

A COMPARISON BETWEEN  
APOLLONIUS OF TYANA  
AND  
JESUS OF NAZARETH

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF LYCOMING COLLEGE  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIRMENTS FOR  
DEPARTMENTAL HONORS IN RELIGION

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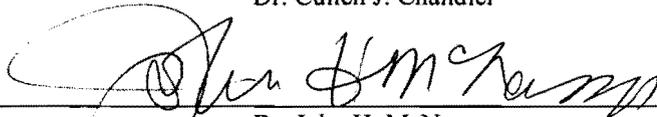
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Dr. Steven R. Johnson



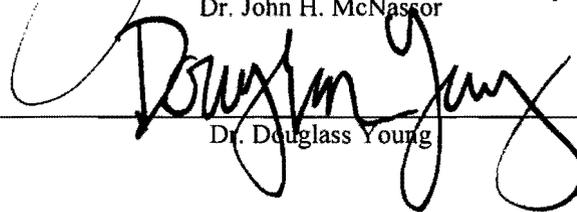
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AND

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SUBMITTED TO DR. STEVEN R. JOHNSON  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
RELIGION 491: RELIGION HONORS

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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
THE ADBRIGED STORY ON APOLLONIUS OF TYANA.....	5
OTHER PERSPECTIVES OF APOLLONIUS.....	15
THE AGENDA OF PHILOSTRATUS.....	25
THE BIOGRAPHIES OF JESUS AND THE SOLIDIFIED CHRISTIAN STORY.....	33
THE EMBELISHMENTS OF JESUS' EARLY LIFE.....	42
THE VERDICT.....	48
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	59

## INTRODUCTION

During the first century C.E., a Hellenistic philosopher and a Jewish rabbi captivated two different audiences with their teachings. Apollonius of Tyana was a Neo-Pythagorean philosopher who ascribed to the teachings of the sixth century B.C.E. philosopher Pythagoras.<sup>1</sup> According to biographer Flavius Philostratus, he was a wandering teacher who travelled from his home in Cappadocia to many Roman cities located in modern-day Greece, Italy, Spain, and Egypt. Apollonius also journeyed deep into India and up the Nile River to Ethiopia to learn from famous sages. During his life, Apollonius was a reformer and attracted followers. Research indicates that Apollonius has been connected with a virgin birth, miracles, and exorcisms.

Like Apollonius, Jesus of Nazareth was an itinerate teacher. According to his biographers, Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, Jesus traveled from his hometown in Nazareth around present-day Israel,<sup>2</sup> Jordan, Lebanon, and southern Syria. Jesus preached a message of love and attracted many Jewish and Gentile followers. According to his biographers, Jesus was divine and had the ability to perform both miracles and exorcisms.

Many Christians have not been exposed to Hellenistic religious and philosophical ideas prevalent during the first century C.E., when Jesus had his ministry. Numerous Christians would be surprised that, for a period of time, the

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<sup>1</sup> Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 382.

<sup>2</sup> For the context of this paper, "Israel" includes the West Bank and the Golan Heights.

Apollonius movement rivaled the Jesus movement. For almost four centuries, Christians created a clear distinction between their beliefs and the tenets of the followers of Apollonius. By the late fourth century, the Apollonius movement ceased to rival Christianity and became an extinct movement. By comparing Apollonius and Jesus, further assessments can help explain why Apollonius' movement ended and Jesus' movement has continued to the present day.

## THE ADBRIGED STORY OF APOLLONIUS OF TYANA

Flavius Philostratus wrote the only surviving biography of Apollonius. Around 200 C.E., the wife of Roman Emperor Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, commissioned the Greek rhetorician to compile a book that preserved the ministry of the Neo-Pythagorean philosopher. Philostratus conflated other Apollonius accounts written by Maximus of Aegae and Damis of Nineveh, as well as a will composed by Apollonius himself.<sup>3</sup> By 217, Philostratus published his book, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, in which he included a complete story depicting the sage's birth, travels, and end of life.

When Philostratus conflated his sources into a single story, he included a birth narrative to demonstrate Apollonius' divine connection to the gods. Philostratus never mentions the name of Apollonius' mother, only that the woman was pregnant. He argued that Apollonius' mother had an encounter with the god Proteus.<sup>4</sup> Proteus told the mother of Apollonius that she would give birth to himself—meaning that Apollonius was Proteus incarnated in human form. However, her baby would possess more prophetic qualities than Proteus, while retaining his vast wisdom.<sup>5</sup> In a dream, his mother was advised to go to the meadows and prepare to deliver her child. She obeyed this prophetic dream, but

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<sup>3</sup> Flavius Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana, The Epistles of Apollonius and the Treatise of Eusebius* (trans. F.C. Conybeare; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 1.3; According to Philostratus, the bulk of his narrative was derived from Damis' journal.

<sup>4</sup> Philostratus, 1.4.

<sup>5</sup> Philostratus, 1.4.

an unusual episode occurred—swans gathered around her and started to dance as she gave birth.<sup>6</sup> At the moment she delivered, Zeus, the father of the gods, sent a lightning bolt to earth to signify Apollonius' divine connection to the gods.<sup>7</sup>

Apollonius maintained this connection to the gods throughout his life. For example, at the age of 14, Apollonius began his philosophical education with the Phoenician teacher Euthydemus in the city of Tarsus.<sup>8</sup> Apollonius desired a deeper philosophical society, however, and moved to Aegae, where the god Asclepius revealed himself to people. Apollonius resided in the Temple of Asclepius and learned the philosophies of Pythagoras, a sixth-century B.C.E philosopher associated with four ideas: numbers that were related to the structure of the universe; metempsychosis, or transmigration, which was the passing of the soul at a body's death to another body; disciples, whose patron was the god Apollo; and a lifestyle of ascetic discipline.<sup>9</sup> By age 16, Apollonius had dedicated himself to follow a Pythagorean lifestyle by renouncing meat, wine, and shoes, not cutting his hair, only wearing linen, and a maintaining celibate lifestyle.<sup>10</sup> The god Asclepius, god of medicine, appeared to the Asclepian priest and revealed his delight that Apollonius was a witness to his cures of the sick. As a result, people flocked to Apollonius and appealed to him to heal their sicknesses.<sup>11</sup> For example, an Assyrian male youth petitioned Asclepius to heal him of his edema. However, the god was appalled that the Assyrian youth lived in luxury and only

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<sup>6</sup> Philostratus, 1.5.

<sup>7</sup> Philostratus, 1.5.

<sup>8</sup> Philostratus, 1.8.

<sup>9</sup> Philostratus, 1.7; Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 382-83.

<sup>10</sup> Philostratus, 1.8; 1.13.

<sup>11</sup> Philostratus, 1.9.

found pleasure through drinking alcohol. Because the adolescent refused to give up drinking, Asclepius refused to heal the boy, but told him to visit Apollonius and he would cure his condition. When the Assyrian visited the young Apollonius, Apollonius argued that the boy's lifestyle irritated his disease. With this observation, Apollonius restored the ill youth back to health.<sup>12</sup>

Apollonius was devoted to the gods and desired to expand his intellectual knowledge of divine wisdom. Philostratus argued that Apollonius surpassed Sophocles because he restrained himself from passions at a young age.<sup>13</sup> Besides his self-elected lifestyle, Apollonius took a vow of silence for five years, during which time he practiced restraint and walking away from conversations that would cause him to speak. In this state of silence, however, Philostratus argued that Apollonius was able to end disputes and teach crowds by mere gestures.<sup>14</sup> After his vow of silence, Apollonius journeyed to India to learn from the wise Brahmans. Along his journey, he stopped in several kingdoms to converse both with the cultic priests and the leaders of the community. He first reached Nineveh where he met Damis, who became both a loyal pupil and friend to Apollonius.<sup>15</sup> After his encounter with Damis, Damis accompanied Apollonius to Babylon.

According to Philostratus, Apollonius' reputation far exceeded his travels and the people of Babylon did not need to be introduced to Apollonius.<sup>16</sup> Apollonius met with the Zoroastrian religious leaders, the Magi, in private and exchanged wisdom. However, Apollonius recognized that these men were wise,

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<sup>12</sup> Philostratus, 1.9.

<sup>13</sup> Philostratus, 1.13.

<sup>14</sup> Philostratus, 1.15.

<sup>15</sup> Philostratus, 1.19.

<sup>16</sup> Philostratus, 1.21.

“but not in all respects.”<sup>17</sup> Desiring for more stimulating conversations, he left Babylon and traveled through the Caucasus mountain range toward his destination of India.<sup>18</sup> During his journey, Apollonius demonstrated his wisdom against other-worldly creatures, such as identifying and driving away an *empusa*, or hobgoblin.<sup>19</sup> Philostratus also argued that Apollonius innately understood all human languages and was able to talk to the birds.<sup>20</sup>

Apollonius and Damis entered into the Indian village called Taxila.<sup>21</sup> According to Philostratus, Apollonius was impressed with King Phraotes and his kingdom because these people lived according to a philosopher’s lifestyle. For example, Phraotes did not live in a lavish palace, but shared his wealth with his people and his enemies.<sup>22</sup> The king regarded Apollonius as his superior and freely conversed with the philosopher.<sup>23</sup> Phraotes was highly impressed with Apollonius’ wisdom and requested to join Apollonius’ brotherhood.<sup>24</sup> As his stay with Phraotes ended, the king gave Apollonius directions to the famed Brahmins of India. He also gave Apollonius a letter of recommendation to verify Apollonius’ knowledge and wisdom as equal to the Brahmins.<sup>25</sup> According to Philostratus, Apollonius marveled at the Brahmins’ power to levitate in the air, to live in a fortress that did not have seeable defenses, and to possess nothing, but

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<sup>17</sup> Philostratus, 1.26.

<sup>18</sup> Philostratus, 2.1.

<sup>19</sup> Philostratus, 2.3.

<sup>20</sup> Philostratus, 1.19; 1.21.

<sup>21</sup> Philostratus, 2.20.

<sup>22</sup> Philostratus, 2.25.

<sup>23</sup> Philostratus, 2.28.

<sup>24</sup> Philostratus, 2.37.

<sup>25</sup> Philostratus, 2.41.

have all the riches of men.<sup>26</sup> The Brahmans welcomed Apollonius into their community and allowed him to take part in their religious rites.<sup>27</sup> By conversing with the Brahmans, Apollonius expanded his intellectual wisdom concerning self-knowledge, reincarnation, and the five elements of the cosmos—fire, wind, earth, water, and ether.<sup>28</sup> The Brahmans embraced Apollonius as their equal and predicted that he would be esteemed a god.<sup>29</sup>

After his adventure to India, Apollonius returned to Cappadocia and was welcomed and praised by his fellow Greeks in Ionia.<sup>30</sup> During his time in Ionia, Apollonius rid the city of Ephesus from a demonic presence that had caused a deadly plague.<sup>31</sup> He then traveled to Athens where flocks of Athenians gathered to hear him speak. Apollonius' reputation attracted many Athenian youths, who sought his wisdom.<sup>32</sup> However, a priest of Demeter was not impressed with Apollonius. He argued that Apollonius was a magician. To protect his honor and reputation, Apollonius refuted the hierophant and claimed that he knew more about the Eleusinian rites than the priest. Winning the support of the Athenian crowd, Apollonius kept his honor.<sup>33</sup> After his stay in Athens, he embarked for Crete, where he demonstrated his divine wisdom. For example, after an earthquake struck the island, Apollonius interpreted the quake as the sea giving

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<sup>26</sup> Philostratus, 3.14.

