

**THE TURA PAPYRUS OF
DIDYMUS THE BLIND'S
COMMENTARY ON JOB:
AN ORIGINAL TRANSLATION WITH
INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY**

by

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Table of Contents

Foreword	1
Introduction to the Translation	4
Didymus' Prologue to the Job Commentary	33
The Commentary on Job	
Chapter 1	40
Chapter 2	76
Chapter 3	91
Chapter 4	133
Bibliography	152
Abbreviations	163

Foreword

This translation was undertaken at the suggestion of Professor Margaret Schatkin, who was my instructor for four semesters of “Greek Patrology,” and “Latin Patrology,” at Boston College — where I fulfilled half the course work for this degree program. The hermeneutical approaches of an Alexandrian Christian in the wake of Origen would make an interesting counterpoint and contrast, we reasoned, to the studies we had done in one of the Boston College seminars on exegetical writings of St. John Chrysostom.

I undertook a translation because my own immersion in texts has always been based on philology. I have tried to ground my systematic reflections and conclusions on a word-by-word study of texts. I was drawn to the Alexandrian milieu because of my sympathy for those Christian writers, such as the ones in Alexandria, who receptively acknowledged the weight and importance in their contemplation of the language and concepts of classical culture.

At a practical level, when I undertook this project, I had just moved from Boston to Litchfield, Connecticut. The fact that Litchfield is an hour’s drive from any research collection in theology dictated some fairly self-contained project. A text study or translation seemed ideal — both to my practical realities as well as my own bent for text study.

There were several questions in my mind, as I began this work, sometime in 1994. Chief among these was the question: would there be enough commentary to harvest from these fragments (chapters one through twelve) of the Tura manuscript, to make it worthwhile?

Within the first several paragraphs of Didymus’ *Commentary on Job*, it was clear to me that

I would be working with some of the most challenging Greek I had ever encountered. This was not the straightforward syntax or vocabulary of *The Shepherd of Hermas*. I continued with the project, largely as a matter of intellectual stimulation, still unsure of the true value of what I was doing. In time, however, I came to realize what a treasure this work was from a theological standpoint. Its bold excursus on the “immortality of the soul” was alone worth the effort. The traces of Didymus’ theology, which are more fully explored in his other, more systematic works, were tantalizing confirmations both of his authorship and of his significance, as a link between St. Athanasius and the later Greek fathers. And my own readings in Origen, which have been ongoing, have convinced me that Didymus was rightly associated with his predecessor by many voices (both those of hostile critics, as well as those of his defenders). At many times, I have felt the work I have done with this translation to be actually a devotional exercise, as well as an academic task. I was pleasantly surprised that, with some notable exceptions, the lacunae (which many had warned would be an impediment to any significant findings) were not destructive to the more important gleanings from this text.

In the translation, I have erred on the side of a more literal rendering, adjusting sentence structure and syntax only where the demands of reading and understanding in English seem to demand it. For the biblical citations (which of course are originally from the Septuagint) I have made my own translations.

I have chosen to submit the sections that follow since they take the reader from the valuable, opening prologue through Didymus’ development of some of his most significant ideas. The concluding sentences of his commentary on chapter three, sound like a perfect place to end. But I decided to include the following section on chapter four, verses one to five, because of its intrinsic

importance, as well as its contribution to the discussion of theodicy, and its allusions to the popular heresies of its day.

I have used the symbols < > to enclose additions I have made to the text for easier comprehension. The symbols [] enclose word(s) that clarify the text's understanding. The bibliography appended was the result of the work of one semester of Professor Schatkin's Greek Patrology seminar at Boston College. It is based on the pages of *Bibliographia Patristica*, through 1994.

My work could not have been completed without the faithful and devoted supervision of my second reader, Professor John C. Williams, formerly Chair of Greek and Latin at Trinity College, Hartford. I studied with Professor Williams first in the mid-eighties, when among other things, we read St. Athanasius' *De Incarnatione*. Professor Williams' accumulated and formidable expertise in the classics has been a great encouragement to my own absorption in the perduring legacy of these in the Christian heritage, both in the fourth century, as well as today.

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Introduction to the English Translation

The works of Didymus the Blind were anathematized by the Second Council at Constantinople in 553. The Council's action was in part because of Didymus' association — and defense of — Origen. It was also due to his own teachings on the $\acute{\alpha}$ $\acute{\alpha}$ and on the pre-existence of the soul. As a result, Didymus' works were mostly lost, except for his treatise “*On the Trinity*”¹; “*On the Holy Spirit*,”² and “*Against the Manichaeans*”³. Another piece of writing widely accepted as the work of Didymus is what (in most editions) is printed as the fourth and fifth book of Basil of Caesarea's *Against Eunomius*.⁴

The treatise *On the Trinity*, survived, it is thought, because of its containing little Origenism.⁵ The treatise *On the Holy Spirit* survived in Greek only in fragments, and in its entirety in a Latin translation by St. Jerome — a pupil of Didymus who acknowledges that the Alexandrian “*certe in Trinitate catholicus est.*”⁶

In our own time, Quasten calls Didymus the “theologian of the Trinity,”⁷ whose grasp of the

¹J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Paris: 1857-66, XXXIX, 269-992.

²*Ibid.*, 1031-1086, and Didymus, *Traité du Saint-Esprit*, Louis Doutreleau (ed.), Paris: Sources Chrétiennes, 1992.

³Migne, 1085-1110.

⁴Migne, XXIX, 497-669.

⁵Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, Allen, Texas: Christian Classics, 1996, III, 87.

⁶St. Jerome, *Apology Against Rufinus*, II, 16.

⁷Quasten, *op. cit.*, 93.

doctrine is summarized in the phrase $\acute{\iota} \acute{\upsilon} \acute{\iota} \hat{\iota} \acute{\upsilon} \acute{\alpha}$ (a phrase not even yet used by St. Athanasius). Didymus *does* use the formula in his writings, and in this respect alone thus constitutes a significant link between Athanasius and the later great Greek Fathers.⁹

In 1941, the accidental discovery of sixth and seventh century papyrus codices in Toura, Egypt, brought to light hitherto unavailable works of Origen and of Didymus. The papyri, now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, have been edited by Otto Guéraud. They contain Didymus' commentaries on Job, Zechariah, Genesis,¹⁰ as well as Ecclesiastes and Psalms 20-46. The commentary on Job has been published in four volumes of a critical edition, with German translation, by Ursula Hagedorn, Dieter Hagedorn, and Ludwig Koenen, completing the work originally undertaken by Albert Henrichs. It offers the available critical edition of the Greek text, and has been used in the making of this original English translation.¹¹

The Toura manuscript for the Job commentary contains no title or author identification. Ascription of it to Didymus is mostly based upon its literal word-for-word identity with surviving Greek catena of Didymus' Job commentary. The German editors note also — as a fair basis for

⁸A still-definitive discussion of the phrase and its evolution through the writings of the church fathers (though without any reference to Didymus) is found in G.L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, London: SPCK, 1959, 166-78.

⁹Didymus' sophisticated development of the doctrine of the Trinity is in contrast with Origen, on whom he relied so heavily in so many other aspects. For it is fair to say Origen's treatment of the Trinity is not nearly so systematic as that of his successor.

¹⁰The commentaries on Genesis and on Zechariah are available in a critical edition, together with French translation, O. Guéraud and J. Scherer, *Sur Zacharie*, Paris: Sources Chrétiennes, 1962, and *Sur la Genèse*, Paris: Sources Chrétiennes, 1976-78.

¹¹Didymos der Blinde, *Kommentar zu Hiob*, (ed. Albert Henrichs, Ursula Hagedorn, Dieter Hagedorn, Ludwig Koenen), Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag GmbH, 1968-85, I - IV, 1.

ascribing authorship to Didymus — the significant treatment, within this newly discovered manuscript, of the pre-existence of the soul and of the α α .¹²

The translation offered herewith is made with the view that the Job commentary offers English readers a hitherto unavailable glimpse into the great Alexandrian exegete's particular understandings not only of these two signature topics. It also affords a new appreciation of his allegorical approach to biblical hermeneutics, his understanding of good and evil, and of what the Christian response to evil might be. It will also offer to scholars yet to come fascinating and fertile ground for fresh study of words drawing from Stoic, Christian and other sources, including Philo. In at least one other place, it briefly but explicitly rebuts those who hold to the doctrine of “transmigration” — important as we shall see, since Origen (and perhaps later Didymus himself) had been accused of that very teaching.

The Pre-Existence of the Soul

In his Job commentary, Didymus dilates upon his teachings on the pre-existence of the soul. He does this primarily in the context of his exegesis of Job 3:3-5ff. In that passage, Job had cursed the day in which he came into being. Didymus anticipates someone's objection that it was not “seemly” for the holy man to have done this. But such an objection, he avers, is grounded in a “literal” — rather than an allegorical — understanding of the text.

Before explaining what he means by this, Didymus indicates he must first dwell upon his conviction that the human soul is immortal. We shall soon see why the two issues, allegory and the immortality of the soul, are for him, at least in this instance, related ones.

¹²*Ibid.*, I, 12.

First, let us consider his excursus on the pre-existence of the soul. “The human soul is immortal,” he declares. It was connected, or “sewn,” to the human body for one of two possible reasons: either for remedial, purgative re-development or in order to form a partnership with “those that needed help.” The soul pre-exists in this sense: that it does not evolve out of “corporeal seed” — as he puts it.

The two possible reasons given by Didymus in his Job commentary for the soul to be sewn together with the body trace back to Origen’s *De Principiis*.¹³ Here Didymus’ predecessor had explained that the pre-existent soul, “so long as it continues to abide in the good . . . has no experience of union with a body.” But when, “by some inclination of evil,” a soul “loses its wings,” it is joined with human beings — or even ultimately with “insensate brutes,” or plants. (*De Principiis*, I, 8,4)

But there are equally, for Origen and for Didymus, instances where the soul is joined with a body for an entirely different purpose: to form partnership with those who need help. The supreme example is that of the Lord himself. But in his *Commentary on John*, Origen explicitly speaks about others. John the Baptist was, says Origen, “sent” into this world for that kind of benevolent partnership with those who needed his help: “John’s soul was older than his body, and subsisted by itself before it was sent on the ministry of the witness of the light.” Interestingly, Origen wants us to remember Elijah in the same way, for according to scripture he too was “sent.” So also were

¹³Didymus most explicitly states his conviction regarding two possible reasons in his commentary on Job 4:1-5: “There are, without doubt, two bases for the sadness which befalls humankind. One is on account of correcting sins. The other because of showing forth the steadfastness and proven worth of the afflicted.”

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others.¹⁴

Tellingly, when Didymus in his Job commentary treats the same topics, viz. the two possible reasons why pre-existing souls are joined with bodies, he uses as proof-texts *the same biblical examples used by Origen in De Principiis and in the Commentary on John*. These examples are the story of the birth of Jacob and Esau, as well as the birth narrative of John the Baptist. The former, Jacob and Esau, are apparently used with this thinking: if God preferred Jacob to Esau, then the two must therefore have existed in some other time wherein their respective merits had been established before God.¹⁵ The latter example, that of John the Baptist, as we shall see, is rather an example of a soul being joined with a body in order to help others.

Didymus' treatment of the soul's pre-existence within his Job commentary makes a most appropriate fit with what many consider to be the primary biblical case-study for "bad things happening to good people." In other words, we are permitted to consider his teaching on pre-existence under the lens of theodicy. Job, after all, had every reason to curse the day in which he was born. Only Didymus will not permit merely a surface interpretation of Job's cursing that day. For only a literal-minded person, he says, would ascribe such a motive to the holy man, who, after all, (cf. below) personifies a kind of Alexandrian α ι and α ι reminiscent of Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis*.

Even allowing for Job's stoic comportment, Didymus knows we are still left with the question of theodicy. Why do good people suffer? Origen had already taken up just that question,

¹⁴*Commentary on John* II, 24.

¹⁵Origen in *De Principiis*: "considering the soul of Esau, who was condemned in a later life for ancient sins." (II, 8,3)

again in *De Principiis*. Only he treats the matter in the context of a somewhat less dramatic narrative, than that of Job. His exegesis is of a passage from Paul's letter to the Romans (9:18-21) where the apostle declares "God will have mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth," a text used by many to argue for pre-destination.

For Origen, it is not pre-destination — for that would be inconsistent with the cardinal value he ascribes to free will, our's *and* God's. Rather, the apostle's words in Romans 9, point to the fact that no capricious spin is intended by God's will — as some might think.¹⁶ Anyway, as Origen says, "there are certain older causes,"¹⁷ to account for lives that are seemingly blessed with fortune, and those that are not, "in consequence of certain former righteous deeds," or the reverse. But everywhere he will preserve free will, so that those who will it, may amend their ways,¹⁸ and return to an ever-loving God.

Why then does *Job* suffer? Is it indeed in consequence of certain former unrighteous deeds? The answer appears to be both "yes" and "no." It is *not* so, if we should take the passage only literally. For to say that Job suffers because of evil he has committed either in this life, or another, is to fall into the same confusion of those who surround him with their blandishments. But in a *figurative* (i.e. an allegorical) way, he personifies *all those that suffer*. And as a "type" for all humankind, he "curses the day on which he was born," in the same way that a physician would

¹⁶Origen remains the great defender of free will, as does Didymus (cf. the prologue to his Job commentary).

¹⁷*De Principiis*, III, 1,21.

¹⁸*De Principiis*, III, 1,23.

“curse” an illness — *in order to heal*.¹⁹

Therefore, we realize that Job was sent mostly *to help*. His soul has been wed with a body, as with John the Baptist’s and Elijah’s and Ezekiel’s, and the others, in order to “help the fallen.” When Job cursed the day on which he was born, then, it was done *on behalf of* “all the human race.” His complaint is not the cry of dereliction that comes out of sheer personal angst; but rather, on behalf of others, he “raises the argument against every cause.”²⁰ Elsewhere in the commentary on Job, in his exegesis of 3:11, Didymus even portrays Job’s occasional cursing of the day in which he was born as a sign of his stooping to identify with the weakness of fellow human beings, not because he *is* weak, but in order to encourage and later to instruct them:

He (i.e. Job) himself, however, he represents as tottering, even though he is steadfast. But he takes the role of those who are morose, so as to allow the word of instruction - later - to follow upon the word of doubt.

In a somewhat convoluted way, it now becomes apparent why Didymus has insisted upon an allegorical approach to this passage — as he does so often elsewhere. For if, in this instance, he had stopped at the literal approach, then — for him — we should have been limited in our

¹⁹Didymus often uses the analogy of a physician and healing. The healing always entails some “cutting,” “burning,” or in this instance, “cursing,” *in order to effect a cure*. Origen used the same picture, as well. Cf. *De Principiis*, III, 13: “even as physicians (though able to heal a man more quickly), when they suspect that there is hidden poison anywhere in the body, do the reverse of healing . . . to heal the more surely (ἄ ὀ ἰᾶ ῶ ἄ ἕ ῶ ῶ .

²⁰A parallel example in Christian hermeneutics might be the received understanding — at least among some Christians — that Jesus’ invocation from the cross of Psalm 22, “Why hast thou forsaken me?, was not merely a despairing cry of abandonment, but rather a self-conscious taking of a familiar psalm of lament, re-cloaking it with the saving drama of abandonment, loss, and redemption.

conception of Job. Job is not only so strong as to be able to identify with human weakness, he is also able to encourage us by going beyond merely an all-too human complaint against the deity. But, if we allow Didymus to contemplate the passage allegorically, and to comprehend Job as another Ezekiel or Isaiah, sent from God, then we shall understand his complaint as being offered for all of us, and in that sense, as a saintly encouragement to us in turn to bear with our sufferings just as philosophically as he has.

Before leaving the topic of the soul's pre-existence, it is worth noting, at least briefly, a second instance in the Job commentary where Didymus turns to this topic. In this one, he echoes the Origenist teaching of the so-called "double creation." Origen had outlined a teaching on two natures, a prior one for the invisible, incorporeal nature, including the soul, and a secondary one for the visible, corporeal nature, including the body. Origen is understood to be drawing from a famous passage from Plato's *Phaedo*, in which Origen has found not only his concepts but also his vocabulary: Socrates says: "Shall we assume two kinds of existences, one visible [the body], the other invisible [the soul]." ²¹

Origen extends Plato's concept of two natures through a further development, that of two "creations." This he does (following Philo's exegesis of Genesis) by repeatedly invoking Genesis 1:1 as a proof-text ²² for just such a double-creation. "In the beginning God created the heavens [the invisible, incorporeal] and the earth [the visible, corporeal]."

²¹ ὦ ὕ ὕ ἔ ὕ ἔ ὦ ὀ ὀ ἔ ὀ ὀ ὀ ἔ ἔ
 "shall we assume then two kinds of existences, one visible, the other invisible?," *Phaedo* 79A).

²²*De Principiis* II, 9,1; II, 9,6; III, 6,8; IV, 4,6.

Didymus explicitly follows this train of thought, also — joining himself now with Plato, Philo, and Origen. For in his exegesis of Job 10:8a, Didymus distinguishes God’s “making of the soul,” from his “fashioning of the flesh.” The verse in Job, reads: “Your hands have made (ἐποίησέν) me and formed (ἐποίησέν) me.” It is “well-said,” says Didymus. By this, he means that scripture has deployed parallel but contrasting verbs: “making” and “forming.” For it is in just this way, he wants to say, that one is to understand the making of the soul and the forming of the body: “made” refers to the soul, and “form” refers to the body. For Didymus, the soul’s creation is prior — and certainly, he implies, a *separate* act of creation, from that of the body.

The ἀνάστασις

The Greek word behind this dogma literally means “return,” “restitution,” (of something that has been put down, or put into a certain condition, ἀνάστασις). In theology, it stands for the belief that “ultimately all free moral creatures — angels, men, and devils — will share in the grace of salvation.”²³

In his *Apology Against Rufinus*, (I,6), St. Jerome more than implies Didymus his teacher to have participated in this teaching, as well. For just after listing those features of Origen’s theology that have become objectionable to many in that time, he labels Didymus “the most open champion of Origen,” thereby implicating Didymus with that very catalogue that includes Origen’s ideas on the restitution of *all*.

Now, it has not been exactly easy for the modern reader to access those words of Didymus

²³F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, London: Oxford, 1974, 70.

that Jerome must be thinking of, and in which presumably he *did* champion such doctrines as the *ἀ* *ἄ* . This is for the simple reason that those works of his that might have included this were precisely the ones that were ultimately destroyed. And those works that are most free from Origenist teachings on universal salvation and the pre-existence of the soul (viz. *On the Trinity* and *The Holy Spirit*) are the very ones that *do* survive.

But in the commentary on Job, the situation is now different. While there is no single place in it where Didymus makes a systematic exposition of the teaching on universal salvation, all the building blocks of such a teaching are here: the idea that God does not create evil (as the Manichaeans had argued); that evil is a motion away from the good; that human beings, along with other rational beings, have free will; that afflictions in this life are a corrective to something done in a previous state, with the implication being that such chastening is with a view towards our eventual restoration.

Didymus openly speculates about even the devil’s restoration. He asks whether the devil is capable of repentance. Strongly he implies that, as a rational creature, he is. The reflection comes about in the context of his exegesis of Job 1:8, where “the Lord said to the devil: “in your thoughts have you considered my servant Job . . .”

For Didymus, the key word is “thought.” Is the devil, in fact, capable of thought? “Having thoughts is the characteristic of a rational being,” (*ὁ* *ἄ* *ἰ* *ἰ* *ὀ* *ἰ* . And rational beings — capable of having thought — are also capable of repentance. For Didymus, the answer is self-evident, from the biblical texts he has cited (Isaiah 14:13, in addition to Job 1:8). In each of them, the “thought” or “understanding” of the devil is addressed.

Even within the opening words of the prologue, Didymus has told how the devil is a rational

being who “became an apostate from God.” He was not created *as* the devil, for God does not create evil, but was “perfect and virtuous.” As such, the devil’s falling away from unity with God was a most extreme example of the change and decay, to which all bodies are subject. “Bodies undergo decay and growth,” says Didymus.

Didymus’ teachings on this in the Job commentary show the direct imprint of

Origen’s words about the devil in *De Principiis*:

. . . he who formerly was Lucifer and who ‘arose in the morning’ has fallen from heaven. . . . Even Satan was once light, before he went astray and fell to this place . . . That he is an

apostate, or fugitive, the Lord also says in Job, in the following words, ‘Thou wilt take with a hook the apostate dragon (Job 40:20)

. . .

- Origen, *De Principiis*, I, 5,5

It happened that a rational being became an apostate of God . . . This is the devil, who was not created as the devil . . . but perfect and virtuous . . . he himself shone as the morningstar of heaven and an early-rising star; but was driven from the heavenly land.

- Didymus, *Commentary on Job, Prologue*

What may be of particular interest is that Didymus traces not only the same concept, but also does so with evidently the same vocabulary and images. While we no longer have the Greek original for this paragraph of Origen’s work, it so happens that in his translation of it into Latin, Rufinus had transliterated the word apostate (ἀπόστατος), followed by his choice of a Latin equivalent, *refuga*. In at least this respect, if not more, Didymus therefore had once again followed his mentor very closely. In the ancient world, as has been so often said, citation without attribution is no plagiarism, but the highest compliment.

As we have already noted, Didymus is also — like Origen — a great champion of free will. He says in the prologue, that “Job . . . brings to light the exercise of free will.” And, things happening to us are not chance occurrences: for nothing happens “without God’s permission.” Therefore,

“whatever is carried out by choice, and under the intentional activity of the one engaged in it, that shows him to be blameworthy or praiseworthy.” The particular decay and decline which the devil has suffered is surely from his own agency and choice.

While biblical exegesis of Job is perhaps not the place to find Didymus’ most systematic explanation of the recovery or “restitution” of those who, like the devil, have been put down by their own choice and agency, it so happens that there *are* places in the commentary on Job where an Origenist understanding of that process is conveyed.

For example, in his commentary on Job 3:24-25, Didymus alludes to a “still greater punishment” upon the devil. And as Henrichs has pointed out, the very concept of the punishment of the devil points to an Origenist teaching on the $\alpha\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$: “nach der alle Vernunftwesen nach vielen Perioden der Läuterung wieder in den ursprünglichen sündenlosen Zustand zurückversetzt werden.”

Still another clue to Didymus’ shared understanding, with Origen, of the $\alpha\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$, is his opinion that the scriptural allusions to the “wrath” of God are not to be taken in some literal, worldly sense of “emotion.” For God, as incorporeal, does not have “feelings,” as we do. Rather, in the commentary on Job 3:26, Didymus allegorically translates “wrath” as the “afflictions” which have beset Job. His basis for doing so is that scripture refers, in this instance, to the wrath as being “sent.” As Didymus is quick to point out, if it were emotion, it would not be “sent,” for emotion “lies in the soul,” and is not “sent” anywhere. The point is, Didymus’ phraseology conforms to an Origenist understanding of affliction as a purgative, and ultimately benevolent, action of a loving, not wrathful, God.²⁴

²⁴For Origen’s own explanation of the “wrath” of God, cf. *De Principiis* II, 4,4.

Didymus' Doctrine of God and the Soul

The afflictions which beset us in this life are not, as with much contemporary thinking²⁵ the mark of a loving but vulnerable God. Didymus' deity is both loving *and* omniscient, if not omnipotent. Almost everywhere in the commentary, he is careful to say that afflictions do not come upon us "without God's permission." Neither will he shrink from saying that afflictions actually are "sent" — and again, "sent" with a purgative, benevolent purpose.

There is a plan, or providence, then in the events of this life, according to Origen and Didymus: a benevolent, if often inscrutable one. And when Didymus speaks, in the prologue to his Job commentary, about innocent suffering, he uses the same vocabulary as Origen did. Both avoid saying that God *causes* suffering to the innocent. But both are equally emphatic that nothing happens in this life beyond the *permission* of God:

The story of Job also teaches us that it is not by chance attacks that we are assailed, if ever such losses come upon us . . . For observe that Job's house would not have fallen upon his sons unless the devil had first obtained power against them . . . From these considerations it is shown that all those events that happen in this world, which are regarded as things indifferent, whether calamities like the above or events of any other kind whatever, happen neither by God's doing nor yet without God . . . Thus even in regard to Job himself it is said that at a definite time he was ordained to fall into the power of others and to have his house

plundered . . . Divine scripture teaches us to accept all things that happen to us as sent by God, because we know that nothing happens without him.

- Origen, *De Principiis*, III, 2,6-7.

The words cited (viz. the same verse cited by Origen: 'See, I <the Lord> give into your hand all that he possesses; only do not touch Job himself') demonstrate that no one falls into any trials without God's consent. For God says: 'See, I have given everything into your hand.' However, in order that it be

²⁵The view is most ably put forth by several thinkers in the theological sphere, William Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology and Scripture*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994; Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991; and Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, trans. Darrell L. Guder, Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983, are but recent examples of the argument for a God "strong in love, weak in power."

obvious that even God's consent has been qualified, a word is added: 'Only do not touch Job himself.' So trials occur neither by the allotment of fate, or spontaneously, but out of the consent of God, in order to show forth — as has already been said — Job's virtue . . .

