(No) Sympathy for the Devil?

Love of Spiritual Adversaries in the Writings of Didymus the Blind

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Abstract

As a successor and strong supporter of Origen, though not an uncritical one, Didymus the Blind has long been presented as advocating controversial theological views, notably the apokatastasis. Along with Origen and Evagrius, Didymus' views on this were condemned by the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553 CE. In order to better understand Didymus' theology, it is important to consider his notion of spiritual conflict and its ramifications for the friends and enemies of God. The purpose of this paper is to examine Didymus' theology of enmity with God, in particular his interpretation of key biblical passages that indicate certain characters as enemies of God, namely Satan, the demons, and Judas Iscariot. The paper will address such questions as should Christians have any sympathy for Satan and the demons? Was Judas' betrayal merely the selling out of Jesus based on greed, or was there a deeper betrayal of the teacher-student relationship? How do God's enemies contrast with Didymus' understanding of the friends of God? In addition to considering Didymus' exegesis of these characters, the paper will examine his treatment of the New Testament command to love one's enemies. Didymus' doctrinal and exegetical texts will both be considered to establish his theology of spiritual conflict. Finally, these considerations will be contextualized within Didymus' own theological milieu, where the blind scholar seems to be aware of mounting criticism of his theology, perhaps by his own students, and even possibly the conflicts swirling around several of his prominent former students (Evagrius, Jerome and Rufinus).

Keywords

Didymus the Blind – love of enemies – Satan – Judas Iscariot – teachers

Before initiating a discussion of Didymus' theology of love for spiritual adversaries, it is important to note that this paper is related to a larger project that has been in development for the past five years dealing with how Didymus portrays Christian teachers as the friends of God. The genesis of the project lies in teaching an undergraduate introduction to philosophy course, where students are encouraged to consider the meaning of love, friendship and happiness through reading selections from Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas in conjunction with several modern authors on these themes. As a result of reading and reflection on these thinkers, particularly Aristotle and Augustine, Didymus' theological enterprise appeared in a new light. It was noticed that his writings are replete with references to the friends of God, whom the Alexandrian master seemed to be presenting as models of the ideal Christian teacher, whether that friend of God was an Old Testament patriarch like Abraham or the Law-giver Moses, a prophet like David, Job or Daniel, a New Testament apostle like Peter or Paul, or a saint of Didymus' living memory such as Athanasius or Anthony. In each case, Didymus repeatedly proposed that these friends of God were model teachers because they had attained contemplation of the divine mysteries, and then, had lovingly condescended in order to teach the truth to others. In this way, the friend of God is one who imitates the Divine Teacher, Christ, who philanthropically drew near to sinful humans for the sake of their salvation. Therefore, the highest attainment of Christian discipleship is not found in contemplation of the divine mysteries alone, but in the compassionate sharing of those mysteries with others in the service of building up souls for the kingdom of God.¹

There is a delicate theological nuance here that hints at Didymus' continuity with the Alexandrian tradition and originality among his contemporaries and could help explain his enigmatic position as an urban teacher of Christian monastic philosophers driven to seek solitude in the desert who were reluctant to bear the burden of teaching simple believers. In late antiquity, there

1 Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation*, trans by J. Behr, (Popular Patristics Series, 44a), Yonkers, NY, 2011, pp. 52–53, 58–59, 66–67, 76–77, 82–85, 98–99, 122–123. Athanasius stresses that the Savior's philanthropy heals the corrupt mortal body and the wounded soul whose choice is hindered by failure to know the truth. Since the biographical traditions about Didymus locate him exclusively in Alexandria, and directly link him to Athanasius, an emphasis on divine philanthropy provides further strength to the relationship between the bishop and teacher, though both certainly drew upon the Christian tradition about God's philanthropy already present from the time of Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 1.74.1–4 and *Protr.* 1.6.3, 2.27.3, 9.82.2, 10.104.3). For the theme of divine philanthropy in early Christian writings, see H. Rhee, "Philanthropy and Human Flourishing in Patristic Theology," *Religions* (Nov. 2018), pp. 1–21, vol. 9, doi:10.3390/rel9110362; sadly, Rhee's article does not discuss the role of philanthropy in the works of Didymus.

are numerous examples of elite, educated Christians who were eager for contemplative study but resistant to taking the practical role of guiding others more novice. By emphasizing teaching of the lowly as the pinnacle of the Christian life, Didymus could be critiquing this trend in favor of solitude or prestige.² This would put him in conjunction with bishops like Athanasius and Basil who actively sought out monks for ecclesial leadership, especially as they were theologically effective in opposing heretical teaching. If this was true, it could be one more reason that Didymus remained in the city of Alexandria for his lifetime and gained the reputation for being the head of the catechetical school there. Sadly, the full originality of Didymus will remain difficult to establish due to the lack of biographical information that would reveal his own self-understanding in relation to other Christian intellectuals of his time.

Assuming that the true friend of God is one who mimics Christ the Teacher, it is now possible to consider how Didymus the Blind theologizes the love of spiritual enemies.³ This paper will begin with a description of what constitutes enmity with God as Didymus understands it. This will require some brief discussion of his theology of sin and will be followed by two examples of scriptural and extra-biblical examples of the enemies of God whose character reveals the danger of the enemy mind, namely Judas Iscariot and the Devil, also known as Satan. Then, the paper will elaborate on how Didymus interprets the Christian command to love one's enemies.⁴ This will shed some light on his view of the potential for the Devil's salvation, suggesting that his proposal is quite nuanced, resembling the theories other Alexandrians like

2 Recently, B. Stefaniw has argued that Didymus served as a grammarian to young Alexandrian Christians, B. Stefaniw, "The School of Didymus the Blind in Light of the Tura Find," in: *Monastic Education in Late Antiquity: The Transformation of Classical Paideia*, ed. L. Larsen, S. Rubenson, Cambridge, 2018, pp. 153–181. For details about the relatively low status of most grammarians in late antiquity, see C. McNelis, "Grammarians and Rhetoricians," in: *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric*, ed. W. Dominik, J. Hall, Oxford, 2007, pp. 285–296.

3 It is well known that Didymus was familiar with the Shepherd of Hermas, whose dichotomy between the two "ways" may have given the blind Alexandrian inspiration to draw the distinction between the friends and enemies of God. See *Comm. Zach.* 1.42.24–44.20, L. Doutreleau, *Didyme l'Aveugle: Sur Zacharie*, 3 vols., (sc 83–85), Paris, 1962, pp. 395–397, footnotes 1&2. R. Hill (tr.), *Didymus the Blind: Commentary on Zechariah*, (FC 111), Washington, DC, 2006, p. 108, footnote 21, refers to Dourtreleau's point.

4 Although the love of enemies was discussed by many patristic authors, no modern scholar has given attention to this topic as it appears in the works of Didymus the Blind. This article will address this lacuna and will provide material necessary for further research on the topic. For more detail about patristic sources on the love of enemies, see R. Roukema, "Reception and Interpretation of Jesus' Teaching of Love for Enemies in Ancient Christianity," in: *Violence in Ancient Christianity: Victims and Perpetrators*, ed. A. Geljon, R. Roukema, Leiden, 2014, pp. 198–214.

Clement and Origen, as well as his own contemporary Gregory of Nyssa.⁵ It will conclude by making a few brief remarks about how Didymus' theology on these topics may have fit in with the broader historical circumstances in which he lived, especially the aftermath of the persecution at the beginning of the fourth century, the confusions caused by the Manicheans and Arians in the middle of the century and the theological disputes concerning the heritage of Origen at the conclusion of that century. By examining these issues, Didymus' theology will be seen to exhibit constant concern not to abandon outreach to the sinner and student, such that a spirituality of the teacher as friend to those oppressed by ignorance explains his commitment to suspect doctrines such as the pre-existence of the teacher's soul and the capacity of any rational creature to repent.

1 Didymus on Those Who Become Enemies of God, and the Nature of Sin

In his commentary on Psalm 31:12, Didymus says that the words "For all my enemies, I have become a mockery" can be referred to the person of the Savior as if spoken from the cross, just as Paul the Apostle had done with the words of Psalm 69:10 in his Letter to the Romans.⁶ Continuing to comment on Psalm 31, then Didymus succinctly states: "His (Jesus the Savior) enemies are those who sin. But it is said 'For when we were sinners we were reconciled.' (Romans 5:10) The sinner is the enemy of God; not that God is the enemy of him, for God is the enemy of no one."⁷ In this very simple distinction, Didymus has articu-

5 J. R. Sachs, "Apocatastasis in Patristic Theology," *Theological Studies*, 2 (1993), pp. 617–640. Although Didymus' theology is similar to Nyssa, it is not the intention of this paper to compare Didymus to any other early Christian author. Rather, the purpose of this paper is not to demonstrate Didymus' originality in relation to others, but to make his thoughts more available to other scholars so that further research might be conducted.

