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APHRAHAT AND THE RABBIS

ON MONOTHEISM AND ANTHROPOMORPHISM

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for Ordination

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DIGEST

Aphrahat wrote for the Syriac-speaking Church from 336-345 C. E. He wrote twenty-three Expositions. The first group of ten were apologetic works of faith. The second group, consisting of thirteen essays, acted fundamentally as polemics against the growing attraction of Judaism in fourth-century Persia. Ca. 340, the Sassanian Empire began a consistent campaign of persecution of the Christian community, which may have felt torn between geographic loyalty to Persia and ideological loyalty to now Christian Rome in the war between the two states. Judaism offered safety, since it was protected by the state, and ideological peace of mind since it resembled Christianity so closely. Aphrahat found himself forced to refute Jewish thought in an attempt to ward off massive defection from the ranks of the Church.

In his seventeenth Exposition, "On the Messiah: That He is the Son of God," translated here, Aphrahat confronts several charges. First, the Jews have charged the Christians with calling Jesus "God." Aphrahat defends the Church by pointing out that the Jews in their Bible have already called other humans "God." Second, the Jews accuse the Christians of calling Jesus the "Son of God." Aphrahat turns to the many biblical texts which refer to Israel as God's son, and to IISam. 7:14, in which Solomon is so-named as well. Third, the Jews have charged the Christians with idolatry in their worship of any other than God, that is, of Jesus. Here Aphrahat turns to the offensive, accusing Jews of a

history of worshipping human kings. Finally, the Jews argue that Jesus was not the Messiah, since their messianic hopes have not been met. Aphrahat selects a series of scriptural verses which he believes predicted the birth, passion and death of Jesus as proofs that he is, in fact, the Messiah.

Aphrahat's arguments are not typical of the Greek Church's anti-heretical literature. His dependence upon Jewish Scripture, to the almost total exclusion of the New Testament, suggests that he really did aim his works at Jews and at Christians attracted to Judaism. He does not quote directly from rabbinic material, nor does his writing reflect rabbinic thought in any way. This implies that the Judaism familiar to him was non-rabbinic or pre-rabbinic in form.

To my grandfather

EDGAR SEYMOUR ROLLE

(may his memory be for a blessing),
who went up the mountain
and saw the Land
but did not cross into it with me.

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PART I

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

INTRODUCTION

The casual observer of the contemporary American religious scene sees a multitude of religious expressions. With a little analysis, s/he might delineate a variety of forms of Judaism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and then some random representatives of other traditions. The historian, looking at the roots of some of the more common expressions, finds that a mere two hundred years ago all Judaism was "orthodox," and a mere five hundred years ago European Christianity was The Church -- "Roman Catholicism." And this is all that the high school student is likely to learn.

Even the college student of Western history, reaching further into the past is unlikely to be aware of non-Greek Christianity or non-rabbinic Judaism. But it is in the realm of these two that this study of Aphrahat must begin. The Eastern Church developed differently from the Western or Greek Church. Over time, some of the Eastern Church disintegrated or was, in one form or another, absorbed into the Greek Church. But parts of it thrived in some areas. In today's world the outgrowth of these phenomena are apparent in the Greek Orthodox and Monophysite Churches.

Non-rabbinic Judaism, on the other hand, is harder to find. Even Karaite Judaism, the classic example, was a reaction against the rabbinic Judaism of its day. Those who are interested study the Samaritans in hopes of gleaning some information about what a non-rabbinic Judaism might have been like. Scholars search rabbinic literature for

clues to non-Pharisaic and pre-rabbinic Judaism. They scour the Dead Sea Scrolls for hints.

Aphrahat, who wrote in the mid-fourth century, appears to be the last Church writer of Syriac prior to the unalterable infiltration of Greek thoughts and expressions into the Syriac-speaking Church. Some of his work was specifically aimed against Jewish thought. But Jewish thought as known to Aphrahat may be either non-Palestinian or non-rabbinic. To study his writings is to try and define the Christianity and the Judaism with which he was familiar and to determine their relationships with other forms of Christianity and Judaism as known through other literatures.

In confronting the text of Aphrahat's seventeenth Exposition, "On the Messiah: That He is the Son of God," a brief introduction to some of the concerns of scholars may prove useful.

WHY SYRIAC?

Why study Syriac? To satisfy intellectual curiosity? On the other hand, Why not? But the real question is, What place does Syriac have in a rabbinic student's thesis, or even in his/her course of study? Syriac has been defined as "the dialect of Aramaic which was spoken in the Euphrates Valley and the adjoining districts."[1] The key word, of course, is "Aramaic." Linguistically, the step from the Biblical Aramaic of Daniel and Ezra to the Talmudic Aramaic of the Rabbis can seem a giant one. For the student, Syriac may serve as a bridge from one to the other. Once past the alphabet barrier, the student finds that Syriac displays vocabulary and, often, pronunciation similar to the Talmud. But, whereas the Aramaic of the Talmud has lost the visual aids of letters which are no longer pronounced, Syriac, in many cases, has retained at least some sign of their original presence -- sometimes in the form of a dagesh indicating an assimilated letter, sometimes in the form of a linea occultans indicating that the letter written is no longer to be pronounced. Thus, Syriac serves as a good tool for the beginning Talmud student.

For the student of language this might well be enough. Also worthy of consideration, however, is the available literature in Syriac. The literature is that of the Eastern Church. Of particular interest is the rise of the Syriac-speaking Church and its early development. For the historian, this sparse Church literature may hold some of the very few clues regarding the spread of Christianity to the East from Palestine,

outside of Graeco-Roman influence. For the student of Judaica, it may hold clues regarding life in the Babylonian Diaspora and the development of rabbinic Judaism.

WHY APHRAHAT?

Aphrahat's writings are among those which may guide the student to an understanding of the early Eastern Church and its relationship with Judaism. Coincidentally, his Syriac is clear and pure in terms both of the language itself and the thoughts expressed thereby.[2] Gwynn points out:

> ...it is clear that he must have lived in a frontier region where Syriac was spoken freely; or else must have removed into a Syriac-speaking country at an early age; for the language and style of his writings are completely pure, showing no trace of foreign idiom or even of the want of ease that betrays a foreigner writing in what is not his mother-tongue. It is clear also that, at whatever age or under whatever circumstances he embraced Christianity, he must have taken the Christian Scriptures and Christian theology into his inmost heart and understanding as every page of his writings attests.[3]

As we shall see, Aphrahat's language, as his Christianity, reflects a church as yet free of Western influence, Western doctrine, and Western terminology. Only a generation later, in the writings of St. Ephrem, the Greek influence is quite apparent. Aphrahat was an independent Christian thinker, whose form of Christianity disintegrated as the Roman Church made its way east. Gwynn has suggested that Aphrahat had previously been neglected due to his lack of concern for what were seen as the important issues of his day, for example, the many heresies threatening the Church, and the results of the Nicene council.[4] From the

other side, Davidson claims that present Jewish interest stems from Aphrahat's interest in Jews.[5] As Neusner writes:

> Outside of the Babylonian Talmud, Aphrahat...provides the only substantial literary evidence on the state of Mesopotamian-Babylonian Judaism in Sasanian times.[6]

IDENTIFYING THE AUTHOR

Aphrahat wrote twenty-three Expositions or Demonstrations. The first twenty-two are arranged in alphabetical order, and the twenty-third, "On the Grapecluster," includes a description of the contents and proper arrangements of those preceding it. In various Demonstrations, including the last one, Aphrahat supplies the dates of composition.

> The definiteness with which our author refers to the dates of composition of the Demonstrations, together with his references to the order of their arrangement leave no doubt as to their genuineness.[7]

Most often the references are to the year of the Persian king's rule.[8] From this internal evidence it is safe to conclude that the first ten Expositions were written in 336-7 C. E. The next twelve were written in the year 344 and the final one was composed in 345.

Unfortunately, the internal evidence tells us little more than this. As Baarda has pointed out,[8a] the author supplies little self-identification beyond referring to himself as a "student of the Holy Scriptures" (ܬܠܡܝܕܐ ܕܟܬܒܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ). He appears to have been born in the latter half of the third century of pagan parents. As Gwynn has suggested (above) he seems to have embraced Christianity early and enthusiastically. What we do not know is the author's correct name, what position

he held which lent him the authority to write these Expositions, and the location of their composition.

THE MANUSCRIPTS

To see through this confusion, a brief history of the Demonstrations may be helpful. The modern ("scientific") study of these writings began with their publication by William Wright in 1869.[8b] Wright depended on three manuscripts (two of which were incomplete) discovered and identified by Cureton at the British Museum. These manuscripts were dated late fifth century, and early and mid-sixth century. Parisot published a second edition in 1894,[9] with an accompanying Latin translation based on the same manuscripts and on an additional one from the fourteenth century. (Wright had intended a second volume of English translations but died before seeing the fruition of his plans.)

Many guesses have been put forward since these publications as to the author's name, location and position. They are based, for the most part, on captions appended to the manuscripts by later hands. The latest of these reads "the Demonstration of the Cluster of the Sage Aphrahat who is Ya'qūḇ Bishop of Mar Mattay. . . ."[10] The earlier manuscripts also contain captions with similar information: In one, the word "Persian" modifies "Sage;" in none do the words "of Mar Mattay" occur. But unknown is the source of any of this information.[11] The most cautious of scholars,[12] indeed, suggests that manuscripts which are 130 years later than the original may well be full of posthumous traditions, none of them necessarily true.

The name Aphrahat (Persian Pharhad, Greek Aphraates) was common enough in the Iranian Empire, but the author never identifies himself by this name. The name "Ya'qūb" has been equated with the Bishop Jacob of Nisibis. His death in 338 C. E. makes this identification impossible. However, the question remains as to how this mistake originated. It may have been due to a note in a fifth century Armenian translation,[13] but on the other hand, the mistaken translation may have been due to a prior tradition.

That he was a "Sage" ( ) none has doubted. But even the description "Persian" has been questioned. Duncan suggests in broad terms:

> ...the fact that Aphraates reckons time according to the years of the Persian king, gives reasonable certainty that the "Persian Sage" actually wrote the Demonstrations within the bounds of the Persian Empire.[14]

Duncan concludes that the internal dating and language point to a Syriac-speaking area of the Persian Empire. The silence with regard to Arian heresies active in the West suggests to him East Syria, or what Neusner refers to as Northern Mesopotamia. Baarda, on the other hand, feels that the argument for location based on the use of Syriac may be misleading; the fact that the compositions were addressed to Syriac readers is not sufficient indication of their source. Thus, he remains skeptical,[15] certainly the most cautious stance.

Duncan finally locates Aphrahat at Mar Mattai:

> ...it will suffice to suppose that Aphraates had his residence in the region or on the site where later stood the monastery

of Mar Mattai.[16]

But this is not without problems. As Duncan has alluded, the presence of a monastery at Mar Mattai later does not mean that it would have already been built in Aphrahat's time. Was there then a monastery there? Would it have had a bishop? or even an abbot?

And here it is that the historian comes nearly full circle: the very kinds of questions which the literature might have answered, it instead raises. The structure of the Early Eastern Christian Church is unknown. What was the nature of a monk's life, if one could even be so-named? Were there monasteries? How were they organized? Some questions Aphrahat addresses, but he does not bring into focus the operation of his Church.

Duncan places Aphrahat in or near Mar Mattai, Neusner assumes this location.[17] Later than the fourth century a monastery was in fact in that place, but the date of its establishment remains unknown.

The argument that Aphrahat was a bishop stands on only slightly surer footing. That he was a monk -- perhaps celibate is a better term -- seems certain. In his discussion of the celibate life, he includes himself as a member of this elite group.[18] That he was a bishop is argued from the fourteenth Demonstration. The author represents himself as having been asked by other clerics to address a letter -- which he has written in the form of a Demonstration -- from them to other Christians in the area (Seleucia?). It has been described as a "synodical letter,"[19] suggesting that the writer must have had the proper authority to write

same. In the Greek Church that might have required a bishop, but was that the case in the Syriac-speaking Church?

Most scholars have accepted -- to a greater or lesser extent -- the information supplied in the margins of the available manuscripts. Their conclusions generally run as follows:[20] Aphrahat was so-named by pagan parents; either when he converted or later when he was named bishop, he adopted the Christian name Jacob; his parents were Persian, he learned Syriac either as his native language, or early in life, suggesting that he lived in East Syria, probably in an area under the larger influence of the well-established Edessene Christian community, most likely as a monk at Mar Mattai.

I, however, prefer to share Baarda's caution and conclude with him:

> If we ourselves keep to the name Aphrahat in this study, we do so for the sake of brevity and because this is the name with which the Persian Sage has become familiar in modern scholarship.[21]

THE EXPOSITIONS

The twenty-three Expositions of Aphrahat fall into two major groups. In the first ten, written 336-7, Aphrahat has built a systematic account of Christianity. They address several themes, including "faith, love, fasting, prayer, wars, sons of the covenant, penitents, resurrection, humility, and pastors,"[22] all of which Aphrahat calls "works of faith." The remaining thirteen, written in 344-5 address many issues. Sections of at least ten of these confront the then-current Jewish view of Christianity, as for example, Exposition XVII translated and analyzed

below, which opens with the words, "This is a refutation of the Jews... for they say...."[23] Burkitt describes the collection as "a full and ordered exposition of the Christian Faith in answer to a request for information from an inquirer."[24] Aphrahat does not reproduce the original request but makes it clear that this is, in fact, his intention. Throughout the works, he addresses "my beloved," "my friend." Gavin was the first to question whether this was all a literary device,[25] and Jansma presents a very strong argument to that effect.[26] Simultaneously, in the Demonstrations, Aphrahat also addresses the "wise debater of the people" (ܕܪܘܫܐ ܚܟܝܡܐ ܕܥܡܐ).[27] etc. Neusner concludes that this also is a literary device which serves at times to introduce the contemporary Jewish view.[28] If both of these are but literary devices, inquiry must be made into Aphrahat's purpose and motivation in writing the Expositions. For an answer, it is necessary to understand the historical situation of the Syriac-speaking Church in the mid-fourth century of the Common Era.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The details of Middle Eastern politics in the three centuries prior to Aphrahat are not necessary, but a brief general overview of the situation before his time will be of some help. An annotated chronology will suffice.[29]

ca. 40 C.E.	Royal family of Adiabene converts to Judaism.
ca. 50-250 C.E.	Romans and Parthians (and later, Sasanians) battle over and alternately rule Edessa.

70 C. E.	Destruction of Jerusalem Temple by Rome.
ca. 120	Conversion of Adiabenian Jews to Christianity.
132-135	Bar Kokhba leads Jews of Palestine against Rome.
ca. 150	Establishment of Christianity in Edessa.
ca. 226	Persians overthrow Parthians; establishment of rule by Sasanian dynasty; Zoroastrianism becomes state religion.
ca. 243	Sasanians control Edessa.
ca. 250	Shapur I grants Jews of Persia relative autonomy.
ca. 300	Rabbinical academy founded at Pumbedita.
ca. 311	Constantine converts to Christianity.
325	Council at Nicea.
336-7	Aphrahat's first ten Demonstrations.
ca. 340-410	Persian Persecution of Christians.
344-5	Aphrahat's remaining Demonstrations.

THE SYRIAC-SPEAKING CHURCH

Burkitt chooses the term "Syriac-speaking Church" to refer to that branch of the Church in which Aphrahat's thinking developed and was heard. He expresses the importance of this term as follows:

> Until a Syriac-speaking Christianity was planted in Edessa, the influence of the Church in Syria did not penetrate much beyond the Greek-speaking towns on the Mediterranean coast.[30]

An understanding of the rise and growth of this heavily Semitic Church serves as an important backdrop to Aphrahat. But such is not easy to come by.

As puzzling as is the rapid spread of Christianity throughout the

Mediterranean, its spread through Northern Mesopotamia is even less explicable. For, in tracing the rise of Christianity in the West, many documents may serve as guideposts in arriving at some relatively definite conclusions. However, as regards the East, documents are few, far between and difficult to interpret. When Aphrahat appears in the mid-fourth century, he brings with him a fully developed liturgy and a full theology, but no information as to their source or development.[31]

The Doctrine of Addai is viewed traditionally by the Eastern Church as the record of the origin of Christianity at Edessa while Jesus yet lived. Segal[32] argues that Addai is a conglomeration of many early traditions, modeled after the conversion (to Judaism!) of the royal house of Adiabene. The legend is late,[33] and, in the form presently available to scholars, has been tampered with. Other documents present similar problems.

Segal's analysis is the most extensive. There appears to have been at Edessa a small, already-established Jewish population. Segal also points to an atmosphere of "religious ferment throughout the Near East"[34] from the mid-second to mid-third centuries. Between the pagan population's familiarity with the concepts both of a deity "of cosmic proportions"[35] and of a trinity, and the Jewish population's monotheism, Christianity could easily have won acceptance.[36] Segal hypothesizes:

> In north Mesopotamia Christian evangelists found in the Jewish communities tools ready to hand for the diffusion of their faith; for they were close-knit congregations, respected by their

> neighbors, willing to accept the Christians as allies against the dominant paganism, well acquainted too with the doctrines of the Old Testament. The last factor is by no means the least in importance. We have alluded to the possibility that it was at Edessa that the Bible was translated into Syriac. Some passages certainly reflect orthodox Jewish interpretation.[37]

Gavin sees Jews as the principal spreaders of Christianity to the east of Palestine.[38] The missionaries, he believes, traveled the well-worn trade routes used for centuries by Jewish merchants which touched Edessa, Nisibis, Mosul, and possibly into Armenia.[39] He thus accounts for the Jewish flavor of Syriac-speaking Christianity.[40]

What is known of these Jews is worth noting. Politically, the Jews of Edessa seem to have allied themselves to Parthia against Rome. This may have been due to the economics of the silk trade, in which Jews were active, or perhaps to the preference for Parthia on the part of the pagan population.

Burkitt[41] feels that the positive images of the Jews of Edessa in the Doctrine of Addai point to a) the strong presence of Jews in Edessa early on, and b) the good relations between the Christian and Jewish communities.

With reference to the Syrian Orient, Vööbus concludes:

> ...the Jewish community appears to be the channel through which the first seed of the Christian Kerygma was transplanted, even in countries where the Jewish community was not strong.... the Jewish Synagogue could have been the medium for the earliest appearance of the Christian message.[42]

The conclusion may be drawn that originally Christianity arrived in the form of traveling Jews who were welcomed into and listened to by Jew-

ish communities. The Jews who thus came to believe the Christian message separated from the larger Jewish community only later, and only if the entire community had not adopted Christianity.

The writings of Aphrahat represent a primitive but developing Church. Greek and Greek thought (philosophy or speculation) appear to be unknown to him. His argument is reasonable, rational. His system of belief seemingly reflects an earlier time. There is no awareness of the discussions at Nicea. There is also no anti-Semitism. In his argument with Judaism no overtone of hatred is detected. The distinctiveness of his Oriental thought was not lost on earlier scholars, and many remarked upon it. For example, Burkitt noticed:

> To him Christianity was the revelation of a Divine Spirit dwelling in man and fighting against moral evil, not first and foremost a tissue of philosophical speculation about the nature of the Divinity in itself. But this is wholly alien to the temper of Greek and Latin Christianity, as it manifests itself from the fourth century onward.[43]

This last line refers to Syriac writers succeeding Aphrahat, beginning with the next generation in the writings of St. Ephrem.

