

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

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

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



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



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

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

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[1st page of article]

NOTES AND STUDIES

THE DATE AND AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLE
TO DIOGNETUS

THE Epistle to Diognetus comes to us from a single imperfect MS, which perished at Strasbourg in 1870 during the Franco-German war. It is considered a patristic gem, but its date and authorship are a problem as yet unsolved. It is not mentioned by Eusebius, St Jerome, Photius, or any other ecclesiastical writer of ancient or medieval times. In the MS it was ascribed with several other treatises to Justin Martyr, but the difference of its style from that of Justin soon led to doubts, and since its first publication in 1592 it has been assigned to a variety of dates ranging from before 70 to about A.D. 300, and for its author have been suggested, besides Justin, such names as Apollos the contemporary of St Paul, Clement of Rome, and the heretic Marcion, while some have imagined it to be a forgery of the sixteenth century. More recent opinion has tended to place the Epistle in the latter half of the second century or somewhere in the third, and this view appears to me to be the only one which can claim probability.

I have long entertained the idea that the *ad Diognetum* might have been written by Hippolytus of Rome, but it is only within the last year that I have noticed a parallel between the Epistle and Hippolytus which is of such a kind as to demand that the possibility of his being its author should be seriously considered. The parallel texts are given below, and when they are studied together and each severally compared with certain passages of Irenaeus, it will, I think, be found difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Epistle was written, if not by Hippolytus, at least by one who was, like Hippolytus, a student of Irenaeus. The passage from Hippolytus occurs near the end of the *Philosophumena*, where he has finished with the philosophers and heretics and is giving his own statement of the true faith.

Ad Diognet. vii 1-5.

Philos. x 33.

<p>οὐ γὰρ ἐπίγειον, ὡς ἔφην,¹ εὐρημα τοῦτ' αὐτοῖς παρεδόθη, οὐδὲ θνητὴν ἐπίνοιαν φυλάσσειν οὕτως ἀξίωσιν ἐπιμελῶς, οὐδὲ ἀνθρωπίνων οἰκο-</p>	<p>τοιαύτη ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς πίστις, ᾧ πάντες ἄνθρωποι, οὐ κενοῖς ῥήμασι πειθομένων, οὐδὲ σχεδιάσμασι καρ- δίας συναρπαζομένων, οὐδὲ πιθα-</p>
---	--

¹ The reference must be to c. v 3: οὐ μὴν ἐπινοία τιμὴ καὶ φροντίδι πολυπραγμάτων ἀνθρώπων μαθήματα τοιοῦτ' αὐτοῖς ἐστὶν εἰρημένον, οὐδὲ δόγματος ἀνθρώπινου προεστᾶσιν ὡς περ ἔνιοι. Comp. Hippol. *de Antichr.* 2: ὅθεν καὶ ἡμεῖς τὰ ἐπ' αὐτῶν (the prophets) προειρημένα καλῶς μαθητευθέντες, λέγομεν οὐκ ἐξ ἰδίας ἡμῶν ἐπινοίας. οὐδὲν γὰρ καινοτομεῖν ἐπιχειροῦμεν, ἀλλ' ἢ τὰ πάσαι προειρημένα ῥητά.

Ad Diognet. vii 1-5.*Philos.* x 33

νομίαν μυστηρίων πεπίστευνται. ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἀληθῶς ὁ παντοκράτωρ καὶ παντοκτίστης καὶ ἀόρατος θεός, αὐτὸς ἀπ' οὐρανῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ τὸν λόγον τὸν ἅγιον καὶ ἀπερινόητον ἀνθρώποις ἐνίδρυσε καὶ ἐγκατεστήριξε ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν, οὐ καθάπερ ἂν τις εἰκάσειεν ἄνθρωπος, ὑπηρέτην τινὰ πέμψας ἢ ἄγγελον ἢ ἄρχοντα ἢ τινα τῶν διεπόντων τὰ ἐπίγεια ἢ τινα τῶν πεπιστευμένων τὰς ἐν οὐρανοῖς διοικήσεις, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν τὸν τεχνίτην καὶ δημιουργὸν τῶν ὅλων, ᾧ τοὺς οὐρανούς ἔκτισεν. . . . Ἄρα γε, ὡς ἀνθρώπων ἂν τις λογίσαιτο, ἐπὶ τυραννίδι καὶ φόβῳ καὶ καταπλήξει; οὐ μὲν οὖν· ἀλλ' ἐν ἐπιεικείᾳ (καὶ) πραύτητι ὡς βασιλεὺς πέμπων υἱὸν βασιλέα ἔπεμψεν, ὡς θεὸν ἔπεμψεν, ὡς (ἄνθρωπον) πρὸς ἀνθρώπους ἔπεμψεν, ὡς σώζων ἔπεμψεν, ὡς πείθων, οὐ βιαζόμενος· βία γὰρ οὐ πρόσσεστι τῷ θεῷ. ἔπεμψεν ὡς καλῶν, οὐ διώκων.

