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A LETTER ATTRIBUTED TO CYRIL OF JERUSALEM ON THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE¹

By S. P. BROCK

Before he set off on his fatal Persian expedition Julian appears to have issued certain instructions about the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem.² Whether the initiative for this came from the Jewish community, or was from the emperor himself, is unclear, the sources being as divided on this point as they are on the exact nature of the events that brought the work to a halt. According to Ammianus Marcellinus, the one pagan account that survives,³

‘... magnitudinem operum gestiens propagare, ambitiosum quondam apud Hierosolimam templum, quod post multa et interneciva certamina, obsidente Vespasiano, posteaque Tito, aegre est expugnatum, instaurare sumptibus cogitabat immodicis, negotiumque maturandum Alypicio dederat Antiochensi, qui olim Britannias curaverat pro praefectis. cum itaque rei idem fortiter instaret Alypius, iuaretque provinciae rector, metuendi globi flammaram prope fundamenta crebris assultibus erumpentes, fecere locum exustis aliquotiens operantibus inaccessum, hocque modo elemento destitutus repellente, cessavit inceptum’.

Christian writers too, among whom Ephrem and Gregory Nazianzen are the earliest, recount with immodest glee a whole series of miraculous happenings that successfully cut short the work.

Whether or not M. Adler was correct in seeing the opening of Gregory’s ‘Second invective against Julian’ as the actual starting-point for all the later Christian embellishments,⁴ it would seem certain that (often conflicting) accounts of miraculous events at Jerusalem in May 363 were spread orally over a wide area within a short period of time.

One of the puzzling things about the attempted rebuilding of the Temple has always been the silence of the bishop of Jerusalem at the time, the famous Cyril.⁵ It is true that, in his fifteenth Catechetical oration, dating from the 350’s, he does make the prediction that the Temple will never be rebuilt, referring to Matthew xxiv, 2,⁶ which implies at least the existence of an interest in the possibility; but no further reference to the Temple is to be found in his extant writings. It was, then, with considerable interest and curiosity that I first read, in a modern Syriac manuscript, a letter attributed to Cyril on this very subject.

The manuscript in question is Harvard Syriac 99,⁷ a miscellaneous collection

¹ The following text is published by kind permission of the Harvard College Library and the Trustees of the British Library. A brief outline of the letter will be found in my ‘The rebuilding of the Temple under Julian: a new source’, *PEQ*, July–December 1976, 103–7.

² See in general J. Vogt, *Kaiser Julian und das Judentum*, Leipzig, 1939, 46–59; M. Adler, ‘The Emperor Julian and the Jews’, *JQR*, v, July 1893, 615–51; W. Bacher, ‘Statements of a contemporary of the Emperor Julian on the rebuilding of the Temple’ [R. Aha], *JQR*, x, October 1898, 168–72; J. Levy (Hans Lewy), ‘Julian and the rebuilding of the Temple’ [in Hebrew], *Zion*, NS, vi, 1941, 1–32, reprinted in *Olamot nifgashim*, second ed., Jerusalem, 1969, 221–54.

³ ‘History’, xxiii.1.2–3.

⁴ Adler, *op. cit.*, 634.

⁵ ‘... had so noteworthy an event happened in his own see, surely he (sc. Cyril) would have been the first to record it’, Adler, *op. cit.*, 649.

⁶ *Catech.*, xv.15 (in PG, xxxiii, col. 889). Cyril’s interest in the Gospel prediction is noted by a number of later writers, e.g. Rufinus, Socrates, Agapius. (Section 3 of *Catech.*, xv is known in Syriac from a number of florilegia, e.g. British Library, Add. 7190, fol. 200b; Add. 17191, fol. 55a; Add. 14538, fol. 31b.)

⁷ No. 91 in L. H. Titterton’s typescript catalogue.

of texts in a recent west Syrian hand, dated 1899. The title of the piece (to be found on folios 188*b*–190*a*) reads as follows.

‘ On how many miracles took place when the Jews received the order to rebuild the Temple, and the signs which occurred in the region of Asia. The letter, which was sent from the holy Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, concerning the Jews, when they wanted to rebuild the Temple, and (how) the land was shaken, and mighty prodigies took place, and fire consumed great numbers of them, and many Christians (too) perished ’.

Fortunately the Syriac letter can be taken back at once to the sixth century, since the opening sections are to be found in British Library, Add. 14609, folio 122*a*–*b*, dated by Wright to that century (probably 586–7). There the title is simply ‘ Letter of Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem ’.

No trace of such a letter seems to be known from any other source, not even among the fairly extensive spuria of Cyril, to be found in Arabic.⁸ It is, indeed, something of a puzzle, for, while one’s initial reaction is that it is most unlikely to be genuine, the details it gives are not obviously derived from any of the many legendary accounts available in both Greek and Syriac, even though there are obvious parallels here and there. Furthermore, the letter gives a precise day and date to the event, Monday, 19 Iyyar, A.G. 674 (= May 363): a check in the table provided in V. Grumel’s *La chronologie*⁹ shows that in 363, 19 May did indeed fall on a Monday. This is not the sort of information a late compiler is likely to get right, nor is he likely to have hit upon the correct day by mere chance.¹⁰

Moreover, while the earthquake is said to have taken place on Monday, 19 Iyyar, the actual digging of the foundations in preparation for the rebuilding seems to have begun the previous day, 18 Iyyar. Now 18 Iyyar by the lunar calendar is the day on which the mysterious Jewish semi-festival *Lag ba-‘Omer* (33rd day of the ‘Omer period) falls.¹¹ Although the Iyyar of our letter belongs to the Julian calendar, and not the lunar, it so happens that in 363 the lunar Nisan and Iyyar coincided exactly with the Julian April and May.¹² It is hard to believe that there is no connexion between the two.

Enough has been said, then, to indicate that we have here a text which at least merits our curiosity, if not our credence. Further discussion of the letter’s provenance and date, however, will best be left until after the text and translation (to which I append a brief commentary, concerned with points of detail that arise) have first been presented.¹³

⁸ G. Graf, *Gesch. der christl. arab. Literatur* (Studi e Testi, 118), Rome, 1944, I, 335–7. Nor is there any mention in the ‘ Life of St. Cyril ’, in Armenian, published by E. Bihain, *Le Muséon*, LXXVI, 3–4, 1963, 319–48.

