian concept of God as Trinity. Letter Two, meant to be an epitome of Letter One, begins with a demonstration that the Son is not a creature (*Serap.* 2.1-8), which has no parallel with the previous letter, but concludes with a summary of *Serap.* 1.22-31, recapitulating the earlier arguments for the Spirit's not being a creature (*Serap.* 2.10-16). Letter Three is a renewed treatment of the Tropikoi's objections first dealt with in *Serap.* 1.15-21, a section omitted for the epitome in Letter Two.

Athanasius's Argument

Throughout these letters Athanasius consistently emphasizes the interrelationship of Son and Spirit, and the dependence of the latter on the former. Alongside other scriptural designations of the Spirit Athanasius speaks frequently of "the Spirit of the Son." But by linking the Spirit firmly to the Son Athanasius sees himself necessarily linking the Spirit also to the Father. Throughout the text Athanasius makes use of his earlier anti-"Arian" arguments in this new controversy. Right at the beginning of the first letter Athanasius writes:

For just as Arians by denying the Son also deny the Father, so too these people by disparaging the Holy Spirit also disparage the Son. And these two groups divide between themselves the opposition to the truth, so that, with some setting their minds against the Word and others against the Spirit, they might hold the same blasphemy against the Holy Trinity. (*Serap.* 1.1.3).

The link between anti-“Arian” polemic and these new controversies over the Spirit can be seen particularly clearly seen in Letter Two, the first half of which is devoted to proving that the Son is not a creature (*Serap.* 2.1-8) and the second half to proving the same about the Spirit (*Serap.* 2.10-16). Athanasius explains the structure of this letter in this way: “Thus it is with good reason that we speak and write about the Son of God first, so that from our knowledge of the Son we may be able to have true knowledge of the Spirit” (*Serap.* 2.10.2).

Athanasius’s linking of the Spirit and the Son should not be read, however, as entirely reactive: from this linking he develops themes long fundamental to his account of creation and redemption. These may be seen clearly in a brief discussion of the second half of the first letter.⁴³ At *Serap.* 1.19-20 Athanasius shows that Father, Son, and Spirit are accorded a series of parallel titles by scripture (e.g. each is named as “light”), but that this naming of the three also brings with it an order and progression (συστοιχία) which begins with the Father, leads us to the Son, and then to the Spirit. We are drawn toward God by the Spirit leading us to the Son who leads us to the Father; thus (continuing with the example of light) the Spirit enlightens us and enables us to see the Son in the Spirit, but the Son is the radiance of the Father. In his discussions of this ordering Athanasius hints toward an account of the relative roles of Son and Spirit in the work of redemption (and in the Godhead) that he never fully developed. At least in part, the inchoate quality of this account of relative roles must stem from the difficulty of separating them in a context where Father, Son, and Spirit mutually indwell and are all present whenever one is present (again see *Serap.* 1.19-20). For example, at *Serap.* 1.23 Athanasius speaks of the Son

⁴³ For more extended discussions of Athanasius’s doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the *Letters to Serapion*, see Lebon, *Athanase d’Alexandre*, 52–77; Shapland, *The Letters*, 34–43; and Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, 59–103.

anointing us with the Spirit, but emphasizes that the Son is anointing us with *his own* Spirit. The Spirit draws us necessarily into union with Son and Spirit. This interrelationship of Son and Spirit is extended also to the Incarnate Christ, with Athanasius emphasizing the importance of the Spirit in forming the Incarnate Christ and shaping his ministry.

The same relationship between Father, Son and Spirit also governs Athanasius's account of the Trinity's work of creation.⁴⁴ Athanasius insists that the Son is the Father's own and that the Spirit, who is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of the Son, must be proper to the substance of the Son and hence ranked with the creating triad not the creation (see *Serap.* 1.25). This observation points in two directions. First, while Athanasius only hints at the role of the Spirit in creation, he is clear *that* the Spirit is intimately involved with God's creating activity, and that the Father continues to work through the Son and in the Spirit. The latter is stated as a general principle at *Serap.* 1.24 and 28, while the former is clear in his use of Psalms 32.6 and 147.18 at *Serap.* 1.31. In the latter section we also find "there is nothing which is not brought into being and actualized through the Word in the Spirit" (1.31.2). Second, if the Spirit is one with Father and Son, then the Spirit is unchangeable, present everywhere, and that in which things participate but which participates in nothing (see *Serap.* 1.23 and 27). In particular, the Spirit sanctifies and gives life to those who participate in him, who is an immutable, perfect source of life and sanctification. We will meet this argument, which has a long pedigree in Alexandrian thought, developed at far greater length in Didymus.

The Date of the *Letters*

⁴⁴ On this theme see Anatolios, *The Coherence*, esp. pp. 114–5; on the Spirit and the Incarnation see pp. 158–9.

Most scholars date the exchange of letters between Athanasius and Serapion to 358-359.⁴⁵ They are a product of Athanasius's third exile, which lasted from February 356 until February 362. After an initial flight, he hid in the suburbs of Alexandria until December 358 when a crackdown on his supporters on the part of the authorities necessitated that he withdraw to the Egyptian deserts to hid among the monks of Nitria and the lower Thebaid.⁴⁶ In the opening line of his first letter, he reports that Serapion's letter had "reached him in the desert" (*Serap.* 1.1.1), indicating that the exchange of letters began during or after December 358, the *terminus a quo*.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ See Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, 59–60, for a comprehensive list of scholarly opinions on the date. The text's most recent editors prefer to date the correspondence from 357/358 to 358/359; see Wyrwa and Savvidis, *Athanasius Werke I/1*, 449–50, 537, and 567.

⁴⁶ See Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 119. The main evidence that Athanasius hid in Alexandria is *Index of Festal Letters* 28-32; see Annik Martin, *Histoire «acéphale» et index syriaque des lettres festales d'Athanasie d'Alexandria* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 256–60.

⁴⁷ See Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, 59 n. 5. In contrast to most scholars, Wyrwa and Savvidis, *Athanasius Werke I/1*, 449, downplay the significance Athanasius's initial seclusion in the suburbs of Alexandria. They date the correspondence to 357/358 because they claim the letters reflect not only an early stage of the debate with the Tropikoi but also the controversy caused by Aetius and Eunomius in Egypt since 356. Since Athanasius is the earliest witness to the Tropikoi, and thus to the earliest stage of debate with them, it is hard to see how this fact can be used to date the letters. On the issue of Eunomius and the dating of the correspondence, see below p. ###.