νότητι εὐπειρίας λόγων θελγομένω, ἀλλὰ δυνάμει θεῆς λόγοις λελαλημένοις οὐκ ἀπειθούντων. καὶ ταῦτα θεὸς ἐκέλευε λόγῳ, ὁ δὲ λόγος ἐφθέγγετο λέγων, δι' αὐτῶν ἐπιστρέφων τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐκ παρακοῆς, οὐ βία ἀνάγκης δουλαγωγῶν, ἀλλ' ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ¹ ἐκουσίῳ προαιρέσει καλῶν. τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἐν ὑστέροις ἀπέστειλεν ὁ πατήρ οὐκέτι διὰ προφήτου λαλεῖν, οὐ σκοτεινῶς κηρυσσόμενον ὑπονοεῖσθαι θέλων, ἀλλ' αὐτοψῆι φανερωθῆναι τοῦτον λέγων (ῥ' λόγον), ἵνα κόσμος ὁρᾷν δυσωπηθῆῃ οὐκ ἐντελλόμενον διὰ προσώπου προφητῶν οὐδὲ δι' ἀγγέλου φοβούμενα ψυχὴν, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν παρόντα τὸν λελαληκότα.

In these two passages the theme and the argument are much the same, but with a difference in presentation which would be sufficiently accounted for by the different scope and appeal of the works from which the passages are drawn: the Christian religion, or the true faith, is no invention of man, but revealed by God, and revealed not through the intervention of any subordinate being, whether prophet or angel, but by God Himself speaking in the person of His own Son and Logos, who was sent to save men not by constraint and fear, but by invitation and persuasion and with their own free consent. The structure also of the two passages is similar, as the words printed in heavy type will help to shew.

¹ ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ: so the MS. The later editors have adopted ἐπ' ἐλευθερίαν, but surely incorrectly: the freedom here in question is that of man's will, with which he was created and which he has never lost. Cf. Irenaeus *Haer.* iv 59: 'quia liberum eum Deus fecit ab initio, habentem suam potestatem . . . et non coactum a Deo'—a passage which, as will presently be seen, Hippolytus has here in mind. Translate: 'but calling freely, by voluntary choice'. For ἐπί with the dative cf. ἐπὶ τυραννίδι καὶ φόβῳ in *ad Diognet.* opposite, where also καλῶν is used absolutely.

But there is more than this general resemblance. In two places not only the thought but the language of the passages comes so closely together that accidental coincidence seems out of the question: (1) οὐ . . . ὑπῆρέτην τινὰ πέμψας ἢ ἄγγελον . . . ἀλλ' αὐτὸν τὸν τεχνίτην κτλ. (Epist.), compared with οὐκέτι διὰ προφήτου λαλεῖν . . . οὐδὲ δι' ἀγγέλου . . . ἀλλ' αὐτὸν παρόντα τὸν λελαληκότα (*Philos.*); (2) ὡς πείθων, οὐ βιαζόμενος· βία γὰρ οὐ πρόσεστι τῷ θεῷ. ἐπεμψεν ὡς καλῶν, οὐ διώκων (Epist.), compared with οὐ βία ἀνάγκης δουλαγωγῶν, ἀλλ' ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ ἐκουσίῳ προαιρέσει καλῶν (*Philos.*). Such parallels in thought and expression seem to require for their explanation either dependence of one passage on the other, or common authorship. In favour of the second alternative something like a positive argument can be found.

In speaking of the large debt which Hippolytus owed to Irenaeus Lightfoot has said that 'it is hardly possible to read any considerable fragment of his other extant works [he has been speaking of the *Philosophumena*, where the debt is obvious] without stumbling upon some thought or mode of expression which reminds us of Irenaeus and the Asiatic elders'.¹ It will presently be shewn beyond all doubt that in *Philos.* x 33 Hippolytus is using Irenaeus, not only in the passage quoted above, but in the lines which immediately follow it.

