

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for the *Journal of Theological Studies* (old series) can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_jts-os\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article]

position and its original form, would seem to point unmistakably to the view that the wish, to which expression had been given just before, was felt by the speaker to be one which could not be fulfilled. In the light of later views about the meal at which it was spoken it was felt to need modification. And the textual evidence for the similar saying with regard to the fruit of the vine, which is recorded in all three Synoptists, suggests that here also the need for modification was felt, though very likely for different reasons.

May we not add Luke xxv 15, 16 to the indications, considerable in number, that the so-called Synoptic view of the Last Supper is not the view which lies behind, or is presupposed by, the earliest forms of the tradition which they embody? It may be incorrect to speak of the Fourth Gospel as 'correcting' a Synoptic mistake. It has at any rate preserved more clearly the truer tradition.

A. E. BROOKE.

### ON APHRAATES *HOM.* I § 19.

IN the January number of this volume of the JOURNAL (pp. 267 ff) Mr H. L. Pass has set forth a new and interesting theory in explanation of the well-known passage in the first Homily of Aphraates<sup>1</sup> which by several eminent scholars has been pronounced to be an early Syriac Creed.

Mr Pass opens his case with a reference to an article of mine on 'The Early Syriac Creed',<sup>2</sup> in which I maintained that the passage just referred to has no claim to be regarded as Aphraates' Creed, inasmuch as there are evident traces of a much less abnormal formula in others of his Homilies. Mr Pass, whilst accepting my main conclusion, justly criticizes me on a point of detail. I had failed to take account of the evident connexion, mediate or immediate, between the passage in *Hom.* i § 19 and a similar passage in the Letter written to Aphraates by a friend and now prefixed to his Homilies. Mr Pass rightly lays stress upon the resemblance between these two passages. Throughout *Hom.* i Aphraates follows closely a line of treatment laid down for him by his friend. The latter has asked him to set down for him some thoughts on the subject of Faith—what it is, what its basis and the substructure upon which it is to be reared, what is the best means of developing it and bringing it to perfection, and, finally, what are the

<sup>1</sup> In Parisot's ed. cols. 44, 45.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, July 1906.

works that should follow the possession of it. Then he makes the very primitive-looking profession of faith which Mr Pass has translated on p. 270 of his article.

In his first Homily Aphraates evidently has his eye constantly upon this letter: he begins by promising to give his friend all the information he has asked for, and to add a little more also; and he proceeds to frame his answer according to the outline sketched for him. *Hom. i* is consequently an entirely mystical, or moral, not a dogmatic treatise on Faith. But when he has spoken of Faith in itself—what it is, on what based, and how built up—Aphraates pauses before giving the list of ‘the works of Faith’ for which he has been asked, and sets forth a short summary of the substance of Faith to balance that given by his friend. This runs so closely parallel to the passage in the Letter that it practically amounts to an expression of approval of the confession made by his friend.

There can be no reasonable doubt, when the two passages are carefully considered, that the contents of *i 19* are directly conditioned by those of the similar passage in the Letter. Aphraates, however, adds a couple of clauses which have a much more creed-like ring, viz. an expression of belief in the resurrection, and in baptism.

Now although Mr Pass recognizes and insists upon the connexion between the two passages, he does not appear to have drawn the conclusion that *Hom. i 19* is directly based upon the Letter: he traces the resemblance rather to the independent use of a common source,—which on other grounds he conjectures to have been a Jewish Creed. Here I cannot agree with him; and before discussing the hypothesis of a Jewish Creed I wish to express my opinion that the agreement between *Hom. i 19* and the Letter really adds nothing to his argument, since the two passages are virtually not two witnesses, but one.

