

DIDYMUS THE BLIND  
AND THE ALEXANDRIAN CHRISTIAN  
RECEPTION OF PHILO

SBL Press

STUDIA PHILONICA MONOGRAPHS

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Thomas H. Tobin, S. J.

Number 8

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DIDYMUS THE BLIND  
AND THE ALEXANDRIAN CHRISTIAN  
RECEPTION OF PHILO

*by*  
Justin M. Rogers

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	The Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antike Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
ALGHJ	Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des Hellenistischen Judentums
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang des römischen Welt</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BIB	<i>Biblica</i>
BICS	Bulletin for the Institute of Classical Studies
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
COMES	Civitatum Orbis Mediterranei Studia
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CPJ	<i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum</i> . Edited by Victor A. Tcherikover. 3 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957–1964.
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Judaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium. Edited by Jean Baptiste Chabot et al. Paris, 1903.
DMOA	Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui
FC	Fathers of the Church
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
Hen	<i>Henoch</i>
HOS	Handbook of Oriental Studies
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUT	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
JAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
J ECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>

<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplements
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Klio</i>	<i>Klio: Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAWG	<i>Nachrichten (von) der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i> OCD</i>	<i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i>
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies
PACS	Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series
PCW	<i>Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt</i> . Edited by Leopold Cohn, Paul Wendland, and Siegfried Reiter. 6 vols. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1896–1915.
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PhA	Philosophia Antiqua
PLCL	Philo in Ten Volumes (and Two Supplementary Volumes). Translated by Frederick H. Colson, George H. Whitaker (and Ralph Marcus). 12 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929–1962.
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
<i>PRE</i>	<i>Pauly's Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> . New edition by George Wissowa and Wilhelm Kroll. 50 vols. In 84 parts. Stuttgart: Metzler and Druckenmüller, 1894–1980.
PTA	Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RevScRel</i>	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
<i>RHE</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
<i>RHPR</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire des religions</i>

<i>RSPT</i>	<i>Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SC	Sources chretiennes
SCH	Studies in Church History
SCO	Studi classici e orientali
SEAug	Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum
<i>Sem</i>	<i>Semitica</i>
StPatr	Studia Patristica
SPhiloM	Studia Philonica Monographs
<i>SPhiloA</i>	<i>Studia Philonica Annual</i>
<i>SPhilo</i>	<i>Studia Philonica</i>
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
<i>SVF</i>	<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i>
TLG	Thesaurus Linguae Graecae
TK	Texte und Kommentare
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antike Judentum
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCSup	Vigiliae Christianae Supplements
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZKG	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

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## INTRODUCTION

Didymus the Blind was famous in his own day. Unfortunately, within a century of his death, he had fallen victim to the charge of Origenism. His work *On the Holy Spirit* continued to circulate thanks to the Latin translation of Jerome, but his exegetical comments lived on mostly in the catenae. An accidental discovery in 1941, however, yielded approximately 2000 papyrus pages representing commentaries on Gen, Job, Psa, Ecc, and Zech, along with other works.<sup>1</sup> Although these commentaries represent only a fraction of Didymus's exegetical output,<sup>2</sup> they provide us with the largest corpus of biblical exegesis in Greek from a single Christian author.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Life of Didymus the Blind*

The life of Didymus spanned nearly the entire fourth century CE. He was born in Egypt and probably never left there, serving as a theological instructor in one of the desert monasteries outside of Alexandria.<sup>4</sup> Despite

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1. The Tura papyri were found when the British were clearing an area south of Cairo for the storing of munitions. The story of their discovery has been reported in several publications (e.g., Henri-Charles Puech, "Les nouveaux écrits d'Origène et de Didyme découverts à Toura," *RHPR* 31 [1951]: 293–329; Louis Doutreleau, "Que Savons-nous aujourd'hui des Papyrus de Toura?," *RSR* 43 [1955]: 161–76; Ludwig Koenen and W. Müller-Wiener, "Zu den Papyri aus dem Arsenios Kloster bei Tura," *ZPE* 2 [1968]: 41–63). Some Didymean papyri on Psa remain unpublished, although Brigham Young University professors are in the process of editing them (for photographs of the papyri online, see <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/DidymusPapyri/id/58>). For an introduction to the collection at BYU, see Dave Nielsen, "The History, Provenance, and Importance of BYU's Didymus Papyri" (online: <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1083&context=studentpub>).