6 See Didymus' notes on Psalms from Tura, Egypt in *Comm. Ps.* 3.144.9–11; for the Greek text and the German critical edition of A. Gesché and M. Gronewald, *Didymos der Blinde: Psalmenkommentar, Vol. 3: Ps. 29–34*, (Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen 8 {hereafter abbreviated PTA}), Bonn, 1969, pp. 74–85. See also: Psalm 69:10 "I am scorned by those who scorn you;" Romans 15:3 "The insults of those who insult you fall upon me." Biblical translations in English are from the NAB (1991 edition). The Tura documents are abbreviated as follows: *Comm. Eccl* (*Commentarii in Ecclesiasten*), *In Gen.* (*In Genesim*), *Comm. Job* (*Commentarii in Job*), *Comm. Ps.* (*Commentarii in Psalmos*), *Comm. Zach.* (*Commentarii in Zachariam*); the doctrinal works of Didymus are abbreviated as follows: *Man.* (*Contra Manichaeos*), *Did. Spir.* (*Liber Didymi De Spiritu Sancto*), *Trin.* (*De Trinitate*).

7 *Comm. Ps.* 3.144.13–15. Gesché, Gronewald, pp. 76–77.

lated with philosophical precision a truth about the Christian God and how the Triune God relates to all creatures, even those who freely opt to oppose and reject the Divine friendship. Each and every sinner has chosen, according to Didymus, to make herself or himself an adversary, an opponent, an enemy of God. Further on, following the exegesis of Psalm 31:13, a student interjects with a question that prompts Didymus to give greater clarification to his notion that enmity between God and sinners is a one-way affair, and his response introduces us to several of the larger concerns involved with how Didymus will explain the love of spiritual enemies. The student asks why the sacred text reads 'For all my enemies I have become a scorn?' Didymus responds:

He did not say 'for all people' (I have become a scorn), but (for) 'my enemies.' And the enemies are careless people who do not judge him (Christ) rightly, they are enemies according to their disposition. For he is himself the enemy of no one, though many are an enemy of him. 'Hear the word of the Lord, you who fear his Word, speak to our brothers, to those who hate you.' (Is. 66:5) Those who hate you are enemies, but you, he says, call them brothers, not merely with your voice, not only with words, but with a true intention, come meet the brothers with filial love in mind. And this is enmity, to possess the mind of an opponent.⁸

As these passages make clear, from the vantage point of God, there are no enemies since each person is lovingly created and desired by the Divine Trinity. The enmity is one-sided and originates from the rational creatures who improperly exercise their free will. And for Didymus, anyone who wants to be an imitator of Christ the Master Teacher must consider no person as an enemy. In this way the enemy mind is forsaken, and the struggle of the Christian spiritual life comes to involve actively opposing notions that entail our enmity with any other human being. But the condition of the sinner is far from simple in Didymus' theology. In order to understand this, we will briefly outline the process of sin in Didymus, which has been much explored in recent scholarship. After this, we will consider several biblical and non-biblical exemplars of sin that Didymus points to as the quintessential enemies of God.

When it comes to the central features of Didymus' theology of sin, Grant D. Bayliss' recent monograph, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind: A Fourth-Century Virtue-Origenism*, provides an excellent and extremely detailed

⁸ *Comm. Ps.* 3.145.3–7. Gesché, Gronewald, pp. 80–81.

discussion.⁹ This text devotes three lengthy chapters to the subject that include considerable review of the recent literature pertinent to situating Didymus' theology within its context. Bayliss gives a very good description of Didymus' four stage theory of how sin begins in a pre-passionate phantasm that is natural to all human beings and is not yet sinful; if it is not rejected, the fantasy grows into a passion that may develop into a disposition to pursue the fantasy, and this tends to eventually lead to the acting out in an evil way. Bayliss, in dialogue with several other contemporary historians of philosophy and theology, is able to demonstrate how Didymus' theory relates to notions of sin, and especially pre-passion, as found in Origen and the Stoics, but Bayliss also convincingly argues that Didymus introduces an innovation in order to address questions raised by the Apollinarian doctrine.¹⁰ But what is more pertinent to Didymus' theology of love for spiritual enemies is that not all sinners are the same – some are quick to repent, while others become obstinate in sin. It is the obstinate whom Didymus points to as the enemies of God most especially. And even more fascinating is Didymus' consistent refrain that the enemies of God are not to be abandoned, since we humans do not know their hearts as God does. Rather, his exegesis repeatedly emphasizes how Christ reveals the philanthropic God who was always mercifully inviting sinners to repentance, even Judas and the Devil who seem beyond mercy. This adds a pastoral dimension to the theology of Didymus and compliments his theoretical, philosophical understanding of the process of sin in the soul.

2 The Development of Spiritual Enmity and Examples of the Enemies of God

Given that the enmity with God is not a reciprocal hatred, Didymus nevertheless devotes considerable attention to the enemies of God, most especially Judas Iscariot, who is presented as the quintessential human sinner, and the Devil,

9 G. D. Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind: A Fourth-Century Virtue-Origenism*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015). Since our concern in this paper is with Didymus' perspective on spiritual enemies and the love of them, we will not attempt to analyze Bayliss' work, though it is thorough, well-argued and effectively presented.

10 Bayliss, pp. 175–238. Bayliss gives an excellent summary of the perspectives of R. Layton and R. Sorabji regarding development of the doctrine of sin until Didymus' time, but also draws attention to the fact that Didymus introduces innovations that highlight a desire to address contemporary Christological issues raised by the Apollinarians and challenges to free will raised by the Manichaeans, see especially pp. 215–220. For further consideration of this topic, see also the dissertation of B. Bennett, *The Origin of Evil: Didymus the Blind's Contra Manichaeos and Its Debt to Origen's Theology and Exegesis*, Ann Arbor, 1997.

whom Didymus treats primarily as the enemy of those humans that are striving for holiness and virtue.¹¹ But how does this enmity take shape and develop? In the case of Judas, Didymus shows that enmity with Jesus the God-Man is not something that suddenly emerged on the night of the Last Supper, nor in the final week of Jesus' earthly life, but rather took time to foment. A full treatment of Didymus' assessment of the Devil would require far more time than this brief paper allows, but we will outline a few of the features that make Satan unique among the enemies of God, as Didymus portrays them.

2.1 *Judas' Transformation from Disciple to Enemy of Christ*

The gospel character Judas appears regularly in the writings of Didymus. Research for this paper revealed discussions of Judas in his commentaries on Ecclesiastes (*Comm. Eccl.*), Genesis (*In Gen.*), Job (*Comm. Job*), Psalms (*Comm. Ps.*) and Zechariah (*Comm. Zach.*) and in his treatises *Against the Manicheans* (*Man.*), *On the Holy Spirit* (*Did. Spir.*), and *On the Trinity* (*De Trin.*).¹² While some of the references to Judas are short, Didymus' accounts in the *Comm. Eccl.*, *Comm. Job* and *Comm. Ps.*, as well as *Man.* and *Did. Spir.* provide the fullest expression of Didymus' description of Judas' growing enmity with Christ.

As was mentioned, several other scholars have examined how Didymus' interpretation of Judas drew on ideas previously expressed by Origen and in the philosophical psychology of some Stoics. These descriptions have focused on the issue of *propatheia*, largely because of the interest in how this aspect

11 Didymus is always at pains to avoid any hint that Satan is an equal to God, so, even though the Devil is clearly stated to be the enemy of God, the Devil is in no way capable of assaulting God, only the goodness of God's creation.