Mr Pass's argument for the existence of an early Jewish Creed is presented in a nutshell in the synoptic table he prints on p. 281. There we see at a glance four passages which present what appears to be an extraordinary family likeness. These are (1) Aphraates *i 19*, (2) the similar passage in the Letter, (3) a passage from Irenaeus *Haer. iii 3*, and (4) one from the apocryphal Syriac *Acts of Philip*. The resemblance between the first two has already been sufficiently accounted for. The passage from Irenaeus comes from the famous chapter where he makes an appeal to tradition against the heretics who taught the existence of another God beside and above the Creator of the world. For his purpose he has singled out the Church of Rome, with which ‘*nesesse est omnem conuenire ecclesiam*’. Here, he says, we can trace back the succession of bishops to the Apostles. What then is the witness of this Church as expressed in

the letter of Clement, who held the bishoprick in the third place from the apostles? In this letter, if the heretics will trouble themselves to read it, they will find the tradition of the apostles, 'annuntiantem unum Deum omnipotentem factorem caeli et terrae' [and the rest as given in Mr Pass's table, p. 281].

It is to be observed that Irenaeus tells us that all the items of faith which make up this passage are contained in the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians; and in fact they may be found in substance scattered up and down that letter. There is, certainly, a temptation to explain the agreement as to contents and arrangement which this passage shews with the Letter and the *Acts of Philip* by referring all three passages to a common source; but still it is quite possible that the agreement is only accidental. The similarity of order may be accounted for by chronological arrangement. The first and third, then, of Mr Pass's columns are probably to be eliminated from the argument—the first as not being an independent witness, the third as being possibly no witness at all.

The really striking feature in Mr Pass's case lies in the marked resemblance between (2) and (3), the passage from the Letter and that from the *Acts of Philip*. Here it is difficult to believe that the two passages are not in some way related. But the connecting link is to be found, I believe, in a Christian liturgical formula rather than in a Jewish Creed.

In bk viii ch. xii of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, in the Preface of the Anaphora, there is a passage which shews a considerably closer agreement, both verbal and as to contents, with the passage in the *Acts of Philip* than even the Letter to Aphraates presents. The Preface in question is very long, extending over several pages, but an abstract of it, including the crucial passage, must be given here.<sup>1</sup>

'It is very meet and right before all things to hymn Thee, the verily existent God, who art before all created things.' [It goes on to address the Almighty as the 'unoriginate knowledge, everlasting sight, unbegotten hearing, untaught wisdom, the first by nature and alone in being, beyond all number; who didst bring all things out of nothing into being'. The next couple of pages are taken up with an account of the furnishing and 'adorning'<sup>2</sup> of the world.]

'And Thou didst not only *create the world*, but didst also make man the citizen of it . . . for Thou saidst to Thy Wisdom: Let us make man *after our image and after our likeness*.' [Here the gifts of man are described at some length.]

<sup>1</sup> The italics call attention to the points of contact with the passage in *Acts of Philip*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the passage in the Letter: 'and He adorned the world with His works.'

'And while Thou didst *accept the sacrifice of Abel*, as of an holy person, Thou didst *reject the gift of Cain, the murderer* of his brother, as of an abhorred wretch.

'And besides these Thou didst accept of Seth and Enos, and didst *translate Enoch*: for Thou art *the creator of men* . . . who didst *bring the great flood upon* the world (τὸν μέγαν κατακλυσμὸν ἐπαγαγὼν τῷ κόσμῳ)<sup>1</sup> . . . and didst *deliver righteous Noah from the flood* in an ark . . . who didst kindle the fearful fire against the five cities of Sodom . . . but didst *snatch holy Lot out of the conflagration*.

'Thou art He who didst deliver *Abraham* from ancestral impiety, and didst appoint him to be heir of the world . . . who didst advance Melchizedek to be a high priest of Thy service . . . Job . . . *Isaac* . . . *Jacob* . . . *Joseph* . . . Thou didst appoint Thy holy servant *Moses*, and *by him Thou hast given the written law* . . . Thou didst glorify Aaron and his posterity with the priestly honour . . . Thou didst punish the Egyptians . . . and didst *divide the sea and bring the Israelites* through it; and didst drown and *destroy the Egyptians* who pursued after them. Thou didst sweeten the bitter water with wood; Thou didst pour forth water out of the rock of stone; Thou didst rain *manna from heaven*, and *quails* as meat out of the air. Thou didst afford a pillar of fire by night . . . and a pillar of cloud by day . . . Thou didst declare *Joshua* to be general of the army, and by him didst overthrow seven cities of the Canaanites. Thou didst divide Jordan, and dry up the rivers of Etham. Thou didst overthrow walls without instruments or the hand of man. For all these things, to Thee be the glory, Lord Almighty.'

