Didymus the Blind, Origen, and the Trinity

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DIDYMUS THE BLIND, ORIGEN, AND THE TRINITY

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School, Marquette University, and to the Faculty of Philosophy of the Catholic University of Leuven, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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ABSTRACT
DIDYMUS THE BLIND, ORIGEN, AND THE TRINITY

Kellen Dale Plaxco, M.Div., M.A.

Marquette University, 2016
Catholic University of Leuven, 2016

This dissertation reconstructs Didymus the Blind’s theology in *On the Holy Spirit* as a pro-Nicene response to Origen’s theology of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The study begins by setting Origen’s speculation into a broad framework of schemes of emanation in Christianity and Platonism. I provide an account of Origen’s grammar of participation, which orders the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a hierarchical series of causes. I show how Origen’s grammar of participation draws on the philosophy of Numenius of Apamea, and I argue that Origen uses his grammar of participation to oppose monarchian theologies that identify the three as a single, undifferentiated substance. “Participation” provides Origen the grammar he needs to establish continuity from the supreme God the Father to all other entities God produces, without teaching two supreme first principles. Origen’s hierarchical scheme yields a “low” pneumatology.

With Origen’s theology in view, I turn to Didymus the Blind’s *On the Holy Spirit*. I contextualize Didymus’s response to angelomorphic pneumatology in terms of pro-Nicene theology. I begin by showing how Didymus transforms exegesis of a key verse in anti-monarchian polemic (John 16:14). I argue that Didymus opposed Eunomius’ reading of John 16:14, as well as Eunomius’ claim that the Holy Spirit is subordinated to the Son. I then show how Didymus’ doctrine of inseparable operation helps him oppose an anti-Nicene reading of John 5:19 and John 14:16. Finally, I argue that Didymus retains certain features of earlier Alexandrian tradition while transforming others in light of Nicaea. He retains a “spiritual” participation in the Holy Spirit and a theology of the “image” of God. He replaces Origen’s tiered trinity with a “high” pneumatology and pro-Nicene theology. The Holy Spirit is the transcendent, “paradigmatic cause” of the impression of holiness in the soul. Didymus argues this point in pro-Nicene terms in order to ground an anti-Manichaean asceticism: the monk can neither purify himself nor become irredeemably evil.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Kellen Dale Plaxco, M.Div., M.A.

I have many people to thank for helping this dissertation toward its end. Above all, Michel Barnes’ guidance has shaped this project and my approach to historical theology in ways I am only beginning to grasp. Michel has been a generous advisor who managed to fill several roles at once: mentor, teacher, scholar, and friend. As Ten Bears says of Josey Wales, there’s iron in his words. I have never left a conversation with Michel without feeling encouraged, challenged, and refreshed. I look forward to future conversations, and I am deeply thankful to him.

Lewis Ayres has taught me much from afar, often through witty emails, and sometimes over Scotch. He also ferried a rare dissertation across the Atlantic in exchange for Wintergreen Altoids. I sometimes imagine Lewis as an academic uncle, not unlike the “cool uncle” you always wanted to spend more time with than holidays afforded. Lewis gives the best kind of advice: critical, supportive, and honest. I am fortunate to have had his guidance, and I am thankful for his support over the years.

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Friendship redeems the trials life hands us, and a dissertation is nothing if not a trial. I am grateful to all who have not only provided critical feedback on multiple chapter drafts or related presentations, but who have done so in the spirit of friendship, especially Matt Bruce, Matt Crawford, Adam Eitel, Jason Gehrke, Drew Harmon, Adam Ployd, and Stephen Waers. Large parts of Chapters 3 and 4 are indebted to a conversation Stephen Waers and I have been having for years now, and I eagerly look forward to reading his own dissertation on monarchian theology and Origen. Others have helped me with research matters specific and general. Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz have been unstinting in help with matters Didymean, including sharing an early draft of their translation of On the Holy Spirit. Kelly Spoerl shared her translation of Eusebius’s anti-
Marcellan works, and Byard Bennett shared the contents of an unpublished Didymean fragment. Still others lent a hand during the perilous days of graduate school: Anne Michelle Carpenter, Kirsten Guidero, Erin Kidd, Paul Monson, and Eric Vanden Eykel. I have been blessed with fine teachers over the years and, although they have not played a direct role in the dissertation itself, the lessons they gave me have stayed with me through my doctoral education and will remain long afterward: John Cavadini, Brian Daley, Bruce McCormack, Iain Torrance, D.H. Williams, and Robin Darling Young.

Scott and Armeen Williams, as well as the entire Williams family, have supported my dissertation simply by supporting me. My own parents, Dale and Becky Plaxco, deserve more thanks than I can give them here. Their love and encouragement during the long road of graduate studies offered gifts beyond those the children of good parents take for granted. To them and my sister and brother-in-law, Meghan and Greg Jones, I mean it when I say: thank you for everything.

Finishing a dissertation would not be the joy it is without my wife, Brooke. She is a loyal companion, whose patient, grounded demeanor helped her endure the anxiety a project like this brings with it. She offered a lesson in the form of a gift by encouraging me with three words: take your time. I may have taken more than my fair share, but it will be a joy to repay the debt. As I began work on this project, our life together changed forever for the good. In a Belgian hospital, Brooke and I met John, who has taught me the virtue of patience, especially on days when the work was not moving as quickly or as easily as I might have liked. On those days I looked forward to John’s laughter, and cherished it. It is with loving gratitude that I dedicate this dissertation to Brooke and John.
ABBREVIATIONS

Ancient Sources

Anonymous/Dub.

AE       Pseudo-Basil, *Adversus Eunomium* IV-V
Trin.    Anonymous/(Pseudo)-Didymus, *De trinitate*

Athanasius

ep. Serap.    *epistulae ad Serapionem*

Basil of Caesarea

Eun.       *contra Eunomium*

Clement of Alexandria

Protr.    *protrepticus*
Strom.   *stromata*

Didymus the Blind

ComGen.  *Commentary on Genesis*
ComJob.  *Commentary on Job*
ComZech. *Commentary on Zechariah*
Ps.      *Lectures on the Psalms*
Spir.    *de spiritu sancto*

Eunomius of Cyzicus

Apol.     *apologia*

Eusebius of Caesarea

d.e.          *demonstration evangelica*
e. th.        *de ecclesiastica theologia*
h.e.          *historia ecclesiastica*
Marcell.     *contra Marcellum*
p.e.          *preparatio evangelica*
Hippolytus

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<th>CN</th>
<th>Contra Noetum</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ref.</td>
<td>Refutatio omnium haeresium</td>
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Novatian

| Trin. | de trinitate |

Origen of Alexandria

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<tr>
<th>Cels.</th>
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<td>HomGen.</td>
<td>Homilies on Genesis</td>
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<td>HomLuk.</td>
<td>Homilies on Luke</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jo.</td>
<td>Commentary on John</td>
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<tr>
<td>Princ.</td>
<td>de principiis</td>
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Philo

| Spec. Leg. | de specialibus legibus |

Plato

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<td>Tim.</td>
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<td>Rep.</td>
<td>Republica</td>
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Seneca

| Ep. | epistulae |

Tertullian

| Prax. | adversus Praxean |
## Modern Sources

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<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCSL</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Brepols)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FOTC</td>
<td>The Fathers of the Church (CUA Press)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCS</td>
<td>Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte</td>
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<tr>
<td>IJPT</td>
<td>The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition</td>
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<tr>
<td>JECS</td>
<td>Journal of Early Christian Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JTS</td>
<td>Journal of Theological Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td>Loeb Classical Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>LXX</td>
<td>Septuaginta, ed. Rahlfs</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPNF</td>
<td>A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (2\textsuperscript{nd} Series unless otherwise indicated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCT</td>
<td>Oxford Classical Texts</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Popular Patristics Series</td>
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<td>SC</td>
<td>Sources Chrétienes</td>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>Studia Patristica</td>
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<td>SVF</td>
<td>Stoicorum Vetorum Fragmenta, ed. Arnim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>Vigiliae Christianae</td>
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Introduction

Therefore, since it has been shown that the substance of the Holy Spirit is not changeable but unchangeable, he will not be ὁμοούσιος [the same in substance] with a creature. To be sure, even a creature would be immutable if he were placed with the Father and the Son, possessing the same unchangeability. For everything which is capable of participating in the good of another is separated from this substance. All such realities are creatures.¹

On the basis of all these passages it is proved that the activity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is the same. But those who have a single activity also have a single substance. For things of the same substance—ὁμοούσια—have the same activities, and things of a different substance—ἑτεροούσια—have discordant and distinct activities.²

Didymus the Blind flourished in Alexandria from the middle of the fourth century until, traditionally, 398 C.E.³ Some time after Ambrose wrote a treatise On the Holy Spirit, in 381, Jerome translated the two dense theological statements quoted above, and many like them, as a brief but compressed treatise On the Holy Spirit by Didymus, in order to prove that Ambrose had “plagiarized” Didymus’s thought.⁴ Didymus’s terse statements reflect a “high” pneumatology and a pro-Nicene understanding of the trinity.⁵

¹ Didymus, Spir. 16. PPS 43 trans.
² Didymus, Spir. 81. PPS 43 trans.
³ For an introduction to what little we know about Didymus’s life, as well as an overview of the revelatory discovery of a cache of papyri attributable to him, see Richard A. Layton, Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 1-12.
⁴ Jerome, Spir. Praef.
⁵ Lewis Ayres provides the following criteria for a broad set of “pro-Nicene” theologies: (1) “a clear version of the person and nature distinction . . .”; (2) “clear expression that the eternal generation of the Son occurs within the unitary and incomprehensible divine being”; (3) “clear expression of the doctrine that the persons work inseparably.” See Lewis Ayres, Nicæa and Its Legacy, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 236. Didymus exhibits (3) a doctrine of inseparable operations in a striking way, and I detail this feature of Didymus’s thought in Chapter 6. Didymus’s definition of divinity as “participated but not participating” is a premise of various articulations of (2) the eternal generation of the Son and the spiration of the Spirit as occurring within the incomprehensible divine being. I discuss this feature of Didymus’s theology in Chapter 5. Finally, Didymus exhibits an incipient, if not a clear, version of (1) the distinction between “person” and “nature.” Even if one were to date On the Holy Spirit to the latest possible period of 374-380, Didymus would have been a contemporary of comparable pro-Nicene theologies, so why has his treatise not received significant attention? Didymus has been eclipsed by a “Harnackian” account of the fourth century in which Athanasius is viewed as the most important influence on the Cappadocians, who
In the study to follow I contextualize the force and significance of Didymus’s *On the Holy Spirit* by (a) arguing that, in *On the Holy Spirit*, Didymus reconfigured Origen’s theology in support of Nicaea; (b) detailing the features of the “pro-Nicene” theology Didymus proffered; and (c) arguing that Didymus’s “high” pneumatology conditions his moral psychology.

**Why Didymus?**

As I have mentioned, features attributed to “pro-Nicene” theologians are all evident in writings that date from the 370s and later. Their appearance in *On the Holy Spirit* has enabled the presumption that Didymus did not compose *On the Holy Spirit* earlier than the eve of the triumph of pro-Nicene theology ensconced in the Creed of Constantinople, 381. However, that presumption rests on another, namely, that the “Cappadocians” possessed unprecedented genius. But the Cappadocians did not develop their own theological positions in a vacuum, and the premise that any theology resembling theirs must have derived from theirs, is not sound methodologically. Such working assumptions have resulted in Didymus’ *a priori* exclusion from influential treatments of doctrinal development in the fourth century.6

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6 For example, Christopher Beeley’s reading of Gregory of Nazianzus takes for granted a late (380) dating of Didymus’s *On the Holy Spirit*, and asserts that Didymus cannot have influenced, directly or
The time has come to challenge such treatments and to adjust our understanding of fourth-century doctrinal development accordingly. A number of detailed studies on the development of fourth-century doctrine mention Didymus in passing, but rarely does the treatment of Didymus transcend the superficial. Scholars have often associated two works with him: Pseudo-Basil, *Against Eunomius IV-V*, and an anonymous *On the Trinity*. However, proponents of Didymean authorship of these texts have struggled, for several reasons, to establish a level of confidence necessary to embolden a wider scholarly audience for them. Like so many other orphaned texts from antiquity, they languish in indirectly, Gregory’s high pneumatology. See Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 283-284: “For similar reasons, we can conclude that Gregory of Nazianzus was not influenced by Athanasius’ younger Alexandrian colleague Didymus the Blind either. Although he studied for a year in Alexandria when Didymus may have worked as head of the city’s catechetical school, the scant evidence that we possess shows no material derivation on Gregory’s part. (The possibility that Didymus was influenced by Gregory is another matter.) . . . Didymus’ only surviving dogmatic work, *On the Holy Spirit*, draws heavily from Athanasius’ *Letters to Serapion.*” Beeley does not entertain an early dating of *On the Holy Spirit*, and in a footnote (note 62) he claims that Didymus took his exegesis of Amos 4:13 from Athanasius—when in fact Athanasius’s and Didymus’s interpretations of this text are not similar. Indeed, this is the same exegesis Mark DelCoglino has shown to have been a distinctive mark of Didymus’s influence on Basil of Caesarea. See Mark DelCoglino, “Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, and the Anti-Pneumatomachian Exegesis of Amos 4:13 and John 1:3,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 61 (2010): 644-58.


Among those reasons is the fact that, although Alasdair Heron’s dissertation offers the strongest case possible in favor of viewing both *De trinitate* and Ps.-Basil *Adversus Eunomium IV-V* as influenced by Didymus, the textual evidence in favor of Heron’s position is thin (Heron, “Studies in the Trinitarian Writings”). The anonymous *De trinitate* associated with Didymus exists in a sole manuscript, in Rome, and lacks significant corroborating manuscript evidence for its being assigned to Didymus. In response to Doutreleau’s criticism of the parallels between Didymus’s *Commentary on Zechariah*, contained in the Tura papyri, and the anonymous *De trinitate*, Heron’s argument is that we do not need to prove that *De trinitate* is by Didymus; we may begin, instead, with the question of Ps.-Basil *Adversus Eunomium IV-V*. In this case, J. Lebon discovered a Syriac manuscript (Brit Mus MS Addit 17201) that ascribes the text to Didymus, and Heron leans heavily on Lebon’s discovery (Heron, “Studies in the Trinitarian Writings of Didymus the Blind,” 181-95; J. Lebon, “Le Pseudo-Basile (Adv Eun. IV-V) est bien Didyme d’Alexandrie,” *Le Muséon* 50 [1937]: 61-83). Heron argues that, “given that Didymus had in fact been largely forgotten by the third quarter of the fifth century, and that at some time the beginning of AE had been lost, it is easy to understand how AE, if by him, could have come to be ascribed to Basil—not simply through its being appended to Basil’s *Adversus Eunomium*, nor yet by deliberate falsification, but by a combination of accident and forgetfulness of a kind not altogether unusual in the annals of misattribution” (Heron, 184). Heron goes on to refute arguments against trusting Lebon’s Syriac manuscript, put forth by C. Bizer and J. Leipoldt, and concludes that “the Syriac MS discovered by Lebon should be given full
the shadows, fascinating artifacts for the eyes of the occasional specialist. In order to revisit the question of these texts critically, we must take seriously Didymus’s contributions to the development of doctrine in the fourth century by restoring Didymus to full view. Without the study to follow, Didymus the Blind would remain a “Melchizedek” of the fourth-century doctrinal debates—“without father, without mother, without genealogy.”

The question of authorship is not the only obstacle for those who would enlarge Didymus’s readership. There is also the question of Didymus’s polemical engagements. To survey scholarship on Didymus emerging in the wake of the Tura papyri discovered in 1941 is to receive the impression that Didymus did not engage in any doctrinal weight, and regarded as an important piece of evidence from the ascription to Didymus, whereas the arguments which have been presented against such an ascription cannot really be supported” (Heron, 194). In fact, Heron’s textual argument rests on this single piece of evidence from a single Syriac manuscript, and his attribution of De trinitate to Didymus stands or falls on his attribution of Ps.-Basil, Adv. Eunomium IV-V to Didymus. For this reason, his attribution of the latter text to Didymus hangs on whether the Syriac MS can be trusted. Though Lebon’s Syriac manuscript must be taken seriously as evidence that these two books were associated with Didymus at an early stage in the history of the text’s edition, a single witness constitutes thin grounds for resolving this case. On the other hand, working independently of Heron, Walter Hayes published an outline of the manuscript tradition of the text. See Walter M. Hayes, The Greek Manuscript Tradition of (ps.) Basil’s Adversus Eunomium, Books IV-V (Leiden: Brill, 1972). Hayes later argued, in spite of himself, that the text was certainly not by Basil and is by Didymus the Blind. See Walter M. Hayes, “Didymus the Blind Is the Author of Adversus Eunomium IV/V,” in Studia Patristica 17, Part 3 (Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1982): 1108–14. Yet the authorship question remains unresolved. In spite of both Heron’s and Hayes’ arguments, Franz Risch’s German translation and commentary still holds out the possibility that Apollinarius might be the author of these two compressed books. See F.X. Risch, ed., Pseudo-Basilii, Adversus Eunomium IV-V: Einleitung, Übersetzung Und Kommentar (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1992). For his part, Wolfgang Bienert is convinced of the Didymean authorship of neither On the Trinity nor Against Eunomius, and he does not include these texts for consideration in his study of Didymus’s hermeneutics; he sidelines On the Holy Spirit presumably because it is extant only in Jerome’s Latin translation. See Wolfgang A. Bienert, Allegoria Und Anagoge Bei Didymos Dem Blinden von Alexandria, PTS 13 (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1972), especially 8-31. On the other hand, Christoph Markschieß treats the De trinitate as by “Didymus,” even if only in passing, and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz presumes the success of Heron’s arguments regarding the authenticity of Against Eunomius. See, respectively, C. Markschieß, Origenes und Seine Erbe TU 160 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 147n121; and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, “Gregory of Nyssa’s Pneumatology in Context: The Spirit as Anointing and the History of the Trinitarian Controversies,” JECS 19:2 (2011): 269n39. Though it is difficult to imagine a candidate better than Didymus for the authorship of Adversus Eunomium and De trinitate, it is not proved beyond doubt that he is the author of both texts, and to engage those texts would necessitate a more critical examination of the arguments for and against authorship than I can here provide.
controversies. Or, if he did, he was not up to the task of winning a significant following. Perusing a handful of books and articles on Didymus from the last fifty years yields a sense that when Didymus lashes out on the rare occasion at a "Eunomian" or an "Apollinarian," he does so more to project authority than to wield it. Didymus appears in the pages of twentieth-century scholarship as an under-informed pretender to doctrinal authority, untrained in the polemical cunning of his slightly elder Alexandrian contemporary, Athanasius. Some have adduced this impression as circumstantial evidence against attributing to him Against Eunomius and On the Trinity.

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9 A cache of papyri discovered in 1941, in Tura, Egypt, contained primarily material eventually ascribed to Didymus. The papyri contain several “commentaries” on Genesis, Job, Ecclesiastes, the Psalms, and Zechariah, all of which the editors finally ascribed to Didymus, and which appeared in either Sources chrétiennes (Genesis, Zechariah commentaries) or Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen (Job, Ecclesiastes, Psalms) series. For more on the discovery at Tura, see Louis Doutreleau, “Que Savons-Nous Aujourd’hui Des Papyrus de Toura,” Recherches Des Sciences Religieuses 43 (1955): 161–93; and Layton, Didymus the Blind, 1-4. Doutreleau published an extensive initial comparison of the Commentary on Zechariah with the anonymous De trinitate previously associated with Didymus, and concluded, on the basis of literary differences, that the two were not the works of the same author. See Louis Doutreleau, “Le De Trinitate Est-Il l’Oeuvre de Didyme l’Aveugle?” Recherches Des Sciences Religieuses 45 (1957): 514-57.

10 As the edition of the Tura papyri were completed in the post-war period, extensive studies of them have focused primarily on their exegetical form and function. A few scholars have attempted to address the theological and philosophical context of the thought they contain. In addition to Heron’s, a handful of dissertations have studied Didymus’s theology (e.g. Adolphe Gesché, La christologie du “Commentaire sur les Psaumes” découvert à Tura. Gembloux: Éditions J. Duculot, 1962; Stephen Craig Reynolds, “Man, Incarnation, and Trinity in the Commentary on Zechariah of Didymus the Blind of Alexandria,” Harvard Dissertation, 1966; Michael Ghattas, Die Christologie Didymus’ des Blinden von Alexandria in den Schriften von Tura: zur Entwicklung der alexandrinischen Theologie des 4. Jahrhunderts [Münster: Lit, 2002]; Richard Bishop III, “Affectus hominis: The Human Psychology of Christ according to Ambrose of Milan in Fourth-Century Context,” University of Virginia Dissertation, 2009 [Chapter 2]). More recent monographs have gravitated toward Didymus’s contributions to an Alexandrian tradition of Origenist hermeneutics and pedagogy—for better (Bienert, Allegoria Und Anagoge Bei Didymos Dem Blinden von Alexandrien; Layton, Didymus the Blind; Blossom Stefiniwi, Mind, Text, and Commentary: Noetic Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius Ponticus [New York: Peter Lang, 2010]); or worse (Robert Hill, “Introduction,” Commentary on Zechariah FOTC 111 [Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006]). If one were to read only the most recent scholarship on Didymus, the recent focus on Didymus’s exegetical endeavors might leave one with the unintended impression that Didymus was not polemically engaged in the doctrinal debates of the late fourth century.

11 Hanson refers to the De Trinitate attributed to Didymus several times but concludes that it is not by Didymus and that the author of Adversus Eunomium, even if it be Didymus, “is essentially a second-rate theologian” (R. P. C. Hanson, The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381 [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988], 653-58). Henry Chadwick’s review, in 1963, of Doutreleau’s edition of Didymus’ Commentary on Zechariah all but sealed Didymus’s fate in twentieth-century patristic scholarship: “The doctrinal content is generally disappointing and meager” (Henry Chadwick, Review of...
Students of the fourth century are familiar with a narrative of development that leads from early skirmishes between Arius and Alexander to the “high” pro-Nicene theology of the Cappadocian fathers in the 380s. At the beginning of the fourth century, Arius ignited what had become a tinderbox of Origenist theology, provoking a strident reaction by Marcellus of Ancyra, whose theology the Creed of Nicaea thinly veiled, and who appears to have embraced the very monarchian tendencies Origen opposed. Nicaea’s creed initially found few supporters at least in part for that reason. It would remain for the Cappadocians to provide a non-monarchian interpretation of Nicaea in the face of a more extreme formulation of Arius’s position in the guise of Eunomius, who radicalized latent dynamics in Origen’s legacy surfaced by “the Eusebian” party. So it was that the Cappadocians’ interpretation of Nicene theology incorporated anti-Origenist elements in spite of a deeply held reverence for Origen on several levels.\(^{13}\)

Whatever else one might say about a narrative like this—and on every point an erudite specialist could provide nuance—it represents the broad strokes taken by scholarship of the fourth-century controversies during the twentieth century. Though

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\(^{12}\) Such a judgment would have been superficial: neither *Against Eunomius* nor *On the Trinity* evinces great rhetorical polish. Both works display the characteristic rambling concatenation Jerome felt obliged to apologize for in the preface to his translation of Didymus’s *On the Holy Spirit*. On closer inspection, the roughly hewn structure of these anonymous texts counts as much in their favor for Didymus’s authorship as “genre.”

\(^{13}\) For a good example of older versions of this narrative, see the dated but astute synopsis provided by Brooks Otis, “Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958): 96-124, at 99-100. Hanson’s statement, which opens a treatment of Origen’s influence in the fourth century, is characteristic: “Origen was the most important theologian produced by the Eastern, Greek-speaking, Church during the first three centuries of its existence. Until the arrival of Athanasius and the Cappadocian theologians in the fourth century, there was no theological mind capable of rivalling his.” See R.P.C. Hanson, “The Influence of Origen on the Arian Controversy,” in *Origeniana Quarta*, ed. Lothar Lies (Vienna: Tyrolia-Verlag, 1987), 410-423, at 410. A more up-to-date consensus view of twentieth-century scholarship on the fourth century is expressed with characteristic economy by Michel Barnes, “Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon,” in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, ed. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (New York: Routledge, 1998), 47-67.
there can be little doubt about Athanasius’s significance for later Christian theological
tradition more broadly, evidence of his immediate impact upon his contemporaries is
more often assumed than argued.\textsuperscript{14} Surprises await those who challenge the assumption
that Athanasius was directly influential in the 360s. For example, it now appears that it
was not Athanasius’s \textit{Letters to Serapion} which influenced Basil of Caesarea’s anti-
pneumatomachian exegesis in \textit{Against Eunomius}, Book III, but Didymus’s \textit{On the Holy
Spirit}.\textsuperscript{15} If Didymus influenced Basil in this case, as is widely conceded, might his
writings have traveled more widely, and at an earlier stage, than previously assumed?

The inertia that leads modern theologians to gravitate toward big names is hard to
resist. Hardly any specialists—not to mention non-specialists—would include Didymus
the Blind as a major figure in narratives of fourth-century doctrinal development, but his
potential significance is not incredible. Brooks Otis wrote in a synopsis typical of
twentieth-century scholarship that “the Cappadocians’ achievement was to recover the
angelological and anthropological portions of [Origen’s] heritage by accommodating

\textsuperscript{14} Consciously or unconsciously, Athanasius’s presumed influence is a sign of the impressive
reach of Harnack’s centralization of Athanasius. See Barnes, “Fourth Century,” especially at 53: “This
fundamental positioning of Athanasius by Harnack remains with us, I think, in the assumption that the
distinctive substance of Athanasius’ theology must have been known by the Cappadocians and that it must
have directly influenced their own theology, such as one sees in works by T. F. Torrance. This
presupposition is a scholarly commonplace; unfortunately we have no real basis for this judgment since we
have no detailed understanding of what (and when) the Cappadocians had read of Athanasius (if they had
Ayres does not include Athanasius’s \textit{On the Incarnation} in his revised account of “pro-Nicene” theology on
the grounds that his reader “will . . . look in vain for any substantive evidence evidence that this treatise had
any effect on the later fourth-century readers” (Ayres, 5) he discusses—namely, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory
of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus. I agree with the methodological approach to adjudicating the
complicated question of Athanasius’s influence in the late fourth century exemplified by Mark
DelCogliano, “The Influence of Athanasius and the Homoiousians on Basil of Caesarea’s Decentralization

\textsuperscript{15} Mark DelCogliano has demonstrated the problem with assuming Athanasius’s influence without
proving it. In the case of Basil of Caesarea’s response to Eunomius, DelCogliano has shown not only that
Athanasius did not influence Basil’s exegesis of Amos 4:13 and John 1:3, but that Didymus did. See Mark
DelCogliano, “Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, and the Anti-Pneumatomachian Exegesis of Amos
them to the anti-Origenist theology of Athanasius.” In this case, instead of assuming that the Cappadocians were appropriating a pre-packaged “anti-Origenism” from Athanasius, why not consider the possibility that Didymus mediated a corrected version of Origen’s legacy to the Cappadocians, among others? I do not mean that Athanasius’s theology is unimportant in its own right, or that his influence in particular cases is precluded, but that an a priori judgment about Didymus’s insignificance suggests that Athanasius’s assumed significance has eclipsed the potential significance of Didymus. In the study to follow, I make Didymus’s pro-Nicene theology visible, so that we are in a better position to assess his place within the field of doctrinal developments in the period 360-380 CE.

*On the Holy Spirit* is the only doctrinal treatise that can be attributed to Didymus himself with certainty, even if only in Latin translation. At the heart of Didymus’s polemical argument in *On the Holy Spirit* is the concept of participation. In many ways, Didymus has been viewed in the shadow of Origen, his predecessor in Alexandria. For that reason, I began research on this topic with the intention of focusing solely on Didymus, his sources, and his thought, in order to remedy that imbalance. However, it soon became clear that it would be neither possible nor desirable to narrate Didymus’s doctrinal contributions without Origen in mind. Origen was every bit Didymus’s intellectual “master” many have presumed him to have been. Yet Origen’s authority did

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16 Otis, 100.
not keep Didymus from quietly adjusting central tendencies in Origen’s theological speculation to fourth-century doctrinal winds. Because I am convinced this is the case, it has been necessary to provide a detailed account of Origen’s theology of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to show how “participation” operated within that theology.

I do not address the question of Didymus’s authorship of Against Eunomius or On the Trinity. Instead, I contextualize the presence in On the Holy Spirit of several doctrinal themes, focusing on the doctrinal refrain that the Holy Spirit is “participated but does not participate.” So the journey toward Didymus’s pro-Nicene theology begins with Origen and philosophy.

**Origen and Philosophy**

Origen’s theology was nothing if not influential. Both opponents and proponents of the Nicene Creed drew from it, and no serious consideration of fourth-century doctrine has failed to offer an account of that fact. Terms related to “participation” (μετοχή, μέθεξις, participatio) animate Origen’s theology and psychology at a deep level, but the logic governing those terms is not always evident. Yet there are dynamics in Origen’s theology that are inexplicable without this logic, and there are problems and limitations in

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Origen’s theology that result from it. Whoever Origen influenced inherits these problems and limitations, sometimes unaware that Origen’s logic of participation entails those problems. This matter’s complexity has produced a divergence of scholarly opinions about Origen’s theology.¹⁹

The question of Origen’s debts to philosophy, and the consequences of those debts, presents a perennial issue in Origen scholarship. Indeed, how one answers this question suggests how one would answer it in the case of other figures from the period—Eunomius of Cyzicus, Gregory of Nyssa, or Augustine of Hippo. For some earlier modern scholars, non-Christian philosophy was a sign of poisonous “Hellenization”—famously, Adolf von Harnack.

Some have moved beyond the anti-Harnackian works of the early twentieth century, taking it to be a foregone conclusion that Harnack’s perspective has been rendered obsolete. However, the issue is by no means settled, and Harnack continues to influence scholarship in unacknowledged, slightly altered ways.²⁰ The extent to which a reader of Origen has given up characterizing philosophy’s presence in Origen’s thought as “poisonous” is a litmus test for whether one is rid of Harnackian tendencies.²¹ The

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¹⁹ Though scholars often puzzle over the question of whether Origen was or was not a “subordinationist,” treatments of his thought’s indebtedness to the concept of participation do not uniformly analyze it as a feature of his trinitarian theology. For scholarship that has treated the issue in some detail, see David L. Balàs, “The Idea of Participation in the Structure of Origen’s Thought. Christian Transposition of a Theme of the Platonic Tradition,” in Origeniana: Premier Colloque International Des Études Origéniennes (Montserrat, 18-21 Septembre 1973), Quaderni Di “Vetera Christianorum” 12, ed. H. Crouzel, G. Lomiento, and J. Rius-Camps (Bari, Istituto di letteratura cristiana antica, Università di Bari, 1975), 257–275.

²⁰ For recent literature on Origen and “Middle Platonism,” see Benjamin Blosser, Become Like the Angels (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 2012), 1-13. For all its erudition, Blosser’s treatment of Origen’s theological anthropology still appears to accept a Harnackian choice of Origen as either a “Platonist” or a “man of the Church,” since Blosser proposes that Origen was a “man of the Church” as opposed to a “Platonist.” See Blosser, 12-13.

²¹ For a provocative and strident but esoteric approach to this issue, see Mark Edwards, Origen Against Plato (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002). Edwards worries that Origen has been misread as a mere Platonist, and his warnings to that effect are well taken, but it bears noting that it is one thing to qualify
better one can explain the presence and impact of philosophical terms in Origen’s
discourse, the more prepared one’s reading of Origen is to withstand such a test. The
distance between the modern reader and Harnack grows insofar as she can read Origen’s
philosophy as integral to his theology without concern that philosophical commitments
have degraded, or even confused, his thought. On the other hand, those who have no
account for Origen’s use of philosophy either do not understand that technical terms of
any discourse—"philosophical" or otherwise—cannot stretch without breaking, or they
have decided in advance that Origen cannot mean what he says.22

Returning to Didymus and Origen, then, the concept of participation had played a
central role in the Nicene controversy that preceded Didymus. How far back did the roots
of "participation" go? Could they be traced to Origen himself? The question of whether
the Son participated in the Father, and the consequences of that participation, surfaced as
a key issue in the earliest stages of the "Arian crisis." Arius could not be accused of
straying from Origen’s theology when he interpreted the title "Logos," along with so
many others, as applicable to the Son only καταχρηστικῶς.23 According to Arius, the Son

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22 As with Origen, so with Arius and Eunomius, among others: the role of non-Christian
philosophy in a heresiarch’s system can all too easily become a derogatory device. In his magisterial
Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries, Maurice Wiles cites a spokesman of a Catholic-
Lutheran dialogue, in the 1960s, who repudiates Arius as holding a “doctrinal scheme [which] owed
nothing to Scripture.” The implication was that Arius’s “doctrinal scheme” was alien to Scripture, derived
from non-Christian philosophy and so to be resisted. Anti-philosophical biblicism of this sort is not limited
to Protestants. The spokesman castigating Arius as a heretic by calling his thought “philosophical” was not
the Lutheran, but a Catholic, John Courtney Murray. See Maurice Wiles, Archetypal Heresy: Arianism
through the Centuries (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 3, where the “Catholic spokesman” is anonymous;
his identity appears, however in Maurice Wiles, “Eunomius: Hair-splitting Dialectician or Defender of the

“was created by the will of God before times and ages, and he received life, being, and glories from the Father as the Father has shared them with him.”

It is striking that Alexander of Alexandria did not dispute this aspect of Arius’s theology. A point of agreement between Arius and Alexander was that the Son receives from and participates in the Father. For Alexander, too, the Son is the “image” of the Father’s hypostasis (Hebrews 1:3), and thus the Son reproduces all that the Father is except the distinctive characteristic of being “unbegotten.” On the other hand, for Arius, the Son is a creature who participates perfectly in the Father’s being just as the Father wills the Son so to participate. Now is not the time to revisit the nebulous question of Arius’s philosophical acumen. It is, however, important to emphasize that a hazy concept of participation lay just beneath the surface of the early Nicene debate. The study to follow uncovers the way the logic of participation functioned for Origen, and the way that Didymus renovated that logic with a “pro-Nicene” theology of the Trinity.

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25 Alexander, Letter to Alexander of Thessalonica (commonly referred to as “ἡ φίλαρχος”), Urkunde 14, 48-52. Rowan Williams surmises that “Bishop Alexander and his circle had been using some sort of language about ‘substantial’ unity between Father and Son, or perhaps . . . had spoken of the Son enjoying metousia or metochê of the Father’s life, in a still fairly untroubled Middle Platonic fashion.” See R. Williams, Arius: Heresy and Tradition, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 223.


Outline of the Dissertation

The study falls into two parts: the first provides a detailed reconstruction of Origen’s theology of the trinity, which Didymus inherited in the late fourth century. In my account of Origen’s theology, I focus on describing in detail both the nature and polemical utility of the deeply-seated tendency in Origen’s thought to order the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a hierarchy. With this aspect of Origen’s theology and the low pneumatology it generates in view, I turn to Didymus, in order to detail Didymus’s reconfiguration of Origen’s legacy in the late fourth century. In this part of the study, I provide a detailed account of the reasons Didymus abandoned Origen’s grammar of participation in favor of a pro-Nicene theology of the trinity. Didymus moves beyond both monarchian and anti-monarchian theologies toward a pro-Nicene synthesis, which I describe and contextualize.

Chapter 1 introduces two interrelated and recurrent themes. They are: (1) Platonic and Gnostic schemes of emanation; and (2) Platonic grammars of participation. The point of introducing these dynamics broadly at the outset is to provide a frame of reference for a constellation of key terms used in later Alexandrian theology—especially terms like αἴτιον, ἀρχή, εἰκών, μεθεξίς, μετουσία, and πηγή. By recognizing this broad family of terms in earlier tradition, we will have a context for considering a trajectory of thought on the same themes from Origen to Didymus. Chapters 2 through 4 then show how Origen draws on these themes to oppose monarchian theology. In Chapter 2, I argue that Origen’s use of participation is influenced by Numenius’s *On the Good*. Specifically, I show how the first two books of Origen’s *Commentary on John* incorporate dynamics
from Numenius in a theology of the Son as Demiurge. As a result of Origen’s use of Numenius, his doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exhibits Platonic hierarchical tendencies. In Chapter 3, I argue that Origen’s use of Numenius is polemically motivated. Returning to several key passages in the *Commentary on John* shows that Origen’s use of participation is designed, against monarchian theology, to provide an intrinsic distinction of Son from Father. In a final chapter on Origen (Chapter 4), I argue that Origen has a low pneumatology at every stage in his career—from his “early” writings in the *Commentary on John* and *On First Principles* to later books of the *Commentary* and other writings from Origen’s later period, in Caesarea. Origen never abandons the Platonizing dynamics that rendered his doctrine of the divine three vulnerable to becoming a binitarian hierarchy of Father-and-Son over a created, angelic Holy Spirit.

The first part of this dissertation forces an interpretive choice for Origen’s scholarly readers. One may either read Origen as having held to a logic of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit governed by dynamics of participation, or pretend that the logic of participation employed by Origen is merely figurative speech. However, the reader who strips Origen’s use of participation of its philosophical valence loses an account of his theology as anti-monarchian, and so also loses a grip on Origen’s contemporary orthodoxy. One may give Origen either a proto-Nicene Trinity or an anti-monarchian theology, but one may not give him both, and the reason for this lies in his use of participation. I prefer to read Origen through the lens that sees his genius in his anti-monarchian strategies, not in his ability to anticipate early fourth century controversies.

The second part of this dissertation articulates Didymus’s pro-Nicene theology of the Holy Spirit by contextualizing it. In Chapter 5, I contextualize the Holy Spirit’s
“reception” from the Son in terms of the history of John 16:14’s exegesis. In the course of doing so, I broaden the dossier of evidence in favor of reading Didymus’s *On the Holy Spirit* as opposed to Eunomius’s first *Apology*. Didymus seizes upon Scripture’s speaking of the Holy Spirit as “poured out” and so opposes Eunomius’s insistence that the Holy Spirit is “filled.” In Chapter 6, I outline Didymus’s arguments for the Holy Spirit’s full divinity in terms of two key strategies: inseparable operation and “single power” causality. I then elaborate the pro-Nicene texture of Didymus’s theology by uncovering the anti-Eunomian utility of Didymus’s exegesis of two key verses: John 5:19 and John 14:16. With Didymus’s pro-Nicene theology in view, Chapter 7 shows that if Didymus retains and refines key aspects of Origen’s moral psychology of the human soul as a divine “image,” he also initiates a new tradition according to which the “archetype” to which the soul is conformed is not only the *Logos*, but the Trinity viewed as a single divine source. Didymus’s “high” pneumatology allows him to frame his moral psychology with the axiom that the soul can neither purify itself nor find itself reduced to irredeemable evil.

Taken as a whole, the second half of the dissertation provides a picture of Didymus’s pro-Nicene theological contribution in *On the Holy Spirit* and helps to explain why Jerome called his theology “catholicus.”28

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28 Hier., *Apol. adv. lib. Ruf.* 2.16.17-25. “What answer will you make, then, as to Didymus, who certainly is catholic as regards the Trinity? You know that I translated his book on the Holy Spirit into Latin. He surely could not have assented to the passages in Origen’s works which were added by heretics; yet he wrote some short commentaries on the Περὶ Ἀρχῶν which you have translated; in these he never denies that what is there written was written by Origen, but only tries to persuade us simple people that we do not understand his meaning and how these passages ought to be taken in a good sense. So much on the Son and the Holy Spirit alone. But in reference to the rest of Origen’s doctrines, both Eusebius and Didymus adhere to his views, and defend, as said in a catholic and Christian sense, what all the churches reprobate” (*quid respondebis pro didymo, qui certe in trinitate catholicus est, cuius etiam nos de spiritu sancto librum in latinam linguam uertimus? certe hic, in his quae ab haereticis in originis operibus addita sunt, consentire non potuit. et in ipsis Περὶ Ἀρχῶν quos tu interpretatus es libris, breues dictauit*)
Didymus’s “high” pneumatology and the exegetical underpinnings of his pro-Nicene theology, we can make better-informed judgments about the options available to later pro-Nicene theologians in the 370s and following. If Didymus composed *On the Holy Spirit* as early as 360, then his arguments comprise a pioneering instance of pro-Nicene theology, and further studies will need to consider not so much whether Didymus mediated the Alexandrian tradition’s insights to later figures, as precisely how he did so.
Chapter 1
Emanation, Participation, and Hierarchy

Introduction

This chapter introduces themes that will occupy our attention for the remainder of this study. The basic aim is to describe how schemes of emanation, in use prior to the third and fourth centuries, employ a Platonic conceptual vocabulary of “participation.” Because a comprehensive overview of such broad issues would be unwieldy, I focus on the soil out of which Origen and Didymus grew.

I begin by surveying some of the ways early Gnostics, Christians, and Platonists imagined procession, or emanation. The themes of emanation and participation are intertwined, and disentangling them is an artificial exercise. So my description of “triadic procession” gives way to describing a grammar of participation and ordering implicit in such schemes of procession. Plato’s talk of participation initiated an influential conceptual vocabulary for thinking through emanative schemes and their appropriation—especially in light of the Demiurge’s looking to a “paradigm” in creating the Cosmos.

In chapters to follow on Origen, we will see how Origen appropriates these dynamics in his own speculation about the Son’s procession from the Father and the creation of the spiritual Cosmos. In the second half of this study, I show how Didymus shifts the Alexandrian tradition toward a perspective in which no single person of the Trinity is identified as Creator: all three share a single divine nature and all three are ascribed “productive” agency. In this way, Didymus’s pro-Nicene theology dissolves the problems triggered by Origen’s complicated debts to Platonic schemes which arrange the
triad in a series of graded entities. Didymus does not discard his tradition’s debt to
Platonism. He transforms it.

**Triadic Procession and Stability of the First Principle**

So we begin with schemes of emanation. It is tempting to associate, if not to
identify, the term “emanation” with the genius of Plotinus and Neoplatonism, but
emanation is older than Plotinus. His thought includes elemental concepts that turn out to
be older than the school Platonism that nurtured him. In fact, earlier Gnostic traditions
provide a fruitful, if somewhat unexpected and enigmatic, point of comparison for later
Christian and pagan traditions.

A number of common themes and terminologies suggest deep parallels between
Gnosticism, early Christian “orthodoxy,” and Platonism.¹ The parallels precede the
second century, even if the origins of gnosticism remain shrouded in controversy.
Continuities between “non-baptismal” Gnostic Christianity and Platonism, each oriented
toward “ascent,” are well known.² Perhaps lesser known is the tradition of scholarship

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¹ I place the word orthodoxy in inverted commas to disclaim any dogmatic judgments about non-
Gnostic Christians or Gnostic Christians. See Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism: An Argument for
Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2005), and David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and
Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), for current accounts
of gnosticism(s). I have also found helpful Alastair Logan’s analysis of Barbelo-Gnostics, or Sethian Gnostics,
Publishers, 1996). The modern sorting out and classification of ancient Gnosticisms remains a topic of
considerable scholarly debate. It is a debate I do not have space to address, but I beg my reader’s trust that I
am aware of the necessary qualifications in using such a fraught term as “Gnosticism.” I use the term for
convenience’s sake to refer to a family of movements which depart from one another in perhaps significant
but complex and various ways.

² See John Turner and Ruth Majercik, eds., *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures,
and Texts* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2000). Sethian Gnosticism’s entanglements with Middle Platonism are
documented extensively by John Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (Quebec, Presses
de l’Université Laval, 2001). For an argument that the Chaldean Oracles adapted Stoicism to Platonizing
that has highlighted continuities between Gnostic, Christian, and Platonist “triadology.” My work takes place in a scholarly trajectory exemplified by the work of Jean Pépin and John Whittaker.³

Pépin’s analysis of Gnosticism normalizes Gnostic triadic theology. Gnosticism supported a tradition of speculation not entirely abandoned by what would become orthodox Christianity or later Platonism, and Pépin’s presentation of a continuity running from Gnosticism to Plotinus means we cannot forget this “normal” aspect of Gnostic theology. Though significant differences separate what would become Christian orthodoxy from Gnostic speculation, deep continuities remained—especially in Alexandria. “Triadic” Gnostics of various kinds (Valentinians, “Naasenes,” and “Peratics”) spoke a language and speculated about a cosmology not entirely unfamiliar to an emerging consensus in Alexandria.

Pépin’s comparative research also demonstrates convincing conceptual parallels between Gnosticism and Plotinian procession. Pépin uses Plotinus to make many of his points, and the rhetorical effect of using Plotinus as a case in point is not so much that

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³ In the following synopsis, I rely on three important articles regarding Gnostic theories of procession. First is Jean Pépin, “Theories of Procession in Plotinus and the Gnostics,” in Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, ed. Richard T. Wallis (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 297-335. Pépin takes his primary evidence from several well known reports in Hippolytus’s Refutatio omnium haeresium, V-VI: VI, 29.5-7; V, 7.25-26; V, 17.5; V, 10-12. For the sake of convenience, I will refer to the author of this treatise as Hippolytus even though there is some doubt as to the authorship of the treatise. Pépin cites evidence original to Gnostics as well as other corroborating reports from heresiologists, but Hippolytus’s texts form a basis for comparison with Plotinus and later Platonism. Second are two related pieces by John Whittaker: “Self-Generating Principles in Second-Century Gnostic Systems,” in Bentley Layton, ed., The Rediscovery of Gnosticism, Vol. 1: The School of Valentinus (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 176-193; and Ibid., “The Historical Background of Proclus’ Doctrine of the ΑΥΘΥΠΟΣΤΑΤΑ,” in De Jamblique a Proclus, ed. H. Dörrie (Genève: Vandoeuvres, 1974), 193-237. Both articles are collected in John Whittaker, Studies in Platonism and Patristic Thought (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984). Though I highlight the primary texts and concepts most relevant to the task of later chapters, the serious student should consult all three articles for fuller documentation and analysis than I have space to provide.
Plotinus borrowed directly from this or that Gnostic treatise. Rather, it is to demonstrate that both Gnosticism and later forms of Christianity and Platonism wove different garments from common spools. On Pépin’s view, in this regard Plotinus was more “Platonist” than “Neoplatonist.”

Gnostics are well known for having taught speculative cosmogonies. An especially familiar theme is an elaborate procession of Eons cascading from an ultimate source. Gnostics also speculated about the relationship between three primary principles. For convenience I will refer to such Gnostics as “triadic.” Hippolytus is our primary source for triadic Gnostic systems. For Valentinian Gnostics like those represented by Hippolytus, the Father is a perfect, solitary entity, described as μόνος or ἐρημός. The Father is “without need” (ἀπροσδεής, ἀνενδεής). Because of the Father’s perfection, he produces a “Son” in the form of “mind” or “Logos.” The production results in a “monad”

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4 It is also, I should state clearly, not meant to imply any kind of influence running from Plotinus to Origen. Though my presentation of material from Plotinus and Neoplatonism in this chapter prior to following chapters on Origen might imply a chronological progression from Neoplatonism to Origen, no such progression is probable given the fact that Origen died before he could have read any of Plotinus’s writings. On the other hand, nothing prevents generic Platonic doctrine that appears in Plotinus from having been available to Origen through other sources. At most, Origen and Plotinus could be analyzed as both emerging from a comparable Platonic school tradition, whether or not their teacher was the same Ammonius. For a recent treatment of both Plotinus and Origen, see Henning Ziebritzki, Heiliger Geist und Weltseele (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), especially 21-43.

5 In fact, Plotinus serves as a point of reference for generic, as opposed to distinctively “Neoplatonic,” elements of Platonism. In later chapters I will leave behind the question of Gnosticism’s mediated influence on later Alexandrian theology. That is because the question often enough is not whether later Christians reworked Gnostic precedents, but how they did so, to what extent, and to what ends.

6 For the Greek text of Hippolytus’s Refutatio, see M. Marcovich, Hippolytus. Refutatio omnium haeresium, Patristische Texte und Studien 25 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986): 53-417; for English I have used Werner Foerster, Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts, Vol. 1. Patristic Evidence, trans., R. McL. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972). See Foerster, Chapters 14-19 for iterations of Gnosticism with three first principles. We need not address the thorny matter of the Refutatio’s authorship, which need not have been written by Hippolytus in order to provide the data it does regarding Gnosticism. It is only for the sake of convenience I refer to the author of “Hippolytus” and not “(Ps.-)Hippolytus.”

7 Ref. VI.29.5-7. Other terms include φιλέρημος, ἔρεμον, and ἀναπαυόμενος (Pépin, 301).
becoming a “dyad,” a theme endemic both to school Platonism and Gnosticim.\(^8\) In the Valentinian case, the first principle breaks out of solitude in an act of love. It “begets” (γεννάω) or “sends forth” (προβάλλειν) a second principle. The second principle is said to “proceed” (προάγειν) from the first. Ordering an entity with terms “first,” “second,” or “third” implies that an entity is “produced” by its prior in the series.

Gnostics characterize the “Father” not only as producing a second principle but also as being the kind of source that does not depend upon its products. For example, Hippolytus’s Naasenes offer the following doctrine of the divine source of all things:

As to the nature of the seed, which is the cause of all that comes into being, [the Naasenes] say that it is none of these, but it generates and produces all that comes into being; their text is, “I become what I will, and I am what I am.” Therefore they say that the being which moves everything does not move; for while it produces everything it remains what it is, without coming to be any of the things that come into being. Him alone he calls good, and of him was said the Savior’s saying, “Why do you call me good? There is one who is good, my Father in heaven, who makes his sun rise upon the just and the unjust, and sends rain upon the righteous and the sinners.”\(^9\)

Note the use of Matthew 5:45 to distinguish the Son from the Father, the “only good” (ἀγαθὸν μόνον).\(^10\) The Father does not “need” the second principle in order to be the Father. The Father is perfectly stable, alone good (ἀγαθὸν). In this way, Gnostics can be read as agreeing with what is often identified as a marker of Platonism: the principle that a cause is greater than its effect. We will return to this notion momentarily.

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\(^8\) See Pépin, 300, as well as John Dillon, \textit{The Middle Platonists}, 24-30, for background on the Platonic Monad and (indeterminate) Dyad. The theme recurs in the fourth century, notably, in the theology of Marcellus of Ancyra, as reported by Eusebius of Caesarea, e.g., \textit{e. th.} 3.4-5.

\(^9\) Hippolytus, \textit{Ref.} V.7.25-26. Λέγουσιν οὖν περὶ τῆς τοῦ πνεύματος οὐσίας, ἣν ἐστί πάντων τῶν γινομένων αἰτία, ὅτι τούτων ἐστιν οὐδὲν, γεννά δὲ καὶ ποιεῖ πάντα τὰ γινόμενα, λέγοντες ὦ γόνιμοι· “γίνομαι ὁ θέλω καὶ εἰμί δὲ εἰμί.” διὰ τούτῳ φησιν ἄκινητον εἶναι τὸ πάντα κινοῦν· μένει γὰρ ὁ ἐστι, ποιοῦν τὰ πάντα, καὶ οὐδὲν τῶν γινομένων γίνεται. τούτων δ’ εἶναι φησιν ἄγαθον μόνον, καὶ περὶ τούτου λελέχθαι τὸ ὑπὸ τοῦ σωτήρος λεγόμενον: “τί με λέγεις ἄγαθὸν; εἰς ἐκ τῶν ἄγαθος, ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ ἐν τοῖς σωφρονοὶς· ὃς ἀνατέλλει τὸν ἥλιον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ δακτύλοις καὶ ἀδίκους καὶ βρέχει ἐπὶ ὅσιοις καὶ ἀμαρτωλοῖς.”

\(^10\) Though Marcovich notices the references, neither Wendland’s 1914 \textit{GCS} edition nor Foerster’s German translation acknowledges this text’s overt debts to Exodus 3:14 and Aristotle (\textit{Metaphysics} 7.1012b31) for the divine name. The title ἄγαθὸν μόνον resurfaces in Clement, \textit{Strom.} III.43.2.
A doctrine that takes its rise from the first principle’s stability is the axiom that the first, or “highest God,” does not participate in any higher entity. In Chapter 10 of the *Handbook of Platonism*, Alcinous discusses the “primary intellect,” or God. This “primary God” is “eternal, ineffable, ‘self-perfect’ (that is, deficient in no respect), ‘ever-perfect’ (that is, always perfect), and ‘all-perfect’ (that is, perfect in all respects); divinity, essentiality, truth, commensurability, <beauty>, good.”

Alcinous stipulates that these attributes are not invoked as referring to mutually opposed or exclusive entities, “but on the assumption that one single thing is being denoted by all of them.” In the next paragraph, he explains that God is ineffable and graspable only by the intellect . . . since he is neither genus, nor species, nor differentia, nor does he possess any attributes, neither bad (for it is improper to utter such a thought), nor good (for he would be thus by participation in something, to wit, goodness), nor indifferent (for neither is this in accordance with the concept we have of him), nor yet qualified (for he is not endowed with quality, nor is his peculiar perfection due to qualification) nor unqualified (for he is not deprived of any quality which might accrue to him).

“Participation” enters Alcinous’s definition of divinity as part of an effort to preclude the notion that God possesses attributes in the way that individuals possess generic qualities. The point of saying that God is not good “by participation” is that God is not a “good” species that partakes of a higher genus’s “goodness.” God’s goodness is simple and exhausts the category of goodness. God, by definition, is not the species of any genus.

The principle of the primal Father’s stability in comparison to the entities he produces, all of them derivative and dependent, is buttressed by the Platonic doctrine of

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11 Alcinous, *Didask.* 10; Dillon trans.  
12 Alcinous, *Didask.* 10; Dillon trans.
the “undiminished giver” and a corollary axiom of non-reciprocal dependence.¹³

Numenius provides a classic expression of divine nature, which “gives without loss”:

When . . . the Divine is communicated, and passes over from the one to the other, it does not leave the Giver while being of service to the Receiver; not only does the Giver not lose anything thereby, but he gains this further advantage, the memory of his giving (or generosity). This beautiful process occurs with knowledge, by which the Receiver profits, as well as the Giver. This can be seen when one candle receives light from another by mere touch; the fire was not taken away from the other, but its component Matter was kindled by the fire of the other. Similar is the process with knowledge, which by both giving and taking remains with the Giver, while passing over to the Receiver.¹⁴

The notion of undiminished giving fits with the kind of speculation about procession dear to triadic Gnosticism. In Hippolytus’s quotation of the Naasenes, above, the primal “seed” “is none of [its products], but it generates and produces all that comes into being.”

The primary divine principle is an uncaused cause and cannot be identified with any of its products. The “second principle” consequently cannot be identified with its source. The first principle stands alone, independent of any “lower” or “subsequent” entities. The second is intrinsically derivative and “subordinate” insofar as it is “second.”

It is well enough known that Plotinus adopts the position that the One does not need what emanates from it.¹⁵ It is also well known that Plotinus explicitly opposed

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¹⁵ E.g., Enn. VI.8.
certain “Gnostics.” However, Plotinus does not take up his position against a monolithic group of Gnostics, as his protestations might suggest. According to Pépin’s reading of the evidence, Plotinus sides with a position held by earlier Gnostics. He opposed certain unnamed Gnostics who described an ultimate “Good” which “turns out to be by chance what it is; it is not master of what it is; it does not draw from itself what it is; it cannot therefore have liberty, nor the freedom to produce, or not to produce, what it is forced to produce, or not to produce.”

Both Naasene and Valentinian Gnostics opposed such views by teaching that the first principle is not dependent upon subsequent entities. Plotinus provides the One with the kind of freedom according to which the One cannot be thought of as compelled or incited by any higher power. In this way, he adopts a position held previously by Naasene and Valentinian Gnostics. The One, he says, cannot be compelled by fate, but “is as he himself has wished to be (ὡς ἠθέλησεν αὐτός ἔστιν).”

Tertullian and Theophilus had argued that God the Father could not be without his “Wisdom” as a “counselor.” Their construal of God’s Wisdom was, in part, a reaction to a Valentinian position according to which God the Father does not depend in any way upon a “second principle.” Viewed in this light, Origen’s well-known doctrine of the Son as eternally-generated Wisdom crystallizes an earlier anti-Valentinian theology of the “Logos theologians.” Whether Plotinus, in the passage of Ennead VI quoted above, elided such Christians with his unidentified “Gnostics” is an enticing question that need not detain us. That Origen followed earlier Logos theologians in positing an “eternal Wisdom” suggests some such possibility at least could be entertained. We will return to

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16 Plotinus, Enn. VI, 8, 7.11-15; Pépin trans.
17 Plotinus, Ibid.
this possibility in the chapters to follow. For now it is important to turn to a group of themes drawn on by later Christians: participation is intellectual, or immaterial; and the Demiurge is a primal “participant” in the source he imitates in the construction of the *Cosmos*.

**Intellectual Participation**

It is well known that Plato held to a theory of Ideas or Forms, and that “participation” was one way Plato spoke of the relationship between Ideas and particulars. Precisely what Plato’s theory was has been the subject of a long history of philosophical scholarship, the particulars of which need not detain us here. The point of using a Platonic grammar of participation is to underscore that elements or aspects of a “higher world” can be and are reproduced in “lower levels” of reality. Plato’s *Parmenides*, in combination with memorable passages from *Republic* and *Timaeus*,

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19 Beginning, famously, with Aristotle’s criticism that “participation” meant little. See, e.g., *Metaph.* 991A20-22: “for to say that they [the Forms] are patterns and the other things ‘participate’ in them is to use empty words and poetical metaphors,” or 992A28, “for ‘participating,’ as we have just remarked, means nothing” (τὸ γὰρ μετέχειν . . . ὀφθὲν ἐστιν). Aristotle’s criticism of Plato’s metaphysics is such a large topic that I will not take it up here. For an incisive, modern critique in Aristotle’s vein, see Kenneth Sayre, *Plato’s Late Ontology: A Riddle Resolved* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). Lloyd P. Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists* (Cornell University Press, 2005), 1-23, in advocating for the provocative thesis that “perhaps the reason Aristotle appears to be a Platonist is that in fact he is one,” demonstrates that today scholars are not content with simplistic modern oppositions of Aristotle to Plato. The “Aristotle” that fourth-century Christians knew was not necessarily, at any rate, the “Aristotle” of modern critical history, mediated as his corpus was by commentators like Porphyry. H. Apostle notes in his glossary to the *Metaphysics* that, “Usually, A is said to participate in B if ‘B’ or its definition is a predicate of A, directly or derivatively, but ‘A’ is not a predicate of B. Plato held that sensible things participated in Ideas, but said little about the nature of participation” (Hippocrates Apostle, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics* [Indiana, 1966], 469). Thus, in Aristotle’s corpus, participation becomes primarily a logical affair. This view appears to constitute a kind of modern consensus: “While Aristotle rejects the Platonic theory of ideas, he uses, nevertheless, rather extensively the verb μετέχειν to express primarily the logical relationship between concepts of different universality, but also the more ontological relation between the imperfect and the perfect possession of a quality or mode of being.” See David Balás, *Metousia Theou: Man’s Participation in God’s Perfections according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*. Studia Anselmiana Philosophica Theologica 55 (Romae: I. B. C. Libreria Herder, 1966), 3.
established key terms for how “participation” would be explored in later Platonist school tradition and early Christianity.\textsuperscript{20} If Plato initiated “participation” talk, his nephew, Speusippus, according to E.R. Dodds, was “already well started on the road to Neoplatonism” with a doctrine of “One beyond Being.”\textsuperscript{21}

Participation (\(\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\lambda\eta\pi\iota\varsigma/\mu\epsilon\theta\varepsilon\iota\varsigma\)) names the relationship between the One and the many, and Platonists would speak of gradations of this relationship of “sharing.” It would denote a characteristically immaterial relationship between particulars and the Ideas in which they share. Plato’s readers would seize upon the fact that young Socrates, in the \textit{Parmenides}, rejects a material division of the Ideas by sensible particulars.\textsuperscript{22} The larger point of the \textit{Parmenides} is that the immaterial is not participated in as a part; it cannot be “shared” materially. Being “participated in” with parts is a feature of material existence, and this kind of existence differs from intellectual existence. In this connection, “part” language is important, because even though Plato makes it clear that participation is not material, he retains the materialistic metaphor of “sharing” for describing the resemblance that obtains between intelligible causes and their respective effects.

Plato’s comparison of the Good to the “sun” (\textit{Rep.} 509) and its production of “light” provides a distinction between the “unparticipating-participated” and the “participant.” Plato’s \textit{Republic} contains the seeds of the doctrine of undiminished giving that would become a hallmark of later Platonic ontologies. The Good (the Sun) is not diminished by its production of light; light’s presence to darkness does not diminish the

\textsuperscript{22} E.g., \textit{Parm.} 131a-c.
source of light. Just so, a participant does not affect that in which it shares, that which
causes it to be what it is. The Ideas would be known to cause their characteristics to be in
sensible particulars, but without appeal to physical mediation; the cause here is, strictly
speaking, intellectual. An important description of this dynamic is Phaedo 100d:

If anyone tells me that what makes a thing beautiful is its lovely colour, or its
shape or anything else of the sort, I let all that go, for all those things confuse me,
and I hold simply and plainly and perhaps foolishly to this, that nothing else
makes it beautiful but the presence (παρουσία) or communion (κοινωνία) (call it
what you please) of absolute beauty, however it may have been gained; about the
way in which it happens, I make no positive statement as yet, but I do insist that
beautiful things are made beautiful by beauty. For I think this is the safest answer
I can give to myself or to others. . . .

This “safe answer” became the point of departure for later formulation among school
Platonists of the so-called “paradigmatic cause.” Already by Philo’s day in Alexandria,
school Platonism had come to speak of a “fifth” cause in addition to Aristotle’s traditional
four. This fifth cause was the “paradigmatic cause,” based on the Timaeus, and which
Seneca’s Letter 65 refers to as the exemplar cause. Platonists invoked this fifth cause
because they believed Aristotle’s four were insufficient to explain the design of any
individual entity, but especially the Cosmos: since all natural things are designed, they
have to be designed according to some pattern. The ship-builder does not build a ship
without a blueprint, and it was according to the “blueprint” or “prototype” that the
Demiurge, in Plato’s Timaeus, made the world. The “paradigmatic cause” is the
prototype according to which a thing is made. It is the blueprint, the ideal shape, which
the architect has in mind when she constructs a building. The existence of a

23 Loeb trans., 345.
24 Jonathan Scott Lee, ‘The Doctrine of Reception According to the Capacity of the Recipient in
Ennead VI.1,4-5,” Dionysius III (1979): 79–98, at 80. Lee’s article contains a useful summary of what he
calls “eidetic causation” in Plato and Plotinus, prior to his (challenged) criticism of Dominic O’Meara’s
reading of Plotinus. That account of Platonist eidetic causation is the non-controversial part of his article.
25 See Seneca, Ep. 65.7. For discussion of this development see Dillon, Middle Platonists, 137-38.
26 For an explicit use of this way of thinking by Origen, see Jo. 1.114-116.
“paradigmatic cause” implies that the actual building is ultimately outstripped by its intended prototype. In the context of exemplar causality, as we shall see, the language of “participation” refers to the fact that there remains an indelible distinction between an entity and its ideal character or shape. “Participation” terminology implies the recognition that any particular existent is ineluctably imperfect and approximates a transcendent perfection.

Exemplar Causality & Demiurgic Imitation

What seemed like a strictly epistemological tool—Plato’s Theory of Ideas—for relating levels of reality, could also be couched in cosmological terms. In Platonizing cosmologies, participation often names a relationship between entities in a primal procession. An entity may participate without “imitating” what it participates, but imitation and participation are closely related in Platonist interpretations of the Demiurge.

In the opening paragraphs of his speech, Timaeus reasons as follows: “when the artificer of any object, in forming its shape and quality, keeps his gaze fixed on that which is uniform, using a model of this kind, that object, executed in this way, must of necessity be beautiful; but whenever he gazes at that which has come into existence and uses a created model, the object thus executed is not beautiful.”27 In creating the Cosmos, the Demiurge requires reference to a model. Timeaus’s reasoning about Being and Becoming indicates that the model, or “paradigm” (παραδείγμα), represents Being, and

27 Tim. 28a-b.
that the *Cosmos* is what becomes.\(^{28}\) According to Timaeus, the *Cosmos* is a copy of an eternal model, and the Demiurge must use the eternal model to order the *Cosmos*.

Numenius takes Plato’s description of the Demiurge’s need for reference to mean that the Demiurge participates in the Good. He speaks of the Demiurge as an “imitator” of the Paradigm he uses to create. Numenius distinguishes between “first” and “second” divinities and links them by speaking of the second’s participation in the first. Numenius writes:

> For if the Second (Divinity) is good, not from itself (οὐ παρ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ) but from the First (παρὰ δὲ τοῦ πρῶτου), how then would it be possible that he (the First) is not good, if the latter derives his goodness from participation with the (other, the First), especially as the Second participates in him (the First) specially because he is the Good.\(^{29}\)

Yet the status and location of the Demiurge was not straightforward in school Platonism; differences developed. Dillon notes a significant difference between Alcinous and Numenius on the interpretation of *Republic* 6-7 and the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*:

Alcinous identifies the Good of *Republic* with the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*, whereas Numenius distinguishes between them.\(^{30}\) For Alcinous, the Demiurge and the Good are the same, whereas for Numenius, the Demiurge participates in the Good.

As the Demiurge orders the Cosmos, the Demiurge contemplates a model and imitates his source. The Demiurge’s contemplation of a model in creating is the chief

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\(^{28}\) Timaeus takes it for granted that “the *Cosmos* is beautiful and its Constructor good,” and if that is so, he reasons that “it is plain that [the Demiurge] fixed his gaze on the Eternal” (*Tim.* 29a). Here and elsewhere, Timaeus refers to this eternal object as the “Model” to which the Demiurge conforms the universe: “So having in this wise come into existence, it has been fashioned after the pattern of that which is apprehensible by reason and thought and is self-identical.”

\(^{29}\) Des Places, ed., Fragment 19. Εἰ γὰρ ἁγαθὸς ἐστὶν ὁ δεύτερος οὐ παρ᾽ ἑαυτῷ, παρὰ δὲ τοῦ πρῶτου, ποὺ οἶον τε ὑφ᾽ οὗ μετοικεῖ· ἐστὶν οὕτως ἁγαθός, μὴ ἁγαθὸν <εἶναι>, ἄλλης τε κάτι τὰ ἑαυτῷ ὡς ἁγαθὸν μεταλαχῶν ὁ δεύτερος; Guthrie, trans., 34. Cf. also Fragments 16 and 19, ed. Des Places.

\(^{30}\) Dillon, *Alcinous*, 106. On the other hand, this may be to provide Numenius with too much consistency. Certain fragments report that he speaks of multiple Demiurges, or at least of the Demiurge considered in different modes. Unfortunately, our evidence does not permit hard conclusions about this feature of Numenius’s thought.
example of both “exemplar causality” and graded “levels” distinguished and ordered by talk of “participation.” Numenius calls the second god a μιμήτης of the first. The First God is self-sufficiently good, he says, “but the Demiurge is good as an imitator of the First.” The title μιμήτης explains what it means for the Demiurge to be an “image” (εἰκών) of the First. Numenius’s constellation of terms (μιμήτης, εἰκών) resembles Hippolytus’s report that certain Gnostics interpreted Sophia’s desire to bear a child without a partner as an attempt to imitate (μιμήσασθαι) the Father. Plotinus is capable of speaking of the Intellect as “imitating the Father” (τον πατέρα μιμούμενος) in its ability to remain what it is. The theme of “imitation” invites comparison of the Gnostic second principle with the Demiurge in Plato’s Timaeus. Generally speaking, the source for imitation is the object of contemplation, the activity of focusing one’s attention on an object for reproduction. Going forward in Alexandrian Christianity, the pairing of μιμήτης and εἰκών will often suggest, if not directly refer to, Plato’s description of a “Demiurge” who looks to a “paradigm” in ordering the cosmos.

The degree of the second and third principle’s resemblance to Platonic schemes varies among Gnostic sects. One key difference between Gnosticism and school Platonism is that, for triadic Gnostics, Sophia and her offspring, the Demiurge, did not witness firsthand the ultimate source of their own generation. Instead, Sophia and the

35 Pépin, 301 cites Hippolytus, Ref. VI, 30.6-7.
36 Enn. 2.9.2.4: Οὐ τοῦν ὡτε πλείω τούτων ὡτε ἐπινοιας περιπτάς ἐν ἐκεῖνοις, ὡς οὐ δέχονται, θετέον, ἄλλον νῦν τὸν αὐτὸν ῥώσατος ἔχοντα, ἀκλήνη πανταξῆ, μιμούμενον τὸν πατέρα καθ’ ὅσον οὖν τε αὐτὸ. Ψυχῆς δὲ ήμιον τὸ μὲν αἰτὶ πρὸς ἐκεῖνος, τὸ δὲ πρὸς ταῦτα ἔχειν, τὸ δ’ ἐν μέσῳ τούτων: φύσεως γὰρ οὕτως μᾶς ἐν δυνάμει πλείον ὡτε μὲν τὴν πάσαν συμφέρεσθαι τὸ ἀρίστω αὐτῆς καὶ τοῦ ὅντος, ὡτε δὲ τὸ χείρον αὐτῆς καθελκυθὲν συνεφελκύσασθαι τὸ μέσον: τὸ γὰρ πᾶν αὐτῆς οὐκ ἤν θέμις καθελκύσαι. 37 Tim.39e.
Demiurge work on the basis of distant, mediated memories.\textsuperscript{38} Plato’s Demiurge, on the other hand, is supposed to reproduce the παράδειγμα κόσμου based on firsthand observation.\textsuperscript{39} In Platonism, then, the second principle’s imitation is intentional, knowing, and direct, whereas in Gnosticism the imitation is distant and clouded—and this by mythological design. In some forms of Gnosticism, the “Son” and the “Demiurge” are differentiated, but both are involved in the constitution of the \textit{cosmos}; the Demiurge is involved to drastic and tragic effect.\textsuperscript{40}

Consider the following example of a Gnostic scheme inspired by basic Platonic proclivities. Gnostic Christians could construe the second principle—i.e., the “Son” or Christ—as enacting imitation of the first through the embedding of divine characteristics within the material creation. Two prominent metaphors for such reproduction in the material realm are painting and imprinting. Hippolytus reports that the \textit{Peratae} characterize the Son as a painter in the following way:

As, however, one who paints from nature (ζωγραφῶν), though he takes nothing away from animals, transfers by his pencil all forms to the canvas; so the Son, by a power which belongs to himself, transfers paternal marks from the Father into Matter. All the paternal marks are here, and there are not any more. For if any one, he says, of those (beings) which are here will have strength to perceive that he is a paternal mark transferred hither from above, (and that he is) incarnate—just as by the conception resulting from the rod a something white is produced—he is of the same substance altogether with the Father in heaven, and returns thither.\textsuperscript{41}

The “paternal marks” (τοὺς πατρικοῖς) remaining in the creation are recognizable traces that lead Gnostics back, ultimately, to the true Father God.

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\textsuperscript{38} See Pépin’s discussion of a number of texts at 311-312.
\textsuperscript{39} See \textit{Tim.} 39e and, e.g., Plotinus, \textit{Enn.} 5.23-27; see Pépin, 312-313, with discussion \textit{ad loc}.
\textsuperscript{40} To the extent that such forms of Gnosticism were committed to a radical dualism, they raised questions for Christians intent on embracing the omnipresence of a good Creator to creation. For this reason, later Alexandrians, such as Clement and Origen, opposed Gnosticism. However, Clement and Origen did not oppose the Gnostic penchant for conceptualizing the Godhead in terms of a procession of entities in Platonic terms.
\textsuperscript{41} Hippolytus, \textit{Ref.} V.17, 5-6; trans., 64.
Another, different explanation of the “paternal marks” arises if it is not the Son but the Demiurge (or his Mother, Sophia) who embeds creation with images. On this view, the procession from God the Father is a series of paintings, copies of copies, descending into the world we know. The images decrease in accuracy and reliability as they proceed from the original in the way that a radio frequency loses power over distance. Participation terminology is useful for illustrating the hierarchical ontology that appears occasionally among Hippolytus’s reports on Gnosticism. Valentinian Gnostics speak of the Cross of Christ as a “Participant” (Μετοχεύς) and the Peratae describe a series of worlds that “participate” in higher realms. According to one Valentinian tradition, the Demiurge himself is “a portrait (εἰκόνα) of the true God,” and Sophia is the “painter” (ζωγραφῶν) of that portrait. In our world “images” (εἰκόνες), “antitypes” (ἀντίτυποι), and “idols” (εἴδωλα) all mingle. Because the created world is a poor reproduction, the images that mingle here are easily misidentified. Only the Gnostic is privy to whether what we see here below can trace its origin to the Father.

If the first principle is uncaused and the second self-caused, then the Naasenes would link the third principle with the creation of the world. This generated principle produced the cosmos “without the Logos,” and so, produced chaos.

For “all things were made by him, and without him was nothing made. That which was made in him is life” [John 1:3f.]. This life, he says, is the unutterable generation of perfect men, which “was not known to the former generations”

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42 Hippolytus, Ref. VI.31.6.
43 Hippolytus, Ref. V.13.1-3.
44 See Pépin, 317-18; the reference occurs in Clement’s report of Valentinian Gnosticism at Strom. IV.13, 89.6-90.1; ed. Stahlin, 287.22-25. Clement’s quotation of a Valentinian doctrine also includes the important detail that “as much as the image is inferior to the living face, so much is the world inferior to the living Aeon.” The implication is that Gnostics taught that an “image” is “inferior” to that which it resembles. See also below regarding Numenius, who also calls the Demiurge an “image.”
45 For Platonic precedent the Timaeus is again relevant: the term γέννητον signifies the “sensible” at Timaeus 52a.
[Eph. 3:5]; and the “nothing,” which was made without him, is the particular world; for it was made without him by the third (being) and the fourth. The context of Hippolytus’s quotation does not clarify whether “the third (being) and the fourth” are Sophia and her own “product,” the Demiurge. According to Hippolytus, the Naasenes know a third, “earthly” entity. It is plausible that their understanding was not far from that of the Peratae: the third principle is “produced” (γέννητον). If so, the identification here of the “third and the fourth” might coincide with the abortive production of the cosmos common to Gnosticisms of various types.