<sup>27</sup> Philostratus, 3.16.

<sup>28</sup> Philostratus, 3.18; 3.21; 3.22; 3.34.

<sup>29</sup> Philostratus, 3.50.

<sup>30</sup> Philostratus, 4.1.

<sup>31</sup> Philostratus, 4.10.

<sup>32</sup> Philostratus, 4.17.

<sup>33</sup> Philostratus, 4.18.

birth to new land. According to Philostratus, Apollonius' prediction was validated by sea-farers, who witnessed a new island appear at sea.<sup>34</sup>

Apollonius' fame reached the emperors of the Roman Empire. According to Philostratus, Apollonius was arrested in Rome for speaking against the Roman Emperor Nero. Tigellinus, a prefect of the Roman Imperial bodyguard known as the Praetorian Guard, arrested the sage and privately interrogated Apollonius.<sup>35</sup> During Tigellinus' interview with the sage, Apollonius argued that he speaks of wisdom which the gods revealed to him. These same deities gave him the strength not to fear the ruthless Nero. Tigellinus realized that the sage was above human understanding and did not want to fight with a god. According to Philostratus, Tigellinus freed Apollonius and declared the sage "too powerful to be controlled."<sup>36</sup>

Apollonius then traveled to Alexandria, where the Egyptians celebrated his arrival.<sup>37</sup> While Apollonius was in Alexandria, a military commander and soon-to-be Roman emperor named Vespasian came to the city to meet privately with Apollonius.<sup>38</sup> During their conversation, Apollonius acknowledged that Vespasian would become a Roman emperor.<sup>39</sup> Apollonius argued that the gods wanted a new ruler, who embodied justice and moderation.<sup>40</sup> According to Philostratus, Vespasian argued that Apollonius' teachings were divinely

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<sup>34</sup> Philostratus, 4.34.

<sup>35</sup> Philostratus, 4.64.

<sup>36</sup> Philostratus, 4.64.

<sup>37</sup> Philostratus, 5.24.

<sup>38</sup> Philostratus, 5.27; According to Philostratus, Vespasian visited Apollonius sometime after his siege of Jerusalem, while Nero was still Emperor.

<sup>39</sup> Philostratus, 5.28.

<sup>40</sup> Philostratus, 5.35.

inspired.<sup>41</sup> In admiration of the sage, Vespasian pleaded with Apollonius to come with him and teach him the duties of kingship.<sup>42</sup> Because he had previous plans, Apollonius declined Vespasian's request.<sup>43</sup> After meeting with Vespasian, Apollonius traveled to Ethiopia to meet the naked sages. Apollonius was not impressed with these sages, however, and was outraged by their criticism of the Indian Brahmans.<sup>44</sup> Before he left Ethiopia, a young naked sage named Nilus converted to Apollonius' philosophy.<sup>45</sup>

After Apollonius left Ethiopia and Vespasian became emperor, Vespasian's son, Titus, captured the city of Jerusalem and local tribes offered to crown him king.<sup>46</sup> Titus refused the crown and argued that the gods had delivered Jerusalem into his hands. Apollonius was delighted with how Titus handled the situation and sent him a letter congratulating him on his success. Apollonius argued that Titus would gain the crown and be known for his temperance and moderation as a ruler. After their formal exchange of letters, Apollonius met Titus in Tarsus.<sup>47</sup> Titus asked Apollonius to teach him how to live a philosophical life. Instead of Apollonius teaching Titus himself, he assigned Demetrius the Cynic to help guide Titus.<sup>48</sup>

Titus' did not rule Rome long and was soon usurped by his brother, Domitian. As with Nero once before, Apollonius was opposed to the current

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<sup>41</sup> Philostratus, 5.29; 5.36.

<sup>42</sup> Philostratus, 5.36; 5.37.

<sup>43</sup> Philostratus, 5.37; 5.62.

<sup>44</sup> Philostratus, 6.11.

<sup>45</sup> Philostratus, 6.15.

<sup>46</sup> Philostratus, 6.29.

<sup>47</sup> Philostratus, 6.30.

<sup>48</sup> Philostratus, 6.31.

administration and verbally criticized the emperor.<sup>49</sup> Domitian accused Apollonius of conspiring to overthrow the empire and ordered him to Rome.<sup>50</sup> In fear of Domitian's wrath, many followers of Apollonius deserted him, with the exception of his friend Damis, who accompanied him to Rome.<sup>51</sup> According to Philostratus, Apollonius went to Rome believing that one should die for philosophy.<sup>52</sup> As soon as he arrived in Rome, Apollonius was arrested and put on trial by the praetorian prefect, Aelian. Aelian and the counsel for the prosecution claimed Apollonius was a wizard and that he instructed people to worship him as a god.<sup>53</sup> Apollonius refuted these claims and his responses impressed Aelian.<sup>54</sup> The sage was ordered to jail until the emperor desired to talk to him. However, Apollonius was not afraid and utilized his jail time to comfort his fellow prisoners.<sup>55</sup> Domitian soon summoned the sage to trial and quickly accused the philosopher of being a "demon."<sup>56</sup> Apollonius corrected the emperor stating that he was a mere mortal, and refuted the emperor's preconceived notions.<sup>57</sup> With Apollonius' boldness to stand up for himself, Domitian ordered that the sage have his beard and hair cut off—an insult to his philosophical lifestyle.<sup>58</sup> After the

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<sup>49</sup> Philostratus, 7.6.

<sup>50</sup> Philostratus, 7.9; 7.11.

<sup>51</sup> Philostratus, 7.15.

<sup>52</sup> Philostratus, 7.13.

<sup>53</sup> Philostratus, 7.21.

<sup>54</sup> Philostratus, 7.20.

<sup>55</sup> Philostratus, 7.22; 7.26.

<sup>56</sup> Philostratus, 7.29; 7.33.

<sup>57</sup> Philostratus, 7.33.

<sup>58</sup> Philostratus, 7.34.

trial, he was sent back to prison. He instructed Damis to go to Dicaearchia and promised his friend that he would appear to him there.<sup>59</sup>

Apollonius was again put on trial. Domitian declared that Socrates died at Athens and Apollonius will soon die. However, Apollonius responded to the emperor that Socrates only appeared dead.<sup>60</sup> Domitian was determined to convict Apollonius, but Apollonius was able to refute his arguments.<sup>61</sup> During this private conference, Domitian accused Apollonius of being a wizard. By using reason and correspondence from Domitian's father, the Emperor Vespasian, he refuted these claims.<sup>62</sup> Before midday, during the meeting, Apollonius translated himself from Rome to Dicaearchia, where Damis was waiting.<sup>63</sup> Having believed that Apollonius was dead, Damis was overjoyed that his friend was still alive.<sup>64</sup> The two traveled to Olympia, where people from Elis, Sparta, Corinth, Athens, Megara, Argos, Boeotia, Phocis, and Thessaly flocked to him.<sup>65</sup> While lecturing in Ephesus, Apollonius went into a trance and saw a man named Stephanus murder Emperor Domitian. Grappling at this foresight, Nerva, the new Roman Emperor, confirmed the details of the sage's vision to both Apollonius and the Ephesians.<sup>66</sup> According to Philostratus, Apollonius told Damis, "O Damis, even if you have to philosophi[z]e by yourself, keep your eyes upon me."<sup>67</sup> With this

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<sup>59</sup> Philostratus, 7.39.

<sup>60</sup> Philostratus, 8.3.

<sup>61</sup> Philostratus, 8.4; 8.5.

<sup>62</sup> Philostratus, 8.7.

<sup>63</sup> Philostratus, 8.10.

<sup>64</sup> Philostratus, 8.12.

<sup>65</sup> Philostratus, 8.15.

<sup>66</sup> Philostratus, 8.25; 8.27.

<sup>67</sup> Philostratus, 8.28.

statement, Damis' journal concluded the retelling of his adventures with his friend—Apollonius.

Philostratus argued that there were several theories concerning the manner in which Apollonius died. Philostratus regaled that the beloved sage lived into his eighties or nineties, while others speculated that he “exceeded a hundred.”<sup>68</sup> Rumors surfaced that Apollonius died in Ephesus or never died at all.<sup>69</sup> These people believed that Apollonius entered the Temple of Athena at Lindus and disappeared to the afterworld.<sup>70</sup> Philostratus recorded that after the sage died, a young man, who followed Apollonius' teaching, claimed that the sage was absolutely dead because he never appeared to him in his dreams. After a few days, the young man awoke screaming that Apollonius was still very present.<sup>71</sup>

Although other biographers may have written about Apollonius, Philostratus' *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* is the only surviving biography. Philostratus claimed that he did not write a completely new biography, but used writings from Maximus, Damis, and Apollonius to compile a complete story of Apollonius. With his account, Philostratus argued that Apollonius was born divine and had the power to heal the sick and cast out demons. Throughout his life, Apollonius traveled to India, Ethiopia, and around the Mediterranean. He discussed philosophy with Persian Magi, Indian Brahmans, and Ethiopian sages. After he died, people developed legends about his death and his final whereabouts.

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<sup>68</sup> Philostratus, 8.29.

<sup>69</sup> Philostratus, 8.30.

<sup>70</sup> Philostratus, 8.30.

<sup>71</sup> Philostratus, 8.31.

## OTHER PERSPECTIVES ON APOLLONIUS

Although Philostratus wrote a biography praising Apollonius of Tyana, other writers in the second through fourth centuries criticized Apollonius and his followers. In these accounts, the authors only dedicated a few sentences to Apollonius. From these accounts, it is clear that not everyone believed that Apollonius was divine; rather, some thought he used magic and tricked his audiences into believing his teachings. The earliest known sources that included references to Apollonius date to the mid-second century. These writers included Lucian, Cassius Dio, Origen, Lactantius, and Eusebius who all developed a negative image of Apollonius.

Thirty-seven years before Philostratus wrote his book, Lucian of Samosata, a Roman writer from c. 125-180 C.E., preserved the memory of Alexander of Abonoteichus in his book *Alexander the False Prophet*. In it, he argued that Alexander was a liar, a trickster, a perjurer, and a vindictive person.<sup>72</sup> Alexander only appeared to be an “honest and upright” individual, but in reality, he used people for his own personal gain.<sup>73</sup> He was a handsome boy who “freely” prostituted himself.<sup>74</sup> An unnamed follower of Apollonius admired the young Alexander’s “beauty,” just as Alexander was “enamored with [the unnamed

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<sup>72</sup> Lucianus Samosatensis, *Alexander the False Prophet* (trans. A.M. Harmon; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 4.181.