If this passage is read side by side with that in the *Acts of Philip* (the full context given by Mr Pass on p. 273, not the abridged form in the table on p. 281) I think there will be little doubt as to where the latter came from. I do not mean that it was necessarily taken straight from bk. viii of the *Apostolic Constitutions*: it may have come from an older liturgical document, on the basis of which bk. viii was drawn up with additions or omissions such as we find in bks. i-vi as compared with the *Didascalia* which underlies these books. But with the passage in *Acts of Philip* goes, *ex hypothesi*, that in the Letter to Aphraates, and indirectly (through its dependence on the Letter) that in Aphraates *Hom.* i 19. That the passage from Irenaeus is based on a similar liturgical text might appear a tempting hypothesis, were it not that, as we have seen, Irenaeus professes to be giving a doctrinal analysis of the Epistle of Clement, and that the contents of the passage are to be found in substance in Clement. As regards the selection of the particular items of which the passage is made up and the apparent

<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. ii 5; cf. Iren. *Haer.* iii 3 (the passage spoken of above) 'qui induxit cataclysmum'.

quotation from 2 Pet. ii 6 ('induxit cataclysmum'), found also in *Const. Apost.* viii 12, but not in Clement, I do not think we are justified in saying more than that they are 'curious'.

If then the common source of the Syriac passages in Mr Pass's table is a liturgical formula, the passage in Aphraates i 19 has no claim to be regarded as a 'Symbol'<sup>1</sup>; and it is idle to base theories upon the accident that it may be divided up into seven clauses and connect it with a seven-clause Waldensian Creed, as Bert and others following him have done. As Mr Pass rightly observes, Bert's Waldensian Creed 'has very little in common with that of Aphraates'. Moreover, if Aphraates i 19 be divided on the same principle as the Waldensian Creed, it will be found to contain not seven clauses, but eight—and this without including the 'works of faith', which Bert regards as an integral portion of the 'Creed' of Aphraates.

A German scholar, Paul Schwen, who has recently published a study on the *Homilies* of Aphraates,<sup>2</sup> though he had not seen my article on 'The Early Syriac Creed' until after his book was completed,<sup>3</sup> arrived independently at the same main conclusions as I had reached: (1) that i 19 is no Symbol of faith; (2) that there are traces in others of Aphraates' *Homilies* of a more normal type of Creed. In support of this view he adduces the three passages on which I mainly relied, viz. those numbered 2, 3, and 5 on pp. 206–207 of my article (=Aphr. *Homs.* xiv 39, xvii 2, xvii 12).

Schwen<sup>4</sup> considers my 'reconstruction' of Aphraates' Creed to be in other respects hazardous. It would be so if I had claimed that it was anything more than a rough approximation—a bare outline. But I called it only a 'tentative reconstruction', and in making it I restricted myself to the actual words and phrases used by Aphraates. If the method I adopted needs any justification, a precedent may be found in Gebhardt-Harnack's reconstruction of the earliest symbol of the Church of Rome.<sup>5</sup>

R. H. CONNOLLY.

<sup>1</sup> We have seen, however, that the passage, though evidently suggested by, and based on, the similar passage in the Letter, contains two clauses not found in the Letter, viz. one on the resurrection and one on baptism; and there is no reason why these additions should not be explained as reminiscences of a Symbol. The further addition in the first clause of the words 'Lord of all'—a very natural Syriac equivalent for 'Almighty'—in itself suggests such reminiscence.

<sup>2</sup> *Afrahāt, seine Person und sein Verständnis des Christentums*, Berlin, 1907.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> Appendix to *Barnabae Epistula, graece et latine* pp. 115 ff.