Determining the *terminus ante quem* is more difficult.⁴⁸ The so-called *Tomus ad Antiochenos*, a letter written by the Council of Alexandria in 362 to persuade the Nicene factions in Antioch to reconcile, offers what amounts to a summary of the doctrine presented in the *Letters to Serapion*.⁴⁹ Athanasius and his fellow bishops write that those who wish to reconcile ought

to anathematize the Arian heresy, confess the faith confessed by the holy fathers at Nicaea, and anathematize those who claim that the Holy Spirit is a creature and separate him from the substance of Christ. For a complete repudiation of the loathsome heresy of the Arians consists in this: not dividing the Holy Trinity and not claiming one of the Trinity is a creature. For those who pretend to confess the faith confessed at Nicaea while daring to utter blasphemies against the Holy Spirit do nothing more than deny the Arian heresy verbally while retaining it mentally.⁵⁰

...The Holy Spirit is not a creature, nor is he foreign to the substance of the Son and the Father, but rather he is proper to it and inseparable from it.⁵¹

⁴⁸ As Shapland (*The Letters*, 16) argued, the argument for the *terminus ante quem* based on the fact that a certain Ptolemaeus is listed as the bishop of Thmuis at the Council of Seleucia in late September 359 (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 73.26) is inconclusive. Nonetheless, Wyrwa and Savvidis, *Athanasius Werke I/1*, 449–50, adopt a *terminus ante quem* based on this fact. Their *terminus ante quem* is also based on the claim that Didymus, whose *Spir.* they date to 362, borrowed Athanasius; as we discuss below p. ###-###, this is doubtful.

⁴⁹ For further discussion of the *Tomus*, see p. ### below.

⁵⁰ *Tomus ad Antiochenos* 3.

⁵¹ *Tomus ad Antiochenos* 5.

Even if Athanasius was not the primary author of the *Tomus*, then it is evident that the bishops who drew up this synodal document were influenced by the pneumatological teaching of Athanasius in the *Letters to Serapion*. The *Letters* must consequently date to 362 or earlier.

There are also internal indications of the *terminus ante quem*. At the end of the third letter, Athanasius attributes pneumatological views similar to those of the Tropikoi to the “the Eunomiuses, and the Eudoxiuses, and the Eusebiuses” (*Serap.* 3.5) and “the bishop of Caesarea and the bishop of Scythopolis” (*Serap.* 3.7) -- Acacius of Caesarea in Palestine and Patrophilus of Scythopolis. The mention of these Homoian and Heteroousian figures suggests some connection between them and the Tropikoi. Since the 330s Athanasius had polemically labeled his opponents “Eusebians” (οἱ περὶ Εὐσέβιον) in an attempt to define a long-standing conspiracy against him and his orthodoxy.⁵² Eudoxius, Acacius and Patrophilus were leaders among the eastern Homoian bishops with whom Athanasius struggled in the late 350s, and all three figure prominently in his *De synodis* from the autumn of 359.⁵³ Patrophilus had been a Eusebian opponent of Athanasius since the 330s. Eudoxius, formerly bishop of Germanicia, become bishop of Antioch in late 357 or early 358, and, after a series reversals and counter-reversals, became the influential bishop of Constantinople in January 360. Acacius was the powerful leader of the Homoian alliance from late 359 through the early 360s. Athanasius’s mention of all three at the conclusion of his third letters squares well with the traditional date of 358-359.

But his mention of “the Eunomiuses” may not. In the late 340s Eunomius became a disciple of Aetius in Alexandria. Active there for only a few years, in the early 350s they

⁵² See Gwynn’s monograph, *The Eusebians*.

⁵³ See especially *De synodis* 1.3, 12.5 and 37.2, where all three are mentioned together.

relocated to Antioch, and after the accession of Eudoxius became members of his circle.⁵⁴ In 358 Eunomius was banished along with Eudoxius and Aetius through the machinations of Basil of Ancyra, though all were rehabilitated in time for the Council of Seleucia in the fall of 359.⁵⁵ During these years, however, Eunomius was involved in the theological debates of the era not as one its driving forces but as a disciple of his master Aetius. He came into prominence only at the Council of Constantinople in 360, when Aetius was condemned and exiled and he was awarded the bishopric of Cyzicus. Here it was that Eunomius probably delivered the address that would be issued later that year or the next as the *Apology*.⁵⁶ As Richard Vaggione writes, this “marks the point at which he began to step out from the shadow of his teacher and become a public figure in his own right.”⁵⁷ Therefore, it seems as if it was only in 360 or afterwards that Eunomius could be considered the leader of the Heteroousians, such that his name could be used as a shorthand for an entire movement. Eunomius surely was known by name at least to some of the opponents of Eudoxius and Aetius before 360, including possibly by Athanasius, but it would have been unusual (though admittedly not impossible) for him to be singled out as a source of error before his elevation to the episcopacy. Thus, Athanasius’s mention of “Eunomiuses” may indicate that the third letter to Serapion (Letter Three) dates to 360 or afterward.

⁵⁴ For these dates, see Thomas A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism* (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 105 and 111

⁵⁵ Sozomen, *h.e.* 4.13.4-14.7; Philostorgius, *h.e.* 4.8. Hanson, *The Search*, 357.

⁵⁶ For dating the *Apology*, see Richard Vaggione, ed. and trans., *Eunomius: The Extant Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 5–9.

⁵⁷ Richard Paul Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 232.

Therefore, if we base our estimates on the earliest possible dates, we suggest that the entire exchange could with reasonable likelihood be dated from December 358 (when Athanasius left Alexandria) though the middle of 360 (when Eunomius first became prominent). But if we account for the time it must have taken for Athanasius to settle into his hiding-place in the deserts of Egypt and for the notoriety of Eunomius to reach him in those same deserts, then the *Letters to Serapion* are more plausibly dated to 359-361.

Greek Text

A new edition of the *Letters to Serapion* for the *Athanasius Werke* series was planned in the 1930s but abandoned as a result of the death of Hans Georg Opitz in the second world war. Therefore, when we began to translate the *Letters to Serapion*, we used the Greek text of the Benedictine edition established by the Maurist scholar Bernard de Montfaucon in 1698, which was republished with additions in 1777 and reprinted by J. P. Migne in his *Patrologia graeca* in 1857 (PG 26.529-638).⁵⁸ At the Fifteenth International Patristics Conference at Oxford in 2007 we learned that the *Athanasius Werke* edition of the letters had been revived when we attended a communication by Dietmar Wyrwa which reported on the current status of the project.⁵⁹ When the new *Athanasius Werke* edition was published in 2010, we revised our translation to reflect

⁵⁸ See Lebon, *Athanase d'Alexandre*, 17–22; Shapland, *The Letters*, 11–16 and 43–47; and Wyrwa and Savvidis, *Athanasius Werke I/1*, 385–440, for further information on the Greek text, manuscripts, and editions.

⁵⁹ Dietmar Wyrwa, “Zum Editionsprojekt: Athanasius, Epistulae ad Serapionem (Athanasius Werke I,1,4. Lieferung)” given on August 8, 2007.

this most recent text. Hence, the present translation of the *Letters to Serapion* is the first to be based upon this new edition.