<sup>73</sup> Lucian, 4.181.

<sup>74</sup> Lucian, 4.181.

follower's] roguery.”<sup>75</sup> According to Lucian, the unnamed individual was a “quack” who advertised “enchantments, miraculous incantations, charms for your love-affairs, ‘sendings’ for your enemies, disclosures of buried treasure, and successions to estates.”<sup>76</sup> The unnamed individual educated Alexander and allowed the boy to assist him as a “helper, servant, and acolyte.”<sup>77</sup> He was a public physician, but Lucian argued that the unnamed individual concocted both good and bad drugs. Alexander continued the corrupt practice that was characteristic of both Apollonius and the unnamed individual. Lucian argued that Apollonius of Tyana was a “notorious” individual who promoted a “sort of school” that was corrupt and passed his teachings to his followers, such as the unnamed follower and Alexander.<sup>78</sup>

Lucian concentrates heavily on the two followers of Apollonius—the unnamed individual and Alexander—but directs a comment specifically about Apollonius. According to Lucian’s remarks, Apollonius was a philosopher who had developed a school of thought that was passed down to his followers. Apollonius combined philosophy with a healing cult associated with the god Asclepius. Lucian remarked that Apollonius had the “notorious” ability to disguise “quack” charms as actual working antidotes for human problems.<sup>79</sup> Apollonius and his followers were corrupt physicians because they provided fake medications and enchantments. Just as Apollonius’ two followers were corrupt

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<sup>75</sup> Lucian, 4.181, 183.

<sup>76</sup> Lucian, 4.181.

<sup>77</sup> Lucian, 4.183.

<sup>78</sup> Lucian, 4.183.

<sup>79</sup> Lucian, 4.181, 183.

physicians, Lucian argued that Apollonius started the practice of conning the public and disguised his trickery with a philosophical teaching.

Around the time Philostratus was a small child, Lucian published his book *Alexander the False Prophet*. Lucian's reference provides an independent source that suggests that Apollonius was not an imaginary figure created by Philostratus. His reference also suggests that Apollonius was well-known in Asia Minor as a quack doctor. Lucian does not introduce Apollonius or explain who he was to his readers. This suggests that people during this period had either read or heard about Apollonius. Lucian also indicated that Apollonius had followers and that they, too, continued to distribute false teachings. Lucian's source establishes that Apollonius existed as a real person and lived before or during Lucian's early life.

A contemporary of Philostratus, Cassius Dio, a Roman historian from c. 155-229, provides modern scholars with a detailed perspective of the Roman Empire in his book *Dio's Roman History*. In Chapter 67, Dio characterized Emperor Domitian as a secretive individual, who was bold, "quick to anger," treacherous, and secretive.<sup>80</sup> Because of his crude demeanor toward other individuals, Domitian was paranoid that he would be murdered.<sup>81</sup> Larginus Proculus, an unknown person from the province of Germany, prophesied the day the emperor would die. Proculus' prophesy terrified Domitian and he ordered Proculus to die "after the emperor had escaped the danger."<sup>82</sup> Fortunately for Proculus, his prediction was correct. Domitian was murdered by Stephanus, an

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<sup>80</sup>Cassius Dio Cocceianus, *Dio's Roman History* (trans. Earnest Cary; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961) 8.317.

<sup>81</sup> Cassius Dio, 8.355.

<sup>82</sup> Cassius Dio, 8.355, 357.

unknown character. Stephanus struck Domitian unconscious and Parthenius, an unknown conspirator against Domitian, killed Stephanus.<sup>83</sup> According to Dio, he was surprised to learn that:

a certain Apollonius of Tyana on that very day and at that very hour when Domitian was being murdered (as was afterwards accurately determined by events that happened in both places) mounted a lofty rock at Ephesus (or possibly it was somewhere else) and having called together the populace,<sup>84</sup> uttered these words: 'Good, Stephanus! Bravo, Stephanus! Smite the bloodthirsty wretch! You have struck, you have wounded, you have slain.' This is what actually happened, though one should doubt it ten thousand times over.<sup>85</sup>

Apollonius saw Domitian murdered in Rome while he was in Ephesus.

Apollonius was not from Ephesus and there is no indication that he knew anyone from the city. Despite this, Apollonius was able to draw a crowd of Ephesians to listen to him speak. This suggests that Apollonius was a skilled speaker who was able to attract the attention of the public. Because he included this short story, Dio indicated that Apollonius was connected with Domitian and may have opposed the emperor. Dio's comment, "though one should doubt it ten thousand times over," demonstrated that he does not believe that this incident actually occurred, but suggests that other individuals ascribed to this legend.

Philostratus' *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* is the only surviving biography of Apollonius. However, during Philostratus' time, other scholars had accessible sources about Apollonius. Dio only included a short paragraph describing Apollonius' vision in Ephesus. As a good historian, Dio examined several sources and included similar details from each source in his historical

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<sup>83</sup> Cassius Dio, 8.357.

<sup>84</sup> Dio footnotes that Zonaras, an unknown individual, added: "stood there speechless for some time, and then cried out;" Cassius Dio, 8.359.

<sup>85</sup> Cassius Dio, 8.357, 359.

account of Domitian's life. According to his footnote, Dio indicated that "Zonaras adds: '[Apollonius] stood there speechless for some time, and then cried out.'"<sup>86</sup> Dio does not identify Zonaras, but Dio's footnote indicates that he recognized that there were several versions of Apollonius' vision circulating in the empire. His footnote suggests that he used several more than one source in his retelling of Apollonius vision in Ephesus.

Dio also noted that Emperor Antonius Pius (c.86-161) respected Apollonius.<sup>87</sup> According to Dio, Antonius began to associate with freedmen rather than the senators of Rome.<sup>88</sup> Dio criticized Antonius' behavior and argued that he:

delight[ed] in magicians and jugglers was so great that he commended and honored Apollonius of Cappadocia, who had flourished under Domitian and was a thorough juggler and magician, and erected a shrine to him.<sup>89</sup>

The Roman senate did not respect Antonius because he associated with freedmen rather than people from the senatorial class. According to Dio, Antonius liked magicians and one such magician he respected was Apollonius. Dio argued that Apollonius was both a magician and a juggler. Like Philostratus, Dio affirmed that Apollonius was from Cappadocia, where Tyana was located. He also confirmed that Apollonius lived during the reign of Domitian and that a shrine was built in his honor. Dio established that as early as the late first to early second century, people accused Apollonius of being a magician. He also argued that only common people and Antonius revered Apollonius, however, not the

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<sup>86</sup> Cassius Dio, 8.359.

<sup>87</sup> Cassius Dio, 78.18.

<sup>88</sup> Cassius Dio, 78.18.

<sup>89</sup> Cassius Dio, 78.18.

senatorial class. For Dio, Apollonius was a magician and was not respected by the senatorial class.

The Christian apologist Origen (c. 185-254), wrote *Against Celsus* in response to the pagan philosopher Celsus' anti-Christian book called *A True Discourse*.<sup>90</sup> According to Origen, Celsus hated Christians and was “ignorant of the Christian faith.”<sup>91</sup> He invented lies about Christians, such as believers eating babies and giving into erotic intercourse with women. He also claimed that Christian presbyters did not promote doing good to others, but wished to harm people through the manipulation of demons.<sup>92</sup> With the use of the “magic arts,” Celsus argued that Christians controlled “uneducated [persons] and men of corrupt morals,” but were unable to convert philosophers because they “observed a healthy manner of life.”<sup>93</sup> Origen refuted Celsus argument and declared:

we shall say of magic, that anyone who chooses to inquire whether philosophers were led captive by it or not, can read what has been written by Moiragenes regarding the memoirs of the magician and philosopher Apollonius of Tyana, in which this individual, who is not a Christian, but a philosopher, asserts that some philosophers of no mean note were won over by the magic power possessed by Apollonius, and restored to him as a sorcerer.<sup>94</sup>

Origen argued that philosophers did not possess a “healthy manner of life” because many philosophers were drawn to Apollonius’ magic. According to Origen, Apollonius was a philosopher and a magician, who was able to lure non-

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<sup>90</sup>Origen, *Against Celsus*: Book VI, in *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Four; Minuscus Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*. (ed. Rev. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; vol. 4 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Rev. Fredrick Crombie; New York: Scribner, 1905), 231; introduction written by ed. Rev. Fredrick Crombie.

<sup>91</sup>Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4:591.

<sup>92</sup>Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4:591.

<sup>93</sup>Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4:591.

<sup>94</sup>Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4:591.

famous philosophers to his particular teachings.<sup>95</sup> Philosophers were educated students who studied under a particular teacher for a designated length of time. Thus, Origen argued that Apollonius was able to fool educated philosophers into following his teachings. He insisted that Apollonius had an established philosophy, but was also commonly known for intertwining his teachings with magic. Origen does not specify what particular magic powers the sage possessed, such as healing enchantments or lustful potions. However, what can be suggested is that Apollonius was a “sorcerer” who dabbled in the “magic arts.”<sup>96</sup>

Origen was a contemporary with Philostratus. Both had similar agendas: to defend their beliefs and spread their ideas to a wider audience. Origen was an apologist who defended Christianity against threats to the faith. Because he mentioned Apollonius, Origen suggests that followers of Apollonius rivaled early Christian communities and caused Christians to defend their beliefs. Because he mentioned Apollonius, Origen indicated that people knew about this individual and he wanted to create a distinction between the followers of Jesus and the followers of Apollonius. He also argued that other people had preserved stories about Apollonius. According to Origen, Moiragenes wrote an early account of Apollonius. He used Moiragenes to criticize philosophers and demonstrated that only the easily manipulated people followed philosophers.<sup>97</sup> Both Lucian and Origen criticized philosophers and used Apollonius as their example. Even more, groups of Pagans and Christians were at odds with Apollonius. Because Origen cited Moiragenes, Philostratus was therefore not the only person who wrote a

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<sup>95</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4:591.

<sup>96</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4:591.

<sup>97</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4:591.

biography about Apollonius. Even though scholars do not know who Moiragenes was, it is again clear that Apollonius was not a fictional character imagined by Philostratus.

