

## QUOTES FROM SCHOLARLY RESEARCH REGARDING PHILOSTRATUS' ACCOUNT OF THE GOD-MAN APOLLONIUS

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Apollonius of Tyana

Philostratus writes about the other Jesus, Apollonius. This account contains his teachings and his miracles and his being seen after he died.

Philostratus (c.170-245 A.D.) wrote The Life of Apollonius.

<http://www.livius.org/ap-ark/apollonius/apollonius01.html> says "The LoA is not a biography in our sense. It is written by a professional orator who wanted to show that the divine Apollonius was above all a champion of the Greek culture and a wise philosopher. Unfortunately, Philostratus had little affinity with philosophy; when the sage of Tyana speaks his words of wisdom, they are very hackneyed (e.g., an emperor must act as emperor as far as his imperial duties require, but as a private citizen as far as his own person is concerned) or even silly (e.g., although the soul wants to ascend to heaven, mountaineering does not bring it closer to God). Philostratus' lack of interest in philosophy and his own preoccupation with rhetoric, make the LoA a very unreliable source, as was already recognized by the Byzantine scholar Photius."

MY COMMENT: The same problem exists with the philosophy of Jesus in the gospels. The teaching at times is hard to interpret. Silly things such as flowers being clothed better than Solomon were said. Plus there is the repeated threatening tone of Jesus.

In the Life of Apollonius 5.21, Philostratus describes a visit of the sage and his disciple Damis to the island of Rhodes in the winter of 68/69.

With a favorable wind Apollonius made the passage and held the following conversation in Rhodes. As he approached the statue of the Colossus, [his disciple] Damis asked him, if he thought anything could be greater than that; and he replied, 'Yes, a man who loves wisdom in a sound and innocent spirit.' (LoA 5.21)

This story cannot be true. The giant statue of the sun god had collapsed in 227/226 BCE, and it is impossible that Apollonius of Tyana has ever seen this wonder of the ancient world. The explanation of Philostratus' mistake must be that he has confused two Apollonii; when he visited Rhodes, he heard a bon mot of an Apollonius, and unaware of the chronological implausibility, he assumed that the speaker must have been the Tyanean Apollonius. (The man who was really responsible for the saying may have been the poet Apollonius of Rhodes, who was staying on the island when the Colossus collapsed.)

All that he says about the Indians is a tissue of absurd and incredible statements. He asserts that they have certain jars full of rains and winds, with which in time of drought they are able to water the country, and again to deprive it of moisture, after the rain has fallen, since in these casks they have the means of controlling the alternate supply of wind and rain. He tells similar stories, equally foolish and preposterous, and these eight books are so much study and labor lost.

There exists a large collection of Letters of Apollonius: it contains more than hundred pieces, most of them said to be written by the Tyanean, some by others, often short, sometimes long. Some letters are likely to be older than Life of Apollonius (LoA): e.g., Philostratus' description of Apollonius visit to Sparta (LoA 4.27) seems to be derived from Letter 63. Unfortunately, other letters are suspiciously similar to compositions by the author of the LoA. However, we can be certain that, although most letters were not written by the sage of Tyana, at least a substantial part of it is based on information about Apollonius that is older and perhaps more reliable than Philostratus' *vie romancée*. The problem is that we do not know which part.

If we exclude the letters that are obviously inspired by the LoA and some anti-christian fabrications, we get a remarkable picture. To start with, the author of the letters -whoever he was- wants us to believe that Apollonius was a neo-Pythagorean philosopher. Next, he shows us an Apollonius who is a hero of the Greek culture; the odd thing is that this Apollonius is sometimes anti-Roman. The first element pervades Philostratus' books too, but the second element is almost absent from the LoA. Because of this anti-Roman tendency, it may be argued that the Letters of Apollonius were composed in the 140's by someone living in Athens.