2. Didymus makes reference to a host of other works, including commentaries on Exod, Lev, Prov, Song, Isa, Jer, Dan, Hos, Matt, Luke, John, Acts, Rom, 2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Heb, the Catholic Epistles, and Rev (see Louis Doutreleau, *Didyme l'Aveugle: Sur Zacharie*, vol. 1 [SC 83; Paris: Cerf, 1962], 17–19).

3. The commentaries on Gen and Zech were published in the *Sources Chrétiennes* series, and those on Job, Psa, and Ecc appeared in the *Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen* series. Thankfully, these editions were not only carefully edited, but translations (in either French or German) were added along with brief explanatory notes. To date, only two of the commentaries have been translated into English, both by the late Robert C. Hill (*Didymus the Blind: Commentary on Zechariah* [FC 111; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006]; *Didymus the Blind: Commentary on Genesis* [FC 132; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2016]).

4. Much has been made about the fact that Rufinus refers to Didymus as a teacher (*doctor*) rather than a director (*magister*) of the famed catechetical school of Alexandria

the desert solitude, it was a volatile time to be a Christian in Egypt. Sociological and ecclesiastical conflict was on the rise, and the political situation of the empire was in transition.<sup>5</sup> But Didymus's interests seem to be almost entirely ecclesiastical. As an ally of Athanasius, he fought early Arianism and Eunomianism, then turned to fight Manicheanism and, later in life, was himself involved in the Origenist controversy.<sup>6</sup> He was also an early hero of monasticism, and entertained the famed Antony.<sup>7</sup> As a teacher, he exerted an exegetical influence on some of the most important figures in the early church, including Eastern figures such as Evagrius Ponticus and Palladius and Western figures such as Rufinus and Jerome. So who was this mysterious teacher who became such a dominant figure in fourth century Egypt?

For biographical details of Didymus's life, we are entirely dependent on his students. We possess three major biographical sources that date within a generation of Didymus's death, but they disagree on the dates of his death and hence his birth. Jerome states that Didymus was already more than eighty-three years old when he composed his *Vir. ill.*, which, as he informs us, was completed "in the fourteenth year of Theodotion," or 392/393 CE. So, according to Jerome, Didymus was born in or before 310 CE.<sup>8</sup> But Palladius, who moved to Alexandria in ca. 388 CE, claims to have visited Didymus four times in a ten-year span. Since Palladius reports that

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(see the discussion in Richard A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria* [Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004], 15–18). The relevant testimony reads, *ita brevi deo docente in tantam divinarum humanarumque rerum eruditionem ac scientiam venit, ut scholae ecclesiasticae doctor existeret, Athanasio episcopo ceterisque sapientibus in ecclesia dei viris admodum probatus* (H.E. 11.7). Older generations of scholars (e.g., Leipoldt, Bardy) were content to trust the ancient biographers (e.g., Philip of Side and Sozomen) in placing Didymus as head of the catechetical school in Alexandria. But newer generations (e.g., Prinzivalli, Layton) have suggested that he never occupied this role.

5. See, for example, Christopher Haas, "Hellenism and Opposition to Christianity in Alexandria," in *Ancient Alexandria between Egypt and Greece*, ed. W.V. Harris and Giovanni Ruffini (Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 26; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 217–29.

6. In the Tura commentaries, Didymus never mentions Origen or the controversy surrounding him. However, in fragments of other works the name of Origen does appear. In an interpretation of 1 Cor 16:17–18, Didymus says, οὕτω καὶ ὁ Ὠριγένους δοξάζει τὸ πνεῦμα πλείω τι ἔχειν τῆς ψυχῆς ἐν ἀρετῇ, εἰ καὶ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ (*Fr. 1 Cor. ad loc.*).

7. Antony is reported to have said of Didymus, *nihil te, offendet, O Didyme, quod carnalibus oculis videris orbatus, desunt enim tibi illi oculi, quos mures et muscae et lacerate habent; sed laetare, quia habes oculos, quos angeli habent, e quibus deus videtur, per quos tibi magnum scientiae lumen accenditur* (Rufinus, H.E. 11.7; cf. Jerome, *Epist.* 68.2).

8. *Vir. ill.* 1, 135. On Didymus's life, see *Vir. ill.* 109.