12 J. Hicks, *Trinity, Economy and Scripture: Recovering Didymus the Blind*, Winona Lake, IN, 2015. Hicks' monograph argues that *De Trinitate*, previously doubted to be from Didymus, in fact, is one of his authentic writings. Hicks is challenging the fascinating position put forward in three volumes by P. Tzamalikos, *A Newly Discovered Greek Father, Cassian the Sabaite, Eclipsed by John Cassian of Marseilles*, Leiden, 2012; *The Real Cassian Revisited: Monastic Life, Greek Paideia and Origenism in the Sixth Century*, Leiden, 2012; and *An Ancient Commentary on the Book of Revelation: A Critical Edition of the Scholia in Apocalypsin*, Leiden, 2012. The dispute about the authorship of *De Trin.*, while fascinating, is not a central concern of this article, since no references to this disputed work are utilized. Tzamalikos' work is clearly important for any scholar wishing to consider the reception of Didymus' theology, especially in the years immediately preceding the Ecumenical Council of 553 when Didymus' writings were condemned. However, this paper is about Didymus' theology in its fourth century context, and so does not attempt to speculate about why his ideas were deemed heretical in the two centuries following his decease. It is hoped that better appreciation of what Didymus was doing in the fourth century will illuminate his reception and condemnation in the sixth century.

of human existence, which these scholars link to the creaturely condition of all humans, is the locus where a person must either offer consent to the phantasm in the mind or resist it. Didymus was able to allow this pre-passionate phantasm to be the level where the Devil's temptation begins so that Christ Jesus would also have endured these moments, but without granting any consent; as such, Jesus was tempted, but without sin, and in Didymus' terminology, Jesus gave no room to the Devil's suggestions.¹³ In Didymus' schema, these pre-passionate thoughts are not sinful and only become so when a person fails to be vigilant in noting that the Devil has instigated an assault on the soul. If the temptation is not resisted, the Devil is able to implant his seed, and a passion or desire now begins to grow. At this stage, Didymus is still able to propose that the person who is gracefully vigilant will resist and the passion will be subdued.

However, a turning point arises once the person begins to entertain the passion, because at this point there is a change in the soul such that the potential for virtue, which is what the graceful vigilance keeps open, now begins to be choked off, and the potential for wickedness and vice now dominates the mind. At this juncture, although the soul is still free and could resist, the likelihood it would is diminished. Instead, the wicked, vicious passion has now become a disposition, and the sinner only lacks the opportunity in order to do the wicked deed in actuality. Once the heart (Didymus' term for the combined action of mind and will) has this disposition to commit a wicked deed, the actual carrying out of virtue has become nearly impossible, though he still affirms that it is better to stem the assault of evil at the level of disposition before it is acted out physically. And this is where we can now return to Judas as the quintessential sinner. The steps and psychic developments just described above are exactly what Didymus applied to Judas' betrayal of Jesus. Our goal is not in tracing these wicked developments in Judas' soul, but the particular aspect of Judas' sin that makes him the enemy of the God-Man.

2.2 *Judas as a Failed Disciple*

In *Man.*, Didymus says that we must not overlook that Judas was originally one of the Twelve whom Jesus desired to carry out His mission, and when Judas was among the other disciples, he, like them, was in a state of virtue, such that

13 Concerns among scholars about the doctrine of *propatheia* bear witness to the enduring interest in Didymus' Christological theology, since he lived through the era of the Arian and Apollinarian conflicts. While not ignoring these topics, the concern of this paper is more focused on how Didymus' praxis of exegesis is related to his presumed role of teaching future Christian teachers how to interpret and present the meaning of the biblical text.

Jesus described them as going out “as sheep among wolves.”¹⁴ Also, in *Comm. Job*, Didymus suggests that when it comes to being tested by the adversary who is called the Devil, this Satan typically does not contend with ordinary humans, but only those best prepared for spiritual combat, which Didymus claims is the Devil’s demand to sift only those who are God’s most virtuous intimates.¹⁵ In this case, Judas, like the other disciples, would have been one of Jesus’ virtuous, intimate friends, and so should have been prepared for the onslaught of Satan’s temptations.¹⁶ And like the other disciples of Jesus, Judas is being trained as a teacher to continue the mission of God by befriending sinners; indeed, since late antiquity emphasized mimetic pedagogy, this is exactly the model of teaching Christ presents for the disciples. Though one could argue that all the disciples failed when sifted by Satan, something went radically wrong with Judas; the question is why and what was the nature of the sin that separated Judas’ failure from that of the rest of the disciples?

Throughout his writings, Didymus consistently interprets scripture as anagogically narrating the spiritual itinerary of the person’s return to God, a sojourn marked with many pitfalls and obstacles raised against anyone who would strive to become virtuous.¹⁷ In order to justify this struggle for virtue among the saints, Didymus is fond of pointing to the letter to the Ephesians, chapter five, verses eleven and twelve: “Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the Devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood, but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens.”¹⁸ And the primary task of the saint seeking virtue is to vigilantly guard against granting Satan any ‘room’ or ‘space’ in the heart, meaning the soul possessing the capacities of thinking and willing.¹⁹ And it is in this regard that Judas’ failure emerges. In *Comm. Eccl.* (Eccl. 10:3–4) Didymus suggests that the Devil

14 *Man.* sections 5–6 and 19–20. For this paper, the English translation of *Contra Manichaeos* is found in the dissertation of B. Bennett, Ann Arbor, 1997, pp. 302–327.

15 The sifting of grain in the ancient world was a particularly violent endeavor by which the grain of wheat was literally beaten out of the chaff. Such a process could certainly be applied to the drawing out of virtue from Job through the devil’s assault.

16 *Comm. Job* 1.90.1–22 in A. Henrichs, *Didymos der Blinde: Kommentar zu Hiob, Vol. 1: Kap. 1–4* (PTA 1), Bonn, 1968, pp. 254–256; the English translation consulted for the first sections of *Comm. Job* are in the dissertation of E. Duffy, *The Tura Papyrus of Didymus the Blind’s Commentary on Job: An Original Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Donaldson, IN, 2000, pp. 131–132.

17 L. Dysinger, “Evagrius Ponticus: Exegete of the Soul,” in *Evagrius and His Legacy*, ed. by J. Kalvesmaki and R. Darling Young, Notre Dame IN, 2016, pp. 75–77, 89.

18 NAB, Ephesians 5:11–12.

19 In this case, Didymus refers to Ephesians 4:26–27, another of his favorite verses.

had been prowling about like a predator, lurking and carefully observing the disciples until Satan noticed that Judas' notions and activities signified that his heart was inclined to greed for money.²⁰ Because of this avarice, the Devil found a place to introduce to Judas the idea of betraying Jesus, his teacher, to the authorities for the sake of monetary gain, even though his Master had warned strongly that a person cannot serve two masters, God and money.²¹ But the fall of Judas is not simply about money or the physical pleasures it affords, and Didymus hints at this in several places. In *Man.*, section 5, Didymus says that Judas "became the son of destruction when he became the betrayer of the Son of God and Teacher," then, again, in the *Comm. Zach.*, while addressing Zachariah chapter three, verses one and two, Didymus says that once Judas left room, the Devil "put it into his heart to betray the person who had chosen him, both excellent teacher and Savior," and finally, in his treatise *Did. Spir.*, Didymus states that "through this opportunity for monetary gain, he became the betrayer of his own teacher and Savior."²² The betrayal of Judas was not simply one person turning over another to unjust authorities, it was a violation of what Didymus considered the most dear – the relationship of friendship that exists between the true teacher, the Savior Son of God, and the sinful human student; this then is the particular sin that sets Judas apart.²³

20 *Comm. Eccl.* 5.294.2–295.5 in G. Binder and M. Gronewald, *Didymos der Blinde: Kommentar zum Ekklesiastes*, Vol. 5: Kap. 9.8–10.20 (PTA 24), Bonn, 1979, pp. 78–85.

21 *Comm. Eccl.* 5.294.2–295.5. The same idea is found again in *Did. Spir.* section 263 in L. Doutreleau, *Didyme l'Aveugle: Traité du Saint-Esprit*, (sc 386), Paris, 1992, pp. 380–381 or Athanasius and Didymus, *Works on the Spirit*, tr. by M. Delcogliano, A. Radde-Gallwitz, and L. Ayres, Yonkers, NY, 2011, p. 224, also in *CM* section 5, Bennett, 1997, pp. 288, 308–309, and in the Prologue to *Comm. Job.* 1.3.34–4.30, Henrichs, 1968, pp. 32–35. Jesus' warning about God and mammon is Luke 16:13. The suggestion that Judas is a lover of money, of course, coincides with the philosophical misgivings of Plato and Aristotle, who had already linked the love of money to pleasure-seeking, just as Didymus will do throughout his writings, and it is the mistaking of pleasure for the good that often precipitates sin in Didymus' theology.