If there be question, then, of ascribing an anonymous work to Hippolytus, coincidence in that work with Irenaeus, and still more coincidence at once with Irenaeus and Hippolytus, will favour the ascription. Now the idea that God does not convert man 'by force', found in both of our parallel passages above, is one that is insisted upon over and over again by Irenaeus, and in language that is sometimes nearer to that of Hippolytus, sometimes nearer to that of the Epistle to Diognetus. In his *Epideixis*, or *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, translated from the Armenian by Dr Armitage Robinson, Irenaeus uses the words 'not compelling as God . . . but giving advice' (c. 55). In his note to this passage Dr Robinson compares *ad Diognet.* vii, but has not noticed the οὐ βία of *Philos.* x 33. He also gives several cross-references to Irenaeus, which must here be cited in fuller form and with the addition of one or two further passages. I insert the Greek where it is extant.

A. *Haer.* iv 59 (ed. Harvey). Illud autem quod ait: 'Quoties volui colligere filios tuos, et noluisti', veterem legem libertatis hominis manifestavit, quia liberum eum Deus fecit ab initio, habentem suam potestatem, sicut et suam animam, ad utendum sententia Dei voluntarie et non coactum a Deo. **Vis enim a Deo non fit**, sed bona sententia adest illi semper (βία γὰρ) θεῷ οὐ πρόσεστιν· ἀγαθὴ δὲ γνώμη πάντοτε συμπάρεστιν αὐτῷ). Et propter hoc consilium quidem bonum dat

¹ *Clement of Rome* vol. ii p. 422.

hominibus. Posuit autem in homine potestatem electionis, quemadmodum et in angelis.¹

B. *Ibid.* 60. 1. Et omnia talia [quae] liberum et suae potestatis ostendunt hominem, et quia consilio instruat Deus, adhortans nos ad subiunctionem sibi et **avertens ab incredulitate, non tamen de violentia cogens** (ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα τὸ αὐτεξούσιον ἐπιδείκνυσι τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ τὸ συμβουλευτικὸν τοῦ θεοῦ . . . [Lat. shews that some words are omitted] ἀποτρέποντος μὲν τοῦ ἀπειθεῖν αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ μὴ βιαζομένου).

C. *Ibid.* 60. 2. Et propter hoc Paulus ait : 'Omnia licent, sed non omnia expediunt' : et libertatem referens hominis, quapropter et omnia licent, **non cogente eum Deo.**

D. *Ibid.* 64. 3. Nec enim lumen deficit propter eos qui semetipsos excaecaverunt. . . . **Neque lumen cum magna necessitate subiiciet sibi quemquam; neque Deus coget** (οὔτε τὸ φῶς ἐξασθενεῖ διὰ τοὺς ἑαυτοὺς τυφλῶντας . . . μήτε τοῦ φωτὸς μετ' ἀνάγκης δουλαγωγούντος τινα, μήτε τοῦ θεοῦ βιαζομένου) eum qui nolit continere eius artem.

E. *Haer.* v i. i. . . . iuste etiam adversus ipsam conversus est apostasiam, ea quae sunt sua redimens ab ea, **non cum vi, . . . sed secundum suadelam**, quemadmodum decebat Deum **suadentem et non vim inferentem** accipere quae vellet.

I venture to submit that in this point of God's 'not using force' Irenaeus is under contribution both by Hippolytus and in the Epistle to Diognetus.

That Irenaeus stands behind Hippolytus here it is not possible to doubt, for immediately after the passage which we are considering (*Philos.* x 33) Hippolytus goes on:—

τοῦτον ἐγνωμεν ἐκ παρθένου σώμα ἀνειληφότα καὶ τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον διὰ καινῆς πλάσεως πεφορηκότα, ἐν βίῳ διὰ πάσης ἡλικίας ἐληλυθότα, ἵνα πάση ἡλικίᾳ αὐτὸς νόμος γενηθῆ καὶ σκοπὸν τὸν ἴδιον ἄνθρωπον πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐπιδείξῃ παρών.

With which cf. Iren. *Haer.* ii 33. 1 :—

Ideo **per omnem venit aetatem**, et infantibus infans factus, sanctificans infantes; in parvulis parvulus . . . **exemplum** illis pietatis effectus . . . in iuvenibus iuvenis, **exemplum** iuvenibus fiens, &c.