What does Aphrahat tell us of this earlier time? Vööbus has studied the asceticism of the primitive Eastern Church extensively,[44] concluding that this was certainly one of its most striking features. Whether or not celibacy was a requirement for baptism, as Burkitt has claimed,[45] it is certain that Aphrahat preferred continence as the Christian way of life.[46] Vööbus also painstakingly examines each of Aphrahat's references to marriage, pointing out the inconsistency and wavering in his

position. Vööbus supposes that this represents, on the one hand, an older anti-marriage (pro-ascetic) point of view, and on the other, a newer doctrine, prevalent in the Greek Church and infiltrating the Eastern Church, which favored acceptance of marriage and married people into the Church.[47]

Vööbus infers that Aphrahat's Church consisted of two levels. As he has written:

> ...above the second degree adherents, who were interested in the Christian message but who did not possess courage enough to take on the whole burden of requirements, there was the community of Christians who live a "spiritual mode of life," the very essence of which centered in virginity. And only those celibates constituted the church.[48]

This is not far from Burkitt's understanding, which saw only the celibates as baptized church members.[49]

Again, what were Aphrahat's purposes and motivations in writing his twenty-three Expositions? Above, his works were divided into two parts, but it is necessary to step back and look at the whole for a moment. In the first ten, Aphrahat presents a systematic account of Christianity and the works of faith. The remaining thirteen have been called his "controversial homilies," not because they are open to question, but because they address the controversies of the day. What binds them together? I believe that the intended readership is the common element of the two sets. Aphrahat wrote for Christians. It is not clear whether he intended his works for either a specifically lay or specifically clerical audience. Perhaps, thus the two groups may be renamed: like so

many good works of theology, the first serves as apology; the second as polemic.[50]

For the Church historian, the apologetic section serves as a curiosity, the relic of a form of Christianity that did not survive. But the polemical section is equally a curiosity. The early polemics of the Greek Church were aimed at heresies and heresiarchs. Aphrahat is removed from this tendency by his unique target: he rarely mentions heresies[51] apparently rampant elsewhere, but takes his aim instead at Judaism. As Gavin sees it:

> Aphraates' "controversial" homilies show that the danger of lapsing into Judaism was the occasion and reason for their being written. They are written primarily for Christians, with a special view to providing Aphraates' fellow-believers with the necessary defense against Jewish attack.[52]

Why does Aphrahat persist in thrusting at the Jews? For the answer, inquiry must be made into the Jewish situation in the fourth century in the Sasanian Empire.

THE JEWS

As mentioned above, whatever their reasons,[53] the Jews favored the Parthians (and later the Sasanians) in their disagreements with Rome. The Parthians granted the Jews almost total autonomy based on their respective understandings of Mar Samuel's dictum, דינא דמלכותא דינא (the law of the land/state is the law).[54]

With the fall of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 C. E., the institution of the academy became central to both Palestinians and "Babylonians" in redefining the direction of Judaism. It has been suggested that some

of these academies, particularly those at Nisibis and Mahoza, might have exercised some influence on Aphrahat directly or indirectly. On the other, side, Neusner feels quite strongly that they did not (see below, p. 22).

Above, it was pointed out that Jewish communities may well have welcomed Christians originally, the two separating only later. Gavin suggests that at first this may really have been a necessity for the Christians, who were so few in number.[55] As they gained strength in any given place, they may have felt themselves free to withdraw from this larger group.

With the Sasanian rise to power (ca. 226 C. E.) Jews were forced to insist on their religious liberty and political loyalty. Successful in this effort, they were again granted autonomy a short quarter-century later by Shapur I, while Zoroastrianism remained the state religion and its advocates tried to force it on the rest of the population.

The Sasanians and Romans finally began to wage war in earnest ca. 337. Shapur II levied heavy taxes to support the war effort. The Jews may well have gathered their own and submitted them through the exilarch. But for the Christians, raising taxes was by no means easy. Possibly already in disfavor for not adopting the state religion, the Christian community was not a wealthy one. The preference for the ascetic life only exacerbated the problem. In addition, as Burkitt states so concisely:

> For the Persian War of the fourth century was the first great

> political event in which the Church found itself taking a side. The Empire of the Sasanids was definitely national, Persian, Zoroastrian, opposed to Christianity; and so, from the time that the Roman Empire became Christian, to be a Persian Christian was, in the eyes of the King of Kings and his government, not very different from being a Persian traitor.[56]

Beginning about the year 340 a consistent policy of persecution of Christians was adopted by the Sasanian government.

This date may be considered a watershed for Aphrahat. It serves to highlight the division already observed in his works. Prior to it, he functions as apologist, explicator of the faith; but thereafter he must defend Christianity against the pull of Judaism. Many have explained this change in stance. The political situation created a sense of tension for the Christian. Support of Christian Rome labeled one a traitor. Hope for pagan victory seemed an invitation to continued persecution and martyrdom. Christianity was threatened with mass defection. Total despair was one alternative; so was the religion of the state. But Judaism was safe and allowed for a clear conscience. Judaism offered monotheism, Scripture, loyalty to Persia, safety from persecution by the state, especially in the person of the Queen Mother Iphra Hormizd, protectress of the Jews.[57] The attraction was strong for ex-Jews returning to a parent religion. But the move to Judaism was also easy for gentile Christians, prepared as they now were for a religion of revelation based in the Scripture they had already learned.[58]

Aphrahat battled not against heresy but against defections en masse to Judaism.[59] His need was to prove the superiority of the Christian

interpretation of Scripture over the Jewish; to show that God had rejected the Jews and had chosen instead "the people which is of the peoples;" to demonstrate that the Jewish critique of Christianity was unfounded.[60]

APHRAHAT AND THE RABBIS

This study has been titled "Aphrahat and the Rabbis on Monotheism and Anthropomorphism." Aphrahat and Christianity have been discussed above, as have Jews and Judaism. But not all Jews were rabbis. In fact, in Aphrahat's time, they may not all have been rabbinic Jews. Two kinds of opinions have been advanced by scholars concerning the relationship between Aphrahat and the Rabbis. The first may be expressed by Gavin:

> If Burkitt's contention that the original Christian community of Edessa was composed of Jewish converts be true; and if northern Mesopotamia was evangelized from Edessa before the primitive character of its Christianity had been made to align itself with contemporaneous Greek or Roman Christianity, we should expect to find strong Jewish affinities of thought, expression, and general viewpoint in the Semitic Christianity of Northern Mesopotamia. If Aphraates represents a type of Christian thought which disappeared even from Edessa within a few years after the close of the second century, we should expect to find traces in him of both a primitive and undeveloped theology, containing strong Jewish elements and, as well, traces of the thought current in the second century.[61]

Gavin goes on to demonstrate his thesis. Neusner, however, takes issue, saying:

> Aphrahat and the rabbis had practically nothing in common, other than that they lived in a single cultural continuum and believed in the same revelation. But since that obviously was the case, it is consequential that they exhibited not so many parallels, but so few.[62]

Neusner's entire argument is built to prove this point. It is difficult to find anyone who moves toward middle ground between these two positions.

One is tempted to name the two sides "the parallelists" and "the anti-parallelists." One of the difficulties in the whole discussion is that neither side has developed a working definition of what constitutes a "parallel," much less a definition that both sides can accept.

Gavin bases his argument on what he believes to be parallel wordings and thoughts or concepts. In twenty pages central to his thesis[63] he compares the respective ideas of Aphrahat and the rabbis concerning 1) ܝܨܪ ܗܪܥ and יצר הרע 2) the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the Shekhina; 3) Premundane Creation; 4) the unity of body and soul in both this life and the next; 5) the use of the kal vahomer (קל וחומר) argument; and 6) the existence of the world as we know it for 6000 years. He concludes:

> In innumerable instances of exact parallels in thought, as well as in his general envisagement of theological problems, we find that Aphraates is a "docile pupil of the Jews." In his account of creation, sin, and the Fall, and the problems of salvation and redemption, his echatology and his chiliasm, Aphraates is peculiarly at one, in the idiom of his thought and the perspective of his field, with contemporary rabbinic Judaism. Where he diverged, he only recombined elements taken from the Rabbis to reassemble them into the contour of a mosaic of a Christian character.[64]

Even Gavin, however, sees a limit to the influence of the Rabbis on Aphrahat. He admits that Aphrahat did not borrow rabbinic hermeneutics. As Luttrell has summarized:

> Like Ginzberg, Gavin tried to establish Aphrahat's relationship to the Jews on the basis of categories of belief; but Gavin refrained from making extravagant claims for Aphrahat's dependence on Jewish hermeneutics. In fact, he flatly denied that Aphrahat was aware of Rabbi Ishamael's thirteen rules of interpretation. Rather, he limited his notion of Aphrahat's dependence to the conceptual.[65]

Gavin attributed Aphrahat's loans to geographical proximity to the Rabbis, shared language and what he termed common "spiritual ancestry." In addition, "There was a common appeal to a common authority -- the Law and its traditional interpretation."[66] Segal has gone so far as to suggest that Aphrahat "was acquainted with the Targum and the Talmud."[67]

Neusner responds to each of these contentions and continues by giving a point by point refutation and a critique of the methodologies employed by earlier scholars.

In response to Gavin's premise (quoted above, p. 20) Neusner writes:

> (Gavin's) assertion that the tenor and method are in the style of the Rabbis is quite true, but does not prove Aphrahat actually knew or studied with rabbis, rather that Christian and Jewish exegesis had much in common, starting with Scriptures. Indeed they did, but the points in common cited here are insufficient to demonstrate concrete rabbinical influence on Christian exegesis. Common style seems to me to point toward common traditions and cultural setting, nothing more.[68]

With reference to the specific examples used by Gavin to support his position, Neusner argues that even if two groups reach the same conclusions or use the same methods this alone does not serve as proof of the dependence of one upon the other. (And here he reminds the investigator that the dependence could just as well have been from the opposite

direction -- by the rabbis on Aphrahat -- unless careful dating of materials can be established.) If, in fact, parallels can be discovered, they may point to a common (third party) source or they may have been arrived at altogether independently. He is fair enough to suggest also that a lack of parallels may, on the other hand, point only to the fact that the available material is incomplete; much may have been lost. It is Neusner's view that Ginzberg,[69] Funk,[70] and Gavin found parallels because they were looking for them. Such was the mood of scholarship in their days.

Neusner finds it curious that Aphrahat never refers to "rabbis" nor to "oral tradition." If it may be assumed that the arguments attributed to the Jews by Aphrahat are really what he says they are, their source must be found. Neusner suggests three possible groups of Jews as the source for Aphrahat's statements:[71] 1) the descendants of the Adiabenian converts, 2) descendants of the ten "lost" tribes, and 3) rabbinic Jews, such as those at the academy at Nisibis. He denies the likelihood of the last group. Just as the literary output of Aphrahat ignores the existence of rabbis and their method/tradition, so the rabbinic literature in no way suggests the existence of Aphrahat nor does it confront any of his arguments.[72]

Finally, Neusner criticizes Gavin's methodology:

> ...parallels are drawn from every period of rabbinical literature, a literature not yet carefully and thoroughly divided according to its places and times of origin, strata, schools, and the like.[73]

Neusner evaluates the relationship between Aphrahat and the Rabbis:

> Common... characteristics... show merely that both the Rabbis and Aphrahat drew upon the same cultural, conceptual, and linguistic heritage, a heritage only partially available to us.[74]

To a great extent this is also a reflection of his view that in the Iranian Empire rabbinic Judaism and Christianity originally held attraction for the same people, Diaspora Jews: where one took hold, the other made no headway for about a century and a half.[75]

Luttrell has suggested:

> More than any other feature of Aphrahat's treatment of the Jews, his use of the Bible will betray Jewish influences if such there be.[76]

Neusner's view might well be that it is precisely in that area that Aphrahat evidences most fully his lack of knowledge of rabbinic Jewish thought. So we turn finally to Aphrahat's use of Scripture.

APHRAHAT'S USE OF SCRIPTURE

Many questions may be asked in this area. The first might be, Which text did Aphrahat use? For the purpose of this study a detailed answer is not necessary, but a general idea of the situation may be helpful. Aphrahat quotes extensively from the Bible. His arguments are invariable scripturally based. His use of the Jewish Scriptures far exceeds that of the New Testament. The discussion of Aphrahat's New Testament text is best left unaddressed here, fascinating though it is;[77] a comparison with the Rabbis does not require it at all.

The Syriac Bible as it is presently available is known as the Peshitta. The histories of its Old and New Testament texts are not necessarily

connected to each other. The analysis below is limited to the text of the Jewish Scriptures.

The origin of the Peshitta is unknown. The text presently used by the Church is an eighth century revision. The quotations found in Aphrahat's writings -- among others -- do not always agree with the present text. Wright was led to assume that Aphrahat simply quoted more freely from the text -- or from memory -- than more modern writers.[78] Scholars since then have been more prepared to think, rather, that his text read differently. The text as Aphrahat quotes it reflects a great deal of apparently Jewish influence, of knowledge of the Targum,[79] and of Hebrew idiom.[80]

The occasion of the original translation also remains unknown, but the most common views are that it was translated by Jews for either Jews or Jewish Christians.[81] Wright believed it to have originated in the second century. Baarda prefers to call this earliest recension the Old (Vetus) Syriac text, arguing that the Peshitta came only later, perhaps as a sort of Syriac Vulgate to harmonize existing texts.[82] At that time or even later some portions were also adjusted to conform with the Septuagint version.[83] All agree, however, that in the first half of the fourth century the text(s) reflected, if anything, Jewish influence due to a direct translation from the Hebrew and/or Targum.

A follow-up question to this one concerns the quotation of the same verse in two (slightly) different forms. How did this come about? As

mentioned above, Wright attributed it to "free" citations, or to citation made from memory.[84] Baarda considers the possibility that Aphrahat actually knew more than one text.[85] In the meantime the question must go unanswered.

The second question to be asked is, Why? Why did Aphrahat depend so totally on scriptural exegesis for his arguments? Part of the answer is hinted at above, where it has been pointed out that Aphrahat fought the attraction of Judaism. The Jewish and Christian arguments could both be based in Scripture. Aphrahat's need was to discredit the Jewish interpretation.[86]

Luttrell, moreover, explores the issue of authority. He writes:

> The main question in any event for the creator of a midrash is one of authority. What proof text or other source will be accepted by the audience as having sufficient weight to prove the point, and why? For Aphrahat the question must certainly have been the same...[87]

For Christians who had been Jews the answer, Luttrell states, lies in the Jewish Scriptures. Aphrahat must insist on the authority of Scripture just as his opponents have; he must insist on his own authority to serve as interpreter of that Scripture;[88] and he must insist on the correctness of the Christian interpretation. The last he accomplishes by showing the New Testament to be the fulfillment of that which was promised of old.[89]

The last question regards method. How did Aphrahat use Scripture? The Greek Church argued against a literal Jewish interpretation by

bringing allegories, but not so Aphrahat.

> One kind of argumentation predominates nearly to the exclusion of all else, and that is, the case built upon common sense interpretation of universally accepted historical texts.[90]

As Neusner thus points out, for Aphrahat, Scripture serves as the factual record of history.[91] No fancy tricks are needed to obtain the true meaning of the text.

Despite Aphrahat's inclination to interpret the text based on the plain sense, Neusner is quick to remind the reader:

> Both Judaism and Christianity claim to be the heirs and product of the Hebrew Scriptures -- Tanakh to the Jews, Old Testament to the Christians. Yet both great religious traditions derive not solely or directly from the authority and teachings of these Scriptures, but rather from the ways in which that authority has been mediated, and those teachings interpreted, through other holy books. The New Testament is the prism through which the light of the Old comes to Christianity; the Babylonian Talmud is the star that guides Jews to the revelation of Sinai, the Torah. The claim of these two great Western religious traditions, in all their rich variety, is for the veracity not merely of Scriptures, but also of Scriptures as interpreted by the New Testament or the Babylonian Talmud.[92]

According to Neusner this disparity in tradition would account for the differences between Aphrahat and the Rabbis. To what, then, does he ascribe the similarities? Earlier scholars saw in Aphrahat dependence upon rabbinic thought, but

> The possibility that traditions common to church and synagogue beginning with the Hebrew Scriptures and Targumim may account for many similarities was never seriously entertained.[93]

So it is that Neusner defines the field of investigation. Aphrahat begins with Scripture. So do the Rabbis. It is at this very lowest of common denominators that research must take its starting point. First, it must

be determined which verses Aphrahat depends on. His methodology must be scrutinized, his conclusions examined. Finally, the same verses may then be viewed in terms of their use by the Rabbis.

What may be concluded after all this has been said? From the analysis of Aphrahat's Exposition XVII which follows with a comparison to rabbinic materials, it is hoped that some clues concerning the relationship between the early Eastern Church and Jews may be uncovered. The Exposition falls into the second half of Aphrahat's writing and displays the author's considerable efforts at defending the Christian belief in Jesus as the Messiah against Jewish charges to the contrary. The materials to be investigated consist of arguments built upon the foundation of scriptural verses. The conclusions drawn from the text are arranged to suit the framework of their respective contenders and in light of their respective methods. An analysis of each -- Aphrahat on one side and the Rabbis on the other -- will bring them into perspective with regard to their separate frameworks. A comparison of their use of Scripture, their methodologies, and their conclusions will serve as the basis of determining whether there was, at one extreme, a dependence of one upon the other or, at the other extreme, an absence of the knowledge of each other's very existence, or any other relationship between the two.

METHODOLOGY AND FORMAT

My translation of Exposition XVII follows. Explanations of the text and of any significant differences with Neusner's translation[94] appear

in the notes at the end. The translation is a relatively literal one, though some freedom has been taken in places in which it was felt that a literal translation would not express Aphrahat's intentions properly. Citations of biblical verses have been inserted into the text.

Following the translation is a point by point analysis of Aphrahat's thought. Each point is accompanied by some of the most relevant rabbinical material using the same scriptural foundations. The material is aggadic, since the halakhic comments are irrelevant to Aphrahat's thought. Existing translations of the rabbinic materials have been quoted when available, otherwise the translations are my own, and have been noted as such.

Neusner's criticism that rabbinic literature from all periods is used indiscriminately holds true here. However, the literature has yet to be "carefully and thoroughly divided according to its places and times of origin, strata, schools, and the like."[73] One of the difficulties, as Neusner well knows, is that the literature reflects an oral tradition, the source for any given statement being difficult to discover. Even if a statement could definitely be dated later than the fourth century, who is to say that it does not reflect an older concept? It is hoped simply that the selected materials will shed some light on the problems discussed above.

PART II

EXPOSITION XVII

ON THE MESSIAH: THAT HE IS THE SON OF GOD

SUMMARY OF THE EXPOSITION

Aphrahat begins his exposition by presenting the arguments of the Jews which he intends to refute. The Jews, as he presents their argument, charge the Christians with calling a human being "God," and the "son of God." The argument is based on biblical verses which declare that there is no other god and that no other god is to be worshipped.

