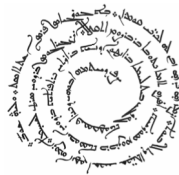


Aphrahat the Persian Sage and the Temple of God



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Aphrahat the Persian Sage and the Temple of God

A Study of Early Syriac Theological
Anthropology

Stephanie K. Skoyles Jarkins



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PREFACE

This study of Aphrahat the Persian Sage comes at a time when Syriac studies is coming into its own as an area of scholarly interest. Syriac Patristic research is in many ways the poor cousin to the greater Greco-Roman studies in Patristics. Syriac studies has gone through waves of interest; the first wave in modern times was in the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century with Gustav Bickell, Jacob Forget, Salomon Funk, Jean Parisot, Louis Ginzberg, Frank Gavin, Richard H. Connolly, and Francis C. Burkitt. The second wave of scholarship on Aphrahat was from the 1930s to the 1950s and was, by necessity, smaller, but no less important, with the writings of Freidrich Loofs, Mother Mary Maude, and Irénée Hausherr. The third wave is the larger one emanating from the writings of Robert Murray in the 1970s and Sebastian Brock in the 1980s through to the present. Today, the interest in Syriac studies is booming in comparison to previous decades. I am quite happy to be part of the expansion and promotion of Syriac studies to the English speaking reader.

My personal agenda is to show Aphrahat as the great theologian he is. My study focuses on Aphrahat's use of the temple image with side glances at other relevant authors and texts including Scripture, Second Temple Judaism, the *Odes of Solomon*, the *Liber Graduum*, the *Gospel* and *Acts of Thomas*, Ephrem the Syrian, and Macarius of Egypt. My book shows that Aphrahat is not a lone voice crying in the wilderness of the Persian Empire in the mid-fourth century. He uses ideas and themes with ancient lineage and he transmits them to his audience and to us. In my view, Aphrahat needs to be brought out from under the shadow of his younger contemporary Ephrem the Syrian; and my work in a very small way helps to do this. I also wish to show the Syriac Fathers as they are; a group of authors who can help modern people to deepen their understanding of the scriptures and spirituality.

Stephanie K. Skoyles Jarkins
May 2008, Ozark, Missouri

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As is almost trite to say, no work is produced in a personal vacuum, most especially one written over such a long period of time. So my thanks are many, and my hope is that this work is reflective in a small part of the great aid and help I have received over the years. First, my thanks to Dr. Robert Kitchen and Dr. Naomi Koltun-Fromm who helped to form my dissertation into a book. I am so grateful for the great amount of time and effort Dr. Kitchen took to help me bring this work to the light. Second, thanks go to Marquette University, the Department of Theology, and the President's Office; especially Mr. Steven Frieder, Mrs. JoAnn Frederickson, and Fr. Robert Wild, S.J. Your undying confidence and steadfast support through this long process has kept me going. Thanks also to Fr. Alexander for guiding my study of Mar Aphrahat; I am pleased that you have found the Sage as interesting as I have. Thanks to all my friends who listened to my challenges through the years, but especially to Dr. Harriet Luckman. You convinced me that I could actually finish this work and that it was important. I am so grateful to my parents, Fr. Douglas Skoyles, S.S.C. and Mrs. Kathryn Skoyles for their encouragement and constant refrains of "Labour Diligently" and "We have the utmost confidence in your capabilities." Thanks also above all to my long suffering husband, David Jarkins; without your support on all levels, this work could not have finally been finished.

Last and by no means least, my heartiest thanks go to Mrs. Lealla Shirley, my editor and friend. It is because of her many years of hard work and patience that I could do this. She is a magnificent editor and an even better friend. I can never fully repay the debt I owe her, except to say that any grammatical errors are mine and not hers. She did her level best to correct my many writing foibles. Thank you Lealla, you are a gem. Thank you one and all. Words are not enough to express my gratitude to all of you.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------|--|
| <i>ABD</i> | <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. David N. Freedman. New York: Doubleday, 1992 |
| ATR | Anglican Theological Review, Evanston IL |
| CBQ | Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Washington, DC |
| CQR | Church Quarterly Review, London |
| CSCO | Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium, Edited by I. B. Chabot et al. Paris, 1903– |
| <i>Dem.</i> | Demonstration by Aphrahat |
| DSp | Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Paris |
| HTR | Harvard Theological Review, Cambridge MA |
| Hugoye | Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies |
| JBL | Journal of Biblical Literature, Atlanta GA |
| JECS | Journal of Early Christian Studies, Baltimore, MD |
| JJS | Journal of Jewish Studies, London |
| JNES | Journal of Near Eastern Studies, Chicago, IL |
| JSOR | Journal of the Society of Oriental Research, Chicago, IL |
| JSQ | Jewish Studies Quarterly, Tübingen |
| JSS | Journal of Semitic Studies, Manchester |
| JTS | Journal of Theological Studies, Oxford |
| <i>NPNF</i> | <i>Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers</i> . Eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Second Series. Vol. 13, <i>Gregory the Great (II), Ephraim Syrus, and Aphrahat</i> . Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1898; Hendrickson, 1995 |
| NovT | Novum Testamentum, Leiden |
| NTS | New Testament Studies, Cambridge |
| OCA | Orientalia christiana analecta |
| OCP | Orientalia christiana periodica, Rome |
| OrChr. | Oriens christianus, Wiesbaden |
| <i>OTP</i> | <i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983 |
| ParOr. | Parole de Porient, Kaslik |
| Payne-Smith | <i>A Compendious Syriac Dictionary</i> . Edited by J. Payne-Smith. Oxford. 1903, Eerdmanns, 1996 |
| POC | Proche-orient chrétien, Jerusalem |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| RSR | Recherches de Science Religieuse, Strasbourg |
| SC | Sources Chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943– |
| Sobornost | Sobornost incorporating Eastern Churches Review, London |
| <i>StPatr</i> | Studia Patristica, Leuven |
| SVTQ | St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, Crestwood, NY |
| TDNT | <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friederich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976 |
| TDOT | <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , Edited by Gerhard J. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green. 8 vols. Grand Rapids, 1974– Eerdmans. 1995 |
| TRE | <i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i> . Edited by G. Krause and G. Müller. Berlin, 1977– |
| TU | Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, Leipzig |
| VC | Vigiliae christianae, Amsterdam |
| ZNTW | Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde des nachbiblischen Judentums, Berlin |

TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

Following the system from the Journal *Hugoye*, the transliteration is:

' b g d h w z h t y k l m n s ° p s q r sh t

ⲁ and the vowel *shāshā* is “u”

Ⲁ and the vowel *shāpā* is “ā”

Ⲃ and the vowel *shāshā* is “ē”

Ⲅ and the vowel *shāshā* is “ī”

the vowel *ptāhā* is “a”

INTRODUCTION

[The Sage] is a great temple for his Creator: and the King of the heights enters and dwells in him, raises his intellect to the heights and makes his thought soar to the sanctuary, revealing to him treasures of all kinds.

Aphrahat, *Dem.* Fourteen¹

ܘܢܘܨܘܢܝܢ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܝܗ
ܕܥܠܝܘܬܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܝܗ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܝܗ
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The longing to know the Divine is a universal desire. Sixteen hundred years ago the Persian bishop Aphrahat taught his flock that they could become temples of God, ascend to the heavenly temple and see God with the eyes of the heart. Heaven, or the heavenly temple, is not some closed off environment only experienced by the dead; it is accessible to the living holy people of God in Aphrahat’s time, and I would posit, also to those who are alive today. The writings of Aphrahat the Sage are relevant because he presents his own personal experience of ascent to heaven as well as arguments from Scripture to explore this important mystical journey for the devout. This book contends that the image of the temple is the hinge of Aphrahat’s theological anthropology; the image encompasses his christology, sacramentology, and ecclesiology. For Aphrahat, the celibate ascetic may become a divine temple and then ascend to the heavenly temple and see the throne of God itself. Aphrahat functions within the mystical milieu of the Second Temple Jewish *Merkabah* riders together with other Syriac Christian authors of his time. This work focuses upon one theme in Aphrahat’s *Demonstrations*, the temple, and uses it as the lens through which to explain Aphrahat’s theological anthropology and its relationship to Christian and Jewish mystical traditions. No one to date has written primarily on Aphrahat’s temple

¹ D 14:35 (PS I/661:17–21).

ten demonstrations are a pedagogical outline of the faith in which Aphrahat writes that:

These ten short books which I wrote to you borrow from one another and build on each other; do not separate them one from the other. I have written to you from ‘Alaph’ as far as ‘Yod,’ one letter following another. Read and learn, you and the brothers, covenanters and sons of our faith.⁴

His intended audience is the inquirer who wrote a note asking for some help in learning the actions of a faithful Christian and to his community who specifically include Covenanters or sons of the covenant who are a distinct ascetic group in the Syriac Christian church.⁵ The second group of twelve demonstrations (*Dem.* 11–13, 15–22) were written eight years later and have a far more apologetic tone, the community is persecuted by the Persians and there is strife between the Christians and the Jews. In these last demonstrations, Aphrahat moves from teacher to debater, he has outlined what he thinks his audience should do and say when confronted by questions and persecution. He is not merely a figurehead extolling virtues to his audience who are suffering; Aphrahat knew of and personally experienced the persecutions of Shapur II, the Sassanid Persian emperor.⁶

Shapur II wished to consolidate his domain, and he regarded the Christians within his empire as a threat because of their perceived loyalty to the Roman Empire. The ascetics received the brunt of the attacks, which

⁴ D 10:9 (PS I/464.24–465.4)

ܡܠܝܢ ܚܝܘܢ ܫܦܬܝܢ ܕܡܛܡܐ ܕܠܚܘܬܐ ܕܝܗܝ ܡܢ ܟܦ ܡܢ ܢܫܬܝܢ ܡܢ ܚܠ ܡܢ
 ܚܝܢ: ܟܦ ܡܛܘܚܐ ܠܗ ܕܡܢ ܕܡܛܘܚܐ ܕܡܛܘܚܐ ܕܡܛܘܚܐ ܕܡܛܘܚܐ ܕܡܛܘܚܐ:
 ܕܡܛܘܚܐ ܕܡܛܘܚܐ ܕܡܛܘܚܐ ܕܡܛܘܚܐ ܕܡܛܘܚܐ ܕܡܛܘܚܐ ܕܡܛܘܚܐ ܕܡܛܘܚܐ
 ܕܡܛܘܚܐ

⁵ For more on the Covenanters, see page 82.

⁶ See *Dem.* 3:4–6, 5:1, and 14:7. Judah B. Segal, *Edessa: The Blessed City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 111 and David J. Lane, “Of Wars and Rumours of Peace: Apocalyptic Material in Aphrahat and Šubhalmāran,” in *New Heaven and New Earth Prophecy and the Millennium: Essays in Honour of Anthony Gelston*, eds. P. J. Harlan and C. T. R. Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 231. For a discussion of the political pressures upon theological debate within Aphrahat’s writings about the persecutions, see Jacob Neusner, “Constantine, Shapur II and the Jewish-Christian confrontation in fourth century Iran,” in *Religion, literature, and society in ancient Israel, formative Christianity and Judaism*, vol. 2, *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism* (Landham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 131–152.

expressed, and the general tenor of *Dem.* Fourteen all suggest that Aphrahat was a bishop.¹⁶ The whole corpus of *Demonstrations* has a great continuity in terms of the imagery used, especially when linked to the temple as a divine dwelling in a person; throughout the work Aphrahat uses similar ideas, scriptural supports, and themes to illuminate his arguments about the divine temple.

Part of the appeal of Aphrahat's writings is that they are written in somewhat simple Syriac and lack the Greek syllogisms and rhetorical splendor of his contemporaries to the West, for example the Cappadocians. Aphrahat has been commonly portrayed as a "pure Semite" whose works can aid the later generations to find Syriac theology without the taint of Hellenism.¹⁷ There appears to be a basic unarticulated scholarly assumption that the Persian Empire was a backwater where there was no news or influence from the West. Aphrahat's own writings debunk this idea. He even writes about Diocletian's persecutions of the Christians (303–312 C.E.):

Also for our brothers in the West, in the days of Diocletian came great suffering and persecution to all the church of God in all of their areas.

De Vita et Scriptis Aphraatis Sapientis Persae (Louvain: Catholic University, 1882), 130–223.

¹⁶ No one less than a bishop could get away with such a tongue lashing of the Seleucia-Ctesiphon leaders unless, of course, he was possibly an ascetic leader (similar to an abbot) and not a bishop. In any case, Aphrahat was an ascetic Christian leader who did not refrain from correcting all members of the church in spite of rank or stature.

¹⁷ Quispel writes of "the non-Greek theology of Aphraates." Gilles Quispel, "The Study of Encratism: A Historical Survey," in *La Tradizione Dell'Enkrateia: Motivazioni Ontologiche e Protologiche*, ed. Ugo Bianchi (Rome: Edizioni dell'ateneo, 1985), 58. Brock notes that the Greek language and culture influenced the Syriac world but Aphrahat and even Ephrem still: "preferred to write in an essentially Semitic mode." Sebastian P. Brock, "The Syriac Background to the World of Theodore of Tarsus," chap. in *From Ephrem to Romanos: Interactions Between Syriac and Greek in Late Antiquity*, Variorum Collected Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; Ashgate Publishing, 1999), 30–53 III. See also Sebastian P. Brock, "Greek Words in Syriac: Some General Features," chap. in *From Ephrem to Romanos: Interactions Between Syriac and Greek in Late Antiquity*, Variorum Collected Studies (Jerusalem: 1996; Ashgate Publishing, 1999), 251–262 XVI.

the fifth century caused some confusion over Aphrahat's name because it attributes the *Demonstrations* to Mar Jacob the Sage. Later on, this attribution was confused with Jacob of Nisibis (d. 338 C.E.) who was a contemporary of Aphrahat.²² However, this could not be the same person, since fully half of the demonstrations were written after Jacob of Nisibis' death.

The name Aphrahat is the Syriac version of the Persian *Farbad*; the root in Persian means "perspicacious." Thus, Aphrahat the Persian Sage is actually redundant.²³ There is a martyr named Aphrahat in the martyrologies compiled in Syria before 412 C.E. Our Aphrahat the Persian Sage is likely not the Aphrahat mentioned in the martyrologies; it was a fairly common name in the area. Theodoret of Cyr in his *History of the Syriac Fathers* wrote that his mother took him to meet with an Aphrahat, but no mention is made of Aphrahat "the Sage."²⁴ The author of the *Demonstrations* is always referred to as "the Sage." As M.-J. Pierre notes, it is tempting to identify Theodoret's Aphrahat with the Sage who wrote the *Demonstrations*, but the *Demonstrations* were written seventy-five years before Theodoret's meeting which was sometime before 416 C.E. It is possible that Aphrahat

P. Schaff and H. Wace (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 345–423. Sebastian P. Brock translated Demonstration Four with a very useful introduction and notes in *Syriac Fathers on Prayer*, 1–28. See Jacob Neusner's translation of Demonstrations 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, and parts of 23 in *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian-Jewish Argument in Fourth-Century Iran* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 19–119. Kuriakose A. Valavanolickal has published a simple English translation of the *Demonstrations* in *Aphrahat Demonstrations, Vol. 1* (Kerala: HIRS Publications, 2001).

One word of caution for those who do not know Syriac. Many of the English translations woefully neglect the greater liturgical and more ecclesiastical language which Aphrahat uses. For the most part English translations avoid any sacramental language or overtones of Christian ecclesiology. Since I argue that Aphrahat is a bishop or at least a very devout Christian, I have retained the more traditional Christian language with references to the eucharist and liturgy. See for example, D 23:61 (PS II/128) on page 62, and D 12:6 (PS I/516.19–517.4) on page 69.

²² Pierre, *Aphraate le sage persan*, vol. 1, 46; and Edward J. Duncan, *Baptism in the Demonstrations of Aphraates the Persian Sage* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1945), 7.

²³ Pierre, *Aphraate le sage persan*, vol. 1, 37.

²⁴ Théodoret de Cyr, *Histoire des Moines de Syrie*, SC vol. 234, eds. Pierre Canivet and Alice Leroy-Molinghen (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1977), 373–405. English translation by Richard M. Price, "Aphrahat," in *Theodoret of Cyr, A History of the Monks of Syria* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Press, 1985), 72–79.

that he knew both Tatian's *Diatessaron* and the separate Gospels.³¹ There is no question that the Sage knew Paul's epistles, and the Acts of the Apostles, since he often quotes verbatim from these texts.³² Although Aphrahat likely did not know 1 or 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude nor the Book of Revelation.³³

How Aphrahat acquired his scriptural education is unclear from the *Demonstrations*. R. Murray asserts that Aphrahat received his scriptural education "doubtless among the ascetical 'Sons of the Covenant.'"³⁴ This is the most likely scenario given that part of the role of the sons of the Covenant (ܒܢܝ ܩܝܡܐ *bnay qyāmā*) was to take care of the church and to teach the people who wanted to learn more about the Christian faith.³⁵ It is certain that he was very well educated in the scriptures and quite articulate.

³¹ Aphrahat's scriptural canon is of great interest to many scholars. Some important studies are: Pierre, *Aphraate le sage persan*, vol. 1, esp. 131–143; Tjitze Baarda, *Early Transmission of Words of Jesus: Thomas, Tatian and the Text of the New Testament* (Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij, 1983), 111–113; Robert J. Owens, *The Genesis and Exodus Citations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983); *idem*, "Aphrahat as a witness to the early Syriac text of Leviticus," in *The Peshitta*, eds. P. B. Dirksen and M. J. Mulder (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985), 1–48; *idem*, "The Early Syriac text of Ben Sira in the *Demonstrations* of Aphrahat," *JSS* 34, Spring (1989), 39–75; and Robert F. Shedinger, *Tatian and the Jewish scriptures: A Textual and Philological Analysis of the Old Testament Citations in Tatian's Diatessaron*, CSCO vol. 591 (Louvain: Peeters, 2001). A. Vööbus states that Aphrahat did not know the *Diatessaron* and uses only the separate gospels. This is not the majority view of the scholarly world today. Arthur Vööbus, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac*, CSCO vol. 128, (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste 1951), 42.

³² F. H. Woods, "Homilies of Aphrahat and Acts of Karpus," *The Classical Review* 3, 10 (Dec, 1889): 458.

³³ After I conducted an extensive search for any reference to 1 Peter 2:4–5, I was obliged to conclude that Aphrahat did not know this epistle. 1 Peter 2:4–5 has many motifs which Aphrahat uses throughout his writings, but there is no use of the phrase "living stones" anywhere in the *Demonstrations*. These lacunae in Aphrahat's scriptural canon mean that this powerful passage linking the spiritual temple and holy priesthood to the individual Christian believer was not known in so many words by Aphrahat. 1 Peter 2:4–5 "Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

³⁴ Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975; reprint, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), 22.

³⁵ The phrase "Sons of the Covenant" is discussed further on page 82.

Another question brought up by the scholarly community is whether Aphrahat was the abbot of Mar Mattai.³⁶ This is suggested by an emendation to the C manuscript dated 1364 C.E. At the end of *Dem.* Twenty-three a colophon reads, “With the help of God, we write the Demonstration of the Grapecluster, of Aphrahat the Sage or Jacob, Bishop of Mar Mattai.”³⁷ According to I. Hausherr, this is an anachronistic appellation.³⁸ J. Neusner, on the other hand, writes “The first great father of the Iranian church, Aphrahat, a monk of the rank of bishop at Mar Mattai [...]”³⁹ R. Murray concurs with J. Neusner stating that Aphrahat could be the prelate of Mar Mattai.⁴⁰ The *Demonstrations* allow us to deduce that the author has great pastoral concerns for his community, but the presumption that he was an “abbot” is untenable.

Although we cannot conclude that Aphrahat was abbot of Mar Mattai, there are many other tantalizing tidbits we may tease out of his writings. Our author was likely a member of the *Bnay Qyāmā*, or Sons of the Covenant.⁴¹ This distinct group of ascetics had a very important ecclesiastical

³⁶ Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, 4 and Stephen D. Benin, “Commandments, Covenants, and the Jews in Aphrahat, Ephrem, and Jacob of Sarug,” in *Approaches to Judaism in medieval times* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 136.

³⁷ Pierre, *Aphraate le sage persan*, vol. 1, 35.

³⁸ Marcel Viller, ed. *Dſp.* (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1937), s.v. “Aphraate,” by Irénée Hausherr.

³⁹ Jacob Neusner, “Aphrahat on Celibacy,” *Judaica* 28 (1972): 117.

The term “monk” in reference to Aphrahat has come under heavy scrutiny because of various concerns over the date of origin for monasticism in the modern sense in the Ancient Near East. Classic monasticism, as it is commonly conceived, developed in Egypt under St. Anthony and St. Pachomius at the turn of the fourth century. It is assumed that Egyptian monasticism did not reach and influence Syria until the late fourth century, in other words, after Aphrahat’s time. Rather than dealing with this large and somewhat complex issue, the term “monk” within the context of Aphrahat’s writings will be eschewed.

Although the term “monk” cannot be used for Aphrahat, it must be noted that all the ideas of dedication, prayer, asceticism, and service to the church are hallmarks of monasticism. There is little disjoint between the role of the Covenanters at this time and the monk’s role later in Syriac tradition, as is shown further in Chapter 2 of this work, see page 73. Perhaps future research will support the view that monasticism developed concurrently in Egypt and Syria.

⁴⁰ Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 29.

⁴¹ Robert Murray, “The Features of the Earliest Christian Asceticism,” in *Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Gordon Rupp*, ed. Peter Brooks (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1975), 69 and Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 226.

role within the Syriac church. *Dem.* Six, “On the Sons of the Covenant,” is filled with advice to these ascetics. He urges his audience to right action in a familiar manner which suggests that he himself was a fellow Covenanter. The hortatory passage of *Dem.* 6:1, beginning with “Let us [...],” illustrates his pastoral concerns for his persecuted community.

Aphrahat, a Syriac Christian cleric, writing in the fourth century C.E. was a mystic who wrote using terminology from the same mystical thought as the Second Temple Jewish mystical writers with a focus on *Merkabah* or the Chariot ascending to heaven. Therefore, a quick review of secondary scholarship in the area of Jewish and Syriac Christian connections will help to illuminate the importance of mystical themes found in Second Temple Jewish literature and Aphrahat. Early scholars found numerous striking similarities between Aphrahat’s exegesis and passages in the Babylonian Talmud and other rabbinic writings. Many scholars characterize his scriptural use as “midrashic.”⁴² Midrash can be defined as a rabbinic statement

⁴² In the early years of Aphrahat studies, he was commonly assumed to be a “docile pupil of the Jews.” Ginzberg’s assessment was based primarily on the work of Funk who found that there were approximately thirty four passages in Aphrahat which had parallels within the *Haggadah*. Salomon Funk, *Die Haggadischen Elementen in den Homilien des Aphraates, des persischen Weisen* (Vienna: Inaugural-Dissertation, 1891). See Isidore Singer and Cyrus Alder, eds. *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: 1901), s.v. “Aphraates, the Persian Sage,” by Louis Ginzberg. Gavin continues in this vein with his influential article in which he concludes that: “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.” Frank Gavin, “Aphraates and the Jews,” *JSOR* VII (1923): 152.

Later scholars refined this view to suggest that he was a Christian writer who was steeped in Jewish or Jewish-Christian traditions. See John S. Luttrell, “The influence of Babylonian Judaism on Aphrahat the Persian Sage (Ph.D. diss., HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, OH, 1977), esp. 53–70. Luttrell compared D 18 with *Baraita Midrash* on Exod 19:14, folio 61b and 62a. He notes that Aphrahat and the Rabbis used the same technical exegetical devices, “light to heavy” or the deduction from a minor to a major principle. Luttrell, 63. There is a strong scholarly desire to avoid “parallelomania” so thematic analyses are more common. See Sebastian P. Brock, “Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources,” *JJS* 30 (1979): 212–232. Vööbus argues that there are Targumic touches to Aphrahat’s use of the Hebrew scriptures. His theological traditions and terminology are taken from Jewish thought. Arthur Vööbus, “Aphrahat,” in *Nachträge zum Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum (1960): 154. Guillaumont suggests that both Aphrahat and Ephrem knew some of the Palestinian Targums and separately followed the inter-

coupled with a quotation from scriptures.⁴³ It is a type of biblical interpretation which is found in the Jewish biblical commentaries containing many inter-textual referents from among different books of scripture. Aphrahat functions within this interpretative context. As R. Murray and E. Rolle both note, there are some similarities between Aphrahat's presentations and a few midrashic themes.⁴⁴ If the term "midrash" is solely limited to Jewish rabbinic statements, then Aphrahat's texts would be excluded. But his style of interpretation is closely aligned to the Jewish tradition with his extensive interweaving of various scriptural texts and ideas to address the difficulties of his time and audience.

The common ground between Aphrahat and his Jewish contemporaries is based upon their similar language, geography, and interpretation of common scriptures. As H. W. J. Drijvers comments:

pretation of Exodus 4:24–26 from that source. Antoine Guillaumont, "Un midrash d'Exode 4, 24–26 chez Aphraate et Ephrem de Nisibe," in *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus*, ed. Robert H. Fischer (Chicago: Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1977), 89–96.

On the whole, we will avoid using the term "Jewish-Christian" given that it is extremely vague. The term is used by those who are following in Jean Daniélou's footsteps, with *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1958). It defines a common category term for those early Christians who seem to be more Jewish than either their enemies or their scholarly interlocutors would like. For a review of the various issues and scholarly debates involved with this term see especially Robert Murray, "Jews, Hebrews and Christians: Some Needed Distinctions," *NovT* XXIV, 3 (1982): 194–208. See also Lesie W. Barnard, "The Early Roman Church, Judaism, and Jewish-Christianity," *ATR* 49 (1967): 371–384; Georg Strecker, "On the Problem of Jewish Christianity," in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, eds. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971; Garland, 1993), 241–285; Stanley K. Riegel, "Jewish Christianity: Definitions and Terminology," *NTS* 24 (1977/78): 410–415; Jarl E. Fossum, "Jewish-Christian Christology and Jewish Mysticism," *VC* 37 (1983): 260–287; Hans J. W. Drijvers, "Jews and Christians at Edessa," *JJS* XXXVI, 1 (Spr 1985): 88–102; and Simon Mimouni, "Le Judéo-Christianisme Syriacque: Mythe Littéraire ou Réalité Historique?" *VI Symposium Syriacum 1992. OCA* Vol. 247, ed. René Lavenant (Rome: Pont. Istituto Orientale, 1994), 269–279.

⁴³ Albert van der Heide, "Midrash and Exegesis," in *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation*, eds. Judith Frishman and Lucas van Rompay (Louvain: 1997), 44.

⁴⁴ Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 54 and Elizabeth Rolle, "Aphrahat and the rabbis on monotheism and anthropomorphism" (PhD diss., Hebrew Union College., 1981), 69.

Pagans, Jews and Christians did not live in splendid isolation in an antique town in which a good deal of life was lived in public, and privacy was an almost unknown concept. Ideological conflicts and struggles like those between Christians, Jews and pagans found their origin in daily experiences of different religious, and consequently social, behaviour because religion in the ancient world was mainly a matter of public conduct according to traditional standards.⁴⁵

Aphrahat and his fellow Christians were not hermetically sealed away from any influence or interaction with their Jewish neighbors. As the Sage's own polemical writings show, he was addressing arguments between his audience and the Jews about circumcision, Passover, Sabbath, being the chosen people of God, the Messiah, celibacy, asceticism, charity, and persecution.⁴⁶

Who these Jews were precisely cannot be determined exactly from Aphrahat's side of the argument. Yet Aphrahat was living at the same time as the sages of the Talmud and the time of the *Hekhalot Zutarti* or the *Lesser Hekhalot* compilation.⁴⁷ According to J. Neusner and E. Rolle, Aphrahat did not know any Palestinian Jews nor rabbinic Jews as we understand them today.⁴⁸ Neusner suggests that the Jews Aphrahat knew were Adiabene Jews who had little or no contacts with Babylonian rabbis.⁴⁹ But as E. Rolle notes:

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

⁴⁵ Drijvers, "Jews and Christians at Edessa," 89.

⁴⁶ See the following demonstrations for Aphrahat's more polemical arguments against the Jews: D 11 "On Circumcision," D 12 "On Passover," D 13 "On the Sabbath," D 15 "On the Avoidance of Food," D 16 "On the People in place of the People," D 17 "On Christ, who is the Son of God," D 18 "Against the Jews, concerning Virginity and Holiness," D 19 "Demonstration 19: Against the Jews, who say that they will yet be gathered together," D 20 "On the Support of the Poor," and D 21 "On Persecution." English translations and discussion of these demonstrations are available in Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, 19–122.

⁴⁷ Stephen D. Benin, *The Footprints of God: Divine Accommodation in Jewish and Christian Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 134.

⁴⁸ Neusner notes that: "Aphrahat and the rabbis had practically nothing in common, other than they lived in a single cultural continuum and believed in the same revelation." Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, 188. See also Rolle, "Aphrahat and the rabbis," 3 and 79.

⁴⁹ Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, 148–149.

the fact that the literature of Aphrahat's day does not mention him means that he did not exist!⁵⁰

Aphrahat's presentation of his Jewish opponents is imprecise, so his contact may have been indirect.⁵¹ I am of the opinion that Aphrahat had a personal contact with some leaders of the Jewish community in his area, though to what extent and how intimately we cannot know.⁵² As Drijvers concludes: "Ephrem Syrus' works like those of Aphrahat and Origen in the third century reflect Jewish learning and actual discussions on theological matters with Jewish rabbis and scribes."⁵³ N. Koltun-Fromm's research into various common themes between Aphrahat and the rabbis shows that: "These textual correspondences attest to some sort of cross fertilization, though it is difficult to say how, when or in which direction."⁵⁴ J. Snaith summarizes the situation as: "His [Aphrahat's] contact with Jews was therefore on an unofficial, informal basis, and I suspect that the 'Jewish debater' sums up in his person any number of acquaintances."⁵⁵ Aphrahat does not write of how he could have learned about his Jewish neighbors, their traditions, and exegesis. He may have had a Jewish teacher, some rabbi of his acquaintance, or he may be using common ideas from his Christian Syrian church which had very strong and deep Jewish roots, or he may have learned some of the

⁵⁰ Rolle, "Aphrahat and the rabbis," 96.

⁵¹ J. B. Segal suggests Aphrahat had a second-hand knowledge of the Targum and Talmud. Segal, *Edessa*, 100. R. Murray notes that "The Christians in Mesopotamia lived at the door of the Jews like poor relations not on speaking terms." Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 19.

⁵² Ouellette notes that Aphrahat probably knew some Mesopotamian Jews, although he does not show any acquaintance with any famous Jews. Jean Ouellette, "Sens et Portée de l'argument Scripturaire chez Aphraate," in *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus*, ed. Robert H. Fischer (Chicago: Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1977), 191.

⁵³ Drijvers, "Jews and Christians at Edessa," 100

⁵⁴ Naomi Koltun-Fromm, "Sexuality and Holiness: Semitic Christian and Jewish Conceptualizations of Sexual Behavior," *VC* (Leiden) 54 (2000): 390. See also her doctoral dissertation: Naomi Koltun, "Jewish-Christian polemics in fourth century Persian Mesopotamia: a reconstructed conversation" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1994).

⁵⁵ John G. Snaith, "Aphrahat and the Jews," in *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honor of EIJ Rosenthal*, eds. John A. Emerton and Stefan C. Reif (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 250.

ideas from his fellow Christians who were having debates with the Jews in the area.

The demonstrations which are deemed anti-Jewish and polemical, *Dems.* 11–21, are by far the most studied of his writings; they have been translated into English and many scholars have written about his irenic, for a Christian Patristic writer, but constant stance against the perceived threat of the Jews.⁵⁶ The more mystical aspects of Aphrahat's writings, for example, ascent to heaven and the heavenly temple, have been almost wholly ignored.⁵⁷ The connection between Aphrahat and his Jewish compatriots is primarily through the *Peshitta* which retained interpretations from the Palestinian Targums⁵⁸ and, I contend, secondarily through a common mystical view based upon Isaiah 66, the *Merkabah* ascent tradition and other "apocalyptic" traditions. Even though Aphrahat was writing to his Christian community to teach them how to debate with their Jewish interlocutors, the spiritual or even mystical traditions of his community are crucial to his message. His dual purpose of pedagogy and polemic are often confused in secondary scholarship—but Aphrahat's pastoral goal of exhortation to his flock is never lost throughout his twenty-three demonstrations.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The prime concern of this study is the imagery of the temple. So a quick review of the exact words Aphrahat uses for temple throughout his work is

⁵⁶ Some articles about Aphrahat's interaction with the Jews of his community are: Klaus Deppe, "Die Rolle des Alten Testaments im Streit zwischen Christen und Juden nach dem Zeugnis Afrahats," *Erkenntnisse und Meinungen*, vol. 1, ed. G. Wiesner (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1973), 83–107; Adam Becker, "Anti-Judaism and Care for the Poor in Aphrahat's Demonstration 20," *J ECS* 10, 3 (2002): 305–327; and S. Benin, "Commandments," 135–156.

⁵⁷ Of course, this theme has not been ignored by Robert Murray, Alexander Golitzin, and me. See Robert Murray, "Some themes and problems of early Syriac angelology," *Symposium Syriacum V, 1988 OCA* vol. 236 (René Lavenant; Rome: Pontifical Institute Studium Orientalium, 1990), 143–153; Alexander Golitzin, "'Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men': The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Niketas Stethatos, and the Tradition of 'Interiorized Apocalyptic' in Eastern Christian Ascetical and Mystical Literature," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001), 125–153; *idem*, "The Place of the Presence of God: Aphrahat of Persia's Portrait of the Christian Holy Man," chap. in *Synaxis Eucharistias: Charisteria eis timen tou Gerontos Aimilianou* (Athens: Indiktos, 2003), 391–447.

⁵⁸ Brock, "Jewish Traditions," 231.

in order. Payne-Smith defines the Syriac word for temple, ܒܝܬܐ (*bayklā*), as: “a palace, a temple.”⁵⁹ The two meanings are interchangeable for the most part; a place where the king resides can be either a palace or a temple. Aphrahat uses the term to mean both temple and palace, but temple is the more salient definition.⁶⁰ An important synonym for *bayklā* is ܢܘܨܐ (*nawsā*), from the Greek root ναός, meaning a temple or shrine.⁶¹ In all of his writings, Aphrahat uses *nawsā* only once, in *Dem.* 23:59: “You [God] have called us your temples⁶² and your majesty walks in us [...]”⁶³ Aphrahat could have replaced *nawsā* with *bayklā* without a change of meaning but from the context of the full passage he likely used *nawsā* to avoid repeating himself.⁶⁴ *Nawsā* occurs far more frequently in other Syriac literature, for example *The Acts of Thomas* and Ephrem’s writings.⁶⁵ The synonyms for *bayklā* which

⁵⁹ Robert Payne-Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, ed. Jessie Payne-Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903; Eerdmans, 1996), 103.

⁶⁰ Aphrahat uses *bayklā* and its cognates over thirty times in his *Demonstrations*. The specific citations are: D 1:3 (9.2–8), D 1:5 (13.19), D 3:2 (101.19), D 4:10 (157.22–23), D 5:7 (197.3), D 5:20 (221.10), D 5:22 (228.9), D 6:1 (252.11), D 6:10 (280.22), D 6:11 (284.5), D 6:14 (292.19), D 6:15 (297.17), D 9:4 (416.3), D 9:7 (421.24), D 12:8 (524.22 and 525.3), D 13:12 (569.2), D 14:28 (645.20), D 14:35 (661.17), D 14:38 (680.13), D 17:6 (796.1), D 17:7 (800.8–9), D 21:4 (941.2), D 21:5 (945.20), D 21:17 (972.16–20), D 23:47 (II/92.25), and D 23:59 (II/121.13). Unless otherwise noted, all citations are from Parisot’s first volume of *Patrologia Syriaca*.