22 *Did. Spir.* 263, Doutreleau, pp. 380–381 or Delcogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, Ayres, p. 224. The issue of betrayal of a beloved teacher seems to have been an important feature of the controversy over Origen's theology that took place at the end of Didymus' lifetime between two of his former students, Jerome and Rufinus, when Rufinus accuses Jerome of previously praising Didymus, but then seemingly turning against the blind master, slandering him as an Origenist.

23 Commenting on Psalm 40:7, Didymus says that Judas' enmity to Jesus grew under the guise of fidelity, since Judas' malice toward Christ can be traced back into the ministry of Jesus prior to events in Jerusalem during Holy Week. See *Comm. Ps.* 5.293.13–27, A. Gesché and M. Gronewald, *Didymos der Blinde: Psalmenkommentar*, Vol. 5: Ps. 40–44.4, (PTA 12), Bonn, 1970, pp. 18–21.

In addition to suggesting that Judas' fall is particularly grave, Didymus adds that Judas has also enlisted himself with a new teacher, one who does not really have the best interests of Judas in mind, but is rather using Judas, duping him into desiring and imitating the intentions of the new teacher – Satan. And by joining himself to Satan, Judas is now receiving instruction for a different mission than that of Christ. In *Did. Spir.*, section 267, Didymus indicates that when Judas adopted the deceptive will of Satan, he became like all children of the Devil who imitate their father by desiring what the Devil desires.²⁴ Elsewhere, in *Comm. Zach.*, Judas has taken on the role described in Psalm one hundred nine, verse six “find a lying accuser to stand at his right hand,” so that Judas is now the instrument of Satan, he is actively engaged in trying to undo those who are being assisted and instructed by Jesus and the other disciples; Judas himself is now the adversary and accuser of Christ, doing the will of Satan his father.²⁵

This notion of the teacher as a spiritual parent coincides with the *Comm. Job* and *In Gen.*, where those who are called children, whether of Job or Abraham, are spiritually interpreted to be the disciples of the master, and also those who carry out the will of Satan are termed his children; in the *Comm. Job*, Didymus directly states that the virtuous hero recognized that both his wife and his so-called friends, who ostensibly come for the sake of comforting Job, are really the dupes of the Devil, who end up becoming Job's adversaries and unjust accusers, even though Job remains long-suffering of their ignorance.²⁶ As such, in the mind of Didymus, Job is not only the ideal ascetic and gnostic Christian, but more exactly the true friend of God, the Divine Teacher who stoops down to aid those trapped in ignorance and sin.²⁷ Along these same

24 *Did. Spir.* 267, Doutreleau, pp. 382–385 or Delcogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, Ayres, p. 225.

25 *Comm. Zach.* 1.42.24–44.20, Doutreleau, pp. 290–295. For the English, see Hill, pp. 66–68.

26 *Comm. Job* 1.4.5–7.26; 1.48.33–49.18; 1.55.33–56.11; 1.95.19–96.24, Henrichs, pp. 32–45, 152–155, 170–173, 268–271 and *Comm. Job* 4(1).321.13–16, U. Hagedorn, D. Hagedorn and L. Koenen, *Didymos der Blinde: Kommentar zu Hiob, Vol 4.I: Kap. 12.1–16.8a*, (PTA 33.1), Bonn, 1985, pp. 272–273; see also Duffy, pp. 84–92 and p. 137. The Prologue to *Comm. Job* makes explicit that Judas was an instrument of Satan, just as was the case of Hymenus and Alexander in 1 Timothy 1:20; the wife and friends of Job are discussed at length in commentary on Chapter 3, where the wife is likened to Eve, who was duped by the Serpent into misleading Adam, and the friends of Job are said to be the instruments of Satan to continue to test Job after the Devil has become worn out of the spiritual contest with the saint who will not give in to temptations.

27 R. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and his Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship*, Urbana, IL, 2004, pp. 56–84. Layton's monograph was ground breaking for Didymus' scholarship in English, and generally is excellent on most points, though some might wish to suggest that Didymus was not simply a gnostic contemplative who educated a few proto-monastic novices, but a teacher of Christian teachers, the

lines, in the *Comm. Ps.*, where Didymus interprets many passages as portraying the voice of Christ from the cross, the Blind teacher says that Psalm twenty six, verses two and three can be understood spiritually so that the reference is not to the physical organs of kidney and heart, but to the spiritual heart or mind and the intentions it contains since ideas can be thought to act like seeds in the minds of others.²⁸ He then comments that while we do not know whether Judas had any physical children, we do know that the betrayer's spiritual children are all traitors of the Truth, so that Judas is now the teacher of traitors and falsehood.²⁹

Finally, in his comments on Psalm 41:6 (40 LXX), Didymus confirms the interpretation of Judas' usurpation of a teaching role when he says that the verse 'my enemies spoke evil against me, (saying) when shall he die' applies to the Jews of Jesus' lifetime who had refused to acknowledge him as Lord and Savior, thus they were traitors to God's Truth in the God-Man, (and next they apply) to Judas who apostatized and became the father of treason, leading the others who seek to kill Jesus.³⁰ In this case, Judas has become the leader, even the teacher, of his own band of followers, namely the mob who came out to arrest Jesus. Didymus is therefore showing that Judas' betrayal entailed the attempt to usurp the role of teacher from Jesus.³¹ Didymus suggests that this is why Judas' greeting "Rabbi" accompanied by a kiss are a mockery of Jesus as a teacher who had done great service to Judas; even though Judas had been a student of Jesus, he failed to ever really be taught by Jesus.³² It is evident that Judas has come to consider his former teacher as an enemy, since he comes to Jesus at the front of an armed mob to whom he has given a secret signal so that Jesus can be taken by subterfuge without any possibility to respond, though Jesus would not have done so since he does not have an enemy mind toward Judas. Given the complex historical setting of fourth century Egyptian

friends of God, who were expected to provide interpretation of the bible and defend the orthodox rule of faith against heretical views.

28 Didymus, like other ancients, thought that reproductive semen was produced in the kidneys.

29 *Comm. Ps.* 2.93.10–16, M. Gronewald, *Didymos der Blinde: Psalmenkommentar, Vol. 2: Ps. 22–26.10*, (PTA 4), Bonn, 1968, pp. 156–159.

30 *Comm. Ps.* 5.292.16–26, Gesché, Gronewald, pp. 14–15. Elsewhere, Didymus makes clear that not all Jews are implicated in Jesus' death, because the disciples of Jesus were Jews, and they accepted him as Messiah.

31 The gospels show that Judas was not the only disciple of Jesus tempted to usurp the role of teacher; Peter had the same problem when he tried to correct Jesus' teaching about the necessity for the Messiah to suffer. This caused Jesus to proclaim: "Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." (Mark 8:33, Matthew 16:23).

32 *Comm. Ps.* 5.294.2–5, 18–32; 5.304.25–305.3, Gesché, Gronewald, pp. 22–29, 82–83.

Christianity, where Christian betrayed Christian, either to escape government persecution or to gain ecclesial power, Didymus is offering Judas' betrayal as a warning to would-be Christian teachers that Satan is constantly assaulting those God-friends who are initially tasked to mercifully teach the Gospel in imitation of Christ; often the enemies of God are those who previously followed Christ, such as apostates and heretics.³³

2.3 *Sympathy for Judas?*

Before concluding our consideration of Judas, we might ask if Didymus ever presents anything that might mitigate the view of Judas as a notorious villain and give us some sympathy for his plight. Several things might be considered. First, Didymus goes to great lengths to stress that Judas was not evil by nature and even was virtuous for a time when he served together with Christ in the company of the Twelve. In fact, Judas' sin was freely chosen, like all sin.³⁴ Second, in his comments on Ecclesiastes 10:4–6, Didymus says that Judas failed to notice that Satan was present in tempting him, or if he did notice Satan, then Judas was foolish to ignore the Devil's operations in his heart.³⁵ The folly of Judas is also noted in that though he was zealous in seeking greatness, he looked for it in the wrong place, such that he exchanged the greatness of piety for money and reward among men, accomplishing only great sin, not true greatness.³⁶ In the *Comm. Zach.*, Didymus says

the Hebrew term 'Satan' (means) 'adversary' in Greek. When understood in that sense, we are better off having the Devil as a foe and adversary, then as a friend: companionship with the devil is harmful and productive

33 There are several circumstances in Didymus' life to which these details of usurpation might be applied. Certainly, as a Nicene Christian and supporter of Athanasius, he could be referring to the several attempts to insert Arian claimants upon the Alexandrian see, Gregory of Cappadocia in the 340's and George of Cappadocia in the late 350's. It could also be referring to Aëtius and Eunomius, the extreme Arians who were in Alexandria during the reign of George of Cappadocia. Furthermore, Didymus might be referring to the controversies over the writings of Origen which embroiled two of his former pupils, Jerome and Rufinus, as well as several other of his theological acquaintances (Evagrius, Melania the Elder, perhaps the Tall Brothers, and the patriarch Theophilus), during the last years of his life. Because we cannot specifically date the commentaries of Didymus, our proposals must remain speculative, but there is certainly ample evidence for why Didymus would be concerned about usurpation by illegitimate teachers.