Aphrahat presents his reply in two parts. In the first he insists that in calling Jesus "god" and "son of God" the Christians are doing nothing which the Jews have not already done. He points to biblical verses in which individuals are called "god" ('elohim) and in which Israel is named God's "son." Further, he points to the exalted state of human beings in general. Although created last, says Aphrahat, Adam was the first creature to be conceived by God. The exalted position has caused God to grant reverence, honor and authority to people. And God allows humans to reverence, and honor others, such as kings. Aphrahat continues by suggesting that Jesus, too, can thus legitimately be the object of such honor. He emphasizes this point by contrasting the Jews' worship of wicked leaders (his examples are Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar and Joseph with Pharaoh), who may be the cause of apostasy, to the Christians' worship of Jesus, who has turned them to the one God.

In the second section, Aphrahat wishes to prove that Jesus has been foretold as the Messiah. In this part he brings many of the classic Christian prooftexts, including verses from Isaiah 7, 9, 52 and 53; Zechariah 13 and 14; Psalms 2, 16, 22, 69, and 110; and Daniel 9. This

last he uses to refute the Jewish argument that the destruction of Jerusalem proves that the Messiah cannot yet have come. Additionally, he reasons that if, as the Jews maintain, the Messiah has not come, when he finally arrives, with what can Christians be charged beyond that they have believed prematurely and worshipped the God of Israel? Finally, Aphrahat shows that only Jesus has fulfilled the biblical predictions.

And thus he concludes that he has proved that Jesus is God and the son of God.

TEXT OF EXPOSITION[1] XVII

The Argument of the Jews

1. This is a refutation of the Jews[2] who blaspheme this people from among the peoples,[3] for they say; "You worship and serve a begotten man, a crucified person;[4] you also call a person 'God;' and even though God has no son, you say of this crucified Jesus that he is the 'son' of God."

And they give the argument, "God has said: 'I am God and there is no other besides me' (Deut. 32:39).[5] And He also said: 'You shall not worship another God' (Ex. 34:14). Therefore, you oppose God by calling a person 'God.'"

Outline of the Refutation

2. Now, my friend, as best as I am able, and in my inadequacy, understand, let me polemize for you concerning these matters. Were we to grant them that he is a person, and that we have honored him, calling him "God" and "Lord," even so we would not have addressed him strangely,

nor would we have given him a strange name, one which they had not (already) used.[6]

True, for us, Jesus our Lord is "God son of God," "King son of the King," "Light from the Light," "Creator," "Counsellor," "Teacher," the "Way," the "Savior," the "Shepherd," the "Assembler," the "Gate," the "Pearl," the "Lamp," and he is called by many names. Let us set aside all of these and we shall expound 1) on his being the son of God, and 2) that he is God who came from God.

Divine Names Applied to Humans

God

3. Indeed, the honored appellation of divinity has been applied even to righteous persons worthy of being called by it: people in whom God has taken pleasure, He has called "my sons" and "my friends!" When He chose Moses, His friend and His beloved, and made him head and teacher and priest for His people, He called him "god," for He said to him, "I have placed you as god to Pharaoh" (Ex. 7:1). And He gave him His priest as prophet, "And Aaron your brother shall speak for you with Pharaoh, but you shall be for him god and he will be for you an interpreter" (Ex. 7:2).[7] So it was not only for Pharaoh, who was evil, that He made Moses god, but also for Aaron, the holy priest, that He made Moses god.

Son

4. Moreover, with regard to our calling him the "son of God," listen to this: they say, "Although God can have no son, you make of this

crucified Jesus the 'son,' the 'firstborn' of God!" But, He has called Israel "my son," "my firstborn," as when He sent to Pharaoh through Moses and said to him, "My son, My firstborn is Israel. I have said to you, 'Release My son that he might worship Me,' but if you are unwilling to release him, see I will kill your son, your firstborn" (Ex. 4:22). And also through the prophet He testified concerning this when He reproached them, saying to the people, "Since Egypt I have called him my son. Even as I have called them thus, so they went and worshipped Baal, and they offered incense to graven images" (Hos. 11:1-2). And Isaiah said about them, "I have raised and educated sons, but they have acted perversely against me" (Is. 1:2). And it is also written, "You are sons of the Lord your God" (Deut. 14:1). And about Solomon He said, "He shall be a son to Me and I shall be a father to him" (II Sam. 7:14, I Chron. 22:10).

Jesus as God and Son

Similarly, we too call this Messiah the "son of God" -- for through him we know God -- just as He called Israel "my son," "my firstborn," and just as He said of Solomon, "He shall be a son to Me." And we call him "God" just as He names Moses with His own name.

David, too, said about them, "I have said that you are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6). Yet when they did not behave, at that point He said of them, "Like human beings shall you die and like any prince shall you fall" (Ps. 82:7).

5. In this world the appellation of divinity is bestowed for maximum

honor, and God grants it to whomever He wishes. As a matter of fact, the names of God are many and honored, as when He mentioned His names to Moses and said to him, "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. Indeed, this is my name forever, and this is my appellation eternally" (Ex. 3:15).[8] And He called His name "I am that I am," (Ex. 3:14). "God Almighty"[9] and "the Lord of Hosts" (Jer. 32:18). God has been called by (all) these names! And although the appellation of divinity is great and honored, even so He did not withhold it from His righteous ones!

Other Titles

And[10] although He is the great King, the great and honored appellation of sovereignty He gave ungrudgingly to human beings, His creation. 6. Indeed, through His prophet, God called the evil king Nebuchadnezzar "king of kings," as Jeremiah said, "Any people or kingdom that does not put its neck in the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of kings, my servant, I will visit that people with famine, sword, and pestillence" (Jer. 27:8).[11] Thus, although He is the great King, He did not withhold the title of sovereignty from people. And although He is the great God, He did not withhold the title of divinity from mortals. And although all fatherhood is His, He also called human beings "fathers," as He said to the Synagogue, "Instead of your fathers shall be your sons" (Ps. 45:17). And although authority is His, He has given authority to people, one over the other; and although reverence for honor is His, in this world He has allowed a person to honor his fellow. Thus, even though a person revere

evildoers and wicked people and those who deny His grace, he is not censored by God! With regard to worship, He did command His people: "Do not worship the sun, nor the moon, nor any of the heavenly hosts. Nor should you long to worship any of the creatures on earth" (Deut. 4:19).[12] Notice the grace and mercy of our good Maker: He did not withhold from human beings the appellation of divinity or the appellation of reverence or the appellation of sovereignty or the appellation of authority, because He is the Father of the creatures which are on the face of the earth.

Special Place of Humans

He has honored, exalted, and praised human beings above all His creatures, because He formed them with His holy hands, and of His spirit He breathed into them, and He was a dwelling place for them from the beginning. He dwells with them and walks with them, as He said through the prophet, "I shall dwell among them, and I shall walk with them" (Lev. 26:12;[13] II Cor. 6:16).[14] So, too, Jeremiah the prophet said, "The Temple of the Lord are you, if you amend your ways and your actions" (Jer. 7:4, 5).[15] And earlier David had said, "O Lord, You have been a dwelling place for us for generations, before the mountains were conceived and before the earth was in labor and before You established the world. Forever and ever You are God" (Ps. 90:1).[16]

7. And how do you resolve this? One prophet said, "O Lord, you have been a dwelling place for us," while another one said, "I shall

dwell among them and I shall walk with them."[17] First, He was a dwelling place for us. And subsequently, He dwelt and walked with us! But to the wise, both statements are true and obvious. Indeed, David says, "O Lord, you have been a dwelling place for us for generations, before the mountains were conceived and before the earth was in labor and before you established the world." As you are aware, my friend, all the creatures above and below were created first,[18] and, last of all, man. Yet when God thought to create the world with all its accoutrements, He first conceived and designed Adam in His mind. After Adam was conceived in His thought, He then conceived the creatures, as he said, "Before the mountains were conceived and the earth felt the pains of birth."[19] Because humanity is older than and prior to the creatures in conception, but in creation, the creatures are older than and prior to man. Thus, when Adam was conceived, he dwelt in God's thought. And while he was contained in His mind in conception, He created all the creatures by the word of His mouth. And when He had completed the world and set it in order with nothing lacking from it, then only did He give birth to Adam from His thought, forming the human person with His hands. And Adam saw an already-established world. And He gave him authority over all He had made, as a man who has a son for whom he wishes to make a wedding feast; he betrothes him a wife and builds him a house, preparing and setting in order all that is needed for his son. Only then does he make the wedding feast and put his son in charge over his house.

So after Adam's conception He actualized him and gave him authority

over all His creation. It is with reference to this that the prophet said, "O Lord, You have been a dwelling place for us for generations, before the mountains were conceived and before the earth was in labor and before you established the world. Forever and ever You are the Lord."[20] So that no one might think that there could be another God either before or after, he said, "Forever and ever," as Isaiah said, "I am the first and I am the last" (Is. 44:6).[21]

And after God actualized Adam from His thought, He fashioned him and breathed in him from His spirit and gave him knowledge of discernment, that he might distinguish good from evil and that he might know that God made him. And in as much as he became cognizant of his Maker, God thereby was formed and conceived in man's mind. And he became a temple for God his Maker, as it is written, "You are God's temple" (I Cor. 3:16).[22] And He said, "I shall dwell among them and I shall walk with them." But, in fact, He is not formed in their midst nor does He dwell among them nor is He conceived in the thought of those men who are not cognizant of their Maker. But rather, they are reckoned before Him like animals and like the rest of the creatures.

Honor Granted to Humans

8. For from these arguments the stubborn will be persuaded that it is not strange that we call the Messiah "the son of God." For He conceived and gave birth to <u>all</u> people from His mind. And let them be admonished in the name of God that just as He places the divine name upon his righteous ones, so it is upon him (Jesus).[23]

And as for the fact that we worship Jesus through whom we know God, let them be ashamed that they fall down and worship and honor wicked leaders from among the unclean nations without incurring any blame. For this (expression of) honor out of reverence God granted to the children of Adam that they might honor each other, especially (that they might honor) those who are more highly placed than they. For if they (the Jews), in the name of obeisance, do reverence and honor to the wicked (and those who, in their wickedness, even deny the name of God, so that they do not worship their Maker) as if they (Jews) alone incur no sins,[24] then we ought to worship and honor Jesus who turned our obstinate minds from all false worship and made us know that we should revere, worship and serve the one God, our Father and our Maker. And they[25] should know that the kings of the world call themselves gods[26] in the name of the great God (with the result that) they are apostates and causers of apostasy. And yet they fall down and worship before them, and they serve and honor them like graven images and idols, and never does the law fault them and it is not a sin. Thus Daniel worshipped Nebuchadnezzar the apostate and compeller of apostasy, but he was not censored. Similarly, Joseph worshipped the Pharaoh but is not written that it was accounted to him a sin. So for us it is true that Jesus is God, the son of God, through whom we know the Father who forbade us all (other) worship. Therefore, we must not repay him who endured these things on our behalf, except by paying him honor through worship in return for his suffering on our behalf.

Jesus Foretold As Messiah

Biblical Predictions

9. So it is proper for us to argue that this Jesus was formerly promised from of old by the prophets and was called "the son of God." David said, "You are my son. Today I have given birth to you" (Ps. 2:7). And he also said, "In the glories of holiness from the womb, from of old I have given birth to you, O child" (Ps. 110:3).[27] And Isaiah said, "A child has been born to us, and a son has been given us. His authority will be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called wonderful, and counsellor, mighty God of the ages, and ruler of peace, his authority and peace to increase without limit" (Is. 9:5-6).[28] Now therefore, tell me, wise teacher of Israel,[29] who is it who "is born" and whose name is called "child" and "son" and "wonderful" and "counsellor," "mighty God of the ages" and "ruler of peace," and the increase of whose authority and peace has He said is without limit?

So if we call the Messiah "son of God," David has taught us; and as regards our calling him "God," we have heard it from Isaiah; "His authority is given on his shoulder" (we understand) that he took his cross and left Jerusalem; and that "a child is born," Isaiah has also said, "Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth. And his name will be called Immanuel, for our God is with us" (Is. 7:14).

Jewish Response and Its Refutation

10. But if you should say that the Messiah has not yet come, I would respond to your contentiousness as follows: for when he comes, it is

written, "The peoples will bring tidings of him" (Gen. 49:10). Now, I have heard from "the peoples" that the Messiah has come![30] While as yet he may not have come, even so I have believed in him prematurely, and through him do I worship the God of Israel. Can it be that when he comes, he will find fault with me, in that I had already believed in him, though he had not yet come?

Indeed, fool, the prophets do not allow you to say that the Messiah has not come yet. Daniel would rebuke you saying, "After sixty-two weeks the anointed one shall come and he shall be killed. And in his coming the Holy City will be destroyed and its end shall be by flood. And until the fulfillment of the judgements it will remain in destruction" (Dan. 9:26). For you hope and expect that with the coming of the Messiah, Israel will be gathered from all places, and that Jerusalem will be rebuilt and resettled. Whereas Daniel testifies that when the Messiah comes and is killed, Jerusalem will be destroyed and will remain in desolation until the fulfillment of the eternal judgements.

More Biblical Proofs

And concerning the suffering of the Messiah, David has said, "They have pierced my hands and my feet; all my bones have cried out; they stared and saw me; and they have divided my garments among them and they have cast lots for my clothes" (Ps. 22:17-19). And Isaiah said, "Behold, my servant will be known and will be revealed and be exalted so that many will be amazed on account of him. His appearance will be more marred than that of any man and his visage more than any

of the people" (Is. 52:13-14). And he said, "He shall purify many peoples, and kings will be amazed on account of him" (Is. 52:15). And he said in the same passage, "He has come up like a babe before him, and like a root from dry land" (Is. 53:2). And he said at the end of the passage, "He will be killed because of our sins; brought down because of our iniquities; the chastisement for our welfare is upon him and by his scars will we be healed" (Is. 53:5).

By which scars are people healed? David was not killed. For he died in good old age and was buried in Bethlehem (cf. I K. 2:10). And if of Saul they say (these words), Saul died in the mountains of Gilboa in the war of the Philistines (cf. I Sam. 31). And if they would say, "They pierced his hands and his feet" when they fixed his corpse to the wall of Beth Shean, it was not fulfilled by Saul because when Saul's limbs were pierced, his bones did not feel his suffering because he was dead. And after Saul died they hung his corpse and those of his sons on the wall of Beth Shean. And when David said, "They pierced my hands and my feet and all my bones cried out" he added further, "O God, stay as my help. Deliver my soul from the sword" (Ps. 22:21). For the Messiah was delivered from the sword and went up from Sheol and lived and rose after three days. And God stayed as his help. And Saul called on the Lord but He did not answer him. And he asked <u>via</u> the prophets and no answer was given him. He disguised himself and asked through diviners and so learned (cf. I Sam. 28:6ff). And he was vanquished by the Philistines. And he killed himself by his sword when

he saw that the battle prevailed over him. And David said in the same passage, "I will declare your name to my brothers, and in the midst of the congregation I will praise you" (Ps. 22:23). How can these words have been fulfilled concerning Saul? And David also said, "You did not allow your pious one to see suffering" (Ps. 16:10).[31]

Jesus As Fulfillment

Indeed, all of these were fulfilled concerning the Messiah: when he came to them and they did not receive him; and they judged him wrongly, by false witness; and he was hanged upon a cross by their hands, and they pierced his hands and feet with nails which they fixed in him; and all his bones cried out.

And on that day occurred the great miracle that the light grew dark in the middle of the day as Zechariah had prophesied and said, "A day will be known by the Lord, neither day nor night, and at evening time will be light" (Zech. 14:7). Which is the day that was distinguished by the miracle of being neither day nor night, and by light at evening time? But the day in which they crucified him, there was darkness in the middle of the day and at evening time was light. And he also said, "That day shall be cold and icy" (Zech. 14:6). As you know, on the day that they crucified him it was cold and they made themselves a fire to warm themselves, Simon having come and having stood by them. And he also said, "The spear shall arise against the shepherd and against the beloved sheep and will strike the shepherd, that the lambs of his flock be scattered. And I shall turn my hand against the pastors" (Zech. 13:7).[32]

And David also said of his suffering, "They put poisons in my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Ps. 69:22). And in the same passage he also said, "They pursue him whom you have struck, and they increase the pains of the killed one" (Ps. 69:27). They did many additional things which are not written about him; curses and abuses, even those which Scripture was unable to reveal, for their abuses were so hateful. But indeed, the Lord wished to humble him and to cause him to suffer (cf. Is. 53:10), WHILE HE WAS KILLED BECAUSE OF OUR INIQUITIES, AND SO HE WAS BROUGHT LOW BECAUSE OF OUR SINS, AND THUS WAS SIN PLACED IN HIMSELF.

Summary

11. We worship those mercies and we bend the knee before the greatness of his Father who turned our worship toward him. We call him "god" like Moses; and "firstborn" and "son" like Israel; and "Yeshu'" like Yeshu' the son of Nun; and "priest" like Aaron, and "king" like David; and "great prophet" like all the prophets; and "shepherd" like the shepherds who tended and led Israel. And He calls us "sons" as he said, "Foreign sons shall obey me" (Ps. 18:45); he has made us his brothers as he said, "I shall declare your name to my brothers" (Ps. 22:23); and we are his friends as he said to his disciples, "I call you my friends" (Jn. 15:15), as his Father called Abraham "my friend" (Is. 41:8). And he said to us, "I am the 'Good Shepherd' and the 'Gate,' and the 'Way,' and the 'Vine,' and the 'Seed,' and the 'Bridegroom,' and the 'Pearl,' and the 'Lamp,' and the 'Light,' and the 'King,' and 'God,' and the 'Reviver,' and the 'Savior.'" And he is called by many names.

This brief argument I have written for you, my friend, that you may

refute the Jews in that they say that he is not the son of God and in that we call him "God, son of God," and "King" and "Firstborn of all creatures."

The Exposition on the Messiah, the son of God is completed.

PART III

APHRAHAT AND THE RABBIS

Analysis and Comparison

Aphrahat's Seventeenth Exposition consists of two parts. In the first, he argues that Jesus is God and the Son of God. He concerns himself with the use, by humans, of God's titles and names. He also discusses the propriety of human reverence for other persons, while insisting on the impropriety of worship directed toward any of God's creations.

In the second part, Aphrahat argues that Jesus is the Messiah as predicted by Jewish Scripture. He dwells particularly on the circumstances of the birth and death of Jesus as fulfillments of prophetic predictions. As Neusner asserts,[1] for Aphrahat, the Bible serves as a historical record: No other personality has fulfilled the biblical claims. Aphrahat thus concludes that Jesus is God, the Son of God, the Messiah.

The presentation which follows appears in the order established by Aphrahat in his argumentation. In each section Aphrahat's argument is analyzed, rabbinic literature is examined, and the two are compared.

i

GOD

In developing the argument that Jesus rightfully may be called "God," Aphrahat points to Ex. 7:1 in which Moses is called "god."[2] Later, in a summarizing statement he writes, "...just as He places the divine name upon His righteous ones, so it is upon him (Jesus)."[3] In using this analogy, Aphrahat suggests that Jesus be considered on a par with the greatest of the prophets, Moses. And he insists that, even if Jesus were human and referred to as "God," "we would (not) have given him

a strange name, one which they (the Jews) had not (already) used."[4] His claim is that the biblical text shows that God grants such titles to the righteous who are worthy.