⁹ pp. 316–17.

¹⁰ 19 Iyyar fell on a Monday 14 times in the century A.D. 300–400. The day could of course be worked out by someone with access to Easter tables.

¹¹ I am most grateful to Dr. N. L. Rabinovitch for pointing this out to me after an earlier form of this paper had been read at a meeting of the British Association for Jewish Studies, in Oxford, July 1975. For an element of uncertainty about the exact day, Sunday or Monday, of the commencement of the rebuilding, see p. 277, n. 46.

¹² See the table in E. Mahler, *Handbuch der jüdischen Chronologie*, repr. Hildersheim, 1967, 531 (the next year when this occurred was 420).

¹³ I use Harvard Syr. 99 as the basis for the text, since it alone is complete; the variants of Add. 14609 are given in the apparatus to the text and notes to the translation (a leaf is missing after fol. 122 in this manuscript, with the result that §§ 7–12 are lost). It is of course likely that in general Add. 14609 will offer a more reliable text, and in a few places it preserves readings which alter the sense of the passage: see p. 274, n. 21, pp. 274–275, n. 31–2, p. 275, n. 35. The following symbols are employed.

A = Add. 14609.

B = Harvard Syr. 99.

() = contraction resolved.

הכנסתה אהרן טעם כאלוהי הנבחר.
 האומה, בה אלה השלם היצור ל הנפיש
 בהם האומה, על פני פניו ששם הנל
 חלק טעם הנל לל טעם לחם כפושקה
 חטא חטא כבדא.

Apparatus (variants of A)

Title: אהרן האומה אפושקה הנבחר.

1. *om.*
2. 1. *pr.* אהרן האומה אפושקה.
 2. הנבחר.
 3. *om.*
 4. *om.*
 5. אפושקה.
 6. אהרן האומה אפושקה.
 7. *pr.* אהרן.
 8. אהרן (*vid.*).
 9. *om.*
 10. *om.*
 11. אהרן.
 12. אהרן אהרן.
 13. *om.*
 14. + אהרן אהרן.
 15. *om.*
3. 1. *pr.* אהרן.
 2. אהרן אהרן אהרן.
 3. *om.*
 4. + אהרן אהרן.
 5. *om.*
4. 1. *om.*
 2. אהרן אהרן.
 3. *scripsi*, cf. A אהרן; B אהרן.
 4. *om.* אהרן.
 5. *om.*
 6. + אהרן.
 7. אהרן.
 8. אהרן אהרן.
 9. אהרן אהרן.
 10. *om.*

18. + *seyame*.
 19. ܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܝܪܝܠ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܝܪܝܠ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ.
 20. *om.*
 21. *om.* ܩ.
 22. ܩܘܪܝܢܐ.
 23. *om.* ܩ.
 24. *om.* ܩ.
 25. *pr.* ܩ.
 26. *om.*
7. 1. + ܩܘܪܝܢܐ.

Translation ¹⁴

*On how many miracles took place when the Jews received the order to rebuild the Temple, and the signs which occurred in the region of Asia.*¹⁵

1 ¹⁶ The letter, which was sent from the holy Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, concerning the Jews, when they wanted to rebuild the Temple, and (on how) the land was shaken, and mighty prodigies took place, and fire consumed great numbers of them, and many Christians (too) perished.

2 To ¹⁷ my beloved brethren, bishops, priests, and deacons of the Church of Christ ¹⁸ in 'every district: greetings, my brethren.¹⁹ 'The punishment of our Lord ²⁰ is sure, and His sentence (*ἀπόφασις*) that He gave concerning the city of the crucifiers is faithful, and 'with our own eyes we have received a fearful sight ²¹; for ²² truly did the Apostle say that 'there is nothing greater than the love of God'.²³ Now, while the earth was shaking ²⁴ and the entire people suffering,²⁵ I have not neglected to write to you about everything that has taken place here.²⁶

3 At the digging of the foundations of Jerusalem, 'which had been ruined because of the killing of its Lord, the land shook considerably,²⁷ and there were great ²⁸ tremors in the towns ²⁹ round about.

4 Now even though the person bringing the letter is slow, nevertheless I shall still write and inform you that we are all well, by the grace of God and the aid of ³⁰ prayer. Now I think that you are concerned for us, '(and) our minds were tearing us—not only our own, but all our brethren's as well, who are with us, that I should tell you too about what happened amongst us.³¹

5 'We have not written to you at length, beyond the earthquake that took

¹⁴ I translate B; the main variants of A are given in the footnotes.

¹⁵ *Letter of Cyril bishop of Jerusalem.*

¹⁶ A omits § 1.

¹⁷ *pr.* Cyril bishop of Jerusalem.

¹⁸ our Lord.

¹⁹ in all regions.

²⁰ With (in) our Lord punishment.

²¹ in our own sight it specifically received it; greetings!

²² Just as, my brothers.

²³ *om.* of God.

²⁴ shook.

²⁵ world suffered.

²⁶ *om.* here.

²⁷ the land suffered specifically.

²⁸ *om.* great.

²⁹ + and cities.

³⁰ + your.

³¹ seeing that we too, because we (were) there, struggled for ourselves.

place at God's (behest). For many Christians too living in these regions, as well as the majority of the ³² Jews, perished at that scourge—and not just in the earthquake, but also as a result of fire and in the heavy ³³ rain they had.

6 At the outset, when they wanted to lay the foundations of the Temple on the Sunday previous to the earthquake, there were strong winds and storms,³⁴ with the result that they were unable to lay the Temple's foundations that day.³⁵ It was on that very night that the great earthquake occurred, and we were all ³⁶ in the church of the Confessors, engaged in prayer. After this we left to go to the Mount of Olives, which is situated to the east of Jerusalem, where ³⁷ our Lord was raised to His glorious ³⁸ Father. We went out into the middle of the city, reciting a psalm,³⁹ and we passed ⁴⁰ the graves of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, and we besought the Lord of the prophets that, through the prayers of His prophets and apostles, His truth might be seen by His worshippers in the face of the audacity of the Jews ⁴¹ who had crucified Him.