34 See note 14 above.

35 *Comm. Eccl.* 5.295.8–296.4, Binder, Gronewald, pp. 84–89.

36 *Comm. Eccl.* 5.295.8–296.4, Binder, Gronewald, pp. 84–89. See also *Did. Spir.* section 263, Doutreleau, pp. 380–381 or Delcogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, Ayres, p. 224.

of ruin. For example, the Devil was close to Judas and made him a son of destruction.³⁷

This almost sounds as if Judas was too lenient with himself and the Devil, allowing the Devil a comfortable space to reside in his soul, so much so that the Devil even became a friend.

Again, in the comments on Psalm 40:10, where Didymus says that the words of the passage can be taken as those of Jesus from the cross, we hear Judas referred to by Jesus as 'the man of my peace, whom I hoped for, has lifted up his heel against me,' in keeping with the words in Psalm 53:13–14 and Deuteronomy 13:7 that speak of 'one who had the same soul and sentiments' as the condemned person.³⁸ Here, Didymus stresses the intimacy between Jesus and Judas, on the one hand deepening the betrayal but, on the other hand, making Judas into a nearly tragic figure. Finally, in describing the death of Judas, Didymus suggests two possible interpretations of the ambiguous text of Matthew twenty-seven verse three "when he saw he was condemned." One way of reading the verse could mean 'when Judas saw that Jesus was condemned by Pilate, Judas greatly repented, and went and hanged himself.' Or it could also be read 'when Judas saw that he himself was condemned, after betraying such a great teacher, he greatly repented and so ended his own life.'³⁹

What is notable here is the self-destructive nature of sin that is openly visible in the death of Judas. Didymus seems to be inviting some sense of pity for Judas, who recognizes, too late, his own great sin. And though he repents, sadly, Judas maintains the role of accuser and judge, condemning himself as worthy of death, such that Satan's seed has borne its fruit in destroying God's creation. One can almost sense the anguish of Judas, the torment of his soul, at knowing he himself had betrayed and become the instigator of his true friend's death. In terms of the historical context, during Didymus' own century many people had lapsed when faced with persecution by the Roman authorities, so members of Didymus' audience might well resonate with the guilt of Judas' plight. Maybe Didymus knew some who had apostatized, and some who had been martyred for their faith. Though it is never explicitly stated by Didymus that sympathy should be extended to Judas, the blind teacher does seem to leave room for that. We must now examine the main outlines of Didymus' discussion of the Devil's enmity toward God to see if similar themes emerge.

37 *Comm. Zach.* 1.44.8–17, Doutreleau, pp. 292–294 or Hill, 2006, pp. 67–68.

38 *Comm. Ps.* 5.304.25–305.3, Gesché, Gronewald, pp. 82–83.

39 *Comm. Ps.* 5.293.30–294.1, Gesché, Gronewald, pp. 22–23.

2.4 *The Devil as the Enemy of God*

While Didymus' references to Judas are common enough, his discussion of Satan occurs on almost every other page of his writings; as such, a full account of Didymus' thoughts on the Devil is beyond the limited scope of this paper, but a few remarks will make clear that the enmity of Satan for God is similar to that of Judas, with one notable difference. Just as was the case with Judas, our considerations of the enmity of the Devil for God begins with the fact that the hatred of enmity is not reciprocal but originates with Satan's purposive choice to oppose the will of God. Didymus clearly states in several places that the Devil is not evil by nature, or according to substance, rather Satan was created as rational and good by God, capable of choosing virtue or vice.⁴⁰ However, as a rational creature, Satan is mutable and so is not in any sense equal to God.⁴¹

In the treatise *Man.*, Didymus argues that the heretic's position regarding God and the Devil is confused and contradictory. In section 29, he points out that the Manicheans try to maintain that Satan is evil by nature, but if that were so, then it would not be possible for the Devil to merit punishment, as the bible clearly suggests he does due to his own choice to do evil. Then the heretics try to make the Devil equal in power to God, who, as the only unoriginate

40 Didymus elaborates on this several times: *Comm. Job* 1.2.9–3.11, Henrichs, pp. 28–31, *Man.* sections 6, 18–21 and 26, Bennett, pp. 288–296, 309–316, and *In Gen.* 1.45.4–15, 1.108.26–109.14, P. Nautin and L. Doutreleau, *Didyme l'Aveugle: Sur la Genèse*, 2 Vols., (SC 233 and 244), Paris, 1976 and 1978, pp. 118–121, 256–257, or R. Hill (tr.), *Didymus the Blind: Commentary on Genesis*, (FC 132), Washington, DC, 2016, pp. 53–54, 106–107.

41 K. Plaxco, "Participation and Trinity in Origen and Didymus the Blind," in *Origeniana Undecima – Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought, Papers of the 11th International Origen Congress, Aarhus University, 26–31 August 2013*, ed. A. Jacobsen, Leuven, Paris and Bristol, CT, 2016, p. 773, footnote 16 reports that B. Bennett has an upcoming article on a fragment from Didymus' *De incorporeo* where Didymus "describes the nature of angels in such a way as to account for how it could have been possible for them to change." Plaxco says Bennett shared an English translation, but not the Greek, since it was in the process of editing and publication. Plaxco reports that this fragment "distinguishes between essence and judgment in order to explain the pre-temporal angelic fall. God (the Trinity) is immutable in essence and judgment. All creatures, however, are mutable in one or two ways: according to judgment (i.e. morally) and according to essence (i.e. physically). Angels, not having physical bodies, are only subject to moral mutability, whereas all other creatures are subject to physical mutability, and those of them with rational souls, i.e. humans, are subject to both moral and physical mutability. At one point the fragment explains that angels are necessarily mutable because "they possess the good accidentally but not essentially." This logic is predicated on the distinction between God and creatures that underwrites Didymus' pneumatology: God is participated in, creatures participate." This is very similar to what Didymus also says in the Prologue to *Comm. Job* 1.1.25–2.18, on the Devil's inequality with God, see *Comm. Job* 1.28.17–29.5, Henrichs, pp. 26–29, 98–101.

One, has the power to consign Satan to punishment in eternal fire; if God and Satan were equally unoriginate, then God would not be able to defeat Satan and impose this punishment.⁴² Conversely, the Manicheans seem to challenge God's immutability by proposing that God is too weak, since Satan's opposition to God began long ago and the punishment with eternal fire lies far in the future; in the interim, the Devil has time to torment the saints without God preventing it.⁴³ Didymus points out that this misreading has created a confused interpretation of Scripture. Instead, Didymus asserts that Satan's evil was not unoriginate. Rather the fall of angelic natures like Satan occurs prior to the creation of humans and should not be comprehended according to an earthly, chronological sense, since angelic beings have their beginning prior to time and space; these demons are used by God to test and purify the God-friends so that even in their wicked refusal to obey God's will, the fallen angels still are made to serve God's purposes.

By asserting that the Devil is a rational being, and given that rational beings are in some sense immortal as their nature is indestructible once created, Didymus does speculate that even the Devil retains the potential for virtue.⁴⁴ In spite of the fact that Didymus will be accused of maintaining the prospect of Satan repenting, it is much more common for the blind teacher to stress that the Devil is the father (and teacher!) of all evil and its author, the first to depart

42 *Man.* section 29, Bennett, pp. 296–297, 320.