In the course of revising our initial translation, we were able to confirm Joseph Lebon's view of Montfaucon's edition: "the text of the Benedictine edition hardly seems to call for important corrections; in fact, it does not appear to contain a lacuna, an interpolation, an insoluble puzzle, or a difficulty that affects the meaning."⁶⁰ Though the *Athanasius Werke* edition is based upon more manuscript evidence than Montfaucon's text, and furthermore takes into account the ancient Armenian translation (dated from the early 5th century to the 8th century and a witness to the original Athanasian text that is independent of the known Greek traditions), we found that the new edition differed only in minor ways from the old edition in approximately eighty-six places (excluding alternative word orders). Only rarely have we departed from the *Athanasius Werke* edition and preferred another reading; these are signaled and explained in the footnotes. In three cases the editors of the *Athanasius Werke* edition chose to insert words into the main body of the text based on evidence found in the Armenian translation but which are not found in any Greek manuscript (see *Serap.* 1.33.5, 2.2.1, 2.8.1). In two cases the editors chose to surround these additions with curved braces { }, indicating uncertainty over whether they are original to Athanasius. We have thought it best to relegate these three insertions to footnotes.

Our translation has benefited greatly from Shapland's version, which, though excellent, is not without occasional mistakes in translation, questionable word choices, infelicities in style, and digressions from good, idiomatic English prose. It goes without saying that we hope to have avoided these imperfections. May our rendition be honored and useful for as long as Shapland's has. If we may be allowed to slightly modify an oft-repeated expression attributed to the 12th

⁶⁰ Lebon, *Athanasie d'Alexandre*, 20–1.

century Bernard of Chartres: *vere nani gigantis humeris insidentes sumus*, “truly we are dwarves sitting on the shoulders of a giant.”

Introduction to Didymus’s *On the Holy Spirit*

Life and Writings

In comparison with Athanasius, contemporary sources on Didymus are scarce. What we do have reveals a man renowned throughout the Mediterranean Christian world of his day as a teacher and interpreter of scripture. He was born in Alexandria, most likely in 313, and died in 398.⁶¹ Disease blinded him at age four, before he could receive any schooling.⁶² Yet this did not prevent him from learning. One of his disciples, Rufinus, records that Didymus had texts read to him which he would retain by memory. Late in the night after his weary lecturers would succumb to sleep, he would stay awake, silently rehearsing what had been read, “like a clean animal chewing its cud.”⁶³

According to Rufinus, he received training in dialectic, geometry, astronomy, and arithmetic. Rufinus portrays him as stunning philosophers who brought questions from these arts.⁶⁴ He claims that these disputations were recorded by stenographers, though none survive. Yet it must be noted that his praise of Didymus echoes formulaic praise of great teachers, such as

⁶¹ See Gustave Bardy, *Didyme L’Aveugle* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1910), 3–4.

⁶² Disease: Socrates, *h.e.* 4.25; Age four: Palladius, *Lausiaca History* 4.

⁶³ Rufinus, *h.e.* 11.7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Athanasius's descriptions of Antony (who is said to have paid Didymus the honor of a visit).⁶⁵ Jerome's assessment of Didymus in the preface to *On the Holy Spirit* emphasizes the uncultivated style of the work, which reproduces another commonplace: the opposition between artless philosophy, committed solely to truth, and flowery rhetoric, concerned more with style than substance.⁶⁶ Recently, Richard Layton has argued that Didymus probably did not receive advanced training beyond what one would receive from a grammarian and that his obvious knowledge of classical philosophy -- especially Aristotle's *Organon* and aspects of Stoic ethics - - was likely gained as part of an ecclesiastical education. In other words, Didymus learned philosophy as a handmaiden to exegesis.⁶⁷

Didymus's reputation for erudition and virtue attracted some of the brightest students of the time. In addition to Rufinus, Palladius, best known as the author of the *Lausiac History*, spent time studying with him.⁶⁸ So too did Jerome. It is possible that Gregory of Nazianzus knew him.⁶⁹ Evagrius praised him as "the great and gnostic teacher."⁷⁰ According to Rufinus's

⁶⁵ Athanasius, *Life of St Antony* 74-80; visit: Rufinus, *h.e.* 11.7; Palladius, *Lausiac History* 4.

⁶⁶ See below, p. ####.

⁶⁷ See Richard A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 137-43.

⁶⁸ *Lausiac History* 4: four times over a period of ten years.

⁶⁹ See John A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, N.Y.: SVS Press, 2001), 44-5.

continuation of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, Didymus played a key role in the ecclesiastical school in Alexandria: "Thus in a short time, with God as his teacher, he arrived at such expert knowledge of things divine and human that he became a teacher in the church school (*scholae ecclesiasticae doctor*), having won the high esteem of Bishop Athanasius and the other wise men in God's church."⁷¹ Some take this to suggest that the official catechetical school, formerly headed by Origen, continued to exist in fourth century Alexandria.⁷² However, it is not clear that the school Didymus taught in was quite as official as Rufinus suggests or that it was the direct successor of Origen's. Nor is it clear what exact role Didymus played in the school: whereas Rufinus merely calls him "teacher" (*doctor*) in this school, a generation later the Greek historian Sozomen more expansively calls him "president of the school of sacred learning in Alexandria" (προϊστάμενος ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ τοῦ διδασκαλείου τῶν ἱερῶν μαθημάτων).⁷³

⁷⁰ Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 48 (ed. A. Guillaumont and C. Guillaumont, *Évagre le Pontique. Le gnostique ou à celui qui est devenu digne de la science*, SChr 356 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1989), 186).

⁷¹ Rufinus, *h.e.* 11.7 (Amidon trans., altered in light of Layton); cf. Sozomen, *h.e.* 3.15.

⁷² See, e.g., Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 229. Edeltraut Staimer goes so far as to refer to it as a "episcopal academy" (*bischöfliche Hochschule*) and Didymus as its "director" (*Leiter*): "Die Schrift 'De Spiritu Sancto' von Didymus dem Blinden von Alexandrien," (Ph.D. diss., München, 1960), 119.

⁷³ Sozomen, *h.e.* 3.15. Chester D. Hartranft, trans. in *Socrates, Sozomenus: Church Histories* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999 [orig. pub. 1994]) NPNF 2nd series, vol. 2, p. 294. Joseph

Didymus's role as teacher is not without significance for the interpretation of *On the Holy Spirit*, since, as we shall see in a moment, the work was written for certain "brothers" whom Didymus presumes are familiar with his previous writings -- in other words, it is probably written for his students. We know from elsewhere that Didymus's writings were frequently prompted by requests from disciples, whether present or not. Learned Christians of the day sought his opinion on such vexed questions as why infants die prematurely, a topic on which Jerome says he wrote a treatise at the behest of Rufinus.⁷⁴ For Jerome, he wrote two multi-volume works on Old Testament books.⁷⁵

Less clear than Didymus' status as an illustrious teacher is the issue of his relationship with the episcopal hierarchy in Alexandria. While Didymus was instrumental in articulating the divinity of the Spirit and other key tenets of Pro-Nicene orthodoxy, he was condemned by contemporaries and by posterity as an "Origenist" -- someone who followed his predecessor too closely in such areas as allegorical exegesis and the pre-existence of the soul.⁷⁶ No less than the

Bidez, ed, Günther Christian Hansen, rev. *Sozomen: Kirchengeschichte*, GCS Neue Folge, 4 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), 125.