Didymus died at eighty-five years of age, his death should be placed around 398 CE, and hence his birth at ca. 313 CE.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the minor confusion about the dates of his life, the blindness of Didymus is a feature about which all of the ancient sources agree. Apparently, Didymus was not born blind, but became so at a very young age due to an accident or a disease.<sup>10</sup> Palladius states that Didymus had suffered his handicap prior to his learning of the alphabet, and thus had to rely totally on memory for his education.<sup>11</sup> Sozomen, who depends on earlier sources, imagines the learning of Didymus to be more concrete, reporting the blind student learned the alphabet by running his fingers across a deeply-etched wooden tablet of the alphabet, as though an ancient form of Braille.<sup>12</sup>

However he obtained his early education, it is clear that Didymus was a gifted student and, in adulthood, acquired a reputation for his erudition that extended far beyond his native land. Rufinus imagines him confounding philosophers who approach him with questions.<sup>13</sup> Even acknowledging that Rufinus's portrait is idealized, the fact that such fourth-century scholars as Rufinus, Jerome, Evagrius Ponticus, Palladius, and probably Gregory of Nazianzus refer to him confirms the reputation he enjoyed in the catholic church of his time.<sup>14</sup>

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9. *Hist. Laus.* 4.1. Palladius himself was accused of Origenism at the Council of the Oak in 403, according to Photius (*Lex.* 59).

10. Palladius seems to have the better information, claiming, οὗτος ἀπὸ ὀμμάτων ὑπῆρχεν, ὡς αὐτός μοι διηγῆσατο, τετραέτης τὰς ὄψεις ἀποβαλὼν (*Hist. Laus.* 4.1). In his *Chron.* Jerome places the blindness of Didymus slightly later, at age five (*Chron.* 246e to the year 372 CE [GCS 24, *Eusebius Werke* VII/1, ed. R. Helm]). In *Vir. ill.* 109, however, Jerome is more ambiguous, stating that the accident occurred “when he was still quite young” (*a parva aetate*; *Vir. ill.* 109). Socrates informs us that a disease took his eyesight: οὗτος κομιδῆ νέος ὢν καὶ τὰ πρῶτα τῶν γραμμάτων στοιχεῖα μαθὼν τῷ τῆς ὀφθαλμίας περιέπεσε πάθει καὶ κακῶς διατεθεὶς τὸ ὄρατικὸν ἀπέβαλεν (*H.E.* 4.25).

11. *Hist. Laus.* 4.1; Socrates informs us that he was in the process of learning the alphabet when he suffered his blindness (*H.E.* 4.25).

12. Sozomen, *H.E.* 3.15.2: Λέγεται δὲ τοὺς χαρακτῆρας τῶν γραμμάτων σανίδι καταχαραγέντας εἰς βάθος ἐκμαθεῖν τοῖς δακτύλοις ἐφαπτόμενος.... Jerome does not include this detail but refers to his elementary learning as *tantum miraculum* (*Vir. ill.* 109).

13. *H.E.* 11.7.

14. For Gregory of Nazianzus's acquaintance with Didymus, see John A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, N.Y.: SVS Press, 2001), 44–45.

*The Importance of Didymus the Blind*

Didymus the Blind is important in a number of ways. First, Didymus was the last great representative of what modern scholars identify as “Alexandrian” biblical interpretation. Second, he lived during the beginnings of Egyptian monasticism, and exerted an influence on the famous Antony. Third, he receives glowing endorsements from Evagrius Ponticus, Rufinus, Jerome, and Palladius, who personally knew him, studied under him and occasionally requested works from him. Fourth, the work of Robert Hill has shown that Didymus served as a conduit between the Alexandrians and the Antiochenes,<sup>15</sup> a link that may prove promising for those who wish to emphasize the positive dialogue between the schools of thought.