On this point, it is helpful to understand the role that Plato’s Timaeus played in later theories of participation—and especially the role played by terms for “image.” To understand how these terms could be used to reinforce one another, and the significance that became attached to them in cosmology, it is useful to turn momentarily to a late source: Proclus’s Commentary on the Timaeus. Proclus, writing in the fifth century, post-dates the period under investigation in this study. Yet Proclus had access to a wealth of texts now lost, and he provides evidence of the kinds of questions pursued in earlier tradition. The question, of course, is how far back such questions can be traced, but their impetus can be found at least as far back as Numenius. Take the following passage, in which Proclus focuses on the nature of the so-called “Paradigm,” or paradigmatic cause, and its relationship to the Demiurge. After having paraphrased the conclusions reached by

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46 Hippolytus, Ref. V.6, 5 (Foerster trans., 271).
47 The Naasene practice of sexual renunciation becomes an ontological statement: abstention from sexuality transcends generation because generation is intrinsically flawed. This is my own interpretation of Hippolytus, Refutatio V.6, 10-11 (Foerster trans., 280): “Because of these words . . . they attend the so-called mysteries of the Great Mother, thinking that through those (sacred) actions they will best understand the universal mystery. For these men have nothing (to offer) beyond what is done there, except that they are not castrated, they only perform the function of those who are castrated. For they urge most severely and carefully that one should abstain, as those men do, from intercourse with women; their behaviour otherwise, as we have fully explained, is like that of the castrated.”
Iamblichus, Porphyry, and Theodore of Asine, Proclus turns to his own master

(presumably Syrianus):

Since some of [our teacher’s] predecessors had determined that the Demiurge himself was in possession of the paradigms for the universe, as in the case of Plotinus, while others placed the Paradigm either anterior to him, as in the case of Porphyry, or posterior to him, as in the case of Longinus, he asked whether (1) the Demiurge comes immediately after the One, or (2) whether there are other intelligible ranks [of gods] between the Demiurge and the One. If indeed (1) the Demiurge comes [immediately] after the One, there is the absurdity that the complete multiplicity of the Intelligible gods comes [immediately] after the Non-multiple, for it is by means of the numbers that are proximate to the One that there is a procession towards the entire series of numbers and the entire multiplicity. But (2) if there are other ranks between the One and the Demiurge, we need to ask (a) whether the Paradigm of the universe is principally in him, or whether (b) it is posterior to him or (c) prior to him. If (a) it is principally in him, we shall place the entire intelligible multiplicity in him, for the Paradigm is the ‘fairest of the intelligized entities’ (30d2). This means once again that it will be intelligible and not intellectual, as we demonstrated a little earlier. The Paradigm, however, has four ideas only, whereas he himself has the ideas of the entities that are more particular than they are, namely the sun, the moon and each of the everlasting beings. But if (b) it is posterior to him, he will have his gaze turned to what is inferior and less honorable, which it is not permissible to admit for any of the divine beings. The result is that the Paradigm is prior to the Demiurge. But if it is prior to the Demiurge, is it (a) seen by him or (b) not seen? To say that (a) it is not seen is the view of someone who pays no attention to Plato or to the nature of things. For it would be absurd if our soul were to see that Paradigm and speak about it, but Intellect, and the Universal Intellect at that, were not to do so. And if (b) the Demiurge sees the Intelligible, does he do so with his gaze turned (i) towards himself or (ii) outside himself only? But if he looks (ii) outside himself only, he sees images of Being and he will have perception rather than intuitive knowledge. If, however, he (i) looks towards himself, object [sic] of intellection will be in him as well. The result is that the Paradigm is both prior to the Demiurge and in him, prior to him in the intelligible mode (noêtôs), in him in the intellective mode (noerôs).
Notice that Proclus worries about the relationship between the Demiurge and the Paradigm to which the Demiurge looks. Does the Paradigm, or intelligible model, reside within the Demiurge himself? Or, if it is extrinsic to the Demiurge, is the Demiurge secondary or inferior to the Paradigm? Furthermore, if the Paradigm is external to the Demiurge, does that not imply an inferior kind of knowledge of the model on the part of the Demiurge?

I do not mean to suggest that the kind of scholastic clarity Proclus provides circulated in third-century Alexandria—though there is little reason to doubt such a possibility. I do, however, suggest that the force of questions like those raised by Proclus would not have been lost on earlier readers of the Timaeus. Take, for example, the following quotations from Numenius—a figure conspicuously absent from Proclus’s account, but whose writings were well known to Clement, Origen, and Eusebius of Caesarea. Eusebius excerpted and retained the following philosophically dense statements.

“Now if essence and the idea is discerned by the mind, and if it was agreed that the mind is earlier than this and the cause of it, then mind itself is alone found to be the good. For if God the Creator is the beginning of generation, the good is the beginning of essence. And God the Creator is related to the good, of which He is an imitator, as generation is to essence, of which it is a likeness and an imitation. “For if the Creator who is the author of generation is good, the Creator also of

essence will doubtless be absolute good, innate in essence. For the second god, being twofold, is the self-maker of the idea of Himself, and makes the world as its Creator: afterwards He is wholly given to contemplation.” And in the fifth Book [Numenius] speaks as follows: “Now as we have by our reasoning gathered names for four things, let them be these four. The first, God, absolute good; His imitator, a good Creator: then essence, one kind of the first God, another of the Second; and the imitation of this essence, the beautiful world, adorned by participation in the beautiful.” Also in the sixth Book he adds: “But the things which partake of Him participate in nothing, else, but only in wisdom: in this way then, but in no other, they may enjoy the communion of the good. And certainly this wisdom has been found to belong to the First alone. If then this belongs exclusively to Him alone, from whom all other things receive their colouring and their goodness, none but a stupid soul could doubt any longer. “For if the second God is good, not of Himself but from the First, how is it possible that He, by communion with whom this Second is good, should not Himself be good, especially if the Second has partaken of Him as being good? “It is in this way that Plato has shown by syllogistic reasoning to any one who is clear-sighted that the good is one.” And again afterwards he says: “But Plato represented these things as true differently in different places; for in the Timaeus peculiarly he wrote the common inscription on the Creator, saying, ‘He was good.’ But in the Republic he called the good the Idea of good: meaning that the idea of the Creator was the good, because to us He is manifested as good by participation in the First and only Good. For as men are said to have been fashioned by the idea of man, and oxen by that of an ox, and horses by the idea of a horse; so also naturally if the Creator is good by participation in the First Good, the first Mind would be an idea, as being absolute good.”

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50 Numenius apud Eusebius, p.e. XI.22, 3-10. The quote that follows corresponds to Des Places, ed., fragments 16, 19, and 20, as translated, however, in the ANF. 'Εν δὲ τῷ πέμπτῳ τάφῳ φήσιν. Εἰ δ’ ἐστι μὲν νοητὸν ηὐσία καὶ η ἱδέα, ταύτης δ’ ὀμολογήθη πρεσβύτερον καὶ αἴτεν εἶναι ὁ νοῦς, αὐτὸς οὕτως μόνος εὑρίσκεται ὁ τὸ ἀγαθὸν. Καὶ γὰρ εἰ ὁ μὲν δημιουργὸς θεὸς ἐστὶ γενέσεως, ἀρκεῖ τὸ ἀγαθὸν οὐσίας εἶναι ἁρχή. Ἀνάλογον δὲ τούτο μὲν ὁ δημιουργὸς θεὸς, ὁν αὐτοῦ μυμήτης, τῇ δὲ οὐσίᾳ ἡ γένεσις, ἠ εἰκὼν αὐτῆς ἔστι καὶ μήμημα. Εἴπερ δὲ ὁ δημιουργὸς ὁ τῆς γενέσεως ἐστὶν ἀγαθός, ἤ που ἐσται καὶ ὁ τῆς οὐσίας δημιουργὸς αὐτοάγαθον, σύμφωνον τῇ οὐσίᾳ. Τὸ γὰρ δεύτερος διὸτει ἄν αὐτοποιεῖ την τε ἱδέαν ἐαυτοῦ καὶ τὸν κόσμον, δημιουργὸς ἄν, ἔπειτα θεωρητικὸς ὄλος. Συλλεγομενόν δ’ ἡμῶν ὑπόμενα τεσσάρων πραγμάτων τέσσαρα ἔστω ταῦτα· ὁ μὲν πρῶτος θεὸς αὐτοάγαθον· ὁ δὲ τοῦτο μυμήτης δημιουργὸς ἀγαθός· ἦ δ’ οὐσία μία μὲν ὁ τοῦ πρῶτου, ἐπέρα δ’ ἡ τοῦ δεύτερου· ἦ μήμημα ὁ κάλος κόσμος, κακολογημένος μετουσίως τοῦ καλοῦ. Ἡτοι τούτοις καὶ ἐν τῷ ἑκτῷ προστίθησι ταῦτα:] Μετέχει δὲ αὐτοῦ τὰ μετέχοντα ἐν ἄλλῳ μὲν οὐδενὶ, ἐν δὲ μονόν τὸ φρονεῖν· ταύτῃ ἀρα καὶ τῆς ἀγαθοῦ συμβάσεως ὄντα, ἄλλος δ’ οὖ. Καὶ μὲν δὴ τὸ φρονεῖν, τούτῳ δὴ συντέτηχε μόνον τῷ πρῶτῳ. Υφ’ οὐ ὅτι τὰ ἄλλα ἀπουργαίνει καὶ ἀγαθοῦ, εἶν τούτῳ ἐκείνῳ μόνον μόνον προση, ἀβεβλέπει ἄν εἰ ποτε ἐν οὐκ ἔρχετε. Εἰ γὰρ ἀγαθός ἐστιν ὁ δεύτερος οὐ παρ’ ἐαυτοῦ, παρὰ δὲ τοῦ πρῶτου, ποῦ οὖν οὐκ ἔρχετε δημιουργὸς ἀγαθός· ἄλλος τε καὶ τῆς ἱδέας ὃς ἀγαθὸν μεταλαχὲν ὁ δεύτερος· οὔτω τοίο Pláton ἐκ συλλογίσμου τοῦ ὃτι, ἐν σύνεσι τὸ ἀγαθόν ὁτι ἐστὶν ἐν. Ἐπεί οὖν ἐξῆς γραφείς. Ταῦτα δ’ οὕτως ἐγράφεται ἔθνος τοῦ ἐκ τῶν ὀλίγων ἐν ὀλίγῃ καὶ ἄρα χωρὶς· ἱδέας μὲν γὰρ τοῦ κυκλικοῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ ἐγγράφεται ἐν Τιμαῖω εἶπον. ἐπικοινωνίας καὶ τὸν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἁρχής· ἃς ἦν· ἐν δὲ τῆς Πολιτείας τὸ ἀγαθὸν εἶπεν ἀγαθοῦ ἁρχῆς, ὡς τοῦ δημιουργοῦ ἁρχῆς ὑπάρχειν ἀγαθὸν, διότι ἀγαθὸν, διότι ἀγαθὸν ὕπαρχειν ἀγαθὸν, ἀγαθὸν ἁρχής· ἀγαθοῦ ἁρχῆς· ἐπερ ἔστι μετουσία τοῦ πρώτου ἀγαθοῦ ἁρχῆς.
The constellation of terms for ordering, participation, and creation in Numenius’ reflection on the *Timaeus* that reappears in Proclus’s *Commentary* belongs to a generic Demiurgic Platonism. The appearance of this constellation of terms in Plato’s cosmological discussion in the *Timaeus* led early Christians to seize upon this aspect of Platonism for interpreting their own sacred account of such matters, found in the opening chapters of Genesis.\(^{51}\) The point I wish to make in comparing these two texts is the following. Already with Numenius, an anxiety induced by a felt need to “locate” the Demiurge in an “order” or hierarchy is apparent. The anxiety results from an overarching logic of participation that treats effects as inferior to causes. This same anxiety is latent whenever Christian theologians invoke similar schemes.

**Causality and Hierarchy**

With the Demiurge’s status as a contemplator and imitator of the Good in view, we are in a better position to understand why Demiurgic schemes of triadic procession suggest hierarchical arrangements. Although a grammar of participation and a Demiurgic cosmology do not amount to the axiom that a cause is superior to its effect, participation and hierarchy are mutually reinforcing tendencies, and in fact they often travel together as mutually entailing ideas.

Like emanation, the doctrine that a cause is superior to its effect is often associated with Plotinus, who, for example, closes *Ennead V.5.13* with the statement that

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\(^{51}\) On such readings, see especially Reydams-Schils, ed., *Timaeus as Cultural Icon*. 
“the maker is better than what is made, because more complete.”\textsuperscript{52} However much Plotinus may have used the principle that a cause is greater than its effect to support his argument that the One transcends all things, his appeal to the principle itself was neither unique nor radically novel. In fact, a version of the axiom was operative in Aristotle and at least some of his readers in antiquity, such as Alexander of Aphrodisias and Cicero.\textsuperscript{53}

As part of an argument that nature governs the universe, Cicero says:

Thus if anyone declared that a man’s teeth and the hair on his body are a natural growth but that the man himself to whom they belong is not a natural organism, he would fail to see that things which produce something from within them must have more perfect natures than the things which are produced from them.\textsuperscript{54}

Cicero is clear that a cause is “more perfect” (\textit{perfectior}) than what it produces.

Alexander of Aphrodisias appeals to the axiom in a psychological context. As A.C. Lloyd says, the active intellect “which causes the material intellect to be an intellect \textit{in habitu}, must be the properly and above all intelligible form (i.e., form without matter); for always what is properly and above all \( \varphi \) is what causes other \( \varphi \) things to be \( \varphi \).”\textsuperscript{55} Lloyd is paraphrasing this passage:

For it is a general rule that in any order of reality, the being which best exemplifies the perfection of that order is the cause of there being other existents of this kind. Thus light, for example, is at once the most visible of all things and the cause whereby other visible things are visible; so too the supreme and highest

\textsuperscript{52} LCL trans., 197. κρείττον γάρ τὸ ποιοῦν τοῦ ποιομένου· τελειότερον γάρ.

\textsuperscript{53} See A.C. Lloyd, “The Principle That the Cause is Greater than Its Effect,” \textit{Phronesis} 21.2 (1976): 146-156. Lloyd argues that one could make a case for the version of the axiom that a cause is greater than its effect on the basis of Aristotle, \textit{Met.} 993b24-26 and \textit{An. post.} 72a29-30. He appeals to Cicero, \textit{De nat. deor.} 2.86 and Alexander of Aphrodisias, \textit{De an.} p. 88, \textit{fin}. Bruns, for evidence that, in fact, readers of Aristotle had done so with some success, though Lloyd later admits that the two passages in Aristotle were atypical of Aristotle’s tendencies (see Lloyd, 155). In order to prove that causal schemes could imply hierarchical arrangement, it is not necessary to discover the strongest version of the axiom, made explicit with deductive proof apparently only by Proclus, that a cause is greater than and not equal to its effect.

\textsuperscript{54} Cicero, \textit{De natura deorum} 2.86. \textit{Ut, si qui dentes et pubertatem natura dicat existere, ipsum autem hominem cui ea existant non constare natura, non intellegat ea quae eferant aliquid ex sese perfectiores habere naturas quam ea quae ex iis eferantur.} LCL 268, Rackham, trans.

\textsuperscript{55} Lloyd, 149.
good is the cause of goodness in other good things, since their goodness is measured by reference to the first good.\textsuperscript{56}

Note that Alexander invokes the principle with an illustration from light. This is no coincidence. It shows that Alexander drew on Plato’s Sun analogy (\textit{Rep.} 508-509) as the paradigm case of the principle that a cause is superior to its effects. Given these precedents, it should hardly surprise to find Alexandrian use of the principle that a cause is greater than its effect.

On the other hand, we do not need to find explicit appeal to the axiom that a cause is superior to its effect in order to understand how the axiom is implicit in interpretations of the \textit{Timeaus}, a chief source of inspiration for accounts of procession amongst Platonists, as we have seen. As Lloyd suggests, “nonphysical causation, or procession, is regularly seen by Neoplatonists as the divisions of genera into species, which of course for Plato represented the standard cases of a one and a many.”\textsuperscript{57} Might something similar hold for pre-Plotinian Platonism?

Especially if the “paradigm” to which the Demiurge looks is identified with the Platonic “paradigmatic cause,” the Demiurge might be thought to participate in a cause superior to him—such an arrangement would be the epitome of a cause’s superiority over its effect. Recall that Numenius describes the Demiurge as an “image.” An image is a faithful, if artificial, representation of the object it represents, but it implies equivocation. No matter how faithful, the image differs from its paradigm in terms of substance. An


\textsuperscript{57} Lloyd, 149.
educated reader would recall another classic illustration that draws on images: the illustration of equivocity that opens Aristotle’s *Categories*.\(^{58}\) We call both “man” and a “picture of a man” an “animal,” Aristotle says, but each use of “animal” indicates a different substance.\(^ {59}\) The distinction between model and copy also implies a relationship of superior to inferior. The human being is superior to the imitation enacted by a portrait, however realistic the portrait may be.

Especially if Aristotle’s *Categories* formed part of a philosopher’s education, it is not difficult to see how a Platonist could see a cause-and-effect relationship between the model, or paradigm, and its corresponding image. The equivocation, taken over from Aristotle, would be obvious. The term “image” stands for an effect’s resemblance of its cause, but the fact that an image is an “effect” includes its equivocal status. To use terms for “participation” to name the relationship between cause and effect, model and image, is only to reinforce the implicit hierarchical relationship.

This is precisely how Numenius portrays the Demiurge, who participates in the Good and is inferior to Intellect. Plato’s description of the Demiurge as contemplating an eternal “model” suggests the Demiurge’s inferiority to what he participates in—the Good. For Numenius, the Demiurge’s participation in the Good and his status as the Intellect’s “imitator” and “image” indicate the Demiurge’s inferiority to the Good. Numenius’s reference to the Demiurge as an “image” and “imitation” is a sign of the Demiurge’s inferiority to Intellect, and explains why Numenius refers to the Intellect as “older than this one”: the Intellect is superior to the Demiurge because the Demiurge is an effect.

\(^{58}\) Aristotle, *Categories*, 1a-6a.

\(^{59}\) Aristotle: “Things are named equivocally if only the name applied to them is common but the expression of the substance corresponding to that name is different for each of the things, as in the case of a man and a picture when each is called ‘animal’” (*Categories*, 1a-3a; Apostle trans., 1).
Conclusion

I have outlined a number of remarkable features of Gnosticism that pre-date the Alexandrian milieu in which Clement, Origen, and Didymus took up there expositions of Christian doctrine. It should be clear now that the use of a constellation of terms to depict a primal “hierarchy” would have been natural for Clement and Origen. The point is not to reduce later options to those provided by Gnosticism. Rather, the purpose has been to underscore a deep continuity between later Christian speculation about the Trinity and earlier attempts to describe a primal procession. It is also important to disarm the instinct that sighting various Platonic parallels in Origen reduces the range of Origen’s inspiration to pagan sources. In fact, earlier Christian traditions, including but not limited to Gnostic traditions, had already incorporated elements familiar to Platonism in speculative schemes. Later Alexandrian similarities should appear not as something born from nowhere, but as innovative attempts to rework common ground to various ends.
Chapter 2
Origen’s Graded Triad

Introduction

This chapter explains an important consequence of Origen’s debts to Platonic philosophy: he teaches a graded triad. I argue that Platonizing dynamics drawn from Numenius of Apamea condition Origen’s theology of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If Origen’s reliance upon Clement is widely presumed, his relationship to Numenius is at least as intriguing. Although Origen mentions On the Good only once in his writings and does not name Numenius in his dogmatic or exegetical works, in apologetic moments he shows high regard for Numenius, and he cites passages from two of his other lost works.¹

Several passages in the Commentary on John exhibit a tendency to order first principles in terms of a hierarchy.² The passages are widely discussed, but their sources of inspiration and the consequences they hold for Origen’s theology are not gauged consistently across current scholarship.³ Some dismiss them as idiosyncratic but not

¹ Origen, Cels. I.15; see Des Places, Fragments 1b and 1c. Origen knows of Numenius’s “On the Incorruptibility of the Soul,” “Epops,” “On Number,” and “On Place” (Cels. IV.51).

² I have reservations about translating Origen’s (rare) use of the word triados as “Trinity.” The reason for my hesitation will become clearer in Chapter 4. Excluding instances of a form of the word in the Catena and Fragmenta, a search of the TLG reports that Origen uses τριάδος only three times in the Commentary on John (Jo. 6.145; 6.166; 10.270; and once in ComMatt. 15.31.25 (τῆς ἀρχικῆς τριάδος)). These statements resemble what Origen says about the three “principles” in the recently discovered Homilies on the Psalms (see Lorenzo Perrone, “La Pneumatologia di Origene alla luce delle Nuove Omelie sui Salmi,” Paper presented at the conference «Il divino in/quieto», Bologna 2-3 December 2014 (forthcoming), and, “Doctrinal Traditions and Cultural Heritage in the Newly Discovered Homilies of Origen on the Psalms (Cod. Mon. Graec. 314),” in Topical Issues of Ancient Culture and Its Heritage (Tbilisi 23-27 September 2014) (Forthcoming).

³ I will return to a consideration of this issue and attendant scholarship in Chapter 4. The best single candidate for an authority motivating a current trend to downplay the significance of Middle Platonism in Origen is Henri Crouzel. See, for example, Henri Crouzel, trans. A.S. Worrall, Origen, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), Chapter 10. Some more recent scholars have followed Crouzel in his
problematic if placed within the broad outlook of Origen’s reverence for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; others take them seriously but mitigate them by appeal to later texts and so suggest they do not represent Origen’s mature position. Still others overlook their potential significance by pretending that Origen displays no tendency toward ontological hierarchy.\(^4\)

My argument is that Numenius’s *On the Good* influenced Origen decisively insofar as his statements about the Christian triad depict a hierarchical triad of Numenian provenance.\(^5\) In order to explain how Numenius influenced Origen’s construal of the Christian triad, I first identify key dynamics in the thought of Numenius and Clement of Alexandria. I then proceed to Origen’s *Commentary on John*, focusing especially on philosophically dense passages in *Commentary on John 2*. Comparison of Numenius and Origen leads to the conclusion that Origen’s early theology of the trinity is marked by a judgment that Origen “is constantly accused, for reasons of vocabulary which we shall explain, of making the Son and the Holy Spirit creatures of the Father.” Crouzel reasons that those who read Origen this way have failed to take into account Origen’s doctrine of eternal generation (Crouzel, 172). Crouzel does not take account of the fact that stating an entity is “eternally generated” does not settle the question of whether the produced entity is “inferior.” After all, as we have seen, Platonists were capable of ordering entities in a primal series without worry that any of the series is “temporal.” For Origen, the fact that these two features of ontology—an entity’s being both “eternal” and ordered in a hierarchy—were not mutually exclusive gives his speculation a potential to support both pro- and anti-Nicene theologies. Setting Origen’s thought within the framework of Middle Platonism shows how this is the case, and though it is important not to judge Origen anachronistically, by the same token it is important not to sterilize his thought of dynamics that would come to be viewed as problematic in light of later doctrinal developments.

\(^4\) For both of these tendencies at once, see Christopher Beeley, *The Unity of Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 3-48, especially 26. Beeley dismisses these passages on the grounds that they conflict with, and so must be read in light of, statements Origen allegedly made later (in, e.g., *Selecta in Psalms* and *Scholia in Apocalypsin*). Though Beeley cites Rowan Williams to similar effect (cf. Rowan Williams, *Arius* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 142-43), he casts off the caution with which Williams had viewed these potentially spurious passages. Williams had the better judgment, because one cannot marshal other texts similar to these two from Origen’s undisputed Greek corpus. For more on this issue, see Chapter 4.

\(^5\) It is appropriate to consider both Clement and Origen as potentially under the influence of Numenius. Clement provides the first recorded mention of his name, in *Strom. I.2.2*, and Dillon accordingly dates Numenius’ *floruit* to 150 CE. See Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 362, for a more detailed argument for this dating.
logic of participation taken from “middle” Platonism, which produces broadly hierarchical dynamics.

**Texts and Dating**

Before comparing Numenius with Origen’s *Commentary on John*, it is appropriate to answer a question: in assessing Origen’s early theology, why start with the *Commentary on John*? Part of the answer is chronological; part of it is philological. The first two books of the *Commentary* date to Origen’s early period, roughly contemporaneous with the material Rufinus translated from the Greek original of *On First Principles*. The Latin text of *On First Principles* 1-2 is skewed to one direction by Rufinus’ sympathetic translation, to another by the hostility of the sources that allege Greek fragments of the original. Because the Greek text of the *Commentary* has survived, Origen’s thought there may help in evaluating Rufinus’ version of *On First Principles*. The first two books of Origen’s *Commentary on John* are pivotal for reconstructing his early speculation about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Unlike a number of passages in Rufinus’ version of *On First Principles*, the *Commentary on John* contains Greek original to Origen. In the case of the *Commentary*, we do not have to worry whether we are dealing with Origen himself or later influences, friendly or hostile. These are Origen’s own formulations.
So much for philological considerations; let us consider chronological issues. Origen composed the Commentary on John over the course of his career.⁶ According to Rufinus, Origen composed a total of thirty-two books on John, ending in open-ended fashion with reflections on the Last Supper. It is not clear why Origen left off when and where he did (at John 13.33), though John McGuckin has argued that Book 32 was close to Origen’s final intended production. Only books 1, 2, 6, 10, 13, 19, 20, 28, and 32 are extant in Greek. According to Eusebius, Origen composed the first five books (of which only books 1 and 2 remain) at Alexandria, presumably circa 230/1.⁷ Origen is supposed to have published On First Principles, at least in parts, earlier in the same decade. The controversy over this (and other) material is thought to have resulted in Origen’s expulsion to Caesarea by Bishop Demetrios of Alexandria in or around 331.⁸ At least with the first two books of the Commentary on John we can rest assured we have material dateable to years surrounding the publication of On First Principles in Alexandria.⁹

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⁷ Eusebius, h. e. 6.24.
⁸ McGuckin, “Structural Design,” 444 n. 9. Prior to his transition to Palestine, according to Eusebius, Origen also produced the first eight books of the Commentary on Genesis (not extant), Commentary on Psalms 1-25, and the Commentary on Lamentations, “two books on the resurrection,” and ten books of miscellanies, or stromata. Origen wrote the rest of the commentaries on John (Bks 6-32) once he had taken up residence in Palestine as the head of a newly established school (so, A.D. 232: Bk 6; 235: Bks 13-20; 238: Bks 22-31; 248: Bk 32).
⁹ Especially as opposed to the relationship between this material and what is definitely much later material, namely, all of Origen’s Homilies except for those on Luke, which were composed earlier at Alexandria (McGuckin, 17; Crouzel, Origen, 30). The Homilies on Genesis, according to this account, date from the last decade of Origen’s life (243/5-253/5). The lost Commentaries on Genesis 1-8, however, date from the earlier Alexandria period. Though Jo. 1 and 2 constitute a faithful rendition of Origen’s theology from his early Alexandria period, the chronological relationship between the four books of On First Principles and the first two books of Jo. remains undetermined.
Demiurgic Precedents in Numenius and Clem

Before turning to Origen, it is important to note the centrality and function of participation for Numenius’s aetiology.\textsuperscript{10} I will begin with several fragments from Numenius before turning briefly to Clement.

\textit{Numenius, On the Good}

Several fragments of Numenius’s lost \textit{On the Good} deserve close consideration in comparison with Origen’s \textit{Commentary on John}.\textsuperscript{11} Fragment 16 is especially important.

\textsuperscript{10} In comparing Origen with “triadic” Platonism, I have taken as points of departure two important articles, here listed chronologically: A.H.B. Logan, “Origen and the Development of Trinitarian Theology,” in \textit{Origeniana quarta} (1987), 424-429; and John Dillon, “Logos and Trinity: Patterns of Platonist Influence on Early Christianity,” in \textit{The Great Tradition: Further Studies in the Development of Platonism and Early Christianity} (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1997), 1-13 (Chapter VIII). I am operating with the conviction that Origen pre-dates the advent of “Neoplatonism” that arrived only with the wide circulation of Plotinus’s \textit{Enneads}, nearly all of which were produced after Origen’s death. If this conviction is correct, then the presumption, exemplified by Herbert Musurillo, that Origen borrowed from “Neoplatonic schools” and “transcended the limited categories of eclectic Neoplatonism” is misleading. See Herbert Musurillo, “The Recent Revival of Origen Studies,” \textit{Theological Studies} 24 (1963): 253, 262.

\textsuperscript{11} On Numenius generally, see E.R. Dodds, “Numenius and Ammonius,” in \textit{Les Sources de Plotin} (Geneva: Vandoeuvres, 1957), 3-61; and John Dillon, \textit{The Middle Platonists}, Rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 361-79. Dillon takes seriously, though not uncritically, Proclus’s report that Numenius teaches a triad (Dillon, 367). I follow the broad contours of Dillon’s account. Ziebritzki reads Numenius as having a basically “two-hypostasis” system in spite of references to a “triad” in the fragments of Numenius’s lost words. This is part of his larger attempt to demonstrate that both Origen and Plotinus represent a shift toward “tri-hypostasis” systems. One difficulty for Ziebritzki’s thesis is the pre-Origenian circulation among Christians of the Pseudo-Platonic Second Epistle (discussed below). Cf. Ziebritzki, \textit{Heiliger Geist und Weltseele}, 67-92. According to Ziebritzki, when Numenius speaks of a “second” and a “third” God, he is only referring to the second principle, the Demiurge, in different modes of action. See Ziebritzki, 81-82: “Damit aber legt sich der Schluß nahe, daß die Rede von einem zweiten und einem dritten Gott so zu verstehen ist, daß beide nicht nur eine teilbare Einheit bilden, sondern tatsächlich identisch sind: es ist ein- und derselbe Gott, der als zweiter Gott die betrachtende und als dritter Gott die demiurgische Funktion ausübt. Die Ausdrücke “zweiter Gott” und “dritter Gott” sind also nichts anderes als die Bezeichnungen für die beiden relationalen Eigenschaften ein- und desselben Gottes, der in der Vermittlung zwischen erstem Gott und Materie auf beide in unterschiedlicher Weise bezogen ist.” One need not deny the applicability of this observation in order still to maintain that Proclus’s description of Numenius’s scheme as “triadic” is not lacking in evidence.
Numenius describes the relationship between the two most primal entities, the Good and the Demiurge.

Now if essence and the idea is discerned by the Mind, and if it was agreed that the Mind is earlier than this and its cause, then Mind itself is alone found to be the Good. For if God the Creator is the beginning of generation, the Good is the beginning of essence. And God the Creator is related to the Good, of which He is an imitator, as generation is to essence, of which it is a likeness and an imitation. For if the Creator who is the author of generation is good, the Creator also of essence will doubtless be the absolute good, innate in essence. For the second god, being twofold, is the self-maker of the idea of Himself, and makes the world as its Creator: afterwards He is wholly given to contemplation. Now as we have by our reasoning gathered names for four things, let them be these four. The first, God, absolute Good (ἀυτούγαθον); His imitator, a good Creator: then essence, one kind of the first God, another of the Second; and the imitation of this essence, the beautiful world, adorned by participation in the beautiful.  

Numenius reasons that if both “being and the Idea” are to be “intellected,” there must be some agent to understand them. A subject must be there to understand “being and the Idea,” and, Numenius reasons, this subject is Nous. In the next fragment of On the Good (Fragment 17), Numenius refers to the first principle as “the first Mind” (τὸν πρῶτον νοῦν) and “Being Itself” (αὐτόν). Aristotle famously portrays his highest principle as “Thought-thinking-itself.” Numenius concludes (“Συνελεγγερμένων . . .”) that Aristotle’s Nous is “older and more divine” (ἄλλ᾽ έτερος πρὸ τούτου νοῦς πρεσβύτερος

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12 Numenius, Frag. 16. Εἰ δ᾽ έστι μὲν νοητός ή ούσια καὶ ή ιδέα, ταύτης δ᾽ ὠμολογήθη πρεσβύτερον καὶ αὖτιν εἶναι ὁ νοῦς, αὐτὸς οὖτος μόνος εὑρηται ὃν τὸ ἄγαθον. Καὶ γὰρ εἰ ὁ μὲν δημιουργὸς θεὸς ἐστὶ γενέσεως, ἢ δὲ τὸ ἄγαθον οὐσίας εἶναι ἄρχη. Ἀνάλογον δὲ τούτῳ μὲν ὁ δημιουργὸς θεὸς, ἢν αὐτοῦ μιμητῆς, τῇ δὲ οὐσίᾳ ἢ γένεσις, ἢ εἰκόνα αὐτῆς ἐστὶ καὶ μίμημα. Εἴπερ δὲ ὁ δημιουργὸς ὁ τῆς γενέσεως ἐστὶν ἄγαθος, ἢ ποι ἐστιν καὶ ὁ τῆς οὐσίας δημιουργὸς αὐτογάθον, σύμφωνον τῇ οὐσίᾳ. Ο γὰρ δεύτερος διπτός ὁ αὐτοποιεῖν τὴν εἰς ιδέαν έαυτοῦ καὶ τὸν κόσμον, δημιουργὸς ὃν, ἐπεῖτα θεορητικὸς ὁ λόγος. Συνελεγγερμένων δ᾽ ἡμῶν ὁ νουματα τεσσάρων πραγμάτων τέσσαρα ἐστο ταῦτα· ὃ μὲν πρῶτος θεὸς αὐτογαθόν· ὃ δὲ τούτου μιμητῆς δημιουργὸς ἄγαθος· ὃ δ᾽ οὔσια μία μὲν ἢ τοῦ πρῶτου, ἐτέρα δ᾽ ἢ τοῦ δευτέρου· ὃς μίμημα ὁ καλὸς κόσμος, κεκαλλιοποιημένος μετουσία τοῦ καλοῦ. Eusebius quotes this important passage in p.e. 11.22.3-5. For a discussion of the importance of Eusebius’ quotation of this fragment, see Chapter 6 of this study. Dillon notices similarities between this fragment and Origen, Princ. I.II.13. See Dillon, “Logos and Trinity,” 6-7.


καὶ θειότερος) than the Demiurge.\textsuperscript{15} Given the Demiurge’s description as an entity that contemplates the Good, it is not clear whether the principle of \textit{Nous} is restricted, in Numenius’s scheme, to the First or the Second principle. In fact, Numenius refuses the question, depicting both the First and Second as \textit{Nous} in different states or modes.

Numenius’s First Principle is not only Aristotle’s \textit{Nous} but also Plato’s “Good,” and is αὐτογαθὸν σύμφωνον τῇ ὑσίᾳ. The second God, on the other hand, “makes the Idea of himself” in imitation of the First God.\textsuperscript{16} The title μιμήτης explains what it means for the Demiurge to be an “image” (eἰκόν) of the First. “The creating God is related (Ἀνάλογον) to the Good, of which He is an imitator (μιμήτης), as generation is to essence, of which [generation] is an image and an imitation (eἰκόν αὕτης ἐστι καὶ μίμημα).”\textsuperscript{17} If the second principle imitates the first, the second principle cannot be identified with the supreme and sole source of divinity, the \textit{First god}.

For Numenius, talk of “participation” implies hierarchy. Numenius describes the Demiurge’s imitation of \textit{Nous} in terms of “participation.” In Fragment 19, the Demiurge is good not by himself (οὐ παρ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ) but “from the first” (παρὰ δὲ τοῦ πρωτοῦ). Numenius glosses the Demiurge’s reception of goodness as “by participation in the [First] (ὑπ’ ὑμετοσίας ἐστὶν οὐτος ἀγαθὸς).”\textsuperscript{18} The passage should be considered in full:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Numenius, Frag. 16.9-10. Numenius’ use of αὐτογαθὸν provides precedent for Origen’s αὐτόθεος. For more on this, see below. Des Places (111n3) reports that αὐτοποιεῖ is an apparent \textit{hapax legomenon}, but the idea of self-production has precedence in both Stoic pantheism and Gnosticism. See Whittaker, “Self-Generating Principles,” and Chapter 1 of this study.
\item Numenius, Frag. 16, 6-8. Ἀνάλογον δὲ τούτῳ μὲν ὁ δημιουργός θεός, ὃν αὐτοῦ μιμητὴς, τῇ δὲ ὑσίᾳ ἢ γένεσις, ἢ εἰκόν αὐτῆς ἐστι καὶ μίμημα.
\item Numenius, Frag. 19.9.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
That which participates in it [presumably, the First Principle], participates in nothing but in thought (ἐν δὲ μόνῳ τῷ φρονεῖν);  

That is the only way in which it could profit from the Good; there is no other way. And thought coincides only with the First. If that by which the other things are colored and made good is present only to that, then it would betray foolishness of soul to dispute this any further. For if the the Second is good, not from itself but from the First, how then would it be possible that he (the First) is not good, if the latter derives his goodness from participation in the (other, the First), especially as the Second participates in him (the First) specially because he is the Good? So Plato taught the sharply observant (auditor) by his statement, “The Good is One” (τὸ ἄγαθὸν ὅτι ἐστὶν ἐν).  

The second God’s participation in the First ensures continuity of nature (i.e., that both are good), but it also entails subordination. In Numenius’s scheme, participation names the process by which the secondary, subordinated entity owes both its existence and the quality of its existence to a primary cause. In the next passage, Numenius states that Plato represented these things as true differently in different places; for in the Timaeus peculiarly he wrote the common inscription on the Creator, saying, “He was good.” But in the Republic he called the Good the Idea of Good, meaning that the Idea of the Creator was the Good, because to us He is manifested as good by participation in the First and only Good. “For as men are said to have been fashioned by the idea of man, and oxen by that of an ox, and horses by the idea of a horse; so also naturally if the Creator is good by participation in the First Good, the first Mind would be an idea, as being absolute good.”

This statement confirms the statement in Fragment 16 that “the First God is self-sufficiently good (αὐτοἄγαθον), but the Demiurge is good as an imitator (μημῆτης) of the

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19 Cf. Origen, Princ. 1.1.3, regarding the immaterial nature of participation in the Holy Spirit.
20 Numenius, Frag. 19 (apud Eusebius, p.e. XI.22.6-8). Μετέχει δὲ αὐτοῦ ἡ μεταίχησις ἐν ἄλλῳ μὲν οὐδενί, ἐν δὲ μόνῳ τῷ φρονεῖν· ταύτῃ ἄρα καὶ τῆς ἄγαθος συμβάσεως ὄντα ἔν, ἄλλως δ’ οὖ. Καὶ μὲν δὴ τῷ φρονεῖν, τούτῳ δὴ συνεπάγγειλεν μόνον τῷ πρώτῳ. Ὁ θεός οὖν τὰ ἄλλα ἀποκαθιστάεται καὶ ἀγαθοῦργεῖ, ἐὰν τούτῳ ἐκείνῳ μόνῳ μόνον προσῆ, ἀβρακτέρας ἐν εἷς ὑπερήφανος ἐτι ἀμφιλογεῖν. Εἰ γὰρ ἄγαθος ἐστιν ὁ δεύτερος οὐ παρ’ ἑαυτῷ, παρὰ δὲ τοῦ πρώτου, πῶς οὖν τε ὑπ’ οὐ μετουσίας ἐστίν οὕτως ἄγαθος, μὴ ἄγαθον εἶναι, ἄλλος τε κἂν τύχῃ αὐτῷ ὡς ἄγαθον μεταλαμψον ὁ δεύτερος; οὕτως τοι ὁ Πλάτων ἐκ συλλογισμοῦ τὸ ἐξί βλέποντο ἀπεδείκτη τὸ ἄγαθον ὅτι ἐστὶν ἐν.
21 Numenius, Frag. 20 (apud Eusebius, p.e. XI.22.9-10). Ταῦτα δ’ οὕτως ἔχοντα ἔθηκεν ὁ Πλάτων ἄλλη καὶ ἄλλη χωρίσας· ιδίᾳ μὲν γὰρ τὸν κυκλικὸν ἕρετον τοῦ δημιουργοῦ ἐγράφατο ἐν Τιμοῖς εἰπόν· “Ἀγαθός ἦν”, ἐν δὲ τῇ Πολιτείᾳ τὸ ἄγαθον ἐπέδρο “ἄγαθον ἰδέαν,” ὡς δὴ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ ἰδέαν οὕτων τὸ ἄγαθον, ὅπετος πέφανται ἡμιν ἄγαθος μετουσία τοῦ πρώτου τε καὶ μόνον. Ὡσπερ γὰρ ἄνθρωποι μὲν λέγονται τυποθεῖται ὑπὸ τῆς ἄνθρωπος ἰδέας, βοῦς δ’ ὑπὸ τῆς βοοῦς, ἢπατοί δ’ ὑπὸ τῆς ἢπατου ἰδέας, οὕτως καὶ εἰκότως ὁ δημιουργὸς ἐπέτρεπτε τοῦ πρώτου ἄγαθον ἄγαθος, ἄγαθον ἰδέα ἐν εἷς ὁ πρῶτος νοῦς, ὃν αὐτοἄγαθον.
First.”\(^{22}\) The “First God,” a King “free from labor,” does not create and is the “Father” of the Second God, which does create and “rules in that he passes through the heaven” as its Creator.\(^{23}\) In a confusing line, Numenius refers to the first principle, Mind, as the “Demiurge of Being,” in distinction from the twofold “Demiurge of Becoming.”\(^{24}\) The reference to a “Demiurge of Becoming” recalls Timaeus’ statement that the Demiurge makes recourse to an eternal paradigm when he makes the *Cosmos*.\(^{25}\) Numenius explains that the “Demiurge of Becoming,” in imitation of the \(\alphaυτο\alphaγαθον\) Mind, “makes an Idea of himself,” which he then uses to create the *Cosmos*.

Numenius’s highest principle is highest insofar as it does not owe its existence to any other cause. Numenius identifies the source of all existence with this first principle alone. An analogy of first principle to being and second principle to creating follows. As the Good (\(\tauο\alphaγαθον\)) must be the principle of being (\(\omegaυσιας\)), Numenius explains, so the “creating divinity” (\(\deltaημιουργος\) \(θεος\)) is the principle of becoming (\(γενεσεως\) \(\alphaρχη\)).\(^{26}\) There is no distinction between the being and the goodness of the first principle; they are identical. As another fragment has it, “the First God is simple, being in himself (\(\omega\) \(θεος\) \(\omega\)

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\(^{22}\) Numenius, Frag. 16.14-15. \(\omega\) \(μεν\) \(\pi\rho\omegaτος\) \(θεος\) \(\alphaυτο\alphaγαθον\). \(\omega\) \(\delta\) \(\tauο\tauου\) \(μιμητης\) \(δημιουργος\) \(\alphaγαθος\).

\(^{23}\) Numenius, Frag. 12.12-14 (*apud* Eusebius, *p.e.* XI.18.6-10). \(\tauο\) \(μεν\) \(\pi\rho\omegaτον\) \(θεον\) \(\alphaργον\) \(ε\iota ναι\) \(\epsilonργον\) \(συμπα\tauο\tauον\) \(και\) \(βασιλεα\), \(\tauο\) \(δημιουργο\nu\gammaο\nu\) \(\delta\) \(\tauε\) \(θεον\) \(ηγε\muο\nuε\nu\) \(δ\iota\) \(\sigma\iota\rule{0.1em}{0.0em}\) \(\mu\iota\tauο\tauον\) \(\iota\nu\tauα\).

\(^{24}\) Numenius, Frag. 16.8-12.

\(^{25}\) Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 29a: “Now if so be that this Cosmos is beautiful and its Creator good, it is plain that he fixed his gaze on the Eternal. . . . and it is clear to all that his gaze was on the Eternal. . . .” (\(\epsilon\iota \muεν\) \(\delta\iota\) \(\kαλος\) \(\epsilon\ιτιν\) \(\delta\iota\) \(\kο\sigma\muο\) \(δ\iota\) \(\tauε\) \(\deltaημιουργο\nu\gammaο\) \(\alphaγαθο\nu\), \(\delta\iota\muο\nu\) \(\omega\) \(\pi\rho\omicron\) \(\tauο\) \(\alpha\iota\iota\iota\iota\) \(\epsilon\iota\muε\piε\nu\). . . . \(\pi\nu\tauι\) \(\delta\iota\) \(\sigmaα\phi\xi\) \(\delta\iota\) \(\pi\rho\omicron\) \(\tauο\) \(\alpha\iota\iota\iota\iota\).” Following this, in 29b, Timaeus concludes that the *Cosmos* is a copy (\(\epsilon\iota\kο\nu\) \(\delta\iota\) \(\tauαρα\iota\iota\nu\) \(\tauαρα\iota\iota\nu\)).

μὲν πρῶτος ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὄν ἐστιν ἄπλοῦς).”

The First God’s “being in himself” makes him simple and indivisible (μὴ... διαιρετός).

So Numenius develops an intricate but underdetermined constellation of three key descriptions of the relationship between the Demiurge and the Mind-and-Good which transcends the Demiurge. The Demiurge is an image of the Good insofar as the Demiurge is an imitator of the Good; another way of speaking of the Demiurge’s imaged imitation is that the Demiurge is a participant in the Good. All three of these modes of speaking about the second God’s relationship to the first reinforce a hierarchical dynamic between the two. As image, imitator, and participant, the second principle is a derivative and subordinate effect of the Good considered as an intellectual cause. It would remain for later Platonists, such as Plotinus, to puzzle over the mechanics of the relationship between the Good and the Demiurge.28

Fragment 16 of Numenius’s On the Good, taken by itself, leaves the impression that Numenius has in mind either a Binity (Nous and Demiurge) or a Quaternity (Nous, First Being, Demiurge, Second Being), but elsewhere he states clearly that the “First God, who exists in himself, is simple,” whereas the “Second and third God are One.”29 The mention of a “third god” implies that Numenius in fact teaches a triad, with the third entity being the “World-Soul” of Timaeus. To complicate matters, however, some fragments suggest that the first two principles are two capacities of the same entity, others that they are distinct entities with distinct cosmological functions. In the final analysis, the triad

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27 Numenius, Frag. 11.11-13.
28 Plotinus will identify the Good with the One and subordinate the Nous to the One.
29 Numenius, Frag. 21. Des Places states plainly that in any case Numenius did not teach four Gods, as the two Gods and “two beings” of Fragment 16 might suggest. See Des Places, 111 n7. See Peter Van Nuffelen, Rethinking the Gods. Philosophical Readings of Religion in the post-hellenistic period (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), which has a chapter on Numenius (and more literature).
Proclus ascribed to Numenius of πατήρ, ποιητής, ποίημα fits: the First God is the Father of the Demiurge; the second is the Demiurge and “Maker,” who then produces a third, the Cosmos and the “Product.”\(^{30}\) If this arrangement is authentic, Numenius taught a Platonic “triad” of God–Demiurge–Cosmos/World–Soul, arranged hierarchically with a grammar of participation, of First over Second, and Second over Third.

Clement and Justin Martyr

It is not difficult to see why Numenius’ triad would be tempting for appropriation by Christians. Origen’s predecessors had already begun puzzling over the issue and offered some promising leads. Clement of Alexandria, for example, knew Numenius and offered a version of his triad, which he found supported by recourse to Plato’s own writings.\(^{31}\) And, though most of the evidence that remains for Numenius derives from Eusebius of Caesarea, it is plausible that both Eusebius and Origen took their knowledge of Numenius’ texts from Clement himself, who found Numenius’ threefold scheme of “First God, Demiurge, and First Product” amenable to his purposes.

Clement based his use of Numenius on a scheme of three divine entities in the Pseudo-Platonic Second Epistle (312e), which reads:

Upon the king of all do all things turn; he is the end of all things and the cause of all good. Things of the second order turn upon the second principle, and those of the third order upon the third.\(^{32}\)

\(^{30}\) Numenius, Frag. 21. Νομοθύμιος μὲν γὰρ τριεὶς ἀνωμνήστις θεοῦς πατέρα μὲν καλεῖ τὸν πρῶτον, ποιητὴν δὲ τὸν δεύτερον, ποίημα δὲ τὸν τρίτον· ὁ γὰρ κόσμος κατ’ αὐτὸν ὁ τρίτος ἔστι θεὸς· ὡστε ὁ κατ’ αὐτὸν δημιουργός διττός, ὁ τὸ πρῶτος θεός καὶ ὁ δεύτερος, τὸ δὲ δημιουργοῦμενον ὁ τρίτος.

\(^{31}\) Clement’s remark about Numenius’ peculiar blending of Platonic and Jewish speculation is our earliest evidence for dating Numenius’ writings. Though modern scholars doubt the authenticity of the Platonic epistle to which Clement appeals, Clement was convinced that Plato wrote this text.

\(^{32}\) Plato, Ep. 2, 312e. περὶ τὸν πάντων βασιλέα πάντ’ ἔστι καὶ ἐκάκινο ἑνεκα πάντα, καὶ ἐκέκινο αἴτιον. ἀπάντων τὸν καλῶν· δεύτερον δὲ πέρι τὰ δεύτερα, καὶ τρίτον πέρι τὰ τρίτα. Plato, Cooper trans., p.
Justin Martyr had used this passage to justify his speaking of the Logos as “in second place” (ἐν δευτέρᾳ χώρᾳ).33 “[Plato],” Justin suggests,
said that the Power next to the first God was placed crosswise in the universe. And as to his speaking of a third, he did this because he read...“that the Spirit of God moved over the waters.” For he gives the second place to the Logos which is with God...; and the third place to the Spirit who was said to be borne upon the water, saying, “And the third around the third.”34

Clement’s interpretation is similar to Justin’s, and it makes sense as a Christian appropriation of Numenian ontology. Clement appeals to *Timaeus* 41a7, where Timaeus describes the generation of multiple “gods.” The “begetter” of the entire universe says to all these deities: “O gods, divine works whose maker and father I am, whatever has come to be by my hands cannot be undone but by my consent.”35 As Clement reads Plato’s triadic scheme, God the Father is “first” and the cause of all good things because it is by his will that all things come to be, and without his “consent” none can be undone. The Son is the Father’s first product, which in turn enables the Father to produce further entities. This first product is the Father’s Wisdom, and by Wisdom the Father produces

1638. It is this passage to which Lloyd Gerson turns to argue that Plotinus did not need to base his “system” solely on the *Parmenides* in order to develop a doctrine of three hypostases, for example, at *Enn.* V.1.8.23-27. See Lloyd Gerson, “The ‘Neoplatonic’ Interpretation of Plato’s *Parmenides*,” *IJPT*, forthcoming, note 14 (manuscript draft).


35 Clement, *Srom.* V.14.102, 5-103, 2; ANF 2:468. ἴδε τὸ τῷ Τιμαίῳ δημιουργὸν πατέρα καλεῖ τὸν δημιουργὸν λέγοντι διὰ διὰ ποτέ· “θεοὶ θεῶν, ὃν ἔγω πατὴρ δημιουργός τε ἔργον.” ὡστε καὶ ἐπάν εἶπεν "περὶ τὸν πάντων βασιλέα πάντα ἐστὶ κἀκεῖνον ἔκειν τὰ πάντα κἀκεῖνον ἀπό τῶν πάντων καὶ διὰ τοῦτον περὶ τὰ δεύτερα καὶ τρίτον περὶ τὰ τρίτα," οὐκ ἄλλος ἔγον Εξακούσιος ἢ τὴν ἐγὼ τριάδα μηνύσθαι· τρίτον μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τὸ ἐγὼ πνεύμα, τὸν ὑόν δὲ δεύτερον, δι᾿ οὗ "πάντα ἐγένετο" κατὰ βουλήσειν τοῦ πατρός. And the address in the *Timaeus* calls the creator, Father, speaking thus, “You Gods of gods, of whom I am Father and the Creator of your works.” So that when he says, ‘Around the king of all, all things are, and because of Him are all things; and he [or that] is the cause of all good things; and around the second are the things second in order; and around the third, the third,’ I understand nothing else than the Holy Trinity to be meant; for the third is the Holy Spirit, and the Son is the second, by whom all things were made according to the will of the Father.
the Holy Spirit, another divine product, third in the scheme. The Father is then able, by
the instruments of Wisdom and the Holy Spirit, to produce further entities.\textsuperscript{36}

**Searching for a Hierarchical Triad in Origen’s *Commentary on John***

With the triadic schemes of Numenius and Clement in view, we may now turn to
Origen’s *Commentary on John*. Several Middle Platonic themes appear in *Commentary
on John* 2.12-21. There Origen interprets John 1:1 (“In the beginning was the Word, and
the Word was with God, and the Word was God”). Origen’s exegesis of this verse is
pivotal, and yet its full effect on Origen’s thought is not assessed evenly in scholarship.
Once I have identified the Middle Platonic themes of this crucial portion of the
*Commentary*, I will move to other passages in the *Commentary* that apply a hierarchical
logic to the Christian triad.

It will be best to consider *Jo.* 2.12-21 in three related segments. First (*Jo.* 2.12-15)
Origen distinguishes between the Father and the Word along lines drawn from Middle
Platonism between a highest divinity (here, God the Father) and an intermediary (here,
The Word). With a move echoing Philo, Origen points out that John 1:1 uses the definite
article (ὁ) to refer to God, but it does not use the definite article in calling the Word
“divine” (θεός).\textsuperscript{37} Then (*Jo.* 2.16-18) he addresses a monarchian objection to his
exegetical explanation.\textsuperscript{38} Finally (*Jo.* 2.19-21), Origen explains that he does not mean to

\textsuperscript{36} I have used the ambiguous term “produce” because the distinction between “creating,”
“begetting,” “causing” is not clear at this point. These terms are synonymous as Origen uses them.
\textsuperscript{37} Cf., for example, Philo, *Sonn.* 1.229. Gerhard Gruber, *Zoe; Wesen, Stufen Und Mitteilung Des
Wahren Lebens Bei Origenes* (Munich: M. Huber, 1962), 114n63 adverts to this text.
\textsuperscript{38} This passage will be discussed in the context of Origen’s quarrel with monarchianism, presented
in Chapter 3.
teach a horizontal procession, but a vertical one, whose asymmetry culminates with God the Father. The asymmetry reflects the hierarchy endemic to Middle Platonism.

Jo. 2.13-15: A τάξις of Uncreated Cause and Word, Word and Rational Creatures

(12) But since the proposition, “In the beginning was the Word,” has been placed first, perhaps it indicates some order (τάξις); in the same manner, next, “And the Word was with God,” and third, “And the Word was God.” Perhaps he says, “And the Word was with God,” then, “And the Word was God,” that we might understand that the Word has become God because he is “with God.” (13) John has used the articles in one place and omitted them in another very precisely, and not as though he did not understand the precision of the Greek language. In the case of the Word, he adds the article “the,” but in the case of the noun “God,” he inserts it in one place and omits it in another. (14) For he adds the article when the noun “God” stands for the uncreated cause of the universe, but he omits it when the Word is referred to as “divine.” (15) For as the God who is over all (ὁ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεός) is “the God” and not simply “God,” so the source (πηγή) of reason in each rational being is “the Word.” That reason which is in each rational being would not properly have the same designation as the first Reason, and be said to be “the Word.”

According to Origen, John 1:1 “indicates an order (τάξις).” The Son bears an identity necessarily disclosed in reference to his “arche,” the Father; it cannot have been otherwise. The logical “order” of John 1 fits the “order” of “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” of Matthew 28:19. Appeal to this divine τάξις—both textually and ontologically—was a traditional anti-monarchian strategy. Tertullian and Novatian took similar approaches in

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making a τάξις of the trinity.\(^{40}\) However, Origen’s motivation for “ordering” the trinity does not begin and end with anti-monarchian tradition.

Origen speaks of “the God over all” (ὁ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεοίς), who transmits divinity to a second God, the Word. Origen’s title “the God over all” for “the uncreated cause of the universe” leads Origen to notice that the Word is described not as “the God” but as “divine” (θεοίς). The fact that Origen reserves the title of ἀυτόθεος for “the God over all,” compared with Numenius, suggests that Origen was adapting Numenius’ scheme for positing the highest divinity above lower entities in a primal procession.\(^{41}\)

Christians privileged God’s transcendence, and on this score Origen was no exception. Though it would be pushing the evidence too far to equate each instance of an Alexandrian’s reverence for a supreme first principle with a reference to the cult of theos hypsistos, the Hypsistarian tradition was long established in Alexandria. Origen calls God the Father, and God the Father alone, “auptóθεος,” the “one true God.” Though he never

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\(^{40}\) For more on this, see Chapter 3. The ordering of “first, second, third,” and the use of taxis also appears in Eusebius, p.e. 7.15.1-10. When Eusebius refers to the Son as “second” and the Spirit as “third,” the anti-monarchian tradition of the three as τάξις is as plausible a candidate for motivation as a Middle Platonist scheme drawn from Numenius. Then again, both traditions would have been mutually reinforcing for a figure as widely educated as Eusebius, who indeed knew both traditions well.

\(^{41}\) The earliest evidence dates to ca. 200 B.C.E. The epigraphic evidence is collected and contextualized by Stephen Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos between Pagans, Jews, and Christians,” in Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frede, eds., Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 81-148, especially 126-28; Mitchell refers, on p. 146 in the Appendix to his article, Item 283, to a II. B.C.E inscription in Alexandria as follows: [− θείοι υψίσταω | − τιν ιερόν | ἥπερ θάλολον καὶ] τὴν προσ[ευχήν καὶ τὰ συν]κυροῦντα. There is also reason for seeing beneath Origen’s titles for the Father—αυτόθεος, ὁ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεοίς—to the cult of the “Highest God,” widespread by Origen’s day in Alexandria. The cult of the “Highest God” was deeply intertwined with the gradual development of monotheism in Judaism and Christianity in the imperial period. Its tendencies, especially when combined with Platonic monism, motivated a deep urge to worship a supreme deity. Alexandria lays claim to some of the earliest epigraphic evidence for the cult. By the second century C.E., Alexandrian pagans, Jews, and Christians shared the view that an ultimate deity transcends all other spiritual powers and principalities. Much earlier, Judaism’s monotheistic proclivities had been absorbed into pagan theology with the result that any given pantheon of gods could be subordinated to a higher, supreme deity. The name for this deity was hypsistos, “highest,” even though, paradoxically, this highest God was also supposed to be above even the attribution of names. Though it would be pushing the evidence too far to equate each instance of an Alexandrian’s reverence for a supreme first principle with a reference to the cult of theos hypsistos, the Hypsistarian tradition was long established in Alexandria.
identifies God the Father with “the most high,” he provides no apology for reading Luke 1:35 as meaning that the Holy Spirit is not to be identified with “the Power of the Most High [God].” The Power of the Most High is Christ, who “overshadows” Mary.\textsuperscript{42} Origen lets his reader draw the inference: if Christ is the power of the Most High, then God the Father, implicitly, is the Most High God.

On the other hand, Christ, as the Power and Wisdom of God, is the highest and greatest “power” generated by God the Father. He transcends all other powers and maintains his own eternal existence distinct from the Father. Origen, in conscious or unconscious rivalry of contemporary theological schemes, places God the Father at the top of a hierarchy of spiritual entities.

\textit{Jo. 2.16-18: The Father’s Primal Image and Perfect Participant}

The next passage offers more overt evidence that Origen’s thought is imbued with Numenian dynamics. It also provides important evidence for the way Origen uses those Numenian dynamics to oppose monarchian theology. We will return to the matter of monarchianism at length in Chapter 3. For now, it is important to notice several features of this passage that can be traced to Numenius. Origen’s use of αὐτόθεος for God the Father, and the implication that the Son is divine, θεός, by participation in αὐτόθεος, bears striking resemblance to Numenius arrangement of a first God, αὐτοάγαθος, and the second God, the Demiurge, “good” by participation.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{42} See \textit{Jo. 6.67}.

\textsuperscript{43} Cf. Numenius, Frags. 16 and 20, ed. Des Places. Origen’s construal here would have a long and consequential afterlife. If Photius is to be trusted as evidence for Methodius’ \textit{Xeno}, then the Son’s demiurgic “imitation” (μιμησις) of the Father establishes the Son as one of two “creative powers” (δύο
(16) Many people who wish to be pious are troubled because they are afraid that they may proclaim two Gods and, for this reason, they fall into false and impious beliefs. They either deny that the individuality of the Son is other than that of the Father by confessing him to be God whom they refer to as “Son” in name at least, or they deny the divinity of the Son and make his individuality and essence as an individual to be different from the Father. (17) Their problem can be resolved in this way. We must say to them that at one time God, with the article, is God in the absolute sense, wherefore also the Savior says in his prayer to the Father, “That they may know you the only true God.” On the other hand, everything besides God in the absolute sense, which is made God by participation in his divinity, would more properly not be said to be “the God,” but “God.” To be sure, his “firstborn of every creature,” inasmuch as he was the first to be with God and has drawn divinity into himself, is more honored than the other gods beside him (of whom God is God as it is said, “The God of gods, the Lord has spoken, and he has called the earth”). It was by his ministry that they became gods, for he drew from God that they might be deified, sharing ungrudgingly also with them according to his goodness. (18) The God, therefore, is the true God. The others are gods formed according to him as images of the prototype. But again, the archetypal image of the many images is the Word with the God, who was “in the beginning.” By being “with the God” he always continues to be “God.” But he would not have this if he were not with God, and he would not remain God if he did not continue in unceasing contemplation of the depth of the Father. 44

44. Jo. 2.16–18. (16) Καὶ τὸ πολλὸν πουθενὸς εἶναι εὐθυμενὸς τάρασσον, εὐλαβεμένους δύο ἀναγορεύει θεοὺς καὶ παρὰ τοῦτο περιπέπτοντας γευδέας καὶ ἁσβεστοῦς δόγματιν, ἦτοι ἀρνομένους ἑαυτοῦ ὑπὸ ἑτέραν παρὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς ὀμολογοῦντας θεὸν εἶναι τὸν μήκρο όνομαστὸς παρ’ αὐτῶς “ὑιόν” προσαγορευόμενον, ἢ ἀρνομένους τὴν θεότητα τοῦ ὑπὸ τιθέντας δὲ αὐτὸν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὴν σωσία κατὰ περιγραφὴν τοπογράφησαν ἑτέραν τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐντεῦθεν λόγοι δύναται: (17) Λεκτέον γὰρ αὐτοῖς, ὅτι τότε μὲν αὐτὸθέου ὁ θεὸς ἐστὶ, διόπερ καὶ ὁ σωτὴρ φησιν ἐν τῇ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα εὐχῇ Ἰην γενόσκεις τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεόν; πάντως τὰ παρὰ τὸ αὐτήθεν μετοχῇ τῆς ἐκείνου θεότητος θεοποιούμενον υἱὸν θεοῦ ἀλλὰ θεοῦ κυρίου ἐκείνου ἐκείνου ἐκείνου τῆς ἐκείνου θεότητος—ἀν οὗ θεός ἐστι κατὰ τὸ λεγόμενον ἡθος θεοῦ κύριος θεοποιούμενον — ὑπὸ τούτοις μετακυβισθῆται καὶ ἀκαθάρτως κατὰ τὸν θεόν ἐνυπηκοούσιν τ🎬.
Origen distinguishes the Son from the Father in essence, but maintains that the Word is similar to God the Father—divine—through participation. The Son, “more honored than the other gods beside him” [quoting Psalm 44.1], “receives” from αὐτόθεος, God the Father: “It was by his ministry that they became gods, for he drew from God (ὁ θεός) that they might be deified, sharing (µεταδιδούς) ungrudgingly also with them according to his goodness.” Notice the Demiurgic position Origen gives the Son. He receives (ἀρυσάμενος) divinity from the Father, and the “gods”—presumably the totality of rational creatures—participate in the Son, the chief participant, as he shares with (µεταδιδούς) them.

Earlier in the Commentary (Jo. 1.188), Origen described “participants in Christ” as “truly [living] because they receive their life from this life.” Here he makes God the Father superior to the Son in a similar way: “the God (ὁ θεός) . . . is very God (αὐτόθεος). The others are gods formed according to him as images of a prototype.” The Son, in turn, is the “archetypal image of the many images” (ἄλλα πάλιν τῶν πλείονων εἰκόνων ἢ ἀρχέτυπος εἰκών ὁ πρός τὸν θεόν ἐστὶ λόγος) the primal image of God the Father. All other divine images take shape in reference to him.

Recall that Numenius depicts the second principle or Demiurge under three Platonic descriptors: image, imitator, and participant. Origen follows suit and construes

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46 Jo. 2.17: ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄρωσάμενος εἰς τὸ θεοποιηθηκαίναι αὐτοῦς, ἀφθόνος κάκεινος κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ χρηστότητα μεταδιδούς.
47 Jo. 1.188: ἀφ’ ἣς οἱ μέτοχοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ λαμβάνοντες τὴν ἁληθίδος ζῷσι τῶν.
48 Jo. 2.18. Αληθινός οὖν θεός ὁ θεός, οἳ δὲ κατ’ ἐκείνον μορφούμενοι θεοὶ ὡς εἰκόνες πρωτοτύπου.
49 Origen’s “theology of the image” takes especially clear expression in hom. 1. in gen. For more on this, see Chapter 7 of this study.
the Son as the Father’s image, imitator, and participant. A standard Platonist illustration of an “image” was the mark left in wax by a seal. The seal itself is the “paradigm,” and the mark is the seal’s image. Insofar as the mark resembles the paradigmatic seal, the mark is a participant in the seal. Insofar as Ideas are “paradigms,” they are causes of the effects that resemble them. Each image participates in its paradigmatic cause. The Timaean Demiurge looks to an eternal “paradigm” (exemplar) in creating the cosmos. Platonists were well known for having added this “fifth cause” to Aristotle’s four. Origen portrays the Son as looking to the Father as to a “paradigm” when he says that the Son contemplates the “fatherly depths.” Origen’s use of a cognitive model to relate Son to Father and Spirit to Son necessitates loss in the process of transmission. Origen states that

no one who participates in justice and the power to judge people will be able to receive the impressions (ἐναπομάζασθαι) of justice and of judging so completely in his own soul that he falls short of absolute justice and judgment in no way, just as a painter will not be able to give a share of all the unique features of what is being painted to his painting.

50 We will return to the issue of the “Son as Image” in Chapter 4, because a key fragment of On First Principles alleges that Origen refers to the Father as “incomparably” divine, using a term that later would come to be applied, not to the Father, but to the Son as the Father’s “incomparable” (aparallaktos) image. For the development of this aspect of Origen’s thought in later theologies of the Son, see especially Mark DelCogliano, “Eusebian Theologies of the Son as Image of God before 341,” Journal of Early Christian Studies 14:4 (2006): 459–484; and Matthew Crawford, “The Triumph of Pro-Nicene Theology over Anti-Monarchian Exegesis: Cyril of Alexandria and Theodore of Heraclea on John 14.10-11,” Journal of Early Christian Studies 21.4 (2013): 537-68.


52 Seneca, Ep. 65.7: his quintam plato adicit exemplar, quam ipse idean vocat: hoc est enim, ad quod respeciens artifex id, quod destinabat, effecit; Dillon, The Middle Platonists, 138.

53 Origen, Jo. 2.52. Οὐδέποτε γὰρ τῶν μετεχόντων δικαιοσύνης καὶ τῆς τοῦ κρίνειν λαὸν δυνάμεως οὕτω πάντη ἐναπομαξασθαι ἐκαυτοῦ τῇ ψυχῇ δυνήσεται τοῦς τῆς δικαιοσύνης τόπους καὶ τοῦ κρίνειν, ὡστε ἐν μηδεὶν ἀπόδει τῆς αὐτοδικαιοσύνης καὶ τῆς αὐτοκρίσεως, ὡς οὐδὲ ὁ γράφων εἴκονα οἶδός τε ἐσται μεταδώσαι πάντων τῶν τοῦ γραφομένου ἑσομάτων τῇ γραφῇ. Cf. Cels. 6.64 and Ayres ad loc. in “Undiminished Giver,” 62, as well as Chapter 4 of this study.
The metaphor at work in this case is a Platonic commonplace of model and copy whose ultimate origin is *Timaeus* 28b: Origen’s painter, like the Demiurge there, contemplates an object he wishes to reproduce.54 The Son’s contemplation of the Father enables the Son to be the Father’s perfect image.

The Son’s role of “perfect participant” is a hallmark of Origen’s christology. It marks the Son as an exemplar for all other creatures. The Holy Spirit is a perfect participant in the *Logos*, and all the saints are participants in the Holy Spirit. The saints are “holy” to the degree that they participate in the Holy Spirit. In this way, each member in the series represents an imitation of the Father’s perfect image, the Son, who by his perfect obedience resembles the Father perfectly. Origen uses the formal relationship that obtains between Ideas and participants, in Platonism, to underscore the formal resemblance between the Son and all creatures that participate in him.

The activity of contemplation determines the degree to which each participant resembles its object of participation. So, a saint contemplates the Holy Spirit, and to the degree that the holy man or woman understands the Holy Spirit’s character, the soul becomes holy. The difference between the angels and saints, on the one hand, and the Holy Spirit, on the other, is that the Holy Spirit perfectly participates in the Wisdom that is the Son. The Son, for his part, is distinguished from the Holy Spirit insofar as the Son maintains perfect and eternal contemplation of the Father, so that the Son participates in the Father perfectly. The Father is the supreme object of contemplation.

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54 Cf. Plato, *Rep.*, Book 10, and *Soph.* 265b. The image may also come from *Philebus* 39a-c, a passage Dillon notes Alcinous, *Didask.* 4, draws upon in describing sense-perception. However, I have not been able to discern in Origen evidence of Alcinous’s distinctive epistemological distinction between *logos epistemonikos* and *logos doxastikos*. 
So Origen views the Son as a prototypical image of God the Father. Application of Aristotle's example of an “image” to Origen’s construal of the Son as image would make the Son \textit{qua} image separated and “invested with its own substance.”\footnote{Jo. 1.152. καὶ κεχωρισμένον καὶ υὐσιωμένον.} It would also imply that the Son is equivocally, not unequivocally, “divine.” Origen does not invoke Aristotle’s example from \textit{Categories} in Jo. 1.152, but his use of the phrase “invested with his own substance” (οὐσιωμένον) would call Aristotle’s illustration to mind. Although the Son \textit{qua} image reproduces the Father’s essential goodness, the Son \textit{qua} image is a substance distinct from the Father. And both the Son and the Father can be called “divine,” though the Son is not divine in the same way that the Father is, because the Son participates in the Father’s divinity.

If we consider the Word as “contemplating” the Father as an appropriation of Numenius’ Demiurge, Origen’s theology of the Son comes more clearly into focus. First, Origen uses terms for participation to make the Word intrinsically dependent upon God the Father as ultimate source (πηγή). The difference between the subject that receives impressions—the Word—and that subject’s object of contemplation—the Father—is that the subject cannot generate the impressions it receives from itself. “It is not possible that one who shares in the Life, and for this reason is called ‘living’, has himself become Life.”\footnote{Jo. 2.52. This arrangement differs from the self-productive second principle that appears in both Numenius’ and Clement’s ontologies. For my explanation as to why Origen avoids applying such terms to the Son, see Chapter 3.} The same holds, Origen says, for Justice and its participants: no participant of Justice ever becomes Justice in the “participated” sense. For Origen, as for Numenius, what participates can never come to be the originating cause of that in which it shares.
Origen’s application of participation to the Son ensures that the Son is never equated with God the Father at the level of nature.

To participate is to be perfected, and to be perfected is to gain what one lacks.\(^{58}\) The Word’s participation in the highest God means, at the very least, that the Word acquires divinity from the Father as source. The Word “becomes” divine—even if Origen uses the term “becomes” equivocally and non-temporally.\(^{59}\) Even a careful reader could be forgiven for applying to Origen’s Son a concept whose original home is the realm of incarnate souls bound to think with and through the senses. He uses the same terms for participation to talk about the existence of a natural capacity in a creature—wisdom or rationality, for example—whose exercise is predicated upon the created resemblance between the creature and the “pattern” according to which the creature is made, i.e., the Son. So “each of the wise participates in Christ to the extent that he has the capacity for wisdom, insofar as Christ \textit{is} wisdom, just as each one who possesses power has obtained greater power to the extent that he has shared in Christ, insofar as Christ \textit{is} power.”\(^{61}\) In this case, creatures possess a capacity for some activity that Christ simply is as the Father’s perfect Image.\(^{62}\) So creatures share in the “substance” of Christ but must come to

\(^{58}\) Here Origen agrees with Alcinous’s definition of God as not “qualified (for he is not endowed with quality, nor is his peculiar perfection due to qualification,)” whereas the Son is “qualified” as “divine” so as not to be identified with the self-perfect God the Father. See Alcinous, \textit{Didask.} 10.4, whose use of the term \textit{ἀποτελεσµένον} may echo \textit{Timaeus} 28b1.

\(^{59}\) \textit{Jo.} 2.12: “Perhaps [John] says, ‘And the Word was with God,’ then, ‘And the Word was God,’ that we might understand that the Word \textit{has become} God because he is with God (\textit{τὸν θεόν ἐνίαν ὁ λόγος νοηθῆναι γνώµηνος θεός}).” The emphasis is not on a temporal change of going from one state to another, but on the ontological priority of the Father to the Son.

\(^{61}\) \textit{Jo.} 1.246: ‘Εκαστος δε των σοφων καθ’ όσον χωρει σοφιας, τοσοουτω μετέχει Χριστοι, καθ’ ο σοφια εστιν· ὅσπερ έκαστος των δυναμων εχοντων κρείττονα δοσιν ειληχε της δυναµεως, τοσοουτων Χριστοι, καθ’ ο δυναµις εστι, κεκοινωνηκεν. Note that the terms for participation (\textit{μετέχω}, \textit{λαµβάνω}, and \textit{κοινωνία}) are used synonymously.

\(^{62}\) A similar case is \textit{Jo.} 1.269-270, where “all men participate in [Christ] insofar as he is Word.” Here the capacity is \textit{Logos}, and Origen uses Paul’s statement that “the Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart,” to support his supposition that even those who have sinned “have already partaken of him” because they possess a fundamental capacity for reason.
realize Christ’s likeness through their actions—actions, in turn, which are not guaranteed always to mirror the archetype. His application of the same metaphor to the Son introduces a pronounced ambiguity about what it means for the Son to be God the Father’s “image”—even with qualifications like eternal, incomparable, and prototypical.

Origen speaks repeatedly of God the Father as “first” and the Son as “second” in “order” (taxei). He can speak of both the Son and the Holy Spirit as “transcending other created beings,” but statements like these do not preclude the possibility that the Son and the Holy Spirit themselves are hierarchically arranged with respect to one another, and with respect to the Father. The Son, he says, is “older than” the Holy Spirit. Origen’s use of πρεσβυτέρος recalls Numenius’s use of metaphorical age to order divine principles in a hierarchy. The Holy Spirit, too, receives from and participates in the Son:

The Holy Spirit seems to have need of the Son ministering to his hypostasis, not only for it to be, but also for it to be wise, and rational, and just, and whatever other thing we ought to understand it to be by participation in the aspects of Christ which we mentioned previously.