An additional element for dating the letters in these years, is the polemic between the stoic philosopher Euphrates of Tyre

(†119) and the neo-Pythagorean Apollonius; this was an important debate in the mid-second century. Reading the letters said to be sent to the Roman philosopher C. Musonius Rufus (c.30-c.100), we get the impression that Musonius is the winner of the polemic [note 4]; this is, of course, too embarrassing to be invented by an admirer of the Tyanean. It must antedate the composition of the collection in the 140's, and may even reflect a real polemic.

In two of the letters to Euphrates, #16 and #17, we encounter an Apollonius who would have scared Philostratus to death: the author of these letters proudly confesses he is a magician, and goes on to give a positive interpretation of that word. These letters were certainly not invented by Philostratus.

Having discussed what little we know about the pre-Philostratean traditions, we can try to add things up, using four criteria of authenticity.

Independent confirmation: when an author who is not primarily interested in Apollonius confirms something in a source on Apollonius, we may assume that we are approaching the historical truth.

Multiple attestation: when independent, pre-Philostratean traditions about Apollonius are in agreement, we may be reasonably certain that they contain some historical truth. The problem with this method is, of course, that it is not always easy to establish independence.

Embarrassment: embarrassing information about the man from Tyana also has a claim to historical reliability.

Consistency: sometimes the truth of statement can be confirmed after other facts have been established.

Using these criteria, we can say that the following elements are almost certain:

Apollonius was considered a magician. Independent confirmation: it is taken for granted by Cassius Dio, Lucian (the latter referring to a disciple) and Anastasius Sinaitica. Fourfold attestation: to be found in the Reminiscences of Moeragenes, in the memoirs of Damis, in the Letters of Apollonius, and in the Antiochene tradition. Embarrassment: Philostratus clearly felt uncomfortable with this, and three times offers apologies.

Apollonius performed healings. Independent confirmation: taken for granted by Cassius Dio, Lucian (both referring to Apollonius' disciples) and Anastasius Sinaitica [note 8]. Fivefold attestation: to be found in the infancy narrative by Maximus of Aegae, in the Tyanean tradition, the story about the plague in Ephesus, the story of the rabies patient in Tarsus, and in Damis.

Apollonius lived in the second half of the first century. Independent confirmation: Lucian mentions a disciple of Apollonius who lived in the first half of the second century. Sixfold attestation: Moeragenes, Letters of Apollonius (especially 58, a consolation of a Roman governor whose governorship can be dated in 82/83), Damis, Anastasius Sinaitica [note 8], mentioned by one Domninus [note 9]. Consistency: Apollonius must have been a contemporary of Euphrates of Tyre (and Domitian).

Apollonius was a neo-Pythagorean philosopher. Independent attestation: Lucian, Life of Alexander. Fourfold attestation: to be found in the Letters of Apollonius, implied in the title of one Apollonius' publications, to be found in Damis, which presupposes a conflict with Stoicism and Cynicism. Consistency: the ideas expressed in the fragment of On sacrifices resemble what is known of first century Pythagoreanism [note 10].

Apollonius wrote a book On sacrifices. This cannot be established by the criteria used, but it is quoted by Porphyry.

Apollonius wrote a book On astrology. Twofold attestation: On astrology is mentioned by Moeragenes and Damis. Embarrassment: Philostratus expresses his disbelief about the existence of On astrology.

The following elements are likely:

Apollonius wrote a book on Pythagoras' doctrines (or a biography). Independent confirmation: Probably used by Iamblichus and Porphyry.

Apollonius traveled to India. Threefold attestation: Damis, Letter 59, mentioned in Porphyry, The Styx [note 11]. (Independent confirmation from India remains possible.)

Apollonius traveled to Egypt. Twofold attestation: Damis, John Malalas.

The following elements may be very ancient elaborations:

Apollonius could predict the future: Twofold attestation: Mentioned in the Ephesian tradition and Damis. Embarrassment: Philostratus tries to explain this away.

Euphrates of Tyre and Apollonius were quarreling. Threefold attestation: To be found in the Letters of Apollonius; Moeragenes and Damis tell the same story.

Apollonius tried to reform certain cultic practices. Twofold attestation: First, there is the quote from On sacrifices; furthermore, it is expressed in the Letters of Apollonius.