- Didymus, *Commentary on Job 1:12*

What is God's purpose in allowing afflictions to befall humankind? Both Origen and Didymus are not without an answer, as they would ascribe it inevitably, on the one hand, to a benevolent mission (Job suffers so as to help other sufferers to display ἀγάπη). Or, Origen and Didymus would — in other human examples — ascribe it to the purging from “ancient sins”). Such an answer is unlikely to be on the one hand palatable to the modern therapeutic mind set, with its accent on freeing people from “blame and shame,” and “the tyranny of the shoulds.”²⁶ It was to be no more acceptable to Orthodox Christian understandings of “judgment” as the winnowing or separating of good from evil, rather than the burning away or “purgation” of the soul.²⁷ Nevertheless, there are certain essential and enduring values in Origen and Didymus' teaching, which should not go unnoticed, or unpreserved, by the Church today.

Chief among the strengths of Origen's teaching is that we are not forced to make the choice,

²⁶Sam Keen, *Inward Bound: Exploring the Geography of Your Emotions*, New York: Bantam, 1992, p. 84.

²⁷Origen's interpretation of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares is an interesting case in point. Here, the fire at the “consummation of the age” is that time when “evil opinions” which have grown upon the soul may be overturned and given over to the fire. The “evil opinions” and not the souls themselves (which are immortal), are given over. (*Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*, II, X, 2). How can this not be different from St. Augustine's view in *The City of God*, that “everlasting fire” is the “last punishment of the wicked.” (*The City of God*, XX, 12).

so often encountered in twentieth century discussions of theodicy, between on the one hand a powerful God, or on the other, a loving God.²⁸ But Origen and Didymus' deity is both all-powerful *and* loving.²⁹ Nothing happens in this world without God's permission. Even the evil that befalls us is part of an overall, mostly inscrutable *process* of salvation. For unlike the salvation experience of a "river baptism" ("I gave my life to the Lord, and was saved") — salvation with Didymus and Origen is ongoing, and in fact happens continually in the road of the soul through different embodiments, "both in those temporal worlds which are seen, and in those eternal worlds which are invisible."³⁰

What Origen (and Didymus) mean exactly by the different "embodiments" of the soul is not always precisely clear. What we do know is that Origen understands there to be a series of "worlds" or "aeons" in which the soul may successively be embodied, since the soul itself is "immortal" and "eternal."³¹ Moreover, Origen somehow understands the soul's progress through these worlds or aeons to be either progressive or regressive (that is, either progressing toward God, or falling away from Him).

The modern reader of Origen and of Didymus are left to parse for themselves just how

²⁸"Why then does He [God] not save them (i.e. those who are destined to perish)? If he is unwilling, then he will not be good; if he is willing but cannot, he will not be almighty." *De Principiis*, II, 5,2.

²⁹Origen writes: "We have frequently shown by those statements that we are able to adduce from the divine Scriptures that God, the Creator of all things, is good, and just, and all-powerful." *De Principiis*, II, 9,6.

³⁰*De Principiis*, I, 6, 13.

³¹" . . . in the many and endless periods of duration in the immeasurable and different worlds, it may descend from the highest good to the lowest evil, or be restored from the lowest evil to the highest good." *De Principiis*, III, 1, 21.

literally this progression is to be understood. It cannot be entirely inappropriate, it seems, to understand it in some metaphorical, rather than a literal, way. For the entire character of Origen and Didymus' approach to scripture itself was of this metaphorical and allegorical character. And later great orthodox theologians, indeed did understand the soul to be on a journey either to or from fellowship with the Almighty. Most stirring of all such claims is perhaps Gregory of Nyssa's declaration (in *The Catechetical Oration*, 21) that there is:

a perpetual movement toward a different state . . . in the one case it is always directed toward the good; and here its progress is continual, since there is no conceivable limit to the distance it can go. In the other case, it is directed toward the opposite . . . our nature cannot remain essentially unchanged. Rather does the will drive it toward some end, desire for the good naturally setting it in motion.

For Didymus, as with the later Greek fathers also, both God and humanity have free will. The freedom of God is that the deity is not ultimately limited by — or vulnerable to — evil. The freedom of the believer is in the choice to follow the road that leads to re-union with God.

Rowan Greer, once again, has put it well when he describes “the journey”³² as one of a few “dominant metaphors”³³ in Origen's thought. Indeed, that human freedom to choose the road leading to God is sometimes in both Didymus and Origen's work set over against the counterpoint of less salutary “pathways” that are also available to us, such as temptation. And the choice between the two can be another example of the moral “wrestling” or “athleticism” of the Christian that we shall come to presently.

³²Rowan A. Greer (ed. and trans.), *Origen*, in the series, “The Classics of Western Spirituality,” New York: Paulist Press, 1979, p. 18.

³³Greer uses this phrase because he understands the movement of the soul, in Origen, to be a “drama” — the story of the soul's struggle both in moral and spiritual spheres to return to fellowship with God.

In his commentary on Job 3:3-5 and 3:5-6, Didymus plays the two off against each other. Origen has done much the same thing in numerous examples: in *De Principiis*, where one “enters upon a narrow path, passing to a loftier and more sublime road,”³⁴ and in *Contra Celsum*, where he decries those who “tread other paths from us — men who deny the Creator.”³⁵

It is clear that the sticking point, though, will remain just this: the nearness of the Origenist ideas to words like “transmigration,” or “reincarnation.” Didymus’ word for the latter was *ἀναστροφή*. But “re-embodiment,” or change-in-embodiment is better. For with Didymus and with Origen, the soul’s pathway through different embodiments *preserves the individuality of that particular soul*, unlike the description we seem to get with Plato, or with much eastern, non-Christian spirituality.

That the individuality of soul is preserved in Didymus and Origen is attested by just the examples we are citing, that of Jacob and Esau, and of Jeremiah (“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.” Jeremiah 1:5) Citations like this one are not to be found in the hitherto extant works of Didymus. The discovery of the Taura papyri brings such speculations to the Church’s consideration once again.

Now, having literally brought back to the light of day some of the proscribed and anathematized portions of Didymus’ writings, we may still choose to disagree with him. But it will *not* do, either, to “lump” his thinking on “re-embodiment” with a certain body of thought loosely called “reincarnation,” if the latter simply means a “generic” soul floating endlessly between different existences. For the soul, in the school of Didymus and Origen, has a particular “road” that

³⁴*De Principiis*, IV, 1,15.

³⁵*Contra Celsum*, VIII, 16.

it will follow, as we have said. It is individual; it has identity. And it awaits a final consummation, in which “the end is always like the beginning.”³⁶ By this, Origen meant that, at the end, all things would be restored to the original fellowship with and design of the creator. This does not undercut the wonder of the resurrection, or take away from its surprise, but rather fulfills it, for in Origen’s thought — as Rowan Greer has put it so well — “the soul has a characteristic form that generates the new body of the resurrection.”³⁷

So in several passages of his *Commentary on Matthew* and the *Contra Celsum*, Origen explicitly critiqued, and distanced himself, from those who believe in transmigration of the soul. These include presumably the Manichaeans Didymus attacked,³⁸ as well as indigenous Egyptian beliefs alluded to by Origen and surely also encountered by Didymus.³⁹ In fact, when Didymus describes the transmigration “straw man” he is attacking, it is the very concept that people had accused Origen of advancing, viz. a notion of the soul’s re-embodiment through various orders of life, bestial, vegetal, celestial.⁴⁰

Now Origen and Didymus’ legacy on this point *is* admittedly confusing and at times apparently contradictory. The one point of some clarity is that we now know (thanks to the discovery of the Job commentary) that Didymus, like Origen before him, *did not want his position to be described by the word “reincarnation,” or “transmigration.”* This is perhaps because of the

³⁶*De Principiis*, I, 6,2.

³⁷Rowan A. Greer, *Op. Cit.*, 16.

³⁸*Commentary on Job* 3:3-5.

³⁹*Contra Celsum*, I, 20.

⁴⁰*Commentary on Matthew*, XIII, 1-2; *Contra Celsum* I, 20; III, 75; V, 29.

uniquely individual nature of the soul of rational beings that they somehow preserve and hold onto, as well as the doctrine of a final consummation (which would be undercut, if not ruled out, by a continual “re-cycling” of souls through different embodiments).⁴¹ Above all, the point of the purging of a soul through embodiment is *loving*: “the labors and chastisements inflicted upon the wicked by God are a kind of medicine leading to conversion.”⁴²

Didymus’ Methodology in his Job Commentary

In the opening words of the prologue to his commentary, Didymus declares that he will “mark off” the basis of the subject under discussion. In a most systematic fashion, he does just that. For with his Alexandrian training, he sees knowledge and contemplation themselves to be organized around certain foundational principles. These principles, as with Origen also, are in Greek, ἀρχή meaning either a “beginning,” or “first principle.” And as he will elsewhere point out, if we start off

⁴¹It is worth pondering whether Origen’s treatment of the topic of “re-embodiment” does not *itself* require a figurative or even an allegorical approach in order to be understood. As noted, he explicitly distanced himself from Egyptian folk teachings about transmigration. But that being said, he continues to come close to some such doctrine with his vocabulary of souls being “sent” into the world, and of their “suffering” in this life toward some “improvement.” Since Origen himself eschewed literal interpretation of scripture, it would stand to reason that we might call upon a more figurative approach to understanding his own theology. What that figurative approach would be, in the case of transmigration, remains to be seen. But the foundations of it are perhaps already laid, if one joins those scholars (such as Rowan Greer) who doubt that Origen or Didymus had in mind an endless “re-cycling” of souls through successive emodiments, when these two fathers spoke of “re-embodiment.” And again, in some sense that doctrine, in Didymus, seems to line up with Plato’s like notions, only differing in that the individual soul and its individuality is in some measure preserved *as* individual soul.

⁴²*Contra Celsum*, III, 75.

with the wrong principles, then all else that follows will inevitably be flawed.⁴³

So he turns his attention to the “basis” or *ὕψος* of the subject under discussion. What is this basis? It is fundamentally, as we have shown, his grasp or “take” on God and creation itself — that we do not live in a random universe.

Again and again, Didymus repeats his starting principle that the created world is good, and that God does not create evil. The devil himself is a “fallen angel,” and was not created *as the devil* by God (cf. Didymus’ *Commentary on Job* 3:8). This foundational principle becomes the starting place for Didymus’ other ideas. These additional ideas include his understanding of free will (both God’s and ours). For the goodness of God cannot be limited by any implication that God *had* to accommodate evil in his good creation. And as overwhelming as human sin may seem, the soul’s one-time oneness with God is the essential ingredient within it causing it to wish to choose return and fellowship with God over sin and estrangement.

Didymus’ Use of Allegory

But now, let us take up another methodological question, and ask how allegory equips Didymus and Origen to deal with just such questions as these that we have been examining: the elusive providence of an all-powerful, all-loving God. In fact, the allegorical method is specifically geared to reveal just such enigmas as these, and at the same moment to revere what must remain ineffably unknowable. Hence the term *ἄγνωστον* as it is used by Didymus, and by the Cappadocians

⁴³The beautiful example of this is Didymus’ commentary on Job 4:1-5, where he shows how Arianism, Docetism, and Manichaeism make their errors early on, in taking off in a wrong direction right at the start, from the wrong *ἀρχή*.

after him: the hidden, apophatic mystery to be contemplated, rather than explained.⁴⁴

Throughout his commentary, Didymus holds at a distance a purely literal approach to exegesis. His word for this is *ἐπισημειωτικός* — a word which was originally used by classical authors, and afterwards in the patristic tradition. Particularly in the latter, it was used respectfully to refer to those who “love learning.” But Didymus uses it almost disdainfully, (cf. his commentary on Job 3:3-5).

For Didymus, as for the Alexandrian school in general, the promise of allegory is that, again, it lifts up the elusive, and allows us to “linger” over what can not be known in a perceptible way. In one telling comment within the Job commentary, Didymus explicitly contrasts “perceptible” with “allegory,” (or more precisely, in this instance, with “anagogy.” For anagogy is a category of allegorical interpretation seeking hidden meanings pertaining to the future life). So in his commentary on Job 1:3, Didymus makes the contrast between simply interpreting the verse in a “perceptible” way (*κατὰ τὸ φανερόν* — by which we are to understand him to mean, “merely literal” — that which can be seen, heard, tasted.⁴⁵ But the “still better” way is that of anagogy (*κατὰ τὸ κρυπτόν*).

In reading Didymus’ commentary on Job, one is perhaps at first inclined to isolate those instances in which he explicitly *tells* us that he will be dealing with a passage allegorically. Such

⁴⁴Allegory of course was also understood by Clement, and other Alexandrians, to be the way to uncloak the biblical writing’s hidden meaning. Clement goes so far as to term the literal mode of interpreting scripture, *κατὰ τὸ φανερόν* — “we must not understand His words literally,” *The Rich Man’s Salvation*, 5.

⁴⁵Origen continually uses *κατὰ τὸ φανερόν* also in his *Commentary on John* to distinguish a “sensible,” from a spiritual, gospel.

examples — as we have seen — are several. But as it happens, his *total* approach and method is allegorical. This means that the foundation of his allegorical method is his willingness to be *literal*, in at least this sense: a close continual scrutiny of *ipsissima verba* of a text. But it also means “translating” in the original sense of anagogy, itself, the words to reveal a deeper, spiritual impact.

A most useful apparatus in Henrichs’s edition of the Job commentary, then, is an index of Greek words receiving an allegorical interpretation at Didymus’ hands. Here are: “drinking wine in the house of the older brother,” as a form of receiving “godly instruction” (Job 1:13); the “lion” as representative of those “who trust in themselves,” such as Nero himself (Job 4:10-12); the “lioness” as “a person with the character of insatiable desire” (Job 4:10-12); “gold in abundance” as “pure thinking” (Job 3:15); “the shaking of a person’s bones” as “the power of a soul” (Job 4:12-16). These are but some of the innumerable examples of a total way of seeing, which is so typical of Didymus’ practice.

The concept of ἀθλητής in Didymus’ portrayal of the man, Job

In his commentary, Didymus always refers to Job as “the blessed one” (ὁ ἅγιος). Within the opening pages of his work, Didymus begins to show what that blessedness consists in. Job, for Didymus, is a kind of “athlete” who “wrestles” with the adversary devil.⁴⁶ By his patient endurance, he overcomes the devil.

ἀθλητής brings to mind not only the strong development of that term in Plato (e.g. his *Laches*). It also connects with the Greek epic tradition. Consider, for example, Didymus’ own

⁴⁶Cf. the commentary on 1:1-3.

sometime use of the etymologically-related word ἄθλη for Job. This we have translated “hero,” in our text, rather than “man,” first because Didymus himself makes the distinction, saying that he will not use ἄνθρωπος with respect to Job, but rather ἄθλη. And secondly, the context is almost always such as to accentuate Job’s heroism as “moral athlete,” or “epic hero.” From the opening pages of the commentary, Job contends with evil as a wrestler would with an opponent.

Now, the *topos* of “wrestling” with the evil one is of course also used by Paul.⁴⁷ Among the Fathers, because of the experience of persecution, it becomes a commonplace. Perhaps most memorable in this regard are sermons of John Chrysostom.⁴⁸ Origen too uses the image, chiefly in *De Principiis*,⁴⁹ and oftentimes explicitly in reference to Job.⁵⁰ Origen’s most exciting reference to Job as “athlete” is in his treatise on prayer, *De Oratione*. Here, “the devil was conquered by the athlete of virtue . . . Job wrestled and conquered twice, but he did not enter such a struggle a third time. For it was necessary for three wrestlings to be kept for the Savior.”⁵¹

In Didymus’ commentary on Job, however, the portrayal is also evidently influenced by

⁴⁷Ephesians 6:12. Another Alexandrian, Clement, picks up on Paul’s metaphor of the athlete contending against the “spiritual powers:” “This is the true athlete - he who in the great stadium, the fair world, is crowned for the true victory over all the passions . . . and the contest embracing all the varied exercises, is not “against flesh and blood,” but against the spiritual powers of inordinate passions that work through the flesh.” *Elucidations* VII, 3.

⁴⁸Cf. Homily 39 on Acts 17:32-34, 18:1; Homily 1 on 2 Corinthians 1:1-4; Homily 1 on Philippians 1:1-2; Homily 22 on Ephesians 6:5-8; Homily 8 on Colossians 3:5-7, among many other references. And Chrysostom explicitly terms Job “the athlete”: cf. Homily 2, “On the Power of Man to Resist the Devil.”

⁴⁹*De Principiis*, I, 5, 2 and III, 2, 3.

⁵⁰*De Principiis*, III, 2, 6-7.

⁵¹*De Oratione*, XXX, 2.

Philo, as well as Stoic and classical values and vocabulary, as they have come down to him, possibly through interpreters like Clement of Alexandria. A key text in the Job commentary for understanding this may be Didymus' commentary on Job 5:19, where the birth of Jacob "supplants" Esau. Didymus claims that the patriarch at first had been named Jacob because he had *supplanted emotion*.⁵² "Later, <he was called> Israel, because he had more time for contemplation, after he had wrestled with emotion. Jesus certainly said this to his disciples, 'no longer are you of this world,'⁵³ (for they had surpassed emotion, according to Didymus)."

So the contrast here, for Didymus, remains one of emotion and contemplation — a distinction that would have been entirely understandable in the school of Clement. For it was Clement who had described the wrestling of Jacob with a stranger at Peniel as a kind of "overcoming" by the "athlete Jacob."⁵⁴ Origen also allegorically ascribed the "supplanting" of Esau to the "overcoming" of the emotion of hatred.⁵⁵

Now, in his own commentary on Job, Didymus tells us more specifically what that moral "athleticism" of the blessed Job embodies: it is a "keeping a distance" from evil. It is to "distance

⁵²Clement of Alexandria also sees Job as one who overcame "emotion." "Calmness is a thing which, of all other things, is most to be prized. As an example of this, the word proposes to us the blessed Job." *Fragments of Clemens Alexandrinus*, "Nicetas, Bishop of Heraclea, from his Catena," II (on Job 34:7).

⁵³John 15:19. The tie-in with the fore-going seems to be the disciples' "surpassing" (or "supplanting") of emotion.

⁵⁴Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, I, 7.

⁵⁵Origen, *Contra Celsum* IV, 46.

himself (ἀ ἐχ) from every bad deed . . . and from all evil.”⁵⁶ For evil does not *exist*, except as the privation of good; and it does not exist until someone, exercising free will in a wrong-headed way, chooses to take its path.

The moral “athleticism” of Job chiefly consists, however, in his being able to personify — repeatedly for Didymus — the classical ideal of endurance and courage, ἀ ἰ This word, perhaps more than other available synonyms for “courage,” connotes manly strength and endurance in military and athletic domains.⁵⁷ The sufferings which come upon a person then, for Didymus, are the occasions in which one may “show forth” courage and endurance in the way of a moral athlete.

Didymus (and Origen) of course also understand our suffering as a catechesis for the soul: that is, that we learn from suffering. Their underlining of the redemptive edge to human sufferings was undoubtedly schooled at least somewhat in the classical doctrine, ἀ ἄ “wisdom comes through suffering.” For that doctrine is echoed in numerous sources, and almost always as if it were a well-known proverb.⁵⁸ And the saying is cited with just the same ring of authority in the New Testament *Letter to the Hebrews*, when the writer declares that “though he were a Son, yet [Jesus]

⁵⁶Didymus, *Commentary on Job* 2:3. In the patristic period, the word has a special significance of “abstaining or desisting from” something.

⁵⁷So Herodotus speaks of a kind of surprising strength and courage, which is not in the reach of most mortals, but rather ὁ ἦ ἀ ἦ ἰρῶ ἀ ἰ “those of good heart and manly strength.”(VII, 153). Or there is Plato’s Socrates, who scrutinizes that ideal of ἀ ἰ , which is “superior to that of most men.” *Apology*, 35A.

⁵⁸One notable citation is in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, line 177, where the saying is preceded by the direct object, as if it is introducing a “saying” or proverb. Another such proverbial rendition of it is to be found in Herodotus’ *Histories*, I, 207, where Croesus the Lydian remarks that “disaster (or literally “the graceless things”) has been my teacher,” (ἀ ἐ ἦ ἐό ἀχά ἦ ἐ

learned obedience by the things which he suffered,” (ἵ ὤ ἰό ἔ ἄ □ ὦ ἔ ἦ
 ὕ ῆ).

But with the Alexandrian tradition, the “things suffered” are not only a source of learning by “default.” It is not, that is, a “passive,” but a chosen pathway to learn from suffering. It is in that sense an exercise of the free will, to choose to learn rather than merely to moan about sufferings. In his commentary on 4:1-5, Didymus even refers also to the moral athleticism of Job as ἵ (the “high-souled way).”

In doing so, he invokes a phrase with a distinguished pedigree in the classical tradition. Aristotle developed the concept at some length in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. The “high-souled” person is most concerned with honor and dishonor. Because the claiming of the one, and the avoidance of the other are such persons’s chief endeavor, they will “not rejoice overmuch in prosperity, nor grieve overmuch at adversity.” In fact, read through the lens of Didymus’ Job, Aristotle’s “high-souled man,” sounds remarkably compatible, at least with respect to his attitude toward the things of this world, the material things, as well as other people’s opinions.⁵⁹

Somehow, perhaps coincidentally,⁶⁰ Chrysostom also picks up on this athleticism of the “high-souled” person. In numerous places in the homilies, Chrysostom draws a picture of the “high-souled” person in scripture — whether it is the patriarch Abraham or the apostle Paul — as the one

⁵⁹Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, IV, 3, 17-18.

⁶⁰It is hard to find too many arguments for Origen or Didymus’ “influence” upon Chrysostom, except perhaps in the notable story of the “tall brethren,” sheltered by Chrysostom in Constantinople, after their worship of the transcendant ineffable had fallen out of favor with the “anthropomorphites” in Alexandria — a deed for which he paid, with the suspicion on the part of his critics of his being also “Origenist,” in his own thinking.

who has a proper relation to riches, despising his own comfort in order to care for that of others;⁶¹ or being patient and “long-suffering” in affliction;⁶² and being properly oriented toward honor, strong enough even to claim it.⁶³ It is hard to believe that Chrysostom had not picked up the phrase rather directly from Aristotle’s writing. It is fascinating to speculate how Didymus also, at about the same time or even earlier, came to fold *ἰ* into his own treatment of Job’s moral athleticism, as well.

The significance of Didymus’, Origen’s (and Chrysostom’s) accent on the moral athlete is underscored — at least in the case of the first two — not merely as “window-dressing,” not merely an aspect of their imagery and style. It is integral to their entire conception of good and evil, and the struggle to remain faithful within life’s afflictions. By overcoming temptation and affliction, the moral athlete gives glory to God. But he or she also — says Rowan Greer — is shaped by the contest, by the wrestling, into someone purer and holier:

[With Origen] *temptation not only tests what we are, it is also a providential process by which we are fashioned into what we should be. God is a divine goldsmith who hammers us into an object of beauty suitable for His grandeur.*⁶⁴

Didymus said it himself, again in his commentary on Job 4:1-5.

The afflictions which come upon anyone, as said before, occur without question on the basis of two things: either on account of punishment or chastening, or so that one might bear it in a great-souled way and receive crowns for strength and courage.

For Didymus, “the great-souled way” is the path of “strength and courage.” The two are

⁶¹Homily XLVIII, on Acts 22:17-20.

⁶²Homily XXXIII, on 1 Corinthians 13.

⁶³Homily XII, on 2 Corinthians 6:1-2.

⁶⁴Rowan A. Greer, *Op. Cit.*, 21.

inseparably part of the same moral orientation. Whether it is palatable or not, God is the loving teacher who instructs us through “tests,” just as certain schools of pedagogy continue to use the quiz and test, not so much as a means of measurement, but as an actual instructional tool. Here the disciple is shaped and formed, like precious metal in the fire.

