

*PERVENIMUS EDESSAM:*THE ORIGINS OF A GREAT CHRISTIAN CENTRE
OUTSIDE THE FAMILIAR MEDIAEVAL WORLD

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*Unde denuo proficiscens, pervenimus in nomine Christi Dei nostri Edessam:*¹ a paper such as this commits its reader to a journey like that made by the fourth-century abess from Aquitaine, Egeria. It is to leave the familiar "frog pond" world of the Mediterranean and to arrive, in the name of Christ our God, at that Mesopotamian Christian city which once was second only to Antioch. Christian Antioch has gone; Christian Edessa has also gone. It remains only as a small place with a Turkish mayor, and is known under the name of Urfa. By Syriac speakers it was known as Orhay, lying on the banks of the Daisan, a small and troublesome tributary of the Balikh, which in turn flows from the North into the Euphrates.² Hence its site is in the more easily defended high ground some way to the North of Harran, in an area which dominates the crossing of routes where the road from Armenia and the North leaves the high ground for the plain to follow the Balikh southwards, and where the road from China through Iran crosses the Euphrates to lead either South through Syria or West through the Gates of Cilicia. This is the meeting place of the western and eastern worlds, for near here passed the movements between Palestine and Mesopotamia associated with Abraham, near here the Assyrians made their last stand after their capital fell in 610 B.C., and near here Crassus' ill-advised attempt to press eastwards came to an end. The Seleucids intended the site to replace Harran as the fortress to dominate the area:

indeed, the name Edessa reflects that of the Macedonian capital as well as the presence of its many springs. It is not surprising that successive local kings first befriended and then betrayed Rome, nor that for some hundred years after Trajan's campaigns it was a client kingdom of Rome until Caracalla made it a *colonia* in 216. Nor is it surprising that in still later times Edessa was regarded not only as important in itself, but its possession, also, as an omen for the Crusaders' possession of Jerusalem.

It is clear why Egeria set out for Edessa. She had spent three years in Jerusalem, had seen all the sights she wished to see, said all the prayers she wished to say, and then had heard of the large number of notable monks and hermits in and near Edessa, as well as the shrine of St. Thomas and a letter from Jesus himself to an earlier king. However, from the standpoint of geography Edessa is outside the classical world proper; it lies in that debatable land between the Roman and the Parthian or Persian empires, and after the partition of Mesopotamia in 363 was the main Roman fortress to the East. Yet the *Pilgrimage of Egeria* itself ties Edessa to the classical world, for this is a text known to classicists, whether for reasons of early liturgy, since the text gives details about Holy Week observances in Jerusalem and about Epiphany observances in Bethlehem, or for reasons of language, since the text shows evidence of a curious dialect and raises questions about a local character. Certainly Edessa was also of immediate significance to the Middle Ages, at least in the years of the Crusades; there was a contemporary fear that the loss of Edessa to the Turks under Zangi in 1145 signified the imminent loss of Jerusalem, in the same way that the cession of Edessa to Baldwin in 1098 had been an omen for the capture of Jerusalem. The fear that it would so prove became the motive for the crusade of Louis VII, clearly expressed in the recruiting song:

Pris est Rohais, ben le savez,
 Dunt Crestiens sunt esmaiez,
 Les musteirs ars e desertez:
 Deus n'i est mais sacrifiez.

[You heard about Edessa's fall.

The Christians are sore distressed,

The monasteries left by all,
 God's sacrifice cannot be blessed.]³

The date of this song must be about 1146 or 1147, which gives an intriguing synchronism, for Bernard preached that Crusade. The year 1142 saw his meeting with Aelred, then novice master at Rievaulx, a meeting which resulted in the writing of *Speculum Caritatis*. The year 1147 saw Aelred as abbot at Rievaulx, and the following year saw the migration of Maimonides from Cordoba to Provence, and of the Kimḥi family to Narbonne: all years significant for the high Middle Ages.