7 Now they ⁴² (sc. the Jews), wanting to imitate ⁴³ us, were running to the place where their synagogue usually gathered, and they found the synagogue doors closed. They were greatly amazed at what had happened and stood around in silence and fear when suddenly the synagogue doors opened of their own accord, and out of the building there came forth fire, which licked up the majority of them, and most of them collapsed and perished in front of the building. The doors then closed of their own accord, while the whole city looked on at what was happening, and the entire populace, Jew and Christian alike, cried out with one voice, saying 'There is but one God, one Christ, who is victorious'; and the entire people rushed off and tore down the idols and (pagan) altars that were in the city, glorifying and praising Christ, and confessing that He is the Son of the Living God. And they drove out the demons of the city, and the Jews, and the whole city received the sign of baptism, Jews as well as many pagans, all together, so that we thought that there was not a single person left in the city who had not received the sign (*σημείον*) or mark (*τύπος*) of the living Cross in heaven. And it instilled great fear in all.

8 And the entire people thought that, after these signs which our Saviour gave us in His Gospel, the fearful (second) coming of the day of resurrection had arrived. With trembling of great joy we received something of the sign (*σημείον*) of Christ's crucifixion, and whosoever did not believe in his mind found his clothes openly reprove him, having the mark of the cross stained on them.

9 As for the statue (*ἀνδριάς*) of Herod which stood in Jerusalem, which the Jews had thrown down in (an act of) supplication (?) (*δέησις*), the city ran and set it up where it had been standing.

10 Thus we felt compelled to write to you the truth of these matters, that

³² Not only were we not harmed by the earthquake that took place at God's (behest), but no Christian who was here (was harmed), but many.

³³ *om.* heavy.

³⁴ winds and strong storms.

³⁵ the foundations as they had wanted; for it was in their mind to lay the Temple's foundations the following day.

³⁶ fled and took refuge in.

³⁷ whence.

³⁸ *om.* glorious.

³⁹ psalms.

⁴⁰ + between.

⁴¹ those (who).

⁴² the Jews.

⁴³ The folio of A containing the rest of the letter is lost.

everything that is written about Jerusalem should be established in truth, that 'no stone shall be left in it that will not be upturned'.

11 Now we should like to write down for you the names of the towns which were overthrown: Beit Gubrin—more than half of it; part of Baishan, the whole of Sebastia and its territory (χώρα), the whole of Nikopolis and its territory (χώρα); more than half Lydda and its territory (χώρα); about half of Ashqelon, the whole of Antipatris and its territory (χώρα); part of Caesarea, more than half Samaria; part of NSL, a third of Paneas, half of Azotus, part of Gophna, more than half Petra (RQM); Hada, a suburb of the city (Jerusalem)—more than half; more than half Jerusalem. And fire came forth and consumed the teachers of the Jews. Part of Tiberias too, and its territory (χώρα), more than half 'RDQLY', the whole of Sepphoris (SWPRYN) and its territory (χώρα), 'Aina d-Gader; Haifa (?; HLP) flowed with blood for three days; the whole of Japho (YWPY) perished, (and) part of 'D'NWS.

12 This event took place on Monday at the third hour, and partly at the ninth hour of the night. There was great loss of life here. (It was) on 19 Iyyar of the year 674 of the kingdom of Alexander the Greek. This year the pagan Julian died, and it was he who especially incited the Jews to rebuild the Temple, since he favoured them because they had crucified Christ. Justice overtook this rebel at his death in enemy territory, and in this the sign of the power of the cross was revealed, because he had denied Him who had been hung upon it for the salvation and life of all.

All this that has been briefly written to you took place in actual fact in this way.

Commentary

The following abbreviations are employed.

Amm. = Ammianus Marcellinus, 'History', xxiii.1.2-3⁴⁴ [after 380].

Art. Pass. = *Artemii Passio*, apud GCS, xxi, 95-6 [eighth century, by John of Rhodes, but based on Philostorgius].

Chr. 724 = *Chronicon anonymum ad annum 724* (ed. E. W. Brooks, *Chronica minora*, II, CSCO, Scr. Syri, 3, 133; translation below, p. 284).

Chr. 846 = *Chronicon anonymum ad annum 846* (ed. E. W. Brooks, *Chronica minora*, II, CSCO, Scr. Syri, 3, 199-200; translation below, p. 284).

Ephrem = Ephrem, *Hymni contra Julianum* (ed. E. Beck, CSCO, Scr. Syri, 78), no. IV (translation below, pp. 283-4; quoted by stanza and line) [363].

Greg. = Gregory Nazianzen, 'Invective against Julian', II (in PG, xxxv, cols. 668-72) [363 or soon after].⁴⁵

MS = Michael the Syrian, 'Chronicle' (ed. J. B. Chabot, iv, 146; translation below, pp. 285-6).

Philostorgius = Philostorgius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, vii.9 and 14 (in GCS, xxi, 95-6, 99-100) [425/33].

Rufinus = Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, x.38-40 (in GCS, ix, 997-8) [403].

Socrates = Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, iii.20 [after 439].

Sozomen = Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, v.22 (in GCS, L, 229-32) [439/50].

Theodoret = Theodoret, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, iii.20 (in GCS, XLIV, 198-200 [449/50]).

Theophanes = Theophanes, *Chronographia* (in PG, cviii, col. 164).

⁴⁴ Commentary in M. F. A. Brok, *De Perzische expeditie van Keizer Julianus volgens Ammianus Marcellinus*, Groningen, 1959, 21-5.

⁴⁵ 363 or 365 according to Vogt, op. cit., 48. J. Bernardi states that there are reasons for supposing that it was written in February 364 (see *Texte und Untersuchungen*, LXIII, 1957, p. 177, n. 2).

2 sentence: i.e. Matt. xxiv, 2 = Mark xiii, 2 = Luke xxi, 6. The same word, ἀπόφασις, occurs in a similar context in Philostorgius.

the Apostle: not an exact quotation; the reference is either to 1 Cor. xiii, 13 or to Eph. iii, 19.