⁶¹ Payne-Smith, 333.

⁶² Syr. ܢܘܨܐ *nawsye*.

⁶³ D 23:59 (PS II/121.14) ܘܢܘܨܐ ܕܘܫܘܪܐ ܕܘܫܘܪܐ ܕܘܫܘܪܐ

⁶⁴ See discussion of D 23:59 in Chapter Five, page 142.

⁶⁵ See discussion Ephrem, page 93. *The Acts of Judas Thomas* are an apocryphal collection of stories which was originally composed in Syriac, likely in the third century C.E., and translated into Greek, Latin, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Armenian. If we are to follow Klijn’s conclusions, the Acts may come from an Edessan Jewish or Christian environment, with both Jewish and Hellenistic ideas present. While this text earned a questionable reputation in the Latin West, the Acts continued to be accorded esteem by the Syrian church, though with some editing. See A. F. J. Klijn’s translation entitled *The Acts of Thomas* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), 13, 20, and 53. William Wright, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1: *The Syriac Texts*. (London, 1871), 172–333 and vol. II: *The English Translation* (London 1871), 146–298. For the Greek version see André-Jean Festugière, *Les Actes Apocryphes de Jean et de Thomas: Traduction Française et Notes Critiques* (Cahiers d’Orientalisme 6; Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1983).

temple imagery (cf. 1 Cor 3:9–17, 1 Cor 6:19 and 2 Cor 2:17). Jesus' own life centered largely around the rituals of the temple: his birth was announced in the temple (Luke 1:17; 2:27–32), he was presented in the temple when he was eight days old (Luke 2:46), he taught in the temple (John 7:14) and cleansed it (Mark 11:17 and parallels). Aphrahat writes throughout his *Demonstrations* that the believer is only called the temple of God because Christ himself is the temple and the believer participates in Christ.

In the Sage's hands, temple and its various cognates represent a multitude of meanings, ranging from the simple—references to the physical building of the Jerusalem temple—to the more complex, temple is the Christ dwelling within a person. Temple, tabernacle, abode, sheepfold, treasury and habitation, all have a common underlying sense, meaning something or someone special is resting within a place. This place may be a locale on earth or it may be within the human heart. All the various layers of meaning weave together within the term temple, so it is for this reason that we may continue with this work examining the facets of Aphrahat's temple imagery.

Aphrahat's theological anthropology involves a mystic who becomes a divine temple and then may ascend to heaven. Within this rather simple statement there are various important concepts which need clarification; these concepts are: apocalypse, ascent, mysticism, *Merkabah*, and *bekhalot*. The first term is "apocalypse" which also involves the cognates apocalyptic and apocalypticism.

The literal meaning of "apocalypse" is the revelation of concealed things, from the Greek ἀποκαλύπτω.⁷⁷ The most famous text with the self

⁷⁷ The term *apokalyptō* as a verb was used in Greek literature without any reference to a divine element in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. and then fell out of common use. It was popular again in the second century B.C.E. and later. G. Kittel, ed. *TDNT*, s.v. "καλύπτω," by Albrecht Oepke. For corrections and expansions upon Oepke's article, see Morton Smith, "On the History of ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΠΤΩ and ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ," in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, ed. David Hellholm (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1983), 9–20. In the Jewish literature, the verb is used both literally and figuratively to describe how God relates to His creation. Smith, "On the History," 13. In the New Testament, it is used four times in relation to revealing secrets, (Matt 10:26/Luke 12:2; Matt 11:25/Luke 10:21; Matt 16:27; and Luke 2:35) and two times about revealing God (Matt 11:27/Luke 10:22). The only time the verb is used within an eschatological context is Luke 17:30 "so will it be on the day when the Son of man is revealed." The Christian use of the term is very similar to the Jewish use.

appellation of apocalypse is the Apocalypse of John in the New Testament.⁷⁸ For the most part, the Jewish and early Christian apocalypse literature dates from the Second Temple period. These texts encompass literature from the Enochic books to Daniel to various pseudepigraphical texts with “apocalypse” in the title, including some of the Qumran library and, of course, many Christian texts.⁷⁹ The apocalypses were an essential literary

Theories abound about the origins of apocalyptic literature, together with Persian influence, to Ugaritic-Canaanite sources through to a more “general” Mesopotamian tradition. See the following for more on the apocalyptic origins: Paul D. Hanson, “Prolegomena to the Study of Jewish Apocalyptic,” in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God*, eds. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), 395. J. VanderKam suggests that rather than an either/or situation with prophetic or wisdom traditions being the sources for apocalyptic literature, it is more accurately a both/and situation. See James C. VanderKam, “The Prophetic-Sapiential Origins of Apocalyptic Thought,” chap. in *From Revelation to Canon: Studies in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 241–254. See also David N. Freedman, ed. *ABD*, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), s.v. “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism,” by Paul Hanson and John J. Collins; James C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition*, The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series vol. 16, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 179–190; Helge S. Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament Vol. 61 (Vlügen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), 319–342 and 603–613; and Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), esp. 5–16.

⁷⁸ Aphrahat does not quote from the book of Revelation and it was not universally received by the church until centuries later, although Athanasius of Alexandria has it in his canonical list in 367 C.E. Portions of Athanasius’ *Festal Letter XXXIX*, is extant in Greek, Coptic, and Syriac, (see PG 26.1434–1440; English translation in Athanasius, *Select Writings and Letters* NPNF Second Series. Vol. 4, trans. Archibald Robertson (Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892; reprint Hendrickson, 1995), 552; and S. Athanase, *Lettres Festales et Pastorales en Copte*, CSCO vol. 151 Scr. Coptici vol. 20, ed. L.-Theophile Lefort (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1955), 37). See also Timothy D. Barnes’ discussion about the Festal Letters and their dating problems in *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993; reprint Harvard University Press, 2001), 183–191.

⁷⁹ For example, the Apocalypse of Abraham, the Apocalypse of Zephaniah and the Apocalypse of Paul to name but a few. See the following for translations of some texts: James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (New

vehicle for mystical sentiments and had great influence on Christian literature including, I contend, Aphrahat and later Jewish literature for example the *Hekhalot Rabbati* and the *Merkabah Rabbah*.⁸⁰

The assorted and mostly anonymous communities who produced apocalypses were diverse in time, culture, language, and religion. One cannot generalize as to the mindset of the authors nor can one assume that all communities who had apocalypses within their respective libraries were marginalized, persecuted or suffering.⁸¹ As C. Rowland notes: “The apocalyptic tradition is not tied to one particular social stratum.”⁸² Aphrahat wrote most of his more apocalyptic and mystical texts later in life during the persecutions of Shapur II.⁸³ Aphrahat’s *Demonstrations* are not apocalypses,

York: Doubleday, 1983) and James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

⁸⁰ Michael E. Stone, “Apocalyptic Literature,” chap. in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 435–436. See also John J. Collins, “Apocalyptic Literature,” in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, eds. Robert A. Kraft and G. W. E. Nickelsburg (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 345–363.

⁸¹ The destruction of the first Jerusalem Temple and later, the Second Temple, is suggested as a prime motivating factor for the development of apocalyptic literature. It may be true that communities who have lost their place to commune with God may think that they have reached the end times, but it does not mean that all apocalyptic literature is at essence pessimistic about the present. Aphrahat’s apocalyptic passages are hopeful for both the future and the present. See especially Ithamar Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988), 129.

⁸² Christopher C. Rowland, “Apocalyptic Literature,” in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture*, eds. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 184.

⁸³ Syrian Christian apocalypses have not been extensively examined, though F. J. Martinez did attempt to argue that there is “an indigenous Syriac apocalyptic tradition, irreducible to concepts like ‘early’ or ‘late’ Christian apocalypticism.” His collection of apocalypses examined are for the most part seventh century C.E. and he chose them specifically to support his thesis. He does include Ephrem’s *Memra* on the Last Judgment for a fourth century example but he ignores Aphrahat’s writings. He uses Aphrahat, but only to discuss the issue in terms of the Persians and the Babylonians in Demonstration 5, “On the Wars.” See Francisco Javier Martinez, “The Apocalyptic Genre in Syriac: the World of Pseudo-Methodius,” *IV Symposium Syriacum 1984*, *OCA* vol. 229, eds. Hans J. W. Drijvers and René Lavenant (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987), 337–352.

but rather, they have apocalyptic imagery and some ideas which involve direct divine revelation to a person during the heavenly ascent.

Ascent or apocalyptic ascent is a person's journey to another realm, not on earth, and then one returns to earth to teach what has been learned. This journey may be done solely through the intellect ascending as Aphrahat usually writes, or corporeally as Enoch was written to have done.⁸⁴ Aphrahat writes of an ascent by a person who has become a divine temple in the quotation from the beginning of our introduction:

[The Sage] is a great temple for his Creator: and the King of the heights enters and dwells in him, raises his intellect to the heights and makes his thought soar to the sanctuary, revealing to him treasures of all kinds. (*Dem.* 14:35)

This passage is one of four key passages addressed later in this work with descriptions of various people ascending to the heavens.⁸⁵ Some of the people who ascend are: Moses, unnamed sages, and Aphrahat himself. Aphrahat is one of the elite who are able to see and communicate his vision of the heavenly throne to his audience. J. Reeves defines the literary genre of apocalyptic writings with an emphasis upon the sharing of knowledge with the uninitiated.

The type of knowledge that is communicated in apocalyptic writings is fundamentally esoteric: its content, character, and essential qualities lie concealed from most members of the social order and rely for their wider dissemination on the willingness of those privileged to receive such knowledge to share it with a broader public.⁸⁶

Aphrahat's own writings are a testament to this goal, even though the *Demonstrations* are sermons they have many apocalyptic aspects to them. A description of an ascent to heaven fits well within the area of mystical thought or even has some aspects of "mysticism" to it.

The term "mysticism" or "mystical" are words which are nebulous and laden with many different suppositions and assumptions.⁸⁷ J. Fossum's

⁸⁴ See *1 Enoch* discussion, p. 168.

⁸⁵ See Chapter 4 for a full discussion of ascent in Aphrahat's writings, p. 189.

⁸⁶ John C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Post Rabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 2

⁸⁷ A useful article for terminology and possible categories of mysticism is Karl-Erich Grozinger, "Types of Jewish Mysticism and their Relation to Theology and Philosophy," in *Expérience et Écriture Mystiques dans les Religions du Livre*, eds. Paul B.

definition of mysticism within the context of apocalypticism is helpful for our study, since within Aphrahat's work it is difficult to distinguish between the mystical and apocalyptic aspects. According to Fossum:

Mysticism is 'vertical' apocalypticism. It supplements eschatology, 'linear' apocalypticism, by dealing with the mysteries of the heavenly world and the ways in which man can gain knowledge of those mysteries. A recondite part of Jewish mysticism concerns God's Glory, the 'likeness as the appearance of man' upon the throne-chariot, the *Merkabah*, first seen by the prophet Ezekiel. The mystics performed journeys to heaven and gazed on the Glory. Furthermore, the one who ascended to heaven was transformed and assimilated to the Glory; he could even be mystically identified with the man-like figure on the throne.⁸⁸

Fenton and Roland Goetschel (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 15–23. For further discussion of both Jewish and Christian mysticism see also S. D. Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism," vol. 13, *World Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroads, 1985), 253–288; Dan Cohn-Sherbok, and Lavinia Cohn-Sherbok, *Jewish and Christian Mysticism An Introduction* (New York: Continuum, 1994); Fossum, "Jewish-Christian Christology and Jewish Mysticism," 260–287 and Gershom G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965).

⁸⁸ Jarl E. Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology* (Freiburg: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1995), 1–2. See also Alan F. Segal, "Paul and the Beginning of Jewish Mysticism," in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*, eds. John J. Collins and Michael Fishbane (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 95–122.

The scholarly debate about both apocalypse and *Merkabah* texts is relatively recent; the connection between *Merkabah* mysticism and apocalyptic literature is now more accepted since the 1960s, when G. Scholem opened the door with his work linking *Hekhalot* literature with apocalyptic thought. (Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism*, 10–20.) I. Gruenwald continued along this line of inquiry connecting the rabbis who pursued the *Merkabah* with *1 Enoch* and various other apocalypses with heavenly journeys and vision of God. Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkabah Mysticism*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980); *idem*, "Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Gnosticism," *Studies in Jewish Mysticism*, eds. Joseph Dan and Frank Talmage (Cambridge, MA: Association for Jewish Studies, 1982), 41–55; and *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism*, esp. 121–130. See also A. Golitzin, "Recovering the 'Glory of Adam': 'Divine Light' Traditions in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Ascetical Literature of Fourth-Century Syro-Mesopotamia," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity*, Ed. J. Davila (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), 275–308; *idem*, "Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men," 125–153; see also

Aphrahat's writings of mystical ascents have many of these similar elements: mystics journeying to heaven, seeing the throne, and even being somewhat identified with the Glory.

A succinct definition of *Merkabah* mysticism is: "esoteric, visionary-mystical tradition centred upon the vision of God, seated on the celestial throne or *Merkabah*."⁸⁹ Those who participate in this type of mysticism are the "Descenders to the Chariot" who focus upon the mystical contemplation of Ezekiel's first chapter. The tradition is associated with R. Yohanan ben Zakkai and his students in the second half of the first century C.E.⁹⁰ *Merkabah* mysticism proposes an ascent through the *Hekhalot*, or [heavenly]

Joseph Dan "The Religious Experience of the *Merkabah*," in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages* Vol. 13 of *World Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Green, (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 289–307.) D. J. Halperin's work on the *Merkabah* interprets it as an outgrowth of the *sharlot* tradition. David J. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1988), 317–318. C. R. A. Morray-Jones brought in the Christian component with his various articles and suggests that the *Merkabah* traditions stemmed from esoteric traditions within the first and second century rabbinism to which some early Christian texts are also a witness. C. R. A. Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah tradition," *JJS* 43, Spring (1992): 1–31; *idem*, "Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1–12) The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate," *HTR* 86, April (1993): 177–217; *idem*, "Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1–12) Part 2," *HTR* 86, July (1993): 265–292; and *idem*, *The Temple Within: The Embodied Divine Image* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998.) A. D. DeConick expands upon Morray-Jones' thesis in her work about the *Gospel of Thomas*. (A. D. DeConick, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas*, vol. XXXIII, *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996). M. Himmelfarb explains the various aspects of the ascent journeys. Martha Himmelfarb, "From Prophecy to Apocalypse: The Book of the Watchers and Tours of Heaven," *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages* Vol. 13 *World Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Green, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1985), 145–165; and *eadem*, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*. esp. 33–36 and 105–114.

⁸⁹ Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism," 2. J. Dan suggests that the *Merkabah* was the topic of very early Jewish speculation, long before the Tannaitic period of the first and second century C.E. How much earlier, we do not know. Dan, "The Religious Experience of the *Merkabah*," 290.

⁹⁰ Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, vii. See also Gruenwald, "Jewish *Merkavah* Mysticism and Gnosticism," 51–52. Another scholar, David Halperin argues that the *Hekhalot* materials date from no earlier than 800 C.E. This dating is disputed. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 359–455.

“palaces.”⁹¹ It describes an adept’s ascent, conquest and final visions of the heavenly palaces. In the end, the victorious mystic is able to stand before the Throne and see the Glory or *kavod* of the Lord.

Upon first blush, one may assume that Jewish mystical texts have little or nothing to say to fourth century Syriac Christian authors; however, A. Golitzin and other scholars have been exploring the Syrian Christian connections with both the *Merkabah* and apocalypse literature.⁹² A. DeConick explains the juxtaposition of these Jewish mystical texts with Christianity:

[...] it seems that during the first century, mystical notions about ascent and gazing on God or his Glory had filtered into Christianity via developing Jewish apocalyptic and mystical circles. It is probable that it was filtering into Rabbinism simultaneously. Thus, it can be plausibly argued that merkavah mysticism is steeped with early Jewish mystical and apocalyptic notions. For this reason, the rabbinic and hekhalot texts are valuable to the study of Christianity’s interface with early Jewish mysticism.⁹³

R. Murray even highlights that: “They [the angelic law court] certainly feature; however, in Aphrahat’s account, in *Demonstration XIV*, of the vision to which a wise man is rapt, almost as though by the *Merkabah*...”⁹⁴ Murray notes the possibilities that Aphrahat may have more in common with these Jewish sages than one may at first think, given that Aphrahat is a fourth century Persian Christian writing for Christians. Our study of Aphrahat corresponds with DeConick’s and Golitzin’s lines of inquiry. Aphrahat’s writings describing human ascent to the heavenly temple have many similar themes to *Merkabah* mysticism. Aphrahat’s writings display ideas which may be categorized as apocalypse as well as having common characteristics with *Merkabah* mysticism.

⁹¹ Gruenwald notes that “There are a number of significant ties that link the *Merkavah* material in rabbinic literature and the Hekhalot writings together, this notwithstanding that substantial differences exist between them in relation to their respective form and contents.” Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism*, v.

⁹² See for example, Golitzin, “Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men,” 125–153, and *idem.*, “Recovering the ‘Glory of Adam,’” 275–308.

⁹³ DeConick, *Seek to See Him*, 31.

⁹⁴ Murray, “Some themes and problems of early Syriac angelology,” 150.

STRUCTURE OF THIS STUDY

We have the foundation of who Aphrahat is and what temple means in the simplest sense. We then turn to the process by which a person may become a divine temple; ascend to the heavenly temple; and mystically behold God. For the process of transformation of the person into a divine temple starts with faith in Christ, therefore initially we shall study Aphrahat's christology. Through Aphrahat's discussions of both baptism and the eucharist, we examine the sacramental realization of this faith within the context of the church. The next step in this process is the ascetic vow or dedication to God. Here we consider the various ascetic groupings and their functions within Aphrahat's community. The crux of this transformation is that an ascetic may then actually "become a temple," which includes a study of how Aphrahat describes the ascetic person as a divine temple. One of the results of being a divine temple is "Seeing God," which involves heavenly ascent to the supernal temple, angelic ministry, and some ideas in common with Jewish *Merkabah* mysticism. It is through faith in Christ, manifest in sacramental realities, ascetic discipline, and transformation by the divine which allows a human being to become a temple of God and see God.

1 APHRAHAT AND TEMPLE

Aphrahat's views about the human and the divine arise from his larger experience of scripture, his community, and the sacraments. His use of the term temple is remarkably consistent throughout the whole corpus of demonstrations. This is intriguing since they were written over an eight year period and to various audiences, i.e., the inquirer who requested basic education in the faith (Dem. 1–10), the bishops of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (Dem. 14), and his community at large (Dem. 11–13, 15–23). The temple image is rooted in the reality of the Jerusalem temple while at the same time both expanded to the heavenly realm and contracted to the realm of the person. Aphrahat describes the restoration of fallen humanity and its elevation to its ultimate destiny of becoming dwelling places for the divine. When Adam is first created, he knows his Creator and is the dwelling place of the Spirit. He then disobeys and rejects the Law of God and becomes divided into two, rather than being one with God. The resolution of the Fall and union with Christ comes when a person recognizes his Creator through faith, is baptized, participates in the eucharist, and dedicates himself to Christ. He then becomes the temple of God. Through the transformation of becoming a divine temple, the person may experience what Aphrahat himself experienced, an ascent to heaven through the mind and heart. The greatest temple of heaven is accessed via the smallest temple of the human heart. This chapter examines the fundamental elements of Aphrahat's temple imagery through the foci of scripture, Adam's fall, Jesus Christ, the church and the sacraments.

SCRIPTURAL QUOTATIONS

The primary use of the term “temple” in the *Demonstrations* is of the individual person as the temple of God. The goal of the Christian in this life is to become the temple of Christ, according to Aphrahat. So central is this theme that the Sage presents it immediately in *Dem.* 1:3 and ends with it in *Dem.* 23:59. The temple motif continually intertwines through most of the intervening demonstrations. The image of the temple is a fully fleshed out

deceptive words: “This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these.” (Jer 7:4).¹⁰¹ Verse 4 is in two halves, opening with: “Do not trust in these deceptive words.” Aphrahat completely ignores the first half of this verse whenever he is quoting this Jeremiah proof text. He only chooses to quote what is relevant to his argument which, in this case, is the temple of the Lord passage of Jer 7:4. The Masoretic consonantal text of Jer 7:4 is: **היכל יהוה היכל יהוה היכל יהוה**.¹⁰² The important word for our purposes is the last, **המה**, “these.” The Syriac *Peshitta* manuscripts of Jeremiah in the Stuttgartensia have **ܐܬܘܢ** ‘*atun*, in Hebrew **אתם**, “you” emended to the end of the last repetition instead of **המה**, “these” of the MT. The *Peshitta* version has “the temple of the Lord are you” (**ܐܬܘܢ ܫܚܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ** *baykeleb ‘atun dmāryā*). Aphrahat builds on the Syriac emended text of Jeremiah 7:4. Even though Jer 7:4 is rarely considered as a text with overtones of the temple as an anthropological symbol, in Aphrahat’s hands it most assuredly is.

The next scriptural proof text is Lev 26:12: “And I will walk among you and will be your God and you shall be my people.”¹⁰³ This passage describes the dwelling of the deity among his people. The dwelling of God in certain people makes those select people his territory or domain. This is a concern about which Aphrahat writes a whole demonstration—that Christians are the true people of God, taking over from the Jewish people who are deemed to be disloyal to God.¹⁰⁴ The Leviticus passage together with Jeremiah 7:4 substantiates Aphrahat’s assertion that a devout Christian may become a temple and God will be dwelling within, thereby making the person God’s own. Quotations from the Apostle Paul, Aphrahat’s favorite scripture author, further supports his argument.

¹⁰¹ All passages from scripture will be quoted according to the Revised Standard Version except internal biblical citations from other sources.

¹⁰² *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, eds. Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1967/77), 795.

¹⁰³ R. J. Owens notes that when Aphrahat is citing 2 Cor 6:16 he is only dealing with the first half of the verse, which follows the *Peshitta* exactly, and that “there can be little doubt that he is excerpting from his Bible.” Owens, “Aphrahat as a witness,” 43.

¹⁰⁴ D 16 entitled “On the Peoples which are in the Place of the People.” Ephrem shares this polemical concern of Aphrahat’s; see Robin A. Darling, “The ‘Church from the Nations’ in the Exegesis of Ephrem,” in *IV Symposium Syriacum 1984*, eds. Hans J. W. Drijvers and René Lavenant (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987), 111–121.

The Sage is a great student of “the Blessed Apostle” Paul (ܩܘܠܘܒܘܬܐ *sbliḥā tubānā*) as the over 225 citations within the *Demonstrations* witness.¹⁰⁵ Paul is Aphrahat’s most prominent theological teacher, far outweighing the other writers of the New Testament and even of the Hebrew scriptures. Aphrahat uses the apostle Paul to guide him in terms of the “two spirits” concept of the human (1 Cor 15:35–58) for the tradition of “grieving the Spirit” (Eph 4:30–32). The most important Pauline passages about the temple are: 1 Cor 3:16–17, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are”¹⁰⁶ and 2 Cor 6:16, “What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.’” Lev 26:12 is quoted within this citation. The Pauline quotation combines the sentiments from both the Leviticus and Jeremiah quotations in the *Dem.* 1:3 passage. The Sage then crowns his argument with a quotation from the fourth gospel: John 14:20, “In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” He uses this Johanine quotation many times throughout the *Demonstrations*. According to this passage, the most important idea is that Christ God dwells in us. So the scriptures corroborate Aphrahat’s view on God indwelling a person and this then creates a mini-divine temple. His use of scripture is straightforward in the *Dem* 1:3 passage, though this is not always the case as other scholars have noted.

R. Owens found that Aphrahat frequently cites scripture from memory, often inexactly, with a pronounced tendency toward accidental mixture of elements from different passages.¹⁰⁷ The conflation of various passages makes the job of the textual critical scholar more difficult. Aphrahat also

¹⁰⁵ Aphrahat’s great affinity to Pauline teaching is examined by John H. Corbett, “The Pauline Tradition in Aphrahat,” in *Symposium Syriacum IV*, eds. Hans J. W. Drijvers, et. al (Rome: Pontifical Institute, 1987), 13–32; and Stephen Taylor, “Paul and the Persian Sage: some observations on Aphrahat’s use of the Pauline corpus,” chap. in *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 312–331.

¹⁰⁶ In the *Demonstrations*, 1 Corinthians is cited most often out of the Pauline corpus with 66 citations or allusions. 1 Cor 3 is a key scriptural chapter in Aphrahat’s work, especially 1 Cor 3:11–13 and 1 Cor 3:16. He uses 1 Cor 3 over fourteen times. For further analysis of Aphrahat’s use of Paul in his texts, see Corbett, “The Pauline Tradition in Aphrahat,” 29.

¹⁰⁷ Owens, “Aphrahat as a witness,” 11 and 42–43.

But because of the New Adam, humanity may have the Divine indwelling again and may again be restored and become his temple.

The specifics of Adam’s sin are less significant to the Sage than the result of Adam’s sin. Aphrahat suggests various reasons for Adam’s behavior including: pride,¹¹⁸ greed,¹¹⁹ and Satan working through Eve.¹²⁰ He explains that:

His Lord gave him the commandment to keep. If he had kept what was commanded him, then his Lord would have brought him to a higher nature. Since Adam wished to receive greatness,¹²¹ which was not a part of

¹¹⁸ Aphrahat lambastes his prideful audience with the example of Adam’s folly. See D 14:10 (PS I/592.15–18) “For pride and boasting has ruined many people. In his pride Adam was cast out from paradise, and dust became food for the serpent.”

ܐܘܢܝܢܐ ܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ

¹¹⁹ D 14:40 (PS I/685.18–19) “It was with a desire for food that [Satan] caused Adam to be cast out from paradise.”

ܐܢܝܢܐ ܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ

D 14:22 (PS I/625.20–22) “Sin came into the world by the bait of greed, when Adam sinned by the food of the tree and was cast out from paradise.”

ܐܢܝܢܐ ܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ

In the next paragraph, Aphrahat writes: “All of this earth and all of this paradise were insufficient for Adam’s greed which came upon him, until he longed to take and eat even from that he was commanded [not to].” D 14:23 (PS I/628.21–24)

ܐܢܝܢܐ ܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ

¹²⁰ D 6:3 (PS I/256.25–26) “For it was through Eve that [Satan] was against Adam, and in his foolishness Adam was enticed by him.”

ܐܢܝܢܐ ܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ

D 18:8 (PS I/837.7–9) “He created Adam and Eve, but Adam is better than Eve in honor and virtue.”

ܐܢܝܢܐ ܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ

Later Aphrahat explains that Adam lost his virtue when Eve was made. D 18:9 (PS I/837.14–16) “In his virginity, Adam was loved and honored; after he begot Eve, he went astray and broke the commandment.”

ܐܢܝܢܐ ܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܘܢܝܘܬܐ

See also D 22:13 for a mention of Eve as the mother of all humanity.

¹²¹ Syr. ܐܢܝܢܐ *namūtā* may also mean pride.

have the spirit soul be the primary soul and the animal soul secondary, so that at the last judgment the animal may be left here on earth and the spiritual rejoin the Spirit of Christ in heaven. In his last Demonstration, Aphrahat summarizes the soteriological ramifications of the two Adams with specific reference to Christ’s resurrection:

Great is the gift of the Good One who is among us, the King’s pledge who is like him, who was led from among us. The Lover has made it and guards it [without] limit. This is a son of Adam whose body came from Mary, who was led from among us to the place of life. The weak body became mighty, and received glory which was greater and more dazzling than that which Adam stripped off in his fall.¹³⁹

Through Jesus Christ’s incarnation, crucifixion, and ascension; the weak flesh of humans becomes more glorious than what the first Adam received in Paradise. Moreover, those who follow Christ, the second Adam, may also become mighty and glorious because of him. R. Murray describes the role of the followers of Jesus, the new Adam: “Those who respond to Jesus as their Saviour, and undertake total discipleship of him in poverty and chastity, regain the lost status of Adam.”¹⁴⁰ It is my contention that the return to the pre-lapsarian state of Adam is key to understanding Aphrahat’s concerns about the state of humans. The fall of Adam in Genesis 2:6 because of the desire to “make oneself wise” must be restored through the true wisdom of God rather than the false wisdom of Adam. Now all things, includ-

Tatian too, has the two kinds of spirit in his writings. In *Oratio Ad Graecos*, Chapter 12, Tatian writes “We have knowledge of two different kinds of spirits, one of which is called soul, (ψυχή) but the other is greater than the soul; it is the image and likeness of God. The first men were endowed with both, so that they might be part of the material world, and at the same time above it.” Tatian. *Oratio Ad Graecos*, ed. Molly Whittaker (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1982), p. 12.1 in Greek, p. 23 in English.

“Δύο πνευμάτων διαφορὰς ἴσμεν ἡμεῖς, ὧν τὸ μὲν καλεῖται ψυχή, τὸ δὲ μεῖζον μὲν τῆς ψυχῆς, θεοῦ δὲ εἰκὼν καὶ ὁμοίωσις. ἑκάτερα δὲ παρὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τοῖς πρώτοις ὑπῆρχεν, ἵνα τὸ μὲν τι ὦσιν ὑλικοί, τὸ δὲ ἀνώτεροι τῆς ὕλης.”

¹³⁹ D 23:51 (PS II/100.1–9)

ܗܠܝܢ ܥܘܢ ܩܝܡܘܬܘܢ ܥܘܢ ܘܠܘܢ ܥܘܢ ܕܝܠܝܢ ܗܝܠܝܢ ܥܘܢ ܡܘܬܘܬܘܬܘܢ ܥܘܢ ܩܝܝܢ
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¹⁴⁰ Murray, “Some themes and problems of early Syriac,” 152.

christological issues burning to the West in the Roman Empire.¹⁴⁶ Aphrahat's christology has received a lot of scholarly attention but has suffered from some anachronistic expectations.¹⁴⁷ When one considers all of the

¹⁴⁶ Aphrahat does deal with a peculiar christological issue which I am defining as "quantification" for lack of a better term. Within Aphrahat's community, there may have been some people who suggested that if one claims that Christ dwells inside, then Christ's power is diminished and that there are then many christs instead of one. Aphrahat goes to great lengths to combat this view, but the precise identity of these literary disputants is unclear. The literalness of Aphrahat's disputant suggests an anthropomorphite literal turn of mind, but the multiplicity and diminution of Christ is not noted in the sources as a point of anthropomorphite contention.

See for example: D 6:10 (PS I/281.11–15) "For Christ sits at the right hand of His Father, and Christ dwells among men. (Matt 28:20) He is sufficient above and beneath, by the wisdom of His Father. And He dwells in many, though He is one." Aphrahat then cites Isa 53:12, John 14:20, and John 10:30 to support his argument. Aphrahat answers this false accusation using various analogies from the environment, most especially the sun. That is, the sun is in heaven and pours out its power on earth and is not at all diminished. It is the same with God; He is up in heaven and he pours out his power on earth. Therefore one cannot say that there are many suns because light shines down on different places; there is still only one sun, see D 5:25 (PS I/236.21–237.4) and D 6:11 (PS I/284.1–10).

Tatian also addresses this christological confusion over the perceived reduction in the Son's power via dwelling in many people. Tatian writes: "He (the Word) came into being by partition, not by section, for what is severed is separated from its origin, but what has been partitioned takes on a distinctive function and does not diminish the source from which it has been taken. Just as many fires may be kindled from one torch, but the light of the first torch is not diminished because of the kindling of the many, so also the Word coming forth from the power of the father does not deprive the begetter of the power of rational speech." Tatian. *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 5.2. trans. Molly Whittaker. p. 11.

“γέγονεν δὲ κατὰ μερισμόν οὐ κατὰ ἀποκοπήν. τὸ γὰρ ἀποτιμηθὲν τοῦ πρώτου κεχώρισται, τὸ δὲ μερισθὲν οἰκονομίας τὴν διαίρεσιν προσλαβὼν οὐκ ἐνδεὰ τὸν ὄθεν εἰληπται πεποίηκεν. ὥσπερ γὰρ ἀπὸ μιᾶς δαδὸς ἀνάπτεται μὲν πυρὰ πολλά, τῆς δὲ πρώτης δαδὸς διὰ τὴν ἕξαψιν τῶν πολλῶν δαδῶν οὐκ ἐλαττοῦται τὸ φῶς, οὕτω καὶ ὁ λόγος προελθὼν ἐκ τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς δυνάμεως οὐκ ἄλογον πεποίηκε τὸν γεγεννηκότα.”

It is unlikely that Tatian is the source of this image and confusion; Tatian is attempting to correct the confusion, though without much success since it survives into Aphrahat's era.

¹⁴⁷ Bardenhewer notes that: "His Christological ideas are those of the Nicene Fathers, though his expression of them is wanting in precision." Otto Barden-

hewer, "Aphraates," in *Patrology: The Lives and Works of the Fathers of the Church*, ed. Thomas J. Shahan (Freiburg: B. Herder, 1908), 386. Hudal emphasizes that Aphrahat's christology is not Greek and not based upon philosophical debate about the Logos. Hudal is one of the first to note that Aphrahat was completely separate and uninfluenced by Greek thought. This becomes a commonly touted description of him which is slowly being dispelled. Alois Hudal, "Zur Christologie bei Aphraates Syrus," *Theologie und Glaube* 3 (1911): 477–487. For the refutation of Hudal's characterization see R. Murray, "Hellenistic-Jewish Rhetoric," 79–85. Loofs portrays Aphrahat as almost Irenaeus in Syriac clothing. Freidrich Loofs, "Die Trinitarischen und Christologischen Anschauungen des Aphraates," in *Theophilus von Antiochen Adversus Marcionem und die anderen Theologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus*, TU vol. 46, 1, eds. Adolf von Harnack and Carl Schmidt (Leipzig: Akademie Verlag, 1930), 257–299. Urbina concludes that despite Aphrahat not having access to Nicene theology, his christology is nonetheless set firmly within the Christian tradition. Ignatius Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gottheit Christi bei Aphrahat* (Rome: Pont. Inst. Orientalium Studiorum, 1933), 140. On the other hand, Petersen uses the term "subordinationist" for Aphrahat, assuming that Judaic Christian christology must be subordinationist. So since Aphrahat defends Christ with Judaic Christian style arguments which are: "essentially functional, titular, and reference[s] OT passages." Furthermore, Petersen concludes: "if Aphrahat's Christology is read as a subordinationist Christology, then it becomes consistent with who Aphrahat was..." William L. Petersen, "The Christology of Aphrahat, the Persian Sage: an excursus on the 17th Demonstration," *VC* 46 (1992): 241–250. Why this makes the Sage's christology, by necessity, subordinationist is unclear in his article. I would suggest that Jewish Christian views of Christ, as Aphrahat expresses them, are most definitely informed by the Jewish modes of argument but that does not make him subordinationist: rather, he is traditional.

