Introduction

"Orthodoxy" and "heresy": we all know what enormous importance is attached to these two concepts for the history of our religion. Usually, however, investigation of this subject tends to focus upon the later epochs. The period of Christian origins is, as a rule, passed over rather briefly. Of course, the "errors" combatted in the earliest literature of Christianity are described and investigated from various points of view, with this or that result. But this is usually done with implicit, or even explicit, assent to the view that any such divergence really is a corruption of Christianity.

But if we follow such a procedure, and simply agree with the judgment of the anti-heretical fathers for the post-New Testament period, do we not all too quickly become dependent upon the vote of but *one* party—that party which perhaps as much through favorable circumstances as by its own merit eventually was thrust into the foreground, and which possibly has at its disposal today the more powerful, and thus the more prevalent voice, only because the chorus of others has been muted? Must not the historian, like the judge, preside over the parties and maintain as a primary principle the dictum *audiatur et altera pars* [let the other side also be heard]? When one side cannot, because of anxiety, confusion, or clumsiness, gain proper recognition, is it not the obligation of the judge—and, *mutatis mutandis* of the historian—to assist it, as best he can, to unfold its case instead of simply submitting to the mental agility and firmness, the sagacity and loquacity of the other? Does either judge or historian dare to act as though whatever cannot be read and understood by everyone as part of the public records never existed, and thus is unimportant for passing sentence?

In our day and age, there is no longer any debate [2] that in terms of a *scientific approach* to history, the New Testament writings cannot be understood properly if one now looks back on them from the end of the process of canonization as sacred books, and prizes them as constituent parts of the celestial charter of salvation, with all the attendant characteristics. We have long since become accustomed to understanding them in terms of their own time—the gospels as more or less successful attempts to relate the life of Jesus; the Pauline letters as occasional writings, connected with specific and unrepeatable situations, and having spatial as well as temporal limitations to their sphere of authority. We must also approach the "heretics" in the same way. We need to understand them also in terms of their own time, and not to evaluate them by means of ecclesiastical doctrine which was developing, or which later became a ready-made norm.

We can determine adequately the significance the "heretics" possessed for nascent and developing Christianity only when we, insofar as it is possible, place ourselves back into the period in which they went about their business, and without hesitation cast all our preconceived ideas aside. We must remain open to all possibilities. What constitutes "truth" in one generation can be out of date in the next—through progress, but also through retrogression into an earlier position. The actual situation in this region may not obtain in that one, and indeed, may never have had general currency.

Perhaps—I repeat, *perhaps*—certain manifestations of Christian life that the authors of the church renounce as "heresies" originally had not been such at all, but, at least here and there, were the only form of the new religion—that is, for those regions they were simply "Christianity." The possibility also exists that their adherents constituted the majority, and that they looked down with hatred and scorn on the orthodox, who for them were the false believers. I do not say this in order to introduce some special use of language for the investigations which follow, so that "orthodoxy" designates the preference of the given majority, while "heresy" is characterized by the fact that only the minority adhere to it. Majority and minority can change places and then such a use of language, which would be able to represent this change only with difficulty, would easily lead to obscurities and misunderstandings. No, even in this book, "orthodoxy" and "heresy" will refer to what one customarily and [3] usually

understands them to mean. There is only this proviso, that we will not hear the two of them discussed by the church—that is, by the one party—but by history.

In order to exclude from the outset all modern impressions and judgments, I will proceed from the view concerning the heretics and their doctrines which was cherished already in the second century by the ancient church, and will test its defensibility in hopes of discovering, by means of such a critical procedure, a route to the goal. The ecclesiastical position includes roughly the following main points:

(1) Jesus reveals the pure doctrine to his apostles, partly before his death, and partly in the forty days before his ascension.

(2) After Jesus' final departure, the apostles apportion the world among themselves, and each takes the unadulterated gospel to the land which has been allotted him.