3 digging: the word *h̄tata* is recorded only from the native lexica in Payne Smith.

foundations: these are regularly mentioned in the accounts.

ruined because . . .: cf. Ephrem, 18, 6, ' . . . the ruins that their own sins had brought about '. This moral is not drawn in the extant Greek sources. Compare also *Chr.* 724.

the land shook: the earthquake is mentioned even by Ammianus, and is a regular feature in the Christian accounts.

towns round about: see on § 11.

5 Christians . . . perished: this point is not mentioned in the other accounts. If indeed there was an earthquake that put a stop to the work, this at least rings true; it is absent, however, from Add. 14609.

fire: see below.

heavy rain: not specifically mentioned elsewhere, although several writers speak of ' storms '.

6 At the outset: the description so far has been in general terms, and the author now goes back over the details.

strong winds: so specifically Ephrem and Theodoret.

Sunday previous to the earthquake: it is stated later on that the earthquake took place in the night of Sunday/Monday.⁴⁶ The same sequence, storms followed by earthquake, is found in *Art. Pass.* and Theodoret. The day is not given elsewhere. For the significance of the date, see pp. 279–80, below, on Monday, 19 Iyyar.

that very night: night time is specified by Rufinus, Socrates, *Art. Pass.* (' near dawn ') and some of the later accounts.

we were all in the church of the Confessors: this episode is unique to the letter. Just conceivably it could have arisen from a misreading of a passage in Greg.: οἱ μὲν (sc. τῶν Ἰουδαίων) ὡς ἰκετεύσοντες . . . taken as ἡμεῖς ὡς ἰκετεύ(σ)οντες . . . Since, however, the letter nowhere else shows a *direct* knowledge of Greg., this suggestion can carry little conviction. No ' church of the Confessors ' is known from Jerusalem, and, while this might simply be due to the writer's ignorance of local topography, it seems more likely that underlying the Syriac here is the Greek *Μαπρύριον*, the term by which the Constantinian edifice was generally known in the fourth century; cf. H. Vincent and F. M. Abel, *Jérusalem. II. Jérusalem nouvelle*, Paris, 1914, 188–9.

graves of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah: what is now known as the ' tomb of Absalom ' was regarded by early Christian pilgrims as that of Isaiah (e.g. the Bordeaux pilgrim of 333: P. Geyer, *Itinera Hierosolymitana* (CSEL, xxxix), 23).⁴⁷ No tomb of Jeremiah was ever known in or near Jerusalem (though his ' pit ' was shown, e.g. Nicephorus, *HE*, viii.30, in PG, cxlvi, col. 115). This could again be an error of ignorance on the writer's part, but on the other hand it is very possible that ' Jeremiah ' is a corruption (easy in

⁴⁶ In B the work on the foundations clearly began on the Sunday, but A (see p. 275, n. 35) implies that only the preparatory digging took place that day, and that the rebuilding was to take place on the Monday, i.e. 19 Iyyar, the day after *Lag ba-'Omer*.

⁴⁷ Note that A, of the sixth century, already has ' Jeremiah '.

Syriac script) of 'Zechariah',⁴⁸ whose tomb in the Kidron valley was regularly visited by pilgrims,⁴⁹ alongside that of Isaiah.

synagogue: corresponds to τὸ ἱερόν of Greg. A synagogue is mentioned only in *Art. Pass.*: (στοῶ τε τῆς Αἰλίας ἤγουν Ἱερουσαλημ) ἢ παρὰ τὴν συναγωγὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων, πολλοὺς τῶν εἰρημένων κατενεχθεῖσα ἀνείλεν, πῦρ τε ἐκραγὲν ἀδήλως πλείστους Ἰουδαίους κατέκαυσεν.

7 doors . . . fire: there were at least four different versions current concerning the appearance of the fire.

(1) It came out of a building (τὸ ἱερόν Greg.), whose doors opened of their own accord; so Greg., Ephrem, and our letter (which alone identifies the building as a synagogue). The episode of the automatic opening of the door is probably a motif borrowed from Josephus, *BJ*, vi.293, where the eastern gate of the Temple opens of its own accord at the sixth hour of the night (note that Gregory, unsuitably in the context, uses the term 'Temple'; our letter is more realistic!). The 'fire', on the other hand, could derive from Zech. xi, 1 (cf. *BT*, *Yoma* 39b).

(2) It comes from the foundations: so John Chrysostom (in *PG*, L, col. 568, and *PG*, LV, col. 285), Sozomen (with two slightly different versions), Theodoret, and *Chr.* 846.

(3) It comes from heaven and consumes the builders' tools: so Socrates and *MS*.

(4) The outbreak was caused by the collapse of the stoa of Aila near the synagogue: so *Art. Pass.* (quoted above); compare also Rufinus.

'There is but one God, one Christ': compare Socrates, where, although the Jews 'confessed Christ, calling him God', they are not baptized, as is implied below. Conversions are mentioned in Sozomen, but as the result of the next miracle.

8 (second) coming: not mentioned in the other accounts, but compare Cyril, *Catechesis*, xv.15.

the mark of the cross: evidently this refers to the appearance of luminous crosses on people's clothes, found in most accounts, but not in the earliest, by Ephrem.

found his clothes openly reprove him: various versions of this episode are to be found:

(1) Crosses appear on clothes of believers and unbelievers, but the latter are distinguished by being murky: so our letter (for the appearance of the crosses on clothes of Christians, compare Rufinus, Theophanes (where the crosses are black on those of some of the unbelieving Jews and pagans), and *MS*).

(2) Murky crosses appear only on the clothing of Jews: so Theodoret (there are luminous crosses to be seen in the sky).

(3) Luminous crosses that cannot be washed off appear only on the clothing of Jews: so Socrates, and compare Sozomen and the 'Chronicle of Seert' (*PO*, v, 2, 229; here they are red).

(4) Crosses appear on the clothes of Jews and Christians, not only at Jerusalem, but also at Antioch: so Theophanes, *MS*.

⁴⁸ cf. Vincent and Abel, *op. cit.*, II, 855-60; J. Jeremias, *Heiligengräber in Jesu Umwelt*, Göttingen, 1958, 61-7.