Later scholars have been more sympathetic to his perspective and have generally refrained from condemning him for non-Nicene christology. Klijn starts the scholarly change of heart through his thorough and thoughtful analysis of Aphrahat's use of the term nature (ܩܝܢܐ *kyānā*). "This [study] shows that when dealing with Syriac christological and theological treatises we have to be continuously aware of a way of thinking different from the one we are used to of our Greek and Latin literature." A. F. J. Klijn, "The Word *kejān* in Aphraates," *VC* 12 (1958): 67. Bruns' study is helpful in that he notes Aphrahat's christology is very complex and couched in a framework which is not "either/or." Aphrahat's christology is functional rather than systematic in the modern sense. As he concludes: "Theologie und Poesie, Dogma und Spiritualität bilden für Aphrahat eine unauflöslliche Einheit." Peter Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats des Persischen Weisen* (Bonn: Borengässer, 1990), 182.

wanting in precision.¹⁵⁴ A common view is voiced by N. Brox who critiques Aphrahat's work with: "The Greek need for definition and ontological designation is clearly not here in Aphrahat."¹⁵⁵ On the whole, scholarly disappointment with Aphrahat's christology not being more Greek does not allow them to give credit for what the Sage does write about Jesus the Christ. Given the range of interpretations concerning Aphrahat's christology, one clear warning from A. F. J. Klijn must be heeded to give Aphrahat his due: "[When] dealing with Syriac Christological and theological treatises we have to be continuously aware of a way of thinking different from the one we are used to in our Greek and Latin literature."¹⁵⁶ Many scholars over the years focused upon Greek and Latin theology, therefore when they encounter the Syriac Christians the scholars sometimes found the Syrians lacking in precision. Judging Aphrahat's christology according to later responses to events, such as Chalcedon, or according to Greek or Latin definitions is disingenuous. So too is judging the Sage's christology on only one demonstration; his christology is far richer and more complex than he has been given credit for by some scholars.

One path by which to enter into Aphrahat's christological thought is via the standard incarnational passages from the New Testament. One of the more significant verses is Philippians 2:7, which Aphrahat cites completely only twice. The first quotation is within the context of Christ being an example of diligent love for us: "The Son of the Lord of all took on¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ E. Rolle exclaims that: "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." Rolle, "Aphrahat and the rabbis," 65.

¹⁵⁴ Otto Bardenhewer observes that, "His Christological ideas are those of the Nicene Fathers, though his expression of them is wanting in precision." Bardenhewer, *Patrology*, 386.

Some other scholars suggest that Aphrahat is old fashioned because he does not deal with the Greek christological controversies nor speculative Logos theology. Cf. Hudal, "Zur Christologie bei Aphraates Syrus," 479 and Tjitze Baarda, *The Gospel Quotations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 1975), 287.

¹⁵⁵ Norbert Brox, *Jüdische Wege des altchristlichen Dogmas*, Pro Memoria (Jerusalem: Das Studien der Dormition Abbey, 1983), 14.

¹⁵⁶ Klijn, "The Word *kejān* in Aphraates," 67.

¹⁵⁷ Syr. **ܩܘܡ** *shqal*. Payne-Smith definition is "a) to lift up, carry, bear; b) to take, partake, receive; c) rarer uses: to bear a crop; to put on, wear; to borrow; to subtract, to omit; to take as the meaning, interpret." Payne-Smith, 593.

juxtaposed with the image that people are the temple of Christ or the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Aphrahat uses Spirit, Holy Spirit, Spirit of Christ, and Christ almost interchangeably for identification of the Divine who may dwell within a person. Aphrahat has a penchant for “internalizing” a text commonly interpreted to refer to the external physical world as in his discussion of Matt 18:20: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”²⁰⁴ The common interpretation is that this passage refers to God’s presence among people gathered to praise him. Aphrahat instead focuses upon God dwelling within the individual, and the sage construes this text to mean that Christ and the Father dwell inside a person; there are two or three gathered when the person is physically alone. As he writes: “When a man sweeps [clean] his soul in the name of Christ, Christ dwells in him, and God dwells in Christ: hence that man becomes one of the three—himself, and Christ who dwells in him, and God who dwells in Christ.”²⁰⁵ In this case, the agent of dwelling is Christ with God the Father indwelling inside of Christ.²⁰⁶

Aphrahat never states that all three persons of the Trinity indwell in the person. Although, this can be inferred quite easily. As he writes in *Dem.* 6:14: “Therefore, my friend, we also have received from the Spirit of Christ, and Christ dwells in us, as it is written that the Spirit said through the mouth of the Prophet: ‘I will dwell in them and will walk in them.’ (Lev

²⁰⁴ Aphrahat internalizes the whole idea of temple instead of focusing solely upon the external building aspects.

²⁰⁵ D 4:11 (PS I/161.13–17)

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²⁰⁶ If one wished to be somewhat simplistic, this passage suggests that Aphrahat may have a sort of “matroshki doll” christology. The christological ramifications of this text taken out of context without other texts of Aphrahat may lead to the presumption that Aphrahat is less than main stream with his interpretation. Likely Aphrahat did not even know Nicaea I; therefore, judging Aphrahat according to Chalcedonian terminology is anachronistic. Aphrahat’s christology is not modalistic; he is merely writing early on in the life of the church. Cf. Bardenhewer, *Patrology*, 386 and Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotttheit Christi bei Aphrahat*, 125.

21:12)”²⁰⁷ Aphrahat uses Leviticus to support his assertion that the second person of the Trinity may dwell within people. The Spirit of Christ is the same as the Holy Spirit or third person of the Trinity in Aphrahat’s writings. So in *Dem.* 6:14 we have two of the persons of the Trinity indwelling. The Sage also writes in *Dem.* 4:11 that wherever Christ dwells so the Father does also; here are the first and second persons of the Trinity dwelling within people. Therefore, we may state that Aphrahat does have a Trinitarian concept of indwelling in a human being.²⁰⁸

When he uses either Christ, God or the Holy Spirit to explain who is residing in the person, he means that the same God does the dwelling. As F. Loofs explains: “The inhabiting of the Spirit and the inhabiting of God are for Aphrahat one and the same.”²⁰⁹ The various phrases that he uses are the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and simply, the Spirit.²¹⁰ Aphrahat also writes that Christ or God dwells in people without

²⁰⁷ D 6:14 (PS I/292.15–19)

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The terms Spirit and Spirit of Christ being used interchangeably may be due to the influence of Pauline texts upon Aphrahat. For example: Romans 8:9, D 23:47 (PS II/91:24–25) and D 8:5 (PS I/370:9–10). S. Brock notes this phenomenon: “As is the case elsewhere in early Syriac literature there is an easy movement between Spirit as Holy Spirit and as Spirit of Christ.” Sebastian P. Brock, “Fire from Heaven: From Abel’s Sacrifice to the Eucharist. A Theme in Syriac Christianity,” in *StPatr.* Vol. 25, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 236.

²⁰⁸ An example of Aphrahat being obviously Trinitarian is D 23:63 (PS II/133.3–8) “Oh you who swear oaths on your head and lie, if you will hold as true the three names mightily and gloriously commemorated on your head: Father, Son and Holy Spirit when you had received your sign of salvation, and if you hold true the baptism, you will not lie.”

ܐܘܕܘܢܟܘܢ ܘܨܘܒܘܢܗ ܕܥܒܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܐܬܝܠܘܢ ܘܗܘܢ ܕܥܒܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܐܬܝܠܘܢ ܘܗܘܢ ܕܥܒܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܐܬܝܠܘܢ ܘܗܘܢ ܕܥܒܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܕܐܬܝܠܘܢ

²⁰⁹ Loofs, “Die Trinitarischen und Christologischen,” 270.

²¹⁰ Spirit of God reference used with Rom 8:9 in D 23:47 (PS II/92).

Spirit of Christ references: D 1:3 (PS I/8), D 1:5 (PS I/13), D 5:25 (PS I/236), D 6:1 (PS I/252), D 6:14 (PS I/292), D 6:17 (PS I/301), D 6:18 (PS I/308) and D 23:47 (PS II/92).

Holy Spirit: Cf. D 6:17 (PS I/300), D 6:18 (PS I/308), D 12:8 (PS I/524) and D 23:63 (PS II/133).

reference to the Spirit.²¹¹ According to Aphrahat, one of the Trinity, or even all of the Trinity can and do dwell in humanity, if the individuals are worthy. The Holy Spirit has many roles; the fundamental role is being sent by God as his Spirit upon the prophets.²¹² His Spirit is sent to the prophets and also to the followers of Christ in the sacrament of baptism.

Pneumatology and christology are intimately connected for the sage, but it is to christology we shall return. Aphrahat also describes the incarnation in terms of putting on the human body as though it were a suit of clothes. “He [Christ] has clothed himself with the body made from dust, and he is drawing it to his nature.”²¹³ The origin of this imagery is probably Genesis 3:21 which describes the garments of skin the Lord made for Adam and Eve.²¹⁴ Paul expands on the clothing motif in Galatians 3:27 with the Christians being clothed by Christ through baptism.²¹⁵ Describing the incarnation using clothing imagery or “putting on” the body is a com-

Spirit: D 1:19 (PS I/44), D 6:14 (PS I/292), D 6:15 (PS I/297), D 6:17 (PS I/301), D 6:18 (PS I/308), D 9:4 (PS I/414), D 14:38 (PS I/680), D 14:43 (PS I/700), D 17:6 (PS I/793), D 18:11 (PS I/840), D 23:52 (PS II/100), and D 23:53 (PS II/104).

Spirit is also used for the non-divine, the Spirit of impurity D 2:20 (PS I/92.21) **ܠܫܘܝܬܐ ܕܫܘܝܬܐ** and the Spirit that pollutes D 9:9 (PS I/428.22) **ܠܫܘܝܬܐ ܕܫܘܝܬܐ**.

²¹¹ Cf. D 6:10 (PS I/281–284), D 6:11 (PS I/285), and D 9:10 (PS I/432).

²¹² D 1:19 (PS I/44), D 6:12–13 (PS/I 285, 288, 292); D 17:6 (PS/I, 793); D 23:11 and 23:58 (PS/II 32 and 117).

²¹³ D 23:49 (PS II/96.18–19)

ܕܠܫܘܝܬܐ ܕܫܘܝܬܐ ܕܫܘܝܬܐ ܕܫܘܝܬܐ ܕܫܘܝܬܐ

* Aphrahat uses **ܢܓܕ** *ngad* ten times, it means: to draw out, stretch out, attract, induce, and persuade; in the *Pa'el* it means to beat or torture. Payne-Smith, 326–327. The *Pa'el* form of the verb is used the majority of the time, especially in quotations of the unforgiving servant parable of Matt 18:23–35. The quotation above is the only christological use of the verb in Aphrahat’s writings.

²¹⁴ For a discussion of the garments of skin see Gary A. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), esp. 117–134.

²¹⁵ Galatians 3:27 “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” “Put on” in the English translates the Greek “ἐνεδύσαθε,” meaning to dress, clothe, put on, or wear and in the *Peshitta* the term is **ܠܫܘܝܬܐ** *lāshbā* or to clothe.

mon Syriac motif. Aphrahat functions within a normal system of images with these descriptions.²¹⁶

Aphrahat's christology is best described in terms of *praxis* rather than *theoria*. In other words, Jesus' action and function within the human realm are the means by which one may understand Aphrahat's doctrine of the Christ. His is a practical expression of the incarnation and salvation, rather than a theoretical argument. The key function of Christ in the created world is his dwelling within a baptized person. As A. Golitzin writes:

[F]or Aphrahat, as for Macarius and [my] other Syrians, the recovery of the 'Glory of Adam' means, first and foremost, being assimilated to Christ, though not simply by way of ascetic exercise and the acquisition of his virtues, which certainly do feature in their understanding, but as well through consciously perceiving him within themselves such that they, too, 'in Christ,' might become for others as well as for themselves the locus—indeed, as here, the 'throne'—of the same Glory which appeared to Moses and the prophets, and which these Christian writers understand as having descended from heaven to take flesh and appear on earth as Mary's son.²¹⁷

Those who have become temples of Christ are participating in Christ, which allows them not only to function as holy people on the earth but also to participate in the heavenly realm. But the indwelling of the Divine cannot be separated from the sacraments of Christ and his church. So all three realms of temple-ness are present even in Aphrahat's christology, that of the person, the church, and heaven.

Aphrahat's christology is very Pauline and scripturally based. Aphrahat writes concerning the incarnation, the dwelling of Christ in the faithful, and of Christ working with the Holy Spirit. He also uses various titles for Christ and defends the power and singleness of Jesus. We have addressed what

²¹⁶ Cf. D 21:8 (PS I/954.11), D 21:19 (PS I/980.15–16), D 22:2 (PS I/996.23), and D 23:11 (PS II/32.8–9). For a full discussion of this imagery, see also Sebastian Brock, "Clothing Metaphors as a means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition," in *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1982), 11–38. Gen 3:21 describes the garments of skin which must be cast off. These were identified with the human body in both Jewish and Christian authors. This motif is also examined in April De-Conick and Jarl Fossum, "Stripped Before God: A New Interpretation of Logion 37 in the Gospel of Thomas," *VC* 45 (1991): 123–150.

²¹⁷ Golitzin, "Recovering the 'Glory of Adam,'" 301.

Aphrahat writes about Christ in a person who has faith; the next step in the transformation of a person into a temple is the sacramental realization of this faith in the church community through baptism and the eucharist.

ECCLESIOLOGY

The basis upon which everything builds in Aphrahat's theology is, of course, faith in Jesus Christ. The sage's christology is deep and filled with scriptural evidence, both from the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament. His ecclesiology is tightly interwoven with his christology. As Aphrahat writes: "He [Jesus] is the Priest, the Holy Minister; let us labor to become sons of his dwelling place."²¹⁸ Christ is the priest of people and place. The dwelling place of Christ includes heaven, the church, and the devout followers' temples of the heart, as we shall see below.²¹⁹ Aphrahat writes so much about the temple that one might assume that the temple and Christian church are synonymous; this is inaccurate. He never refers to the Christian community with the term temple (*bayklā*); temple is the individual person or the Jerusalem temple. The Sage primarily uses the term (ܩܘܪܝܢܐ *qūriā*) for the Christian church.²²⁰

Aphrahat's ecclesiology, or supposed lack thereof, has come under criticism from no less a Syriac scholar than R. Murray, as he writes: "Our authors [Aphrahat and Ephrem] are well aware of the divine indwelling in each Christian as in a temple, but of it in the whole Church as in a temple

²¹⁸ D 14:39 (PS I/684.6–7)

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Aphrahat refers to Jesus as the priest in D 2:6 (PS I/57.21–23), D 6:13 (PS I/289.21–22), D 17:11 (PS I/813.11), D 21:13 (PS I/964.15–18), D 23:20 (PS II/65.5).

²¹⁹ For the heart motif in Aphrahat, see page 110.

²²⁰ The term church (ܩܘܪܝܢܐ *qūriā*) occurs over forty-two times throughout his writings. A sample of examples are the following: D 16:5 (PS I/776.3–5) "Concerning the church (*qūriā*) and the congregation (ܩܘܪܝܢܐ *kenusbtā*) of the peoples, David said, 'Remember your church which you acquired from of old.' (Ps. 74:2)." D 14:38 (PS I/ 681.2–5): "You are the carriers of the jug, assisting in silence, imprisoned by the community (*kenusbtā*). You are the children of the Church (*qūriā*), the educators of his sons, those who gather into the sheepfold"; and D 21:20 (PS I/ 980.20–22) "and because of Jesus the church (*qūriā*) pleased God and has gone in to the king instead of the congregation (*kenusbtā*) which did not do his will." For the most part Aphrahat uses the term church (*qūriā*) as distinct from the Jewish congregation or synagogue (*kenusbtā*).

they seem much less aware.”²²¹ In my opinion, this assessment must be modified somewhat; Aphrahat has a pastoral and polemical focus upon the individual persons within his larger church community. He is writing about faith and living the Christian life, not ecclesiology. Murray even states quite categorically that Aphrahat has a very non-sacramental understanding of the relation between Christ and humans:

Aphrahat never develops the idea of the solidarity of Christ’s body with our bodily nature in such a way as to make the doctrine implicitly sacramental and ecclesiological. As F. Gavin observed, though Aphrahat lived a century and a half later than Irenaeus, his christology is hardly more developed; his ecclesiology, at least in relation to Christ’s body, is even less so.²²²

Such a comparison with a Latin father as Irenaeus is unfair to the Syrian Aphrahat. In defense of Aphrahat, he takes the visible church and the sacraments as a given and focuses on the individuals within his community. However, there are other Syriac authors who are at pains to emphasize the importance of the visible church, for example, Macarius²²³ and the *Liber*

²²¹ Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 344.

²²² Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 70. Cf. Gavin, “Aphraates and the Jews,” 107.

²²³ Macarius was probably a North Eastern Syrian monastic who wrote in the second half of the fourth century. He may be a later contemporary to Aphrahat who has very similar concerns, and also uses imagery especially centred upon the temple of God. The use of the symbol of temple of God within the Macarian homilies allows us to see a continuum of ideas from the Hebrew scriptures, through the New Testament to Origen and beyond. The critical edition of the Homilies is: Makarios, *Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*, vol. 4, ed. Hermann Dörries (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1964). For a manuscript history and general introduction to the life and times of Macarius see Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, trans. George A. Maloney (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 1–33.

Some key articles on Macarius, his Temple imagery, and relation to other thinkers are: Alexander Golitzin, “Temple and Throne of the Divine Glory: ‘Pseudo-Macarius’ and Purity of Heart, Together with Some Remarks on the Limitations and Usefulness of Scholarship,” in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature*, eds. Harriet Luckman and Linda Kulzer (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 107–130; Andrei Orlov and Alexander Golitzin, “Many Lamps are Lightened from the One”: Paradigms of the Transformational Vision in Macarian Homilies,” *VC* 54 (2001): 1–18; Alexander Golitzin, “A Testimony to Christianity

Gradium.²²⁴ Even though Aphrahat does not write extensively about the communal body of Christ due to his emphasis on the individual's spiritual-

as Transfiguration,” chap. in *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality*, ed. S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), 129–156; Simon Tugwell, “Evagrius and Macarius,” in *Study of Spirituality*, eds. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 168–175 and Kallistos Ware, “Prayer in Evagrius of Pontus and the Macarian Homilies,” in *An Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, eds. Ralph Waller and Benedicta Ward (London: SPCK, The Cromwell Press, 1999), 14–30. Macarius has many discernable influences including Clement of Alexandria, Origen, the *Diatessaron*, Basil of Caesarea, and Gregory of Nyssa.

²²⁴ The *Liber Gradium* also known as the *Book of Steps* or *Degrees* (*Ketabā demasqatā*), henceforth LG. This text was written presumably anywhere from the early mid fourth to the early fifth century C.E. The probable provenance for these texts is somewhere near the River Zab in the Persian Empire. Brock, *Syriac Fathers on Prayer*, 42–53. There is an English translation by Robert A. Kitchen and Martien F. G. Parmentier, *The Book of Steps: the Syriac Liber Gradium* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2004). No consensus on the doctrinal ‘orthodoxy’ of the LG exists at the moment. After M. Kmosko’s introduction and Latin translation in 1926, the LG was set in the Messalian heretical camp by many scholars. It was also diagnosed with pronounced encratite tendencies. See René Graffin, *Patrologia Syriaca*, vol. 3, *Liber Gradium*, ed. M. Kmosko (Paris: 1926). It was not until 1954 that Arthur Vööbus showed that this verdict is far from conclusive in his article “*Liber Gradium*: Some Aspects of its Significance for the History of Early Syrian Asceticism,” chap. in *Charisteria Iohanni Köpp*, Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 7 (Stockholm:1954), 108–128. C. Stewart in his definitive work on Messalianism suggests: “Categorical denunciation of Messalian errors may be seen to rest largely on misunderstanding of unfamiliar terminology, and culture joins with (and perhaps supplants) doctrine as the basis of controversy.” Columba Stewart, *Working the Earth of the Heart* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 69. See also Robert Kitchen’s introductory remarks about the Messalian controversy in *The Book of Steps*, xix-xxi. The *Liber Gradium* is an anonymous collection of 30 *mēmre* or homilies about living the Christian life with a pronounced ascetic bent. R. Murray observes that the “homilies represent a somewhat isolated spirituality and cultural milieu and speak with tones unlike those of Aphrahat and Ephrem.” Robert Murray, “The Characteristics of the Earliest Syriac Christianity,” in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, eds. Nina G. Garsoian, Thomas F. Mathews, and Richard W. Thompson, (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 4. This observation must be tempered slightly since the LG does share some common features with the Macarian corpus, though admittedly without any direct literary connections. Sebastian Brock, “The Syriac Tradition,” in *The Study of Spirituality*, ed. Edward J. Yarnold (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 207. It is thanks to the work of these later scholars that the LG has slowly emerged as a pe-

BAPTISM

Aphrahat describes two means by which Christ enters into a person: baptism and eucharist. It is through baptism that the Spirit of Christ first enters into the believing person.²³² As Aphrahat explains:

We receive the Spirit of Christ from baptism. When the priests call upon the Spirit, the heaven[s] open and the Spirit descends and hovers²³³

²³² The scholarly debate about baptism and the Covenanters or *qyama*, as described in Demonstrations Six and Seven begins with F. C. Burkitt's hypothesis that only those who were to lead a celibate life were baptized in Aphrahat's community. Francis C. Burkitt, *Early Christianity Outside the Roman Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 1899; reprint, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2002), 49–54. These lectures are a reprint of *Early Eastern Christianity St. Margaret's Lectures 1904 on the Syriac Speaking Church*, London: John Murray, 1904. See also Francis C. Burkitt, "Aphraates and Monasticism: A Reply," *JTS* 7 (1906): 10–15. Connolly refutes Burkitt's position suggesting that Aphrahat's concern is for his celibate audience and that they take baptism very seriously. Those of the community who wished to be married should do so before baptism, but they are not excluded from baptism because of marriage. Richard H. Connolly, "Aphraates and Monasticism," *JTS* 6 (1905): 538–539. Duncan follows Connolly's position in his book, *Baptism in the Demonstrations*, 82–103. Vööbus suggests a solution to the dilemma, that Aphrahat retains an older liturgical tradition which was previously practiced and is no longer followed in Aphrahat's time. Therefore, there was a time when only the celibates were baptized but now all lay people are baptized, celibate and married alike. Arthur Vööbus, "Celibacy, a Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syriac Church," in *Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile Vol. 1*. (Stockholm:1951), 35–58. See also Thomas W. Manson, "Entry to Membership of the Early Church," *JTS (Old Series)* 48 (1947): 25–32; Taeke Jansma, "Aphraates' Demonstration VII §§ 18 and 20. Some Observations on the Discourse on Penance," *ParOr* 5 (1974): 21–48. Murray's classic article puts this debate to rest. He concludes that all were baptized, but that Aphrahat's primary concern was for those ascetics who lapsed after baptism and who needed to repent. Robert Murray, "The Exhortation to Candidates for Ascetical Vows a Baptism in the Ancient Syriac Church," *NTS* 21 (1974): 59–80. See also Jaroslav Z. Skira, "Circumcise Thy Heart: Aphrahat's Theology of Baptism," *Diakonia* 31, 2 (1998): 115–128.

²³³ Syr. **ܐܘܪܝܢܐ** *rhap* means to brood, hover over, cherish, take pity or care of. Payne-Smith, 538. Aphrahat uses the verb three times, the Genesis 1:2 quotation of this passage; D 10:2 (PS I/ 448.6) in allusion to Exodus 32:31–32 explaining that Moses is a compassionate pastor and father who "cherishes" his children; and in D 14:14 (PS I/604.26) in a long excursus on love from the John 15:12 passage, Aphrahat writes: "Love shows compassion, cares, (**ܐܘܪܝܢܐ** *marhēp*) gathers together, draws near, encourages, and makes glad." The verbal imagery from the Genesis

upon the waters (Gen 1:2). And those who are baptized are clothed in him; for the Spirit is distant from all who are born in body; they come to the birth by water, and then they receive the Holy Spirit.²³⁴

Aphrahat is very clear: one cannot receive the Spirit and become a dwelling place for God without first being baptized. The sacrament of baptism is a fundamental tenet of the Christian faith, as he states: “[You] should furthermore also believe in the mystery of baptism.”²³⁵ Baptism is a sacrament for Aphrahat, though this may not be self evident from the previous quotation. Mystery, *razū* *ܐܝܟܢܐ* in Syriac, means sacrament, secret, or Holy Eucharist.²³⁶ So the “mystery of baptism” is the sacrament of baptism.

If a person rejects the sacrament of baptism then the person will be condemned. As the Sage declares: “And again when our Lord gave the mystery of baptism to his apostles, he said to them: ‘Whoever believes and is baptized will live, and whoever does not believe will be judged.’”²³⁷ Faith

passage suggests not only that the Spirit hovers but also loves and protects the person who is baptized.

²³⁴ D 6:14 (PS I/292.24–293.5)

ܩܘܿܡܢܳܗܠܳܘܳܟܳܘܳܢ ܕܶܥܳܡܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܪܳܘܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ

Gen 1:2 as a baptismal typology is common throughout Syriac tradition. As S. Brock discusses the hovering verb is used as an analogy to the dove descending at Jesus’ baptism, see Sebastian P. Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, ed. J. Vallian (Indian: Anita, 1979). Cf. Duncan, *Baptism in the Demonstrations*, 123–147; Vööbus, “Celibacy, a Requirement for Admission to Baptism,” 52 ff.; Pierre, *Aphraate le sage persan*, vol. 1: 107–111, 162–163 and 174–177; Murray, “The Exhortation to Candidates,” 58–80; Skira, “Circumcise Thy Heart,” 115–128; and Geoffrey G. Willis, “What was the Earliest Syrian Baptismal Tradition?” chap. in *Studia Evangelica 6*, TU 112 (1973): 65–654.

²³⁵ D 1:19 (PS I/44.19–20) : *ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ*

²³⁶ Payne-Smith, 28. Aphrahat uses the term over forty times throughout the *Demonstrations*. The majority of references are to the “mystery of baptism” or to the eucharist, see for example, D 4:5 (PS I/145.10–24) and D 12:2 (PS I/508.7–22). See also Edmund Beck, “Symbolum-Mysterium bei Aphraat und Ephräm,” *OrChr*, 42 (1958): 19–40.

²³⁷ D 1:17 (PS I/41.2–5) citing Mark 16:16. See also D 6:14 (PS I/291, 294).

ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ ܕܶܡܳܬܳܐ ܕܶܚܳܝܳܐ ܕܶܟܳܪܳܘܳܠܳܐ

select group makes a solemn pledge of celibacy at baptism, but this does not necessarily mean that non-ascetics were not baptized.²⁴⁹ The scholarly consensus today is that Aphrahat is speaking in this passage to his specifically celibate audience who dedicated themselves to Christ when they were baptized as adults. As R. Murray explains: “it [*Dem.* 7.18–20] simply expresses the practice and ideology of the *Bnay Qyāmā*, with no implications to be legitimately drawn for the laity.”²⁵⁰ The elite, or the Sons of the Covenant, were to be examples for all Christians. The moment of baptism is the point at which they made their oaths.

Part of the difficulty with baptism in Aphrahat’s writings is the confusion about his audience. Some of his demonstrations are addressed to the greater church including lay people, such as Demonstrations Fourteen and Twenty-Three; others are specifically directed to the ascetic members of his community, especially the *qyāmā*, such as Demonstrations Six and Seven. Some scholars have disregarded this key piece of information. Aphrahat upholds both the sanctity of baptism for all faithful and stresses the necessity of repentance and forgiveness within his ascetic audience. I conclude, following Dr. Griffith’s research, that Aphrahat emphatically teaches that his ascetics should not take their baptismal vows in a cavalier manner. Aphrahat’s writings do not allow us to say with absolute certainty that the non-ascetic laity were excluded from baptism or other sacraments of the church. Aphrahat’s primary concern for his ascetics means that we can only speak to his views about them with any confidence. Baptism sets the stage for the person to receive the Divine Spirit, and the next stage of development in becoming a temple for God is the eucharist, participating in the body and blood of Jesus.

EUCHARIST

Baptism is the initial means by which the Spirit enters into the person, according to Aphrahat. The eucharist is the means by which the Spirit nourishes the person. Baptism and eucharist work in concert to allow the person’s prayer to be heard by God and sins removed. As Aphrahat explains:

²⁴⁹ Sidney Griffith, “Asceticism in the Church of Syria: the Hermeneutics of Early Syrian Monasticism,” in *Asceticism*, ed. Victor Wimbush (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 238.

²⁵⁰ Murray, “The Characteristics of the Earliest Syriac,” 7–8.

The only purification is by the water of baptism and partaking of the body and blood of Christ. Blood is made holy by the Blood, and the body is cleaned by the Body.²⁵¹

Through baptism the person is cleaned enough to be able to offer prayer as the sacrifice and to participate in the eucharist. In his only direct Gospel quotation about the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples, Aphrahat writes:

For our redeemer ate the paschal lamb with his disciples on the night of the fourteenth and in truth he made the sign of the paschal sacrifices for his disciples. After Judas left them, Jesus took the bread, blessed and gave it to his disciples, saying to them, “This is my body. All of you take and eat from it.” He also blessed the wine, saying to them, “This is my blood of the new testament, which on behalf²⁵² of many is shed for the

²⁵¹ D 4:19 (PS I/181.12–14)

ܩܠܘܢ ܕܥܣܝܢ ܕܘܼܢܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܫܘܢ ܕܟܪܝܨܘܢ ܕܥܝܫܘܢ ܕܦܫܘܢ ܕܕܠܘܢ
ܕܘܼܢܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܫܘܢ ܕܦܫܘܢ ܕܕܠܘܢ ܕܘܼܢܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܫܘܢ ܕܦܫܘܢ ܕܕܠܘܢ

²⁵² Syr. **ܫܠܦ** *hlap* is the same verb root in the *Peshitta* version as in Aphrahat’s quotation. Payne-Smith defines the preposition as “instead of, on account of, or on behalf of.” The root verb means to exchange, substitute, to pierce, or shear. In the *Pa’el*, it means to change, exchange, or renew. (Payne-Smith, 144) This verb is also used in the Odes of Solomon 4:1–3 for the sanctuary not being able to be changed or moved. See further about the Odes, page 121. The Eucharistic implications of the sacrifice both on behalf of and changing those for whom it is sacrificed is intriguing.

Aphrahat also uses *hlap* to describe the experience in which a human person becomes heavenly at the Resurrection. “Thus also when the dead come to life, the righteous will be changed, and the earthly form will be swallowed up by the heavenly, and it will be called a heavenly body. And that which is not changed, shall be called earthly.” D 8:5 (PS I/369.13–17).

ܕܠܘܢ ܕܘܼܢܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܫܘܢ ܕܦܫܘܢ ܕܕܠܘܢ ܕܘܼܢܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܫܘܢ ܕܦܫܘܢ ܕܕܠܘܢ
ܕܘܼܢܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܫܘܢ ܕܦܫܘܢ ܕܕܠܘܢ ܕܘܼܢܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܫܘܢ ܕܦܫܘܢ ܕܕܠܘܢ
ܕܘܼܢܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܫܘܢ ܕܦܫܘܢ ܕܕܠܘܢ ܕܘܼܢܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܫܘܢ ܕܦܫܘܢ ܕܕܠܘܢ

In reference to the Transfiguration, Aphrahat uses *hlap* for Jesus’ appearance being transformed into the likeness of his coming, D 23:12 (PS II/36.14). The sanctuary, eucharist, Transfiguration, and Resurrection are all connected by Aphrahat with this one verb.

The Jewish precursor of Passover and the Last Supper of Jesus have their importance because of the individual's participation in them. Aphrahat comments that:

These are indeed great mysteries. Whoever eats from the true lamb, the Christ, girds up his loins in faith, and puts on his sandals in the preparation of the Gospel, and holds in his hand the spiritual sword which is the word of God.²⁵⁶

The complete event of the Passover and Exodus from Egypt of the Jewish community is now internalized for the individual Christian through the sacrifice of Jesus and the individual's eating of that Passover, i.e., the reception of the eucharist. Yet again, Aphrahat is presenting an "internalized" interpretation of a Biblical text commonly interpreted at its basic "external" level.

The localization and internalization of the paschal sacrifice is crucial for Aphrahat's eucharistic theology. The mouth and lips have important roles to play in the salvation of the person. Aphrahat states that: "Our mouth becomes sufficient for you [Christ] and you dwell in us."²⁵⁷ Now that a person has received Christ, Aphrahat tells what must be done: pure prayer. As Aphrahat commends in *Dem. Four*, "On Prayer": "Our Lord's word tells us to 'pray in secret in your heart, and shut the door' (Matt 6:6). What is the door he says to shut, if not your mouth?"²⁵⁸ Aphrahat tells people in whom Christ dwells to be silent and pray. Taking Aphrahat's analogy

²⁵⁶ D 12:9 (PS I/525.23–528.2) (Eph. 6:14–17)

ܫܠܝܢ ܩܪܘܢ ܠܗ ܨܘܨܝܢ: ܫܗ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ
ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ
ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ

See also Origen, *Homily on Numbers XX, 1,5–6 to XX, 2,3* and *De Principiis*, vol. III. Origène, *Homélies Sur Les Nombres III*, SC vol. 461, ed. Louis Doutreleau (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2001), 20–29; and Origène, *Traité Des Principes*, Vol. III, 210–217.

For a study of the Quatrodécimin and other Pascal implications of Aphrahat's twelfth Demonstration see Gerard A. M. Rouwhorst, *Les Hymnes Pascales d'Ephrem de Nisibe*, vol. VII, 1, *Supp VC* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 131–157.

²⁵⁷ D 23:59 (PS II/121.10–11). ܫܫܘܢ ܠܗ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ

The mouth is one of the main ways to sin, according to Aphrahat. See the following for a more complete discussion of sin and 'grieving the Spirit,' page 122.

²⁵⁸ D 4:10 (PS I/157.19–21)

ܨܘܨܝܢ ܠܗ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ
ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ ܨܘܨܝܢ

further, one might wish to argue that he is suggesting that the only pure prayer is that which is silent. The eucharist received by the mouth allows the mouth to then function as it should—silently.

In this chapter, we have examined Aphrahat's anthropology with a view to his temple theology. The foundation for all of the Sage's theology is the scriptures. His use of the temple image is especially formed by Jer 7:4–5, Lev 26:12, 1 Cor 3:16, 2 Cor 6:16, and John 14:20. He encapsulates his views in the very first Demonstration, "On Faith" *Dem.* 1:3. Faith in, and becoming a temple of, Jesus Christ are the two pillars of Aphrahat's temple theology. The problem of death because of the first Adam's disobedience is solved by the Second Adam, Jesus Christ. A key theme of Aphrahat's christology is how the great became small and the mighty became feeble. "Your majesty burrows into the little heart, you have made of us temples wherein your glory dwells."²⁵⁹ The Divine compresses himself into the little heart of the human being, not only at the incarnation but also when a faithful person becomes a temple of God. Nevertheless, these people who have become little temples must still function within the larger temple, the church. For Aphrahat, the church and its importance and functions are a given. The sacraments of baptism and eucharist provide the means for the Spirit of Christ to enter into and continually nourish the person.²⁶⁰ Aphrahat's ecclesiology is not a defense of the communal worship of God by his people. His pastoral concern is for the spiritual welfare of his individual audience members. A person who is living on earth and who is a follower of Jesus Christ is to labor towards being a temple for God in all aspects: body, will, and spirit. This person is the ascetic.

²⁵⁹ D 23:59 (PS II/121.12–13)

ܐܘܢ ܕܝܚܝܘܢ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܢܝܘܬܝܘܢ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܢܝܘܬܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܢܝܘܬܝܘܢ : ܕܥܝܢܝܘܬܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܢܝܘܬܝܘܢ ܕܥܝܢܝܘܬܝܘܢ

²⁶⁰ There are clergy members in Aphrahat's community, but no specific mention of ordination. The Sage also writes a whole demonstration about repentance, *Dem.* 7, but we do not have specific evidence of the sacramental standing for ordination nor confession in his church.