Origen knows the generic use of a grammar of participation, also used by Numenius, to place first divine principles in a hierarchy, and he applies the grammar to his own triad: the Holy Spirit participates in the Son, and the Son in the Father. This arrangement appears in a much later book of the Commentary, where Origen states that “the Father

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63 e.g., Jo. 13.151. ἀλλ’ ἡμείς παλαβόμενοι τῷ σωτηρίῳ λέγοντι: “Ὁ πατὴρ ὁ πέμψας με μείζων μου ἐστίν” καὶ διὰ τούτου μὴ ἐνεγκόντι μηδὲ τὴν ἀναθήματος προσηγορίαν τὴν κυρίαν καὶ ἀληθὴ καὶ τελείαν παραδέξασθαι αὐτῷ προσφερομένην, ἀλλὰ ἀναφέροντι αὐτὴν εὐχαριστίας τῷ πατρί μετ᾽ ἐπιτιμήσεως πρὸς τὸν βουλόμενον ὑπερθέκασθι τοῖς ἑαυτῷ, πάντων μὲν τῶν γενητῶν ὑπερέχειν ὑπὸ συγκρίσεως ἀλλ’ ὑπερβαλλόμενη ὑπορθή θαμαὶ τῷ σωτηρίῳ καὶ τῷ πνεύματι τὸ άγιον, ὑπερεχόμενον τοσοῦτον ἢ καὶ πλέον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς, ὅσῳ ὑπερέχει αὐτός καὶ τὸ άγιον πνεῦμα τῶν λουπῶν, οὗ τῶν τυχόντων ὄντων. Ὁση γὰρ δοξολογία τοῦ ὑπερέχοντος θρόνων, κυριοτήτων, ἀρχῶν, ἐξουσιών, καὶ παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι, πρὸς τούτους καὶ άγίων ἀγγέλων καὶ πνευμάτων καὶ ψυχῶν δικαίων, τί δεῖ καὶ λέγειν;

64 Jo. 2.73; Heine, trans. 113; πρεσβυτέρου παρ’ αὐτῷ τὸ λόγον τυγχάνοντος.

65 Cf. Numenius, Frags. 16.3; 17.7; 24.65.

66 Jo. 2.76, οὗ χρῆσθαι δοκεῖ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα διακονοῦντος αὐτοῦ τῇ ὑποστάσει, οὐ μόνον εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἀλλὰ καὶ σοφόν εἶναι καὶ λογικόν καὶ δίκαιον καὶ πάν ὀσπιστῶν χρῆ αὐτὸ νοεῖν τυγχάνειν κατὰ μετωχίαν τῶν προειρημένον ἤλθεν Χριστοῦ ἐπινοιών.
exceeds the Savior by as much as, or even more than, the Savior himself and the Holy Spirit exceed the rest.”

A graded grammar of participation thus appears to be a relatively stable feature of his trinitarian thought.

Jo. 2.19-21: Non-Reciprocal Dependence, Transmission, and Loss

(19) Some, however, have probably taken offense at what we said when we described the Father as the true God but, in addition to the true God, said many gods have come into existence by participation in the God. These people might fear that the glory of the one who transcends all creation is put on a level with the others who happen to have the title “god.” Because of this we must set forth this explanation in addition to the difference which has already been explained in relation to which we declared that God the Word is the minister of deity to all the other Gods. (20) The reason which is in each rational being has the same position in relation to the Word which is in the beginning with God, which is God the Word, which God the Word has with god. For as the Father is very God and true God in relation to the image and images of the image (wherefore also men are said to be “according to the image,” not “images”), so is the very Word in relation to the reason in each one. For both hold the place of a source; the Father, that of divinity, the Son, that of reason. (21) As, therefore, there are many gods, but for us there is “one God, the Father,” and there are many lords, but for us there is “one Lord, Jesus Christ,” so there are many words, but we pray that the Word who is in the beginning, who is with God, God the Word, may be with us.

Here Origen reiterates his point that he teaches a vertical hierarchy. Some of his readers, he says, might be worried that he has brought “the Father as the true God” down by speaking of the participation of other entities in the one true God. According to this arrangement, the procession from Father to Son and rational entities would be horizontal, not vertical. Origen is clear about what he means. Both the Father and the Son “hold the

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67 Jo. 13.151; Pace Beeley, p. 321n48 ad loc. Beeley asserts that Origen “is merely using two senses of greatness at the same time, as several orthodox theologians will also do later.” The problem with this interpretation is that the distinction Beeley asserts Origen knows (“two senses of greatness”) is not in evidence here or elsewhere. In fact, Origen does not distinguish, for example, between a “grammar of participation” as applied to the Trinity and a “grammar of participation” as applied to the order of creatures.
place of a source,” but they are not the source of the same quality at the same level. “The Father [is source] of divinity, the Son . . . of reason.”

Scholars often associate two components of Platonist causality with Plotinus and later forms of Neoplatonism. These are the principle of non-reciprocal dependence, and the principle that a cause is superior to its effect. As we have seen, both principles precede Plotinus. Consider, first, the doctrine that a cause is greater than its effect. Scholars have been tempted to identify this idea with Plotinus and to associate its presence elsewhere as a marker of Plotinian influence. However, the doctrine is not distinctive of Plotinus and can be found in earlier Hellenistic philosophy.

As we have seen, emanation and causality are linked by the Platonist axiom that an Idea is a cause. Origen’s characterization of the Son as “image” represents a Christian appropriation of Numenius’s depiction of the Demiurge as an “image.” Origen’s trinity in Jo. 1-2 is framed in terms of a causal procession in which each cause produces an effect both similar and inferior to its cause. The Father causes the Son to be divine, and the divine Son causes all rational entities, beginning with the Holy Spirit, to be what they are.

Next, consider the principle of non-reciprocal dependence reinforces the hierarchical character of Origen’s procession. Origen acknowledges that some “people might fear that the glory of the one who transcends all creation (τὴν τοῦ πᾶσαν κτίσιν

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68 In the case of Plotinus, the first principle is detailed by Dominic O’Meara, “The Hierarchical ordering of reality in Plotinus,” in The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus, ed. Lloyd Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 66-81; the second by A.C. Lloyd, “The Principle that the Cause is greater than its Effect,” Phronesis 21.2 (1976), 146-156. Lloyd shows that on this point Plotinus was not novel, strictly speaking, but made much of a principle already in circulation in earlier philosophical tradition.

This is an explicit appropriation of the principle that a cause is superior to its effect. Here
the Father is superior to the Word in the same way that the Word is superior to all its
rational effects. Note the analogous application of the title αὐτόλογος to the Son in this
passage. The title provides the Son a role of “source” (πηγή) comparable to that of God
the Father. Humans exist “according to the image,” but are not themselves “images” of
the one Word. As God the Father is to the Word, so the Word is to all “words,” or rational
creatures.

Origen’s analogy runs in two directions. It guarantees the logikoi’s dependence
upon and inferiority to the Image for their rationality. It also suggests that the Son draws
from and is dependent upon αὐτόθεος, the “only True God.” The Word is “according to
the Father” but is not himself to be identified as the source of divinity, as αὐτόθεος. As
the logikoi contemplate the Logos, so the Logos contemplates the “fatherly depths” of

Jo. 2.19: Ἀλλ᾽ ἔπει εἰκός προσκόψειν τινάς τῶν εἰρημένως, ἐνός μὲν ἀληθινοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀπαγγευμένου παρὰ δὲ τῶν ἀληθινῶν θεῶν θεῶν πλείόνων τῇ μετοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ γενομένων, εὐλαβευμένως τὴν τῶν πάσων κτίσιν ὑπερέχουντος δόξαν ἔξισσάαι τοῖς λοιποῖς τῆς “θεός” προσηγορίας τυγχάνουσι, πρὸς τῇ ἀποδεδομένῃ διαφορᾷ, καθ’ ἣν εὐφάσκομεν πάσι τοῖς λοιποῖς θεοῖς διάκονον εἶναι τῆς θεότητος τῶν θεῶν λόγων, καὶ ταύτην παραστατέον.

Jo. 2.20: Ὁ γὰρ ἐν έκάστῳ λόγῳ τῶν λογικῶν τότων τῶν λόγων ἔχει πρὸς τόν ἐν ἀρχῇ λόγων πρὸς τὸν θεόν ὅτα λόγων θεοῦ, ἐν ὁ θεός λόγος πρὸς τὸν θεοὶ· ὡς γὰρ αὐτόθεος καὶ ἀληθινός θεός ὁ πατὴρ πρὸς εἰκόνα καὶ εἰκόνας τῆς εἰκόνος, —διὸ καὶ “κατ’ εἰκόνα” λέγονται εἰναὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι, οὐκ “εἰκόνες” — οὕτως ὁ αὐτόλογος πρὸς τὸν ἐν ἐκάστῳ λόγων. Αμφότερα γὰρ πηγῆς ἔχει χώραν, ὃ μὲν πατήρ θεότητος, ὃ δὲ υἱὸς λόγων.
αὐτόθεος. As the logikoi participate in the Logos as αὐτόλογος, so the Logos participates in αὐτόθεος.

Origen’s use of participation in Jo. 2.19-21 underwrites a mechanism of epistemological access to God the Father provided by knowledge of the Son, the “invisible image” according to which the each individual rational Nous is constructed.72 The Father is participated in by his sole and perfect image, the Son. This “invisible” image, in turn, is the source of the Holy Spirit’s existence and character. As the Holy Spirit participates in that image, it is enabled to serve as the source of holiness for the saints who participate in him.73 Origen’s chain of epistemological access doubles as an “imitative chain”; less advanced saints imitate more advanced saints, who in turn work toward equality with the angels (Jo. 2.82), the chief of which is the Holy Spirit.74 The Holy Spirit perfectly participates in the Son and is infused with the Son’s perfections, which communicate the invisible Father as his perfect and invisible “image.”75 The only quality in which the Son participates is divinity. So his reception of divinity is the only way in which the Son is inferior to the Father as the product of God the Father. Of all

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72 For an intriguing comparison of Origen to Atticus and Numenius on the question of the Second Principle’s knowledge of the First, see Rowan Williams, “The Son’s Knowledge of the Father in Origen,” in Origeniana Quarta, ed. Lothar Lies (Vienna: Tyrolia, 1987), 146-53. Williams’ comparison leads him to conclude that, “In two respects, Origen clearly ranges himself with Neoplatonism over against some of its precursors: he accepts that the logic of placing the First beyond intellect and insisting on its simplicity involves the identification of intellect with the Second, and the assimilation of intellect and demiurge; and he holds (as far as we can see) that the intelligibilia are within the being of the Second qua wisdom” (149).

73 Cf. Princ. 1.2.6, where Origen states that the Son “is therefore the image of the invisible God, the Father, being the truth, when considered in relation to the Father himself, and the image, when considered in relation to us, to whom he reveals the Father; through which image we know the Father, whom ‘no one’ else ‘knoweth save the Son and he to whom the Son hath willed to reveal him.’ And he reveals the Father by being himself understood.”

74 Didymus cites Luke 20:36 as evidence for the idea that human beings strive to become like angels—a verse Origen employs three times in Princ. to make a similar point. See Princ. I.8.4, II.2.2, and especially IV.4.2: “. . . when the saints reach the height of perfection they are said to be made like, or equal to, the angels, according to the gospel statement.”

75 For more on the Holy Spirit’s participation in the Son, see Chapter 4.
other qualities or virtues he is a source comparable to αὐτόθεος. So Origen elsewhere speaks of the Son as αὐτολόγος, αὐτοσοφία, and αὐτοαλήθεια.\textsuperscript{76}

According to Origen, the Son receives the quality of divinity from the Father in an eternal act of contemplation, and here it is important to note that how Origen elsewhere defines participation complicates his application of the metaphor in \textit{Jo.} 2.19-21. In \textit{Jo.} 2.52, for example, Origen describes what it means for any soul to “participate.” In doing so, he uses a key term about the psychological aspect of participation in describing contemplation: ἐναπομάζασθαι. According to Origen,

no one who participates in justice and the power to judge people will be able to receive the impressions (ἐναπομάζασθαι) of justice and of judging so completely in his own soul that he falls short of absolute justice and judgment in no way, just as a painter will not be able to give a share of all the unique features of what is being painted to his painting.\textsuperscript{77}

This passage occurs in a section of \textit{Jo.} 2 in which Origen is describing the way rational entities participate in justice. Origen does not apply it directly to the Son; he is speaking here of the consequences of a rational soul’s participation in the “Idea” of justice. Nevertheless, the consequences for speaking of the Son as “participating in” the Father hang in the air, because Origen does not distinguish between senses of terms for participation when he applies them to the Son.

Finally, we may consider a pivotal passage that should be read in light of Origen’s Numenian debts:

\begin{quote}
(75) We are persuaded that there are three hypostases, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and we believe that only the Father is unbegotten. We admit, as more
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{76} See, for example, \textit{Cels.} 3.41, a later text that reinforces the model of \textit{Jo.} 1-2.

\textsuperscript{77} Origen, \textit{Jo.} 2.52. ὤδεις γὰρ τῶν μετεχόντων δικαιοσύνης καὶ τῆς τοῦ κρίνειν λαὸν δυνάμεις οὕτω πάντη ἐναπομάζασθαι ἕαυτῷ τῇ ψυχῇ δυνήσεται τοὺς τῆς δικαιοσύνης τύπους καὶ τοῦ κρίνειν, ὡστε ἐν μηδενὶ ἀπόδειν τῆς αὐτοδικαιοσύνης καὶ τῆς αὐτοκρίσεως, ὡς οὐδὲ ὁ γράφων εἰκόνα οἶος οὖσα ἐστὶ μεταδοῦναι πάντων τῶν ὑπὸ γραφομένου ἰδιωμάτων τῇ γραφῇ. Cf. \textit{Cels.} 6.64 and Ayres \textit{ad loc.} in “Holy Spirit as ‘Undiminished Giver,’” 62.
pious and as true, that the Holy Spirit is the most honored of all things made through the Word, and that he is [first] in rank of all the things which have been made by the Father through Christ. (76) Perhaps this is the reason the Spirit too is not called son of God, since the only begotten alone is by nature a son from the beginning. The Holy Spirit seems to have need of the Son ministering to his hypostasis, not only for it to exist, but also for it to be wise, and rational, and just, and whatever other thing we ought to understand it to be by participation in the aspects of Christ which we mentioned previously.  

Origen here famously states clearly that the Holy Spirit is the “first” of “all things made through the Word,” and we will return to this passage in Chapter 4, in order to examine more carefully its consequences for Origen’s pneumatology. For now it is important to note that the τάξις that emerges in Jo. 2.75-76 turns on the principle of non-reciprocal dependence: the Son participates in the Father, but the Father does not participate in the Son; the Holy Spirit participates in the Son, but the Son does not participate in the Holy Spirit. The suspicion that Origen thinks this principle is applicable to the Son and the Spirit is confirmed by his use of the same terms in their cases as those he uses to describe the hierarchy at the level of rational creatures.

Conclusion

Origen’s Commentary on John invokes a scheme of procession that resembles hierarchical orderings of Gnostic, Christian, and Platonic precedent. Origen’s “triad” is at home in this broad tradition. God the Father, αὐτόθεος, produces an image, the Son he

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78 Jo. 2.75-76; (75.) Ἡμεῖς μέντοι γε τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις πειθόμενοι τυχανέων, τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸ ἄγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ ἄγεννην μηδὲν ἔτερον τοῦ πατρὸς εἶναι πιστεύοντες, ὡς εὐσεβέστερον καὶ ἄληθες προσεμέθα τὸ πάντον διὰ τοῦ λόγου γενομένοι τὸ ἄγιον πνεῦμα πάντων εἶναι τιμώτερον, καὶ τάξει πρῶτον πάντων τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ πατρός διὰ Χριστοῦ γεγενημένον. (76.) Καὶ τάχα αὕτη ἔστιν ἡ αἰτία τοῦ μὴ καὶ αὐτὸ υἱόν χρηματίζειν τοῦ θεοῦ, μόνου τοῦ μονογενοῦς φύσει υἱόν ἀργήθην τυχάνοντος, οὐ χρησίμως διεκε τὸ ἄγιον πνεῦμα διακοινούντος αὐτοῦ τῇ ὑποστάσει, οὐ μόνον εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἀλλὰ καὶ σοφὸν εἶναι καὶ λογικὸν καὶ δίκαιον καὶ πᾶν ὀτιποτὰν χρῆ αὕτω νοεῖν τυχάνειν κατὰ μετοχὴν τῶν προερχόμενων ἢμῖν Χριστοῦ ἐπινοιῶν.
generates and the Word he possesses. This image, in turn, is the instrument by which he produces multiple rational images. The first of the rational images produced by the Father through his Word is the Holy Spirit. The Son’s role as mediator of divinity and agent of creation is clear enough. Analogously, the Holy Spirit is the agent neither of creation nor of rationality, but the primal source of holiness in the saints.

The hierarchical model of Jo. remains in spite of Origen’s claims that all three of the divine causes are “divine,” because Origen articulated his trinity in a context in which divine causes were regularly ordered and ranged in hierarchical terms. The scholar who wishes to read this model out of Origen must furnish statements that explicitly mitigate the plain consequences of Origen’s grammar of participation.

The net effect of the foregoing argument, then, is to shift the burden of proof to scholars who would read a hierarchical taxis out of Origen. Not only does Origen not distance his own presentation of the three first divine principles from precedents that ordered them hierarchically, but he overtly adopts the terminology and conceptual tendencies shared by all of those precedents to order the three in a series of graded entities. It is my contention that he would have been surprised by anyone who did not think a “hierarchical triad” was the obvious, traditional Christian arrangement. Origen remains committed to this model of the trinity for at least the early period of his theological career. In Chapter 4, I will argue that the net effect of Origen’s hierarchy—a “low” pneumatology—remains visible for the length of Origen’s career. But first, we turn to the polemical reasons that led Origen to adopt a grammar of participation that distinguished the triad in a graded hierarchy: monarchian theology.
Chapter 3
“That They May Know You, the Only True God”:
Participation’s Anti-Monarchian Function

Introduction

With Origen’s appropriation of Numenius in view, we may now consider Origen’s theology within a frame of theological polemics. This chapter uncovers the way Origen put his appropriation of Numenius to the service of an anti-monarchian agenda. Origen admitted that God the Father alone is the primary principle of a triadic hierarchy. The Son’s participation in the monarchy of the Father forms the basis of a strategy for distinguishing the Son from the Father, and the Holy Spirit from the Son, and for explaining the continuity of divinity that courses down through the hierarchical triad to the rest of the rational creation.

Origen uses participation to resist monarchian theology with three related tactics. First, he consistently avoids “self-production” terminology in referring to the second person. Second, he emphasizes the Son’s eternal and non-temporal reception from the Father. Third, he explains that the Son possesses divinity “essentially,” as a distinct entity subordinated to the Father. These three stratagems are developed on the basis of an appeal to a logic of procession of entities that participate in one another hierarchically. With these arguments in mind, we will review two “bogeymen” that often plague modern attempts to understand Origen’s “triadology”: the shift of “containment” language from a physical to an epistemological sense, and the doctrine of eternal generation of the Son.
When contextualized as anti-monarchian, these elements of Origen’s theology, so often puzzled over, take on a new light.

Previous scholarly treatments recognize the breadth of Origen’s use of participation language, but none has contextualized this language within a polemical setting. A growing body of scholarship has reinforced various links between Origen’s exegesis, his theology, and his polemic against Roman monarchianism.¹ On the other hand, Origen’s readers have neglected to account for his engagements with monarchianism or have overused later doctrinal categories to judge Origen’s thought. Some have judged the results of Origen’s use of a participation logic to be a “subordinationist” trinitarian theology.² However, such critics tend to operate with too little self-critical awareness about the rhetorical use of “subordinationism” as a heuristic category: it belies doctrinal standards foreign to Origen’s context and so remains anachronistic if not used with qualification. On the other hand are Origen’s latter-day defenders, some of whom either downplay³ or ignore altogether⁴ the significance of the


² A good example of a view like this is J. Nigel Rowe, Origen’s Doctrine of Subordination: A Study in Origen’s Christology (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 3-33.


metaphysics of participation in Origen’s thought to such a degree that Origen cannot have meant what he said. My account charts a middle course between ignoring the consequences of “participation” for Origen’s Trinitarian theology, on the one hand, and overreaching with anachronistic judgment, on the other.

**Roman Monarchian Theology and Origen’s Commentary on John 1–2**

Before addressing Origen’s *Commentary on John*, it is important to acknowledge two stages of development in monarchian theology up to this point. At the early stage, Noetus had held to the paradoxical idea that God the Father “suffered” in the Son. Later versions of monarchian theology used Stoic mixture theory to construct a more nuanced view. Callistus of Rome, for example, taught not that God the Father suffered, but that God the Son was the divine nature—God the Father—mixed with human nature. This is what Callistus must have meant when he referred to a “total blending” (συμπάσχειν) of the Father with the Son, invoking a Stoic theory of mixture in which each element does not lose its individual qualities. The two can be extracted whole and intact after the mixture, even though they are more closely mixed than a jar of oil and water shaken vigorously.⁶

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⁶ The Stoics had in mind the *sui generis* total blending of body and soul.
Callistus, Heine argues, applied this Stoic theory of total blending to the incarnation. On this view, the Father, or divine *Pneuma*, is totally blended with the flesh, or Son, which, at the death of the Son, is again separated. The Father, on this account, need not be said to have “died.” Callistus’ opponents did not need to exaggerate much to make the claim that the theory involves the Father in some kind of “suffering.” On the other hand, Callistus’ construal might have been misread by opponents like Hippolytus. The term at the heart of the theory, συμπάσχειν, means “to suffer with,” or “to blend totally,” depending on one’s philosophical awareness. Hippolytus and others could seize upon the similarity of the philosophical term in order to conflate Callistus’ theory with older patripassian theories of Noetus and his followers.

Though it is unclear whether Origen opposed Callistus himself, the monarchianism he opposed was more advanced than that of Noetus. His opponents did not teach that the Father suffered and died. They were intent on teaching that, because there are not two ultimate principles, the Father and the Son are one substance (*ousia*). Origen famously opposed this construal by arguing in favor of the Son’s eternal existence, distinct from the Father. In what follows, I will draw our attention to the anti-monarchian motivation for several key components of Origen’s theological exegesis in the *Commentary on John*.

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7 See Heine, “Callistus”: 76.
8 For more on this, see Heine, “Callistus”: 74-77.
God the Father, αὐτόθεος, and the Question of “Self-Production”

As we have seen, in the Commentary on John, Origen refers to the Son as θεός, but not ὁ θεός, and applies the title αὐτόθεος exclusively to God the Father. Origen’s anti-monarchian agenda helps to explain his reservation of a particular title for God the Father alone. Then, too, it helps to clarify the theological consequences that follow from that reservation. Origen’s use of αὐτόθεος is a neologism. It invites comparison with a family of titles for “self-produced” ascribed to the highest deity by a range of Hellenistic sources—e.g., αὐτογένεθλος, αὐτόγονος, αὐτόφυτος, αὐτογενής, αὐτογένητος. In spite of the similarity between αὐτόθεος and those titles, Origen generally avoids application of terms indicating “self-production” to the Father or the Son. Instead, the Father is αὐτόθεος, and the Son is αὐτολόγος and αὐτοσοφία. We should pause to

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9 Jo. 2.17.
10 The results of a TLG search suggest that Origen was first to use the word αὐτόθεος. On the other hand, compounds formed with “auto” are attested as apax legmomena in other figures, such as Numenius, who appears to have been the only figure to use the term αὐτοτελής αἰτία which M. Frede (“The Original Notion of a Cause,” 138) explains as representing the Stoic “perfect cause” (cf. Cicero, De Fato 41; see also Alcinous, Didask. 10.3 and Dillon, The Middle Platonists, 283, which uses the term in combination with two other similar –teles titles for God—aiteles and panteles). Whether Origen coined the term αὐτόθεος to read that causality onto God the Father is an interesting question. The only place in the Didymean corpus where αὐτοτελής appears is Trin. 7.8.13, line 10. Jerome translates some term repeatedly in DSS with causa, often referring to the Holy Spirit as “cause,” though not the causa perfecta of Cicero (see e.g., DSS 46, 49, 71, 84, 202, 206, 238). Dillon’s commentary on Alcinous suggests some ways in which Middle Platonism is a more appropriate background for Origen’s αὐτόθεος as the first in a series of sources.
consider Origen’s studied avoidance of terms for self-production.\textsuperscript{12} In order to understand Origen’s avoidance, it will help to attend to the intellectual culture that preceded him.

The esteem afforded the Father by allowing him alone the title αὐτόθεος is similar to the kind of supremacy the cult of Theos Hypsistos reserved for one transcendent deity,\textsuperscript{13} and one alone. Though Origen’s αὐτόθεος does not replicate the terminology of the cult of the Highest God, Origen’s reasons for avoiding that terminology are possibly more complex than one might expect: Origen’s avoidance of such terms may have more to do with their having been co-opted by Roman monarchians than with their association with pagan religion.\textsuperscript{14} In order to underscore his own theology’s similarity to such religious proclivities, yet keep his theology distant from the “self-generative” God of the monarchians, Origen coined a new term for the “highest God”: αὐτόθεος.

\textit{Self-Production of the Second Principle}

A theme apparent in triadic Gnosticism which returns in third-century Christianity is the self-production of the scheme’s second principle. Gnostic theologies knew a wide range of terms for divine self-production.\textsuperscript{15} One of the earliest and most striking examples of the second principle’s self-generation appears in another citation by Hippolytus. It regards the sect of the \textit{Peratae}. Hippolytus reports that they knew of a first

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{14} On which, see Chapter 4.
\end{flushright}
God, unoriginate (ἀγέννητον), a second deity, self-produced (αὐτογενές), and a third god, begotten (γεννητόν). The procession moves from a principle unproduced through a principle that self-generates to a principle produced by another. The Naasenes, too, know of an autogenetic figure. Gnostics had a number of resources at their disposal for the development of the idea that the second principle produces itself. John Whittaker would draw our attention to terminology and concepts endemic to Stoic pantheism (the cosmos spontaneously produces itself); Neopythagoreanism (the series of numbers is self-generated); and tragic literature (images of divine self-renewal). Whittaker finds the most likely inspiration in oracular literature, which provided a common basis for Gnostics, orthodox Christians, and pagan Platonists alike.

Self-production was also a theological metaphor favored by pantheistic Stoics, like Seneca, who could speak of God as the one who produces himself. By Clement’s day, as Whittaker puts it, “one looked . . . beyond the universe and even beyond the demiurgic Nous in quest of the ultimate.” The self-productive God had been subordinated to a higher, unoriginated and transcendent deity. Clement quotes the “Thracian Orpheus,” who writes of the Demiurge that “he is one, self-generating (αὐτογενής); and from Him alone all things proceed, and in them He Himself exerts his activity: no mortal beholds him, but he beholds all.” Elsewhere Clement quotes the classical Perithous (of either Euripides or Critias) and glosses its use of a divine epithet,

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17 Hippolytus, Haer. 5.12; see Whittaker, “Self-Generating Principles,” 184-5, ad loc. και έστι το μὲν πρώτον ἀγέννητον, ὀπέρ ἐστὶν ἄγαθὼν τέλειον· τὸ δὲ δεύτερον ἄγαθὼν αὐτογενές· τὸ δὲ τρίτον γεννητόν.
19 According to Hippolytus, Ref. V.10.
33 Apud Lactantius, Inst. 1.7, Seneca, fr. 15 Haase: Deus ipse se fecit.
38 Coxe trans., ANF 2, p. 193, slightly modified: εἶς ἐστ’ αὐτογενής, ἐνός ἐκχωνα πάντα τέτυκται· ἐν δ’ αὐτοῖς αὐτὸς παρινίσσεται, οὐδὲ τις αὐτῶν εἰσορῷ θνητῶν, αὐτὸς δὲ γε πάντας ὀρᾶται.
τὸν αὐτοφυῆ, as a way of speaking about the “Demiurgic Nous” (ἐνταῦθα γὰρ μὲν
αὐτοφυῆ τὸν δημιουργὸν νοῦν εἴρηκεν). For Clement, as with Hippolytus’s Peratae, the
second principle is self-productive and subordinated to a higher first principle. Clement
posits a transcendent Father in order to preempt Stoic pantheism, but he does not deny
that the second principle self-generates insofar as the Logos became flesh. So Clement
seems to teach that the incarnation of the Logos was the second principle’s “self-
generation.”

A tradition like the one known to Clement remained in Alexandria for a long time.
The Chaldean Oracles could speak of God as αὐτογένεθλος. The De trinitate associated
with Didymus quotes a related fragment of the Perithous, which glosses αὐτογένεθλος
with the following definition of self-generation: “creating itself, ever new, not created
(Τίκτων αὐτὸς ἐαυτὸν, ἅκι νέος, οὐ ποιητός).” Turning to school Platonism, Numenius
reports that the second principle “makes an Idea of himself.” Plotinus avoids stating
explicitly that the second principle, Nous, self-generates. He avoids such language
probably because he was nervous about his position’s being confused or elided with
popular Gnosticism. According to Plotinus, the Nous in no way originates from the One

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39 Clement, Strom. 5.14.114.3; and Whittaker, “Self-Generating Principles,” 182 ad loc.
41 A key biblical text in Jo. 2.12-20 is John 17:3 (“that they may see you, the one true God”). John
17:3 does not play a role in the monarchian thought opposed by Tertullian (Against Praxeas) or Hippolytus
(Against Noetus/Against Heresies). Whether the monarchians faced by Origen employed the verse or not,
Origen invokes John 17:3 as a tactic in anti-monarchian polemics.
42 Clement, Strom. 5.3.16.5; and see Whittaker, “The Historical Background of Proclus’ Doctrine
of the ΑΥΘΥΠΟΣΤΑΤΑ,” in De Jamblique a Proclus, ed. Heinrich Dörrie (Genève: Vandoeuvres, 1974),
224.
43 Chald. Or. 39; Ruth Majercik, ed. and trans., The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and
Commentary (New York: Brill, 1989), 62-63. The term αὐτογένεθλος reappears in (Pseudo-)Didymus,
Trin. 3 (PG 39 788.9) and Gregory of Nyssa, Eun. 3.8.29.9.
45 Trin. 3.2.1 (PG 39.788); c. 390? CE.
46 Frag. 16, ed. Des Places; ὁ γὰρ δεύτερος διττός ὃν αὐτοποιεῖ τὴν ἰδέαν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὸν κόσμον.
as an act on the part of the One, even if the One does generate the Nous. Porphyry was less allergic to borrowing from the Gnostics than was Plotinus. A trajectory of the second principle’s self-generation runs from Porphyry (Hist. Phil. Fr. 18) to Marius Victorinus (Adv. Arium 3.17.15; 4.13.5).

In Christian circles, a period of stigmatization ensued in the third century because the second principle’s “self-production” had been a preferred idiom of earlier monarchians. As John Whittaker notices, Hippolytus accuses Noetus of predicking his patripassianist identification of the Father and Son on the notion of divine self-generation. Subsequent abstention from the metaphor of self-production for the second person thus appears as a reaction to this monarchian tradition. This reaction helps to explain Origen’s reservation of the title αὐτόθεος for God the Father alone, in Commentary on John and On First Principles.

Had Origen employed the terms of “self-production” in the case of the Son, he would have had good precedent for doing so, but he did not. Thus, Origen avoids the terminology of “self-production” in the face of a tradition that had grown comfortable with it. His avoidance was probably not due to Gnosticism’s use of the terms; Clement’s use of the language testifies to an environment in which Gnostics were not radically against the trend on this score, but were reflecting a doctrinal commonplace. However,

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47 Pépin, 305, reads Enn. V, 2.11.1.7-8 this way. The question of the One’s “self-production,” or “self-reflexivity,” as Lloyd Gerson terms it, is another matter. I am persuaded by Gerson’s point that, for Plotinus, “self-reflexivity does not compromise simplicity,” and that Plotinus’s reflections on the One are in keeping with Aristotle’s similar comfort in speaking of “thought thinking itself” without worrying that such speaking would problematize the first principle’s simplicity. In any event, Plotinus appears more comfortable than his followers—especially Proclus—would have been, to speak of the One’s self-causation, for example, in the pivotal Ennead VI.8. See especially Enn. VI.8.13.57, 14.41, 16.15, 16.17, and Lloyd Gerson, “The ‘Neoplatonic’ Interpretation of Plato’s Parmenides,” IJPT, forthcoming.

48 Here the studies of Whittaker are crucial. See Whittaker, “Self-Generating Principles,” 178-180; and Whittaker, “Historical Background,” especially 210-214.

49 See Hippolytus, Ref. IX.10 (9.5 in ANF’s numbering).
Gnostics like Hippolytus’s *Peratae* were not the only potential cause for a stigmatization of self-production talk in the third century. The point I want to emphasize here is that language of “self-production” formed the basis of a concept useful to monarchians. The Father and Son, according to some versions of monarchical theology, comprise one entity that self-generates, now as Father, now as Son. Hippolytus’ report of Noetus’ doctrine is a case in point:

Now, that Noetus affirms the Son and Father are the same, no one is ignorant. But he makes his statement thus: “When indeed, then, the Father had not been born, He yet was justly styled ‘Father’; and when it pleased Him to undergo generation, having been begotten, He Himself became His own Son, not another’s.” For in this manner he thinks to establish the sovereignty of God, alleging that Father and Son, so called, are one and the same (substance), not one individual produced from a different one, but Himself from Himself; and that He is styled by name Father and Son, according to vicissitude of times.

Noetus is supposed to have been concerned that there should not be any kind of “other” production within divine nature. “The Son” was generated “from himself,” not “from

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50 See Whittaker, “Historical Background,” 209-214. Whittaker presses his argument a step too far. He concludes that, because after the monarchical crisis orthodox Christians tended to avoid talk of divine “self-production,” “Christians neglected an important department of theology, and by abandoning the concept of self-generation deprived their theology of a suggestive means of expressing the aseity of the supreme divinity” (Whittaker, 214). Whittaker has not made the case that Christians failed to express such a feature of the divine nature. It is this feature, I suggest, that Origen maintained by coining the term autotheos (Whittaker does not include Origen in his discussion). Notably, the evidence for earlier use of terms related to “self-production” is retained by Clement, falls away with Origen, and returns positively, apparently, only with Cyril of Alexandria. It is also worth noting that the *De trinitate* associated with Didymus retains precisely the sort of application of “self-generation” to the divine nature Whittaker claims is lacking in orthodox Christian circles (see footnote 20 above).

51 ANF trans. p. 128, *Ref.* IX.10, 10-11. ‘Ωτι δὲ καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν υἱὸν εἶναι λέγει καὶ πατέρα, οὐδεὶς ἀναγεννητο· λέγει γὰρ οὕτως· ὅτε μὲν οὖν μὴ γεγένητο ὁ πατήρ, δικαίως πατὴρ προσηγόρευτο· ὅτε δὲ προδόκησε γένεσιν ἐκ παρθένου ὑπομείνα, γεγονεινθείς ὁ πατὴρ υἱὸς ἐγένετο αὐτὸς ἐαυτοῦ, οὐχ ἐπέρου. οὕτως γοῦν δοξεῖ μοναρχίαν συνιστάν, ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ φάσκων υπάρχειν πατέρα καὶ υἱόν, γινόμενον οὐχ ἐπέρου εἰς ἐπέρου, ἀλλ᾿ αὐτὸν ἐξ ἐαυτοῦ· ὑπομείνα μὲν πατέρα καὶ υἱὸν καλούμενον κατὰ χρόνον τροπὴν, ἐνα δὲ ἄντα (M. Marcovich, ed., *Hippolytus. Refutatio omnium haeresium*, PTS 25 [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986], 348). Similar but not identical phrasing reappears in Hippolytus’ *Contra Noetum*. Early in the account (*CN* 3.2.3), Hippolytus uses intensive and reflexive pronouns to underscore that Noetus identifies the Father with Christ as a single agent: Αὐτὸς ἐστι Χριστὸς ὁ Πατήρ, αὐτὸς Υἱός, αὐτὸς ἐγεννηθή, αὐτὸς ἐπαθήν, αὐτὸς ἐαυτὸν ἐγερεῖν. At *CN* 7.4, Noetus’ followers are supposed to confess that the Son is himself the Father (ὁμολογοῦντος αὐτὸν ἐαυτὸν Πατέρα).
another” (αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ, οὐχ ἑτέρου).

Hippolytus elaborates the compressed quotation: the divine manifestation of “the Son” is self from self, not other from other (γινόμενον οὐχ ἑτέρον ἐξ ἑτέρου, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ). Noetus taught divine self-production as a way of protecting the divine μοναρχία.

Echoes of Noetus appear in Origen’s synopsis of the monarchian tradition in the Commentary on John. As Origen says, some “deny that the individual existence of the Son is other than that of the Father” (ιδιότητα υἱοῦ ἑτέρον παρὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς). The monarchian tradition from Noetus forward would have read language of one divine hypostasis proceeding from another as indicating “another from another” (ἕτερον ἐξ ἑτέρου). This sort of differentiation could only entail dithesim, on their account.

Origen uses a grammar of participation to distinguish Son from Father and order the divine first principles in the face of monarchian theology. Given the use Noetus makes of “self-production,” John Whittaker explains the charge later leveled at “Sabellians” that they taught a divine “Father-Son” (ὑιοπάτορα) by reading it as an ascription of “self-production” to the Father-Son deity. So Clement’s use of “self-production” to describe the incarnation would have looked dangerously outdated to Origen. It would have appeared to fit all too neatly with monarchian theologies.

Yet Origen retains a monarchian’s preference for one primary divine principle. He allows that the Father alone is the supreme source of all, and in this way provides a concession to monarchian concerns. He does not, however, deny the Son’s eternal divine

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52 Eusebius will revive the language of “another from another” in his quarrel with Marcellus (e.g., e. θ. 3.5). See Chapters 5-6.

53 Jo. 2.16.

54 The charge resurfaces in Arius’ concerns about Alexander of Alexandria’s theology. See, for example, his letter to Alexander; Urk. 6: “. . . nor as Sabellius claimed, dividing a Monad into a Son-Father (ὑιοπάτορα).”
existence, as a monarchian would have. He refuses the monarchian consequence that the sole divine principle acts under different forms; instead, there are second and third hypostases arranged in a hierarchy. Origen’s ordered use of “auto”-titles to refer to the Father, the transcendent source, and the Son, the secondary source, directly follows from and reinforces his opposition to monarchian theologies of the Son.

The Perfect Participant: Anti-Monarchian Grammar of Participation

I now return to passages from the Commentary on John discussed in Chapter 2. We saw there that Origen drew on Numenius to discover a Platonic hierarchy in the Gospel of John. I now want to draw attention to evidence in these passages that Origen employed that hierarchy as an anti-monarchian strategy.

The Son’s Participation in the Father

Origen’s thought is squarely situated in an Alexandrian tradition that had absorbed middle Platonist tradition. In the Commentary on John, “participation” names likenesses between creatures and their divine sources. By invoking a Platonic grammar of participation, Origen invokes a scheme common to earlier forms of Platonism in which an ultimate source produces entities that resemble one another in a chain or procession. The chain includes both the Holy Spirit’s need for a source in the Son, and the Son’s need for a source in the Father.
However, Origen’s use of participation is no mere aping of Platonist ontology. It provides a way of speaking about the Son’s distinction from the Father, and the Holy Spirit’s distinction from the Son, which prevents the distinctions between the three from collapsing. This grammar ensures both that the relationship between each of the three “hypostases” is incorporeal and that each of the “three” is a real existent produced by an incorporeal cause. The continuity thus provided is one of conceptual similarity: the Son is the primal image of the Father; and the Holy Spirit is the primal participant in the Father’s image. However, because each of the three is a “real existent,” none of the three can be collapsed into another. All three exist eternally. In this way, the grammar of participation grounds Origen’s invalidation of monarchian theology.

Ronald Heine’s arguments that Origen encountered monarchianism at Rome are convincing. Taking Eusebius’s evidence seriously, Heine supposes that Origen was in Rome “when the controversy between Zephyrinus, Callistus and Hippolytus must have been raging.” He argues that Callistus, with his knowledge of Stoic mixture theory, had advanced the monarchian tradition beyond that of the patripassianist theory of Noetus and his followers. Because Origen does not mention patripassianism, but because he does appear sensitive to monarchian theological concerns, he probably does not have the earlier doctrine of Noetus in view. The monarchian doctrine Origen encountered in Rome was more sophisticated than that of Noetus, if it was not that of Callistus himself.

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56 Heine, 57. Heine’s judgment is based in part on Eusebius h.e. 6.14.10, which reports that Origen “visited Rome, ‘desiring,’ as he himself somewhere says, ‘to see the most ancient church of Rome,’” while Zephyrinus was Rome’s bishop. Eusebius’s data implies a period of roughly 199-216 for the dates of Origen’s visit, but it is plausible to suppose, as Heine does, that the visit occurred at a time when Origen could have encountered the debate he appears to know in his early writings.

57 For more on Roman monarchian theology, see H. Hagemann, Die Römische Kirche (Freiburg, Herder, 1864), 300-28. I agree with Heine’s worry that Hagemann presses the evidence too far in attempting to identify Origen’s opponent with Callistus himself. Whether Origen encountered Callistus himself is probably indeterminable.
Origen opposes doctrines dear to monarchians in several places in the

_Commentary on John._ To take just one example, Origen has in view monarchian
when he reports that some use Psalm 44:2 (Ἐξηρεύξατο ᾗ καρδία μου λόγον ἀγαθόν) to
portray the Son as

an expression of the Father occurring in syllables. And in accordance with this
view, if we inquire of them carefully, they do not give him hypostasis, nor do they
make his ousia clear. I do not mean that it is this or that, but in what manner [he
has] ousia.

The last phrase indicates that Origen’s quarrel with monarchians turns not on the question
of what, precisely, the second person is (οὐδέπω φαμέν τουάνδε ἢ τοιάνδε). It rather turns
on precisely how the second person is (ὁποῖς ποτὲ οὐσίαν). Against those who would
disperse the Word’s subsistence into the ethereality of syllables, Origen insists that the
Word is distinct from the Father, “separated and substantiated” (καὶ κεχωρισμένον καὶ
οὐσιώμενον).

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58 Origen’s quarrel with the Gnostic Heracleon in the _Commentary_ is amply documented.
Naturally, Origen’s disagreements with Heracleon tend toward questions about what the “creation” of the
cosmos mentioned by Scripture entails, e.g., were the “aeons” created by God the Father? See, for example,
Jo. 2.100-104, for Origen’s anti-Heraclean exegesis on this point. For clear anti-monarchian statements in
Jo., see 1.243-44, 1.266, 2.12-18, and 13.151-152. An anti-monarchian polemic appears in other texts from
both early and late periods of Origen’s career (early: _Princ._ 1 [pre-230s]; _Dialogue with Hercleides_ 4 [circa
230]; and late: _Contra Celsum_ 8.12 [late 240s]).

59 Jo. 1.151: καὶ μάλιστα ἐπεὶ συνεχῶς χρόνιται τῷ Ἐξηρεύξητο ᾗ καρδία μου λόγον ἀγαθόν, ousia.
οἰόμενον προφοράν πατρικὴν οὐσίαν ἐν συλλαβῖς κειμένην εἶναι τὸν ὑὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο
ὑπόστασιν αὐτῶ, εἰ ἄκριβῶς αὐτῶν πυθανομεθα, οὐ διδάσκειν οὐδὲ οὐσίαν αὐτῶν σαφηνίζουσιν, οὐδέπω
φαμέν τουάνδε ἢ τοιάνδε, ἄλλ’, ὅποις ποτὲ οὐσίαν. See Heine, “Christology of Callistus”, 65. Heine can also
point to Origen’s attack on monarchian exegesis of Ps 44:2 at Jo. 2.280-287, so the anti-monarchian concern
appears to span at least the time-frame of both of the first books of Origen’s _Commentary_. Eusebius repeats
this charge against Marcellus and includes the interpretation of it as the Stoic distinction between the _logos
endiathetos_ / _logos prophorikos_ at _e. th._ II.15.4.

60 Jo. 1.152: Ἰοράν γὰρ ἀπαγγελλόμενον υἱὸν εἶναι νοῆσαι καὶ τῷ τυχόντι ἐστὶν ἀμήχανον. Καὶ
λόγον τοιοῦτόν καθ’ αὐτῶν ξύναι καὶ ὑπὲρ οὐ κεχωρισμένον τὸν πατρός καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο τῷ μὴ ὑφεστάναι
οὐδὲ υἱόν τυγχάνοντα ἢ καὶ κεχωρισμένον καὶ οὐσιώμενον ἀπαγγελλότωσαν ἡμῖν θεόν λόγον. Heine (73ff.)
compares Origen’s exegesis of Ps 44:2 at Jo. 1.151 with Tertullian’s _Against Praxeas_ in order to confirm
Origen’s anti-monarchian polemic. At first glance it is not clear whether Origen here endorses the latter
proposition as his own construal of things, or whether he might be forcing a ridiculous conclusion on his
opponents. It could be that he is forcing a Gnosticizing interpretation of the distinction between Father and
Son, in materialistic terms, on his monarchian opponents. However, Origen elsewhere deploys substantial
language to refer to the distinction between Father and Son, with which pattern the usage here accords. See,
for example, Jo. 2.62, and the discussion of that text in the following Chapter.
At Jo. 2.16, Origen notes two monarchian positions:

Many people who wish to be pious are troubled because they are afraid that they may proclaim two Gods and, for this reason, they fall into false and impious beliefs. They either deny that the individuality of the Son is other than that of the Father by confessing him to be God whom they refer to as “Son” in name at least, or they deny the divinity of the Son and make his individuality and essence as an individual to be different from the Father.  

This passage is well known. Though Origen does not name his opponents, their positions owe to a monarchian concern. They are “troubled because they are afraid that they may proclaim two Gods,” or, in other words, two supreme first principles. Some, Origen says, “confess him to be God whom they refer to as ‘Son’ in name at least,” in order to “deny that the distinctiveness of the Son is other than that of the Father.” This is the first result of a monarchian concern. On the other hand, a monarchian might “deny

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61 Jo. 2.16; Heine trans., 98, slightly modified. Και τὸ πολλὸς φιλοθέους εἶναι εὐχαριστοῦς ταράσσον, εὐλαβουμένους δός ἀναγορεύσαι θεοὺς καὶ παρὰ τοῦτο περιελαβουμένου δός ἀναγορεύσαι θεοὺς καὶ παρὰ τοῦτο περιπίπτοντας γενέσει καὶ ἀσβεσί πόλνασαι, ἤτοι ἀρνούμενός ἵδοιτη αὐτὸν ἐτέραν παρὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρός ὁμολογοῦντας θεὸν εἶναι τὸν μέχρι ὀνόματος παρ’ αὐτοῖς “αὐτὸν” προσαγορεύομεν, ἢ ἀρνούμενός τὴν θεότητα τοῦ αὐτὸν τῆς ὀδύναν κατὰ περιγραφὴν τυχάνουσαν ἐτέραν τοῦ πατρός, οὕτως ἀλλὰ δύναται πρόσαγορεύομεν.  

62 Its sense and significance for Origen’s thought are disputed. Previous generations of scholarship were more willing to acknowledge the ambiguities in Origen’s thought than have been more recent scholars. Christopher Beeley, for example, provides a quietly sterilized account of Origen in Chapter 1 of The Unity of Christ (see especially p. 25ff). The sterilization owes in part to Beeley’s overlooking of participation’s consequences. He can acknowledge that the late Origen of Contra Celsum wrote that the Father “gave a share of himself and his greatness’ to the Son” (Beeley, Unity of Christ, 23, quoting Cels. 6.69). But he skirts the consequences of a statement like this. He later asserts, “Nor does the language of participation . . . signal any lessening of divinity in the Son merely because Origen also uses it to refer to the relationship between the saints and God” (Ibid., 26). He next cites two texts (Frag. Ps. 134.19-20 and Schol.Apoc. 20) to support this claim. These texts are spurious, in part because they fly in the face of so much of Origen’s undisputed corpus’s position regarding participation and the Son. Beeley’s appeal to them is circular. Even if one were to admit them as evidence of Origen’s thought, it is difficult to explain them except as traces of a shift. In that case they would stand at direct odds with the quotation Beeley himself provides from Cels. 6.69, late in Origen’s career. In no case are they straightforwardly compatible with Jo. quoted elsewhere by Beeley. He resorts to the position that the Father’s being “greater than” the Son “refer[s] . . . to the Father’s unique role and character within the Trinity” (Ibid., 26). Yet again a question is begged: what does it mean for the Father to have “a unique role and character within the Trinity” when that role entails being the only fully divine cause? It is not far-fetched to suppose that the consequence of “role and character” excludes the possibility of the Son’s “equal divinity,” since Origen adheres to the principle that a cause is greater than its effect. Ontological disparity between the Father and Son is an ineluctable consequence of Origen’s logic. Beeley does not account for this line of thinking because he deems it unworthy of an accounting; he dismisses it as obviously misguided.

63 ἤδοιτη αὐτὸν ἐτέραν παρὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρός, ὁμολογοῦντας θεὸν εἶναι τὸν μέχρι ὀνόματος παρ’ αὐτοῖς αὐτὸν προσαγορεύομεν.
the divinity of the Son and make his distinctiveness and essence as an individual to be different from the Father.”

This second position resulting from monarchianism might lead to a theology according to which the Son’s divinity is a temporary matter that takes place only at some stage during the life of Jesus.

Eusebius’s evidence that Origen encountered a monarchian by the name of Beryllus is important, because Beryllus’s terminology appears in Origen’s reference to unnamed individuals who deny that the Son possesses “his own distinct existence” (τὴν ἰδιότητα καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν κατὰ περιγραφὴν). Beryllus had denied precisely this. There is no reason to doubt Eusebius’s report that documents were still in circulation in the early fourth century testifying to exchanges between Origen and Beryllus, whom Origen purportedly won over with personal discussion.

Here is what Eusebius says of Beryllus’ doctrine:

He dared to assert that our Saviour and Lord did not pre-exist in a distinct form of being of his own before his abode among men, and that he does not possess a divinity of his own, but only that of the Father dwelling in him.

According to this report, Beryllus claimed that Christ did not “pre-exist” (προ ödeστάναι) in a distinct form of being (κατ’ ἰδίαν οὐσίαν περιγραφὴν). Beryllus taught a version of

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64 ἡ ἀρνοῦμενος τὴν θεότητα τοῦ υἱοῦ τιθέντας δὲ αὐτῷ τὴν ἰδιότητα καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν κατὰ περιγραφὴν τυγχάνουσαν ἐπέραν τοῦ πατρός. Heine notes that these two options might be referred to as modalist and dynamic forms of monarchianism, respectively. The modalist is the version of monarchianism with which Origen takes issue. Dynamic monarchianism, on the other hand, leads to a form of adoptionism, whereby it is the Son’s human nature, and not his divinity, that is permanently secured. See Heine, “Stoic Logic as Handmaid,” 98-99. To Heine’s careful and, I think, correct analysis of this passage, I only add that it is not implausible that Origen’s opponents have tried implicitly to lump his own position in with the adoptionist camp.

65 Modern historians of dogma would call this theology “adoptionist,” though I refrain from the term because it is not used by Origen or his opponents.

66 Jo. 2.16.

67 Given the exchange between Origen and Heraclides, discovered in stenographic form on papyrus, we need not doubt the authenticity of an account like the one Eusebius provides. Origen was no stranger to disputation and might easily have gone to persuade Beryllus of his error.

68 Eusebius, e.h. 6.33.1. Greek: τὸν σωτῆρα καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν λέγειν τολμοῦν μὴ προ ödeστάναι κατ’ ἰδίαν οὐσίαν περιγραφὴν πρὸ τῆς εἰς ἀνθρώπους ἐπιδημίας μηδὲ μὴν θεότητα ἰδίαν ἔχειν, ἀλλ’ ἐμπολιτευομένην αὐτῷ μόνην τὴν πατρικήν.
monarchian theology according to which the Father was the “divinity” that indwelled Jesus during the incarnation. Christ, according to Beryllus, did not have “his own divinity” (θεότητα ἰδίαν ἔχειν). In this regard he is an example of a monarchian use of a Christology of mixture: the Father is the divinity that dwells in Christ. If that is so, then Christ does not have a pre-temporal existence: the man Jesus is indwelled by God the Father, and the man Jesus’ divinity results from that indwelling. Origen opposes Beryllus’s doctrine by arguing in favor of the Son’s distinct eternal existence prior to the incarnation. Beryllus, for his part, objected to Origen’s doctrine on the grounds that it seemed to teach the existence of two separate and independent existents and, thus, two supreme first principles. If it was not Beryllus himself who motivated Origen’s worries in the *Commentary on John*, it must have been someone who shared his position.

Psalm 44:2 (LXX) states that “my heart erupts with a good Word” (ἐξηρεύξατο ἡ καρδία μου λόγον ἄγαθόν). Psalm 44:2 was a key monarchian prooftext because it could be read as an instance of the Word’s “proceeding forth” from the mouth of God the Father, only to dissipate into the air. Psalm 44:2 provided a basis for monarchianism especially if the “Word” were characterized according to the Stoic psychological distinction between inner reason (λόγος ἐνδιάθετος) and outward expression (λόγος προφορικός). Monarchians had good precedent for associating Psalm 44:2 with the λόγος προφορικός. Theophilus of Antioch had used the Stoic idea to illustrate two moments or aspects of the second Person—the Word as imminent in the Father’s mind and the Word

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69 For more on this, see Heine, “Christology of Callistus,” 74-78. For more evidence that early Christians were sensitive to various ways in which Stoic mixture theory could be deployed in christology, see Anthony Briggman, “Irenaeus’ Christology of Mixture,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 64.2 (2013): 516-555.
revealed to humankind. From a Stoic standpoint, the λόγος προφορικός could only be conceived in terms of speech, as opposed to a transcendent, enduring procession.

Monarchians would then use Psalm 44:2 to construe God’s λόγος ἁγαθόν as a “mere utterance” of God, “an expression of the Father occurring in syllables” that comes to be and passes away.

Origen knows the Stoic distinction between inner speech and outward expression, but he avoids any mention of it in the Commentary on John. The avoidance is not accidental. In order to undermine a monarchian interpretation of Psalm 44:2, Origen tacitly repeals Theophilus’s association of the Stoic λόγος ἐνδιάθετος–λόγος προφορικός distinction with Psalm 44:2. Having avoided the question of a two-stage Logos theory, he uses a participatory grammar to articulate the Son’s continuity with and distinction from the Father. Participation provides a way of achieving distinction between the Father and the Son without sacrificing the continuity suggested by the Father’s incorporeal and eternal generation of the Son.

God, with the article, is ὁ τῷ θεῷ, wherefore the Savior says in his prayer to the Father, “that they might know You, the Only True God. On the other hand,

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70 Theophilus, Ad Autolycum 2.10 and 2.22.
71 Heine, 66.
72 Jo. 1.151; cf. Jo. 1.280-287 and discussion ad loc by Heine, “Christology of Callistus”; 66. Origen’s alternative psychological distinction between “voice” and “reason” (Jo. 1, 32) explains the need for voice, and so for teaching, among human beings. It does not broach the question of the relationship between human psychology and the divine nature, or the relationship between Christ as God’s eternal Logos and the Holy Spirit as John the Baptist. Joseph Lienhard (“Origen’s Speculation on John the Baptist or Was John the Baptist the Holy Spirit?” in Origeniana Quinqua, ed. R.J. Daly [Leuven: Peeters, 1992], 449-453) notes that at this stage in his career Origen speculated that John the Baptist is the Holy Spirit. In the case of Jo. 1.32, Origen uses the relationship of John the Baptist to Christ as a model for thinking through the complex interrelationship between speech and its intelligibility.
73 At least he is aware of it in the later text of Contra Celsum 6.65. See D.G. Robertson, “Origen on Inner and Outer Logos,” Studia Patristica XLVI (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 201-205. Origen’s avoidance of the distinction is not due, as Roberston supposes, to worries that the distinction represented a position not “close enough to the psychological doctrines of the Scriptures.”
everything except αὐτόθεος, which is made God by participation in his divinity, would more properly not be said to be ‘the God’ but ‘divine’."

Recall that this statement’s context is the elaboration of John 1’s identification of the Logos as “with God,” πρὸς τὸν θεόν. There can be little doubt that Origen means to include the Son in the group designated by the phrase “based the supreme God” (τὸ παρὰ τὸ αὐτόθεος), because in his next breath he invokes the scene of the “Savior’s prayer to the Father” (John 17:3), “that they might know You the One True God.” The Son prays to αὐτόθεος just as the rest of the rational creation does.

Origen states that the Son, like all other creatures, is “made God by participation in [the Father’s] divinity” (μετοχῇ τῆς ἐκείνου θεότητος θεοποιούμενον). Yet he is satisfied that he has successfully avoided both horns of the dilemma posed by Origen’s opponents. Neither has he denied the priority of the “One True God,” nor, by making the Son’s existence distinct from the Father, has he alienated the Son from the Father, since the Son is God “by nature,” and not by adoption like the rest of the created, spiritual cosmos.

The Son’s Possession of Divinity οὐσιωδός

Origen has monarchian theology as a target in mind when he describes the Son as possessing divinity “essentially” (οὐσιωδός). In the passage quoted above, when Origen describes how the Son has existence, he describes that existence as “separated and substantiated” (καὶ κεχωρισμένον καὶ οὐσιωμένον). In a number of other places he adopts

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74 Jo. 2.17; αὐτόθεος ὁ θεός ἐστι, διόπερ καὶ ὁ σωτήρ φησιν ἐν τῇ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα εἰς ἑαυτῷ· “Τοια γινόμενοι σε τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεόν· πάν δὲ τὸ παρὰ τὸ αὐτόθεος μετοχῇ τῆς ἐκείνου θεότητος θεοποιούμενον οὐχ “ὁ θεός” ἀλλὰ “θεός” κυριώτερον ἄν λέγοιτο.
Aristotelian terminology to underscore the Son’s eternal existence, distinct from the Father. Origen’s preference for using the phrase καθ’ αὐτὸν as an anti-monarchian term is apparent at Jo. 2.69, where he writes:

But consider if it is possible for us to learn two things in that ‘in the beginning’ is mentioned twice. One is that “in the beginning was the Word,” as if he were by himself (καθ’ αὐτὸν), and not with anyone at all; the other being that “in the beginning” he “was with God.” I think that it is not false to say of him that “he was in the beginning and “in the beginning” he was “with God,” neither being only “with God” since “he was” also “in the beginning,” nor being only “in the beginning,” and not being “with God,” since “the same was in the beginning with God.”

The “two things” the phrase “in the beginning” signifies are the Word’s eternal distinction from the Father and the Word’s eternal presence “in” the “beginning,” which Origen had already glossed as Wisdom. When Origen explains his first interpretation of John’s statement that the Word was “in the beginning,” he interprets it to mean that the Word was “by himself, and not with anyone at all” (ὡς εἰ καθ’ αὑτὸν ἦν καὶ μὴ πάντως πρός τινα). By saying this, Origen abstracts the Word’s existence from God the Father’s, in theory, in order to underscore the Word’s distinction from God the Father. In order to do this he uses the Aristotelian phrase καθ’ αὐτὸν to describe the Word. For Origen, then, describing the Word as καθ’ αὐτὸν opposes a monarchian identification of the Word with the essence of Father. Clement of Alexandria had distinguished between the Father and

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75 The likelihood of Origen’s deep acquaintance with Peripatetic philosophy only increases if his teacher, Ammonius, was not the enigmatic Ammonius Saecas, the teacher of Plotinus, but a different Ammonius—a Peripatetic. For a compelling argument along those lines, see Mark Edwards, “Ammonius, Teacher of Origen” Journal of Ecclesiastical History 44.2 (1993): 169-181. In any case, Origen’s having learned at the feet of a Platonist like Ammonius Saecas would not preclude his familiarity with Peripateticizing usage of terms as general as “essence.”

76 Jo. 2.69, Heine trans. Ὑπακολέξεις ὁμολογοῦσαι τὸ υἱὸς ἡμῶν μαθάνειν πράγματα δύο· ἐν μὲν ὑπέρ ἐν ἀρχῇ ἢ ἐν λόγῳ· ὡς εἰ καθ’ αὑτὸν ἦν καὶ μὴ πάντως πρός τινα· ἐτερον δὲ ὑπέρ ἐν ἀρχῇ· ἐν πρός τον θεόν ἦν· ὑπάκολος δέ ὑπέρ ἐν ἀρχῇ· ἐν πρός τον θεόν ἦν. Καὶ οἷον, ὅτι ὑπὲρ γεγονός εἰπεν περὶ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν καὶ ἐν ἀρχῇ· ἐν πρός τον θεόν,· ὅτε ἐν πρός τον θεόν· πρὸς τον θεόν μονος τυγχάνων, ἐπεί καὶ ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν; ὅτε ἐν ἀρχῇ· ἐν πρὸς τον θεόν· ἤν, ἐπεί ὅτους ἤν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τον θεόν.

77 Jo. 1.109-124.
the Son by using the phrase “by circumscription and not in essence.” However, Beryllus had insisted that the Word could not be distinguished from the Father “according to his own individuality of essence” (κατὰ περιγραφήν καὶ οὐ κατ’ οὐσίαν). Origen uses the phrase καθ’ αὐτόν to oppose Beryllus’s denial of the Son’s “own distinct existence” (κατ’ ἵδιαν οὐσίας περιγραφήν).

Elsewhere Origen applies οὐσιωδός to the Son’s existence to achieve the same effect. The term οὐσιωδός was part of an Aristotelian distinction between something that is what it is “by definition”— καθ’ αὐτόν/οὐσιωδός—and something that possesses a quality as a nonessential attribute, or accident (συμβεβηκός). Simplicius reports that Xenocrates and Andronicus reduced Aristotle’s ten categories to two: that which is “by itself” (καθ’ αὐτό) as opposed to that which is “relative” (τὸ πρὸς τι). Others made, he says, a similar divide between substance (οὐσίαν) and accident (συμβεβηκός). If

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80 Origen, *Cels.* 6.44 applies Aristotle’s distinction between the possession of a quality “essentially” as opposed to its possession “by accident” (e.g., *Met.* 30.4 and 10.1.1)—in other words, participation “essentially” as opposed to “accidentally” pace Sted 52 who argues that Christian writers don’t know this distinction developed by Porphyry and Alexander of Aphrodisias in *met.* 91.10; Porph. *Isag.* 176; 21.15; 22.9-10. In *Jo.* 2.124, Origen applies the same Aristotelian distinction to the difference between God and the rational creation. In *Jo.* 6.188 he states that the Son has an essential existence. In *exp. in Prov.* 8.22 he states that the Son as Wisdom exists essentially, and *dial.* 5 refers to the Son’s essential possession of divinity. See also *or.* 27.12 (GCS 3:371), where Origen states that “the Son of God subsists essentially” (οὐσιωδός υφιστάτος τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ). See Crawford, “Triumph”: 554, for discussion of these passages in the context of a trajectory running from Theodore of Heraclea to Cyril of Alexandria.

81 “The followers of Xenocrates and of Andronicus seem to include everything in [the opposition] ‘by itself’ and ‘relative’, so that, according to them, so large a multitude of genera is superfluous. Others make the division into ‘substance’ and ‘accident’, these people too seem somehow to be saying the same thing as those just mentioned, who say that accidents are ‘relative’ as [being] always ‘of’ other things (τὰ συμβεβηκότα πρὸς τι λέγονται, ὡς ἄλλων ἀεὶ ὄντων), and that substance is by itself (τὴν οὐσίαν καθ’ αὐτό)’” (Simplicius in *Cat.* 63.21-29; Sorabji, trans., 63). Simplicius goes on to complain that both groups fail to include the universal and the particular in their two categories, and so fail to account for Aristotle’s scheme. ἄλλοι δὲ κατ’ ἄλλον τρόπον αἰτίωνται τὴν περιττότητα. οἱ γὰρ περὶ Ξενοκράτη καὶ Ἀνδρόνικον πάντα τὸ καθ’ αὐτό καὶ τὸ πρὸς τι περιλαμβάνειν δοκοῦσιν, ὡστε περιττὸν εἶναι κατ’ αὐτὸς τὸ τοσσότον τὸν γενὸς πλήθος. ἄλλοι δὲ εἰς οὐσίαν καὶ συμβεβηκός διατέμνουσιν· καὶ οὕτω δὲ ταύτων πος δοκοῦσι τοῖς προτέρους λέγειν τὰ συμβεβηκότα πρὸς τι λέγοντον, ὡς ἄλλων ἀεὶ ὄντων, καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν καθ’ αὐτό. ῥητῶν όμως κοινὴ πρὸς ἀμφοτέρους, οὐτὶ τὴν εἰς ἐλάχιστα τοιμήν τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους ἀνάλογας ἀτελῶς αὐτῆς ἡγεῖτο, τὸ καθόλου καὶ τὸ μερικὸν παραλείποντες. καὶ μέντοι τὰ συμβεβηκότα πολλά ὄντα γένη
Simplicius’ account of the earlier tradition is reliable, the adverbial use of ὠσία (οὐσιωδὸς) could easily have stood for something that exists “according to itself” or “by itself.” Alexander of Aphrodisias confirms just that sort of application of an adverbial form of ὠσία. He glosses καθ’ αὐτὸ with οὐσιωδὸς.⁸²

In each of several cases, Origen uses the term οὐσιωδὸς to establish the Son’s having “his own” divine existence. In the Dialogue with Heraclides, he refers to the Son’s possession of divinity “essentially” (οὐσιωδὸς).⁸³ In Dial. 5, Origen responds to the objection that he had “professed before the church [his] belief that at the resurrection the body which rose had been a corpse.” Origen is opposing the Son’s possession of divinity “essentially” to the Son’s possession of a body. In passing he confirms that he has “attributed deity to Jesus Christ essentially (οὐσιωδὸς).”

The appearance of οὐσιωδὸς in the context of Origen’s opposition of Christ’s possession of “divinity” to his possession of a human body, subject to decay, might lead readers to suppose that Origen thinks the Son is divine in the same way that the Father is, which is to say, divine without participation in divinity. In fact, in a number of places Origen can be found referring to the Son as divine οὕτω προσφέρων Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν θεότητα.

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⁸² See Alexander of Aphrodisias, in metaph. 471.21: ὅτε ἐὰς ἀπόλυτον τῶν ἑλήμενων φαινον ἐστὶν ὅτι <τὸ τί ἐν ἑνὶ ἔστιν ὅσον ὁ λόγος ὀρισμός ἔστι,> τοιούτοις τόν ὄντων ἐπὶ ἕκείνου μόνην τὸ τί ἐν ἑνὶ λέγεται κυρίως τῶν ὑποί, ὅν ὁ λόγος ὀρισμός ἢτι άνόμοτος καὶ ἀπαριθμητικός ἐστιν τὸν καθ’ αὐτὸ καὶ οὕσιωδός ὑπαρχόντος αὐτῶς. Alexandri Aphrodisiensis in Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria, Ed. Hayduck, M (Berlin: Reimer, 1891). Philo (De decalogo 29-31) and Clement (Strom. 8.6) know Aristotle’s ten categories well enough, but Philo does not apply a scholastic reduction of the ten to two general categories of substance and accident. Clement’s understanding in Strom. 8.6 is comparable to Philo’s.

⁸³ dial. 5. οὕτω προσφέρων Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν θεότητα.
are set to the same side of a line between divinity and creaturehood as God the Father. On this reading, because the three are divine οὐσιωδῶς, they do not participate, but are divine in and through themselves.

Indeed, Origen does elevate the Son and the Spirit. They are “higher” or “greater” than all other spiritual creatures. However, such elevation does not mean that the Father is not “higher” than the Son, and the Son “higher” than the Spirit, however “essentially” (οὐσιωδῶς) each of the three is divine. Origen makes this point explicit elsewhere in the Commentary. There is little doubt that Origen thinks all three of the hypostases are incorporeal and in this way divine. However, to state that the three existences are incorporeal and divine begs the question of what it means to call them “divine” or how each of the three is “divine.” For Origen, it is not contradictory to state both that each of the three is incorporeally and essentially (οὐσιωδῶς) divine and that the Father, Son, and Spirit stand in hierarchical relation one to another. These are not incompatible ideas for him.

More often than not Origen’s emphasis in making such statements is that the Son has a divine existence—a “divinity”—distinct from that of God the Father. This is how Origen counteracts the statement of someone like Noetus, who had denied the possibility of the Son’s existing as “other from other” (ἕτερον ἐξ ἑτέρου). The Son is distinct from the Father as a separate existent, Origen argues, but he is not completely “other from other” (ἕτερον ἐξ ἑτέρου). The Son’s participation in the Father guarantees this last fact.

84 Jo. 13.151.
85 Christ is the Son of God “by nature,” a phrase fraught with ambiguity. Origen insists on a unity of two entities, essentially distinct. He does not elaborate in the Commentary on John about the kind of unity the Son possesses with the Father, or about how the Son possesses that unity. It is only in On First Principles and Against Celsus that we find the well known analogy of the Son’s “volitional” unity with the Father. On all of this, see the next chapter.
Though the Son’s procession from the Father, his generation, is eternal, the Son nevertheless finds his source in the primary God, the Father. Because the Son eternally participates in the Father, the Father-Son relationship is asymmetrical. If there is tension in this formulation, it is the result of Origen’s efforts to satisfy the sympathies of his opponents, who wished to insist that one entity “self-generates” as the Father and then “self-generates” as the Son. Instead, Origen opts for a hierarchy in which a primary entity generates a secondary entity that receives divinity from it.

The difference between the statements Origen makes about the three’s being divine essentially (οὐσιωδός) and their ordering in a hierarchy has to do with whether one is talking specifically about the qualities of which each entity is the source, or whether one is referring more broadly to the possession of divinity. When an object’s character καθ’ αὐτὸ is opposed to the qualities it possesses as “accidental,” the qualities an object possesses καθ’ αὐτὸ cannot be taken away from the object except on pain of that object ceasing to be what it is. If we gloss Origen’s grammar of participation in Jo. 2.12-20 with these terms, God the Father exists καθ’ αὐτὸ. The Son derives his existence and divinity from the Father and so does not exist καθ’ αὐτὸ. There remains an eternal relationship of derivation running from the Son to the Father. On the other hand, looking down the hierarchy, the Son is wise, rational, and just “essentially” (καθ’ αὐτὸ), serving as the source for the Holy Spirit’s possession of all such qualities. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is holy “essentially” (καθ’ αὐτὸ) and serves as the source of sanctity for all the angelic host. So the graded series Origen articulates in Jo. 2.12-20 is a sequence of the reception of qualities that are “essentially” (καθ’ αὐτὸ), not accidental, to each of the trinitarian persons in order. The Son receives from the Father what the Father is

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86 See the next section of this chapter for more on “self-production.”
“essentially” (καθ’ αὐτὸ), namely, divine existence. The Holy Spirit, in turn, receives from the Son what the Son is “essentially” (καθ’ αὐτὸ). All other rational creatures receive all of these qualities from God the Trinity.

**Old Themes in a New Key: Containment and Eternal Generation**

In scholarship on Origen’s doctrine of the trinity, two issues appear frequently, but only infrequently do the scholars discussing them agree with precision about the nature and consequences of their presence in Origen’s thought. These topics are the question of the Son’s knowledge of the Father and the doctrine of the Son’s eternal generation. Both of them can be explained by recourse to Origen’s campaign against monarchianism. Against monarchian theology, Origen’s grammar of participation guaranteed both that the Son was distinct from and subordinate to the Father in a series of entities. To grasp Origen’s anti-monarchian theology is to acknowledge his debt to a Platonizing grammar of participation that established a hierarchical arrangement of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The issue is not that Origen could not have arranged things otherwise, but that the conceptual grammar he chose to employ carries with it consequences he did not disclaim.

**The Son: From Physical Containment to Epistemological Comprehension**

A key feature of Origen’s anti-monarchian strategy also supported by his appeal to the Son’s participation in the Father is his understanding that the Father “comprehends” the Son as a distinct entity, but that the Son does not “comprehend” the Father in the
same way. Recall Beryllus’ phrase that Christ did not pre-exist the incarnation as an “individual circumscribed existent” (κατ’ ιδίαν οὐσίας περιγραφήν). Origen, on the other hand, affirms that this is precisely the way Christ existed before the incarnation. In Jo. 2.16, he states one horn of the dilemma his opponents face: “by denying the divinity of the Son they make his own distinct existence as an individual different from the Father” (ἀρνουμένους τὴν θεότητα τοῦ υἱοῦ τιθέντας δὲ αὐτοῦ τὴν ιδιότητα καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν κατὰ περιγραφήν τυχάνουσαν ἔτεραν τοῦ πατρός, ἐνεπεκθέν λύσθαι δύναται). The key phrase is τὴν ιδιότητα καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν κατὰ περιγραφήν, and its presence in Origen’s Commentary corroborates Eusebius’ report of Beryllus’ denial.

The end of Commentary on John Book 1 contains this pregnant passage:

In addition, to signify that the Word has his own individuality (ιδίαν περιγραφήν), that is to say, lives according to himself, we must speak also of powers, not only of power. “For thus says the Lord of the powers” is a phrase which occurs in many places, certain divine spiritual beings being named powers. The highest and best of these powers was Christ who is called not only the “wisdom of God,” but also the “power.” [292] As, therefore, here are many powers of God, each of which has its own individuality (ἐκάστη κατὰ περιγραφήν), which the Savior excels, so also the Christ, on the basis of our previous investigation, will be understood to be the “Word”—although the reason which is in us has no individuality apart from us (ὁ παρ’ ἡμῖν ἐστι κατὰ περιγραφήν ἑκτὸς ἡμῶν)—possessing substance (τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχον) “in the beginning,” that is in wisdom.89

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89 Origen, Jo. 1.291-92. (291) Καὶ ἐπὶ εἰς τὸ παραδέξασθαι τὸν λόγον ἰδίαν περιγραφήν ἔχοντα, οὗν τυχάνοντας ξίν ταῖς ἐπτάντες καὶ περὶ δυνάμεως, οὗ μόνον δυνάμεως: “Τάδε γὰρ λέγει κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων” πολλαχοῦ κεῖται, λογικῶν τινος θείων ξίνων δυνάμεων ὄνομαζομένουν, ὅν ἡ ἀνοτέρῳ καὶ κρεῖττον Χριστὸς ἦν, οὗ μόνον σοφία θεοῦ ἄλλα καὶ δύναμις προσαγορευόμενος. (292) Ἡσπερ οὖν δυνάμεως θεοῦ πλείονες εἰσίν, ὅτι ἀκάτη κατὰ περιγραφήν, ὅν διαφέρει ὁ σοφίς, οὗτος καὶ λόγος—εἰ καὶ ὁ παρ’ ἡμῖν οὐκ ἔστι κατὰ περιγραφήν ἑκτὸς ἡμῶν—νοεῖται ὁ Χριστὸς διὰ τὰ προεξητασμένα, ἐν ἀρχῇ, τῇ σοφίᾳ, τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχον.
Here we see that Origen is willing to entertain the same constellation of spiritual entities between the “highest God” and the rest of the *cosmos* in which we live, but in a way comparable to God the Father, he places the Son at the top of a hierarchy of those powers. The Holy Spirit, we learn elsewhere, is the chief of all the powers that participate in the Son.