He also cites Ps. 82:6. Only a single line of interpretation is given and Aphrahat does not return to develop it:

> David, too, said about them, "I have said that you are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6). Yet when they did not behave at that point He said of them, "Like human beings shall you die and like any prince shall you fall" (Ps. 82:7).[5]

Aphrahat does not elaborate on the meaning of "when they did not behave" (ܘܟܕ ܠܐ ܐܟܫܪܘ). Rather, he writes only that "the appellation of divinity is bestowed for maximum honor and God grants it to whomever He wishes."[6]

In addition to those texts depended upon by Aphrahat in his discourse, there are in the Bible others which use the term 'elohim to refer to people (cf. Ex. 4:16; 22: 7, 8, 27). The Rabbis, observing these several references, grapple with the problem of applying the divine name to mortals. Their solutions seem to reflect, for the most part, a need for radical redefinition of the word 'elohim (אלהים) in order to avoid the presumption that humans are divine. How can the term 'elohim be employed in relation to mortals? they ask. The responses of the Rabbis fall into four categories: in the first, all human beings (or, at least, all Israel) have some aspect of divinity. That is, some trait makes them better than the beasts, although lower than the angels. In the

second response, 'elohim is treated almost as a technical term, to be translated consistently as "judges." This interpretation is extended in the third solution to suggest that only Moses, as the ultimate judge in the wilderness, merits the title 'elohim. Finally, avoiding a redefinition, some midrashim simply emphasize that while 'elohim may, on occasion, denote some or all people, they (and we) are to remember at all times their relative position: God may label mortals "'elohim," but God's position is still above those so-named.

All four of these meanings are reflected in the following excerpt from Ruth Rabbah:

> "God, thy God, am I" (Ps. 50:7). R. Judan interpreted this verse to apply to Moses. The Holy One, blessed be He, said, "Even although I called thee a god to Pharaoh, 'I am thy God,' I am over thee." R. Abba b. Judan interpreted the verse to apply to Israel. Even although I called ye godlike beings, as it is said, "I said: Ye are godlike beings" (Ps. LXXXII, 6), yet "I am thy God": know nevertheless that I am over you. The Rabbis interpreted the verse to refer to the judges. Even although I called ye gods, as it is said "Thou shalt not revile judges ('elohim)" (Ex. XXII, 27), know that I am over you. And He spoke to Israel again and said: "I have imparted of my glory to the judges and called them gods, and they condemn them. Woe unto the generation that judges its judges!"[7]

Each of the answers suggested above is reflected in several midrashim which serve also to answer some other questions.

The Rabbis suggest many ways in which human beings demonstrate what might be considered some aspect of divinity. In one of their more fanciful interpretations, they say of the Israelites in the wilderness:

> God said: "If My children are to have need of easing themselves, how can I cause it to be written concerning them that

> they are godlike beings, as I did in the text, 'I said: Ye are godlike beings' (Ps. LXXXII, 6)? This must not be; but even as the angels do not need this thing, so shall they also not need it any more."[8]

Along more serious lines Pesikta Rabbati reads:

> "And I covered thee with mšy (silk)" (Ezek. 16:10). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: I make you into a thing of lasting substance (mmš) in the world: "I said, Ye are godlike beings" (Ps. 82:6). So R. Aibu explains the word mšy.[9]

How, exactly, is something "of lasting substance" equated with being "godlike?" Unfortunately, no further explanation of these words appears.

Yet another interpretation reverses the point of view. God is contrasted with a mortal king in several ways. After suggesting that Moses used the King's scepter, that Elijah rode the King's horse, that the Messiah will wear the King's crown and garment, that Solomon sat on the King's throne, this midrash continues:

> A mortal king -- one may not call his viceroy "king," yet the Holy One, blessed be He, called Moses god, when He said to him "See I have made thee a god to Pharaoh" (Ex. 7:1). God said also to the children of Israel: "Ye are gods" (Ps. 82:6)...[10]

This view intimates that God grants human beings divine traits from time to time, at least at appropriate moments (of God's choosing).

By far the most popular interpretation of the use of 'elohim with reference to humans concerns Israel standing at Sinai. On their arrival they may be characterized as 'elohim. Their downfall is, of course, worship of the Golden Calf. Sifre phrases it most simply:

> You stood before Mt. Sinai and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do and we will obey" (Ex. 24), and I even said to you, "You are 'elohim" (Ps. 82). But since you said to the calf, "This is your god, O Israel" (Ex. 32), I also said to you

"Indeed, as man shall you die."[11]

This is the last segment of what seems to be a longer tradition. The first two parts appear to be along the lines of the following:

> As it is said, "And the tablets are the work of God and the writing is the writing of God engraved (harut) on the tablets" (Ex. 32:16). Do not read engraved (harut) but freedom (herut). No one is free except him over whom the angel of death does not rule.[12]

> If the angel of death should come to me and say, "Why was I created?" I would say to him, "If I created you, I created you (to have power) over the nations of the world, and not over my children. Why? Because I have made them gods ('elohim), as it is said, 'I said: "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you"'" (Ps. 82:6).[13]

Here, the aspect of divinity connoted by 'elohim seems to be that of eternal life.

The most this-worldly understanding of Ps. 82:6 is found in Sifre:

> R. Simmai said, "All the creatures who were created from heaven, their souls and their bodies are from heaven. And all the creatures who were created from the earth, their souls and their bodies are from the earth. Except for this man whose soul is from heaven and whose body is from earth. So when man does Torah and the will of his Father who is in heaven, he is like the creatures above, as it is said, 'I have said, You are 'elohim, sons of the Most High, all of you' (Ps. 82). When he does not do Torah and the will of his Father who is in heaven, he is like the creatures below, as it is said, 'Indeed, like man shall you die' (ibid.)."[14]

Like the midrashim referred to above which discuss the Golden Calf, this one draws together the understanding the Rabbis had of human nature. The potential to reach toward divinity is present in every person, represented by the phrase "whose soul is from heaven and whose body is from earth." This potential may be realized only when

God's will is pursued, by living the life of Torah.[15] So it is that the Rabbis saw the term 'elohim as a reference to the divine aspect of humanity in several different ways.

The second understanding of the Rabbis of 'elohim is as a reference to judges. Perhaps the earliest expression of this view occurs in the Mekhilta:

> Another Interpretation: Why is it said here, "unto Moses and Aaron"? (Ex. 12:1). Because it says, "And the Lord said unto Moses: See I have set thee in God's stead ('elohim) to Pharaoh" (Ex. 7.1). From this I would know only that Moses was judge over Pharaoh.[16]

Lauterbach accepts this interpretation so totally that he notes:

> The word אלהים, designating God, also means "judge".... Hence, the passage in Ex. 27.1 may mean: "I have set thee in God's stead," and also: "I have set thee up as judge."[17]

When the word 'elohim created a similar problem in Ex. 22; 7, 8, and 27 the Rabbis conclude through the use of gezerah shavah with Ex. 7:1 that it must again refer to Moses.[18] But there the given context of matters of civil law seems to point more obviously to the translation "judge(s)," so that their understanding of 'elohim as Moses who acted as judge in the wilderness is an obvious route. We are here reminded most strongly, perhaps, of the classic rabbinic discussion of the meanings of the names of God, in which it is asserted that YHWH refers to God's attribute of mercy, while 'elohim to that of judgment.[19]

The above leads to the third meaning assigned to 'elohim by the Rabbis, that of Moses alone. While the term when used in Ex. 22, is interpreted

to mean Moses, this is simply a natural extension of the Rabbis' earlier translation of 'elohim as "judges" applied now to a context in which Moses seems to be the only appropriate "judge" to serve as referent. In Leviticus Rabbah,[20] however, appears a single midrash in which Moses is equated with 'elohim directly. The interpretation is on I Sam. 28:13 in which the woman of Endor, summoning Samuel from the dead at Saul's request, says, "I have seen 'elohim." The midrash concludes (based on gezerah shavah with Ex. 7:1) that Moses is again meant; that Samuel, thinking he was being summoned for the Day of Judgment, brought Moses ('elohim) with him, and it is for this reason that the woman says, "I have seen 'elohim."

The last solution which the Rabbis offer is of a different nature. Rather than deny the use of 'elohim through redefinition, they accept its use and look elsewhere for a way to contradict this apparent granting of divinity to human beings. In each midrash of this kind, they find a way to have God say, as it were, "You may be 'elohim, but do not forget that I am God above and beyond that."

In the Pesikta de Rab Kahana this suggestion is made with regard first to Moses and then to judges:

> Continuing his discourse, R. Phinehas, the Priest ben Hama read the words "God, thy God am I," (Ps. 50:7) as "god, thy God am I," and asking "Whom did the Lord address as 'god'?" replied: "Moses, to whom He said: Even though I address thee as god -- 'See, I have made thee god to Pharaoh' (Exod. 7:1) -- still 'God am I' over thee."
>
> In further comment on "god, thy God am I,"... the Rabbis said that the Lord was addressing judges as "gods" and declaring

> to them: Make not much of the fact that I ascribed divinity to you when I said "Thou shalt not revile Elohim (judges)" (Exod. 22:27), for "God am I" over you, nevertheless.[21]

Addressing the same problem, but using a different prooftext, Numbers Rabbah responds to the question of why Ex. 6:2 ("I am Adonai") precedes Ex. 7:1:

> ...the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: "Although I have appointed you as the god of Pharaoh," as is demonstrated by the text, "See, I have set thee as a god to Pharaoh," (Ex. VII, 1), "take care that My Godhead shall be over you, for I made you a god over none but Pharaoh alone."[22]

More succinctly, the version in Tanhuma Buber concludes, "although I have made you a god, I am Adonai. You are god over none but Pharaoh."[23]

Through the midrash, the Rabbis demonstrate their insistence that 'elohim is a term which rightfully belongs to God. When granted to people, it must be reinterpreted carefully to avoid any misunderstanding which would assign divinity to the human creation. Neusner juxtaposes the views of Aphrahat and the Rabbis:

> The rabbis understood 'elohim to mean judge, not God. Aphrahat understood the word to mean God, as we noticed. But the rabbinic usage long antedated the polemical context and cannot be thought a response to Christian arguments about Jesus.[24]

In support of this view, Neusner quotes from the Mekhilta,[25] one of the earliest midrashim. Other early sources which point to the total unacceptability to Jews of using 'elohim with reference to humans are the Targumim. While neither Onkelos nor Jonathan translates the term to mean "judge" they present two other interpretations:

> But the Lord said to Mosheh, See, I have appointed thee a

> Master (rab[26]) with Pharaoh, and Aharon shall be thy interpreter (methurgeman).[27]
>
> But the Lord said to Mosheh, Wherefore art thou fearful? Behold, I have set thee a terror to Pharaoh, as if thou was his God, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.[28]

Aphrahat's interpretation basically runs along the lines that if Moses was called 'alāh (ܐܠܗ), Jesus too may be so-named. But the earliest Jewish thought suggests that even calling Moses "'elohim" created serious problems which could not be left uninterpreted.

SON OF GOD

The second charge by the Jews which Aphrahat wishes to refute, he states, is that "even though God has no son, you say of this crucified Jesus that he is the son of God,"[29] and again later, "you make of this crucified Jesus the 'son,' the 'firstborn' of God!"[30] Aphrahat indicates the Christian position by declaring that Jesus is "'God son of God,' 'King son of the King.'"[31]

Aphrahat responds to the charges by bringing five prooftexts. In each of the first four, Israel is referred to as God's son (or sons). In his final text, it is Solomon who is called God's son. He concludes this portion of his argument by applying the parallel directly to Jesus:

> Similarly, we too call this Messiah the son of God -- for through him we know God -- just as He called Israel 'my son,' 'my first-born,' and just as He said of Solomon, "He will be a son to Me."[32]

The importance of quoting from Ex. 4:22 lies specifically in the use of the phrase "my firstborn (בכורי) is Israel." Hence, Aphrahat may again claim, as he did in reference to the term "God," that Christians

have not used a name which the Jews had not previously used.

It is of interest that Aphrahat chose Hos. 11:1 and Is. 1:2 as the next texts. There are many places in which Israel is referred to as God's son(s); other texts could have been employed, seemingly, to the same end. But in these two verses "son" is juxtaposed against the concept that Israel sinned against God; in Hosea "they worshipped Baal," in Isaiah "they acted perversely." Keeping in mind Aphrahat's audience, the present-day reader must imagine what reaction these two verses might have evoked 1600 years ago. Surely, for the Christian of that time, these phrases might have sparked an entire line of reasoning in which the Jews were seen as rejecting God's covenant and were, in return, rejected by God, who then made a new covenant with others. And this argument could have served as a focal point, too, for the newly converted Jewish-Christian who needed encouragement in and, perhaps, justification for his/her decision. Although Aphrahat does not follow up this line of thought in the remainder of the Demonstration, the fact is that, from among all others, these are the verses he has chosen, or these are the ones on the tip of his tongue, as it were. Either way, we may assume that they were current and evocative for at least some of his audience.

In his fifth text, Aphrahat brings his only example of God's "son" being applied to a single individual, to Solomon. But it is worth noting that there has been a progression. In Ex. 4:22 Israel collectively is called "My son." This is also the case in Hos. 11:1, but, as observed

above, here the line may have been crossed to polemic. While staying with the polemic stance, Is. 1:2 uses "sons" rather than the collective "son." "Sons" may remind the reader that the group is composed of individuals. The quote from Deuteronomy does not seem to add much to the discussion, although it continues the terminology of "sons." Finally, the solitary individual is termed "son." Aphrahat needs this, as he indicates in the next paragraph, "we too call this Messiah the 'son' of God...just as He said of Solomon...."[33]

For the Rabbis, the terminology of being God's son suggested a number of different aspects. In some cases an explicit awareness of the metaphorical quality of the idea is expressed. But what is the metaphor? What does it mean to be God's son? It may mean to be exalted by God (and in return to exalt God, the Father). It may express the intimacy of the relationship felt with God. At times, the emphasis is heightened by use of the term "firstborn," which may suggest the especially intimate relationship of Israel (as opposed to other nations), or the concept of having been chosen above or prior to others. Finally, it brings to mind aspects of fatherly love -- is it a conditional or an unconditional love? All of these are present in the rabbinical comments on the verses employed by Aphrahat in this section of his exposition.

There are midrashim in which Israel is represented as being God's son and no indication is given that any problem exists in making such a statement. On the other hand, some contain a level of self-awareness

worth mentioning here.

First, the Targum presents itself. The reading for IISam. 7:14 is "I will be for him (Solomon) like a Father and he will be for Me like a son (דמי כבר)."[34] It must be kept in mind, that the discomfort in rendering the text accurately may be due to the fact that it concerns a single individual, Solomon, and the Targum may have been motivated to avoid such presumptions.

Commenting on Ps. 2:7, the Midrash on Psalms reads:

> "Thou art My son;" God does not say "I have a son," but "Thou art like a son to Me," as when a master wishing to give pleasure to his slave, says to him, "Thou art as dear to me as a son."[35]

Metaphor here becomes simile; interpretation is added, "as dear as" tells us of at least one of the rabbinic understandings of "son."

Numbers Rabbah has simply:

> ...for all Israel are called (נקראו) "children," as it says, "Ye are children of the Lord your God," etc. (Deut. XIV, 1).[36]

This sentiment may in fact underlie much of what the Rabbis say elsewhere. In particular, some of the comments which follow seem to assume an understanding on the part of the audience, without explicit remark, that "sons" refers to Israel, and that certain inferences, as will be shown, may therefore be drawn.

There remains one apparently unique comment[37] in which "sons" is altogether redefined:

> "Your children" (Deut. 6:7), these are your students. And so you find everywhere that students are called sons, as it is said, "You are sons of the Lord your God" (Deut. 14:1), and it says, "The sons of prophets" (IIK 2). And were they sons of prophets,

> were they not students? Rather (we learn) from here that students are called "sons."[38]

This reflects, of course, both the context of Deut. 6 and the worldview of the Rabbis, who saw themselves as teachers. Yet it is an important statement in that it serves as a reminder that the word "sons" need not be taken literally in rabbinic literature.

What does it mean to be called God's son? As Rashi states it most simply, commenting on "My son, My firstborn," it is the "terminology of exaltedness."[39] The idea was not original with him; looking to the Mekhilta:

> "For He is highly exalted." He has exalted me and I have exalted Him, He has exalted me in Egypt, as it is said: "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh: Thus saith the Lord: Israel is My son, My firstborn" (Ex. 4.22). I too exalted Him in Egypt, as it is said: "Ye shall have a song as in the night when a feast is hallowed" (Isa. 30.29).[40]

"Son" serves as a form of expression, showing Israel's position in the eyes of God.

How is Israel exalted? An example is shown in Deut. Rabbah:

> R. Levi said: This can be compared to a king who had many sons, of whom he loved the youngest more than all of them. He also had a garden which he loved more than anything else he possessed. The king said: "I will give the garden which I love more than anything I possess to my youngest son whom I love more than all my sons." So God too said: "Of all the nations whom I have created I love only Israel, as it is said, 'When Israel was a child, then I loved him' (Hos. XI, 1); of all that I have created I love only justice, as it is said, 'For I the Lord love justice' (Isa. LXI, 8)." Said the Holy One, blessed be He: "I will give what I love to the people whom I love."[41]

Why is Israel thus exalted? Because, some midrashim will answer, they are beloved of God. As the Targum reads Deut. 14:1: "As beloved

children are you before the Lord your God...."[42] The idea is presented with a minor reversal in Aboth de R. Nathan:

> The people of Israel are beloved because they are called sons of God. But even if they had not been created and not called sons of God, they would have been beloved. Extraordinary love was showed to them because they were called sons of God, as Scripture says: "You are the sons of the Lord your God...." (Dt. 14:1).[43]

Just how beloved is Israel? They may be compared to the angels:

> Rabbi Joshua said: The Israelites are called "Sons of God," as it is said, "Ye are the sons of the Lord your God" (Deut. XIV. 1). The angels are called "Sons of God," as it is said, "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job XXXVIII. 7)....[44]

We might think thus that the Israelites and the angels are equally beloved, but Aboth de R. Nathan hastily prevents such a misinterpretation:

> The people of Israel were called sons, as Scripture says: "you are the sons of the Lord your God..." (Dt. 4:1). And the ministering angels were called sons, as Scripture says: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord..." (Job. 1:6). But you do not know which is more loved than the others. When Scripture says: "Israel is my firstborn son..." (Ex. 4:22), (it means:) Israel, you are more beloved to me than the ministering angels.[45]

All of which suggests the next question: What does it mean to be the "firstborn of God?" First, at least historically, the firstborn refers to Jacob, "Jacob is the firstborn of the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written, 'Israel is My firstborn son' (Ex. 4)."[46] Of course, the Rabbis had some trouble justifying Jacob's receiving the birthright of the firstborn, but they tried to do just that, giving the following midrash, for example:

> "And he (Esau) did eat and drink" (Gen. 25:34). He brought in

> with him a company of ruffians who said: "We will eat his dishes and mock at him" while the Holy Spirit exclaimed, "They prepare the table" (Isa. XXI, 5) -- i.e. they set the festive board; "They light the lamps"...(ib.)..."Anoint the shield" (ib.) -- make a record that the birthright belongs to Jacob. Bar Kappara taught: And this was because they made sport of him. And how do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, agreed with them? Because it says, "Thus saith the Lord: Israel is My son, My firstborn" (Ex. IV, 22).[47]

But Israel is descended from Jacob and, by extension, thus becomes the firstborn.

