A HISTORY OF THE
PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA PROGRAM UNITS
IN THE SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE

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Introduction

The Philo of Alexandria program unit of the Society of Biblical Literature has played an important role in the history of Philonic scholarship, especially in the English-speaking world. The program unit began as a consultation (1984–85), became a seminar under the leadership first of Earle Hilgert (1986–90) then of Gregory E. Sterling (1991–95), and then became a group under the leadership of Gregory E. Sterling (1996–98) and Thomas H. Tobin, S.J. (1998–2001). The group plans to continue under its current structure.¹

The SBL program unit has played at least three vital roles in Philonic scholarship. First, it has served as the occasion for the annual meetings of three editorial boards: the board of The Studia Philonica Annual, the board of the Studia Philonica Monographs, and the Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series. The boards have regularly offered reports to the members of the program unit at their annual business meeting. Second, the program unit has worked in concert with the boards in research and publication. Sometimes this has been a simple matter of publishing a revised paper that was particularly good. Those who present papers know in advance that most of the editorial board for these publications will be in the audience. In cases where revised papers were published elsewhere, they have had the benefit of an airing before a collection of Philonic specialists. On other occasions, we devoted entire sessions to major issues in Philonic studies with a view to publishing a special section in SPhA. At present, the group devotes one session a year to a treatise addressed in the commentary series in an effort to provide both an occasion for wide discussion of crucial issues and an opportunity for debate over issues of format and coverage. Third, the program unit has served as a broader stimulus to Philonic scholarship. The program unit has attempted to include the work of both established scholars who want to make a contribution in a field in which they do not

¹ I want to thank Professors Hilgert and Tobin for supplying information about the programs during the years they served as chair.
specialize and the findings of younger scholars who are beginning their careers. These contributions have often found diverse venues for publication.

Several of us have thought that it would be useful to compile a record of both the papers. We hope that this material will not only complement the history of the Philo Institute, but provide a means for future researchers to locate unpublished papers or to contextualize a paper. The following lists the official record of the papers which have been presented in the various program units devoted to Philo. I have made an effort to be as complete and accurate as possible; however, there are some gaps in the record. The gaps are either from one of the earliest years or a result in a late change in the program. In cases where I know the change, I have listed the material that was presented rather than what was printed in the official program. I have restricted the list to presenters. I have listed the major themes for sessions so that those interested in the bibliography of a treatise or topic can the basic issues at a glance. I have used ‘Research Reports’ for all sessions that involved multiple themes or were open sessions designed to permit individual scholars to present work independent from that of the program unit.

I have also included the subsequent publication information where appropriate. If a paper was initially published in the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers and secondarily published elsewhere, I have listed both in chronological sequence. When there is a variation in wording between the title of the original paper and the subsequent publication, I have opted to give the latter unless the two are significantly different in which case I have listed both. I have only listed publications that have already appeared at the time of this compilation; some of the later contributions will undoubtedly appear in print in the future.

1985

Theme: Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin et Exodum


Abraham Terian, ‘The Priority of the Quaestiones among Philo’s Exegetical Commentaries’, in David M. Hay (ed.), Both Literal and Allegorical:

1986

Theme: *De Josepho*


1987

Theme: *De Somniis*


1988

First Session: Prophecy

Second Session: Research Reports

J. Harold Ellens, ‘Callimachus’ Pinakes and Philo’s Encyclopedia of Knowledge.’

1989

First Session: Research Reports


Second Session: Research Reports


1990

First Session: Research Reports

John T. Greene, ‘Balaam as Figure and Type in Ancient Semitic Literature to the First Century b.c.e. with a Survey of Selected Post-Philo Applications of Balaam Figure and Type’, SBLSPS 29 (1990) 82–147; Balaam and His Interpreters: A Hermeneutical History of the Balaam Traditions, BJS 244 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).
Second Session: *Hypothetica*

Earle Hilgert, ‘A Survey of Previous Studies on Philo’s *Hypothetica*.’

1991

First Session: *De Virtutibus*


Second Session: Philo’s Ethical Theory


1992

First Session: Philo’s Relationship to Middle Platonism


**Second Session: Philo’s Assessment of Specific Alexandrian Groups**


**1993**

**First Session: Philo and Alexandrian Judaism**


Angela V. Askew, ‘Philo of Alexandria on Genesis, Eternity, and Time.’


**Second Session: Philo and Early Christianity**

First Session: Allegory in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds

David Dawson, ‘Allegorical Reading and the Embodiment of the Soul in Origen.’

Second Session: Philosophical and Exegetical Traditions in Philo

John W. Martens, ‘Philo and the Stoics on the Kathekonta and the Katorthomata’.

1995

Theme: The Influence of Philo’s Mysticism on Christianity and Judaism

**Theme: Philo and Judaism**


**1996**

**Theme: Were there Jewish Schools of Exegesis in Alexandria?**

John J. Collins, ‘The Evidence for Advanced Jewish Schools.’


**Theme: De opificio mundi**


Robert A. Kraft, ‘Knowing What Counts: Philo’s Excursions into Number-Wisdom in *Creation*.’


Daniel N. Jastram, ‘The Anthropology of *De opificio mundi*.’
1997

Theme: Alexandria

Dorothy Sly, ‘Philo’s Alexandria’.
Christopher Haas, ‘Late Antique Alexandria in the Passio of Peter I.’
Diana Delia, ‘Alexandria in Recent Scholarship’.

Theme: De vita contemplativa

Abrahan Terian, ‘The Significant Variants in the Armenian De vita contemplativa’.

1998

Theme: Research Reports

Clare Komoroske Rothchild, ‘Creation of the Cosmos in Philo of Alexandria and the Wisdom of Solomon: Metaphysical-Ontological Interpretation as Metaphor.’

Theme: De vita Moysis

Ronald R. Cox, ‘Philo’s Life of Moses: Reading the Torah Biographically.’

**1999**

**Theme: Ancient Commentaries**

Sze-kar Wan, ‘The Greco-Roman Commentarial Tradition.’
Karen Jo Torjesen, ‘Prophecy, Authority, and Exegesis in Philo and Origen.’
John T. Townsend, ‘Biblical Interpretation in Rabbinic Literature.’

**Theme: Philo’s Allegory of the Laws**


**2000**

**Theme: Research Reports**

James N. Rhodes, ‘Diet and Desire: The Logic of the Dietary Laws according to Philo.’
Kenneth A. Fox, ‘Philo’s Double Attitude toward the Body.’

**Theme: Quod deterius potiori insidiari solet**

Adam Kamesar, ‘Philo of Alexandria’s Treatise *The Worse Attacks the Better*: Issues of Interpretation’
Kenneth Schenk, ‘Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews: Ronald Williamson’s Study after Thirty Years.’