Elsewhere, in *Jo.* 2.75, Origen describes the Trinity as three “hypostases.” The term *hypostasis* did not come directly into Origen’s hands from Platonism, but had already been absorbed by Valentinian Gnosticism. Monarchians like Beryllus had denied the definition of a “hypostasis” as an “individual circumscribed existent” to describe the Son, perhaps as part of an anti-gnostic polemic. Origen took the alternative approach of adopting “hypostatic” language in spite of its Gnostic heritage in order to oppose the monarchian position.

It is important to attend to the significance of the final term in the phrase Beryllus denies: περιγραφὴν. Origen pairs his language of the Son’s participation in the Father, and the Holy Spirit’s participation in the Son, with the language of “enclosing.” More widely he uses the term περιγραφὴ and cognates to express this idea. Here, too, Origen has transformed the tradition that preceded him in response to the challenge of monarchian theology.

The tradition prior to Origen had associated divine nature with “that which encloses but is not enclosed.” What is finite had for a long time been equated with what is comprehensible in Greek philosophy. If boundlessness is distinctive of divine nature,  

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90 William Schoedel traces parallels between the axioms *containing not contained/ enclosing not enclosed* and the use of similar doctrines in Eleatic, post-Parmenidean philosophy, as well as these doctrines’ absorption into early Christian theology, both “orthodox” and “gnostic.” He highlights a monistic shift in some of Irenaeus’ opponents, which is more developed in the Alexandrian, and potentially
divinity is unknowable. Irenaeus had reversed the earlier Greek tradition’s conception of
divine nature as finite and so knowable.91 His version of this axiom was borrowed from
Philo, who probably inherited it from an early middle Platonist tradition also accessed by
Alkinous.

In order to understand how Origen contributed to the transformation of this set of
concepts, it is important to notice that Gnosticism in Alexandria had already shifted away
from a radically dualist cosmology. The shift probably was precipitated by Irenaeus’s
argumentation. Schoedel isolates a development in Gnosticism from dualism toward
monism, and the cause for the development, he argues, was Irenaeus’ rhetorical
influence.92 Gnostics had previously held to a “topological” theology according to which
divinity is “locatable.” Irenaeus forced some of his interlocutors to shift toward a
cosmology whose basis is monistic, the central axiom of which is that it is God’s nature
to enclose but not be enclosed. Schoedel’s evidence of the purported shift is that
Teachings of Silvanus, a Gnostic text probably of Alexandrian provenance, reveals that its
author had made space for monistic theology. With Silvanus, the strict Gnostic
cosmological dualism of earlier forms of Gnosticism has given way to the conviction that
divine nature “contains and is not contained.”

91 The trajectory culminates in the early Christian era with Gregory of Nyssa’s well known
doctrine of epektisis and the doctrine of divine infinity.
92 For the text of Teachings of Silvanus, I have used James Robinson et al., The Nag Hammadi
Library in English (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988). Christian texts from the apostolic period invoke
the enclosing/not enclosed doctrine as a way of defining divine nature. 1 Clem 28:4 reads a version of Ps.
138:7-10 (LXX) this way: ποι ὁ ὄς τις ἀπέλθη ἢ ποι ὑποδράση ἀπ τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐμπεριέχοντος.


proto-“orthodox” Teachings of Silvanus. See William Schoedel, “‘Topological’ Theology and Some
Monistic Tendencies in Gnosticism,” in Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Alexander Böhlig,
The Early Christian Doctrine of God,” in Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual
Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant, ed. by William Schoedel and Robert Louis Wilken (Paris:
Éditions Beauchesne, 1979), 75–86.
The nature and the location of the Demiurge is a pivotal aspect of theologies in this vein. Is the Demiurge “contained in space” as the fashioner of matter? Or is it that the Demiurge “contains but is not contained”? Middle Platonists were comfortable locating the Demiurge on the side of all the things “contained”—but that results from Platonist characterization of divine nature not as infinite but as finite, and because finite, intelligible. The Demiurge’s identification with the “known God,” as opposed to the transcendent, unknowable Father, correlates with the Demiurge’s being “enclosed,” for example, in Silvanus, but also in Clement of Alexandria and Numenius.93 The pressure placed on Christology by the location of the Demiurge in space is evident in Silvanus’ paradoxical characterization of Christ, who is “restrained; still he is unrestrained according to his nature.”94 Similar christological paradoxes can be found earlier and elsewhere.95 The point is that the question of whether the Son is, like the Father, “uncontained” remains relatively underdetermined in Silvanus. The text does not even open the question of locating the Holy Spirit in space.

The relevance of Silvanus’ Christology and its relationship to containment language for Origen’s Christology is as follows. If Silvanus is indeed the product of earlier Alexandrian theology, then its shift away from the strict dualism of more radical Gnostic theology indicates that already in Alexandria, Gnosticism was not antithetical to monism. If this is so, it suggests that Origen cannot be made out to repeal Gnosticism by subordinating the Son to the Father, as if doing so were simply a matter of inverting the Gnostic tendency to denigrate the Demiurge of Genesis by calling the Son the

93 See Teachings of Silvanus 100, 13-16; Schoedel, “‘Topological’ Theology,” ad loc., 89-90.
94 Teachings of Silvanus 101, 33-102, 7.
95 Schoedel references Ignatius Eph. 7.2, for example.
“Demiurge” and making the Father superior to him. Origen does subordinate the Son to the Father, but for different reasons and with Gnostic precedent. Silvanus (116, 7-9) identifies Christ as the Demiurge and clears him of the charge of ignorance. It is improbable that Origen’s elevation of the Father over the Son responded to Gnostic anxieties about the ignorance of the Demiurge. If anything, Origen’s insistence that the Son knows the Father through contemplation, even if he does not comprehend the Father, as well as the Son’s identification as the Father’s “Wisdom,” were themselves Gnostic commonplaces by the third century. Gnostic theologies had developed a more complex stance on the issue of dualism than that of “Sethian” texts like the Apocryphon of John.

If Origen repeals Theophilus’ association of Psalm 44:3 with the procession of the Son from the Father, then he appears to reinstate simultaneously Theophilus’ hierarchical trinity. The hierarchy in Theophilus is represented by a series of enclosed entities. The illustration is that of the Father holding a pomegranate in his hand. The figure is somewhat literally the Father; his hand, metaphorically, is the Son, which holds a piece of round fruit. The fruit, enclosed by the Son, is comprised of both a rind and pulp. The pulp is the cosmos, and the rind is the Spirit, the boundary between the Son and the cosmos. Whereas Irenaeus would elevate the Holy Spirit to a status of being God’s other “hand,”

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96 As Beeley argues in Unity of Christ, 26n48. Beeley asserts that Origen uses “two senses of greatness” when in fact Origen does not distinguish between senses of “greatness.” The omission is crucial: without a distinction between the kind of hierarchy applied to the “order” of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the hierarchy applied to other rational entities, Origen produces the very ambiguity that would render his theology of the trinity problematic in the decades subsequent to Nicaea. Beeley denies that Origen’s theology generates this ambiguity, even if as a byproduct of his commitment to Hellenistic philosophical principles such as the doctrine that a cause is superior to its effect.

97 See Schoedel, 89-90 for discussion.

98 See Schoedel, “‘Topological’ Theology,” 97-98; and Theophilus Ad Aut. 1.5.
Origen returns to the one-handed model according to which the Holy Spirit is subordinated to the Son.99

Origen knows terms of “enclosure” and applies them to the Son. However, he does so with a key difference from his predecessors who had used such terminology. He transfers the operative language of “containment” to the realm of epistemology.100 Jerome translates Origen’s usage of the term in a metaphorical, and not literal/material sense, meant to imply an epistemological consequence, not a physical one (so the Father “comprehends” the Son, but the Son does not “comprehend” the Father). Origen himself did not speak of the Son’s being “enclosed” in anything but a non-material sense. Whether Origen was the first to use “enclosed” without its literal meaning, or whether gnosticism in Alexandria had already developed a sense of speaking of “being enclosed” without material form, is uncertain. It is clear, however, that Origen shifts the tradition of speaking about the Father’s “comprehension” of the Son from physical to epistemological soil. Origen reinforces the hierarchical scheme when he transfers the containing/not contained trope to the realm of epistemology. When this shift is combined with Origen’s hierarchical model of the trinity, the Son cannot be said to comprehend the Father. This means that the Son is placed in a position of eternal contemplation of the Father, though the Son never attains the level of knowledge of the Father that the Father has of himself or other entities.

99 For more on the nature and significance of Irenaeus’s “two-hands” model of pneumatology, see Anthony Briggman, Irenaeus.
100 I have been helped on this subject by Matthew Crawford’s treatment of Origen, en passent, in “The Triumph of Pro-Nicene Theology.”
Origen can be found denying the Son’s *physical* circumscription.\(^{101}\) Though his denials of the Son’s physical circumscription are not widespread, it is clear enough that Origen associated both the Son and the Holy Spirit with the incorporeal nature of divinity, such that it could be the nature of neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit to be “contained in space.” However, Origen does imply two important applications of the containing–not contained scheme, however epistemologically construed. First, the Father is, ultimately, not comprehended. Not even the Son finally *comprehends* the depths of the Father. That Origen thinks this explains his insistence on the eternal contemplation of the Father by the Son. If Gregory of Nyssa is appropriately characterized as teaching that the soul moves indefinitely toward God but never finally attains identity with God, Origen construed something like the idea and characterized the Son as the paradigmatic soul-in-progress. For Origen, the chosen idiom is eternal contemplation, and there remains an ultimate distinction between the Father and the Son in this sense alone: the Son eternally contemplates the un-contain-able depths of the Father.

In short, monarchianism forced the issue regarding the trinitarian use of containment language. It drove Origen to innovate in its application to the Son by using “containment” non-physically. One option taken previously to Origen was not available to him in the face of monarchian theology. That option would have been to deny that the Son is circumscribed, as Clement had done, and so to identify the Son with the divine nature.\(^{102}\) However, had Origen simply denied circumscription to the Son, his monarchian opponents would have been able to elide his position with theirs. He needed a way to

\(^{101}\) Crawford, “Triumph”: 552, n50, cites Origen, *Cels*. 4.5 (“Even supposing that we do say that [the power and divinity of God] leaves one place and fills another, we would not mean this in a spatial sense”) as evidence that there is little reason to doubt the Latin of *Princ*. 4.4.1, where Origen denies that the Son “is contained in some place” (*in loco aliquo contineri*).

\(^{102}\) See Shoedel, “‘Topological’ Theology,” 101; and Clement, *Strom*. 7.5.5.
maintain his opposition to the likes of Beryllus without denying the Son’s divinity. The language of circumscription provided him this, provided he used it in a non-physical sense. The language of “comprehension,” in turn, could be used without physical connotation, in order to provide Origen with a conceptual apparatus for durable distinction of the three without material division. Origen’s intra-trinitarian model of participation afforded just such a conceptual apparatus.

The question of the Son’s knowledge of the Father, which would appear later with such force and centrality in the wake of Nicaea, was a side-effect of Origen’s decentralizing of the physical containment metaphor dear to the monarchian position. It was not the primary focus of his thought. By making of containment not a physical but an epistemological matter, Origen could avoid the implication that the Son was indistinct from the Father, without having to make the Son a corporeally enclosed entity.

“Eternal Generation”

Finally, consider the doctrine of eternal generation, associated at least since the work of G. Prestige with Origen’s genius, and often attributed to him as a lasting hallmark of his proto-orthodoxy. Contrary to what many scholars have presumed about Origen’s doctrine of the Son’s eternal generation from the Father, the doctrine was not an incipient instance of Nicaea’s homoousion. It travelled with different presuppositions and intentions. As Maurice Wiles argued in an important but not always noticed article from 1961, Origen’s doctrine of eternal generation was at once a real innovation and an obstacle for later theology. For, on one hand, it stipulated that the Son was eternally
present to the Father, but, on the other hand, it entailed that the rest of the “rational creation” was eternally existent as well as the Father and the Son.\textsuperscript{103}

The passages in the \textit{Apology} ascribing to Origen a doctrine of eternal generation are important.\textsuperscript{104} However, they do not rule out the possibility of hierarchical ordering. Nor need Origen’s doctrine of eternal generation be considered anything but an artifact of his anti-monarchian polemic combined with Platonizing proclivities. Recall that it was the Roman school of monarchians who characterized the \textit{Logos} as coming to be and passing away like a series of syllables. Marcellus’ alleged doctrine that the Kingdom of the Son would “come to an end,” famously opposed by the Constantinopolitan Creed, was the end of such a long-standing monarchian tendency to grant the \textit{Logos} only temporary status as a divine agent.

That Origen’s doctrine of eternal generation was formed to oppose monarchianism becomes more apparent the closer we look at his argumentation. First, take this dense quotation from Pamphilus’ \textit{Apology for Origen}, purported to come from \textit{On First Principles} 1.1.5-6:

God, therefore, must not be thought of as some kind of body or as existing in a body, but he is an intellectual nature, simple, admitting within himself no addition of any kind, so that one should not believe that he has anything greater and lesser in himself, but that he is in all parts a \textit{μονάς} and, so to speak, a \textit{ἑνάς}. He is both the mind and the source form which the beginning of all intellectual nature, or of mind, exists. But mind, in order to move or operate, does not need a physical location, nor measurable size, nor bodily shape or color, nor does it require any other of those things at all that are proper to a body or to matter.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{103} Maurice Wiles, “Eternal Generation,” \textit{Journal of Theological Studies} (1961): 284-291. Beeley, \textit{The Unity of Christ}, for example, does not mention Wiles’s perspective, and his reading of Origen does not account for the evidence Wiles presents. Though Ayres, \textit{The Legacy of Nicaea}, does not cite the argument, his portrayal of Origen is not discordant with that of Wiles.

\textsuperscript{104} See Pamphilus, \textit{Apol.}, 47-64 in Scheck trans., FOTC 120.

\textsuperscript{105} Scheck trans., 62-63.
Here Origen provides a description of the divine “monad” as incorporeal. Origen does not here invoke a divine nature which both Father and Son possess in the same way or to an equal degree. Pamphilus unapologetically includes it as a passage about Origen’s “conception of God the Father.”

Next, in *Apology* 48, Pamphilus quotes probably from Origen’s lost *Commentary on Genesis*. “If God always is perfect,” Origen reasons, “he does not lack the power by which he is Father, and if it is good that he is the Father of such a Son, why would he deprive himself of this good and not become the Father immediately, if one can say it this way, from when he is able to be Father?” Notice that the logic directly confronts one who would make the Son’s begetting temporally bound. That temptation was characteristic of the monarchianism Origen opposed in his *Commentary on John*. In the next passage quoted by Pamphilus, Origen elaborates on the argument for the Father’s eternal generation of the Son by comparing the Father and Son to a light and its radiance. The familiar comparison comes from pairing Wisdom 7:26 with Hebrews 1:3. Origen explicitly addresses a monarchian concern when he acknowledges that, if he had proclaimed the Son “unborn,” “we would appear to be implying two principles of light.” Instead, Origen says, there is one ἀρχή of radiance, one “origin and source,” God the Father. So Origen concedes to the monarchian position at least the formal requirement of a single divine source or ἀρχή. On the other hand, Origen denies the monarchian idea that the Son does not exist eternally. The Father, never without his Wisdom, is a light that eternally emits its radiance. Those insistent on granting a “beginning” to the Son, in *Apol.*

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106 Scheck trans., Pamphilus, *Apol.* 43: “So then, we have clarified Origen’s conception of God the Father (*de deo Patre*) by means of the written texts that we have set forth above.”
107 Scheck, trans., 66.
108 Appeal to Hebrews 1:3 as a christological passage was long-standing; cf. 1 Clem. 36:2.
54 and 56, could plausibly have been monarchians. Origen’s opposition to them plays on the multiple sense of ἀρχή, noted extensively in the first book of the *Commentary on John*. The term ἀρχή could mean “beginning,” “principle,” or “source,” and so Origen implies, to argue that the Son “has a beginning” does little to advance the monarchian axiom of one divine ἀρχή—if the Son has an ἀρχή other than the ἀρχή that is the Father, there are two first ἀρχαί. If the Father is the Son’s ἀρχή, or source, there is one ἀρχή, and the Son exists eternally as a distinct divine entity. According to Origen, so does the rest of the “rational creation.”

**Conclusion**

The topic of Origen’s “subordination” of the Son to the Father has received scholarly attention that is relatively wide, but not necessarily always deep. It is not often recognized that, in fact, Origen’s hierarchical ordering of the Son and the Holy Spirit is part of a strategy of developing eternal distinctions within divine nature in the face of a monarchian position that would have reduced the identities of the Son and the Holy Spirit to that of God the Father. The dynamic of a triadic hierarchy is intrinsic to Origen’s anti-monarchian position. To read Origen’s hierarchy as innocent or “pre-Nicene,” and thereby implicitly to exculpate Origen from the ontological consequences that follow from Origen’s triadic hierarchy in his Christology is tempting, but it misleads.

While it is not the burden of historical scholarship to hold Origen to post-Nicene standards, to imply that his triadic scheme is “proto-Nicene” misreads Origen’s doctrine

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109 See *Jo.* 1.90-124.
110 In this way, Henri Crouzel misleads. See Crouzel, *Origen*, 181-204.
on its own terms. To deprive Origen of triadic hierarchy altogether, on the other hand, dissembles in still a different way. Depriving Origen of triadic hierarchy also deprives Origen’s trinitarian model of its rhetorical and polemical force. It takes away whatever contemporary orthodoxy Origen’s that model possessed.

It was a triadic hierarchy, grounded in a grammar of intra-trinitarian participation and procession, that allowed Origen to articulate eternal distinction within God, and thereby to resist monarchian theology. Were it not for his use of a Platonic grammar of participation to order the trinity within itself, Origen’s opponents could have elided his position with theirs. Rhetorically, Origen for his part could appeal to a broad consensus that, in fact, there were multiple divine principles in a graded series, and that this did not preclude the Father’s “monarchy,” his sole property of unique and primal source. Origen conceded this much to his opponents, even if it meant subordinating Son to Father, and Spirit to Son. He ensured, however, that the “subordination” of the Son to the Father was not conducted along the lines of a God-world distinction, since he replaced the corporeality of the containment metaphor with a grammar of epistemological comprehension. The Son’s eternal generation ensured the Son’s eternal presence, along with the rest of the “spiritual creation,” in light of God the Father’s. The Father would never be without his eternal, “hypostatic,” Wisdom. The scholar who, from a post-Nicene perspective, attempts to “cure” Origen of the “disease” of a triadic hierarchy removes not only the cancer allegedly diagnosed, but also the very heart and soul of Origen’s contemporary and constructive orthodoxy. Origen may have been either anti-monarchian or proto-Nicene, but he cannot have been both in any straightforward reading of his Commentary on John.
In the next chapter, with Origen’s grammar of participation and the trinitarian model it generates in view, comparison of *Jo.* with *On First Principles (Princ.)* enables an assessment of some of the evidence of a hierarchical trinity controversially alleged of Origen by his critics. The model that emerges in *Jo.* surfaces in some of these fragments; it can also be seen if we peer behind Rufinus’s version of the text. In the final analysis of both *Jo.* and *Princ.*, Origen’s anti-monarchian grammar of participation impacts his portrayal of the Son to a limited degree. I will argue that it weakens his theology of the Holy Spirit.
Chapter 4
Origen’s Low Pneumatology

Introduction

It is the burden of this final chapter on Origen to demonstrate that Origen’s grammar of participation generates a low pneumatology. By “low” I mean that Origen’s theology produces unresolved ambiguity about the Holy Spirit’s ontological status and fails to give the Holy Spirit the same kind of causal agency as that given to God the Father. First I compare relevant passages from the first two books of the Commentary on John with several disputed passages in On First Principles, both those in Rufinus’s tendentious translation and those of the Greek fragments alleged by Origen’s critics. I show that the same tiered arrangement appears in On First Principles for the same polemical purposes: to oppose monarchian theology. I also argue that Origen never deviated from this basic orientation. I then argue that Rufinus’s translation obscures

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1 As will become clear in this chapter, it is tempting to suggest that using the word “trinitarian” to describe Origen’s theology misleads. Against calling Origen “binitarian,” on the other hand, is Christoph Marksches, “Der Heilige Geist im Johanneskommentar des Origenes. Einige vorläufige Bemerkungen,” in Origenes und sein Erbe (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 107-126, (apparently) on the grounds that Origen calls the Spirit a third hypostasis (Jo. 2.75). Although Origen does call the Spirit “third,” in terms of the Spirit’s power the Spirit is first of another series: the series of celestial rational creatures, the logikoi, the prime of which is the Spirit. Ziebritzki explores the potential correlation between developments of “three hypostases doctrine” in Platonism and Christianity. For Ziebritzki, Origen is the first fully “Trinitarian” theologian in the true sense, because he teaches “three hypostases.” He sees pneumatology as a key point of contact between Christianity and Platonism’s doctrine of the “world soul.” He depends, however, on showing that pneumatology was persistently “low” until Origen. Among other objections one might raise is that Ziebritzki has slighted Irenaeus. His treatment depends on H.-J. Jaschke, but Anthony Brigman has offered a strong case in favor of viewing Irenaeus as having held a “high” pneumatology. See Hans-Jochen Jaschke, Der Heilige Geist Im Bekenntnis Der Kirche: Eine Studie Zur Pneumatologie Des Irenäus von Lyon Im Ausgang Vom Alchristlichen Glaubensbekenntnis (Münster: Aschendorff, 1976); Anthony Brigman, Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
Origen’s thought in at least one instance, and I clarify the appearance in Origen’s writings of a term which might justifiably be used to question my argument: ὀὐσιωδὸς.

Rufinus and the Trinity of On First Principles

Before turning to a comparison between the Commentary on John and On First Principles, a word about Rufinus’s translation is in order. The dynamics of participation that emerge with relative clarity in the Commentary on John are muted in Rufinus’ Latin translation of On First Principles.\(^2\) The crucial first two books of On First Principles, in which Origen discusses the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, are not extant in Greek apart from fragments alleged by sources whose hostility might have muddled Origen’s original formulations. Before we come to the text of On First Principles itself, a brief word regarding Rufinus’ translations is in order.

It is not sound to suspect Rufinus without reason. However, he acknowledges that he has represented Origen, not reproduced him. He would follow Jerome’s method for translating Origen’s homilies. Jerome had “so smoothed over and emended these [potentially offensive statements] in his translation, that a Latin reader would find in them nothing out of harmony with our faith (a fide nostra discrepet).”\(^3\) Rufinus admits that he has tampered with the original formulation. He has not “reproduce[d] such passages from

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\(^2\) For the text, I have used Herwig Görgemanns and Heinrich Karpp, eds., Origenes Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976).

\(^3\) Princ. Praef. 1.2; Butterworth trans., lxiii. . . . ita elimavit omnia interpretando atque purgavit, ut nihil in illis quod a fide nostra discrepet latinus lector inventat. This statement is important, methodologically, for its absence in the scholarship of Ilaria Ramelli, who culls Origen’s homilies, extant only in Latin translation, precisely for the sorts of doctrinal fixes Rufinus claims Jerome introduced. Ramelli acknowledges neither this allegation nor its potential consequences, if true, for her portrait of Origen as a “proto-Cappadocian.” See Ilaria Ramelli, “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism and Its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappadocian Line,” Vigiliae Christianae 65 (2011): 21-49.
the books of Origen as are found to be inconsistent with and contrary to his true
teaching.⁴ Rufinus emphasizes Origen’s “true” teaching, what Origen must really have
meant when he said certain things now “offensive” to Latin doctrinal sensitivities.
Rufinus has omitted material offensive to the Latin regula and expanded Origen’s
obscure statements with explanations.⁵ Rufinus states plainly what Origen’s “true
teaching” regarded:

. . . wherever . . . I have found in his books anything contrary to the reverent
statements made by him about the Trinity in other places, I have either omitted it
as a corrupt and interpolated passage, or reproduced it in a form that agrees with
the doctrine which I have often found him affirming elsewhere.⁶

The “Origen” subject to revision by Rufinus’s On First Principles is not first of all the
Origen of the “Origenist controversies” over the soul’s pre-existence and fall or the status
of the material body.⁷ Rufinus sterilized an Origen of Trinitarian speculation.⁸

Rufinus claims he conducted his sterilization, however, without recourse to
foreign wells. He is supposed to have only given “back to [Origen] his own statements

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⁴ Ibid., . . . observantes scilicet ne ea, quae in libris Origenis a se ipso discrepantia inveniuntur
atque contraria, proferamus.
⁵ We do not have to guess at the contents of Rufinus’ understanding of the Christian regula, since
we possess his Commentary on the Creed. See ACW 20, J.N.D. Kelly, trans. From this we can observe
Rufinus’s own trinitarian beliefs. Rufinus’s creed was not the Nicene Creed, however much he may have
interpreted his local creed in conformity with his understanding of Nicaea. For more on this issue, see
below.
⁶ Praef. 1.3. Sicubi ergo nos in libris eius aliquid contra id invenimus, quod ab ipso in ceteris locis
pie de drainitate fuerat definitum, velat adulteratum hoc et alienum aut praetermisimus aut secundum eam
regulam protulimus, quam ab ipso frequenter invenimus adfirmatum.
⁷ For which see Elizabeth Clark, The Origenist Controversy (Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 1992), 159-93, a still matchless accounting of the turbulent years in the late fourth and early fifth
centuries that occasioned Rufinus’s defensive translations of Origen.
⁸ Ronald Heine notes, in his introduction to Rufinus’s translations of Origen’s homilies on Genesis
and Exodus that Rufinus “suppresses contradictory elements in Origen. By contradictions he means
primarily contradictions regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. Since Rufinus thought that Origen’s genuine
thought was in agreement with the orthodox faith this means, in effect, that he suppresses those elements in
Origen which are not in harmony with the orthodox faith on the Trinity.” See Ronald Heine, trans., Origen.
found in other places.”⁹ Which, precisely, were the trinitarian views offensive to the late-fourth-century *regula*? Where, exactly, did Origen save himself from those views? Rufinus gives no citations, but his statements suggest that a shift later in Origen’s life regarding the Trinity is at least possible. Later in this chapter, I will confirm that Origen never altered his logic of participation in support of a graded model of the trinity, and the confirmation suggests that Rufinus must either have been talking about a different aspect of Origen’s thought, or perhaps had access to something that was not original to Origen.

Now is not the time to conduct a systematic review of the reliability of Rufinus’s translations of *On First Principles*.¹⁰ We have to admit that Origen’s original Greek may lie beyond the grasp of historical reconstruction. Yet, a strong candidate for at least some of the “offensive” trinitarian material reshuffled by Rufinus is apparent. Given intervening developments between Origen’s early career and Rufinus’ emendations of *On First Principles*, Origen’s hierarchical trinity in *Jo*. 1-2 would have appeared problematic to someone like Rufinus. If that hierarchical version were to have appeared in the original Greek Rufinus translated, he would have singled it out as a prime candidate for the kind of revision he owns up to having conducted. Had Rufinus encountered Didymus’ *On the Holy Spirit*, translated earlier by Jerome, his sensitivity would have been heightened all the more. He might have found Didymus’s scholastic theology a useful tool for clarifying some of Origen’s the statements in *On First Principles* that would have embarrassed pro-Nicene readers.

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⁹ *Praef*. 1.3. *Nihil tamen nostrum diximus, sed licet in aliis locis dicta, sua tamen sibi reddidimus.* Note the final word in this sentence could well be a play on “Didymus,” if we suppose Rufinus to have used Didymus in his “handing back to Origen” what Origen said elsewhere.

¹⁰ On Rufinus’s methods as a translator of Origen generally, see Heine, FOTC 71, 30-39.
I offer the following reading of *On First Principles* without denying that a range of statements regarding the divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit can be found throughout the Latin version, and without denying, *a priori*, the validity of such statements for a reconstruction of Origen’s model of the Trinity. But the presence of Origen’s anti-monarchian grammar of participation must be kept in mind as subject to Rufinus’s corrections, and just so, as a probable strand of the elusive original text of *On First Principles*. To demonstrate the veracity of Jerome’s claim that Rufinus borrowed from Didymus in his “correction” of Origen is not the burden of this chapter. That Rufinus did so becomes an enticing possibility worth entertaining once the features of Didymus’s pro-Nicene theology are brought into focus by the chapters that conclude this study. In the comparisons to follow, Rufinus’s intervention will never be far from mind. Though I will not undertake an exhaustive analysis of passages where Rufinus’s influence is plausible, I will argue that Rufinus has brought his own thought to bear in one important case, regarding the unity of the Father and Son, in *On First Principles 1.2.6*. But before we come to these matters, it is appropriate to get in view a doctrinal comparison of Origen’s thought in the *Commentary* and *On First Principles*.

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12 In the following discussion, I will note points where I think Rufinus may have repaired elements in Origen’s thought, and why I think that. We can dispense at the outset with a few apparent discrepancies between the trinity of Jo. 1-2 and Rufinus’ Origen in Princ. Rufinus’ translation of Princ. 1.4.2 to the effect that the *Triad* is “the fount of all holiness” may not be as helpful to saving Origen from himself as one might first suppose. Origen elsewhere uses τριάδος to refer to the Trinity, but the term is rare in his undisputed writings. In Jo. 6.166, Origen says that the τριάδος is “venerable” (προσκυνητός). The *Philocalia* records a single instance of the term, which reproduces the *Commentary on Matthew*’s attribution of the adjective ἀρχικός to the trinity (Commentary on Matthew 15.31). So the “triad” is the “primal triad” or “causal triad.” This usage bears out the arrangement in Jo. 1-2 of a graded series of causes. Rufinus’s Latin in Princ. 1.4.2 only describes holiness as transmitted by all three persons; holiness is the “lowest common denominator” in Origen’s causal scheme from Jo. 1-2. Recall that the Holy Spirit, third in rank, is the self-productive source of holiness for creation—but not of existence (the Father) or rationality (the Son) (Princ. 1.3.5). Origen affirms the immutability of the Holy Spirit in Princ. 1.3.4. The affirmation is not necessarily Rufinus’s channeling of Didymus. Origen states that the Holy Spirit possesses holiness not through knowledge gained by the Father’s revelation of the Son, like we possess holiness, but through himself. This presumés only what we already know about the Holy Spirit from Jo. 2: the Holy Spirit is the cause of holiness, and, in this regard at least, is immutable.
Commentary on John and On First Principles: Hierarchy and Low Pneumatology

I now want to describe the continuity that holds between key passages in the Commentary on John and some of the fragments alleged of Origen’s original version of On First Principles. The goal is to observe a line of continuity from the Commentary to On First Principles, and to attend to evidence that confirms Origen never departed from the approach of the Commentary.

Binitarian Tendencies in the Commentary on John

I argued in Chapter 2 that Origen drew on Middle Platonism to develop a triadic hierarchy in the Commentary on John’s first two books. I want here to draw attention to the effects of that dynamic on Origen’s pneumatology. Origen’s use of the term τάξις appears clearly in Jo. 2.73-77, and here it produces a low pneumatology.\(^{13}\) In the Commentary on John, Origen never names the Holy Spirit as “third” in order, though he does imply that the Holy Spirit is “third.” The omission is remarkable in light of earlier Christian readings of Platonic triadology (e.g., Justin and Clement). Jo. 2.73-77 is especially important, since it includes the only place in Origen’s Greek works where he implies that the Holy Spirit is third in the primal series, by stating that he believes in “three hypostases.”\(^{14}\)

However, Origen does not say that the Holy Spirit is third in the series of first principles. Instead of an explicit statement to that effect, we find something rather different in the immediate context. Only two paragraphs earlier, Origen states that the

\(^{13}\) The significance of τάξις is pronounced at Princ., 1.3.4-8.

\(^{14}\) Jo. 2.75.
Holy Spirit is “the most honored of all things made through the Word, and . . . he is [first] in rank (τάξις) of the ‘all things’ which have been made by the Father through Christ.”

The Spirit is “one of the ‘all things’ considered to be inferior (ὑποδεξστερον) to the one through whom he was made” [i.e., the Son]. Here Origen comes as close as he ever does to an explicit statement of the Holy Spirit’s subordination to the Son. The Holy Spirit is the principle (ἀρχή) of an alternate order (τάξις)—the τάξις of created rational entities, or angels.

Origen’s commitment to a “triad” of three hypostases recedes under the weight of binitarian tendencies, especially if we entertain the possibility that his pneumatology is angelomorphic. Such a possibility can be seen just between the lines of Jo. 2.82:

if [someone] takes offense when we say that the Savior was made less than the Holy Spirit when he became man, we must approach him from what is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews, when Paul also declared that Jesus was made less than angels because he suffered death” (quoting Hebrews 2:9).

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16 Jo. 2.86 ἐν τῶν πάντων τυγχάνων ὑποδεξστερῷ τοῦ δὲ οὐ ἐγένετο νουομένῳ. Origen lets on that some biblical texts draw him to an “opposite view,” but it is unclear what the texts are, or what “the opposite view” is. In On First Principles, Origen feels the need either to oppose a form of “hyper-pneumatology,” or to protect his own word from being (mis)read to imply a “hyper-pneumatological” scheme. It is likely that he has the same view in mind here, though he is less forceful in his rejection here than he is in On First Principles. Additionally, in fragment 39 ep. ad Mennam, Origen states that the Father “contains all things, and the Son is one of the ‘all things,’ and so he also contains the Son” (ὁ δὲ πατὴρ ἐμπερφέρει τὰ πάντα, τῶν δὲ πάντων ἐστὶν ὁ οἶκος, δήλων ὅτι καὶ τὸν υἱὸν). This fragment presents an inclusion of the Son in John 1:3, though when Origen comments on that verse in Jo. 2.86 he does not mention the Son. Matthew Crawford notes (551 n46) that Jerome’s presentation of a Latin translation of this Greek helps to corroborate Justinian’s allegation. But Justinian’s and Jerome’s allegation fits with the statement made in Jo. 1.291-292 to the effect that the Son is “circumscribed”. In his Contra Marcellum 1.4.41, Eusebius of Nicomedia will insist that the Son’s being the Father’s “image” means that “there are two ousiai and two pragmata and two dunameis,” echoing Origen’s anti-monarchian point at Jo.291-292. See Gwynn, The Eusebians, 216-217.

17 His term is ὑποδεξστέρον.

18 Jo. 2.82. Εἰ δὲ ἐν τούτῳ προσκόπτει τις τῷ λέγειν ἡλαταίσθαι παρὰ τὸ ἄγα τοῦ πνεύμα τῶν σωτηρία ἐνανθρωπισθήσατα, προσκυκτείτω αὐτόν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐν τῇ πρὸς Ἑβραίους λεγομένου ἑπιστολῆ, καὶ ἀγγέλου ἐλάττων διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου ἀποφημημένου τοῦ Παύλου γεγονέναι τὸν Ἰησοῦν· φησί γάρ: “Τὸν δὲ βραχύ τι παρ᾽ ἀγγέλους ἡλατομένου βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου δόξης καὶ τιμή ἐστεφανομένου.”
The logic of Origen’s reasoning here is that the incarnate *Logos* (i.e., Jesus) was “less than the angels,” and that this explains the way in which we can say that the second person is less than the third. The logic turns on the premise that, if the incarnate *Logos* were lower than the angels, he would also be lower than their principle, the Holy Spirit. This statement, taken by itself, does not identify the Holy Spirit as the chief of the angelic host. However, when coupled with Origen’s identification of the Holy Spirit with the one who is “first in rank” of the “all things” produced by the Father through the Word, the lines between “Holy Spirit” and “Archangel” begin to blur.

Origen goes on to explain why the Holy Spirit is not to be identified with the Son. Just as the Son is not to be identified with the Father because the Son, as the Father’s invisible image, participates in the Father’s divinity, so too the Holy Spirit receives certain qualities from the Son.\(^19\) The Father uses the Son to cause the Holy Spirit to exist. The Son provides the Holy Spirit with a determinate character. In order for the Holy Spirit’s “*hypostasis*” not to be indeterminate, it is filled with all the attributes of Christ that Christ is “naturally”—wisdom, rationality, justice, and so on. Origen invokes 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 to provide the Holy Spirit a role analogous to that of the Father and Son: he, too, provides the “material of the gifts” administered to the saint that participates in him. As the Father is the source of the Son’s divinity, the Son as *Logos* is the self-sufficient source for all creation of its rationality.\(^20\)

Origen now extends the analogy to the Holy Spirit, which, as the “material” of the Son, is the self-productive source of holiness for creation.\(^21\) The Holy Spirit’s “material”

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\(^19\) Jo. 2.76, already quoted, speaks of the Holy Spirit’s reception of qualities from the Son.

\(^20\) Jo. 2.19-20.

\(^21\) Jo. 2.77: Ὅμως δὲ τὸ ἁγιὸν πνεῦμα τήν, ἵνα οὕτως εἴποι, ὑλὴν τῶν ἀπὸ θεοῦ χαρισμάτων παρέχειν τοῖς δι᾽ αὐτὸ καὶ τὴν μετοχὴν αὐτοῦ χρηματίζοις ἁγίους, τῆς εἰρημένης ὑλῆς τῶν χαρισμάτων
is set in motion (ἐνεργομένης) by the Father, made righteous (διακονομένης) by the Son, and given existence (ὑφεστώσης) by the Holy Spirit. Origen’s causal ordering of the trinity reappears. The Father is the self-sufficient source of divinity and causes the Son’s divine existence; the Son is the self-sufficient source of rationality and causes the Holy Spirit’s rational existence; and the Holy Spirit is the self-sufficient source of holiness and causes the existence of all holy creatures.

Origen elsewhere uses τάξις to indicate the angelic order attained by way of participation in a scale of ranking. He does not distinguish his use of τάξις to refer to the angelic hierarchy from his use of that term in the context of trinitarian speculation. In fact, Origen’s failure to distinguish between the angelic “order” and the trinitarian “order” does not appear to be an oversight; the lack of a distinction between the angelic and trinitarian hierarchies appears to be intentional. If Origen thought the Holy Spirit was an angel, the continuity between the angelic and trinitarian “orders” is a logical consequence Origen embraced. With this dynamic more clearly in view, we may turn to several passages in On First Principles for comparison.

In Princ. 1.3.3, Origen appears to deny the Holy Spirit’s being “made or produced”:

\[\text{ἐνεργομένης μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, διακονομένης δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, υφεστώσης δὲ κατὰ τὸ ἄγιον πνεῦμα.}\]

The characterization of the Spirit as the “spiritual material” (materia spiritualis) of the Son is mentioned by Aloys Grillmeier in his concise account of Origen’s christology (see Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, 138-48). He does not name the passage in Origen he has in mind when he writes that “[the pneuma] provides a new substratum, which makes it possible to receive ‘the wisdom of Christ’. The Spirit appears as ‘materia spiritualis’ which is informed by the ‘Logos-wisdom’. . . . The Holy Spirit is neither unbegotten like the Father, nor begotten as is the Son, nor is it created like other creatures. It issues from the Father and becomes a subsisting hypostasis by means of the Logos. Thus it belongs on the side of God, but is in third place after the Father and the Son” (140). Grillmeier is probably thinking of Princ. 1.3.8 (“[rational creatures obtain] . . . their holiness from the Holy Spirit and they become capable of receiving Christ afresh in his character of the righteousness of God”) when he speaks of the Spirit as a “new substratum” that makes possible a fresh receiving of the Word as wisdom.

22 Princ. 1.6.2-3; Clement’s “gnostic” was a spiritual guru always pure and ready to pray in the ranks of angels already in this world (Strom. 7.12; ANF, 545: “So is [the Gnostic] always pure for prayer. He also prays in the society of angels, as being already of angelic rank, and he is never out of their holy keeping; and though he pray alone, he has the choir of the saints standing with him”). Cf. also Origen, Cels. 4.29.
It is proved by many declarations throughout the whole of scripture that all things were created by God (a deo universa creata sint) and that there is no substance which has not received its existence from him (nec sit ulla substantia quae non ab eo hoc ipsum ut esset acceperit); which refutes and dismisses the doctrines falsely taught by some, that there is a matter which is co-eternal with God, or that there are unbegotten souls, in whom they would have it that God implanted not so much the principle of existence as the quality and rank of their life. Moreover in that little book composed by Hermas, called “The Shepherd, or the Angel of Repentance”, it is thus written: “First of all, believe that God is one, who created and set in order all things; who, when nothing existed before, caused all things to be; who contains all things, but himself is contained by none.” Similar statements are also made in the book of Enoch. But up to the present we have been able to find no passage in the holy scriptures which would warrant us in saying that the Holy Spirit was a being made or created (factura esse vel creatura diceretur), not even in that manner in which we have shown above that Solomon speaks of wisdom, nor in the manner in which the expressions we have dealt with, such as life, or word, or other titles of the Son of God, are to be understood. The “Spirit of God,” therefore, who “moved upon the waters,” as it is written, in the beginning of the creation of the world, I reckon to be none other than the Holy Spirit, so far as I can understand; which indeed I have demonstrated in my exposition of these passages, not however, according to their literal but according to their spiritual meaning.23

Note that the passage begins with a clear statement by Origen that “all things (universa) have been produced (creata sint) by God.” Rufinus’s use of the Latin universa probably translates πάντα, the same word used in John 1:3. However, according to Rufinus, Origen here makes it clear that Scripture never speaks of the Holy Spirit as one of the “all things” produced by God. So Rufinus’s Latin implies that Origen either has not read John 1:3, or does not want to admit it as evidence in pneumatology.

About halfway through the section italicized in the quotation above, the passage is interrupted, in Butterworth’s translation, by the presentation of Koetschau’s Fragment 7, taken from Justinian’s Letter to Mennas, which alleges that Origen said: “Following the same reasoning we believe that everything whatever except the Father and God of the universe is created (ὅτι μὲν οὖν πᾶν ὃ τι ποτὲ παρὰ τὸν πατέρα καὶ θεὸν τῶν ὀλῶν
Even if this fragment paraphrases and does not quote Origen, it represents Origen’s doctrine in the *Commentary on John*.

Origen’s statement in Rufinus’s version of *On First Principles* 1.3.3, to the effect that he knows of no Scripture in which the Holy Spirit is “a being made or created,” runs afoul of what Origen makes plain in the *Commentary on John*:

> But if it is true that “all things were made through him,” we must investigate if the Holy Spirit, too, was made through him. I think that one who declares that he was made and who advances the statement, “All things were made through him,” must accept that the Holy Spirit too was made through the Word, since the Word is older than he (Ὁίμαι γὰρ ὅτι τὸ μὲν φάσκοντι γενητὸν αὐτὸ εἶναι καὶ προιμένῳ τὸ πᾶντα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο· ἀναγκαῖον παραδέξασθαι, ὅτι καὶ τὸ ἄγιον πνεῦμα διὰ τοῦ λόγου ἐγένετο, πρεσβυτέρου παρ᾽ αὐτὸ τοῦ λόγου τυγχάνοντος). But it follows that one who does not wish the Holy Spirit to have been made through the Christ, if he judges the things in this Gospel to be true, says he is “unbegotten.”

Origen acknowledges not only that John 1:3 might be read to imply that the Holy Spirit is one of the “all things” made by the Father through the Word, and he concludes that the best interpretation of this passage is that the Holy Spirit is, in fact, among the “all things” of John 1:3.

So, did Origen say in *On First Principles* that “we have been able to find no passage . . . which would warrant us in saying that the Holy Spirit was a being made or created”? Two options present themselves, the suggestion that Origen was lying notwithstanding. First, Origen could have written his statement in *On First Principles* prior to having come to write his *Commentary on John*, or at least its first two books.

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25 Note that here Origen calls the Son “older than” the Holy Spirit, perhaps echoing Numenius’s use of the word πρεσβύτερος to arrange first principles, as he does, for example, in Fragments 16, 17, and 24, ed. Des Places. Blanc (SC 120, 253n2) notes that the term is not necessarily “chronological,” which is true so far as it goes, and notes several instances of this term in Origen’s *Commentary* (e.g., Jo. 1.236; 2.36; 2.181; 2.185; 10.179), but she does not connect it to Numenius’s precedent.

26 Jo. 2.73.

27 The other two options, he goes on to make clear, are to identify the Holy Spirit as the “unbegotten,” or to teach “that the Holy Spirit has no distinctive essence different from the Father and the Son” (Jo. 2.74).
Indeed, the phrase “up to the present” suggests an ongoing search, as though Origen were reporting on his work-in-progress. However, if that is so, then the Commentary represents a shift in thinking and should be privileged as representing Origen’s more developed pneumatology—since he has finally decided that, in fact, John 1:3 indicates that the Holy Spirit is produced by the Father through the Son. On the other hand, if the Commentary and On First Principles were written more or less contemporaneously, then Origen’s original statement in On First Principles is obscured by Rufinus’s sympathetic intervention. In either case, the statement in On First Principles regarding the Holy Spirit’s being “produced” should not be used as evidence of Origen’s mature pneumatology—or, for that fact, even of his pneumatology in his “early” period. At the very most, it represents an experimental position that was soon abandoned.

Son as Image and Hierarchical Triad

I now want to pivot from Origen’s low pneumatology to his descriptions of the Son as the Father’s “invisible image” in On First Principles. Origen’s construal of the Son as the Father’s image is a theology of procession. It describes, in an accessible way, what it means for the Father to “beget” the Son. It also makes space for the grammar of participation articulated in the Commentary on John. In the first book of On First Principles, Origen repeatedly characterizes the Son as God the Father’s “image.”

\[28\] We may set aside Origen’s statements, in Princ. 1.1.8, to the effect that the Son does not see the Father. A number of Origen’s readers took these statements to mean that Origen

\[28\] See especially Princ. 1.1.8; 1.2.6; 1.2.8; 1.2.13.
thought the Son incapable of seeing the Father.\textsuperscript{29} Origen’s statement concerns the nature of both the Father and the Son. It is inappropriate to speak of vision in the case of either, he says, since both the Father and the Son are intellectual entities. Neither of them sees or is seen with the physical senses. So the Son “cannot” see the Father because the Father is not the kind of entity that can be seen in any event. The “cannot” in that sentence does not restrict the Son’s nature, but expresses the incorporeality of both Father and Son.

*Princ.* 1.2.6 confirms that this reading of 1.1.8 is not a Rufinian gloss. Origen writes:

> But in regard to the Son of God, of whom we are now speaking, the image may be compared to our second illustration; for this reason, that he is the invisible image of the invisible God, just as according to the scripture narrative we say that the image of Adam was his son Seth. It is written thus: “And Adam begat Seth after his own image and after his own kind.” This image preserves the unity of nature and substance common to a Father and a Son.\textsuperscript{30}

Origen describes the Son as an invisible image, and he refers to his distinction between two ways of thinking about an “image.” One way is to consider an image as an artificial production; the other is to think of it as a natural production. The first, a physical representation like a painting or carved statue, is better suited to illustrate the way human beings resemble God, Origen says. With this “image painted or carved on some material” Origen has in mind the interpretation of the “image” of Genesis 1. The second kind of “image”—a natural production—on the other hand, is more appropriate to the kind of continuity between Father and Son. Insofar as the Son is God the Father’s “invisible

\textsuperscript{29} See Butterworth, p. 13, for references to Jerome, Epiphanius, and Justinian.

\textsuperscript{30} *Princ.* 1.2.6.
image,” the Son “preserves the unity of nature and substance common to a father and a
son.”

The Latin’s report here of “natura ac substantia” reflects Rufinus’ intervention. The Greek equivalent—φύσις και ούσια—never appears in Origen’s extant Greek writings. The phrase “nature and substance” does feature, however, in Rufinus’s discussion of the unity that obtains between God the Father and the Son. In the course of Rufinus’s discussion it becomes clear that he treats “nature” and “substance” as synonymous, and that whatever unity the persons of the trinity have, they have it at the level of “nature or (vel) substance.” In his Commentary on the Creed, he states: “‘God,’ so far as human intelligence can conceive, is the designation of the absolutely supreme nature or substance.”

Having defined God as a “substance without beginning or end, simple, uncompounded, invisible, incorporeal, ineffable, incomprehensible: a substance (substantiam) in which there is nothing accidental, nothing creaturely (in qua nihil adjunctum, nihil creatum sit),” Rufinus scolds his reader not to delve too deeply into the question of the Son’s generation from the Father lest he “plunge too inquisitively into the

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31 Princ. 1.2.6. Quae imago etiam naturae ac substantiae patris et filii continet unitatem; Butterworth trans., 19. Depending on how one takes this line, we might have a statement at odds with Origen’s statements in Jo. 1.152 that the Son is substantially distinct from the Father, kai kexorismenon kai ousiomenon. In Prin. 1.2.6, we are supposed to think of the Son’s being an image as the basis for continuity between the “nature and substance” of the Father and Son. A few lines down in 1.2.6, Origen expresses this unity as existing only at the level of shared volition between the Father and the Son: the Son’s “birth from the Father is as it were an act of his will proceeding from the mind. And on this account my own opinion is that an act of the Father’s will ought to be sufficient to ensure the existence of what he wills.” In Jo. 1.152, Origen makes it plain that the Son is a substance separated from the Father. In Jo. 2.75 he calls the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit distinct hypostases. With Rufinus’s Latin we have a slight correction. Origen excoriates those who would construe the Son’s generation from the Father in corporeal terms. He has in mind certain Gnostics. Whatever “separation” Origen implies between the Father and the Son, it is not a material division. Instead, he explains that the Son is distinct from the Father as an act of will proceeding from the mind is distinct from mind. Origen avoids the monarchian alternative, which is to identify the Son as a Word proceeding from the mind, since a Word’s subsistence is too impermanent. Origen feels pressed to avoid any connotation of corporeality as he describes the Son’s substantial distinction from the Father, and so he opts here for the metaphor of an act of will that proceeds from the mind.

32 Rufinus, Comm. in Sym. Apost. 4; PL 21, 341. Deus, secundum quod opinari potest humana mens, naturae ipsius vel substantiae quae est super omnia appellatio est; Kelly trans., 33.
depths of the mystery.” Following this warning, Rufinus provides examples of such oversights, and in the process he implies what the unity of the Father and Son is like:

“First of all explain, if you can, how the mind within you generates its word, and what the spirit of memory in your mind is. Explain how these, for all their diversity in reality and operation (quomodo haec cum diversa sint rebus et actibus), form a unity in substance or nature (unum tamen sint vel substantia vel natura), or how, while proceeding from the mind, they are never separated (separentur) from it.”

The doctrine of “common operation” is traceable to Origen himself. The clear use of “nature” and “substance” as synonyms, however, is not. In On First Principles 1.2.6, Rufinus is thus more likely than Origen to have said that the Son’s being the Father’s “image” preserves the unity of “nature and substance” of the Father and the Son.

An original and its copy, or an archetype and its image, have the “same nature,” according to Aristotle, even if they are not the same “substance.” In this sense, the

33 PL 21, 341; Kelly trans., 34.
34 PL 21, 342; Kelly trans., 34.
35 See Princ. 1.2.12 and the discussion of this passage below, in Chapter 6.
36 Cf. Mark Edwards, “Did Origen Apply the Word Homoousios to the Son?” Journal of Theological Studies 49.2 (1998): 658-670. Edwards argues, against an earlier article on the same subject by Hanson (see below), that Pamphilus’s report that Origen used the term homoousios was not inaccurate. However, he concludes that Origen’s “use was too tentative to anticipate the later orthodoxy, yet venturesome enough to be thought heretical before the Nicene Council” (Edwards, 670). Even if Edwards has made a strong case for Origen’s use of the word homoousios, it is a use whose qualification takes back the proto-Nicene sense some of Origen’s modern readers have implied by pointing out that he applied it to the Son. If Origen did use the word, he glosses it to mean “of the same nature as the Father” (in Edwards’ retrograde Greek: ταὐτὸν κατ᾽ οὐσίαν τῷ θατρί; cf. Edwards, 665), which suggests the possibility that Origen’s use of the word conceded terminologically a point to the monarchians which he then immediately revoked conceptually: a distinction between the Father and the Son’s hypostases. Regarding Princ. 1.2.6., Edwards acknowledges that “the word substantiae may be expository here,” though he makes no mention of the potential confirmation one might glean from Rufinus’s usage in his Commentary on the Creed. See Edwards, 662. I am inclined to agree with Hanson’s statement that “[t]here can be little doubt that Origen believed that the Son was of the same nature as the Father, but this would not have prevented him from saying that the Son’s ousia is distinct from that of the Father.” See Richard P. C. Hanson, “Did Origen Apply the Word Homoousios to the Son,” in Epektasis: Melanges Patristiques offerts au Cardinal Daniélou, ed. J. Fontaine and C. Kannengiesser (Paris, 1972), 293-303, at 293-4.
37 Beeley makes the following statement regarding Origen’s use of the metaphor of “image” to describe the Son: “Christ is the image of God the Father more in the way that a human child is the image of
model of an original and its image is an example of equivocation.\textsuperscript{38} A man and an artificial representation of him in the form of a statue are both the “same nature,” but on is not “man” in the same way as the other. Origen reads the Father-Son model in terms of an original-image relationship which implies equivocation. It is hard to believe he would have said “and substance,” given the purchase that term had for monarchian theology. For Origen himself, the participatory model of model and copy, in which the copy is ontologically “less than” that from which it receives, governs his use of terms for the Father and the Son’s having the “same nature.”

The Father and the Son, then, are two distinct incorporeal entities united in some way, and one of the chief means of unity is the model of original and image. It is this model which Jerome claimed led Origen to say disastrous things about the Son in relation to the Father. We do not have to credit Jerome’s allegation that these statements led Origen to describe the Son as “a very small brightness,” in order to understand why Koetschau is justified in crediting this Greek fragment alleged by Justinian: statements in its parent than in the sense of a painted or carved image: he is a distinctly existing being just like his parent, not a mere artifact made by a superior being. . . . The difference between the two types of imaging is that the Father and the Son are of the same nature, just as a human parent and child are both human beings; whereas an artist and an artifact are not of theh same nature” (Beeley, \textit{Unity of Christ}, 29-30). In a footnote to this statement, Beeley appeals to \textit{Princ.} 1.2.6 and admits that the phrase \textit{naturae ac substantiae unitatem} could be an insertion on the part of Rufinus. Yet he insists that the phrase “expresses Origen’s meaning faithfully enough, if it is not overinterpreted to indicate Athanasian consubstantiality. Origen expresses the common divinity and sameness of nature (if not sameness of \textit{ousia}) shared by the Father and Son in several other passages” (Beeley, \textit{Ibid.}, 322n57). He cites Hanson’s article on the question, “Did Origen Apply the Word Homoousios?” So it appears that Beeley thinks that Origen’s use of the “Son as Image” metaphor precludes the possibility of hierarchy. In fact, Origen’s use of the image metaphor is a direct result of his appropriation of Numenius, who speaks of the second principle or Demiurge as an “imitator” and “image” of the first, and for this reason subordinates the second principle to the first. To say that the Father and the Son “share the same nature” does not preclude the possibility that the Father is the “original” and the Son a subordinated participant in the Father as source. For this reason, I am not convinced that Origen’s statement in \textit{Princ.} 1.2.6 save Origen from a hierarchical arrangement of Father over Son, as Beeley here implies.

\textsuperscript{38} Aristotle, \textit{Cat.} 1.
very similar terms appear in Origen’s *Commentary on John.* In 1.2.6, Origen states that the Son, as incorporeal Wisdom, is

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\ldots \text{the image of the invisible God, the Father, being the truth, when considered in relation to the Father himself, and the image, when considered in relation to us, to whom he reveals the Father; through which image we know the Father, whom “no one” else “knoweth save the Son and he to whom the Son hath willed to reveal him.” And he reveals the Father by being himself understood; for whoever has understood him understands as a consequence the Father also, according to his own saying, “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also.”}\]

Notice that Rufinus’s translation here states an analogy: the Son is *truth* in relation to the Father and *image* in relation to humanity. It makes little sense, on Origen’s own terms, to consider the Son as *truth* in relation to God the Father. As Butterworth notes, the incongruity between what Rufinus claims Origen says, and what Origen implies, belies Rufinus’s attempt to cloak Origen’s controversial arrangement of the Son as *image* in relation to the Father and *truth* in relation to humanity. That arrangement, as we have seen, is expressed with clarity in *Commentary on John* 2.12-21, especially at 2.18 and 2.20:

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\begin{align*}
(2.18) \text{The God, therefore, is the true God. The others are gods formed according to him as images of the prototype. But again, the archetypal image of the many images is the Word with the God, who was “in the beginning.” By being “with the God” he always continues to be “divine.” }& \ldots \\
(2.20) \text{The reason which is in each rational being has the same position in relation to the Word which is in the beginning with God, which is God the Word, which God the Word has with God. For as the Father is the one true God in relation to the image and images of the image (wherefore also men are said to be “according to the image,” not “image”), so is the very Word in relation to the reason in each one. For both hold the place of a source; the Father, that of divinity, the Son, that of reason.}\end{align*}
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40 *Imago ergo est invisibilis dei patris salvator noster, quantum ad ipsum quidem paterem veritas, quantum autem ad nos, quibus revelat patrem, imago est, per quam cognoscimus patrem, quem nemo alius novit nisi filius et cui voluerit filius revelare. Revelat autem per hoc, quod ipse intelligitur. A quo enim ipse fuerit intelletus, consequenter intellegitur et pater, secundum hoc quod ipse dixit: Qui me vidit, vidit et patrem;* Butterworth trans., 19-20.
41 *Jo.* 2.18, 20; Heine trans., 99-100.
Here Origen states clearly the analogy between Father and Son, Word and rational creatures, which Rufinus’s translation has obscured in On First Principles. The similarity between Origen’s analogy here and that implied by a similar original statement in Princ. 1.2.6 is part of the reason Koetschau included for reference a Greek fragment from Justinian’s Epistle to Mennas. Fragment 4 of On First Principles, according to Koetschau’s numbering, reads as follows:

We, therefore, having been made according to the image, have the Son, the original, as the truth of the noble qualities that are within us. And what we are to the Son, such is the Son to the Father, who is the truth.\(^{42}\)

It is not difficult to understand why Koetschau included this fragment, and there is little reason to doubt its authenticity.

Not much further along in Rufinus’s version of the text (1.2.8), Origen restates the Son’s identity as the Father’s image and pairs it with increased ability to receive the Son, God’s “word” and “wisdom.”

I do not think it superfluous, therefore, to turn our attention to this point, namely, how there can be said to exist, besides the actual substance or subsistence of God (whatever that substance or subsistence means), something else which is an image of his substance. See, then, whether the Son of God, who is called God’s word and wisdom, and who alone knows the Father and reveals him to whom he will, to those, namely, who become capable of receiving his word and wisdom, may not perhaps be said to express the image of God’s substance or subsistence for this reason, that he makes God understood and known; that is, when wisdom outlines first in herself the things which she wishes to reveal to others, by means of which they are to know and understand God, then she herself may be called the “express image of God’s substance.”\(^{43}\)

\(^{42}\) Koetschau, ed., Fragment 4; Γενόμενοι τούτων ἡμεῖς κατ᾽ εἰκόνα, τὸν υἱὸν πρωτότυπον ὡς ἠλήθειαν ἔχομεν τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν καλῶν τύπων· αὐτὸς δὲ ἐκεῖ ἡμεῖς ἠσμέν πρὸς αὐτόν, τοιούτος ἐστι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἠλήθειαν τυγχάνοντα; Butterworth trans., 20.

\(^{43}\) Princ. 1.2.8: non mihi videtur otiose esse intellectus advertere, quomodo alia praeter ipsam dei substantiam vel subsistentiam, quaeacunque illa substantia vel subsistentia dicitur, figura substantiae eius esse dicitur. Et vide ne forte, quoniam filius dei, qui et verbum eius et sapientia dicitur et qui solus novit patrem, et revelat quibus vult, id est qui capaces verbi ipsius et sapientiae sunt, secundum hoc ipsum, quod intelligi atque agnosci faciatur deum, figuram substantiae vel subsistentiae eius dicitur exprimere: id est cum in semet ipsa primum describit sapientia ea, quae revelare alius ceteris, ex quibus ab illis agnoscitur et intellegitur duas, et haec dicitur figura expressa substantiae dei; Butterworth trans., 21.
The Son is the image of God the Father’s substance. He is called the “image” because he makes God the Father understood and known.

The Son is in position to make the Father known because the Son knows the Father perfectly. Contemplation of an object results in conformity to that object’s aspects. If one contemplates goodness, one becomes good. Because the Son perfectly contemplates the Father, he is in a position perfectly to reproduce the Father’s nature and so to be the Father’s perfect image. Because the Son is the Father’s image, he provides reliable epistemological access to the Father.\textsuperscript{44}

Origen elaborates on the Son-as-Image model by invoking the example of an enormous statue at \textit{Princ.} 1.2.8:

Let us suppose . . . that there existed a statue of so great a size as to fill the whole world, but which on account of its immensity was imperceptible to anyone, and that another statue was made similar to it in every detail, in shape of limbs and outline of features, in form and material, but not in its immense size, so that those who were unable to perceive and behold the immense one could yet be confident that they had seen it when they saw the small one, because this preserved every line of limbs and features and the very form and material with an absolutely indistinguishible similarity. It is by some such likeness as this that the Son, in emptying himself of his quality with the Father, and showing to us a way by which we may know him, becomes an “express image” of God’s substance; so that, through this fact of his becoming to us the brightness, we who were not able to look at the glory of pure light while it remained in the greatness of his godhead, may find a way of beholding the divine light through looking at the brightness.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{44} Origen makes this point without recourse to calling the Son \textit{ἀπαραλλάκτος} because, for him, that term would signify that the Son and the Father are not two distinct entities, but are really one—a consequence that would lead ineluctably to the monarchian position. On this term and its later history, see especially DelCogliano, “Theologies of the Son as Image.”

\textsuperscript{45} Butterworth trans., 22. \textit{Verbi causa, si facta esset aliqua status talis, quae magnitudine sui universum orbem terrae teneret et pro sui immensitate considerari a nullo posset, fieret autem alia statua membrorum habitu ac vultus linamentis, specie ac materia per omnia similis absque magnitudinis immensitate, pro eo ut qui illam immensam considerare atque intueri non possent, hanc videntes, illam se vidisse confiderent, pro eo quod omnia vel membrorum vel vultus linamenta vel ipsam speciem materiamque similitudine prorsus indiscreta servarent: tali quadam similitudine “exinaniens” se filius de aequalitate patris et viam nobis cognitionis eius ostendens, “figura expressa substantiae eius” efficitur; uti qui in magnitudine deitatis suae positam gloriam merae lucis non poteramus aspicere, per hoc quod nobis “splendor” efficitur, intuendae lucis divinae viam per splendoris capiamus aspectum.
Here is a way to see the “sun” without approaching it directly. Origen provides Colossians 1:15 with an explicitly epistemological valence and associates the Son’s being as image with his function as the revealer of an otherwise incomprehensible nature—that of God the Father, whose light is too much for the capacity of our mind’s eye.

The continuity that obtains between the smaller figure (Christ) and the larger, incomprehensible statue (God the Father) is not due to the fact that both are made of the same “material.” Rather, the continuity derives from the fact that both statues share the same form or bear the same appearance—alogically speaking. Origen is careful to point out that, once we have grasped the conceptual point, we have to abandon the corporeal grounds upon which we came to that point: the Son is not a physical statue of a physical Father. But the one who has understood the character conveyed by Christ will have understood what can be grasped of God the Father. This is the point of Origen’s illustration of the two statues. The analogy turns on epistemological access to God the Father provided in Christ. Such access is guaranteed by the fact that the “image” faithfully represents the essential attributes or defining characteristics of the original, inaccessible image.

46 Origen implies that God the Father is the Sun of Republic 509b. The Son is a more gentle, approachable light. Origen characterizes the Son as the “mediator” that helps the soul out of the Cave and into the light of the Sun in Plato’s Allegory of the Cave (Republic VII, 514a-521a): “. . . we arrive at the meaning of [the Son’s] being the brightness; for it is through its brightness that the nature of the light itself is known and experienced. This brightness falls softly and gently on the tender and weak eyes of mortal man and little by little trains and accustoms them, as it were, to bear the light in its clearness; and when it has removed from them all that darkens and obstructs their vision . . . it renders them capable of enduring the glory of the light, becoming in this respect even a kind of mediator between men and the light” (Princ. I.II.7; Butterworth trans., 21).
Commentary on John's development of a graded scheme of participation against the monarchical position. The same polemical edges of Origen’s participatory grammar appear in the same terms, I will now show, in the trinitarian theology articulated in Princ. 1.2.13 and 1.3.5. Koetschau includes a fragment from Justinian that he thinks belongs at 1.2.13. The fragment reads:

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\text{in the case of the Savior it would be right to say that he is an image of God’s goodness, but not goodness itself} \ (\text{εἰκὼν ἀγαθότητος τοῦ θεοῦ ἕστιν, ἀλλ’ οὐκ \ αὐτοαγαθὸν}). \ \text{And perhaps also the Son, while being good, is yet not good purely and simply} \ (\text{ὁ υἱὸς ἀγαθὸς ἄλλ’ οὐχ ὑπὸ ἀπλός}). \ \text{And just as he is the image of the invisible God, and in virtue of this is himself God, and yet is not he of whom Christ himself says, ‘that they may know thee, the only true God’; so he is the image of the goodness (εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος), and yet not, as the Father is, incomparably good.}
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This passage fits with Origen’s strategy in Jo. 2, with a slight difference. In Jo. 2.12-20, Origen refers to God the Father exclusively with the title \(\alphaὐτόθεος\), not the title \(\alphaὐτοαγαθόν\). And here he uses \(\alphaὐτοαγαθόν\) in a comparable way. God the Father alone is \(\alphaὐτοαγαθόν\); the Son is \(\alphaγάθος \ \alphaλλ’ \ οὐχ \ ώς \ \alphaπλός\). The point is the same: the Son is an incomparably good.

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47 As Ronald Heine notes, “there is no section on the Trinity in the On First Principles” (Origen, 136). Instead, scholars who would reconstruct Origen’s “trinitarian theology” in Princ. must piece together a synthetic account on the basis of Origen’s relatively scattered remarks on God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. I am focusing here on passages in which Origen’s use of participation bears directly on his conception of the trinity. The most important sections are Princ. 1 Pref. 4, 1.1.3-6, 1.2.1-13, 1.3.2-8.


49 That is so unless we are here dealing with a quotation from a later portion of Jo. (1). That possibility is, however, improbable since Origen did not probably get to John 17:3 in nearly two decades of work on the commentary. See John McGuckin, “Structural Design and Apologetic Intent in Origen’s Commentary on John,” in Origeniana Sexta, 441-457, and Heine, Origen, 83-103.
entity which participates in its cause, the Father, which in turn is superior to its effect, the Son. The author introduces a distinction between God the Father as “Goodness itself” or Good simply, and the Son, who, though “God,” is not to be identified with the God. The dynamic of participation ensures the distinction, and the author is able to recover John 17:3 from the monarchian purpose of insisting that there are not two Gods (the Father and Jesus Christ) but only one true God. It also produces the corollary notion that the Son is “less than” the Father because the Son participates in the Father.

The fragment “at” 1.2.13 fits into Origen’s anti-monarchian strategy. Origen admits the principle of “one True God” without sacrificing the divinity of the second person. He may therefore speak of “two Gods” without speaking of two first principles. He has a first principle participated by a second. The price he has to pay, however, is that the goodness of the second person (and the third) is derived from the first. Rufinus has Origen concluding this section of Princ. with the following proposal:

we ought not to imagine that there is some kind of blasphemy, as it were, in the saying that ‘none is good save one, God the Father’, as if these words were to be taken as a denial that either Christ or the Holy Spirit is good; but, as we said before, the original goodness must be believed to reside in God the Father, and from him both the Son and Holy Spirit undoubtedly draw into themselves the nature of that goodness existing in the fount from which the one is born and the other proceeds.⁵₀

Origen appeals to Mark 10:18 to justify his distinction between the Father as “the Good” and the Son as a participant in “the Good”: Jesus says that “none is good but God” (οὐδεὶς ἄγαθος εἰ μὴ ὁ θεός). Though the Greek for this passage is lost, it is probable that Origen was making the point that in this passage Jesus refers to “the God” and

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⁵₀ Princ. 1.2.13. Propter quod non debet velut blasphemiae aliquod genus putari in eo quod dictum est quia nemo bonus nisi unus duo pater, ut propere putetur vel Christus vel spiritus sanctus negari quod bonus sit; sed, ut superius diximus, principalis bonitas in deo patre sentienda est, ex quo vel filius natus vel spiritus sanctus procedens sine dubio bonitatis eius naturam in se referit, quae est in eo fonte, de quo vel natus est filius vel procedit spiritus sanctus; Butterworth trans., 27-28.
identifying “goodness” with “the God,” the Father. God the Father thus is the “one true” source of goodness for the Son and the Holy Spirit. This statement remains in Rufinus’s Latin and confirms Origen’s commitment an ordering of derivation. In spite of the fact that Origen teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit possess goodness not, as with other entities, as some attribute that can be lost, the Son and the Holy Spirit receive their goodness from God the Father. And so the incorporeal subordination of the Son and the Holy Spirit to the Father remains in Origen’s trinitarian model in On First Principles.

Origen cites John 17:3 as he argues for a clear expression of the Son’s participation in the Father. Recall that in Jo. 2.17, when Origen replies to an (imagined or real) interlocutor who has posed the dilemma, John 17:3 provides Origen’s justification as to why the God is the one true God and the Savior is divine, but not the God. The same deployment of the same verse occurs here. Origen introduces the logic of participation with John 17:3 in order to dissolve the monarchian picture of one god who acts in different ways. Instead, according to Origen, one true God is simply, and it is in this God that all other “gods”—including the Son and the Holy Spirit—participate. Origen trades the picture of One True God acting in diverse ways for the distinct existences (hypostases) of the Son and Holy Spirit afforded by a participatory hierarchy of incorporeal entities. Given the fragment’s concordance with Origen’s polemical strategy in Jo., I am inclined to conclude that it is anti-monarchian and close to a statement original to Origen. Koetschau was correct to include it as a representation of Origen’s early model of the Trinity.
Another fragment, placed by Koetschau in *Princ.* 1.3.5, provides another pivotal passage for grasping the significance of participation for Origen’s trinitarian scheme. It is one of the most fulsome statements Origen makes about the functions proper to each trinitarian person, and it is frequently referred to in scholarship.\footnote{51} Here is the central passage:

The God and Father, who holds the universe together, is superior to every being that exists, for he imparts to each one from his own existence that which each one is; the Son, being less than the Father, is superior to rational creatures alone (for he is second to the Father); the Holy Spirit is still less, and reaches the saints alone. So that in this way the power of the Father is greater than that of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and that of the Son is more than that of the Holy Spirit, and in turn the power of the Holy Spirit exceeds that of every other holy being.\footnote{52}

\footnote{51} See especially Henri Crouzel, “Les personnes de la Trinité sont-elles de puissance inégale selon Origène, Peri Archon I, 3, 5-8?” *Gregorianum* 57 (1976): 109-125; Ziebritzki also reviews these issues at some length. See Ziebritzki, 203-24. Crouzel argues that Origen did not teach that the three are arranged in a hierarchy of *power*, even if they are arranged in a hierarchy of “appropriation.” This is supposed to save Origen from a hierarchy of the trinity considered in and of itself: “Le subordinationisme d’Origène, malgré un tout petit homme de texts difficiles parce qu’insuffisamment clairs, est essentiellement basé, comme celui de plusieurs antécééens et à la différence de celui des Ariens, sur une hiérarchie venant de l’origine et de l’ ‘économie rédemptrice’” (114). I sympathize with Crouzel’s attempt to save Origen from anachronistic judgments, but I am not convinced that the “hierarchy” applies only to the “redemptive economy,” in part because I am not convinced that Origen distinguishes consistently between an “immanent” and an “economic” trinity, and Crouzel’s reading of Origen requires that distinction of him.\footnote{52} Butterworth, trans., 33-34, slightly modified; Koetschau, ed., Fragment 9. ó μὲν θεός καὶ πατὴρ συνέχον τὰ πάντα φθάνει εἰς ἑκάστον τῶν ὑόνων, μεταδοθὸς ἐκάστῳ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἱδίου τὸ εἴναι, ὅπερ ἔστιν, ἔλαττόνος δὲ παρὰ τὸν πατέρα ὁ υἱός φθάνον ἐπὶ μόνα τὰ λογικά (δεύτερος γὰρ ἐστὶ τοῦ πατρὸς), ἐπὶ δὲ ἑπτήδευς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἄγιον ἐπὶ μόνοις τοὺς ἁγίους δύκνομενον· ὡς ταῦτα τούτοι μείζων ἡ δύναμις τοῦ πατρὸς παρὰ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγίον, πλείων δὲ ἡ τοῦ υἱοῦ παρὰ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγίον, καὶ πάλιν διαφέρουσα μᾶλλον τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἡ δύναμις παρὰ τὰ ἄλλα ἁγία. Primarily on the basis of this passage in *On First Principles*, Salvatore R.C. Lilla comes close indeed to suggesting that Plotinus and Origen are twin versions of a contemporary shift in thinking toward triadic hierarchies. He states generally that “Origen’s theology is deeply influenced both by Middle Platonism and by the hierarchical structure of the system of early Neoplatonism, reflected in the teaching of Ammonius and Plotinus.” See Salvatore R.C. Lilla, “The Neoplatonic Hypostases and the Christian Trinity,” in *Studies in Plato and the Platonic Tradition: Essays Presented to John Whitaker*, ed. Mark Joyal (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1997), 127-190, at 128. We do not possess Ammonius’s writings, so it is hard to know how Lilla can claim to have access to Ammonius’s doctrine. We do have the work of Numenius, who influenced Plotinus, but it is unclear whether that is what Lilla means by “early Neoplatonism.” Origen died in 254 CE, a year after Plotinus is thought to have begun writing, in 253 CE. The date of 253 as the beginning of Plotinus’s literary career is based on Porphyry’s most probably reliable claim that Plotinus had been writing since the first year of Gallienus, in *Vit. Plot.*, 4.
The “power” of each member of the triad is “greater” than that which follows it. Note that Origen characterizes the Son as “second” to the Father, and implies, but does not state explicitly, that the Holy Spirit is “third.” It is debatable whether this parenthetical remark is original to the fragment. A key difference suggests that the Holy Spirit’s inclusion as “third” represents a Justinian gloss. Nevertheless, it does bear out Origen’s grammar of participation in Jo. Note, too, that Origen’s conclusion at the end of this fragment—“the power of the Holy Spirit exceeds that of every other holy being”—fits with his statement in Jo. 2.75 that the Holy Spirit is “first” in the “order” (τάξις) of created entities. Origen does not invoke the term τάξις here, but he is nevertheless describing an “ordering” of the Trinity.53 The Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit operate in increasingly specific spheres of ontological consequence: the Father causes existence, the Son causes rationality, and the Holy Spirit causes holiness. This arrangement indicates that all things which exist are created by the Father and participate in the Father insofar as they exist; that all things that exist as rational are caused by the Son and participate in the Logos’ rationality; and that all rational entities which are or are becoming holy participate in the Holy Spirit’s holiness. Creatures participate in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as sources that impart proper characteristics as distinct causes.54 This is the same

53 See Michel Barnes’ comparison of Origen’s taxis to Tertullian’s gradus in the contest against monarchianism in Barnes, “The Beginning and End of Early Christian Pneumatology,” Augustinian Studies 39:2 (2008): 169-86, especially 184-86. As Koetschau notes by way of justification for his inclusion of this fragment, Origen elsewhere confirms the arrangement outlined here: see Cels. VI.29 and especially VIII.15, where Origen, invoking John 14:28, states that “It is obvious that we, who maintain that even the sensible world is made by the Creator of all things, hold that the Son is not mightier than the Father, but subordinate” (Chadwick, trans.). Origen’s statements in Jo. 2 to similar effect tell against using the apologetic context of Cels. to mitigate the consequences of his riposte to Celsus regarding his trinitarian doctrine.