As a centre for the transmission of culture from the classical period to the Middle Ages, however, Edessa clearly falls short. The Daisan flows neither into the Tiber nor the Rhone. Yet the city's chief isolation is not one of time or of geography, but of language. Edessa was the home and the centre of Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic developed in the second Christian century, a Semitic dialect that is used by a geographically distinct Christianity. This Christianity spread from the gates of Antioch in the West to the China seas in the East, and from the mountains of Armenia in the North to the coast of India in the South. As can be imagined, such a Christianity was inevitably different in its contacts, in its developments, in its loyalties; different, too, in its cast of mind and in its difficulties. The home of this Christianity was never made in a civilization that finally welcomed it, but always in one that began by suspecting it and ended by rejecting it. It was the observation of this that led F.C. Burkitt to say in the 1904 St. Margaret Lectures⁴ that since a study of Christianity in the Church of Edessa and in the Euphrates valley was a study of Christianity whose origins lay outside the Roman empire and whose language was akin to that of Palestine, such a study was "the nearest thing we can get to an experiment in Church History, to a history of the Church as it might have been."

"The Church as it might have been" would certainly serve as the title of a study of the origins of the church in Edessa, or indeed in the neighbouring province of Adiabene across the Tigris to the East: an examination of such sources as there are reveals not so much an accurate recollection and record as an account of an early period as it was wished it had been. To set side-by-side those Syriac documents which speak of early

years of Christianity in Edessa or Adiabene with material in Greek sources, with statements in later Syriac writers whose theological roots may be determined, and with the history of the text of Syriac Old and New Testament shows that old contradiction between church historians and historians of the church which Fr. J.M. Fiey categorizes as between "les orientaux" and "les orientalistes."⁵ Now it is at this point that it becomes clear why the study of the church in the Euphrates valley and elsewhere to the East should be drawn to the attention of classicist and mediaevalist alike. To cite Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, in a preface to a catalogue of Syriac manuscripts:

As the field has developed during this century, Syriac studies in the broadest sense lie outside the province of the Semitist -- an endangered species in any case. Whereas the Semitist may still possess some competence in the language, a collection such as this should have been tackled by a student of Christian origins, of *Oriens Christianus*, of liturgy and patrology. If not a latter-day Wright or Sachau, then a J. Rendell Harris or van Lantschoot.⁶

The present paper does not therefore propose to give a major new contribution to the field of Syriac Christian origins: there are many studies and several theories.⁷ Any discussion of the New Testament or the Old Testament text and its history, of Jewish Christian theology, of that of the early church, or orthodoxy and heresy, or of the liturgy, must say something of the early years of the church outside the familiar mediaeval and classical world of the Mediterranean and Europe. All that is attempted here is to outline the problem as it confronts the unknowing or the unwary, and to suggest some corroborative evidence on behalf of the interpretation which seems most likely.

The *Pilgrimage of Egeria* provides a convenient starting point. She said that while in Jerusalem she had heard of three things concerning Edessa: that there were monks of great holiness in large numbers; that there was a shrine of St. Thomas; and that there was a letter from Jesus transmitted by Ananias to the then king, which letter had been most carefully preserved. When she reached Edessa, she saw a newly enlarged church, the

shrine of St. Thomas, and the monks, was shown the city gate through which the letter had been brought, and had read to her that part of the letter which said that, if read aloud at a time of siege, it would protect the city from attackers. Egeria's letter was condemned as a forgery by the *Decretum Gelasianum*, but an examination of its contents leads to two further sources met with in the search of early material. The first of these is Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* (13.1-22), where an account is given of Thaddaeus, one of the Seventy. Abgar, it is said, king of the nations beyond the Euphrates, sent to Jesus asking for a cure from a terrible disease. In reply, Jesus said that he would later send one of his disciples: that disciple was Thaddaeus, sent by Thomas. But, as Eusebius says, "There is nothing like hearing the letters themselves," and quotes in Greek from the Syriac originals which he said were in the archives in Edessa. He goes on to quote a Greek version of the Syriac account of the sending by Judah Thomas of the disciple Thaddaeus, and of his staying with the Jew Tobias, the healing of Abgar, and preaching. There is the immediate discrepancy with Egeria, as to whether the preaching was first done by Thomas or by a disciple of Thomas; and Eusebius is somewhat suspect as a witness, as his previous paragraph on the subject of the seventy disciples (12.1-5) has included in their number that Peter whom Paul rebuked face to face in Antioch, and who had the same name as the apostle Peter.⁸ A Syriac version of the correspondence and of the whole episode of the early preaching in Edessa is to be found in a sixth-century manuscript which gives a longer account of the whole matter, and in particular of the teaching of Thaddaeus, or in Syriac, Addai.⁹ There is a continuation of the story in that it relates what happened after the death of Abgar when a time of persecution came. The significant passages are those which refer to Abgar's command that a church be built and its subsequent erection; to the public reading of the scriptures and the meditating on them; and to the statement that an Edessene named Paluṭ was first deacon and then priest. This last seems contradicted by the later statement that afterwards one Aggai followed Addai as "guide, ruler, and successor in his chair," but that in a time of persecution Aggai was killed too quickly for him to have laid hands on Paluṭ, and that Paluṭ therefore had to go to Antioch to receive ordination at the hands of Serapion, Bishop of Antioch, who had received