Indeed, the legend and legacy of Didymus appear to have been great. Jerome commemorates him on three occasions as *videns* (“the seeing”),<sup>16</sup> which suggests that the familiar epithet of *caecus* (“the blind”) was already being applied to Didymus during his own lifetime.<sup>17</sup> In one case Jerome speaks of studying under Didymus, noting “I thank him for many things. What I did not know I learned; what I knew ... I did not lose.”<sup>18</sup> Sozomen states, “Many people came to Alexandria because of his fame, some to hear him and others merely to visit him,”<sup>19</sup> and later, “he was in high demand by men from the whole church.”<sup>20</sup> The historian Socrates places Didymus alongside the famed Cappadocian fathers Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus.<sup>21</sup> The entire Christian tradition would remember Didymus both

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15. On the influence of Didymus among the Antiochenes, see Robert C. Hill, *Reading the Old Testament in Antioch* (The Bible in Ancient Christianity 5; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 8–9, 22, 29, 33, 40–41, 76, 95, 146. Most of Hill’s examples are based on *Comm. Zach.*, which is understandable since he was about to issue a translation of the work (see note 3 above).

16. Prologue to his *Comm. Gal.*; see also the prologues to his translations of Origen’s *Hom. Jer.* and *Hom. Ezek.* Jerome would later attempt to separate himself from Didymus, however, in the wake of the first Origenist controversy.

17. Pierre Nautin dates Jerome’s commentaries on Philemon, Galatians, Ephesians, and Titus between June/July and early Autumn of 386 CE. See “La date des commentaires de Jérôme sur les épîtres pauliniennes,” *RHE* 74 (1979): 5–12. Other scholars are not so specific, being content to date the four commentaries between 386 and 388 CE. See Alfred Friedl, “St. Jerome’s Dissertation on the Letter to Philemon,” in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter* (ed. D. Francois Tolmie; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 289–316, 289.

18. *Epist.* 84.3: *In multis ei gratias ago. Quod nescivi, didici; quod sciebam ... non perdididi.*

19. *H.E.* 3.15.3: καὶ πολλοὶ κατὰ κλέος τοῦ ἀνδρὸς εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν παρεγγόντο, οἱ μὲν αὐτοῦ ἀκουσόμενοι, οἱ δὲ ἰστορήσαντες μόνον.

20. *H.E.*, 3.15.4: Τοῖς δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς καθόλου ἐκκλησίας περισπούδαστος ἦν.

21. *H.E.* 4.25.

in his own time and shortly thereafter, almost universally expressing an admiration for his exegetical talent and Nicene orthodoxy.<sup>22</sup>

But the influence of Didymus on subsequent biblical scholarship would be relatively short-lived. Despite his dedication to the Nicene ideal, Didymus was committed, although not uncritically,<sup>23</sup> to the controversial Origen.<sup>24</sup> Because of his acceptance and propagation of characteristic Origenist teachings, church history would cast a dark shadow on Didymus.<sup>25</sup> Toward the end of his life, the so-called Origenist controversy was already gaining steam, and after his death, in around 398 CE, many tried to break allegiance with Didymus.<sup>26</sup> His writings were formally condemned

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22. The most famous work of Didymus in the Catholic tradition is his *De spirito sancto*. This work attempts to explain the Holy Spirit as a hypostasis alongside the Father and the Son, and was translated into Latin by Jerome at the request of Pope Damasus in ca. 384 CE (see the preface to the Latin translation of *De spirito sancto* and *Epist.* 36.4 of Jerome to Damasus). It is supposed by some modern scholars that Didymus coined the phrase *τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις, μία οὐσία* (see John Chapman, “Didymus,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* 4:784 [1908]). Didymus, however, wrote other dogmatic works. His *De trinitate* is a work which appeared orthodox to Jerome (*Ruf.* 2.16). He also wrote *De dogmatibus* and *contra Arianos*, which may be one book or two. Quasten identifies both with books 4 and 5 of the *contra Eunomium*, a work traditionally attributed to Basil rather than Didymus (e.g., *Patrology* 3:88, 210). Jerome reports that Didymus had indeed refuted Eunomius in *Vir. ill.* 120, but whether one can connect the *contra Eunomium* 4–5 with Didymus at all remains doubtful. Recently, Mark DelCogliano has argued that Basil was influenced by Didymus’s *De trinitate* in his composition of *contra Eunomium* and, even if Didymus himself did not author books 4–5 of that work, the Didymean tenor of those sections, as well as the whole of books 1–3, remains evident (*JTS* 61 [2010]: 644–58). The position of Hayes is different; see Walter M. Hayes, “Didymus the Blind is the author of *Adversus Eunomium IV/V*,” *StPatr* 17 (1982): 1108–14.