54 Henri Crouzel argues at length that Origen’s “subordinationism” is merely apparent, and that Origen’s trinitarian thought is problem-free in its essentials (see Henri Crouzel, Origen, A.S. Worrall trans., [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989] “Trinity and Incarnation,” 181-204, especially at 188). He apologizes for On First Principles 1.3.4-8 (191) by arguing that in suggesting that Origen taught a
graded causal hierarchy of Jo. 2, with one difference. Here, the Holy Spirit appears to be ranked “third,” whereas in Jo. 2.75-76, the Holy Spirit is ranked not third but first of the creatures. The discrepancy is, however, not reason to doubt the authenticity of this fragment, since Origen does not say explicitly that the Holy Spirit is “third,” but that the Holy Spirit’s power is greater than that of all those entities it produces. The implication that the Holy Spirit is “third” in rank is an implication which Justinian deduced from Origen, but which Origen did not originally state so clearly. On the other hand, there are statements by Origen himself of a Holy “triad.”

Unfortunately, the evidence is such that not even a scholar as well-informed as John Dillon can pinpoint Origen’s source in Platonic school tradition for the doctrine that the first three hypostases extend their activities in concentric circles. Dillon concludes that there is no evidence for the doctrine traceable to Eudorus of Alexandria to the effect that “God is the creator even of matter, while the power of the Demiurge extends to all hierarchy of power in the Trinity, “Jerome, followed by Justinian, projected conclusions onto [this passage] which were personal to them and which Origen did not draw.” However, if the fragments represent paraphrastic interpolation and not quotations of Origen, it is not difficult to see how Jerome and Justinian could have come to their conclusions, given Origen’s remarks in Jo. 2.12-18, a text Crouzel admits poses difficulties (Crouzel, 181). Though we should not hold Origen to anachronistic standards, it is going too far to suggest that his trinitarian scheme was free of hierarchical consequences. Though Crouzel is not wrong to stress the fact that Origen’s trinitarian theology is expressed in pre-Nicene terms, his insinuation that the discerning reader had no reason to take issue with its terms of expression is an overstatement. In so overstating his case, Crouzel obscures the anti-monarchian context of Origen’s trinitarian scheme, inadvertently robbing it of its genius and originality. Had Origen not developed the participatory grammar he did, his monarchian opponents might have carried the day. Another problematic text for a reading like Crouzel’s is the arrangement in On Prayer 15.4. There Origen paraphrases Jesus’s statement that “no one is good but God the Father alone” by offering a liturgical argument. He says that Jesus means by this statement that we should pray to the Father through the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Origen’s paraphrase, the Son means: “You should pray only to the Father, to whom I [i.e., the Son] pray myself. . . . For you must not pray to the High Priest appointed on your behalf by the Father or to the Advocate who is charged by the Father with praying for you. Rather you must pray through the High Priest and the Advocate. . . . It is not reasonable for those who are deemed worthy of one and the same Father to pray to a brother. You must pray only to the Father with me and through me.” See Rowan Greer, trans., Origen (New Jersey, Paulist Press, 1979), 114.
that which is endowed with Form . . . ; the Soul would then extend to all that had all.”

Nevertheless, he remains “convinced . . . that Origen’s theory and Proclus’ theory are applications of the same doctrine, and that this doctrine was not invented by Origen.”

Elsewhere, Dillon mentions the Pseudo-Platonic Second Epistle as an influence on Numenius, and we have already seen that this passage was exploited by early Christians such as Justin and Clement. Dillon sees Origen as having drawn indirectly from this Platonic tradition of three successive entities. The Pseudo-Platonic Second Epistle (312e) speaks of three successive political entities ruling over three respective groups: “It is in relation to the king of all and on his account that everything exists. . . . In relation to a second, the second class of things exists, and in relation to a third, the third class.”

The relatively open-ended nature of this formula provides a pregnant precedent for later Platonist speculation to fill out the scheme. Though it does not specify the nature of the “classes” that belong to each successive entity, it provides the sort of precedent that confirms that Origen’s doctrine was most probably not his own creation, but an adaptation of a Platonic doctrine as Dillon suggests. In arranging his trinity as a *taxis*, Origen followed Clement’s precedent. Clement had used the Second Epistle to support his adherence to just the sort of threefold *taxis* as the one Origen describes.

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56 Ibid., 23.


59 See above, Ch. 1.
Another question arises. Some scholars have seen in *On First principles* 1.3.4-8 two contradictory “hierarchies” of the Trinity.\(^{60}\) Origen seems to teach that the Trinity could be arranged according to the breadth of entities that derive from each trinitarian person in a doctrine of “appropriations” (so, Father: all existents; Son: all *rational* existents; and Holy Spirit: all *holy, rational* existents), or that it could be arranged according to the *quality* of the entities so appropriated, with the result that the trinity is inverted in terms of importance. This “inverted” trinity would result from the fact that the Holy Spirit, as the sole means of access to the Son and the Father, is of chief importance. So Origen teaches a trinity with the Holy Spirit at the “top.”

However, Origen explicitly denies the view that the Holy Spirit should be considered greater than the Son. Balas’s interpretation of this text operates on the assumption that Origen anticipates a misunderstanding of his own teaching, but that is not so. Instead, he is rejecting an actual Jewish-Christian theology of the Holy Spirit that placed the Holy Spirit “over” the Son.\(^{61}\) We need not worry, then, that Origen here espouses two conflicting models. He espouses only one: an ordered chain of causes from Father down to Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit is the primary means of access to the Son and the Father is only a logical consequence that follows from one’s perspective. For any sanctified rational entity, the Holy Spirit is the point of entry to the higher principles.

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\(^{60}\) Crouzel claims that Origen was afraid that the section on the Trinity in *Princ.* I.III.5-I.IV.2 “would comprise an inverse hierarchy based on the nobility of the respective functions” (Crouzel, 191). Balás likewise infers from Origen’s entertainment of hyperpneumatology that it was a perceived consequence of his own doctrine (Balás, 264).

in the hierarchy. Balas implies that this move restricts *Logos* to the saints alone. However, Origen states explicitly that *Logos* is not limited to the saints.

If we take into account that Origen does not see tension between limiting the Holy Spirit to the “saints” and universal access to the *Logos*, Balas’s appeal to a distinction between a distinction between the “supernatural” and “natural” orders in Origen evaporates. Origen thinks that God the Father is accessible to all rational entities through the *Logos*, but that only certain entities are provided the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a *particular* and, perhaps, the preferred means of access to the *Logos*, but it is not the *only* means of access to the *Logos*. Origen can speak of pagan wisdom without worrying too much about whether the pagans have any access to the *Logos*. Indeed, they do.\(^{62}\) Origen is an unreconstructed rationalist who has not entertained the sorts of problems an Augustine would face regarding the fallibility of reason. To read him as having a distinction between the “supernatural” and “natural” orders is to offer an anachronistic, if ingenious, reconstruction of Origen’s position.

*The Omnipresence of the Logos*

In *On First Principles*, Book IV, Origen recapitulates his doctrine and takes up problems not yet resolved.\(^{63}\) Origen writes, in Rufinus’s version: “It is now time for us, after having dealt to the best of our ability with the matters previously discussed, to summarise the particular points, with the object of gathering together what we have said in scattered references, and first of all to repeat our teaching concerning the Father, the

\(^{62}\) See, for example, *Jo.* 2.30.

\(^{63}\) *Princ.* 4.4.1-2.
Son, and the Holy Spirit.” After some discussion of the Son’s eternal, immaterial generation and the Word’s omnipresence to the saints, Origen pivots with this transitional sentence: “Having therefore briefly repeated these points concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. . . .” The promised statement regarding the Holy Spirit never appears.

Indeed, Origen has a fine opportunity to name the Holy Spirit when he describes the means by which Christ is omnipresent to creatures in the process of sanctification. In *Princ.* 4.4.2, Origen anticipates an objection that the Word’s indwelling of Peter or John would circumscribe the Word in place:

But if anyone should maintain that through those who receive a share of God’s Word, or of his Wisdom or truth or life, the Word himself and the wisdom appear to exist in a place, we must answer him by saying that undoubtedly Christ, in his character of Word and Wisdom and all the rest, was in Paul, according to Paul’s own statement. . . . Since then he was in Paul, who will doubt that he was similarly in Peter and in John and in every one of the saints, and not only in those on earth, but also those in heaven? For it is absurd to say that Christ was in Peter and Paul, but that he was not in Michael the archangel and in Gabriel.

Origen concludes that the divinity of the Son cannot be thought of as “contained in any place” (*divinitas filii dei non in loco aliquo concludebatur*), and that “in virtue of the majesty of its incorporeal nature, [the divinity of the Son of God] is confined to no place, in no place, on the other hand, can we think of it as being absent.” The Son is present to all individuals, but not to all to the same degree. Origen says nothing here about the agency of the Holy Spirit in rendering the Son present to such individuals. Indeed, one wonders whether the Holy Spirit himself, as an angel, is not subject to the Son’s presence

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64 *Princ.* 4.4.1.
65 *Princ.* 4.4.3.
66 *Princ.* 4.4.2; Butterworth trans., 316. Didymus worries in similar fashion, but his worry concerns the Holy Spirit’s ability to be omnipresent, not Christ’s (see *Spir.* 21-23). Origen solves the problem by making Christ’s divinity the omnipresence required of God for sanctification (*Spir.* IV.4.4). Here is a trace, at least, of Origen’s pneumatology: the divine agency we might expect to find attributed to the Spirit is instead ascribed to the divinity of the Son. The sole mention of the Holy Spirit, late in the chapter, does not save Origen even if it is not the result of Rufinus’s tampering.
67 Butterworth trans., 316.
in a way similar to all the other angels and rational creatures since, as Origen says, “he needs him to minister to his *hypostasis.*” Origen is not inclined to provide the Spirit with such agency primarily because the Spirit is itself in need of such agency. As Origen says in *Jo.* 2.76, “the Spirit stands in need of the Son ministering to his *hypostasis.*” Christ himself was in Peter and Paul. But how did Christ come to be in Peter and Paul? Origen does not say what someone like Didymus might, namely, that Christ’s presence is rendered possible by the Holy Spirit, who “creates Christ’s body” in Mary’s womb. Origen’s failure to ascribe agency to the Holy Spirit in this instance confirms that his hierarchical trinity has generated a pneumatology sufficiently “low” that it invites an exclusion of the Holy Spirit from God’s dealings with creation. Though Origen’s silence should not be held against him, the chance to provide the Holy Spirit with agency in the process of transformation is worth noting, if for no other reason than the exegetical absence Origen left behind. In the final analysis, the closest analog for Origen’s Christian trinity is the doctrine ascribed to Numenius by Proclus, in his *Commentary on Timaeus.* Numenius teaches three “gods”: a first, the Father, a second, the maker, and a third, the thing made. This “third God,” Proclus explains, is also the *Cosmos.* Origen’s trinity is the Father, whose Son is the principle of creation and an agent of creation, but nevertheless a second derivative figure who “participates” in the Father. There is no easy identification of the Holy Spirit with the *Cosmos* in Origen. However, Origen does teach an elaborate *cosmos* of rational creatures, and the chief of these appears to be the Holy Spirit. So even if the Holy Spirit is not reducible to the spiritual *Cosmos* or Platonic World-Soul, the Holy Spirit is to be identified as its most important leader and representative before the

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68 *Jo.* 2.76.
Father and the Son. The Spirit is the one who worships God the Father most perfectly through the *Logos*. The Holy Spirit takes on the appearance of the most holy Archangel of all.

*The Question of Development*

So far, I have limited my discussion of Origen’s theology to his early period as represented by texts drawn from the *Commentary on John*’s first two books and what can be discerned of the first two books of *On First Principles*. I have not opened the question whether Origen may or may not have developed his thought on this issue in later works. The little evidence one can summon as evidence of a shift comes from spurious fragments on the Apocalypse and the Psalms; such material is just as likely an interpolation influenced by later orthodoxy as a late shift in Origen’s thought. Not only does the later *Against Celsus* not distance itself from earlier views that “subordinate” the Holy Spirit, but it provides a more extreme version of the same view. Two passages, one from *Against Celsus* and one from the *Commentary*, suffice to show that the same basic model remained for the course of Origen’s career. In *Against Celsus* 8.15, Origen reproduce the trinitarian hierarchy alleged of Origen by Jerome and Justinian:

> It is obvious that we, who maintain that even the sensible world is made by the Creator of all things, hold that the Son is not mightier than the Father, but

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70 Cf. Williams, *Arius*, 142-3 and Beeley, *Unity of Christ*, 26. Beeley sterilizes this issue in Origen’s thought, depends upon Williams’ precedent for the use of these two fragments from the *catenae* (C. Beeley, *The Unity of Christ*, (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2012), 26). However, Beeley does not follow Williams in treating these fragments as only potentially reliable. Instead, Beeley insists that, on the basis of these two remarks, he is justified in drawing the following interpretive conclusion: “nor does the language of participation . . . signal any lessening of divinity in the Son merely because Origen also uses it to refer to the relationship between the saints and God.” Had Origen himself offered such a disclaimer, Beeley’s interpretation might convince, but—apart from these spurious remarks—Origen cannot be found making such an explicit clarification in his undisputed writings.
subordinate. And we say this because we believe him who said, “The Father who sent me is greater than I” (Jn. 14:28).  

The reference to the Son’s being “less than” the Father is clear enough here. Again, in _Against Celsus_ 5.39, Origen confirms that the Son is the perfect “participant” in the Father. He is worried that his opponents will construe his belief in a “second god” as implying polytheism:

> Therefore, though we may call him a second God, it should be understood by this that we do not mean anything except the virtue which includes all virtues, and the Logos which includes every logos whatsoever of the beings which have been made according to Nature, both those which are primary and those that exist for the benefit of the whole. We say that this Logos dwelt in the soul of Jesus and was united with it in a closer union than that of any other soul, because he alone has been able perfectly to receive the highest participation in him who is the very Logos and the very Wisdom, and the very Righteousness.  

Note that the _soul of Jesus_ is the perfect participant in the _αὐτολόγος_. The scheme retains the hierarchy Origen finds in the opening lines of the Gospel of John. The Father alone is _αὐτόθεος_, and the second person alone is _αὐτολόγος_ and _αὐτοσοφία_. Another example occurs in a later section from the Commentary on John. Origen interprets John 14:28 (“The Father who sent me is greater than I”) as indicating that

> the Father exceeds the Savior as much (or even more) as the Savior himself and the Holy Spirit exceed the rest. And by ‘the rest’ I do not mean ordinary beings, for how great is the praise ascribed to him who transcends thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come?.... But although the Savior transcends in his

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71 _Cels_. 8.15.  
72 _Cels_. 5.39. About this passage Normal Russell writes: “If the Son is Logos, the Father is _αὐτολόγος_; if the Son is Wisdom, the Father is _αὐτοσοφία_.” Russell cites _Cels_. 5.39, but here Origen does not call the _Father_ _αὐτολόγος_; he calls the second person the _αὐτολόγος_. Focusing on the sentence, “he alone has been able perfectly to receive the highest participation in him who is the _αὐτολόγος_,” Russell reads the subject of the verb to be the Logos, not the “soul of Jesus.” But to call the Father _αὐτολόγος_ runs afoul of what Origen is careful to do in the _Commentary on John_ 2.12-18—a text which Russell also cites here. There Origen constructs a clear series of principles that cause respective qualities: the Father creates all things and imparts divinity, from which arises the Logos, who in turn causes all rational qualities, from which arises the Holy Spirit, who in turn causes all holiness. The Origen of the _Commentary_ would not apply the term _αὐτολόγος_ to the Father except as a byproduct of the fact that the Father is perfectly what all of his products are. But the second person is _αὐτολόγος_.

73 _Jo_. 13.151-152.
essence, rank, power, divinity (for the Word is living), and wisdom, beings that are so great and of such antiquity, nevertheless, he is not comparable with the Father in any way. For he is an image of the goodness and brightness, not of God, but of God’s glory and of his eternal light; and he is a vapor, not of the Father, but of his power; and he is a pure emanation of God’s almighty glory, and an unspotted mirror of his activity.\footnote{Jo. 13.151-153; Heine, trans., 100. Origen’s invocation of John 14:28 is in keeping with his use of the verse in Cels. VIII.15.}

Origen emphasizes the “distance” between the Father who transcends the Son and the Son who transcends all those beings that participate in the Son. Origen’s use of participation earlier in \textit{Jo.} tells against the possibility of explaining away Origen’s emphasis on the Son’s inferiority to the Father in this passage. The Holy Spirit appears again as the highest angel, the archangel of all archangels, thrones, powers, and so on, in a grand angelic hierarchy. The Son, from whom the Holy Spirit receives all that he is, transcends him, and he, in turn, is transcended by God the Father to an unfathomable degree.

There are more examples that Origen continues to hold to a grammar of intra-trinitarian participation in later works. These suffice to demonstrate that he does not abandon the basic principles at work in his earlier anti-monarchian model of the trinity.

\textit{Excursus: Reading οὐσιωδὸς/substantialiter in On First Principles}

Now we come to Origen’s use of a vague but important philosophical term: οὐσιωδὸς. The anti-monarchian valence of this term has been demonstrated in the previous chapter. In \textit{Princ.} 1.5.3, Origen opposes the way that goodness resides in all created powers and how it resides in the Trinity. In the powers, goodness is not substantial: \textit{non substantiale sit in ipsis bonum}. He then states that “essential goodness is
found, as we have plainly shown, solely in Christ and the Holy Spirit, and of course the Father also.”

The Trinity does not possess goodness accidentally.

In discussing the departure of rational entities from an original contemplation of goodness (Princ. 1.6.2), Origen distinguishes between “all those beings who started from one beginning but were drawn in various directions by their own individual impulses and were distributed throughout the different ranks of existence in accordance with their merit,” on the one hand, and “God and his Christ . . . [and] the Holy Spirit,” in whom goodness resides “essentially” (substantialiter).

. . . all those beings who started from one beginning but were drawn in various directions by their own individual impulses and were distributed throughout the different ranks of existence in accordance with their merit; for in them goodness does not reside essentially, as it does in God and his Christ and in the Holy Spirit. For only in this Trinity, which is the source of all things, does goodness reside essentially. Others possess it as an accident, liable to be lost, and only then do they live in blessedness, when they participate in holiness and wisdom and in the divine nature itself.

Among those who fell, Origen explains, goodness is possessed accidentally (accidentem . . . ac decidentem habent). “For only in this Trinity, which is the source of all things, does goodness reside essentially.” All “others” possess goodness “as an accident, liable to be lost, and they only live in blessedness when they participate in holiness and wisdom and in the divine nature itself.”

The Greek for these passages is lost. We should notice that Origen uses the adverbial phrase “essentially” or “substantially” in two distinct senses. He uses the term

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75 Butterworth trans., 47; GCS: quod utique in solo Christo et in spiritu sancto evidenter ostendimus, sine dubio utique et in patre. Non enim trinitatis natura habere aliquieid compositionis ostensa est, ut haec ei consequenter videantur accidere.

76 Butterworth trans., 53; GCS page 80. . . quì ab illo uno intio pro suis unusquisque motibus varie acti per diversos ordines pro merito dispensati sunt; non enim in his bonitas substantialiter inerat, sicut in deo et Christo eius et in spiritu sancto. In hac enim sola trinitate, quae est auctor omnium, bonitas substantialiter inest; ceteri vero accidentem eam ac decidentem habent, et tunc sunt in beatitudine, cum de sanctitate et sapientia ac de ipsa deitate participant.

77 Butterworth trans., 53, modified.
not only to name the mode of possession of some attribute, but also to speak of the
distinction of one entity from another. Origen uses “essentially” in the first sense—the
distinction of possession of some attribute naturally or intrinsically—to distinguish the
Trinity from all other entities. On the other hand, Origen uses “essentially” to distinguish entities one from another, such as the Son from the Father.

Before we can adjudicate this Princ. 1.6.2, it is important to settle what Origen means when he uses the term “essentially” in application to the trinity. Origen applies the term “essentially” (οὐσιωδῶς) to the Son’s existence in four places. Of these, Origen’s remark in his Dialogue with Heraclides is most pertinent. He there refers to the Son’s possession of divinity “essentially.” In Dial. 5, Origen responds to the objection that he had “professed before the church [his] belief that at the resurrection the body which rose had been a corpse.” Origen is opposing the Son’s possession of divinity “essentially” to the Son’s possession of a body. In passing he confirms that he has “attributed deity to Jesus Christ essentially (οὐσιωδῶς).” What does this statement mean?

Origen’s use of οὐσιωδῶς in Dial. 5 derives from the Peripatetic tradition and is directly related to his anti-monarchian agenda. The term is well known as part of an Aristotelian distinction between something that is what it is “by definition” and

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78 In Cels. 6.44 Origen applies Aristotle’s distinction between the possession of a quality “essentially” as opposed to its possession “by accident” (e.g., Met. 5.30.4 and 10.1.1)—in other words, participation “essentially” as opposed to “accidentally” pacé Stead, 52, who argues that Christian writers did not know this distinction developed by Porphyry and Alexander of Aphrodisias in met. 91.10; Porph. Isag. 176; 21.15; 22.9-10. See Jo. 2.124, where Origen applies the Aristotelian distinction to the difference between God and the rational creation; Jo. 6.188 states that the Son has an essential existence; exp. in Prov. 8.22 states that the Son as Wisdom exists essentially, and dial. 5 refers to the Son’s essential possession of divinity. See Crawford, 554, for discussion of these passages in the context of a trajectory running from Theodore of Heraclea to Cyril of Alexandria.

79 dial. 5. οὐσιωδῶς οὕτω προσφέρων Ἰησοῦ Χριστῆ τῆς θεότητα.

80 The likelihood only increases if his teacher, Ammonius, was not the enigmatic Ammonius Saccas, the teacher of Plotinus, but a different Ammonius—a Peripatetic. For a compelling argument along those lines, see Mark Edwards, “Ammonius, Teacher of Origen” Journal of Ecclesiastical History 44.2 (1993), 169-181. In any case, Origen’s having learned at the feet of a Platonist like Ammonius Saccas would not preclude his knowledge of Peripateticizing usage of terms as general as “essence.”
something that possesses a quality as a nonessential attribute, or accident. Simplicius reports that Xenocrates and Andronicus reduced Aristotle’s ten categories to two: that which is “by itself” (καθ’ αὐτὸ) as opposed to that which is “relative” (τὸ πρὸς τι). Others made, he says, a similar divide between substance (οὐσίαν) and accident (συμβεβηκός).\(^81\) If Simplicius’s account of the earlier tradition is reliable, the adverbial use of οὐσία (οὕσιωδὸς) could easily have stood for something that exists “according to itself” or “by itself.” Alexander of Aphrodisias confirms just that sort of application of an adverbial form of οὐσία. He glosses καθ’ αὐτὸ with οὕσιωδὸς.\(^82\)

When an object’s character καθ’ αὐτὸ is opposed to the qualities it possesses as “accidental,” the qualities an object possesses καθ’ αὑτὸ cannot be taken away from the object except on pain of that object ceasing to be what it is. If we gloss Origen’s grammar of participation in Jo. 2.12-20 with these terms, God the Father is divine καθ’ αὑτὸ. The Son derives his divinity from the Father and so is not divine καθ’ αὑτὸ. The Son is wise, rational, and just καθ’ αὑτὸ, and the Holy Spirit is holy καθ’ αὑτὸ. So the graded series

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\(^81\) “The followers of Xenocrates and of Andronicus seem to include everything in [the opposition] ‘by itself’ and ‘relative’, so that, according to them, so large a multitude of genera is superfluous. Others make the division into ‘substance’ and ‘accident’; these people too seem somehow to be saying the same thing as those just mentioned, who say that accidents are ‘relative’ as [being] always ‘of’ other things (τὰ συμβεβηκότα πρὸς τι λέγουσιν, ὡς ἄλλων ἅπαντων), and that substance is by itself (τὴν οὐσίαν καθ’ αὑτὸ)’ (Simplicius in Cat. 63.21-29; Sorabji, trans., 63). Simplicius goes on to complain that both groups fail to include the universal and the particular in their two categories, and so fail to account for Aristotle’s scheme. ἂλλοι δὲ κατ’ ἄλλον τρόπον αἰτιόται τὴν περιπτώσιμην. οἱ γὰρ περὶ Ξενοκράτη καὶ Ἀνδρόνικον πάντα τὸ καθ’ αὑτὸ καὶ τὸ πρὸς τι περιλαμβάνειν δοκοῦσιν, ὡστε περιπτὼν εἶναι κατ’ αὑτοὺς τὸ τοσοῦτον τῶν γενῶν πλῆθος. ἂλλοι δὲ εἰς οὕσιαν καὶ συμβεβήκος διατέλεσαν· καὶ οὕσιν δὲ τάυτῶν ποις δοκοῦσι τῶν προτέρων λέγει τὰ συμβεβηκότα πρὸς τι λέγουσιν, ὡς ἄλλων ἅπαντων, καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν καθ’ αὑτό. ῥήτειον οὖν κοινῆ πρὸς ἀμφοτέρους, ὅτι τὴν εἰς ἐλάχιστα τιμῆν τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους ἕξωσάντος ἄειδός αὐτῆς ἤμαντο, τὸ καθόλου καὶ τὸ μερικὸν παραλείποντες. καὶ μέντοι τὰ συμβεβηκότα πολλὰ ὅταν γενναὶ ἀποστενοῦσιν εἰς ἐν τῶν συμβεβηκότων τὸ πρὸς τι (Simplicii in Aristotelis categorias commentarium, Ed. K. Kalbfleisch [Berlin: Reimer, 1907] Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 8, p. 63, lines 21-29).

\(^82\) Alexander of Aphrodisias, in metaph. 471.21: ὅστε εἰς ἀπάντησιν τῶν εἰρήμενων φανερὸν ἐστίν ὅτι τὸ τί ἢ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὅπως διὰ τὸν ὄριον ὁ ὄριος ἑαυτῷ ἐστιν, τούτων δὲ τῶν ἀνατυπών ὁ τί ἢ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἐστιν κακεῖα καὶ ἀπαρθημένης ἐστὶν τὸ τί ἢ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἐστιν καὶ ὄριος ἐστὶν ὁ ὂριος ἑαυτῷ. ἀληθείας ἐν Χριστῷ καὶ ἀληθείας ἐν Χριστῷ ἑαυτῷ (Alexandri Aphrodisiensis in Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria, Ed. Hayduck, M [Berlin: Reimer, 1891]. Philo (De decalogo 29-31) and Clement (Strom. 8.6) know Aristotle’s ten categories well enough, but he does not apply a scholastic reduction of the ten to two general categories of substance and accident. Clement’s understanding in Strom. 8.6 is comparable to that of Philo’s.
Origen articulates in *Jo*. 2.12-20 is a sequence of the reception of qualities that are καθ’ αὐτὸ to each of the trinitarian persons in order. The Son receives from the Father what the Father has καθ’ αὐτὸ, namely, divinity. The Holy Spirit, in turn, receives from the Son what the Son is καθ’ αὐτὸ. All other rational creatures receive all of these qualities from God the Trinity.

Recall that in *Dial.* 5, Origen states that the Son is divine “essentially.” If Origen is here drawing on the sense of οὐσιωδός that means a subject possesses its attributes from itself and not by derivation, his application of οὐσιωδός to the Son’s possession of divinity would contradict his statements in *Jo.* to the effect that the Son possesses divinity “by participation” in God the Father. On the other hand, such a statement would undermine the participatory scheme Origen had constructed to maintain an eternal distinction between the Father and Son in the face of monarchianism. How, then, should we read Origen’s statement in *Dial.* 5 that the Son is divine οὐσιωδός? Does his statement represent a shift in thinking that in *Jo.* 2?

The first question to ask is whether Origen’s thought is “anti-monarchian” in the *Dialogue with Heraclides*. Origen’s anti-monarchian christology argues that there are two divine entities distinct one from the other, and that the second entity participates in the first. This model is still apparent in the exchange between in Origen and Heraclides at *Dial.* 124. To speak of an object καθ’ αὐτὸ is ambiguous in one very important way. Such reference may either indicate only that what we are talking about is its own entity, as distinct from other entities, or that the qualities it possesses belong to it intrinsically. Describing an object καθ’ αὐτὸ may also serve to indicate both facts at the same time. When Origen invokes the “substance” side of the Aristotelian pair of substance-accidence
with the term οὐσιωδός and says that the Son possesses divinity “essentially”, it could be that he is only recalling his attempt to underscore the Son’s own “existence” or “essence” or “power.” If that were so, he would be referring to his position, against the monarchicals, that the Son is a divine entity distinct from the Father, not to be confused with the Father. The Son has his divinity “by himself” as a distinct divine entity. So the Son is divine “essentially” (οὐσιωδός).

Jo. 2.69 bears out the alternative sense of οὐσιωδός as an anti-monarchical term. Origen applies a version of the Aristotelian distinction to the Word. There he states that the Word exists both essentially (καθ’ αὐτὸν) as something distinct from God the Father and relative to (πρὸς) God the Father as something derivative from the Father. We are left to infer what Origen has already told us earlier in the Commentary—that the Word as Son is dependent upon God the Father for his divinity insofar as he participates in God the Father. So far, so good. The appropriation of the substance-accidence distinction shows that Origen could use Aristotle’s term for existence “by itself” to emphasize the Son as a distinct entity in his anti-monarchical mood. The Son is not divine “by himself” like the Father is. In fact, in Jo. 2.69, Origen uses the Aristotelian distinction to render the Son both distinct from and dependent upon the Father, just as his grammar of participation in Jo. 2.12-20 states explicitly. Origen knows a sense of “essentially” that signifies the existence of a distinct entity. At Jo. 1.152 Origen pairs οὐσιωμένων with κεχωρισμένων to argue for the Son’s distinct existence (ὑπόστασις). There is no reason to read Origen’s use

83 Jo. 2.69, Heine trans. Ὄρα δὲ εἰ κατὰ τὸ δισσὸν ὀνομάζεσθαι τὸ «ἐν ἀρχῇ» δυνατὸν ἡμᾶς μανθάνειν πράγματα δύο· ἐν μὲν ὁτι «ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος», ὡς εἰ καθ’ αὐτὸν ἦν καὶ μὴ πάντως πρὸς τινα· ἐτέρων δὲ ὁ τι “ἐν ἀρχῇ” “πρὸς τὸν θεόν ἦν.” Καὶ ὁμοία, ὅτι οὐ πιθάνοις εἰπεῖν περὶ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι “ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν” καὶ “ἐν ἀρχῇ” “πρὸς τὸν θεόν,” οὔτε “πρὸς τὸν θεόν” μόνον τιχανόν, ἐπει καὶ “ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν,” οὔτε “ἐν ἀρχῇ” μόνον ὁν καὶ οὐχὶ “πρὸς τὸν θεόν” ἄν, ἐπεὶ “Ὅτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.”
of οὐσιωδός in Dial. 5 as departing from its use to distinguish the Son from the Father.

Dial. 5, then, does not represent a significant shift in Origen’s christology.

Now recall Rufinus’s presentation of Origen in On First Principles 1.6.2. There Origen appears to apply just the sort of Aristotelian use of οὐσιωδός that might save his model of the trinity from the consequences of his grammar of participation in Jo. 1-2.

And though we cannot find Origen employing that distinction in application to the Son in his indisputable corpus, we do find Didymus applying this distinction in precisely this way in a number of places.84

According to Didymus, goodness “exists essentially (οὐσιωδός) in God, in the Trinity. And it is by participation in the Trinity that human beings have the good and the just and virtue.”85 Didymus has to clarify a point about psychology that leads him to distinguish between the way human souls possess the good and the way the Son does. In passing he uses Aristotle’s distinction between a quality possessed intrinsically and one possessed accidentally.

Not all things said indicate the underlying substances, but there are times when they indicate things attributed to them. The knowledge of God is attributed to a man. The man is not for this reason called “Knowledge,” but “knowing.” The attribute is not said univocally with regard to the thing to which it is attributed. But the Savior is called both “wise” and “Wisdom,” both “Knowledge” and “having knowledge,” both “Justice” and “just.” And I do not here mean as attribute and substance, but through the comparison of both of the terms the same thing is indicated. For if I say that the Savior is Justice, I mean not that he possesses it, nor that he has a just disposition (?), and if I say that he is just—“do not deny the Just”—I do not mean that he is such, but that he is Justice itself. It is

84 I exclude for the time being analysis of the relatively high frequency of the term οὐσιωδός in De trinitate, whose Didymean authorship remains questionable. Though De trin. is influenced by Didymus if not original to him, it is not guaranteed to have been a text that could have influenced Rufinus.

in this way that we speak of justice as an attribute in the case of God. I do not mean that God is just by participation in Justice, but that God establishes justice.\(^{86}\)

In *Princ.* 1.6.2, Rufinus translates Origen as saying that goodness does not reside in creatures “essentially in the way it does in God and his Christ and in the Holy Spirit.”\(^{87}\) In *On the Holy Spirit* 13, Didymus uses the same Latin term (*substantialiter*) to argue against characterizing the Holy Spirit as an angel.

Moreover, that which is essentially good cannot be capable of participating in an external goodness, since it is what bestows goodness on other things. Therefore, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is distinct from not only corporeal but also incorporeal creatures because other substances receive this substance for their sanctification. Indeed, it is not only incapable of participation in a foreign sanctification, but, above all, it is the Bestower and Creator of sanctification.\(^{88}\)

In the case of *Princ.* 1.6.2, then, Rufinus appears to have emended an original, more nebulous statement to the effect that “goodness resides essentially in the source of all things.” Didymus’s influence on Rufinus in this conceptual matter would help to explain otherwise strange divergences between the trinity of two works written about the same period of time with similar polemical aims.\(^{89}\)

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87 *non enim in his bonitus substantialiter inerat, sicut in deo et Christo eius et in spiritu sancto.* GCS, 80.

88 DelCogliano, et al. trans., 147. *Quod autem substantialiter bonum est non potest extraneae capax esse bonitatis, cum ipsum tribuat ceteris bonitatem. Igitur manifestum est non a corporalibus solum, sed et ab incorporalibus creaturis extraneum esse Spiritum Sanctum, quia ceterae substantiae hanc substantiam sanctificationis accipient; iste vero non tantum non est capax sanctificationis alienae, sed insuper attributor est et creator.*

89 Ronald Heine discusses the authenticity of Fragment 2 in the scholia collected by Preuschen and spuriously attributed to Origen (see Preuschen, ed., 485.24-486.26). Heine argues that “one would hardly want to say that this fragment is Origen. Perhaps one might say it is Origenist.” I would go further and suggest we may safely infer that it is indeed Origenist, and that it is Didymean. See Ronald E. Heine, “Can
Conclusion

Given the reading presented in the first part of this dissertation, Origen used the conceptual tools at his disposal, drawn from Platonism, to oppose a live threat to doctrinal “orthodoxy” in his own day: monarchianism. Origen’s modern defenders may wish to downplay the consequences of the metaphysics of participation in Origen’s more extreme statements in his early thought, but the cost will be an account of Origen’s contemporary “orthodoxy” in the face of monarchian theology. In that case, the gain of a “proto-Nicene” Origen yields the loss of an Origen who contributed to the live debate of his own era.

My focus on the dynamics of participation in Origen’s trinity should not be mistaken for an attempt to hold him accountable according to anachronistic standards. I hoped to limn the provocative nature of a dynamic deeply and intentionally ingrained in Origen’s thinking about God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. During his early period

the Catena Fragments of Origen’s Commentary on John Be Trusted?” Vigiliae Christianae 40 (1986), 118-134, esp. 127-128. Consider Didymus’ similar remarks about the Son in his Lectures on the Psalms, in L. Doutreleau, A. Geschè, M. Gronewald, eds., Didymos der Blinde, Psalmenkommentar, Pt. 1, Patristische Texte und Abhandlungen 7 (Bonn, Habelt, 1969), Codex 2, Lines 2–13: ὁ σωτήρ καὶ κύριος ἡμῶν θεὸς ἄμα καὶ ἀνθρωπός ἐστιν· θεὸς μὲν ἂεί, οὐκ ἂεί δὲ ἀνθρωπός· πρὸ γὰρ τῆς κτίσεως θεὸς ἦν, ἀνθρωπός δὲ σῶκα. ἐμελλέν δὲ καὶ τοῦτο φυστάσθαι σοστηρίας ἑνεκα. καὶ τὸ μὲν ἀνθρωπός γενέσθαι διὰ τι ἔχει, τὸ δὲ θεὸς εἶναι οὐ διὰ τι, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν ἐκουσίων ὑπαρξίν καὶ τὴν τού γεννήματος οὐσίαν· οὕτω γὰρ ἦκουσα τοῦ· “ἕο διὰ τὸν πατέρα” μου. οὐ τοῦτο λέγει, ὅτι ὁ πατέρας χοισευε με, ὡς βούλονται οἱ Εὐνομιανοί, ἀλλὰ τοῦτο λέγει, ὡς εἰ λέγοι τις· “διὰ τοῦτο λογικός εἰμι, ὅτι λογικὸν ἔρχον, πατέρα, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο θνητός εἰμι, ὅτι θνητὸν ἔρχον πατέρα”. καὶ ἀλλήλες γε· τὸ “ὅτι” ἐστὶν ἀποδεικτικὴ αἰτία. ἐπεὶ τοῖνυν ζῇ διὰ τὸν πατέρα, ἐστὶν λεγόμενος ζῇ διὰ τοῦ πατέρα, ἐστὶν λεγόμενος, ζῇ διὰ τοῦ πατέρα, ἐστὶν λεγόμενος, ζῇ διὰ τοῦ πατέρα. Μy translation of the first half of this quotation is as follows: “Our Savior and Lord is simultaneously God and human; he is always God, but not always human. For before the creation he was God, but he was not yet human. But he was about to take this (humanity) on for our salvation. And the human part he was able to become ‘on account of something,’ but to be the divine part was not ‘on account of anything,’ but through his own existence and essence of being begotten. For it is in this way that you should hear the verse, ‘I live through my Father.’ He does not say that the Father ‘gives me life,’ as the Eunomians wished, but he says this, as if someone might say, ‘I am rational because I have a rational Father, and I am mortal because I have a mortal father.’ And true indeed: the ‘because’ is a demonstrative cause.”
Origen’s grammar of participation served a twofold purpose: it was polemically useful and intellectually attractive. And yet, the ingenuity of Origen’s early trinitarian model contained the seeds of its undoing. Origen’s rendering of the Son and Holy Spirit as participants left the Son and the Holy Spirit divine agents which not only act but also participate. For this reason, Origen’s use of participation generates an important ambiguity at the heart of his trinitarian model.

Origen does not distinguish between the kind of participation enacted by the Son or the Holy Spirit and that which other creatures, such as angels, must enact in order to be transformed into “gods.” His imprecision in this regard generates questions for discerning readers: if the Son is supposed to save us as only God can, and if, due to his participation in God the Father he lacks what we lack, namely, an internally self-generating source of divinity, how can he save us? If the trinity consists of the Holy Spirit, who participates in the Son, who in turn participates in the Father, who alone is the supreme self-productive source of divinity, how, in Origen’s terms, is the trinity not a graded series of causes? If the trinity is a graded series of causes, what are the consequences of such a doctrine of God for the emerging sense in Christian tradition that Christ—and later, the Holy Spirit—is fully God?

With Origen’s grammar of participation and the theological ambiguities it generates now in view, we may turn to the second part of this study, which focuses on Didymus the Blind’s reconstruction of Origen’s theology in light of a new, “pro-Nicene” perspective in Alexandria.
Chapter 5
“I Will Pour Out My Spirit”

Introduction

The next two chapters describe the ways that Didymus’s theology in On the Holy Spirit should be considered “pro-Nicene.” In order to show that Didymus teaches a “pro-Nicene” theology, it is important first to define the term “pro-Nicene.” I adopt the definition proposed by Lewis Ayres. Ayres provides the following criteria for a broad set of “pro-Nicene” theologies: (1) “a clear version of the person and nature distinction . . .”; (2) “clear expression that the eternal generation of the Son occurs within the unitary and incomprehensible divine being;” (3) “clear expression of the doctrine that the persons work inseparably.”\(^1\) So defined, the term “pro-Nicene” describes Didymus’s theology because On the Holy Spirit offers an early version of these pro-Nicene instincts. Didymus’s axiom that all three of the trinitarian persons do not participate is a strong ground for a doctrine of the “eternal generation” of the Son and a doctrine that the persons work inseparably. In Chapter 6, we will see that Didymus argues for a distinction between the one power and nature of the Trinity, on the one hand, and the activities of the three that may be distinguished, on the other. In the second part of this study, then, I aim to show that Didymus crafts an early version of what would become hallmark features of later, pro-Nicene theologies.

I begin this chapter by pointing out the continuity between Origen and Didymus on the nature of participation. Then I present a brief history of the exegesis of John 16:14.

\(^1\) Lewis Ayres, Nicaea and Its Legacy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 236.
The impact of this verse on pneumatology is tied to its use of a key term in Platonist philosophy: \( \lambda \alpha \mu \beta \alpha \omega \). After placing this verse into its context as an anti-monarchian prooftext for distinguishing the Holy Spirit from the Son, I show how Didymus’s interpretation of this verse is a prime example of his “pro-Nicene” exegesis. In a way analogous to the generation of the Son’s taking place in the incomprehensible mystery of the Trinity, Didymus argues that we should interpret the Holy Spirit’s “reception” from the Son in light of the Spirit’s identity as a divine agent and source. Didymus bases this reading on the axiom that the Holy Spirit does not participate in any higher source, but is participated in by creatures. Based on his reading of John 16:14 and his argument that the Holy Spirit is a divine source that does not participate, Didymus opposed Eunomius’s claim that the Holy Spirit is “filled.” He does so by carefully attending to Scripture’s usage of terms for “pouring out” and “being filled”—terms dear, as we shall see, also to Plotinus.

Beyond Origen and Monarchianism: Participation, Circumscription, and Omnipresence

In scholarship, Jerome’s name is often associated with exaggeration—especially in scholarship concerning Origen or Origenism. However, Jerome did not exaggerate when he characterized Didymus as not given to rhetorical polish. Didymus’ On the Holy Spirit exudes no obvious structure. It barely evinces order at all, apart from abrupt divisions of a meandering exegetical discussion; it reads like a concatenation of

polemical exegesis strung together from notes.\textsuperscript{3} Probably the style results from the fact that Didymus presented his arguments to students in an exploratory lecture, proceeding wherever his mind took him.\textsuperscript{4} The argumentation is compressed, and repetition abounds. Themes, not textual sequence, must guide our consideration of \textit{On the Holy Spirit}. We begin with the theme of the Holy Spirit’s “participation” in the Son and the question of whether the Holy Spirit is “circumscribed.”

Origen’s characterization of the Holy Spirit as both participated in “intellectually” and “circumscribed” could have been viewed as problematic. To be “circumscribed” could have implied spatial location—the very consequence Origen’s definition of participation sought to exclude. Origen’s use of terms for “circumscription” for the Son and Holy Spirit was developed in the face of monarchian theology, which reduced the activity of all three persons to the nature and activity of a single entity. In using terms for “circumscription” to refer to the Holy Spirit, the options could be limited to Origen’s low pneumatology and monarchian theology.

Didymus moves beyond these options. He appropriates Origen’s doctrine of intellectual participation in the Holy Spirit to come to the non-Origenian conclusion that the Holy Spirit is “uncircumscribed.” Didymus’s identification of the Holy Spirit with the divine nature allows him to explain the Holy Spirit’s activity as “teacher,” in terms similar to both the Father and the Son, as an unparticipating source. Whereas for Origen the Holy Spirit had been a teacher who had “received” from the Son, it is clear from Didymus’s treatment that the Holy Spirit is an untutored teacher.

\textsuperscript{3} For what little structure there is, the arrangement provided by the English translation of DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres, based on Doutreleau’s edition, has undoubtedly colored my understanding of the text.

\textsuperscript{4} For more on the scholastic context of Didymus’s extant writings, see Richard Layton, \textit{Didymus the Blind and His Circle} (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 13-35.
Origen uses the Platonic distinction between the incorporeal and the corporeal in a decisive way for his pneumatology. Recall that participation occurs without need for bodies; it is an intellectual causal mechanism. Origen worries that some might try to construe the fact that the Holy Spirit “dwells in” the saints alone as a kind of materialistic participation. If that were so, then the Spirit would be localized, found in some places but not in others. Prior Christians had associated the Holy Spirit’s activity with the Holy Spirit’s presence—and “presence” was not rendered in Platonic terms. Instead, the Holy Spirit could be present in a place—or not. As opposed to this, in the same way that an Idea causes beauty to exist in a sensible particular item that is beautiful, Origen says that the Holy Spirit causes holiness to be in the saint’s soul.

Origen points out that this view was accounted for and dismissed by Jesus himself in John 4:24:

> It was this belief of the woman, who thought that God would be worshipped rightly or wrongly by Jews in Jerusalem or by Samaritans in Mount Gerizim because of some special privilege attaching to the material places, that the Savior contradicts by saying that the man who desires to seek for God must abandon all idea of material places.

Origen next quotes Jesus’ statement that “the true worshippers shall worship the Father neither in Jerusalem nor in this mountain. God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:21, 23, 24). This he rejected by making recourse

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5 See above, Chapter 1.
6 Origen states the limitation of the Holy Spirit’s presence to the “saints alone” later, in Princ. 1.3.7: “the working of the power of God the Father and god the Son is spread indiscriminately over all created beings, but a share in the Holy Spirit is possessed, we find, by the saints alone (spiritus vero sancti participationem a sanctis tantummodo haberi).”
7 See Origen, Princ. 1.1.4; Butterworth trans. 9.
8 Ibid.
to Plato’s implication, in the *Parmenides*, that no such definition of participation is acceptable:

Further, although many saints partake of (*participant*) the Holy Spirit, he is not on that account to be regarded as a kind of body, which is divided into material parts (*partes corporales*) and distributed to each of the saints; but rather as a sanctifying power (*virtus . . . sanctificans*), a share of which is said to be possessed (*cuius participium habere*) by all who have shown themselves worthy of being sanctified through his grace.⁹

Following this statement, Origen clarifies his point with an illustration:

There are many who share in the teaching and art of medicine; yet are we to suppose that all who share in medicine have some material substance called “medicine” placed before them from which they take away little particles and so obtain a share of it? Must we not rather understand that all who with ready and prepared minds gain a comprehension of the art and its teaching may be said to share in (*participare*) medicine? These illustrations from medicine must not be supposed to apply in every detail when compared with the Holy Spirit; they establish this point only, that a thing in which many have a share is not necessarily to be regarded as a body. The Holy Spirit is far different from the system or science of medicine, for the Holy Spirit is an intellectual existence (*subsistentia est intellectualis*), with a subsistence and being of its own (*proprie subsistit et extat*), whereas medicine is nothing of the sort.¹⁰

Origen applies a logic of participation to the relationship between the Holy Spirit and his “participants,” the Saints. The logic applies in the same way that a reader of *Parmenides* 131a-c would have been tempted to construe the relationship between Ideas and sensible particulars. No material relationship is necessary to provide sensible particulars with access to the Ideas. In the same way, according to Origen, the relationship provided by

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⁹ Origen, Princ. 1.1.3. *Sed et cum de spiritu sancto multi sancti participant, non utique corpus aliquod intelligi potest spiritus sanctus, quod divisum in partes corporals percipiat unusquisque sanctorum; sed virtus profecto sanctificans est, cuius participium habere dicuntur omnes, qui per eis gratiam sanctificari meruerint.*

¹⁰ Origen, Princ. 1.1.3. *Multi sunt qui disciplinae sive artis medicinae participant, et numquid putandum est omnes eos, qui medicinae participant, corporis alicuius, quod medicina dicitur, in medio positi sibi auferre particularas et ita eius participium sumere? an potius intelligendum est quod quicumque promptis paratisque mentibus intellectum artis ipsius disciplinaeque percipiant, hi medicinae participare dicantur? Sed haec non omnimodis similia exempla putanda sunt de medicina sancto spiritui comparata; sed ad hoc tantummodo conprobandum, quia non continuo corpus putandum est id, cuius participatio habetur a plurimis. Spiritus enim sanctus longe differt a medicinae ratione vel disciplinae pro eo quod sanctus spiritus subsistentia est intellectualis et proprie subsistit et extat; nihil autem tale est medicina.*
participation is intellectual, and the Holy Spirit’s existence as a cause is intellectual. So
the Saints do not “share in” the Holy Spirit as a material entity.

The immateriality of the Holy Spirit suggests that the Holy Spirit is not bound by
place. However, Origen did not foreclose the possibility that the Holy Spirit might be
“circumscribed,” if the questions of circumscription and corporeality were distinguished.
In fact, Origen’s doctrine of three distinct “hypostases” seemed to teach the Holy Spirit’s
“circumscription.” In turn, the Holy Spirit’s “circumscription” could be used to return to
the Holy Spirit a “localized” status. Origen’s anti-monarchian construal of the Holy Spirit
as “circumscribed” thus left open the possibility of reading “circumscription” as location,
and location in spatial terms.

Didymus: The Holy Spirit is Participated because it is Uncircumscribed

In Spir. 21-23, Didymus argues that the Holy Spirit is “uncircumcised by neither
place nor substance. Invisible creatures, such as angels, he says, “are not circumscribed
by place and limits (non circumscribantur loco et finibus invisibles creaturae),” but they
are “limited by the distinctive feature of their substance” (tamen proprietate substantiae
finitur). Didymus distinguishes between invisible creatures who are “circumscribed”
not spatially but “by the distinctive feature of substance.” The Holy Spirit, on the other
hand, “even though he is in many, does not have a circumscribed substance” (cum in
pluribus sit, non habet substantiam circumscriptam). The Holy Spirit, in other words,

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11 See Jo. 2.75.
12 Didymus is not facing the question of whether the Holy Spirit is localized, but what had become
the more basic question: is the Holy Spirit an angel? However, he is dealing with an older tradition of
“indwelling,” according to which the Spirit of God indwells places—and persons.
may have distinctive features, but those features do not “circumscribe” the Holy Spirit in place.

Animating Jerome’s Latin translation of Didymus’s *subsistens* is likely a form of the verb ὑφίστημι. Didymus is here probably referring to a teaching like Origen’s (e.g., *Jo. 2.77*), that the Holy Spirit’s *hypostasis* comprises the “goods given by the Lord.” Origen says that “the material of the gifts is made active/set in motion/operated by God, administered by Christ, and subsists in accordance with the Holy Spirit” (τῆς εἰρημένης ὕλης τῶν χαρισμάτων ἐνεργουμένης μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, διακονουμένης δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὑφεστῶσης δὲ κατὰ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα). Origen only uses the noun *hypostasis* in one place, two paragraphs prior to this sentence, at *Commentary on John 2.75*. Here he states that the “material of the gifts” is given *hypostasis* “according to” the Holy Spirit. If the term *hypostasis* means “material,” then it suggests that the Holy Spirit’s “hypostasis” is the material of the gifts conferred by Christ, because the phrase could mean that the Holy Spirit comprises the “gifts” as a single entity: the Holy Spirit “instantiates” the “matter” of the gifts. However we interpret the phrase ὑφεστῶσης δὲ κατὰ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, Origen’s formulation does not include the Holy Spirit as an agent that operates or makes active the gifts in the soul.

Didymus agrees with Origen’s statement in the *Commentary on John* by saying that the Holy Spirit “exists in those goods which are conferred by the Lord” (*ipse subsistens in his bonis quae a Domino largiuntur*). However, Didymus uses the Origenian axiom that spiritual gifts “exist in accordance with the Holy Spirit” to reason in a

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13 Origen, *Jo. 2.77*
14 The Latin given to him by Rufinus at *Princ. 1.1.3* (see above: *quod sanctus spiritus subsistentia est intellectualis et proprie subsistit et extat; nihil autem tale est medicina*) would suggest that he used the term to describe the Holy Spirit in *On First Principles*. There is little reason to doubt Rufinus’s translation on this point, since “*hypostasis*” does not mean much more than “distinct existence” for Origen.
direction different from Origen. For the Holy Spirit’s “hypostasis” or subsistence, as Jerome’s Latin would have us say, does not merely represent the virtuous creatures who share in a more transcendent source of good gifts, as Didymus’s opponents have argued.

“On the contrary, this substance (substatia = ὑπόστασις?) we are now discussing produces wisdom and sanctification. . . . The Holy Spirit . . . is the immutable sanctifier, the bestower of divine knowledge and all goods (scientiae divinae et uniuersorum attributor bonorum).” Didymus qualifies Origen’s description of the Holy Spirit’s “hypostasis”: if it is true that the Holy Spirit is the aggregation of divine gifts, that aggregation is an agent and source of those gifts. The Holy Spirit is an agent and source transcended by no other, and is united with the Father and the Son. In order for Didymus to make his case along these lines, he will have to show that, in fact, Scripture depicts the Holy Spirit as the “produce[r] of wisdom and sanctification."

Didymus agrees with Origen that the Holy Spirit is a “third hypostasis” in which the saints participate immaterially. To this account he adds that the Holy Spirit is a divine agent in the same way that the Father and the Son are. In order to see how this is the case, we must first turn to a biblical passage which emphasizes the Holy Spirit’s “reception” from the Son and the Father: John 16:14.

**John 16:14: the Spirit’s Reception from the Son and Low Pneumatology**

John 16:14 occurs as one of a series of statements Jesus makes about himself, the Holy Spirit, and the relationship the Spirit has to both the Son and the Father.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you in all truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things
that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.\(^{15}\)

The Holy Spirit mediates for us what the Father says to the Son. Because he plays the role of mediating what Jesus hears and says, “he will glorify [the Son] because he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήμψεται καὶ ἀναγγέλει υἱῷ). Jesus concludes with a statement that authorizes the Holy Spirit’s reception from the Son, since “all that the Father has is [the Son’s] (ὅσα ἔχει ὁ πατὴр ἐμὰ ἐστὶν).” Furthermore, the Holy Spirit’s angelic office is explicit: three times in this passage the Holy Spirit performs the function of a messenger, an ἄγγελος: ἀναγγέλει υἱῷ.\(^{16}\)

John 16:14 could serve as the basis of an angelomorphic pneumatology that is “low” in the sense that it ranks the Holy Spirit as third in a vertical, hierarchical series. The ranking of “third” might be sufficiently “low” that the Spirit crosses over from classification with the Father and Son to classification with the angelic host. John 16:14 uses two terms that would tempt ancient readers to characterize the Holy Spirit as an angel inferior to the Son. First, the Holy Spirit is said to receive from the Son and, as a result of that reception, to glorify the Son. This characterization implies that the Holy Spirit is more liturgical participant than object of glorification. Second, the Holy Spirit receives and hands on the sacred speech given from the Father to the Son. Each of these

\(^{15}\) Jn. 16:13-15. ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὀδηγήσει ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πάσῃ· οὐ γὰρ λαλήσει ὡς ἔαντοι, ἀλλὰ ὅσα ἀκούσει λαλήσει καὶ τὰ ἐρχόμενα ἀναγγέλει υἱῷ. ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήμψεται καὶ ἀναγγέλει υἱῷ. Πάντα ὅσα ἔχει ὁ πατὴρ ἐμὰ ἐστὶν· διὰ τοῦτο εἴπον ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λαμβάνει καὶ ἀναγγέλει υἱῷ.

\(^{16}\) Though Jesus’s statement that the Holy Spirit “will announce to you” is not a statement that “the Holy Spirit is an angel,” the function of delivering a revelation is associated with angelic figures, especially in apocalyptic literature. So, for example, in Revelation 2-3, the seven churches are each assigned their own angels, or messengers, who carry John’s apocalypse to them. In Revelation 17:7-18, an angel explains to John his foregoing vision (John 17:1-6). We will return to this point momentarily.
characterizations of the Holy Spirit takes on a particular valence when contextualized within two broad influential streams of literature: apocalyptic and Middle Platonic. I take up the thread in apocalyptic literature first by turning to the angelomorphic pneumatology of the *Ascension of Isaiah*.

The pneumatology of the *Ascension* is important not only because it represents a kind of angelomorphism that tempted early Christians, but also because it exhibits a tendency that would be exploited by anti-monarchian readings of John 16:14: a vertical ordering of the trinity. The *Ascension*’s ordering is “apocalyptic” in the sense that a series of figures passes a secret revelation down a chain. Isaiah receives the secret message from an angelic guide, third in a series.\(^{17}\) The *angelus interpres*, or “interpreting angel,” is a familiar trope in ancient Jewish and early Christian literature, and the *Ascension* exploits the hermeneutic function of the angel with an important twist: the angelic interpreter is no ordinary angel. The angel sent to Isaiah “was not of this firmament, nor was he from the angels of glory of this world, but he came from the seventh heaven.”\(^{18}\) Isaiah emphasizes the distinction of this “glorious angel” from the rest of the angelic host: “His glory was not like the glory of the angels which I always used to see, but he had great glory, and an office, such that I cannot describe the glory of this angel” (7:2). Upon asking the guide to disclose his identity, Isaiah is refused (7:1-6). The angel tells

\(^{17}\) For the critical text of the *Ascension*, see Paolo Bettiolo and Enrico Norelli, eds. *Ascensio Isaiae*, CCSA 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995). For translation, see James Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983). The date and provenance of the *Ascension* is nebulous. The portion of the text containing the narrative of Isaiah’s ascension may date as late as the fourth century CE, and perhaps as early as the first or second century. See Robert Hall, “The Ascension of Isaiah: Community Situation, Date, and Place in Early Christianity,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109.2 (Summer 1990): 289–306. Hall argues that the final form of the text was achieved by the mid-second century. I refer to the *Ascension* not to imply its later influence, but to provide evidence of angelomorphism prior to anti-monarchian readings of John 16:14, and to show why those anti-monarchian readings could plausibly have been taken to imply angelomorphism.

him he may not learn who he is until he has “taken [him] up through (all) the stages and have shown [him] the vision on account of which [the angel] was sent.” Only then, he says, “you will understand who I am; but my name you will not know, for you have to return into this body” (7:4-5).

At this point the speaker reports his feeling overjoyed at his guide’s warmth toward his desire to proceed. The guide senses this feeling and asks, rhetorically,

Do you rejoice because I have spoken kindly to you? . . . You will see one greater than me, how he will speak kindly and gently with you; and the Father of the one who is greater you will also see, because for this purpose I was sent from the seventh heaven, that I might make all this clear to you (ut notificem tibi omnia hec).\(^{19}\)

The speaker’s statement “that I might make all this clear to you” resembles the Holy Spirit’s angelic office in John 16:13-15. In his report is a hierarchy of intensifying kindness: God the Father is the one “greater than” (maiores) the one promised to “speak kindly and gently” (umiliorem et sapientiorem) to the prophet. That figure, in turn, is Christ. This leaves one plausible interpretation of the angelic guide leading the prophet back to the seventh heaven. He is the Holy Spirit.

When the angelic guide whose description is beyond compare finally leads Isaiah up through the seven heavens, the guide’s identity becomes clearer. In the seventh heaven, Isaiah is advised to worship an archangel (9:33-36), one who “has spoken in you,” and is informed that this is the Angel of the Holy Spirit. That the Angel of the Holy

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\(^{19}\) *Asc. Is.* 7:7-8. I quote from the Latin version of the text; the Old Slavonic version notices the parallel to John 16:14 and makes it more obvious; the translator of the Old Slavonic text, Alda Giambelluca Kossa, renders it as “in order to teach you everything” (“per annunziare a te tutto questo”); in his synopsis, Enrico Norelli renders the Slavonic in Latin as “ut noticiam tibi haec omnia” (see *Asc. Is.* CCSA 7: 292 and 388, respectively). Perhaps the author has in mind both John 16:14 and John 14:26. John 14:26: ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὁ πέμψει ὁ πατὴρ ἐν τῷ ὅνομά μου, ἐκεῖνος ὡμᾶς διδάξει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὡμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὡμῖν ἐγώ.
Spirit was the prophet’s guide all along is never made explicit but hangs in the air as the most reasonable conclusion.

The Ascension of Isaiah was not an isolated instance of speculation about the Holy Spirit’s angelic status. Earlier Jewish angelologies lent such speculation credibility. The angelology of Melchizedek was promising in this regard. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, Melchizedek in an exalted angelic figure who receives the names el and elohim. In a striking rewriting of Isaiah 61:2, one of the scrolls (11Q Melch.) refers to the jubilee year not as “the year of Yahweh’s favor,” but as “the year of Melchizedek’s favor."20 In 2 Enoch 71-72, Melchizedek receives the genealogy Genesis claimed he lacked.21 Hebrews depicts Melchizedek as the archetypal owner of the spiritual authority God the Father gave to the Son. Because Jesus’s priesthood is timeless—“according to the order of Melchizedek”—the author of Hebrews argues that “Jesus has became the guarantee of a better covenant.”22 The Nag Hammadi corpus also includes speculation about Melchizedek’s divinity into its cosmogony by describing Melchizedek as a heavenly archetype of the transcendent Sethian “race.”23

Speculation about Melchizedek’s angelic status became pneumatological in the third and fourth centuries. In a letter addressed to Evangelus, Jerome mentions an unattributed treatise that deals with the question of Melchizedek’s angelic nature in

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21 Genesis 14:17-20 mentions Melchizedek as blessing Abraham, and the author of Hebrews 6-7 deduces from Scripture’s silence regarding his origin that he was “without father, without mother, without generation” (Heb. 7:3).
22 Heb. 7:15-22.
23 See especially Nag Hammadi Codex IX, “Melchizedek.” The text is so fragmentary that it is difficult to render a clear picture of what role Melchizedek was thought to have played in the gnostic cosmogony of aeons. He is referred to as “holy” and a “high priest” (4, 14). In 6, 16-18, he is “[from] [the] race (γένος) of the High-priest (ἀρχιερεύς) [which is] above [thousands of thousands] and [myriads] of myriads of the aeons (αἰῶν)” (Birger A. Pearson, ed., Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X (Leiden: Brill, 1981). For more on this enigmatic text, see “Introduction to Codex IX” in Pearson, ibid., 19-40.
considerable detail. Its author claimed not only that Melchizedek was an angel, but also that he was the Holy Spirit. Jerome initially suspected Origen and Didymus of the heresy, but he was not able to find them guilty of identifying Melchizedek with the Angel of the Holy Spirit. Instead, Origen and Didymus agreed that Melchizedek was “one of the highest powers” (*supernis uirtutibus est locatus*).

Jerome’s picture fits with what we find in Origen’s extant *Homilies on Genesis*. It would not have made sense for Origen to associate Melchizedek with the Holy Spirit because he associated him with Christ. God the Father rewards the Son with eternal priesthood, and Christ is a “priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Interpreting a key phrase in Hebrews 6:17, Origen explains that the Son’s eternal priestly status discloses God’s “immutable will.” Didymus, for his part, is careful to note that

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24 The editors of the “Nicene Fathers” translation date Jerome’s Letter 73, *Ad Evangelum*, to the year 398. The date appears arbitrary, though it was written after Jerome turned against Didymus and other “Origenists.”

25 “So immediately I discovered at the beginning of Origen’s homilies on the beginning of Genesis a writing about Melchizedek. There Origen, in a long and winding speech, was distracted from his main topic to the point that he called [Melchizedek] an angel, and with nearly the same arguments as your writer on the Holy Spirit, he was located among the highest powers. I then turned to Didymus, Origen’s follower, and I saw a man at the feet of his master holding the same opinion.” Jerome, Ep. 73.2. *Statimque in fronte geneseos primam omeliarum origenis repperi scriptam de melchisedech, in qua multiplici sermone disputans illuc devolutus est, ut eum angelum diceret, isdem que paene argumentis, quibus scriptor tuus de spiritu sancto, ille de supernis uirtutibus est locatus. Transiui ad didymium, sectatorem eius, et uidi hominem pedibus in magistri isse sententiam.* For the critical edition of the text see Isidorus Hilberg, ed., *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae Pars II: Epistulae LXXI–CXX*, *CSEL* 55 (Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Vienna, 1996) 13–23, here quoted from p. 14. We may dismiss as rhetorical flourish Jerome’s insinuation that he turned to the very first page of a codex of Origen’s sermons to find the stray detail he managed to unearth.

26 It would take us too far afield to open the question of whether Origen identified the Holy Spirit with John the Baptist at the time of his delivering his *Homilies on Genesis*. See Joseph Lienhard, “Origen’s Speculation on John the Baptist or Was John the Baptist the Holy Spirit?” in Robert J. Daly, ed., *Origeniana Quinta* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992) 449-453.

27 Origen, *HomGen* 9.1. Hebrews 6:17 states: “...when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose (τὸ ἀμετάκλητον τῆς ἀμοιβῆς αὐτοῦ), he guaranteed it by an oath.” Didymus would agree with Origen’s interpretation of Hebrews. In the *Commentary on Zechariah* (e.g., I, 183), Didymus states that the reason those who are thirsty can drink and be filled by the Son is that the Son is immutable: “Anyone coming to him drinks, you see, for the reason that his position is immovable.” It is the Son’s constancy that enables him to be a divine source.
Hebrews 7:3 states that Melchizedek resembles (ἀντικειμένους) the Son of God, and not vice versa.²⁸

Jerome’s anonymous treatise accords with Epiphanius’ description of some “Melchizedekians” who regarded Melchizedek “as a sort of great power” (μεγάλην πιστικά δύναμιν).²⁹ They, too, identified him with the Holy Spirit. In turn, others call themselves Melchizedekians; they may be an offshoot of the group who are known as Theodotians. They honor the Melchizedek who is mentioned in the scriptures and regard him as a sort of great power. He is on high in places which cannot be named, and in < fact > is not just a power; indeed, they claim in their error that he is greater than Christ. Based, if you please, on the literal wording of, “Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek,” they believe that Christ has merely come and been given the order of Melchizedek. Christ is thus younger than Melchizedek, they say. For if his place were not somehow second in line he would have no need of Melchizedek’s rank. Of Melchizedek himself they say that he <has come into being> “without father, without mother, without lineage”—as they would like to show from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews. They also fabricate spurious books for their own deception.³⁰

In order to understand the exegesis of Hebrews to which Epiphanius takes exception, the Spirit’s “reception” (λαμβάνω) from the Son in John 16:14 is important.

The term λαμβάνω is freighted with ontological significance in Platonic tradition. It travels with a group of terms related to “participation” in post-Platonic philosophy. In

²⁸ Didymus the Blind, ComZech. 2, 69-71: “...since [Melchizedek] is God’s servant not in shadow but in truth and in spirit, he will be at the right hand of the one seated and reigning on his throne. Being at his right, resembling God the Son and remaining a priest forever, he has a counsel of peace in respect of the one whom he resembles, the Son of God also being likewise at peace with the King of Salem—“peace,” that is—and the king of righteousness, namely, Melchizedek” (Hill trans., FOTC 111:129). Didymus also mentions Melchizedek at Zech. 1, 183; 1, 239; and 1, 244. None of these additional references depart from reading Melchizedek as only an angelic power.

²⁹ Epiphanius, Panarion II, GCS edition of the text edited by Karl Holl, 1912 (TLG) 324.1.3-4.

³⁰ Μελχισεδεκιανοὺς πάλιν ἔτεροι ἐαυτοῦς καλοῦσιν, ἀποσπασθέντες τάχα ἀπὸ τῶν Θεοδοτιανῶν καλομένων. οὕτω τὸν Μελχισεδεκὸν τὸν ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς λεγόμενον διώκουσιν, μεγάλην τινὰ δύναμιν ἤγονοσιν. εἰναι δὲ αὐτῶν ἄνω ἐν ἀκατονομάστοις τόποις καὶ ἀληθῶς εἰναι τούτων ὑδέν ὤν δύναμιν τινα, ἀλλὰ καὶ μειστέρων τοῦ Χριστοῦ τῇ ἐαυτῶν πλάνῃ φάσκουσι. Χριστὸν δὲ ἔγονον ἀπλὸς ἐλλευθερὰ καὶ καταξιωθέντα τῆς ἐκείνου τάξεως, δήθεν ἐκ τοῦ ῥητοῦ τοῦ εἰρημένου “σῦ εἰ ιερεὺς εἰς τὸν ἁιδὸν κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισεδέκ”· ὡς εἰναι αὐτῶν, φησιν, ὑποδεικνύον τὸν Μελχισεδέκ. εἶ μὴ γὰρ ἐν δεύτερῃ τινὶ εἰσαγωγῇ κείμενος, οὐκ ἀν τῆς ἐκείνου τάξεως ἐπεδείκτη. περὶ αὐτοῦ δὲ τοῦ Μελχισεδέκ φασιν ὅτι ἀμήτωρ, ἀπάτωρ, ἀγενεαλογητός· ἐγένετο, ἐκ τῆς πρὸς Ἰσδοράος τοῦ ἀγίου Παύλου ἑπιστολῆς παριστάν ἐπολύμενος. πλάτωσιν δὲ ἐαυτοῦ καὶ βιβλίους ἐπιπλάστους, ἐαυτοὺς ἀκατότητες. GCS 31; Holl, ed. (1922) 324, 1.1-5. It is tempting to infer from Epiphanius’s mention of “spurious books” that he has encountered the anonymous treatise that fell into the possession of Jerome’s correspondent, Evangelus. At Epiphanius, Panarion II.5.2-5; Frank Williams, trans. 82.
the *Timaeus*, Plato had described matter as the “receptacle” which, in a process “difficult to describe,” receives form. The Demiurge gives matter form on the basis of a resemblance to an original paradigm. In describing the process of “stamping” matter with forms, Timaeus says, “the figures that enter and depart are copies of those that are always existent, being stamped from them in a fashion marvelous and hard to describe.”

Timaeus describes what would come to be known as “prime matter” “as a Kind invisible and unshaped, all-receptive (πανδεχές), and in some most perplexing and most baffling way partaking of the intelligible (μεταλαμβάνον δὲ ἁπάρωτατα πη τοῦ νοητοῦ).” Nothing in the perceptible world is cut off from sharing in intelligible reality. In appropriation of *Timaeus*, terms for “reception” stand for the link between “this world” and the “higher” world of the forms. The link between the two worlds occurs not at the level of the receptacle and its elements but at the level of the Demiurge who looks to an eternal archetype of Being in order to fashion the cosmos that comes to be.

Readings of the *Timaeus* could diverge on matters of detail, but the link between Being and Becoming established by the Demiurge was a feature common to many Platonic theologies. Numenius provides a characteristic application of terms of reception and participation in this context. He posits a primal distinction between the Demiurge, which he equates with Mind (*Nous*), and which constructs the *Cosmos*, on one hand, and the eternal Being to which the Mind looks, on the other hand. The distinction is couched in terms of participation and reception.

If it be granted that Existence, and the Idea, is intelligible, and that Mind is older than this, as its cause, then it must be concluded that this Mind alone is the Good. For if the Creating Divinity is the principle of Becoming, then surely but the

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32 Plato, *Tim.* 50c.
33 Plato, *Tim.* 29a-d.
Good be the principle of Being. Inasmuch as the Creating Divinity is analogous to
him, being his imitator, then must Becoming (be analogous) to Being, because it
is its image and imitation.\textsuperscript{34}

The myth of the Demiurge grounds a series of two entities that receive and pass on
characteristics in an imitative chain. The Demiurge reproduces what he sees, imitating the
Good by looking to the Good—the eternal model—and copying it out in his creative acts.
The continuity between the Good and the “world of becoming” is guaranteed by the
Creator’s faithful reception of the good and his passing it along in creation. An
ontological hierarchy in turn makes this reception possible. Only if the Demiurge receives
from the Good can he pass the good along, and his reception implies his inferiority to the
original he receives. So, Numenius says, “Mind alone is the Good,” the “Good-in-itself,”
and is “older than” every Idea it causes—including the “Creating Divinity.” In this way,
the Good is superior to the Demiurge.