⁷⁴ This has not survived. Didymus's answer to Rufinus's query was that the infants who die sinned only a little in their pre-incarnate state, making the briefest contact with the flesh sufficient punishment. Jerome, *Against Rufinus* 3.28.

⁷⁵ Jerome, *Against Rufinus* 3.28; *On Famous Men* 109; *Commentary on Zechariah*, preface.

⁷⁶ For studies of the label "Origenism" in Didymus's day, see Jon Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen*, Patristic Monograph Series, no. 13 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988); and Elizabeth A. Clark,

Fifth Ecumenical Council (in Constantinople, AD 553) anathematized him for being “Origenist.” It is imperative, however, in approaching *On the Holy Spirit*, to bracket later controversies over Origen. In this treatise, Didymus shows no interest in the themes which may have led to his condemnation. Many of his arguments are similar to those of Athanasius, who according to Rufinus favored him. There is no good reason to doubt this, even if the “Origenist” Rufinus would have had reason to emphasize *Athanasius’s* support for Didymus as a subtle criticism of the great Archbishop’s successors, who grew increasingly suspicious of all hints of “Origenism”. Whatever Rufinus’s motives, there would have been reasons for Athanasius, working before the rise of the “Origenist” specter, to endorse an independent scholar whose doctrinal agenda dovetailed with his own and whose writings emphasized episcopal authority. In particular, Layton points to a common opposition by Athanasius and Didymus to followers of Hieracas -- like Didymus, an independent Christian scholar and teacher -- as well as their support for the Council of Nicaea.⁷⁷ We might add their united front, beginning in the late 350s and early 360s, against those in the region of Alexandria who were associating the Spirit with the angelic realm.

While the discovery of more of Didymus’s works at Tura has brought to light his exegetical labors (showing him to be a follower of Origen in this area), it has also led to an unfortunate neglect of Didymus’s contributions to Trinitarian doctrine. Didymus the Origenist has eclipsed Didymus the dogmatician.⁷⁸ Though subtlety is not something one typically

The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

⁷⁷ Layton, *Didymus the Blind*, 15–8.

⁷⁸ To some extent, this neglect has resulted from uncertainty over the authenticity of the three books *On the Trinity* attributed (rightly, we believe) to Didymus. *On the Trinity* has been shown

associates with Jerome, it is perhaps time we reconsider his appraisal of this man who was *both* (in Jerome's loaded language) "Catholic as regards the Trinity" *and* a successor to Origen on such doctrines as the pre-existence of souls, which might be less palatable to subsequent generations.⁷⁹ The variety of Didymus's writings -- and the interplay of doctrine, exegesis, and philosophy in these works -- is clear from the list of works attributed to him, even in those cases where only a title survives.

In his work *On Famous Men* from 392/93, Jerome lists the following works by Didymus: "Commentaries on all the Psalms, Commentaries on the Gospels of Matthew and John, On the doctrines, also two books *Against the Arians*, and one book *On the Holy Spirit*, which I translated into Latin, eighteen volumes *On Isaiah*, three books of commentaries *On Hosea*, addressed to me, and five books *On Zechariah*, written at my request, also commentaries *On*

to be most probably by Didymus. For a succinct presentation of the argument for its authenticity, see Alasdair Heron's analysis of its sources: "Some sources used in the *De Trinitate* ascribed to Didymus the Blind," in Rowan Williams, ed., *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 173–81; more fully, idem, "Studies in the Trinitarian Writings of Didymus the Blind: his Authorship of the *Adversus Eunomium* IV-V" (Ph.D. diss., Tübingen, 1972); cf. Jürgen Hönscheid, ed. and trans., *Didymus der Blinde: De trinitate, Buch I*, Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie 44 (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1975), 6–7.

⁷⁹ Jerome, *Apology against Rufinus* 2.16.

Job, and many other things.”⁸⁰ Jerome conspicuously does not mention the extant work *On the Trinity*, which might suggest that it was written between 392 and Didymus’s death in 398, if it is authentic, as we believe it to be.⁸¹ There are indeed other reasons for placing it late in Didymus’s life.⁸² Also not mentioned is the short, partially extant work *Against the Manichees*. From other sources, we have more titles of works which have not survived: *On the Sects*, *On the Son*, *On Virtue and Vice*, a *Defense of Origen*, *To a philosopher*, *On the incorporeal*, as well as works on Galatians and Ephesians and possibly an exposition of the seven Catholic Epistles. Of the works named by Jerome, *On the Holy Spirit* is extant in Jerome’s Latin translation, while, thanks to the discovery at Tura, all of the *Commentary on Zechariah* and portions of the works on Job and the Psalms are extant in Greek. We have fragments of his exegetical works on the Gospel of John, the Acts of the Apostles, and 1 and 2 Corinthians. There are also fragments of his apologetically-motivated commentary of Origen’s *On First Principles*, mentioned by Socrates⁸³ and Jerome⁸⁴ and preserved in catenae and in John of Damascus’s *Sacra Parallela*.

It has also been claimed that he authored the works that come down to us as Basil of Caesarea’s fourth and fifth books *Against Eunomius*, the seven pseudo-Athanasian dialogues, the

⁸⁰ *On Famous Men* 109; trans. by W.H. Fremantle in *Theodoret, Jerome, Gennadius, Rufinus: Historical Writings, etc.*, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, NPNF, 2nd series, volume 3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994 [orig. pub. 1892]), 381.

⁸¹ For the authenticity of *On the Trinity*, see n. 71 above.

⁸² See Alasdair Heron, “The Two Pseudo-Athanasian Dialogues Against the Anomoeans,” *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 24 (1973): 101–22, at 121.

⁸³ Socrates, *h.e.* 4.25.