The story of Apollonius' vision of the murder of Domitian: Independent confirmation: Philostratus has picked up the story in Ephesus, and Cassius Dio tells it too.

The story about the birds' language: Independent confirmation: Philostratus claims to have heard this story at Ephesus and there is a different account of it in Porphyry's treatise On abstinence.

Apollonius' relation to the common cults was strained: Embarrassment: Philostratus tries to explain away failures (at the oracle of Trophonius, at Eleusis, and on Crete).

<http://www.livius.org/ap-ark/apollonius/apollonius01.html>

When in Ephesus he warned the citizens of a forthcoming plague. The people disregarded his warning until the pestilence was upon them. Then they remembered his words and sought further counsel of the mighty magician. He told them that there was a wretched beggar among them who they should stone to death. At first the people were hesitant to do such a drastic act, but the continued appearance of the beggar and the magician's stern accusations changed their minds. After the deed was done, the people removed the mound of stone under which they thought the beggar laid. But a black dog appeared which Apollonius pronounced was the cause of the plague.

When in Rome it is said he brought the daughter of a consular back to life. (Even Apollonius' biographer was not certain whether this girl just appeared to be dead or was actually dead.) However, this feat won Apollonius notoriety for the girl was well liked among the people and betroth.

He is allegedly said to have prevented one of his former students, Menippus of Corinth, from marrying a vampire. The young man had not heeded earlier warnings. The wedding festivities had proceeded up to the banquet when Apollonius appeared as a guest. He then made all the luxuries of the banquet and the guests disappear, proving they were a hoax. After doing this he forced the girl to confess as to being a vampire, a type of a vampire.

Another legend has it that an Indian magician made seven rings representing the seven planets and presented them to Apollonius who wore a different one each day. It is said this enabled him to maintain his youthful vigor well into old age. He is reputed to have lived to one hundred.

Apollonius' death is a mystery. According to some he fell out of favor with Emperor Severus, who put him on trial and had his hair cut off to eliminate his magical powers. Apollonius simply disappeared from the courtroom never to be seen again.

His followers admitted he died but said he was caught up and taken up into heaven. Other people did not even know he had died. In Tyana a temple was built and dedicated to him, and statues of him reside in other temples.

The only extensive work about Apollonius was written by Philostratus at the insistence of Julia, the mother of the Emperor Severus.

[http://www.themystica.com/mystica/articles/a/apollonius\\_of\\_tyana.html](http://www.themystica.com/mystica/articles/a/apollonius_of_tyana.html)

The work of Philostratus is generally regarded as a religious work of fiction. It contains a number of obviously fictitious stories, through which, however, it is not impossible to discern the general character of the man. In the 3rd century, Hierocles endeavoured to prove that the doctrines and the life of Apollonius were more valuable than those of Christ, and, in modern times, Voltaire and Charles Blount (1654-1693), the English freethinker, have adopted a similar standpoint. Apart from this extravagant eulogy, it is absurd to regard Apollonius merely as a vulgar charlatan and miracle-monger. If we cut away the mass of mere fiction which Philostratus accumulated, we have left a highly imaginative, earnest reformer who attempted to promote a spirit of practical morality.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollonius\\_of\\_Tyana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollonius_of_Tyana)

It has been argued that the work of Damis never really existed, and that he was a mere man of straw invented by Philostratus. This view was adopted as recently as the year 1910 by Professor Brigg, in his history on the origins of

Christianity. But it seems unnecessarily skeptical. It is quite true that Philostratus puts into the mouth of the sage, on the authority of Damis, conversations and ideas which, as they recur in the Lives of the Sophists of Philostratus, can hardly have been reported by Damis. But because he resorted to this literary trick, it can hardly have been invented as late as the year 217, when the life was completed and given to the literary world.

It is rather to be supposed that Damis himself was not altogether a credible writer, but one who, like the so-called aretalogi of that age, set himself to embellish the life of his master, to exaggerate his wisdom and his supernatural powers; if so, more than one of the striking stories told by Philostratus may have already stood in the pages of Damis.