2 THE ASCETICS

The process of becoming a temple of God begins with faith in Christ together with baptism and eucharist. The next step is the practice of a strict asceticism, the first requirement of which is celibacy. Aphrahat uses different terms for the ascetics in his community: they are the single ones (ܐܝܢܐ *ihidayē*), the Covenanters (ܒܢܝ ܩܝܡܐ *bnay qyāma*), the virgins (ܒܬܘܠܐ *btulē*), and the holy ones (ܩܕܝܫܐ *qaddishē*). The common denominator amongst them is that they are celibate and dedicated to following Jesus Christ. The terms are very flexible and Aphrahat himself uses interchangeably *ihidayē*, *qyāma*, *qaddishē* and *btulē*. However, *ihidayē* is the all encompassing term for the celibate followers of *the Ihidayā*, Jesus Christ. The Covenanters, virgins, and holy ones are all *ihidayē*. The virgins comprise both males and females; the more common term for a female ascetic is virgin. For a male ascetic, the term Covenanter is more usual. The last category of ascetics, the holy ones, is the most distinct from the others. These ascetics are those who were married and now wish to completely dedicate themselves to Christ in celibacy. One cannot be a “holy one” and a “virgin;” however, a virgin may be a holy one. According to Aphrahat, only a celibate ascetic Christian who is completely dedicated to God may become a temple of God.

THE SINGLES (*IHDAYĒ*)

“We are from Adam, and here we know a little. This alone we know: there is one God, one Christ, one Spirit, one faith, and one baptism.”²⁶¹ The one, solitary, or single is an essential concept for Aphrahat. The single ones or ܐܝܢܐ *ihidayē* are those who follow Christ, the one son of God.²⁶² As

²⁶¹ D 23:60 (PS II/124.10–13) Syriac is on page 43.

²⁶² The term *ihidayē* in reference to the fourth century ascetics will be translated as “the Singles.” The term “singles” is used eight times in the *Demonstrations* to refer to the followers of Christ: D 6:4 (PS I/261.1), D 6:6 (PS I/269.3), D 6:8 (PS I/272.21), D 6:8 (PS I/276.19), D 7:18 (PS I/341.23), D 7:19 (PS I/344.25), D7:25 (PS I/356.8) and D8:23 (PS I/404.6). The term is used another way in D 22:7 (PS I/1004.10) where it refers to those who trust in the world, and the end result is that Death shall win. “He (Death) leads away for himself the precious only-begotten

Aphrahat explains: “The Single one (*Ihidaya*) who is from the bosom of his Father shall make all the singles (*ihidaye*) glad.”²⁶³ He explains this idea further writing that: “These things are suitable for the single ones who have accepted the heavenly yoke and have become disciples of Christ. Likewise it is appropriate for the disciples of Christ to be like their Lord.”²⁶⁴ The ascetics are Christ’s disciples and should emulate him by being single in every sense of the word. To place *Ihidaya* within a context, in the *Peshitta* NT, it refers to God the Father’s only Son in John 1:14,18; 3:16,18. The term is also applied in the simpler sense for those people in the scriptures who are the sole offspring of their parents.²⁶⁵ The singles have no earthly parents once they become the offspring of Jesus. This is a “radical discipleship of Jesus.”²⁶⁶ *Ihidaya* was a familiar technical term by the mid fourth century for both Christ and his ascetic followers. The most general, all encompassing term for Aphrahat’s ascetic audience members is the Singles, the *ihidaye*.²⁶⁷

children ܩܘܼܪܼܒܼܝܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ *bar ihidaye*, and their parents will be deprived of them and will be judged.”

²⁶³ D 6:6 (PS I/269.3–4)

ܐܘܼܪܼܘܼܟܼܐܢܼܐܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ

The title “Only Begotten” for Jesus Christ is used three times in the *Demonstrations*, D 6:6, D 23:52, and D 23:53. D 23:52 (PS II/100.15–17) “We give thanks to you for the love of Him who has been given by you, who has desired that we live by the death of his Only Begotten One (*ܐܘܼܪܼܘܼܟܼܐܢܼܐܢܼ Ihidayeh*).”

ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ

D 23:53 (PS II/105.10) “Though we did not ask you, you sent us your Only Begotten One.” ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ

Later Aphrahat addresses his “beloved solitary.” *ܐܒܝܒܝܗܐ* *ihidaye* D 6:4 (PS I/261.4) and in D 6:8 (PS I/272.21) he tells the solitary/singles, sons of the covenant, virgins and holy ones all the things they must do and not do.

²⁶⁴ D 6:8 (PS I/276.18–22)

ܐܘܼܪܼܘܼܟܼܐܢܼܐܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ ܕܼܘܢܼܝܢܼܐܢܼ

²⁶⁵ Son of widow of Nain in Luke 7:12, the possessed son in Luke 9:38, Jairus’ daughter in Luke 8:49. Cf. S. Griffith, “Singles,” 149–150, and Kiraz, ed., *Concordance to the Syriac New Testament*, s.v. “ܐܘܼܪܼܘܼܟܼܐܢܼܐܢܼ.”

²⁶⁶ Thomas K. Koonammakkal, “Ephrem’s Ideas on Singleness,” *Hugoye*, Vol. 2, No. 1, <http://www.leidenuniv.nl/gg/peshitta/syrom/Hugoye/Vol2No1/HV2N1Koonammakkal.html>; Jan. 1999, paragraph 4.

²⁶⁷ For further discussion of the term *ihidaye* and its function within Syriac spirituality see Sidney Griffith, “Singles’ in God’s Service; Thoughts on the Ihidaye from the Works of Aphrahat and Ephraem the Syrian,” *The Harp* IV, 1,2,3 July

Many scholars have studied the Syrian singles to determine their origin and specific function within the church. R. Murray defines the Singles as:

- (1) becoming 'single' by accepting Christ's call to leave dear ones, (2) becoming single-minded, by accepting 'circumcision of the heart,' and (3) 'putting on' the *Ihīdayā*, Christ, and thus 'standing up' for him as a sort of representative, and thereby joining the *Qyamā*, the 'heart' of the Church.²⁶⁸

Murray's definition matches Aphrahat's use of the term with the emphasis upon becoming as Christ-like as possible. A. Guillaumont suggests that the origin of the Syriac term "*ihīdayā*" may be traced back to the tradition that those who serve in the Jerusalem temple abstain from conjugal relations and is related to the sentiment of singleness expressed in Psalm 86:11: "Teach me thy way, O LORD, that I may walk in thy truth; unite (דן) my heart to fear thy name." The Hebrew term דן is the same root as the Syriac term *ihīdayā*. It is translated in Greek as μοναχος *monachos* which in turn is the foundation for the English term monk. Guillaumont argues for a Jewish provenance of the celibate and ascetic manner of living which later becomes known as monasticism.²⁶⁹ In Aphrahat's case, he uses *ihīdayē* as the

(1991): 145–159; *idem*, "Monks, 'Singles,' and the 'Sons of the Covenant,' Reflections on Syriac Ascetic Terminology," 141–160; and A. J. van der Aalst, "A l'origine du monachisme syrien: Les 'ihidaye' chez Aphrahat," in *Fructus Centesimus*, eds. Antoon Bastiaensen, et al. (Steenbrugis: Kluwer, 1989): 315–324. R. Murray observes that *ihīdayā* may be a synonym for μονογενής and μοναχος in Greek. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 13. Eusebius of Caesarea also uses the term μοναχος to refer to one who retires to the desert in solitude, for example in Egypt. The emphasis differs in Aphrahat's community, rather than geographic solitude; spiritual and sexual solitude is crucial for the *ihīdayā*. (Cf. Antoine Guillaumont, "Monachisme et Éthique Judéo-Chrétienne," *RSR* 60, 1 (Jan–Mar 1972): 199–218.) The Single one idea is also found in *The Gospel of Thomas* log. 4, 11, 16, 22, 23, 49, 75, and 106. Cf. A. F. J. Klijn, "The 'Single One' in the Gospel of Thomas," *JBL* LXXXI (1962): 271–278. *Ihīdayā* themes are also in *The Acts of Judas Thomas* #48, 60, 80, 122, 143. See too, A. F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas* and A. Baker, "Fasting to the World," *JBL* 84 (1965): 291–294; and AbouZayd, *Ihīdayutha*.

²⁶⁸ Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 16.

²⁶⁹ Guillaumont even uses Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* to help explain the celibacy of the Qumran community. His argument is more complex than is presented here in the barest of outlines. For his full argument see his articles: "A Propos du Célibat des Esséniens," in *Hommages a André Dupont-Sommer*, (Paris: Andrien-Maisonneuve, 1971), 395–404 and "Perspectives Actuelles sur les Origines du

over arching category for his ascetics, within the group there are various subcategories: covenanters, virgins, and holy ones. He does not keep the subcategories separate from each other; there is some confusion with his terminology.

The principal aspect of the singles who follow Christ is that they are exactly that, single, in all aspects of their lives—physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. As Aphrahat explains:

And it is said, “The two of them should be one flesh.” (Gen. 2:24). And this is true, for as a man and woman become one flesh and one mind, and his intelligence and thought²⁷⁰ separate from his father and his mother, so too a man who has not yet taken a wife but remains single in one spirit and one mind with his Father.²⁷¹

Aphrahat argues that this Genesis passage is applicable to both married and celibate people. For the man who marries a woman, his mind becomes attached to concerns of this world; for the single one, his mind is attached to God. The key idea is singleness of mind and union with God the Father.

Another Syriac writing, the *Gospel of Thomas* deals with singleness within the Christian context. The *Gospel of Thomas* is a collection of sayings, or logia, attributed to Jesus which differ somewhat from the canonical sayings in emphases and spiritual sentiment.²⁷² The GT has a strong theme of

Monachisme,” in *Frontiers of Human Knowledge*, ed. Torgny T. Segerstedt (Uppsala: 1978; Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1979), 219–221.

Guillaumont is not alone in this line of inquiry; A. Vööbus, R. Murray, and J. Ouellette all follow the possibility of connections between the Syriac Christians and the Qumran community. See Arthur Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, vol. 1, 100ff; Arthur Vööbus, “Aphrahat,” 152–155; Robert Murray, “Characteristics of the Earliest Syriac Christianity,” 3–16; and Jean Ouellette, “Aphraate, Qumran et les Qaraites,” in *A History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities 15: Niddah, Commentary Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 6/15*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 166–183.

²⁷⁰ Syr. mind ܩܝܢ ܩܝܢ, intelligence ܩܝܢܐܬܐ *tar'iteh*, and thought ܩܝܢܐܬܐܐܘܘܢ *mahsabteb*.

²⁷¹ D 18:11 (PS I/840.22–841.2)

ܩܝܢܐܬܐܘܘܢ ܩܝܢܐܬܐܘܘܢ ܩܝܢܐܬܐܘܘܢ ܩܝܢܐܬܐܘܘܢ ܩܝܢܐܬܐܘܘܢ
ܩܝܢܐܬܐܘܘܢ ܩܝܢܐܬܐܘܘܢ ܩܝܢܐܬܐܘܘܢ ܩܝܢܐܬܐܘܘܢ ܩܝܢܐܬܐܘܘܢ
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²⁷² The *Gospel of Thomas*, henceforth GT, original language composition for the collection is disputed. I follow N. Perrin's analysis and suggestions that the GT was originally a Syriac text, likely produced in the area of Edessa around 175–200 C.E.

the “single one” or *ihidayē* running throughout the logia. One logion states: “Jesus said: ‘Blessed are the solitary and elect, for you will find the kingdom. For you are from it, and to it you will return.’”²⁷³ Salvation for humanity is a return to the unity with God that Adam enjoyed before the fall.²⁷⁴ This may be a possible witness to the early stages of solitary asceticism similar to what we find in Aphrahat’s *Demonstrations*.²⁷⁵

Returning to the Sage’s writings, we have the ascetic singles who are to follow Christ as soldiers follow their leader. Aphrahat emphasizes this point in an elliptical analogy found in *Dem.* Seven “On Repentance.”²⁷⁶ After a

Nicholas Perrin, *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), 192. The GT exists in a Coptic translation found in the Nag Hammadi library. A copy of the GT Coptic manuscript is in Michael Fieger, *Das Thomasevangelium Einleitung, Kommentar Und Systematik* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1991), 202. See Jacques Ménard, *L’Évangile selon Thomas [traduction et commentaire]* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975). Some English translations are Helmut Koester and Thomas O. Lambdin, “The Gospel of Thomas (II,2),” in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, vol. 3, ed. James M. Robinson (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 124–138 or Richard Valantasis, *The Gospel of Thomas* (London: Routledge Pub., 1997).

The GT has usually been categorized as encratite, see DeConick and Fossum, “Stripped Before God,” 123–150. The *Acts of Thomas*, the *Liber Graduum*, and Macarius may have used the GT as a source. For a history of the text see Klijn, “The ‘Single One’ in the Gospel of Thomas,” 271–278; Gilles Quispel, “L’Évangile selon Thomas et les origines de l’ascèse chrétienne,” chap. in *Aspects du Judaïsme chrétien* (Paris: 1965), 35–51; and *idem*, “The Gospel of Thomas’ and the ‘Gospel of the Hebrews,’” *NTS* 12 (1966): 371–382, esp. 377.

²⁷³ Logion 49, Koester, “The Gospel of Thomas,” 132.

²⁷⁴ See also Logia 4, 11, 16, 22, 23, 75, and 106. See especially Klijn, “The ‘Single One’ in the Gospel of Thomas” for a full discussion of this theme in the GT.

²⁷⁵ P. H. Poirier examined Aphrahat’s saying about being “one” (ⲁⲩ *had*) by comparing this passage with the Gospel of Thomas sections 16 and 23, and observed that *had* and the *Ihidayā* are not necessarily Gnostic terms. Some terms in question are: One intellect ⲕⲏⲓ *réyānā*, one heart ⲕⲗ *lebā*, and one thought ⲕⲁⲃⲃⲁⲧⲁ *maḥshabā*. Paul Hubert Poirier, “L’Évangile selon Thomas (log 16 et 23) et Aphraate (*Dém* XVIII, 10–11),” in *Mélanges Antoine Guillaumont*, ed. R. Coquin (Geneva: P. Cramer, 1988), 16.

²⁷⁶ Demonstration Seven has had a fair amount of scholarly ink spilled about it, metaphorically speaking. Some scholars have argued that Demonstration Six and Seven are a unit, others have argued for the two to be considered separate texts. The issue at stake is the composition of Aphrahat’s community; was it filled with only ascetics, or was it a mixed community of ascetics and non-ascetics alike? F. C. Burkitt and A. Vööbus argue for the solely ascetic community, T. Jansma and P.

tial for the singles, but there are countless further requirements for these elite disciples.

Aphrahat tells these celibates to have a firm faith, fast, pray, love Christ, be mild, wise, peace-loving, pleasant, and humble. They must shun jokes, angry words, mocking, or laughter. They should refrain from drunkenness, pride, gluttony, or envy. They must dress appropriately, without jewelry, long hair with barrettes, or perfumes.²⁹⁴ They should avoid inappropriate companions, for example, those who are wicked, contemptuous, blasphemers, and slanderers.²⁹⁵ The passage in *Dem.* Six is a concise summary of the various pieces of advice about the life of an ascetic. The Singles try to function in a manner of *imitatio Christi*. Within the category of the “singles,” there are further subcategories of the Covenanters, the virgins, and the holy ones.

THE COVENANTERS (*BNAY QYĀMĀ*)

Aphrahat is the earliest Syriac witness to the *bnay qyāmā*.²⁹⁶ This title may be variously translated as Sons of the Covenant,²⁹⁷ Covenanters,²⁹⁸ and Mem-

servations,” *Hugoye Vol. 4 no. 2 (July 01)*, <http://syrcom.cua.edu/syrcom/Hugoye:2001, Paragraph 5>.

²⁹⁴ Cf. D 6:8 (PS I/273–276).

²⁹⁵ Cf. D 6:8 (PS I/276.12–18).

²⁹⁶ Citations of the title “*bnay qyāmā*” are as follows: the title of the Sixth Demonstration is ܒܢܝܐ ܩܝܡܐ ܕܒܢܝܐ ܩܝܡܐ *taḥwītā dbnay qyāmā*. Citations not referring to the Demonstration title are: D 6:20 (PS I/312.7–21); D 7:25 (PS I/356.8); and D 10:9 (PS I/465.3). “Read and learn you the brothers (ܒܢܝܐ ܩܝܡܐ) the sons of the covenant (ܒܢܝܐ ܩܝܡܐ *bnay qyāmā*), and the sons of our faith (ܒܢܝܐ ܩܝܡܐ ܕܒܢܝܐ ܩܝܡܐ *bnay haymānutan*), those from whom mocking is far removed.” This passage may be interpreted as showing that the *qyāmā* were not clergy but lay people and still separate from the rest of the community. D 18:11 (PS I/841.13) and D 22:25 (PS I/1041.10–11) are both references to the title of D 6. Other citations of ܒܢܝܐ ܩܝܡܐ *qyāmā* alone are far more frequent, twenty six times compared to eight times with “sons.” On the whole, the term *qyāmā* refers to the various specific covenants of God with his people, i.e., Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the ultimate covenant, Jesus Christ.

²⁹⁷ The academic consensus at this point has preferred this title to all other possible English titles.

For various interpretations of the Covenanters see the following: Connolly, “Aphraates and Monasticism,” 522–539; Burkitt, “Aphraates and Monasticism: A Reply,” 10–15; Mother Mary Maude, “Who were the B’nai Q’yâmâ?,” *JTS* 36 (1935): 13–21; Hausherr, “Aphraate,” *DSp*, 747; Simon Jargy, “Les ‘Fils et Filles du

bers of the Order.²⁹⁹ The Covenanters are a sub-set of the larger group of ascetic celibates, the singles, *ihidayē*. The nomenclature of Aphrahat's celibates is fluid and overlapping. He uses *ihidayē* and *bnay qyāmā* synonymously. As S. Griffith explains, the *ihidayē* and the *bnay qyāmā* are two terms referring to the same people in Aphrahat's community.³⁰⁰ The difference is in the point of reference in regard to them. The *ihidayē* refers to the singleness; the *bnay qyāmā* refers to standing, rising up, and community. There are celibates who are not members of the Covenant and are still singles, though the opposite is impossible: all Covenanters are *ihidayē*.

The dictionary definition of *qyāmā* is: "a) standing, upright, bearing; constitution; stability; b) a military post, station, garrison, c) a statute, covenant; d) profession of the ascetic or monastic life, vow of chastity, celibacy."³⁰¹ The most important definition is covenant.³⁰² As A. Vööbus ob-

Pacte' dans la Littérature Monastique Syriaque," *OCP* 17 (1951): 304–320; Vööbus, chapt. in *History*, vol. 1, "Qeiāmā," 97–108; *idem*, "The Institution of the *benai qeiāmā*," 19–27; George Nedungatt, "The Covenanters of the Early Syriac Speaking Church," *OCP* 39 (1973): 191–215 and 419–444; Murray, "The Features of the Earliest Christian Asceticism," 63–78; *idem*, "Circumcision of Heart' and the Origins of the *Qyāmā*," in *After Bardaisan: Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honour of Professor Hans J. W. Drijvers*, OLA vol. 89, eds. Gerrit J. Reinink and Alexander C. Klugkist (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 201–211; Griffith, "Monks, 'Singles,' and the 'Sons of the Covenant,'" 141–160; Peter Nagel, "Zum Problem der 'Bundessöhne' bei Afrahat," *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 36, 5 (1962): 152–154.

²⁹⁸ This is G. Nedungatt's preferred title.

²⁹⁹ M. J. Pierre's French translation uses the phrase "des Membres de l'Ordre." Secondary sources focusing upon Aphrahat's view of the celibate or ascetic are far more numerous than on any other topic. Some key studies are the following: Gustav Bickell, *Ausgewählte Schriften der syrischen Kirchenväter Aphraates, Rabbulas und Isaak von Ninive, zum ersten Male aus dem schriftlichen übersetzt* (Kempten: Kösel, 1874); Guillaumont, "Monachisme et Éthique Judéo-Chrétienne," 199–218; Sebastian P. Brock, "Early Syrian Asceticism," in *Syriac Perspective on Late Antiquity* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), 1–19; Murray, "Features," 63–78; Ouellette, "Aphraate, Qumran et les Qaraites," 166–183; Griffith, "'Singles' in God's Service," 145–159; *idem*, "Monks, 'Singles,' and the 'Sons of the Covenant,'" 141–160; and Koltun-Fromm, "Sexuality and Holiness," 375–395.

³⁰⁰ Cf. D 22:25 (PS I/1041:11), D 8:23 (PS I/404:6), D 6:14 (PS I/296:14–16), D 18:11 (PS I/841:13), and D 6:4 (PS I/260:13–20). Griffith, "Monks, 'Singles,' and the 'Sons of the Covenant,'" 146.

³⁰¹ Payne-Smith, 504.

³⁰² The term 'covenant' as a description of God's relationship with His people is used throughout the Hebrew scriptures, the Christian scriptures, and the Qum-

serves, for the early Syriac church, “the covenant (*qeiāmā*) assumes the structural position of moulding all its theology, ethics and organization.”³⁰³ This term describes the people who are dedicated to Christ and the church. The followers of Christ are the Sons of the Covenant, and Christ is the Covenant.³⁰⁴ G. Nedungatt explains the importance of Covenant for Aphrahat and Syriac Christian thought in this way: “It is through *qyāmā* that in this sphere of religion man’s relations with God are rendered stable.”³⁰⁵ Christ is the ultimate “stabilizer” in volatile times.³⁰⁶

Qyāmā means both covenant and also literally, a standing firm; a rising up; resurrection.³⁰⁷ The Syriac root word ܩܡܩܩ *qām* means to stand.³⁰⁸ So the Covenanters may also be translated as the sons of resurrection.³⁰⁹ There is some scholarly debate about the importance of “standing” or “rising up” to the Covenanters. Some scholars have suggested that the sense of standing up for Christ may be linked to those who stood up in the synagogues.³¹⁰ A. Vööbus, on the other hand, dismisses this aspect of the Covenanters’ role in the church as far-fetched.³¹¹ But, in my opinion, there is a connection

ran documents. Covenant is *qyāmā* or ܩܡܩܩ in Syriac, ברית in Hebrew, and διαθήκη in Greek. For a further discussion of covenant ideas see, Freedman, ed. *ABD*, s.v. “Covenant,” by George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion; George E. Mendenhall and Johannes A. Huntjens, “Contrasting Notions of Covenant and Law in the text from Qumran,” *Revue de Qumran* 8:3 (1974): 361–380; and Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “The New Covenant in the Letters of Paul and the Essene Document,” in *To Touch the Text: Biblical and Related Studies in honor of Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J.*, eds. Maurya Horgan and Paul Kobelski (New York: Crossroads Press, 1989), 194–204.

³⁰³ Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, vol. 1, 12.

³⁰⁴ D 16:7 (PS I/780:23, 781:9–11, 21).

³⁰⁵ Nedungatt, “Covenanters,” 197.

³⁰⁶ The persecutions of Shapur II made Aphrahat’s life and the life of his community very volatile.

³⁰⁷ This sentiment is very common; it can even be found in G. Webb’s 1837 hymn “Stand up, stand up for Jesus.”

³⁰⁸ Payne-Smith, 494–495.

³⁰⁹ Griffith, “Asceticism in the Church of Syria,” 230–232.

³¹⁰ Cf. Maude, “Who were the B’nai Q’yāmâ?” 14 and Nedungatt, “Covenanters,” 191–215.

³¹¹ Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, vol. 1, 98 and 100.

between those who “stand up”³¹² via the temple imagery which is so key for Aphrahat’s thought. The servants of the temple normally stood in the Jerusalem temple.³¹³ There is also evidence that some of the Covenanters lived in the church building proper while they were serving the church and the community.³¹⁴ The Covenanters having to stand up in church to fulfill their sacred function is plausible, and therefore the associated meaning of stand-

³¹² Could this sentiment be akin to “standing up” for someone who is getting married, i.e., being best man or bridesmaid? This would add yet another interesting layer to the “bride of Christ” imagery for the ascetic who follows Christ.

³¹³ 1 Kings 8:10–11 is witness to standing in the temple, because the priests could not stand when the ark was installed in the temple. “And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.”

³¹⁴ Aphrahat was not the only one having to keep the Covenanters ‘in line,’ so to speak. Rabbula of Edessa, a fifth century bishop wrote many canons to reform the Syrian church. He was very concerned about the function, role, and abuses of the Covenanters. Some Covenanters were actually eating their dinner off of the altar. Canon #58: “The benai qeïama shall not ascend to the raised floor of the altar, and bring up any food into the apse, nor shall the priests eat there, nor shall any man eat in the church; nothing shall be placed there except sacred implements.” Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 49.

Rabbula also wrote canons to guide the treatment and behavior of both the *bnay* and *bart qyāmā*. Cf. Susan Ashbrook Harvey, “Bishop Rabbula: Ascetic Tradition and Change in the Fifth Century Edessa” unpublished manuscript, 1996; Peter Bruns, “Bischof Rabbula von Edessa—Dichter und Theologe,” *Symposium Syriacum VII, OCA* vol. 256, ed. René Lavenant (Rome: Pont. Istituto Orientale, 1998), 195–202; Hans J. W. Drijvers, “The Man of God of Edessa, Bishop Rabbula, and the Urban Poor,” in *Media Latinitas: A collection of essays to mark the occasion of the retirement of L. J. Engels*, ed. R. I. A. Nip (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1996), 205–210; *idem*, “Rabbula, Bishop of Edessa: Spiritual Authority and Secular Power,” in *Portraits of Spiritual Authority*, eds. Hans J. W. Drijvers and J. W. Watt (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), 139–154.

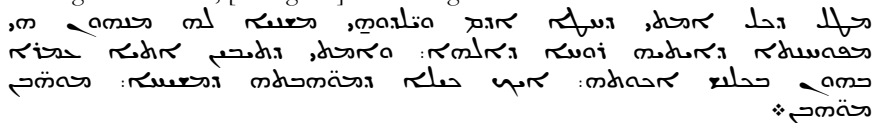
son if the person commits a grievous enough sin.³³² Though both texts use temple as an essential image, the *Liber* describes the process and uses the image with more explanation than does Aphrahat. The Sage presents the temple image with the accompanying scriptural references and assumes that his audience can fill in the blanks. The LG author does not leave anything to the interpretation of his audience. He explains in clear and simple terms the role of the visible church as a means to create the personal temple of God.

The Covenanters in the *Demonstrations* are a distinct group of male celibate ascetics who are usually lay people and may have been formerly married. This group serves the physical church or temple as well as becoming living temples of the Spirit. The *Liber Graduum* also describes his ascetic community, the Just and the Perfect, in terms of temple imagery. The LG author uses the degree to which an adherent is a temple as a delineation point between the two groups. Although there are key differences between the LG’s ascetic community and that as described in the Sage’s area, the fundamentals are the same—followers of Jesus may be celibate ascetics who eventually become spiritual temples. A question arises though, are the celibate ascetics necessarily male and not female in Aphrahat’s view?

HOLY WOMEN

Despite the masculine collective phrase “Sons of the Covenant,” there were also females who were dedicated to Christ and fulfilled a very similar role to their male counterparts.³³³ Aphrahat rarely uses the term *bart qyāmā* or the

they repent, God comes and dwells in each of them in like manner, to the measure of his gifts of Christ, [who gives] different gifts.”



³³² Cf. D 6:1 (PS/I 252.9–12) and the section entitled “Grieving the Spirit,” page 122.

³³³ For a study of female ascetics and the reworking of societal norms into the Christian ascetic milieu, see Susan Ashbrook Harvey’s article “Sacred Bonding: Mothers and Daughters in Early Syriac Hagiography,” *JES* 4, 1 (1996): 27–56. The *bart qyāmā* are women who live within the larger community rather than being isolated from it. Harvey reassesses the role of the *bart qyāmā*, suggesting that their liturgical role as singers in the choirs of church (thereby teaching the congregation within a public and civic context) is more important to their function than modern

This is less than encouraging concerning women becoming temples of God since they are the “weapon of Satan” against the male ascetic. The parallel of Eve and Mary is prominent in the passage: Eve brought the Law, painful childbirth, and death which is overcome by Mary’s Son. Furthermore, Eve was the one who first allowed Satan to conquer Adam; then, through Mary, Jesus is ultimately able to conquer Satan. Aphrahat is writing particularly to his male ascetic audience, the spiritual athletes for whom women are a temptation and problem. If one wishes to stretch interpreting this passage, then a far less probable interpretation is that Aphrahat thinks that women must become men to enter heaven. Because it is the men who will enter paradise, Aphrahat uses the male terms for blessed, virgins, and holy ones, not female.³⁴¹ The idea of women becoming men to be saved is a fairly common sentiment from his era; androgyny was deemed necessary for female sanctification.³⁴² Another possible interpretation is impossible to

See also D 18:9 (PS I/837). Women also bring nothing but grief to those men who give up their virginity for them. There are very few references to Mary called “the mother of the great prophet” in D 14:33 (PS I/657), or “Blessed Mary who bore Him” D 6:10 (PS I/281); and in D 3:14 (PS I/132) and D 21:10 (PS I/960). Mary is cited within passages where Aphrahat discusses the role of Gabriel as one who takes prayer up to heaven. In D 9:5, Mary is an example of humility because she conceived Jesus through her humility. If one agrees with A. Lehto’s assessment of Mary and her importance as a counterpoint to Eve in Aphrahat’s work, then Mary has an important role in salvation history. Lehto, “Women in Aphrahat,” paragraph 8.

³⁴¹ The terms are: the blessed *ܩܕܝܫܐ* (*tubne*), the virgins *ܩܕܝܫܐ* (*btule*), and the holy ones *ܩܕܝܫܐ* (*qaddisbe*).

³⁴² The idea of female followers having to act or become like males is found in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, where Thecla “sewed her mantle into a cloak after the fashion of men,” to follow Paul. *Acts of Paul*, c.40. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, “Acts of Paul,” in *New Testament Apocrypha Vol. 2*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. Robert McLachlan Wilson (London: James Clarke & Co, 1992; reprint Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 246. The androgyn motif may come from a possible interpretation of Paul’s letter to the Galatians 3:28. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Logion 114 of the *Gospel of Thomas* also has the androgyn motif clearly stated: “Simon Peter said to them, ‘Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.’ Jesus said: ‘I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.’” Koester, “The Gospel of Thomas (II,2),” 138.

prove, but may be most compassionate to Aphrahat himself; he does not address whether or not women may become temples of God because he is primarily concerned about his own companions, all of whom are probably male. So holy women are not unknown to Aphrahat, but they are not center stage, nor maybe even in the theatre. Aphrahat's lack of literary interest in women stands in stark contrast to his contemporary Ephrem the Syrian.

In the area of writing about women and the holy life, Ephrem trumps Aphrahat in almost every way. A key difference between Aphrahat's and Ephrem's various uses for the term "temple" is that the latter applies the term to Mary, the mother of God. Aphrahat has very little to say about Mary and he never uses the temple symbolism in reference to her. Ephrem writes in the *Hymn on the Nativity*, no. 17 describing Mary and Jesus: "Blessed is she, You are in her heart and mind. She is a royal palace,³⁴³ because of You, the King's Son. She is the holy of holies for You, the High Priest."³⁴⁴ Mary's title of palace, or temple, is dependent upon her relationship with Jesus who makes her the temple. The liturgical imagery of Mary as the holy place and Jesus as the high priest fills out the palace imagery since *haykela* can mean both palace and temple. Ephrem has great sympathy and regard for Mary and for women in general, while Aphrahat seems to view women primarily as a threat to the purity of his male ascetics.

In regard to women being temples, Ephrem has a unique use of this image: he uses the term "temples" solely to refer to female virgin ascetics, never to males. In his *Hymn on the Epiphany*, XI, Ephrem writes:

There are further examples of females becoming like men and even surpassing gender distinction in the sayings of the Egyptian Desert Fathers. S. Elm argues that the transformation of holy women into holy men is beyond a temporary vision transformation or even an analogy but becomes a physical reality for those women who fight with demons and suffer in the desert. These women become 'fathers' and 'athletes' of the desert. See Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God' The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 269.

³⁴³ Syr. *ܕܝܐ ܒܝܪܬ*.

³⁴⁴ *Hymn on the Nativity*, 17.5. Edmund Beck, ed., *Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania): Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers* CSCO#186 vol. 82. (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1959), 88. See Sebastian P. Brock, *Bride of Light*, Moran 'Etho (Kottayam, India: SEERI, 1994), 25.

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on Virginity and Holiness” defends the Christian faith against accusations from Jewish opponents.³⁴⁹ Virginity and holiness are indivisible for the Sage.

Aphrahat’s thesis is that virginity is better than any other state of human existence, and he defends his position with various scriptural proof texts from both the Hebrew scriptures and the Gospels. Noah is one of the many exemplars mentioned by Aphrahat to illustrate the importance of virginity. Noah as the paradigm of fidelity to God became a typically Christian statement. N. K. Fromm suggests that: “For Aphrahat, it is virginity, not faith, that appears as the real criterion for Noah’s righteousness.”³⁵⁰ Aphrahat also argues that Moses, Joshua, Elijah, and Adam before Eve’s creation are all models for his audiences’ lives.³⁵¹ Mentions of virgins and virginity are scattered throughout his works; for the most part the terms are simple descriptions of the chaste ascetics both in Aphrahat’s community and in scriptures.³⁵²

One of the more popular scriptural proof texts for virginity is the parable of the wise virgins, Matt 25:13 and parallels. Some scholars who have studied the treatment of this parable within Syriac Christian literature have noted a clear similarity between Aphrahat and Ephrem. K. Valavanolickal even suggests that there may be a direct borrowing between the two authors.³⁵³ The last sentence of the wise virgins parable is key: Matt 25:13

³⁴⁹ ܩܘܪܝܢܘܬܐ ܩܘܪܝܢܘܬܐ ܕܥܢ ܩܘܪܝܢܘܬܐ ܕܥܘܠܐܢܐ ܩܘܪܝܢܘܬܐ

D 18 is available in English translation in Neusner’s work, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, 76–96.

³⁵⁰ Naomi Koltun-Fromm, “Aphrahat and the Rabbis on Noah’s Righteousness in Light of the Jewish-Christian Polemic,” in *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation*, eds. Judith Frishman and Lucas Van Rompay (Louvain: E. J. Peeters., 1997), 59. Cf. D 18:2–3 (PS I/819–824). Noah, in Aphrahat’s understanding, was 500 years old before he had his children. So Noah remained celibate for 500 years in order to not have children who were corrupted by the evil generation—see Gen 5:32 ff.

³⁵¹ Cf. D 18:7–8 (PS I/832, 833, 837)

³⁵² ܩܘܪܝܢܘܬܐ *btulata*, the virgins is found in D 6:4, 6, 7 (PS I/261.5, 269.7, 272.1–18); D 7:20 (PS I/345.10); D 8:21–22 (PS I/401.6–23); D 10:6 (PS I/457.14); D 14:16, 37, 47 (PS I/613.6–18, 677.2, 717.22); D 22:7 (PS I/1004.20). ܩܘܪܝܢܘܬܐ *btulata* or virginity is found in *Demonstrations* other than D 18 as follows: D 1:4 (PS I/12:15); D 6:1, 5, 19, 20 (PS I/253.10, 264.24, 309.22, 312.8); D 7:20 (PS I/345.9); D 22:25 (PS I/1044.2–3).