(3) Even after the death of the disciples the gospel branches out further. But now obstacles to it spring up within Christianity itself. The devil cannot resist sowing weeds in the divine wheatfield—and he is successful at it. True Christians blinded by him abandon the pure doctrine. This development takes place in the following sequence: unbelief, right belief, wrong belief. There is scarcely the faintest notion anywhere that unbelief might be changed directly into what the church calls false belief. No, where there is heresy, orthodoxy must have preceded. For example, Origen puts it like this: "All heretics at first are believers; then later they swerve from the rule of faith." [1]

This view is so deeply rooted, and so widely held, that it applies even to such personalities as Mani, who is supposed to have been a presbyter of the church and a valiant warrior against both Jews and pagans, but then left the church because he took it as a personal offence that his students received such scanty recognition (see below, 39). In general, it is an opinion of orthodoxy that only impure motives drive the heretic from the church—indeed, this must be so if

1. *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 3 (to Cant. 2.2): *omnes enim haeretici primo ad credulitatem veniunt, et post haec ab itinere fidei et dogmatum veritate declinant* (ed. W. A. Baehrens, GCS 33 [1925]; ET by R. P. Lawson, ACW 26 [1957]). See also the fragment from Origen on Proverbs (to 2.16), ed. Lommatzsch 13,228 (= PG 13, 28 f.). Tertullian speaks similarly at the end of *Prescription against Heretics* 36 in his analogy of the wild olive (or fig) tree (= heresy) which springs from a cultivated seed (= orthodox doctrine).

the evil-one is at the bottom of it all. Already Hegesippus, who was in Rome around the year 160, asserts that after the martyr's death of James the Just, Thebutis had begun to corrupt the church, which until then had been a pure virgin, [4] through false belief, because he had not succeeded James as the leader of the Jerusalem community (EH 4.22.4-6). We hear similar things about Valentinus (below, 39 n. 91, and 128), Marcion,[2] and Bardesanes (below, 38 f.).

(4) Of course, right belief is invincible. In spite of all the efforts of Satan and his instruments, it repels unbelief and false belief, and extends its victorious sway ever further.

Scholarship has not found it difficult to criticize these convictions. It knows that the ecclesiastical doctrine was not yet present with Jesus; likewise, that the twelve apostles by no means played the role assigned to them out of consideration for the purity and revealed nature of ecclesiastical dogma. Further, historical thinking that is worthy of this name refuses to employ here the correlatives "true" and "untrue," "bad" and "good." It is not easily convinced of the moral inferiority attributed to the heretics. It recognizes there the same embarrassed, and thus artificial, claim that emanated from Jewish Christianity when it asserted that Paul had sued for the hand of the high priest's daughter and, when it was denied him, began to rage against Torah (Epiphanius *Her.* 30.16).

Sooner or later, however, a point is reached at which criticism bogs down. For my tastes, it all too easily submits to the ecclesiastical opinion as to what is early and late, original and dependent, essential and unimportant for the earliest history of Christianity. If my impression is correct, even today the overwhelmingly dominant view still is that for the period of Christian origins, ecclesiastical doctrine (of course, only as this pertains to a certain stage in its development) already represents what is primary, while heresies, on the other hand, somehow are a deviation from the genuine. I do not mean to say that this point of view must be false, but neither can I regard it as self-evident, or even as demonstrated and clearly established. Rather, we are confronted here with a problem that merits our attention.

In this way, the subject of my book is defined more precisely, and I am left free to bypass much else that also could be treated under

2. [Epiphanius *Her.* 42.1.8; see also Tertullian *Prescription against Heretics* 30 and *Against Marcion* 4.4, and the *Edessene Chronicle* 6 (below pp. 14 ff., 38).]

the title I have selected. For example, I do not intend to present once again a description of the tenets of the ancient heresies, but I presuppose that they are well known, along with many other things. We live in a time that demands concise discussion, and repetition of what already has been presented in a suitable manner [5] should not be tolerated. Therefore, he who opens this book in hopes of finding therein a convenient synopsis of what fellow-scholars already have contributed to this or to that aspect of the theme will be disappointed.

As we turn to our task, the New Testament seems to be both too unproductive and too much disputed to be able to serve as a point of departure. The majority of its anti-heretical writings cannot be arranged with confidence either chronologically or geographically; nor can the more precise circumstances of their origin be determined with sufficient precision. It is advisable, therefore, first of all to interrogate other sources concerning the relationship of orthodoxy and heresy, so that, with the insights that may be gained there, we may try to determine the time and place of their origins. I have chosen to begin with Edessa and Egypt so as to obtain a glimpse into the emergence and the original condition of Christianity in regions other than those that the New Testament depicts as affected by this religion.