⁴⁹ e.g. mentioned by the pilgrim Theodosius (Geyer, *op. cit.*, 142). Note also that Isaiah and Zechariah are the only two prophets commemorated in the old Jerusalem calendar: cf. A. Renoux, in *PO*, xxxvi, 2, 188. A less likely possibility is that 'Jeremiah' is a corruption of 'Hezekiah', whose tomb was also shown, but the term 'prophets' militates against this.

9 statue of Herod: this mysterious episode has no parallel. Two possibilities come to mind: *either* the whole episode is a corrupt version of the narrative about the collapse of the Stoa of Aelia, found in Sozomen and Theodoret (though neither mentions the name) as well as in *Art. Pass.* (quoted above); *or* (and this seems the more likely) 'Herod' is a corruption of 'Hadrian', whose statue is mentioned by the Bordeaux pilgrim of 333 and Jerome at the end of the century.⁵⁰ Jewish hatred for the memory of Hadrian would be readily understandable; moreover, it would seem that the statue stood on the actual site of the Temple,⁵¹ otherwise left in ruins since A.D. 70, and so would have to be removed if the rebuilding was to get under way.⁵²

supplication: the sense of *δέησις* here is not at all clear to me. The word is recorded in Payne Smith only from the native lexica (in a corrupt form).

10 no stone: apart from the words 'in it' (Matt. 'here', Luke omits), the quotation follows the Peshitta of Matt. xxiv, 2 = Luke xxi, 6 (different wording in Mark). For the importance of this passage in contemporary polemic, see below.

11 towns . . . overthrown: of the earlier accounts *Art. Pass.* provides the nearest parallel, naming 'Nikopolis, Neapolis, Eleutheropolis, Gaza, and several others'. *Chr. 724* states that 21 cities were overthrown (exclusive of Jerusalem?), while Agapius of Mabbug (PO, VII, 4, p. 581) specifies 22 as the number. Our letter would appear to give 23 names (22 excluding Jerusalem, 21 excluding the suburb 'Hada' as well). This correspondence is remarkable and can hardly be attributed to chance; accordingly we have a *terminus ante quem* of 724 for this part of our letter, only preserved in B.

Of the names the following are problematic (and may well be corrupt).

NŞL: corruption of NŞRT, NŞN', or 'ŞL ?

Hādā: the manuscript vocalizes the name, which I am unable to identify.

'RDQLY: ?

'Aina d-Gāder: is this 'Ain Gadur on the Zerqa? Otherwise perhaps a corruption of En Geddi.

Haifa (manuscript HLF, read HYF?): perhaps this should not be read as a name at all.

'D'NWS: ?

12 third hour: this is the time given for the appearance of the cross in the sky above Jerusalem, described by Cyril in his letter to Constantius. It was seen on the 'nones of May' 350 (the year is uncertain, see below, p. 285, n. 66), and the event is commemorated in the Jerusalem calendar annually on 7 May. Although there seems to be contamination in some of the later accounts of the two events, 350 and 363, there is nothing else in the present letter to suggest that any borrowing from descriptions of the earlier episode has taken place here.

ninth hour of the night: i.e. the night of Sunday/Monday.

Monday 19 Iyyar: see above, p. 268. The only other account to give a date is *Chr. 724*, which, however, provides 27 Iyyar (the syntax of the sentence

⁵⁰ *In Isaiam* (PL, xxiv, 49) and *Comm. Matt.* (PL, xxvi, 177). For what may be the plinth of the statue (wrongly) identified as that of Hadrian, see *CIL*, III, Supplement 6639.

⁵¹ This is stated by two eyewitnesses, Origen and the Bordeaux pilgrim, whereas Dio Cassius and Jerome imply that a pagan temple had been erected on the former site of the Jewish Temple; cf. J. Wilkinson, 'Christian pilgrims in Jerusalem during the Byzantine period', *PEQ*, July-December 1976, 75-101.

⁵² For archaeological evidence of destruction of buildings in the vicinity of the Temple at this time, see B. Mazar, *The excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem near the Temple Mount. Preliminary report of the second and third seasons*, Jerusalem, 1971, 23 (Mazar also publishes here an inscription on the masonry below 'Robinson's Arch', containing Isaiah lxvi, 4, which certainly belongs to a time when hopes for the restoration of the Temple were running high).

in question is awkward, and the editor supplies ' Julian was killed ' as the event to which the date refers ; it seems preferable, however, to leave the text of the manuscript as it stands, in which case the date refers to the destruction of the cities).

A date in May for these events is rather later than the date usually proposed, namely February/March, but would in fact suit the climatic conditions of Jerusalem better, seeing that February and March fall in the rainy season, and so would be unsuitable for such work.

It has already been pointed out that the digging of the foundations probably began on *Lag ba-'Omer*. The origins of this semi-festival are shrouded in obscurity, and according to fairly late traditions are to be associated either with the cessation of a plague that was killing off R. Akiba's disciples, or with the day on which manna first began to fall. Neither of these explanations is likely to be the true one, and modern scholarship has failed to produce any convincing alternative. Since there seems to be no good evidence that *Lag ba-'Omer* was observed at any date prior to the time of the attempted rebuilding of the Temple, there is the real possibility that this semi-festival may actually have its origins in the events of 363 : the outcome of the whole affair would at least readily explain the ambiguous nature of the whole festival, as well as the silence of the Jewish sources on the matter (which indeed are so late that a knowledge of the true origins may not have intentionally been assigned to oblivion). Owing to the lack of further evidence, however, it would seem best to leave the matter open, and simply to posit *some* connexion between *Lag ba-'Omer* and the rebuilding of the Temple : even if the latter is not the origin of the observance of 18 Iyyar, and *Lag ba-'Omer* is older than Julian's time, the festival could well have been chosen as a propitious day on which to start work on the foundations.

In evaluating this text, we can follow two main lines of approach : external attestation and internal criteria.