³⁵³ Kuriakose A. Valavanolickal, *The use of the Gospel parables in the writings of Aphrahat and Ephrem* (Frankfurt an Main; New York: P. Lang, 1996), 353. He sug-

“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.” From this passage it is a rather simple leap to relate the wise virgins to the holy angelic watchers. Therefore, if one wishes to follow Christ, one should be virginal, ever vigilant, and watchful, following the example of the angels.

Aphrahat often tells his audience to follow the *vita angelica* for salvation. The two different terms for the heavenly ministers at the Lord’s throne who function as examples for humans are: angels (ܡܠܐܬܝܢ *malakē*) and watchers (ܐܝܪܝܢ *irē*).³⁵⁴ Aphrahat uses the terms interchangeably with no marked difference between the terms concerning characteristics or roles of these heavenly beings. The only difference between the two terms is the frequency of use: watchers or heavenly watchers occurs a total of thirteen times, angels occurs approximately thirty-six times. Both terms happen most frequently in direct quotations from the scriptures.

Some pertinent instances from the various references to angels are *Dem.* 20:11, *Dem.* 2:20, and *Dem.* 6:1. In *Dem.* 20:11, Aphrahat weaves together John 1:51 and 20:13, Matt 4:11 and 26:53, and Luke 2:14, within a very short space to explain the passage about Lazarus and the rich man. The angels’ responsibilities are wide ranging, from those who carry Lazarus into the bosom of Abraham (meaning heaven), to those who declare the resurrection of Jesus to Mary, serve Jesus, glorify him at his birth, announce his birth to Mary, and finally are present when the Son of Man will come again. Following Matt 18:10, Aphrahat writes in *Dem.* 2:20 that: “He said and declared about the little ones, that no one should despise them because their angels³⁵⁵ are always seen by the Father who is in heaven.”³⁵⁶ The an-

gests that this parable may be a common exegetical *topi* or it may be fairly clear borrowing. Ephrem’s texts are *Hymn on the Resurrection* XLVI:37:41 and *Hymn on the Nativity* 21:4. See also Pieter J. Botha, “A comparison between Aphrahat and Ephrem on the subject of Passover,” *Acta Patristica et Byzantina*, 3 (1992): 46–62.

³⁵⁴ Aphrahat uses the term angels (ܡܠܐܬܝܢ *malakē*) in the following: D 2:20 (PS I/93:20–23), D 6:1 (PS I/248.25–26), D 8:16 (PS I/392.21), D 20:9–11 (PS I/908.6–912.12), D 20:17 (PS I/924–925), D 22:13 (PS I/1016.27), D 22:15–16 (PS I/1024–1025), and D 23:4 (PS II/13.25).

The term watchers (ܐܝܪܝܢ *irē*) occurs in: D 5:3 (PS I/188.13), D 5:22 (PS I/228.8–22), D 6:5 (PS I/264.7–8), D 6:6 (PS I/268.12–13), D 6:6 (PS I/268.26–269.1), D 6:14 (PS I/296.18–19), D 6:19 (PS I/309.21–24), D 14:31 (PS I/653.7–11), D 14:35 (PS I/664.2–3), and D 18:12 (PS I/841.25).

³⁵⁵ Syr. ܡܠܐܬܝܢ *malakāyḥon*.

³⁵⁶ D 2:20 (PS I/93:20–23)

ܡܠܐܬܝܢ ܐܝܪܝܢ, ܥܠ ܘܥܝܢܝܗ: ܕܩܝܡ ܠܗ ܒܦܨܚ ܕܡܫܚ: ܕܡܠܐܬܝܢ ܕܚܘܠܝܗ
 ܫܘܢ ܠܡܘܠܗ ܕܦܨܚܗ.

gels function both as continual worshippers of God the Father and as juvenile welfare officers about the people who may be mistreating children. In *Dem.* 6:1, the ascetics are directly exhorted to imitate the angels: “Whoever partakes in the likeness of angels, let him become a stranger to men.”³⁵⁷ The angels or heavenly messengers are to be life examples for those who wish to follow this path of asceticism and celibacy.

The second term Aphrahat uses for angels is “watchers” (ܩܘܪܝܐ *qōriyā*). The term watchers is also found in Daniel 4:13, Gen 6:1–4, and in the Second Temple text expansions of Genesis and *1 Enoch* 15.³⁵⁸ Aphrahat’s use of the term suggests that he may have been familiar with these texts or at least with their terminology from the biblical texts.³⁵⁹ The most frequent use of “watcher” or “heavenly watcher” is in allusions to the Hebrew scriptures where angels have a prominent role. Aphrahat uses both watcher and angel interchangeably when referring to 1 Kings 19:15–35, the story of Hezekiah’s prayer causing the death of 185,000 people. The heavenly beings who do the killing are called angels (*malakē*) in *Dem.* 4:8 (PS I/153.10); the beings are called watchers (*qōriyā*) in *Dem.* 5:3 (PS I/188.13) describing the same story. The term watcher also refers to those who serve the heavenly throne and in descriptions of the end times.³⁶⁰

The celibate followers of Christ are described as “watchers” as well. The watchers are characterized as spiritual, heavenly, and virginal; so too should the individuals within the community strive to be. As Aphrahat declares in *Dem.* 6:19: “In writing this, I have reminded myself and you, my friend. Therefore love virginity, the heavenly portion, the communion of

³⁵⁷ D 6:1 (PS I/248.25–26) See above, page 96.

³⁵⁸ For a discussion of Noah and the Watchers, see John C. Endres, “Prayer of Noah: Jubilees 10:3–6,” in *Prayer from Alexander to Constantine: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Mark Kiley (London: Routledge, 1997), 53–58.

³⁵⁹ Alexander Golitzin, “The Place of the Presence of God,” 400.

³⁶⁰ D 6:6 (PS I/268.12–13) “The heavenly Watchers will rush, and the throne shall be set for right judgement.”

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D 6:14 (PS I/296.18–19) “When the Watchers have opened the doors of heaven before the king...”

ܩܘܪܝܐ ܩܘܪܝܐ ܩܘܪܝܐ ܩܘܪܝܐ ܩܘܪܝܐ ܩܘܪܝܐ
D 14:35 (PS I/664.2–3) “The Watchers hasten to serve [the sage] and the Seraphs cry ‘holy’ to his glory.” For the Syriac of this quotation see page 140.

some archaic concept of the Syriac church that held: “Virginity would be normal for Christians.”³⁶⁶ If this was not actually the case within Aphrahat’s community, it was at least the standard to which Aphrahat wished all would strive. In my opinion, Vööbus rather overstates the virginity issue in saying that:

All the available sources are unanimous in their testimony that the fundamental conception around which the Christian belief centered was the doctrine that the Christian life is unthinkable outside the bounds of virginity.³⁶⁷

Vööbus then focuses upon what he characterizes as Aphrahat’s: “estimate of marriage and its totally negative character.”³⁶⁸

Marriage as “distracting” from God is certainly one of Aphrahat’s opinions, but it must be balanced with his other statements about marriage. When one takes into account Aphrahat’s own statement about marriage being good, his declared audience (predominantly ascetics), and his own polemical goals (refuting his Jewish antagonist) it is hardly convincing that, according to Aphrahat, the only way to live a Christian life is through virginity. Vööbus’ position sounds hauntingly similar to a much earlier statement by F. C. Burkitt who concludes that there is no reference to the sacramental ceremony of marriage, and therefore: “We cannot doubt that he [Aphrahat] would have regarded such a ceremony [as marriage] with horror.”³⁶⁹ Such a characterization is inaccurate and disingenuous. Aphrahat had certain goals of pedagogy to fulfill with his texts, and he also had a certain purpose in mind—training his ascetics to be better followers of Christ. The married laity were not a primary concern for Aphrahat, but he did not think that marriage was evil. It is apparent that Aphrahat’s principal concern is for his celibate audience; however, he writes about married Christians:

God forbid that we should attribute any fault to marriage which God has given to the world, because thus it is written, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”³⁷⁰ However, there are some things

Earliest Christian Asceticism,” 63–78, and Neusner, “Aphrahat on Celibacy,” 117–129.

³⁶⁶ Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, vol. 1, 175.

³⁶⁷ Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, vol. 1, 69.

³⁶⁸ Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, vol. 3, 21 is quoting D 18:10 (PS I/840).

³⁶⁹ Burkitt, *Early Christianity Outside the Roman Empire*, 53–54.

³⁷⁰ Gen 1:31.

Single One, Jesus Christ. Aphrahat also discusses the Covenanters (*bṁay qyāmā*), who were “set apart” lay members who served within local church communities. Many of the ascetics were virgins (*btulē*), and Aphrahat places great value upon virginity. The holy ones (*qaddishē*) were married people who gave up sex for the sake of the heavenly kingdom. The common denominator is that they are all solely dedicated to God. But the categories and delineations are blurred and overlap. As R. H. Connolly wrote almost one hundred years ago:

All then that has been said about the Solitaries applies to the *B'nai Q'yama*, and they formed therefore in the Church of Aphraates a class apart from the ordinary baptized laity. I admit that when all has been said some things remain obscure.³⁹⁵

Despite the obscurity of Aphrahat’s definitions about the ascetic ones in his community, it is clear that the goal for dedication to God is being his temple.

³⁹⁵ Connolly, “Aphraates and Monasticism,” 535.

are given here on earth but taken up to heaven by Gabriel, while the ultimate heavenly, and at the same time earthly, action is the incarnation of Jesus.⁴⁰⁷ In all three inner person passages, the temple of God and dwelling of the divine are located inside the person and most commonly associated with the heart.

HEART AND PRAYER

The faithful person's heart is the home of God. Two quotations describe the role of the heart in reference to the divine, both from Aphrahat's last Demonstration, twenty-three, "On the Grapecluster." The first passage is: "We have conceived and given birth to you in our heart, and we are [becoming] your likeness in our intellect."⁴⁰⁸ The divine image dwelling in the human heart occurs later in the passage: "Your majesty burrows into the little heart, you have made of us temples wherein your glory dwells."⁴⁰⁹ The smallest innermost recesses of the Creator's creature contains the greatest of the divine. This temple imagery connects intimately with Aphrahat's heart imagery.

The heart stands for the whole person in Aphrahat's theology. He follows the Hebrew scriptural tradition of the human body being an indivisible entity with the *nefesh* נפש (soul), *guf* גוף (body), and *ruah* רוח (spirit).⁴¹⁰ Aphrahat does not have a dichotomy of body versus soul or spirit, nor does he divide the body from the soul.⁴¹¹ All aspects of the person unite into a whole; it is the whole person who becomes the temple of God. S. Brock explains:

[...] it was the 'body' and not the soul which St. Paul (1 Cor 6:19) described as the 'temple of the Holy Spirit within you.' It is not a case of body versus soul, but of body *and* soul: the 'heart' is doubly the center of the psychosomatic entity that makes up the human person.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁷ D 4:13 (PS I/168.11–169.6) See below, page 189.

⁴⁰⁸ D 23:59 (PS II/120.21–22)

ܘܢܘܩܝܢ ܕܥܘܢܘܩܝܢ ܕܥܘܢܘܩܝܢ:

⁴⁰⁹ D 23:59 (PS II/121.12–13)

ܘܥܠܘܢ ܕܥܘܢܘܩܝܢ ܕܥܘܢܘܩܝܢ: ܘܥܠܘܢ ܕܥܘܢܘܩܝܢ ܕܥܘܢܘܩܝܢ:

⁴¹⁰ Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages, their concepts and beliefs*. vol. I, trans. Israel Abrahams (Hebrew University: Jerusalem Magnes Press, 1975), 215.

⁴¹¹ Brock, "Prayer of the Heart," 132. See also Terzoli, "Âme et Esprit chez Aphraate," 105–118.

⁴¹² Brock, "Prayer of the Heart," 133. Cf. Pierre, *Aphraate le sage persan*, vol. 1, 182. Her observation that a study of Aphrahat's anthropology is very difficult is

Christian is supposed to work very hard at offering prayer sacrifices to Christ.

In order to give a pure offering of prayer to God, one prerequisite is a pure heart. Aphrahat's biblical sources for the necessity of a pure heart are Ps 24:3–4, Ps 51, 1 Cor 3:16, and Matt 5:8 among many other scriptural passages.⁴¹⁶ Psalm 24 declares that the pure of heart will be able to ascend to the holy place. In Psalm 51, the priority is a clean heart and a right spirit with which to give the sacrifice.⁴¹⁷ One cannot come into the presence of the Lord without being purified.⁴¹⁸ Paul uses Ps 51 in 1 Cor 3:16.⁴¹⁹ The result of having a pure heart is being able to see the divine, as the beatitude

heavenly Church.” (Brock, *Syriac Fathers on Prayer*, xxvi). One agenda in the LG is to defend the authority of the visible church by connecting the transformation of the person into a temple with respect for the visible church. Aphrahat does not have this concern; he focuses upon correct prayer and sacrifice at the personal level.

⁴¹⁶ Some other key Hebrew scripture passages are: “keep heart clean” Ps 73:13, Prov 20:9, Cf. Sir 38:10, “pure in heart” Ps 73:1. “No ritual can purify the heart; a ‘pure heart’ and a ‘steadfast spirit’ are the gift of Yahweh alone.” Botterweck, ed. *TDOT*, s.v. “לב לב,” by H. J. Fabry. See also Deirdre A. Dempsey, “The Phrase ‘Purity of Heart’ in Early Syriac Writings,” in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature*, eds. Harriet Luckman and Linda Kulzer (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999): 31–44; Stephen Bonian, “Purity of Heart in Syriac Prayer,” *Diakonia* 22, 2 (1989): 121–126; and Brock, *Syriac Fathers on Prayer*, xxviii–xxix, for a discussion of the “luminous heart” a term which Aphrahat does not use, but is key in later Syriac spirituality.

⁴¹⁷ Aphrahat quotes parts of Ps 51 four times in his *Demonstrations*. Twice he uses the psalm in Dem 2:6 concerning what is the correct sacrifice to God, namely a contrite heart and a humble spirit. (Ps 51:13,14 and 19, D 2:6 (PS I/60.24–61.2)) Following these quotations, Aphrahat uses Ps 51:13 in Dem. 6:16 (PS I/300.10) concerning how the Holy Spirit may leave a sinful person. The last quotation from Ps 51:4 is in Dem. 7:14 (PS I/333.20–22), where Aphrahat writes about the penitent being forgiven by God.

⁴¹⁸ Ps 24:3–4. “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.” Similar sentiments are found in many other sources in the scriptures.

Purity of heart is needed even to fast. As Aphrahat states: “And if there is no purity of heart, the fast is not accepted.” D 3:2 (PS I/101:10–11)

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⁴¹⁹ Douglas R. de Lacey, “The Function of a Metaphor in St. Paul,” in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel*, ed. William Horbury (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 394.

in Matthew promises: Matt 5:8 “Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God.” As J. Raasch comments: “It is on these texts that the Fathers base their teaching that purity of heart is a preliminary goal of the Christian life in relation to the ultimate end, the vision of God.”⁴²⁰ Aphrahat also draws similar conclusions from the scriptures and is fully within the exegetical tradition of Philo of Alexandria,⁴²¹ and Origen,⁴²² among others. Aphrahat often describes a person as being or having a place of prayer.

⁴²⁰ Juana Raasch, “The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and Its Sources Part 1,” *Studia Monastica* 8 (1966): 21.

⁴²¹ Philo, (20 B.C.E.–50 C.E.), was an Alexandrian Jew who presented the Hebrew scriptures through a Greek philosophical lens. His writings had a great influence on Origen and many other Christian writers. He presents a particular perspective on the temple: he considers the whole cosmos to be the temple of God. It may be that Aphrahat did have access to a few of Philo’s works or that our Sage is echoing a commonly held Jewish tradition which is also evident in Philo’s writings. The latter scenario is the most plausible. See *De specialibus legibus* I, XII, 66–67. Philo of Alexandria, *The Special Laws*, trans. Francis H. Colson, vol. VII, Loeb edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 136–139. Philo of Alexandria, *Les Oeuvres de Philon d’Alexandrie*, vol. 24, *De Specialibus Legibus*, eds. Roger Arnaldez, Jean Pouilloux, and Claude Mondésert (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1961), 48–50.

Aphrahat and Philo both write that the soul should be the temple for the divine. Philo explains: “And I will walk among you, and will be your God. (Leviticus 26:12): but in the understandings of those who are still undergoing cleansing and have not yet fully washed their life defiled and stained by the body’s weight there walk angels, divine words, making them bright and clean with the doctrines of all that is good and beautiful. It is quite manifest what troops of evil tenants are ejected, in order that One, the good one, may enter and occupy. Be zealous therefore, O soul, to become a house of God, a holy temple, a most beautiful abiding-place.” *De somniis*, I, XXIII, 148–150. Philo of Alexandria, *De Somniis On Dreams*, vol. V, Loeb, 136–139, trans. Francis H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), 375–377.

“Περιπατήσω ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ ἔσομαι ὑμῶν θεός” (Λευκ. 26, 12)-, ταῖς δὲ τῶν ἐτιἀπολουομένων, μήπω δὲ κατὰ τὸ παντελὲς ἐκνιψαμένων τὴν ῥυπῶσαν καὶ κεκληρωμένην <ἐν> σώμασι βαρέσι ζώην ἄγγελοι, λόγοι θεοῖ, φαιδρύνοντες αὐτάς τοις καλοκάγαθίας δόγμασιν. [149] “Ὅσα δὲ ἔξοι-κίζεται κακῶν οἰκητόρων σίφη, ἵνα εἰς ὁ ἀγαθὸς εἰσοικίσηται, δῆλόν ἐστι. Σπούδαζε οὖν, ὦ ψυχὴ, θεοῦ οἴκος γενέσθαι, ἱερὸν ἄγιον, ἐνδιαίτημα κάλλιστον.”

Philo of Alexandria, *Les Oeuvres de Philon d’Alexandrie*, vol. 19, *De Somniis*, ed. Pierre Savinel (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1962), 84–87. J. Raasch cites this passage in “The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and Its Sources Part 3,” *Studia Monastica* 10 (1968). 11.

When a person is able to give an acceptable offering to God, it will be carried to heaven and laid at the heavenly altar by none other than Gabriel himself. As Aphrahat describes:

Thus you should keep in your mind⁴²³ that your prayer has been left in front of the altar, and if he [Gabriel] who presents prayers does not want to carry it from the earth, it is because he inspected it and found it to be a faulty offering. If the offering is pure, he raises it up before God. [...] And if you are willing to forgive, then he [Gabriel] who offers up prayers will receive your offering and raise it up; but if you do not forgive, then he will say to you: ‘I will not bring your polluted offering before the sacred throne.’ Instead you will go there and give an account to your Creditor, taking your offering with you, while he [Gabriel] will leave your offering and go off.⁴²⁴

⁴²² Origen of Alexandria (c. 185–c. 254 C.E.) is one of the foremost Christian exegetes of the early church. Both Aphrahat and Origen are steeped in the scriptures and both have great affinity for the Pauline corpus. Their common ideas are likely due to their common scriptural teacher. Some common motifs between Aphrahat and Origen are: Christians being of different levels, the simple and the perfect, prayer as sacrifice, and the eyes of the head and the eyes of the heart being able to see God. See Origen, *On Prayer*, XXVII, 5. Origen, *Die Schrift Vom Gebet*, 366; *On Prayer*, II.2 Origen, *Die Schrift Vom Gebet*, 299; and *On Prayer*, IX. 2 Origen, *Die Schrift Vom Gebet*, 318. See Aphrahat’s use of the “seeing God” motif in Chapter Five, page 165.

Origen, *Contra Celsus* VIII:18 “And every one who imitates Him according to his ability, does by this very endeavor raise a statue according to the image of the Creator for in the contemplation of God with a pure heart they become imitators of Him. ... Thus the Spirit of Christ dwells in those who bear, so to say, a resemblance in form and feature to Himself.” Origène, *Contre Celse*, *SC Vol. IV*, vol. 150, ed. Marcel Borret (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1969), 211–215.

“Καὶ ἐν ἑκάστω δὲ τῶν κατὰ δύναμιν ἐκείνον καὶ ἐν τούτῳ μιμησαμένων ἐστὶν ἄγαλμα τὸ ἑκάτ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος, ὅπερ κατασκευάζουσιν τῷ ἔνορᾶν θεῷ καθαρῷ καρδίᾳ, ἑμιμηται γινόμενοι τοῦ θεοῦ.” ... οὕτῳ δὲ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῖς, ἵν’ οὕτως ὀνομάσω, συμμορφοῖς ἐπιζάνει.”

Origen, *Origenes Werke: Gegen Celsus*, vol. 2, ed. Paul Koetschau (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche, 1899), 235–236.

⁴²³ Syr. ܩܬܘܪܝܬܐ ܩܪܝܬܐ.

⁴²⁴ D 4:13 (PS I/168.11–15 and 168.23 -169.6)

ܩܠܘ ܶܩܘܪܝܬܐ ܶܩܪܝܬܐ ܶܩܘܪܝܬܐ ܶܩܘܪܝܬܐ ܶܩܘܪܝܬܐ ܶܩܘܪܝܬܐ ܶܩܘܪܝܬܐ
ܶܩܘܪܝܬܐ ܶܩܘܪܝܬܐ ܶܩܘܪܝܬܐ ܶܩܘܪܝܬܐ ܶܩܘܪܝܬܐ ܶܩܘܪܝܬܐ ܶܩܘܪܝܬܐ

ing symbolic thought patterns common to Judaism and Christianity.”⁴²⁸ He shows the similarities between Aphrahat’s writings about prayer and those from Ps 140:2,⁴²⁹ Ben Sira 32 (35):8⁴³⁰ and the *Babylonian Talmud Ta’anit* 2a which is “What kind of service is it which takes place in the heart? We must answer. It is prayer.”⁴³¹ Aphrahat’s own description of prayer as sacrifice functions within this tradition.

The Sage uses common imagery from Hebrew scripture and even common arguments in order to teach his audience how to refute the Jews. As Aphrahat explains his motivation:

Therefore, I have written you this brief answer so that you may defend yourself when it is necessary to give a word and strengthen the intellect of whoever is listening, so that they will not yield to the seditious argument of [the Jews].⁴³²

Aphrahat notes throughout his *Demonstrations* that Jesus Christ is the ultimate sacrifice and it is because of his incarnation and sacrifice that all other sacrifices are abrogated. He then argues that the Jews are no longer the people of God, Israel, because they rejected Christ, and therefore the Christians are the new Israel. As he writes:

And because they [the Jews] rejected his kingdom, he took⁴³³ the kingdom away from them, for the One [Jesus Christ] to whom the kingdom

⁴²⁸ Brock, “Fire from Heaven,” 242.

⁴²⁹ Ps 141:2 “Let my prayer be counted as incense before thee, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice.” Brock is correct in noting the similarities of Aphrahat’s ideas with this Psalmic verse, but it is interesting that Aphrahat never quotes this verse verbatim. Given the Sage’s predilection for quoting from scriptures, this is very striking.

⁴³⁰ The *Peshitta* has “Let him decide to pray in his heart.”

⁴³¹ Joseph Rabbinowitz, “Ta’anith,” *The Babylonian Talmud Seder Mo’ed*, vol. IV, ed. Isidore Epstein (London: Soncino Press, 1938), 3. col. 2a. Aphrahat does not cite Ps 141:2 explicitly but the sentiment is most definitely present in his texts.

⁴³² D 19:12 (PS I/885.26–888.3)

ܠܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ
ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ
ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ ܕܢܘܫܝܘܬܝܗܘܢ

⁴³³ Syr. *ܬܝܒ ܫܒܩܐܠ*. In the active sense this verb has the meaning of lifting up, bearing, partaking, or receiving.

For the prophet says: “This is my rest; give rest to the weary.” (Isa 28:12) Therefore give the rest of God and you will have no necessity to say “Forgive me.” Give rest to the weary, and visit the sick, and provide for the poor: this is indeed prayer. As I shall explain to you, my friend, whenever someone gives the rest of God, that is prayer.⁴³⁷

Aphrahat’s interpretation of Isaiah 28:12 is rather standard at this point. He cites examples of charitable acts for those in need; this is giving the “rest of God,” and it is also accounted as prayer. But he goes on in this passage to give an extreme example from scriptures of prayer in action which he interprets as being the rest of God.

For it is written: “When Zimri fornicated with the Midianite woman, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, saw him, and entered into the room and killed the two of them.” (Num 25:6–8) And his killing was accounted as prayer, for David says of him, “Phinehas rose up and prayed, and it was reckoned a reward for him, for ever and ever.” (Ps 106:30–31) Because

“*shekinah*,” means to dwell, but it also may mean to rest. The *Shekintā* of the Lord has some eschatological or at least heavenly overtones. For a further discussion about Aphrahat’s use of *Shekintā*, see page 153. Preuss’ comment stands in contrast to the use of rest in the New Testament, which uses the term “ἀνάπαυσις” as the rest of the dead and the “place of the rest promised to the Jewish disciple of wisdom in Mt. 11:28f.” (G. Kittel, ed. *TDNT*, s.v. “ἀνάπαυσις,” by O. Bauernfeind.) The broad use of this term suggests that the rest of God is both a locality and an activity. Aphrahat is using the word in the latter sense.

The “Rest of the Lord” motif is quite common throughout early Jewish and Christian literature. The image is in Philo, Qumran, the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Odes of Solomon*, the *Liber Graduum*, and the Macarian literature. See Jon Laansma, “I Will Give You Rest”: *The Rest Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Mt 11 and Heb 3–4* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1997), 112; Ernst Bammel, “Rest and Rule,” *VC* 23 (1969): 88–90; Kristine Ruffatto, “In His Rest Shalt Thou Rest”: The Concept of Rest in the Acts of Thomas and Its Roots in Jewish Rest Tradition,” (Milwaukee, WI, unpublished, 2004); and Susan Ramsey, “The Sabbath and Rest in Aphrahat the Persian Sage and Macarius,” read at North American Patristics Society, Loyola University, May 28, 2004.

⁴³⁷ D 4:14 (PS I/169.16–23)

אנכי לנו טובה: מוזה, מן, נשוא: אנוש לחיפה. חבו מכל נשוא
 גאלמא רה בו רעה: מלה מוזה לך שמינאר דעבם לך. אנוש
 לחיפה שמינאר בונומא פזיש לחיפה: מוזה, מן, גאלמא. אכפיש
 עבד, חל מוזה דכחוב דבונוש נשוא גאלמא חבו, מן, גאלמא.

self among the men of rest and the good.”⁴⁴⁶ The action of Christ coming to live in the good person is described as resting. The rest of the Lord has many different uses in these works: actions of prayer, prayer itself, description of where the righteous people go at the end, and as a synonym for the indwelling of God in the believer. Aphrahat is far from being alone in his presentation of the rest of God, his writings are in harmony with another Syriac text *The Odes of Solomon*.

The author of the Odes and Aphrahat both present God as indwelling in followers and describing this indwelling as divine rest.⁴⁴⁷ Ode 12 declares: “For the dwelling place of the Word is man, and his truth is love.”⁴⁴⁸ Following the love motif, Ode 3:5 suggests that the dwelling of the divine may be portrayed using the term “rest”: “I love the Beloved and I love in my soul, and where his rest is, there I am too.”⁴⁴⁹ The place of rest as the tem-

⁴⁴⁶ D 23:59 (PS II/121.16–18)

ܘܢܐ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ

⁴⁴⁷ The *Odes* and Aphrahat have many more literary images in common, i.e., holy war (Ode 9:6), the holy ones (Ode 7:16, 8:2, 22:12, 23:1), and the true covenant (Ode 9:11). The covenant reference in Ode 9 may be an early reference to the *Bnay Qyāma* of Aphrahat’s time, but we cannot be sure. See also Majella Franzmann, “A Study of the Odes of Solomon with Reference to the French Scholarship 1909–1980,” in *Die Oden Salomos in Ihrer Bedeutung Für Neues Testament Und Gnosis*, ed. Michael Lattke. (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1986), 394. Critical text: Michael Lattke, *Oden Salomos Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar* Vol. 1. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

The *Odes of Solomon* is a collection of hymns about which very little scholarly consensus exists. All that is agreed upon by scholars about these texts is that they are a collection of poetic hymns and they most definitely were not written by Solomon. I am following M. Franzmann’s conclusion that “... the Odes stand as a collection and must have been used as such since the third century C.E. This fact is borne out by reference to the Odes by number in two of the earliest works in which they are quoted: the *Pistis Sophia* and Lactantius’ *Divinae Institutiones*.” (Franzmann, “A Study of the Odes,” 373.) It will be presumed that the Odes likely were written in Syriac, were used as a collection of hymns since the third century C.E., have had a place within the Syriac literary corpus, and that they likely predate Aphrahat at least by a few decades. The Odes help to set the stage for Aphrahat’s insights concerning the image of temple within the spiritual life.

⁴⁴⁸ Ode 12:12

ܘܢܐ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ

⁴⁴⁹ Ode 3:5

ܘܢܐ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܢܘܨܬܐ

ple of God's rest is a very common idea.⁴⁵⁰ Charlesworth observes that: "His rest' is parallel to 'place' or *monai*, possibly night-stops or resting places, in John."⁴⁵¹ Franzmann also summarizes the Odist's ascent theology:

In [Ode] 36:1, resting on the Spirit is the decisive moment leading to the ascent of the Odist which ends in glorification. The Odist 'stands in rest' (26:12), composes 'Odes of rest' (cf. 26:3), and exhorts others to come into Paradise and recline upon the Lord's rest (20:7–8).⁴⁵²

In the *Odes*, the movement of ascent to the heavens occurs through the paradoxical state of a person being at rest in the spirit coupled with having the indwelling of the higher power. Being at rest is not a passive state of being; it leads to the person praising the Lord.

Aphrahat also uses the "rest of the Lord" in an active rather than passive sense in *Dem.* 4:14 and other passages. For Aphrahat, the works of rest are those that are good and help the person to become a divine resting place. In the *Odes*, the praising of God occurs when the person is able to ascend to the heavens to glorify the Lord.⁴⁵³ But those who do not give "the rest of God" in an active sense run the risk of "grieving the Spirit."

GRIEVING THE SPIRIT

Praying pure prayers of the heart, right actions of charity, baptism and eucharist; none are guarantees that the Spirit will remain with you or that you will remain a temple of God. To remain a temple for the Spirit, a person must keep from "grieving the Spirit" (ܠܘܐܝܠ ܥܘܣܐ *miq lruha*) because the Spirit will leave if grieved. For example, the ascetic might grieve the Spirit by: disobedience, lying, failure to forgive, returning to wanton ways, drunkenness, gossiping, anger, or cruelty.⁴⁵⁴ It is interesting to note that Aphrahat does not think that impurity or grieving the Spirit comes from sex

⁴⁵⁰ See further discussion of rest as a theme in Aphrahat, page 117.

⁴⁵¹ Charlesworth, *Odes of Solomon*, 301. He further suggests that Ode 3:5 has parallels with John 14:2 and 17:24. See also Brian McNeil, "The Odes of Solomon and the Scriptures," *OrChr* 67 (1983), 104–122.

⁴⁵² Majella Franzmann, "Portrait of a Poet: Reflections on 'the Poet' in the Odes of Solomon," in *Perspectives on Language and Text*, eds. Edgar W. Conrad and Edward G. Newing. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 319–320.

⁴⁵³ The ascent passages referring to the Odist are Odes 18:1, 21:6, 29:4, and 36:1. Cf. Franzmann, "A Study of the Odes," 391 for a discussion of this image.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. D 6:1 (PS I/251–252).

through receiving God via the mouth that he is able to live in us, both literally and figuratively. The injunction on impurity from the Sage is expanded to include an injunction against wrong speaking either in anger⁴⁶¹ or heresy,⁴⁶² and wrong actions.⁴⁶³ False doctrines and blasphemy were threats to Aphrahat's community, so he is very concerned about wrong words leading his flock astray.⁴⁶⁴ In a reference to Judas, Aphrahat warns his audience: "Guard your lips from deception, for they give kisses to the son of the King."⁴⁶⁵ Because the mouth and lips are the instruments by which Jesus enters into the person through the eucharist, the instruments must be kept clean, lest the Spirit becomes aggrieved.

⁴⁶¹ D 14:16 (PS I/612.17–18) "And the sons of peace suppress arguing to be worthy of becoming sons of the Father in heaven."

ܘܚܘܬܐ ܘܥܠܡܐ ܠܘܥܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܪܒܐ ܘܨܘܪܐ .

One of the many means by which the followers of Jesus may become the sons of the Father is through no longer quarrelling and being angry. Aphrahat's anti-anger stance suggests that he has a pastoral concern of keeping a community functioning together peacefully.

⁴⁶² "For who will give a reward to Marcion who did not confess our good Creator? And further who will answer Valentinian for his fast, who preached that there are many creators, saying that a perfect God has not been spoken and no intellect has studied him? And who will give a reward to the sons of darkness for the teaching of the impious Mani, who dwells in the darkness in the likeness of snakes, and the Chaldean art, the teaching of Babel? See all these fast, but their fast is not accepted." D 3:9 (PS I/116.6–17)

ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܘܥܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܪܒܐ ܘܨܘܪܐ ... ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܘܥܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܪܒܐ ܘܨܘܪܐ : ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܘܥܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܪܒܐ ܘܨܘܪܐ : ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܘܥܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܪܒܐ ܘܨܘܪܐ : ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܘܥܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܪܒܐ ܘܨܘܪܐ . ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܘܥܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܪܒܐ ܘܨܘܪܐ .

⁴⁶³ In D 6:8 (PS I/272–276) Aphrahat's exhortation explains in great poetic detail the correct actions expected of solitaries, monks, virgins, and saints.

⁴⁶⁴ D 1:19 (PS I/44.20–22, 24–26) "This is the faith of God's Church: that one should separate oneself from [...] empty doctrines, which are tools of the Evil One, from the flattery of sweet words, from blasphemy and from adultery."

ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܘܥܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܪܒܐ ܘܨܘܪܐ : ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܘܥܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܪܒܐ ܘܨܘܪܐ : ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܘܥܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܪܒܐ ܘܨܘܪܐ : ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܘܥܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܪܒܐ ܘܨܘܪܐ : ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܘܥܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܪܒܐ ܘܨܘܪܐ :

⁴⁶⁵ D 9:10 (PS I/432.18–19)
ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܘܥܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܘܥܘܒܐ ܠܪܒܐ ܘܨܘܪܐ .

Aphrahat uses two texts from the Hebrew scripture and one from the Pauline corpus to support his position concerning the transitory nature of the Spirit’s indwelling in human beings. The first proof comes from a discussion of Genesis 6:7. The sons of Adam are the first to grieve the Spirit: “And when they were many, they were corrupted and impious, until they saddened and grieved their Creator’s spirit by their sins, and he said, ‘I regret that I made them’ (Gen 6:7).”⁴⁶⁶ The second example of the Spirit being aggrieved comes from 1 Samuel 16:14. Aphrahat uses this to exhort his audience to better behavior. Thus, he writes:

I will teach you about that [which is] written, that the Spirit does not always remain with those who receive him. For it is written that Saul received the Holy Spirit when he was anointed, but he grieved the Spirit and the Spirit left him. Then God sent to him instead an evil spirit.⁴⁶⁷

Because of King Saul’s sin, Saul lost the indwelling of the Spirit he had received. Paul’s exhortation is also quite direct, and it is the primary framework from which Aphrahat works. Ephesians 4:30–32 says:

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Aphrahat uses the passage to focus upon one of his primary pastoral concerns, that if his community continues to fight among themselves, there will be dire consequences.