23. Emanuela Prinzivalli remarks that “the literary production of Didymus appears to be that which is the most balanced in juxtaposing faithfulness to Origen’s teaching with a re-thinking of this very teaching” (*Origeniana Decima: Origen as Writer* [ed. Sylwia Kaczmarek and Henryk Pietras; Leuven: Peeters, 2011], 779). Prinzivalli’s statement can serve as a corrective to Manlio Simonetti’s overly optimistic suggestion that we can use Didymus’s *Comm. Gen.* to reconstruct Origen’s lost commentary on Gen (*Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Introduction to Patristic Exegesis* [trans. John A. Hughes; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994], 78).

24. Didymus reportedly wrote a commentary on Origen’s *Princ.* (Jerome, *Ruf.* 2.16; Socrates, *H.E.* 4.25.7).

25. Didymus, for example, held the notion that souls pre-exist, one of the more controversial of Origen’s teachings by the end of Didymus’s own life (*Comm. Gen.* 106.10ff. [on Gen 3:21]; *Comm. Job* 56.16–58.16).

26. Jerome, who had been a disciple of Didymus and a translator of at least two of his works (the *Comm. Zach.* and *Did. Spir.*), later rejected him for his Origenism (his *Ruf.* 1.6 is representative where he deems Didymus *Origenis apertissimus propugnator*), a point on which Rufinus keenly attacked his rival (note his *Apol. Hier.* 2.28 where he recalls Jerome’s former praises of Didymus as *videns* and *propheta* and *apostolicos vir*).

a century and a half later, along with those of Origen, at the ecclesiastical Council of Constantinople in 553.<sup>27</sup>

*Didymus as an Author*

The literary output of Didymus is remarkable. Among Alexandrian biblical scholars only Origen is credited with writing more works. And Didymus was certainly not limited to one area of interest. We will discuss the role of Didymus as a biblical exegete, but we should not neglect his other literary efforts. Didymus was a controversialist, personally associated with Athanasius.<sup>28</sup> We know he defended the Trinity against the Arians and Eunomius<sup>29</sup> and wrote a treatise *On the Holy Spirit*, which now exists in Jerome's Latin translation.<sup>30</sup> He regarded "the godless doctrines of the Arians, Manicheans and Eunomius" as having "sprung up like weeds"<sup>31</sup> and did what he could to refute them.<sup>32</sup>

Didymus also shows an interest in philosophy, authoring treatises *On the Soul*, *On Incorporeals*, *On Philosophy*, and *On the Virtues*. All of these treatises,

27. For a discussion of the early history of the controversy see Emanuela Prinzivalli, *Magister Ecclesiae: Il Dibattito su Origene fra III e IV Secolo* (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 82; Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2002). For the events leading to the condemnation of the Origenists at the fifth ecumenical council see Franz Diekamp, *Die origenischen Streitigkeiten im sechsten Jahrhundert und das fünfte allgemeine Concil* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1899), 131. Diekamp places the date of the official condemnation in March or April, 553. For the roles of Rufinus and Jerome and their circles in the controversy, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

28. Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* 2.7; Palladius *Hist. Laus.* 4.4.

29. There has been controversy over the authorship of both *Trin.*, attributed to Didymus, and books 4–5 of the *Contra Eunomium*, which has been passed down as a work of Gregory of Nyssa (for the authorship of Didymus's alleged Trinitarian writings see Alasdair Heron, "Studies in the Trinitarian Writings of Didymus the Blind: his Authorship of the *Adversus Eunomium IV–V*" [Ph.D. diss., Tübingen, 1972]).

30. On the Christology of Didymus, see Michael Ghattas, *Die Christologie Didymos' den Blinden von Alexandria in den Schriften von Tura: Zur Entwicklung der alexandrinischen Theologie des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte 7; Münster: Lit, 2002). *De spiritu sancto* now exists in a convenient English translation (see Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Lewis Ayres, *Works on the Holy Spirit: Athanasius the Great and Didymus the Blind* [Popular Patristics Series 43; Yonkers, N.Y.: SVS Press, 2011]).

31. *Comm. Eccl.* 302.13: παρεφύη δόγματα ἀσεβῆ τὰ Ἀρειανῶν καὶ Μανιχαίων, τὰ Ἐ[ὺ]μίου.