(a) *External attestation*

The survival of §§ 2-6 in Add. 14609 immediately shows that we are not dealing with a recent attribution to Cyril, but with a text of considerable antiquity, already current under his name in the sixth century.⁵³ That an old text such as this should survive *complete* only in a modern transcript need not surprise us, seeing that quite a number of ancient Syriac works are available in Western libraries only in modern copies ; in almost every case it is likely, if not always certain, that a much older manuscript survives in one of the Syriac manuscript collections in the Middle East, at present inaccessible. In the case of our letter it is possible to make the following observations concerning the ancestry of Harvard Syr. 99.

(1) The manuscript also contains the *Didascalia*, *Acta Pilati*, and other New Testament pseudepigrapha, which also occur in Mingana Syr. 4, copied in 1895.⁵⁴ Now these texts in all probability can be traced back to 'an old manuscript from Midyat' (in Tur 'Abdin, south-eastern Turkey) and a fourteenth-century manuscript in Mosul, both utilized by Raḥmānī in *Studia*

⁵³ I was not yet aware of the existence of part of the text in Add. 14609 when I wrote the article published in *PEQ*, July-December 1976, 103-7.

⁵⁴ For what follows, see my 'Notes on some texts in the Mingana collection', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, xiv, 2, 1969, 211-15. (The manuscript there referred to as Harvard Syr. 91 is our manuscript B, which now bears the number Syr. 99.)

syriaca, fasc. 2; for the *Acta Pilati* Raḥmānī also had access to an eighth-century manuscript in Midyat. The scribe of Mingana Syr. 4, the deacon Mattai bar Paulos of Mosul, also specifically states that his *Vorlage* was a 'very old manuscript' from Tur 'Abdin. This state of affairs does not, of course, mean that all the texts contained in Harvard Syr. 99 and Mingana Syr. 4 came from Tur 'Abdin, but it does suggest at least the possibility that the scribe of Harvard Syr. 99 may have derived the letter from that source. In this connexion it is particularly intriguing to find that two pseudepigraphical texts, the apocryphal correspondence between Pilate and Herod, and the Teaching of Peter in Rome, are to be found, not only in Harvard Syr. 99 and Mingana Syr. 4, but also (in rather shorter recensions) in Add. 14609, where they in fact sandwich our letter!

(2) According to Malfono Isa Gülcan, a teacher at the monastery of Mar Gabriel in Tur 'Abdin, to whom I showed the letter, this text was recently again copied for the monastery from an older manuscript, which I presume to be in the library of the Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan of Mardin.

(3) § 11 of the letter would appear to have been known to the author of the anonymous chronicle *ad annum* 724, preserved in an eighth-century manuscript.

(4) From the title of the letter in Harvard Syr. 99, it would seem that the document was excerpted from a larger work, probably a chronicle. This would explain the presence of the words 'and the signs which occurred in the region of Asia': the title must originally have been meant to cover a whole section in the chronicle, but the scribe of Harvard Syr. 99 excerpted from it only Cyril's letter.

On purely external grounds, then, we know that the letter was already circulating under the name of Cyril at the end of the sixth century, in the context of New Testament pseudepigraphical texts, and it would appear that at some time it may have been incorporated into a chronicle, whence the Harvard manuscript, originating in Tur 'Abdin, seems ultimately to derive.

(b) *Internal criteria*

Here we are on much more delicate ground, and perhaps it will be best to start by giving reasons for not considering the letter to be a genuine work of Cyril's. Two points are to me conclusive here: first, the letter claims to be an eyewitness account, written in the midst of all the turmoil, yet at the end we find that the news of Julian's death, over a month later, had evidently arrived; secondly, if the letter were genuine, it is very hard to see why such an important eyewitness account, circulated to 'bishops, priests, and deacons of the Church of Christ in every district', should have been completely ignored by all the fourth- and fifth-century writers who describe the episode.

But even if the letter is not genuine, it is nevertheless old and may contain valuable information, and it is this possibility that we shall examine in the following paragraphs.

The argument used against the letter's authenticity can in fact be used to support the view that the letter belongs earlier, rather than later, in the development of the legendary tradition:⁵⁵ since the letter does not follow, or even agree in details with, any of the standard accounts in the Church historians, it is likely that the author did not yet know them. That he is actually earlier than them is suggested by the fact that the closest parallels to the letter are

⁵⁵ cf. the episode of the synagogue doors. Even in the case of the crosses on the garments (with no parallel in Ephrem, but cf. Gregory) the account in our letter is free from most of the later legendary accretions.

to be found in the two earliest accounts of the events, namely Ephrem's and Gregory's. An early date would also be supported by the correct equation of day and date.

We have seen from the commentary that there are a number of puzzling topographical items: the church of the Confessors, the tomb of Jeremiah, and the statue of Herod. Are these just the tell-tale mistakes of an ignorant and late compiler, or are they (as I have suggested in the commentary) corruptions of the Martyrion, the tomb of Zechariah, and the statue of Hadrian, all of which would be unexceptionable in a late fourth-century text? Here I would simply point out, in favour of the latter explanation, the fact that there are certainly a number of bad corruptions in the list of towns affected by the earthquake at the end of the document.

If the letter were early, one would expect it to have been written in Greek. Are there any indications that our letter is a translation? ⁵⁶ At the outset it should be stated that it is often exceedingly hard to tell whether a Syriac text is a translation from Greek or not, especially if it is a short one. I have been unable to find any evidence in our letter that clearly points one way rather than the other on this issue: for example, in the list of towns, some appear in their Greek form (e.g. Azotus, not Ashdod), while others are given their Semitic name (e.g. Beth Gubrin, not Eleutheropolis).

Attention might be drawn here to the presence of two rare words, *htata* 'digging', and *d'sys* < *δέσσις*, which are only recorded in Payne Smith from the native lexica. While these probably imply that the text is early, they can say nothing about the original language of the letter. On this aspect we must simply admit a *non liquet*.

Perhaps we should look for a solution in a different direction. If the letter is not Cyril's, can we find it a suitable *Sitz im Leben*? I would suggest that we can, and that the key is to be found in § 10, which reads 'we felt compelled to write to you the truth of these matters, that everything that is written about Jerusalem should be established in truth, (namely) that "no stone shall be left in it that will not be upturned"'.