> "What is His name?" (Prov. 30:4), Adonai, as it is said (Is. 44), "I am Adonai, that is My name." "And what is His son's name?" (loc. cit.), Israel, as it is said (Ex. 4), "Thus says Adonai, 'Israel is My son, My firstborn.'"[48]

Just as God chose Jacob to be firstborn (even though he was not so biologically), so God chose Israel. As Schechter has written:

> It must, however, be noted that this doctrine of election -- and it is difficult to see how any revealed religion can dispense with it -- was not quite of so exclusive a nature as is commonly imagined. For it is only the privilege of the first-born which the Rabbis claim for Israel, that they are the first in God's kingdom, not the exclusion of other nations.[49]

This all involves a certain amount of protektzia granted Israel by God:

> "My son, Israel, My firstborn." They are the children of him who took the birthright. Another explanation: God said to the wicked Pharaoh: "Dost thou not know how I love the firstborn? I have written in My Torah: 'Thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thine ox' (Deut. XV, 19), warning that he who does work with it will be punished. It is only proper, therefore, that thou who hast stretched out thine hand against My firstborn shalt be smitten." God brought ten plagues upon him....[50]

One last comment:

> R. Nathan said: The Holy One, blessed be He, told Moses: "Just as I have made Jacob a firstborn, for it says: 'Israel is My son, My firstborn' (Ex. IV, 22), so will I make the King Messiah a firstborn, as it says: 'I also will appoint him first-

born'" (Ps. LXXXIX, 28).[51]

It is of interest in that Aphrahat makes no use whatsoever of any aspect of this remark.

And finally, the Rabbis see the relationship between Israel and God as a true parallel to the relationship between father and son. The question which is never altogether resolved is whether God's love (and any father's love) is conditional or unconditional.[52] Several viewpoints are represented.

Rare is the comment -- at least in Father-son terms -- that Israel was the beloved son who has sinned, with no further resolution of the tension. However, we read in Midrash Shir HaShirim:

> As Scripture says, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him," etc. (Hos. 11:1). R. Johanan said, "The Holy One, blessed be He, raised him and said to Israel, You have not behaved with me in the way that children behave with their parents; children, when they are small, do not respect their parents, but when they are bigger they respect their parents. But you said at the sea, 'This is my God and I will glorify Him' (Ex. 16:2). When you grew up, you sinned against Me, as it is said, 'I reared children and brought them up, and they have rebelled against me'" (Is. 1:2).[53]

More often, the idea expressed is that the intimate Father-son relationship is achieved only on occasion. "I will be to him a father, and he will be to me a son (IISam. 7:14). When? When he is busy with Torah...."[54] When Israel works toward achieving it, only then do they deserve to be termed sons.

By far the most widely used model, however, is that of the unconditional love of parent for child, of Father for son. A variety of shades

of expression are present. In some places the impression is given that God's love for Israel is constant; they just receive a scolding from time to time.

> To what may this be likened? To a king's son whose father ordered him to go to school. He, however, went into the street and began to play with other boys. When his father got to know that he had not been to school he upbraided him and gave him a good scolding. Afterwards, however, he told him, "Wash your hands and come and dine with me." So it was with Isaiah. He first says, "Children I have reared and brought up, and they have rebelled," etc. (Is. 1:2), but when he finishes with the subject, what does he say? "Come now, and let us reason together" (ib. 18).[55]

And so also Schechter cites a passage in Sifre "as a proof that even corruption cannot entirely destroy the natural relation between father and child."[56]

On the other hand, sometimes the resumption of normal, loving relations requires a bit more, for example, Israel's repentance:

> Thus Israel angered the Holy One, blessed be He, and He called Isaiah and said to him: Write that I deny my sons. He began to write (Is. 1), "Hear, O heavens," etc. Why do I deny them? Because they angered Me: "Children I have reared and brought up," etc. "The ox knows its owner," etc. After awhile Israel sought the Holy One, blessed be He, and He received them. The same mouth which said "and they sinned against Me," (Is. 1) also said, "I wipe away your sins like a cloud," etc. (Is. 44:22), and received them. As it is said, "Return to Me and I shall redeem you."[57]

Schechter also brings to our attention this same attitude on the part of the liturgy:

> When R. Akiba, in a time of great distress, opened the public service with the formula, "Our father, our king, we have sinned against thee; our father, our king, forgive us," he only expressed the view of the great majority, that Israel may claim their filial privileges even if they have sinned.[58]

Rather than Israel's repentance, the agency employed to resume relations may be intercession on their behalf by the prophets. A passage in Exodus Rabbah represents them as saying, "Just as a father has mercy on his children though they have sinned, so must Thou have mercy on them."[59]

The classic juxtaposition of the two views of God's love for Israel -- conditional and unconditional -- occurs in Kiddushin:

> "Ye are sons of the Lord your God;" when you behave as sons you are designated sons; if you do not behave as sons, you are not designated sons: this is R. Judah's view. R. Meir said: In both cases you are called sons, for it is said, "they are sottish children" (Jer. IV, 22); and it is also said, "They are children in whom is no faith" (Deut. XXXII, 20); and it is also said, "a seed of evil-doers, sons that deal corruptly" (Isa. I, 4); and it is said, "and it shall come to pass that, in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God" (Hos. 2:1). Why give these additional quotations? -- For should you reply, only when foolish are they designated sons, but not when they lack faith -- then come and hear: And it is said, "They are sons in whom is no faith." And should you say, when they have no faith they are called sons, but when they serve idols they are not called sons -- then come and hear: And it is said, "a seed of evil-doers, sons that deal corruptly." And should you say, they are indeed called sons that act corruptly, but not good sons -- then come and hear: And it is said, "and it shall come to pass...."[60]

In summary, the range of rabbinic response to the appellation of "son" is wide. It varies from changing the metaphor to a simile -- <u>like</u> a son -- to interpreting the metaphor -- "exalted," "beloved" -- to examining the nature of the human father-son relationship and applying it to Israel and God.

By use of analogy, Aphrahat has claimed legitimacy for the Christian

use of "son of God" with reference to Jesus. But beyond the analogy to other biblical personalities, he has not developed the concept of what it means to be God's son. Later in his exposition, he argues that all humans are properly God's children, since God gave birth to Adam.

It is difficult to compare the two. The Rabbis try to explore the real meaning of being God's son. Aphrahat settles for relative superficiality and never asserts (here) the Christian claim that Jesus was more than another human being, that he was God's son in a more literal sense.

OTHER TITLES

Just as God has granted the use of His name ('elohim) to human beings, so too has He granted the use of some of His other appellations. Among these Aphrahat mentions "King" and "Father." He cites Jer. 27:8 in which Nebuchadnezzar is called "king" and Ps. 45:17 in which the term "fathers" clearly refers to men. His view is that God is the primary possessor of these names (and attributes). When people were created, He allowed them to borrow not only these titles but the very characteristics they represent.

The effect of this seems to be that human beings are seen as acting in a kind of "imitatio dei." People who copy one of God's roles -- that of Ruler or Parent -- are permitted also to copy God's name -- king or father.

The Rabbis also comment on these two verses, although their points of departure are in some cases altogether different. As regards

Nebuchadnezzar's sovereignty, they take it for granted; it is assumed. The comments are limited to establishing two points: 1) that Nebuchadnezzar's jurisdiction included the entire world; and 2) that Nebuchadnezzar was a human king to whom service but not worship was due.

Several texts illustrate the first point. A representative one is that found in b. Megillah:

> Our Rabbis taught: Three ruled over the whole globe, namely, Ahab, Ahasuerus and Nebuchadnezzar, as it is written: "And it shall come to pass that the nation and the kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon...."[61]

The second idea is found in Lev. R.:

> R. Samuel b. Nahmani said another thing. Nebuchadnezzar said to them: "Did not in fact Moses write down for you in the Torah: 'And there (in exile) ye shall serve gods the work of men's hands'" (Deut. IV, 28)? They replied: "Your Majesty! This service does not mean worship but service in taxes, annonae, fines, and poll-taxes." For R. Samuel b. Nahman explained that there (in Babylon) they call kings gods. Our Rabbis made one observation. Nebuchadnezzar said to them: "Did not Jeremiah in fact write down for you that 'The nation and the kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar...that nation will I visit,' saith the Lord, 'with the sword'" (Jer. XXVII, 8)? He said to them: "Either you fulfil the first part of this sentence or I shall fulfil the last part." Thereupon "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered and said to king Nebuchadnezzar" (Dan. III, 16). (If he is called "king" why describe him also as "Nebuchadnezzar" and if "Nebuchadnezzar" why "king?" They could only have meant:) You are our "king" only as regards taxes, annonae, fines, and poll-taxes, but in this matter of which you speak to us you are just "Nebuchadnezzar" and your name is simply "Nebuchadnezzar."[62]

R. Samuel b. Nahman's explanation is of note here. It must be observed that Aphrahat quotes the text of Jer. 27:8 as "Nebuchadnezzar,

king of kings." None of the standard texts as presently used (Hebrew Bible, Peshitta, Septuagint, Targum) varies from the rabbinic citation, "Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon." Duncan has suggested[63] that Aphrahat takes advantage of the text as he has it to aim his polemic, briefly, at the state religion which saw the Persian king as a god. Aphrahat reminds his Christian readers that the king -- whom the Persians call "king of kings" -- is no god, is not to be worshipped, and is king only by God's permission.

Without the use of the term "king of kings," R. Samuel b. Naḥman reminds the Palestinian Rabbis of this deification of the kings "there" -- in Babylon -- and that this concept underlies the midrash. Perhaps it also underlies the origin of the rabbinic name for God, the King of the kings of kings (מלך מלכי המלכים).[64]

In using Ps. 45:17 the Rabbis again assume that "fathers" and "sons" are strictly in the human realm. The simple meaning of the text is used throughout. The question the Rabbis seek to answer is, In what cases do sons replace fathers? In several cases the question involves civil litigation.[65] Aggadically, Song of Songs Rabbah reads:

> ...it is written, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy sons" (Ps. XLV, 17). You find cases of a righteous man begetting a righteous, a wicked man begetting a wicked, a righteous man begetting a wicked, and a wicked man begetting a righteous; and each finds confirmation in a verse of Scripture, in a popular proverb, and in a figure of speech.... Solomon, however, was a king son of a king, a wise man son of a wise man, a righteous man son of a righteous man, a nobleman son of a nobleman....[66]

There is no argument here with Aphrahat concerning the intent of the text to speak of human beings. But the whole underlying fabric which Aphrahat expresses is missing from the rabbinic material. For Aphrahat, God is the King par excellence, the preeminent Father, by whose grace alone mortals may be granted these traits. The Rabbis at times seem to be aware that such traits are human, applied to God for want of better expressions. In a word, they are sometimes aware of their anthropomorphisms. A brief aside on the use of anthropomorphisms by the Rabbis is in line here.

On one hand, the rabbinic literature reflects a tremendous amount of anthropomorphizing. Schechter has summarized:

> A great number of scriptural passages, when considered in the light of rabbinic interpretation, represent nothing else but a record of a sort of Imitatio hominis on the part of God. He acts as best man at the wedding of Adam and Eve; he mourns over the world like a father over the death of his son when the sins of ten generations make its destruction by the deluge imminent; he visits Abraham on his sickbed; he condoles with Isaac after the death of Abraham; he "himself in his glory" is occupied in doing the last honours to Moses, who would otherwise have remained unburied, as no man knew his grave; he teaches Torah to Israel, and to this very day he keeps school in heaven for those who died in their infancy; he prays himself, and teaches Israel how to pray; he argues with Abraham the case of Sodom and Gomorrah not only on equal terms, but tells him, If thou thinkest I acted unworthily, teach me and I will do so. Like man he also feels, so to speak, embarrassed in the presence of the conceited and overbearing and says, I and the proud cannot dwell in the same place.[67]

Loewe, in A Rabbinic Anthology, puts forward two explanations for this kind of expression. First, he suggests that many of the Rabbis were "simple folk" and dealt with "simple folk."[68] Second, he writes:

> The apparent flippancy (of a particular anthropomorphic reference) is not due to any rabbinic lack of deep reverence for God or of fervent love; it may rather be said that this very reverence and love produced a certain intimate familiarity, which may be compared to the familiarity of a loving son who is on very intimate terms with his father, and can even make jokes about him to his face.[69]

Loewe admits, however, that at times the Rabbis are aware enough of this tendency to tone down their comments with "such caveats as Kebayakol ('If it be proper to say so...')."[70]

It is also of interest that the Targum consistently goes to some length to avoid certain anthropomorphisms.[71] In the Targum "God" is not seen, but rather "the glory of God" is seen; it is not God who dwells, but the Shekhinah or Memra, etc. Jacobs suggests that the use of "the Omnipresent" (המקום) is also an attempt on the part of the Rabbis to avoid humanizing God.[72]

The literature is occasionally quite direct. For example:

> It says: "Command the children of Israel that they bring unto thee pure olive oil for the light" (Lev. XXIV, 2). God says: "For thee, Moses, not for me, God. I need no light.[73]

But none of these efforts is consistent, or thorough. The Targum leaves in some and takes out some. The Rabbis sometimes confront the illegitimacy of anthropomorphisms and sometimes do not.

It has been seen that Aphrahat and the Rabbis share an awareness of the deification of Persian monarchs. Beyond this, their respective views of the descriptive titles that humans share with God are entirely unrelated. Aphrahat sees humans as borrowing from God that which is Divine. The Rabbis often see themselves addressing God in strictly

human terms.

REVERENCE FOR HUMAN BEINGS

Having discussed the use of several of God's titles on the part of human beings, Aphrahat follows with a qualification. He quotes from Deut. 4:19 to remind his reader that while individuals may carry these names, they do not thereby become eligible to be worshipped. At most, they may be revered, respected for the authority they wield, but one should keep in mind that it is God who has lent them this authority.

God has placed the divine name upon Jesus[74] and the Christians worship him. Aphrahat quotes the Jewish argument, "You worship and serve a begotten man, a crucified person."[75] In defense he responds that at least Jesus has brought the pagans to worship the one God:

> ...we ought to worship and honor Jesus who turned our obstinate minds from all false worship and made us know that we should revere, worship and serve the one God, our Father and our Maker.[76]

In contrast, some kings name themselves gods (rather than having God label them), and expect to be worshipped. Aphrahat now turns to the offensive and points a finger at Daniel's worship of Nebuchadnezzar and Joseph's of Pharaoh, insisting that they have not been punished in any way for such behavior. And this, despite the biblical view that both kings were evil, and saw themselves as gods over their respective subjects, compelling worship of themselves. Therefore, Christian worship of Jesus and, through him, of God is surely not punishable. It is noteworthy that Aphrahat brings no prooftexts to this argument. There

seems to be no scriptural basis for his remarks.

The Rabbis understood Deut. 4:19 just as Aphrahat did: as a warning against idolatry. Their stand against such worship is stated quite strongly in the following midrash on Ex. 20:4:

> "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image." He shall not make one that is engraven. But perhaps he may make one that is solid? Scripture says: "Nor any manner of likeness." He shall not make a solid one. But perhaps he may plant a plant as an idol for himself? Scripture says: "Thou shalt not plant thee an Asherah" (Deut. 16.21). He shall not plant a plant for an idol to himself. But perhaps he may make an idol of a tree? Scripture says: "Of any kind of tree" (ibid.). He shall not make an idol of a tree. But perhaps he may make one of stone? Scripture says: "Neither shall ye place any figured stone," etc. (Lev. 26.1). He shall not make an idol of stone. But perhaps he may make one of silver or of gold? Scripture says: "Gods of silver or gods of gold ye shall not make unto you" (Ex. 20.20). He shall not make an idol of silver or of gold. But perhaps he may make one of copper, iron, tin, or lead? Scripture says: "nor make to yourselves molten gods" (Lev. 19.4). He shall not make for himself any of these images. But perhaps he may make an image of any figure? Scripture says: "Lest ye deal corruptly, and make you a graven image, even the form of any figure" (Deut. 4.16). He shall not make an image of any figure. But perhaps he may make an image of cattle, or fowl? Scripture says: "The likeness of any winged fowl" (ibid., v. 17). He shall not make an image of any of these. But perhaps he may make an image of fish, locust, unclean animals, or reptiles? Scripture says: "The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water" (ibid., v. 18). He shall not make an image of any of these. But perhaps he may make an image of the sun, the moon, the stars or the planets? Scripture says: "And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven," etc. (ibid., v. 19). He shall not make an image of any of these.[77]

In one midrash, Deut. 4:19 is interpreted as referring specifically to astrology.[78] In another, it is pointed out that the verse has been slightly reworded in the Septuagint to emphasize its anti-idolatry stance.[79]

It is difficult to follow up Aphrahat's charge of the worship of human

kings by Daniel and Joseph since he supplies no prooftexts. It is clear that the Rabbis understood that Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar considered themselves gods. Note the following:

> Pharaoh was one of four men who claimed divinity and thereby brought evil upon themselves. These were: Hiram, Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, and Joash, King of Judah.... How do we know that Nebuchadnezzar claimed divinity? Because it says: "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High (Isa. XIV, 14). God replied to him: "Yet thou shalt be brought down to the nether-world, to the uttermost parts of the pit" (ib.). What did God do unto him? He exiled him into the wilderness while he was still on his throne and fed him on grass like the beasts, as it says: "And he did eat grass as oxen" (Dan. IV, 30).... Whence do we know that Pharaoh claimed to be a god? Because it says: "My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself" (Ezek. XXIX, 3). God delivered him into the hands of his enemies, as it says: "Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra King of Egypt into the hands of his enemies" (Jer. XLIV, 30)....[80]

This interpretation thus also makes clear the view of the Rabbis that God did not accept such presumptions.

The Book of Esther and the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in Dan. 3 serve as biblical statements against idolatry. The Rabbis depend on these and other sources to base their very firm position against the legitimacy of human worship of other humans. They apparently find nothing on which to base a view such as Aphrahat's that Jews can be seen worshipping human kings. The rabbinic stance against idolatrous practice is so strong that support can hardly be expected for Aphrahat's suggestion that Jesus may be seen as the means to an end, even that of worshipping the one God.

THE MIDRASH

In the middle of his argument concerning the reverence of human beings for one another, Aphrahat injects a lengthy midrash to show the exalted place of humans in God's creation. His pretext is the reconciliation of Lev. 26:12 and Ps. 90:1-2. He interprets Ps. 90:1-2 to read that God was a dwelling place for the human prior to the very creation of the world. Yet any reader of the Bible knows that Adam was the last thing to be created. So Aphrahat resolves the puzzle: God conceived of Adam first and this conception dwelt with God while the world was being created. Last of all Adam was created into this new world. Adam, being primary in creation, is thus deserving of authority over the rest of creation. God granted him this authority, but (just a reminder) God is "forever and ever."

Adam no longer dwelt in God's mind, but God may now dwell in the human mind. This occurs only among those who recognize God as their Maker. This is concretized by the verse from Jeremiah, "You are the Lord's temple."

Several conclusions are drawn: 1) it is only by God's permission that mortals have authority, 2) they are granted that authority because they were first to be created, 3) they are considered as any other creature unless they recognize God as Creator, 4) since God conceived and gave birth to Adam, He is the Father, and any individual, including Jesus, is rightly called His son.