32. On Didymus and the Manicheans, see Byard Bennett, "Didymus the Blind's Knowledge of Manichaeism," in *The Light and the Darkness: Studies in Manichaeism and its World* (ed. Paul Mirecki and Jason Beduhn; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 38–67.

although probably rich in Philonic influence, have been lost.<sup>33</sup> Didymus probably never studied philosophy formally, however. Richard Layton goes so far as to suggest that Didymus's philosophy was already mediated by Christian scholasticism, and that he probably never "advanced beyond the preliminary grammatical instruction to the study of rhetoric."<sup>34</sup> Still, he remains an important source on Aristotelianism as well as the Christian engagement with Porphyry.<sup>35</sup>

We have testimony, either from Didymus himself or from his admirers, of no less than twenty-five commentaries on biblical books. Some books were given focused attention, such as Isaiah (two works), but it is doubtful whether most of these commentaries were ever completed. Of the preserved commentaries from Tura, only Zech and Ecc were treated *in toto*.<sup>36</sup> Obviously, these shorter biblical books made completion attainable. Gen and Job, by contrast, were likely never completed,<sup>37</sup> and although Jerome says that Didymus wrote commentaries on every Psalm,<sup>38</sup> there is no other indication that the *Comm. Ps.* was finished.

As an exegete, Didymus shows a penchant for allegorical interpretation, but not to the neglect of the letter. The so-called *defectus litterae* is not as prominent in Didymus as it was in Origen or Philo, and often he extracts maximum utility from the literal meaning.<sup>39</sup> Of course, there are the usual

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33. Philo himself wrote a treatise *On Virtues*, which is mostly preserved (see the discussion in Walter T. Wilson, *Philo of Alexandria On Virtues: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* [PACS 3; Leiden: Brill, 2011], 10–15).

34. Layton, *Didymus the Blind*, 137.

35. On Didymus and Aristotelianism see David T. Runia, "Festugière Revisited: Aristotle in the Greek Patres," *VC* 43 (1989): 1–34. On Didymus and Porphyry see Philip Sellew, "Achilles or Christ? Porphyry and Didymus in Debate over Allegorical Interpretation," *HTR* 82 (1989): 79–100, and Pier Franco Beatrice, "Didyme l'Aveugle et la tradition de l'allégorie," in *Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible/Origen and the Bible* [ed. Gilles Dorival and Alain Boulluc; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995], 579–90.

36. This is not to say we actually possess the full treatments. The manuscripts are lacunose at several points.

37. It is possible that at least Gen was never intended to be completed. David Runia observes that Didymus's commentary stops in chapter 17, almost precisely the span of Philo's Allegorical Commentary (*Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* [CRINT 3.3; Assen: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 200).

38. *Vir. ill.* 109.

39. For the so-called *ophelcia*-criterion in biblical exegesis see Manlio Simonetti, *Lettera e/o allegoria: un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica* (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 23; Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1985), 79, 146–47. As this relates to Didymus, see Simonetti, "Lettera e allegoria nell'esegesi veterotestamentaria di Didimo," *Vetera Christianorum* 20 (1983): 341–89, 356.

dismisals of anthropomorphic and anthropopathic texts.<sup>40</sup> But in general, Didymus seeks to investigate all levels of potential meaning. This leads to a consistent feature of his exegesis. Didymus generally begins with the most obvious level of interpretation (the literal) and progresses to the most obscure (the allegorical).<sup>41</sup> The *Comm. Gen.* is the most rigid in this regard, although the other Tura commentaries follow the same basic approach.<sup>42</sup>

The point of this interpretive methodology is to lead the reader in his spiritual progress toward virtue, or Christ.<sup>43</sup> Sometimes Didymus expresses this goal in the Platonic sense of *ὁμοίωσις θεῶν*,<sup>44</sup> and sometimes he Christianizes the formula.<sup>45</sup> Still, the goal is to contemplate God “as he is.”<sup>46</sup> The commentaries of Didymus presuppose the Bible to be the fundamental means to achieve the goal of divine contemplation.<sup>47</sup> By focusing on each verse or set of verses, Didymus systematically walks through the biblical text, allowing scripture to be its own best interpreter.<sup>48</sup> Any source

40. See Roland Marcin Panczer, “Didimo il Cieco e gli antropomorfismi biblici,” in *Origeniana Decima*, 751–63.

41. It has been suggested that Porphyry composed different commentaries adapted to the level of student sophistication (H. J. Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity: Interpretations of the De anima* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996], 22). Didymus seeks to accomplish a similar goal in a single work.