Roughly fifty years after Philostratus published *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, Lactantius, a Christian apologetic theologian (c. 260-330), defended Jesus Christ and Christianity in his book *The Divine Institutes*.<sup>98</sup> Non-Christians were suspicious of the religious movement called Christianity. New religious and philosophical movements were in competition with one another to gain followers. According to William Fletch, Lactantius used Philostratus' book *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*.<sup>99</sup> Because Lactantius used Philostratus' book, there is no new information about Apollonius as a person; however, Lactantius' dissertation implies that the followers of Apollonius were increasing in number after Philostratus published his book c. 217. In *The Divine Institutes*, Lactantius discredits Apollonius' character by juxtaposing Christ's humble death on the cross with Apollonius' selfish translation from his trial in Rome.<sup>100</sup> He also establishes that both Jesus and Apollonius was accused of being magicians. For example, Lactantius argued that no one believed Apollonius was a god, because "it was evident that he was both a man and a magician."<sup>101</sup> He also questioned how Christ's opponents could accuse him of being a "magician" when he

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<sup>98</sup> Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*: Book V, Of Justice, in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies*. (ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. vol. 7 of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Rev. William Fletcher; New York: Scriber, 1905), 138; introduction by editor Rev. William Fletcher.

<sup>99</sup> Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, 7:138.

<sup>100</sup> Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, 7:138.

<sup>101</sup> Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, 7:139.

“performed wonderful deeds.”<sup>102</sup> Lactantius does not expand the knowledge of the man named Apollonius, but his book illustrates that Apollonius was known in the third and fourth centuries.

Like Lactantius, Eusebius, a Christian apologist (c. 263-339), based his book, *The Treatise of Eusebius*, on Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Eusebius does not contribute any new information about the person Apollonius. He examines Philostratus’ story and explains why Philostratus’ story is wrong. For example, Eusebius questioned why Apollonius needed an education when he was supposedly divine.<sup>103</sup> He identifies Philostratus’ contradictions. For example, according to Philostratus, Apollonius understood all languages, but when Apollonius visited the Brahmans, he hired an Indian translator.<sup>104</sup> Unlike Lactantius, who defends the divine Christ over the imposter Apollonius, Eusebius breaks down Philostratus’ argument and identifies his fallacies. Eusebius’ major contribution was identifying Apollonius’ teachings as a major problem for Christians in the middle of the fourth century.

Because writers such as Lucian and Cassius Dio mentioned Apollonius in their writings, Philostratus did not invent Apollonius. Lucian, Cassius Dio, and Origen also illustrated that they used sources that predated Philostratus’ *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Philostratus admired Apollonius and wrote a book that articulated his sentiment. Not all pagans and Christians, however, agreed with Philostratus’ *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Individuals such as Cassius Dio, Origen, and Lactantius, and Eusebius argued that Apollonius was associated with

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<sup>102</sup> Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, 7:138.

<sup>103</sup> Philostratus, 2.491, 507.

<sup>104</sup> Philostratus, 2.491, 521.

magic. Overall, these sources argued that Apollonius was considered a magician who taught philosophy or a philosopher who was accused of practicing magic. Even though some people associated him with magic, Apollonius was able to maintain a following and people believed in his power. After Apollonius' death, his movement continued to grow and his followers passed on his teachings. Christian apologists such as Lactantius and Eusebius refuted Philostratus' arguments and exposed the logical fallacies of Apollonius' life. However, they suggest that the followers of Apollonius existed during the fourth century and rivaled Christians for new converts.

## THE AGENDA OF PHILOSTRATUS

By the time Philostratus published his book, several other authors such as Lucian and Cassius Dio, had criticized the events surrounding Apollonius' life. In *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, Philostratus tries to address and discredit opposition such as Moiragenes. He also argued that Apollonius surpassed the founder of this philosophical movement—Pythagoras. However, Philostratus' main agenda was to counter accusations that Apollonius was a wizard. By addressing opposition, showing Apollonius' greatness, and disproving false accusations, Philostratus' biography served multiple purposes.

Philostratus belonged to Empress Julia's inner circle. According to Philostratus, Julia admired "rhetorical exercises" and a "kinsman of Damis" brought to her attention Damis' memoirs of his experiences with Apollonius.<sup>105</sup> Although Damis wrote a clear account of his adventures, Julia commissioned Philostratus "to recast and edit these essays" because Damis wrote his account "somewhat awkwardly."<sup>106</sup> Before editing Damis' work, Philostratus consulted several sources, such as Maximus of Aegae, who wrote a biography of Apollonius and a will written by Apollonius. He then combined these sources and created a continuous timeline of Apollonius' life. Philostratus recognized that not all accounts of Apollonius presented the sage in a favorable manner. Philostratus

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<sup>105</sup> Philostratus, 1.3.

<sup>106</sup> Philostratus, 1.3.

argued that people should not “pay attention” to Moiragenes, “who composed four books about Apollonius, and yet was ignorant of many of the circumstances of his life.”<sup>107</sup> In the first several pages of his book, Philostratus provided the reader with his sources and acknowledged that Moiragenes wrote an inaccurate account about Apollonius. As a good historian, Philostratus discovered two primary sources and one secondary source that favored Apollonius. He recognized that Moiragenes also wrote about Apollonius, but Philostratus argued that this author was ignorant of the details of Apollonius’ life. In this short account, Philostratus’ agenda was to discredit Moiragenes, who according to Christian theologian Origen wrote an account that argued Apollonius was a wizard.<sup>108</sup> Philostratus argued that there are more sources favoring Apollonius than discrediting the sage. His goal was to demonstrate that he researched the subject, found numerous sources that confirmed stories of Apollonius, and discredited Moiragenes and assumedly any other source that disagreed with his account of Apollonius.

In the beginning of his book, Philostratus argued that followers of Pythagoras of Samos, the founder of Pythagorean philosophy, believed Pythagoras was not an Ionian, but in the past was Euphorbus of Troy. These followers believed that Pythagoras had “come to life after death.”<sup>109</sup> Pythagoras lived an ascetic lifestyle and did not wear clothing made from animal products, eat animal flesh, or sacrifice animals to the gods. According to Philostratus, people rumored that Pythagoras had “social intercourse with the gods” and

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<sup>107</sup> Philostratus, 1.3.

<sup>108</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus*, 4:591.

<sup>109</sup> Philostratus, 1.1.

learned how humankind pleased or disgusted the gods.<sup>110</sup> While other people theorize about the gods, Pythagoras said that the god Apollo came to him in person and the goddess Athena, the Muses, and the other gods “also consorted with him though without making such acknowledgment.”<sup>111</sup> Pythagoras’ followers honored him as an “emissary from Zeus” and “accepted as law any decisions communicated by him.”<sup>112</sup> According to Philostratus, however, Apollonius was more divine than Pythagoras.<sup>113</sup> Philostratus’ agenda was to articulate that the student, Apollonius, surpassed the teacher, Pythagoras. According to Philostratus, Pythagoras was considered by his followers to be a spokesman of the gods. By Philostratus’ account, Apollonius was superior to Pythagoras. For example, Pythagoras may have communed with the gods, but when Apollonius was born, Zeus signaled his birth by sending a “thunderbolt... to earth.”<sup>114</sup> Apollonius also found favor from the god Asclepius, who came down to the priest of Asclepius in Aegae and declared that “he was delighted to have Apollonius as witness of his cures of the sick.”<sup>115</sup> Philostratus argued that Apollonius lived a more disciplined lifestyle than to Pythagoras. For example, Pythagoras only refused to wear clothes made out of animal products, eat animal meat, and refused to animal sacrifice; but Apollonius became a vegetarian, around the age of 14, and refused to drink wine, wear shoes or any garment made out of

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<sup>110</sup> Philostratus, 1.1.

<sup>111</sup> Philostratus, 1.1.

<sup>112</sup> Philostratus, 1.1.

<sup>113</sup> Philostratus, 1.2.

<sup>114</sup> Philostratus, 1.5.

<sup>115</sup> Philostratus, 1.8.

animal products, sacrifice animals, or involve himself in intercourse.<sup>116</sup> In addition, Apollonius took a five-year vow of silence. For Philostratus, Apollonius disciplined himself more than Pythagoras and lived a more ascetic lifestyle. Philostratus reasoned that since Pythagoras had a following and people respected his teachings, then people should also follow and respect Apollonius.

Overall, Philostratus' main agenda was to defend Apollonius from his critics, who accused him of wizardry. Philostratus was compelled to write "a true account of the man [Apollonius]" in response to the "general ignorance" of Apollonius' critics.<sup>117</sup> For Philostratus, his book would be a "true account" that detailed Apollonius' life, highlighting Apollonius' supernatural and divine being."<sup>118</sup> Philostratus argued that people believed in other accounts of divine predictions, such as Anaxagoras' rain story, but would not believe in Apollonius' reputation. Philostratus consented to provide support to prove the authenticity of Apollonius' character and disprove the accusations that he was a wizard. Philostratus argued that Apollonius' critics cannot accuse Apollonius as a wizard just because he talked to "wizards of Babylon," the "Brahmans of India," and "the nude ascetics of Egypt;" while philosophers such as Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Pythagoras, and Democritus all "consorted with wizards and uttered many supernatural truths, yet never stooped to the black arts."<sup>119</sup> He also argued that Plato consulted with Egyptian priests and Socrates demonstrated the gift of foreknowledge. None of *these* philosophers ever "passed for a wizard," but

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<sup>116</sup> Philostratus, 1.7, 8, 12.

<sup>117</sup> Philostratus, 1. 2.

<sup>118</sup> Philostratus, 1.2.

<sup>119</sup> Philostratus, 1.2.

Apollonius' critics accused him of wizardry. Philostratus argued that Apollonius' critics were inconsistent on who was and who was not to be considered a wizard. For Philostratus, people respected Plato, Socrates, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Pythagoras, and Democritus and should also honor Apollonius.

Philostratus proceeded to argue that Apollonius was not a wizard, in his retelling of Apollonius' meeting with Emperor Domitian. According to Philostratus, Apollonius argued that Domitian's father, Vespasian, consulted him before he took over the empire. Apollonius reasoned that "if he [Vespasian] looked upon me as a wizard, he would have never taken me into his confidence."<sup>120</sup> Apollonius also pointed out that the meeting between Vespasian and himself was:

held publicly in a temple, and wizards do not affect temples of the gods as their places of reunion; for such places are inimical to those who deal in magic, and they cloak their art under the cover of night [to] preclude their dupes from the use of their eyes and ears.<sup>121</sup>

Philostratus included Apollonius' dialogue with Domitian to prove that

Apollonius was not a wizard. According to Apollonius' argument, Vespasian needed advice and not magical incantations to usurp the throne in Rome.

Apollonius also argued that the two individuals met in a temple. He asserted that wizards do not gather in temples because these places are unfriendly toward magic. While wizards meet in secret, this meeting occurred outside, in plain sight of everyone. Apollonius also argued that wizards perform their arts in the dark, so people cannot easily recognize a lie. Under the cover of dark, people's senses

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<sup>120</sup> Philostratus, 3.7.