The Rabbis, too, are bothered by the words of Lev. 26:12. What is the meaning, they ask, of "I shall walk among you?" Onkelos, as might be predicted from the comments above, reads, "I will make my Shekinah to dwell among you."[81] In some cases, the question asked is, "Under what circumstances will God walk among us?" The answers are brief and varied. According to Shir HaShirim Zuta:

> Israel shall welcome the Shekhinah and it will stay with them in the land, as it is said, "I shall walk among you" (Lev. 26:12).[82]

Aboth de Rabbi Nathan interprets the verse twice:

> He used to say: "If you will come to my house, I will go to your house." This refers to Israel which leaves its silver and gold and ascends to Jerusalem to celebrate the three pilgrimage feasts; the Shekinah descends upon them and blesses them, as Scripture says: "And I will walk among you, and will be your God...(Lev. 26:12)."[83]

and:

> The Shekinah goes around from one to another of the scholars who sit studying and blesses them, as Scripture says: "And I will walk among you...(Lev. 26:12)."[84]

And Pesikta Rabbati offers:

> ..."When shall I find myself reconciled to thee, that I may comfort thee?" (Lam 2:13). When I find Myself reconciled to thee, then I shall say "I will walk among you, and be your God, and ye shall be My people" (Lev. 26:12) -- then I shall comfort you, I in my own glory will come and comfort you: "I even I, am He that comforteth you."[85]

All of these -- at least potentially -- are in this world. However, two excerpts respond to a different query, that of When will God walk among us? They respond by speaking, in one case, of the world-to-come and, in another, of the time following the resurrection. Aggadat

Bereishit points to the Garden of Eden:

> So in this world all enter through a single gate, the righteous and the wicked as one, (Eccl. 9:2) "There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." But in the world to come, the righteous are in the Garden of Eden, as it is said, (Ps. 118:2) "This is the gate of the Lord, the righteous[86] shall enter into it." And so David says, (ib., 116:9) "I shall walk before the Lord in the lands of the living," this is the Garden of Eden; if one might say so, as if the Holy One walks about with them, as it is said, (Lev. 26:12) "And I shall walk among them..."[87]

Here, the author is certainly aware of the anthropomorphism inherent in the verse which is, thus, toned down by "if one might say so." The conclusion to be drawn from the midrash is that God walks only among the righteous in the Garden of Eden.

On the other hand, an excerpt from Tanhuma Buber almost serves to emphasize the anthropomorphism. How is it that all those who are to be resurrected will fit into Jerusalem? This midrash describes God as enlarging Jerusalem until it reaches the heavens, until it reaches all seven levels of heaven, until it actually reaches the Throne of Glory. And then:

> Since it reaches the Throne of Glory, the Holy One says to them, "I and you shall walk in the world, as it is said, 'And I shall walk among you'" (Lev. 26:12).[88]

Aphrahat puts forth the idea that God will dwell with anyone who makes him/herself a Temple of the Lord by becoming cognizant of the Creator. In one sense, the rabbinic literature holds out similar conditional promises, but they are couched in different terms. If one welcomes the Shekhinah, if one is a scholar, if one goes to Jerusalem for the pilgrimages, if one is righteous and goes to the Garden of Eden, then God

"will walk with you." Interestingly, however, none of the midrashim uses conditional language in any form.

Aphrahat's use of Jeremiah 7:4 depends on his joining it to verse 5. The Hebrew text reads, "...'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these,' (5) but if you amend your ways..." The Peshitta text, however, punctuates differently, reading, "...the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, (5) the temple of the Lord are you, if you amend your ways...." This seems to be the sense Aphrahat has of the text as well. The text is sufficiently different for the two to interpret them with no points of contact. This is especially so since the majority of rabbinic comments are in halkhic contexts.

Before exploring the rabbinic literature which cites Ps. 90:1-2, it may be helpful to reproduce the verses, along with verse 3:

> [1]A prayer of Moses, the man of God.
>
> O Lord, You have been our dwelling-place in every generation.
> [2]Before the mountains came into being,
> before You brought forth the earth and the world,
> [3]from eternity to eternity You are God
> You turn man to contrition
> You decreed, "Return you mortals!"

Aphrahat uses the last half of verse 1 together with the first half of verse 2 to interpret, in effect, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in every generation, EVEN before the mountains came into being, before You brought forth the earth and the world."

The Rabbis do use the first part of verse 1 but not in conjunction with

the remainder of the first verse. These comments do not seem to have any bearing on Aphrahat and, therefore, will not be considered below.

A typically rabbinic view is expressed in b. Megillah:

> Raba gave the following exposition: What is the meaning of the verse, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place?" This refers to synagogues and houses of learning.[89]

Two other comments take the verse quite seriously and deal with the issue at hand. In Genesis Rabbah a real theological problem is answered by interpreting this verse as applying to both the past and the present:

> R. Jose b. Halafta said: We do not know whether God is the place of His world or whether His world is His place, but from the verse, "Behold, there is a place with Me" (Ex. XXXIII, 21), it follows that the Lord is the place of His world, but His world is not His place. R. Isaac said: It is written, "The eternal God is a dwelling-place" (Deut. XXXIII, 27); now we do not know whether the Holy One, blessed be He, is the dwelling-place of His world or whether His world is His dwelling-place. But from the text, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place" (Ps. XC, 1), it follows that the Lord is the dwelling-place of His world but His world is not His dwelling-place.[90]

The Midrash on Psalms retains the original tense of the verb and thus reads:

> "Remember Thy congregation, which Thou didst make Thine own of old" (Ps. 74:2). What does the phrase "of old" prove? That before the world was created, the Holy One, blessed be He, had made the children of Israel His own, as is said "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world" (Ps. 90:1-2).[91]

Here is the first mention, not of premundane creation as per Aphrahat, but of <u>something</u> occurring prior to creation. Also of note is the use of the second half of verse 1, combined with the first half of verse 2, to yield a new interpretation of both. In this case, the Rabbis ignore the connection

between the beginning and end of the second verse, just as Aphrahat did.

The concept of premundane creation is not missing, however, from the rabbinic literature. It is fully developed in the comments on Ps. 90:2. For each tradition there are several parallels with slight variations.[92] Only two are reproduced below. The more common[93] is that found in b. Pesaḥim:

> Seven things were created before the world was created, and these are they: The Torah, repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, the Throne of Glory, the Temple and the name of the Messiah. The Torah, for it is written, "The Lord made me (sc. the Torah) as the beginning of his way. Repentance, for it is written, "Before the mountains were brought forth," and it is written, "Thou turnest man to contrition, and sayest, Repent, ye children of men,..."

The more interesting of the two, with regard to Aphrahat, is that found in Gen. R.:

> "In the beginning God created." Six things preceded the creation of the world; some of them were actually created, while the creation of the others was already contemplated. The Torah and the Throne of Glory were created. The Torah, for it is written, "The Lord made me as the beginning of His way, prior to His works of old" (Prov. VIII, 22). The Throne of Glory, as it is written, "Thy throne is established of old," etc. (Ps. XCIII, 2). The creation of the Patriarchs was contemplated, for it is written, "I saw your fathers as the first-ripe in the fig-tree at her first season" (Hos. IX, 10). (The creation of) Israel was contemplated, as it is written, "Remember Thy congregation, which Thou has gotten aforetime" (Ps. LXXXII, 17). R. Ahabah b. R. Ze'ira said: Repentance too, as it is written, "Before the mountains were brought forth." etc. (ib., XC, 2), and from that very moment, "Thou turnest man to contrition and sayest: Repent, ye children of men" (ib., 3).[94]

It is worth making careful note that according to this tradition two items were actually created, the rest only contemplated. Of the two which were actually created, neither was human in form.

Aphrahat has concluded that since Adam was first in creation he received the power of authority over the rest of creation. While the Rabbis do not deny the human dominion of God's creation, they would not have accepted Aphrahat's reasoning. On the contrary:

> Moses said to the sea: Didst thou not declare: I shall not be divided, and now thou fleest? "What aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleest?" (Ps. 114:5). The sea replied: In truth, it is not seemly that I be divided at thy command, for I was created on the third day, as it is said "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered" (Gen. 1:9); and further on, "There was evening, and there was morning, a third day" (ibid., 1:13), whereas thou wast created on the sixth day, as it is said "And God said: 'Let us make man'" (ibid., 1:26), "And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day" (ibid., 1:31). Accordingly, it is not because of the power of thy presence that I withdraw and flee, but "because of the presence of the Lord who formed the earth" (Ps. 114:7) -- that is, because of the presence of the Lord who created the earth, of whom it is written "Thou hadst formed the earth and the world" (Ps. 90:2);[95]

It has been seen that the Rabbis, in contrast to Aphrahat, do not attribute human primacy to the creation of the human prior to any other creation. While they do use the same verses as Aphrahat and sometimes appear to answer the same queries, the responses of the Rabbis take them in very different directions.

Both are concerned with the infallibility of Scripture. The Bible must be logical and consistent. Apparent illogic or inconsistency must be resolved. Only a careful and thorough knowledge of the text can make this possible. Aphrahat and the Rabbis certainly have this kind of knowledge in common.

Gavin discusses this midrash at length, comparing many of its ele-

ments to rabbinic literature.[96] While there is some significance in seeming similarities, Gavin ignores some of the profound differences pointed out above. Moreover, nowhere is the language of the two identical. In an age of oral tradition and learning through recitation and memorization, it appears unlikely that some of the wording would not be the same if dependence had in fact transpired.

ii

The first half of Aphrahat's exposition is predicated on the phrase "Even were we to grant them that he is a person...." Jesus is compared to other biblical personalities for the purpose of turning the Jewish contentions back to their protagonists. This first part is aimed at demonstrating that Jesus is the son of God just as others are sons of God.

In the second half Aphrahat turns to portraying the uniqueness of Jesus, who alone is the Messiah. It is he and no other who has fulfilled the predictions made by the prophets. Some of the verses upon which he depends yield such conventional Christian interpretations that they already appear in the Gospel(s), such as Zech. 14:7 . Some were used early on by the Greek Church. Some are apparently unique to Aphrahat or his tradition.

The argument is well structured. First, the birth of the Messiah is shown. Then a refutation of Jewish thought is presented. Finally, Aphrahat goes through the passion and crucifixion, backing each point

with a prooftext brought from Jewish Scripture.

Texts from Psalms and Isaiah are said to have predicted the birth of the Messiah Jesus. The reader's knowledge of the Gospel account is assumed, as the texts are never produced as explicit proofs.

Aphrahat quotes the Jews as arguing that the Messiah has not yet come. His first response is to accept this temporarily and to point out that there is no sin in having believed in the Messiah even though he may not have actually come (before he has actually come). His second response is to argue that the Jews' hope for national redemption and for the reestablishment of Jerusalem in the time of the Messiah is a contradiction of the obviously eschatological view in Dan. 9:26.

Aphrahat depends on by now familiar texts to show that Jesus' passion was foreseen. The verses are taken from the Songs of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah, from Psalms and from Zechariah. Again, the reader's knowledge of the Gospel story is assumed and New Testament texts are not brought in explicitly.

For the Rabbis, some of the verses used by Aphrahat are so unimportant that not a single comment is made upon them. Some of the remarks on the texts which <u>are</u> used do not touch on messianic concepts at all. The discussion below has been limited to the rabbinic literature which may potentially have some bearing on Aphrahat's argumentation.

<u>BIRTH</u>

Aphrahat points to Ps. 2:7, 110:3, Is. 9:5-6 and 7:14 as predictions

concerning the birth of Jesus. Not surprisingly, the Rabbis have nothing relevant to say about Ps. 110:3, since their text apparently read differently.[96]

The Rabbis bring only one pertinent comment on Ps. 2:7:

> Our Rabbis taught, The Holy One, blessed be He, will say to the Messiah, the son of David (May he reveal himself speedily in our days!), "Ask of me anything, and I will give it to thee," as it is said, "I will tell of the decree" etc. "this day have I begotten thee, ask of me and I will give the nations for thy inheritance" (Ps. 2:7-8). But when he will see that the Messiah the son of Joseph is slain, he will say to Him, "Lord of the Universe, I ask of Thee only the gift of life." "As to life," He would answer him, "Your father David has already prophesied this concerning you," as it is said, "He asked life of thee, thou gavest it him (even length of days forever and ever)" (Ps. 21:5).[98]

Ironically, the text is not used to speak of the birth of the Messiah, as in Aphrahat's comments, but of the rebirth of the Messiah ben Joseph. In fact, the verse seems almost a pretext to discuss the relationship between the Messiah ben Joseph and the Messiah ben David, the only information imparted here being that the Messiah ben Joseph is destined to be killed before or at the advent of the Messiah ben David. The text could conceivably be seen as an indirect polemic against the Christian assertion that the verse has already been fulfilled, although there seems no inherent reason to believe that this is so.

In examining Is. 7:14, the inevitable question concerning the problematic translation of "young woman" or "virgin" arises. It is curious that Aphrahat may already have had a Syriac text which read "virgin" (ܒܬܘܠܬܐ), as the present Peshitta text does. Of course for the Rabbis, there is no issue. The only reference of interest to the verse

from rabbinic thought mentions Hezekiah:

> Israel and Hezekiah sat that night and recited the Hallel, for it was Passover, yet were in terror lest at any moment Jerusalem might fall at his (Sennacherib's) hand. When they arose early in the morning to recite the shema' and pray, they found their enemies dead corpses; for this reason did God say to Isaiah: "Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz (he speedeth to the spoil, he hasteth to the prey)" (Isa. VIII, 3), and he did indeed hasten to plunder their spoil. Another called him "Immanuel," that is, "I will be with him," (ib. VII, 14), as it says: "With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God" (IIChron. XXXII, 8).[99]

As will be shown below, Hezekiah serves as a nearly messianic figure in some rabbinic thought.

In contrast to these scanty allusions, the Rabbis were more expansive in their interest in Is. 9:5-6. The most direct denial of Aphrahat's explanation is found in Deut. R., "He said to him: 'I have yet to raise up the Messiah,' of whom it is written, 'For a child is born to us'" (Isa. IX, 5).[100] Without referring to the actual Messiah, but only to what will happen in that time, Gen. R. comments:

> In that hour the Lord will requite the nations of the world with a great and ceaseless retribution, and hurl them down to the Gehenna, where they will be judged (punished) for generations upon generations, as it says, "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men," etc. (ib. LXVI, 24). And why will all this happen? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, has set a limit to the sufferings of the righteous in the world. Then will the time have arrived for the endless retribution of the wicked and the end of the sufferings of the righteous, which sufferings He will revoke from the world, as it says, "He setteth an end to darkness" (Job XXVIII, 3). What does this mean? Said R. Johanan: It alludes to the righteous, who in this world are like one sitting in darkness and gloom. In that hour the Holy One, blessed be He, will render to the righteous reward without end and without limit. Happy are the righteous who increase Torah (learning) and pursue peace for Israel, for they are requited for their labour with a limitless and endless re-

> ward for all eternity, as it says, "That government (of Torah) may be increased, and of peace there be no end" (Isa. IX, 6).[101]

Yet, in the same source Is. 9:5 is applied to Hezekiah; "of Hezekiah too six virtues are recorded: 'And his name is called, Wonderful, Counsellor, Prince, Mighty, Everlasting father, Prince of peace'" (Isa. IX, 5.)[102]

Along similar lines, Pesikta Rabbati reads:

> Gabriel's place at the east, corresponds to that of Moses and Aaron and of the kingdom of the house of David. And why is he called Gabriel, a name made up of the words Gabri ("My means whereby I prevail") and 'El ("God")? Because it is written of Judah "For Judah prevailed (gabar) above his brethren (I Chron. 5:2), and it is also written of a scion of Judah "And his name is called 'Wonderful in counsel is the God the Mighty ('El Gibbor)'" (Isa. 9:5).[103]

It is unclear whether the allusion here is to Hezekiah or to the Messiah. This issue is brought into focus by the following excerpt:

> "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." R. Tanḥum said: Bar Ḳappara expounded in Sepphoris, Why is every mem in the middle of a word open, whilst this is closed? -- The Holy One, blessed be He, wished to appoint Hezekiah as the Messiah, and Sennacherib as Gog and Magog; whereupon the Attribute of Justice said before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Sovereign of the Universe! If Thou didst not make David the Messiah, who uttered so many hymns and psalms before Thee, wilt Thou appoint Hezekiah as such, who did not hymn Thee in spite of all these miracles which Thou wroughtest for him?" Therefore it (sc. the mem) was closed (and God's will revoked).[104]

Hezekiah served as a nearly messianic figure in rabbinic thinking. Aphrahat does not challenge this concept, and the suggestion must be put forth that he was unfamiliar with it. No conclusion, however, may be reached from this argument out of silence. Some of the texts used by Aphrahat as predictions of the birth of Jesus are used to convey

rabbinic concepts concerning messianism. However, for the Rabbis, these texts point either toward the past, to Hezekiah who was not the Messiah, or toward the future to an as-yet-unidentified Messiah.

JEWISH RESPONSE

Aphrahat understands the end of Gen. 49:10 to refer to the Messiah. Several translations of the words לו יקהת העמים are possible: "the peoples will bring tidings of him," or "the peoples will hear him," that is, "the peoples will obey him," or "the obedience of the peoples will be unto him." No matter what Aphrahat's precise interpretation, for him the term "the peoples" must refer to the Church,[105] and so also the "him" must be Jesus.

For the Rabbis, the whole context of Gen. 49:10 lends itself to messianic interpretation, since it speaks of the eternal national rule of the tribe of Judah. Since most Jewish thought held that the Messiah would once again bring national independence and would be of the tribe of Judah, from the House of David, Jacob's blessing of his son was easily rendered in this light.

The Targum goes so far as to actually insert the term into the verse:

> He who exerciseth dominion shall not pass away from the house of Jehuda, nor the saphra from his children's children forever, until the Meshiha come, whose is the kingdom, and whom the peoples shall obey.[106]

In a phrase by phrase commentary, Gen. R. yields:

> "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah" (Gen. XLIX, 10): this refers to the throne of kingship -- "The throne given of God is forever and ever; a sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy king-

> dom (Ps. XLV, 7). When will that be? -- "Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet": when he comes of whom it is written, "The crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot" (Isa. XXVIII, 3).
>
> "Until Shiloh cometh": he to whom kingship belongs (shelo).
>
> "And unto him shall the obedience (yiḳhas) of the peoples be." This alludes to him who will set on edge (maḳheh) the teeth of all the nations, as it says: "The nations shall see and be put to shame for all their might; they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf" (Micah VII, 16). Another interpretation of, "And unto him shall the obedience (yiḳhas) of the peoples be" -- Him to whom the nations of the world will flock (miṭḳahalin), as it says, "The root of Jesse, that standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek" (Isa. XI, 10).[107]

Finally, in b. Sanh. this remark is found, "What is his (the Messiah's) name? -- The School of R. Shila said: His name is Shiloh, for it is written, 'until Shiloh come.'"[108]

It appears that Aphrahat and the Rabbis both interpreted parts of Gen. 49:10 in messianic terms. Two differences may be seen. First, the Rabbis do not depend solely upon the last three words of the verse. Second, it is clear that the Rabbis do not see the fulfillment of this prediction in Jesus. On the other hand, they do not appear to challenge the Christian belief in the least. Neither the tone nor the vocabulary suggests that theirs are any more than typical explications of Scripture.