⁸⁴ Jerome, *Apology against Rufinus* 2.16.

pseudo-Athanasian works *On the Trinity and the Holy Spirit* and *On the Incarnation and Against the Arians*, the treatise *Against Arius and Sabellius* ascribed to Gregory of Nyssa,⁸⁵ and an unattributed treatise *On the Vision of the Seraphim*.⁸⁶ Of these extant pseudonymous works, *Against Eunomius* 4-5 and the pseudo-Athanasian *On the Trinity and the Holy Spirit* and *On the Incarnation and Against the Arians* are the most likely ones to have been written by Didymus, but scholars remain divided.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Karl Holl attributed this text to Didymus in 1904: “Über die Gregor von Nyssa zugeschriebene Schrift ‘Adversus Arium et Sabellium,’” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 25 (1904): 380–98. Many remain unconvinced. Some prefer not to assign the work definitively to any known author: see Bardy, *Didyme L’Aveugle*, 17–9, 71–3, 113–4; Reinhard Hübner, “Gregor von Nyssa und Markell von Ankyra,” in Marguerite Harl, ed., *Écriture et Culture Philosophique dans la Pensée de Grégoire de Nysse*, Acts du Colloque de Chevetogne (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 199–229, at 211, n. 1; and Joseph T. Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth-Century Theology* (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1999), 232–9. Gregorian authenticity is maintained by Jean Daniélou (“L’*Adversus Arium et Sabellium* de Grégoire de Nysse et l’Origénisme cappadocien,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 54 (1966): 61–6) and Friedrich Müller (*Gregorii Nysseni Opera Dogmatica Minora, Pars I* (Leiden: Brill, 1958), lxi). Regardless of one’s position, Holl’s premise that the work must have been written before 358 is certainly false.

⁸⁶ See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology, Vol. III: The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon* (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 1993), 90.

⁸⁷ For discussion of these pseudo-Athanasian works, see Alasdair Heron, “The Pseudo-Athanasian Works *De Trinitate et Spiritu Sancto* and *De Incarnatione et Contra Arianos*: A

The Date of *On the Holy Spirit*

The text translated here is unquestionably by Didymus. With respect to the question of when Didymus wrote *On the Holy Spirit*, only one thing is absolutely firm: it was written before Ambrose of Milan used it in writing his own treatise on the same subject in 381. The work clearly responds to contemporaries who claimed, on the basis of Amos 4.13 and John 1.3, that the Spirit is to be associated the Spirit with the angelic order. The first evidence we have for a group like this outside of this treatise comes from the other work translated in this volume, though it is important to note certain differences: Athanasius's opponents made much use of 1 Timothy 5.21 and Hebrews 1.14. While Didymus does not record an opponent's argument based on Hebrews 1.14, he spends enough time on the verse to suggest that he might be attempting to reclaim it from his adversaries. But whereas Athanasius devotes an entire section to 1 Timothy 5.21, it is not mentioned in *On the Holy Spirit*. Nor do Athanasius's terms of abuse for his opponents, "Tropikoi" and "Pneumatomachians" (that is, "Spirit-fighters"), appear in Didymus's text. So it is likely that Didymus and Athanasius were responding to different currents of a broad movement. With respect to the question of dating, Athanasius demonstrates no awareness of Didymus and emphasizes the novelty of his opponents; thus, we should not expect Didymus's work to be significantly earlier than Athanasius's.

By comparing the treatise itself to other, more easily datable works, we can further specify its date. It was once common to assign it to the middle of the 370s, around the time when

Comparison," in G. D. Dragas, ed., *Aksum-Thyateira: A Festschrift for Archbishop Methodios of Thyateira and Great Britain* (Athens and London: Thyateira House, 1985), 281–98; cf. Heron, "Some Sources."

Basil of Caesarea wrote his own *On the Holy Spirit*. But the arguments for this are weak, relying on a sense that Didymus's treatise, with its developed pneumatology, could not have preceded Basil's by many years. Subsequent work has shown that the two treatises deal with rather different currents of opposition to the Spirit's divinity.⁸⁸

Returning to the question of possible parallels between Athanasius and Didymus, one must be careful not to overstate the case.⁸⁹ Louis Doutreleau, the editor of Jerome's Latin translation of Didymus, points to five similarities in the pneumatological polemics of Athanasius and Didymus, suggesting that they indicate the latter's dependence on the former.⁹⁰ Yet, for Doutreleau, the fact that Didymus handles the five themes differently shows a considerable gap between the two authors in time and overall disposition, Didymus being more "serene" and less polemically-driven. The five areas of overlap Doutreleau points to are:

1. Both draw a clear distinction between the Spirit and angels.
2. Both argue from the presence of the definite article: when it appears, scripture is referring to the *Holy Spirit* and not merely a created spirit.
3. Both worry over interpreting Amos 4.13 ("I [God] am the one who ... creates spirit") rightly.

⁸⁸ Staimer, "Die Schrift 'De Spiritu Sancto'," 127–32; Heron, "Studies in the Trinitarian Writings of Didymus the Blind," 169–70.

⁸⁹ The argument here deals only with the relation between Didymus's *On the Holy Spirit* and Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion*. We will bracket the question of the influence of other Athanasian works upon Didymus's treatise.

⁹⁰ Louis Doutreleau, ed. and trans., *Didyme L'Aveugle: Traité du Saint-Esprit*, SChr 386 (Paris: Cerf, 1992), 33–6.

4. Both distinguish various uses of the word “spirit” in scripture.
5. Both respond to the *reductio* that, if the Father has a Son who in turn has a Son called ‘Spirit’, then the Father is in fact a Grandfather.

However, Doutreleau is wrong to conclude that the concurrence of these themes in the two demonstrates Athanasius’s influence upon Didymus. Numbers 1 and 4 appear in Cyril of Jerusalem’s *Catecheses*, which were delivered in 348 or 350, before either of Athanasius’s or Didymus’s writings and indeed before the likely rise of the Alexandrian Pneumatomachians.⁹¹ Moreover, when Athanasius argues against the Tropikoi on point 1, he makes clear that they base their association of the Spirit with angels on 1 Timothy 5.21 (“In the presence of God and Jesus Christ and the elect angels ...”), but Didymus never alludes to the verse. Point 2 is implicit in Cyril’s contrast between “spirit without qualification” (*pneuma haplôs*) and the Holy Spirit, where he uses the same terminology we find in Athanasius and Didymus.⁹² Cyril also takes pains to argue that there is no “second Father” in the Trinity alongside the Father, a point not unlike number 5; he further parallels Didymus and Athanasius in his concern to deny that the Spirit is a second Son.⁹³ It is true that Cyril does not concern himself with recovering Amos 4.13 (point 3).⁹⁴ However, as we shall see shortly, the parallel between Didymus and Athanasius on this

⁹¹ For point 1, see Cyril, *Catecheses* 16.23, and cf. 16.13. For point 4, see *Catecheses* 16.13-15.

⁹² *Catecheses* 16.13; cf. Didymus’s use of *simpliciter* with *spiritus* (or Greek *pneuma*) in *Spir.* 8 and 246.

⁹³ *Catecheses* 16.3. Cf. Staimer, “Die Schrift ‘De Spiritu Sancto’,” 121; Heron, “Studies in the Trinitarian Writings of Didymus the Blind,” 170.