<sup>121</sup> Philostratus, 8.7.

are not as sharp as if they are in sunlight. This suggests that wizards played off of people's inability to fully assess the situation and make rational decisions. For Apollonius, only fools make decisions when they are disadvantaged. Apollonius also argued that wizards "get men to believe that the unreal is real, and to distrust the real as unreal, and [he] attributed all such effects to the imaginative fancy of the dupes."<sup>122</sup> Apollonius argued that gullible and unintelligent people believed that magic is real. Philostratus' goal was to persuade his readers into believing that Apollonius was fully against magic. He also insisted that fools followed wizards. According to Philostratus, Damis was not "stupid" and the Brahmins "embraced" Apollonius.<sup>123</sup> Philostratus argued that Damis was able to identify a true enlightened individual. Because an unknown, assumedly educated, individual followed Apollonius, Philostratus argued that the reader should also follow Apollonius and disregard the rumors that he may have been a wizard. However, Philostratus branches out beyond unknown individuals and argued that well-known philosophers such as the Indian Brahmins embraced Apollonius and considered him as teacher of truth. Philostratus recognized that his readers would overlook the intelligence of Damis, but would be amazed that the philosophical elite would agree with Apollonius' teachings.

Expecting his audience to accept his creditability, Philostratus also argued that Apollonius did not charge people for his gifts, but "practiced [his] art not for money but free, gratis, and for nothing."<sup>124</sup> Wizards made a profit selling potions, charms, hexes, and incantations. According to Philostratus' earlier description of

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<sup>122</sup> Philostratus, 8.7.

<sup>123</sup> Philostratus, 1.3; 3.50.

<sup>124</sup> Philostratus, 8.7.

an ascetic philosopher, Apollonius was financially poor because he did not focus on earthly possessions or desires. However, Apollonius performed miracles and drove out demons for free. Apollonius argued that only wizards charge money for help and that he, as a person of the gods, did the work of the gods for free. Philostratus' goal was to connect the reader with the idea that Apollonius lived an ascetic life without money, while wizards lived a more comfortable life than Apollonius because they charged for their services.

In his book, Philostratus recognized that Apollonius was accused of being a wizard during his lifetime and attempted to refute these claims. Philostratus either used passages from his sources to argue that Apollonius defended himself during his lifetime, or wrote in the voice of Apollonius to have the reader believe that Apollonius truly had to defend himself. Philostratus' goal was to demonstrate that Apollonius was opposed during his time on earth. As a creative writer, Philostratus writes in the first person, suggesting that Apollonius himself actually had a serious back-and-forth discussion with the Roman emperor. As unlikely as it may be that Apollonius made these statements, Philostratus engaged the reader by presenting his arguments as in a reasonable debate, answering questions that the reader might have had about Apollonius.

In *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, the agenda of Philostratus was to present Apollonius as a respectable individual who should be taken seriously. Philostratus argued that he used sources such as Damis' journal, Maximus of Aegae, and a will written by Apollonius to construct a complete biography of Apollonius. Not all early writers admired Apollonius, however, Moiragenes tried

to discredit Apollonius. Besides his sources, Philostratus argued that Apollonius surpassed Pythagoras because he lived a more ascetic lifestyle. He also maintained that Apollonius should be regarded with respect just as Plato, Socrates, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Pythagoras, and Democritus. Philostratus was also determined to prove that Apollonius was not a wizard. He argued that Apollonius was no different than philosophers such as Plato or Socrates in this regard. For Philostratus, Apollonius was a highly regarded philosopher and demanded respect.

## THE BIOGRAPHIES OF JESUS AND THE SOLIDIFIED CHRISTIAN STORY

The Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John are four biographies of Jesus that recount his ministry. They each introduce Jesus differently, but contain both similar and unique accounts of Jesus' life. These gospels do not agree on every detail that occurred during Jesus' lifetime. Some of the biographers have expanded the stories of Jesus, providing more detail, while others omit certain events. Over time, Christians collected these four gospels and intertwined them into a single biography that ignored the many differences among the biographies.

Of the four New Testament Gospels, Mark was the earliest writer.<sup>125</sup>

Around 70 C.E., Mark composed a short compellation of Jesus' life, starting at his baptism and continuing to his resurrection.<sup>126</sup> Unlike Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2, Mark does not provide a birth narrative, nor does he claim that Jesus existed with God before his birth, like John 1:1-18. He acknowledged that Jesus was the Son of God,<sup>127</sup> had a group of twelve consistent disciples,<sup>128</sup> and performed both exorcisms and healings. According to Mark 15:1, the chief priests, elders, and scribes opposed Jesus' teachings and had him tried by Pontius Pilate—later to be

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<sup>125</sup> Scholars do not know who wrote Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John. These names are second century additions to give the stories added authority.

<sup>126</sup> The earliest known manuscripts of Mark do not include Mark 16:9-20. For this paper, only Mark 1:1—16:8 will be used in this project.

<sup>127</sup> Mark 1:11.

<sup>128</sup> Mark 3:14-19.

condemned and crucified.<sup>129</sup> At the end of his narrative, Mark 16:1-8 acknowledged that Jesus was not in the tomb and was raised from the dead.

Although there is not an overt agenda in Mark's book, Mark 16:5-8 suggests that Mark wanted people to spread the word that Jesus was raised from the dead and that people needed to seek him. For Mark, the reader was supposed to be an active participant. There is another possible agenda, however, that may explain why Mark wrote his biography. In his book, baptism is a central theme. According to Mark, Jesus became Son of God when he was baptized by John the Baptist. This suggests that Mark believed that followers of Jesus must be baptized in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be empowered to preach and live the gospel.

Roughly ten years after Mark wrote his gospel, Matthew wrote an expanded biography of Jesus' life that included a birth narrative and Jesus' instructions to the disciples after his resurrection. Matthew used Mark as a template for his book. Although he did not use Mark's exact words, Matthew included almost all of Mark's topics, excluding Mark 1:21-38; 3:13-19; 4:21-29, 35-41; 5:1-43; 6:6b-13; 8:22-26; 9:38-41, 49-50; 13:33-37. While Mark's biography is relatively short, Matthew wrote a considerably longer one and provided a more detailed version of Jesus' life. Matthew's story does not begin at Jesus' baptism, but at the conception of Jesus. Matthew was the first gospel to elaborate on Jesus' early life. For Matthew, Jesus was born from a virgin named Mary, who was impregnated by the Holy Spirit and betrothed to a man named

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<sup>129</sup> Mark 15:15, 21-39.

Joseph.<sup>130</sup> According to Matthew, Jesus was born in Bethlehem; Magi from the east came and paid homage to the child.<sup>131</sup> Matthew does not write about the period between Jesus' early childhood and his baptism. As with Mark, Matthew recognized that Jesus was the Son of God,<sup>132</sup> who had twelve consistent disciples, and performed both exorcisms and healings. Unlike Mark, Matthew focused greater attention on Jesus' teaching on the Law, almsgiving, and prayer. Matthew argued that the chief priests and elders opposed Jesus and turned him over to Pilate to be killed.<sup>133</sup> Jesus was soon crucified. Unlike Mark, who argued that three women went to visit the tomb of Jesus, Matthew insisted that Mary Magdalene and another woman named Mary went to visit Jesus' tomb.<sup>134</sup> Instead of meeting a young man in a white robe, the two women met an angel, who told them to go to the disciples, and declare that Jesus had risen from the dead.<sup>135</sup> At the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus appeared to the disciples and commissioned them to make disciples, baptize, and teach people to obey his teachings.<sup>136</sup>

Like Mark, Matthew never stated why he wrote his book. However, Matt 28:19-20 suggests that Matthew wanted people actively proselytizing and baptizing. Like Mark, Matthew encouraged active participation, but he specified that it shall include both preaching and baptizing. Matthew's biography also demonstrated that he believed that Jesus was divine at conception. The Gospel

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<sup>130</sup> Matt 1:18.

<sup>131</sup> Matt 2:1, 11.

<sup>132</sup> Matt 3:17.

<sup>133</sup> Matt 27:1-2.

<sup>134</sup> Matt 28:1.

<sup>135</sup> Matt 28:5, 7.

<sup>136</sup> Matt 28:19-20.

communicates that Jesus was divinely conceived and did not receive his divinity during baptism.

Around the last decade of the first century, Luke wrote his version of the life of Jesus. Unlike Mark and Matthew, Luke clearly stated his main agenda wanting readers to “know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.”<sup>137</sup> Luke admits that he was not writing a new story, but recognized that there were many stories of Jesus by the late first century.<sup>138</sup> Luke was not one of Jesus’ disciples and most likely never met Jesus.<sup>139</sup> Luke was a historian who interviewed individuals who had encountered Jesus and read other biographies about Jesus.<sup>140</sup> Like Matthew, Luke used Mark as one of his sources. Unlike Matthew, Luke opened his book with an account of the foretold birth of John the Baptist.<sup>141</sup> In Luke’s book, the reader discovers that Mary, Jesus’ mother, was related to John’s mother, Elizabeth.<sup>142</sup> He discussed Mary and Elizabeth’s interactions and also presented an account of John’s birth.<sup>143</sup>

Similar to Matthew, Luke included a birth narrative that included Jesus’ divine conception. He agreed with Matthew that Jesus was born in Bethlehem,<sup>144</sup> of a virgin named Mary,<sup>145</sup> who was impregnated by the Holy Spirit.<sup>146</sup> However, Luke and Matthew disagreed over the details of Jesus’ birth. Prior to Jesus’ birth,

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<sup>137</sup> Luke 1:4; NRSV.

<sup>138</sup> Luke 1:1.

<sup>139</sup> Luke 1:2.

<sup>140</sup> Luke 1:2-3.

<sup>141</sup> Luke 1:5-25.

<sup>142</sup> Luke 1:36.

<sup>143</sup> Luke 1:57-66.

<sup>144</sup> Luke 2:4.

<sup>145</sup> Luke 1:27.

<sup>146</sup> Luke 1:35.

Matthew implied that Mary and Joseph lived in Bethlehem,<sup>147</sup> while Luke argued that Mary and Joseph traveled from Nazareth to Joseph's ancestral town of Bethlehem because of a census ordered by Emperor Augustus.<sup>148</sup> It was in Luke's book that the images of Jesus being born in a manger and angels appearing to shepherds were first presented.<sup>149</sup> For Luke, there were no Magi from the east, but angels in the fields. Unlike Matthew, Luke records an account of Jesus being circumcised and presented in the temple of Jerusalem.<sup>150</sup> Luke was the only gospel writer to include a story of Jesus during his youth. Luke 2:41-52 gives the reader a glimpse into the wisdom and knowledge of the twelve year old Jesus in the Temple. Besides these differences, Luke concurs with Mark and Matthew that Jesus was the Son of God,<sup>151</sup> who had twelve disciples,<sup>152</sup> and performed both exorcisms and healings. Luke's Jesus was not favored by everyone. The chief priests and scribes turned Jesus over to Pilate to be killed.<sup>153</sup> Only in Luke does Jesus' trial move him from Pilate to Herod and back to Pilate, before he is sentenced to be crucified.<sup>154</sup> Luke differs from Matthew and Mark on who exactly visited Jesus' tomb. Luke mentions that "they" went to the tomb, but does not immediately indicate who "they" were.<sup>155</sup> Only later, in Luke 24:10, does Luke specify that "they" were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women. Unlike Mark and Matthew, Luke argued that *two* men

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<sup>147</sup> Matt 2:1.