Aphrahat produces Dan. 9:26 not to show that Jesus the Messiah has come, but to challenge the entire Jewish messianic idea. He outlines the Jewish belief concerning kibbutz galuyot (ingathering of the exiles) to a rebuilt Jerusalem. But Daniel, he insists, has already contradicted that expectation by predicting not the rebuilding but the destruction

of Jerusalem.

The Rabbis do not respond to this interpretation in any way. There are no comments. Neusner makes some pertinent remarks:

> The single most striking difference between Aphrahat and rabbis was on Daniel 9. Here Aphrahat offered a concrete timetable of redemption, proving that Daniel had foretold both the redemption of Israel and its ultimate rejection. Obviously Aphrahat came at the end of a series of those who attempted to interpret in concrete historical events the meaning of Daniel's vision. The Palestinian rabbis had long since rejected all such efforts to calculate the end of time, vigorously opposing anyone who claimed to know when the Messiah would come. But they did so not in response to Christianity. They were concerned with the recurrence of the tragedy of Bar Kokhba's time, when many Jews including important rabbis believed Bar Kokhba was a Messiah and followed him to a terribly destructive war.... If Aphrahat had argued with the rabbis about the meaning of Daniel, he probably would not have found an equivalent contrary view, for we have no rabbinical calculation of the coming of the Messiah or the meaning of the weeks of Daniel similar to Aphrahat's. The rabbis would have said that Daniel as read by Aphrahat was simply wrong, for obvious reasons, and that the true meaning of Daniel's vision would only be known when it was fulfilled.[109]

The two verses in this portion of his argument have been employed by Aphrahat to confront Jewish concepts head on. And it is here that the widest divergence of thought can be seen between Aphrahat and the Rabbis. Neusner has used the respective interpretations of Gen. 49:10 to emphasize this point:

> To the rabbis it was unthinkable that gentiles had taken, or could take, the place of Israel in the divine plan. Israel was chosen of old, and the mark of her chosenness was providential punishment for her sins, as Yoḥanan ben Zakkai had said at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. Just as God was sufficiently concerned with Israel to punish sin, so he could be relied on to reward her repentence and in the end of days to restore her fortunes. Scriptures central to Aphrahat's arguments, e. g., Gen. 49:10..., were not interpreted in response to Christian assertions, but quite apart from them. Gen. 49:10

> referred to the patriarchs and exilarchs; but even if, as in the school of R. Shila, one understood the Scripture to refer to the coming Messiah, it could not be turned to the Christian's advantage. That Abraham was the father of many nations moreover posed no problem to the rabbinical exegetes. The many gentile nations were just that -- gentiles -- and they were not the "people which is of the peoples." God did not reject Israel and form a new people, but he forgave the old and would in time call all peoples. Within that paradigm, all Scriptures employed by Aphrahat could be satisfactorily interpreted by the rabbis.
>
> We again note the parallel tendency of Aphrahat and the rabbis to see things pretty much in their own terms.... The respective interpretations do not merely differ; they are completely unrelated...[110]

THE PASSION

In the remaining discussion, Aphrahat depends heavily, although not exclusively, upon verses from Psalms, the Songs of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah, and Zechariah. As Neusner has commented:

> ... Aphrahat remains well within the conventional Christian reading of Is. 53, Ps. 22, Zech. 13, and other Hebrew Scriptures understood by the Church to refer to Jesus, his life, passion, and resurrection.[111]

Only a few of the verses yield any rabbinic commentary worthy of note.

The first part of Is. 52:13 brings this remark in Midrash Tanhuma:

> And it is written, "Whoever you are, O great mountain in the path of Zerubbabel, turn into level ground" (Zech. 4:7). What is the meaning of "Whoever you are, O great mountain?" This is the King Messiah. Why is he called "great mountain?" For he is greater than the Patriarchs, as it is said, "Indeed, My servant shall prosper, be exalted and be raised to great heights" (Is. 52:13); "He shall prosper" more than Abraham, "be exalted" more than Moses and "be raised" higher than the ministering angels.[112]

The thrust of this excerpt is very different from that of Aphrahat which concerns the suffering endured by Jesus.

So also Is. 53:5 is used rabbinic in messianic thought in one place:

> The fifth interpretation makes it refer to the Messiah. "Come hither" (Ruth 2:14): approach to royal state. "And eat of the bread" (ib.) refers to the bread of royalty; "And dip thy morsel in the vinegar" (ib.) refers to his sufferings, as it is said, "But he was wounded because of our transgressions" (Isa. LIII, 5). "And she sat beside the reapers" (Ruth 2:14), for he will be deprived of his sovereignty for a time, as it is said, "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken" (Zech. XIV, 2). "And they reached her parched corn" (Ruth, loc. cit.), means that he will be restored to his throne, as it is said, "And he shall smite the land with the rod of his mouth" (Isa. XI, 4).[113]

Here is found a brief reference to potential suffering on the part of the Messiah. Such ideas seem quite rare in the rabbinic literature.

It is of passing interest that almost all of the Rabbis' comments on Ps. 22:21 refer to the binding of Isaac. They interpret "My soul" to apply to either Abraham or Isaac.[114]

Aphrahat turns, finally, to an account of the day upon which Jesus was crucified. Once more, the Christian Gospel tradition is assumed and not stated explicitly. The day is portrayed in accordance with the description found in Zech. 14:6-7.

The Rabbis also see these two verses in the light of the future. Some of their commentary focuses on the time of the Messiah, while some of it points to the World to Come. In either case, it is not oriented to present-day reality.

What day is meant by the allusion in Zech. 14:7? Not the day of Jesus' crucifixion, but:

> "And on the seventh day God finished his work" (Gen. ii. 2). The Holy One, blessed be He, created seven dedications, six of them

> He dedicated, and one is reserved for the (future) generations. He created the first day and finished all His work and dedicated it, as it is said, "And it was evening, and it was morning, one day" (Gen. i. 5). He created the second day and finished all His work and dedicated it, as it is said, "And it was evening, and it was morning, a second day" (ibid., 8); and so through the six says of creation. He created the seventh day, (but) not for work, because it is not said in connection therewith, "And it was evening and it was morning." Why? For it is reserved for the generations (to come), as it is said, "And there shall be one day which is known unto the Lord; not day, and not night" (Zech. xiv. 7).[114]

The information supplied is somewhat vague; "the generations to come" telling the reader very little. In the following excerpt, again, information is lacking:

> R. Huna said in R. Aha's name: What do the children of Noah think: that the covenant made with them will endure to all eternity? (No, for) thus said I to them: "While the earth remaineth" (Gen. 8:22). But as long as day and night endure, their covenant will endure. Yet when that day cometh of which it is written, "And there shall be one day which shall be known as the Lord's, not day, and not night" (Zech. xiv, 7), at that time (shall be fulfilled the verse), "And it will be broken in that day."[115]

While the meaning of these may not be altogether clear, at the very basis of each remains the idea that Zechariah spoke of a time not yet come.

The rabbinic reading of Zech. 14:6 is easier to follow. In two comments the implication of the verse points to the World to Come:

> "And it shall come to pass in that day that there shall not be light, but heavy clouds (yekaroth) and thick (we'kippa'on); what does "yekaroth we'kippa'on" mean? -- Said R. Eleazar: This means, the light which is precious (yakar) in this world, is yet of little account (kaput) in the next world. R. Johanan said: This refers to Nega'im and Ohaloth, which are difficult (heavy) in this world yet shall be light (easily understood) in the future world. While R. Joshua b. Levi said: This refers to the people who are honoured in this world, but will be lightly esteemed in the next world.[116]

and:

> "And the Lord spoke unto Moses... That they bring (the Red Heifer) unto thee" (Num. 19:2). Concerning this verse, R. Lulianos the son of R. Ṭibur taught in the name of R. Isaac of Carthage..., The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Moses, I reveal unto thee the reasons for the precept concerning the Red Heifer, but to others (for the time being) it is a statute. For, as R. Huna taught, (God said), "When I take up My pledge of a world-to-come I shall give My reasons for the statutes I ordained" (Ps. 75:3). God's pledge is to be found in the verse "And it shall come to pass in that day that there shall not be light; but heavy clouds and thick (wḳp'wn) (Zech. 14:6). Actually, the last word in this verse is written yḳp'wn ("Will be perspicuous"), (so that the verse is to be read "there shall not be light; yet precious things will be perspicuous") -- that is, explanation of things concealed from you in this world will in the time-to-come be as clear to you as crystal. Thus it is written "And I will bring the blind by a way they knew not. I will make darkness light before them..." (Isa. 42:16).[117]

One must remember that, at least originally, for the Rabbis the World to Come and the time of or after the coming of the Messiah were two separate things. The messianic redemption is of this world and involves a national deliverance and political independence. The World to Come refers to that which happens to human beings after this life. It is not in history, but outside it. Aphrahat has chosen some of the verses from Jewish Scripture which he believes point to the life and death of the Messiah Jesus. The Rabbis concurred that some of these texts did not appear to be related to the world as they knew it. Some they interpreted as references to the World to Come. Others were viewed as allusions to a messianic time. Not a messianic time as Aphrahat understood it (that is, the present), but a messianic time which would fulfill nationalistic hopes as well as those for a peaceful era.

PART IV

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Aphrahat and the Rabbis both begin with Scripture. For them, Scripture is the infallible revelation of God's truth to humans. The literary output of Aphrahat (as presently available) is not extensive and, therefore, uses a limited number of biblical verses. By contrast, the rabbinic literature, ranging over several centuries and many personalities is quite extensive and depends on many more scriptural passages. Even so, the Rabbis do not use every biblical verse.

Having narrowed this study to Aphrahat's seventeenth Exposition, it has been shown that the Rabbis do not comment on every verse which Aphrahat has cited in his argumentation. When the Rabbis do bring the same texts, they sometimes take off in very different directions. Their halakhic discussions are the most obvious of these instances, since halakhah was of no interest to Aphrahat. In other cases, the Rabbis and Aphrahat begin with similar concerns, but arrive at different conclusions. For example, both interpret Gen. 49:10 in messianic terms; for the Rabbis the text serves as a prediction of events as yet unrealized, while for Aphrahat the Messiah has already come. On occasion, the two literatures actually agree. Both understood that although the Persian kings saw themselves as divinity, Deut. 4 forbade Christian and Jew alike from worshipping a human being.

Gavin argued that Aphrahat depended on rabbinic Jewish thought in formulating his ideas. Neusner has pointed out Aphrahat's use of Jewish Scripture to the exclusion of any other material in his polemics

aimed at Judaism as proof that Aphrahat did not know anything of rabbinic Judaism or its interpretation of that Scripture. Neusner argues that the Rabbis and Aphrahat had in common only a basis in the same Scripture and a common cultural context.

There seems little basis for Gavin's assertion that Aphrahat depended on rabbinic thought in formulating his ideas. However, the question of Aphrahat's sources has not been resolved. It is clear that he based his argumentation in scriptural exegesis. It seems quite likely that he quoted from a Jewish translation, which may account for some of the Jewish flavor in his thinking. Had he, in fact, studied in a rabbinic academy, he could be expected to confront rabbinic interpretation and hermeneutics quite directly. This he never does. The method of learning in the academies involved memorization and recitation. If Aphrahat had studied in this manner, as Gavin insists, it seems nearly impossible that he would never quote directly from a memorized passage. Yet none of his writing precisely reproduces any of the available rabbinic material.

Neusner's suggestions point the direction for further research. It would be helpful to know exactly <u>which</u> Scripture, that is, what text, Aphrahat quoted from. Insufficient investigation has been made into the cultural context to be useful in determining just what Aphrahat and the Rabbis may have had in common. Additionally, not enough is known about the Jewish element in Aphrahat's Church -- either in his own day or prior to it -- to draw any conclusions regarding its effect on his

thinking, or on the development of the Syriac-speaking Church.

Neusner seems to go too far when he suggests that Aphrahat's knowledge of Judaism was limited to Scripture. While he may not have known any rabbinic Jews (as indicated by his lack of reference to even the most basic of rabbinic concepts), there seems no reason to insist that Aphrahat was unfamiliar with Jews, themselves as yet untouched by rabbinic thought. It is not clear why Neusner disregards this possibility.

Exposition XVII seems almost entirely devoted to responding to Jewish charges. Those charges, discussed above, include 1) that the Christians address Jesus, a human being, as "God;" 2) that they call the same person the "Son of God;" 3) that by so doing, they commit idolatry; and 4) (not stated explicitly:) that the Christian belief that the Messiah has come is false, since the Jewish expectations for kibbutz galuyot (ingathering of the exiles) and Jewish national independence have not been fulfilled.

There is no reason to suggest that these charges, confronted by Aphrahat, were anything other than real. They represented what was, for Aphrahat, a real and present danger: the appeal of Judaism for fourth-century Persian Christians, who saw the safety of a state-protected religion in the light of their own persecution. The only question which remains in this area is whether Aphrahat intended his refutations to be aimed at Jews outside the Church or at Jewish-Christians considering a return to the parent religion.

It seems that the confrontation between these non-rabbinic Jews and

the Syriac-speaking Church was a perfectly real one. Aphrahat's is the only literature -- from either side -- which presents this dialogue in any way. Other literatures, both Jewish and Christian, present forms of Judaism and Christianity which are more easily recognizable because of their familiarity. The fact that present-day scholarship is unaware of the Judaism best known to Aphrahat does not mean that it did not exist any more than the fact that the literature of Aphrahat's day does not mention him means that he did not exist!

FOOTNOTES

PART I

1. F. C. Burkitt, Early Eastern Christianity, The St. Margaret's Lectures, 1904, on the Syriac-speaking Chruch (London: John Murray, 1904), p. 43. (Hereafter referred to as Christianity.)

2. Frank Gavin, Aphraates and the Jews: A Study of the Controversial Homilies of the Persian Sage in their Relation to Jewish Thought (New York: AMS Press, 1966), p. 2. (Hereafter referred to as Aphraates.)

3. J. Gwynn, "Select Demonstrations of Aphrahat," in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, (New York: Christian Literary Association, 1898), 13:157. (Hereafter referred to as "Select Demonstrations.")

4. Ibid., p. 159.

5. Josef A. Davidson, "Aphrahat, the Persian Sage, and the Rabbis on Circumcision and on Fasting: An Annotated Translation of Expositions XI and III with a Comparison to the Rabbinic Literature" (Rabbinic Thesis, HUC-JIR, 1977), pp. 5-6 (Hereafter referred to as "Circumcision.")

6. Jacob Neusner, Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian Argument in Fourth-century Iran (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), p. xi. (Hereafter referred to as Aphrahat.)

7. Edward J. Duncan, "Baptism in the Demonstrations of Aphraates the Persian Sage" (Doctoral dissertation, Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1945), p. 5. (Hereafter referred to as "Baptism.")

8. Gwynn, "Select Demonstrations," 13:156.

8a. Tjitze Baarda, The Gospel Quotations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1975), p. 2-3. (Hereafter referred to as Gospel Quotations.)

8b. William Wright, The Homilies of Aphraates, the Persian Sage (London: Williams and Norgate, 1869). (Hereafter referred to as Homilies.)

9. D. Ioannes Parisot, Patrologia Syriaca (Paris: Ediderunt Firmin-Didot et Socii Instituti Francici Typographi, 1894), Part I, v. 1 and 2.

10. So Gwynn, "Select Demonstrations," 13:156.

11. The most thorough and concise discussion of all these problems is found in Baarda's Introduction.

12. Baarda, Gospel Quotations, p. 6-7.

13. Gwynn, "Select Demonstrations," 13:154.

14. Duncan, "Baptism," p. 6.

15. Baarda, Gospel Quotations, p. 8.

16. Duncan, "Baptism," p. 13.

17. Neusner, Aphrahat, p. 4.

18. As indicated by some of his comments in Expositions VI and VII. For a detailed discussion of scholarly views on celibacy and its place within the Syriac-speaking Church, see the following works: R. H. Connally, "Aphraates and Monasticism," Journal of Theological Studies, 6 (1905): 522-539; F. C. Burkitt, "Aphraates and Monasticism: A Reply," ibid., 7 (1906): 10-15; T. Jansma, "Aphraates' Demonstration VII Paragraphs 18 and 20: Some Observations on the Discourse on Penance," Parole de L'Orient, V, 1, pp. 21-48. (Hereafter referred to as "Demonstration VII."); Arthur Vööbus, Celibacy, A Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1951). (Hereafter referred to as Celibacy.)

19. Baarda, Gospel Quotations, p. 6; W. A. Wigram, "Aphraat," Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature, ed. by Henry Wace and William Piercy (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1911), p. 31.

20. See, for example, Baarda, Gospel Quotations, p. 6.

21. Ibid.

22. Davidson, "Circumcision," pp. 3-4.

23. See below, p. 31.

24. Burkitt, Christianity, p. 82.

25. Gavin, Aphraates, p. 4.

26. Jansma, "Demonstration VII," pp. 39-42.

27. It is interesting to note Aphrahat's own title, ܚܟܝܡܐ , and the form of his address to his opponent, also ܚܟܝܡܐ , in light of the term חכם in rabbinic literature. I am not aware of any work which investigates this terminology.

28. Neusner, Aphrahat, pp. 127-128.

29. Much of what follows is based on Neusner, There We Sat Down (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), especially on the chronology found there on pp. 13-14. (Hereafter referred to as There.)

30. Burkitt, Christianity, p. 45.

31. Neusner, Aphrahat, p. 3.

32. J. B. Segal, Edessa 'The Blessed City' (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 64-72. (Hereafter referred to as Edessa.)

33. Gavin claims it is from the sixth century. See his Aphraates, p. 11.

34. Segal, Edessa, p. 43.

35. Ibid., p. 60.

36. Segal's argument is somewhat circular. In effect: Christianity gained acceptance due to the presence of Jews in Edessa; the Jews must have already been in Edessa because Christianity gained acceptance so readily.

37. Ibid., pp. 42-43.

38. Gavin, Aphraates, pp. 12-18.

39. Ibid., p. 12.

40. Ibid., p. 18.

41. Burkitt, Christianity, pp. 16, 72.

42. Vööbus, Celibacy, p. 11.

43. Burkitt, Christianity, p. 85.

44. In addition to his work cited above (note 18), see Arthur Vööbus, History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient (Louvain: n.p. 1958).

45. Burkitt, Christianity, pp. 133-142.

46. See especially Expositions VI, VII and XVIII, and the appendix in John Luttrell, "The Influence of Babylonian Judaism on Aphrahat the Persian Sage" (Author's doctoral dissertation, HUC-JIR, 1977). (Hereafter referred to as "Influence.") Luttrell argues at length that the Syriac ܥܒܪܝܐ should be equated with celibacy.

47. Vööbus, Celibacy, pp. 45-58.

48. Ibid., pp. 32-33.

49. Burkitt, Christianity, p. 127.

50. Davidson, "Circumcision," p. 8.

51. See Wright, Homilies, p. 10.

52. Gavin, Aphraates, p. 31.

53. Gavin suggests, "In other respects they (the Jews) had in Persia that which they were denied by Rome -- autonomy and religious liberty." Aphraates, p. 20.