It was noted at the outset that a key significance of Didymus’ work is that it serves as a link between Athanasius and the later Greek fathers. For this writer, that is no empty, textbook observation. Correspondences with Origen are patent and recurring, as this introduction has sought to demonstrate. Those associations in fact go beyond mere “influence.” The two thinkers are of the same “school,” in the sense that we may even reliably “fill in” the gaps in our understanding of Didymus, by reference to those considerably more systematic expositions that are to be found in Origen’s writing.⁶⁵

Having secured the connection between Didymus and Origen, it remains to be said that Didymus is thereby well within the lineage of influences who also shaped Origen’s thought: Plato, Plotinus, and the Stoics, among others. Plato’s doctrine of “metempsychosis,” for example, as developed in the *Phaedrus*, includes the notion that the soul’s chastisement is remedial, not vindictive. There is motion therefore in the present life through a series of sufferings, the purpose

⁶⁵For example, when Didymus refers somewhat elliptically (in his commentary on Job 3:17) to a certain parallelism between angels and souls, we are left somewhat in the dark. What does he mean, for example, when he says that they have their rest or “cessation” in a “parallel way”? Certainly by its very nature, the dogma will remain esoteric, yet Origen alone casts light on Didymus’ thought in the latter’s teaching that angels in fact are souls who have only “lightly” sinned in life. (*De Prinipiis*, I, 8,1).

of which are to give us freedom to choose a better road.⁶⁶ “Souls which attain any vision of truth,” are preserved from harm until the “next period.” The wings however fall from those which have forgotten the good, and they pass into human life: “all these are states of probation, in which he who does righteously improves, and he who does unrighteously, deteriorates his lot.”⁶⁷

It may even be that a key Origenist notion, that of free will - which also plays such an important part in the pages of Didymus - traces its genesis from Plato’s *Phaedrus*, and from other such dialogues. As the soul in Plato is ever drawn toward the lovely, so also with Didymus and Origen, and (again) with Gregory of Nyssa whose teaching on *epectasis* posits no limit to the positive motion for good that can come about when the soul moves in the direction of the Godhead.⁶⁸

While its theological orientation is mystical and even esoteric, Didymus’ commentary on Job is no arcane work of isolated scholarship. It situates itself squarely within the Alexandrian tradition of allegory and of Christian universalism, and of revered classical teachings on the soul. The latter it baptizes with a Christian orthodoxy that saves the doctrine of the soul from dualism. The former it passes along to the Cappadocian fathers of the church, where such teachings take full flower in the mystic “contemplation” (*theoria*) suggested already by Didymus.

⁶⁶*Phaedrus*, 245C.

⁶⁷As we have pointed out elsewhere, a key distinction between Plato and the Alexandrian Christians is obviously in the different directions that we are taken by the former’s notion of “immortality” as opposed to the latter’s “eternal life,” or “aeons.”

⁶⁸“There is no conceivable limit to the distance it can go . . .” (ἡ ὁ ἄ ὕ ἔχ when it is oriented toward the good. *The Catechetical Oration* 21.

Prologue

It befits all those who undertake to examine a work to define, in advance, the basis of the subject under discussion. This must now be done - especially since the present book [Job] is most useful, and its thought is not to be disdained. For in this book, Job sets in motion the account of everything concerning the judgements of God: that none of the adversities which occur to humankind come to pass without God's permission. In addition to these things, there are other dogmatic contemplations (even in the prologue)¹ with regard to: steadfastness and patience; despising things which are neither good nor bad, such as money and possessions; having many children, even a goodly race of children. To that end, <Job> also brings to light the exercise of freedom; as well as teachings concerning various dogmas. God willing it, we shall see this in each of those passages in which these <topics> are found. If such a marking off of the hypothesis is fitting, it is time now to begin.

The change, to which the value of all beings is subject, appears in various ways. Bodies undergo decay and growth. At the same time, a corresponding change enters into our chosen intentions. Changes which relate to bodies make those to whom the changes happen neither blameworthy nor praiseworthy. For no one is acceptable <to God> on the basis of the growth or decay of the body, which lies outside what is in our control. However, whatever is carried out by

¹Basil distinguishes between dogma and kerygma (“*On the Spirit*” 27) in a familiar and classic differentiation: dogma is the hidden, apophatic mystery to be contemplated. Kerygma is the news or message to be proclaimed. In this instance, the subtlety of that distinction is perhaps not to be read into Didymus’ use of “dogma.” Nevertheless, Didymus does seem to use the word here as an indicator of deeper philosophical reflections which, in turn, must be “brought to light” by the commentator who will “define, in advance,” the subject at hand.

choice, and under the intentional activity of the one engaged in it,² that shows him to be blameworthy or praiseworthy. This is the case with the one who turns from wickedness to virtue or from virtue to wickedness. Accordingly, it happened that a rational being became an apostate of God, “I have exalted myself in the face of the Lord almighty.”³ This is the devil, who was not created as the devil, for “God did not create death,-”⁴ but perfect and virtuous - for “God created all things exceedingly beautiful.”⁵ He fell nonetheless from the right condition and blessedness, and envies those who change over to these things - “for through the devil's envy death came into the world.”⁶ Mostly, he thought of himself as an outcast: “I must hinder those who possess the heavenly citizenship, so that they not ascend to that place from which I was driven away.” For he considers the progress of humanity to be an accusation against himself, since he himself shone as the morningstar of heaven and an early-rising star⁷; but he was driven from the heavenly land, in order to test those who later

²As we have noted elsewhere, for the Alexandrians, it is the rational faculty that makes human beings “like God.” As rational beings, they are also “free” in the exercise of their will. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* II, 19,102.

³Job 15:25. Didymus’ text differs slightly from our Septuagint. Such variants shall not henceforth be noted, except where it actually seems to bear on some aspect of Didymus’ exegesis.

⁴Wisdom of Solomon 1:13.

⁵Genesis 1:31. By contrast, Origen was at some pains to show that the phrase “I create woe,” (or even “I create evil”), as it appears in Isaiah 45:7, does *not* mean what at first glance it might seem to indicate. “We, on the other hand, maintain that “evil,” or “wickedness,” and the actions which proceed from it, were not created by God.” Evils, such as there may be in this world, come about (Origen says) as sawdust and spiral shavings from the lathe of a carpenter. *Contra Celsum*, VI, 55.

⁶Wisdom of Solomon 2:24.

⁷Isaiah 14:12. Origen also describes Satan as once having been light, cf. *De Principiis*, I, 5,5.

would be illumined by the "Sun of Righteousness."⁸ Those however who have a stronger inclination toward evil contend zealously with virtuous living. For "the thought of humanity is keenly directed after evil."⁹

The apostle wishes to show this, when he says: "Will we not judge angels?"¹⁰ By this he meant: We, who lead the heavenly life, will consign those to the earth, who have not kept to their own fitting station. So also will the inhabitants of Ninevah condemn the Jews, who have shown no belief in the Savior, whereas they themselves followed the message of Jonah, who published repentance. Even that which was said about the Queen of Sheba indicates the same thought. For although she was a woman and a queen, and lived at a distance, and had to traverse foreign regions, she considered all this inconsequential, and pressed onward, to hear the wisdom of Solomon. The Jews, on the other hand, had their teacher [the Lord] amongst them, and did not wish to draw any advantage from this, even though he possessed much more than Solomon. The former [Solomon] was of benefit because of the wisdom that came out of him. But the Savior, beyond the benefit offered by his words, showed a miraculous power in wonders and signs sufficient to persuade even the most unbelieving. He brought about awakenings from the dead, gave sight again to the blind, cleansed lepers, and in short, healed "every illness and weakness."¹¹ The envy then of the devil

⁸Malachi 3:20.

⁹Genesis 8:21.

¹⁰1 Corinthians 6:3. Origen expounds upon the relationship of human beings and angels, and upon the judgment of angels, in his *Commentary on Matthew X*, 13. Not *all* angels will be judged, he points out, but only those who "have not been entrusted with this office." For Origen, it is not the *station* (i.e. "angel" as opposed to "mortal") that is most important. It is rather the appropriate or inappropriate exercise of free will, whether by an angel *or* a mortal that matters.

¹¹Matthew 4:23.

consisted of this, that human beings were aspiring to attain those things for which he himself had been driven out. Wherefore, he did not neglect spitefully to abuse the human race. For "our adversary the devil goes about like a lion seeking someone to devour."¹² Accordingly, he planted - even in the mind of Judas - the inclination to avarice, and made him the Savior's betrayer, just as if he had intentionally entered, as it were, into his own den.¹³

Likewise, the adherents of Hymenaeus and Alexander experienced "the shipwreck of their faith", but still - <only> out of their willingness - became the tool of the devil. Therefore, even the blessed Paul delivered them "to Satan himself, in order that they might be instructed not to blaspheme."¹⁴ And the snare of the devil against humanity generally becomes full of wiles "working among the sons of disobedience."¹⁵ And he does not hold himself at a distance even from the virtuous, but assails also these. This then is what the saying signifies when it counsels: "If the spirit of the rulers should rise up against you, do not leave your place."¹⁶ The devil assails and reaches up to the one who is coming down; but the virtuous having become secure hinders the plot. Now Job, who was by nature a perfect man, and distanced himself in every respect from evil and partook only of virtue, "gave no opportunity to the devil."¹⁷ Accordingly, it is said of him: "just, truthful,

¹²I Peter 5:8.

¹³Continuing the metaphor of I Peter: the devil as a roving lion.

¹⁴I Timothy 1:20.

¹⁵Ephesians 2:2.

¹⁶Ecclesiastes 10:4.

¹⁷Ephesians 4:27.

blameless, pious, distancing himself from all evil deeds,"¹⁸ and in this way shows him to be wholly perfect, not only because he distances himself from evil, but also because he had reached the summit of virtue. One truly possesses virtue when one will by free choice distance oneself from the opposing state of affairs. For the blessed David teaches this, saying: "Turn aside from evil and do good."¹⁹ And also this has the same <meaning>, "Desist from your evil, and learn to do good."²⁰ Moreover, Job distances himself from evil, not in the way an infant does, but as one who perfectly practices virtue.

On account of his heroic courage, then, he received praise, not because he was wanting in the other virtues, (they all follow after it, because one depends on the other) - but because steadfastness was the predominant one. The same held true for his blessedness. For the "poor in Spirit"²¹ inherit the kingdom of God; whereby he is not only mild and just, he is adorned with the other <virtues>. Job possessed also the other virtues, as is shown by the following: for as he was inclined towards hospitality, so also towards pity, he "was father to the needy and helper of the helpless, eyes to the blind and feet to the lame."²²

Him then, who was protected on all sides through moral and intellectual virtue²³ (for it is on

¹⁸Job 1:1.

¹⁹Psalm 33:15 (34:14) and Psalm 36:27 (35:27).

²⁰Isaiah 1:16.

²¹Matthew 5:3.

²²Job 29:12-16.

²³As Didymus' subsequent comments will amply demonstrate, he understands the godly contemplation of God to be a pathway to "moral and intellectual virtue," and these, in and of themselves, are a part of the "whole armor of God."

account of the latter that he will be called "true" so that he is also blameless), <him> the devil attempted to lead astray, from so great a virtue, since he suggested to him naturally frequent evil thoughts, which the holy one did not accept as suitable, according to the one who said: "Evil will be far from me, and I will know nothing of it,"²⁴ which means: The adversary entered into me frequently, however I did not submit to him, and in that way recognize his presence, <and> sin. The holy one recognized the presence <of the devil> insofar as he contended <against him>, however he did not so recognize him, that he should submit to his evil suggestions.

When the devil descended to the last treachery of his demands, believing that through this assault on <Job's> virtue he might lead him astray, he did what he had done with the patriarch Abraham (if someone wishes to take up the book of the testament <Old Testament>).

He very often assaulted the holy one and every time was defeated. Since Abraham was well-disposed toward his late-born and beloved son, he hoped finally in this way to twist Abraham about. He <the devil> proposed the demand for punishment of the child. God complied with this <wish> of his own will, because he wanted to unmask the adversary, saying: "Take your beloved Son, whom you love,"²⁵ through these cunningly-wrought words wishing to awaken the love of the father, with which he might make his heroic courage obvious. Abraham maintained his courage, reporting neither to his wife nor to his domestic servants what was to happen, so that nothing should come in the way of the good deed. He did not waver even in the face of his son's word, when he said: "Father, see the fire and the wood, where is the animal for the sacrifice?"²⁶ Therefore Abraham

²⁴Psalm 100 (101):4.

²⁵Genesis 22:2.

²⁶Genesis 22:7.

trusted that God could raise up the child even if he were dead, and did not turn aside from the command.²⁷ He would have slaughtered his only son, if God had not recognized his readiness and had not saved his son for him.

That Satan however, had such a cunning plan, the gospel teaches us, when the savior says to his own disciples: "See, the devil demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat."²⁸

The title of the book - having the same name as the man <Job> - has the superscription marked accordingly, since all the book concerns his history - no one else vying with him. The attribution then, from which the book derives, is itself significant, as some have attempted to show. On the one hand, some attribute it to the holy Ezra [lacuna], while on the other hand, others — since at the end of the book it says: [lacuna], [they] say that the friends of Job were pleased by his accomplishment, and — since they were kings — deposited this writing concerning it in the archives. Let the “lover of the beautiful”²⁹ seek out <what he wishes> concerning it, if he does not accept what is said.

²⁷Here, Didymus is likely alluding to Hebrews 11:19.

²⁸Luke 22:31.

²⁹ ὁ as in the "Philocalia" assembled by Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Basil.

Didymus' Commentary on Job, Chapters 1 - 4:5

Job is the fifth <generation>³⁰ after Abraham, as is told at the end of the book.

1:1-3 *"There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. And that man was honest, blameless, righteous, devout, turning away from every evil deed. There were born to him seven sons and three daughters, and in herds he had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred grazing she-asses, numerous servants; so on the earth he had great possessions."*

Since the narrative is at the point of relating the exceeding³¹ virtue of the blessed Job, it accordingly makes mention also of the land, his blameless character, his having many children, his being blessed with children, as well as his riches in herds and other things, so as to teach that it was not cheap things that he looked down upon when all of these things were taken away in his trials; for even when he had had all these things he did not pride himself in them.

Describing him also discloses the purity of his soul: the devil tested no careless man. And it was necessary, before the wrestling with the adversary, to describe the greatness of this athlete, that it did not suffice for him <Job> merely to avoid every evil deed, but <that he> cultivated the greatest

³⁰Didymus conflates Job with the patristic Iob (Genesis 46:13), who indeed was in the fifth generation after Abraham: Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Issachar, Job.

³¹ὕψιστος as an adjective is here used in an abstract, generic sense, meaning "exceeding," or "surpassing." (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *The Rich Man's Salvation*, 5) But it also had a more specific, material sense in much classical literature, meaning, "beyond all boundaries or limits." So for example, Aeschylus *Persians* 291, and Euripides *Bacchae* 785. The connotation of material goods is germane, for Didymus goes on to connect the kind of virtue Job had with the fact of his having so many children and cattle, and so much land and goods. His virtue was such that "it was not cheap things that he looked down upon when these things were taken away..."

perfection. This contradicts those who say that his children and animals avoided evil deeds. For he is the one who was both righteous and blameless. If opponents say the same thing even also about the first psalm, they are refuted. For they say, "Blessed will be the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked and does not sit down in the seat of the pestilent"³² will also fit well³³ with animals and with the infants. But they are refuted by what follows. For it says: "But his will was in the law of the Lord, and in His law he will apply himself night and day,"³⁴ which is not characteristic of infants and animals.³⁵ It is also well (said) that this (man) lived in the land of Uz, which is interpreted as "good counsel." For the righteous one does nothing unadvisedly, but pure counsel is his home and city.

1,3 *And that man was of noble birth among those where the sun rises.*

This is possible in a literal (perceptible) way. However, if one should understand it in its higher meaning,³⁶ it may be said that the righteous one possesses a nobility which is illumined, not

³²Psalm 1:1

³³ὅ ὅ is a favorite word of Didymus' (cf. its appearance as the second word of the first sentence of the prologue). It is also a familiar term in writings of both Pythagoras and Philo. Here it denotes what is "essential," or "characteristic," or "appropriate" to infants and non-rational creatures. In general, it assumes a familiar Hellenistic distinction between the abstract and concrete domains.

³⁴Psalm 1:2

³⁵The translator is indebted to Rowan Greer's suggestion to him that the argument here seems to be that animals and children are not capable of *perfect* virtue, and that therefore Job's opponents are wrong to suppose this.

³⁶ὁ ὅ ἡ Didymus seems to equate ὅ ἡ with ὅ ἡ

by human light, but by that of "the sun of righteousness."³⁷

1,4 *"His sons were coming together and held drinking banquets each day. They invited their three sisters to join with them, to eat and drink."*

Being well brought up, the sons of Job did not so much make fellowship and drinking banquets with others, as rather with one another, according to what is said in the Psalms: "Behold, what is more beautiful or agreeable than when brothers dwell together."³⁸ Since they harmoniously demonstrated their virtue even in visible things, they were - without faction - brought together, and not apart. And they came together in the dwelling of their older brother, not only according to their age, but also perhaps doing this according to their virtue - and learning from him what was of benefit to them. It was well also that they brought along their own sisters, for this is a clear sign of their self-control and civility.

1,5 *"And when the days of the banquets were over, Job sent and purified them, having arisen at dawn, having offered sacrifices for them, according to their number, and one calf for the sins of their souls."*

Following the one who says: "After nightfall, my soul awakens to you, O God,"³⁹ and "My God, to you I awaken,"⁴⁰ and: "At dawn, I shall stand near to you and I shall watch you,"⁴¹ the blessed

³⁷Malachi 3:20

³⁸Psalms 132:1

³⁹Isaiah 26:9

⁴⁰Psalms 62:2

⁴¹Psalms 5:4

Job awakens at dawn only to make sacrifice to God on behalf of his children "according to their number," which means individually and in order. For there is nothing intentionally disorderly. And with that, he presented the calf on behalf of them according to his own custom and thereby accustoming the training of his children⁴² <to this>. In this way then he purified them at the completion of the banquet day. With the purification of visible things, he also showed that which accomplishes the purification of mind. Consider whether - with the calf which was brought on behalf of all - he did not refer to the Savior who "endured the cross"⁴³ on behalf of the human race, and who also is called "the fatted calf"⁴⁴ in the gospel parable, because he is the teaching which promotes the divine growth. But do not marvel if the calf intimates the Savior. Job was not uninitiated in the visitation of our Savior, for about him, he said: "the one who will overcome the great sea monster."⁴⁵

1,5 *"Job spoke: Perhaps my sons have thought evil in their minds against God."*

In this is shown the great purity of the children. Since <Job> discerned no perceptible sin on their part, he purposely presented the offering on their behalf, reasoning that human weaknesses and softness are slippery⁴⁶ in the young. On account of this, Saint Paul also said: "I am not conscious

⁴²Literally, the very Greek idea of *pedagogy*.

⁴³Hebrews 12:2

⁴⁴Luke 15:23

⁴⁵Job 3:8

⁴⁶There is the implication of a "snare."

of anything against myself, but in this I have not been acquitted,"⁴⁷ and the psalmist: "purify me of the hidden things in me."⁴⁸ Wherefore it must be observed, that it was not on account of sins that they were subjected to such a death.

1,5 *"Therefore, Job did accordingly all the days of his life."*

In this way, the unremitting strength⁴⁹ of the holy one is made plain, in that he does not exercise virtue one time but not another. David also said this about himself in the Psalm: "I will praise the Lord at every opportunity."⁵⁰

1,6 *"And behold, one day it came to pass that the angels came to stand before the Lord, and the devil came with them."*

Expressings its form of speech in a more narrative fashion,⁵¹ the text recounts what concerns the presence of the angels by saying: "one day it came to pass." Thus, we consequently understand the time and the appropriate occasion for the presence before the Lord of the angels, who were offering their own liturgies and their own labor to the Lord. And as they stood there, the devil was also in attendance. And even though he is manifold and crafty, he does not escape God's notice. It

⁴⁷1 Corinthians 4:4

⁴⁸Psalm 18:13

⁴⁹Henrichs points out that the term used here is part of the Stoic vocabulary. Henrichs, *Op. Cit.*, p. 59.

⁵⁰Psalm 33:2 (34:1)

⁵¹"form of speech" or "mode of diction", cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1456b, where the difference "between a command and a prayer, a simple statement and a threat, a question and an answer . . ." are signified. Does it signify here more generally the narrator's art in relating the dramatic encounter between Satan and the Lord?

(i.e. the text) says that he also came with the angels, not merely in order to stand before God, but that he himself be recognized by the eye of God, who sees all things. The text also illustrates the hypocrisy of the devil, who changes his form to that of an angel of light and in this way escapes the notice of mortals, but is unable to escape the notice of God, who is the creator of all things and the one through whom are all things, or that of the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is of the self-same substance
 ὁ ἴ . As it is said, concerning the Word, that "he is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare before his eyes."⁵² So also with the Holy Spirit, "for the Spirit searches everything."⁵³ And concerning the Father, the apostles said: "You Lord know the hearts of all."⁵⁴ And it naturally belongs to God alone to discern our thoughts.⁵⁵ 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 to turn away, and to shun them on account of the greatness of their evils, lest they <themselves> should fall into danger while cultivating such people. If <the angels> caught on to the purpose of the devil from certain signs, at least when they "attended the Lord," and when even the devil came with them under disguise, then rightly they committed to God the judgment about the participation of the devil which had taken place. God himself said the following to him <the devil>:

⁵²Hebrews 4:12 (NRSV).

⁵³1 Corinthians 2:10

⁵⁴Acts 1: 24

⁵⁵Origen believed that "God knows all things and not a single intellectual truth can escape his notice — for God the Father, with his only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit, stands alone in his knowledge not only of the things he has created but also of himself . . ." *De Principiis*, IV, 4,10.

1,7 "And the Lord spoke to the devil: Where have you come from?"

This he said to him so that, in listening, we will understand the phrase: "Where have you come from?" <in such a way as this>: These our angels, who have the charge from me to perform divine service, attend to me, as they accomplish these things. Their attendance consists in this. For their attendance to these things is not with respect to <a particular> place.

"But you, where do you come from? You are not serviceable to me. Where then, do you come from?" One will understand in a similar way to this what God said to Adam: "Adam, where are you?"⁵⁶ The word: "Where have you come from?" should reveal the senselessness of further movement on the part of the devil.

1,7 "And answering the Lord, the devil said: 'I have come from around the world and walking up and down in the world under heaven. And here I am.'"

If the devil's answer to God's question was a thought formed within him, then it would have been foreseen by God. For God, when wishing to speak with a mortal, instills his wish in <that one's> understanding. The devil, answering the Lord, did not <actually> thus answer, but it is meant that he answered as <the Lord> deliberated. Let us see what his answer was. He said, "I have come from around the world under heaven, and from walking up and down in the world." One should not be astonished if, being a subtle spirit, he <the devil> should go down into the forenamed places.

For God did not expose him through cross examination. <The phrase>, "walk up and down" is also well <expressed>, for he does not encompass it <the world>. He goes about as an adversary

⁵⁶Genesis 3:9

"searching" for any one to swallow, in such a manner that he might "draw to himself"⁵⁷ those hearkening to his evil blandishments, while demanding the surrender of those offering resistance, which also happened with Job. Whence the devil does not use force, nor does he come upon us beyond our strength. Wherefore the invitation: "resist, be steadfast in faith"⁵⁸ addresses itself to those who have the strength to resist. And: "If the spirit of the one exercising authority rises up against you, do not give up your place."⁵⁹ That God also bestows power is declared: "he will also provide the way out for anyone who is able to endure it."⁶⁰ Next, it must be shown that the earth and the space beneath heaven are different places; the earth indeed being beneath heaven, but the spaces beneath heaven are by no means necessarily earth. The devil walks up and down those places, while rejoicing in the demonic spirits⁶¹ of evil. "After I have walked up and down this place," he also says, "Here I am." That is to be understood in this way: after I have gone through all these places, and have found that blessed Job is not able to receive anything from us, Here I am, which means: I show my hiddenness to your inescapable eye intending to demand Job.

⁵⁷1 Peter 5:8. The *topos* appears here yet again (as it did also in the prologue to the *Commentary*): the devil as a ravening lion, prowling about seeking someone to devour. Because of the characteristic, peripatetic nature of the devil, Origen — using once again the same Bible text (1 Peter 5:8) that Didymus will avail himself of — says that “on this account [i.e. on account of the devil prowling like a lion] a strict guard must be kept over our heart day and night.” *De Principiis*, III, 3,6. The fact that a strict guard must be kept is the “set-up” of course — in Didymus’ understanding — for why God puts a “hedge” around us, protecting us from the wiles of Satan.

⁵⁸1 Peter 5:9

⁵⁹Ecclesiastes 10:4

⁶⁰1 Corinthians 10:13

⁶¹"Demonic spirits" is used here to avoid the obvious confusion which would be caused by the more literal translation, "spirit-filled."

1:8 *And the Lord said to him <the devil>: in your thoughts have you considered my servant Job, that there is not one like him upon the face of the earth, a blameless person, true, pious, abstaining from every evil deed?"*

One must understand <the phrase> "the Lord said to the devil" in the same way as the preceding part. That is to say: it is not incongruous if, whatever God wishes the devil to think, he will instill this in order to show - to the shame <of the devil> - that God does not stop planning. One must realize this then, lest the conversation of God with the devil should seem pointless. For nothing is pointless in the case of the one who created the entire universe. Rather, it is an advantage that <the devil> is shamed by juxtaposition with the just and blameless man. The Lord termed Job "servant"⁶² - in both senses of the word: For <Job> was indeed among his servants, according to the saying attributed to the Psalmist: "I am your servant, a son of your servant girl,"⁶³ he was his son on account of his service and the full-blooded servanthood, because he became worthy of the grace of the Spirit and also because he himself says, with the wise Paul: "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God."⁶⁴

For "whoever practices righteousness, has been born from God."⁶⁵

That even the devil is a rational creature is signified by the saying, "Have you carefully

⁶² î can mean both "son" and "servant."

⁶³Psalm 116:16.

⁶⁴Romans 8:16.