<sup>148</sup> Luke 2:1, 4-5.

<sup>149</sup> Luke 2:6-20.

<sup>150</sup> Luke 2:21-40.

<sup>151</sup> Luke 3:21-22.

<sup>152</sup> Luke 6:12-16.

<sup>153</sup> Luke 22:66.

<sup>154</sup> Luke 23:6-16.

<sup>155</sup> Luke 24:1.

in dazzling clothes told them that Jesus rose from the dead.<sup>156</sup> Afterwards, only in Luke does Jesus appear on the road to Emmaus and later ascend into heaven.<sup>157</sup>

Twenty or so years after Matthew wrote his account of Jesus, John compiled a radically different biography of Jesus. Unlike the previous gospels, which started their timelines of Jesus in the early first century, John 1:1-18 placed Jesus at the beginning of time, with and as God. John emphasized that Jesus already existed apart from the world. The gospel writer also did not provide a birth narrative, perhaps because he argued that Jesus was always divine. For John, he did not believe that Jesus became divine at conception or at his baptism. This suggests that John's agenda was to illustrate that Jesus was always divine. He did not focus on how Jesus came into the world, but only that his audience knew that Jesus existed divinely apart from the world. Even more interestingly, John 1:45 recognized that Jesus was the son of Joseph from Nazareth, but he never acknowledged Jesus' mother by name.<sup>158</sup> Similar to the Synoptic Gospels, he used the phrase "Son of God;" however, John's gospel implies that Jesus and God are one.<sup>159</sup> John also rearranged the order of events in his biography. For example, the Synoptic Gospels placed Jesus' cleansing of the temple at the end of his ministry,<sup>160</sup> while John 2:13-25 placed the event at the beginning of his ministry. John 13:1, 29-30 also placed Jesus' crucifixion on the day of Passover, while the Synoptic Gospels placed Jesus' crucifixion on the day after the Passover

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<sup>156</sup> Luke 24:4-7.

<sup>157</sup> Luke 24:13-53.

<sup>158</sup> John 2:1-3; 19:25.

<sup>159</sup> John 8:58.

<sup>160</sup> Mark 11:15-19; Matt 21:12-13; and Luke 19:45-48.

Seder.<sup>161</sup> Although John's timeline was different than the previous biographers, archaeologists have confirmed that the places in John are historically accurate. Like the Synoptic writers, John argued that an opposition group wanted Jesus crucified. Similar to Mark 15:1, Matt 27:1-2, and Luke 22:66, John 18:3 confirmed that the chief priests took part in Jesus' crucifixion; however, John also argued that the Pharisees and the Jews as a collective people turned Jesus over to Pontius Pilate and had him killed.<sup>162</sup>

Besides his differing timeline, John 2:1-12, 4:46-54, and 5:1-18 agree with Mark, Matthew, and Luke that Jesus performed miracles. Unlike his colleagues, John never claimed that Jesus exorcized demons. Rather, he emphasized Jesus' divine connection with God and Jesus being humanity's key to eternal life.<sup>163</sup> John's main agenda was to write a biography of Jesus so that people would "come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah."<sup>164</sup> John 20:31 also articulated that through Jesus people might have life. John portrayed Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."<sup>165</sup> Other such stories of Jesus found only in John include the wedding at Cana,<sup>166</sup> the raising of Lazarus,<sup>167</sup> and Jesus washing the feet of his disciples.<sup>168</sup> Many of John's accounts have become popular stories that characterize the ministry of Jesus.

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<sup>161</sup> Mark 14:16; Matt 26:19; and Luke 22: 16.

<sup>162</sup> John 18:3; 36, 38; 19:7, 12.

<sup>163</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>164</sup> John 20:31.

<sup>165</sup> John 1:29.

<sup>166</sup> John 2:1-12.

<sup>167</sup> John 11:38-44.

<sup>168</sup> John 13:1-20.

As early as the second century, Christians treated Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John as one integrated story. As the story of Jesus developed, Christians used John 1:1-18 to argue that Jesus was God and that he had always existed. Christians created the iconic manger scene that intertwined the angels and shepherds of Luke 2:8-20 with Matthew's Magi from the east.<sup>169</sup> The three theologically-different baptism stories became one account that marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.<sup>170</sup> After Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, the wedding at Cana came to be seen as Jesus' first miracle.<sup>171</sup> Christians ignored John's absence of exorcisms and conflated all of the gospels' miracles, healings, exorcisms, and teachings into one continuous story.<sup>172</sup> For Christians, Jesus walked on water,<sup>173</sup> raised Lazarus from the dead,<sup>174</sup> cast out demons into pigs,<sup>175</sup> and preached his Sermon on the Mount.<sup>176</sup> He taught parables such as the Mustard Seed,<sup>177</sup> the Lost Sheep,<sup>178</sup> the Good Samaritan,<sup>179</sup> and the Prodigal Son.<sup>180</sup> For many Christians, the purpose of Jesus' ministry was encapsulated in John 3:16.<sup>181</sup> Christians recognized that an opposition group wanted Jesus dead. Although Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John differed on who exactly turned Jesus over to Pontius Pilate, Christians ignored the discrepancies between the gospels

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<sup>169</sup> Matt 2:1-12.

<sup>170</sup> Matt 3:13-22; Mark 1: 9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34.

<sup>171</sup> John 2:1-12.

<sup>172</sup> One author literally did this: Tatian's *Diatessaron*.

<sup>173</sup> Matt 13:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21.

<sup>174</sup> John 11:38-44.

<sup>175</sup> Matt 8:28-34.

<sup>176</sup> Matt 5-7; Luke 6:20-49.

<sup>177</sup> Matt 12:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-21.

<sup>178</sup> Matt 18:10-14; Luke 15:1-10.

<sup>179</sup> Luke 10:29-37.

<sup>180</sup> Luke 15:11-32.

<sup>181</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

and agreed that the Jews turned Jesus over to the Romans to be crucified. The specifics of Jesus' final days were summed up into three main events: Jesus was crucified on a cross,<sup>182</sup> placed in the tomb,<sup>183</sup> and rose from the dead on the third day.<sup>184</sup> Jesus appeared to his disciples and proved to Thomas that he was raised bodily from the dead.<sup>185</sup> Finally, Jesus ascended into heaven.<sup>186</sup>

Starting with Mark, the Canonical biographies of Jesus were written over three decades. Matthew and Luke most likely had a copy of Mark and used it as an outline for their biographies. John was different, however, and told a story of Jesus that did not follow the timeline of the Synoptic Gospels. Theology varies in each gospel and some gospels highlight different aspects of Jesus' ministry over others. By the second century, however, Christians did not view Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John as four separate biographies, but as a collective account retelling the same story.

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<sup>182</sup> Matt 27:33-44; Mark 15:22-32; Luke 23:33-43; John 19:16-30.

<sup>183</sup> Matt 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42.

<sup>184</sup> Matt 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10; 1 Cor 15:2-3.

<sup>185</sup> John 20:24-29.

<sup>186</sup> Luke 24:51.

## THE EMBELISHMENTS OF JESUS' EARLY LIFE

By the mid-second century, early Christians were collecting the four distinct biographies of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John and conflating them into a single story to explain the life of Jesus. Christian apologist, Tatian, did this quite literally, writing the Diatessaron. Even though the four gospels contained various contradictions and inconsistencies, they provided early Christians with information about Jesus, such as where he was born, his ministry, and his death and resurrection. However, these four gospel writers did not address every detail of Jesus' life. Specifically, they did not include detailed information about Mary and Joseph or Jesus' infancy. Only Matthew and Luke provided a birth narrative that addressed Mary's impregnation by the Holy Spirit and Joseph's adoptive role as Jesus' earthly father. Only Luke's gospel contained the singular account of Jesus as a 12-year old boy. According to scholar Oscar Cullmann, due to the lack of detailed information, early Christians created "legendary motifs" to fill in the gaps of Jesus' infancy.<sup>187</sup>

As soon as the four gospels were being collected and collected as a single unit, an unknown author, writing under the name of James (an allusion to Jesus' brother), wrote *The Protoevangelium of James* sometime after 150 C.E.<sup>188</sup>

Cullmann argued that the author, James, was not a Jewish-Christian, but a non-

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<sup>187</sup> Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha: Gospels and Related Writings* (rev. and enl. ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 1.415.

<sup>188</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.423.

Jew, because he lacked geographical understanding of Israel and was ignorant of Jewish customs.<sup>189</sup> James based his writing on the presumption that the reader had knowledge of the canonical infancy stories found in Matthew and Luke. Although scholars are not certain what James used as his primary sources, James appears to freely use portions of Matthew and Luke's birth narrative throughout his story.<sup>190</sup> His overall agenda was to demonstrate the sacredness of Mary and illustrate that Joseph had children from a previous marriage.

Unlike Matthew and Luke, James started his story with Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna. Similar to Abraham and Sarah's inability to have children, the story of Mary's parents was reminiscent of the great patriarch of the Hebrews. Joachim fasted for 40 days and nights,<sup>191</sup> while Anna lamented to God about her predicament.<sup>192</sup> Both Joachim and Anna were visited by messengers, who indicated that Anna would conceive a child—Joachim was visited by two messengers and Anna was visited by an angel.<sup>193</sup> James argued that Anna bore a girl, but he veers away from Jewish tradition and indicates that the couple had Mary raised in the Jerusalem Temple by the temple priests.<sup>194</sup> According to Cullmann, these claims are not characteristic of Jewish traditions, because Jews did not dedicate their children to be reared in the Temple. James also argued that the high priest commissioned Joseph to take care of Mary.<sup>195</sup> Unlike the canonical gospels, James argued that Joseph was old, already had sons, and was

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<sup>189</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.423-24.

<sup>190</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.423.

<sup>191</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.426.

<sup>192</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.427.

<sup>193</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.427.

<sup>194</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.429.