his from Zephyrinus, who had received it from Simon Cephas, who had received it from our Lord himself.

It is clear that something is very wrong with the statements as made. Here are such "divagations mégalomanes" as J.M. Fiey refers to, and a history of the church as it was hoped to have been. It is most unlikely that a church was built at the alleged time; there is a notable anachronism in the definition of scriptures read and pondered; Paluṭ cannot be a contemporary both of Jesus and of Serapion and Zephyrinus; indeed, there is an anachronism even in the stated relation between Peter, Zephyrinus, and Serapion. It is clear that two kings, both named Abgar, have been confused, Abgar the Black (A.D. 9-46) and Abgar the Great (A.D. 179-214), and that the text must be taken as showing the later Abgar embracing Christianity and building the first church. On the face of it, there is a late second-century Christianity trying to justify itself to others with traditions linking it with the churches of Antioch and of Rome, and to justify itself to itself with traditions taking it back not only to the first years of Christianity but also to the time of our Lord himself, even before the crucifixion. If this were all, then the matter would be of a simple confusion of names which supported a wishful thinking about Christian origins. There are, however, grave reasons for suspecting that Abgar the Great was not what this interpretation would have him be, and suspicions that elements of another story have been woven into the account in the Syriac narrative.

To take this second point first: two episodes have been left out of the summary of Addai's life given above. The first concerns a woman by name Protonicê, wife of Claudius, who visited Jerusalem at the time that Addai was there, who stayed with Herod, and who discovered the true cross, the story much as it was later to be related of Helena. The second episode concerns contacts made between Abgar and one Nersai, king of the Assyrians, and the acquainting of the latter with the teaching and miracles of Addai. This sounds very like the material found in Josephus (*Antiquities* 20.23-97) concerning the kingdom of Adiabene, next to Edessa's kingdom of Osrhoene: an account of the conversion of King Izates and his mother ~~Helena~~ to Judaism by Jewish traders. Hence it is suggested that the material in Josephus has been the basis of the account of the foundation

of Christianity in two separate places, in Adiabene and in Edessa.¹⁰ There is irony in this, if such be the case: for that would mean that Edessa used the traditions of the Judaizing of Adiabene to present its own conversion to Christianity, and included an episode in which Christianity went from the hills of Osrhoene to Adiabene across the Tigris. Probably the knowledge of the conversion of the royal house of Adiabene that Josephus has recorded does lie at the back of traditions given in the *Doctrine of Addai*. It does not, however, indicate of itself that Adiabene was Christian first, and that Christianity was taken from there to Osrhoene and Edessa, nor that Edessa appropriated to itself traditions appropriate to and derived from Adiabene. It means no more than that the account of Izates and Helen underlies two later accounts in which it is a common term. But the question of early Christianity in Adiabene is a difficult one, much confused by a document which can hardly be what it purports to be.¹¹

Earlier the question was raised whether Abgar the Great was not what the documents so far suggest, namely a Christian. It is usually stated that he was one, on the grounds that he was instructed by Addai, that he built a church, that he forbade emasculation after his conversion, that he had at his court the Christian archer Bardaisan. None of these points can really demonstrate the argument that they are intended to support. Whether or not Addai instructed Abgar concerns the very document which is suspect; evidence to be given below throws doubt on the building of a church at that time; that he forbade emasculation after or because of his conversion begs the very question raised; and Bardaisan's presence at the court proves no more than that there was a connection between the two. Moreover, it is questionable whether Bardaisan's religion was definitively Christian by standards of later orthodoxy.