This prediction in the Gospels would appear to have played a key role in the propaganda put out by the various parties, pagan, Jewish, and Christian, in connexion with the rebuilding of the Temple. Several ancient writers held that Julian's main purpose in ordering the rebuilding was to falsify the Gospel prediction, and some modern scholars have also adopted this explanation of his motivation.

Now several of the accounts, from Rufinus and Socrates onwards, do in fact mention Cyril in connexion with this prophecy. Cyril, says Rufinus, recalling the words of Daniel and the Gospels, despite all the preparations, nevertheless persisted in claiming that 'no stone could ever be placed on another' by the Jews. Likewise Socrates writes: 'On this occasion Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, called to mind the prophecy of Daniel, which Christ too in the holy Gospels has confirmed, and he (i.e. Cyril) predicted in the presence of many persons that the time had indeed come when "one stone should not be left on another" in the Temple, but our Saviour's prophecy would indeed be fulfilled'.

As we have already seen, these do in fact reflect Cyril's words in his fifteenth Catechetical homily, delivered several years earlier. It seems likely that Rufinus and Socrates knew this homily and that they were simply updating the pre-

⁵⁶ My explanation of the 'church of the Confessors' obviously presupposes a Greek original.

diction. What is important from our point of view is that people were concerned to fit Cyril into the picture, and precisely in connexion with this key passage from the Gospels.

I would suggest, then, that the same motivation that led Rufinus and Socrates to introduce Cyril and his reference to Matthew xxiv, 2 into their account, also led someone else, who had a fair amount of local knowledge, to compose our letter in Cyril's name, at much the same sort of time, in the early years of the fifth century.

APPENDIX

By way of an appendix I give an English translation of the main accounts of the attempted rebuilding of the Temple to be found in Syriac sources.

- (1) Ephrem, *Hymni contra Julianum*, IV.18–23 (ed. E. Beck, CSCO, Scr. Syri, 78).

By far the earliest (perhaps dating from 363 itself) comes Ephrem's invective in the course of the last of his hymns against Julian. The relevant stanzas are the following.

18. At that time fearful events were stirred up to rebuke (men),
 (God) proclaimed in the world truth to souls,
 in that cities were overthrown, to the reproach of paganism.
 Jerusalem especially held guilty
 the accursed and the crucifiers, who had made bold threats and entered
 so as to rebuild the ruins that their own sins had brought about.
19. Foolish and stupid, they had caused its ruin when it was still standing,
 and now that it lies in ruins, they threaten to rebuild it!
 When it was established, they tore it down, when it lies waste, they shower
 their love on it.
 Jerusalem quaked when she saw
 that her destroyers had entered her again and disturbed her quiet;
 she complained to the Most High, and she was heard.
20. He ordered gales to blow, he beckoned earthquakes, and they came,
 lightning too, and it caused turmoil; (he bade) the air, and it turned
 murky,
 the walls, and they were overthrown, the gates, and they opened them-
 selves:
 fire came forth and consumed the scribes
 who had read in Daniel that she would lie waste for ever;⁵⁷
 and because they had read without understanding, they were mightily
 struck, and so learnt.
21. They had scattered her through the Lowly one,⁵⁸ who had gathered together
 her chicks,⁵⁹
 and they imagined He had gathered to her the error of the diviner(s);
 they overthrew her because of the True one,⁶⁰ they propped her up with
 waverers,
 they wished to rebuild her again.
 They had upturned the great altar at the slaying of the Holy one,
 and they imagined that the rebuilder of (pagan) altars would re-establish it.

⁵⁷ Dan. ix, 27.

⁵⁹ Matt. xxiii, 37.

⁵⁸ Matt. xxi, 5 taken from Zech. ix, 9.

⁶⁰ Delete *seyame*, with Beck.

22. They destroyed her through the wood of the Living Architect,
 they propped her up with the broken reed of paganism ;⁶¹
 they made her sad with Zechariah,⁶² who had given them joy, (saying)
 ‘ Behold your king ’ ;⁶³
 they wanted to make her happy with the divination of the madman,
 they proclaimed to her : ‘ Behold, there comes one furious, who will
 rebuild you ;
 he will enter and sacrifice in you, and pour libations in you—to his demons ’.
23. Daniel spoke the sentence over Jerusalem and decreed
 ‘ She shall not be built again ’, and Sion believed him.
 They (sc. Jerusalem and Sion) bewailed themselves and wept : he had cut
 off and cast away their hope.
 Cana, with its wine, gave comfort
 to the two mourners, giving them advice,
 ‘ Do not aggravate the injustice (done) to the Good one by your mourning ’.

(2) *Chronicon anonymum ad annum 724* (ed. E. W. Brooks, *Chronica minora*, II, CSCO, Scr. Syri 3, 133).

Under the year A.G. 674 (= A.D. 363) is the following entry ; although there is no specific mention of the events in Jerusalem, the destruction of the 21 cities would seem to be based on our letter, § 11 (see commentary).

At that time the Lord was angry with the cities of the pagans and Jews and Samaritans and of the false teachings in the south that had joined in with the madness of the pagan Julian. Anger went forth from the Lord’s presence and began to destroy the unclean and pagan cities because of (or over) their inhabitants, because they had defiled them with the blood they had unjustly shed. And it began to destroy the cities, twenty-one in number, some of which were overthrown, others collapsed, and yet others survived, in the month of Iyyar of the year 674, on the twenty-seventh day.⁶⁴

(3) *Chronicon anonymum ad annum 846* (ed. E. W. Brooks, *Chronica minora*, II, CSCO, Scr. Syri, 3, 199–200).

For the most part this account is based on Theodoret, but the Jews’ reply (‘ Give us permission . . . ’) is not found there.

The Jews, being reproved by Julian for having neglected sacrifices, put forward as the reason the fact that it had been laid down that it was not permissible to make sacrifice except in the Temple at Jerusalem, ‘ Give us permission ’, they said, ‘ if you want us to sacrifice, to rebuild our Temple ’. When he had given them permission they began to build, and while they had still only laid bare the foundations, fire issued forth from them and destroyed those on the site. The fire consumed the building (operations) and destroyed them. On hearing this, Julian ceased from urging them on over the matter of the rebuilding and sacrifices.