After a few words Hippolytus continues:—

τοῦτον ἄνθρωπον ἴσμεν (ἐκ) τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς φυράματος γεγονέναι. εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὑπῆρξε, μάτην νομοθετεῖ μιμῆσθαι τὸν διδάσκαλον. εἰ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐτέρας ἐτύγχανεν οὐσίας, τί τὰ ὅμοια κελεύει ἐμοὶ τῷ ἀσθενεῖ πεφυκότι, καὶ πῶς οὗτος ἀγαθὸς καὶ δίκαιος;

¹ Cf. Justin 2 *Apol.* 7 ἀλλ' ὅτι αὐτεξούσιον τὸ τε τῶν ἀγγέλων γένος καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός, κτλ. On the debt of Irenaeus to Justin see Dr Robinson's Introduction to the *Demonstration* of Irenaeus.

Cf. Iren. *Haer.* iii 19. 5:—

Si enim non vere passus est, nulla gratia ei, cum nulla fuerit passio; et nos, cum incipimus pati, seducens videbitur, adhortans nos vapulare et alteram praebere maxillam, si ipse illud non prior in veritate passus est . . . et nos seducit, adhortans perferre ea quae ipse non pertulit. Erimus autem et super magistrum, dum patimur et sustinemus quae neque passus est neque sustinuit magister. (And a few lines farther on—§ 6—we have a repetition of the words taken over by Hippolytus): Quapropter et **per omnem venit aetatem**, omnibus restituens eam quae est ad Deum communionem.

When, therefore, Hippolytus writes, in the passage under comment: ἐπιστρέφων τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐκ παρακοῆς, οὐ βία ἀνάγκης δουλαγωγῶν κτλ., it is plain that here also he is dependent on Irenaeus, who has said the same thing in nearly identical words: ἀποτρέποντος μὲν τοῦ ἀπειθεῖν αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ μὴ βιαζόμενος (passage B above), and: μήτε . . . μετ' ἀνάγκης δουλαγωγούντος τινα, μήτε τοῦ θεοῦ βιαζομένου (passage D).

Turning now to *ad Diognet.* vii, we find there even closer agreement with Irenaeus: notably in the aphoristic phrase βία γὰρ οὐ πρόσεστι τῷ θεῷ—where, however, we miss the balancing clause found in Irenaeus, ἀγαθὴ δὲ γνώμη κτλ. (passage A); but also in the immediately preceding words ὡς πείθων, οὐ βιαζόμενος, answering to 'suadentem et non vim inferentem' in Irenaeus (passage E). And to οὐ βιαζόμενος there are at least four other parallels in Irenaeus: in B (ἀλλὰ μὴ βιαζομένου); in C ('non cogente eum Deo'); in D (μήτε τοῦ θεοῦ βιαζομένου); and in *Demonstr.* 55 ('not compelling as God').

It cannot be questioned that there is literary borrowing here on one side or the other. Are we, then, to suppose that Irenaeus knew and made use of the Epistle? To me his repeated insistence on the idea that God 'does not use force' to constrain man's will suggests rather that the thought and expression are his own. Βία θεῷ οὐ πρόσεστιν is an axiom which is set down by Irenaeus at the very beginning of his discussion of man's free will, and the idea which it embodies is fundamental to his whole treatment of the subject; hence it seems very improbable that he was indebted for this idea to an isolated phrase in a nameless writer. I conclude therefore that the author of the Epistle to Diognetus was, like Hippolytus, familiar with the works of Irenaeus. If this be accepted we have brought down the date of the Epistle to the close of the second century, and to the age of Hippolytus, *at the earliest*.

But in our parallel passages coincidence between the Epistle and Hippolytus is not confined to the point at which both can be illustrated from Irenaeus. Besides this there is, as already noted, a general correspondence in the matter and argument, and to some extent in the

structure, of the two passages ; and there is, moreover, another particular coincidence in what is said on the one side as to God's sending to mankind not any 'subaltern *or* angel', but Him by whom the world was made (Epist.), and on the other side as to His sending His own Logos, who speaks to men 'no longer by prophet *or* angel', but present in His own person (Hippolytus). But further, even in the passages about 'using force' there is a feature common to the Epistle and Hippolytus which appears to be independent of Irenaeus—the participle *καλῶν*, used in the same absolute construction. Irenaeus uses in this connexion 'counselling', 'persuading' (so too *ad Diognet.* vii), and 'exhorting' ('adhortans', which may stand for *παρακαλῶν*), but not, so far as I have noticed, *καλῶν* 'vocans', or 'advocans'; and the word 'calling' involves a slightly different point of view: it suggests a 'personal element', such as might easily have been introduced twice over by a single writer in adapting the language of Irenaeus.