The sons of Adam who were destroyed in the Flood, King Saul, and Paul’s exhortation set the scriptural stage from which Aphrahat presents his interpretation of sin, which is defined as “grieving the Spirit.” The danger of sin is ever present, even for those who are to become temples of the Divine, as Aphrahat warns in *Dem.* Six: “Therefore let us prepare our temples

⁴⁶⁶ D 18:2 (PS I/820.23–26)

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⁴⁶⁷ D 6:16 (PS I/297.19–24)

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grieve the Spirit, the person is condemned forever, remaining non-spiritual, constantly sinning, and ultimately becoming merely an animal.

The departure of the Spirit from a Christian leaves the person prey to Satan and no longer a spiritual but merely an animal being. The Pauline description of the last days found in 1 Corinthians 15:35–58 is the chief interpretive lens through which Aphrahat describes what happens to both the devout and the sinful. Aphrahat accepts fully the animal and spiritual dichotomy found in the Pauline text. The sinner is utterly animal, imitating the sinful Adam: a beast, ignorant of God, a dwelling place for Satan, naked, accused, and indicted by the Spirit. The saint, on the other hand, is entirely spiritual: a likeness of Jesus the heavenly Adam, clothed, protected, defended by the Spirit, and a temple of God.⁴⁷⁹

The Holy Spirit is key in the determination of whether or not a person is spiritual or animal, heavenly, or earthly. The Spirit may be either, as it were, a defense lawyer or a prosecuting attorney before the tribunal of the Lord. The Spirit may function as a defense lawyer before God to protect the person who honors the Spirit's indwelling:

And whoever worships the Spirit, and guards it safely in himself in purity, in that day the Holy Spirit shall guard him, and he shall become all of the spirit, and shall not be found naked; as the Apostle said: "Oh would that we could be clothed and not found to be naked." (2 Cor 5:3)⁴⁸⁰

The Spirit is not only the defense attorney but also the haberdasher for the spiritual person. The Spirit provides the clothing to protect the person from judgment. A court informant and prosecuting attorney are other functions for the Spirit, depending upon the actions of the person in whom he dwells. "This Spirit goes often and stands before God and beholds his face, and [if anyone] harms the temple in which he dwells, [the Spirit] will accuse him before God."⁴⁸¹ The role of the Spirit is dependent upon the actions of the

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. D 22:6 (PS I/1001), D 22:9 (PS I/1029) and D 23:11 (PS II/29–33).

⁴⁸⁰ D 6:18 (PS I/308.19–24)

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⁴⁸¹ D 6:15 (PS I/297.15–18)

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anger and rage.⁴⁸⁹ Aphrahat presents the dung soiling the person's temple as wrong words, heresy or blasphemy. Of secondary concern for the Sage is wrong action or sins which ruin the indwelling the Spirit. Ephrem writes that the dung are bad habits and adultery. So his emphasis is more on the practical level rather than on wrong speech. However, Ephrem's poem may also serve as a lovely summary of Aphrahat's theology.

Macarius, or Macarius of Egypt, is another important author for our study. He most likely wrote his works originally in Syriac. He too writes of the person as a temple of God and has many concerns about purity. Followers of Christ may become temples, but due to their sinfulness, most people are not worthy of becoming temples of God. Macarius explains this with a parallel between a person being the temple of Satan or the temple of the Holy Spirit. "We have not yet been made 'the temple of God' (1 Cor 3:16) and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, for we are still the temple of idols and the receptacle of evil spirits because of our attachment to the passions."⁴⁹⁰ Macarius' concern about the polluting effects of the passions is a more Greek philosophical concern, though Aphrahat would agree that any anger, lust, or envy would preclude the Holy Spirit from dwelling within the "passionate" person.⁴⁹¹ A further, more pastoral, passage has a similar description of a dirty (sinful) person as one who has foul smells and dung within. Along the same lines, Aphrahat uses the phrase "dung and mud," and Macarius is very much in harmony with Aphrahat's sentiments.

For human nature itself tends to form a fellowship with the demons and the evil spirits equally as well as with the angels and the Holy Spirit. It is the temple of Satan or the temple of the Holy Spirit. Now, give a look at your mind, brothers. With whom are you in fellowship: the angels or the demons? Whose temple are you, the dwelling place of God or the devil? With what treasure is your heart filled: grace or Satan? Just as a house that has been filled with foul smells and dung, it must be completely cleaned up and put in order and filled with every fragrance and all treas-

⁴⁸⁹ Aphrahat uses similar references to dung and mud in D 3:2 (PS I/101.18–22). See page 123.

⁴⁹⁰ Homily 25.4, lines 65–67. Dörries, *Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*, 201–202. Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies*, 161.

“οὐπω γεγόναμεν ναὸς θεοῦ καὶ οἰκητήριον πνεύματος ἁγίου· ἔτι γὰρ ἔσμεν ναὸς εἰδώλων καὶ δοχεῖον πνευμάτων πονηρίας διὰ τὴν ἐπὶ τὰ πάθη ὀρμήν.”

⁴⁹¹ See Aphrahat's use of Satan temple, page 126.

ures, so it is that the Holy Spirit may come instead of Satan and may find rest in the souls of Christians.⁴⁹²

Macarius' passage has almost exact parallels with Ephrem's; the dirty temple smells so much that it has to be cleaned up before the pure fragrance of the Holy Spirit may enter. Ephrem writes of prayers as flowers, Macarius does not make clear what the fragrance is but it is likely a reference to incense and/or other sweet smells associated with the temple.

To lose the Spirit means no longer to be the dwelling place of the divine and thus no longer a temple of the Spirit. The Spirit is offended by sinful acts, when the heart becomes so dirty that it is uninhabitable. If this occurs, Satan may inhabit the heart. Satan may only dwell there, if there is a vacancy in an individual's heart left by the Divine vacating the premises, so to speak. Interestingly, in *2 Baruch*, the Jerusalem temple is not only vacated by God, but the enemies are invited in: "Enter, enemies, and come, adversaries, because he who guarded the house has left it."⁴⁹³ Baruch describes God's abandonment of the Jerusalem temple; Aphrahat interiorizes this in describing how the Spirit abandons the human temple when it is grieved. *2 Baruch* is a second temple Jewish text which deals with temple imagery and

⁴⁹² Homily 27.19, lines 277–286. Dörries, *Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*, 228–229. Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies*, 182. See also Homily 15.33, Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies*, 120. See a very similar passage in Aphrahat with reference to dung and mud, page 123.

“ἐπειδὴ αὐτὴ ἡ φύσις κοινωνικὴ ἐστὶ τῶν διαμόνων καὶ πνευμάτων τῆς πονηρίας, ὁμοίως καὶ ἀγγέλων καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου· ναὸς ἐστὶ τοῦ σατανᾶ καὶ ναὸς τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. λοιπὸν ἐπισκέψασθε τὸν νοῦν ἡμῶν, ἀδελφοί, τίνος ἐστὲ κοινωνοί, ἀγγέλων ἢ διαμόνων· τίνος ἐστὲ ναὸς καὶ οἰκητήριον, θεοῦ ἢ διαβόλου· ἡ καρδιά ποίου θησαυροῦ μεμῶσται, τῆς χάριτος ἢ τοῦ σατανᾶ· ὡσπερ οὖν οἰκίαν μεμῶστωμένην δυσωδίας καὶ κοπρίας, χρῆ ταύτην καθαρισθῆναι τὸ ὄλον καὶ κοσμηθῆναι καὶ πληρωθῆναι πάσης εὐωδίας καὶ θησαυρῶν, ὥστε πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλθεῖν ἀντὶ τοῦ σατανᾶ καὶ ἐπαναπαῆναι εἰς τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν Χριστιανῶν.”

⁴⁹³ *2 Baruch* 8.1. The Syriac *Apocalypse of Baruch*, or *2 Baruch*, is set in the period following the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/6 B.C.E., but it is probably written in reaction to the destruction of the Second temple in 70 C.E. *2 Baruch* probably originates from the Palestine region written in Hebrew, dating from approximately 100–120 C.E. The Syriac text survives in a 6th century manuscript, presumably translated from the Greek. A. F. J. Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” *OTP*, 1:616. The critical edition is: *Apocalypse de Baruch*, *SC* vol. 144 and 145, ed. Pierre Bogaert (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1969).

Since, therefore, he invisibly enters into this region of the soul, let us prepare that place in the best way the case admits of, to be an abode worthy of God; for if we do not, he, without our being aware of it, will quit us and migrate to some other habitation, which shall appear to him to be more excellently provided.⁴⁹⁷

Aphrahat's description of the Spirit leaving a person is very similar to Philo's own portrayal of God's dwelling within the soul. Philo and Aphrahat focus on the interior dwelling of God, whereas Baruch primarily deals with God dwelling in the Jerusalem temple. It may be that Aphrahat did have access to a few of Philo's works or that our Sage is echoing a commonly held Jewish tradition which is also evident in Philo's writings. The latter scenario is the most plausible. Although it is not possible to prove the influence of Second Temple Jewish literature on the Syrian Christian authors, at least it does show that great minds think alike.

Aphrahat has analogous ideas to some earlier Jewish authors and later Syriac Christians have comparable concerns to the Sage. The late fifth to early sixth century Syriac writer Philoxenus of Mabbug deals with the whole question of the Spirit living in a person after He was dwelling within for some time.⁴⁹⁸ Aphrahat's view differs significantly from the later author; however, that it is a topic of concern is important. S. Brock contrasts Aphrahat and Philoxenus of Mabbug:

“Τὸ μὲν ἀνωτάτω καὶ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἱερὸν θεοῦ νομίζειν τὸν σύμπαντα χρηὸν κόσμον εἶναι, νεὸ μὲν ἔχοντα τὸ ἀγιώτατον τῆς τῶν ὄντων οὐσίας μέρος, οὐρανόν, ἀναθήματα δὲ τοὺς ἀστέρας, ἱερέας δὲ τοὺς ὑποδιακόνους αὐτοῦ τῶν δυνάμεων ἀγγέλους, ἀσωμάτων ψυχάς, οὐ κράματα ἐκ λογικῆς καὶ ἀλόγου φύσεως, οἷας τὰς ἡμετέρας εἶναι συμβέβηκεν, ἀλλ’ ἐκτεμημένας τὸ ἄλογον, ὅλας δι’ ὄλων νοεράς, λογισμοὺς ἀκραιφνεῖς, μονάδι ὁμοιουμένας.”

⁴⁹⁷ *On the Cherubim*, Part 2 XXIX (98) Philo of Alexandria, *Les Oeuvres de Philon d’Alexandrie*, vol. 3, *De Cherubim*, eds. Roger Arnaldez, Jean Pouilloux, and Claude Mondésert (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1961), 66. See also Philo, *The Works of Philo*, 90.

“Ἐπειδὴ τοῖνυν ἀοράτως τότε τῆς ψυχῆς χωρίον εἰσδύεται, παρασκευάζομεν τὸν τόπον ἐκεῖνον ὡς ἔνεστι κάλλιστον, ἀξιόχρεων ἐνδιαίτημα θεοῦ γεννησόμενον. εἰ δὲ μή, λήσεται μεταναστάς εἰς ἕτερον οἶκον, ὃς ἂν ἄμεινον αὐτῷ δοκῆ δεδημιουργῆσθαι.”

⁴⁹⁸ Philoxenus of Mabbug, d. 523, is one of the most important Syriac theologians of the fifth to sixth centuries who also dealt with the Chalcedonian christological controversies. See Brock, *Syriac Fathers on Prayer*, 102–133.

Spirit involves more practical actions than Aphrahat, that of adultery and rage. Macarius' emphasis is about control of the passions, a very Greek philosophical concern. Philo of Alexandria writes that God may leave the human soul as long as it is unworthy. Philoxenus of Mabbug, a later Syriac author, mitigates Aphrahat hard line on the Spirit leaving a person permanently, to write that the Spirit only leaves temporarily until the person corrects the problems. Aphrahat works within a larger milieu of thought and has his own interpretations on Ephesians 4:30 but he has many different companions who also write about the grieving of the Spirit.

The divine indwelling a person and then leaving is a popular topic for both Jewish and Christian authors. Aphrahat is dealing with a well tread topic, possibly he may be following the lead of earlier authors, Philo, Baruch, and the Odist. He also is of the stream of thought which continued after the Sage leading to Philoxenus. For Aphrahat, the Lord comes in the door entering the inner person, where he dwells in the temple of the heart. The person offers the sacrifice of prayer on the altar of the heart and strives to remain sinless. When a person does sin, then repentance must immediately occur or the Spirit may be grieved and leave. As Ephrem, Aphrahat, and Macarius agree, the resulting stench of sin in the soul must be cleaned through repentance. To guard against the possibility of becoming a beast instead of a spiritual person, one must keep ever vigilant in thought and action. The result of the good acts and refraining from evil is that, after death and when the last judgment occurs, the Spirit will intercede on behalf of the person before Christ and thereby the person will be saved.⁵⁰¹ But even before the last judgment, the Sage, who is a temple of God, is allowed to fulfill the Matthean beatitude—he can see God in this life.

⁵⁰¹ Cf. D 6:15 (PS I/297.8–18).

4 THE SAGE “MAY” SEE GOD

In Aphrahat’s writings, the journey of becoming a divine temple begins with faith in Christ, and proceeds through baptism, eucharist, ascetic dedication, and indwelling by God. The journey ends in the ability to see God with the spiritual eyes of the heart. Within Aphrahat’s corpus there are four passages in which the human being has a personal and immediate interaction with the divine, commonly described as “seeing God.” These passages may be very generally categorized as ascent texts. They illustrate Aphrahat’s close connection with apocalyptic and with *Merkabah* mystical thought. Aphrahat’s temple imagery has deep mystical roots stemming from *Merkabah* and *Hekhalot* literature. He is part of the same mystical tradition as a number of Second Temple Jewish texts. There are many currents in this stream, he is but one of them. It would be pure speculation on my part to presume direct influence, although we can see many affinities between the Sage and these various texts. The ascent to the heavens occurs in the following important passages: *Dem.* 18:4, *Dem.* 14:35, *Dem.* 23:59, and *Dem.* 10:8.

The first named passage found in *Dem.* Eighteen describes God’s revelation and Moses’ ascent on Mt. Sinai.

Passage #1 - *Dem.* 18:4 (PS I/828.4–18) Moses went up to Mount Sinai, entered into the cloud, and received the commandment. Moses saw the shining splendor, was afraid, and quaked. Trembling seized him, for he saw the *Shekintā* of the Most High which drew near to the mountain, the great power of the throne of God, to which the myriads and thousands minister, veiling their faces from his shining splendor. They rush and swiftly fly with their wings, calling, sanctifying, and exalting his majesty.⁵⁰² They are watchful, prepared, and swiftly rushing; [they are] adorned, beautiful, excellent, and desirable. They rush, sanctifying, ac-

⁵⁰² Syr. ܪܒܘܬܐ *rabbūtā*.

THEME #1 – THE SAGE

The first theme concerns the fortunate person who is allowed to ascend to the heights, the person who is filled with God's wisdom.⁵²⁶ The person who is able to ascend is the elite of the elite, the perfect one⁵²⁷ of the community, the Sage, the wise man, **ܣܚܝܡܐ** (*ḥakīmā*).⁵²⁸ Aphrahat names the person who ascends in *Dem.* 14:35: "It [the treasure of God] is planted in the heart of the sage."⁵²⁹ The sage is both the garden for God's treasure and God's beloved: "[Love] desires the wise people."⁵³⁰ In Aphrahat's view, the only truly wise person is one who follows the wisdom of God. One of the scriptural examples of a wise person is Moses.⁵³¹ *Dem.* 18:4 describes Moses'

⁵²⁶ Aphrahat uses wisdom (**ܣܚܝܡܐ** *ḥekmā*) in two important ways. The first way refers to the fallible human wisdom which only gets a person in trouble. See D3:10 (PS I/117.2) in reference to Haman's wisdom not being able to save him, referring to Esther 4:6 and D5:7 (PS I/197.4) citing Ezek 18:3. The second and far more common wisdom reference is to the "Wisdom of God" (**ܣܚܝܡܐ ܕܥܠܝܗܘܢ** *ḥekmā dalāhā*) which is the treasure of God; see page 154. Cf. D 10:8 (PSI/464.9–11). The Wisdom of God is also the fear of God, following Isaiah 11:2 "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." Cf. D 23:67 (PSII/148:8), D 1:9 (PSI/21.5). Aphrahat creates a clear divide between divine wisdom and that of humanity, "Humanity cannot rise up to the wisdom of God, as I have written in the tenth discourse." D 22:26 (PS I/1048.17), Cf. D 23:52 (PS II/101.20). The Holy Spirit as wisdom is described in D 21:2 (PSI/984.6–11) where Aphrahat states that it is the Spirit of Wisdom with which Joseph defended himself to the Pharaoh.

⁵²⁷ Aphrahat uses the term "perfect" **ܩܡܝܪܐ** (*qmīrā*) in the opening passages of his first Demonstration. The process of salvation is the journey to perfection, the journey of a person to become a perfect one. The *Liber Graduum* uses the idea of "the perfect ones" as a cornerstone for the whole life of the believing community. Aphrahat functions with the same sort of idea but he does not create the dual system of "perfect" and "just" as the *Liber* does. Cf. D 1:3 (PS I/8:24 ff).

⁵²⁸ H. J. W. Drijver's article "Hellenistic and Oriental Origins" covers many of the key themes associated with the rise of the Holy Man in Christianity. Hans J. W. Drijvers, "Hellenistic and Oriental Origins," in *The Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Sergei Hackel (London: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, 1980), 25–36. See also Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, vol. 1, 140, and Brock, "Early Syrian Asceticism," 1–19.

⁵²⁹ D 14:35 (PS I/661.10).

⁵³⁰ D 14:15 (PS I/604.22) **ܣܚܝܡܐ ܐܝܢܐ ܣܚܝܡܐ**.

⁵³¹ Enoch is also a sage; however, Aphrahat does not address Enoch as such, he only writes that Enoch was pleasing to God. See further, page 183.

heavenly throne, veil their faces, fly swiftly, call, and sanctify. Aphrahat ties the angelic ministry in heaven to the Christians’ ministry on earth in *Dem.* 23:61:

For we know that God is one, [we] will confess, worship, praise, exalt, honor, sanctify, and glorify his greatness, through Jesus his Son, our Savior, who chose us for himself and brought us to him.⁵³⁷

So in church, Christians worship God in the same way as the angels do in heaven. The greatest of the Christians, the sages, may also ascend to heaven in spirit and participate in the heavenly liturgy. Those who are sages in Aphrahat’s community are the elite and the most wise.

A further example of who may be a sage is Aphrahat himself. His first person account of the ascent experience in *Dem.* 10:8 is a witness to his sobriquet of “The Persian Sage.” Aphrahat is labeled a sage by later readers and scholars, but he also considers himself a sage. He addresses the possibility that someone may disagree with his writings with the defense that he is a sage and that he has personal knowledge:

And again, if any one who should find words we have spoken in one way said by another sage in another way, let him not be disturbed, because every man speaks to his hearers according to what he can understand. [...] Let him accept that which pleases him, and if any does not please him, let him not mock the sages, because the word of God is like a pearl that has a beautiful appearance whichever way you turn it.⁵³⁸

Aphrahat is part of a company of sages who speak the word of God, and those who listen are told to consider other wise peoples’ words as well. To

seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.’”

⁵³⁷ D 23:61 (PS II/128.7–12) Full quotation, see page 62.

עב ית יהוה ונתן עמו אלהים: נבואה משפחהו מנולל מנוכח מנוני
מנוני מנעבט לזכרות: כו עבד כו מ פוסת ורב למ סוה
:אלה

⁵³⁸ D 22:26 (PS I/1045.5–10) and D 22:26 (PS I/1048.3–7)

אך וחס נעבד ית יהוה בלא נל כנו אשכנז אשכנז
מלשכר רשונה כנו אשכנז: כמנה לה טונו: חלק נל רש
אפי סוג וסווי סנה חלק לעתה. (...) סולא כשנה למ לה
נעם כשכנה חלק ואלה ואלה לכו יענה נענה נל אפוס
והמפוס שוה עפיה אה למ.

wise debater of the people.⁵⁴⁵ The latter title is used in a more sarcastic tone. Aphrahat writes as though he were debating with one person who attacks Christian views on various fronts. According to J. Neusner, “[... Aphrahat] stands practically alone for his interest in the opinions of actual, not imaginary Jewish opponents. Unlike many of the earlier Christian apologists he has taken the trouble to learn what his opponents really say against Christianity.”⁵⁴⁶ The Jewish sage debating partner in the *Demonstrations* may be a literary construct, but at least in Neusner’s estimation, the content of the Jewish arguments are valid Jewish concerns. J. Snaith notes that: “His [Aphrahat’s] contact with Jews was therefore on an unofficial, informal basis, and I suspect that the ‘Jewish debater’ sums up in his person any number of acquaintances.”⁵⁴⁷ The Jewish debater may also represent those of Aphrahat’s own community who have converted from Judaism and still understand Christianity in terms with which Aphrahat disagrees. There is not enough evidence from Aphrahat’s time to determine what type of Jewish community with which he was dealing. Whether the Jewish Sage represents a real person or not, true Jewish thought of the time or not, is ancillary to Aphrahat’s polemical goal. The tone and passion with which he speaks suggests that Aphrahat does have in mind a person with whom he is arguing or at least Aphrahat feels very threatened by the views presented by his Jewish debating partner. In his various demonstrations dealing with the perceived threat from the Jews, Aphrahat writes to his Christian audience to educate them in how to refute the Jewish critique, which could be from those who are non-Christians or Christian converts from Judaism.⁵⁴⁸ Aphrahat is combining pedagogy and polemic in his work.

ܩܝܡܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ
ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ

⁵⁴⁴ D 17:9 (PS I/804.18–19) “So now tell me, O wise man, teacher of Israel.”

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⁵⁴⁵ D 12:3 (PS I/512.2–4) “Now I ask you, O wise debater of the people, who does not examine the words of the law?” This same title is used in D 15:5 (PS I/744.15)

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⁵⁴⁶ Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, 244.

⁵⁴⁷ Snaith, “Aphrahat and the Jews,” 250.

⁵⁴⁸ Some of the demonstrations are even entitled “Against the Jews[...]” (ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ), for example, *Dem.* 18 and 19. *Demonstrations* 10–19, and 21 all deal with debated issues between Aphrahat’s community and the Jewish commu-

Another use of the terms wisdom, wise or sagacity is Aphrahat's title for Christ of “Wise Doctor.”⁵⁴⁹ He also calls “doctor” his fellow ministers (bishops) who can give absolution for sins. He writes in *Dem. Seven* “On Repentance”: “O Doctors, are you disciples of our Wise Doctor?”⁵⁵⁰ In reference to the Genesis 3 account of Adam and Eve, Aphrahat explains: “But doctors, I [must] remind you of something that is written in the books of our Wise Doctor, that he does not refuse repentance.”⁵⁵¹ Aphrahat uses the wise doctor imagery within his martial context for spiritual warfare of the Christian. When a person has sinned, there is a wound. The only way to cure this wound is to reveal it and then to have the medicine which will help the healing. The medicine is Jesus who was also wounded at the crucifixion. The wise doctors who follow the Wise Doctor come to the battlefield to patch up the combatants. Confession to a clergy person is healing for the sinful person. The warfare motif is very common in Aphrahat's books—*Dem. Five* “On the War” is filled with this imagery.⁵⁵² The life of a Christian is characterized as a spiritual battle with the forces of evil in which the wounded have the clerics there to bandage them up with absolution after repentance. Christ is the true Sage, or Doctor; his followers may also be sages.

The Sage becomes the epithet for those who go up to heaven, but it also occurs in the more pragmatic sense of someone who is intelligent. Aphrahat sets out a means to test true sagacity and also uses the term for his Jewish conversation partner. The foremost “sage” is Jesus himself who

nity: circumcision, Passover, Sabbath, food laws, the Messiah, virginity and marriage, Israel, persecution, and who are the People of God.

⁵⁴⁹ Ephrem also uses Physician imagery, most usually in reference to Jesus Christ healing our sins. See *Nisibene Hymns* 26.3–7, 27.1, and 24. See Aho She-munkasho, *Healing in the Theology of Saint Ephrem* (Gorgias Dissertations 1; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004).

⁵⁵⁰ D 7:2 (PS I/316.10–11) ...ܕܘܚܘܟܝܢܗܘܢ ܕܡܕܘܢܐ ܕܚܘܬܐ ܕܥܘܕܝܢܐ

⁵⁵¹ D 7:8 (PS I/324.5–7)

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⁵⁵² See the following for discussion of various historical insights gained from Demonstration 5 about Constantine and Shapur II, T. D. Barnes, “Constantine and the Christians of Persia,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 75 (1985): 126–136. The prominence of martial motifs is logical given that Aphrahat was living in a time of persecution and war—sadly, nothing much has changed in over sixteen hundred years.

is the Wise Doctor healing his people's sins. Hence, the person who goes up to heaven is a sage within whom Jesus is dwelling.

On the spiritual journey to become a temple and ultimately ascend to the heavenly throne and see God, the person who may participate in the journey is the sage. For Aphrahat, the sage is one who is holy, ascetic, celibate, probably older, and wise. The sage is he who may ascend, but to what place does this man ascend?

THEME #2 – THE TEMPLE

The second theme addressed from these ascent passages is the place where the ascent transpires—the temple. The temple is presented as being both inside the sage and in the heavens. Aphrahat frankly states that the sage is the human temple for the divine in *Dem.* 14:35. “He [the Sage] is a great temple for his Maker: the King of the heights comes and dwells in him, raises his mind to the heights and makes his thoughts soar to the sanctuary, revealing to him treasures of all kinds.”⁵⁵³ Later, at the end of his *Demonstrations*, Aphrahat uses a more personal turn of phrase with the repeated use of the second person pronoun “you.” “You have called us your temples and your majesty walks in us.”⁵⁵⁴ So at the most personal level of human existence the sage becomes a locus for the divine which opens the door for seeing the heavenly temple. Aphrahat is no innovator with his description of a living person who sees the divine heavenly temple; he follows a well trodden path of mystical thought stemming from the Scriptures.

The Hebrew scriptures depict the physical building of the Jerusalem temple; there are also allusions to the supernal temple within the texts. The Psalms describe Mt. Zion as the holy mountain where God dwells, with the temple being the royal palace of God and Jerusalem his capital, Ps 48. In Ps 11, the Lord's throne is in his heavenly temple. Ps 93 has some mystical elements which resemble the features of *Merkabah* mysticism with apocalyptic overtones: the robed Lord is on the throne and there is thundering water. God's throne is not connected with the Jerusalem temple on earth; it is connected with the heavens.⁵⁵⁵ Ezekiel, Chapter 1, describes the fiery chariot throne in heaven without a detailed description of the temple on earth, but chapter thirty-nine offers the complete blueprints for the temple. The temple is also the setting for Isaiah's prophetic call in which the Lord is on

⁵⁵³ D 14:35 (PS I/661.20) See page 140.

⁵⁵⁴ D 23:59 (PS II/120.14–15) See page 142.

⁵⁵⁵ Timo Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 48.

his throne with all the angels flying around. Isaiah 66 opens with the rhetorical question posed by the Lord: “Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?” These are a few of the key scriptural passages wherein the heavenly temple and throne are portrayed—they all factor into later mysticism both for some Jews and Christians, especially Aphrahat.

Within any temple there needs to be a throne—we have many references to the heavenly throne within the scriptures; one of the more prominent references is Isaiah 66:1. In this passage the Lord poses the question, “What is my place of rest?” If Aphrahat were to answer the question directly, he would say that the Lord’s place of rest is the temple. God is too large for the earthly temple; his throne is in heaven.⁵⁵⁶ The “place of rest” includes the heavenly realm and is not static or limited only to one locale. The Sage describes the place of rest for God as both heavenly and within the person in his long semi-liturgical excursus in *Dem.* 23:59. He uses Isaiah 66:1–2 as a framework for his description culminating in the Divine Glory dwelling in the human temple. He writes:

You have measured the dust of the earth in the palm of your hand (Isa 40:12); the heavens are your throne (Isa 66:1), but they do not contain you. And while your name is great and your works magnificent, you have shrunk your majesty enough for our tongue. Our mouth becomes sufficient for you and you dwell inside us. You sojourn in the righteous⁵⁵⁷ and vast is the place for you [in them]. Your majesty burrows into the little heart, you have made of us temples wherein your glory dwells.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁶ See also page 117. Macarius also uses “rest” to mean eternal life with God, “The Spirit of the Lord also becomes the rest of worthy souls and their joy and delight and eternal life.” Homily 4.12, Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies*, 55. “τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κυρίου, γιγνόμενον εἰς ἀνάπαυσιν τῶν ἀξίων ψυχῶν καὶ ἀγαλλίασιν καὶ τροφήν καὶ ζώην αἰώνιον.” Homily 4.12. Dörries, *Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*, 36.

⁵⁵⁷ Syr. ܙܕܝܩܐ *zaddiqā*.

⁵⁵⁸ D 23:59 (PS II/121:6–13)

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from his shining splendor. They rush and swiftly fly with their wings, calling, sanctifying, and exalting his majesty.⁵⁶⁴

The description of the unnamed sage's ascent in *Dem.* 14:35 is almost exactly the same as the previous quotation, with wings moving swiftly and angels covering their faces.

The Watchers hasten to serve him and the Seraphs cry "holy" to his glory, flying with their swift wings, their garments white and resplendent, veiling their faces from his splendour, rushing swifter than the wind.⁵⁶⁵

In the *Dem.* 14 passage, the sage becomes even greater than Moses. Moses is able to observe the angels' service in heaven, but the sage, who *is* the temple for his Maker, is himself served by the angels. The Isaiah 6:3 account in which Isaiah saw the supernal throne with the seraphim and cherubim flying and glorifying is combined with other throne passages to create Aphrahat's frenetic presentation of the angels together with the thoughts of the sage combining to praise God.⁵⁶⁶ One may rather simplistically characterize Aphrahat's presentation of the heavenly temple as being the "Grand Central Station" of the heavenly realm with all the frantic activity of the many flying ministers around the throne.

The sage who ascends to the heavenly temple has a side benefit of being able to see and receive the heavenly treasure (ܩܕܝܫܐ *simtā*). Three of the passages use treasure or treasury imagery to describe what is revealed to the person, excluding the Moses passage. Yet the commandments are a sort of divine treasure and thus all four ascent passages involve a representation of treasure. The emphasis upon treasure within the context of temple im-

⁵⁶⁴ D 18:4 (PS I/828:8–20) See page 139.

⁵⁶⁵ D 14:35 (PS I/664.1–7). According to Halperin, the wings and general swiftness of the angels around the throne can be traced to the LXX where there is more use of "swift" than in the other versions of the Hebrew scriptures. (Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 60). After my own search, I could not find any scriptural versions which have the same emphasis upon speed and swiftness of the angelic ministers around the throne as has Aphrahat.

⁵⁶⁶ Isa 6:1–3: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.'"

ting up yet another dual action image of the treasure being both “up” in heaven and “down” in the human heart.

One of Aphrahat’s most common descriptions of the place where the divine treasures are to be kept is the heart. A person who is humble and good has good treasures inside the heart. If the person is evil, then there are only evil things in the heart. The heart is the staging point from which thoughts, speech and actions start. Aphrahat expands upon Matt 7:17–18 and the fruit tree analogy in the following: “The secret chambers of his heart are full of good treasures, and his tongue brings forth sweet fruits.”⁵⁷¹ So if the person is being a good treasury for God and guarding the gifts of God well within the heart, then good words come out of the person.

The treasure is located both in heaven and within the heart; what is this divine treasure exactly? There are many answers to this question. The first answer is that the treasure is Christ himself. As Aphrahat describes Christ after the crucifixion: “He has been buried within the earth as a treasure buried in a field.”⁵⁷² A second answer is that one of the treasures is fasting: “Pure fasting is precious before God, and is guarded as a treasure in heaven.”⁵⁷³ A third possibility is that the divine treasure is God’s love: “Love is the precious sign, the excellent pearl, and the treasure. The sign of all is love.”⁵⁷⁴ Treasure is also the wisdom of God: “For the treasure does not fail, for it is the wisdom of God; and the steward is our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵⁷⁵ Following in this vein, Aphrahat defines divine wisdom as fear of God and implies that this is also the treasure given to some.

⁵⁷¹ D 9:13 (PS I/437.18–20)

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⁵⁷² D 2:20 (PS I/93.3–4) this is alluding to Matt 13:44 ff.

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See too D 14:39 (PS I/681.10–14). Aphrahat presents Jesus as the pearl of great price, and we Christians are the merchants in search of him. “For indeed, he [Jesus Christ] is the good pearl and we are the merchants who sell our possessions and buy it. He is the treasure of the field; when we have found it, we rejoice and possess it.”

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⁵⁷³ D 3:1 (PS I/97.1–2)

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⁵⁷⁴ D 14:15 (PS I/605.18–19)

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⁵⁷⁵ D 10:8 (PS I/463.4.6) for the full quotation see page 143.

by God to people is described by Aphrahat as various inclusive and overlapping possibilities: Christ, fasting, love, and, the wisdom of God.

The connection between the eucharist and the divine treasure is seen most clearly in *Dem.* 10:8. The term for the treasury is ܚܙܐ *gazā*, and according to Payne-Smith, it serves also as a metaphor for the eucharist or consecrated bread.⁵⁸¹ The phrase in this passage is ܚܙܐ ܒܝܬܐ *bēyt gazā* which means treasury or sanctuary.⁵⁸² So following the metaphorical definition of treasure then, it may be suggested that Aphrahat’s spiritual ascent occurs within the liturgical setting of the eucharist. Aphrahat mentions in the previous section: “Let the priests who distribute from the altar minister honorably.”⁵⁸³ This setting for his mystical experience is logical if one agrees that Aphrahat was at least some type of cleric, possibly even a bishop. Given this function within the Syriac church, celebrating the eucharist would be one of his duties and therefore his vision may well have occurred within the church while he was celebrating the eucharist.⁵⁸⁴ Aphrahat’s own guide in the *Dem.* 10:8 vision is Jesus Christ, who shows Aphrahat the heavenly treasure.⁵⁸⁵ Jesus fulfills the same role as Enoch’s angelic guides of *1 Enoch*.⁵⁸⁶ In any case, even though the ecclesiastical locale is strongly suggested, the vision is still within Aphrahat’s mind rather than focused upon some physical building on earth.

The images of treasury and offering are also combined in the following passage: “Let us prepare as offerings for the King desirable fruits, fasting and prayer. Let us guard his pledge⁵⁸⁷ in purity, that he may trust us over all

⁵⁸¹ Payne-Smith, 67 “to hide, m. treasure or treasury. Metaph. the eucharist or the consecrated bread.”

⁵⁸² Payne-Smith, 43 “a treasury; the sanctuary of a church; E-Syr., a recess in the north wall of the sanctuary.

⁵⁸³ D 10:6 (PS I/457:6–9)

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⁵⁸⁴ See Golitzin, “Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men,” 152–153 for a discussion of many different examples of ascent occurring during the celebration of the eucharist.

⁵⁸⁵ D 10:8 (PS I/460.1–2) “The Steward [Jesus Christ] brought me into the King’s treasury and revealed to me there many precious things[.]” Syriac on page 143.

⁵⁸⁶ See *1 Enoch*, page 168.

⁵⁸⁷ Syr. ܪܒܘܢܐ *rabbuneh* may also be translated as earnest money, from the Greek root ἀρραβών. Payne-Smith, 531.