(4) *Incerti auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, I (ed. J. B. Chabot, CSCO, Scr. Syri, 43, 178–9).

This long account is largely taken verbatim from Socrates, although the first sentence and a half are from another source (perhaps based on the Julian romance ?).

⁶¹ 4 Kings xviii, 21.

⁶² Matt. xxiii, 35.

⁶³ Zech. ix, 9.

⁶⁴ The editor supplies ‘ Julian was killed ’ ; since Julian’s death fell in June (26), and not May, it is preferable to keep the text. For 27 Iyyar, cf. Ethiopian synaxary, PO, I, 5, 533.

The emperor Julian compelled the Jews to sacrifice, and they did so. And they petitioned the emperor that their temple in Jerusalem should be rebuilt, whereupon he gave orders for its rebuilding, with the expenses provided from public funds (*δημόσιον*). For this reason they quickly prepared everything—stone, wood, fired bricks and lime instead of clay, as well as everything else required for the building.

The holy Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, on seeing this gave a prophecy and said: 'The time spoken of in our Lord's words "No stone shall be left here on another" shall reach its fulfilment'.⁶⁵ This was the holy Cyril's prediction.

On that night there was a great earthquake that brought up the stones from the ancient foundations of the temple, scattering them in the violence of the tremor. The houses that were in the vicinity of the site were also thrown down. The report of the upheaval spread through the entire country.

Further, on the following night fire came down from heaven and destroyed the entire work of the architects and builders, as well as the rest of their tools: hammers, grips, axes, chisels, as well as virtually all the material that had been got ready for the rebuilding, were all to be seen burning with flames of fire. The fire was burning among the tools for the entire day.

The Jews were in great alarm, and though unwilling they acknowledged that Christ is God. Nevertheless they did not do His will.

Not even a third miracle that affected them brought them to the faith: on the next night signs of the cross, resembling rays, were to be seen imprinted on their clothes. When day came and they saw this sign (still there), they tried to wash it and cleanse it off by every possible means, but they were unable to do so.

(There follows a brief episode extracted from Sozomen, *HE*, v.8, or Theodoret, *HE*, III.13, about the sacrilege performed by Julian's uncle and namesake, with the scene, however, transferred here from Antioch to Jerusalem.)

(5) Michael the Syrian, 'Chronicle' (ed. J. B. Chabot, II, 288-9 (translation); IV, 146 (text)).

The first paragraph is clearly based on Socrates, while the second refers to quite a different episode, the luminous cross seen stretching from Golgotha to the Mount of Olives in the time of Constantius and described by Cyril in a letter to that emperor of doubtful authenticity (PG, XXXIII, col. 1170).⁶⁶ Michael's immediate source is not clear: the reference to Antioch could be taken from Socrates, *HE*, II.28 (in the context of Antioch Socrates here describes a cross seen in the whole of the Orient), but the second sentence is much closer to Philostorgius, *HE*, III.26, and Theophanes (A.M. 5847), both of whom (against Cyril in his letter) mention the crown.

When the Jews received the order to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and to make sacrifices, they brought some 3000 modii of lime. A strong wind rent the air and the earth was shaken. The ancient foundation stones came up, and fire descended from heaven, consuming the levers (*μοχλοί*), (as well as) the carpenters with all their tools. On the next night a third

⁶⁵ The Greek text adds a reference to Daniel.

⁶⁶ New edition in E. Bihain, 'L'épître de Cyrille de Jérusalem à Constance sur la vision de la croix (BHG³ 413)', *Byzantion*, XLII, 1973, 264-96. The appearance is celebrated liturgically on 7 May; the year is usually thought to be 351, but according to H. Grégoire and P. Orgels it is 350 (see *Byzantion*, XXIV, 1954, 596-9), while J. Vogt argues for 353 ('Berichte über Kreuzerscheinungen aus dem 4. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.', *AIPHÖ*, IX, 1949, 602-3).

wonder took place : images of the cross, looking like rays (of light), appeared fixed on their clothes. When it was day they tried to remove them by washing the spot, but without success.

Because they were rebuilding the temple, an image of the cross appeared on all the garments of the Jews, the pagans, and the Christians—and not just in Jerusalem, but also in Antioch and the surrounding districts. The cross, which had a crown of light, was seen from Golgotha to the Mount of Olives. It was finer and brighter than the one that appeared in the time of Constantine the Great.

- (6) *Chronicon anonymum ad annum 1234* (ed. J. B. Chabot, CSCO, Scr. Syri, 36, 155–67).

Although this chronicle devotes over 10 pages to Julian's reign and includes the apocryphal correspondence between Julian and Basil,⁶⁷ as well as a further long extract from Socrates (*HE*, III.1), there is, surprisingly, nothing at all about the rebuilding of the temple.⁶⁸

- (7) Julian romance (ed. J. G. E. Hoffmann, *Julianos der Abtrünnige*, Leiden, 1880, 108–16).⁶⁹

The author of this legendary tale elaborates on the way the Jews gained permission to rebuild the temple in a very unflattering way, but he deliberately passes over the ensuing events in Jerusalem on the grounds that they have been described by another author. (The English translation by H. Gollancz here totally misses the sense, giving quite the reverse impression ! The sentence in question ⁷⁰ should be translated on the following lines : ' I should be doing something superfluous if I inserted into our narrative what has been outlined by another writer,⁷¹ who has described these events (i.e. the rebuilding of the temple) fittingly, as they actually took place '.)

⁶⁷ No. 205 in J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Imp. Caesaris Flavii Claudii Iuliani Epistulae*, Paris, 1922, 282 ff. In their prefatory remarks the editors suggest that the letters are taken from the Syriac Julian romance : they certainly do not feature in any extant part of that text.

⁶⁸ Nor is there anything in Barhebraeus' *Chronicon*.

⁶⁹ A translation of this (not very reliable : see below !) is to be found in H. Gollancz, *Julian the Apostate*, London, 1928, 117–26.

⁷⁰ Syriac, p. 116, ll. 10–12 ; English translation, p. 126 (top).

⁷¹ Probably one of the Church historians is meant.