54. See Gavin, Aphraates, p. 29; and Neusner, Aphrahat, pp. 33-34.

55. Gavin, Aphraates, p. 16.

56. Burkitt, Christianity, p. 25.

57. See Gavin, Aphraates, pp. 31-32; Davidson, "Circumcision," pp. 7-8; Duncan, "Baptism," pp. 22-23.

58. Neusner, Aphrahat, pp. 125-126.

59. Ibid., p. 125; Davidson, "Circumcision," p. 5.

60. Neusner, Aphrahat, pp. 1, 123-124, 135-136.

61. Gavin, Aphraates, p. 13.

62. Neusner, Aphrahat, p. 188.

63. For a fuller explication of this material, see Gavin, Aphraates, pp. 37-58.

64. Ibid., p. 58.

65. Luttrell, "Influence," p. 29.

66. Gavin, Aphraates, p. 37.

67. Segal, Edessa, p. 100.

68. Neusner, Aphrahat, pp. 151-152.

69. Louis Ginzberg, "Aphraates," in Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901), I:663-665.

70. S. Funk, Die Hagadischen Elemente in den Homilien des Aphraates (Vienna: by the author at M. Knopflmacher, 1891).

71. Neusner, Aphrahat, pp. 148-149.

72. Ibid., p. 187.

73. Ibid., p. 155.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid., p. 2; also id., There, p. 21.

76. Luttrell, "Influence," p. 53.

77. Burkitt, in Christianity, and Wright, in Homilies, both touch on some of the questions surrounding the New Testament text in Syriac. For a relatively thorough discussion of issues revolving around the Diatessaron text, see the introduction in Baarda, Gospel Quotations.

78. Wright, Homilies, p. 16.

79. Gavin, Aphraates, p. 14.

80. Burkitt, Christianity, p. 71.

81. For the view that the Peshitta was intended for Jews, see Wright, Homilies, p. 4; and Burkitt, Christianity, pp. 72-73. For the view that it was intended for Jewish Christians, see Gavin, Aphraates, p. 15.

82. Baarda, Gospel Quotations, pp. 12-16, 31, 300-306.

83. See Wright, Homilies, pp. 4, 8-17; and Burkitt, Christianity,

pp. 72-73.

84. Wright, Homilies, p. 16.

85. Baarda, Gospel Quotations, p. 245; cf. Luttrell, "Influence," p. 13.

86. Neusner, Aphrahat, pp. 124-125.

87. Luttrell, "Influence," p. 102.

88. See Luttrell, "Influence," p. 103.

89. Ibid., p. 106.

90. Neusner, Aphrahat, p. 144.

91. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

92. Id., There, p. 20. Duncan expresses Aphrahat's view: "The explanation of Scripture is to be made 'according to the mind of the whole Church,' but with allowance for differing views or interpretations." "Baptism," p. 15.

93. Neusner, Aphrahat, p. 190.

94. The translation is found in Aphrahat, pp. 68-75.

PART II

1. Baarda prefers the translation "demonstration" for the Syriac ܬܚܘܝܬܐ. He explains:

> his (Aphrahat's) many Books...or Letters...are not simply Homilies..., but they are best characterized as Demonstrations...: in the same way as he addresses the (imaginary?) Jewish hakkīmā with the challenge "Show me, demonstrate for me" (ܚܘܝܢܝ) or "Show us, demonstrate for us" (ܚܘܝܢ), he puts himself into the position of a student of the holy Scriptures who has to teach others, that is, to demonstrate (ܚܘܐ) with an appeal to the sacred texts.

Gospel Quotations, pp. 9-10.

I, however, prefer Davidson's use of "exposition" which he explains as follows:

The usual translation of the Syriac Tahwitha' is "Demonstration" or, loosely, "Homily." Tahwitha' is a "Talmid-type" noun, common in Aramaic, whose root is H-W-'. Not appearing in Syriac in P'al, in Pa'el the root means "to show, make manifest." Cf. J. Payne-Smith, A Compendious Syriac Dictionary, p. 129a. In Jewish Aramaic, the root has the meaning "to show, to tell" in the Pael and Haphel/Aphel (no Qal); Marcus Jastrow, Dictionary of Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi, Midrashic Literature and Targumim, p. 432a. In Jewish Aramaic, the noun 'ahwayah means "telling, interpretation" (Jastrow, op. cit., p. 39a) and is linked to the Hebrew noun (also in the noun form of the causitive Hiph'il/'aphel) Haggadah (also an Aramaic Mishqal). In the literature of the Talmud and of the Midrashim, Haggadah is always used in contrast to Halachah, which means "practice, rule, traditional law" (Jastrow, op. cit., p. 353a). Haggadah/'aggadah is defined by Jastrow as "tale story, lesson, esp. Agadah, that class of Rabb. literature which explains the Bible homiletically" (op. cit., p. 11a). Haggadah, then, can be taken as an exposition of the Bible. Therefore, the translation of the Syriac Tahwitha' as "exposition" is entirely in line with the usage of the day and more descriptive of Aphrahat's purpose in setting down his views on the subjects that he chose. See also T. Jansma's article "Aphraates' Demonstration VII paras, 18 and 20. Some Observations on the Discourse on Penance" in Parole De L'Orient, vol. V, Number 1, 1974, p. 39, where he describes these works of Aphrahat's as expositions. On page 41, he continues with a similar analysis of the word Tahwitha' wherein he says that "Verbal derivatives of the root hwy meaning to explain, to expound, to demonstrate..."

"Circumcision," p. 74 n. 1.

2. See above, pp. 16-20 for a discussion of Aphrahat's polemics.

3. Aphrahat repeatedly uses the phrase "people from among the peoples" ( ) to refer to the church. In his sixteenth exposition he argues the Israel (the original "people") was rejected by God and the "peoples" (= gentiles) took their place as the "people."

4. Aphrahat uses . Neusner generally translates this term as "son of man." He thus seems to raise a problem unnecessarily. The Hebrew בן אדם and Syriac refer simply to any person or human being. While the Greek Church may have had trouble with the translation of this term, there is no reason to think that Aphrahat or the Syriac-speaking Church would have understood the term in other than its simplest meaning in this context.

5. Cf. the Masoretic text. The Peshitta presently follows the Hebrew; Aphrahat's text apparently was different. See above, pp. 24-28.

6. Neusner translates to suggest that Aphrahat agrees with the Jews that Jesus is human (Aphrahat, p. 68). It is more likely that Aphrahat wishes to say, in effect, "For the sake of this argument, we could temporarily compromise and say that Jesus was just human." Therefore, I have translated, "were we to grant."

7. Aphrahat's quotation of Ex. 7:2 is not identical to the current Peshitta text, which follows the Masoretic Hebrew. It is, however, reminiscent of Ex. 4:16, especially as it reads in the Targumim. Onkelos: "And he shall speak for thee with the people, and shall be thy interpreter, and thou shalt be to him a rab." Jonathan: "And he shall speak for thee with the people and be to thee an interpreter, and thou to him the principal..." J. W. Etheridge, The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch with Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1968). (Hereafter referred to as Targums.)

8. Parisot cites both Ex. 3:6 and 15 here. Neusner has Ex. 3:6, 1, 4, 15. I see no reason to suggest anything more than Ex. 3:15 since the quotation certainly follows the Masoretic text as it now stands.

9. Although "God Almighty" (אל שדי) occurs in several places in the Bible, it is not attached to any of the other verses quoted here. There seems to be no particular justification for assuming that it is also from Ex. 3:14 as Neusner has.

10. Here, Aphrahat begins his discussion of sovereignty. The change in subject matter suggests a natural break here rather than a sentence later, at "6."

11. "The king of kings, my servant" does not appear in this verse in either the Peshitta or Masoretic texts. "My servant" occurs two verses earlier in Jer. 27:6. "The king of kings" is used to refer to Nebuchadnezzar in Ezek. 26:7.

12. Wright, Parisot and Neusner each use slightly different citations. The text here does not follow either the current Peshitta text nor the Masoretic Hebrew. The concept is that suggested by Deut. 4: 15-19.

13. Lev. 26:12 does not include the phrase "dwell among them," but verse 11 includes the phrase " משכני בתוככם ." (Peshitta follows the Hebrew.)

14. Wright cites only the New Testament reference; Parisot and Neusner cite both. Judging from Aphrahat's general method of depending on Jewish Scripture, I suspect that "Lev. 26:12" should be sufficient. Of course, he could have been aware of its recurrence in the New Testament, assuming that he knew IICor.

15. It is interesting that this understanding of the two verses can only be obtained by ignoring the verse divisions as we now have them.

16. See p. 36 n. 15 above. By readjusting the punctuation, the verse is made to read as Aphrahat understands it in the following paragraphs.

17. Neusner's italics emphasize the change in subject from Ps. 90:1 to Lev. 26:12, but Aphrahat's analysis is related more to the switch in tense.

18. "The creatures above," the angels; "and below," the beasts.

19. Although Neusner translates here and above (p. 36) both in the same way, in fact, the two texts read differently. (The sense, however, remains the same.) See above, p. 36 n. 16. The Peshitta text agrees with Aphrahat's original quote, although with some orthographic differences.

20. In this third quotation of the same text, it is suddenly made to read ܡܪܝܐ instead of ܐܠܗܐ. Wright has one ms. with ܐܠܗܐ.

21. Wright cites this verse as Is. 91:4. Parisot cites Is. 48:12 in addition to 44:6. While the idea is the same in each place, the text as it reads here is identical to the Peshitta and Masoretic Hebrew of Is. 44:6.

22. Wright, Parisot and Neusner read ICor. 3:16. It would seem to make more sense to cite Jer. 7:4-5 or even IICor. 6:16 as above (p. 36). See also p. 36 n. 14.

23. This is the sense of the text, which is very difficult. Neusner reads, "And they will have (to admit) that also the title of divinity belongs to him, for even to his righteous men he gave the name of God." See Aphrahat p. 72 where Neusner also produces the translations of this sentence by Gwynn, Bert, and Parisot.

24. The text here is difficult. Neusner translates, "Now if they worship and honor with the name of worship the evil men, those who in their iniquity even deny the name of God, but they do not worship them

as their maker, as though they worshipped them alone, and so do not sin. . . " The argument, however, is not substantively affected by either translation.

25. Neusner translates "we." The form ܗܢܘܢ is certainly "they."

26. While Aphrahat's examples of kings who call themselves gods are Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, the comment may, in fact, be aimed at the contemporary political situation. See above pp. 18-19 and below pp. 70ff.

27. The Peshitta agrees with Aphrahat; the Hebrew differs, rendering "your youth" rather than "I have given birth to you." The difference could be a matter of vocalization: the Hebrew יְלִדְתִיךָ has become Syriac ܝܠܕܬܟ.

28. The Peshitta reads as Aphrahat does (although the verses are numbered 6-7).

29. See above, p. 11.

30. Neusner reads, "I who am of the people." Either way, the use of the word ܥܡܡܐ is a clear reference to the Church. And see above, p. 32, n. 3.

31. The purpose of this verse here is unclear, therefore the correct translation is uncertain.

32. The current Peshitta text follows the Masoretic Hebrew.

PART III

(References to the rabbinic literature are to the English translation, whenever available.)

1. Neusner, Aphrahat, p. 144.

2. See above, p. 33.

3. P. 38.

4. P. 33.

5. P. 34.

6. Pp. 34-35.

7. Ruth Rabbah, Proem.

8. So Numbers Rabbah, 7:14. A parallel text appears in Pirke de R. Eliezer, Cap. 44.

9. Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 33. (Hereafter referred to as Pes. Rab.)

10. Midrash on Psalms, 21:2. (Hereafter referred to as Mid. Pss.) Parallel in Exodus Rabbah, 8:1.

11. Sifre, Ha-azinu 320. (References are to Meir Friedmann, Sifre debe Rab [Vienna: J. Holzwarth, 1864] translation is mine.) Parallels include: b. Abodah Zarah, 5a; Lev. R., 4:1, 11:3; Num. R., 16:24; Eccl. R., 3:16; Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Jethro BaHodesh Cap. 9 (hereafter referred to as Mek.); Midrash Tanhuma, Tissa 16, Emor 8 (hereafter referred to as Tanh.); Tanhuma Buber, Shelah 39a (hereafter referred to as Tanh. B.); Pesikta de Rab Kahana, Piska 4 (hereafter referred to as Pes. dRK); Pes. Rab., Piska 1; Seder Eliahu R., 26 (hereafter referred to as Eliahu R.); Pirke de R. Eliezer, 44 (hereafter referred to as Pirke dRE).

12. Seder Eliahu Zuta, 24. My trans. (Hereafter referred to as Eliahu Z.). Parallels include: Ex. R., 32:1, 32:7; Tanh. B., Va'era 13b.

13. Tanh. B., Va'era 13b. My trans.

14. Sifre, Ha-azinu 306. My trans.

15. This idea is also suggested in Shir HaShirim R., 1:2.

16. Mek., Piskha Bo Petikhta.

17. Jacob L. Lauterbach, Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1933), p. 2.

18. See Num. R., 9:47; Tanh. Aharei Mot 8; b. Sanh. 2b.

19. See, for example, Gen. R., 12:15; Sifre, 27.

20. Lev. R., 26:7; see also Mid. Pss., 90:5.

21. Pes. dRK, 12:23. Parallel in Tanh. B., Va'era 9a.

22. Num. R., 14:6.

23. Tanh. B., 13a. My trans.

24. Neusner, Aphrahat, p. 175.

25. Ibid.

26. An interesting sidelight is raised by the use of the word "rab." While in Jewish Aramaic it meant "teacher," in Syriac it came to mean "prince." But in Arabic it actually refers to God.

27. So Onkelos in Etheridge, Targums.

28. So Jonathan, ibid.

29. Above, p. 32.

30. Above, pp. 33-34.

31. Above, p. 33.

32. Above, p. 34.

33. Ibid.

34. My trans.

35. Mid. Pss., 2:9.

36. Num. R., 9:7. See also Num. R., 10:2.

37. I have been unable to find it reproduced by any other source.

38. Sifre, Va-ethanan 34. My trans.

39. Rashi reads: " לשון גדולה ."

40. Mek., Beshallah Shirata 2.

41. Deut. R., 5:7.

42. So Jonathan.

43. Aboth de R. Nathan, version b, 44. (Translations are from Anthony Saldarini, The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975].) (Hereafter referred to as AdRNb.) Also see parallel in Aboth 3:14.

44. Pirke dRE, 22.

45. AdRNb, 44. See also Ex. R., 30:6.

46. Tanh., Shemini 2. See also Tanh. B., Toledot 64a, Shemini 12a.

47. Gen. R., 63:11.

48. Tanh., Naso 24. See parallels in Num. R., 12:11 and Pes. dRK, 1:4.

49. Solomon Schecter, Aspects of Rabbinic Theology (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), p. 62. (Hereafter referred to as Aspects.)

50. Ex. R., 25:27.

51. Ex. R., 19:7.

52. Cf. Erich Fromm's conclusion that fatherly love is basically conditional love.

53. Joseph Chaim Wertheimer (ed.), Midrash Shir HaShirim (Jerusalem: Ktav Yad Vasefer, 1971), 2:6. My trans.

54. Tanh. B., Bereishit 10b. My trans. See also a similar idea expressed in Baba Bathra 10a. A curious parallel is found in Mid. Pss., 2:9: "R. Yudan said: All these goodly promises are in the decree of the King, the King of kings, who will fulfill them for the lord Meshiha. And why all this? Because the Meshiha occupies himself with Torah."

55. Num. R., 2:15. A similar idea is expressed in Eliahu R., 18 and Shir HaShirim R., 5:3, 16.

56. Schechter, Aspects, p. 52.

57. Aggadat Bereishit, 14:1. My trans. See also Mid. Pss.,9:4.

58. Schechter, Aspects, p. 54.

59. Ex. R., 46:4. In Pes. Rab., 10:7 it is Moses who acts as intercessor.

60. b. Kiddushin 36a. For a very direct statement, see Mishnat R. Eliezer, p. 306.

61. b. Megillah 11a.

62. Lev. R., 32:6.

63. Duncan, "Baptism," p. 25.

64. Tos. Sanh. 8:5 and other places.

65. See b. Baba Bathra 65a and 159a; Horayoth 6a; Temuroth 15b.

66. Song of Songs R., I, 1:6.

67. Schechter, Aspects, p. 37.

68. C. Montefiore and H. Loewe, A Rabbinic Anthology (New York: Schocken Books, p. xcvi. (Hereafter referred to as Rab. Anth.)

69. Ibid., p. 341.

70. Ibid., p. xcvi. And see p. 500 for an illustration taken from Tanna debe Eliahu.

71. George Foot Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 417-422. (Hereafter referred to as Judaism.) See also Schechter, Aspects, p. 35.

72. Louis Jacobs, A Jewish Theology (New York: Behrman House, 1973), p. 142.

73. b. Menahot 86b as quoted in Montefiore and Loewe, Rab. Anth., p. 25.

74. Above, p. 38.

75. Above, p. 32.

76. Above, p. 39.

77. Mek., Yithro BaḤodesh 6.

78. Gen. R., 87:4.

79. Mek. Bo Piskha 14. See also b. Megillah 9a; AdRNb 37 and Saldarini's note on p. 216.

80. Ex. R., 8:2.

81. In Etheridge, Targums. Jonathan reads, "I will set the Shekinah of My glory among you." Op. cit.

82. Shir HaShirim Z., p. 22. My trans.

83. AdRNb , 27.

84. Ibid., 18.

85. Pes. Rab., 33:12.

86. The biblical text has been corrupted slightly here. It reads " לצדיקים " instead of " הצדיקים ."

87. Aggadat Bereishit, 23d. My trans.

88. Tanh. B., Tsav 11a. My trans.

89. b. Megillah 29a.

90. Gen. R., 68:9.

91. Mid. Pss., 74:1.

92. For a brief description of these variations, see Pirke dRE, p. 12 n. 9.

93. In addition to b. Pesahim 54a, see parallels in b. Nedarim 39b and Midrash Mishlei, 8:9.

94. Gen. R., 1:4. Parallels in Tanh., Naso 11 and Mid. Pss., 93:3.

95. Mid. Pss., 115 end.

96. Gavin, Aphraates, pp. 37-39 and see on through p. 58.

97. See above p. 40 n. 27.

98. b. Sukkah 52a.

99. Ex. R., 18:5.

100. Deut. R., 1:20.

101. Gen. R., 97.

102. Ibid.

103. Pes. Rab., 46:3. See also Num. R., 2:10.

104. b. Sanh. 94a.

105. See above p. 32 n. 3.

106. So Onkelos in Etheridge, Targums. Jonathan reads, "...till the time that the King, the Meshiha shall come, the youngest of his sons; and on account of him shall the peoples flow together." Op. cit.

107. Gen. R., 99:8. Also in Gen. R., 98:8.

108. b. Sanh. 98b. See also Lam. R., 1:16 §51.

109. Neusner, Aphrahat, p. 171.

110. Ibid., p. 174.

111. Ibid., p. 5 n. 4.

112. Tanh. B., Toledot 70a. My trans. Parallel in Tanh., Toledot 14.

113. Ruth R., 5:6.

114. Pirke dRE, 18.

115. Gen. R., 34:11.

116. b. Pesahim 50a.

117. Pes. Rab., 14:13. Parallels include Num. R., 19:6; Tanh. B., Huqat 59a; Pes. dRK, 4:7.

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