⁹⁴ Cyril’s only reference to Amos 4.13 deals only with the phrase, “and announces his Christ to humanity,” and does not mention the Spirit: *Catecheses* 10.15.

point is only partial. So, in sum, with the exception of the exegesis of the Amos passage, the parallels Doutreleau invokes between Didymus and Athanasius can be found in another work of Greek theology from the time. Consequently, he has given us no reason to believe Didymus used Athanasius's text in composing his own work. Indeed, in a major study of Didymus's treatise, Edeltraut Staimer argued that *On the Holy Spirit* was surely written *before* Athanasius's letters -- a proposal which gives one pause, even though it has not met with general acceptance.⁹⁵

But perhaps Doutreleau has not noted all possible parallels between the two works. One is the appeal by both Athanasius and Didymus to the idea that the Spirit is capable of being participated in, but does not participate in the Father.⁹⁶ For both authors, this places the Spirit unequivocally on the far side of an absolute division between what is created and what is uncreated. The specific language used is not exactly commonplace and might suggest one author has used the other. However, Lewis Ayres has shown that this language comes from Origen, and is much more central to Didymus than to Athanasius.⁹⁷ Didymus explicitly states that he has already made this point in his (lost) work *On the Sects* (*Spir.* 19). One cannot, therefore, argue that he must have drawn the idea from Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion* or that Athanasius must

⁹⁵ Staimer, "Die Schrift 'De Spiritu Sancto'," 123ff.; cf. Heron, "Studies in the Trinitarian Writings of Didymus the Blind," 170.

⁹⁶ Athanasius, *Serap.* 1.23, 1.27; Didymus, *Spir.* 10-19, 54ff., 265.

⁹⁷ Lewis Ayres, "The Holy Spirit as Undiminished Giver: Didymus the Blind's *De Spiritu Sancto* and the Development of pro-Nicene Pneumatological Traditions," in Janet Rutherford and Vincent Twomey, eds., *The Theology of the Holy Spirit in the Fathers of the Church* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, forthcoming), ##-##. For further discussion of this doctrine see the section, "Didymus's Argument."

have taken it from *On the Holy Spirit*. In sum, then, we have no firm grounds for believing that either author knew the other's work, let alone that either used the other as a source.

Further light can be shed upon the treatise's occasion by asking how *On the Holy Spirit* relates to three pieces of evidence roughly from this period. First, Lewis Ayres has shown that, in *On the Holy Spirit*, Didymus responds to Eunomius's *Apology*, which was most likely delivered at the Council of Constantinople in January 360 and published in that year or the next.⁹⁸ As mentioned above, by the middle of 360, Eunomius had established quite a reputation around the eastern Mediterranean.⁹⁹ In the *Apology*, for the first time in extant works by opponents of Nicene theology, Eunomius appeals to John 5.19 ("The Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing"). Eunomius uses this to show the difference between the Father and the Son, and proceeds to explain the difference between the Spirit and the Son by alluding, most likely, to John 16.14.¹⁰⁰ Didymus addresses these verses together.¹⁰¹ Since they were first connected by Eunomius, it would appear he is responding to his *Apology*, which gives us a reasonably firm *terminus post quem* of 360. Thus, *On the Holy Spirit*, or at least one section of it, is the first work in a long career of opposing Eunomius, a polemical agenda for which Didymus had gained a reputation by 392.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Ayres, "The Holy Spirit as Undiminished Giver." For dating the *Apology*, see n. 56 above.

⁹⁹ See p. ###.

¹⁰⁰ *Apology* 20 (Vaggione 60); cf. the use of John 5:19 at *Apology* 26 (Vaggione 70).

¹⁰¹ *Spir.* 160-164.

¹⁰² Jerome, *On Famous Men* 120. The anti-Eunomian agenda is carried forth in the Pseudo-Athanasian works *On the Incarnation and Against the Arians* and *On the Trinity and the Holy*

Second, there is the Synod of Alexandria in 362 and the resultant *Tomus ad Antiochenos*. The *Tomus* sought to reconcile those Melitians in Antioch who taught three hypostases but a single deity with those older Nicenes around Paulinus who held only one hypostasis, equating the term with *ousia* as the Council of Nicaea had done. The pneumatology of the *Tomus* resembles that of Athanasius' *Letters to Serapion*.¹⁰³ Following Staimer, Heron suggested that “the doctrine of the Trinity in [*On the Holy Spirit*] is still in an early and undeveloped state as compared with the position after the Synod of Alexandria and the *Tomus ad Antiochenos*.”¹⁰⁴ For Staimer and Heron, the *Tomus* provides a *terminus ante quem* for *On the Holy Spirit*. However, this document certainly did not have the effect Staimer and Heron ascribe to it: it was not immediately viewed as a “neo-Nicene Renaissance” rendering works like *On the Holy Spirit* obsolete.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, since its target is Antioch rather than Alexandria, it helps very little for dating Alexandrian theology. So, the *Tomus* does not help us to fix a date for *On the Holy Spirit*.

Third, it has recently been shown by Mark DelCogliano that there are striking parallels between Didymus's treatment of Amos 4.13 together with John 1.3 and Basil's brief remarks on the same verses in his *Against Eunomius* 3.7, which can be dated to 364 or 365. The verses appear together in both works and not in Athanasius. In a number of ways, Basil and Didymus interpret the verses similarly, while differing from Athanasius's treatment of the verse in the

Spirit, which are possibly by Didymus, since they are very closely related to *On the Trinity*; see n. 85 above.

¹⁰³ See also p. ### above.

¹⁰⁴ Heron, “Studies in the Trinitarian Writings of Didymus the Blind,” 169.

¹⁰⁵ See esp. Staimer, “Die Schrift ‘De Spiritu Sancto’,” 132–3.

Letters to Serapion. Given the way in which Basil appears to compress Didymus's fuller treatment, it is most likely Basil has read Didymus, rather than vice-versa.¹⁰⁶

The cumulative force of the evidence suggests that *On the Holy Spirit* should be dated to 360-365 and not to the mid-370s.¹⁰⁷ This fits nicely with our comments about the relative chronology of this work with the *Letters to Serapion*, since Didymus's tome is likely not to have been much later than Athanasius's letters. Heron, who proposed a range of 355-362, notes that the matter of dating has broader significance for interpreting Didymus: "This incidentally also means that [*On the Holy Spirit*] is the first systematic treatment of the subject, and that Didymus must be recognized as having been a much more original and pioneering spirit [than] had been thought."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ 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* n.s 61 (2010): 644–58.