⁶⁵I John 2:29.

thought about...”⁶⁶ For the capacity to reason is the peculiar characteristic⁶⁷ of a rational being. This observation about the devil will be made not only here, but also in the saying: “You spoke in your understanding: I shall ascend to heaven.”⁶⁸ Wherefore, this is clearly indicative of his being a rational creature. Yet, if reasoning is characteristic of him, then it is to be carefully considered whether he might also be capable of repentance. For with the capacity to think comes both reasoning and repenting. And since the capacity to reason lies within his will, so perhaps also the capacity to repent. Let him who does not see this as a given not unwittingly represent God as the author of <the devil’s> evil, by supposing he possesses neither reason nor sense. If he also has become in a certain respect something else, yet he shares being rational with those who also have this nature. For even though human beings are mortal, we say that the commonality is not according to mortality, but according to rationality which is common both to immortals and to mortals. Even having reason does not belong uniquely either to the purely good or the purely evil. For just as sense perception is common both to the good and the evil - the good to be sure, who rightly use it do not avail themselves of it the way the evil one does, who glances up to heaven and makes himself like God. So also having reason: it is to be found both in the good and the evil, though it is different with respect to use.

“You have therefore,” says the Lord, “considered my servant Job, because among mortals

⁶⁶Job 1:8.

⁶⁷ *ἡ ἰσχυρία* is here more likely reminiscent of Plato’s use of it (e.g., as “the appropriate thing,” (*Phaedo* 96D), than Aristotle’s *ἡ ἰσχυρία* (*Rhetoric* 3,2,6) - the contrast between the proper and the metaphorical sense of a name.

⁶⁸Isaiah 14:13.

on the earth, there is none like him.”⁶⁹ “Have you therefore,” says the Lord, “considered my servant Job, that there is not one like him upon the face of the earth?”⁷⁰ The addition of “upon the face of the earth,” is not without meaning. For there are rational beings like him and rational beings who are above the earth who are superior to him.⁷¹ It is not the same to say “there are none like him,” and “there are none upon the face of the earth like him.” For why should he not be superior to all that are upon the earth, since the Lord of all things gave testimony to him in the word: “A man, who is a blameless person, true, pious, and abstaining from every evil deed.”⁷² He distances himself from evil in the proper sense in which - by his nature - he is capable. Praise is especially fitting if one - who *is* capable of being evil - distances himself from evil, because he hates it. For one does not say - about each one who does nothing evil - that he or she has avoided evil. No one would assert, with regard especially to infants, who have done no evil, that they - in the proper sense of the word - avoid doing it. For whoever would act in this way does so on the basis of a rational decision. Whatever has to do with evil and good, presupposes some kind of aptitude for it. Also no one indeed should assert that the infant avoids debauchery or practices self-control. For in this, infants still possess no discernment with respect to making decisions.⁷³

When we explained this in the foregoing, and when we adduced that <verse> from the first Psalm, we contradicted the idea that these (infants) are pious in the same way. For that one is pious

⁶⁹Job 1:8.

⁷⁰Job 1:8.

⁷¹The angels, mentioned in Didymus’ comment on Job 1:7.

⁷²Job 1:8.

⁷³Didymus returns here to a theme he has alluded to previously, in his commentary on 1:1-3.

in his or her being who reverences the life of piety, while those who revere what is not holy are <themselves> unholy. It is characteristic of the blessed <Job> that he is “true”, in respect to his contemplation of what is true and in his sincerity in his morals. And the one who practices virtue on account of something else is not true.

1:9 The devil answered, and said before the Lord.

One can plausibly say <the phrase> “before the Lord” to be credible inasmuch as <the devil> speaks “over against”⁷⁴ the witness of God. This is because he loves evil; or has formed arrogant opinions, for evil is shameless. Therefore - out of bad motives he reproaches <Job>, even with what he brings up. In this way, he detracts from the virtue of the righteous one. What then does he say?

1:9-10 Does Job worship the Lord in vain? Have you not put a hedge around the outside and the inside of his house, and all around the outside of his possessions? And have you not blessed the works of his hands, and made his herds numerous upon the earth?

It is characteristic of those who love evil and hate virtue to hold the good deeds of their fellow creatures not to be genuine. But always they say, “this one is righteous because of not being capable of doing ill,” “this one is prudent out of so-called folly,” “still another one is not out for money and means, but again, only because he does not need them.” Sometimes also, they <those

⁷⁴Didymus plays on the double meaning of ἐναντίον : “before” meaning “standing before,” and “over against,” or “opposing,” and “adversary to.”

who love evil> deem the meek one to be a hypocrite; and generally allow no virtue to be ascribed as genuine to any low-ranking person. As originator of this evil, the devil thought such things about Job, and revealed them to the one who knew the secret, when he said Job was righteous - on account of his outward goodness. He says, “you have put a hedge around him,” instead of “you have secured.” For he wishes to make clear that on account of these things <the hedges placed around him by God> Job is unassailable and <the Devil> has no opening. He considered the abundance of things, which are neither good nor evil, as the cause of <Job’s> virtue. Wherefore, he showed himself not to have spoken correctly. For when all these things are taken away from him, <Job> remains just as unassailable. And actually an abundance of riches contributes somewhat to virtue in the one who knows to use it rightly; in itself it is however in no way necessary. The blessed Job showed that both in poverty as well as in wealth, his virtue was not distorted.¹⁴³

1:11 “*But put forth your hand, and touch all that he has. Truly he will bless you to your face.*”

_____ One must conceive God’s hand variously as either the chastening and ministering¹⁴⁴ power,

¹⁴³It is useful to compare Didymus’ thought here with that of Clement of Alexandria who had also identified money as being in and of itself neither “good nor bad,” for the responsibility is with the one exercising choice as to its use: ὁ ἡ ἰ ὀ ἐξ ἐ ὕ ἡ ἔ ἡ ὀ ἄ θ ὀ ἡ ὀ ὀ ἄ ἰ ὄ ἰ ἄ θ ἄ ἄ ὀ ἄ ἰ ὠς ὕ ς ἡ θ ἰ ὠς ἄφ □ ὠ ἔ *The Rich Man’s Salvation*, 14.

¹⁴⁴ὁ ἔ is a familiar and frequent New Testament word, generally as the objective genitive, “servants of God,” or “ministers of the word.” In a classical use, it literally meant “rowers” in the trireme, for example. Paul uses it to denote lowly servanthood (e.g. I Corinthians 4:1) - in distinction to ἄ - meaning a respected household servant. Here the word is employed in a less familiar way to denote God’s servanthood.

which holy writing customarily calls “vessels of wrath,”¹⁴⁵ or rather as the sheltering and watchful power <which is> consistent with the saying: “No one is able to snatch [them] out of my Father’s hand.”¹⁴⁶

It is possible to receive the Son into the hand that protects and supports those who are under him, as it says in the Word: “The right hand of the Lord has lifted me up, the right hand of the Lord has let his power hold sway.”¹⁴⁷

The word, *ǎ* , (touch) perhaps here signifies “beset,” comparable to “bringing affliction upon.” We routinely find this usage in scripture. The phrase, “Do not touch my anointed ones,”¹⁴⁸ does not forbid simple “touch,” but the audacity to afflict the holy ones. And the word, “whoever touches you touches the apple of my eye,”¹⁴⁹ likewise signifies the one who touches in order to inflict injury. If the devil became an apostate and stretched out his neck¹⁵⁰ before the almighty, the creator of all, nonetheless, he had a certain piety towards the creator of all things. For he says: “Truly, he will bless you to his face.”¹⁵¹ He uses this expression instead of “he will curse you to his face.” . . ., for which reason he did not bring forth the harsh [saying] against God, when he expressed himself in the way he just did.

¹⁴⁵Romans 9:22.

¹⁴⁶John 10:29.

¹⁴⁷Psalms 117:16 (118:16).

¹⁴⁸Psalms 104:15 (105:15).

¹⁴⁹Zechariah 2:8, literally “the pupil of his eye.”

¹⁵⁰Job 15:25.

¹⁵¹Job 1:11.

1:12 *“Then the Lord spoke to the devil: ‘See, I give into your hand all that he possesses; only do not touch Job himself.’”*

The words cited demonstrate that no one falls into any trials without God’s consent. For God says: “See, I have given everything into your hand.” However, in order that it be obvious that even God’s consent has been qualified, a word is added: “Only do not touch Job himself.” So, trials occur neither by the allotment of fate, or spontaneously, but out of the consent of God, in order to show forth - as has already been said - Job’s virtue; sometimes also on account of other factors, all of which will be discussed in the following <passages>.

1:12 *“And the devil went forth from the Lord.”*

It is more aptly said about the devil that he has gone forth from the Lord, than it is about Cain. For concerning Cain, it was said: “Cain went forth from the sight of the Lord God.”¹⁵² The <word> “going-forth” signified his not being seen by God. And this person also goes forth, always happening upon those <who are> outside, even though he also came - affectedly - with the helpers of God.

1:13 *“And when that day had come, Job’s sons and daughters drank wine in the house of their elder brother.”*

Accordingly, it mentions both the day and the coming together of the children, so that

¹⁵²Genesis 4:16.

likewise also the <circumstances of their> deaths might be believable, since they died together at the same point as the destruction of their house. The writing is frequently misconstrued. For most <interpreters> are of the view that those who participate in such a “coming-together” do so to drink, whereas these [children of Job] not only drank, but also ate and spoke as is customary in such a coming-together as this one. Consider the present citation in a more allegorical <way> - whether it does not <mean> perhaps they drank “wine, which rejoices the heart of man” in the house of the elder brother who offered godly instruction.

1:14 *“And see, a messenger came to Job and said to him: ‘The yokes of oxen were ploughing, and the she-asses were feeding near them; and the spoilers came and robbed them, and slew the servants with swords, and I, having alone escaped, am come to tell thee.’”*

Because of these things, it happened that the attack took place that day. For “the yokes of oxen were ploughing and the she-asses were feeding near them.” By “messenger” is to be understood the reporter <of these things> as indeed it is written in <the Hebrew book of> Kings. It is worthy of consideration how the events reported by the messenger, which happened so suddenly, throughout the account become still worse, and tend to cause Job endless sorrow. That the yokes of oxen were robbed while plowing doubles the sorrow. On the one hand, this is on account of the loss of the animals. The capture of the roaming she-asses (which, themselves, brought little income) is still to come. On the other hand, it [the sorrow] is also on account of the increase in income and property, which was to be expected from sowing. The slaying of the servants by the intruders - reported with the others - also brought about enormous grief.

<All this> would be sufficient to bring anyone into sudden confusion, even if it were falsely

reported. And yet, though events indeed were bad, the holy one in no way allowed himself to be despondent. In one of the Psalms, it says about the holy: “He is not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is prepared to hope in the Lord.”¹⁵³ <For> with the blessed Paul, he said concerning this: “Who will separate the believer from the love of God? Neither hardship, nor distress, nor persecution, nor hunger nor sword.”¹⁵⁴ Job with the greatest heroic courage remained unseparated from the love of the Lord, even though such great hardships overtook him. One might say that it were possible <for Job> to think animals and their field work to be of little account. But, the fact that Job even bore courageously what he heard about the slaughter of his servants, this plainly shows the heroic courage of the holy one, and his endurance.

It is however <now> to be attended to whether this one was the only one saved, in order that he might report that he would be saved for a still greater trial. In case Job had not heard about these events until the ulceration of his own body had begun, then the lesser evils would not have been such sorrows, because the greater trials had already happened.

1:16 While he was still speaking, there came another messenger, and said to Job, ‘Fire has fallen from heaven, and burnt up the sheep, and devoured the shepherds likewise; and I having escaped alone am come to tell you.’”

The succession of distressing messages brings home the unusual and amazing heroic courage of the blessed one. For consider the observation, that while the first messenger was “still speaking” and reporting, the second messenger arrived - arriving not for the healing of these <calamities>, but

¹⁵³Psalm 111:7 (112:7).

¹⁵⁴Romans 8:35.

that he might report additional, and even worse ones. To report distressing things in such a way customarily causes a person's mind to begin to whirl and to become confused, and he will be put out of his proper mind, because he will be pulled about here and there through the different griefs. However the holy one was not of such a kind <to react in this way>. But just as an unbreakable <wall> in such a way remains standing unshaken, no matter how many things should fall upon it, wishing to occupy it, so also the holy Job does not allow himself to shake. So also the holy Job, having "the foundation" upon the salvation "stone,"¹⁵⁵ when trials do come, he does not shake.¹⁵⁶

The report of the second <messenger> is also worthy of contemplation: how it brings about an increase in the sorrow. He says: "Fire has fallen from heaven, and burnt up the sheep, and devoured the shepherds likewise." For even if the holy one knew accurately the teachings of truth - that trials do not happen outside the will of God¹⁵⁷ — nevertheless, what happened him the greatest pain because of those who had been overturned, as though God had himself turned against him.¹⁵⁸ For the fact that the intruders, in their attack, carried off the beasts and slew the servants, the simple ones could explain: that the intruders attacked - according to the custom of enemies - and held

¹⁵⁵Luke 6:48.

¹⁵⁶While Didymus' language is so frequently reminiscent of Stoic vocabulary, the ἀλί of the blessed Job has a salvific foundation, as it is actually based on the "rock of salvation," here referenced to Jesus' metaphor of a house built on solid footing.

¹⁵⁷Literally, "Our trials do not happen outside the governance of God." ἡ ἐπίου is actually an unusual word, both in classical and patristic sources. Elsewhere, where Didymus has expressed much the same thought, it has been the "permission" ὡς of God.

¹⁵⁸Another way in which Didymus' Job becomes a "type" of Christ. For He also — in the cry of dereliction — wonders out loud whether perhaps God has forsaken him. In addition, the cross itself becomes a "scandal," St. Paul says, to the Jew, and a stumbling block to the Greek (1 Corinthians 1:23).

themselves back out of lack of discipline as well as out of hatred, <meant> that therefore the event was not sent by God. When however the fire was reported - as having come down from heaven, there was something to be feared: lest one of the weaker ones could believe that virtue was nothing worthy of wonder, if even God punishes the one who possesses it. However, even with this incident, the holy one is not brought down, but concentrates on the whole of God's <governance>. For the devil does not have the authority to bring down fire from heaven. That happened out of a decision by God, wherewith the same God that had given the devil authority over Job's possessions, also showed this one that the holy one did not concern himself with human things, even when <the devil> binds many snares.¹⁵⁹

For behold how God even has brought about that which he <the devil> could not bring about, in order to cause, in this way, the greatness of champions to be demonstrated and the adversary to be ruined. For Job did not bravely endure just some small and unimportant onslaught, but the annihilation of seven thousand sheep, together with the shepherds, who were obviously not few in number. The informer, on the other hand, was saved on account of the reasons above.

1:17 *“While he was yet speaking, there came a different messenger and said to Job, ‘The horsemen formed three companies against us, and surrounded the camels, and took them for a prey, and slew the servants with the sword; and I only escaped and am come to tell thee.’”*

Perhaps there was an army encampment in the region, which - divided into three units - fell upon the camels. For it says - as if it is well-known: “The horsemen formed three companies.” But

¹⁵⁹Not only does Didymus say that Job remains secure in his faith *no matter what* happens. He even wants us to believe that *the more the evil that happened*, the more he believed. For the more concentrated and terrible the losses, the more the blessed Job was convinced that these *had* to come from God, and not mere accident or fate.

it is also possible that the continual attacks of the hostile horsemen, which took place then, were set in motion at the instigation of the devil, and that the messenger (since the attacks were familiar to him) had accordingly said: "The horsemen formed three companies against us." They not only snatched the camels, they also killed the servants.

But understand how, successively, the trials become steadily more distressing. For first the yoke of oxen, being five hundred in number, and the five hundred grazing she-asses were taken captive, then fire fell from heaven upon the seven thousand sheep and made the suffering even worse than the previous one. On the third occasion, the three thousand camels were taken off - just as at the time of the former attacks - a very costly matter and a well-known fact of a person's wealth that is not to be belittled - and then the servants were slain, just as at the time of the former <attacks>.

After these things the mass death of the children takes place, as it will be brought to light by the citations <to follow>. For truly, if the death of the children had been announced first, everything that had already taken place would have seemed slight. When it took place however under a continual escalation of suffering, the sharpness of succeeding events was increasingly capable of confounding the mind. Even this, the devil in his evil way had done, after he had made supplication. However, he would be disappointed, because the blessed one in no way allowed his reasoning to be moved.

1:18-19 "While he was yet speaking, there came another messenger, saying to Job, 'While your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking with their elder brother, suddenly a great wind came on from the desert, and caught the four corners of the house, and the house fell upon your children, and they have died; and I alone have been saved, and am come to tell thee.'"

_____Not without reason is it added: "When your sons and daughters were eating and drinking."

For the arch-roguer the devil has taken even this in hand to augment sorrow <and> in order that the serious news about events should cause great overwhelming sorrow in the blessed one. If the collapse had taken place when the children were sleeping, Job would have reckoned that they had not been conscious of the misfortune, and would not have been so grieved <about it>. But since the devil brought about this trial when they were occupied with essential care of the body, this worsens the pain. For it is without a doubt that, as with <other> occasions as this, very many people were present. This the messenger did not mention, because he was content with the overwhelmingly unpleasant <message about> the children, which took priority even over the fate of the others. For such <an expression> lies within the customary <scope> of the writing. When the Savior broke the five loaves, with which he satisfied the five thousand men, the evangelist mentions these <men>, saying: “Without women and children.”¹⁶⁰ He considered only the principal persons in his enumeration.

Consider what this wind is which “came across the desert and struck the four corners of the house” and caused it to collapse: whether it is a hurricane moving with exceeding force that slammed into the house and demolished it, or whether it is a spirit ministering to the devil himself - for this is a great, and evil spirit - to strike the four corners of the house and to demolish it. Both <views> are possible, when we examine whether the messenger could know if it were a spirit serving the devil which caused it, or the devil himself. If however he understood the wind to be a hurricane, then his words are to be understood in much the same way as <we understood> the descent of fire from heaven upon the cattle. What had been said of the one holds true for the other. For the devil is not able to set wind in motion. The forceful word, “suddenly” is introduced, in order to bring to

¹⁶⁰Matthew 14:21.

expression the fact that no one was able to escape destruction, since the event took place in that way.

Likewise, the messenger was found outside.

1:20-21 "Then Job stood up and tore his garments, and shaved the hair of his head, and fell on the ground, and worshiped, and said: 'I myself came forth naked from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, the Lord has taken away: as it seemed good to the Lord, so has it come to pass; blessed be the name of the Lord.'"

The divine spirit forestalls the maliciousness of evil men and of the devil himself. For perhaps such an <evil> person would have said that Job did not have love his children, since he did nothing befitting sympathy. Yet both his sensitivity and his manliness alike are shown in that he obviously did not suffer either unfeelingly nor in an unmanly way the misfortune of the lamentable, mass death of his children. For by the fact that he "tore his garments and shaved the hair of his head," - this was especially customary among the ancients, when someone died - he showed his feeling and his tender love.¹⁶¹ The following however brings out a completely clear proof of his manliness and of his surpassing wisdom, when it says, "he fell on the ground." He did not despair, nor did a sound come out of him, that would have been unfit for a prudent man. He said nothing neglectful, but fell down and worshiped the creator of all, in the believing conviction that these events do not transpire outside divine judgments, and as they took place, they unfolded from the beginning on, successively, and certainly according to some true plan. After the prayer, he added: "I came forth naked from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, the Lord has taken away: as it seemed good to the Lord, so has it come to pass; blessed be the name of

¹⁶¹ í For a development of the concept of this kind of love, (which always denotes *familial* love), in a popular account, cf. C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*.

the Lord.”

Consider - alongside his manliness - how also wisdom is found in the blessed Job as he carries forward in his words godly teaching which is useful for the entire human race.

He says, “I myself came forth naked from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither.” <Here> it is well to question those who think nothing godly about the immortality of the soul. For example, where will Job depart to naked? Perhaps into the womb of his mother? He indeed did come forth naked from that place, according to the saying. But come away from the falsehood of this understanding. For it is obvious that this was said in order to teach that the soul is not sown <together with the body>¹⁶² as some assume. The blessed Paul writes in a way that is similar to this: “. . . For we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it.”¹⁶³ For just as the “taking out” signifies that the deceased lived, so also the one who did not bring anything in, lived and comes from a certain place without being able to bring any such thing with him. He also brings in that teaching - not known to many - “The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away.” With this, he shows that his property was not unlawful and does not stem from some improper counsel. “The Lord makes rich and the Lord makes poor,”⁹⁰ not in a kind of irrational inclination introduced by fate, as some take it, but rather in such a way that it will be known whether he must live long in these circumstances, and endure in suitable ways.

¹⁶²In patristic times, *í* comes to refer to the origin of the soul. With Origen, the soul was generally understood *not* to be sown with the body, but to be pre-existent. For a discussion of this, cf. Joseph Wilson Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-century Church*, (John Knox Press, Atlanta: 1983), p.107.

¹⁶³1 Timothy 6:7.

⁹⁰I Kings 2:7.

Beyond this, there are other reasons: some are comprehensible to mortals, and on the other hand, others are not to be spoken of and are known to God alone. Understanding this well, the blessed one said: “The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away; as it has pleased the Lord, so has it happened.”⁹¹

As regards the phrase, “it pleased,” it is not to be construed lightly, but rather as representing God’s firm judging. A like expression to this will be used in the Acts of the Apostles when the apostles - writing a letter about those turning to faith not being circumcised - said: “It pleased the Holy Spirit and us.”⁹² This they said not in a light sense, but completely advisedly. This steadfast remark could also point to the adversary: that Job has been handed over not to bring gladness to the devil who had demanded it, but rather in such a way that <through this remark> glory to the Lord might be brought about⁹³. This was what the Lord himself said to Job: “Do you believe that I would have dealings with you for any other purpose than that you should appear righteous?”, and that Job is not diverted from virtue, either on account of goods or of children.

Even his <Job’s> thankfulness is worthy of wonder, when he says: “May the name of the Lord be praised.”⁹⁴ Wherefore, it offers a refutation to those who - falling into such misfortunes - express even such things which it is not well to mention. But the holy one who is not so witless is unbendable with respect to the catalogue of so many such happenstances, <and> he becomes the herald of godly and true teachings.

⁹¹Job 1:21.

⁹²Acts 15:28.

⁹³Here it is not *glory of* but *glory to* the Lord, quoting the liturgy.

⁹⁴Job 1:21.

In a corresponding way are these words to be received: “Thus Job rent his garments.” It could even be persuasively said that he bared himself on account of this, first in order to show the tempter that: if you covet even the last remnant, take then also this!, and secondly by showing in a figurative way that he is like a champion athlete who lays aside his clothes before his opponent. Even the removal of his hair symbolizes this, that he holds all unnecessary things to be a “big nothing,” and contemptible in the eyes of a just and wise one - who neither boasts in moments of peace and quiet, nor is vexed in afflictions.⁹⁵ In order to show this, the blessed David also sang: “I will praise the Lord at all times.”

1:22 “In all these events that befell him, Job did not sin at all before the Lord and showed no foolishness to God.”

A powerful witness of the Holy Spirit is given by the blessed Job in the saying: “In all these events that befell him, Job did not sin at all before the Lord.” It often happens that one does not obviously sin, but in his mind a trouble arises, as the Word says: “I was troubled and did not speak.”⁹⁶ The appended <word> “before” shows that indeed no false step arose. For that would have been perceived by God. It is not the same to say: “This person did not sin,” and “He sinned in no way before the Lord.” <The latter> shows the overriding purity of the holy man that he did not lapse either in word, or deed, or thoughts, or in his mind. In this at least, calling those who had repented, God said: “Take away from before my eyes the evils of your way,”⁹⁷ which means that not

⁹⁵2 Corinthians 8:13.

⁹⁶Psalm 76:5 (77:4). Didymus’ observation is a patent example of his “Christian stoicism.”

⁹⁷Isaiah 1:16.

only in deed, but also in thought, we wish to abstain from evil, because God sees it <all>. The Savior also said this in the gospel: “If you give alms, do not trumpet it before you, as the hypocrites do,”⁹⁸ and “The One who sees in secret will reward you.”⁹⁹ For as the one who gives alms in this way does not hear the praise of the crowd, so also is the one free from evils, who does not sin before the Lord.

The saying is also well-put: “And he imputed no folly before God.” For whoever is convinced that events are governed through the foreknowledge of God, imputes no folly before God, who governs. Unbelievers, in this circumstances, often make reproach, saying: “This or that should not have happened,” “This one or that one should not have been poor or rich, or sick or well,” “Why was this young person deprived of life while that old person is still here?” Such talk leads - godly governance holds - generally to nonsense. However, the holy man praises the Lord, even in such trials as these, being persuaded that God’s judgement is just.

2:1-2 “And it came to pass on a certain day, that the angels of God came to stand before the Lord, and the devil came among them to stand before the Lord. And the Lord said to the devil, “Where do you come from?” Then the devil said to the Lord, “I am come from going through the world, and walking about through the whole earth.”

In his first audience with God, the devil received power over all of Job’s goods and kindred, and he destroyed everything. Yet he had not been able to overturn the brave intention of the blessed

⁹⁸Matthew 6:2.