43 *Man.* section 30, Bennett, pp. 297, 320. This misinterpretation is also the main concern of *Comm. Job*, where the unjust suffering of the saints is again treated at length because the friends of Job see that Satan has destroyed his health, wealth and family and assume this could only be the result of God's desire to punish Job's sin.

44 *Man.* section 30, Bennett, pp. 320–321. This is how Didymus opened himself to the charge of holding to the salvation of Satan. Here Didymus is not so concerned to have the Devil reach the state where “God will be all in all,” but rather to preserve the essence of the rational creature as possessing a good nature from God that is morally mutable. In other places, Didymus approaches the doctrine of Apocatastasis because he is trying to maintain the opportunity for repentance to all rational creatures against the Manicheans and Meletian rigorists. Didymus' doctrine about Satan bears some ambiguity similar to that found in Aristotle's description of the dissolution of a friendship when the friend becomes incurably wicked; the problem is when does a rational creature become incurably vicious? Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IX.3. The circumstances of sixth century theology that precipitated the condemnation of Didymus' writings, along with those of Origen and Evagrius, are not the concern of this paper, though it is hoped that this paper brings some clarification of Didymus' thought. The reasons for the Council's decisions in 553 are better located in that time period and have more to do with the reception of Didymus rather than his own teaching in its historical context.

from virtue, the arch-roguer, who is most worthy of being accursed and most worthy of punishment as God's enemy.⁴⁵

Although Didymus does specifically call the Devil God's enemy, the hatred of Satan is directed against undoing the goodness of creation, especially attacking the apex of God's creation, namely human beings. In *Comm. Job*, Didymus makes this abundantly clear, as he presents Job as God's champion in competition with the opponent of all who pursue virtue and heavenly citizenship.⁴⁶ And though initially the Devil seems to possess greater strength over the weak human opponent Job, the tables are quickly turned, and Satan's real weakness becomes obvious. One of the startling features of Didymus' *Comm. Job* is that it is said over and over that the Devil is only able to attack the saint with God's approval, since God will use the trial by Satan as a means to demonstrate the faith and virtue of his servant Job.⁴⁷ This reinforces that the Devil is never able to coerce a human opponent – Satan must rely on erroneous suggestions and persuasion to wickedness. This introduces how Didymus will present the Devil as a teacher who convinces dull students, the heretics and sophists, who then lead others to destruction through similar erroneous teaching.

2.5 *The Devil as a Teacher of Falsehood*

In *Comm. Job*, Didymus reveals the weakness of Satan's teaching by presenting the Devil as a rather poor thinker, inadequate in the basics of philosophy. For example, the Devil assumes his attacks on Job's family, property and body will cause Job to turn against God because Satan assumes that physical goods and pleasure are the only good things, or that all goods are the same.⁴⁸ And Didymus points out that philosophers are well aware that the good of virtue is far superior to any physical goods or pleasure; Job, as a wise teacher, knows this too.⁴⁹ Again, Satan wrongly thinks that because of Job's bodily existence, he is weak and never really worked to be virtuous, being either good by nature

45 *Comm. Job* 4(1).400 (fragment on Job 15:24b reconstructed from catenae) U. Hagedorn, D. Hagedorn, Koenen, pp. 182–183. See *Comm. Job* 1.31.4–5, Henrichs, pp. 104–105, or Duffy, p. 71, and *Comm. Job* 4(1).365.17–18, U. Hagedorn, D. Hagedorn, Koenen, pp. 130–131, and *In Gen.* 1.95.29–96.2, Nautin, Doutreleau, 1976, pp. 224–225 or Hill, p. 94, where the Devil is called *archekakon*; see *Comm. Job* 1.63.4–11, Henrichs, pp. 190–193 or Duffy, p. 99, where the Devil is the cause of the human fall, and *Man.* 28, 30, Bennett, pp. 319, 320–321, where the Devil is *echthros an theou*.

46 *Comm. Job* 1.2.18–31, Henrichs, pp. 28–31; Layton, pp. 60–70.

47 *Comm. Job* 1.23.18–33, 1.28.12–27, Henrichs, pp. 86–89, 98–101 or Duffy, pp. 65, 69.

48 *Comm. Job* 1.42.8–43.2, Henrichs, pp. 134–137 or Duffy, pp. 80–81.

49 *In Gen.* 1.97.24–98.13, Nautin, Doutreleau, 1976, pp. 228–231 or Hill, 2016, p. 96.

or a hypocrite.⁵⁰ Of course, for Didymus Satan's greatest failure is the refusal to accept the truth when it is presented; it is this obstinate state of mind that becomes characteristic of the Devil, and it is how Didymus links Satan to the enemies of the Israelites in the Old Testament who teach idolatry, the sophisticated teachers who opposed the philosophers, and the heretics who oppose the true teaching of the Church.⁵¹

Perhaps the best example of Satan assuming the role and behavior of a false teacher is found in the account of the serpent's conversation with Eve that Didymus interprets in *In Gen.*⁵² Here, the Devil is presented as one who conducts a Socratic dialogue with the woman, inviting her responses, but then proposing alternative meanings for what God had said. Didymus says Satan introduces to Eve the interpretation that God's real motive in forbidding eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is due to jealousy, because God did not want the humans to become like God.⁵³ And Didymus explicitly links this false interpretation to the origins of the gnostic heresy of the Ophites that regards the serpent as the giver of true knowledge of good and evil through the actual experience of evil-doing. Then Didymus notes that the Devil desires that the humans merely become theoretically competent in distinguishing good from evil but never actually practice virtue. Instead, the Devil seeks to make humans clever in evil-doing.⁵⁴ Didymus presents the Devil as persuasive, possessing hidden intentions, lavish in promising great things to Eve.⁵⁵ And because of the false ideas that Satan has implanted in her, the woman's reason is obscured so that she mistakenly judges what is pleasant as being good, with the result that she and Adam ate of the tree of knowledge and thus were stripped of virtue and had their eyes opened to the nakedness of all sinners, which is the vulnerability to punishment and shame at sinful behavior.⁵⁶ Additionally, Eve becomes the dupe of the Devil, and imitating her new teacher, she attempts to usurp the role of teacher from Adam, whom Didymus supposed was her first teacher.⁵⁷ Thus, just as with Judas, the Devil has duped an unsuspecting student into attempting to overturn the instruction offered by an elder teacher.

50 *Comm. Job* 3.284.3–16, U. Hagedorn, D. Hagedorn and L. Koenen, *Didymos der Blinde: Kommentar zu Hiob, Vol 3: Kap. 7.20c–11*, (PTA 3), Bonn, 1968, pp. 158–161; *Comm. Job* 1.20.29–22.11, A. Henrichs, 1968, pp. 80–85.

51 *Man.* section 34, Bennett, p. 322.

52 *In Gen.* 1.81.1–84.2, Nautin, Doutreleau, pp. 188–197 or Hill, 2016, pp. 81–84.

53 *In Gen.* 1.81.1–15, Nautin, Doutreleau, 1976, pp. 188–191 or Hill, 2016, p. 81.

54 *In Gen.* 1.81.16–20, Nautin, Doutreleau, 1976, pp. 188–191 or Hill, 2016, p. 81.

55 *In Gen.* 1.82.12–18, Nautin, Doutreleau, 1976, pp. 192–193 or Hill, 2016, p. 81.

56 *In Gen.* 1.82.22–83.19, 92.8–22, Nautin, Doutreleau, 1976, pp. 192–195, 214–217 or Hill, 2016, pp. 82–83, 91.

57 *In Gen.* 1.93.11–30, Nautin, Doutreleau, 1976, pp. 218–221 or Hill, 2016, p. 92.

Because Didymus has implicated the Devil as the primary teacher of lies and falsehood, it is not uncommon for him to present other false teachers as enemies of God.⁵⁸ As enemies of God, the heretics are frequently allegorized as the enemies of Israel who taught idolatry to God's people, while the kings of the nations (Assyria, Babylon, Egypt) are nearly always interpreted as Satan, who seeks to oppress the people of God without mercy. Finally, Didymus also indicates that the Devil and false teachers are fond of using the syllogisms of the sophists, proposing true starting points but then misdirecting the argument to a false conclusion.⁵⁹ Didymus therefore presents a direct line between idolatry and oppression of God's people by Old Testament villains, the sophist pretenders who undermined the true teaching of the philosophers, and the heretics of his contemporary Christian community who damaged the faith of God's people, all under the direction and formation of the Devil, the first teacher of lies.