¹⁰⁷ The dating of 358/59 proposed by Hauschild and followed by Sieben ignores Didymus's use of Eunomius's *Apology*. Hauschild also dates Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion* to 358/9. See Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, "Die Pneumatomachen: Eine Untersuchung zur Dogmengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts" (Ph.D., Hamburg, 1967), 10–1, 34; and Hermann Josef Sieben, ed., *Didymus der Blinde: De Spiritu Sancto/Über den Heiligen Geist*, *Fontes Christiani* 78 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 39–41.

¹⁰⁸ Heron, "Studies in the Trinitarian Writings of Didymus the Blind," 169. In his "Zur Theologie der »Tropici« in der Serapionbriefe des Athanasius. Amos 4,13 als Pneumatologische Belegstelle," *Kyrios: Vierteljahresschrift für Kirchen- und Geistesgeschichte Osteuropas* 14 (1974): 3–24, Alasdair Heron reverted to the traditional dating of ca. 370. See DelCogliano, "Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, and the Anti-Pneumatomachian Exegesis," 657 n. 50, for

The Context of *On the Holy Spirit*

From the treatise, we can glean some hints as to *why* Didymus wrote it. In his preface, he refers to unnamed pneumatological rabble-rousers:

some have raised themselves up to investigate heavenly matters by a kind of recklessness rather than by living rightly, and they brandish certain things concerning the Holy Spirit which are neither read in the scriptures nor taken from any one of the old ecclesiastical writers. And so, we are compelled to acquiesce to the oft-repeated exhortation of the brothers that we set forth our opinion on the Holy Spirit by means of proof-texts from the scriptures, lest those who hold contrary opinions deceive people through their lack of familiarity with so great a doctrine and instantly drag them away into the opinion of their enemies without careful reflection (*Spir.* 2).

While the passage does not identify Didymus's opponents, it does reveal that the immediate impetus for the work was given not by the "enemies" but by "the brothers" who have exhorted Didymus to respond to the current chatter. It also reveals the method of the treatise, which is of course not peculiar to Didymus: the citation and discussion of relevant "proof-texts." Throughout the course of the work, Didymus's principal authority is the text of scripture. He does, nonetheless, point the "brothers" to his earlier works *On the Sects* (*Spir.* 19 and 93) and *On Dogmas* (*Spir.* 145), neither of which is extant or datable. He also expects them to recognize his

a critique of this reassessment. In our opinion, here Heron demonstrates (*contra* Staimer; see n. 95 above) that Didymus's treatise was *not necessarily* written *before* Athanasius's letters, but does not offer compelling evidence that it *must* have been written *after* Athanasius's letters (nor after Basil's *Contra Eunomium*).

frequent teaching -- does he refer to oral instruction? -- on how to interpret passages where the Son is called the hand, the arm, and the right hand of the Father (*Spir.* 87). It would be unusual to cite one's work in a treatise addressed to one's opponent. So despite the obvious polemical intentions of the work, it was clearly written for a group of like-minded students.

As for the errors Didymus opposes in the work, some have already been mentioned: the association of the Spirit with the angelic order; the notion that Amos 4.13 proves that the Spirit is created; the same inference from John 1.3; the objection that ascribing divinity to the Spirit would make the Father a Grandfather. To these we must add one which does not appear in Athanasius or in Cyril of Jerusalem: the doctrine that the Spirit is an activity of God and not a substantial reality (*Spir.* 97). Eunomius also argues against this doctrine in a highly compressed passage.¹⁰⁹ As with Eunomius, Didymus's response to this is evidently dependent on a fragment of Origen's *Commentary on John*.¹¹⁰ So in arguing that the Spirit is a substantial reality -- an agent and not merely an act -- Didymus is not opposing a contemporary group, but is using Origen's argument to mark out an extreme position to be avoided.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *Apology* 25.

¹¹⁰ Frag. 37 (Erwin Preuschen, ed., *Origenes Werke, IV: Der Johanneskommentar*, GCS 10 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1903), 513-4). Given his fuller treatment of the issue, Didymus appears to draw his argument directly from the Origen fragment rather than from Eunomius. Still, he does modify Origen's argument.

¹¹¹ See Andrew 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* ## (####): ##-##. The discussion of the date of *On the Holy Spirit* in this introduction revises the one found on pp. ##-## of this article.

The Structure of *On the Holy Spirit*

The structure of Didymus's text may be described thus: after a brief introduction (*Spir.* 1-9), Didymus discusses the Spirit's nature (*Spir.* 10-73); the Spirit's activity (*Spir.* 74-109); the Spirit's sending, procession, and proper names (*Spir.* 110-131); scriptural testimonies on the Spirit (*Spir.* 132-230). He concludes with various reflections: he offers a proof that the Spirit shares the substance of the Father and the Son from the Spirit's role along with them in making believers good and holy (*Spir.* 231-237), discusses the various senses of the term "spirit" in scripture (*Spir.* 237-256), analyzes the unique way in which the Spirit is said to "fill" believers substantially (*Spir.* 257-268), and dismisses talk of the Spirit as the Father's brother or the Son's son (*Spir.* 269-271). This is followed by a short conclusion which reiterates the danger of blasphemy against the Spirit (*Spir.* 272-277). Didymus's treatise is thus complex and at times appears to have no overarching organization..¹¹²

Didymus's Argument

Despite this confusion, however, one fundamental argument provides a theological foundation to the work. Didymus argues that the Spirit is the boundless source of all sanctification in which Christians (and all angels) participate, and thus *a priori* cannot be a created reality participating in goodness:

Nor is it possible to find in the Holy Spirit any strength which he receives from some external activity of sanctification and virtue, for a nature such as this would have to be mutable. Rather, the Holy Spirit, as all acknowledge, is the immutable sanctifier, the

¹¹² See Ayres, "The Holy Spirit as Undiminished Giver," ##-##.

bestower of divine knowledge and all goods. To put it simply, he himself subsists in those goods which are conferred by the Lord (*Spir.* 11).

For Didymus, as for Athanasius before him, if the Spirit may be described in these terms, then the Spirit must be one with the Father and the Son:

Now because he is good, God is the source and principle of all goods. Therefore he makes good those to whom he imparts himself; he is not made good by another, but subsists as such. Hence it is possible to participate in him but not for him to participate (*ideo capabilis, et non capax*) (18)... the Father and the Son are possessed rather than possessors, but the creature possesses while not being possessed (*Spir.* 17-18).

Didymus's use of the undiminished giver parallels Athanasius's in some respects, but shows independent development. For example, Didymus strongly emphasizes that only when we understand the Spirit to give without loss and to be immutable and omnipresent can we understand what it means for the Spirit to "fill" the apostles and Christians. In the same context, as we saw in the quotation from *Spir.* 11 above, Didymus places much emphasis on the Spirit being the substance of the gifts he is said to give, emphasizing the unmediated transforming presence of the Spirit. At the same time, this account of the Spirit's presence is placed in the framework of Didymus's strong insistence on the inseparability of Father, Son and Spirit: there is, for example, "a single reception of the Trinity" (*Spir.* 75).