We are left, then, with three alternatives: (*a*) that the Epistle was used both by Irenaeus and Hippolytus; (*b*) that Irenaeus was used independently by Hippolytus and the author of the Epistle, one of whom also made use of the other; (*c*) that Irenaeus was used by Hippolytus only, who *is* the author of the Epistle. The last of these solutions, as it is the simplest, so to me it appears the most probable. I do not think that Irenaeus is indebted to the Epistle, but *vice versa*; and a study of the parallel passages with which we are dealing does not suggest to me that there has been actual copying of one author by another: the kind of agreement which they present would, in my opinion, result more naturally from common authorship; and the hypothesis of a pair of contemporary (or nearly contemporary) writers both using Irenaeus for the same matter, and one of them influenced also by the other, is not on the face of it a very easy one.

Here for the present I leave this question. The suggestion that Hippolytus is the author of The Epistle to Diognetus is capable of reinforcement by some further parallels; but these, though not without weight as arguments in support, are of a slighter character than that already discussed, and so I prefer to hold them over in the hope that what has now been pointed out may evoke some comment of an encouraging nature which would make it seem worth while to pursue the matter further.

One objection, however, which is likely to be raised may be anticipated here—that on the count of style. I can only say as to this that I have considered the point to the best of my ability, and that, although the Epistle offers a contrast to the usual style, or styles, of Hippolytus (for his manner of writing varies greatly according to his subject or his mood), yet it was precisely certain phrases and modes of expression in

the Epistle that first led me to think of Hippolytus as its author. That it is composed with more attention to literary form than is usual in his writings may be due in part to the fact of its being a letter, and addressed to a cultured pagan. In regard to our Epistle the late Abbot Chapman has said: 'The writer is a practised master of classical eloquence, and a fervent Christian. There is no resemblance to the public apologies of the second century. A closer affinity is with the "Ad Donatum" of St Cyprian, which is similarly addressed to an inquiring pagan.'¹ This analogy is very pertinent to our present enquiry. In the matter of style there is no more difficulty (so it seems to me) in accepting Hippolytus as the author of the *ad Diognetum* than there is in accepting St Cyprian as the author of the *ad Donatum*. The latter treatise is quite as far removed from the ecclesiastical style of St Cyprian as the former is from that of Hippolytus; and the difference in each case may be traced to the same cause.

R. H. CONNOLLY.

A NEGATIVE GOLDEN RULE IN THE SYRIAC ACTS OF THOMAS

IN the JOURNAL for October 1934 (xxxv 351) I pointed out that the negative Golden Rule which occurs in Jewish Aramaic in a famous saying attributed to Rabbi Hillel was widely current in Syriac in the same concise form; also that it is given by Aphraates and Philoxenus in connexion with the commandments quoted by our Lord to the rich man in the Gospel, and that Philoxenus cites it four times as if it were actually part of the Gospel text.

I can now add that the negative Rule in something very like the same form had a place also in the early Syriac *Acts of Judas Thomas*, though it does not appear in the text edited by Dr Wright from a MS of the tenth century. In what follows I assume with Nöldeke, Burkitt, and others that these *Acts* were written in Syriac, or at least that the Greek which we have is a translation from the Syriac. In chap. 83 of the Greek as contained in the Roman MS U we read:—

ταύτην δὲ τὴν ἐντολὴν εἰλήφαμεν παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου, ἵνα ὃ οὐκ ἀρέσκει ἡμῖν ὑπὸ ἄλλου γινόμενον, τοῦτο ἄλλω τινὶ μὴ ποιῶμεν (sic).²

At the corresponding place in Wright's edition of the Syriac there is nothing equivalent to this. I give the context from his translation. The Apostle Judas Thomas says in the course of a discourse to the multitudes:—

¹ *Catholic Encyclopedia* vol. v, article 'Diognetus, Epistle to'.

² M. Bonnet *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, 1898, p. 199 ll. 20-24. This passage is not included in the collection of texts given by G. Resch in *Das Aposteldecret* p. 133 ff (*Texte u. Unters.* NF. xiii 3, 1905).