Returning to Epiphanius’s “Melchizedekians,” Hebrews states that Christ is a
“priest κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Melchizedek.” If interpreted in Platonic terms, the Spirit’s
reception from the Son in John 16:14 implies that the Spirit receives from the Son in a
series of caused entities. The tendency to use the language of “order” to arrange Christ
with respect to “Melchizedek” can be explained as a Platonic reading of John 16:14’s use
of the verb λαμβάνω to name the relationship between the Son and the Spirit. The phrase
κατὰ τὴν τάξιν (“according to the order of Melchizedek”) could mean that Melchizedek
represents a special order of priesthood. On the other hand, if read on Platonic ground,
κατὰ τὴν τάξιν means that Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. This second

\textsuperscript{34}Des Places, ed. frag. 16. Εἰ δὲ ἐστι μὲν νοητὸν ἢ ὄντος καὶ ἢ ἰδέα, ταύτης δ’ ὀμοιογνήθη
πρεσβύτερον καὶ αὐτὸν εἶναι ὁ νοῦς, αὐτὸς οὖσας μόνος εὐρήται ὁ ἄγαθόν. Καὶ γὰρ εἰ ὁ μὲν
δημιουργὸς θεός ἐστι γενέσεως, ἀρκεῖ τὸ ἄγαθόν οὕσις εἶναι ἄρχη. Ανάλογον δὲ τούτῳ μὲν ὁ δημιουργὸς
θεός, ὁν αὐτοῦ μιμητῆς, τῇ δὲ οὕσις ἢ γένεσις, ἢ εἰκὼν αὐτῆς ἐστὶ καὶ μίμημα. Eusebius quotes this
passage in the \textit{Preparation for the Gospel} XI, 22,3-5.
reading means that Melchizedek was an eternal priest before Christ received his position as an eternal priest from God the Father. Earlier Christian tradition had used the term τάξις to arrange the Trinitarian persons in a series.\(^{35}\)

The *Refutatio omnium haeresium* attributed by some to Hippolytus appears to have been an earlier source for Epiphanius. In the mid-third century, its author could write that Theodotus the banker “attempted to establish that Melchizedek constitutes a kind of greatest power, and that this one is greater than Christ. And they allege that Christ happens to be according to the likeness (of this Melchizedek).”\(^{36}\) Note the Timaean terminology: Christ comes to be according to the image of Melchizedek. (Ps.??-) Hippolytus’s “Theodotians” had read Hebrews 7:17 in terms of the Demiurge’s looking to an image. God the Father, the Demiurge, created Christ by looking to the paradigm, Melchizedek. Epiphanius accuses the Alexandrian Hieracas of having taken the further step of identifying Melchizedek with the Holy Spirit.\(^{37}\) If the Holy Spirit is Melchizedek,

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36 Hippolytus, *Ref.* VII.36.2-5: . . . καὶ αὐτὸς Θεόδοτος καλούμενος, τραπεζίτης τῆς τέχνης, λέγειν δύναμιν τινα τὸν Μελχισεδέκ εἶναι μεγαλύτερα, καὶ τούτον εἶναι μείζονα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, οὐ καὶ εἰκόνα φάσκοιν τὸν Χριστὸν τυγχάνειν. (Ps.-)Hippolytus’s descriptor for Melchizedek, δύναμιν τινα . . . μεγαλύτερα, is comparable to Epiphanius’s μεγάλην τινα δύναμιν. For Greek text, see Miroslav Marcovich, ed., *Hippolytus, Refutatio omnium haeresium*, Patriстичес Texte und Studien, Bd. 25 (New York: W. De Gruyter, 1986).

37 Epiphanius, *Panarion* II.5, 2-5; Frank Williams, trans. (modified), 82. καὶ ὁ μὲν Ἱερακᾶς ὁ Αἰγύπτιος ἀὐρησίαρχος νομίζει τούτον τὸν Μελχισεδέκ εἶναι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον διὰ τὸ “ἀφορμοιούμενον, φησί, τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ μένει ἱερεύς εἰς τὸ δινηκές”. ὡς ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως ἢς ἔπειν ὁ ἅγιος ἀπόστολος “τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ὑπερεντυγχάιναι ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν στεναγμοῦ ἀλαλήτους”, δὲ ἐπιστάμενος τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος ὁδεν ότι ὑπὲρ ἐκλεκτῶν ἐντυγχάνει τῷ θεῷ, ἐξέπεσε δὲ καὶ οὕτως παντελῶς τοῦ προκειμένου. οὐ γὰρ σάρκα ἐνεδύσαστο τὸ πνεῦμα πάτε: σάρκα δὲ μὴ ἐνυδυσάμενον οὐκ εἶχαν εἶναι βασιλεύς τῆς Σαλῆς καὶ ἱερεύς τόπου τινός, καὶ ὡς ἀπὸ τοῦτο τοῦ Ἱερακᾶ καὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ αἱρέσεως τὴν ἀνατροπὴν ποιησόμαι, τότε ἐν πλάτει περὶ τοῦτον διηγησόμαι, τῆς δὲ ἀκολουθίας τὰ νῦν ἐπιλήψομαι. “The Egyptian heresiarch Hieracas believes that this Melchizedek is the Holy Spirit because of ‘made like unto the Son of God he remains a priest continually,’ as though this is to be interpreted by the holy apostle’s statement that ‘the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.’ Anyone who understands the mind of the Spirit knows that he intercedes with God for the elect. But Hieracas too has gone entirely off the track. The Spirit never assumed flesh. And not having assumed flesh, he could not be king of Salem and priest of anywhere.”
who in turn is prior to Christ in a series, Epiphanius knows a latter-day instance of the
“hyper-pneumatology” Origen faced in *On First Principles*.\(^{38}\) To invoke John 16:14’s
statement that the Spirit receives from the Son would oppose the hyper-pneumatology
based on Hebrews 7:17.

To judge from the range of evidence from (Ps.-?)Hippolytus, Eusebius, Jerome,
and Epiphanius, Melchizedek’s identification with the Holy Spirit occurred as early as
Origen’s day and outlasted Didymus’s lifetime. 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. Given the persistence of such angelomorphic
tendencies well into the fourth century, it is easier to understand why Jesus’s statement in
John 16:14 about the Holy Spirit might be rendered not simply as, “He will *proclaim* to
you,” but as, “He will be an ‘angel’ to you.”\(^{39}\) John 16:14’s use of λαμβάνω to name the
relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit would only reinforce the suspicion that
the Holy Spirit receives from the Son as an inferior entity. Several anti-monarchian
readers of John 16:14 would read the verse just this way.

**Tertullian, Origen, Novatian, and Eusebius on John 16:14**

Following Tertullian’s reading of John 16:14, low pneumatological tendencies
established themselves in anti-monarchian readings of this verse from Origen to

\(^{38}\) Barnes, “Beginning and End”: 182.

\(^{39}\) Rowan Williams was not the first to suggest that the Son and the Spirit had long been
categorized as “angelic liturgists” in Alexandria—perhaps in Origen’s case—but his treatment remains a
categorically rich and suggestive argument along those lines. See Rowan Williams, “Angels
Unawares: Heavenly Liturgy and Earthly Theology in Alexandria,” in *Studia Patristica Vol 30* (Leuven:
Peeters, 1997), 350-63.
Eusebius. That tradition took extreme form in Eunomius’s contention that the Holy Spirit is a creature “filled” by the Son, “third in both nature and order” (τρίτον καὶ φύσει καὶ τάξει).\(^{40}\) We will now survey anti-monarchian readings of John 16:14 from Tertullian to Eusebius. With the exception of Tertullian, each of these figures uses the logic of reception in John 16:14 to order the Son and the Spirit as superior to inferior. Each is willing to pay the price of distinguishing the three from one another with a grammar of intra-trinitarian participation: a low pneumatology.

John 16:14 could be used to show that the Trinitarian persons are distinct figures with distinct activities. On the other hand, Jesus’s statement in John 10:30 that “I and the Father are one” was a staple of monarchian exegesis.\(^{41}\) Tertullian appeals to John 16:14 as part of a larger attempt to distinguish the three trinitarian personae. He invokes John 16:14 to recover John 10:30 from monarchian exegesis. According to his reading, Jesus’s statement that the Spirit “receives from what is mine,” taken with the implication that the Son, too, receives from what belongs to the Father, means that the three are distinct, not identical.

He is called “another Comforter,” indeed; but in what way He is another we have already shown.\(^{42}\) “He shall receive of mine,” says Christ, just as Christ Himself received of the Father’s. Thus the connection (connexus) of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Paraclete, yields three gathering together (tres . . . cohaerentes), who are yet distinct One from another (alterum ex altero). These

\(^{40}\) Eunomius, Apol. 25.22.


\(^{42}\) In Adv. Prax. 13, Tertullian invokes the illustration of the sun and its ray, which he says are “as much two things and two species of one undivided substance, as God and His Word, as the Father and the Son.” It is not clear whether he means to apply the same metaphor to the kind of unity the Holy Spirit shares with the Son and the Father.
three are one essence, not one person, as it is said, “I and my Father are One,” in respect of unity of substance, not singularity of number.\footnote{Tertullian, \textit{Adv. Prax.}, 25: \textit{Ita connexus patris in filio et filii in paracleto tres efficit cohaerentes, alterum ex altero. Qui tres unum sunt, non unus, quomodo dictum est: ego et pater unus sumus, ad substantiae unitatem, non ad numeri singularitatem} (CCSL 2: 1159-1205).}

So Tertullian rules out “numerical singularity” of the Godhead to oppose monarchianism. He presupposes that the Spirit’s reception of what belongs to Christ entails the numerical distinction of Son from Spirit. The three are united in terms of undivided divine “substance”—though Tertullian stops short of explaining how a unity of substance is not a numerical unity. John 16:14 is useful to him as a means of articulating the distinction between the Son and the Holy Spirit, because in this passage the Spirit receives from the Son. Reception implies distinction in number, as one receives from another.

Origen, too, uses John 16:14 to oppose monarchianism, and in a similar way. He goes beyond Tertullian by tying John 16:14 to an “ordering” of the three persons in a hierarchical scheme. The ordering in turn provides a precedent of ambiguous consequence. Origen does not refer to John 16:14, as one might expect him to, in a key passage, in \textit{Commentary on John} 2.76, in which he writes that the Holy Spirit “seems to have need of the Son ministering to his \textit{hypostasis}, not only for it to exist, but also for it to be wise, and rational, and just, and whatever other thing we ought to understand it to be by participation in the aspects of Christ which we mentioned previously.”\footnote{Origen, \textit{Jo.} 2.76.} John 16:14 would have provided a suitable warrant for Origen’s suspicion, but he does not invoke the passage here.

He does invoke John 16:14 twice elsewhere, once early and once late in his \textit{Commentary on John}.\footnote{Origen, \textit{Jo.} 2.127; 20.263.} In \textit{Jo.} 20.263, Origen says,
whenever . . . the Holy Spirit or an angelic spirit speaks, it does not speak from its own resources, but from the Word of truth and of wisdom. This is made clear also in the Gospel according to John where he teaches about the Paraclete and says, “He will receive from me, and will announce to you.”

Origen includes the Holy Spirit with other angelic spirits in classifying it as speaking “not . . . from its own resources (ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων), but from the Word of truth and of wisdom.”

The context indicates that Origen is more concerned to authenticate the Spirit by distinguishing “true” from “false” spirits, as much as he would distinguish the Spirit from the Son. So his reading of John 16:14 in this case is as likely to be anti-Gnostic as anti-monarchian. In any event, Origen’s deployment of the verse here includes no protection against ontological subordination of the Spirit to the Son; indeed, it turns upon just such an arrangement.

Origen’s other reference to the verse in the Commentary on John (2.127) is more telling. He uses John 16:14 to clarify what it means for the Son to “minister to [the Holy Spirit’s] hypostasis.” The Son teaches the Holy Spirit to be what it is:

For that the Holy Spirit also is instructed by [Christ] is clear from what is said about the comforter and the Holy Spirit: “Because he will receive from me and will announce it to you.” Now we must inquire very carefully if the Spirit, by being instructed, contains all things which the Son, who is from the beginning, knows by contemplating the Father.

Origen’s compressed speculation suggests that the Son knows certain things directly—“by contemplation of the Father”—which the Holy Spirit knows indirectly. The fact that the Holy Spirit receives knowledge from the Son reinforces the Spirit’s inferiority to the Son. The inferiority does not, however, undermine the Spirit’s authority. Origen is careful to point out that the Holy Spirit “comprehends all things,” even if at second remove. The

46 Origen, Jo. 2.263; Heine trans., 260 (modified).
47 Origen, Jo. 2.127. Ὅτι μὲν γὰρ καὶ αὐτὸ αὐτῷ μαθητεύεται, σωφρές ἐκ τοῦ λεγομένου περὶ παρακλήτου καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος· “Ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἔμπου λήψεται, καὶ ἀναγεννήθη ὕμιν.” Εἰ δὲ μαθητευόμενον πάντα χωρεῖ, ἃ ἐναπεινίζων τῷ πατρὶ ἀρχήμενος ὁ υἱὸς γινόσκει, ἐπιμελέστερον ζητητέον.
Holy Spirit receives from the Son, and the reception corroborates Origen’s interpretation that the Holy Spirit is “instructed” by Christ.

Origen was not alone in taking anti-monarchian exegesis of John 16:14 one step further than Tertullian had by applying a Platonizing hierarchy to the relationship between the Son and Holy Spirit. Novatian, too, uses the verse to subordinate the Spirit to the Son. He draws a twofold characterization of the Son and Spirit in Trin. 16.2-3. On one hand, he says, this verse demonstrates that the Son is indeed the source of the Holy Spirit’s information, and on this point his reading of the verse mirrors Origen’s. He reads John 16:14 as authorizing the Holy Spirit because the Son is superior to the Holy Spirit. This also entails that the Holy Spirit is “less than” (minor) the Son.

The premise that motivates Origen’s logic also drives Novatian’s: reception implies ontological hierarchy. Novatian concludes from John 16:14 that Christ is “greater than the Paraclete.” “If [the Paraclete] received from Christ the things which He will make known, then surely Christ is greater than the Paraclete, since the Paraclete would not receive from Christ unless He were less than Christ,” Novatian explains. Novatian uses John 16:14’s logic of reception to justify an ontological hierarchy of Son over the Holy Spirit, and that logic draws on a Platonizing reading of the key verb \( \lambda \alpha \mu \beta \alpha \nu \omega \). The presence of the verb \( \alpha \nu \alpha \gamma \gamma \epsilon \lambda \epsilon \iota \) is not acknowledged, but the Holy Spirit’s status as an angel is left open as a possibility, if not a direct consequence, of the resulting ontological hierarchy.

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48 Whether Novatian is opposing the same “hyper-pneumatology” faced by Origen is an open question. But in any case John 16:14 is associated with the Holy Spirit’s distinction from and subordination to the Son and the Father in anti-monarchian polemic.

49 Novatian, Trin. 16.3: Sed si a christo accepit quae nuntiet, maior ergo iam paracleto christus est, quoniam nec paracletus a christo acciperet, nisi minor christo esset (CCSL 4: 40). FOTC, DeSimone trans., 62.
The anti-monarchian tradition of John 16:14 finds its most extensive deployment in Eusebius’s polemical use of it against Marcellus. Eusebius glosses John 16:14 with the logic of participation Origen had developed in his *Commentary on John*. Eusebius makes a series of references to John 16:14 as part of an argument with Marcellus in his *Ecclesiastical Theology* 3.4-5. He provides an extensive quotation of Marcellus’s *Against Asterius*, whom he says states:

... if the Word were to appear to have come from the Father Himself and has come to us and “The Holy Spirit” (as even Asterius confessed) “proceeds from the Father,” and again the Savior says concerning the Spirit that “He will not speak on His own authority (ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ), but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you,” doesn’t the monad in this ineffable statement appear clearly and obviously to broaden into a Trinity without in any way suffering division?  

According to Marcellus, Jesus’s statements in John 16:13-15 entail that the trinity proceeds from a Monad to a Dyad and, finally, a Triad. In no case, Marcellus insists, is the substance or reality divided materially. The procession remains immaterial, such that the three are names, but they are not the names of separated entities.

Our concern lies less with reconstructing Marcellus’s theology and more with recognizing the traditional force of Eusebius’s reading of John 16:14. In opposition to Marcellus, he writes: The only-begotten Son of God teaches that He Himself has come forth from the Father because He was always with Him, and likewise of the Holy Spirit, who exists as another besides the Son. The Savior Himself shows this clearly when He says, “He will take what is mine and declare it to you.” For this would be

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50 In what follows I have benefited from the use of an unpublished translation of *De ecclesiastica theologia* by Kelley Spoerl. I am grateful to Prof. Spoerl for allowing me to consult her translation ahead of its publication.

51 Eusebius, *e.th.* 3.4.2-3; Spoerl trans. εἰ τοίνυν ὁ λόγος φαίνετο ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐξελθόν καὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐληλυθός, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα τὸ ἄγιον, ὡς καὶ Λυτέριος ὁμολόγησεν, παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται, εἰθής τε ὁ σωτὴρ φησὶν περὶ τοῦ πνεύματος ὅτι “οὐκ ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ λαλήσει· ἀλλ᾽ ἃσα ἄκουσει λαλήσει, καὶ τὰ ερχόμενα ἀναγγέλεται ὑμῖν. ἐκείνος μὲ δοξάσει, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήψεται καὶ ἀναγγέλει ὑμῖν”, ὡς σαφῶς καὶ φανερῶς ἐνταῦθα ἀπορρήτῳ δὲ λόγῳ ἢ μονάς φαίνεται, πλατυνομένη μὲν εἰς τριάδα, διαφεύγει τῇ δὲ μηδαμώς ὑπομένουσα;
unmistakable proof that the Son and the Holy Spirit are not one and the same. For that which takes from another is thought to be other than the one who gives.⁵² Eusebius contends that John 16:14 proves that the Holy Spirit is “a different entity from the Son” (ἐτερον υπάρχον παρὰ τὸν υἱόν).⁵³ According to him, the “Son” and “Holy Spirit” are not different names for a single reality if in fact the Holy Spirit “receives from” the Son, as John 16:14 states. Eusebius’s reading of the verse presupposes its antimonarchian utility for distinguishing the giver (Son) from the receiver (Spirit)—as with Tertullian, Origen, and Novatian.

After introducing his reading of John 16:14 in Ecclesiastical Theology 3.4, Eusebius elaborates on his point in the following section, 3.5. His elaboration plays on the various ways the Son speaks of the reception of the Holy Spirit. He cites, first, John 14:15-17, which closes with the Son’s statement that the world cannot “receive” the “Spirit of truth.” This is supposed to entail, according to Eusebius, that “the Spirit is another counselor and other than Himself.” Jesus’s breath prepared the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit. The logic of reception guarantees that the Son and the Spirit are distinct entities:

For the one who gives and that which is given could not have been the same, but the one who provides [the Spirit] was the Savior and that which is given was the Holy Spirit, and those received the Spirit were the apostles, while the breath purified the apostles, as I said, or also effected the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, for it is possible to interpret this event in either of these ways.⁵⁴

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⁵² Eusebius, e.th. 3.4.9; Spoerl trans.: ὁ δὲ μονογενὴς υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐξεληλυθέναι ἑαυτὸν διδάσκει διὰ τὸ συνεῖναι αὐτῷ πάντοτε, καὶ τὸ ἀγιὸν δὲ πνεῦμα ὁμοίως ἔτερον υπάρχον παρὰ τὸν υἱόν. ò δὲ σαρήν συνεῖναι ὁ σωτὴρ παράδειγμα λέγων ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήμμεται καὶ ἀναγελεῖς ὑμῖν.” ἀντικρύς γὰρ παραστατικῶν ἃν εἶπ τοῦτο τοῦ μὴ εἶναι ἡ τὸ τοῦτον τὸν υἱόν καὶ τὸ ἀγιὸν πνεῦμα· τὸ γὰρ παρ’ ἐτέρον λαμβάνων τι ἐτέρων παρὰ τὸν διδόντα νοείται.

⁵³ Eusebius, e.th. 3.4.9.

⁵⁴ Eusebius, e.th. 3.5.2-3; Spoerl trans. τὸ δὲ διδόναι αὐτὸν τὸ πνεῦμα πάλιν ἔτερον αὐτὸν παρίστη τοῦ διδόμενου· οὐκ ἂν γὰρ ὁ αὐτὸς ἤν ὁ διδός καὶ τὸ διδόμενον, ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν παρέχον ἤν ὁ σωτήρ, τὸ δὲ διδόμενον τὸ ἀγιὸν πνεῦμα, οἱ δὲ λαμβάνοντες οἱ ἀπόστολοι, τὸ δὲ ἐμφύσημα καθαρτικὸν ως ἔρην τῶν ἀποστόλων ἢ καὶ ἐνεργητικὸν τῆς μεταδόσεως τοῦ ἁγίου πνεῆματος, ἐκατέρως γὰρ νοεῖν δυνατόν.
Eusebius is satisfied that he has shown that “the Holy Spirit is another existing alongside [the Son].” He ratifies this statement by reference to a litany of other passages.\textsuperscript{55} Upon returning to the question of Jesus’s “breath” and comes to a more precise statement about the Holy Spirit’s transcendence over all other spiritual powers:

For when “He breathed upon” [them], then, He also gave to them a share in the grace of the Holy Spirit, such as could effect the forgiveness of sins. For “there are varieties of gifts,” of which a part were given to [the disciples] when [the Savior] lived with them, and after these He filled them with an [even] greater and more perfect power. He spoke to [the apostles] about this in the Acts of the Apostles: “but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.”

A little further on, Eusebius concludes that the Savior Himself taught that the Holy Spirit exists as another besides Himself, outstanding in honor and glory and privileges, greater and higher than any [other] intellectual and rational substance (for which reason He has been taken up into the Holy and thrice-blessed Trinity). Yet He is surely subordinate to [the Son]. Indeed [the Son] showed this when He said, “For He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak”—obviously, from my treasure. For in Him are “hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Therefore, He Himself, seeing as He is the only-begotten Son, receives from the Father and listens to Him, while the Holy Spirit supplies what He receives [from the Son]. Hence He says, “He will take what is mine and declare it to you.”\textsuperscript{56}

Following this clear subordination of the Holy Spirit to the Son and the Father, Eusebius acknowledges both that the Father and Son, too, are spiritual. He then walks a fine line between overt angelomorphic pneumatology and his own position.

\dots given that the Holy Spirit is another alongside the Father and the Son, showing his individuality (idioma), the Savior has called Him Counselor, distinguishing Him from the common run of angels through the title “Counselor.” For the angelic powers also are spirits. For it has been said, “He who makes His


\textsuperscript{56} Eusebius, \textit{e.th.} 3.5.17-19; Spoerl trans. αὐτὸς ὁ σωτὴρ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἄγιον ἐπέρευεν υπάρχειν παρ’ ἑαυτὸν ἑδίδαξεν, τιμὴ μὲν καὶ δόξα καὶ προσβείεις ὑπερέχουν καὶ κρείττον καὶ ἀνώτερον πάσης τῆς νοερᾶς καὶ οὐκικῆς τυγχάνον ούσίας (διὸ καὶ συμπαρείπεται τῇ ἁγίᾳ καὶ τρισμακάριᾳ τριάδι), ὑποβεβηκός γε μὴν [ἕν] αὐτοῦ. δὲ δὴ παρίστη εἰπὼν “οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐαυτὸς λαλήσει, ἀλλὰ ὅσα ἀκούσεις λαλήσει”· παρὰ τίνος δὲ ἀκούσεις, διασαρείζοντι λέγον «ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήγεται καὶ ἀναγγελεῖ υμῖν», ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ δηλαδὴ θρησκευόν· ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ “εἰπὼν πάντως οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι.” αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν ἀπο τῇ οὐς ἐννοείς παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς λαμβάνει καὶ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀκούει, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα τὸ ἄγιον παρ’ αὐτοῦ χορηγεῖται· διὸ φησιν “ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήγεται καὶ ἀναγγελεῖ υμῖν.”
angels spirits.”  

But none of these can be equal to the Spirit-Counselor. For this reason, only this [Spirit] has been taken up into the holy and thrice-blessed Trinity.  

Eusebius feels pressed to explain the presence of the Holy Spirit in the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19. This is the second time he has said that the Holy Spirit “has been taken up into the . . . Trinity.” A few lines later, he confirms that, indeed, the Father makes all things through the Son—“both visible and invisible and surely also…the very existence of the Spirit-Counselor.”  

Eusebius does not state explicitly that the Holy Spirit is an angelic being, but he leaves open the possibility that the Holy Spirit is a created spiritual being “taken up” into the Trinity on account of its holiness.

**Eunomius: “The Holy Spirit is Filled with Sanctification and Instruction”**

It ought now to be clear that by the time Eunomius came to write his *Apologetic*, the fact that the Holy Spirit is said to “receive from” the Son in John 16:14, paired with an anti-monarchian tradition of reading John 16:14, would entail a logic according to which the Holy Spirit is inferior to the Son because he “receives from” the Son. The Spirit’s inferiority could reasonably entail an angelomorphic pneumatology, especially if it were combined with subtle attention to Origen’s *Commentary on John*. Such a low pneumatology would have considerable authority.

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57 Quoting Heb. 1:7.  
58 Eusebius, *e.th.* 3.5.21; Spoerl trans. ἀλλὰ γὰρ τοῦ ἀγίου πνεύματος ἐπέρω ὄντος παρὰ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν, τὸ ἰδίωμα παριστάται ὡς σωτήρ κέκληκεν αὐτὸ παράκλητον, τὸ κοινὸν τῆς ὁμοομοίας ἀφορίζον διὰ τῆς τοῦ παρακλήτου προσηγορίας, ἐπεὶ καὶ αἱ ἀγγελικαὶ δυνάμεις ἔδει ἄν πνεύματα ὁ “ὁ γὰρ “ποιῶν τοὺς ἄγγελους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα” ἔρηται. ἀλλ’ οὔθεν τούτον ἐξισοδοθήθαι δύναται τὸ παρακλήτῳ πνεύματι. διὸ τῇ ἁγίᾳ καὶ τρισυμακαρίᾳ τριάδι. . . The “individuality” (*idioma*) of the Spirit’s *hypostasis* derives from Origen’s *Commentary on John*, and it is later emphasized by Eunomius in *Apol.* 25.17. Eunomius describes the Spirit as “having his own existence” (ἰδίαν ἔχον ὑπόστασιν).  
59 Eusebius cites John 1:3 to support this contention.
Eunomius wrote his first Apology in 360, and Basil did not respond to it for at least three and perhaps as many as five years. Didymus was one of the first to respond. Lewis Ayres has suggested that Didymus’s reading of John 16:14 responds to Eunomius’s argument, based on Eunomius’s combination of John 16:14 with John 5:19, that the Holy Spirit worships the Son. We can say more, however. For it is not only to Eunomius’s exegesis of John 5:19 that Didymus responds in On the Holy Spirit. He responds to a basic logic dependent upon anti-monarchian exegesis of John 16:14.

Consider the context of Eunomius’s compressed pneumatology. Eunomius took cues from both Origen’s Commentary on John and intervening developments in Platonism since Origen’s death—possibly the Platonism of Plotinus. The suspicion that, in his Apology, Eunomius was drawing on Neoplatonic thought, is not new. That Eunomius was a “Neoplatonist” means different things to different readers, so it is important to specify Eunomius’s sources and state clearly the consequences of his Neoplatonic borrowings. That Eunomius had absorbed important points of Neoplatonic doctrine is at least plausible. However, no one has yet pointed to Eunomius’s Apology 25 for a point of contact between Eunomius’s theology and Neoplatonic philosophy. Yet here is a straightforward correspondence.

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61 See 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, Maynooth, 2008, 57–72 (Portland: Four Courts, 2010), 66-67. Ayres points out that Eunomius bases his position on John 5:19; Eunomius’s appeal to John 16:14 is more oblique. As DelCicogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres state, Eunomius was the first anti-Nicene theologian to pair John 16:14 with John 5:19 (see Works on the Spirit, 40). Eusebius (e.th. 3.3-5) paired these texts in a relevant context, so probably Eunomius was drawing on Eusebius.

In *Apology* 25, Eunomius argues that the “natures” of the three follow their “order.” He claims that when Scripture says we worship “in the Spirit,” it means that the Spirit cannot be the object of worship. The point reinforces an anti-monarchian reading of John 16:14 even if it does not invoke the text directly. Instead of being identical with the Only-Begotten, or another “offspring” of the Father, the Holy Spirit “is third both in nature and in order since he was brought into existence at the command of the Father by the action of the Son.”

Eunomius appeals to the precedent of Origen’s *Commentary on John* 2’s exegesis of John 1:3. Origen had said that “the Holy Spirit is the most honored (τιμώτερον) of all things made through the Word.” Similarly, Eunomius concludes that the Holy Spirit is honoured in third place as the first and greatest work of all, the only such ‘thing made’ of the Only-begotten, lacking indeed godhead and the power of creation, but filled with (πεπληρωμένον) sanctification and instruction.

Elsewhere Eunomius invokes a distinction between the one who worships and who is worshipped (ὅτε προσκυνοῦσα καὶ προσκυνούσα) as an interpretation of Jesus’s statement, in John 16:14, that the Holy Spirit “will glorify me.” The logic implied by John 16:14 also appears in Eunomius’s pneumatology under the rubric of the Holy Spirit’s “being filled.” This characteristic of the Holy Spirit takes precedence for Eunomius, presumably because it is logically primary. It is one of two distinctive features of the single chapter Eunomius devotes to the Holy Spirit in his first *Apology*. The other

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63 Eunomius, *Apol.* 25.22-24: ἀλλὰ τρίτον καὶ φύσει καὶ τάξει, προστάγματι τοῦ πατρός, ἐνεργείᾳ δὲ τοῦ ὤδω γενόμενον, τρίτη χώρα τιμώμενον ὡς πρῶτον καὶ μεῖζον πάντων καὶ μόνον τοιούτον τοῦ μονογενοῦς ποιήμα....

64 See Origen, *Jo.* 2.73-75, here at 2.75: “τὸ πάντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου γενόμενον τὸ ἀγνον πνεῦμα πάντων εἶναι τιμώτερον καὶ τάξει πρῶτον πάντων τῶν ὡς τοῦ πατρός διὰ Χριστοῦ γεγενημένων.


distinctive argument is one he shares with Didymus. It is the anti-monarchian argument that the Holy Spirit is a divine agent, not merely an activity of God.\footnote{The subtle point that the Holy Spirit is “filled” does not reappear, however, in the summary confessional statement appended in the manuscript tradition to the Apology. For more on this issue, 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 65, no. 3 (2011), 227–48.}

Eunomius’s statement that the Holy Spirit’s being “filled with sanctification and instruction” (ἀγιαστικῆς δὲ καὶ διδασκαλικῆς πεπληρωμένον) deserves attention. Origen had suggested that “the Holy Spirit has need of the Son ministering to his hypostasis.”\footnote{Origen, Jo. 2.76: . . . ἐοίκε τὸ ἄγιον πνεῦμα διακονοῦντος αὐτοῦ τῇ ὑποστάσει, οὐ μόνον εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἄλλα καὶ σοφὸν εἶναι καὶ λογικὸν καὶ δίκαιον καὶ πᾶν ὀτιστοῦν χρῆ αὐτὸ νοεῖν τυγχάνειν κατὰ μετοχὴν τῶν προειρημένων ἡμῖν Χριστοῦ ἐπινοοῦν.} And if the Holy Spirit’s role is to sanctify, then the Spirit must have received the power to sanctify from the Son, just as the Son received his various titles from the Father.

Eunomius’s assertion makes sense as the formulation of a logical consequence of Origen’s theology in the Commentary on John 2. It also fits with broader anti-monarchian reading of John 16:14.

It was not only Origen’s precedent that gave weight to Eunomius’s pneumatology. The Platonic tradition had continued to develop along lines concordant with Origen’s hierarchical ordering of first principles. Origen himself had initiated a coupling of Hebrews 1:3 with Wisdom 7:25-26 to describe the Son, as the Father’s Wisdom, an “ἀπόρροια of the pure glory of the Almighty.” Origen uses ἀπόρροια to distinguish the Son’s divine origin: he radiates as an ἀπόρροια not from the Father himself, but from his glory, as Hebrews 1:3 states.\footnote{See Origen, Jo. 13.25; cf. Princ. 1.2.10.} Origen’s statement, however, begs an important question: what does it mean to call the Son an “emanation” (ἀπόρροια) of the Father’s glory?
The term ἀπόρροια is frequent in neither Scripture nor the Platonic tradition. Plotinus does not use the term ἀπόρροια. Numenius never uses it, nor does Alcinous in his Didaskalikon. But Plotinus and other Platonists speak generically of incorporeal emanation or procession. Plotinus does speak—if only once—of an overflowing (ὑπερρήψη) of the One. His reticence belies that the Platonic tradition was familiar with metaphors of “outpouring” for the primal procession, even if Plotinus himself remained squeamish about using physical metaphors to describe the One.\(^{71}\)

In Plotinus’s scheme of emanation, the One “spills over” and produces the One existent, which in turn generates the primal triad Being-Life-Mind. Plotinus describes the first being to proceed from the One as “filled” by the One when it “halts” and turns to “look toward” the One.\(^{72}\)

This, we may say, is the first act of generation: the One, perfect because it seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing, overflows (ὑπερρήψη), as it were, and its superabundance makes something other than itself. This, when it has come into being, turns back upon the One and is filled (ἐπληρώθη), and becomes Intellect by looking towards it. Its halt and turning towards the one constitutes being, its gaze upon the One, Intellect. Since it halts and turns towards the One that it may see, it becomes at once Intellect and being. Resembling the One thus, Intellect produces in the same way, pouring forth (προχέας) a multiple power—this is a likeness of it—just as that which was before it poured it forth (προέχεα). This activity springing from the substance of Intellect is Soul, which comes to be this while Intellect abides unchanged: for Intellect too comes into being while that which is before it abides unchanged. But Soul does not abide unchanged when it produces: it is moved and so brings forth an image. It looks to its source and is filled (πληρούται), and going forth to another opposed movement generates its own image, which is sensation and the principle of growth in plants.\(^{73}\)

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\(^{72}\) Plotinus, *Enn.* V.2.1.

\(^{73}\) Plotinus, *Enn.* V.2.1.7-22; Armstrong trans., 59-61. καὶ πρώτη οἶνον γέννησις αὐτῆ· ἡ ἀπόρροια ἐκ τῶν μεταξμένων τοῦ κύριου τοῦ κόσμου ἐμφανίζεται, ἐκ τῆς ὑπερρήψης τῆς αὐτοῦ πεποίησεν ἄλλη· τό ἤ γενόμενον εἰς αὐτῷ ἐπιστράφη καὶ εἰπερρόθη καὶ ἐγένετο πρός αὐτὸ βλέπον καὶ νοεῖν οὗτος. Καὶ ἡ μὲν πρός ἐκείνον στάσις αὐτοῦ τὸ ἐποίησεν, ἡ δὲ πρός αὐτὸ θέα τὸν νοεῖν. Ἐπεί όμων ἔστη πρός
Plotinus here delineates a process of emanation from the One to Nous to Soul. He uses several forms of the verb πληρόω to describe the procession.

Eunomius argues that the Holy Spirit is “filled” (πληροῦται), and his argument invites comparison with Plotinian emanation. It is difficult to know whether Eunomius used Plotinus’s Ennead V.2 directly in order to argue that the Holy Spirit is “filled.” His statement is far too compressed to command certainty, even if the logic fits. Whatever his source in the Platonic tradition, Eunomius did not simply reproduce a Platonic scheme in Christian guise. He was adapting a traditional feature of Platonist metaphysics—ontological hierarchy—for an end to which that feature had been put in anti-monarchian Christian polemic for generations. Anti-monarchians since Origen had tended to use a generically Platonic grammar of participation to distinguish between the three and to range them hierarchically in “vertical” order. Had Eunomius turned to Origen’s statement in the Commentary on John that the Holy Spirit “has need of the Son ministering to his hypostasis,” it would have been difficult for him not to see Plotinus’s language of one existent’s being “filled” by its superior. The fit between Origen’s pneumatology and Plotinian ontology in hindsight was sensible enough, and Eunomius drew the sensible

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74 John Rist demonstrated that even Enn. V.1’s most striking metaphysical aspects redound to earlier tendencies in Middle Platonism, available to Clement and Origen (and others) without access to Plotinus’s Enneads, and Rist’s argument remains unchallenged. See John Rist, “Basil’s ‘Neoplatonism’: Its Background and Nature,” in Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic. A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium, ed. Paul J. Fedwick (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981), 137-220. Rist cautions that traces of Plotinus’s distinctive influence are not to be found prior to the late fourth century among Christians. As I argued in Chapter 1 of this study, third- and fourth-century Christians need not have encountered Plotinus to adumbrate a Christian God as a series of three principles, or hypostases, arranged in an emanative scheme. Parallels with Gnosticism notwithstanding, Christians might have taken cues from Numenius, if they saw fit.
conclusion. The Holy Spirit is a celestial creature “filled” by the Father with the Son’s virtues. 75

Didymus Against Eunomius: “I Will Pour Out my Spirit”

In On the Holy Spirit, Didymus offered one of the first straightforward denials that the Holy Spirit is “an invisible creature.” 76 But whose proposition did he deny? The account to follow is not the first to suggest that Didymus recognized and resisted an earlier, stronger tradition in Alexandria that involved the Holy Spirit as the leader of the angelic host in a heavenly liturgy. 77 I argue, however, that Didymus was not only responding to angelomorphic pneumatology generally or generically. He was responding to a specific instance of it: the explicitly low pneumatology of Eunomius’s Apology 25. 78

Didymus makes extensive use of participation terminology. 79 A thoroughgoing distinction between God, as substantially good, and creatures, as good-by-reception or participation, is fundamental to Didymus’s strategy in On the Holy Spirit. 80 Didymus sets

75 Other instances of John 16:14’s reception are worthy of attention but occur too late to have been relevant to the dispute between Didymus and Eunomius. One is especially ironic. Epiphanius uses the verse to castigate Paul of Samosata’s latter-day defenders. The irony is that Epiphanius has taken up a position on this verse that stands in line with Eunomius, who in turn derived it from Origen, whom Epiphanius would not have relished having inspired his own view on the trinity. See Epiphanius, Panarion II, 65.6.8.
76 Didymus, Spir. 62.
78 My account here broadens the basis for the perspective taken by the text’s recent translators. See DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres, 40-42.
80 The wide-ranging deployment of this concept and its attendant terminology by Didymus in On the Holy Spirit provided some of Mingarelli’s most compelling evidence in his case for Didymus’ authorship of On the Trinity, a text that also shows a widespread polemical use of the concept. See L. Doutreleau, Le De Trinitate est-il l’Oeuvre de Didyme l’Aveugle? in Recherches de Science Religieuse 45 (1967), 514-57, at 529: “... these nearly identical formulations regarding the participated Spirit are found nowhere else. Neither Athanasius, nor Pseudo-Athanasius, nor Basil, nor Epiphanius, nor even those who
himself the task of answering this key question: is the Holy Spirit holy in and of himself, or is the Holy Spirit holy “through participation in another’s sanctity”? Didymus is at pains to differentiate the Holy Spirit from the angels, and his definition of participation depends on a distinction between angels, which are mutable, and the divine nature, which is not. Didymus’s linking of the ability to be participated with immutability forms the basis of his argument that the Holy Spirit is not an angel. An angel, by definition, can change. “The Divine Utterances demonstrate that the angels changed and fell.” Most angels preserved in blessedness, but “those who were similar in nature to them that changed,” so the difference between an angel that falls and one that does not is a difference in degree, not kind. It is the nature of an angel to have the capability of “falling away.” Angels are capable of conversion, whereas divine nature is not.

Motivating Didymus’s insistence on the mutability of angels is Origen’s doctrine of the pre-existence of rational entities that fell away from their Creator. Origen distinguishes between God in which goodness resides naturally, or essentially, and the good angels, in which goodness resides as a separable accident. In Rufinus’s translation of On First Principles, Origen says everything created by God is mutable intrinsically. He explains that because rational beings . . . were made when before they did not exist, by this very fact that they did not exist and then began to exist they are of necessity subject to change and alteration. For whatever may have been the goodness that existed in their being, it existed in them not by nature but as a result of their Creator’s beneficence.”

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81 Didymus, Spir. 19.
82 Didymus, Spir. 58: Nam et angelorum conversiones et ruinas divina eloquia demonstrant.
83 See, for example, Princ. 1.5.3.
84 Origen, Princ. 2.9.2: Butterworth trans., 130; rationables istae naturae...factae sunt cum ante non essent, hoc ipso, quia non erant et esse coeperunt, necessario convertibles et mutabiles substiterunt,
Rational entities are created, so they are mutable. Because created rational entities possess goodness as a separable attribute, they can lose goodness. Origen opposes the fact that rational entities participate in goodness with God’s possession of goodness without the possibility of loss.\(^85\)

Returning to Didymus, some were deducing from the Holy Spirit’s low ontological status that the Holy Spirit is a created rational entity like the good angels. Like those good angels, the Holy Spirit would remain a creature that receives goodness. Nevertheless, there would remain the logical possibility that the Holy Spirit could cease to possess goodness because the Spirit receives it. The difference between the Angel of the Holy Spirit and the rest of the angelic host would be a difference in degree, not kind. That the Holy Spirit could change would be a logical consequence of its angelic nature and so, theoretically at least, it could fall.

However, Didymus identifies the Holy Spirit with the divine and immutable source of all mutable goods. He makes the identification by defining participation in terms of causality, as follows:

> 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 is good. Hence it is possible to participate in him but not for him to participate.\(^86\)

\(^{85}\) Didymus, *Spir.* 56; note the similarity between Rufinus’s translation of Origen and Jerome’s translation of Didymus. Rufinus’s Origen describes the angels as *convertibles*, and Jerome’s Didymus states that the Holy Spirit is *inconvertible*. That Didymus has swayed Rufinus’s translation of Origen is a tantalizing prospect.

\(^{86}\) Didymus, *Spir.* 17: *Deus vero cum bonus sit, fons et principium omnium bonorum est. Facit igitur bons eos quibus se impertit, bonus ipse non factus ab alio, sed subsistens: ideo capabilis, non capax.*
Didymus moves immediately from this definition of God’s goodness as uncaused to an application of it to the Son’s divinity. Because Scripture speaks of the Son as God’s “wisdom,”

[the Father’s] only-begotten Son is Wisdom [1 Cor 1.24] and sanctification; he does not become wise but makes wise, and he is not sanctified but sanctifies. For this reason too it is possible to participate in him but not for him to participate.87

The strategy is to associate the Son with a title (here, “Wisdom”) that suggests the Son is a “source” on the same level with God the Father. The Father does not participate in some higher goodness; the Son does not participate in some higher “wisdom.” Neither, then, can be said to participate. The Son is a source in the same way the Father is. So, too, Didymus argues, is the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is also an immutable, eternal substance, then the Holy Spirit cannot be identified with created substances such as angels.88

Didymus’s argument that the Holy Spirit must be characterized as immutable and “participated but not participating” is exegetical. Its contours fit with a polemic against Eunomius’s pneumatology in Apology 25. Didymus offers a distinctive case for the Holy Spirit’s identity as immutable divine source by showing that Scripture reserves language of “pouring forth” (e.g., Romans 5:5, Joel 2:28) for the divine nature alone, as opposed to angelic creatures. God sends, and does not “pour forth,” angels, he argues.89 A being that is “poured forth” is a being that is “participated in by others.”90 Didymus’s exegesis is

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87 Didymus, Spir. 17: Unigenitus quoque Filius eius, sapientia et sanctificatio, non fit sapiens, sed sapientes facit, et non sanctificatur, sed sanctificat. Unde et ipsa capabilis est, et non capax.
88 Didymus, Spir. 55; DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, Ayres 13. Capabiliem substantiam uocat, quae capiatur a plurimis et est sui consortium tribuat; capacem uero eam quae communicatione substantiae alterius impleatur, et capiens aliud, ipsa non capiatur ab alio.
89 Didymus, Spir. 49-50.
90 Didymus, Spir. 50. Cf. Didymus, Spir. 34: “Therefore, whoever fills all creatures, at least those which are able to participate in power and wisdom, is not one of those whom he himself fills. It must be
motivated by an alternative reading of Scripture according to which the Holy Spirit is itself “filled” by the higher power of Christ. That view belongs to Eunomius.

In *Spir.* 31-33, Didymus groups a number of biblical texts that speak of “filling.” In order, they are: Luke 1:15 (*implebitur*), Luke 1:41 (*repleta*), Luke 1:67 (*repletus*), Acts 2:4 (*repleti sunt*), Acts 4:31 (*repleti sunt*), Ephesians 5:18 (*implemini*), Acts 6:3 (*plenos*), and Acts 7:55 (*plenus*). Of these texts, we are left to guess what Didymus’s Greek might have been, but the uniformity in Jerome’s translation is striking: whatever Jerome’s biblical text might have been, Didymus had amassed a group of texts that all refer to a similar set of terms. If the modern critical text is close to the text Didymus had before him, then Didymus was not concerned with a set of terms, but with a single term. In the critical edition of these texts, the following forms appear: Luke 1:15 (*πλησθήσεται*), Luke 1:41 (*ἐπλήσθη*), Luke 1:67 (*ἐπλήσθη*), Acts 2:4 (*ἐπλήσθησαν*), Acts 4:31 (*ἐπλήσθησαν*), Ephesians 5:18 (*πληροῦσθε*), Acts 6:3 (*πλήρεις*), and Acts 7:55 (*πλήρης*). Didymus is making a point about a single term’s Scriptural use. The point hinges on the sense one gives to the Greek verb *πληρόω* and its derivative forms.91

Usage of the term *πληρόω* is not widespread in Platonic discourse. Plotinus’s use of it in *Ennead* V.2, alongside his more idiosyncratic vocabulary, is distinctive. So when Didymus uses the term to describe the Holy Spirit as an agent, not an object, of its activity, the evidence should point us in the direction of Plotinus, not simply the broader Platonic tradition. Yet, this fact does not resolve the question of whether Didymus knew Plotinus. It only suggests that Plotinus’s terminology motivated Eunomius’s

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91 Athanasius does not apply the terms for “filling” to the Holy Spirit, reserving instead the metaphor for “fountain” and “river” to the Father and Son, respectively. Cf. Athanasius, *Serap.* 1.19.2.4.
pneumatology. Recall that the term πληρόω (the root of Plotinus’s ἐπληρώθη) appears both in Plotinus and in Eunomius’s statement that the Holy Spirit is filled with the power of sanctification and instruction. It is also behind Jerome’s Latin translation of Didymus when he writes, for example, that “the presence of an angel or some other lofty nature that was made fills (non implet) neither the mind nor the understanding since it too is filled up (completur) from elsewhere,” or that the Holy Spirit “is not one of those whom he himself fills (non est ex his quae ipse complet).”

Didymus seizes upon the language of “pouring forth” to argue that any entity that is “poured forth is participated in by others.” Because the Holy Spirit is an agent of “filling,” the Holy Spirit is to be distinguished from all those entities “whom he himself fills.” The language of “pouring forth,” recall, had been reserved by Plotinus for the One alone. Only the One “overflows” in Plotinus’ scheme. Porphyry speaks of one substance’s “completion” or “filling” (συμπλήρωσις) of another substance—both “becoming one with the other substance” and not ceasing to be what it is. Behind Porphyry’s logic is a version of the doctrine of the “undiminished giver” according to which that “source” imparts its qualities without change or loss. By pointing out that Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit as “poured forth,” Didymus can show that Scripture links the Holy Spirit to the productive nature of God just as it does the Son. Here it is useful to turn briefly to Eusebius of Caesarea.

Eusebius provides an important link between the Platonist tradition of emanation and the debate between Eunomius and Didymus. In an important passage of Proof of the Gospel (IV.3), Eusebius covers exegetical ground dear to the legacy of Origen by

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92 Vaggione trans., 69. Rist (“Basil’s Neoplatonism”) does not notice the reference.
93 Didymus, Spir. 34.
providing his interpretation of Wisdom of Solomon 7:25 and Hebrews 1:3.\textsuperscript{94} characterizes the Son’s begetting from the Father as a “pouring forth,” likening the arrangement to the relationship between fragrance and substance. He writes:

> For [the Son] is a breath of the power of God, and a pure effluence of the glory of the Creator. For a fragrant breath is poured forth from any sweet-scented substance, say from myrrh or any of the flowers and odorous plants that spring form the earth, beyond the original substance into the surrounding atmosphere, and fills the air far and wide as it is shed forth, without any deprivation, or lessening, or scission, or division of the said substance. For it still remains in its own place, and preserves its own identity, and though begetting this fragrant force it is no worse than it was before, while the sweet odour that is begotten, possessing its own character, imitates in the highest degree possible the nature of that which produced it by its own [fragrance].\textsuperscript{95}

Eusebius appeals to the doctrine of undiminished giving to argue that the Son’s generation from the Father does not deprive the Father in any way.\textsuperscript{96} He implies that this appeal demonstrates that the Son is a “perfect image” of the Father—an image that does not alter and so is not inferior to the original Good, God the Father.

In context, Eusebius’ logic contradicts itself. He insists that the Son is so perfectly similar to the Father by “imitation” that the Son can in no way be said to be “inferior” to the Father. Yet he also upholds an eternal distinction between the Father and the Son (probably against Marcellus) which implies inferiority insofar as the Son is the unique “effect” of a primal cause (the Father). The Son is the “Only-Begotten.” The eternal distinction between Father and Son risks becoming a hierarchy of causes insofar as Eusebius allows that the second entity “came into being.” Eusebius allows as much even if he tries to avoid stating that it is the case without appeal to analogy. “The Father

\textsuperscript{94} For an argument that the constellation of 1 Cor. 1:24, Heb. 1:3, and Wisd. 7:25 is a marker of Origen’s influence, see Barnes, \textit{The Power of God}, 111-112.

\textsuperscript{95} Eusebius, \textit{d.e.}, 148d.

\textsuperscript{96} Lewis Ayres (“Undiminished Giver,” 63n16) does not cite this passage, but does provide Eusebius, \textit{p.e.} 7.15, as an example of Eusebius’ appropriation of the doctrine of undiminished giving.
precedes the Son, and has preceded him in existence, inasmuch as he alone is unbegotten,” whereas the Son is “brought into being from all time, nay rather before all times, by the Father’s transcendent and inconceivable Will and Power.”

Gregory of Nyssa, in *Contra Eunomium III*, 6, would exploit the contradiction of Eusebius’ scheme by distinguishing, famously, between four senses of “generation” and arguing against Eunomius’ reduction of all kinds of generation to a single kind. In doing so, Gregory involved Eusebius’ *Proof of the Gospel* in his debate with Eunomius and implied that to follow Eunomius was to engage in a reductive appropriation of Eusebius. Didymus’ response to Eunomius in *On the Holy Spirit* shows that the question of Eusebius’ legacy was already at stake in 360. For Didymus’ exegetical appeals turn on the acknowledgment that identifying a divine person with “pouring out” entails the divine identity of that divine person—an insight gleamed from one side of Eusebius’ self-contradictory exegesis of Hebrews 1:3 and Wisdom 7:25.

Didymus re-aligns Scripture’s “pouring out” language with the Holy Spirit but does not deny its applicability to the Son. He argues explicitly that Scripture reserves a special manner of speaking for the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit, as opposed to angelic entities, is “poured out.” Compared to Athanasius, Basil, and Gregory Nazianzen, only Didymus makes much of the fact that Scripture never speaks of God “pouring out” angels and reserves such terminology for the Holy Spirit. Didymus argues that if the Holy Spirit is nowhere said to be “filled,” and if Scripture additionally speaks of the Holy Spirit as “poured out,” the the Holy Spirit cannot be identified with angelic entities, which are “sent” but not “poured out.” Positively, the Holy Spirit must be identified with divine

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97 Eusebius, *d.e.*, 147d and 149b, respectively.
nature in the same way that the Father and the Son are. If the Holy Spirit is so identified, passages like John 16:14, which speak of the Holy Spirit’s “reception” from the Son can be read in light of the Holy Spirit’s incorporeal nature: the Spirit receives in the same way that the Son gives—immutably and incorporeally.\(^9\)

That the Holy Spirit does participate in the Son was an axiom that marked a venerable anti-monarchian theological position stretching back at least to Didymus’s own intellectual master, Origen. Eunomius could legitimate his pneumatology by direct recourse to that tradition’s authority in Eusebius. In opposing Eunomius, Didymus was guarding his intellectual master’s legacy against some of its most extreme consequences. Only a figure well versed in both Origen’s theology and theological tradition could attain such a subtle position.

**The Holy Spirit as Untutored Teacher**

As we have seen, Eunomius argues that the Holy Spirit is “filled with holiness and instruction” (ἁγιαστικῆς δὲ καὶ διδασκαλικῆς πεπληρωμένον).\(^{100}\) Didymus responds directly to this claim by arguing that the Holy Spirit is not “filled with instruction” but receives Wisdom from Christ without having learned.\(^{101}\) Didymus points out that John 14:26 states that the Holy Spirit is not only the content of instruction; he is the agent of instruction. Didymus paraphrases: “The Holy Spirit himself, who has been sent by the Father and comes in the name of the Son, will teach all things (docebit omnia = διδάξει

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πάντα) to those who are perfect in the faith of Christ."\textsuperscript{102} On the basis of this passage, Didymus adds a clarifying remark. The Holy Spirit, he says,

will not teach as an instructor or teacher of a discipline which has been learned from another. For this method pertains to those who learn wisdom and the other arts by means of study and diligence. Rather, as he himself is the art, the teaching, the wisdom, and the Spirit of Truth, he invisibly imparts knowledge of divine things to the mind.\textsuperscript{103}

The argument turns on whether the Holy Spirit possesses immediately the divine nature common to the Father and the Son, or whether the Holy Spirit receives access to that nature by means of an intermediary. If the Holy Spirit is identified with the divine nature in the same way that the Father and the Son are, then Scriptural language about the Spirit’s “reception” from the Son (e.g., John 16:14) can be read in light of the Holy Spirit’s identity as the source and cause of created effects. The Spirit is the “undiminished giver.”

Didymus maintains Origen’s association of Christ with God’s Wisdom in a number of places in \textit{On the Holy Spirit}. He refers to 1 Corinthians 1:24—which calls Christ the “power and wisdom of God”—only twice.\textsuperscript{104} In both cases, the verse is used to identify Christ with Wisdom. He reasons that what the Apostles “are taught by the Spirit is wisdom, which we cannot understand as anything other than the Son.”\textsuperscript{105} He then turns to characterize the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of Wisdom” and so the Spirit of Christ.

Wisdom 9:16-18 reads as follows:

16 We can hardly guess at what is on earth, and what is at hand we find with labor; but who has traced out what is in the heavens?

\textsuperscript{102} Didymus, \textit{Spir.} 140. Cf. John 14:26: \textit{ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὃ πέμψει ὁ πατὴρ ἐν τῷ ὄνομάτι μου, ἐκείνος ὑμᾶς διδάσκει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν ἐγώ.}

\textsuperscript{103} Didymus, \textit{Spir.} 141.

\textsuperscript{104} Didymus, \textit{Spir.} 17, 92.

\textsuperscript{105} Didymus, \textit{Spir.} 86. \textit{Si ergo Spiritus Patris in apostolis loquitur, docens eos quid debeant respondere, et quae docentur a Spiritu sapientia est, quam non possimus aliam praeter Filium intellegere.}
17 Who has learned your counsel, unless you have given wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on high?
18 And thus the paths of those on earth were set right, and people were taught what pleases you, and were saved by wisdom.”

Didymus reads Wisdom 9:16-18 as God’s sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{106} The verse says: “Who has come to know your will, unless you have given Wisdom and sent your Holy Spirit from on high?” Didymus is careful to respect what had become, thanks to Origen, a strong tradition in Alexandria of associating the Son with the Father’s eternal Wisdom. However, he glosses “Wisdom [of God]” as “Only-Begotten Son” so that this passage may be taken to refer to the sending of the Spirit and the Son.

By highlighting passages that pair the Holy Spirit with God’s Wisdom, Didymus moves beyond Origen’s identification of the Son with Wisdom, and he extends the association of God’s wisdom to the Father and the Holy Spirit as well. For Didymus, the Holy Spirit is the divine “teacher” who makes wise but is not made wise, who teaches without having learned. In \textit{Spir.} 91-95, Didymus offers an expanded argument that the Holy Spirit should be characterized in terms of divine Wisdom. God the Father, who is Wisdom, both \textit{generates} Wisdom and \textit{makes others wise}. Rather than reduce divine Wisdom to the \textit{Logos}, Didymus associates the Father’s eternal production of Wisdom with the Son, and the Father’s “making-wise” with the Holy Spirit. The argument is premised on the fact that Scripture often speaks of an impartation of divine wisdom to creatures, so there must be a divine agent who produces wisdom in created entities. The Holy Spirit is that agent of instruction and implementation of the divine Wisdom.

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Spir.} 118-119.
Didymus explains that, because the Holy Spirit is one with the divine nature shared by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit does not learn wisdom and transmit it to creatures. He is the wisdom he transmits:

But [the Holy Spirit] will not teach as an instructor or teacher of a discipline which has been learned from another. For this method pertains to those who learn wisdom and the other arts by means of study and diligence. Rather, as he himself is the art, the teaching, the wisdom, and the Spirit of Truth, he invisibly imparts knowledge of divine things to the mind.107

Didymus thus argues that the Holy Spirit is the very Wisdom that the Son and the Father are. The Spirit both teaches Wisdom, i.e., Christ, and is the Wisdom he teaches. This argument further strengthens Didymus’s case, against Eunomius, that the Holy Spirit is not “filled” with instruction: he is instruction and dispenses wisdom to creatures without having it received it from elsewhere.

Didymus is careful to exclude the possibility that the Holy Spirit teaches like humans teach one another—as having first learned a tradition handed on—and to argue that he teaches in the same way that the Father and the Son do:

In fact, the Father also teaches his disciples in this way, as one of those taught by him says: God, you have taught me wisdom [Dan 2:23]. And another boldly cries out: You have taught me, God, from my youth [Ps. 70:17]. In this way all of them have been taught. In addition, the Son of God, who is the Truth and the Wisdom of God, teaches those who participate in him in such a way that his instruction is imparted, not by some method, but in virtue of who he is by nature. It is for this reason that his disciples are taught to call him alone “teacher.” And so, those same teachings that the Father and the Son give to the hearts of believers, the Spirit provides to those who have stopped living like animals. For the one living like an animal does not receive what belongs to the Spirit, thinking that what the Spirit says is foolishness [1 Cor. 2:14]. But whoever cleanses his mind of disturbance is filled with the teachings of the Holy Spirit (that is, with words of wisdom and knowledge), to such an extent that he who has received them says: But God has revealed these things through the Holy Spirit [1 Cor. 2:10].108

107 Spir. 140
108 Spir. 141-142.
So Didymus applies the logic that the Holy Spirit “is participated and does not participate” to reading passages where the Holy Spirit is spoken of as a “teacher.” He argues that the quelling of passion in the soul is spoken of, in Scripture, as deriving from the Holy Spirit through “instruction.” Because the Holy Spirit is the same nature as the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit does not “learn” as a “participant.”

**Conclusion**

Didymus opposes Eunomius’s theology of the Holy Spirit in spite of the fact that Eunomius’s pneumatology could have claimed as an ultimate authority Origen’s *Commentary on John* and a well-established anti-monarchian tradition of ordering the trinitarian persons hierarchically on the basis of John 16:14. In addition to arguing at length and in various ways that the Holy Spirit “is participated but does not participate,” Didymus insists that the Holy Spirit “fills” creatures as it is “poured out.” And to be “poured out,” Didymus argues, is not a characteristic Scripture attributes to created entities like angels. Only the divine nature, and so only the Holy Spirit, can be “poured out” in order to “fill” creatures. Didymus’s polemic requires sensitivity to the philosophical force of Eunomius’s position. Though he may not have known Plotinus’s *Enneads*, Didymus had to know enough Platonism to recognize a conceptual threat to the full divinity of the Holy Spirit when he saw one, and the threat derives from the logic of a divine nature that “fills but is not filled.”

One lesson to take from the case of Didymus’s *On the Holy Spirit* is that caution is appropriate in noticing parallels between fourth-century Christians and Neoplatonic
texts. Didymus had a wealth of indirect exposure to Hellenistic philosophy through his access to Origen’s writings, as well as the writings that had accumulated in Alexandria’s library since Origen’s death. Given the relative lack of contact between Plotinian Platonism and Christianity prior to the late fourth century, we should take even more caution. If Didymus wrote *On the Holy Spirit* in 361, he is more likely to have drawn on and reacted to Origen’s mediated “Middle Platonism” than Plotinian Platonism, since Plotinus’s influence did not penetrate into influential Christian intellectual circles until the 380s, beginning with Basil of Caesarea. Yet Didymus should not be dismissed as only having absorbed philosophy through “catechetical” means. Though Didymus may not have known Plotinus directly, he was shrewd enough to recognize Eunomius’s use of Platonism to support a *heteroousian* pneumatology. Scholarship unaware of connections like these could only remain insensitive to them because of a single but important presumption that should be abandoned: Didymus the Blind was not a subtle thinker.
Chapter 6
A Single Reception of the Inseparable Trinity

Introduction

In this chapter I detail two distinctive features of Didymus’s “pro-Nicene” theology: his commitment to (1) a doctrine of inseparable operations and (2) a pro-Nicene doctrine of the single power and nature of God. Didymus was one of the first Greek-speaking theologians to take this decisive step of arguing in favor of the Trinity’s single divine nature. This chapter locates Didymus within a trajectory from Origen to Basil of Caesarea. Eunomius provided an impetus for pro-Nicene theologians to develop an argument from “inseparable operations” and apply it to the entire trinity, because Eunomius extended its inverse to all three persons. Eunomius argued that differentiating between the activities of the persons entails that the persons are different substances with respectively different natures. Regarding the divinity of the Holy Spirit, Eunomius forced an important issue by linking pneumatological prooftexts (e.g. Jn 14:16, Jn 14:26, Jn 16:14) with a key christological prooftext (Jn 5:19) in Apology 25.

I first sketch the features of the “pro-Nicene pneumatology” that results from Didymus’s novel application of a doctrine of inseparable operations to all three persons of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is a creative power and divine source in the way the Father and the Son are. With Didymus’s pro-Nicene theology in view, we can turn to these key texts to see how Didymus’s exegesis of them should be read in opposition to Eunomius’s. I first offer a brief history of John 5:19’s utility for portraying the Son as a Demiurgic figure, especially in anti-monarchian tradition from Tertullian to Eunomius. I then turn to

One Nature, One Power: Didymus’s High Pneumatology

I have mentioned Lewis Ayres’ description of the markers of “pro-Nicene” theologies. One of those markers is the presence of a doctrine of inseparable operations. In addition to this doctrine, Michel Barnes analyzes the development of theologies in the third and fourth centuries according to the technical use of “power” in trinitarian theologies. I will now show that Didymus possesses both a doctrine of “inseparable operation” and a “pro-Nicene” theology of God’s single power.¹ I will argue that the context for these doctrines is the early pro-Nicene response to Eunomius’s first Apology. To begin, then, we should discuss briefly Barnes’s description of “power” theologies, so that it will be clear to what extent Didymus may be classified as “pro-Nicene” in terms of his use of “power.” I then turn to a reading of key texts at issue between Eunomius and Didymus.

Barnes defines “pro-Nicene” theologies on the basis of an awareness that “one power” theology can be used to support the “one nature” doctrine implied by Nicaea. Such pro-Nicene theologies may take their position without danger of a monarchian tendency because “one power” theology had been used in the third century in explicit

¹ Didymus is “pro-Nicene” in such a way that both Barnes and Ayres should recognize, without having to enter into a discussion over Barnes’ controversial category, “Neo-Nicene.” For more on this, see Ayres, Nicaea, 237-38, and Barnes, Power of God, 169-72.
opposition to monarchian theologies in Rome and Carthage. Barnes describes three “basic doctrines of divine power” from the third through the fourth centuries: (1) an “old” Nicene theology of “one power,” in which the Son or Word is the one and only “power of God” the Father; (2) a two power theology, in which the only “power of God”—that of the Father—is reproduced in a second, “imaged” power—“a power produced by the first power”; and (3) a pro-Nicene theology of “one power,” in which there is only one “power of God,” and “this single power is the principle of unity in the divine and . . . is possessed commonly among the three.” Representatives of each group include: (1) old “one power”: Marcellus and Athanasius; (2) “two power”: Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, Eusebius, and Asterius; and (3) pro-Nicene “one power”: Hilary, Ambrose, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine. I will show that Didymus belongs in group (3) insofar as he holds to a pro-Nicene “one power” theology.

A Theology of Inseparable Operation (ἀχώριστος ἐνεργεία)

Before turning directly to the question of Didymus’s theology of “inseparable operation,” a note on terminology is appropriate. Jerome translates a term several times with inseparabilis/inseparabiliter, and the appearance of this term in the Latin is peculiar enough to inquire as to what Didymus’s Greek might have been. A search of the TLG for the phrase ἀχώριστος ἐνεργεία reports only a few instances in the fourth century, and all but one of them occur in texts associated with, if not authored by Didymus: one in the Pseudo-Athanasian Dialogues; two in the Pseudo-Athanasian Contra Sabellianos, one in

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Pseudo-Basil, *Adversus Eunomium*, one in a fragment of the *Catena* on John ascribed to Didymus, one in (Ps.-)Didymus *De trinitate*, and one in Gregory of Nyssa’s *Contra Eunomium*. Excluding the Pseudo-Athanasian Dialogues and *Contra Sabellianos*, which are as likely to have *used* Didymus as to have been by Didymus himself, the fragment of the *Catena* on John 5:19 is worth attention.

If what is said by Jesus, that *whatever that one*—(clearly “the Father”)—*does, these things also the Son does likewise* [Jn 5:19], refers to the things done marvellously by him in the Gospels, one wants to know how the Father did these things. To which it must be said: if the Son, being of one substance with the Father, has an inseparable activity because he is *a spotless mirror of the Father’s activity* (Wis 7:26), the Son is active simultaneously and inseparably everything that the Father does, and what the Son works at, the Father also brings into existence immediately, so that in this way neither the Son without the Father nor the Father without the Son does anything. This can be seen in the case of created things. For when the Father makes things the Son does not bring into being different things. For it would follow in this case that [there would be] two suns, every one of the beings divided into two beings, but it does not appear that created things are like this. So the identity of activity of Father and Son is seen in creatures.

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4 Ps.-Ath., *Dial.* PG 28 445.28.45; Ps.-Ath., *Contra Sab.* PG 28 16.52, PG 28 117.9; Ps.-Basil, *AE* PG 29 761.11; (Ps.-)Didymus, *Trin.* 2.7.3, 14 line 5; Gregory Nyssa, *CE* 1.1.208.6. Gregory of Nyssa’s use of ἀγωριστὸς ἐνεργεία alone combines the use of these terms with technical philosophical language from the commentary tradition on Aristotle. Surprisingly, Alasdair Heron does not include the doctrine of inseparable operation as an “orthodox doctrine” advocated by the Didymean texts (cf. Heron, “Trinitarian Writings,” Ch. 6, 155-66), yet the doctrine appears in five of the works associated with Didymus. Origen uses these terms in proximity only once. See Origen, *On Prayer* 27.8.21. But here Origen does not describe an activity as “inseparable”; he is discussing a Stoic definition of being as “potentially inseparable” from qualities.

5 Joseph Reuss, ed., *Johannes-Kommentare Aus Der Griechischen Kirche*, (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), fragment 4. I am grateful to Mark DelCogliano for suggestions on how to translate this passage (and especially the phrase ἱκολούθη αὐτόν τούτο δίδω ἡλίους καὶ ἑκατὸν τῶν ὄντων ὀντίν εἶναι), though I take responsibility for it here. I include analysis of only the first half of this fragment, because the second half comments not on John 5:19, but on 5:21, and does not appear to be directly related to the statement made about John 5:19. This is not to say they are not both by Didymus, or that they did not originally occur in sequence, but that one should be cautious. In any event, what Didymus says about John 5:19 is directly related to the doctrine of “inseparable activity,” whereas what he says about John 5:21 is not. Εἰ τὸ λεγόμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ· ὁ γὰρ ἀν ἐκεῖνος ποιή (δῆλον δὲ ὅτι ὁ πατήρ), ταῦτα καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ὁμώς ποιεῖ, ἀναφορὰν ἐχέι πρὸς τὰ παραδόξα ὅτι ἂντι ἐν τοῖς ἑσσαγχλασίας γεγενημένα, ἑπιστατέον πῶς ταῦτα ὁ πατήρ ἐποίησεν. πρὸς δὲ λεκτέον· ἐπεὶ ὢμοοοσίας ὁν τὸ πατρὶ ὁ υἱὸς ἀγωρίστων ἐνέργειαν ἔχει τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς ἐνεργείας ἀκτιλίσθαν ἐσπερατόν ὃν, κἂν τοι ποιεῖ ὁ πατήρ, ἂμα καὶ ἀγωριστῶς ἐνέργει ὁ υἱὸς καὶ ὁ ἐργάζεται ὁ υἱὸς, εὐθὺς καὶ ὁ πατήρ εἰς ὑπαρξίαν ἐγένε κατὰ τοῦτο μὴ τοῦ ὄντος ἄνω πατρὸς μήτε τοῦ πατέρα ἄνω υἱοῦ ποιεῖν τ. ταύτην τὴν θεωρίαν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν δημοσιογράμματος· οὐ γὰρ ἔσται κτίσιον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐπερα δῆ σώματι ὁ υἱὸς· ἱκολούθη γάρ τούτῳ δίδω ἡλίους καὶ ἑκατὸν τῶν ὄντων διήτον εἶναι, ἀλλ’ οὐ φαίνεται οὕτος ἑργάζατα τά κτίσματα. τὸ ἄρα τούτων τῆς ἐνεργείας πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ ἐν τοῖς κτισμαίοις θεωρεῖται. Cf. Origen, *Cels.* 3.72.8, 8.14.10; *Jo.* 13.25.153.4.
The terms ἀχώριστος ἐνέργεια do not appear elsewhere in fourth-century Greek theology. Didymus’s argumentation in *On the Holy Spirit* confirms the authenticity of at least the first half of this comment in the *Catena*—the half which concerns John 5:19. If Didymus wrote *On the Holy Spirit* around 360-65, then he was the first Greek-speaking pro-Nicene theologian to use the term “inseparable activity” to oppose the heteroousian reading of John 5:19.

Several passages in *On the Holy Spirit* lead to the conclusion that Didymus belongs in the final group, and so belongs to both Ayres’ and Barnes’ classifications of “pro-Nicene.” Didymus teaches “one power” with the understanding that “one power” means “one nature,” and the “one nature” is a divine nature shared by all three persons. As we have seen, Didymus states repeatedly that all three persons share a divine nature which is “participated in, but does not participate.” Although Didymus makes little explicit technical use of terms for “power” (*virtus/potestas*) in *On the Holy Spirit*, in a few instances Didymus reveals that he knows that “power” and “nature” are terms which mutually reinforce one another as markers of divine unity.

An important passage occurs at *Spir.* 87-92. In *Spir.* 87, Didymus applies a similar logic similar to the Holy Spirit’s Scriptural characterization as the “finger of God.”

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6 Ps.-Basil AE V, PG 761, contains a comment based on Didymus’s argument that the entire Trinity indwells the soul, and a link between one divine nature and one baptism is explicit: “For when all things are worked by God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, I see an inseparable activity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And through this all the saints are temples of God and Son and the Holy Spirit—saints in whom dwells the one divinity and lordliness and one sanctity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, through the one holiness of baptism.” Ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ διὰ Ἱσοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν Πνεύματι, ἀχώριστον ὑπὸ τῆς ἐνέργειας τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ, καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος. Καὶ διὰ τὸ τούτο νοεῖ Θεοῦ καὶ Υἱοῦ καὶ Πνεύματος ἁγίου εἰς πάντες οἱ ἁγίοι, ἐν οἷς οἰκεῖ ἡ μία θεότης, καὶ μία κυριότης, καὶ ἁγίας μία Πατρὸς καὶ Υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου Πνεύματος, διὰ τὸν ἕνα τοῦ βαπτισμάτος ἁγιασμόν.

7 Most of the occurrences of *virtus* are Jerome’s Latin translation of “virtue,” not “power,” though the Latin for both terms is the same.
Building upon the idea that the Son is the “hand” of God, Didymus argues that the Holy Spirit, too, should be considered the “one power” of God. “Trinity has a single nature and power,” he states, as he introduces a number of passages that identify the Holy Spirit as the “finger” of God. Here is the full discussion:

Another scriptural example shows that Trinity has a single nature and power (*Trinitatis una et natura et virtus ostenditur*). The Son is called the Hand, the Arm, and the Right-hand of the Father. Just as we have often taught that these terms demonstrate that the one nature lacks difference⁸ (*docuimus ex his vocabulis unius naturae indifferentiam demonstrari*), so too is the Holy Spirit named the Finger of God because he is conjoined in nature (*secundum coniunctionem naturae*) to the Father and the Son. [88] In one of the Gospels, when some were disparaging the miracles of the Lord by saying: *He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons* [*Lk 11:15*], the Savior, asking why they said this, replied: *If it is by Beelzebub that I cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast out demons? But if it is by the Finger of God that I cast out demons, then the reign of God has come upon you* [*Lk 11:19-20*]. When writing about this same event, another evangelist has the Son say: *But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons* [*Mt 12:28*]. These passages show that the Finger of God is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if a finger is joined to a hand and a hand to him whose hand it is, then without a doubt the finger is ascribed to the substance (*ad eius substantiam refertur*) of him whose finger it is. [89] But be careful not to descend to lowly things, forget what we are now discussing, and thereby depict in your mind a variety of bodily limbs and begin to imagine for yourself their sizes, their inequalities, and other body parts larger or smaller than they, saying “a finger differs in size from a hand by quite a bit and a hand differs likewise from him whose hand it is.” For Scripture is speaking here of incorporeal realities, and wishes only to demonstrate the unity of a substance, not also its dimensions. [90] For just as the hand, through which everything is accomplished and worked (*per quam cuncta perficit et operatur*), is not divided (*non diuiditur*) from the body, and just as the hand belongs to him whose hand it is, so also is the finger not separated from the hand of which it is the finger (*digitus non separatur a manu cuius est digitus*). And so, spurn inequalities and dimensions when you think about God, and understand the unity that obtains among the finger and the hand and the entire body. Now it is by this Finger that the Law was written on tablets of stone [cf. *Ex 31:18*].⁹

This passage shows that Didymus is familiar with pro-Nicene arguments which began to emerge in the 350s, and which responded to anti-Nicene argumentation, which argue for

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⁹ *Spir.* 87-90.
a single divine nature on the basis of a single power and substance. Didymus’s argument bears a tantalizing similarity to that of Hilary, who writes: “by a bodily similitude you may learn the power of the one divine nature which is in both [Father and Son]; for the nature and the power of the Father is in the Son.”\(^{10}\) When Didymus states that “the one nature lacks difference,” he says, “we have taught,” referring back to *Spir.* 74, which reads as follows.