⁹⁹Matthew 6:4.

Job. Owing to the greatness of his soul, Job remained the same, the same with respect to his godliness. This is fairly reasonable: for he was of the mind that God both sends pleasant things yet also takes them away.

<The devil> attempts to direct a second challenge against Job's body, hastening to subjugate him through deadly pains. Since the verses are the same as those before, what was said about those suits these also, so that perhaps the same thing <commentary> would not be repeated. Only let it be added that <now> the devilish [lacuna] is shown especially strongly. To the words: "Where do you come from?" let it be said: The words spoken to the devil by the Lord are a complete refutation <of him> since he had nothing he could honestly say about any right action¹⁰⁰ or reproof of his own. And beyond this it showed that he had been conquered, which out of his shame was the very thing he himself did not wish to admit.

It is to be noted that the devil does not now respond as in the way <he had earlier>. At that time, he said, "I am come from going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down in the world."¹⁰¹ Now however, he says: "I am come from going through the world, and walking about the whole earth."¹⁰² Consider also whether <the devil> - as a liar - perhaps did not wish to mention that he had gone to and fro on the earth, so that he might make it believable that he had not first assaulted Job. At that time, however, <he had mentioned it> out of shame. For he indeed knew that nothing remains hidden before God. So, he did not say: "Those things over which you have given me

¹⁰⁰The predicate use of the adjective. The word can mean "right action" or also "success."

¹⁰¹Job 1:7.

¹⁰²Job 2:2.

authority, here is what I have done. I have taken away Job's possessions and killed his children."

That would be the logical answer, and "he himself remained <unchanged>." But he passed along to a second demand, through which he reckoned on overturning the resolve of the holy man.

If even the devil, by this means, conceals his intention, so that instead of "the earth," he says, "the whole <world>," then we shall nonetheless demonstrate from the scriptures that "the earth" is often called, "the whole <world>." It says, "the whole <world> will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord,"¹⁰³ And in the following, even Job says: "The one who made all (the whole of everything) in highest heaven,"¹⁰⁴ in which way, he wishes to say that God draws humanity - on the basis of their virtue - from the earth to heaven.

2:3 "But the Lord spoke to the devil: 'Have you then turned your thoughts to my servant Job, that there is none like him among mortals, a just, godly, blameless man, abstaining from all evil? And he still holds to his guilelessness.'"

As was said earlier, so it is once again: "You turned the thoughts of your mind to ..." This is an analogy *à l'instar* that - after the struggle - <the devil> will be disgraced. For the devil, thinking that Job takes pleasure in external goods, said "Have you not made a hedge about him, and about his household, and all his possessions round about?"¹⁰⁵ But after his assault took place in vain, it says: "You turned your thoughts to". . . instead of "You know out of your own experience the

¹⁰³Isaiah 11:9.

¹⁰⁴Job 25:2.

¹⁰⁵Job 1:10.

steadfastness of the God-fearing, blameless and guileless man who distances himself from every evil.” Beyond these things, the Lord adduces by way of refutation, “He still holds to his guilelessness. Consider also that he will “not bless me to my face,” as you used to.¹⁰⁶

It is to be noted that in the foregoing, he said: “who distances himself from every bad deed.”¹⁰⁷ But now <it says> “from all evil.” From this it is known that “the evil” speaks of what is bad. So also the scriptural saying: “You that love the Lord, hate evil,”¹⁰⁸ in lieu of “hate what is bad.”

Different meanings can be understood for “guilelessness.” It signifies both negation of evil, as well as singleness of heart. For whenever the holy man says, “Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my guilelessness,¹⁰⁹ “guilelessness” here means virtue. Whoever possesses virtue, is deprived of evil. And in other places, “the guileless and simple of heart joined themselves to me”¹¹⁰ he calls the virtuous ones guileless. These are indeed simple of heart, but simplicity of heart is a mark of virtue. When however it says: “They deceive the hearts of the guileless,”¹¹¹ and “A guileless person believes every word,”¹¹² and again, “that He may give shrewdness to the guileless,”¹¹³ it

¹⁰⁶Job 1:11.

¹⁰⁷Job 1:8.

¹⁰⁸Psalms 96:10 (97:10).

¹⁰⁹Psalms 25:1 (26:1).

¹¹⁰Psalms 24:21 (25:21).

¹¹¹Romans 16:18.

¹¹²Proverbs 14:15.

¹¹³Proverbs 1:4.

signifies the “pure.” To these also, he prays that shrewdness be given which is equal in force, not to evil, but to prudence. So Job still possesses that guilelessness which is right in every sense of the word.

2:3 *“whereas you have told me to destroy his property without cause?”*

The Lord attests to the futility of the devil’s efforts against the holy man. For one who works in some way or other without cause labors in vain. If even the devil then - in the hope of getting the holy man into his power - attempted to destroy his possessions and children, yet knew that his effort against the great courage of the holy man had been thwarted already, then he struggled in vain. For nothing of what he had hoped for happened.

2:4 *“And the devil answered and said to the Lord, ‘Skin for skin, all that people have they will give as ransom for their life. No, but put forth your hand and touch his bones and flesh. Truly, he will bless you to your face.’”*

There are three so-called good things: one comprises externals and is divided between those that have to do with money and possessions, and health and other things having to do with the body. The other two are virtues. The devil believes that good things are uniquely indistinguishable, and he believes Job to be of the same opinion. And so he unashamedly says before the Lord the words we already explained above: that people would pay any price not to suffer something themselves. This is most persuasive, since it <applies> to most people. However <it is> not true of all. For many have risked their lives for money. But the evil-loving devil - cheapening the courage of the blessed

one and wishing to bring upon his body the very things he has brought, said that <Job> would easily despise the possession of external things. So he maliciously conceals that many thousands have promised to die for the sake of their children. For in this way wars also have come about on behalf of children. For people will set themselves up as a bulwark for their own children, risking their lives for them. Yet the adversary, yearning to damage Job, expresses himself in an unwelcome way about the events that have come to pass.

As before, he says, “But put forth your hand and touch his bones and flesh. Truly, he will bless you to your face.”¹¹⁴ For he knows that even though he had been cast out, he is unable to accomplish anything against anyone unless God allows it. We have considered this consent to have arisen wisely, since it arose with God.

2:6 *“The Lord spoke to the devil, ‘Behold, I deliver him up to you; only spare his life.’”*

For our benefit, the Lord permits even this - so that Job might be established as the likeness and pattern of courage, like an engraved pillar, serving as the model,¹¹⁵ both for his contemporaries and for those who will come after, for such virtue, which really happened <here>. And so from this athlete and wrestler himself we hear the words: “I know that I shall be justified.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴Job 2:5.

¹¹⁵ ò has actually a dual meaning of “scout” and, on the other hand, of “object, aim, significance.

¹¹⁶Job 13:18.

And when the Lord handed him over, the Lord said: “Only spare his life.”¹¹⁷ Wherefore, it can be thought of this way: we often see that madness and perversions of reason¹¹⁸ arise in some people. On account of these <people> again, God - who knows well the hidden things - understands the bases <on which> people have thus been delivered up. What the Lord says then is this, ‘Cause no torpor¹¹⁹ and confusion of his reason, but touch his flesh and bones, which you also demanded.’ Consider then, whether ‘Only preserve his life’ stands in place of ‘Do not kill him!’¹²⁰

2:7 *“So the devil went out from the presence of the Lord and inflicted Job with loathsome sores from his feet to his head.”*

Every sinner is outside of <the presence of> God - but the devil especially as the arch-evil creature. This has been mentioned earlier. And because it says in the narrative that “the devil came with the angels,”¹²¹ the plot continues accordingly. This is to be understood from the narration: when the devil went apart from the Lord, he does not tarry, but immediately effects what he had asked for, covering <Job’s> entire body with wounds. By means of this assault, he wishes to loosen the strength of Job’s virtue.

He [the devil] mentions <Job’s> extremities to make it obvious that he touched also the mid-

¹¹⁷Job 2:6.

¹¹⁸ ἡ ὁ is the “governing principle” or reason in Stoic natural philosophy.

¹¹⁹ ἄ - another Stoic term.

¹²⁰Job 2:6.

¹²¹Job 1:6.

parts.

2:8 *“And he took a potsherd to scrape away the discharge.”*

This verse signifies the loneliness and helplessness of him [Job], since no one was with him to tend to him, but even his wife was away on account of her zeal toward her work, through which she herself was nourished and probably he was too. For in the following <verses>, his wife was saying, “I am a wanderer and a servant from place to place and house to house, waiting for the setting of the sun.”¹²² So she proved what had been said.

His body was deteriorating to such an extent he was being destroyed by putrefaction. Therefore, he scraped himself with the potsherd. Yet in spirit he himself was untouched by illness, and unbent.

2:8 *“he sat upon a dung-heap outside the city.”*

It is understandable that persons having such a body would not be permitted to live in those cities.¹²³ Therefore, Job sat on a dung-heap outside the city and contemplated the overwhelming change into which he had been changed by the tempter - from such a propensity and course of life to such failure, that he is even without a home, and is seated on a dung-heap, with no servant at hand, nor a friend, nor even his wife herself - as has already been said. And it does not appear that she had

¹²²Job 2:9d.

¹²³What is possibly signified by “those cities” are the small number of larger cities (by ancient standards). The word is generally restricted to these.

been inattentive towards him, as we have mentioned.

2:9a-e *“When a long time had passed, his wife said to him, ‘How long will you hold out, saying, Behold, I wait a little while longer, expecting the hope of my deliverance? For behold, the remembrance of you has disappeared from the earth, your sons and daughters, the travails and pains of my womb with which in vain I toiled with hardships, while you yourself should sit down spending the nights in the open air in the rot of the worms. And I wander as a servant from place to place and house to house, waiting for the sun to set, so that I might rest from my toils and my pangs which now beset me. Yet, speak some word against the Lord and die!’”*

Since the devil was weakened through such assaults as these - not being able to cast down <Job> by taking away his wealth or by the annihilation of his children, and beyond all this not even through unending damage to his body - he devises as his third device the conversation with his wife: perhaps through her he might beguile Job as <he had> Adam through his wife.

When much time had elapsed and he himself had not been able to shake the champion, <Job’s> wife spoke suggesting neglect of duty, perhaps wishing to release him from suffering, if he should just speak a word foolishly to the Lord. And see how with each word she calls him to neglect of duty, - thereupon saying, “How long will you hold out?” For a long period of his illness, she suggested the plan to him of neglecting duty. Thereupon, the following: “See, I wait a little while longer, expecting the hope of my deliverance” - in some way unable to turn around his expectation. Perhaps often, while she was importuning, he himself was holding forth good hope, and <in this way> was keeping back from her ridicule. Since she had a weak reasoning, she did not perceive

<this as contempt>, as she kept enticing him into neglect of duty¹²⁴ <by saying that> he was hoping falsely. A soul lacking in reason always loves to hold expectations to be unreliable.

Having urged what, to her way of thinking, was the return for such absolute hopelessness, she said: “Behold, the remembrance of you has disappeared from the earth.” “Neither son, nor daughter, remain for you, for your descendants to have as a remembrance.” Therefore she nearly said: “If you should become well, the enjoyment of your health would be in vain, since your children are now no more, and your possessions have been destroyed. And if this were all, then your long-suffering would have cause, she says, but beyond these things, you yourself sit in the rot of worms, while I - out of my poverty - wander from place to place.

Having launched a bolt of her contempt, through all these words, she brought an end of her most demeaning speech, saying: “Speak some word against the Lord, and die.” To which one might say: “How did his wife come to this conclusion that <Job> would die if only he should speak a word against the Lord?” One might, variously, respond to this, either: “She was prompted to say this by the adversary, so that his pains might be fulfilled: “If only he will bless you to your face.” Or, perhaps in those cities the one who blasphemed the Lord would die, either at the hands of a ruler or of citizens. Perhaps she knew of no one who had blasphemed and was still living. For this perhaps might happen when the evil had not yet spilled forth. Perhaps too she was thinking that God would not permit him to live, if he sent forth a blasphemous word.

Through this <phrase>, “Behold, the remembrance of you has disappeared from the face of the earth,” she manifests also that you will have no hope ever again to attain the same enjoyment of

¹²⁴וֵי is actually used twice in this passage, and with two different meanings: as “contempt” (hers), and as “neglect of duty” (into which she was attempting to entice him).

good things. This she thinks to be the only good <things>, while she pays no heed to the true good <things>.

And without her knowing it, in another way she spoke a true word. For the remembrance of those who disdained human life is in heaven. That the scripture might confirm this, the Psalmist says: “The face of the Lord is over those doing evil that the remembrance of them will be entirely wiped away from the earth.”¹²⁵

Whenever any person sins and says “in their hearts there is no God”¹²⁶ and whenever God brings hardship <upon them>, it appears that - in order that they might be helped - the recollection of them is taken away from the earth, and when they are changed to virtue “they are enrolled in heaven.”¹²⁷

She also spoke the things about the children - as <only> a woman does - thinking it to be the only hope of saving them, and repeatedly saying she had given birth to them in vain.

By her constant visits, she also brought her distress before him.

2:10 *“But he looked on her, and said to her, ‘You have spoken like one of the foolish women. If we have received good things from the hand of the Lord should we not endure evil things?’”*

Job’s strength of soul is shown also in this, that in such sufferings he does not submit to the word which his wife has discordantly brought forth, but says: “You have spoken like one of the foolish women.” This he earnestly said, looking straightforwardly, and from her complaints the holy

¹²⁵Psalm 33:17.

¹²⁶Psalm 52:2; 13, 1.

¹²⁷Luke 10:20.

man knew she brought these forth at the inciting of the devil. Because he was wise, <Job> knew that the first [i.e. Eve's] transgression - brought about through the guile of the devil - was the cause of Adam's transgression.

For this reason, he says: "You have spoken like one of the foolish women." Then he even set before her a logical reasoning which was fitting, and then adds: "If we have received good things from the hand of the Lord, should we not endure evil things?" For the same understanding applies with respect to the pleasant things, which are indifferent, that <we> not be carried away <by them>, and <yet> also to the painful things, not to be cast down by them. For whoever is well-versed in affairs knows that those things presumed to be good are not such by their nature, but rather to the extent that they <actually> correspond to the opinion of the one who partakes of them. So, indeed, even bad things - I mean those that bring suffering - are not in and of themselves evil; but to that person who finds himself in it, what he makes of it. So, many good and evil <things> were seen with wealthy <people>, like Abraham or others like him - as well as Pharaoh and those akin to him. When many misfortunes came upon them again, some of these gave up, others remained unmoved in their thinking, as for example the blessed Job and Lazarus, who have received even such things [sufferings] as from a doctor who used cutting and burning for restoration to health.¹²⁸

2:10 *"In all these things that happened to him, Job sinned not at all with his lips before the Lord."*

For the second time, now, has this been said. The first time was with respect to the first affliction. Now, however, for the second time. Even <the first time> it said: "In all these things that happened to him, Job sinned not at all before the Lord." But now it says, "In all these things that

¹²⁸Again, a figure used by both Origen (*De Principiis*, III,13) and by Didymus.

happened to him, Job sinned not at all with his lips before the Lord.” Some hold there to be no difference between “sinned not at all with his lips before the Lord,” and “sinned not at all before the Lord.” Yet, others take it to mean that upon the loss of his possessions and the death of his children, “Job sinned not at all before the Lord,” neither in word or in thought. Yet now to this phrase is added, “with his lips.” <This says> that perhaps some turmoil could have occurred - not the same <as something> out of sin, for this indeed would be a defeat - but out of an action of human weakness - forced by much affliction that was assailing his whole body. The spirit of what is written therefore is to show the increase of <Job’s> distress, and <at the same time,> his courage: even if <Job’s> courage be forced into unwelcome considerations, he is <still> not so troubled that he has done or said anything out of faint-heartedness or pettiness.

The psalmist says a similar thing: “I was troubled and did not speak.”¹²⁹ Clearly, something had happened <to the Psalmist> that led him <also> to be troubled. Yet, since he had checked this <inner> disturbance just short of this thought process, he did not then speak of it. This agrees with what Paul writes to the Corinthians: “I do not wish you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction that occurred to us in Asia, that we were burdened to an excess beyond our capability, so that we were utterly at a loss, even concerning our life. But we ourselves carry within us the sentence of death - so that we do not trust in ourselves, but in God who awakens the dead.”¹³⁰

2:11 *Now his three friends having heard of all the evil that had come upon him, came to him, each from his own country: Eliphaz, the king of the Thaemans, Baldad, tyrant of the Sauchians, Sophar*

¹²⁹Psalm 76:5 (77:4).

¹³⁰2 Corinthians 1:8-9.

king of the Minaeans;” . . .

Astonishing things receive the most attentive hearing when they occur to notable persons. Since on account of his wealth and his virtue, Job belonged to those who were best-known, it was natural that his friends should hear of the harshness of the things that had happened to him, and that they should then appear. They did not come from a single place, but each from his own land, moved by sympathy. At the same time, they were kings, wherefore they did not however look down upon the one into whose life such change had occurred. (“Tyrant” means “king,” for at this time the name was not known as a term of opprobrium, nor does it represent a different governance than that of a king. This also is found in Proverbs: “By me, kings reign, and tyrants rule throughout the earth.”¹³¹) These <kings> now appeared before him. <Their sympathy> was the only reason for their being led there. This saying is a useful reminder of sympathy, lest in the vicissitudes befalling us we overlook the things which concern love and charity for one another.

2:11 *And they came to him with one accord, to comfort and to visit him.*

They came to accomplish both of these things. For <Job> had been afflicted also in each of two ways: he had been deprived of possessions and children; and his entire body had been afflicted with wounds. “With one accord,” they came to him, either because of their great zeal, or because they - who had dwellings apart from one another - had decided to come together, so that they might encourage him. Together, they saw that the evil things had not abated; but were still at work.

¹³¹Proverbs 8:15-16.

2:12-13 *When they saw him from a distance, they did not know him; and they cried with a loud voice, and wept, and rent every one his garment, and sprinkled <themselves> with dust. And they sat down beside him seven days and seven nights.*

The section cited here speaks to us in a two-fold way. On the one hand there is the courage of the blessed one - while others are bearing with the happenings of fate with difficulty. There is also the sympathy of the friends, who not only came. They also wailed, for seeing him, they did not know him on account of his illness, which had altered the features of his form. Crying out with a loud voice - each one rent his garment and sprinkled himself with ash. All of this, it is said, showed both the courage of the holy one as well as their fellow-feeling. He remained unmoved, which one might be astonished at. Despite all these things, Job was not pushed into the neglect of duty into which suffering - where it occurs - usually strikes down others. The sympathy of these friends is also <seen> in their remaining by him for seven days and seven nights. One ought not to minimize such strength in the face of weakness and helplessness, because it is on account of such <traits> that others are led to feel sympathy.

2:13 *And none of them spoke, for they saw that his afflictions was dreadful, and very great.*

Those who had come to encourage <Job> fell silent in the <face of the> magnitude of events. Naturally, he was continually touched by their sympathy. One does desire this to be accomplished first, among those who are to be comforted. With respect to such care, they had no resource - not even a physician's aid - that would surpass that of their sympathies. And since <his friends> held the view that he was wise, it was normal that they should be in awe and keep silence before him -

not daring to bring forth a word.

3:1 *With this, Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day, saying:*

The wise man is no idle talker; nor does he utter with his tongue what cannot happen. He does not curse the day which is <merely> an interval of time, but rather the things that have happened in it. For it is the custom in the scripture to use the term “day” to mean “happenings.” The psalmist teaches this, saying: “The Lord will deliver him in an evil day.”¹³² By “day of trouble,” he is not indicating a time difference, but the evil things which have happened within these <days>. So also, what the apostle Paul said: “Because the days are evil.”¹³³ This has the same meaning. Thus one might say that for one or another, based on what has occurred, the day is either good or bad. For the people Israel unexpectedly to traverse the Red Sea, it was a good day. For the Egyptians however <it was> bad. For they sank like lead in a mighty water.¹³⁴

3:3-5 *Let the day perish in which I came into being, and that night in which they said: ‘Behold, a male child.’ Let that night be darkness, and let not the Lord regard it from above, neither let light come upon it. But let darkness and the shadow of death seize it.*

It is worth contemplating: is it consistent with the all-wise Job and his courage to have cursed both the day in which he came into being, and the night in which they said: ‘Behold, a male-child.’

¹³²Psalm 40:2, 41:1.

¹³³Ephesians 5:16.

¹³⁴Exodus 15:10.

And how <he said> it (i.e. the night) should be in darkness, whereas in fact every night (already) is just that. “He called” refers to “the light he called day and the darkness night.”¹³⁵ And what does it signify that he prays the day not be regarded by the Lord from above, nor light to come upon it; but rather that darkness and the shadow of death should seize it? Some of these things have happened by nature. For with respect to a day which is past (and which indeed has no more continuing reality), to express such wishes would indeed not be seemly for a wise person <to do>.

But if even the lovers of the literal stayed with the literal meaning of the text,¹³⁶ they always thereby diminish the courage of the holy man, <a courage> which the devil has not been able to diminish - since they [the friends] suggest that he has shown some neglect of duty. But if he really had done this, then the devil would not have been so shamed by Job’s courage, and the Lord would not have said to Job: “Do you think that I have spoken to you for any other purpose than to allow you to appear justified?”¹³⁷ Therefore, one must examine the text according to the rules of allegory, because the literal interpretation produces no rational (and for the holy man, no suitable) meaning. Before we begin this, it follows that we should first say what contributes to understanding of the text.

¹³⁵Genesis 1:5.

¹³⁶Didymus here more than implicitly suggests that even the “literal” is a springboard to a deeper contemplation. It is not then that his approach is intended to depreciate a word-by-word attentiveness to the text. It is rather that he believes such a literalism to be the beginning and not the end of the interpretive task. Hence, he says, “if even the lovers of the literal stayed with the literal meaning . . .”, for he means to say that they *only* stay with the literal, and fail to move from that necessary and important stage to still deeper contemplations.

¹³⁷Job 40:8.

The human soul is immortal. It does not merely have other states alongside that of the body, but even a godly <state>. It was connected with <the body> for different reasons: either that out of its own worth, and according to its own inclination and yearning, it had effected a partnership to these bodies with itself, or that, for the sake of those that needed help, it was united with them. For it is not sewn together with the body in the way that <some argue>, who fail to recognize <the soul's> magnitude.¹³⁸ For out of corporeal seed no such incorporeal substance can arise, nor will it (i.e. “incorporeal substance”) be formed later than the body, since it happens to be its antecedent. For God did not establish anything out of “non-being” after “he rested from all his works.”¹³⁹ <Scripture> says, “What is what has been other than what will be? And what is what has been done, other than what will be done? And there is nothing new under the sun. Whoever will speak and say: ‘See, this is new!’ It has already been, in the ages before us.”¹⁴⁰ Jeremiah is a witness to these things: that <the soul> is introduced into life, and joined with bodies both on account of its own evil, as well as its use in behalf of others.¹⁴¹ “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations,”¹⁴² Jacob and Esau, of

¹³⁸“Though for most souls embodiment is a remedial punishment, some souls have taken on bodies in order to serve their fellows. This is preeminently true of the human soul of Christ . . .” Joseph Wilson Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church*, Atlanta, 1983, p. 107.

¹³⁹Genesis 2:2.

¹⁴⁰Ecclesiastes 1:9-10.

¹⁴¹When Didymus refers here both to the soul’s own evil *and* to its use for others, he is almost surely referencing Origen’s *De Principiis*, III,4,2, where his predecessor at Alexandria distinguishes in a parallel way an upper and lower soul. The biblical examples cited by Didymus are the same as those used by Origen in proving the soul’s pre-existence. *De Principiis*, II,7,4.

¹⁴²Jeremiah 1:5.

whom God says: “I have loved Jacob and I have hated Esau,”¹⁴³ when they were still in the womb; and John - who in the belly of his mother “leaped and exulted.”¹⁴⁴

These <verses> demonstrate that the souls <did not arise> simultaneously with the bodies. For whoever exults in the womb of his mother and partakes of the Holy Spirit outside the womb of his mother, and whoever is hated before he is born, or another who is loved <before he is born>, <all these souls> submit to these conditions¹⁴⁵ - and not without cause. It is not only toilsome, but also most burdensome that it (i.e. the soul) is united with a body. Yet, this is not only on account of its own faults, but also as a help to others.

Just as it is not seemly for the victor in war to applaud the cause of the war - it being the cause of many annoyances, in the same way it follows that those who have kept to a straight and narrow path should not commend their privilege of entry into life, but rather be persuaded that alongside these, some who were led into temptation slipped back into utter evil; and as for those who had come for the sake of others, it became causes of suffering.

Job indeed considered it a burdensome day, and worthy to be cursed - on account of the evils which arose from such cause <as the foregoing>. For this reason, he said: “Let the day perish into which I came into being.” He said this for all the human race. For since the holy man knew that all who looked upon his circumstances were in some considerable confusion - knowing that he suffers undeservedly - Job raises the argument against every cause. In it, he all but says: “If it were not a

¹⁴³Malachi 1:2-3; Romans 9:13.