This group of questions needs discussion in the light of another document, the last one relevant for this paper. This is the *Edessene Chronicle*,¹² compiled in the sixth century and therefore not long after the last of the events it relates, the fourth of the great floods. It begins also with an account, in detail, of the flood which took place in November 201 and which destroyed many buildings, including "the temple of the church of the Christians." It might be argued that the unusual phrase arouses

suspicion, or that it gives grounds for credibility. Perhaps the phrase is to be regarded with suspicion, for the *Chronicle* reverts after the lengthy account of the first flood to a brief resumé of outstanding events, and for the year 312/3 states that Qônâ (or Kûnê) laid the foundation of the church in Edessa. W. Bauer considered this to be the first credible piece of evidence for Christianity in Edessa.¹³ This would mean that the description of the city which was flooded in 201 reflected recollections of a later rather than earlier city, and that the building of a church and the establishing of an episcopate in the early fourth century were the consequences of the toleration of Christianity in the eastern part of the Roman Empire associated with Licinius. It is significant that the selection of matter for the earlier entries in the *Chronicle* fastens on three names. The information given is that Marcion left the Catholic Church, that Bardaisan was born, that Mani was born. It would seem from this that the church in Edessa did not have a continuous succession or a continuous history, but that among its features were the teachings of these individuals who were representatives of a Christianity which did not ultimately prevail, and that in the end the person of Qônâ was the one central to the church which was organic with that of the later communion of Ephrem and Aphrahat. If there was a precursor of Qônâ it was Paluṭ, whose significance was that there was a link between him and Antioch as the mother church of the East, mother in the sense of being esteemed rather than in the sense of being origin. It would follow then that the church in Edessa and the Euphrates valley was conscious of an origin peculiar to itself, even if now it is impossible to see the origin exclusively in one person, or indeed one school of thought.

To summarize: the usual documents used to discuss the origins of Christianity in Edessa are all of doubtful value, since they are the result of wishful thinking and pious conviction woven round such remembered tradition as seemed relevant. Yet there are some elements which are the basis for a reconstruction: these are the names of the three heterodox figures earlier than Qônâ, to which can be added a fourth: Tobias son of Tobias, the Jew with whom Addai lodged (indeed there is other mention of Jewish merchants in the Addai document). Therefore it is necessary to look for corroboration that Christianity in Edessa and the Euphrates valley

had an origin in Christian groups heterodox from later standpoints, and that Jewish figures appear in this background. This conclusion is stated clearly by Fr. Robert Murray, who says that there was no one clear centre of Mesopotamian Christianity, which seems to have been the result of unofficial evangelism and the spontaneous spread of Judaeo-Christian groups: "Christianity in communion with the Great Church developed there as a sort of precipitate in a cloudy solution."¹⁴ The documents so far mentioned give support to this. It was noted earlier that the definition of scripture mentioned in the Addai document aroused suspicion. That mention is made of the Old and New Testament and that the New Testament is defined as the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles of Paul, shows knowledge of the canon of the second rather than first century. More important, however, is the description of the Gospels as being the version of the Diatesseron, that Harmony of the Gospels made by Tatian the Assyrian who was once a pupil of Justin Martyr but who became violently opposed both to Judaism and to the Old Testament element in Christianity, in the tradition of a Marcion. There is certainly evidence that writings associated with Edessa in the early years are very much of that speculative approach which prefers concepts and allusion to concrete and factual accounts and statements, and which is found particularly among the seekers after Truth in the Nag Hammadi finds. There are, for example, elements of the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of Thomas in the Diatesseron, probably because of material in common rather than a relation of dependence. The language and the approach of the Odes of Solomon reflect a similar concern with speculation and concept.¹⁵

Further evidence is to be found in the scriptures used by the Syriac speaking church. Little has been certain until recent years, for despite appeals and attempts to provide a scholarly text of the Syriac Old Testament it is only recently that the Leiden Peshiṭta has given critical texts of a substantial number of books. What has emerged is quite clear: those books which are based on the Hebrew are based on a text substantially the same as the Hebrew Massoretic text (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*). But there was no one definitive translation, rather a number of different translations or variations within translations, associated with separate places. After about the eighth century the text associated with Mosul