> On the basis of the passages I have brought to our attention (as well as many others), we have shown that the Holy Spirit is not a creature and is never classified with created things but is rather always placed together with the Father and the Son. And so, let us now investigate in what way his is not different from either of them.\(^ {11}\)

Just following this paragraph, the section in which Didymus argues that 2 Cor. 13:13 proves that there is “a single reception of the Trinity” (*una Trinitatis assumptio*).\(^ {12}\) He then states the fact that “there is a single grace of the Father and the Son perfected by the activity of the Holy Spirit demonstrates that the Trinity is of one substance.”\(^ {13}\) The fact that Didymus sets out to show how the Holy Spirit is “not different from” the Father and the Son suggests that Didymus is operating in an anti-Eunomian context. His theology of the Holy Spirit responds, at any rate, to a heteroousian position. We now turn our attention to Didymus’s pro-Nicene theology.


\(^{11}\) *Spir.* 74.

\(^{12}\) *Spir.* 75.

\(^{13}\) *Spir.* 76.
Didymus describes the actions of the Son and the Holy Spirit in a way that binds their actions to one another, which in turn demonstrates their unity of nature. In several places, Didymus characterizes the action of one person in terms that imply and entail the divine action of the other.\(^\text{14}\) To possess the Son, Didymus says, is to possess the Holy Spirit, and \textit{vice versa}. And so it goes with all three: for the Father or Spirit to “indwell” the soul is for all three to do so.\(^\text{15}\) Didymus points out that it was not only the Word that came to the prophets, but also the Holy Spirit, “since he too is possessed inseparably with the only-begotten Son of God.”\(^\text{16}\) Didymus extends this logic to the “possession” of the Father as well: “he who receives the Son receives the Father, and the Son with the Father makes his home in those who are worthy of his presence.”\(^\text{17}\)

Didymus also argues that “whenever anyone receives the grace of the Holy Spirit, he has it as a gift from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.”\(^\text{18}\) Didymus’s description of inseparable possession is a doctrine of inseparable operation (\textit{operatio}) that demonstrates the unity in substance of the Trinity: “The fact that there is a single grace (\textit{una gratia}) of the Father and the Son perfected by the activity (\textit{operatione completa}) of

\(^{14}\) Didymus introduces the doctrine in \textit{Spir.} 9 and returns to it in \textit{Spir.} 125. The reason Didymus argues this way is not only to prove the Spirit’s divinity, but also to counteract the doctrine that the Spirit of the Prophets and the Spirit of the Apostles are not one and the same Spirit. This argument is the sign of an anti-Manichaean polemic in Didymus’ theology, as Didymus is known to have written against Marcionites in the late fourth century. For translation and analysis of Didymus’s work \textit{Against the Manichees}, see Byard Bennett, “The Origin of Evil: Didymus the Blind’s Contra Manichaeos and Its Debt to Origen’s Theology and Exegesis,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Saint Michael’s College, Toronto School of Theology, 1997.

\(^{15}\) We will return to the doctrine of “indwelling” in Chapter 7.

\(^{16}\) \textit{Spir.} 9; \ldots \textit{quia et inseparabiliter possidetur cum Unigenito Filio Dei}.

\(^{17}\) \textit{Spir.} 125.

\(^{18}\) \textit{Spir.} 76.
the Holy Spirit demonstrates that the Trinity is of one substance.”¹⁹ There is a single grace and so there is a single activity of the Trinity. The underlying logic is that there is a single giving by God, begun by the Father, continued by the Son, and “completed” by the Holy Spirit. The singleness of this activity demonstrates that “the Trinity is of one substance,” that the Trinity is single.²⁰ Recall Origen’s similar but ambiguous statement: “the Holy Spirit supplies the material of the gifts from God to those who are called saints thanks to him and because of participation in him. This material of the gifts which I mentioned is made effective from God; it is administered by Christ; but it subsists in accordance with the Holy Spirit.”²¹ Whereas Eunomius, following Eusebius, had used a statement like this to argue in favor of the Trinity’s differentiated activities and differentiated natures, Didymus uses the scenario to clarify that the Trinity’s gift (gratia) is single, and if the gift is single, so too must the Trinity’s substance be one.

It is noteworthy that Didymus applies the term “of one substance” (unius substantiae) to the entire Trinity.²² In Spir. 87-90 he defends this theory on the grounds of the Spirit’s identification as the “finger of God.” He says that “the Son is called the Hand, the Arm, and the Right-hand of the Father. Just as we have often taught that these terms

¹⁹ Spir. 76; Una igitur gratia Patris et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti operatione completa, Trinitas unius substantiae demonstrabitur.

²⁰ As is often the case, Didymus does not make the logic that underlies this argument explicit. The logic is that entities that display unified activities must themselves be unified. Or, to put the position inversely, unified activities do not arise from plural entities, and the Trinity’s action is single, so the Trinity’s substance must be single.

²¹ Origen, Jo. 2.77.

²² See Spir. 81 and 86. If On the Holy Spirit was written ca. 360-62, as is now thought, Didymus may have been the first pro-Nicene theologian to state that the Trinity is homoousios. Regarding this issue, see also Mark Edwards, “Did Origen Apply the Word Homoousios to the Son?” Journal of Theological Studies 49.2 (1998): 658-670, and my discussion of this article in Chapter 4. It is worth noting that, as Mark Edwards points out en passent, scholars have used the appearance of an application of the term homoousios to the entire Trinity in fragments 14 and 257 of the Catena in Matthaeum. Edwards cites Klostermann, ed., Origenes Werke XIII.3.1 (Leipzig, 1941), 21 and 18, and states that the adjective homoousios “pertains on both occasions to the whole Trinity, which was unthinkable in Origen’s day” (Edwards, 658n5). It was not unthinkable in Didymus’s, and here I suggest we have yet another potential sign of Didymus’s fingerprints in the textual tradition of Origen’s texts.
demonstrate that the one nature lacks difference, so too is the Holy spirit named the
Finger of God because he is conjoined in nature to the Father and the Son.” In Spir. 87, Didymus uses an example from Scripture’s speaking of the Holy Spirit as the “finger” of God to argue that “the Trinity has a single nature and power” (Trinitatis una et natura et uirtus ostenditur).24

Didymus cites several passages which speak of the Holy Spirit as the “Finger of God.”25 He concludes that “if a finger is joined to a hand and a hand to him whose hand it is, then without a doubt the finger is ascribed to the substance of him whose finger it is.”26 Didymus cautions that “Scripture is speaking here of incorporeal realities, and wishes only to demonstrate the unity of a substance, not also its dimensions.”27 Didymus uses an argument from the body’s unity to argue for the unity of the three.

For just as the hand, through which everything is accomplished and worked, is not divided from the body, and just as the hand belongs to him whose hand it is, so also is the finger not separated from the hand of which it is the finger. And so, spurn inequalities and dimensions when you think about God, and understand the unity that obtains among the finger and the hand and the entire body. Now it is by this Finger that the Law was written on tablets of stone [cf. Ex 31:18].28

Didymus uses his argument to oppose the idea that the finger is “separated from” the hand. Analogously, Didymus is working to show that the Holy Spirit is “inseparable” from the Father and the Son.

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23 Spir. 87.
24 Perhaps Didymus was aware of earlier Latin theology. An argument for “one power from common works” was dear to such figures as Tertullian and was “ubiquitous” in Latin theology following him (e.g., Novatian, Phoeadius). See Michel Barnes, “Latin Trinitarian Theology,” in The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity, ed. Peter Phan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 70-84.
26 Spir. 88.
27 Spir. 89.
28 Spir. 90. Sicut enim manus non dividitur a corpore, per quam cuncta perficit et operator, et in eo est cius est manus, sic et digitus non separator a manu cius est digitus. Reice itaque inaequalitates et mensuras cum de Deo cogitas, et intellege digiti et manus et totius corporis unitatem, quo digito et lex in tabulis lapideis scripta est.
Didymus’s choice of comparison with the inscription of the Law by the “same Spirit” suggests that he could have had Marcionite views in mind as well as those of Eunomius. In either case it is important to note a precedent for this argument for unity in the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle, who also uses the body to describe the kind of unity Didymus invokes: a unity of substance.  

In *Metaphysics* Δ.6, Aristotle explains that “‘one’ means (1) one by accident, (2) one essentially.” He then provides the following example of things said to be one essentially (καθ’ ἑαυτὰ):

... some are so called because they are continuous, e.g. a bundle is made one by a band, and pieces of wood are made one by glue; and a line, even if it is bent, is called one if it is continuous, as each part of the body is, e.g. the leg or the arm.  

Aristotle goes on to discuss the various other ways things may be called “one.” For our purposes, it is important to note the presence in Aristotle’s use of bodily metaphor to define “essential (καθ’ αὐτό)” unity, because Didymus’ purpose in *Spir.* 87-90 is to back up his claim in *Spir.* 86 that “the Trinity is associated in a unity of substance” (*Igitur Trinitas substantiae unitate sociatur*). Didymus is careful to point out that Scripture “is speaking here of incorporeal realities, and wishes only to demonstrate the unity of a substance (*unitatem . . . substantiae*), not also its dimensions.” So Didymus has applied an Aristotelian argument to a non-Aristotelian definition of “substance.” In effect, Didymus has used an Aristotelian definition of substance to underwrite a Platonizing definition of the doctrine of undiminished giving.

29 That Didymus is familiar with the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accident is evident from other passages in *On the Holy Spirit*, such as *Spir.* 109-110.


33 *Spir.* 89; . . . quia de incorporalibus Scriptura nunc loquitur, unitatem tantum ulens, non etiam mensuram substantiae demonstrare.
Next, in *Spir.* 91-96, Didymus argues from the Spirit’s agency in moral transformation and the trinity’s inseparability in the process. I will refer to this idea as a doctrine of “inseparable possession.” Next, Didymus rebuts Eunomius’s claims by showing that the Spirit’s distinct activities do not entail difference in nature. In the following section, we will also see that Didymus refutes Eunomius’s exegesis of John 14:16. I will argue that Basil of Caesarea took his cues on this point from Didymus.

**One Power: The Holy Spirit, the Power of God**

In order to support his doctrine of inseparable operation, Didymus shows that Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit as the same divine power as the Father and the Son. A good example of this strategy is Didymus’ establishing a link between Acts 1:8 and Luke 1:35 to interpret Paul’s statements about the “power of God.” Origen had given significant weight to the fact that Paul calls Christ “the Power and Wisdom of God” in 1 Corinthians 1:24. Didymus draws attention to another passage in 1 Corinthians 2:4, which refers to the “power of God” without stating the identity of the “power,” but which mentions the Holy Spirit in such a way that the Holy Spirit could be the “power.” In the critical edition of the Greek, Paul says: “Both my word and my preaching are not with persuasive words of human wisdom,” Paul says, “but with the demonstration of the Holy Spirit and the Power (ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως), so that your faith may not

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34 See *Spir.* 9; 91-96; 106-109; 125.
35 *Spir.* 122.
be in the wisdom of humans but in the Power of God (ἀλλ᾽ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ).” Didymus writes that the Apostle says, “And my word and my preaching are not with persuasive words of human wisdom but with the demonstration of the Spirit and the Power of God.” Here Didymus likely replaces the end of the phrase with and the end of Paul’s original sentence. The conflation is important because it reveals the extent to which Didymus is trying to show that Paul identifies the Holy Spirit as the “Power of God.”

Following this, Didymus glosses the “power” of 1 Corinthians 2:4 as “Christ the Lord,” and then quickly redirects our attention to two passages in which Scripture speaks of the “power” of the Holy Spirit. This passage (§144-145) is complicated. Here is the full quotation:

[144] It is true that we cannot interpret the power which is equal to the Spirit (aequalem . . . Spiritui uirtutem) as another besides Christ the Lord. For he himself said to his disciples: For you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit when he comes upon you [Act 1:8]. And the archangel said to Mary: The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the Power of the Most High will overshadow you [Luke 1:35]. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit came upon the virgin Mary, the creating power (creatrix . . . uirtus Altissimi) of the Most High fashioned (fabricata est) the body of Christ: using it as a temple, he was born without the seed of a man. [145] All this shows that the Holy Spirit is the Creator, as we have already shown briefly in our volume On Doctrines . . . . Nor is it particularly astonishing if the Holy Spirit is the maker (conditor) of the Lord’s body, since along with the Father and the Son he creates all things (creet omnia) which the Father and the Son create: Send forth your Spirit, and they are created [Ps 130:30]. Furthermore, we have already demonstrated at length that the Holy Spirit’s activity (operationis) is the same as that of the Father and the Son, and that a single substance is implied by the same activity, and, vice versa, that those who are ὁµοούσια [the same in substance] do not have an activity that is diverse (non . . . diuersam).

Didymus refers to the “creating Power” and argues that, because the Holy Spirit created the body of Christ in Mary’s womb. When Didymus says that “we cannot interpret the
power which is equal to the Spirit as another besides Christ the Lord, he is referring, most likely, to Paul’s reference to “the Spirit and the power of God,” which, curiously, is implied to mean a power “equal to” the Spirit.

A plausible link between the “power of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 1:8 and the “power of the Most High” of Luke 1:35 strengthens Didymus’ case. In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells the disciples that “you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit when he comes upon you.”

Didymus seizes upon the words “when he comes upon you” (ἐπελθόντος . . . ἐφ᾽ ὑμᾶς) to link Acts 1:8 with Luke 1:35. Luke 1:35 states that “the Holy Spirit will come upon you (ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σὲ), and the power of the Most High (δύναμις ὑψίστου) will overshadow you.” The two verses do not say the same thing about the Holy Spirit, but by juxtaposing them Didymus can imply that the Holy Spirit is the “power of the Most High.” If the Holy Spirit is that power, Didymus may conclude: “the creating power of the Most High fashioned the body of Christ.” Scripture singles out the Holy Spirit as the creator when it speaks of the production of Christ’s body in Mary’s womb; in this case, Scripture does not speak of Christ as creating his own body, but it does speak of Mary as conceiving “by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Didymus thus shows that the Holy Spirit “creates.”

Jerome’s Latin of Didymus’ version does not report the standard wording of Acts 1:8. Jerome’s Latin reads accipietis enim uirtutem Spiritus Sancti uenientem super uos. In turning to the critical text of the New Testament, we find “but you will receive power power
when the Holy Spirit has come upon you (ἀλλὰ λήμψεσθε δύναμιν ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεῦματος ἐφ᾽ ὑμᾶς).” Notice that in our Greek, there is a genitive phrase: “the power of the Holy Spirit,” whereas in Jerome’s Latin the “power” (uirtutem) is modified by a participle (uementem), which implies that the “power” comes upon the disciples. The difference is subtle but potentially important. Didymus’ version of the biblical text allows him to distinguish between the “power of the Holy Spirit” and “the Holy Spirit,” and then to emphasize the Holy Spirit’s identification as the divine “power.”

As the translators note, “in the standard text it is ‘the Holy Spirit’ who comes upon the disciples. Here, it is ‘the power of the Holy Spirit’ which does.” On the other hand, Didymus interprets Luke 1:35 as meaning that “when the Holy Spirit came upon the virgin Mary, the creating power of the Most High fashioned the body of Christ.” In both cases, then, Didymus distinguishes between the “creating power of the Most High” or the “power of the Holy Spirit,” on the one hand, and the Holy Spirit as such. In the case of the disciples, the Power comes upon them, but in the case of Mary, the Holy Spirit comes upon her. And yet in both cases the Holy Spirit is associated with the “power of God.” Instead, Didymus is associating the term power with the Holy Spirit by conflating these two important passages. Didymus wants to show that the Holy Spirit is the same “power and nature” as the Father and the Son.

So Didymus associates 1 Corinthians 2:4, Acts 1:8, and Luke 1:35 with “the creating power of the Most High,” and he distinguishes the “power of the Holy Spirit” from the angelic powers. Next Didymus invokes Psalms 103 and 130 to identify the

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44 On “power” as a key marker of divine nature among Nicene theologians, see Barnes, The Power of God, 220-59.
45 Works on the Spirit, 188n121.
46 At Spir. 23.4 and 58.3, Didymus distinguishes an “angelic power.” See also Spir. 30.
Holy Spirit as “Creator.” “Nor it is particularly astonishing if the Holy Spirit is the maker of the Lord’s body, since along with the Father and the Son he creates all things which the Father and the Son create: *Send forth your Spirit, and they are created* [Ps 130.30].”

And, if the Holy Spirit is to be identified with God’s “creating power,” Didymus can show that the Holy Spirit plays an essential role in creation: the Holy Spirit creates the body of the Son. Didymus concludes this section by invoking his earlier arguments for the consubstantiality of the Trinity:

> . . . the Holy Spirit’s activity is the same as that of the Father and the Son,” and “a single substance is implied by the same activity, and, vice versa, . . . those who are ὁμοούσια [the same in substance] do not have an activity that is diverse.

In these two compressed paragraphs of *Spir.* 144-45, Didymus unites a theology of “one power” and a doctrine of inseparable operation to support a pro-Nicene theology of the trinity.

**Key Texts: Didymus and Eunomius on John 5:19 and John 14:16**

So far we have seen Didymus’ pro-Nicene commitment to a doctrine of inseparable operations and a single power and nature of divinity. I will now argue that Didymus opposed the exegesis of two key texts linked by Eunomius’s *Apology*. John 16:13 and John 5:19 both say that the Holy Spirit and the Son do not act “on [their] own accord” (ἀφ’ἑαυτοῦ). Eunomius quotes the phrase ἀφ’ἑαυτοῦ:

> he who creates by his own power is entirely different from him who does so at the Father’s command and acknowledges that he can do nothing of his own accord.

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47 *Spir.* 145.
48 *Spir.* 145; cf. *Spir.* 81-86.
(ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ), just as the one who is worshipped is different from the one who worships.

In *Spir.* 160-161, Didymus applies a pro-Nicene reading of John 5:19—that activities reveal nature, and that the activities are one—to John 16:13.

Next, so that no one separates the Holy Spirit from the will and fellowship of the Father and the Son, it is written: *For he will not speak on his own accord, but he will speak as he hears* [Jn 16.13]. The Savior said something similar to this about himself: *As I hear, so I judge* [Jn 5.30]. And elsewhere: *The Son is not able to do anything on his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing* [Jn 5.19]. For if the Son of the Father is one, not according to the error of Sabellius who confuses the Father and the Son, but according to their inseparability of essence or substance, then he is unable to do anything without the Father. The works of separate individuals are distinct, but when the Son sees the Father working, he is himself also working, yet working not in a second rank and after him. After all, the works of the Son would begin to diverge from those of the Father if they were not performed by equals.

I argued in Chapter 5 that Didymus opposed Eunomius’s exegesis of John 16:14. In this chapter I focus on the case of John 5:19, a text which featured in previous anti-monarchian tradition, and a text Eunomius uses to support his heteroousian theology. In addition to John 5:19, I will argue that Didymus opposes Eunomius’s exegesis of another key text at stake in the debate with heteroousian theology: John 14:16. I will also suggest that Didymus influenced Basil’s reading of this verse.

*John 5:19, Numenius, and the Demiurgic Son*

Jesus says in John 5:19, “Truly, truly, I tell you: the Son is not able to do anything by himself except what he sees the Father doing; for whatever that one does, the Son also

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50 *Spir.* 160-61.
does likewise.”\(^{51}\) This passage supported a number of anti-monarchian arrangements of the Son as Demiurge. Consider Tertullian, for example.\(^ {52}\) Though Tertullian is known more for his knowledge and use of Stoicism, his acquaintance with Platonism is not lacking in evidence. *Against Praxeas* shows him giving a Demiurgic reading to John 5:19, which provides Tertullian evidence of a “handing on” of monarchy from the Father to the Son.\(^ {53}\) He combines John 5:19 with John 1:3 to argue that the Son acts by observing the Father:

... our case stands, that from the beginning he always was seen who was seen at the end, and that he was not seen at the end who from the beginning had not been seen, and that thus there are two, one seen and one unseen. Therefore it was the Son always who was seen and the Son always who conversed and the Son always who worked, by the authority and will of the Father, because The Son can do nothing of himself, unless he have seen the Father doing it—doing it, of course in his consciousness. For the Father acts by consciousness, whereas the Son sees and accomplishes that which is in the Father’s consciousness. Thus all things were made by the Son, and without him nothing was made.\(^ {54}\)

Tertullian draws on the same Platonic commonplace of model and copy Origen used in the *Commentary on John*.\(^ {55}\) He draws attention to his own understanding of what it means for the Son to “see” the Father and act accordingly. The Father acts *in sensu*, “in mind.”\(^ {56}\) Evans’ translation of “consciousness” corroborates the Demiurgic picture of Middle Platonism exemplified by Numenius, who says that “the First God is the Good

\(^{51}\) ἀµὴν ἀµὴν λέγω υµῖν, οὐ δἐναι ὁ υἱὸς ποιεῖν ὅφε ἐκείνῳ οὐδὲν ἐὰν μὴ τι βλέπη τὸν πατέρα ποιώντα· ἃ γὰρ ἐν ἐκείνῳ ποιητή, ταῦτα καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ὁμοίως ποιεῖ.

\(^{52}\) See Tertullian, *Prax*. 4, 15, and 21.

\(^{53}\) *Prax*. 4.1. Tertullian’s arrangement here invites application of John 16:14 to the continuing “reception” by the Holy Spirit of the same “monarchy”—a move to be made by Eusebius, as we will see.

\(^{54}\) *Prax*. 15 (Evans ed., page 108, lines 6-15): constat eum semper visum ab initio qui visus fuerit in fine, et eum nec in fine visum qui ne cab initio fuit visus, et ita duos esse, visum et invisum. filius ergo visus est semper et filius conversatus est semper et filius operatus est semper, ex auctoritate patris et voluntate, quia Filius nihil semetipso potest facere nisi viderit patrem facientem—in sensu scilicet facientem. pater enim sensu agit, filius vero quod in patris sensu est videns perficit. sic Omnia per filium facta sunt et sine illo factum est nihil; Evans trans., 153 (modified).

\(^{55}\) See Plato, *Tim.* 28b and discussion in Chapter 2.

\(^{56}\) Lewis and Short (s.v.) lists mens and ratio as synonyms for sensus.
itself, but the Demiurge is good by imitating the First God."57 Similarly, the Son observes the Father and replicates his thought by acting: the Son creates, or actualizes, the Father’s thoughts by imitating the Father in obedience.58

Novatian interprets John 5:19 in the same terms. He calls the Son the “imitator of the Father’s activities and power” (imitator paternorum operum atque uirtutum), a title that invokes a similar arrangement.59 The Demiurge creates on the basis of privileged access to a more basic, more elevated divinity. When Clement comments on John 5:19, he cites Colossians 1:15 to strengthen the Demiurgic picture provided by Numenius.

According to Numenius, a First God, roughly equivalent with Aristotle’s first Principle, Νους, does not act, but thinks; the second God creates. Numenius provides a description of the relationship between the First and Second Gods which would tempt Christians to

58 Eusebius quotes Fragment 16 in p.e. 11.22.3-5. Εἰ δὲ ἔστι μὲν νοητόν ἡ οὐσία καὶ ἡ ἴδεα, ταύτης δ’ ὀμολογήθη πρεσβύτερον καὶ αἴτιον εἶναι ὁ νοῦς, αὐτὸς σὸνος μόνος εὑρίσκει ὁ τὸ ἄγαθον. Καὶ γὰρ εἰ ὁ μὲν δημιουργὸς θεὸς ἐστὶν γενέσεως, ἀρκεῖ τὸ ἄγαθὸν οὐσίας εἶναι ἄρρη. Ανάλογον δὲ τούτῳ μὲν ὁ δημιουργὸς θεὸς, ἂν αὐτοῦ μυμητῆς, τῇ δὲ οὕσιν ἡ γένεσις, ἢ εἰκόνα αὐτῆς ἔσται καὶ μὴμμα. Εἶπερ δὲ ὁ δημιουργὸς ὁ τῆς γενέσεως ἐστὶν ἄγαθος, ἢ που ἔσται καὶ ὁ τῆς οὐσίας δημιουργὸς αὐτοάγαθον, σύμφωνον τῇ οὐσίᾳ. Ὅ γὰρ δεύτερος διήτος ὁ αὐτοποιεῖ τὴν τε ἴδεαν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὸν κόσμον, δημιουργὸς ὁ δὲ ἔσται θεοφυλτικὸς δῶς. Συλλέξῃσιμένων δ’ ἡμῶν ὁμόμα τεσσαράν πραγμάτων τέσσαρα ἐστον ταύτα· ὁ μὲν πρῶτος θεὸς αὐτοάγαθον· ὁ δὲ τούτου μυμητῆς δημιουργὸς ἄγαθος· ὁ δ’ οὐσία μία μὲν ὁ τοῦ πρῶτου, ἐτέρα δ’ ὁ τοῦ δευτέρου· ἡ μὴμμα ὁ καλὸς κόσμος, κακολοισιμένος μετοσία τοῦ καλοῦ. “Now if essence and the idea is discerned by the mind, and if it was agreed that the mind is earlier than this and the cause of it, then mind itself is alone found to be the good. For if God the Creator is the beginning of generation, the good is the beginning of essence. And God the Creator is related to the good, of which He is an imitator, as generation is to essence, of which it is a likeness and an imitation. For if the Creator who is the author of generation is good, the Creator also of essence will doubtless be absolute good, innate in essence. For the second god, being twofold, is the self-maker of the idea of Himself, and makes the world as its Creator: afterwards He is wholly given to contemplation. Now as we have by our reasoning gathered names for four things, let them be these four. The first, God, absolute good; His imitator, a good Creator; then essence, one kind of the first God, another of the Second; and the imitation of this essence, the beautiful world, adorned by participation in the beautiful.” I refer to the collection of fragments by E. Des Places, ed., Numénios: Fragments (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1974). For an English translation of many of these fragments, though from a different edition, see Kenneth Guthrie, Numenius of Apamea, the Father of Neo-Platonism: Works, Biography, Message, Sources, and Influence (London, Grantwood, N. J: G. Bell and sons, 1917). Though I have consulted Guthrie’s translation, I have made enough unmarked changes to shoulder responsibility for the Greek translated in the pages to follow.
59 This quotation is from Novatian, Trin. 21.3. Novatian refers to Jn 5:19, to similar effect, at Trin. 14.12, 21.3, 22.3, 28.15, and 31.15.
construe John 5:19 in similar terms. He says that “the creating God is related (Ἀνάλογον) to the good, of which He is an imitator (μιμητής), as generation is to essence, of which it is an image and an imitation (εἰκὼν αὐτῆς ἔστι καὶ μίμημα).” Numenius describes the Second God’s being an “image” in terms of “imitation.”

Now as we have by our reasoning gathered names for four things, let them be these four. The first, God, absolute good; His imitator, a good Creator: then essence, one kind of the first God, another of the Second; and the imitation of this essence, the beautiful world, adorned by participation in the beautiful.⁶¹

Clement and Origen both draw on Numenius in order to make sense of John 5:19, but to different effects. According to Clement, John 5:19 means that the Son reveals the “Name of God” because as the Son sees the goodness of the Father, God the Savior works, being called the first principle of all things, which was imaged forth from the invisible God first, and before the ages, and which fashioned all things which came into being after itself.⁶²

Here Clement appeals to John 5:19 to depict the Son as the Platonic Demiurge: as the Son sees the “goodness of the Father, God the Savior works,” and his work is to make all things. Note that Clement uses Colossians 1:15 to strengthen the relationship between the Son’s imitation of the Father and his being “image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15).

Origen takes a step beyond Clement by using John 5:19 to articulate a doctrine of “common operation,” as follows:

. . . as regards the power of his works, then, the Son is in no way whatever separate or different from the Father, nor is his work anything other than the Father’s work, but there is one and the same movement, so to speak, in all they do (sed unus atque idem, ut ita dicam, etiam motus in omnibus est); consequently

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⁶⁰ Numenius, Frag. 16, 6-8
⁶¹ Numenius, Frag. 16, 14-17.
⁶² Clement, Strom. 5.38.7. ὅνομα δὲ ἔχεται θεοῦ. ἐπεὶ, ὡς βλέπει τοῦ πατρὸς τὴν ἀγαθότητα, ὁ οὐδὲ ἐνεργεί, θεὸς σωτήρ κακλημένος, ἢ τῶν ὀλλῶν ἀρχῆς ἢτις ἀπεικόνισται μὲν ἐκ "τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀκράτου" πρότη καὶ πρὸ αἰώνων, τετάσκοντος δὲ τὰ μὲν ἔκατην ἀπαντα γενόμενα. ANF trans., 455. The only place Clement mentions Jn 15:9 is Strom. 1.12.3, where Clement places emphasis on the fact that the Son always does what he sees the Father doing as an example of Wisdom’s eternal productivity.
[Solomon] has called him an “unspotted mirror,” in order to make it understood that there is absolutely no dissimilarity between the Father and the Son. Some indeed have said that the Son’s acts are to be compared with a pupil’s work in likeness to or imitation of his master, or that such things as the Father has first formed in their spiritual essence are made by the Son in bodily material; yet how can these opinions be reconciled with the Gospel, which says, not that the Son does like things, but that he does the same things (eadam) in like manner?63

Origen makes his case by seizing upon the Greek word ὁμοίως in John 5:19. The point is that the Father and the Son enact the same activity in similar ways. Origen wants to show that one cannot use this verse to differentiate the activities of the Father and the Son: they have the same object as their end. One may only differentiate the manner in which they pursue this same end. So Origen leaves open the possibility of a single, common activity shared by the Father and the Son, and he leaves open the possibility of differentiated modes of operation or activities.64

Origen’s reading of John 5:19 is a “fugitive beginning” of a doctrine of common operations, because Origen’s emphasis on the identity of the Father and Son’s activity in creation does not preclude the possibility that the Son is the Father’s instrument in the act of creation. If the Son and Father share a “common operation,” it may not be because they share the same nature but because they do not. Furthermore, Origen could be cited in favor of an opposing doctrine that differentiates the operations of the three. “The Holy Spirit supplies the material of the gifts from God,” he says, “to those who are called saints thanks to him and because of participation in him. This material of the gifts which I

63 Butterworth trans., 26-27 (modified); Origen, Princ. 1.2.12. Quoniam ergo in nullo prorsus filius a patre virtute operum inmutatur ac differ, nec aliud est opus filii quam patris, sed unus atque idem, ut ita dicam, etiam motus in omnibus est: idcirco “speculum” eum “immaculatum” nominavit, ut per hoc nulla omnino dissimilitudo filii intellegatur ad patrem. Ea sane quae secundum similitudinem vel imitationem discipuli ad magistrum a quibusdam dicta sunt, vel quod in material corporali ea a filio fiant, quae a patre in substantiis spiritualibus prius fuerint deformata, convenire quomodo possunt, cum in evangelio filius dicatur non similia facere, sed eadem “similiter” facere?

64 Determining the polemical horizon of this passage is difficult. It could respond to a Marcionite position that divides the work of the Son from the work of the God of the Old Testament, the Father. On the other hand, Origen might have in mind a Gnosticizing reading of John 5:19.
mentioned is made effective from God; it is administered by Christ; but it subsists in accordance with the Holy Spirit."\(^{65}\) In a related passage in *On First Principles*, the three have their own spheres of activity: the Father creates, the Son provides rationality, and the Spirit makes creatures holy.\(^{66}\) Creatures “obtain first of all their existence from God the Father, and secondly their rational nature from the Word, and thirdly their holiness from the Holy Spirit.”\(^{67}\) These statements differentiate between the activities of the three, and they make sense as an element of Origen’s anti-monarchian polemic.\(^{68}\) Origen’s reading of John 5:19 should be contextualized as an attempt to speak of continuity between the Father and the Son, but not a continuity that entails that the Father and Son share the same nature.

Origen’s fourth-century readers drew on his differentiation of the activities of the three to oppose pro-Nicene monarchianism. Eusebius invokes a similar arrangement, and Eunomius follows him. Eusebius uses the Middle Platonic picture that emerges from his reading of John 5:19—evident in both the *History of the Church* and the *Preparation for the Gospel*—to oppose Marcellus.\(^{69}\) In the *Preparation for the Gospel*, after having reproduced a string of references to the First and Second Gods as Primal Good and Demiurge from Numenius’ *On the Good*, Eusebius does not feel obliged to explain himself when he states that

Also the Word of our Salvation says, “The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing.” Enough, however, has been said by Numenius

\(^{65}\) Origen, *Jo.* 2.77. Οἶμαι δὲ τὸ ἄγιον πνεῦμα τήν, ἣν' ὀὕτως εἶπο, ὡλὴν τῶν ἀπὸ θεοῦ χαρισμάτων παρέχειν τοῖς δὲ οὕτω καὶ τὴν μετοχὴν οὕτω χρηστέουσαν ἁγίοις, τῆς εἰρημένης ὡλῆς τῶν χαρισμάτων ἐνεργοῦμενης μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, διακονουμένης δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὑφεστάσθης δὲ κατὰ τὸ ἁγιὸν πνεῦμα.

\(^{66}\) Origen, *Princ.* 1.3.7-8.

\(^{67}\) Origen, *Princ.* 1.3.8; Butterworth trans., 38. Cum ergo primo ut sint habeant ex deo patre, secundo ut rationabilia sint habeant ex verbo, tertio ut sancta sint habeant ex spiritu sancto.

\(^{68}\) See Chapter 3 for more on this aspect of Origen’s assignment of distinct and appropriate activities to the three.

\(^{69}\) See Eusebius, *h.e.* 10.4.25; *p.e.* 11.18.25.
on this subject: and there is no need to add anything to his own words to show that he was explaining not his own opinions but Plato’s.\textsuperscript{70}

The location of this statement in the \textit{Praeparatio} is telling. It occurs in the momentous Book 11, which includes Eusebius’s arguments that Moses and Plato can be harmonized, as well as a number of extensive extracts from Numenius and Plotinus on the first and second causes. In fact, Book 11 is the single most significant source for textual reconstruction of Numenius’ lost \textit{On the Good}.\textsuperscript{71} Eusebius provides the majority of what remains of the work in the \textit{Praeparatio}, and Book 11 is the most concentrated book of Numenius’ fragments within the \textit{Praeparatio}.\textsuperscript{72} It is telling, then, that Eusebius cites John 5:19 in this context. His citation of the text here suggests that he viewed John 5:19 as a key instance of Scripture’s testimony to the Son as the “Second Cause” in Platonic terms. All of Eusebius’ quotations of Numenius occur in the \textit{Praeparatio evangelica}, but his use of Numenius extends to Eusebius’s anti-Marcellan works. Eusebius “the apologist” cannot be played off against Eusebius “the dogmatician.”

The \textit{Ecclesiastical Theology} reproduces Eusebius’ interpretation of John 5:19 in a non-“apologetic” context. Eusebius uses John 5:19 to distinguish between Father and Son on Platonic ground twice, for example, in \textit{Ecclesiastical Theology} 3.3-5. This extended passage is situated within a section in which Eusebius subordinates the Holy Spirit to the

\textsuperscript{70} Eusebius, \textit{p.e.} 11.18.25.


\textsuperscript{72} The chief sources for Des Places’s Budé edition of the fragments of Numenius, in order of number of citations, most to fewest, are: Eusebius (26); Porphyry (9); Proclus (9); Origen (4); Iamblichus (4). In order to place the significance of the extracts contained in \textit{Praep.} 11 in perspective, it helps to notice that the \textit{Praeparatio} contains fifteen quotations from Numenius, more than the number of quotations of Numenius by Iamblichus and Proclus combined. See Des Places, 147-149.
Son on the basis of John 16:14—a verse Eunomius obliquely references in Apology

20.22, also reading it in light of John 5:19. Here is Eusebius:

But even before the very heavens and those things that are beyond heaven and all things in heaven were created (for all things taken together have been shown to come from one [source]), the Son of God existed, and was present to and together with the Father when He was still contemplating the establishment of all these things. For this reason He says, “When He established the heavens, I was there.”\(^{73}\) Thus like a good painter, taking the archetypal ideas from the Father’s calculations, He transferred them to the substance of the works, sculpting and giving specific shape to such things, just as He had seen them lying beforehand in the Father’s mind. And that He Himself would be a worthy witness of these things, He teaches in the gospels in this way: “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing; for whatever He does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He Himself is doing.”\(^{74}\) For this reason, one would quite rightly inquire how the Son creates for a second time the things that have once been created by the Father. But He Himself resolved that concern, having said, “For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”\(^{75}\) Therefore the things that are created by the Son are exactly like the archetypal works that pre-exist in the ineffable calculations of the Father. Observing them closely, then, in the mind of the Father, the Son made copies of the things He had seen. He showed that He looked into the depths of the Father and that this was a work of the Father’s love in the next section where He also says clearly, “For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all that He Himself is doing.”\(^{76}\) Consequently, when the Father reveals His secrets, the Son, seeing them, completed through those works the works of the Father’s will. Therefore co-existing in this way with the Father and being present to Him when He was preparing the heavens and what went with it, He taught this, saying “When He established the heavens, I was there.”\(^{77}\) The Father rejoiced even before the creation of the cosmos, looking at His own only-begotten Son and discerning Himself in Him as in an image.\(^{78}\)

\(^{73}\) Prov. 8:24.

\(^{74}\) John 5:19-20.

\(^{75}\) John 5:19.

\(^{76}\) John 5:20.

\(^{77}\) Prov. 8:24.

\(^{78}\) Eusebius, e.th. 3.3.53-57. πλὴν ἄλλα καὶ πρὶν γενέσθαι αὐτῶν τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ τὰ ἐπέκεινα οὐρανοῦ τὰ τε ἐν οὐρανῷ πάντα (ἠ ἐνὸς γὰρ τὰ πάντα περιληπτικῶς δεξιόλογα ἐντὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ τὸ πατρί παρῆνε ταυτὰ καὶ συνῆν ἐπὶ βουλευομένου περὶ τῆς τούτων ἀπάντων συστάσεως. διὸ φησίν· ἡνίκα ἠτίμαζεν τὸν οὐρανόν, συμπαρῆμεν αὐτῷ. ἐτηθ’ ὡς ἀγάθος γραφεὶς τῆς ἁγιοτόπους ἁγίας. ἀρχαίων πατρικῶν λογισμῶν ἀπολαμβάνων ἐπὶ τὰς τῶν ἐργῶν μετεφερὲν συνήσια, τοιαύτη ξωπολαστῶν καὶ ψυφιστάμενος, (54.) ὅποια τῇ τοῦ πατρὸς διανοεῖ ἑνούθεν ἀφρότητι, τοῦτων δ’ αὐτὸς γένοιτ’ ἀν μᾶρτυς ἀξιόχρεος, ἐν Ἑβαγγελίῳ ὡδε διδάσκον· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὡμοίως, οὐ δύναται οὗτος ποιεῖν ἀν’ ἐκείνου οὐδέν, ἐὰν μὴ παρὰ τὸν πατέρα ποιοῦντα· ὃ γὰρ ἀν ἐκείνος ποιήσῃ, ταῦτα καὶ (55.) ὃ ὡς ὡμοίως ποιεῖ. ὃ γὰρ πατήρ φιλεῖ τὸν υἱόν καὶ πάντα διέκεισθαι αὐτῷ ὃ αὐτὸς ποιεῖ. ἐνθα τὶς εἰκότος ζητήσεων ἐν πάς τα ἀπάτη ὧς τοῦ πατρός γεγονότα ὃ ὡς αὐτῆς ποιεῖ; ἐπελύσατο δ’ αὐτὸς τὸν λόγον ἐποίην “ἀ γὰρ ἐν ὁ πατήρ
Eusebius here uses John 5:19 to portray the Son in Demiurgic terms, applying the familiar theme of the Demiurge’s looking to a transcendent Paradigm in the act of creating. The relationship between Father and Son resembles that of Numenius’s primary Being and the Nous: “Thus like a good painter, taking the archetypal ideas from the Father’s calculations, He transferred them to the substance of the works, . . . just as He had seen them lying beforehand in the Father’s mind.” Eusebius calls the Son a “good painter” (ἀγαθός γράφεώς). The Son’s Demiurgic position explains Jesus’s statement, in John 5:19, that he “does what he sees the Father doing.”

Eunomius, John 5:19 and the Single Reception of the Trinity

Eunomius presses Eusebius’ interpretation of Origen’s thought further. He argues that John 5:19 not only cannot be used to show that the three have the same activity, but that it also entails that their activities are different. The difference in activity entails a difference of nature among the three. Call this doctrine “separable operations.”

Eunomius argues his point on the ground that John 5:19 says the Son “can do nothing of his own accord.” He seizes upon the phrase “οὐ δύναται . . . ποιεῖν ἄφ’ ἐαυτοῦ οὐδὲν” and says it means the Son lacks agency in creation. Eunomius reasons that the Son is a

80 Eusebius, Ibid.
81 Cf. Plato, Tim. 29A: “Now if so be that this Cosmos is beautiful and its Constructor good (δημιουργὸς ἄγαθός), it is plain that he fixed his gaze on the Eternal (πρὸς τὸ ἄτιδον ἐβλεπεν) . . . .”
82 Eunomius, Apol. 20.17-19.
power inferior to the Father who creates “by his own power” (ἐξουσίᾳ); the Father is different from, and superior to, “him who does so at the Father’s command (τοῦ νεόματι πατρικῷ ποιοῦντος).” Eunomius links this argument with his exegesis of John 16:14: the Spirit/Worshipper (προσκυνοῦντος) is inferior to the Son/One Worshipped (προσκυνούμενος). Eunomius thus ties a low pneumatology to John 5:19.

As a careful reader of Origen, Didymus was in a strong position to extend application of Origen’s idea of inseparable operations to the Holy Spirit. Against Eunomius’s exegesis of John 5:19, Didymus makes several exegetical points appropriating Origen’s argument that Jesus ascribed to the Father and Son one identical activity. However, Didymus applies this argument not only to the Son but also to the Holy Spirit.

The heart of Didymus’ argument along these lines comes in *On the Holy Spirit* 184-191. In a string of exegetical statements on Romans 8:9-10, Didymus argues that we can presume the presence of the Spirit when Paul speaks of the presence of the Son. “When [Paul] said: ‘But if Christ is in you, although your body is dead because of sin,’ in no way does he mean that the body is a slave to vices and wantonness.” In other words, even though Paul only said that “Christ is in you,” Paul did not fail to assert the presence of the Spirit, which produces the gifts of the Spirit and the life of virtue. In responding to faulty exegesis of Roman 8:10a, Didymus assigns idiomatic roles to the Son and the Holy Spirit in the generation of virtue. The Son generates virtue in the soul by his presence, as does the Holy Spirit. The Son is present when “those who have made their own bodies

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86 *Spir.* 184-194
87 *Spir.* 192.
The “Spirit of life” is present when those same souls “do righteous works” either by correcting “deadly vices” or by believing in Jesus Christ and living accordingly. Together, then, the Son and the Holy Spirit generate, respectively, the death of vice and the life of virtue in the soul. Neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit is separable from the other in this divine act of the production of psychological virtue.

In *Spir.* 184, Didymus ties the action of the Holy Spirit to the action of the Son, on the grounds that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Son. He uses Romans 8:9b (“But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ”) to reach this conclusion. In Romans 8:10a, Paul says, “but if Christ is in you.” He does not say, “But if the Spirit of Christ” is in you. This, Didymus argues, “demonstrates most clearly that the Holy Spirit is inseparable from Christ because wherever the Holy Spirit is, there also is Christ, and from wherever the Spirit of Christ departs, Christ also withdraws from that place.” In *Spir.* 189, Didymus argues from another angle. After quoting Romans 8:9b again, he says, “If anyone were to assume the contrary of this conditional proposition, he could say: ‘If anyone belongs to Christ such that Christ is in him, then the Spirit of Christ is in him.’” Didymus goes one step further, however, and uses this verse to show the inseparability of the Holy Spirit, not only with respect to the Son, but also the Father: “This same logic can also be deployed likewise in the case of God the Father.” Didymus simply replaces the word “Christ” with the word “God” in Romans 8:9b so that it reads, “If anyone does not have the Spirit of God, he does not belong to God.” This statement is then transformed into a contrapositive, leaving us with, “If anyone belongs to God,

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88 *Spir.* 192.
90 Cf. *Spir.*, 111.
91 *Spir.* 188.
92 *Spir.* 190.
then the Spirit of God is in him.”

This, Didymus says, makes sense of 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 1 John 3:24/4:13, verses which speak of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and God’s dwelling in people when he gives them his Spirit. Finally, Didymus concludes that “all these passages demonstrate that the substance of the Trinity is inseparable and indivisible (indissociabilis et indiscreta Trinitatis substantia).”

In On the Holy Spirit 74-80, Didymus adduces several passages to support his reading of 2 Cor. 13:13 that “there is a single reception of the Trinity” (una Trinitatis assumptio). He introduces his discussion by stating that he is going to show that the Holy Spirit “is not different from either [the Father or the Son]” (nunc videamus quam cum utroque habeat indifferentiam). Among the passages adduced is Zechariah 12:10, which shows, Didymus explains, God promising “that he would pour himself out . . . (repromittit Deus effusurum se).” God’s gift is the Holy Spirit, but whoever has the Holy Spirit has it as a gift from the Trinity:

> For whenever anyone receives the grace of the Holy Spirit, he has it as a gift from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the fact that there is a single grace of the Father and the Son perfected by the activity of the Holy Spirit demonstrates that the Trinity is of one substance (unius substantiae).

As the translators note, the end of this phrase includes a probable instance of Didymus’ original Greek, ὅμοοσία—here translated by Jerome, but elsewhere given by Jerome

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93 Spir. 190.
94 Spir. 191.
95 As the translators note, “the word indifferentia is unusual in Latin, probably representing the Gk. τὸ ἄδιάφορον or ἄδιαφροτία. It appears also in Spir. 87 and 100” (DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres, Works on the Spirit, 166n61).
96 Didymus, Spir. 76. Cum enim quis Spiritus Sancti acceperit gratiam, habebit eam datam a Deo Patre et Iesu Christo Domino nostro. Vna igitur gratia Patris et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti operatione completa, Trinitas unius substantiae demonstrabitur.
without translation. In the following paragraphs, Didymus makes a similar argument from other passages. Then he concludes:

on the basis of all these passages it is proved that the activity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is the same (eamdem operationem esse Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti). But those who have a single activity (una est operatio) also have a single substance (una est et substantia). For things of the same substance (quae eiusdem substantiae)—όμοοΰσια—have the same activities (easdem habent operationes), and things of a different substance—ἐτεροοΰσια—have discordant and distinct activities.

Didymus reasons that because things that have the same substance must have the same activity, whatever does the same activity must have the same substance. The reasoning is the inverse of Eunomius’s, in the first Apology 20.17-19. Note that Jerome provides the Greek ἑτεροούσια, to make it clear that Didymus was opposing the use of that term to describe the substance of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Didymus bases his argument against the heteroousian view on the logic that all three persons give the same gift, and in this way, perform “a single activity.” So Didymus argues for the inseparability of the trinity in terms of its divine action, and so that it has a single divine power.

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97 Didymus Spir. 16, 27, and 145. The phrase in Latin, unius substantiae, is the same phrase Illaria Ramellia allows that Origen used in her reading of Origen’s homilies translated by Rufinus. Ramelli does not entertain the possibility that in seeing “Origen” in Rufinus’s translation we are actually reading Didymus, but this possibility is at least plausible. See Illaria Ramelli, “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism and Its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappadocian Line,” Vigiliae Christianae 65 (2011): 21-49.

98 Spir. 77-80. 2 Cor 13:13, Jn 14:21, Jn 3:16, Is 33:22, 35:4; Gal 5:22; Rom 5:5; Phil 2:1; 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Jn 1:7; 1 Jn 1:13.

99 Spir. 81. Here Jerome provides the original Greek for his readers. Ex omnibus approbatur eamdem operationem esse Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Quorum autem una est operatio, una est et substantia, quia quae eiusdem substantiae ομοοΰσια sunt easdem habent operationes, et quae alterius substantiae έτεροοΰσια dissonas atque diversas.

100 Elsewhere, Didymus argues along similar lines that the whole Trinity is the agent that establishes apostolic authority. See, e.g., Spir. 105. “If those whom Christ sent to evangelize and baptize the nations are those whom the Holy Spirit placed in charge of the Church and the Father appointed by his decree, there can be no doubt that the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit have a single activity and approval. It follows from this that the Trinity has the same substance.”
In John 14:16, Jesus says of the Holy Spirit that

I will give to you another Paraclete (ἄλλον παράκλητον), so that he will be with you forever—the Spirit of truth, which the world is not able to receive (οὐ δύναται λαβεῖν), because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because indwells you and will be in you (παρ’ ὑμῖν καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται).

Because Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as “another Paraclete,” John 14:16 offers Scriptural warrant for distinguishing between the Son and the Holy Spirit as “different” in some way. But to what extent are they “different,” and how? Before turning to Didymus’s exegesis of this passage, it is important to note that in a few places Didymus alludes to the “distinguished features” of the three persons. So, for example, in Spir. 113-114, he writes:

[113] And so, since it is impossible and impious to believe such things about incorporeal beings, we ought to understand that the Holy Spirit goes out from the Father as the Savior himself goes out from God, to which he bears witness when he says: I have gone out from God and have come [Jn 8:42]. And just as we separate places and changes of place from incorporeal realities, so too do we distinguish emissions (whether internal or external) from the nature of intellectual realities, since they belong to bodies which can be touched and have extension.

[114] And so, we ought to believe the following statements that used ineffable words known by faith alone: the Savior has gone out from God [Jn 8:42], and the Spirit of Truth comes forth from the Father [Jn 15:26]—the same Father who said: The Spirit who comes forth from me [Is 57:16]. Indeed, well-said is the passage: he who comes forth from the Father [Jn 15:26]. For even though it is possible to say “from God” or “from the Lord” or “from the Almighty,” none of these is used. Instead, from the Father is used, but not because the Father is different from God Almighty—for it would be criminal to think this! Rather, the Spirit of Truth is said to come forth from the Father [Jn 15:26] according to the distinctive feature of the Father and the concept of fatherhood.  

The difficulty Didymus faces here is that statements regarding the “emission” from God the Father are not to be taken as referring to God’s body, because God is incorporeal. Yet,
the abstraction from a bodily sense makes it difficult to distinguish between the 
processions of the Son and the Spirit. So Didymus argues that statements such as “come 
forth from the Father” do not imply that God the Father has a body but that God the 
Father has a “distinctive feature” within the Trinity.

Now we come to Didymus’s interpretation of John 14:16, in light of his doctrine of 
“distinguished activities.” Didymus opposes Eunomius’ exegesis of another text 
important for Eunomius’ heteroousian position: John 14:16. In John 14:16, Jesus states 
that the Holy Spirit is “other than” the Son. In order to wrest this text back from 
Eunomius, Didymus acknowledges that Jesus calls the Holy Spirit “another Paraclete” 
(alium Paracletum), but he explains the appearance of “another” on the grounds that 
 “[the Son and the Spirit] have separate activities” (sed iuxta operationis diuersitatem).102

The Greek of the title in Jerome’s Latin (alia Paracletum) is ἄλλον παράκλητον, 
translating John 14:16: πατέρα καὶ ἄλλον παράκλητον δώσει ύµῖν.103

This argument directly opposes Eunomius’s reading of the text. In Apology 25.17-
18, Eunomius obliquely refers to this passage. The Holy Spirit, he argues, is not 
identical (ταύτον) with the Only-Begotten (otherwise he would not have been 
numbered after him as possessing his own substance, since the Saviour’s own 
voice is sufficient proof of these things, when he expressly says that the one who 
would be sent to bring to the Apostles’ remembrance all that he had said and to 
teach them would be “another” ( еёδε σημείωσε τὸν ἄποστολον). . . . 104

Eunomius refers here to Jesus’s statement to the disciples that “the Advocate, the Holy 
Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you

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102 Spir. 120.
103 Spir. 120.
104 Οὐδέ μὴν ταύτον τῷ μονογενεῖ (οὐ γὰρ ἂν ὑπηρεθήκη τῷ τούτῳ ὡς ἴδιαν ἤχον ὑπόστασιν, 
ἀρκοῦσης καὶ πρὸ τούτων τῆς τοῦ σωτηρίου φωνῆς δ’ ἦς ἑτερον ἕφη σαφῶς τὸν ἀποσταλησόμενον εἶναι 
πρὸς ὑπόστασιν καὶ διδασκαλίαν τῶν ἀποστόλων). . . .
of all that I have said to you.” The reference to the “other Paraclete” is an oblique reference to John 14:16. Notice that, instead of reading John 14:16’s ἄλλον, Eunomius has substituted his favored technical term for differentiating the three persons: ἕτερον. Instead of ἄλλον παράκλητον, he reads ἕτερον παράκλητον. According to Eunomius’ interpretation of this passage, Jesus does not only speak of “another” Paraclete; he speaks of “a different” Paraclete.

Eunomius’s gloss on John 14:16, however, is not without precedent. As we have seen, Eusebius repeats a form of the phrase ἕτερος παρ’ αὐτόν several times to emphasize the distinction between the Son and the Spirit, in opposition to Marcellus. He bases the phrase on John 14:16’s description of the Spirit as ἄλλον παρακλήτων:

And that the Holy Spirit is other than (ἕτερον) the Son, our Savior and Lord Himself taught clearly and distinctly in the plainest of terms, when He said to His disciples, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive.” You see how He says that the Spirit is another counselor (τὸ παράκλητον ἐτερον) and other than Himself (ἄλλο παρ’ ἑαυτόν).

A little further along, Eusebius re-states the point more succinctly: “thus from these things it is shown that the Holy Spirit is another existing alongside [the Son] (ἕτερον ὑπάρχον παρ’ αὐτόν).” Eusebius feels obliged to explain that “Paraclete” does not automatically distinguish the Spirit from the Son. This suggests that he, too, read John 14:16 as potentially a description of the Son as a “Helper.”

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106 See Eusebius, e. th. 3.5.
107 Spoerl trans., MS p. 35; e. th. 3.5. καὶ ὅτι γε ἐτερον ἐστιν τὸ πνεύμα τὸ ἄγιον τοῦ υἱοῦ διαρρήσην καὶ διαφόρως λευκοτάτος ῥήμασιν αὐτός ὁ θεός καὶ κύριος ἡμῶν ἐδίδαξεν, ἐν οἷς πρὸς τοὺς αὐτοῦ μαθητὰς ἔλεγεν ἀν ἄγαπάτε με, τὰς ἐντολὰς τὰς ἐμὰς τηρήσετε. καὶ ἐγὼ ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἄλλον παράκλητον δώσει υἱόν ἵνα ἡ μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὁ ὁ κόσμος οὐ δύναται λαβεῖν.” ὅρας ὅπως τὸ πνεύμα τὸ παράκλητον ἐτερον εἶναι ἡ ὁμοία καὶ ἄλλο παρ’ ἑαυτόν.
108 Spoerl trans., MS 36; e. th. 3.5. πλὴν ἐκ τούτων δείκνυται ἐτερον υπάρχον παρ’ αὐτόν τὸ ἄγιον πνεύμα.
Didymus acknowledges the presence of “another Paraclete” in the words of Jesus, but he offers a different explanation for the Spirit’s alterity. He argues that both Jesus and the Spirit are “Paracletes,” each to be distinguished from the other because their activities can be distinguished. He argues that the fact that Scripture distinguishes between a diversity of Trinitarian activities does not entail that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit differ in nature. He says, “But do not think that the natures of the Son and Holy Spirit are different because they have separate activities.” Didymus entertains the possibility of two modes of speaking about “difference” among the Trinitarian persons. At the level of nature and power, there is no differentiation among the three, who share the same activity of creation and the giving of grace. On the other hand, there remains a way to speak of each of the three in different ways.

The works of separate individuals are distinct, but when the Son sees the Father working, he is himself also working, yet working not in a second rank and after him. After all, the works of the Son would begin to diverge from those of the Father if they were not performed by equals.

By making a clear distinction between the Son’s Demiurgic activity in creation and the question of his “ranking,” Didymus repeals the implicit link between John 5:19 and Middle Platonic taxis-logic with which a Demiurgic reading of the text had imbued it. Didymus reasons that if the Son acts in such a way that there is any kind of ontological “gap” between the Father and the Son, then “the works of the Son would begin to diverge from those of the Father” (alia quippe Patris, alia Filii opera esse inciperent), and this

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109 Spir. 122. Verum noli ex Filii et Spiritus Sancti operatione diversa varias aestimar naturas.
110 Didymus, Spir. 161.4-8. . . quia separatorum diversa sunt opera, sed uidens operantem Patrem, et ipse operator, non in secundo gradu et post illum operans. Alia quippe Patris, alia Filii opera esse inciperent, si non aequaliter fieren.
would render their work asunder. Didymus clarifies that he does not intend to relapse into the doctrine of “Sabellius”:¹¹¹

For if the Son of the Father is one, not according to the error of Sabellius who confuses the Father and the Son, but according to their inseparability of essence or substance, then “he is unable to do anything without the Father.”¹¹² Notice that Didymus seizes upon the pivotal phrase of John 5:19 Eunomius uses to differentiate Son from Father: “he is unable to do anything without the Father.” Didymus redeems the phrase, making a virtue of what had appeared to be a vice. The Son’s “inability to do anything without the Father” turns out to be a feature of the Son’s inseparable activity, which the Son shares inseparably with the Father—not, Didymus clarifies, as a “Sabellian” would have it, but as a non-Marcellan Nicene would have it: the Father and the Son remain irreducibly “Father” and “Son,” but they share the same nature and do the same thing.

Didymus acknowledges both that the Father, Son, and Spirit perform the same activity, namely, the gifts of creation and grace, and that certain other activities may still be distinguished. The three are irreducible, and cannot be conflated; to think otherwise would not be to read Scripture on its own terms. The subtlety on this point makes it possible both for Didymus to oppose Eunomius’s theology and to argue in favor of Nicaea without a Marcellan interpretation of ὃμοοόσια.

Mark DelCigliano has argued convincingly that Didymus, and not Athanasius, influenced Basil’s exegesis of John 1:3 and Amos 4:13.¹¹³ Another point of contact

¹¹¹ He probably has a more proximate monarchian in mind, such as Marcellus or Photinus.
¹¹² Didymus, Spir. 161.1-4. Si enim unus est Patri Filius, non iuxta Sabelli uitium Patrem et Filium confundentis, sed iuxta indiscretionem essentiae siue substantiae, non potest quicquam absque Patre facere...
between Didymus and Basil is the disputed exegesis of John 14:16. Basil shares

Didymus’ peculiar reading of John 14:16. Hard on the heels of Basil’s argument that
Eunomius cannot prove that “in every case [the Spirit has] a different nature,” Basil
writes:

Furthermore, God is said to be and is good. The Holy Spirit is also good,
possessing a goodness that is not adventitious (οὐκ ἐπισκευαστὴν ἔχον τὴν ἁγαθότητα), but coexistent with him by nature (ἀλλ’ ἐκ φύσεως αὐτὸ συνυπάρχουσαν). Otherwise, it would be possible to say the most irrational thing
of all: the one who is holy by nature (τὸ φύσει ἁγιὸν) does not have goodness by
nature (μὴ φύσει . . . τὴν ἁγαθότητα ἔχειν), but as something supervening and
accruing to him from without (ἐξ οὗθεν προσγεγεγενημένην αὐτῷ). When the Lord
said: I will ask my Father, and he will give another Paraclete to you [Jn 14:16], he
indicated that the Spirit, too, is our Paraclete (καὶ αὐτὸς εἶναι Παράκλητος ἡμῶν ἐνδείκνυται). Hence the designation “Paraclete” also contributes no small amount
to the demonstration of the glory of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁴

Here Basil’s argument turns on the presumption that the title “another Paraclete” not only
is not a problem, but it is an honorific title. The “other” (ἄλλος) of Scripture includes the
Spirit with the Son, already a “Paraclete,” or “Helper,” and in this way Scripture
characterizes the Spirit as possessing divine nature. This reading only works if one
supposes that the Son is a “Paraclete,” so that when Scripture speaks of “another
Paraclete,” Scripture is not speaking of a “Paraclete of another nature” but “another
Paraclete of the same nature.” Basil here adopts Didymus’ peculiar reasoning about this
difficult passage that gave significant weight to Eunomius’ argument.

¹¹⁴ Basil, Eun. 3.3. Καὶ ἁγαθὸς ὁ Θεὸς εἴρηται, καὶ ἔστιν ἁγαθὸν δὲ καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγιόν, οὐκ ἐπισκευαστὴν ἔχον τὴν ἁγαθότητα, ἀλλ’ ἐκ φύσεως αὐτὸ συνυπάρχουσαν. Η πάντων ἐν εἴς ἀλογώταιν τὸ φύσει ἁγιὸν μὴ φύσει λέγειν τὴν ἁγαθότητα ἔχειν, ἀλλ’ ἐπηγεγεγενημένην καὶ ἐξ οὗθεν προσγεγεγενημένην αὐτῷ. Ἐν τὸ δὲ ἔπειν ὁ Κύριος ὅτι, Ἕγει ἐρωτήσα τὸν Πατέρα, καὶ ἄλλον Παράκλητον δόσαι ἦμαν, καὶ αὐτὸς εἶναι Παράκλητος ἡμῶν ἐνδείκνυται. Ψέπτε καὶ ἢ τοῦ παρακλήτου προσηγορία οὐ μικρὸν πρὸς ἀπόδειξιν τῆς δόξης τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος συντελεῖ. Michel Barnes reads Basil’s Against Eunomius (1:23.17-21) and On the Holy Spirit in light of the tradition of pro-Nicene exegesis of John 5:19 he identified in his
of Poitiers preceded Basil in his reading of John 5:19, but he does not entertain the possibility that Basil
had drawn on Didymus’s On the Holy Spirit for his exegesis of John 14:16 in response to Eunomius. But
Barnes, On the Trinity associated with Didymus reads John 5:19 in light of 1 Cor 1:24
Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued three related points. First, Didymus’s *On the Holy Spirit* exhibits a “pro-Nicene” doctrine of inseparable operations. Second, Didymus’s doctrine of inseparable operations relies upon his claim that the Holy Spirit’s activity reveals the one “power of God.” The third point concerns Didymus’s use of these “pro-Nicene” insights to counter a prevalent anti-Nicene tradition, which took John 5:19 and John 14:16 to differentiate the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Father and from one another. Didymus teaches that distinguishing between the activities of the persons need not entail a differentiation in nature among the three. When the Son speaks of “another Paraclete,” in John 14:16, the reference means only to point out the “distinctive activity” of the Holy Spirit; it need not entail that the Holy Spirit differs in nature from the Son or the Father.

With the features of Didymus’s pro-Nicene theology and the “high pneumatology” it generates in view, we may turn to a comparison of Didymus and earlier Alexandrian tradition on the Holy Spirit as the “seal” of the divine image in the human soul. Didymus’s pro-Nicene theology places him in a strong position to provide a clear statement of the Holy Spirit’s agency in the production of virtue in the soul.
Chapter 7
“Sealed by the Promised Holy Spirit”

Introduction

This chapter brings this study of Origen and Didymus to a close. So far we have seen that Origen’s use of participation is an anti-monarchian strategy that generates a low pneumatology. For Origen, the Holy Spirit transmits holiness. However, because the Holy Spirit does not cause holiness to reside in the soul without having received the “ministry” of the Word, the Holy Spirit is not a divine agent in the same way or to the same degree that either God the Father or God the Son is. Depending upon which features of Origen’s theology one emphasizes, the Holy Spirit sometimes comes across as an angelomorphic entity. We have also seen that Didymus counteracts the radical, heteroousian position of Eunomius by recovering a number of texts from a reading which would subordinate the Holy Spirit to the Son and Father. He argues in favor of a doctrine of inseparable operation, whereby all of the Trinity’s activities disclose a single divine nature at work in the transformation of the human soul.

I close by showing how Didymus’s pro-Nicene theology provides added clarity to a traditional expression of the Holy Spirit’s activity. In order to emphasize the Holy Spirit’s divine nature as a transcendent cause, Didymus characterizes the Spirit in terms of a “seal” that causes the soul to become virtuous. The “seal” is a biblical image, drawn from Paul, and, so I will argue, it doubles as a reference to Hellenistic psychology. For this reason, I offer some background which contextualizes the history of reading the Holy Spirit as “seal” in terms of the cause of “cognitive impression.” Didymus retains a
theology of the divine image, endemic to Alexandrian tradition, which construes the human soul as an image constructed according to a divine archetype, and whose conformity to that archetype results in the soul’s perfection. However, Didymus departs from his Alexandrian predecessors by initiating a new tradition in Alexandria: the “archetype” to which the soul is conformed is not only the Logos, but the Trinity considered as a single divine source of moral transformation. According to Didymus, the soul does not purify itself, and it cannot be reduced to evil. For these reasons, I argue that we should read Didymus as using a pro-Nicene doctrine of the Trinity to buttresses an “anti-Manichean” asceticism.

“Until Christ is Formed in You”: Image, Seal, and Soul

Didymus’s discussion of the restoration of the divine “image” in the human soul agrees with earlier Alexandrian tradition. However, Didymus provides added clarity in On the Holy Spirit. Especially if we place two key Pauline texts in a context that includes reading “seal” in Hellenistic-philosophical terms, we can see why Didymus seized upon them: they provide the Holy Spirit divine agency in the process of moral transformation not exploited by Clement or Origen.

Continuities on the Divine Image from Clement to Didymus

It is important to note, first, the way in which Didymus’s moral psychology is in deep agreement with that of Origen and Clement of Alexandria. Didymus
emphasizes that the soul is conformed to the likeness of a divine image. Before turning to Origen’s first Homily on Genesis, we should look briefly at an important statement by Clement. He writes:

Rightly then Moses says, that the body which Plato calls “the earthly tabernacle” was formed of the ground, but that the rational soul (ψυχὴν δὲ τὴν λογικὴν) was breathed by God into man’s face (ἀνώθεν ἐμπνευσθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς πρόσωπον). For there, they say, the ruling faculty (τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν) is situated; interpreting the access by the senses into the first man as the addition of the soul. Wherefore also man is said “to have been made in [God’s] image and likeness.” For the image of God is the divine and royal Word, the impassible man (ἀπαθῆς); and the image of the image is the human mind.

Clement reads the moment when God “breathes into” (ἐμπνευσθῆναι) the face of the human being as the production of the “rational soul” or “mind”—the Logos. The Septuagint for Genesis 2:7 states that “God breathed into his face” (ὁ θεὸς . . . ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον). Clement, by contrast, says that the “rational soul” was “breathed into (ἐμπνευσθῆναι) his face.” In John 20:22, Jesus is said to have “breathed onto” (ἐνεφύσησεν) the disciples and said, “receive holy Spirit” (λάβετε ἅγιον πνεῦμα).

Clement’s use of the verb ἐμπνευσθῆναι suggests that he reads John 20:22 into the text of Genesis 2:7. For him, when God “breathes into the face” of humanity, God gives humanity a rational soul. For Clement, λόγος, πνεῦμα, and ἡγεμονικὸν are synonymous psychological terms extending to all human beings. The implication, however is that to have a “holy spirit” is to be a virtuous soul.

1 On the traditional Alexandrian distinction between “image and likeness,” see Richard Layton, Didymus the Blind (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 93-96. Layton cites Clement, Strom. 2.22.131.6; Origen, Princ. 3.6.1; HomGen 13.4; and Rom. 4.5. See Layton, 94n44.


3 Unfortunately, Didymus’s comment on Genesis 2:7 was probably contained in a stretch of papyrus not retained in the papyrus found at Tura. Didymus does cite Genesis 2:7, but he never cites the part of the verse that speaks of God’s “breathing into the face” of humanity. When he cites the verse in the
Origen’s reading of these texts is slightly different than Clement’s. Origen states clearly, in On First Principles, that the Savior’s breathing upon the disciples (John 20:22) is an instance of God’s gift of the Holy Spirit. Yet Origen does not make a similar point regarding the divine “breath” of Genesis 2:7. He reads Genesis 1:26 and 1:27 as representing two distinct exegetical moments. Genesis 1:26 indicates, according to Origen, that the mind rules over the passions (the “beasts”). This is the whole human being, body and soul. Of all the other creatures, man alone “has the honor of the sun and moon having the promise of shining ‘as the sun in the kingdom of God’.” Genesis 1:27, on the other hand, means that, in creating man, God produced a “man” according to the image of God. This “man” is not the corporeal human being, but the “inner man, invisible, incorporeal, incorruptible, and immortal.” The “inner man” is the location of God’s indwelling, the throne of the divine Glory, and so, the means by which the promised “illumination” may take place. Origen is careful to point out that only the “inner man” is capable of participating in the divine image.


4 See Princ. 1.3.2.
6 Origen, Heine trans., 63.
7 Ibid., 64.
8 As noted in Chapter 5, Origen agrees with the Platonist doctrine that participation is spiritual or intellectual, not bodily or material. See, for example, Numenius, fr. 19 (Guthrie, trans., 34): “Whatever participates in him, participates in nothing but in thought; in this manner alone will it profit by entrance unto the Good, but not otherwise” (Μετέχει δὲ αὐτοῦ τὰ μετέχοντα ἐν ἄλλῳ μὲν οὐδὲν, ἐν δὲ μόνῳ τῷ φρόνειν· ταύτῃ ἄρα καὶ τῆς ἀγαθοῦ συμβάσεως ὄνιναι’ ἂν, ἄλλως δ’ οὖ).
Colossians 1:15, that the Archetype used to create this “man” is “the brightness of the eternal light and the express figure of God’s substance”: Christ.\(^\text{10}\)

Origen then narrates the incarnation as Christ (the Archetype)’s taking on the “image of the evil one” in order to restore the obscured image of humanity.\(^\text{11}\) The consequence of the incarnation is that all . . . who come to him and desire to become participants in the spiritual image by their progress “are renewed daily in the inner man”\(^\text{12}\) according to the image of him who made them, so that they can be made “similar to the body of his glory,”\(^\text{13}\) but each one in proportion to his own powers.\(^\text{14}\)

Origen describes the process of moral transformation in terms of a uniting of humans comparable to that of divine Father and Son. The Apostles become the image of Christ just as Christ is the Image of the Father insofar as they become “one.”\(^\text{15}\) Origen concludes his reading of Genesis 1:26-27 by urging his audience to “contemplate that image of God so that we can be transformed to his likeness.” For, “by beholding the image of God, according to whose likeness [we] have been made by God, [we] will receive that form, which was given to him by nature, through the Word and his power.”\(^\text{16}\) Contemplating the “Image,” Christ, results in the reproduction in the soul of Christ’s likeness.

Origen closes his homily with a brief mention of “the Holy Spirit whose temple we ought to be first of all by our holiness.”\(^\text{17}\) Origen’s statement represents a small advance

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 65.
\(^{11}\) Ibid., 65.
\(^{12}\) Quoting 2 Cor. 4:16.
\(^{13}\) Quoting Phil. 3:21.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 66.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., 66: “The apostles transformed themselves to his likeness to such an extent that he could say of them, ‘I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ For he had already petitioned the Father for his disciples that the original likeness might be restored in them when he says: ‘Father,” grant “that just as you and I are one so also they may be one in us’.”
\(^{16}\) Ibid., 66.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., 71. For Didymus, “participation” in an image is not only the imitation of a good form, but is also linked with the imitation of bad forms. The overall scheme resembles Origen’s ambiguous use of the “image of the devil” in Homily 1. There Origen merely opposes the “image of God” as the “inner man” to
over the merely rationalistic construal of Clement. The role of Christ, the Word of God, as the transcendent Image of God is clear in Origen’s treatment. We are made “according to” the Image of Christ, which ensures our potential to grow into the likeness of Christ.

The nature of the Spirit’s role in the production of Christ’s likeness in the soul, on the other hand, is less clear.\textsuperscript{18} We might infer, from Origen’s remarks in \textit{On First Principles} (e.g., \textit{Princ.} 1.3.8), that the Holy Spirit is the cause of holiness in the soul, and that “holiness” amounts to the likeness of divinity Origen mentions here. However, in \textit{On First Principles} and the \textit{Commentary on John}, Origen also characterizes the Holy Spirit as a mediating, and not an ultimate, cause of holiness, because the Holy Spirit depends

\textsuperscript{18} There is an odd passage in \textit{On First Principles}, which appears to ascribe the Father’s giving of “the Spirit” to “all people” as an appropriation of the exegetical moment of God’s breathing into the face of Adam. The statement appears to reproduce Clement’s linking of Genesis 2:7 with John 20:22. See \textit{Princ.} 1.3.4, Butterworth trans., 31-32: ‘We, however, think that this peculiar use may be observed in the Old Testament also, as when it says, ‘he that giveth spirit to the people who are upon the earth.’ For undoubtedly every one who walks upon the earth, that is to say, every earthly and corporeal being, is a partaker of the Holy Spirit, which he receives from God.” The first part of this statement rings true to Origen’s authentic work, but the second is an overstatement that warrants suspicion, for at least two reasons. First, this passage conflicts with what Origen later says regarding the possession of the Holy Spirit “by the saints alone” (\textit{Princ.} 1.3.8). Second, it contradictis Origen’s earlier statement that human beings have to be “purified” in order to participate in God and, presumably to participate in the Holy Spirit (cf. \textit{Princ.} 1.1.2). A third reason is circumstantial: this passage occurs just a few lines after Rufinus has Origen declare, in a rather flat-footed way, that “we have been able to find no passage in the holy scriptures which would warrant us in saying that the Holy Spirit was a being made or created, not even in that manner in which we have shown above that Solmon speaks of wisdom, nor in the manner in which the expressions we have dealt with, such as life, or word, or other titles the Son of God, are to be understood.” But this is in flat contradiction to what Origen says in the \textit{Commentary on John}, Book 2. If Rufinus could introduce such a drastic change here, it should not surprise us if in fact he altered Origen’s statement regarding God’s giving the “spirit” to “the people who are upon the earth.”
upon the Father and the Son for its own existence and character; it passes on the
“likeness” to us as one which has received it.