2.6 (No) Sympathy for the Devil!

Before moving on to discuss how Didymus advocates for the love of spiritual adversaries, we must again ask if there is any indication of circumstances that might mitigate our viewing the Devil as the ultimate villain? In this case, even though Didymus speculatively maintains the mutable nature of created rational beings and so also the possibility of the Devil's repentance, he only ever suggests that the Devil is deserving of condemnation and punishment because Satan is always unrepentant. This is in contrast to the humans who are misled by Satan, such as Eve, the friends of Job, and even Judas, whom Didymus tends to interpret as repentant and most often reconciled to God by the aid of the saints. And there is a marked difference between Satan and those who have been duped by him – Satan does not really appear to be convinced by the lies utilized to mislead others, and there is never a suggestion that the Devil regrets misleading humans. Instead, like Pharaoh of Egypt in the Exodus account, or the king of the Assyrians, Satan is always presented by Didymus as hard-hearted, stubborn, resolved in opposition to God's plan and closed to any type

58 *Comm. Zach.* 2.127.12–137.9, 2.203.9–207.15, 2.222.8–29, 2.232.4–235.16, 2.250.21–252.8, 3.348.23–350.22, Doutreleau, pp. 494–515, 660–669, 692–695, 708–715, 742–745, 950–955 or Hill, 2006, pp. 140–148, 204–207, 217, 221–224, 234–235, 308–309.

59 *Comm. Zach.* 1.91.13–92.5, 2.140.16–141.11, Doutreleau, pp. 408–409, 520–523 or Hill, 2006, pp. 113, 151; *Comm. Job* 3.225.5–226.7, U. Hagedorn, D. Hagedorn, Koenen, pp. 42–45. See also Albert-Kees Geljon, “Didymus the Blind: Commentary on Psalm 24 (23LXX): Introduction, Translation and Commentary,” in VC 65 (2011), p. 63, where Didymus’ comments suggest that the Apollinarians used syllogisms like Sophists to intentionally deceive people.

of reconciliation with God.⁶⁰ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the evil spirits (Devil and demons) are merciless in their accusations against humans and never judge with compassion; as such, there is no hint that the Devil is worthy of any sympathy.⁶¹

3 Didymus the Blind on the Love of Spiritual Adversaries

In this final section, attention will be devoted to three of Didymus' writings that address the issue of love for spiritual adversaries: *Comm. Eccl.*, *Comm. Ps.* and *Comm. Job*. Each of these will be considered in order, then the paper will conclude with some reference to historical circumstances that likely impacted Didymus' ideas but are never directly discussed.

3.1 *Love of Spiritual Enemies in Comm. Eccl.*

In dealing with the words 'there is a time to love and a time to hate' from Ecclesiastes 3:8, Didymus posits that hate is clearly incompatible with loving someone, and, though on the one hand, someone who is loving is willing to kiss another, on the other hand, however, kissing and hating are not necessarily incompatible.⁶² The purpose for this line of logic is that Didymus wants to address the fact that Judas kissed Jesus without loving the Savior. Next, Didymus points out that one can theoretically know love and hate simultaneously, that is, one can have each in mind, distinguishing them, while practicing neither one.⁶³ However, if a person gives a nod to evil and hate, then the potential for good and virtue disappear, even if the evil is never actualized. This means that when a person has bitterness, anger or hatred within her or his mind, the ability to actualize a loving deed toward the person hated is gone. And as such, Didymus notes that there is a distinction between something that is desirable, and the thing actually being loved. This helps to make sense of

60 *Comm. Job* 1.96.19–24, Henrichs, pp. 270–271 or Duffy, p. 137. Didymus frequently distinguishes between those who are duped by deceivers and those who maliciously deceive the innocent, as he does with the friends of Job, who speak against God's friend out of ignorance, and so are able to be forgiven by the prophet's prayer at the conclusion of the work; see Job 42:8.

61 This is in keeping with the biblical maxim that as we judge, so shall we be judged; since the Devil and demons have no mercy, no mercy is shown to them.

62 *Comm. Eccl.* 2.80.19–81.19, M. Gronewald, *Didymos der Blinde: Kommentar zum Ekklesiastes*, Vol. 2: Kap. 3–4.12, (PTA 22), Bonn, 1977, pp. 78–85.

63 *Comm. Eccl.* 2.80.26–81.3, Gronewald, 1977, pp. 80–81. See also footnote 50 above for the same argument at *In Gen.* 1.81.16–20, Nautin, Doutreleau, 1976, pp. 188–191 or Hill, 2016, p. 81.

Judas' betrayal of Jesus. According to Didymus, Judas had become the companion to the adulterous Devil, who spoiled the mystical marriage Judas' soul ought to have had with Christ. Instead, the Devil is a companion who must be hated.⁶⁴ Judas' soul had missed the moment of love, "the time of love," when the divine Bridegroom is present, since Christ is the most desirable spiritual spouse of all.⁶⁵

By bringing up Judas and Satan in the context of Ecclesiastes 3:8, Didymus has created space for a discussion of the love of enemies. So, he says "We have a command to love our enemies so that we are to behave (loving) toward those who hate us such that we even make a prayer for them. In as much as we do want them to be helped, we love the enemies, therefore, let us not be disturbed by enmity. Yet, we also hate our enemies in the sense that we do not imitate them, and do not want to be in enmity as they are."⁶⁶ There is a dual dimension here: at one level, Christians ought to desire that good things come to their enemies for their assistance and benefit; but at another level, Didymus is indicating that hatred and enmity itself are detrimental to the soul's own health. Didymus then concludes by suggesting that our primary love must be for our own good, and that good is found in the Christian faith; and should we ever be faced with persecution, even to the point of choosing between Christ and our beloved biological father, at such a time, we must loathe our earthly father in order to cling to Christ.⁶⁷ Such is the time to hate a father, but if a father educates a person in virtue, then such a father is a good father, so that it is the time to love.⁶⁸ With this conclusion, Didymus has tied together the key elements discussed in this paper, adding that the good father is a Christ-like teacher who seeks the good of the student.

3.2 *Love of Spiritual Enemies in Comm. Ps.*

In his comments on Psalm 25:2–3 (LXX 24), where verse two reads 'do not let my enemies rejoice over me' Didymus begins by stressing that 'these enemies are at enmity with me, but not I with them.' Again, the words are being interpreted as coming from Christ at the crucifixion. And Didymus then immediately adds

64 *Comm. Eccl.* 2.81.4–8, Gronewald, 1977, pp. 80–83.

65 See Mark 2:19, Matthew 9:14–15, Luke 5:33–35.

66 *Comm. Eccl.* 2.81.8–81.12, Gronewald, 1977, pp. 82–83.

67 For the Christian, Christ is both beloved Bridegroom and spiritual Father, since he is the divine teacher. Again, there is an echo of Aristotle's philosophy of friendship here, since Didymus is referring to how each human must desire his or her own good first (*Aristotle, Eth. nic.* 1X.4–8), as well as reference to the historical context of persecutions that were part of the early fourth century.

68 *Comm. Eccl.* 2.81.12–81.19, Gronewald, 1977, pp. 82–85.

“the Savior says love your enemies, and some would think that the specification of ‘your’ is superfluous, as if it would only need to say, ‘love the enemies.’ But the servants of Christ are not permitted to have enemies, to have enmity toward others, so (it says) they must love (their) enemies.”⁶⁹ Next, Didymus mentions the theories of Aristotle on how one could wish the good that one’s enemies to be virtuous, but this is for selfish reasons, in so far as they will not harm us if they are righteous. But Didymus contrasts this with the Christian regard for enemies. Christians are to pray for enemies, not so that they do not harm the Christian, but so that the one possessing enmity toward the Christian does no harm to himself or herself by such hatred. In this case, the reference to Aristotle is significant, since the love of the Christian toward enemies is close to what Aristotle describes as the love of a true friend, who desires the virtue of a friend for her or his own good, without regard to any benefits that might accrue from it.⁷⁰

3.3 *Love of Enemies in Comm. Job*

The last place to examine Didymus’ interpretation of Jesus’ command to love your enemies is in *Comm. Job*. But in order to understand what Didymus has in mind, we must understand a little about how Didymus presents the character and narrative of Job. Key to his exegesis of Job is Didymus’ contention that Job’s words throughout must be taken in the context of the opening chapters, where God dialogues with the Devil, and has suggested that the Devil should consider the virtue of Job, whom God himself has declared as righteous beyond all others, truly avoiding all evil and sin. Because of this challenge, the Devil proposes to sift Job, and with God’s permission, removes from Job his family, his property and his health, all his physical goods.⁷¹ When this fails to deter Job from virtue and faith in God, the Devil enlists the wife and friends of Job, who proceed to assault his good reputation, accusing him falsely and erroneously of being a sinner. Didymus then suggests that Job’s words to his wife and accusing friends are those of an accomplished, exceptional teacher, who accepts that the woes he is enduring are afflictions brought about at the behest of the Devil. In this case, Job’s words are often ironic, and Didymus presents him as gently, patiently teaching, and with great long-suffering endurance striving to change the minds of his friends who have become his accusers. Didymus thus presents Job as a model for any Christian teacher, a friend of God, who’s trust in God graces the teacher with the skills of effective instruction and the spiritual

69 *Comm. Ps.* 2.77.4–12, Gronewald, 1968, pp. 86–89.