<sup>195</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.430.

unreceptive to taking in Mary.<sup>196</sup> Besides this information, James included several characters found in Luke's gospel, such as Mary's cousin Elizabeth and her husband, the priest Zacharias.<sup>197</sup> He also utilized Matthew's account of the Magi and King Herod's killing of the baby boys from Bethlehem.<sup>198</sup>

*The Protoevangelium of James* demonstrated that early Christians wanted to know more about the people who reared Jesus. This second century book illustrated that there was a growing interest in Christianity and that canonical texts did not provide all the answers. To explain the gaps, early Christians developed legends to provide more information about Jesus. *The Protoevangelium of James* is not one of the texts included in the New Testament canon. The book was written almost 50 years after the last canonical gospel was written, the Gospel of John. James also focused his attention more on Mary than on Jesus. He does not portray Mary and Joseph as the stereotypical loving couple that can be discerned from Matthew and Luke. Also, according to Cullmann, *The Protoevangelium of James* was written to combat Jewish accusations that Jesus was the illegitimate child of a soldier named Panthera.<sup>199</sup> In response, the author wrote under the *nom de plume* of Jesus' brother James. This fictitious James countered these accusations by arguing that Mary was a virgin, like Matthew and Luke, but that she never had intercourse with Joseph. He explained that Jesus' brothers and sisters mentioned in the gospels were half-brothers and sisters. With this

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<sup>196</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.430.

<sup>197</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.430.

<sup>198</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.436.

<sup>199</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.417.

explanation, early Christians developed the theology of Mary's perpetual virginity and combated Jewish accusations of Jesus' illegitimacy.<sup>200</sup>

Besides wanting to know more about Mary and Joseph, early Christians were interested with the boy Jesus. Out of the four canonical gospels, only Luke 2:39-52 provided a childhood story about Jesus. Early Christians wanted to know more about Jesus' early life. Like *The Protoevangelium of James*, Thomas the Israelite<sup>201</sup> wrote *The Infancy Story of Thomas* around the late second century<sup>202</sup> to illustrate Jesus as a boy. Using the pseudonym Thomas, the author tried to connect his work with the disciple Thomas, who was mentioned in the canonical gospels.<sup>203</sup> Thomas provides a different perspective on the personality and divinity of the child Jesus. According to Cullmann, the author was a gentile Christian, because *The Infancy Story of Thomas* does not demonstrate knowledge of things Jewish.<sup>204</sup>

Thomas' account fills in the gap between the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke and Luke 2:39-52. Thomas does not provide a birth narrative, but begins his story with Jesus as a five-year old boy. According to Thomas, Jesus was a divine child who was capable of performing otherworldly deeds. He had power over nature and was able to create living creatures out of clay.<sup>205</sup> Jesus also had the ability to raise people from the dead and perform healings.<sup>206</sup>

According to Thomas, the boy Jesus had a temper and quickly reacted to his

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<sup>200</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.418.

<sup>201</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.444.

<sup>202</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.442.

<sup>203</sup> Mark 3:18; Matt 10:3; Luke 6:15; John 11:6.

<sup>204</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.442.

<sup>205</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.444.

<sup>206</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.448.

surroundings.<sup>207</sup> At the end of his account, Thomas concluded his story with the boy Jesus at the Temple.<sup>208</sup>

Written in the later part of the second century, *The Infancy Story of Thomas* was not included in the New Testament. Thomas also described Jesus as a quick-tempered child who many people would have avoided, rather than worship as the Son of God. However, Thomas' story indicated that people wanted to know more about the young Jesus. According to Cullmann, although not part of the canon, *The Infancy Story of Thomas* rapidly spread among early Christian groups and was quickly translated into various languages.<sup>209</sup> Christians wanted to learn more about Jesus and Thomas helped to perpetuate and solidify these legendary stories.

*The Protoevangelium of James* and *The Infancy Story of Thomas* are two examples of the growing popularity of early Christians to understand Jesus' childhood. Both stories use fictitious names that reflects a direct connection to Jesus—James the brother of Jesus and Thomas the disciple. Although written after their deaths, early Christians continued to read these legendary accounts and translate the stories into various languages. Early Christians realized that there were gaps within the canonical gospels and they tried to reconcile these spaces by inventing stories about Mary and Joseph and the boy Jesus. This also demonstrated that Christianity was not dying off in the later second century, but was attracting new converts. Unlike Philostratus' biography of Apollonius, the canonical gospels did not include a very detailed early life of Jesus. Thus, as the

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<sup>207</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.444.

<sup>208</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.448-49.

<sup>209</sup> Schneemelcher, *New Testament*, 1.443.

Christian movement grew writers such as “James” and “Thomas” provided various details about Jesus’ early life.

## THE VERDICT

Apollonius and Jesus attracted followers during their lifetime. After their deaths, the followers of Apollonius and Jesus continued to follow their teachings. The followers of Apollonius, however, thrived only until the fourth century, while the followers of Christianity continue to flourish in the twenty-first century.

Although these two movements had similarities such as disciples, communities, and ethical teachings, there are more differences between the two are greater; these include the spread of the movements, the appeal of the ethics, the creation and development of doctrine. Ultimately, the major difference between the two movements was how the founders acted upon their beliefs.

Both Apollonius and Jesus had disciples during their lifetime and had an established community of followers after their deaths. According to Philostratus, the number of disciples that followed Apollonius fluctuated between one and 34.<sup>210</sup> Philostratus only named three of Apollonius' disciples—Menippus, Dioscorides, and Damis.<sup>211</sup> Out of these three disciples, Damis was Apollonius' closest disciple and friend.<sup>212</sup> After his death, the followers of Apollonius established their community in Tyana.<sup>213</sup> Philostratus indicated that many of these individuals were youths seeking wisdom.<sup>214</sup> He also argued that the main

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<sup>210</sup> Philostratus, 1.18; 1.3.

<sup>211</sup> Philostratus, 4.38.

<sup>212</sup> Philostratus, 1.3.

<sup>213</sup> Philostratus, 8.31.

<sup>214</sup> Philostratus, 8.31.

function of this community was to discuss the soul, study geometry, and read books.<sup>215</sup>

Like Apollonius, Jesus had disciples. According to the biographies of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, Jesus had twelve consistent disciples throughout his ministry. Out of these twelve, his biographers only agree on eleven disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon, and Judas Iscariot.<sup>216</sup> After he was crucified, the followers of Jesus remained in the vicinity of Jerusalem.<sup>217</sup> According to Matt 28:16-20, Jesus commissioned the disciples to make other followers, baptize others into the community, and teach others to obey his ethics.

Although Apollonius and Jesus both had disciples that formed communities, the Jesus movement which became known as “Christianity,” outlasted the Apollonius movement. According to Philostratus, the Apollonius community was centralized in Cappadocia and focused on the wealthy and intellectual community.<sup>218</sup> Instead of centralizing Christianity in one community, early followers of Jesus spread his teachings beyond Israel to Greece, Asia Minor, and Italy. By 50 C.E., Paul, an early convert, wrote letters to Christian communities in Corinth,<sup>219</sup> Galatia,<sup>220</sup> Philippi,<sup>221</sup> Thessalonica,<sup>222</sup> and Rome,<sup>223</sup> encouraging them to remain loyal to the teachings of Jesus. Unlike the teachings

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<sup>215</sup> Philostratus, 8.31.

<sup>216</sup> Mark 3:13-19a; Matt 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16.

<sup>217</sup> Mark 28:1-8; Matt 28:1-10; Luke 24:1-53; John 20:1-10, 19-29; 21:1-25.

<sup>218</sup> Philostratus, 8.31.

<sup>219</sup> 1 Cor 1:1-3.

<sup>220</sup> Gal 1:1-5.

<sup>221</sup> Phil 1:1-2.

<sup>222</sup> 1 Thess 1:1.

<sup>223</sup> Rom 1:1-7.

of Apollonius, the teachings of Jesus were focused on a greater portion of the Roman population, the uneducated and the poor. The majority of the population had to work to support a family and could not dedicate vast amounts of time to contemplate on philosophy. Apollonius' movement focused on a small segment of society that had the time, the money, and the ability to study philosophy. As a consequence, his movement did not appeal to the working classes. As demonstrated by Paul, Christianity, however, was compatible with everyday living.<sup>224</sup> Christianity appealed to the majority of society, while eventually attracting intellectuals such as Origen, Augustine, and Eusebius, who could dedicate vast amounts of time to developing Christian theology.

As these communities developed, the followers of Apollonius and Jesus lived according to a prescribed ethical lifestyle. Apollonius practiced a disciplined standard of living that regulated what could be put into and on the body. He taught that individuals should refrain from consuming meat and alcohol because it interfered with the mind and the soul.<sup>225</sup> He also argued that followers should neither wear shoes, wear any type of material made from animals, nor cut their hair.<sup>226</sup> Apollonius believed that people should live a celibate lifestyle that promoted self-control of bodily passions.<sup>227</sup> He also maintained that people should not sacrifice animals to the gods, but only make offerings that were valuable possessions, such as frankincense.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Acts 18:1-3.

<sup>225</sup> Philostratus, 1.8.

<sup>226</sup> Philostratus, 1.8.

<sup>227</sup> Philostratus, 1.13.

<sup>228</sup> Philostratus, 1.31.

Just as Apollonius lived by an ethical creed, Jesus developed an ethic based on one's relationship with God and other human beings. Jesus taught that people should not retaliate, but love their enemies.<sup>229</sup> He also believed that people should always help other people and never deny them their requests.<sup>230</sup> Jesus valued other people and desired that his followers emulate these characteristics. He also expected his followers not to judge others, but to live in harmony with one another.<sup>231</sup> By not judging, followers could avoid hypocrisy.<sup>232</sup> He also rejected the value placed on earthly possessions,<sup>233</sup> anxiety,<sup>234</sup> and scandals.<sup>235</sup> If someone committed a wrong, Jesus believed that people should forgive that person and not hold that sin against him or her.<sup>236</sup> The most important ethical concept Jesus developed, however, was to love the Lord with all one's heart and to also love one's neighbor as oneself.<sup>237</sup>

Both Apollonius and Jesus developed a system of living. Apollonius taught self-denial, but did not address how people should interact with one another. Jesus, however, encouraged ethical relationships where people were held accountable to each other and God. Jesus did not practice asceticism, but helped to reform people's social interactions. Jesus' lifestyle was relatable to everyone. For example, he attended parties,<sup>238</sup> socialized with tax collectors,<sup>239</sup> and had

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<sup>229</sup> Matt 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-29.

<sup>230</sup> Matt 5:42; Luke 6:30.

<sup>231</sup> Matt 5:48; 7:1-2; Luke 6:36-38.

<sup>232</sup> Matt 7:3-5; Luke 6:41-42.

<sup>233</sup> Matt 6:19-21; Luke 12:33-34.

<sup>234</sup> Matt 6:25-33; Luke 12:22-31.

<sup>235</sup> Matt 18:7; Luke 17:1.

<sup>236</sup> Matt 18:15, 21-22; Luke 17:3-4.

<sup>237</sup> Mark 12:29-31; Matt 22:37-39; Luke 10:27.

<sup>238</sup> John 2:1-11.

problems with his family.<sup>240</sup> Apollonius was not relatable to a wide audience. For example, to follow Apollonius, a follower had to deny themselves marriage, change how they dressed, and watch what they ate and drank. Unlike addressing issues that affected the majority of the population, Apollonius focused on self-denial, instead of how to live a harmonious lifestyle. On the other hand, Jesus challenged individuals to change their behaviors, reevaluate their priorities, and focus on God. Because he reformed social interaction, the ethics of Jesus appealed to a wider audience.