predominated, since the Nestorian Christians of Mosul predominated; and the text associated with the Jacobite Christians of Takrit dropped out of use and survived only because it was preserved in the Takritian monastery in the Egyptian desert of Scete. There seems to have been a tradition of separate translations made for local usage, and those of the less significant places dropped out of use. In those texts prepared by the present writer either alone or in co-operation with J.A. Emerton it is clear that the Syriac text diverges in its own tradition where the Hebrew is doubtful and was so recognized by the Hebrew text critics, where the Hebrew lent itself to legitimate translation in different syntax, or where the unvocalized Hebrew text was capable of being translated in different ways.¹⁶ Even more to the point are the conclusions of the editor of Ecclesiasticus, who concludes that the Syriac text of that book shows clear signs of that markedly Judaeo-Christian group, the Ebionites.¹⁷ The evidence of this kind suggests that it is a mistake to look for Christian origins at Edessa either in a background solely Jewish, or in one that is entirely Gnostic. Rather, the background had elements of both, and from it one group, associated with Palut, came to dominate and to discover its resemblance to the church in Antioch. Nevertheless, there was enough of a remembered background for there to be recollection of an origin at once peculiar to itself yet belonging to a pattern of early and independent witnesses standing close to a Christianity of Jewish transmission.

In conclusion, this paper has suggested that while a study of Christian origins in Edessa and the Mesopotamian valley lies only on the periphery of the concerns of classicist and of mediaevalist, and does not play a part in the transmission of classical to mediaeval culture, yet it is a study that can properly be undertaken only with the help of those familiar with both the classical and the mediaeval worlds. The *syriacisant* cannot be an isolationist. Nor is this surprising: the problem of Christian origins is clearly seen when it is realized that a church independent of the West grew out of attitudes similar to those at Chenoboskion in Egypt and at Qumran in Palestine, used scripture variously translated from the Hebrew, for long held fast to a Gospel harmony in Syriac but with elements of a text similar to that of the African Latin text, and recast its origins by re-writing an account of a neighbour country's conversion to Judaism

-- re-writing, moreover, in the light of St. Matthew's account of the visit by the Magi. To paraphrase a comment made elsewhere:¹⁸ in provinces on trade routes from the Mediterranean to the China seas anything was possible. And mediaevalists familiar with both East and West will know how memory and fantasy can so easily be woven together: there is the eastern story of Antar, the sixth-century son of an Arabian father and a black slave, who fathered Richard Coeur-de-Lion on a sister of a king of Rome and Godfrey de Bouillon by a Frankish princess.¹⁹

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NOTES

¹ W. Heraus, *Silviae vel potius Aetheriae Peregrinatio ad Loca Sancta* (2 Aufl., Heidelberg 1921) 19.2, p. 20.

² Until diverted by Justinian the river flowed through the city, entering and leaving by watergates. Disastrous floods came in November 201, May 303, March 413, April 525. The Syriac *Edessene Chronicle* is to be found in I. Guidi, *Chronica Minora* (CSCO 1 and 2, Louvain 1903) Syriac in 1, pp. 1-13; Latin 2, pp. 1-10. On the history of Edessa, J.B. Segal, *Edessa the Blessed City* (Oxford 1970).

³ Colin Morris, *Medieval Media: Mass Communication in the Making of Europe: An Inaugural lecture* (Southampton 1972) 7.

⁴ F.C. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity* (London 1904) 5.

⁵ J.M. Fiey, *Jalons pour une histoire de l'Eglise en Iraq* (Louvain 1970) 1, vital reading for an assessment of primary and secondary sources of early Syriac Christianity.

⁶ M.H. Goshen-Gottstein, *Syrian Manuscripts in the Harvard College Library: A Catalogue* (Missoula 1979) 7.

⁷ A bibliography is to be found in I. Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia*

Syriaca (2nd ed., Rome 1965) 13-17. Apart from Burkitt and Segal (cf. above nn. 2 and 4) a recent and excellent summary is to be found in Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge 1975) 1-38. Opposite views of the value of early documents may be found in W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia 1971) 1-43 and H.E.W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth* (Oxford 1954) 39-94. For origins deriving from Palestine, see L.W. Bernard, "The Origins and Emergence of the Church in Edessa During the First Two Centuries A.D.", *Vigiliae Christianae* 22 (1968) 161-75. For links with Jewish textual traditions see P. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza* (2nd ed., Oxford 1959) 265-313, against which see P. Wernberg-Møller, "Prolegomena to a Re-examination of the Palestinian Targum Fragments . . .," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 7 (1962) 253-66. Mention might also be made of A.J.F. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas* (Leiden 1962) 30-33. Of the list there is no end, but it will be seen that the present paper owes most to Robert Murray, strikes a balance between Jewish speculative influence on the one hand and a wholehearted Gnostic or Jewish influence on the other, and is unconvinced by a theory of a Palestinian origin and deliberate systematic missionary activity. Cf. also n. 5 above.