70 Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* VIII.3–5; IX.4–8.

71 *Comm. Job* 1.1–7.24, Henrichs, pp. 24–45 or Duffy, pp. 33–39.

fortitude to endure inevitable misunderstanding among students who are often less than cooperative, and even occasionally hostile toward the teacher who simply seeks to lead the student to truth and freedom. With this introduction to the commentary on Job, we can now consider several of the points Didymus makes about the love of spiritual adversaries.

Early in his commentary, Didymus discusses how the Devil came into the company of angels in the heavenly court to confront God, and the angels do not say anything, but God immediately notices Satan, because the Lord knows the hearts of all, as Acts 1:24 reports. This leads him to state "If this very thing were obvious also to mortals, who do not have the goodness of God, they would be alienated from sinners so as not to come to aid them, but rather turn away and shun them on account of the greatness of their evils, lest they themselves should fall into danger."⁷² Later, Didymus points out that the wicked do indeed seek to cover their true appearance, whether this is because they wish to behave as wolves in sheep's clothing, or they are concerned to hide their ugliness.⁷³ The friends of God, however, are sorrowed by the lawless ways of careless people.⁷⁴ But God has mercy on sinners and sends them teachers to correct them and lead them to repentance; one is Moses, who suffers numerous afflictions on behalf of the Hebrews and who mediates for them with God, praying on their behalf.⁷⁵ Whereas humans tend to base their judgments on what they have seen and on what has been done in the past, God sees the heart in its immediately current state; this is why God's friends hold out hope for the sinner's repentance.⁷⁶ This is why Job continuously questions and challenges the mistaken ideas of his wife and friends; knowing they have been unwittingly made instruments of Satan, he does not judge them and prays that they not be punished.⁷⁷ Indeed, Job even challenges his students to become more compassionate toward the afflicted and less judgmental, since judging others is

72 *Comm. Job* 1.14.4–15.10, Henrichs, pp. 62–65 or Duffy, p. 45 and *Comm. Job* 3.270.17–30, U. Hagedorn, D. Hagedorn, Koenen, pp. 124–127.

73 *Comm. Job* 3.253.24–254.8, U. Hagedorn, D. Hagedorn, Koenen, pp. 84–87.

74 *Comm. Job* 1.66.8–24, Henrichs, pp. 200–203 or Duffy, p. 111.

75 *Comm. Job* 2.181.1–182.13, A. Henrichs, *Didymos der Blinde: Kommentar zu Hiob, Vol. 2: Kap. 5,1–6,29* (PTA 2), Bonn, 1968, pp. 180–185. It is the ordinary course that the friends of God who teach the way to salvation are afflicted on behalf of those whom they educate. Such was the case of Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Jeremiah, Job, Jonah, Paul, and many saints.

76 *Comm. Job* 3.304.25–305.4, U. Hagedorn, D. Hagedorn, Koenen, pp. 210–211.

77 *Comm. Job* 1.95.6–98.20, Henrichs, pp. 268–275 or Duffy, pp. 137–139; Didymus notes that at the conclusion of the book of Job (Job 42:8), this friend of God will offer a sacrifice on behalf of his students that God will accept as clearing away their sins.

something the Devil and demons are constantly doing.⁷⁸ By being less satanic, that is less accusatory, Didymus adds that ‘even the powerless is given hope,’ so as to counter the Novatians, the rigorist sect who would eliminate remorse and repentance from the apostates during persecution, such that they would be left hopeless.⁷⁹ The friend of God is the teacher who never gives up on the possibility that the student might repent and so enter the kingdom of God.

And when it comes to the struggles with the spiritual adversaries, Didymus suggests that even if the saint were unassailable, she or he would still not seek out trials, lest the adversary, namely the Devil, receive still greater punishment because of the conflict.⁸⁰ Likewise, those who have been tried by the adversary and defeated him, must not turn and ridicule the evil one, because the righteous is not a scoffer, but is compassionate. Didymus proposes that the saint should attempt to behave peacefully, even toward the beasts, whom he has previously interpreted as the Devil and demons, because eventually such beasts will cease to trouble the saint.⁸¹ The saints extend love even to their enemies, showing that they are peaceable toward those who hate peace, so that they may fulfill the words of the prophet who said “Speak to those who hate you, my brothers, so that the name of the Lord be glorified and they be put to shame.”⁸² In this way, the friend of God does not seek any revenge on an enemy, since to seek this would imply assuming or putting on an enemy mind. Instead, the love of enemies can extend even to those deserving of punishment for their obstinance.

4 Conclusion

Several elements of Didymus’ theology of love of spiritual enemies can now be drawn together by way of conclusion. First and foremost, the stress upon the mutability of rational creatures serves to preserve the prospect that minds and behaviors can be changed. This is an especially important principle for any aspiring teacher to maintain, since it prevents the teacher from losing hope in

78 *Comm. Job* 2.163.23–165.30, Henrichs, pp. 138–141 and *Comm. Job* 3.253.6–254.19, U. Hagedorn, D. Hagedorn, L. Koenen, pp. 82–87.

79 *Comm. Job* 2.131.12–133.6, Henrichs, pp. 56–63. Although Didymus specifically mentions the Novatians, he likely has another rigorist group in mind, namely the Meletians, who reacted against the reconciliation of the lapsed by the patriarchs of Alexandria, especially Athanasius, following the cessation of persecutions.

80 *Comm. Job* 1.88.11–90.1, Henrichs, pp. 250–255 or Duffy, pp. 130–131.

81 *Comm. Job* 2.142.3–146.1, Henrichs, pp. 84–95.

82 *Comm. Job* 2.174.14–174.30, Henrichs, pp. 164–167.

any student. But this is even more pertinent to a teacher of Christian teachers, because such a teacher is training others who hope to mimic the true teacher, Christ, who as God condescended to educate sinners and enemies who hate the education and the educator to the point of crucifixion.

Second, by situating Didymus' theology of the enemies of God within the context of the teacher–student friendship, it becomes clear why Didymus would seek to maintain such a controversial position as the theoretical reconciliation of the devil, demons and all sinners. Though more research is needed in this regard, it appears that Didymus does posit a distinction among the enemies of God; those who are living humans always live in the moment of repentance where God's mercy affords the opportunity for conversion. This is not the case for the devil and demons, whose changeability is not the same as humans, and as such can be considered as incurably wicked, and thus hazardous to befriend.

Finally, Jesus' command to love enemies is radically applied by Didymus such that the attitude of enmity is what is forbidden by the gospel, since to put on the mind of enmity was to assume the posture of an adversary and accuser, to be prone toward the type of merciless judgment commonly practiced by Satan and the demons. Vigilance against the temptation of such ideas becomes the task of any would-be friend of God. In Didymus own circle of students, such adversarial attitudes would bear sour fruit in bitter controversy, and it is likely he was aware of these in the final decade of his life. It is also certain that he was a witness to the bitterness and enmity precipitated by the complex social circumstance when apostates who had betrayed their teachers and pastors to the Roman authorities sought to return to the Church via reconciliation after the persecution subsided. Even in our contemporary world, Didymus' theology concerning love of enemies would be challenging to maintain when confronting mass murders, genocide and rising nationalism which result from and foster the adversarial mind. Perhaps the Christian doctrine of loving enemies as spiritual resistance of the desire for vengeance has always been the most radical element of its theology.