Despite encouraging ethical relationships, Jesus died for his beliefs, while Apollonius refused to die for his philosophy. Before his interrogation with Domitian, Apollonius told Damis that philosophers should not fear death. Rather, a philosopher should choose an honorable death so that the enemy cannot defame philosophy.<sup>241</sup> During his trial, however, Apollonius did not chose to die on behalf of his philosophy, but translated himself from Domitian's court to safety.<sup>242</sup> Apollonius choose his own life over his philosophy. Even before this incident, Apollonius compromised philosophy for safety. Before they travelled to Rome, Apollonius instructed Damis to cut his hair, wear a linen cloak, and not act like a Pythagorean philosopher, because he did not want Damis to be associated with him.<sup>243</sup> In both circumstances, Apollonius chose safety over his philosophy. He did not demonstrate self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to his teachings. Apollonius followed his own teachings when they were most convenient for him.

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<sup>239</sup> Luke 19:1-10.

<sup>240</sup> Mark 3:31-35; Matt 12:46-50; Luke 8:19-21.

<sup>241</sup> Philostratus, 7.31.

<sup>242</sup> Philostratus, 8.8.

<sup>243</sup> Philostratus, 7.15.

Unlike the Greek philosopher, Jesus died for his ideas. Before he was crucified, the Jewish high priest interrogated Jesus, and he was then beaten by the religious authorities, spat upon, and ultimately condemned to death.<sup>244</sup> After the Jewish authorities denounced him, Pilate questioned Jesus and had him flogged<sup>245</sup> and crucified.<sup>246</sup> During these trials, Jesus did not defend himself. Unlike Apollonius, Jesus refused safety and accepted the consequences. While hanging on the cross, Jesus forgave his accusers.<sup>247</sup> Instead of cursing his enemies and denying his teachings, Jesus maintained his beliefs till his death.

The death of Jesus demonstrated a commitment to one's faith, while the actions of Apollonius illustrated that his ideology was only applicable when it was convenient. The crucifixion of Jesus became the foundation for Christian theology and doctrine. Because of the manner of his death, the followers of Jesus tried to explain why he died. As early as the first century, Paul argued that Jesus died on the cross to reconcile humanity with God because of original sin.<sup>248</sup> Besides Paul, John argued that Jesus was the "Lamb of God" who took away sin.<sup>249</sup> John explained that the death of Jesus was similar to the sacrificial lambs killed during Passover. In essence, Jesus was the final Passover lamb, who atoned for humanity's sins and thus made animal sacrifice obsolete. With the crucifixion

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<sup>244</sup> Mark 14:53-62, 67-68; Matt 26:57-65; Luke 22:54-71.

<sup>245</sup> Luke 23:22.

<sup>246</sup> Mark 15:26; Matt 27:15; Luke 23:25.

<sup>247</sup> Luke 23:24.

<sup>248</sup> Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:20-23.

<sup>249</sup> John 1:29.

of Jesus, theologians developed soteriology and explained that the death of Jesus allowed believers to enter into heaven.<sup>250</sup>

Along with theology, the early Christian community developed doctrines. Paul laid the groundwork for the development of Christian theology. In Galatians and Acts, Paul visited the disciples to learn the basic information about Jesus.<sup>251</sup> In Romans, Paul's salutation demonstrated early tenets of Christianity.<sup>252</sup> For example, Jesus was a descendent of King David, declared the Son of God, and resurrected from the dead.<sup>253</sup> Paul demonstrated that early Christians were passing down fundamental tenets of the faith. Around the beginning of the second century, a Christian wrote the *Didache*, or *Teaching of the Apostles*.<sup>254</sup> The *Didache* was an early attempt to develop a written doctrine for the faith.<sup>255</sup> In the fourth century, Christians developed the Nicene Creed, which codified the tenets of Christianity.<sup>256</sup>

There is no evidence, on the other hand, that the followers of Apollonius developed a theology to explain why Apollonius translated out of Rome. Philostratus indicated that Apollonius may have died at an old age<sup>257</sup> or disappeared within a cult temple.<sup>258</sup> Presently, there is no evidence to suggest that the followers of Apollonius spread outside the borders of Cappadocia.

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<sup>250</sup> 1 Thess 5:9.

<sup>251</sup> Acts 9:26-31; Gal 1:11-24.

<sup>252</sup> Rom 1:1-7.

<sup>253</sup> Rom 1:3-4.

<sup>254</sup> Stephen M. Miller and Robert V. Huber, *The Bible: A History, The Making and Impact of the Bible* (Intercourse, Penn.: Good Books, 2004), 99.

<sup>255</sup> Miller and Huber, *The Bible*, 99.

<sup>256</sup> W.H.C. Frend, "The Constantinian Revolution 305-30," in *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 498-99.

<sup>257</sup> Philostratus, 8.29.

<sup>258</sup> Philostratus, 8.30.

Philostratus does not provide evidence that the followers of Apollonius were passing down doctrine from one generation to the next. Philostratus does show, however, as late as the second century, people were following certain aspects of the teachings of Apollonius. He does not indicate that these followers were living an ascetic lifestyle like Apollonius.

Besides these differences, the death of Jesus perpetuated the growth of Christianity. This is not unique, however, to Christianity; it is also found in the history of philosophy. The founder of Platonist thought was not Plato, but his teacher Socrates. Socrates was a philosopher who criticized Athenian democracy.<sup>259</sup> In 399 B.C.E., an Athenian jury convicted Socrates of “impiety and corrupting the young” and sentenced him to death.<sup>260</sup> Instead of fleeing the city, Socrates drank poison and died for his beliefs.<sup>261</sup> Like the followers of Jesus, Plato developed and preserved the teachings of his teacher. Between the first century B.C.E. and the second century C.E., Platonism evolved into Middle-Platonism. This movement further developed in the third and fourth centuries and was called Neo-Platonism.<sup>262</sup>

Socrates’ example demonstrates that philosophical movements have the capacity to survive and develop over a long period of time. The movements of Socrates and Jesus have a common element: the founder died for his ideas, which motivated followers to develop and continue the teachings. The Apollonius movement lacks this critical element and may explain why the Apollonius

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<sup>259</sup> M.R. Wright, *Introducing Greek Philosophy* (Los Angeles: University of California, 2010), 22.

<sup>260</sup> Wright, *Introducing*, 22.

<sup>261</sup> Wright, *Introducing*, 22.

<sup>262</sup> Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 391.

movement disappeared. Apollonius did not die for his beliefs. He had the opportunity to die for his ideology, but he chose his life over his philosophy. His potential followers of Apollonius may have negatively interpreted Apollonius' action to flee for safety as a reason not to continue to follow his philosophy.

In the fourth century, Christianity dominated the Roman Empire. For 300 years, Christians were persecuted and their religious texts were destroyed. In 313 C.E., however, Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Toleration and it became legal to practice Christianity.<sup>263</sup> Constantine recognized that Christianity was a legitimate religion in the empire and he helped to expand the religion. He ordered Christians to write Bibles and he requested 50 Bibles for the churches he planned to build in Constantinople.<sup>264</sup> He also diverted funds from pagan shrines to popularize the spread of Christianity.<sup>265</sup> Constantine's Christian successors continued to support Christianity and passed tough laws against pagan cults.<sup>266</sup> They destroyed pagan shrines in Jerusalem, Mambre, and Aphaca. In particular, Christians destroyed a shrine dedicated to Apollonius of Tyana, whom Hierocles had argued was superior to Jesus.<sup>267</sup> Besides destroying the shrine, Eusebius wrote a book against the Apollonius movement.<sup>268</sup> Between 370 and 380, paganism in Cappadocia ceased to trouble Christian leaders.<sup>269</sup> In 380, Emperor Theodosius ordered that people must follow the "single deity 'of the Father, Son,

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<sup>263</sup> Miller and Huber, *Bible*, 94.

<sup>264</sup> Miller and Huber, *Bible*, 94.

<sup>265</sup> Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 668.

<sup>266</sup> Fox, *Pagans*, 671.

<sup>267</sup> Fox, *Pagans*, 671.

<sup>268</sup> Fox, *Pagans*, 672.

<sup>269</sup> Fox, *Pagans*, 668.

and the Holy Ghost under the concept of equal majesty of the Holy Trinity.’’<sup>270</sup>

In essence, the emperor only recognized and supported Christianity.

People followed the teachings of Apollonius until the late fourth century. After Constantine, Christianity was supported financially and Roman laws catered to Christian ideology. Unfortunately for Apollonius’ movement, Christian emperors attacked pagan cults. Although Apollonius was a philosopher, his movement was tied to pagan ideology and was considered a threat to Christianity. Because of this threat, Christian emperors quickly destroyed the shrine to Apollonius and Eusebius wrote a book disproving the validity of Apollonius. As early as 370, paganism ceased to threaten the growth of Christianity in Cappadocia. By 380, Christianity was made the official religion of Rome and removed any hope of revitalizing Apollonius’ movement.

Apollonius and Jesus had many similarities, such as a divine birth, miracles, and exorcisms. They attracted followers and were able to draw in large crowds of people. The Jesus movement, however, outlasted the Apollonius movement. Unlike Apollonius, Jesus had twelve consistent followers who eventually spread his movement throughout the Roman Empire. Paul helped to further develop Christian theology and doctrine. The Apollonius movement remained stagnant in Cappadocia and did not spread beyond the borders of Asia Minor. There is no evidence that the followers of Apollonius developed his doctrines. The major difference between the two movements, however, was how the leaders applied their beliefs. Jesus died for his teachings, while Apollonius

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<sup>270</sup> Charles Freeman, *A New History of Early Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 247.

compromised his ideology for safety. Socrates example shows that even a philosophical movement can exist and thrive because of the death of the philosopher. The ideas of Socrates were developed in Platonism, Middle-Platonism, and Neo-Platonism. Just as Socrates' movement continued into the Middle Ages, so to the Jesus movement has lasted for almost 2,000 years. This devotion appealed to others and the Jesus movement developed into Christianity.

Under Constantine, Christianity rapidly expanded and thrived in the Roman Empire. He commissioned churches, Bibles, and holy sites that helped to legitimize Christianity as a growing religion in the empire. Because of Constantine, Christianity was no longer illegal in the empire, but rivaled pagan cults and the Apollonius movement. By the middle of the fourth century, some Christians were focusing their resources in Asia Minor to specifically destroy the threat caused by the followers of Apollonius. By the late fourth century, Christian writers were no longer writing about pagan threats in Cappadocia. This signaled the end of the Apollonius movement. Christian Emperor Theodosius, however, made certain that no pagan cult could ever rival Christianity and decreed that Christianity was the official religion of Rome. With this action, the legacy of Apollonius was over and would never again rival Christianity.

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