¹⁴⁴Luke 1:44.

¹⁴⁵That is, to the limitations of being in a body.

matter concerning the fall of so many, then the character of courage <on my part> would not be needed.” For just as from a disorder - when many people have been subjected to suffering, the loving physician rightly curses the disorder, likewise the blessed one - out of his impulse to heal - curses the day of the fall of humanity, of which he speaks in general terms. <His cursing that day> does not happen arbitrarily, but out of a logical “cause and effect” so that the fallen may be helped.¹⁴⁶

He uses his words in a more narrative style, so that he might make his figure of speech clear. Therefore, he says, may whatever the cause be that brought about my entrance into this life be cursed and exist no longer. Then he takes up also the noun, “night,” since birth also often takes place in the night: “May that night be dark.” By this he means: “No longer traveling, but as it were in darkness, may they — thus hindered — not find the road that leads to the source¹⁴⁷ of evil (as if one could speak of those who have been afflicted to the point of confusion: “May the affairs of those leading a disordered life no longer prosper.”)

“And let not the Lord look upon it (i.e. the day) from above.” For it was fitting for the holy one to pray that those things pertaining to reason should aim towards virtue, and <should> no longer suffer a turnaround towards a worse condition. For this would not be the same <condition> according to those who posit transmigration.¹⁴⁸

“Let not light come upon it (i.e. the day).” May the impulse towards what is inferior be

¹⁴⁶ ἰ ὁ is used by Christian writers in a quasi-Stoic sense to contrast what happens arbitrarily to what happens out of a divine cause and effect (Athenagoras, *de resurrectione mortuorum*, 1; Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Orations*, 16, 6).

¹⁴⁷The word is ἐ meaning here a source, or origin.

¹⁴⁸The Manicheans. But Didymus may also have in mind local teachings of the Egyptians on this concept — just as Origen refers to Egyptian folk teachings on transmigration, *Contra Celsum*, I, 20.

checked: in that those who work <evil> remain without light, according to the word <of scripture>: “the light of the ungodly will be put out.”¹⁴⁹

“Let darkness and shadow of death take it.” <This is> so that for those inclined toward dark evils, this intent might be foiled, and their impulse toward evil might be checked — since they reckon their undertaking to be fatal. The word of the prophet is similar to this: “I shall build up its roads among the thorns, and its path (i.e. of evil) you will not find.”¹⁵⁰ For it is important that that very evil which comes about through fear and ignorance should be checked. In this way, one will come to have a loathing for it.

3:5-6 *“Let blackness come upon it; let that day and night be cursed, let darkness carry them away.”*

These <words> are to be considered not so much as imprecations, but prayers: that there be a pause <in the occurrence of> evil things. For in accordance with what was related above, it is desirable that the cause of his fall and its road¹⁵¹ should remain unknown, so that “there be no good road for a person engaged in evils.”¹⁵² For the longing for virtue makes the road of evil unknown. Yet virtue itself, when it is augmented, causes a complete forgetting of evil’s efficacy. This is what the saying means: “Let darkness carry it away.” By “it” I mean evil itself, and it is worthy to be cursed — for it provides no opportunity for those who work at the things worthy to be cursed to have it (i.e.

¹⁴⁹Job 18:5.

¹⁵⁰Hosea 2:8.

¹⁵¹In these sentences, Didymus seems to contrast “road” and “path.” The orientation to the good constitutes a “road.” Falling away from God is merely a “path.”

¹⁵²Sirach 20:9.

evil).¹⁵³ They cause the things they have brought into being to be worthy to be cursed.

3:6 *“Let it not come into the days of the year, not let it be numbered with the days of the months, but let that night be pain.”*

The holy man does not desire that the day of his downfall should be numbered or remembered. It becomes grievous to him¹⁵⁴ on account of that dark-looking cause, which — due to its distress and darkness — is also called “night.” This is so that there be some chastening for those who, out of repentance, have kept themselves away from night, and so that the one who has repented be made to be “of some account,” and that he be included in that year about which the Psalmist says: “You will exalt the crown of the year with your goodness.”¹⁵⁵ He then advances to sing: “You will pay great heed to me in your plan and in your power.”¹⁵⁶

3:7 *“and let not mirth come upon it, nor joy.”*

Since the holy man is fond of his companions, he prays that no one be joyful in his downfall, or find any pleasure at all in this. For often, if we see someone hastening to do evil deeds, we might pray saying, “May the things he has been striving for not come to pass.” In this frame of mind, the

¹⁵³In a complex, often convoluted way, Didymus is saying that “evil begets evil.” The idea is consistent too with his often-expressed view that if our orientation is towards the good, then the evil will cease to have a visible path: it will lose its reason for existence.

¹⁵⁴He might easily have said, “It *only* becomes grievous to him.” For Didymus believed that Job suffered his sorrows with serenity borne out of his virtue. The holy man’s role is to give a pattern or likeness after which others in their suffering may be led to chastening and correction.

¹⁵⁵Psalm 64:12, 65:11.

¹⁵⁶Psalm 137:3, 138:3.

holy man also prays, and (without wishing ill) sings: “Let the deceitful lips be stilled, which with arrogance and contempt speak what is unjust against the righteous.”¹⁵⁷ What else would “stilling the lying lips” mean but that the one who speaks unjustly, ceases, because the speaker recognizes such <speaking> to be unsuitable?

Even this one <Job> then prays that no one be so perverted as to think that it makes joy or cheer to sink into that state that leads to human weakness. The Savior himself says this: “It would have been well for him, if that man had never been born.”¹⁵⁸ In Ecclesiastes also it is shown that: “Better than these both is the one who has not yet come into being.”¹⁵⁹ If it is good for the one not yet to have been born - that is obviously to say, by means of *this* birth - then it does not happen without reason.

3:8 *“But he who curses that day, will curse it, he that is ready to take in hand the great sea monster.”*

This prayer is for deliverance from the cause of those occurrences which, on the one hand, are evil to those who come - out of their own <devices> - to the road of their origin, and on the other hand, are toil to those who <come to it> for other <reasons>. He prays therefore that the cause of human misfortune — which is really worthy of being accursed — fall under a curse. This is so that even those who are within it might recognize that it is filled with curse, and they might flee it — since they are cursed of God.

¹⁵⁷Psalm 30:19; 31:18.

¹⁵⁸Matthew 26:24.

¹⁵⁹Ecclesiastes 4:3.

It is also well that he ascribes to the damning God no other agency of his than that one which relates to his incarnation.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, he did not say: “But he who curses that day will curse it.” Nor did he continue: “the Creator,” or the “teacher.” Even these things do not follow. Rather, <he said>: “he that is ready to take in hand the great sea monster.”

For since the devil (who is also called a sea monster) becomes the cause of the human fall, for this <reason>, that it (i.e. the fall) might be put down, he lifts up the prayer and makes use of the prophecy as follows, that “that one be destroyed who has the power of death, that is, the devil.”¹⁶¹ For in the purity of his soul, and moved by the Holy Spirit, he foresaw him (i.e. Christ) so that to the holy ones also power might be granted to “tread upon snakes and scorpions and over every power of the enemy,”¹⁶² and so that out of these things others also (having been made sober), might be delivered from sin which stands in the way, and so that - on account of their progress in virtue, might hear: “You will tread on the adder and the basilisk, and you will step upon the lion and the dragon,”¹⁶³ that is, the devil. For concerning him, it is said: “Our adversary, the devil, prowls around

¹⁶⁰ ἰ ἱ here may mean, “incarnation,” rather than “economy,” or even “plan of salvation.” For a rather comprehensive review of various patristic connotations to this word, cf. G.L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, SPCK: London, 1959, pp. 57-67. He says: “. . . the supreme instance of divine economy . . . was exhibited in the Incarnation, for which the word “oekonomia,” without any verbal qualification, is the regular patristic term from the third century onwards.” With Didymus, the soul is “sewn” to the body - as in Job’s case - in order to become a positive example for others. Job becomes a “type” - sent to be a model of spiritual direction for weaker souls.

¹⁶¹ Hebrews 2:14.

¹⁶² Luke 10:19.

¹⁶³ Psalm 90:13; 91:13.

like a lion, seeking someone to devour.”¹⁶⁴ And again, “You have crushed the heads of the dragon.”¹⁶⁵

The <phrase> “is ready to” is appropriate, as it signifies the incarnation.¹⁶⁶ For it was not fitting to bring the devil to naught by means of unveiled divinity.¹⁶⁷ Rather, it was by means of this one (i.e. Christ)¹⁶⁸ who became the temple of the Word, and who proceeded out of a seed which was cheated and blocked by the devil. For it would have been the subject of boasting to him (i.e. to the devil) if God had overcome him using unveiled divinity.

The various names for the devil signify his different operations, not his actual being. For given his character, the devil is called adversary, evil one, lion, dragon, snake, monster, since his evil is effected in various ways. Wherefore, the teaching of the Manichaeans is to be overthrown.¹⁶⁹

3:9 “*Let the stars of that night be darkened; and not remain, and not come into light; and let it not see the morning star arise.*”

¹⁶⁴I Peter 5:8.

¹⁶⁵Psalms 73:13; 74:13.

¹⁶⁶Here, the word is ἐ ὦ not ί

¹⁶⁷Reminiscent of this is Gregory of Nyssa’s “fishhook analogy”: ὕ ὕ ἰ ἐ ί
 ὕ ἄ ἄ φ ἰ ἦ ὕ ία ἰ ἦ ὕ ἦ ὕ ὕ ἦ
 ἐ ἄ *Catechetical Orations*, 24. The replication by Gregory of the same concept and vocabulary here as found in Didymus’ suggests another of the “links” between Didymus and the later Greek fathers.

¹⁶⁸Instrumental, to mark the parallelism and contrast with “unveiled divinity.”

¹⁶⁹Like other fathers of the church, such as Gregory of Nyssa, Didymus rebuts the Manicheans’ teaching that the devil - as devil - was created by God. Rather, like Nyssa, he maintained its character to be freely chosen. (cf. *Catechetical Orations*, 7)

The stars that came about on the fourth day¹⁷⁰ - and which <remain> the same until the consummation¹⁷¹ of time - belong to every night, and not to this one or to that one - so that the attached word, “that,” leads us away from the “literal.” For each night does not specifically have its own (i.e. other) stars, so that one might also speak of them - how they should be darkened. Overall, how can the praying of a wise man not be out of harmony if he were to pray that the stars be darkened, which God made to shine,¹⁷² and to pray on account of the critical circumstances which have befallen him, and which are to be demolished by his steadfastness. As a result, (i.e. of what I have said earlier), one must render these things in the <spiritual> way that was presented earlier (i.e. by means of allegory).

And so, the holy man prays that people should not consider these things to be desirable which are not actually desirable. For since sin-loving souls have some things <within them> that lead <them> to sin — either a learned <pattern of behavior> or <inner> reckonings that lead to these things (this <Job> calls “light”) — since in a certain way it produces an advance toward evil.

He prays that these things (i.e. enticements) not become an aggregate and be the rationale for those who are on the road to evil, and not serve them as a point of departure, saying: “Let the stars

¹⁷⁰Genesis 1:16.

¹⁷¹ εἶς is classically a subscription, or joint contribution, to public funds. In its usage in patristic times, it comes to mean, among other things, the consummation of the age, cf. St. John Chrysostom, *in pascha* 5 (8.263a).

¹⁷²The implication is something like this: that if the wise and holy man Job were to curse the night, and pray that the stars be darkened, tacitly he would be acknowledging that the creation itself in some measure were evil. This would be to fall into the Manichaean camp. In fact, as we have observed elsewhere, for Didymus, evil is *not* part of the original design of creation. Therefore, Job’s “cursing” of the night must serve some other purpose - which we have elsewhere described as a pedagogic purpose of “identifying” with weaker souls in this world.

of that night be darkened.” He signifies by “night” the road that leads to the human condition. Let nothing bright illumine souls, nor guide them on it (i.e. on the road that leads to the human condition), since¹⁷³ a fetter of many evils exists on it.

<The road> itself should not be lasting, since other rational beings turn from it on account of the darkness. That is because <souls> find no inducement, nor will they become part of such incentives that lead to it. The morningstar also should not break upon this same <road>. This appears to be an illuminating thought, since he is persuaded that it is necessary that they find favor in this road. For often one who loves sin will persist in his error, either because he finds pleasure <in it> or because captivating thoughts awaken <within him> on the basis of which he reckons himself not to err.

3:10 *"Because it did not shut up the gates of my mother's womb"*

The cause of the curse now appears, saying - as he does - wherefore, it is not in keeping with the perceptible night. But it <is in keeping> with the condition we have mentioned that leads to life. For if <the night> had not provided the opening for these things, then the "gates of my mother's womb" also would not have opened, which means: "Then this sorrowful life would not have come about, and through the sin of such a ?,¹⁷⁴ original sin would not have resulted. If this were the case, that one who "holds on" <here> on account of the plan of salvation would not have stayed in this

¹⁷³In later Greek, *ἵνα* will frequently mean “since,” rather than “in order that,” (cf. Liddell and Scott, *Greek Lexicon*, II, 1,2 and Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 8.

¹⁷⁴A lacuna, regrettably, in the text prevents our fuller understanding of an important passage. What we have here translated as “original sin” is literally “the sin of birth.” What original sin meant with Didymus is different, of course, from what it comes to mean, certainly, in an Augustinian theology.

condition [human].

The blessed Paul also knew this, when he said: "It is better to depart, and be with Christ."

"To remain in the flesh is more necessary for you." The one (i.e. the "holding out in this life") is good with respect to some thing <else>; while the other (i.e. the departing) exists well unconditionally. For it is blessed to be outside this life. For this reason, thus, Jesus says to his friends: "You no longer belong to this world, but I have chosen you out of it." For it is better not to have been tested, in the first place, with such a road, even if one should chance upon it, on account of the plan of salvation. It would be especially good if no one needed a physician, (being healthy). For that would have as its result that one would no longer be in the same condition in which one conforms even to sorrows, and unwelcome things, as <Job> adds in the following.

3:10 *"For it would have removed sorrow from my eyes."*

He is not only indicating the sorrow which afflicts him and surrounds him, but also that he saw many ruined. For the eye of the just man is encumbered by lawless works, done by careless people. To have to submit to life, in itself, is no small sorrow . . . From the unjust things, all these things have . . . which did nothing, since it produced no evils. But even Habakkuk emits such a cry, when he says: "To what end have you shown sufferings and toils to me, and to regard misery and godlessness?"

3:11 *For why didn't I die in the womb? Or why didn't I come forth from the womb and die*

immediately? And to what end did my knees support me? And to what end did I suck the breasts?

As it seems, he (i.e. Job) seeks - like Jonah - to avert the divine plan¹⁹¹ that exists on behalf of those it helps. Moreover, he also demands a teaching on the judgments of God. This is characteristic of the just, who are not completely ignorant of such things, but who personify a role in their words so that others might learn <from it>. ¹⁹²

At any rate, Jeremiah puts forth a question <to God>: “You are righteous, Lord; but I shall speak to you with respect to your judgments.”¹⁹³ This is a proof that he knows what is taking place with those about whom he asks: “How does it happen that the road of the impious prospers?”¹⁹⁴ The judgment of God in reality takes many hues: when the unjust prosper, while the just are straitened and “eat dirt” [partake of what is foul] - like Jeremiah himself - who is so holy that he was made holy from his mother’s womb,¹⁹⁵ but had to suffer such things as even to be thrown into a cistern of mud.¹⁹⁶ But even Lazarus and the rich man - (the former suffers ill, the latter lives with the greatest luxuries),¹⁹⁷ - bring out sharply the inscrutable judgments of God. This he (i.e. Jeremiah) calls

¹⁹¹ i í

¹⁹²Didymus means that Job is not despairingly cursing the day of his birth. He is assuming a role, that of frail mortal beings, in order to identify with them and to expose them to helpful teachings of the “divine plan.”

¹⁹³Jeremiah 12:1.

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵Jeremiah 1:5.

¹⁹⁶Jeremiah 45:6.

¹⁹⁷Luke 16:19.

“prospering” - according to the opinion of many. Thus, not out of idle talk, but for the instruction of others, the blessed one pursues such things. To this belongs therefore also what is said in one of the Psalms: “How good is God to Israel, to the upright in heart. But my feet were nearly overthrown; my goings about almost slipped. For I was jealous of the lawless ones, when I contemplated ¹⁹⁸the peace of sinners.”¹⁹⁹ That <the Psalmist> does not doubt, though, is clear. For he does say, “How good is God to Israel.” These things cause those who have an upright heart to think. He himself, however, he represents as tottering, even though he is steadfast. But he takes the role²⁰⁰ of those who are morose, so that the words of instruction - later - should follow upon the words of doubt.

At any rate, by inquiring, Job also wishes to learn from God the reason for such a course of life - for this <reason> he steps forth in this role. For he indeed does speak as one undertaking to know the reason for this course in the body. For there are those who will fall into so much evil that they pray for union with the body, and for those as helpers who come as a result of the divine plan. For this reason, he utters the word cited here: “For why did I not die in the womb of my mother?” Holy persons - out of piety - pray to be entrusted with the help of the weaker ones. For this very reason, he himself says the following: “Why didn’t I come forth from the womb and perish immediately?” Likewise also: “To what end did my knees support me? And to what end did I suck the breasts?” For the holy one preferred that illness would not afflict any rational beings, so that pure ones would not need to come in succession <to earth> for a way of healing <to those who are on

¹⁹⁸Didymus here uses the word εἶ - the Neo-Platonic and Christian Alexandrian term (e.g. Clement of Alexandria) for the “contemplation” of God.

¹⁹⁹Psalm 72:1 (73:1).

²⁰⁰Literally, the mask - as in theater.

earth>.

This phrase is also apt: “Why did my knees support me?” - which signifies a journey of life. For some <people>, life <here on earth> came about as a consequence of their own blunders. But to the holy ones, <life> happened not because they had to give an account of what they had done, but because they were carrying out a divine plan.

3:13-14 *“Now I should have lain down and been quiet. I should have slept and been at rest, with kings and counselors of the earth.”*

For if, he says, on behalf of those who are in need of healing, such a series <of things> and such a train <of events> had not occurred, leading me on the road up to this situation. This means: “if in my mother’s womb I had immediately died and had been taken away without ever leaving the womb,” and “if my knees had not supported me,” and if I had not sucked the breasts,” which is to say, “if the toilsome divine plan had not been taken in hand by us, then I, lulled, would have been at rest. This, in turn, means, “I would have had rest, and would have spent my days in the same way as the divine and heavenly rational beings pass the course of life.” The kings and counselors have mastery over the land of the meek, of whom it is said: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”²⁰¹ We take “kings” to be those in authority, “counselors” as those of a lower rank, whom the kings command. A comparable analogy is embraced in the gospel parable, whether <“a master

²⁰¹Matthew 5:5.

takes charge> be it over ten cities, or five.”²⁰²

3:14 “. . . *who gloried in their swords.*”

It is not the case - as some might suggest it to mean - that the holy one was some militarist who was inclined to live among such kings who according to what is close at hand are ever-ready to wage war - thinking journeys of life with such things to be beautiful, but <rather> knowing that “for the holy, the struggle is not against blood and flesh,”²⁰³ - as the apostle says - “but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against the spirits of evil.” Against these, those who lead a good life put on the whole armor of salvation to contend in the front line. He wishes to lead his life in the midst of these without being tested by human birth.²⁰⁴ But one of those peacemakers happened to be even the “commander of the <forces> of the Lord” - whom Joshua, the son of Nun, had seen and to whom he said: “Are you one of us, or one of our adversaries?”²⁰⁵ Being discerning, and not hasty, the holy one knows well that even the opponent in a suit often “disguises himself as an angel of light.”²⁰⁶ These are now also haughty, not because

²⁰²Luke 19:17-19.

²⁰³Ephesians 6:12.

²⁰⁴Ephesians 6:13.

²⁰⁵Joshua 5:13.

²⁰⁶2 Corinthians 11:14.

they esteem vanity, but because they are rejoicing over the victory over the adversaries, and rejoice in God <over this>.²⁰⁷

3:15 *“Or with rulers, who <possessed> much gold, who filled their houses with silver.”*

The <quotation> above - which properly has the same interpretation <as the preceding one> - we understand to correspond to the role of the holy one. For <Job> considered it desirable to live with the wealthy, not because he was greedy or a parasite - he who nobly bore the destruction of all his possessions and goods, and accepted no <riches> from his friends because he was no flatterer, and having free choice and an unshaken mind. Accordingly, he wished to spend his life among such rulers and kings, for whom riches were an adornment. The admirable Paul writes to those who believe themselves to have acquired a good wealth: “Already you have become rich. Without us, you have become kings. I wish that you had become kings, so that we might be kings with you.”²⁰⁸

For these <rulers> possess “much gold,” which signifies pure thought. Being pure themselves, they approach in a pure way the light of knowledge. For these very same ones have also “filled their own houses” with that which corresponds to <their pure> nature, namely with the spoken word. They have, as a result, adorned the surpassing purity of their mind by their participation in the Word. For they have nothing to do with such a spiritual state of mind as that one

²⁰⁷Luke 1:47.

²⁰⁸1 Corinthians 4:8.

in which Job - on account of the divine plan - has come.

On account of his communion and sojourn with humankind, such a clear mind <as that of Job> has no likeness with such a situation. Wherefore, this <state> is to be wiped clean, since it is not sin, but something else, some accident, which has come about thanks to his helping others.

3:16 *“Or I should have been as a miscarriage from my mother’s womb, or as infants who never saw light.”*

To this can be added the verse, “To what end did I suck the breasts?” - spoken in the midst of those <verses> from, “Now I should have lain down and been quiet,” to “who filled their houses with silver.” It may, then, have the same sense as the earlier citations. For just as it does not appear desirable <to Job> to have been born, so it would even please him to be “a miscarriage,” so that he no longer takes part in the fullness of the course of life and affliction which happens after such birth. Or, if he even becomes a small child, he turns back, so that from childhood he should not reach the stage of adulthood.

For, in reality, such a thing is not without difficulty - and would be surely worthy of investigation: that whereas <on the one hand> these do not come into life, the others die right after being born. So, the philosopher examining <these things> infers <them> not to happen accidentally, for it just so happens that God is just and good and God has “ordered all things with reason, order, measures, and weight.”²⁰⁹ The holy man himself knows this judgment. Not without care, he speaks

²⁰⁹Wisdom of Solomon 11:20.

about it. But, <he does so> so as to praise the better condition, and because he believes that it is preferable.

3:17 *“There the ungodly have burnt out the fury of rage; there the wearied in body rest. The eternal <ones> are of one accord.”*

The entire succession of things said by Job strives after the divine purpose and bring forth teaching on the various kinds of human births. For treating of his heartfelt prayer not to associate with the human way, and not to have been born, or right after birth to have been freed from this life, he brings forth even a certain motive now, teaching that being born is pleasing to the opposing powers and sought after by them not a little. For his discourse has shown that on account of their trespasses souls have happened to have a differing genesis <of life>. Yet the devil and those with him, love sin, so as to arouse to evil those who give themselves up to it(i.e. to sin). He explained this very thing, saying: “There the ungodly have burnt out the fury of rage.” By “there” he is indicating the other world in distinction to this one, as in this <word>: “Naked came I from the womb of my mother, naked will I return there.”

Still, for all that, if some such thing is also pleasing to the evil powers, God foresaw it when the world was established, and gave laws to each <person> to hinder them in sinning, so that those living in this body might consider heavenly things and in like manner yearn after life there, so that the one weary and bruised in body from wrestling with evil <here>, might <at least there> find rest. For this is what is signified by, “There the unwearied in body rest.”

For when the holy have pleased <God>, on account of many afflictions on earth in which they have been bruised in body, but not in spirit, <then> they have a cessation <of their afflictions> in a way parallel with the angels, who happen also to be eternal.²¹⁰ But if the latter are eternal, and if their cessation is parallel, then it is clear that souls also are eternal. For since they are immortal and despise the transitory things, they also possess the things of eternity.

It is to be noted that “eternity” is used in many ways. In one sense, it signifies that which has no beginning and no end, as in the <phrase>, “God is eternal.”²¹¹ For God is called eternal since his existence has neither beginning or end. Yet, that “eternal” is somewhat different of which it was said: “That which cannot be seen is eternal.”²¹² For these things are not eternal in the way God is, but rather because they do not fall away and always remains in the same <state>. Still different is that “eternal” when compared against the present, of which it was said: “The children of this age are more shrewd in their own generation.”²¹³ But, the time which stretches out over a life of a person is said to be “an age.” At least this is laid down about the Hebrew who did not wish to be freed in his seventh year: “He shall be your slave forever.”²¹⁴ For he does not remain always a slave of a man even after his death. In this sense, Paul also writes, signifying that “If meat is a cause of scandal to

²¹⁰Interesting that Didymus uses the expression, “happen to be eternal,” when he speaks of angels. Is it really open to question that angels would be eternal? But we remind ourselves that Origen taught that the angels are souls or minds which revolted against God only slightly, as distinguished from the demons who sinned more deeply. “Each in turn received the reward for his individual sin.” *De Principiis*, I, 8,1.