The doctrine of the undiminished giver has a long history. Initial hints toward it in Plato are developed in Hellenistic thought and appear at Wisdom 7.27 and in Philo. Clement and

Origen make use of it, as do a number of non-Christian Platonists.¹¹³ In the fourth century the same doctrine crops up on different sides of the Trinitarian controversies. Eusebius of Caesarea, for example, uses a version of the doctrine to argue that the Spirit gives to those “below” but also receives from the Word who, in turn, receives from the Father. The Father alone is the true undiminished giver.¹¹⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem uses the doctrine to speak of the Father and the Spirit but without clearly indicating the relations between them.¹¹⁵ With Athanasius and Didymus, we see this doctrine used in order to assert the unity of Father, Son and Spirit. As we have already noted, Didymus may well know Athanasius’s *Letters to Serapion*, but he also demonstrates an independent engagement with a variety of sources, especially Origen. The doctrine then appears in the Cappadocians, perhaps with some debt to our two Alexandrian authors -- although this question lies outside the scope of this introduction.

One of the other distinctive features of this text is Didymus’s willingness to speak of the Trinity as *homoousios* -- rather than of the Son as *homoousios* with the Father in the manner most common in Athanasius. “Therefore, the fact that there is a single grace of the Father and the Son perfected by the activity of the Holy Spirit will demonstrate that the Trinity is of one substance” (*Spir.* 76). Didymus does not make use of a formal terminology of *ousia* or *physis* and *hypostaseis* or *prosopa* (and in this he parallels Athanasius among others), expressing the unity of the irreducible Father, Son and Spirit in other striking ways. With specific reference to

¹¹³ See e.g. Philo, *De opificio mundi* 6.23, *De gigantibus* 25-7; Clement, *Stromata* 7.2.5; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.63-4. For further discussion of the doctrine’s history, see Ayres, “The Holy Spirit as Undiminished Giver,” ##-##.

¹¹⁴ Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 7.15.

¹¹⁵ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* 6.7; 17.14.

the Spirit, he reflects in intriguing fashion on what it means for the Spirit to be “the Spirit of Wisdom and Truth,” a phrase he perhaps took from Athanasius. Didymus argues that Father, Son and Spirit each subsist as Wisdom and Truth. Because the Spirit shares this status the Spirit “possesses the same circle of unity and substance as the Son and, moreover, ... is not divided from the substance of the Father” (*Spir.* 94). This phrase poses many questions for the interpreter but it shows Didymus reflecting in far more detail than Athanasius on ways of imagining Father, Son, and Spirit as irreducible and yet in a unique unity of substance.

Jerome’s Latin Translation of Didymus’s *On the Holy Spirit*

The Greek original of *On the Holy Spirit* is lost. All we have is Jerome’s Latin translation from 385, which is the text translated here from the critical edition prepared by Louis Doutreleau, SJ. In this work, Jerome is a literal and indeed rather wooden translator, though the dryness of the prose might be attributable to Didymus himself, if we follow Jerome’s backhanded reference in the preface to the Alexandrian’s simplicity of style. Jerome’s translation has some peculiarities, however, which the reader must bear in mind. First, when the argument depends upon features of the Greek, as in the dispute over the definite article which Latin lacks, Jerome provides both the Greek and a Latin rendering (*Spir.* 8 and 73). Jerome also provides the Greek for the technical terms ὁμοούσια and ἕτεροούσια, while also translating them. In these cases, we have kept the Greek, as Jerome does, while of course rendering his Latin into English. In one case, he provides a Greek title for the book of Wisdom (Πανάρετος) without translating it; we have provided the Greek and an English translation (*All-Perfect*) (*Spir.* 118). Finally, Jerome occasionally provides explanatory asides which are not part of Didymus’s original text (*Spir.* 55, 70, and 223). Like Doutreleau, we have indented these paragraphs. Some of this is

explained by Jerome's need to use Latin terms he does not use elsewhere in his corpus to convey difficult, but important Greek terms as [τὸ] μεθεκτόν, which he renders both with the unusual *capabilem* (*Spir.* 51 and 55-56) and, more expansively, with *quod capiatur participatione* (*Spir.* 265).

A Note on the Translations

In the Benedictine edition, Athanasius's three letters to Serapion are subdivided into numbered sections, and in the new *Athanasius Werke* edition these numbered sections are further subdivided into subsections. In contrast, Didymus's treatise is divided into 277 short sections. These section and subsection numbers are signaled in each translation. For Athanasius's letters, the numbers of the letter, section, and subsection are provided; for example, 1.4.4 indicates the fourth subsection of the fourth section of the first letter. While influenced by the section and subsection divisions of the editors, our paragraphization in both translations is based upon the author's flow of thought and follows modern English practice. The part and section subtitles in both translations are our own and are intended to facilitate a fruitful reading of the texts.

Italics are used in the translation for scriptural citations or reminiscences; these are always followed by the scriptural reference in square brackets, for example [Jn 1.1]. References to scriptural allusions are given in the footnotes. Note that the Psalms are referenced according to the Septuagint version. On rare occasions words are inserted in square brackets to improve the sense.

In line with scholarly consensus, the editors of the *Athanasius Werke* edition treat what the manuscripts call the second and third letters as a single letter, Letter Two. In addition, they

divide what the manuscripts call the fourth letter into two separate documents (the first is Letter Three, the second is a short treatise on Mt 12.32).¹¹⁶ This has necessitated the adoption of a new numbering system for the *Letters to Serapion*. Here is a comparison of the old and new systems:

old	new
<i>Serap.</i> 1.1-33	<i>Serap.</i> 1.1-33 (no change)
<i>Serap.</i> 2.1-9	<i>Serap.</i> 2.1-9
<i>Serap.</i> 3.1-7	<i>Serap.</i> 2.10-16
<i>Serap.</i> 4.1-7	<i>Serap.</i> 3.1-7
<i>Serap.</i> 4.8-23	<i>Serap.</i> 4.1-16

Since all scholarship on the *Letters to Serapion* has hitherto employed the old numbering system, at the appropriate places the old reference numbers are provided in curved braces -- e.g. {4.4} indicates the beginning of the fourth section of the fourth letter according to the old numbering (now numbered as 3.4).

Finally, in our numbering of the subsections of the *Letters to Serapion* we have corrected two misprints in the *Athanasius Werke* edition.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ See p. ### n. 25 above.

¹¹⁷ There are two subsections labeled 1.7.4: the second is renumbered 1.7.5 and consequently 1.7.5 of the AW edition appears here as 1.7.6. There are two subsections labeled 1.20.4: the second is renumbered 1.20.5 and consequently 1.20.5 and 1.20.6 of the AW edition are respectively renumbered 1.20.6 and 1.20.7.