The heavenly realm and the visible public temple coalesce within the human temple because of the work of the Spirit and Christ. The temple exists at the personal, public and heavenly levels of existence.⁵⁹⁷ It is described as:

The true church and blessed mother who raises all the children and the body and heart in which our Lord dwells, because the spirit of truth resides in it, the true temple and altar,⁵⁹⁸ because our Lord dwells there, as it is written, “your bodies are temples of the Lord and Christ dwells in your inner man.” (1 Cor 6:19)⁵⁹⁹

The human temples are the temples both of the Holy Spirit and of Jesus Christ. There are three temples which the LG author describes: the first is the public temple on earth with sacraments and clerics, and the second is the “little” temple of the heart.⁶⁰⁰ The last and most important place is the heavenly church which is “on high” (*lel*). Those who may reach the point of being the temple of God are the Perfect of the LG community.

Aphrahat and the author of the LG use the temple image in remarkably similar ways. Both use the three levels of temple symbolism:

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⁵⁹⁷ The LG describes the process of salvation for the perfected one in this way: “But when the Paraclete (*ܦܪܐܩܠܝܬܐ paraqlita*) comes, a person learns the whole truth. And when he learns the whole truth, then fear is little by little taken completely away from him; then he is freed. And when he is freed, then he will be perfect. And when instrument is perfected and he is fashioned [in] its image, he grows day by day in love working to the day when our Lord desires to lead unto him. Then his dwelling is with him who is our God.” (LG 5:19 c.136:4–13) The indwelling of the divine is later defined as becoming the temple of God.

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⁵⁹⁸ Syr. *ܚܝܩܠܐ haykila*.

⁵⁹⁹ LG 12:2 c.292:6–13

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See also Aphrahat’s use of ‘inner person,’ page 107.

⁶⁰⁰ Golitzin, “Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men,” 146.

heaven, earth, and human heart. The LG even tells of the reward for the blessed as the ability to see God, as does Aphrahat. The differences between the two texts are relatively minor: Aphrahat’s defense of the visible church is anemic compared to the vociferous defense of the LG and those who are the elite ascetics of both communities have some differences in how they realize their Christian callings. Another Syrian Christian author of more renown than Aphrahat or the LG is Ephrem the Syrian, who also wrote about the temple both as person and as the structure on earth and in heaven.

The first, and most obvious, use of temple is the Jerusalem temple. Ephrem refers to Jesus’ presentation in the temple, the cleaning of it, and the temptation by Satan on top of it.⁶⁰¹ Satan even has his own temples which are overthrown by Christ’s temple, as Ephrem writes: “Since he [Satan] stood You up on the top of the temple,⁶⁰² You have overthrown the top of his temples.”⁶⁰³ Ephrem also employs the temple as a synonym for the Christian church as he writes of the sack of Nisibis: “He shut us in that we might gather together in his temple.”⁶⁰⁴ Ephrem draws on temple imagery to describe the physical building in Jerusalem and the Christian churches as well as to refer to Satan’s temples. It is unclear whether Ephrem is referring to those people who follow Satan as temples or to pagan temple buildings.

⁶⁰¹ For references to Jesus’ presentation in the temple, see *Hymns on the Nativity* 6.12, and 18.16, and *Homily on Our Lord*, Section 53. The cleaning of the Temple is alluded to in the *Hymn on Virginity* 37.8. Christ’s temptation by Satan is in *Hymn on Virginity* 14.12 and 32.6, also *Nisibene Hymns* 35.16. The critical editions are: Edmund Beck, *Hymnen de Nativitate*, 53, 94; *idem*, *Sermo de Domino Nostro: des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrerers*, vol. 270 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1966), 50; *idem*, *Hymnen de Virginitate: des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrerers*, vol. 223. (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1962), 99, 117, 47; and *idem*, *Carmina Nisibena: des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrerers*, part 2 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1962), 6. See also François Graffin, ed., *Ephrem de Nisibe: Hymnes Sur la Nativité*, SC vol. 459 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2001).

⁶⁰² Matt 4:5.

⁶⁰³ *Hymn on Virginity* 13.10. Beck, *de Virginitate*, 46.

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A similar sentiment is in the *Nisibene Hymns* 53.16, see Beck, *Carmina Nisibena*, 74.

⁶⁰⁴ *Nisibene Hymn* 2.9. Beck, *Carmina Nisibena*, vol. 1. 8.

ܘܥܠ ܗܘܢܝܢ ܕܘܕܝܢ ܕܡܫܝܚܘܢ ܕܥܣܘܟܘܢ

Ephrem exploits the term temple in a more metaphorical and meta-physical sense for a person who has been baptized, purified and is a dwelling for God. He describes this process in such a poetic manner that it even suggests possible *Merkabah*⁶⁰⁵ mystical overtones to the passage:

Our Lord has renewed your ‘oldness’ in baptism: he is the Carpenter of salvation, who has fashioned with his own blood, and he built himself a

⁶⁰⁵ Ephrem refers to chariots ascending to the heavens on numerous occasions, “The living who fly up in their chariots will sing glory with their harps.” *Hymn on Virginitate* 27.6 Beck, de *Virginitate*, 101.

ܩܠܒܘܢ ܕܩܝܡܘܢ ܕܚܝܘܬܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ
See also *Hymn on Paradise* 1.7 “The clouds, their chariots fly through the air; each of them has become the leader of those he has taught (Cf. Dan 2:3); his chariot corresponds to his labors, his glory corresponds to his followers.” Edmund Beck, *Hymnen de Paradiso: Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers*, vol. 174. (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1957), 2.

ܩܠܒܘܢ ܕܩܝܡܘܢ ܕܚܝܘܬܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ
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Hymn on Paradise 6.23 “One of them cut through the air with his chariot; (Elijah, 2 Kings 2:11) the Watchers rejoiced as they met him, seeing that a body had lately taken up its abode among them; and just as an earthly being ascended in a chariot and put on splendor, so did the Lord, in His grace, descend and put on a body; He then mounted a cloud and ascended to reign over high and low.” Beck, *Hymnen de Paradiso*, 24.

ܩܠܒܘܢ ܕܩܝܡܘܢ ܕܚܝܘܬܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ
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Translated by Brock, in Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise*, 80, 117. Critical Edition: Éphrem de Nisibe, *Hymnes Sur le Paradis*, SC vol. 137, ed. René Lavenant (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1968), 38.

Aphrahat uses the same term as Ephrem for chariot, that is, ܩܠܒܐ *rakubā* which means mount or horse as well as chariot, instead of ܩܠܒܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ *‘āgēlā* chariot, see D 6:1 (PS I/249.5–6) cited on page 183.

The connection between Ephrem and *Merkabah* mysticism is not far-fetched. Several scholars have noted the similarities between Ephrem’s writings and those of the Targums, Haggadah, and general common symbolic imagery. See Paul Feghali, “Influence des Targums sur la Pensée Exégétique d’Éphrem?,” *IV Symposium Syriacum 1984*, *OCA* vol. 229, eds. Hans J. W. Drijvers and René Lavenant (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987), 71–82; Drijvers, “Jews and Christians at Edessa,” 101; and Nicholas Séd, “Les Hymnes Sur le Paradis de Saint Éphrem et Les Traditions Juives,” *Le Muséon* 81 (1968): 455–501.

temple⁶⁰⁶ to dwell in. Do not let the ‘old man’ dwell in his stead in that temple he has built. O body, if you allow God to dwell in your temple, you too will become his royal palace [temple].⁶⁰⁷

Ephrem makes a distinction in this passage between *nawsā* and *hayklā*, though both terms can mean temple. Furthermore, Genesis 1:26 is connected with temple imagery in one of Ephrem’s texts: “Since our King [Christ] is exalted, his images [humans] are in his temples and his images are among his possessions.”⁶⁰⁸ The poet Ephrem presents an encapsulation of temple anthropology which includes all the important ideas: baptism, indwelling, Jesus as temple, Satan possibly dwelling instead, and the body as royal palace.⁶⁰⁹ His artistry allows for a more condensed temple theology than Aphrahat’s own presentation.

⁶⁰⁶ Three of the four terms for temple in this quotation use *nawsā* instead of *hayklā*. Syr. ܢܘܫܐ *nawsā*.

⁶⁰⁷ Syr. ܗܝܟܠ *haykal*. *Hymn on Virginity* 1.2; Beck, *Hymnen de Virginitate*, 1. See also Hymn on the Epiphany 3.9; Beck, *Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)*, 148.

ܡܫܟܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܟܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܟܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܟܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܟܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܟܝܢܐ
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⁶⁰⁸ *Hymn on Virginity* 28.6 Beck, *Hymnen de Virginitate*, 103.

ܡܫܟܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܟܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܟܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܟܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܟܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܟܝܢܐ

⁶⁰⁹ Ephrem also addresses a question about how people may be temples for God and at the same time have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them in his Commentary on the Diatessaron:

He said, “You are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you.” (1 Cor 3:16) If we are the temple, how can we be the dwelling of the Spirit? What he has said clarifies this, “You are the temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you.” (1 Cor 6:19) Furthermore in the Acts of the Apostles he says, “Because it pleased you to tempt the Spirit of our Lord” (Acts 5:9) and “You have not lied to people but to God” (Acts 5:4). Therefore the Spirit is God, because he is from God. The name of God dwells with people, for some are called gods. (Last Supper Discourse, XIX:15. Carmel McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem’s Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron*, Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 289–290; and Louis Leloir, ed. Éphrem de Nisibe, *Commentaire de l’Évangile Corcondant ou Diatessaron SC* vol. 121 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1966), 340.)

Aphrahat explains this confusion over 1 Cor 3:16 in a similar manner, but he uses more Hebrew scriptural supports rather than taking from the Book of Acts as Ephrem does. R. Murray summarizes Ephrem’s use of the Temple image as being primarily for the human body in which the Holy Spirit dwells, namely Jesus Christ’s

The temple structure is an important element in Hebrew Scriptures. Isaiah 66 being a particularly relevant passage for Aphrahat’s own description of the heavenly throne and temple. The temple image runs through most of Aphrahat’s writings as well as through those of the *Liber Graduum* and Ephrem’s Hymns. The temple is a physical constructed building here on earth; it is the supernal temple in heaven; and it is the dwelling place of God within the devout. An especially devout person may even transcend the earthly realm and see the heavenly temple without first dying. The LG author is very concerned about the physical functioning of the church or temple on earth, whereas Aphrahat is more concerned about the inner temple of the person. Ephrem emphasizes the means by which one may become a divine temple, through baptism, but it is not without hazards—Satan may dwell within instead of the Holy Spirit. Aphrahat also warns against assuming one may always be a divine temple; however, if one is then there is the possibility of seeing God enthroned in His heavenly temple. It is to the latter phase of observing the workings of the heavenly temple, or seeing God, to which we now turn. Aphrahat states that he, an unnamed Sage, and Moses have seen God.

THEME #3 – TO SEE GOD

We now turn to the third theme, which is the ability to see God; this is a tangible benefit to becoming a divine temple. “Seeing God” is usually described as a journey up to the heavens which culminates with a vision of the divine throne. This journey is typically defined as an “ascent” from earth to the heavens. There is a long literary tradition of ascent accounts from which follows Aphrahat’s personal ascent experience and other descriptions. To remind us of Aphrahat’s own words two of the important passages are repeated, *Dem.* 14:35 and *Dem.* 10:8:

body, Mary’s body, and all Christians. See Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 226.

upon it, it dazzled my eyes, and captivated my thoughts, and made my reflections wander in many ways.⁶¹²

Ascent texts are most usually described as “apocalyptic,” a term full of various interpretations and about which many scholars debate. Aphrahat’s own writings of his journey to heaven and seeing the throne of God himself, means we must address the quagmire of discussion around apocalyptic texts and the equally complex term “mysticism.”

When one encounters a text replete with angels, a sage, the heavens, a throne, and even a chariot, the term “apocalypse” comes to mind to describe it. This word carries enormous scholarly baggage and many scholars cannot even agree on how to define it. A fair amount of scholarly debate surrounds apocalyptic literature and its characterization, however; John Collins has produced a working definition of the literary genre:

‘Apocalypse’ is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.⁶¹³

This definition is not universally received by any means, but it is sufficiently broad to allow for many different texts to be categorized as apocalypses while at the same time not including every text with a hint of supernatural imagery. Apocalypses are, according to Collins, usually divided into two categories: those with or without otherworldly journeys.⁶¹⁴ Given that our

⁶¹² D 10:8 (PS I/460.1–6)

זי בלאר ארבלו לביד יוא נולכו אמונא דכך אבך סעיא:
 אבנו עוה ארע אשכח למ טובה כליא זכר: אבו עוה כח סעיא
 אבך סעיא: אמונא אבך כליא סעיא.

⁶¹³ The Society of Biblical Literature Apocalypse Group developed this definition and it was published by John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14, 1 (1979): 9. For a more recent examination of the definition’s function within apocalyptic scholarship, see Adela Yarbro Collins, “Introduction: Early Christian Apocalypticism,” *Semeia* 36 (1986): 1–11; and Robert L. Webb, “‘Apocalyptic’: Observations on a Slippery Term,” *JNES* 49, 2 (Apr. 1990): 115–126. Rather than rehashing all the scholarly arguments, see the comprehensive article by Hanson, “Prolegomena,” 389–413.

⁶¹⁴ Collins, “Introduction, Morphology” 13–15. Collins gives three subdivisions within the larger categories: apocalypses which have emphases upon the historical, the cosmic, or political eschatology, and finally personal eschatology. Many

main interest is in the temple, the main class of apocalypses considered is those with an otherworldly journey to the heavenly temple or God's place. A sample of Second Temple texts which fit into this category are: the Book of the Watchers (*1 Enoch* 1–36), the *Similitudes of Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 31–71), and *2 Enoch*.⁶¹⁵ The descriptions of the celestial temple when on one of these otherworldly journeys recall the three-fold structure found in the descriptions of the Jerusalem sanctuary in Exodus.⁶¹⁶

One of the quintessential ascent texts is *1 Enoch* which illustrates various important aspects of apocalyptic ascent literature. *1 Enoch* has many similar images to the *Demonstrations*: heavenly ascent, description of the throne, a sage seeing the heavenly temple, and the sage's reaction to the journey.

וַיֵּלֶךְ עִנֹּחַ אִתְּהוֹאֵלִים וְאֵינְנוּ כִּי־לָקַח אֱתוֹ אֱלֹהִים Genesis 5:24

“Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”

From this elliptical entry in the scriptures a great literary tradition began about the seventh antediluvian hero and visionary, Enoch.⁶¹⁷ *1 Enoch*, espe-

texts transcend these subcategories, and so the subcategory classification is less useful in my opinion.

⁶¹⁵ There are many other Christian apocalypses, but for the most part they are not addressed in this study. One of the most famous Christian ascent passages attested is 2 Cor 12:2–4 wherein Paul describes “a man” ascending to heaven. But Aphrahat never alludes to nor quotes this passage, see below for further discussion, page 186. Many different Syrian Christian texts have apocalyptic overtones, including the *Liber Graduum*, the Thomas literature, Ephrem, and Macarius. For a more complete discussion of this matter see Golitzin, “A Testimony to Christianity as Transfiguration,” 130–131. For a list of various apocalyptic texts within the category of otherworldly journeys see Collins, “Introduction: Morphology,” 15.

⁶¹⁶ Christopher C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 83.

⁶¹⁷ The scriptural citations for Enoch are Gen 4:17–18, 5:18–24, 1 Chron 1:3, Luke 3:37, and Jude 1:14. Gen 5:24 is alluded to in Hebrews 11:5 with a more detailed account of Enoch's journey to heaven: “By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was attested as having pleased God.”

1 Enoch (3rd Cent B.C.E.–1st Cent C.E.) contains five independent books and additions: Chapters 1–36, The Book of the Watchers (dated approx. 3rd cent. B.C.E.); Ch. 37–71 The Book of the Similitudes (c. 105–64 B.C.E.); Ch. 72–82 The Astronomical Book (the oldest section of *1 Enoch*, written no later than the 3rd cent.

cially the book entitled “The Book of the Watchers,” chapters 1–36, is very popular with later mystical writers and has some common themes with Aphrahat. The author of the Book of Watchers emphasizes the heavenly temple over and above the earth-bound temple.⁶¹⁸ As M. Himmelfarb explains: “Ascent to heaven in *1 Enoch* 14 represents an attempt to reach the God who is no longer understood to dwell in the Jerusalem temple.”⁶¹⁹ The one who can reach God is Enoch, who as the pure sage is able to ascend to the heights, see the throne, and survive to tell the tale. *1 Enoch* 14 has an amazing description of the tripartite structure similar to the structure of the Jerusalem temple with an outer courtyard enveloping two houses.⁶²⁰ In

B.C.E.); Ch. 83–90 The Book of Dreams (c. 165–161 B.C.E.); and Ch. 91–107 The Epistle of Enoch (from 170 B.C.E.). The Astronomical Book, the Book of the Watchers, and the Epistle of Enoch all predate the last six chapters of Daniel. The composition, known to us as, *1 Enoch*, survives completely only in an Ethiopic translation. *2 Enoch*, or Slavonic Enoch, likely dates from the late first century C.E., and *3 Enoch*, or *Sefer Hekhalot*, has traditions dating back to 132 C.E. with the literary attribution to Rabbi Ishmael, but it probably comes from the fifth or sixth century C.E. See E. Isaac, “I (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” *OTP* 1:7; and James C. VanderKam, “Biblical Interpretation in *1 Enoch* and Jubilees,” chap. in *From Revelation to Canon: Studies in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 276–279.

For a full discussion see: Francis I. Andersen, “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” *OTP* 1:91–221; and P. S. Alexander, “3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch,” *OTP* 1:223–315. See also John J. Collins, “The Place of Apocalypticism in the Religion of Israel,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, eds. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 559–558; Freedman, ed. *ABD*, s.v. “Enoch, First Book of,” by George W. E. Nickelsburg; VanderKam, “Biblical Interpretation in *1 Enoch* and Jubilees,” 276–304; Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne*, 376; and Andrei Orlov, “The Flooded Arboretums: The Garden Traditions in the Slavonic Version of 3 Baruch and the Book of Giants,” *CBQ* 65, 2 (Apr 2003): 184–196. See also the resources at www.marquette.edu/maqom for bibliographic resources on the Enochic literature.

⁶¹⁸ Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 220–221 and Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 81.

⁶¹⁹ Himmelfarb, “From Prophecy to Apocalypse,” 161.

⁶²⁰ Robert A. Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery in the Book of Revelation*, Studies in Biblical Literature, Vol. 10, ed. Hemchand Gossai (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 119. Briggs suggests that temple is not the most important image in *1 Enoch* 14; it is depicting heaven as the route of the stars and source of water, etc. Briggs has missed the centrality of the Jerusalem temple. If Philo’s contention is correct, then the temple is the basic structure of the cosmos itself. For more about Philo, see page 113. The Temple is the gateway by which one can journey to the heavens and see

Enoch's vision, the heavenly throne is within the two houses, one of marble and fire, the second completely of fire. It becomes common in later Jewish heavenly ascent literature to have the adept journey through three stages. He ascended through the wall, which corresponds to the balustrade—which in the Jerusalem temple marked the boundary between the Court of the Gentiles and the inner temple (*'ulam*). Then the adept arrives at the sanctuary building (great house or *hekhal*), and then the second house, the holy of holies (*devir*) containing the divine throne. The tripartite structure of the temple embodies a cosmology of three heavens.⁶²¹

Enoch's vision of the temple has influences from Ezekiel 1.⁶²² I. Gruenwald observes that *1 Enoch* 14 “can be considered a model-vision of *Merkavah* mysticism.”⁶²³ This is possibly one of the earliest accounts of a person ascending to the heavenly temple extant.⁶²⁴

And as I [Enoch] shook and trembled, I fell upon my face and saw a vision. And behold there was an opening before me (and) a second house ... in every respect it excelled (the other)—in glory and great honor—to

the stars, etc, so it is of paramount importance for the Enochic literature as well as for Aphrahat. As T. Eskola observes about *1 Enoch* 14: “The whole scene is theocratic, transcendent, and cultic. All this is supported by an intentional use of temple imagery.” Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne*, 73.

⁶²¹ Morray-Jones, *A Transparent Illusion*, 30; and Martha Himmelfarb, “Apocalyptic Ascent and the Heavenly Temple,” in *SBL: 1987 Seminar Papers* ed. Kent H. Richards, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 211.

⁶²² See Rachel Elijor, “From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines: Prayer and Sacred Son in the *Hekhalot* Literature and Its Relation to Temple Traditions,” *JSQ* 4 (1997): 217–267; and April D. DeConick, *Voices of the Mystics*, Journal for the study of the New Testament, supplement series, vol. 157 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 59–64.

In *1 Enoch* 14, C. C. Rowland finds parallels with Dan 7:13, T. Abraham 10, Ezek 8:2, and 2 Kgs 2:11, Exod 24:10; 38:22; b. Hagiah 15a; Is 6.1; Ezek 1.26; Dan 7.9; Rev 4.2; Slav. Enoch 22.2; and Life of Adam and Eve 25. Christopher C. Rowland, “The Second Temple: Focus of Ideological Struggle?,” in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel*, ed. William Horbury (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 179.

⁶²³ Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 36.

⁶²⁴ Stone suggested that the *Book of Watchers* of *Enoch* date from the third century B.C.E. since some fragments were found at Qumran. Michael E. Stone, *Scriptures, Sects and Visions: A Profile of Judaism from Ezra to Jewish Revolts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 30–31.

the extent (of its glory and honor) it is impossible for me to recount to you concerning its glory and greatness.⁶²⁵

Enoch is not the only scriptural figure who trembled at the sight of God. Aphrahat describes Moses as trembling when he went up Mt. Sinai to receive the commandments.⁶²⁶ Aphrahat’s description of Moses’ ascent and vision of God has many similar ideas and similar terminology to Enoch’s vision in *1 Enoch*. Aphrahat also states the ineffable aspect of the vision of God, as Enoch does in the previous passage. Aphrahat writes: “All mouths are inadequate, all languages are insufficient.”⁶²⁷ Enoch’s vision of the heavenly throne continues in *1 Enoch* 14:

And I observed and saw inside it a lofty throne—its appearance was like crystal and its wheels like the shining sun; and the voice of the cherubim; and from beneath the throne were issuing streams of flaming fire. It was difficult to look at it. And the Great Glory was sitting upon it—as for his gown, which was shining more brightly than the sun, it was whiter than any snow. None of the angels was able to come in and see the face of the Excellent and the Glorious One; and no one of the flesh can see him—the flaming fire was round about him, and a great fire stood before him.⁶²⁸

Aphrahat describes the sage seeing the ministering angels with analogous imagery to *1 Enoch* 14, but he adds different details from the Enochic account. “All the Watchers are eager to minister to him and the Seraphs cry ‘holy’ to his glory, flying with their swift wings, and their white and shining garments, veiling their faces from his shining [countenance], rushing swifter than the wind.”⁶²⁹ In both accounts the ministering angels are unable to look upon God and are serving him.⁶³⁰ The common denominator between

⁶²⁵ *1 Enoch* 14:14–16. Isaac, “I (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” 20–21.

⁶²⁶ See D 18:4 (PS I/828.4–6), see page 139.

⁶²⁷ D 23:59 (PS II/121.23–124.2) see page 142.

⁶²⁸ *1 Enoch* 14:18–22, in Isaac, “I (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” 21.

⁶²⁹ D 14:35 (PS I/ 664.4–6) see page 140. Aphrahat uses almost exactly the same terms to describe the angels serving the *Shekinta* when Moses sees the throne in Passage #4 D 18:4 (PS I/828.4–18).

⁶³⁰ The ministering angels who intercede in the heavenly temple are functioning as the priests do in the earthly Jerusalem temple. M. Himmelfarb suggests that some of the apocalyptic literature was actually produced within the priestly community rather than just the prophetic realm of Jewish life. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 28 and 211.

Aphrahat and *1 Enoch* is most likely the Hebrew scriptures rather than any direct source reliance of Aphrahat upon the Enochic literature.⁶³¹ Aphrahat uses many images about the heavenly temple similar to those found in Enoch, but the name Enoch is only mentioned twelve times in the *Demonstrations*. The aspect of Enoch's story which Aphrahat notes most often is that Enoch was translated,⁶³² to heaven so he would not die because of his excellence and because he was pleasing to God.⁶³³ Enoch's vision and his prophetic and mystical roles are wholly ignored. Enoch is a very minor character in Aphrahat's work, and this is interesting given the great role that Enoch had in Jewish apocalypse and ascent writings.⁶³⁴ Aphrahat is far more interested in Elijah than Enoch.⁶³⁵ The *Demonstrations* and *1 Enoch* have some common elements which suggests that their authors participate in the same mystical tradition stemming from the common source of heavenly temple descriptions in the Hebrew scriptures.

In Hebrew scriptures, the one who first and foremost may see God is Moses himself. Aphrahat uses Moses as the paradigmatic ascent character for the Christian sage; although, Aphrahat does warn against trying to fulfill all aspects of Moses' ascent. To remind the reader of Aphrahat's own words about Moses' ascent to see God; it is as follows:

Dem. 18:4 (PS I/828.4–18) Moses went up to Mount Sinai, entered into the cloud, and received the commandment. Moses saw the shining

The Watchers in *1 Enoch* 12–16 are symbolically presented as disobedient priests who need the guidance and correction of Enoch. M. E. Stone concludes that: "The portrayal here of the watchers as disobedient priests from the heavenly temple suggests that this author has a complaint against the Jerusalem priesthood, and the setting of the story in upper Galilee near the ancient shrine of Dan may reflect the actual geographical place of origin of this tradition." Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple*, 93.

⁶³¹ A. Orlov suggests that Aphrahat most likely uses Mosaic adaptations of the Enochic tradition in a similar manner to Ezekiel the Tragedian's *Exagoge*. Personal correspondence, January 2005. See page 140.

⁶³² The verb "translated" is the *ethpa'el* of the root **קצ** *shnā*. Payne Smith, 586–587.

⁶³³ Cf. Letter of Inquiry PS I/4.12, D1:4 (33.9), D22:3 (PS I/996.11) and D23:31 (PS II/73.25–27).

⁶³⁴ Ephrem mentions both Elijah and Enoch in the *Nisibene Hymn* 36:2, but it is a straightforward reference concerning those who will not be found in Sheol.

⁶³⁵ See discussion of Elijah and Enoch in Aphrahat, page 183.

teach what he has seen. His mystical journey has many overtones of other-worldly journeys as appearing within *Merkabah* literature.

Aphrahat is a mystic who describes visionary ascent journeys by Moses, an unnamed Sage, and by himself. These ascents involve traveling to the heavenly temple which sounds very similar to a Jewish Rabbinic mystical tradition called *Merkabah* mysticism. As explained in the introduction of this work, *Merkabah* mysticism is practiced by those who are described as Descenders to the Chariot follow a visionary based mystical tradition following the inspiration of Ezekiel. Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai (approx. 150 C.E.) is one of the famous adherents to this mystical tradition. The Sage or visionary adept ascends through the heavenly palaces (*Hekhalot*) and through this journey he must deal with angels, trials, and then the sage may stand before the Heavenly Throne and see the Glory of God. The Chariot language comes from Ezekiel and his heavenly chariot as the means by which the adept may ascend.⁶⁴¹

An apocalypse or revelation of the heart is a motif which is also shown in *Merkabah* mysticism of the later Jewish tradition. The Syrian Christians are an interesting witness, or even bridge, between the Second Temple apocalypse literature and the Jewish mystical traditions of the later middle ages. We find a few instances of *Merkabah* ascent texts in the Babylonian Talmud.

The Talmudic texts were compiled around 200 to 500 C.E., so Aphrahat's own writings were in the middle of the compilation.⁶⁴² Therefore, we cannot presume that Aphrahat read a completed version of the Talmud, although he may have known of some of the common themes and ideas. The most likely common source between Aphrahat and the Rabbinic authors is the Hebrew scriptures itself. Even though the Talmud was not completed until long after Aphrahat's time the vision ascent accounts have many common features with the Sage's own writings and show a common mystical bent in the Jewish and Syriac Christian thought.

⁶⁴¹ See Introduction, page 25.

⁶⁴² Adin Steinsaltz, *The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition* (New York: Random House, 1989), 1–3. David Halperin argues that the ascent to the Hekhalot accounts are far earlier than the compilations and may stretch to before the turn of the common era. If this is the case, then it would be possible that Aphrahat did know something of the Merkabah riders vision accounts; however, we cannot determine this with any certainty. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 63–64.

The Babylonian Talmud has a few stories which suggest the presence of *Merkabah* mysticism with stories of the rabbis who have “expounded on the works of the Chariot.” One key idea which comes out of these stories is that a person who wishes to study the mysteries of the Chariot must have five qualifications (from a reading of Isaiah 3:3): “The captain of fifty, and the man of rank, and the counselor, and the cunning charmer, and the skillful enchanter.”⁶⁴³ This text refers to someone who is over the age of fifty and who has come to a knowledge of his own mind. Age is of great importance for these sages; there is a story of a school age boy who started to expound on the Chariot and was engulfed in flames. So one must be a sage who is older and who has studied the scriptures for many years. Only those who are worthy of the honor will see God as the Gemara author of the *BT Megillah* 24b states:

They said to R. Judah: many have discerned sufficiently [with their mind’s eye] to expound the Chariot (1 Ez) and yet they never saw it? What says R. Judah to this? There [he can reply], all depends on the discernment of the heart, and the expounder by concentrating his mind can know, but here one reads for the benefit which he derives there from, and this one derives no benefit.⁶⁴⁴

R. Judah emphasizes the importance of the adept’s heart and the focus of the mind for dealing with Ezekiel’s chariot which means ascent visions. So the worthy person must have the right inner fortitude and concentration to be able to go through such a mystical journey. Aphrahat has a similar idea concerning who may see God: a sage must be wise and well educated in the teaching of scriptures, and he must have the correct spiritual disposition.⁶⁴⁵ Two stories from the Talmud bear quoting in full concerning the “expounding on the Chariot.” The first is the story of R. Eleazar and R. Johanan b. Zakkai. R. Eleazar asks to be able to “expound on the works of

⁶⁴³ BT Hagigah, Chapter 3, col. 13a. See Israel Abrahams, “Hagigah,” *The Babylonian Talmud Seder Mo’ed*, vol. IV, ed. Isidore Epstein (London: Soncino Press, 1938), 75–76.

⁶⁴⁴ BT Megillah 24b. See Maurice Simon, “Megillah,” *The Babylonian Talmud Seder Mo’ed*, vol. IV, ed. Isidore Epstein (London: Soncino Press, 1938), 146. Also cited in Halperin, 335. The *Mishnah Megillah* 4:10f states: “They do not use as the prophetic lection the selection of the chariot.” Ezek 1:1ff. *The Mishnah*, ed. Jacob Neusner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 324.

⁶⁴⁵ See section above, “To See God,” p. 165.

the Chariot.” R. Johanan b. Zakkai then gets off the donkey and sits under an olive tree:

[...] he answered “Is it proper that whilst thou art expounding the ‘Work of the Chariot,’ and the Divine Presence is with us, and the ministering angels accompany us, I should ride on the ass!” R. Eleazar started expounding, and “forthwith fire came down from heaven and encompassed all the trees in the field; [thereupon] they all began to utter [divine] song. What was the song they uttered?—“Praise the Lord from the earth, ye sea-monsters, and all deeps ... fruitful trees and all cedars ... Hallelujah.” (Ps. 148: 7, 9, 14.) An angel [then] answered from the fire and said: This is the very ‘Work of the Chariot.’⁶⁴⁶

This passage has many interesting aspects: what starts the vision, the setting for it, the angels, and fire. In this Talmudic passage, one rather audacious Rabbi, Eleazar, asks to be able to explain or experience the works of the Chariot. His elder and, one assumes, more mystically experienced companion R. Johanan b. Zakkai then complies by getting off his donkey and the “expounding” begins. So having an experienced mentor is important and just asking to be able to have the vision means one may receive it. Aphrahat does not have the idea of a mentor visionary; however, in *Dem.* 14:35 he does allude to the idea that one must have the correct inner disposition in order to have the ascent vision. One’s mind and heart must be in the right place. The setting for the Talmudic vision is on the side of the road, not in some special place or within a large gathering. So it seems one may experience the Chariot anywhere. The last two aspects of this vision fit together, the angels and the heavenly fire. The act of having the vision of the Chariot causes a forest fire and the angels to come down and sing. One interesting congruence with Aphrahat’s ascent accounts is that through the study or expounding on Scripture the angels are brought down to earth to be present with the Sage. This is reminiscent of Aphrahat’s *Dem.* 14:35 ascent account where there is also a “descending into the heart.” The divine, in turn, descends to the mundane level contingent upon the right actions of the sage.

We now turn to a second Chariot account found in the Babylonian Talmud concerning R. Joshua and R. Jose the priest.

⁶⁴⁶ BT Hagigah 14b. Abrahams, “Hagigah,” 88–89.

They said: Let us also expound the ‘Work of the Chariot’; so R. Joshua began an exposition. Now that day was the summer solstice; [nevertheless] the heavens became overcast with clouds and a kind of rainbow appeared in the cloud, and the ministering angels assembled and came to listen like people who assemble and come to watch the entertainments of a bridegroom and bride. [Thereupon] R. Jose the priest went and related what happened before R. Johanan b. Zakkai and [the latter] said: Happy are ye, and happy is she that bore you; happy are my eyes that have seen thus. Moreover, in my dream, I and ye were reclining on Mount Sinai, when a *Bath Kol* (heavenly voice) was sent to us, [saying]: Ascend hither, ascend hither! [Here are] great banqueting chambers and fine dining couches prepared for you; you and your disciples and your disciples’ disciples are designated for the third class.⁶⁴⁷

This story has the ascent of the sages to the heavenly realm set within the context of a dream, similar to Jacob’s dream of Genesis 31. In this story the ascent does not occur within the context of the expounding on the Chariot, rather it occurs after, but it is still “triggered” because of the student coming to understand the meaning of the Chariot. In this account of the Chariot, there is also tangible physical effects upon the earth. In the first account, a forest fire; in this account, a storm with a rainbow. The angels also appear for the experience; in the first, they sing; in the second, they are gathering as though for a wedding. R. Johanan b. Zakkai is then told by a heavenly voice that he may come up to heaven with his students and that there is a great feast waiting for him. Aphrahat has very little in common with this account of the Chariot except for the angels and the whole idea of ascending to the heavens.

We have seen some examples of the classic Babylonian Talmudic accounts of the Chariot and what happens to the sage who comes to expound upon Ezekiel’s chariot. Some key aspects are physical effects upon earth of the vision, the angels coming down to listen, the sage going up to heaven, the Divine coming to be present with the men who are able to understand the Scripture fully and the sage having a mystical vision either in a dream or awake.

For Aphrahat, the ideal result of becoming a divine temple is that the person may see God with the eyes of the mind while the body still remains

⁶⁴⁷ This quotation then leads straight into the garden or *pardes* account of R. Akiba. BT Hagigah 14b Abrahams, “Hagigah,” 89–90.

on earth. In *Dem.* Six, Aphrahat declares: “Let us clean our hearts from wickedness, so that we may see the Most High in his Glory.”⁶⁴⁸ Later in the chapter he expands the description of the righteous by incorporating Isa 33:17: “Whoever cleans his heart from dishonesty, ‘His eyes shall see the King in his beauty.’” (Isa 33.17)⁶⁴⁹ A. Golitzin observes that Isa 33:17 is used “routinely” to refer to eschatological visions by various Christian authors from the second century C.E. onwards even into the eleventh century.⁶⁵⁰ So Aphrahat is in good company with his use of Isaiah within the context of humans seeing God. Isaiah is also important for those who have anthropomorphite tendencies.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁸ D 6:1 (PS I/240.15–16) ܕܡܪ ܠܥ ܗܝ ܗܘܐ: ܘܝܣܐܝܐ ܠܝܡܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ

⁶⁴⁹ D 6:1 (PS I/252.7–9)

ܕܡܪ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܠܡܬܐ ܗܝ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܠܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ

⁶⁵⁰ Golitzin, “Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men,” 133.