However this is to be, the evident aim of Philostratus is to rehabilitate the reputation of Apollonius, and defend him from the charge of having been a charlatan or wizard addicted to evil magical practices. This accusation had been levelled against the sage during his lifetime by a rival sophist Euphrates, and not long after his death by the author already mentioned, Moeragenes. Unfortunately the orations of Euphrates have perished, and we know little of the work of Moeragenes. Origen, the Christian father, in his work against Celsus, written about the year 240, informs us that he had read it, and that it attacked

Apollonius as a magician addicted to sinister practices. It is certain also that the accusations of Euphrates were of a similar tendency, and we only need to read a very few pages of this work of Philostratus to see that his chief interest is to prove to the world that these accusations were ill-founded, and that

Apollonius was a divinely-inspired sage and prophet, and a reformer along Pythagorean lines of the Pagan religion. It is possible that some of the stories told by Byzantine writers of Apollonius, notably by John Tzetzes, derived from Moeragenes.

And a certain Hierocles, who was a provincial governor under Emperor Diocletian, wrote a book to show that Apollonius had been as great a sage, as remarkable a worker of miracles, and as potent an exorcist as Jesus Christ. His work gave great offence to the missionaries of the Christian religion, and Eusebius the Christian historian wrote a treatise in answer, in which he alleges that Apollonius was a mere charlatan, and if a magician at all, then one of very inferior powers; he also argues that if he did achieve any remarkable results, it was thanks to the evil spirits with whom he was in league. Eusebius is careful, however, to point out that before Hierocles, no anti-Christian writer had thought of putting forward Apollonius as the rival or equal of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is possible of course that Hierocles took his cue from the emperor Alexander Severus (AD 205-235), who instead of setting up images of the gods in his private shrine, established therein, as objects of his veneration, statues of Alexander the Great, Orpheus, Apollonius of Tyana, Abraham, and Christ. This story however in no way contradicts the statement of Eusebius, and it is a pity that this significant caution of the latter has been disregarded by Christian writers of the last three centuries, who have unanimously adopted a view that is utterly unwarranted, namely, that Philostratus intended his life of Apollonius as a counterblast to that of the Christian gospel.

<http://www.mountainman.com.au/atyana00.html>

COMMENT: The story of this man seems to be riddled with lies but not if you believe in magic. There are elements that seem to ring true unlike Jesus. Apollonius wrote, "The gods are in no need of sacrifices. What then can one do in order to win their favour? One can, in my opinion, acquire wisdom, and, so far as one can, do good to such men as deserve it. This pleases the gods; atheists however can offer sacrifice." This is a rejection of the sacrificial death of Jesus and the Eucharist. The death and resurrection of Jesus are ruled out by the following, "There is no death of anyone save in appearance only, even as there is no birth of anyone or becoming, except only in appearance. For when a thing passes from essence into nature we consider that there is a birth or becoming, and in the same way that there is death when it passes from nature into essence; though in truth a thing neither comes into being at any time nor is destroyed. But it is only apparent at one time and later on invisible, the former owing to the density of its material, and the latter by the reason of the lightness or tenuity of the essence, which however remains always the same, and is only subject to differences of movement and state. For this is necessarily the characteristic of change caused not by anything outside, but by a conversion of the whole into the parts, and by a return of the parts into the whole, due to the oneness of the universe. But if someone asks: What is this, which is at one time visible, and at another invisible, as it presents itself in the same or in different objects? It may be answered, that it is characteristic of each of the several genera of things here, when it is full, to be apparent to us because of the resistance of its density to our senses, but to be unseen in case it is emptied of its matter by reason of its tenuity, the latter being perforce shed abroad, and flowing away from the eternal measure which confined it; albeit the measure itself is never created nor destroyed." That is from the epistle of Apollonius to Valerius. To Euphrates he wrote that people like himself can only be magicians. So that would cover Jesus too. "You think it your duty to call philosophers who follow Pythagoras magicians, and likewise also those who follow Orpheus. For my own part I think that those who follow no matter whom, ought to be called magicians, if only they are determined to be divine and just men."