²¹¹Genesis 21:33.

²¹²2 Corinthians 4:18.

²¹³Luke 16:8.

²¹⁴Deuteronomy 15:17.

my brother, I will not eat meat forever,” instead of “in my life.”²¹⁵

3:18 *“They have not heard the voice of the tribute collector.”*

For this age in which <Job> came - and in which he lives - is filled with taxes. <This is> on account of a divine plan. For there are many who have come under the yoke of sin and furnish tributes and taxes to the adversary. The prophet Jeremiah lamented that Jerusalem had become indebted through these tributes, saying, concerning her: “She that ruled over the provinces has <become encumbered with> tribute.”²¹⁶ She who is the gathering place of believing souls, or . . . who surrenders her own freedom to the cruelest tyranny . . . these holy ones show also the <word of the> gospel when . . .

It is <characteristic> of kings not to be encumbered by tribute. These <kings> then - released from fleeting things - either because they have not had the experience of these things, or even after they *have* had this experience, because they are beyond these things - either way, they are beyond the tax of foreigners, since with those who bring about the attempt . . . [lacuna]

3:19 *“The small and great are there, and a servant that feared his lord, and has met with a*

²¹⁵1 Corinthians 8:13.

²¹⁶Lamentations 1:1.

shadow.”

The preceding shows <that God's> conduct of affairs is without regard to <the station of> persons. For the Lord comes to this earthly life in no other way than as a servant or as the poor. So in the following: “Some king or tyrant”²¹⁷, Wisdom declares, that <these kings or tyrants> “have not had a different beginning of existence <from others>.”²¹⁸ “There is for all <persons> one entrance into life, and a common departure,”²¹⁹ even if it is different with respect to the kind of motion <in and out of it>. These did not come into being differently. But even the servant, who is doing hard service for the master will - even though he is not a master - but servant of a master throughout his entire road <of life>, will encounter a shadow. <This is> so that he might be led up out of this shadow which has symbolic meaning - from the laws which have been given here <on earth>, and thence to the heavenly realm.²²⁰

It can be taken in a different way; in this transitory life a difference was established between small and great and slave, because greed brings about this very cunning. But in the coming age, Paul

²¹⁷Wisdom of Solomon 12:14.

²¹⁸Wisdom of Solomon 7:5.

²¹⁹Wisdom of Solomon 7:6. The word “common” here does not simply mean something ordinary, but rather something which is shared equally by all, with no special conditions.

²²⁰As Henrichs observes, Didymus would have been thinking here of the law as a shadow of the heavenly realm, which is to come, (Hebrews 10:1ff). cf. Albert Henrichs, *op. cit.*, p. 229. Didymus indeed does refer elsewhere to the law as “shadow,” cf. *De Spiritu Sanctu*, 150, 5-6; and 250,5 and 8.

says there is “neither male nor female, nor slave nor free.”²²¹ By the same token, he could have said, “neither rich nor poor,” but <rather> the exposing of the works according to which it will happen that the one who in this life is small or a slave, there is thought of as great and free. For he says, “I saw slaves upon horses and masters who went on foot <like slaves>.”²²² Everything <which here on earth> is taken to be great, there, will be found to be punishment.

Perhaps it is even possible so <to understand it> that thenceforth that which is great in each thing - great as to virtue - there also will be found <great>, and so also with the small things. In this sense, even that which Ecclesiastes offers is to be unfolded (i.e. “interpreted”): “Wherever the tree should fall, there it remains.”²²³ With “tree” he speaks of the person who, if he has fallen into this punishment - which is to say - if the end of this living is in acts of sin, so it (i.e. his “living”) will be there. But if in virtue, then just so. For “all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be given recompense for what has been done in the body.”²²⁴ Even the servant, who thoughtfully serves God is there happening up on a shadow and rest since he has escaped the fire of life.” The thoughtful son will be saved from the fire.”²²⁵ He will not be consumed by the fire, as with those in the parable²²⁶ who did not take seeds into the deep (soil) and they fell on the blazing of sin. This promise is spoken to David in the Psalms: “The sun will not burn you by day, nor the

²²¹Galatians 3:28.

²²²Lacuna, which is filled by reference to Ecclesiastes 10:7.

²²³Ecclesiastes 11:3.

²²⁴2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10.

²²⁵Proverbs 10:5.

²²⁶Matthew 13:5-6.

moon by night,²²⁷ which we have not literally found (here). He himself, being just - while overpowered by a visible fire, yet was not subdued by the fire of sin. For it is common both to the just and the unjust to be on guard against those things happening outside of them, but it is peculiar to the good to evade the fire that comes from evil.

3:20-22 *“For to what end is light given to those in bitterness, life to the souls who are in pain? Those which long for death and it does not come upon them, though they dig for it as for treasures, and rejoice greatly when they find it <hit the mark>.*

The holy one examines closely what is hidden, as well as <whatever> is not an evident judgment of providence - so as to teach those who will listen. This is firstly so that they not be dissatisfied with what occurs, and then that they know that it comes from God, lest they think they think the cause for these things coming into being to be either accident or fate. For the mishaps which follow people are of many sorts, so that the one lives in poverty, the other is changed from riches to poverty. And yet there is a difference in this. The one is in different kinds of distress, another however in evil, and since not only the common folk experience such testing, but also the good, he inquires after the judgment <of providence>, asking: “To what end is light given to those in bitterness?” For if he knows also this, then he wishes that we at least be patient <in suffering> and so he teaches us that it is fitting that we should expect to receive the instruction on this from

²²⁷Psalm 121:6, (120:6).

God. He spoke also concerning those embittered on account of the injustices done by people: “To what end is light given to those in bitterness?”

Jeremiah hints at something of the sort when he said: “I sat alone, because I was full of bitterness.”²²⁸ However, he was full of bitterness because he was contemplating the inconstancies and injustices among people. But even these (i.e. those who are inconstant and unjust) also suffer distress. Or was Saint Paul not in distress when he said: “I have great pain and my heart is in unremitting distress.”²²⁹ For might I pray²³⁰ that I be cursed, for the sake of my brothers, my kin, according to the flesh,” who “on account of their turning away from the truth,”²³¹ happen to be outside of it? Moreover, they even yearn for death when they say: “It is better to depart and be with Christ,”²³² just as “digging for treasure,”²³³ they long for <death>. So one of the holy said: “Woe is me that my stay has been lengthened.”²³⁴ And so Paul was to write about those in the like situation: “Here they have no lasting city, but they seek the one that is to come.”²³⁵ Therefore, they are not

²²⁸Jeremiah 15:17.

²²⁹Romans 9:32.

²³⁰ ὁ ὅ the imperfect in Hellenistic Greek frequently takes the place of (and has the sense of) the optative.

²³¹Titus 1:14.

²³²Philippians 1:23.

²³³Job 3:21.

²³⁴Psalms 119:5; 120:5.

²³⁵Hebrews 13:14.

enamored of life and are ready to die, as Saint Paul says: “Daily I die.”²³⁶ He wrote this <unusual> thought because he is completely ready <to die>. One who clings to life²³⁷ would not say this.²³⁸ For the holy ones believe²³⁹ that if they depart from this life, they will receive divine recompense. Therefore, they are like “those who dig for a treasure,” even if the digging comes about as a result of their labor.²⁴⁰ So then, just as the holy ones think that they are re-entering the kingdom through many <toils>, nevertheless the hope lightens the toil - just so, also those striving in an athletic contest work hard at many things because they have the crown of victory before their eyes. The next verse <from Job> also applies to the same holy ones, when he says: “There is great rejoicing, if they hit the mark.” None of the wicked departs with great joy - even if they <the wicked> are in difficult circumstances and if because of these <adversities> they desire to leave life. For even if he puts away his afflictions here <on earth>, yet chastisements that come as a consequence of the actions of his life do close in <upon him>. Even when they (i.e. the wicked) depart, they take with them

²³⁶1 Corinthians 15:31.

²³⁷ ὁ in classical times, has the sense of one who loves life, but in a cowardly way, clinging to it. For Didymus, as we have seen, “despising life” is the virtue. This is not necessarily in the way it would strike many modern ears. “Having contempt for life” for him is a code word for having a greater attachment to that which is yet to come. It is fair to say that in Didymus’ and Origen’s understanding, the person who has “died” to this world, continues to participate actively in the affairs of this world, but has fixed the inner contemplation on heavenly things - a posture which transforms the “here and now.”

²³⁹In Herodotus, ἐπίστανται has the sense of “to be assured of,” “to believe.” In Attic Greek, it is “know for certain.” Origen uses it to mean, “believe,” cf. *John 1:16*.

²⁴⁰ ἄλγος in Homeric Greek refers to that which comes about as the result of persistent hard labors, as for example in the case of Odysseus. In the patristic period, it has the connotation of spiritual disciplines. In the way Didymus uses it here it reminds us that Job is no “passive victim,” any more than one would say that about Jesus’ passion.

impulses of the soul, or appetites, or savageness, or other passions, all of which are firmly connected or strengthened here <in this world> within <the soul>. On account of the chastisement that will follow, they are not overly joyful. Then it also follows <that we should> understand this <saying> as pertaining to the holy ones. Or, are they not greatly rejoicing, to be escorted by angels and to attain Abraham's bosom and the kingdom, and to receive this (i.e. the kingdom) in place of their difficult circumstances which they experienced outside <the kingdom> and which as toils they have endured for the sake of virtue? Even blessed David had these in his sight when - even though he was a king - <he> reckoned life to be like a prison, and sang to God: "Lead my soul out of prison."²⁴¹ For he was not locked in a perceptible prison. It is also to be reckoned from the following words, that he longed for deliverance from here. For he says: "The just will await me, until you deliver me." For this is equivalent to <the following>: "so that without us they should not attain perfection."²⁴² Those who truly have courage will also have the things promised. But if this is so, why should not the holy people be exceedingly joyful - having attained the end of this life, at which point they will receive the kingdom of the heavens?

3:23 *"Death - for a man - is a cessation; for God hedges <us> in through it."*

If one wished to understand this according to the <sense which is most> at hand, it would be

²⁴¹Psalm 141:8; 142:7.

²⁴²Hebrews 11:40.

to say that for those who are in critical circumstances and toils, death is a cessation, since “God hedges <us> in through it,” and <thereby> rebuts the contingencies <of life>. But whoever follows <our> earlier understanding will in no way exaggerate if he says that not all things that die come to a cessation, since the evil receive in turn their punishment. <Job> also noted this in passing, since he did not say: “Death is for a person,” but “for a hero.”²⁴³ For whoever has courage and <dwells> in virtue is not ensnared by death, being totally prepared for it and singing: “My heart is prepared, “O God, my heart is prepared.”²⁴⁴ This very one will receive repose, receiving it in turn as the promise. Even while suffering toils, he will find a cessation, because of that which “God hedges in” through it (i.e. through death), on account of the sentence upon Adam which <applies> in common <to all>, saying: “Earth you are, and to earth you will return,”²⁴⁵ being loosened for the future through release from “grief and pain and sighing,”²⁴⁶ on account of hearing, “Go in the joy of your Lord.”²⁴⁷

3:24-25 *“My sighing has come before my food, and I weep oppressed by fear. For I encountered the fear of which I was mindful, as well as that of which I was afraid.”*

²⁴³The word, in the epic tradition, is not just “man” but “hero,” as in the opening lines of the *Odyssey*. That Didymus is thinking in some such way also about Job is suggested by his using - in the very next line above - the word ἄθλητήν. This word (cf. preface) is of course etymologically rooted in ἄθλη and demonstrates Didymus’ “take” on Job’s role as “moral athlete.”

²⁴⁴Psalm 56:8; 57:7.

²⁴⁵Genesis 3:19.

²⁴⁶Isaiah 35:10.

²⁴⁷Matthew 25:21.

Fear does not always signify emotion, nor spiritual goodness and perfection, but also <actually> a “mean.”²⁴⁸ Neither “emotion” nor “spiritual goodness” correspond <exactly> to this. <Rather> as one might say, <it is> someone who is nearer to these things on account of his usefulness to others, rather than on account of the Fall. For if Saint Paul says: “I fear lest in the way the serpent beguiled Eve . . .”²⁴⁹ <in this> he does not have fear in an affective way, nor is perfection and purity signified in this, even if the wise Paul had it, but care for the salvation of others. <Here> he is speaking about perfection: “Fear of the Lord surpasses all things.”²⁵⁰ Concerning the affective things - that they might not assail <us> - the scripture saying declares: “Do not fear their fear,”²⁵¹ and “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body,”²⁵² “They were in great fear in that place, where there was no fear.”²⁵³ And these things <are indicated> when it is said: “I weep, oppressed by fear.” But let us see from the beginning (i.e. verse by verse) what has been expounded. “My sighing has come before my food,” wherefore it is taught that other persons who are endowed with a delicate life and who give themselves completely to self-indulgence and pleasure - considering nothing else - shout

²⁴⁸Didymus here makes the traditional distinction between fear as the emotion and on the other hand the proper reverence for things holy. But he develops another concept, a refinement in fact of the former two. The “mean” is what is exemplified by those who have come “on behalf” of others, cf. Commentary on 3:3-5.

²⁴⁹2 Corinthians 11:3.

²⁵⁰Sirach 25:11.

²⁵¹I Peter 3:14.

²⁵²Matthew 10:28.

²⁵³Psalms 52:6; 53:6.

out through these deeds <themselves>: “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow, we die.”²⁵⁴ But the holy man - along with Saint Paul - says: “Who is weak, and I am not weak, who is made to stumble, and I am not incensed?”²⁵⁵ Visible nourishment he takes in - not without a groan - this, on account of human weakness, and not for pleasure. Rather, he ponders the pure and immaterial²⁵⁶ life and that table which the Savior promised to his own disciples, saying: “that you may eat and drink at my table in the kingdom of heaven,²⁵⁷ he bewails, and still taking this in, he sings with his thought. “My soul longs and thirsts for the courts of the Lord.”²⁵⁸ Then because the holy man, however complete²⁵⁹ he may be, knows that it is possible for a person to wander into sin so long as he is in life - and adds to this: “I weep, encompassed by fear.” To weep in the midst of afflictions <shows> a vigorous frame of mind, according to the verse: “Each night shall I bathe my bed <with tears>, and in my weeping shall I drench my mattress?”²⁶⁰

²⁵⁴1 Corinthians 15:32; Isaiah 22:13.

²⁵⁵2 Corinthians 11:29.

²⁵⁶ἀστικός comes also to mean “ascetic”, a meaning which would not seem to be entirely supported by this particular context.

²⁵⁷Luke 22:30.

²⁵⁸Psalms 83:3; 84:2.

²⁵⁹As in the gospels, the word εἰς does not mean “perfect” in the normal sense in which people nowadays tend to take that word. Rather, it functions here as an extension of ἵνα - “even so as to be perfect.” The context, once again, is Didymus’ belief that holy persons like Job are “sent” to the earth in order to provide a positive example for those who are here to “chasten” or purge their souls. Therefore, for Didymus, such a soul as that of Job’s would not be passively awaiting but rather actively participating and preparing. One attractive, and possible, connotation of the word εἰς here is that combination of the contemplative and the active which St. Athanasius and others use it to mean (cf. St. Athanasius, *Commentary on Psalm 64*).

²⁶⁰Psalms 6:7.

The holy ones do these things not puffing up themselves,²⁶¹ but awakening their hearts so that through these they may call upon God for aid, just as the blessed David, calling together an assembly of his peers, also says: “Come, let us prostrate ourselves and fall down before him and weep before the Lord who made us.”²⁶²

The concern about apostasy is a great good. Wishing the disciples to have this <concern>, the Lord says: “Be watchful, for you do not know at what hour the thief is coming.”²⁶³ The holy ones are no less vigilant throughout the trials that beset them, and do not give in to carelessness, but prepare themselves for these <trials and tribulations>, fearing lest in preaching to others they themselves should become remiss. And they do not excuse their stumblings. Not without heed for that concern (their concern about their stumblings), they are ready to make preparation. On account of this, even the blessed one himself always remains firm, bringing down the insurrections of the devil. On the one hand, he was wishing not to be in critical circumstances, since human weakness - whatever relates to its <human> limitation - does not bear an unlimited measure of afflictions, unless a courageous attitude should overcome the weakness. On account of this, he continues: “For the fear of which I was mindful came upon me, and of which I was afraid, <it> befell me.” Still, he was not saying these things, cowering, but in the sense in which it has been rendered. For he had a fear - lest,

²⁶¹ ὄ - a somewhat unusual word, and reminiscent, in this context, of ὄ (“puff up”) in 1 Corinthians 13:4. But cf. also Euripides, *Andromache*, 931, ὦ ὦ ἴ' ὦ ἄ ἔ ὕ ' ἔ ὕ ὄ s, “twas pestilent women sought to me, and ruined, which spoke and puffed me up with words like these.” (Translation by Arthur S. Way, *Euripides*, London, 1924, II.)

²⁶²Psalm 94:6; 95:6.

²⁶³Matthew 24:42, Luke 12:39.

lingering in life - he should be touched by <the kind of> afflictions and misfortunes - which end up bringing most <people> to their knees. For even if they (i.e. the holy ones) are unassailable they <nonetheless> do not wish to bring on trials, lest either the adversary (i.e. the devil) should have still greater punishment on account of them, or lest the human weaknesses - as we said - should make them sink to their knees.

When even a helmsman, guiding a ship <dugout> straight forward, does not wish to be tested against a storm, <it is> also lest he somehow might fall into misfortune. But that <the holy ones> do not seek to avert misfortunes out of cowardice can be heard from one of them - who speaks for them <all> in common: “God is our refuge and strength, a help in afflictions that have very much found us.” Therefore, we shall not fear when the earth is shaken and mountains are moved into the depths of the seas.”²⁶⁴

What the apostle says is in agreement with this: “Who will separate us from the love which is in Jesus Christ?” Suffering, anguish, persecution, or famine,” and so forth.²⁶⁵ However, that they submit - not “without perspiration”²⁶⁶ to these things, he adds: “But in all these things we are more than conquerors through the one that loved us.”²⁶⁷ This is an example in the contested struggle, on account of the victory that results. The <phrase> “I encountered,” is also appropriate, just as the athlete encountered the wrestling match. For the devil does not contend with just anyone, as the

²⁶⁴Psalm 45:2-3; 46:1-2.

²⁶⁵Romans 8:35.

²⁶⁶Job is consistent with his use of athletic metaphor for the hero Job.

²⁶⁷Romans 8:37.

Lord makes clear, saying to his disciples: “See, Satan has demanded to sift you, like wheat.”²⁶⁸ Even <Job> encountered <fear>. For he was most prepared for the struggle, as even the circumstances and the following commentary make clear.

3:26 *“I was not at peace, or quiet, nor at rest; yet wrath came upon me.”*²⁶⁹

By <all> of these things, <Job’s> preparation for his adversary is shown. For Paul also - having the hope and the grace of the Spirit - and being watchful - took his stand in face of the antagonist, knowing this, that: “For the holy, the struggle is not with blood and flesh, but with rulers, with authorities, with the cosmic powers of darkness, with the spiritual forces of evil,”²⁷⁰ and with the archevil one himself, the devil, who “goes about like a lion seeking someone to devour.”²⁷¹ Although <Job> was alike watchful, and in <just> this way, the devil did not neglect to demand that he should bring upon him, what he had brought upon him. <Job> calls this wrath, on account of the afflictions, knowing that he was stuck with it <the wrath> - but not on account of evil. For he says:

²⁶⁸Luke 22:31.

²⁶⁹Didymus’ “take” on Job here seems to be this: that the holy one, Job, as a “moral athlete,” is *not* at peace or quiet, or rest. He is “preparing” or training. While terms such as “peace or quiet” would sound good to modern ears that evidently then is not the connotation of such a phrase here - at least for Didymus.

²⁷⁰Ephesians 6:12.

²⁷¹1 Peter 5:8.

“I know that I shall appear just.”²⁷² Elsewhere, it <scripture > seems to call afflictions, wrath. For it says: “You have sent forth your wrath and it devoured them as stubble.”²⁷³ If we hear about the wrath of God, we do not consider that to be his emotion - <understood> in some human <way>. For such emotion cannot by its nature be sent, because it lies in the soul. The so-called wrath of God will however be sent. For “you have sent your wrath,” which is the afflictions. For these are also sent. He also then terms these things wrath, which have befallen him.

So this holy man stretched out such a narration - in which the judgments of God might be an instruction - and godly mysteries. These we have set out²⁷⁴ as well as we could. It is clear that he (i.e. Job) is not greatly distressed on account of what he has encountered, but even in these things has the desire for godly contemplation²⁷⁵ and for heavenly longing.

4:1-5 *“Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered, and said: ‘Have you not often been spoken to in distress? But who shall endure the force of your words? For if you have instructed many and have comforted the weak hands, and have raised up the failing with words, and have imparted courage to feeble knees. But now that fear has come upon you and has touched you, you have been troubled.’”*²⁷⁶

²⁷²Job 13:18.

²⁷³Exodus 15:7.

²⁷⁴“Setting out,” or “marking out” the parameters of his study was Didymus’ initial, stated goal in the prologue.

²⁷⁵Here Didymus points most clearly to his Alexandrian precursor, Clement, with his accent on “godly contemplation.”

²⁷⁶An almost uniquely Septuagint usage of $\acute{\alpha}$ to mean, “to trouble.”

For every instruction and interpretation, there are principles. If these are sound, all things go forward reasonably. But whenever the principles are not sound, many errors follow. This should be <shown> from the example of heresies. For if one of the ungodly ones should reckon that the Father existed before the Son, then many false things follow upon this unsound principle. He will next assume the Son to be a created thing, one that is mutable - and not eternal, that it is impossible for him to be an eternal, pre-existent being.²⁷⁷ If, however - according to the unsound hypothesis of these persons - the Father exists beforehand, then the Son would not be eternal. Instead, it follows that he is a “created thing” and a “fabricated thing,”²⁷⁸ from which it follows that he is divertible²⁷⁹ and changeable. If this is so, then - in his essence - he will not be God. Wherefore, if ever you should fall in with unsound teachings, seek the principle of them. For if this should be overturned, the whole of it goes away.²⁸⁰ Let a second example of this be set forth.

There are some who state the opinion that the Savior <only> appeared to be seen.²⁸¹ It must

²⁷⁷cf. Didymus’ writings elsewhere on the Trinity, *De Trinitate* I, 15; II, 6,7.

²⁷⁸This is in contrast with ἐγέννητο (begotten, not made). The word “creature” while not exactly ambiguous, does not perhaps sufficiently capture Didymus’ contrast between a Jesus who is “created” and “made,” rather than “begotten.”

²⁷⁹The adjectives “mutable and changeable,” represent a recurring hendiadys among the Fathers, and in the Creed of Nicaea. In Origen’s *First Principles* I,2,10, it is “*quoniam in omnibus inconvertibilis est et incommutabilis.*”

²⁸¹These are apparently the Docetists, whom Origen had also singled out in the opening chapters of *De Principiis*, (I, 1,4): “this Jesus Christ was born and suffered in truth and not merely in appearance.” But Didymus apparently also had in mind the Manichaeans, (cf. *De Trinitate*, III, 21: “How would you know that Christ truly became flesh with a living soul, and was not a mere phantasm, whereas the Manichaeans think that He had a body only in appearance and the Arians that He was without a soul, if He had not said, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful,’ and showed a certain fear . . .”

be ascertained, on what account he came to live among the people, and it is obvious that it was for the salvation of human beings. If however, he were only apparently seen, and if the teaching only apparently happened, then even the cross also and the ascension - upon which it follows that even salvation only took place in appearance and not in truth. Wherefore, <all of this> follows as a consequence of the absurd principle.

Even with the words of Eliphaz - which have just been set out - it is just this way. There are, without doubt, two bases for the sadness²⁸² which befalls humankind. One is on account of correcting sins, the other because of showing forth the steadfastness and proven worth of the afflicted.

This is the very thing the familiar saying signifies <when it says>: “Blessed is the man who endures temptation,” because - being proven true - he shall receive the “crown of life,” which he has promised to those who love him.²⁸³ And again, “Consider it all joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of any kind, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and endurance <produces> character, and character, hope.”²⁸⁴ There are also expressions of the other kinds - <i.e. punishment> - to show as a witness from the holy scriptures. For it says: “I shall bear the anger of the Lord because I have sinned against him.”²⁸⁵ For he is saying that the onset <of afflictions> comes about through sins. Affliction then is common both to the good and the evil, but the place of its

²⁸²literally, *sad countenance*.

²⁸³James 1:12.

²⁸⁴*Ibid.*

²⁸⁵Micah 7:9.

origin differ.