Aphrahat only quotes Isa 33:17 twice in his *Demonstrations*. The second passage is D 9:4 (PS I/413.14–16) “The inner chambers of their hearts are full of good treasures, and their conscience* is pure from deceit. The eyes of their mind contemplate what is above; they gaze on the beauty of their Lord (Isa 33:17) and rejoice at all times.”

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* (ܕܡܫܝܚܐ *ti'ratā* is the same word as the Greek term θεωρία *theoria*)

⁶⁵¹ The desire to believe that God had a body which has a head, arms, and legs of cosmic proportions includes Christian and Jewish traditions, for example, the *Shi'ur Qomah* texts. The rabbinic anthropomorphite tendencies expand from the scriptural references and were included in the Talmudic traditions which survived into the middle ages. A small sample of scriptural verses with anthropomorphite overtones: Gen 1:26, Isa 66:1, Exod 17:6. Num 11:33 even suggests that the Lord has a nose. As M. Bar-Ilan explains: “This ancient belief was elaborated as could be seen in *Shi'ur Qoma* and in the words attributed to R. Ismael, R. Akiba, Rab, and R. Hisda.” Meir Bar-Ilan, “The Hand of God: A Chapter in Rabbinic Anthropomorphism,” <http://faculty.biu.ac.il/~barilm/handofgd.html>: www.mu.edu/maqom, 2003, page 7. See also Graham Gould, “The Image of God and the Anthropomorphite Controversy in Fourth Century Monasticism,” in *Origeniana Quinta*, ed. Robert J. Daly (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 549–557.

One Christian sect of the fourth century, the Audians, interpreted Isaiah literally and claimed that God had bodily parts of cosmic proportion. Theodoret of Cyrus and Epiphanius of Salamis both describe the Audian sectarians in their writings, and Ephrem even mentions them by name. Theodoret writes: “he [Audius] understood the Divine Being to have a human form, and conjectured it to be en-

the eyes of faith or with the eyes of the heart. The “seeing” is interiorized; the channel is not the physical eye but the interior eye of the heart or soul. Aphrahat opens and closes his *Demonstrations*, in a rather chiasmic manner, by setting all of his writings on the spiritual rather than on the more mundane physical plane. In the first Demonstration, he writes: “Listen, therefore, my friend, and open the inner eyes of your heart to me, and the senses of your mind to the matter that I will say to you.”⁶⁵⁴ The final Demonstration has in part the prayer: “Open our ears to the prayer of your writings, and the eyes of our hearts will reach out near to you on high.”⁶⁵⁵ The eyes of the heart are the primary function for the person, not the physical senses; it is the spiritual sense which is most important.

In Aphrahat’s view, those persons who strive to develop their spiritual senses, their heart’s eyes, are the humble.⁶⁵⁶ He wrote a whole Demonstra-

⁶⁵⁴ D 1:1 (PS I/5:12–15)

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⁶⁵⁵ D 23:53 (PS II/104.15–17)

ܕܢܟܢܢܢܗ ܩܘܢܝܢܢܗ ܕܢܟܢܢܢܗ ܠܗ ܥܢܢܢܢܗ ܠܗ ܥܢܢܢܢܗ ܠܗ ܥܢܢܢܢܗ ܠܗ ܥܢܢܢܢܗ

⁶⁵⁶ Pachomius of Egypt (c. 292–346 C.E.) also notes the importance of being humble if one is to see God. His further reputed agenda is to emphasize that one should not ask to see God; it is granted to a few select people who are worthy. He says further: “But all the same, hear about a great vision. For what is greater than such a vision, to see the invisible God in a visible man, his temple?” *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, trans. Armand Veilleux (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications Inc., 1980), 330. See the First Greek Life of Pachomius, Section 48. Critical edition François Halkin, *Sancti Pachomii Vitae Graecae*, Subsidia hagiographica 19. Brussels, 1932. See also Henry Chadwick, “Pachomios and the Idea of Sanctity,” in *The Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Sergei Hackel (London: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, 1980), 11–24. For further exploration of Pachomius’ ascetic ideal, see also Elm, *Virgins of God*, 283–311.

Pachomius himself is this temple of God, as argued by Mark S. Burrows in “On the Visibility of God in the Holy Man: A Reconsideration of the Role of the Apa in the Pachomian Vitae,” *VC* 41 (1987): 11–33. Pachomius’ hagiographer reduces the importance of seeing God and transfers this concern to seeing God’s creation. Pachomius himself then exemplifies God’s temple. There is an underlying concern that there are those within Pachomius’ community who are asking to see God and may even be proud of their visions. The trivializing of the vision experience may be due to pressures within the community which are not directly discussed. Aphrahat may have similar difficulties within his audience given his great

mind, intellect, reflections.⁶⁶⁴ The common denominator among all of these different words is that they are non-corporeal. There is a very simple reason for all the thoughts arising, as Aphrahat writes about the humble: “Their intellect⁶⁶⁵ is caught up⁶⁶⁶ and placed in the heights, and they wait to enter into the Holy Place.”⁶⁶⁷ Perpetual dwelling in heaven is the hope of those who can have their thoughts ascend and therefore see God while still on earth.

Aphrahat functions within the ascent tradition of the Jewish and Christian apocalyptic themes, but he veers away from insinuating any idea of the human body ascending to the heavenly realm. The emphasis in Aphrahat’s text is that the sage’s body remains on the physical earth while the thoughts ascend to heaven. Aphrahat battles with a belief that states a person may physically ascend to the heavens and see God in the manner of Enoch⁶⁶⁸ and Elijah,⁶⁶⁹ who are key figures in *Merkabah* mysticism. The Sage explains, “he [Elijah] put all his thoughts⁶⁷⁰ in heaven, he was caught up⁶⁷¹ in the fiery chariot to heaven, and his dwelling-place was there for

⁶⁶⁴ Cf. D 10:8 (PS I/460.3) and D 9:2 (PS I/412.4).

⁶⁶⁵ Syr. ܐܘܡܢܘܬܐ *ta’ithun*.

⁶⁶⁶ Syr. ܠܬܘܫܒܐ *htap*.

⁶⁶⁷ D 9:4 (PS I/416.21–23) Other places where Holy place *beyt maqdashā* is used are: D 2:6 (PS I/57.21–22) “He entered into the holy place not made with hands”

(ܫܘܠܗ ܠܘܨܒܐ ܕܠܝܠܐ ܕܘܫܘܒܐ ܕܘܫܘܒܐ ܕܘܫܘܒܐ). Gabriel brings the offering to the holy place (ܘܫܘܒܐ ܕܘܫܘܒܐ) which is heaven in D 3:15 (PS I/133.19). The Jerusalem temple is also called the holy place in D 4:3 (PS I/144.7), “Again, when Solomon built the sanctuary (ܘܫܘܒܐ ܕܘܫܘܒܐ) and offered up sacrifices and whole offerings” and in D 19:1 (PS I/845.16) “They dwelled in it four hundred and forty years before Solomon built the holy house ...”

⁶⁶⁸ Enoch is only cited twelve times by name in Aphrahat’s sermons. See the discussion of Enoch, page 168.

⁶⁶⁹ Elijah is cited by name as an example of the Christian life far more often than Enoch, over fifty times to Enoch’s twelve. In D 6:13, Elijah is paralleled with John and in D 21:14 (PS I/965–968) he is compared with Jesus. Elijah is one of many examples of the virginal life, see above D 6:1 (PS I/253.9–10) and he has the likeness of angels D 6:5 (PS I/265). Elijah is mentioned also far more frequently by name than Enoch in the scriptures, over ninety five times. Cf. 1 Kings 17–21, 2 Kings 1–10, 1 Chron. 8:27, 2 Chron 21:12, Ezra 10:21, 26, Malachi 4:5, Matt 11:14, 16:14, 17:3–12, 27:47–49, (and parallels), John 1:21, 25, Rom. 11:2, and James 5:17.

⁶⁷⁰ Syr. ܡܢܘܚܐ *marniteh*.

⁶⁷¹ Syr. ܠܬܘܫܒܐ *htap*.

ever.”⁶⁷² Aphrahat emphasizes the mental disposition of Elijah to explain his being physically taken into heaven, according to Scripture.⁶⁷³ But, Elijah’s physical ascent is offset by Aphrahat’s emphasis upon the mental ascent. Elijah is an example of ascent, but he is the exception rather than the rule. For Aphrahat, one may see heaven, but only in the thoughts of the mind; one’s body must and will stay firmly planted on the ground. Aphrahat may be distancing himself from the *Merkabah* rider proponents who use Elijah as the example of someone who can ride a chariot and physically see the temples of heaven.⁶⁷⁴ The Sage explicitly rebuts the idea of riding a chariot to heaven: “Whoever waits to be caught up into the clouds, let him not make for himself adorned chariots.”⁶⁷⁵ He knew that the way to see God is not to wait to be physically taken up into heaven in some mechanical contrivance, but rather to enter into the heart and there see God in his Glory. It is a spiritual or mental vision, not a physical journey, but the experience is still very powerful and moving.

Aphrahat’s great emphasis upon the non-corporeal aspect of the ascent experience suggests that he has a hidden agenda, or at the very least, hidden polemical opponents. But he is not alone in this concern. The *Ascension of Isaiah*, chapter 6, also emphasizes that it is Isaiah’s mind that was taken up to heaven during his vision, not his body.⁶⁷⁶ Aphrahat may be addressing his remarks about the “eyes of the mind seeing God” to a group of

⁶⁷² D 6:5 (PS I/264.10–12)

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⁶⁷³ The *Merkabah* mystics also regarded their ascent experiences to be mental ascents while their bodies remained on earth. As J. Dan explains: “the experience is one of a complete departure of the mystic’s spirit from its physical enclosure and its free roaming among the divine palaces.” Dan, “The Religious Experience of the *Merkavah*,” 300.

⁶⁷⁴ The fundamental scriptural text for this tradition concerning Elijah is 2 Kings 2:11: “And as they still went on and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”

⁶⁷⁵ D 6:1 (PS I/249.5–6) Aphrahat may be alluding to Ps. 20:7 (19:7 LXX) “Some glory in chariots, some in horses, but we glory in the name of the Lord.”

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⁶⁷⁶ The *Ascension of Isaiah* is a composite work with parts probably dating from the second century B.C.E. to the fourth century C.E. The chapters 6–11 of the *Ascension* describe Isaiah’s vision traveling through the seven heavens with his angel guide. Michael A. Knibb, “Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah,” *OTP* 2:165.

unnamed people who defend physical ascent to heaven. Aphrahat presents a "corrected" version of Jewish ascent spirituality; a holy person may see God, but not with physical eyes, only with mental faculties. The vision of the heavenly throne, the angels, and the glory of God Himself follows the scriptural accounts, and the sage's experience is very similar to the rabbinic reports of their own ascent experiences. There is one key difference, Aphrahat never refers to any physical effect upon the earth in his ascent account. The two Talmudic accounts both mention tangible physical manifestations of the vision: in the first passage the trees are set ablaze; in the second, there is a storm and a rainbow. The closest Aphrahat comes to a physical effect during a vision ascent is the description of the angels as lightning in Moses' ascent, *Dem.* 18:4.

The question then arises, why does Aphrahat use the passage about Moses on Mt. Sinai where Moses obviously sees God physically and not mentally? Aphrahat does not and could not ignore this crucial event in the salvation history of both Christians and Jews. He minimizes the fact that Moses sees God physically in *Dem.* 18:4 but he does mention that Moses and the mountains were quaking. There is a mention of a corporeal aspect as well as the more detailed description of the non-corporeal angels. Despite Aphrahat's own agenda in refuting those who claim to have a corporeal ascent experience, the important mystical experience is still the humble holy person seeing God with the mind.

Some interesting "omissions" concerning heavenly ascent and seeing God in Aphrahat's works must be noted. The sage omits citing Isa 6:3 verbatim: "And one [angel] called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.'" Although, he does allude to Isa 6:3 frequently, he never quotes it explicitly. Aphrahat also never quotes directly from the book of Revelation nor Ezekiel 1:26: "And above the firmament over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness as it were of a human form." Daniel 7 is quoted extensively, but only in *Dem.* Five, "On Wars." Aphrahat uses the Daniel passages in the simple sense of the text to show that the persecutions occurring are prophesied and therefore can be overcome.⁶⁷⁷ All of these scriptural passages are filled with interesting ascent and *Merkabah* type imagery.

⁶⁷⁷ For a study of Daniel and Demonstration 5, see Craig Morrison, "The Reception of the Book of Daniel in Aphrahat's V Demonstration, 'On Wars,'" Vol 7. no. 1 (January 2004) <http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol7No1/HV7N1Mor>

But the most interesting “omission” is that even though Aphrahat has four descriptions of a person seeing the heavens he never quotes 2 Cor 12:1–4 directly. Aphrahat has a thorough understanding of Paul, so this oversight is glaring. Why would the Sage avoid quoting Paul’s description of a man who was caught up to the third heaven, into paradise, when this is very similar to what Aphrahat describes in his own ascent accounts? Is there an ulterior motive for him to avoid specifically citing Paul’s ascent experience? Both Aphrahat and Paul describe spiritual experiences similar to the *Merkabah* mystics. I suggest that despite all the many verbal and experiential similarities between Aphrahat and Paul, Aphrahat bows to polemical pressure and avoids the “enemies” scriptural proof texts. One possible answer to Aphrahat’s apparent lacunae is that these scriptural passages were being “used” by people who supported the position that one may ascend to the heavens physically. Since Aphrahat is fighting this position, he may be avoiding “using the opponents’ ammunition,” so to speak. These ascent passages are “off limits” for someone who is fighting against those in the physical ascent camp. The crypto-anthropomorphites of his community were probably pointing to the Pauline evidence of physical ascent to heaven; therefore, the sage takes evidence from other scriptural passages and his own personal experience to refute them. Although I cannot name who these hypothetical opponents may be, Aphrahat’s reticence to use some obviously interesting ascent texts from the Scriptures makes my supposition at least possible. He is likely dealing with Christians who have too literal an understanding of Ezekiel’s chariot ascent.

Aphrahat is an excellent student of Paul, even when he avoids some obvious Pauline passages. The Sage uses Pauline language and ideas throughout the *Demonstrations*. Paul and Aphrahat may also both be of a similar spiritual strain as the *Merkabah* riders. J. W. Bowker even suggests that: “Saul practiced *merkabab* contemplation as an ordinary consequence of his highly extended Pharisaic training.”⁶⁷⁸ Paul was a zealous Pharisee, a contemporary to Johanan ben Zakkai, and Paul writes of being caught up (ἄρπαγέντα), third heaven (τρίτου οὐρανοῦ), and Paradise

rison.html. C. Morrison observes that Aphrahat is not working “merely from memory” but rather from the *Peshitta* text of Daniel. One must keep in mind that Aphrahat’s “homiletic interests prevailed over accuracy when citing the biblical text.” Morrison, “The Reception,” 3.

⁶⁷⁸ John W. Bowker, “*Merkabah* “Visions and the Visions of Paul,” *JSS* 16 (1971): 172.

(παράδεισον).⁶⁷⁹ Aphrahat’s connection with *Merkabah* mysticism may be via Paul rather than from any direct knowledge the sage had from contemporary Jewish mystics. But *Dem.* 10:8 is the exception to the possibility that Aphrahat was merely following Paul’s spiritual lead and getting the information “from books”—the Sage describes a personal ascent, being caught up to the heavenly realm and personal experience of the divine treasure. So Aphrahat is both a devout student of the Apostle Paul and a mystic in his own right. If Bowker’s suggestion is correct about Paul being a descender to the chariot then Aphrahat’s reticence about the Second Corinthians passage is even more puzzling.

The similarities of experience are evident between the Apostle and the Sage, and there are also similarities of language. In 2 Cor 12:1–4, the Apostle writes of “being caught up” into the third heaven. The verb ἀρπαγέντα, has a similar sense to Aphrahat’s verb **ܐܬܗܘܐ ܚܬܘܦ** which he uses to describe Elijah’s ascent in the fiery chariot, the spiritual people’s ascent at the eschaton, and the humble ones’ minds ascending to heaven.⁶⁸⁰ The verb *h̄tap* means to take by force, plunder, do violence, seize, snatch, or

⁶⁷⁹ Bowker, “Merkabah Visions,” 157. See also: Gersom G. Scholem, “The Four who Entered Paradise and Paul’s Ascension to Paradise,” in *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, 2 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965), 14–19; Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), s.v. “Jew, Paul the,” by W. R. Stegner; Morray-Jones, “Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1–12),” 177–217; *idem*, “Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1–12) Part 2,” 265–292; Alon Goshen Gottstein, “Four Entered Paradise Revisited,” *HTR* 88, 1 (1995): 69–133; Peter Schäfer, “New Testament and *Hekhalot* Literature: The Journey Into Heaven in Paul and in *Merkavah* Mysticism,” *JJS* XXXV, 1 (Spr 1984): 19–35; and Alan F. Segal, “Paul and the Beginning of Jewish Mysticism,” 95–122.

⁶⁸⁰ The majority of the twenty-one references to *h̄tap* in the *Demonstrations* are in the simple sense of taking something by force or inflicting violence upon something or someone. *H̄tap* references meaning “take by force” or “plunder” are: D 3:5 (PS I/108.10), D 3:7 (PSI/113.5–8), D 6:17 (PS I/305.20–21), D 14:10 (PS I/593.7), D 14:37 (PS I/673.4), D 16:1 (PS I/ 761.15), and D 22:6 (PS I/1001.23, 26). The references meaning “violent” are: D 14:43 (PS I/700.15), D 14:46 (PS I/716.17), D 15:1 (PS I/729.5), and D 19:4 (PS I/857.5). In D 5, Aphrahat juxtaposes *h̄tp* or violence with judgement, which is an interesting dichotomy; with judgement there is not violence. “I looked for judgement, but there was violence, and for righteousness, but there was lamentation.” D 5:22 (PS I/228:14–16)

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to the point where it can be "hidden" in the human heart. This then makes the recipient a temple of God. The vast and incomprehensible has become little and knowable through the incarnation and the indwelling of Christ's followers. The transcendent is now imminent.

B. McGinn proposes that there is a tension within apocalypse literature between the imminence and transcendence of the Divine; this idea is also applicable to Aphrahat's sage. McGinn suggests:

The God who reveals his secrets to the sage is paradoxically both nearer and farther away than the God of the prophets. He is nearer in the sense that some sages at least ascend to heaven to see and hear him and to bring his secrets back to the faithful. But he is also farther away, more transcendent, because his power over history is hidden in this age in which evil forces dominate and because he acts and reveals through intermediaries, the angelic powers to whose exuberant proliferation the apocalypses contributed so much in both Jewish and Christian history.⁶⁹²

Aphrahat is a sage who fulfills McGinn's description of one who can ascend to heaven. Aphrahat's relationship with the Divine is immediate and imminent rather than with a far off and distant God. He emphasizes the closeness of God to the sage, be it he himself or Moses or some other person, in his four passages which describe an ascent to heaven. But he and other Jewish and Christian mystics take the apocalypse ascent a step further; it is also a descent into the heart where the divine dwells. A. Golitzin defines it as:

'interiorized apocalyptic,' the transposition of the cosmic setting of apocalyptic literature, and in particular of the 'out of body' experience of heavenly ascent and transformation, to the inner theater of the Christian soul, to 'the great world,' as Niketas puts it, borrowing from Gregory of Nazianzos, 'within the small.'⁶⁹³

The great majesty of the divine is reduced to the smallest part of the person, the heart. There are overtones of the incarnation as well as temple imagery within the concept of the great within the small human.

⁶⁹² Bernard McGinn, "John's Apocalypse and the Apocalyptic Mentality," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 9.

⁶⁹³ Golitzin, "Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men," 141.

According to Aphrahat, the human temple with its altar within the heart is the point of meeting between the human and the divine. The ascent to heaven occurs with the descent of the mind into the heart. To use a modern metaphor, prayer from the heart allows for the “double clicking” on the heart hyperlink so the mind may ascend to heaven. The incarnation, the ultimate conjunction of ascent and descent, allows for this to happen. The greatness of God has been shrunk to the miniscule level of the heart. There is another layer of meaning in the Syriac to the “little heart” of the human temple which Aphrahat also plays upon, that is, the little heart may also be translated as the “feeble heart.” The divine power is juxtaposed with the weakness and helplessness of the human being. In the incarnation, the ܪܒܘܬܐ *rabbutā* is united with the ܙܘܪܘܬܐ *zurutā*; the Divine is united with the person. By becoming temples of Christ, people have the divine power burrowing or hiding in the smallest and feeblest of places, the human heart. Aphrahat also calls himself ܙܘܪܘܬܐ *zurutā*, one who is weak, feeble, or little.⁶⁹⁴ Through weakness, Christ’s followers may become divinely strong. Through Christ’s indwelling, people may become temples of the Divine Glory itself. This interchange of the Divine from the heavenly *templum major* to the earthly *templum minor* provides the conduit through which the person can break through into the realm of the Divine.

The mystical journey is one taken by a wise, humble, older man who, through prayer, is able to travel to the supernal temple and see the heavenly throne itself. Aphrahat himself is a type of *Merkabah* mystic. He writes of his own personal mystical ascent guided by Jesus himself. Aphrahat is writing within a mystical stream of thought which includes the likes of: *1 Enoch*, the Talmudic *Merkabah* texts, the *Liber Graduum*, and Ephrem the Syrian. Aphrahat is not alone in his mystical focus upon the heavenly temple and sights contained therein. He also describes the ascent of “a sage” to heaven where the angelic host starts to worship him as though he were the enthroned one of Isaiah’s vision. The sage is the model and example for all, including the ascetics who may be unable to ascend to the heights and see the throne in their thoughts. These ascetics come with many different titles: singles (*ihidayē*), Covenanters (*bnay qyāmā*), virgins (*btulē*), and holy ones (*qaddishē*). The goal of the Christian life is to become a temple of God. “Temple-ness” means being fully suffused with the divine. The greatness of God descends to the smallest of feeble creatures, the human being. It is then

⁶⁹⁴ D 22:26 (PS I/1049.1–4), for the full quotation see page 201.

when the sage encounters God within himself and then is taken to the heavens to see in the mind the temple and throne of God.

CONCLUSION

Aphrahat the Persian Sage, writing over sixteen hundred years ago, provides the modern reader with a treasure trove of theological ideas, teachings, and imagery. He wrote the *Demonstrations* to solve a problem: there were those in his community who did not have a firm grounding in the Christian faith, and they were being derided by their Jewish contemporaries.⁶⁹⁵ So Aphrahat created these works to be both pedagogical and polemical. His immediate goal may or may not have been fulfilled; we do not know. On the other hand, we do know that there was a secondary benefit—his works survive today. His writings provide us with a window to an author who personally saw God’s treasure in heaven and who may teach us the importance of working towards becoming “God’s temples” in our own lives. He is a mystic who functions within the mystical tradition of the Jewish *Merkabah* riders as well as those fellow Syrian Christians who also wrote about the faithful person becoming a divine temple. His theology is grounded in the Hebrew scriptures as well as the New Testament; however, his theology is not just book learning, he personally experiences mystical visions and the power of prayer. To summarize, in a rather crude vernacular phrase: the Sage “walks the walk, and talks the talk.”

In this study, we examined Aphrahat’s process of becoming a temple and the specifics associated with the temple imagery. In the opening chapter of this work the key elements of Aphrahat’s temple theology were examined through the lenses of his use of Scripture, the image of Adam, christology, ecclesiology, and sacramentology. Through the fluid and expert use of the scriptures, Aphrahat weaves the supports for his argument that people may become divine temples. Five of the key verses he uses are: Jer 7:4–5, Lev 26:12, 1 Cor 3:16, 2 Cor 6:16, and John 14:20. The Hebrew scriptures from Jeremiah and Leviticus are the foundation for his argument which he then culminates with quotations from Paul and the gospel of John. The Sage follows Paul and a Syriac reading of Jeremiah to support his

⁶⁹⁵ Those who are called Jewish by Aphrahat could be the Adiabene Jews as Neusner suggests or converts in Aphrahat’s community who are holding on to their Jewish traditions. Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, 148–149.

view that a person may become a temple of God.⁶⁹⁶ In order to become divine temples, the devout person must change from the sinful nature of Adam to following the heavenly Adam, Jesus Christ. The means by which one may do so is faith in Christ. It is through this faith that the false wisdom for which Adam craved in the garden is transformed into the true wisdom of Jesus. When one has faith in Jesus Christ, is purified, and Christ comes to dwell within, then the person is a temple. As the Sage writes in his last demonstration:

Your majesty burrows into the little heart, you have made of us temples wherein your glory dwells.⁶⁹⁷

The Divine is reduced to the level of the person, the macrocosm becomes a microcosm, the great becomes small, the mighty becomes feeble. This is the process of becoming God's temple. It also describes the incarnation of Jesus Christ. As God humbled himself in the incarnation, so too he humbles himself when he dwells within the devout person. The Christians gather in community to pray and participate in the sacraments of baptism and eucharist which is key for a person who wishes to become a divine temple. These are some of the means by which the divine may enter into the faithful. It is through the Spirit indwelling in oneself, the continued feeding on the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and a strict ascetic discipline that one may keep oneself as a temple.

In Chapter Two, "The Ascetics," we examined who, in Aphrahat's view, may become a temple of God. The celibate ascetics in the Sage's community are described with many different terms; the broadest category for these people is "Singles" *ihidayē*. There are three subcategories to the Singles: the "Covenanters" *bnay qyāmā*, the "Virgins" *btulē*, and the "Holy Ones" *qaddishē*. The Covenanters are both male and female ascetics who live within the city or town and serve the church. They are not separated from the greater community, nor are they clergy. Although some of the clergy may well have been Covenanters, not all Covenanters were clergy. The name Virgins is self explanatory. Some of the Covenanters were also virgins, but they could have also been members of the *qaddishē* or Holy Ones. The Holy Ones were married people who have agreed to abstain

⁶⁹⁶ Aphrahat uses especially Jer 7:4–5, Lev 26:12, 1 Cor 3:16, 2 Cor 6:16, and John 14:20.

⁶⁹⁷ D 23:59 (PS II/121.12–13)

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from marital relations to become completely dedicated to Christ. These terms are very flexible, and Aphrahat himself uses interchangeably Singles *ihidayē*, Covenanters *qyāmā*, and Virgins *btulē*. Those who are Singles, *ihidayē*, follow the life and example of the *Ihdayā*, Jesus Christ. These ascetics strive to be united with Christ, as his temples, both here on earth and after death.

In Chapter Three, “Being a Temple,” Aphrahat’s theological anthropology is explained through the motifs of inner person, heart, rest, and grieving the Spirit. Other authors’ views on these subjects were also addressed, including Second Temple Jewish texts of Philo and Baruch, and fellow Syriac authors, such as: the Odist of *The Odes of Solomon*, the *Liber Graduum* author, Ephrem the Syrian, Macarius of Egypt, and Philoxenus of Mabbug. These texts show that Aphrahat uses popular themes and writes from a common mystical stream of thought infused by the Scriptures. We have in the *Demonstrations*, the inner person and the heart as both descriptive of where the Divine dwells in a person. During a person’s mystical ascent to the heavens, the heart may ascend to the heavens while the inner person must remain with the body on earth. It is through the Spirit dwelling within the ascetic’s heart that the whole being becomes a temple of God whose function is to offer up the sacrifice of prayer. However, prayer is not just a mental exercise; it is also charitable action. Aphrahat describes this active prayer as “giving the rest of the Spirit.” If a person does not have a pure heart which can offer the sacrifices of prayer through action and contemplation, then the Holy Spirit may become “grieved” and leave the person. If the Spirit becomes grieved then He may leave the formerly holy person permanently; in which case, that abandoned person may become a temple for Satan. Aphrahat describes a person who is now Satan’s temple in this way: “His heart is obscured and his intellect is dark. His mind is blinded and he gropes and stumbles.”⁶⁹⁸ This description of the poor person under Satan’s control is directly opposite to the way Aphrahat describes the sage’s mind when it has ascended to heaven; the mind is able to see everything, and is not blind in any way.

Chapter Four, “The Sage ‘may’ see God,” examined the ultimate reward for a person who is God’s temple, that is, mystical ascent to heaven in this life. The sage, who is a divine temple, encounters God within himself and then is taken to the heavens to see the temple and throne of God. Aphrahat describes this mystical ascent of an ascetic in four passages of the *Demonstrations*: *Dem.* 18:4, *Dem.* 14:35, *Dem.* 23:59, and *Dem.* 10:8. The first

⁶⁹⁸ D 14:43 (PS I/701.2–4).

ascent passage is *Dem.* 18:4, Moses' ascent on Mt. Sinai. It is the paradigm on which Aphrahat bases his other descriptions. The second passage is *Dem.* 14:35 in which a sage, who is a "great temple for his Maker," sees God. The sage is able to see God by descending into his heart while his mind ascends to heaven. When the sage's mind is in the heavenly throne room, the angels start to worship the sage as though it were he who is enthroned. Aphrahat uses the collective pronouns for the third ascent passage in *Dem.* 23:59. His audience may be included in the mystical ascents, or at least, have a chance to participate in their own ascent at some point. This passage describes the great majesty of God reducing down to the size and level of the human heart so the person may become a temple. The fourth passage, *Dem.* 10:8, is a personal description of Aphrahat's own mystical ascent. He is an ascetic and sage who has experienced the heavenly throne first hand. Aphrahat's guide for his journey to heaven was Jesus himself, who showed him the King's treasury. Heavenly ascent is not some esoteric or odd custom that was done in bygone years. Aphrahat writes about his own personal experience of God, an experience in which he knows his audience may also participate, if they are pure and work hard enough. The sage does not expect his community to do anything he himself has not already done.

From these four ascent passages, four important themes emerge. They are:

(1) The sage is the person who may ascend to heaven. (2) The ascent occurs within the person who has become a temple. (3) Seeing God is the result of the ascent. (4) The actions of ascent and descent are simultaneous. The first theme highlighted the characters of the ascent "drama," the sages. They are the elite of Aphrahat's community; they are humble, wise, and older. They are those who may ascend to heaven in spirit and participate in the heavenly liturgy with the angels. The second theme was the setting for our ascent drama, the heavenly temple. Aphrahat works from the scriptural descriptions of the heavenly temple and the Jerusalem temple to describe the setting for the mystical ascents. This temple image is multidimensional; it includes the throne, angelic host, treasury, the person as a temple, and the heavens as the temple.

Themes three and four are the action of our ascent drama, that is, seeing God. For Aphrahat, the ideal result of becoming a divine temple is that the person may see God with the eyes of the mind while the body still remains on earth. The ascent to heaven is a mystical experience also described in *Merkabah* mysticism of the later Jewish tradition. Aphrahat writes within the same mystical stream of thought as the *Merkabah* riders. How-

ever, the Sage has his own polemical issues with the heavenly ascent descriptions; he is adamant that it is an ascent of the mind, not of the body. Aphrahat also avoids quoting 2 Cor 12:1–4, Paul’s description of his mystical ascent. I suggest that this deliberate omission is because Aphrahat is refuting some unidentified opponents who used this passage for their own purposes. Aphrahat does not wish to use “ammunition” from the “other side.” The fourth theme is of ascent and descent at the same time. The sage descends into his heart in order to ascend to the heavenly temple. The incarnation is the ultimate descent in order to ascend which allows for the sage to see heaven. Our drama has finally reached the end; the sage who is a divine temple has reached heaven, seen God, and returned to teach others.

My study continues the scholarly conversation about Syrian Christians and their possible interactions with Jewish mysticism. A future avenue of investigation stemming from my work would be an examination of post Second Temple Jewish texts that have temple, chariot, ascent, and throne imagery to see if there are many connections with the Syrians. Another avenue of future study would be to extend the analysis of temple imagery to see how this stream of thought continues after Aphrahat’s time in the later Syrian authors, such as: Philoxenus of Mabbug, Isaac the Syrian, and Moshe bar Kepha. There may also be more correlations between later Syrian Christian authors and later Jewish mystical writings.

A few lingering questions arise from my work. How close were the ties between Aphrahat’s community and the Jews in his area (assuming that he is writing from the territory around Mosul in modern day Iraq)? I think that Aphrahat did have some personal contact with his Jewish neighbors but to what extent I do not know. Another area to be explored is what exactly did Aphrahat have in his library? Were there other earlier Jewish and Christian writers on whose mystical works Aphrahat may have drawn? Aphrahat quotes from the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament extensively and many of his similar arguments and ideas to other authors stem from common sources. However, is the common ground between Aphrahat and others due to direct influence, i.e., did Aphrahat read Enoch, for example? Or is the Sage merely writing with common ideas that were taught in his community and “in the air.” Although Aphrahat wrote with chronological specificity, he does not cite his non-scriptural sources. So some of these questions may be answered with a study of later Syriac writers to see where the stream in which Aphrahat functioned flows. But that is beyond the scope of my present study.

This book is the only comprehensive study of Aphrahat’s temple imagery to date. The temple is central for both Jews and Christians; it is the

place of sacrifice, meeting, and communication with the Divine. Aphrahat has many continuities with *Merkabah* mysticism, foremost of which is that a person may experience a mystical ascent to heaven before death. In Aphrahat's various descriptions of mystical ascent, he uses Moses' experience at Sinai with the *Shekintā* as the paradigm for this experience, including the angelic host, throne, temple, awe, and trembling. Aphrahat even has a heavenly guide for his own journey, Jesus, who fulfills the role of Enoch's angelic guide in 1 *Enoch*. The greatest discontinuity between Aphrahat and his Jewish mystical forebearers is Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Aphrahat is a Christian who is working within the mystical framework of Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, but it is Jesus who is the guide and his Spirit who dwells within. Another discontinuity is his emphasis upon the mental aspects of the mystical ascent. There is no physical riding of the chariot to heaven in Aphrahat's view; one's feet are firmly planted on the earth, while one's mind is flying to the heavenly temple. It is fair to say that Aphrahat is a Christian *Merkabah* rider in his own right.

What can our fourth century pastor share with a twenty-first century flock? As a pastor, Aphrahat is familiar with the negative sides of humanity. He does not lose sight of human frailty; he knows that people are prone to anger, hatred, greed, pride, and all sorts of sinfulness. However, ultimately, Aphrahat's theological anthropology maintains that the person is a creature made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). Because of the Lord's self emptying in the incarnation (Phil 2:7), his follower may become a *locus* of the divine—a temple of God. The Lord's *kenosis* allows for the *theosis* of humanity. The person may then manifest the Spirit within, through love, humility, faith, and actions.

The greatest gift that Aphrahat shares with modern readers is hope, hope that a person may experience heaven today, here and now, on earth, before death. He shares the hope of the Gospel, that faith in Jesus Christ is fundamental for a Christian life. He shares his own experience of heaven and the gift of the King's treasury with his audience of 1600 years ago and with his audience today. In his polemical writings, he is more irenic than either Ephrem or John Chrysostom. He is also a great teacher of the Gospel and of prayer. He gives practical instructions for both contemplation and action. He teaches that today we can fulfill the beatitude from Matthew's Gospel, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁹ Matt 5:8.

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