⁸ The body of Thomas was moved to Edessa in the fourth century. Cf. also Fr. Placid, "The South Indian Apostolate of St. Thomas," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 18 (1952) 158-97; G. Nedungatt, "St. Thomas the Apostle and Hosius Thomas of Ortona," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 38 (1972) 388-407.

⁹ George Phillips, *The Doctrine of Addai, The Apostle* (London 1876).

¹⁰ Kahle (at n. 7 above).

¹¹ *The Chronicle of Arbela*. Any discussion of the history of Christianity in Adiabene must take into account J.M. Fiey, "Auteur de date de la Chronique d'Arbèles", *L'Orient Syrien* 12 (1967) 265-302.

¹² This paragraph summarizes the Bauer-Turner controversy (see n. 7 above).

¹³ Cf. Bauer (at n. 7 above).

¹⁴ Cf. Murray (at n. 7 above).

¹⁵ On the Diatesseron, cf. L. Leloir, O.S.B., *Saint Ephrem commentaire de l'Évangile concordant* (Dublin 1973), and "Recherches récentes

sur le Diatesseron," in *Memorial Mgr. Khouri Sarkis* (Louvain 1969). On Odes cf. James Hamilton Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon* (Oxford 1973). A revised reprint is now available from the Scholars' Press, Missoula. The earlier editions, especially that by J.H. Bernard (Cambridge 1912), are still of value. See also J.A. Emerton, "Some Problems of Text and Language in the Odes of Solomon," *JTS* 18 (1967) 372-406. On the Nag Hammadi material cf., *inter alia*, H.E.W. Turner, *Thomas and the Evangelists* (London 1962). On the texts, J.M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco 1977).

¹⁶ *The Old Testament in Syriac, Peshiṭta Version*, Part II, 5 (Leiden 1979). Further evidence is to be available in the volume containing Leviticus, now in the press. Cf. also D.J. Lane, "'Lilies that Fester' -- the Peshiṭta text of Qoheleth," *Vetus Testamentum* 29 (1979) 481-90 and the same writer's "'A Turtle Dove or Two Young Priests' -- A note on the Peshiṭta Text of Leviticus," *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 205 (1978) 125-30. On the history of the Leiden work, cf. that edition, *Genesis and Exodus* (Leiden 1977) v-xiv. Cf. also A.P. Hayman, M.D. Koster, "The Peshiṭta of Exodus," *JSS* 25 (1980) 263-70. An early appeal for an edition is in Canon John Rogers, *Reasons why a new edition of the Peschito or Ancient Syriac Version of the Old Testament should be published, with Variae Lectiones from ancient Mss and editions* (Oxford 1849).

¹⁷ M.M. Winter, "The Origins of Ben Sira in Syriac," *Vetus Testamentum* 27 (1977) 237-53, 494-507.

¹⁸ H.J.W. Drijvers, cited by Murray (at n. 7 above) 6-7. A summary of Drijvers' view is to be found in his *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Assen 1966) 214-17. The whole work is of value for looking at a Mesopotamian Jewish rather than a Palestinian Jewish background to the diffuse Christianity of Edessa. The Aberkios inscription (J.B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, II. 1 [London 1885] 476-85) is taken as evidence of an indeterminate Christianity in the East in the second century; some account of Jewish Christianity is given in J. Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London 1964) and in the volume *Judéo-Christianisme. Recherches historiques et théologiques offertes en hommage au Cardinal Jean Daniélou* (Paris 1972). A caution on this subject is expressed in the Appendix by G. Strecker to the edition of W. Bauer's *Orthodoxy and Heresy* (above at

n. 7). In discussion of such a subject there come to mind two prayers to our Lord from litanies quoted by Fr. Murray in a paper to the Oxford Society for Historical Theology, May 9, 1968. Jesus is appealed to as "O Thou the helmsman that is never drunk" and "O Thou Rennet, coagulator of disordered minds." Cf. Murray (at n. 7 above) 161 and 252.

¹⁹ This paper originated at the Third Annual Colloquium on Mediaeval Civilization held at Scarborough College, University of Toronto, January 1980.