Surely, at least, that which is in scripture is spoken of as “scourges” is inflicted upon sinners by reason of evils they have brought to pass: “Many are the scourges of the sinner, but mercy shall encompass the one who hopes in the Lord.”²⁸⁶ And again, “If his sons should forsake my law and not walk in my judgments, and not guard my statutes and keep my commandments, I shall visit their acts of lawlessness with a rod, and their sins with the scourge.”²⁸⁷ If the same misfortunes and the same griefs and circumstances should be inflicted upon the righteous, they are not called “scourges,” but “afflictions.” “Many are the afflictions of the righteous,”²⁸⁸ and, “in affliction, I remembered the Lord.”²⁸⁹

But it also <has to do with> the righteous one who is in the greatest affliction - according to the saying: “In all things, afflicted, but not crushed,”²⁹⁰ and it says: “And a scourge shall not draw near to your dwelling.”²⁹¹ The afflictions which come upon anyone, as said before, occur without question on the basis of two things: either on account of punishment and chastening, or so that one might bear it in a great-souled way²⁹² and receive crowns for strength and courage. Not knowing

²⁸⁶Psalm 31:10; 32:10.

²⁸⁷Psalm 88:31-33.

²⁸⁸Psalm 33:20.

²⁸⁹Isaiah 26:16.

²⁹⁰2 Corinthians 4:8.

²⁹¹Psalm 90:10; 91:10.

²⁹²Aristotle, *Ethics*, 4,3,3ff. Aristotle devotes an entire chapter of his Nicomachean Ethics to ἰ . The concept is likewise a key theme in several of Chrysostom’s homilies (cf. the

this, the friends of Job - following the former way <of thinking> - thought that he was afflicted on account of his having departed through sins. They certainly did not grasp the latter way, despite <the fact> that they did not know any sins of Job. For how would that even be, when he gave witness that each day he was boldly in the presence of God and carried in his sacrifices on behalf of his sons: “Lest they have conceived evil things.”²⁹³ For no <sins> of theirs were apparent. Wherefore, he performed his service also on account of their inner thoughts. But an even greater <example> of this is that he also gave witness to God, saying that: “He <Job> was a just man, blameless” and so forth.²⁹⁴ But likewise - as has already been said - the friend thought only in the former way, viz. that the onslaughts were sent, and <he> did not dare to ascribe these things to a just man. They wished to make the providence evident: that afflictions come upon <one> according to <one’s> deeds. On account of this understanding of theirs, they said something that contradicts <the truth>. On this account, even, God granted forgiveness to them and on behalf of their lack of perception, caused <Job> to bring forth a sacrifice.²⁹⁵ This they did - not out of evil resolve - but rather to justify providence. I have said this, even though they did not understand the exact <circumstances>. It is also surely out of this opinion that the one who is first to speak says: “Have you not often been spoken to in distress,” wherefore it is made clear that you yourself have often uttered words concerning those upon whom afflictions have come, so that we have understood the <phrase>“it was

introduction to this translation).

²⁹³Job 1:5. The goodness of Didymus’ Job is such that he sacrifices even for his son’s possible sins of omission!

²⁹⁴Job 1:1.

²⁹⁵This, he actually did do, cf. Job 42:8.

said,” in an “active sense,” as <for example, in the usage>, “it was carried out by you.” It is also possible for it to be spoken in a passive sense,²⁹⁶ so that what is said is: “Now experiencing sufferings perchance for the first time, do you have anyone speaking words of comfort to you?” Then, the ῆ is used instead of the ὁ ἰ. For not only at that moment was Job encompassed <by difficulty>. Probably he was in his afflictions for a longer time. Then he <Eliphaz> understood differently the sense of the things spoken by Job, and - when he had heard the <words of Job> making light of them, added: “Who might bear the force of your words?” You yourself have brought much comfort; however, your words, which tend to make light <of the situation>, no one can endure. This he said, unaware of the greatness of Job’s words. In truth, he took even him <Job> as an analogy and said: “For inasmuch as you have instructed many,” and so forth, with which he makes clear that “Whatever encouragement you have contributed to others, since you comforted those who had surrendered, so to speak, to pain, regardless of which “you became zealous” - instead of troubled - you have done so much to save and comfort the afflicted, that you have stretched out your right hand to them, as it indicates in Isaiah with respect to the Lord: “beckon with the hand,”²⁹⁷ which indicates harmony and sympathy. “To weak knees, you have imparted courage,”²⁹⁸ since he <Job> supplies strength to people crushed by weakness through his attention to them. Whoever bows them <the knees> has weak knees - in the sense alluded to: “whoever bows them to Baal,”²⁹⁹ whoever

²⁹⁶ ὦ , Aristotle, *Categ.* 8,8.

²⁹⁷ Isaiah 13:2.

²⁹⁸ Job 4:4.

²⁹⁹ Romans 11:4.

proclaims another god,³⁰⁰ whoever is a slave of the sin which he does. “But now suffering has come upon you and has touched you.” By “has touched you,” is meant a great tightening in afflictions. In addition to what has been said there, it is logical to consider that even worse than the afflictions which crept in through circumstances were the inroad brought upon <him> through the words of his friends. For in addition to the fact that his sufferings were without comfort, still more, their words also, being vulgar, occasioned no small distress.

4:6 *“Is not your fear <based on> folly, as well as your hope, and the evil of your way?”*

While the spiritual <power> of the <sacred> writing³⁰¹ testified to Job that he had shown no folly before God, this one (i.e. Eliphaz) had a different “take” on those things that were oppressing him (i.e. Job). He thought that [Job] was suffering on account of his sins. <For> he imagined that he (i.e. Job) had uttered what he did, out of contempt <when he> said: “Is not your fear <based on> folly - since you consider yourself righteous - as well as “your hope, and the evil of your way?” But folly, he says, is also the hope you had that you would be perceived as righteous. For such things do not occur to a righteous <person>. This very way will be called the way of evil by Eliphaz since he is continually thinking that the blessed one suffers on account of sins. Thus he has also ascribed

³⁰⁰ε

³⁰¹Here is an noteworthy combination of words, φ ὠ ἐ ἴ. The sense seems to be that the scriptures “give evidence” -- as opposed to those who think, along the lines of popular imagination, that Eliphaz had the more “reasonable” understanding of Job’s “folly.” For a similar use of the word, cf. Plato’s *Phaedo*, where φ ὠ ἐ ἴ has the sense, “to speak like a book,” i.e. with “precision,” as evidence.

folly to him (i.e. Job).

4:7-9 *“Remember one therefore, who, being pure, has perished, or when were the true utterly³⁰² destroyed? Accordingly, <as> I have seen those plowing wickedness, so those that sow them will reap sorrows for themselves. From a command of the Lord, they shall perish, and from a breath of his anger, they will be obliterated.”*

Still holding the same notion that, on account of sin, Job had been beset by the trial of his adverse circumstances, he says these things to him, believing that no one who is pure in life has fallen into afflictions, and will be “utterly obliterated.” He speaks in a darkly foreboding way about the destruction of children and money and possessions. For the phrase “were obliterated,” means this to him. By way of comparison he refers to the bad and suggests <the idea> that they <always> fall into misfortunes. <Here> he says something true, that “those sowing unjust things reap sorrows.” He suggests <that we> consider the “payback,” which he says is sent from God. In response to this, he is absolutely correct in his statement: “From the command of the Lord, they shall perish, and from the breath of his anger, they shall be obliterated.” A similar word is found in Saint Paul: “who will render to each one according to his works.”³⁰³

4:10-12 *“The strength of the lion, the voice of the lioness, the boasts of the serpents were quenched. The “ant-lion”³⁰⁴ has perished on account of not having food, and the lions’ whelps have left one another. But if there were any truth in your words, none of these evils would have befallen you.”*

³⁰²Literally, “with the whole root.”

³⁰³Romans 2:6, 2 Timothy 4:14.

³⁰⁴The “ant-lion” is not a lion, at all. Rather, it is a kind of dragonfly, who acts like a lion by ambushing its prey.

If even Job's friends - <Eliphaz> among them - were proved wrong when they were disposed <to think> concerning him that he had fallen into afflictions on account of sins, then they nevertheless certainly have a human understanding (which however is not infallible). If we enter therefore into their words, which are said out of <their> wisdom, we are not displeased with them because we are disposed <to think> that they (i.e. Job's friends) were <simply> not able to arrive, completely, at the truth, according to what one should think.

<We see that> also from the conclusion of the <part> now cited: "If there were any truth in your words," he says, "none of these evils would have befallen you," - wherefore, as we have said this is neither properly nor intelligently expressed by him. For he holds this to be the sole cause of his <Job's> afflictions - that which I speak of <as coming about> through sin. He holds that the changes a human <life> goes through are not void of understanding, when he says: "The strength of the lion, the voice of the lioness, the boasts of the serpents were quenched." This is expressed by him in the genre of allegory.³⁰⁵ Many who were arrogant and thought very much about human things fell into a change <of circumstances>, such as Nebuchadnezzar who from a kingdom came <down> to the extreme <station> of a common man. But this is the sense of what was said by the rich man, who says: "I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, you fool, this night they will take your soul from you."³⁰⁶ Therefore, on account of its being savage-hearted and haughty, the lion is

³⁰⁵The word used here is *ἰ* Following Origen (*Homil. Jer. 5:14*), Gregory of Nyssa defends the use of tropology as an allegorical, even mystical, reading of holy scripture, cf. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, III, p. 266. Didymus uses the word to mean "allegory." Didyme l'Aveugle, *Sur Zacharie: Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes de L. Doutreleau*, Sources Chrétiennes 83-85, Paris, 1962.

³⁰⁶Luke 12:18 and Luke 12:20.

taken <as an example for Eliphaz> because he “trusted only in himself.”³⁰⁷ Wherefore, Saint Paul also - thinking of Nero, said: “At my first defense, no one supported me . . . but the Lord stood by me . . . and rescued me from the mouth of the lion.”³⁰⁸ But Jeremiah also says, “Israel is a wandering sheep: the lions have driven him out”³⁰⁹ explains in the following who the lions <are>, saying: “The king of Assyria first devoured him, and so forth. But also this, “God has ground down the teeth³¹⁰ of the lions,”³¹¹ signifies the defeat of arrogant, savage-hearted persons.

“Lioness”³¹² could be taken to mean <a person with> the character of insatiable desire. <And it is a well-known fact> that she has such a nature. For whenever she needs nourishment, she does not roar lest those beasts which always serve as her nourishment should take flight. But <for the sake of argument>,³¹³ if this is also the nature of the male, yet it was mentioned on account of his (i.e. the male’s) greater strength and with respect to his kingly and arrogant <nature>. And he has made mention of snakes - speaking riddlingly of snake-like persons - that even these are destroyed when a change <of circumstances> befalls them. These <people> are deceitful and work trickery, concerning which <scripture> says: “I am afraid that - in some way as the serpent deceived Eve with

³⁰⁷Proverbs 28:1.

³⁰⁸2 Timothy 4:16-17.

³⁰⁹Jeremiah 27:17.

³¹⁰Literally, the “grinders.”

³¹¹Psalms 57:7.

³¹²The è is adversative, completing the contrast between “lioness” here, and “lion” above.

³¹³There is no real doubt in Didymus’ mind as to the nature of the male, despite his use, in this instance, of ì è It is an appeal to a general understanding, rather than a dogmatic teaching.

its trickery - your thoughts would be corrupted.”³¹⁴ The “ant-lion” however is compared with an arrogant and rash person, who, on account of his wavering and unsteady <character> falls away more swiftly. It is said that this one (i.e. the ant-lion) is borne by a lion that has come together with an ant - however not with the insect³¹⁵ but with another, which indeed has the magnitude of a bear, yet it is called <ant-lion>. The inquirers <into nature> say that the ant-lion — since his father is a meat-eater and his mother is a grass-eater — is destroyed, perishes when he is unable to make use of <any> one prey, because he is the descendent of both <kinds, a meat-eater and a grass-eater>. That these things are so, let the reader judge.³¹⁶

There are also those who take this (i.e. the ant-lion) to be the devil and persuasively say that for the holy ones, he <the devil> is an ant-lion because of his weakness, but for the sinners he is a lion since they “have given room to him.”³¹⁷

“The lion-whelps have left one another.” This, he said, speaking riddlingly of the unruly and savage people. For even lion-whelps are together as long as they are under their mother. But when they have reached maturity, they part with one another. Thus even an unscrupulous and savage person hides his wickedness as long as he has any advantage, a human one, I mean, alongside his fellow human beings. However, when the thing for which he has striven comes to the moment of

³¹⁴2 Corinthians 11:3.

³¹⁵The diminutive form (ἄνθος) of the word ὄνθος is used here. In Patristic times, it has come to signify an insect provided by God to feed the hungry.

³¹⁶Note: ὁ ἐπιτιμωτής, the active participle used as a substantive to denote “the reader,” (a commonplace usage in Hellenistic Greek). Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Moses*, 44.424.

³¹⁷Ephesians 4:27, “do not give room to the devil.”

fullness,³¹⁸ he despises³¹⁹ his benefactor. By “true word,” is to be understood what proceeds from honest dispositions. For “logos” is even in the soul. And this must be said: that it is not fitting to believe the words of every character³²⁰ who is found in scripture, or their understanding, to be worthy of significance. Certainly, in the gospels, the <words> of the Jews are void of understanding, and even Nicodemus expresses himself in a way that is not sensible. For when the Savior said: “You must be born again,” he said, “It is not possible for anyone to be born after having grown old, or to enter into the womb of his mother a second time.”³²¹ Therefore, one must not always expect sensibility among every person found in the scripture.

4:12-16 *“Will not my ear receive extraordinary things from him, with fear and the night’s sound, fear fell upon people, horror and trembling seized me and greatly shook my bones, and a spirit came before my face, and my hair and flesh bristled. I arose and did not recognize it. I looked, and there was no form before my eyes, but I heard a breeze and a voice.”*

Then <Eliphaz> expresses himself with more words. At first, it will seem to be with encouragement; later with reproachful. It is as if Job himself became anxious,³²² and that he had

³¹⁸The analogy seems to be that the lion also lies in wait until just the right moment before springing upon its prey.

³¹⁹“thinks little of”

³²⁰The word, from theatre, means a “role” which one plays. It presupposes our understanding of Origen’s notion of a pre-existent soul, which is “sent” to the world in order to play a certain “role.”

³²¹John 3:4.

³²²Also, “zealous.” But in the *Septuagint*, the word has the special sense, “anxious.”

suffered on account of his sins. For Eliphaz believed this right from the start, and in addition to these things, that human affairs - even if they should be full of glory - experience much change. He thought that someone hearing him might not pay heed to his words, and added these quotations, for the sake of credibility: “Will not my ear receive extraordinary things from him.” <This is> all but saying: “None of those listening should think me to be stupid. The ear of my understanding hears wondrous things from him.” “From Him,” <here> means “from God.”

This indicates <God’s> supreme authority, as in <the following>: <I> myself <am> the one speaking.³²³ And <it is found> in this: “The wise One himself brought evil things upon them, and His law should not be frustrated,”³²⁴ obviously <the law> of God. For if human intelligence really should give its attention to the things of God, it will be filled with fear, according to the saying: “I considered your works and was astonished.”³²⁵ “Night’s dread” (i.e. a great obscurity) also falls upon this very <situation>, out of which shuddering and fear befall the one who begins to consider any of God’s judgments. Not just that, but also “the bones” of such a person (which <here> signify the power of the soul) are shaken.³²⁶ This is (or, “this signifies) power of a soul. For all human reckoning is utterly weak with respect to the accurate consideration of God. This very thing Habakkuk also understood and said: “At the sound of the prayer of my lips, trembling entered into

³²³Isaiah 52:6.

³²⁴Isaiah 31:2.

³²⁵Habakkuk 3:2.

³²⁶Here is yet another example of Alexandrian allegory at work. Much like “silver” and “gold” as allegorical “stand-ins” for, respectively, “speaking” and “thinking,” the “bones” are — allegorically — an earthly token for a heavenly gift, “the power of the soul.”

my bones.”³²⁷ That <person> therefore — as was said above — who desires to understand the fearsome deeds of God, experiences a perception in his power of reasoning, which is inexact. This is signified through <the words>: “And a spirit came before my face.” And it follows: “And my hair and flesh quivered.” For a person endures no small torment if he should dare to take upon himself the judgments and the wonders of God.

“I arose . . . and there was no form before my eyes,” so that its meaning is: “even if a person should rouse himself to understanding, the exact sense - called “form” - escapes him.”³²⁸ Comparable to this would be: “a great depth, who shall find it out?”³²⁹

“But I heard a breath and a voice.” When one makes use of <one’s> intelligence, some marvelous and faint traces³³⁰ of the administration which is from God are received - and one does not have the power to grasp it in every way, and that is very completely understandable. For if Paul - speaking in Christ - says: “O depth of riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and inscrutable his paths!”³³¹ How much <more> will one exhaust himself who

³²⁷Habakkuk 3:16.

³²⁸God does not have “form,” if this means that He is “circumscribed” in terms of place (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, VII, 6). Nor can God be worshipped in anything circumscribed by space and form: ὁ ἄσπαστος ἰσθμὸς ἁπλοῦς ἡ φήμη ἡ φωνή ἡ εἰκὼν ἡ ὅμοιωσις (Justin, *First Apology* 9). Then, φήμη is rather the image or likeness of God, which (within us) can and is overshadowed by human pridefulness and sin (Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration* 40, p. 161, 2).

³²⁹Ecclesiastes 7:24.

³³⁰By patristic times, ἄσπαστος has come to mean merely a “faint trace,” as in an echo.

³³¹Romans 11:33.

inclines toward the comprehension of the <the divine> by means of human reasonings?³³²

4:17 “*What then? Can there be a pure mortal before the Lord, or a man blameless with respect to his works?*”³³³

Even in what was treated earlier, we have suggested that the friends of Job had a human <way of> understanding. For it is indeed no small display of their understanding that although they were kings, on the one hand they left their lands and on account of their sympathy for Job were near at hand <to him>, even though - on the other hand - they thought that he was not free of sins. Likewise, even if they possess <faculties of> human reasoning, still certainly they are also utterly wrong. For as was said before, since they posit only one cause of afflictions, they think even Job to have suffered on account of sins. They were led to this from a persuasive argument: since they are considering the weakness of human nature. Therefore, even Eliphaz said the foregoing: “What then? Can there be a pure mortal before the Lord, or a man blameless with respect to his works?”

This <idea of Job’s friends> is indeed persuasive. Yet if one should examine it - with one’s thinking <faculty>, <then> one has <its> refutation. For if the one who falls into distresses is assailed because of sins, then no one would be pure, and none would be beyond <such> distresses. However, this is the line of thought of a <person in such straits>, whereas godly instruction teaches

³³²In patristic writings, $\acute{\alpha} \psi$ connotes the apprehension of the divine by use of the human mind, cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration*, I, p. 13, 2: $\hat{\eta} \hat{\upsilon} \hat{\omicron}$
 $\acute{\eta}\psi$

³³³The interrogative form of the hortatory subjunctive.

that even wicked persons who are completely in sin lead their own lives free from danger. Among these is the rich man with Lazarus, who “daily feasted sumptuously, clothed in fine linen and purple,”³³⁴ and until his last breath remained in a sweet way of life, while Lazarus was attested to be a just person, yet had not rest here <on earth>. But concerning even the one hearing: “Fool, this night your soul will be taken from you,”³³⁵ and “The things which you have prepared, whose will they be?” - even he has not been put on record just because he has become intimately acquainted with dire circumstances.

And this is what the divine Word teaches, even if this one (i.e. Eliphaz) expressed it in a human manner: that even the pure one (i.e. a mortal)³³⁶ certainly was not such before the Lord. This is shown by the <verse>: “Stars are not pure before him,”³³⁷ and by that one of the Psalms <which says>: “No one living will be justified before you.”³³⁸ For he did not say: “No one will be justified,” but “before you.” You will therefore find that all fall short before God, and that they have no superiority <to God>. For Moses, “who however was instructed in all wisdom of the Egyptians,”³³⁹ says: “I am not worthy to speak, before yesterday, neither before the third day, nor since you began to speak to your servant.”³⁴⁰ For when the superior is present, he appears to be less. Or, as he says

³³⁴Luke 16:19.

³³⁵Luke 12:20.

³³⁶The phrase came to mean “baptized.”

³³⁷Job 25:5.

³³⁸Psalms 142 (143):2.

³³⁹Acts 7:22.

³⁴⁰Exodus 4:10.

in another connection: “I am not eloquent.”³⁴¹ But even Abraham, who was counted “a friend of God,”³⁴² says: “Since I began to speak to my Lord, I am earth and ashes.”³⁴³ He does not lower himself once for all, but “after he began to speak to God.” If “mortal” and even “man” will be spoken in a parallel <fashion> by Eliphaz, then we consider the expression more accurately and say that “mortal” can refer to a woman. The word, “man,” however is not said about every human being.

4:18-20 *“If he does not trust his children, and perceives some crookedness in his angels . . . but as for the inhabitants of clay houses, out of which we also - out of the same clay - have come, he struck them in the same way as a moth. And from morning to evening they are no more.”*

From the weightier <argument>, he (i.e. Eliphaz) wishes to deduce <his> proof and make it believable - that all humanity is under sin. He says “that even the servants of God are not trusted by him,” which is to say, they are not like the immutable <angels>. Rather, “among his angels, he perceives crookedness.” But if this <is the case>, how much more with those that dwell in clay houses.

Those also - who are from the same clay - he will not spare when they sin, <but> will inflict his punishment upon them as with moths, and from morning often until evening they will not withstand his judgment.

³⁴¹Exodus 6:12.

³⁴²James 2:23.

³⁴³Genesis 18:27.

On the one hand, then, this is the whole thought of his words. On the other hand, one might inquire how he (i.e. Eliphaz) holds an opinion concerning the apostate angels, in whom - he says - God has observed crookedness. Besides which, let it be said, that inasmuch as he is an intelligent man, he (i.e. Eliphaz) knows that the angels are not by nature good, but changeable. It is not absurd <to say> that even people who are possessed by demons, have given him this idea, concerning which the divine teaching says: “The angels, however, who did not keep to their own place, he kept in the gloom.”³⁴⁴

However, he says that the people inhabit “clay” — that is, “material” — houses. More simply, he says, “that people arise from the same clay.” For the soul is not also from clay, since the body is said to be clay. “He struck them in the way <one does> a moth.” <With this> he signifies the punishment which will be inflicted upon these - the paltry <folk>. This is made clear in the book of wisdom.

<lacuna>

But even the prophet says: “The prince begs, and the judge spoke peaceful words: it is the desire of his soul. And I will take away their goods like a devouring moth, and as one who acts by a measuring rod on a day of visitation.”³⁴⁵ Wherefore, the unexpectedness and suddenness of punishment and judgment is made clear. For this is what is signified by “measuring rod.” For if “he

³⁴⁴Jude 6.

³⁴⁵Micah 7:3.

does not inflict his wrath each day,³⁴⁶ but “renders to each one according to his works,”³⁴⁷ he does this with his measuring rod, with which he mingles good things.

4:20-21 *“They have perished because they cannot help themselves. For he blows upon them and they become parched. They perish because they have no wisdom.*

Holding still to the same premise by which he (i.e. Eliphaz) believes that the <present> circumstances have come to pass on account of sins, he also says these things. Since <people> could not help themselves through virtue and repentance of their evil deeds, afflictions followed upon them (i.e. the evil deeds). He suggests <us> to consider this: “Since they (i.e. the people discussed above) — through weakness — were not able to shake off the harshness of those things that had come upon them, they perished and showed the worthlessness of human strength. Indeed, the following appears also to signify this: “For he blows upon them, and they become parched.” For indicates that it required no extreme assaults against them, but solely one that “breathed upon” them. This was sufficient for their murder, which he called their destruction. Having begun with the same aforementioned sense, he adds to it: “They perish because they have no wisdom.” He recognizes that <in this way> many wise people have come into extreme distresses.

³⁴⁶Psalm 7:12.

³⁴⁷Romans 2:6.

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Abbreviations

Aevum	Aevum. Rassegna di Scienze Storiche, Linguistiche e Filologiche. Milan
AugR	Augustinianum. Rome
AtPavia	Athenaeum. Studi Periodici di Letteratura e Storia dell' Antichità. Pavia
BASP	Basic and Applied Social Psychology
HthR	Harvard Theological Review. Cambridge (Mass.)
JHPh	Journal of the History of Philosophy. Berkeley. Los Angeles
JThS	Journal of Theological Studies. Oxford
Kyrios	Kyrios. Vierteljahrsschrift für Kirchen - und Geistesgeschichte Osteuropas. Berlin
MuHel	Museum Helveticum. Basel
NDid	Nuovo Didaskaleion. Catania (Italy)
NovTest	Novum Testamentum. Leyden
NTS	New Testament Studies. Cambridge
PTA	Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen. Bonn
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
RBen	Revue bénédictine. Abbaye de Maredsous (Belgium)
RBPh	Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire. Brussels
rechSR	Recherches de science religieuse. Paris
REG	Revue des études grecques. Paris
RSLR	Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa. Florence
RSPhTh	Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et théologiques
SC	Sources chrétiennes
ScEs	Science et Esprit. Montreal. Canada
SE	Sacris erudiri. Bruges
SMSR	Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni. Bologna
TU	Texte und untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
VetChr	Vetera Christianorum. Bari
VigChr	Vigilae Christianae. Amsterdam
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik. Bonn