Let us now turn to Didymus’ reading of Genesis 1:26-27 in his own Commentary on Genesis.19 He follows Origen’s interpretation closely. In fact, the resemblances between the anthropology of Origen’s “Homily 1” and that found in Didymus’ comments on Genesis 1:26-27 are striking.20 The “human” of Genesis 1:26 signifies the “composite living being, composed of soul and body, and especially the soul.”21 Didymus continues:

there is an especially preferable sense according to which we may understand the preceding text. We have said that “human” is, properly speaking, mind and soul. It is that which, participating in God, from that very participation, becomes God’s image, as we have said that virtue represents the one participating in it. Paul, knowing this doctrine, also taught it, speaking in Christ, when he said to those whom he urged to be imaged according to Christ, ‘until Christ is formed in you,’ teaching that the true understanding about Christ, once it is born in the soul, impresses its marks and representations on the soul according to him.22

Didymus fixes upon Paul’s use of the term μορφόω to underwrite his claim. According to Didymus, Paul is channeling a doctrine of intellectual participation in Christ, the “image of the invisible God.” Origen had asked rhetorically:

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19 See SC 233:146. προείρηται κυρίως ἀνθρώπου εἶναι ὁ νοῦς καὶ ἡ ψυχή· αὕτη μετέχουσα Θεοῦ ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς μετουσίας εἰκὼν αὐτοῦ γίνεται, καθά λέγομεν εἰκονίζει τὴν ἁρετήν τὸν μετέχοντα αὐτῆς, ὀπερ ἐπιστάμενος καὶ ὁ ἐν Χριστῷ λαλῶν Παύλος φησιν ὡς προτρέπεται κατὰ Χριστὸν εἰκονισθήναι· “μέχρις οὐ μορφωθῇ Ἰησοῦς ἐν ὑμῖν,” διδάσκοντι ὅτι ἡ περὶ Χριστοῦ νόησις ἄλλης ἐγγενομένη ψυχῆς χαρακτηρίζει καὶ εἰκονίζει αὐτὴν κατ’ αὐτόν. There is a chronological hazard in comparing Didymus’ On the Holy Spirit with his Commentaries. If there is no strong consensus about the dating of Didymus’ On the Holy Spirit, there is even less of one concerning the Commentaries. Yet, for the purposes of my presentation here, the material I analyze does not suggest that Didymus has developed in one direction or another; the statements I quote help to clarify Didymus’ compressed claims in On the Holy Spirit, and throw into relief Didymus’ relationship to his predecessors in Alexandria.


21 ὁ ἀνθρώπος σημαίνει καὶ τὸ σύνθετον ζῶον τὸ ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ σῶματος συνεστὸς καὶ μάλιστα τὴν ψυχήν (SC 233:140; ComGen 54.23).

22 Ἐστιν δὲ μάλιστα κατὰ προηγομένην διάνοιαν ἐκλαβεῖν τὸ προκείμενον· προείρηται κυρίως ἀνθρώπου εἶναι ὁ νοῦς καὶ ἡ ψυχή· αὕτη μετέχουσα Θεοῦ ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς μετουσίας εἰκὼν αὐτοῦ γίνεται, καθά λέγομεν εἰκονίζει τὴν ἁρετήν τὸν μετέχοντα αὐτῆς, ὀπερ ἐπιστάμενος καὶ ὁ ἐν Χριστῷ λαλῶν Παύλος φησιν ὡς προτρέπεται κατὰ Χριστὸν εἰκονισθήναι· “μέχρις οὐ μορφωθῇ Ἰησοῦς ἐν ὑμῖν,” διδάσκοντι ὅτι ἡ περὶ Χριστοῦ νόησις ἄλλης ἐγγενομένη ψυχῆς χαρακτηρίζει καὶ εἰκονίζει αὐτὴν κατ’ αὐτόν (SC 233:146-148; ComGen 57.26-58.3).
What other image of God is there according to the likeness of whose image man is made, except our Savior who is “the firstborn of every creature,” about whom it is written that he is “the brightness of the eternal light and the express figure of God’s substance,” who also says about himself: “I am in the Father, and the Father is in me,” and “He who has seen me has also seen the Father”?23

Though it is not necessary that Didymus borrowed from Origen on this point, it is at least plausible that Didymus agrees with Origen’s statement when he writes that “the image of God is his Only-begotten Son. Paul teaches this when he writes, ‘who is the image of the invisible God,’ that is, an essential and unchanging image. For ‘He who has seen me has also seen the Father’.”24

Like Origen, Didymus teaches that the human being is made up of “soul, body, and spirit.”25 However, Didymus clarifies that Paul distinguishes “our spirit” from the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8:16, Paul states that “the Spirit himself testifies (Αὐτὸ τὸ Πνεῦμα συμμαρτθρεῖ) to our spirit.” Paul’s distinction between the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit himself” (Αὐτὸ τὸ Πνεῦμα) and our “spirit” confirms the indelible line Didymus sees between the Holy Spirit and all rational creatures.

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23 Origen, Heine trans., 65.
24 SC 233:148; ComGen 58.4-7. εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἔστιν ὁ Υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ὁ μονογενής· Παῦλος τοῦτο διδάσκει γράφων: “Ος ἔστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀωράτου,” εἰκὼν δὲ οὐσίωδης καὶ ἀπαράλλακτος: “Ὁ” γὰρ “ἐφαρμακός ἐμὲ ἑόρακε τὸν Πατέρα.” The only other place in the Didymean corpus where the “image” is paired with ἀπαράλλακτος is Trin. 3 (789.44), in a passage with other terminology, such as synanarchon, which may imply a scholastic context beyond the fourth century. Interestingly, Didymus feels obliged to rule out the possibility that there are two images, one of the Father, and one of the Son. This may indicate a later stage in ‘Eunomian’ doctrine, which may well have developed its theory into claiming that there were two ‘images’: οὐ δέι διωρὸς τὰς εἰκόνας λαμβάνειν· οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη Πατρὸς καὶ ἄλλη Υἱοῦ τυγχάνει· εἰ γὰρ ὁ ἑωρακός τὸν Υἱὸν ἔδει καὶ τὸν Πατέρα καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ Υἱὸς ἔστιν κατὰ τὸν μακάριον Παῦλον, οὐ δέι ἐπειρήσων εἰκόνα ἐννοεῖν (SC 233:148; ComGen 58.8-13). Might this be Didymus’ characterization of Eunomius’ doctrine of the “activities” of the Father and the Son as intermediaries? On this issue, see Michel Barnes, “Eunomius of Cyzicus and Gregory of Nyssa: Two Traditions of Transcendent Causality,” Vigiliae Christianae 52.1 (1998): 59-87.
25 See SC 244:140-43; ComGen 55:12-56.1. Cf. Origen, Princ. 3.4.1. Both Origen and Didymus base this psychological model from 1 Thess 5:23, and the common use of this text of Scripture suggest that, in this case, Didymus is relying on Origen’s precedent.
As we have seen, in *On the Holy Spirit*, Didymus makes it clear that the Holy Spirit teaches as one who has not been taught. What, then, does the Holy Spirit teach? According to Didymus, attainment of virtue is conformity to Christ. He includes Paul’s statement “until Christ is formed (μέχρις οὗ μορφωθῇ) in you” to show that conformity to Christ lies behind the compact statements about the divine image offered by Genesis 1:26-27. Paul teaches, Didymus says,

that the intellection of truth about Christ, once it has engendered itself in the soul, characterizes and images the soul according to itself. “Let us make man according to our image and likeness.” The “image” of God is the only-begotten Son. Paul teaches this when he writes “who is image of the invisible God,” an essential and unchanging image (εἰκὼν δὲ οὐσιώδης καὶ ἀπαράλλακτος). For “who has seen me has seen the Father.” If then it is said to God, “Let us make man according to our ‘image and likeness,’ ” then it is not necessary to take different images. For the Father does not have one, the Son another. For if the one who has seen the Son saw also the Father and “character of God’s hypostasis is the Son,” according to the blessed Paul, it is not necessary to imagine another image. For none of the things generated images and characterizes God according to substance. Thus, the text does not read, “Let us make man an image, but according to an image. This means that this [human] reproduces and imitates that image (ὅπερ ἔστιν ἀπ' ἐκείνης εἰκονισθήναι καὶ μιμήσασθαι ταύτην). For the human being has been constructed as capable of receiving the image (χωρητικὸς γὰρ κατεσκευάσθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς εἰκόνος). Didymus’s explanation here concords with the Alexandrian tradition of identifying the archetypal “image” to which humanity is conformed as the second person, Christ. He provides some added clarity that the human being is created with the capability of “receiving the image,” but by and in large, Didymus’s reading of this passage is a scholastic version of Origen’s exegesis of this passage.

Whereas Clement’s reading of the divine “image” conflates the soul with the Holy Spirit, and Origen’s does not ascribe the same kind of causality to the Holy Spirit as to

26 See Chapter 5.
27 SC 233:146-68; *ComGen.* 58.1-15.
the Father and Son, Didymus develops the Alexandrian tradition in a pro-Nicene
direction. The Holy Spirit is the seal of the image in the soul. This model for the Holy
Spirit’s agency in the process of moral transformation is present in the *Commentary on
Genesis*, but it appears with greater clarity in Didymus’s *On the Holy Spirit*. Before we
come to that text, it will be useful to explore first the history of terms for “sealing” an
“image” in the soul in philosophical perspective.

**The Holy Spirit as “Seal” and Cause of Cognitive Impression of Virtue**

So Didymus agreed in broad terms with his Alexandrian predecessors that the
human being is made in the image of God and conformed to it. In order to understand
how Didymus adds clarity to the Holy Spirit’s identification as the cause of virtue in the
soul, it is important to attend to some technical terminology. I first explain how Ephesians
1:13-14 and 4:30 could have been read in light of Hellenistic psychology, especially the
notion of “cognitive impression.” I then turn the broad context of these verse’s
interpretation to what I argue is a shift from Origen to Didymus. Didymus seizes upon
these verses as key texts for underscoring the Holy Spirit’s inseparably divine agency.

*Ephesians 1:13-14 and 4:30*

Here are Paul’s statement regarding the Holy Spirit’s action as a “seal” on the
soul.

In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your
salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised
Holy Spirit (ἐσφραγίσθητε τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἅγιῳ); this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory.  

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal τῷ πνεύμα τῷ ἅγιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἐν ὧν ἐσφραγίσθητε) for the day of redemption.

In each of these texts, Paul states that the Holy Spirit “seals” and implies that the Holy Spirit is a “seal” (σφραγίς; signaculum). Modern studies of these lines have tended to focus on the question of the relationship between “sealing” and early Christian liturgical contexts. They have not however drawn attention to an association early Christian readers trained in Hellenistic moral psychology would be tempted to make. When Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as a “seal,” he uses a term associated with the philosophical notion of “cognitive impression.” Before I come to Didymus and some relevant precursors to his interpretation of this verse, a word on the “cognitive impression” and its use by Philo is in order.

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30 Eph. 4:30.
31 The classic study in this regard is G.W.H. Lampe, The Seal of the Spirit, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1987), especially 235-305. See also Tucker S. Ferda, “‘Sealed’ with the Holy Spirit (Eph 1,13-14) and Circumcision,” Biblica 93.4 (2012): 557-579. Ferda (559-61) offers a fourfold typology of scholarly approaches to the history of Ephesians 1:13-14 in early Christianity: (1) baptism; (2) confirmation; (3) spiritual empowerment; (4) magical protection. The absence of a category for reading Eph. 1:13-14 in terms of Hellenistic psychology is worth noting, and Ferda here faithfully represents a scholarly tendency to overlook the overlap to which I am drawing attention. Lampe does not mention the Stoic tradition of “cognitive impression” in his book on the subject. It is also worth mentioning that Ferda includes Didymus’s statement in Spir. 20 under the rubric of (3), in which “the focus is not a particular rite (baptism, confirmation, etc.), but rather the work of the Holy Spirit on the character of the believer (e.g., righteous behavior, robust faith in God, charismatic gifts, etc.).” See Ferda, 560-1. I do not disagree that Didymus’s usage reflects a psychological reading of Ephesians 1:13-14, but I also do not think that the use of a psychological context excludes reading Didymus as referring the verse to liturgical practicies. Similar statements made by the author of De trinitate led Lampe, for example, to characterize Didymus as a good example of a figure who read the passage as referring to baptism (cf. Lampe, 249n2). In other words, even though Didymus foregrounds the psychological terminology Paul uses, there is no reason to suggest that he does so to the exclusion of baptism or confirmation as a human means of the impartation of the Holy Spirit’s “impression” on the soul.
A Hellenistic Context for “Sealing”

In his *Commentary on John*, in a rare moment of explicit definition of “participation,” Origen uses the term ἐναπομάσσομαι, a word related to “sealing.” The term ἐναπομάσσομαι is Stoic in origin and appears in the classic definition of “cognitive impression” (φαντασία καταληπτική) variously ascribed to Zeno and Chrysippus. A cognitive impression was thought to be “impressed and sealed (ἐναπομεμαγμένη καὶ ἐναπεσφραγισμένη) both from and according to a real object, such as it would not be from an unreal object.” That Stoics spoke of the impression as sealed—

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The Stoic invention of the “cognitive impression” proved a flexible non-Skeptical tool for epistemology. It could be adapted to fit Platonist or Aristotelian, as well as Stoic, philosophical ends. In Seneca’s Epistle 65, the “seal” of the Platonic “paradigmatic cause” is impressed in corresponding matter like that of a signet ring in wax. The

34 Note here the presence of the root-word σφραγίς. As Lampe notes, “σφραγίς (signaculum) is used to denote a stone in a signet ring, the design or inscription which it bears, the stamp which is made with it upon was, and hence a seal which is an authentication, guarantee, or proof” (Lampe, Seal, 8).

35 Richard Layton ascribes to Didymus awareness of Stoic epistemology generally, and to the cognitive impression in particular, in his Commentary on Job. See Layton, Didymus the Blind, 30-35. Diogenes Laërtius describes the cognitive impression as “an imprint on the soul (τύπος ἐν ψυχῇ): the name having been appropriately borrowed from the imprint made by the seal upon the wax.” See Lives, VII 46: Τὴν δὲ φαντασίαν εἰναι τύποσιν ἐν ψυχῇ, τοῦ ὀνόματος οἰκείως μετεπειγόμενου ἀπὸ τῶν τύπων τῶν ἐν τῷ κηρῷ ὑπὸ τοῦ δακτυλίου γιγαντιόν. τῆς δὲ φαντασίας τὴν μὲν καταληπτικὴν, τὴν δὲ ἀκαταληπτον· καταληπτικὴν μὲν, ἢν κρίτηριον εἰναι τῶν πραγμάτων φασί, τὴν γιγαντιον ἀπὸ ὑπάρχοντος κατ᾽ αὐτὸ τὸ ὑπάρχον ἐναπεσφραγισμένην και ἐναπομειμένην· ἀκαταλήπτον δὲ ἢ τὴν μὴ ἀπὸ ὑπάρχοντος, ἢ ἀπὸ ὑπάρχοντος μὲν, μὴ κατ᾽ αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ ὑπάρχον· τὴν μὴ τρανή μηδὲ ἐκτυπον. As noted, Diogenes is probably channeling Cleanthes’ definition. Compare Cicero’s report (Acad. 1.42) of Zeno’s doctrine that nature “bestowed as it were a ‘measuring-rod’ of knowledge and a first principle of itself from which subsequently notions of things could be impressed upon the mind (notiones rerum in animis imprimerentur), out of which not first principles only but certain broader roads to the discovery of reasoned truth were opened up.” See also Cicero, Acad. 2.18 and Zeno’s famous “hand illustration” at 2.145. In characterizing cognitive impressions as marking an imprint in wax like a seal, Cleanthes had been working with earlier precedent. According to Plato, the soul receives an imprint of the Ideas in wax (κηρός) (Theaet. 194c5); Timaeus characterizes the Demiurge as a “wax worker” (Tim. 74c). Cleanthes may also have appropriated the example of the seal from the signet ring from Aristotle’s De Anima (424a19). Didymus picks up on this aspect of Origen’s use of Stoic tradition in On the Holy Spirit. See especially the “tropological” interpretation of Noah’s three sons (Gen. 6:10) in ComGn 165.5-166.14, where Didymus uses the term ἐκτύπωσις to describe the soul’s “πάθος with a view toward ὀρμή.” Didymus evinced knowledge of the Stoic “non-pejorative” or intellectualist doctrine of pathos as the assent to an impression leading up to impulse. This is interesting evidence, too, for the rationalistic interpretation of the Stoics and Stoic tradition, in which πάθος could be used loosely to refer either to the outworking of a vicious movement of the soul, or simply to the “affect” produced by an initial phantasia to the soul in the first place. Didymus is aware of this distinction.

illustration is the same that Cleanthes had used to describe how a cognitive impression works.\textsuperscript{37} By the so-called Middle Platonic period, Platonists had grown accustomed to borrowing these Stoic epistemological terms.\textsuperscript{38} For an unreconstructed Platonist, for example, it would have made little sense to speak of “cognitive impressions,” but for school Platonists of Philo’s day, it had become possible to think of “ Impressions” as being “cognitive.”

Consider the following example of Philo’s adaptation of Stoic epistemological vocabulary. In \textit{Special Laws} 1.46-50, Philo casts the contemplation of the Ideas in Stoic terms when he speaks of “receiving impressions” (\textit{ἐναπομαξασθαί} \ldots \textit{τύπους}) in the soul—the same terms Origen makes synonymous with \textit{μετεχόντων} in the \textit{Commentary on John}.\textsuperscript{39} He relates the familiar scene of Moses’s request to see God’s face and the Lord’s response (Exodus 33:12-23 LXX). Philo explains that God’s refusal to allow Moses to see his “face” represents the fact that God is beyond all human comprehension, no matter how far a soul progresses in knowledge of divine nature. Nevertheless, Moses begs to see God’s “glory” if not his “face.” To this God replies that

\begin{quote}
the powers (\textit{δυνάμεις}) which you seek to behold are altogether invisible, and appreciable only by the intellect, since I myself am invisible and only appreciable by the intellect. \ldots And though they are by nature incomprehensible in their essence, still they show a kind of impression or copy of their energy and operation; as seals among you, when any wax or similar kind of material is applied to them, make an innumerable quantity of figures and impressions (\textit{τύπους ἐναπομάττωσα}) without being impaired as to any portion of themselves, but still remaining unaltered and as they were before; so also you must conceive
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{37} The impression-in-wax model attributed to Cleanthes may or may not go back to Zeno. See SVF II.56. Chrysippus, however, found the metaphor problematic and opted for a no-less-materialistic model of the impression as an alteration in the \textit{pneuma} as air. Chrysippus’s adjustment, in turn, allowed for more than one impression to reside in the soul at once, whereas the wax model could not explain such psychological phenomena. See Josiah Gould, \textit{the Philosophy of Chrysippus}, 53-55.

\textsuperscript{38} See also Alcinous, \textit{Didask}. 4.4-6.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Jo}, 2.52, quoted above. Eusebius, \textit{d.e.} 4.13, uses the term in a similar way. Note also the intriguing application of the term in a liturgical context to describe the impression of the “seal” of baptism spoken of, for example, in Ephesians 1:13-14 (\textit{v.Polyc.} 19).
that the powers which are around me invest those things which have no distinctive qualities with such qualities, and those which have no forms with precise forms, and that without having any portion of their own everlasting nature dismembered or weakened.  

Philo has God speaking of the “powers” surrounding him. God tells Moses that some refer to the divine “powers” around God as the “Ideas,” because “they give a peculiar character (εἰδοποιοῦσι) to every existing thing.” This is a clear reference to the causal power of the Ideas—the “paradigmatic cause” of Seneca’s Letter 65, for example. Yet Philo has used Stoic “impression” language to describe the paradigmatic cause. Furthermore, the Ideas transmit “figures and impressions” without “being impaired as to any portion of themselves.” They give without loss, in other words. Philo applies the doctrine of the “undiminished giver” to the Ideas. So Philo characterizes Seneca’s “Paradigmatic Cause” as supplying the ultimate source for any particular cognitive impression. In this way, Philo uses a Stoic epistemological concept, somewhat perversely, to circumvent sense-perception as the most basic source of knowledge. For this reason,

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40 Philo, Spec. leg., 1.46-50: ὥς ἐπίζητες δυνάμεις εἰσίν ἄρατοι καὶ νοηται πάντως ἐμοὶ τοῦ ἄρατοι καὶ νοητοὶ λέγω δὲ νοηται οὐχὶ τὰς ὑπὸ νῦν καταλαμβανομένας, ἀλλ’ ὅτι εἰ καταλαμβάνεσθαι οἶαι τε εἰεῖν, οὓς ἄν αἰσθησις αὐτῶς ἀλλ’ ἀκραφνέστατος νοῦς καταλαμβάνοι, περικυκλάτος ἄπατολμητικοὶ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν ὦμοι παραφαίνουσιν ἐκμεγεδων τι καὶ ἀπεικόνισμα τῆς ἐκατόν ἐνέργειας· οἴαι οἱ παρ’ ὑμῖν σφραγίς· ὅταν καὶ ἐπανεχθέν τηρήσεις ἵνα ὡς ὧμοιότροπας ὑπάρξῃ, ἐόρφοις δὲ νοομένοις ἐκμεγεδαινόμενοι, μηδὲν ἀκρωτηριασθείσας μέρος, ἀλλ’ ἐν ὦμοιοι μένουσαι –, τοιαύταις ὀποληπτένιοι καὶ τὰς περὶ ἐμὲ δυνάμεις περιποιοοῦσαι ἀποίους ποιότητας καὶ μορφάς ἀμόρφοςς καὶ μηδέν τῆς ἀνέδου φύσεως μὴν ἀλλαττομένας μήτε μειομένας, ὀνομάζομεν δ’ αὐτὰς οὐκ ἄπο χωρί τινας τῶν παρ’ ὑμῖν ιδεας, ἐπειδῆ ἐκκατα τῶν ὄντων εἰδοποιοῦσί τὲ ἀτακτα τάττουσαι καὶ τὰ ἄπειρα καὶ ἀόριστα καὶ ἀσχημάτιστα περατοῦσαι καὶ περιορίζουσαι καὶ σχηματίζουσαι καὶ συνόλως τὸ χείρον εἰς τὸ ἀμεινὸν μεθαρμοζόμεναι. C.D. Yonge, trans., p. 538.

41 Philo, Spec. leg., 1.48: “And some of your race, speaking with sufficient correctness, call them ideas (ἰδέας), since they give a peculiar character (εἰδοποιοῦσι) to every existing thing, arranging what had previously no order, and limiting, and defining, and fashioning what was before destitute of all limitation, and definition, and fashion; and, in short, in all respects changing what was bad into a better condition” (Yong, trans., p. 538).

42 Seneca, Ep. 65.

Philo may speak of the mind’s having a *cognitive* impression as receiving access to the Ideas.

For Philo, contemplation of the Ideas remains fundamental, and the Ideas, according to Philo, are God’s “powers” made accessible through the Torah. It would make sense, then, for Philo to cast contemplation as comprising the study of Scripture. In *Special Laws* 4.159-164, Philo does just that. He describes an ideal king who should “write out a copy of the book of the law with his own hand, which shall supply him with a summary and concise image of all the laws.” The point is not that the ruler should know the laws in a remote sense, but that the ruler should come to embody the Torah and be transformed into a living example of the law. Philo has him say:

I wrote all this; I who am a ruler of such great power; without employing any one else as my scribe, though I had innumerable servants. Did I do all this, in order to fill up a volume, like those who copy out books for hire, or like men who practice their eyes and their hands, training the one to acuteness of sight, and the others to rapidity of writing? Why should I have done this? . . . I did it in order that after I had recorded these things in a book, I might at once proceed to impress (ἐναπομάττωμαι) them on my heart, and that I might stamp upon my intellect their divine and indelible characters: other kings bear scepters in their hands, and sit upon thrones in royal state, but my scepter shall be the book of the copy of the law; that shall be my boast and my incontestable glory, the signal of my irreproachable sovereignty, modeled according to the archetypal royal power of God.

To “impress” (ἐναπομάττωμαι) the character of the law’s precepts upon the “heart” is the point of the ruler’s rewriting, or copying out, the Torah. According to Philo, to “contemplate the Ideas” is to assent to the cognitive impressions provided by the Ideas.

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45 ἐγὼ ταύτῃ ἐγράμμα ὁ τοιοῦτος ἄρχων, μὴ ἐτέρῳ προσαρκησάμενος ὑπηρετῶν μυρίων ὄντων· ἄρ' ὡς βιβλίον ἀποπληρώσω, καθήπερ οἱ μισθοῦ γράφοντες ἢ οἱ γημιότατος ἄρθρα ὀφθαλμοὺς τε καὶ χεῖρας, τοὺς μὲν εἰς ὀξυσσίαν, τὰς δ' ἴνα ὅσον ὀξυγράφος·—πόθεν; οὐκ ἔστιν — ἄλλ' ὡς αὐτὰ ἐν βιβλίῳ γράφων εὐθὺς εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν μεταγράφω καὶ ἐναπομάττωμαι τῇ διανοίᾳ θεωτέρους καὶ ἀνεκπλήτους χαρακτήρας, οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλοι βασιλεῖς βακτήριας ἔχοντες σκηνοφροφοῦσι, ἐμοὶ δὲ τὸ σκητρὸν ἔστιν ἡ βίβλος τῆς Ἐπικομίδου, καύχημα καὶ κλέος ἀναπαγόνιστον, παράσημον ἡγεμονίας ἀνεπλήττειν πρὸς ἄρχετον τήν τοῦ θεοῦ βασιλείαν ἀπεικονισθείσης. Yonge, trans., p. 632, slightly modified.
“paradigmatic cause” of God’s glorious cloud. The wise ruler receives a “scepter” in modeling his own power on the “archetypal royal power of God.” In order to construct such a model in himself through imitation, he pursues access to God’s “powers” through the study of Torah. By copying out the Torah he focuses his attention on it in steady contemplation. Such contemplation leads to moral transformation as the ruler assents to Torah’s truths.

So far, it should be clear that Philo had made available to his Alexandrian heirs a use of “impression” which would have both transcended its Stoic origins, so that it could be used to refer to the cause of intellectual comprehension. Origen also applied the concept of “clear and distinct impressions” in the case of Christian prayer. Prayer is an attempt to achieve clarity about the truth. I now want to show how Didymus’s reading of Ephesians 1:13-14 and 4:30 draws on this tradition by clarifying the Holy Spirit’s nature and agency in moral transformation. According to Didymus, the Holy Spirit is the transcendent cause of virtue in the soul.

*From Origen to Didymus: The Holy Spirit as Exemplary Cause of Cognitive Impression*

Recall that Origen casts the Son’s “participation in” the Father in cognitive terms, as the Son contemplates the “fatherly depths.” Origen had used the Platonic notion of the Demiurge to explain how the Son reproduces his likeness in creatures. Origen’s scheme begins with the Holy Spirit as the primal product of the Son’s creative activities. Didymus clarifies the Holy Spirit’s agency in the production of a divine likeness in the

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46 See Chapter 2.
soul and characterizes the Holy Spirit as the image’s “seal.” His reading of Paul’s statement in Ephesians is worth quoting in full, because it allows Didymus to characterize the Holy Spirit as the paradigmatic cause of virtue in the soul:

The blessed Apostle wrote to the Ephesians and said: Believing in him, you have been sealed (signati estis; = ἐσφραγισθήτε) by the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance [Eph 1.13-14]. For if some are sealed with the Holy Spirit and take on his form and likeness, the Spirit is among those which are possessed and do not possess, seeing that those who possess him are imprinted with his seal (habentibus illum signaculo eius impressis).

Recall that, in the Commentary on Genesis, Didymus states that “true understanding about Christ, once it is born in the soul, impresses its marks and representations on the

\[\text{\footnotesize 47} \] A comment on Ephesians 1:13-14 in the catena attributed to Origen reads as follows: σφραγίζεται δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τὸ ἁγίο τὸ ἁκούοντα τὸν τῆς ἁλθείας λόγον, ὡς ἀληθινὸν τῆς κυρίας τοῦ ἁκούοντος· ὥς εἰ ἁκούεις μὲν, μὴ πιστεύσαι δὲ, οὐκ ἂν σφραγισθῇ. ἄλλος δὲ τις ἐρεῖ δι’ εἰ καὶ πιστεύσαι μὲν, μὴ ἔπει τοσοῦτον δὲ προκόπτοι ὡς ἁκούεις τὸν λόγον τῆς ἁλθείας, οὐδ’ οὗτος ἄν χωρήσῃ τὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἐπαγγελίας τὸ ἁγίον σφραγίδα, ἢτις ἐστὶν ἁλθείας ἐκτύπωσις καὶ τράνωσις τοῦτον ἀ πρέπει ἐκτυπωθῆναι καὶ τρανοῦσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ἁγίου πνεῦματος. ζητητέον δὲ καὶ εἰ που εὑρήσῃ πνεῦμα ἐπαγγελίας ἁγίον, καὶ τί ἐκδεκτέον εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τὸ ἁγίον. οὕτω τούτων δι’ ὃ ὁ πνεῦμα τὸ ἁγίον, γενόμενον ἐπὶ τίνι, ἁγίον ποιεῖ, καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς σοφίας σοφὸν, καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς συνέεσωσι σωτηρίας, οὕτω καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας εἶναι πως ἐν τῇ ἐπαγγελίᾳ. See Origen, Com.Eph. 8.26-39; Gregg, ed., “The Commentary of Origen Upon the Epistle to the Ephesians,” JTS 3 (1902): 243. The author of this compressed comment appears to address the question of the presence or absence of the definite article. The phrase without definite articles—πνεῦμα ἐπαγγελίας ἁγίου—does not appear in the immediate context of Scripture. Perhaps it appeared in some copies of the text in the author’s context, or perhaps the author refers to one of several cases of the undecorated phrase “holyspirit” (πνεῦμα ἁγίου) attested in Scripture—e.g., John 20:22. In any case, the author reasons that just as the Holy Spirit is the Spirit which “makes holy,” and the Spirit of “Wisdom” makes “wise,” and the “Spirit of Unity” makes unified, so also “the Spirit of the Promise” is “in the promise.” The reasoning is that the Holy Spirit is the cause of the promised gifts and this explains Paul’s title for the Holy Spirit. If this statement is authentic to Origen, taken by itself it expresses a pneumatology similar to that in the Commentary on John: the Holy Spirit makes all the entities inferior to it “holy.” Cf. Orat. 20.2 and Jo. 13.3.15, in which Origen appears to acknowledge the existence of “sense impressions.” At the very least, the phrase ἐκτυπωθῆναι καὶ τρανοῦσθαί may owe to Origen. However, we should not exclude the possibility that here Didymus’s lost Commentary on Ephesians, appropriated by Jerome, has influenced the catena tradition. On the other hand, in neither of these other texts does Origen mention the Holy Spirit. If this is Origen’s original statement, it appears to be unique in his corpus, and Didymus may have drawn on it to clarify the Holy Spirit’s nature as the transcendent cause of virtue. For scholarship on the relationship between Jerome’s Commentary on Ephesians and those of Origen and Didymus, see Ronald Heine, “Recovering Origen’s Commentary on Ephesians from Jerome,” JTS 51.2 (2000): 478-514. For an argument in favor of viewing the catena fragments ascribed to Origen with general caution, see Ronald Heine, “Can the Catena Fragments of Origen’s Commentary on John Be Trusted?” Vigiliae Christianae 40 (1986): 118-134.

\[\text{\footnotesize 48} \] Spir. 20.
soul according to him.”49 Here he shows that the Holy Spirit is the divine agent that “impresses” the soul with Christ. The Holy Spirit impresses on the soul the “true understanding” (νόησις ἀληθῆς in the Commentary on Genesis) of Christ. In a related passage, Didymus incorporates elements of Origen’s theology of the Son as image into Paul’s identification of the Holy Spirit as the “seal”:

[95] Since the Son is the Image of the invisible God [Col 1:15] and the Form of his substance [Heb 1:3], whoever is fashioned and formed according to this Image or Form (quicumque ad hanc imaginem vel formam imaginantur [εἰκονιζέται?] atque formantur)50 is led into likeness 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 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.51

Note that Didymus here links the Holy Spirit’s action of “sealing” with the Holy Spirit’s “filling” the soul. Recall that the Holy Spirit’s activity of “filling” is a key identifier of the Holy Spirit’s identity with the divine nature. So Didymus implies that the Holy Spirit’s identity as “seal” suggests the same thing as that suggested by the Holy Spirit’s identity as the divine “source” which “fills” creatures.

Didymus’s statement also contains a number of terms which featured in the definition of cognitive impression as Philo adapted it to Platonic purposes. The soul encounters the “image” by the Holy Spirit’s agency as “seal,” which “leads” the soul to Christ. According to Didymus’s exegesis of Ephesians 1:13-14, the Holy Spirit “imprints” or impresses the soul (habentibus illum signaculo eius impressis).52 This part of Didymus’s exegesis is not unprecedented, but his explanation for the exegesis is

49 ComGen. 58.1-2: ἡ περὶ Χριστοῦ νόησις ἀληθῆς ἐγγυομένη ψυχῇ χαρακτηρίζει καὶ εἰκονίζει αὐτὴν κατ’ αὐτόν.
50 Cf. Didymus ComGen. 58.14-17: Διότερον οὖκ ἔρημα· Ποιήσωμεν τὸν ἀνθρωπὸν εἰκόνα, ἅλλα κατ’ εἰκόνα, ὥσπερ ἐστιν ἃ ποιεῖσθαι εἰκονισθῆναι καὶ μιμήσασθαι ταύτην· Jerome may have used “imago et forma” to render a version of a pair of terms similar to Didymus’s phrase εἰκονισθῆναι καὶ μιμήσασθαι.
51 Spir. 95.
52 Spir. 20.
telling: “just as someone, who takes up a practice and a virtue, receives into his mind, as it were, a seal and an image (signaculum et figuram) of the knowledge which he takes up, so too the one who is made a sharer in the Holy Spirit (Spiritus Sancti particeps efficuitur) becomes, through communion (per communionem) with him, simultaneously spiritual and holy.” 53 The “reception” of the “seal” into the mind implies the context of an “exemplary cause” like that described by Philo—the divine power that reproduces its resemblance in others.

Later Didymus makes statements that rely on this principle. For example: “And so, when the Spirit of Truth himself enters into a pure and simple mind, he will impress upon you the knowledge of truth; since he always joins the new to the old, he will guide you into all truth.” 54 This statement depends upon the Holy Spirit being the divine power that causes others to be like it: “When the Holy Spirit comes into the hearts of believers, 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.” 55 The operative logic is that the Holy Spirit causes believers to be what the Holy Spirit is: “filled with words of wisdom and knowledge.”

Didymus distinguishes between the “image” and the “seal” that reproduces it. He speaks of the mechanism for the reproduction of the divine likeness as a “communion.” Plato, in Phaedo 100d, had used the term “communion” to describe the mechanism of the beautiful’s presence (parousia) in a particular entity. Though the impetus to use terms for “communion” can also be ascribed to Paul’s own terminology, Didymus’s use of such terms also makes sense in light of Philo’s Platonized “cognitive impression.” The soul

53 Spir. 20.
54 Spir. 151.
55 Spir. 149.
assents to impressions, and if the impressions are virtuous, the soul becomes virtuous. Didymus uses the Stoic model to show that the Holy Spirit is the cause of holiness in the soul that assents to impressions caused by the Holy Spirit.

Didymus’s pairing of the Holy Spirit’s “exemplarity” with the common metaphor of the Son as God’s “image” reinforces Didymus’s doctrine of inseparable divine operation ad extra. According to Didymus, the Holy Spirit causes holiness—the likeness of the divine image—to reside in the soul. The Holy Spirit plays the role in the Christian scheme of Platonism’s “paradigmatic cause” insofar as the Holy Spirit produces the appearance of holiness in the human soul. The Holy Spirit’s identity as “paradigmatic cause” allows Didymus to maintain, with Origen, that the Holy Spirit is participated in “immaterially.” While Didymus does imply that the Son is “image” and the Spirit is the “seal,” Didymus is careful not to reduce the identification of the divine “cause” or “archetype” to the Logos alone. According to Didymus, the divine archetype of virtue is not only the Logos, but the Trinity considered as a single divine cause. This brings us to Didymus’ theory of divine indwelling.

The Holy Spirit, the Human Spirit, and the Indwelling Trinity

Decisions made at the level of causality set the stage for what it is possible to conceive at the level of psychology, and on this point Didymus’ pro-Nicene pneumatology conditions his psychology. We have seen that Didymus’s pro-Nicene theology gives the Holy Spirit agency as a cause of the human soul’s conformity to a divine likeness. I will now show how Didymus uses his pro-Nicene theology to support
his moral psychology in two related ways. First, Didymus adapts Stoic themes to his own ends: God purifies the soul. Didymus distinguishes clearly between the human spirit and the fully divine, Holy Spirit, so that there can be no doubt about the futility of self-purification. Second, Didymus provides an anti-Manichaean explanation of the soul’s vicious behavior. Didymus is able to distinguish between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit because he is clear that the Holy Spirit is a divine, and not a human, cause.

The Trinity’s Presence: Indwelling and Serenity

First, let us consider Didymus’s use of the theme of “indwelling.” In addition to using the Scriptural example of the Son as “image” and the Holy Spirit as “seal,” Didymus uses terms of “indwelling” to name the way the Trinity’s gives itself to the soul. The Trinity indwells the soul and brings with it a condition of psychological serenity. In this way, Didymus develops Alexandrian tradition in a new direction. In a provocative but little-noticed article, John Egan suggested that the roots of Augustine’s well-known “psychological analogy” of the trinity had roots in Alexandrian soil. Whatever a broad continuity may stretch from Clement to Augustine, insofar as the soul is made in the “image of God,” earlier Alexandrians tended to locate the similarity between the human image and the divine exemplar exclusively in the divine Logos. Augustine was not, however, without Alexandrian precedent.

As Egan points out, according to Clement the Logos was an emanation of the divine mind. As such it provided a singular link between human intelligence and divinity.

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On this score, Origen appears to have been no exception to his predecessor in Alexandria. Egan suggests that Cyril anticipated Augustine’s expansion of the relationship between God and the human “image” to a correspondence between the “image” of the human being and the “image” of the trinity. But the shift did not begin with Cyril. It occurred at least as early as Didymus’s On the Holy Spirit.

The theme of indwelling is familiar in scholarship on early Christian asceticism or spirituality. Early Christians ranging in disposition from desert monastics to ecclesial officials often find themselves characterized by modern scholars as Platonizing mystics who seek an elusive communion with an ever-nebulous divinity, lacking shape, form, and content. Plato had initiated an otherworldly quest for that which transcends the here and now of concrete, earthly existence. In this mode, “indwelling” names the presence, ever so fleeting, of the transcendent.

The theme of indwelling is also familiar as a form of Jewish mysticism: God himself came to dwell with the people of Israel in their wanderings in the wilderness in the form of a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. For Christians, God’s dwelling became personal in the man Jesus. And yet the incarnation of God’s presence in Christ did not keep early Christian theorists from invoking the theme of indwelling in a

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57 See especially Strom. 5.13.88.1-3, 5.14.94.3-5, and Origen’s comparison of “reason in us” with the Word in Jo. 2.20, discussed in previous chapters.
58 “It is true . . . that Augustine goes beyond the Alexandrian practice of linking man as created ‘to the image’ [Egan’s translation of *kat’eikona*], with the Word alone as the image of the Father; but it should be noted that in Alexandria too there was some progress towards the point reached by Augustine. Cyril of Alexandria recognized that being in the image of God meant being in the image of the consubstantial Trinity, but he granted that our divine sonship is the mark of the Son in us” (Egan, 177). Egan points to Cyril’s *De dogmatum solutione* 4 in order to support this statement, but he could have chosen a number of passages from Cyril’s work to make the point. He refers to the translation by Walter J. Burghardt, *The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria* (Woodstock, MD: Woodstock College Press, 1957), 123.
Platonizing sense: God may “dwell” here and now in Christian temples and even bodies, but the dwelling is always from elsewhere.

Such broad strokes are not misplaced. Jews and Christians did long for another world. Many even claimed already to live with at least one foot in that other world, awkwardly juxtaposed with and not reducible to this one. It was not only, however, Platonizing “mystics” who could speak of “divine indwelling.” With their naturalism, alleged materialism, and strict adherence to practical morality, Stoics are not the first school to come to mind at the mention of the theme of “divine indwelling.” Yet Seneca, in a short Epistle, places at the heart of his moral psychology a theory of divine indwelling. There is an inexhaustible source at the heart of the virtuous sage, he says. The source is virtue itself, and the sage’s possession of virtue is an unending source of divinity. The Stoic message is that the sage is able to possess virtue and never cease to be virtuous.

Seneca instructs his addressee, Lucilius, not to seek something from him “when you can acquire it from yourself.” Stoics do not need to offer prayers, Seneca explains, because “God is near you, he is with you, he is within you.” Stoics had developed a notion of self-reliance that turned the Sage in on himself as his own source of virtue.

Here is Seneca:

This is what I mean, Lucilius: a holy spirit indwells within us, one who marks our good and bad deeds, and is our guardian. As we treat this spirit, so are we treated by it. Indeed, no man can be good without the help of God. Can one rise superior


61 Seneca, Ep. 41.1-2. prope est a te deus, tecum est, intus est.
to fortune unless God helps him to rise? He it is that gives noble and upright counsel. In each good man “a god doth dwell, but what god know we not.”

The God that dwells within is the only God capable of counseling the troubled mind that virtue is better than fortune. There is a space in the soul, Seneca suggests, where this God dwells, and which is comparable to a sacred grotto or a pagan temple, “a place not built with hands but hollowed out into such spaciousness by natural causes.” The “spirit that is within us” is like this space in nature. Seneca describes one in tune with that spirit, the Stoic Sage. The mere appearance of such a person will result in our reverence for him:

If you see a man who is unterrified in the midst of dangers, untouched by desires, happy in adversity, peace amid the storm, who looks down upon men from a higher plane, and views the gods on a footing of equality, will not a feeling of reverence for him steal over you? Will you not say: ‘This quality is too great and too lofty to be regarded as resembling this petty body in which it dwells? A divine power has descended upon that man.’ When a soul rises superior to other souls, when it is under control, when it passes through every experience as if it were of small account, when it smiles at our fears and at our prayers, it is stirred by a force from heaven.

Here Seneca’s description of the sage’s *apatheia* is familiar enough to those acquainted with Stoicism. The Stoic Sage is his own source of virtue: the sage attains virtue *through himself*, as Seneca implies in his opening remarks to Lucilius. Yet in the lines that follow, Seneca’s Stoic proclivities give way to something slightly different. The Sage, Seneca says, is in touch with a divine source above, “stirred by a force from heaven.” He continues:

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62 Seneca, Ep. 41.2. *Ita dico, Lucili: sacer intra nos spiritus sedet, malorum bonorumque nostrorum observatory et custos; hic prout a nobis tractatus est, ita nos ipse tractat. Bonus vero nir sine deo nemo est: an potest aliquis supra fortunam nisi ab illo aditus essurgere? Ille dat consilia magnifica et erecta. In unoquaque virorum bonorum “(quis deus incertum est) habitat deus.*

63 Seneca, Ep. 41.3. *non manu factus, sed naturalibus causis in tantam laxitatem excavates, animum tuum quadam religionis suspicione percutiet.*

64 Seneca, Ep. 41.4-5. *Si hominem videris interritum periculis, intactum cupiditatis, inter adversa felicem, in medias tempestatis placidum, ex superior loco homines videntem, ex aequo deos, non subibit te venerationis eius? non dices, *“ista res maior est aliorque quam ut credi similis huic in quo est corpusculo positis”? Vis isto divine descendit; animum excellenter, moderatum, Omnia tamquam minora transeuntum, quidquid timemeus optamusque ridentem, caelestis potential agitat.*
A thing like this cannot stand upright unless it be propped by the divine. Therefore, a greater part of it abides in that place from whence it came down to earth. Just as the rays of the sun do indeed touch the earth, but still abide at the source from which they are sent; even so the great and hallowed soul, which has come down in order that we may have a nearer knowledge of divinity, does indeed associate with us, but still cleaves to its origin; on that source it depends, thither it turns its gaze and strives to go, and it concerns itself with our doings only as a being superior to ourselves.\textsuperscript{65}

Just a bit further on Seneca clarifies the identity of this great soul. It is “One which is resplendent with no external good, but only with its own. For what is more foolish than to praise in a man the qualities which come from without? And what is more insane than to marvel at characteristics which may at the next instant be passed on to someone else?”\textsuperscript{66}

At stake is the indefectibility of virtue. Seneca rules in favor of the Stoic preference for virtue over “external goods,” such as good fortune. But there is a tension at the heart of Stoic self-reliance, as Seneca belies belief in something like the “unfallen soul” doctrine associated, later, with Plotinus. The divine force, or power, descended upon the Sage is Reason (\textit{Ratio}).\textsuperscript{67} The great Sage’s mind remains fixed on the origin of his greatness, a divine source that stirs him to pursue reason. And though this greatness is not “external” (it comes from within) and is “his own,” it remains something that has “descended upon him” from above. There remains a deep tension in this picture: the Sage must get in tune with nature’s order, an order is not established by the Sage, and yet the Sage is supposed to be praised for something that is “his own,” not external to him.

\textsuperscript{65} Seneca, Ep. 41.5. \textit{Non potest res tanta sine adminiculo numinis stare; itaque maiore sui parte illic est unde descendit. Quemadmodum radii solis contingent guidem terram sed ibi sunt unde mittuntur, sic animus magnus ac sacer et in hoc demissus, ut propius [quidem] divina nossemus, conversatur quidem nobiscum sed haeret origini suae; illic pendet, illic spectat ac niitur, nostris tamquam melior interest. Quis est ergo hic animus?}

\textsuperscript{66} Seneca, Ep. 41.6. \textit{Quis est ergo hic animus? Qui nullo bono nisi suo nitet. Quid enim est stultius quam in homine aliena laudare? quid eo dementius qui ea miratur quae ad alium transferri proinus possunt?}

\textsuperscript{67} “Do you ask what this is? It is soul, and reason brought to perfection in the soul” (\textit{Quaeris quid sit? Animus et ratio in animo perfecta}); Ep. 41.8. Seneca’s speaking of a divine power “descending upon” a person is of course mirrored by Luke, which speaks of the Holy Spirit’s “coming upon” Mary.
It is helpful to view Didymus’ psychology as informed by the tradition Seneca illustrates. Didymus locates the source of moral excellence not in the soul itself, but in God, and God remains ultimately distinct from the soul. The source of moral excellence in the soul, according to Didymus, is the “seal” of Christ, the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit is a fully divine agent, the Holy Spirit has the divine office of serving as the source of virtue in the human soul. For this reason, each soul marked by the Holy Spirit is given a share in the Trinity and so becomes “Holy.”

To be holy is also to be virtuous. Didymus’s pneumatology implies that Christian life produces the fruits of virtue sought by Stoicism—the extirpation of the passions and the mind’s serene direction of the soul—but without recourse to the tension generated by the self-productive divine indwelling Seneca describes. Instead, according to Didymus, not only the Holy Spirit but the Trinity “indwells the rational soul.” Insofar as the Christian participates in this divine source, the Christian becomes virtuous. Without access to this divine source, the soul founders, failing to attain stability on its own.

Didymus does not reflect at length in On the Holy Spirit about all of the mechanics of moral psychology one might find in a Stoic handbook on the subject. The familiar terms φαντασία and ὁρμή do not appear, for example. However, a few glimmers of Stoic vocabulary do appear through the blinds of Jerome’s Latin, suggesting that Didymus has in mind a Stoic model for how the soul should operate. He is at least thinking in Stoic terms when he describes the kind of psychological serenity—peace and

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68 There are difficulties with using Seneca as evidence for Didymus’s knowledge of Stoicism. Not least of all is the fact that Seneca’s letters would not have been translated into Greek. If Didymus knew Stoicism firsthand, which is not improbable, he would have known it in Greek excerpts, not Latin. These would more likely have come from collections of Chrysippus or Posidonius, and more likely they would have been found in doxographies of mixed sources. Nevertheless, I use Seneca’s letter because it provides such a clear example of the kind of amalgamation of Platonic and Stoic themes that were possible in the period.
stability—achieved by the possession of the Holy Spirit. For example, Didymus describes the sanctified soul as a soul that has calmed its temptation to passion. The word Jerome uses to translate Didymus’s term for temptations, or disturbances, is *perturbationes.*

Didymus So says:

> God, the bestower of goods, in the power of the Holy Spirit grants the hope he promised to those who have the Spirit. With joy and peace he fills those who possess undisturbed, peaceful thoughts, and have minds joyful and calmed from every storm of the passions (*perturbationum*). Now whoever obtains the aforementioned goods in the power of the Holy Spirit also obtains the correct faith in the mystery of the Trinity.

Didymus here refers generally to the Stoic doctrine of *ἀπάθεια.* According to Didymus, peace of mind, or *ἀπάθεια,* and doctrine go hand in hand. God, Didymus says, gives the “promised Holy Spirit.” The substance of this hope is a serene mind, a soul undisturbed by anxious thoughts. Cicero explains that what the Greeks call *πάθη,* the Latin refers to as *perturbationes.* So here it is apt, as the translators have done with the English “passions,” to imply the presence, just beneath Jerome’s Latin, of the classic Stoic term for the emotions: *πάθη.*

Didymus draws the generally Stoicizing cast of his moral psychology from Origen. However, Didymus has provided the Holy Spirit a causal role Origen did not in

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69 *Perturbatio* appears at *Spir.* 44.5; 109.5; 110.12; 142.8; and 181.5.

70 *Deus autem largitor bonorum spem quam primisit reddit in virtute Spiritus Sancti his qui habent illum, et gaudio ac pace complet eos qui, imperturbatam et sedatam cogitationem possidentes, laetas habent mentes et ob omni perturbationum tempestate tranquillas. Qui autem in virtute Spiritus Sancti praedicta bona fuerint consecuti, etiam rectam fidem in Trinitatis mysterio consequentur* (*Spir.* 44). Cf. *Spir.* 181: “The wisdom of the flesh is directly linked with death and kills those who advance and are wise according to the flesh, but the wisdom of the Spirit bestows tranquility of mind (*tranquilitatem mentis*), peace, and eternal life on those who have it [Rom 8:6]. Those who come to possess it will trample under their feet all disturbances (*omnes perturbationes*), every kind of vice (*genera vitiorum,* and even the demons themselves who strive to suggest these things.”

71 Cf. Cicero: “...we prefer to apply the term ‘disorders’ rather than ‘diseases’ to what the Greeks call *πάθη*” (*quae Graeci πάθη vocant, nobis perturbationes appellari magis placet quam morbos;* Loeb trans., 339). Following this, Cicero casts his lot with a bipartite psychology he ascribes to Pythagoras and, “following him,” Plato.
producing a state of serenity in the soul. A relatively clear example of the kind of shift that has taken place from Origen to Didymus is evident if we compare Didymus’s statements so far with a statement in the opening lines of On First Principles, Book 1.

Against a Stoic position that characterizes God as a fiery substance, Origen writes:

> Let us rather consider that God does indeed consume and destroy, but that what he consumes are evil thoughts of the mind, shameful deeds and longings after sin, when these implant themselves in the minds of believers; and that he takes those souls which render themselves capable of receiving his Word and Wisdom and dwells in them according to the saying, “I and the Father will come and make our abode with him,” having first consumed all their vices and passions and made them into a temple pure and worthy of himself.\(^{73}\)

In this statement, the roots of Didymus’s psychology appear, but with an important omission. Origen quotes John 14:23, which has Jesus state that “I and the Father will come and make our abode with him.” This binitarian arrangement does not name the Holy Spirit as a divine entity that indwells. Origen makes it clear that the saints must “render themselves capable of receiving” God’s Word and Wisdom. Unlike the Stoics, for Origen, God is the agent of this purification (“[God] having first consumed all their vices and passions and made them into a temple pure and worthy of himself”). But Origen does not link divine purification to the presence and action of the Holy Spirit.

*The Distinction of Spirits and the Possibility of Angelic Indwelling: Zechariah 4:5*

With Didymus’s pro-Nicene pneumatology and attendant psychology in view, we may turn briefly to a consequence that follows from Didymus’s clear distinction between the Holy Spirit, which brings about the soul’s purification and serenity, and the human spirit. Apparently some ascetics with which Didymus was familiar were teaching that

\(^{73}\) *Princ.* 1.1.2; Butterworth trans., 7-8.
angels could “indwell the soul.” Given the prevalence of the idea of demonic possession and the fact that demons were “bad angels,” the idea of “angelic indwelling” is not strange. Athanasius notes that his opponents use Zechariah 4:5 to argue that the Holy Spirit is an angel that indwells the soul of the prophet. The verse states, “Thus says the angel who speaks within me.” Athanasius’s opponents, he claims, infer from this statement that “the angel who speaks within [the prophet] is the Spirit.”

John 16:13 famously declares that the Holy Spirit will “lead you into all truth,” and, though Athanasius does not quote John 16:13, it is easy to see how John 16:13’s mention of the Spirit as the guide to truth could have been identified as Zechariah’s angelic interpreter.

Athanasius argues against this interpretation by asserting that the angel speaking within the prophet is not the Holy Spirit. He cites the following two verses, in which Zechariah has a vision of a lampstand. The verses include a statement that “‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, saying: ‘Not by great power, nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty.’” From this Athanasius concludes:

It is obvious that the angel who spoke within the Prophet was not the Holy Spirit. For the angel was an angel, but the spirit was the Spirit of Almighty God, to whom the angel ministers and who is inseparable from the divinity proper to the Word.

Athanasius refers to an argument from a few lines earlier that, because Gabriel announces to Mary (Luke 1:35) that “the Holy Spirit will come upon you,” the Holy Spirit and the Son are “ministered to” by the angel Gabriel. This implies that the Holy Spirit should not be identified with the “ministering spirits” mentioned by Scripture. So also in this passage, Athanasius argues, the Holy Spirit is ministered to by the angel that interprets the vision to Zechariah, and so cannot be identified with that angel.

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74 Serap. 1.11.2.
75 Serap. 1.11.4.
Didymus does not address Zechariah 4:5 in *On the Holy Spirit*. When he does, in his *Commentary on Zechariah*, his response is different from Athanasius’s, but the difference probably reflects a shift: the polemical threat of angelomorphic pneumatology has disappeared. The distinction between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit, which once would have required an argument, now appears as a foregone conclusion. Didymus writes:

> the message that the angel gives to the prophet is not given with great power or with human strength or anything else: it is said and made clear by the Spirit of the Lord. Now, the Holy Spirit of the Lord is repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures, including the Scriptures beyond the passage in hand. The statement is made of him also in Isaiah, for example, in these terms, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for whose sake he anointed me.’ In similar terms the apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Corinthians, ‘What human being knows what is human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is God’s except the Spirit of God, who searches even the mystical depths of God.’ And again in Isaiah the one who is the origin and caretaker of all things says, ‘A spirit will come forth from me.’

Didymus lays out a few verses that distinguish clearly between the Spirit of God and the human spirit. Paul’s case is especially clear. There is a human spirit, Paul says, and the Spirit that searches the innermost mysteries of God. These two are not the same. But Didymus presumes that this is so and does not feel the need to make a case. The shift only confirms Doutreleau’s dating of the *Commentary on Zechariah* to the 380s.

However, reflected in Didymus’s remarks on this verse is a concern not for establishing that the Holy Spirit is divine, but that the human spirit and the Holy Spirit not be confused. Such confusion might lead the human being to suppose it is capable of

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77 Hill trans., FOTC 111:89; SC 83:348. Doutreleau dates the *Commentary on Zechariah* between 386 and 393 with the probable date of composition being 387, shortly after Jerome requested the commentary to have been produced by Didymus (Doutreleau, ed., SC 83:23-27; cf. Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, 109). There can be little doubt that Didymus had already written *On the Holy Spirit* when he came to comment on Zechariah 4:5.
more than it is. The human soul must know its limits. On this point, Didymus’s exegesis comports with the moral psychology of *On the Holy Spirit*. Didymus states that

it was by this Spirit that what was shown in the sight of Zerubbabel was made clear, not by the great power or strength of any created person; of a different kind is the power conferred with the Spirit to those who are worthy, the savior saying of it to his disciples in the Acts of the Apostles when ascending to heaven and to his Father, “You will receive power from the Holy Spirit coming upon you.”

Didymus notes that the savior promised that the Holy Spirit would descend upon them from on high (Acts 1:8). He then cites several instances, as though to prove that the donation occurred, in which the Holy Spirit is responsible for transmitting divine power to a prophetic or wise figure in Scripture, whether Paul (1 Cor 1:24), John (unknown citation), or Mary (Luke 1:35). He concludes that “it was with the Spirit of god mentioned in the passages cited . . . that the announcement was made in the presence of Zerubbabel and of the power associated with him, and not with any other great power and strength, which would be inferior, even if divine and much to be desired.”

*An Anti-Manichaean Commonplace*

The idea that an angelic presence might descend upon a monk and possess him, giving him great insight or wisdom, is understandable in the context of Egyptian monasticism. Such an experience is even more intelligible if the lines between the Holy Spirit and the angelic host had been blurred, since Scripture speaks frequently of the “indwelling” of the Spirit in human beings. Furthermore, Alexandrian asceticism aims to become like the angels, if not to become angelic. How better to become an angel than for

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79 Hill trans., FOTC 111:89; SC 83:348.
81 Hill trans., FOTC 111:90; SC 83:350.
an angel to come to rest within one’s soul? By the same token, if a virtuous angel could “dwell in” the soul, it might also be possible for a bad angel to dwell in the soul. In other words, it might be possible for a bad monk to be characterized as inhabited by a demon. That sort of “indwelling” might in turn be viewed as generating a psychological situation beyond repair.

Didymus uses his pro-Nicene pneumatology to support an “anti-Manichean” moral psychology. His moral psychology is “anti-Manichean” in the sense that it draws on existing anti-heretical literature, which portrays Manicheans as teaching that it is possible for a soul to become evil “essentially” as opposed to “accidentally.”

Near the end of On the Holy Spirit, Didymus reminds the reader that “we argued above that the soul and mind of a human being cannot be filled with a created thing according to substance, but by the Trinity alone, since the mind is filled with created things only according to activity and the will’s error or virtue.” He then responds to an objection. Someone worried that “there is a created substance called Satan in the Scriptures that enters into certain people and is said to fill their heart.” Didymus asks:

How can Satan fill the mind and commanding faculty of someone without entering into him and into his mind and (so to speak) without stepping through the doorway of his heart, since this power belongs to the Trinity alone?

So Didymus dismisses the example of Acts 5:3, and turns to the case of Judas, in John 13:27. He explains the case as follows:

[264] Therefore, when this thought occurred to Judas, it gave Satan the opportunity to enter into his heart and fill him with the worst kind of will. Yet he did not enter according to substance, but rather according to activity, since entering into another belongs to the uncreated nature which can be participated in

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83 Spir. 257.
85 Spir. 258.
86 Spir. 260.
by many (*quia introire in aliquem increatae naturae est et eius quae participetur a pluribus*). The devil is not capable of being participated in, seeing that he is not the Creator but a creature. For this reason too, being capable of change and alteration, he fell from holiness and virtue. [265] We said above that τὸ μεθεκτόν (that is, “that which is received by participation”) is incorruptible and immutable and consequently eternal, but that which is able to be changed is made and has a beginning. In addition, that which is incorruptible is everlasting whether one looks at ages past or ages to come. Therefore, it is not the case, as certain people think, that a person is filled with the devil or becomes indwelt by him through participation in his nature or substance. Rather, we believe that he indwells the person whom he fills through fraud, deception, and malice. . . . [267] If those who are called his sons in Scripture are not capable of receiving the devil through participation in his substance (for time and again we have shown that this is impossible for creatures), then no one else can receive him through participation in his substance, but only by adopting his most deceptive will. [268] After all, we have said that, in the case of creatures, activity and zeal can participate in works both good and bad. But the nature and the substance of the Trinity alone is able to enter into others.

Didymus here uses his definition of the Holy Spirit as “participated in, but not participating,” in order to distinguish between the Holy Spirit and the Trinity, as having a divine nature that can “indwell” or “enter into others,” and creatures, such as the devil, which cannot “enter according to substance, but rather according to activity.” Elsewhere in *On the Holy Spirit*, Didymus invokes this distinction to make the same point. He says:

> After all, it is possible for that which we have learned (I mean the virtues and the arts), and for the disturbances, ignorance and passions contrary to these, to dwell in souls, yet not as substances but as accidents. But it is impossible for a created nature to dwell in the mind.\(^\text{87}\)

In context, this statement is part of a proof that the Holy Spirit may “dwell in the mind” because the Holy Spirit is not a “created nature.” But the distinction between “accidental” and “substantial” indwelling is the same. The distinction depends upon an adaptation of the scholastic distinction between “substance” and “accident,” taken over from Aristotle. However, Didymus uses the distinction not with an Aristotelian sense of “substance” as a

\(^{87}\) *Spir.* 109.
particular thing, but with substance standing in for the kind of entity which can be
participated immaterially, as an intellectual cause.

Didymus knows an earlier tradition, drawn from Methodius by the unknown author
of a late third-century dialogue against Manichaean and Gnostic moral psychologies. In
the course of this dialogue, a figure named “Adamantius” opposes various versions of
psychological dualism, according to which there are two uncreated realities, one good
and the other evil. Adamantius argues against this dualism by appealing to a theory of
evil according to which evil can never be thought to be “substantial.” Here is an
important example:

All these things [such as murder, adultery, theft, immortality, and whatever the
Law forbids] are of an “accidental” nature. Murder is not substance, nor again is
adultery, nor are any of the similar evils. But just as the grammarian is named
from Grammar and the rhetorician from Rhetoric . . . , Yet neither Rhetoric nor
Grammar is substance, but it receives its name from those things which are
“accidental” to it, and from which it seems to be thus named, although it is none
of them, so, it seems to me, the substance receives its name from what are
considered to be evil results, though it is none of them. The producer of evil
results is called evil; yet what a man produces is not himself, but his actions, and
it is from these that he receives the designation “evil.” Should we say that he is
himself what he does, when he commits murders, adulteries, thefts, and all such
like things, he will himself be these things. Now if he is these things, and they
have existence only when they are committed, but cease to exist when they are
not committed; and furthermore if they are committed by men, men will be their
own makers, and conversely, the cause of their own non-existence! But if you
affirm that these vices are his actions, then Man is held to be “evil” because of
what he does, and not because of what he is in substance (ἐξ ὧν ποιεῖ τὸ κακὸς
eἶναι ἔχει, οὐκ ἔξ ὧν ἐστὶν οὐσία). We said that a human is called evil from things
that are “accidental” to his or her substance (κακὸν δὲ εἴπομεν λέγεσθαι ἀπὸ
σωμβεβηκότων τῇ οὐσίᾳ)—things which are not the actual substance just as a
craftman [sic] takes his name from his craft. Now if Man is evil as a result of what
he does, and what he does has a beginning of existence, then Man himself began
to be evil, and these evil things also began to be; but if this is so, Man was not
originally evil, nor are evil things uncreated (οὐδὲ ἀγένητα τὰ κακά), for they
prove to be created by him.88

88 W.H. van de Sande Bakhuyzen, ed. Der Dialog des Adamantius Περὶ τῆς ἐς θεὸν ὀρθῆς
πίστεως, GCS 4 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1901), 160–62 = De la Rue 847a; Robert A. Pretty, trans., Adamantius.
This elaborate proof serves an anti-Manichaean point that evil things are not without a beginning, and that beginning lies in the action of the human soul. Notice that “Adamantius” explains that the person who commits an evil act should not be identified with that evil act. There is an indelible distinction between vices as “actions” and the person held accountable for those actions because of what he does, and not because of what he is in substance. The distinction between the substance of a person and that person’s evil actions allows “Adamantius” to prove that “Man was not originally evil, nor are evil things uncreated, for they prove to be created by him.”

Didymus appears to have drawn on the tradition represented by this dialogue. However, Didymus provides the “anti-Manichaean” reasoning of “Adamantius” with additional theological coherence: Didymus shows that pro-Nicene theology counteracts the extreme case of the Devil himself “indwelling” a human soul and the possibility of a monk’s “demonization.” Didymus’s pneumatology prevents this possibility by rendering evil as incapable of substantial existence. According to Didymus, neither the Devil nor sin can reside in the soul in the same way that the Trinity does—“substantially.” Important consequences follow from this, not the least interesting of which is that no monk, however tempted or withdrawn from the Holy Spirit’s presence, can become pure evil. And yet, paradoxically, no good monk can ever claim to be the cause of goodness in his own soul: that honor belongs to the Spirit alone. The effect of Didymus’s moral psychology precludes two dangerous extremes in an ascetic context: the possibility that a monk might ever be beyond hope of conversion, and so a temptation to demonize other monks; and the possibility that any good monk can claim ultimate responsibility for his own goodness. That honor belongs to the Holy Spirit alone.
Conclusion

Regarding the resemblance between the Trinity and the human soul, a decisive turn in Alexandrian theology took place with Didymus the Blind’s *On the Holy Spirit*. Didymus’ argument that the entire Trinity—and not just a single “member” of the three—indwells the human soul, reformulated Alexandrian tradition according to pro-Nicene standards. Didymus’s pro-Nicene pneumatology precludes humanity’s self-purification and resists the reduction of any soul’s vicious inclinations to that soul’s essence. Didymus puts his theology of trinitarian indwelling to the service of an anti-Manichean point: no monk can become identified with vice beyond hope of restoration to the shape of the divine image. In this way, Didymus contributes to a consensus view on the Holy Spirit which establishes a deep and widely held grammar of “participation” stretching back to Origen.
Conclusion

In this study I have argued two points. The first regards the consequences of “participation” for Origen’s theology and pneumatology; the second concerns the nature of Didymus’s “correction” of such dynamics for a new period in Christian theological development. These two points, taken together, trace a shift from Origen to Didymus. With Origen, it is possible to believe that the Holy Spirit “participates in” the Son, and that the Son “participates in” the Father. With Didymus, no member of the Trinity “participates in” any other; instead, all created beings “participate in” the Trinity as a unified divine cause.

I have argued that Origen adapts philosophical tradition prior to him in order to oppose a contemporary threat to what he considered to be Christian orthodoxy. Origen opposed monarchian theology by distinguishing between the Son and Father, and the Spirit and the Son, with a grammar of participation that ranged the three hypostases in a tiered hierarchy of successive causes (Chapters 1-3). This arrangement yields a low pneumatology, which borders on being angelomorphic (Chapter 4).

An important feature of this first argument is that I have argued for a “low” pneumatology in Origen by appealing to texts whose authenticity cannot be questioned, and which employ Platonic participation in the service of a tiered ontological scheme. Because these texts cannot be called into question in terms of later “tampering” by Origen’s friends or foes, I have isolated a fundamental dynamic in Origen’s thought. The dynamic is central, and it brings into focus a central feature of Origen’s theology: each trinitarian figure participates in that which causes its production. When Origen’s critics
accuse him of dynamics like these, we should take them seriously. On this basis, I have argued that at least some of the controversial fragments ascribed to Origen do not depart significantly from the spirit, if not the letter, of Origen’s original formulation. I have also forced a choice for Origen’s modern readers: one may either have a “philosophical” and anti-monarchian Origen, or one may have a non-philosophical and “proto-Nicene” Origen, but one may not have an anti-monarchian and proto-Nicene Origen. The final option is incoherent given the evidence brought forward in this study, but it is an incoherence not lacking in current accounts of Origen’s theology.

The second main argument of my thesis is that Didymus the Blind’s *On the Holy Spirit* represents a significant contribution to pro-Nicene theological development, for several reasons. Didymus transformed the way “participation” should be applied to the Trinity, in light of a shift in thinking toward “pro-Nicene” theology in the second half of the fourth century. Didymus not only avoided Origen’s graded hierarchy, in which the Holy Spirit participates in the Son, and the Son participates in the Father. He also offered a theological rationale for explaining texts which had been used to oppose monarchian theology, and which, in anti-monarchian tradition, produced dynamics similar to those exemplified by Origen. So, in Chapter 5, I argued that Didymus opposed the use of Platonist philosophy by Eunomius to argue that the Holy Spirit is “filled” with “instruction.” He opposed Eunomius’s application of Plotinus’s philosophy to the Holy Spirit by pointing to several key texts which characterize the Holy Spirit as “poured out,” and so identified the Holy Spirit as a non-participating cause. In Chapter 6, I showed that, in addition to arguing that the Holy Spirit should be considered fully divine, Didymus provided an argument, based on extensive exegetical foundations, for a doctrine of
inseparable operation of the three. Depending upon the dating of *On the Holy Spirit*,
Didymus’s argument for inseparable operation represents one of the earliest such
arguments in Greek pro-Nicene theology. Finally, in Chapter 7 I argued that, because
Didymus applies a pro-Nicene theology to his doctrine of the Holy Spirit, he is able to
clarify the Holy Spirit’s role as a transcendent cause of virtue in the soul. Didymus is able
to distinguish between the “human spirit” and the Holy Spirit to the effect that the soul
can neither purify itself nor find itself reduced to irredeemable evil. All of these
achievements result from Didymus’s re-ordering of Origen’s dynamics of participation
and his disavowal of any application of participation to the second or third persons.

So I have argued that Didymus corrects a central tendency at the heart of Origen’s
theology of the trinity. Several consequences follow. One concerns scholarly readings of
Origen’s theology; three have to do with scholarship on fourth-century doctrinal
development. First, then, consider the reading of Origen’s theology for which I have
argued. It is not without precedent in scholarship. Previous scholars have pointed out
Origen’s indebtedness to Platonism. And many earlier readings have been ready to
acknowledge the plausibility of Jerome and Justinian’s allegation that Origen taught a
hierarchical trinity which produces necessary difficulties in light of a pro-Nicene

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89. In fact, almost no scholar has *not* recognized Origen’s debt to “Platonism,” though two
observations bear keeping in mind. First, it is so common to claim that Origen “Platonizes” that, while
claims to that effect are not meaningless, they do necessitate further qualification and clarification. What,
exactly, does any given scholar actually mean by referring to Origen as “Platonizing”? I have tried to offer
a precise account of my own terms in this regard. Second, all too frequently, such acknowledgments have
resulted in bizarre statements that imply not only that Origen *might* represent currents contemporary with
Plotinus, but also that he certainly was *influenced* by currents of “Neoplatonism.” This in spite of the fact
that Neoplatonism’s founder, Plotinus, only set pen to paper a year before Origen’s death in 254 CE. I have
tried to distance my own account from such anachronistic treatments. See, for example, Salvator R.C. Lilla,
“The Neoplatonic Hypostases and the Christian Trinity,” in *Studies in Plato and the Platonic Tradition:*
However, at present several scholars have offered what I would call a neo-Crouzelian approach to Origen. Henri Crouzel was no mean scholar, and his own reading of Origen’s theology is as deeply informed by Origen’s texts as it is debatable. But Crouzel was intent on downplaying the consequences of Origen’s debts to Platonism—especially those debts which produce a hierarchical trinity. In short, Crouzel wanted an Origen simultaneously both anti-monarchian and proto-Nicene.

My analysis of Origen confronts Crouzel and his latter-day heirs. The argument in the first part of this dissertation was developed in order to persuade such heirs, who read Origen’s trinitarian theology non-philosophically, that such readings contain inherent difficulties. Origen’s grammar of participation is the heart of this issue. Those convinced by my presentation will hopefully revise their own claims about Origen’s hierarchical trinity. It was a central feature of his thought and was part and parcel with his response to monarchian theology.

Turning to Didymus, consider the following points of departure for further investigation. First, if it is true that Didymus was offering a pro-Nicene theology of the Holy Spirit as early as 360, then this dissertation has placed Didymus’s contribution in view for further studies to take more seriously Didymus’s role in the development of theology in the crucial period 360-380, when the Cappadocians were at work developing

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90 See, for example, Nigel Rowe, *Origen’s Doctrine of Subordination: A Study in Origen’s Christology* (New York: P. Lang, 1987). Throughout this study, I have avoided speaking of Origen’s “doctrine of subordination” (if I have not always avoided the word “subordination”—which Origen does use) because I think doing so takes a step too far toward anachronism. To acknowledge a hierarchical ordering at work in Origen’s thought is one thing; to insist on his “subordinationism” implies an awareness I do not think Origen had. For him, the question of hierarchical orderings as potentially threatening the “full divinity” of the Son was not raised as an issue in the way that it later would be, and just so, to speak of “Origen’s subordinationism” takes a reading from historical to normative theology.

91 I have in mind especially Christopher Beeley, Sarah Coakley, and Ilaria Ramelli, who in the last decade or so have offered relatively influential readings of Origen’s trinitarian theology which exhibit the tendency epitomized by Crouzel.
a pro-Nicene consensus that would be inscribed in the Constantinopolitan Creed. Didymus influenced Basil on exegetical matters related to Basil’s debate with Eunomius. We do not need to overstate the significance of Didymus’s influence in order to wonder whether Gregory of Nyssa or Gregory of Nazianzus might also have availed themselves of Didymus’s endeavors. Gregory of Nazianzus studied in Alexandria and may well have encountered Didymus personally. Too many scholars have dismissed out of hand possibilities like these, and my description of Didymus’s theological contribution is meant to enable other scholars to provide more traces of Didymus’s influence on theologies of more widely influential figures from the period.

Second, we should take more seriously the possibility that Didymus influenced Rufinus’ version of *On First Principles* in areas related to trinitarian doctrine, as well as related matters in Jerome’s biblical commentaries. Didymus’s influence on Ambrose is well known. That he may have indirectly influenced Augustine is an afterthought in the minds of the few who would even entertain it. But Didymus’s influence in the Latin West promises to be an interesting subject for inquiry. We know, for example, that Jerome’s translation of his *On the Holy Spirit* enjoyed a wide circulation in medieval witnesses in the West. How much more of Didymus might lay behind major figures in the West is a question worth pursuing. John Cassian comes to mind, as does Gregory the Great, among others.

Finally—and related to the question of Didymus’s influence—is the matter of the authorship of the Pseudo-Athanasian *Dialogues*, Pseudo-Basil’s *Against Eunomius* (IV-V), and the anonymous *On the Trinity* associated with Didymus. There can be little doubt that whoever wrote these works borrowed from Didymus’s authentic corpus, if not from
his personal tutelage. By contextualizing Didymus’s *On the Holy Spirit* within an arc from Origen to the latter part of the fourth century, I hope to have provided others a better position for exploring similarities between *On the Holy Spirit*’s polemical context and exegetical moorings to those of pseudonymous (and anonymous) fourth-century literature. Further studies should revisit the question of authorship in order to carry the work begun by Alasdair Heron to completion; these nebulous texts should find speedy translation into English so that they can receive more attention than they have enjoyed to this stage. At the very least, I hope to have shown that Didymus’s thought is sufficiently compelling, in terms of the doctrinal debate of his own day, to warrant another look as a figure worth considering on his own terms.
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