42. See e.g., *Comm. Gen.* 102.9–12; 139.4–14; 226.24. On the basic notion of two senses in scripture, as it relates to Didymus, see Jo Tigcheler, *Didyme l'Aveugle et l'exégèse allégorique: Étude sémantique de quelques termes exégétiques importants de son commentaire sur Zacharie* (Graecitas Christianorum Primaeva 6; Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Veegt, 1977). On the allegorical method of Didymus in general, the work of Wolfgang Bienert is still basic, “*Allegoria*” und “*Anagogē*” bei Didymos dem Blinden von Alexandria (PTS 13; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972).

43. See Placid Solari, “Christ as Virtue in Didymus the Blind,” in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays in Honor of Juana Raasch*, ed. Harriet A. Luckman and Linda Kulzer [Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical, 1999], 67–88).

44. E.g., *Comm. Eccl.* 99.6–7. The terminology is taken from Plato’s *Theaetetus* 176b. For a discussion of the *ὁμοίωσις* formula in an Alexandrian Christian context, see Salvatore R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford Theological Monographs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 60–117.

45. Knowledge of the Trinity is a prerequisite (*Comm. Job* 288.14–22).

46. E.g., *Comm. Eccl.* 238.26.

47. David Hay argues that the goal of Philo’s Allegorical Commentary was exactly the same (“Philo of Alexandria,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism* [ed. Donald A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien and Mark A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001], 1:357–80, 365).

48. This of course reminds us of Origen’s interpretive methodology (on Origen as commentator, see Christoph Marksches, “Origenes und die Kommentierung des paulinischen Römerbriefs,” in *Commentaries—Kommentare* [ed. Glenn W. Most; Aporemata: Kritische Studien zur Philologiegeschichte 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1999], 66–94, and Lorenzo Perrone, “Continuité et innovation dans les commentaires d’Origène: Un essai de comparaison entre le *Commentaire sur Jean* et le *Commentaire sur*

of information that assists him in explicating the biblical text is fair game. This includes both Christian and non-Christian sources, and it is in this context that we shall investigate his use of Philo of Alexandria.

*The Plan for This Work*

The explicit mention of Philo in Didymus the Blind is curious. Although Didymus, as most ancient authors, did not generally name his sources, Philo's name appears nine times in the Tura commentaries. In fact, Philo is named in Didymus more than any other non-biblical author. This becomes more curious when we recognize that Didymus names Origen only once, the author assumed by modern scholars to be his most influential source.<sup>49</sup> Didymus's infrequent mention of Origen has been attributed to the growing Origenist controversy,<sup>50</sup> but Didymus shows no clear awareness of it, and Philo himself was cited in this controversy as a corrupting force in Origen's thought.<sup>51</sup> So Philo ought to have been as scandalous to some as Origen himself.

So we must first establish in this study that Philo was already an authority entrenched in Didymus's tradition of biblical exegesis. The first two chapters are, consequently, overviews of Didymus's Alexandrian heritage and the role that Philo played in that tradition. Then we shall go on to show how Didymus utilizes and cites his sources. We do this by setting Didymus in the ancient Christian commentary tradition of source citation and then by comparing his usage of Jewish sources in general to his named citations of Philo. This covers chapters 3–5. Finally, we discuss specific examples of interpretive methodology shared among the two authors, such as etymology and arithmology, as well as common exegetical themes. We discuss this material in chapters 6–8. The purpose of this work is to show that, while Clement and Origen can *sometimes* be regarded as mediators of Philonic thought for Didymus, it is clear also that Didymus knew Philo directly and utilized him as a trusted exegetical source.

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Matthieu," in *Le Commentaire entre tradition et innovation* [ed. Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé; Bibliothèque d'histoire de la philosophie; Paris: J. Vrin, 2000], 183–97.

49. See Pierre Nautin, *Didyme l'Aveugle: Sur la Genèse* (SC 233; Paris: Cerf, 1976), 1:22.

50. See Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, 201.

51. See Theodore of Mopsuestia, "Treatise against the Allegorists," in Frederick G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* (The Early Church Fathers; New York: Routledge, 2010), 75–79.