1

Edessa

After the breakup of the kingdom of Alexander the Great, Mesopotamia, including the region in which Edessa lay, came under the control of Seleucus I Nicator. He reorganized an extant settlement there, Osroë, by mixing the population with westerners who spoke Greek, and gave it the Macedonian name Edessa.[1] In the second half of the second century B.C.E., as the Seleucid kingdom disintegrated in the wars with Parthia (145-129), insubordinate despots seized power for themselves in Edessa and its environs (i.e., in the Osroëne), as was true elsewhere in Mesopotamia (Diodorus *Exc. Escur.* 25), at first under Parthian dominion. Thereafter, they came under the Armenian banner in the time of Tigranes, and then the Roman through Lucullus and Pompey. With the assassination of Caracalla, which occurred in Edessa in 217 C.E., the local dynasty finally came to an end, after various preliminary interludes, when the Osroëne was incorporated into the Roman Empire.[2]

The Greek influence did not have a long or profound effect here. According to the *Chronicle* of Jacob of Edessa, who lived in the seventh century, the Greek part of the population was so greatly diminished already by the year 180 of the Seleucid era (= 133 B.C.E.)

1. Appian *Roman History* 11 (*Syrian Wars*). 57 (ed. and ET by H. White, LCL [1912]). The name Edessa, which is Illyrian in origin, means "water-city"; cf. U. Wilcken, *Alexander the Great* (ET by G. C. Richards from 1931 German, London: Chatto and Windus, 1932), p. 23 (= German 20).
2. A. von Gutschmid, *Untersuchungen über die Geschichte des Königreiches Osroëne,* Mémoires de l'Academie impériale des Sciences de S. Pétersbourg, series 7, vol. 35.1 (St. Petersburg, 1887); E. Meyer, "Edessa," *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft,* ed. G. Wissowa, 5.2 (Stuttgart, 1905), 1933-1938.

that they allowed the native population to have a king from their own midst.[3] The rulers—strictly speaking they were not kings but toparchs, even though the coins occasionally also call them [7] "king" (*basileus*) —even at that time bear predominantly Arabic or Aramaic names: 'Abdu, Ma'nu, Bakru, Abgar, Wâ'il. Moreover, the old Semitic designation of the city is revived at the expense of "Edessa"—it is called Urhâi, modern Urfa (see below, n. 11). There is a corresponding lack of Greek inscriptions for the first centuries of the common era. The native princes use Syriac inscriptions on their coins. Roman gold pieces, which were in circulation in the area from the time of Marcus Aurelius, of course have Greek legends, as do the coins which name the emperor along with a local prince. Only Abgar IX[4] (179-214), the Roman minion, prefers a Greek inscription even for himself alone.[5] This represents only his own attitude, not the national orientation of his subjects.

When we ask how and when Christianity gained influence in this region, it is unnecessary to begin with a survey of the sources—which are in Syriac, Greek, and a few in Latin. Instead, for the sake of convenience, we will combine the information concerning the sources with the evaluation of them and with the collection of discernible data made possible thereby.

The story of King Abgar V Ukkama (= the Black), who ruled from 9-46 C.E., and his relationship to Jesus is well known.[6] It is found in its oldest form in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* [= EH] 1.13, who first tells the story, then introduces the documentation, so as to return once again to the story. The king, who has heard of the miraculous healings performed by Jesus, appeals to him by letter, acknowledges his deity, and begs to be freed from the illness that afflicts him. At the same time, in view of the hostility of the Jews, he offers his own home city to Jesus as a safe dwelling place. Jesus answers

3. Syriac text ed. by E.-W. Brooks, with a Latin translation in the companion volume, by J. B. Chabot, in part 2 of *Chronica minora* (CSCO, Scriptores Syri, series 3, vol. 4, 1903), syr. 281 f., lat. 211.
4. So Gutschmid and others such as F. Haase; but H. Leclercq, following M. Babelon, designates him as Abgar VIII—DACL 4 (1921): 2065 ff. (esp. 2065.7).
5. Gutschmid, *Osroëne*, pp. 37 ff.; G. F. Hill, *Catalogue of Greek Coins in the British Museum: the Greek Coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia* (London: Longmans, 1922), e.g. p. CI, no. 5.
6. [See also Bauer's treatment of this subject in Hennecke-Schneemelcher, 1: 437 ff. On Edessene Christianity in general, see most recently J. B. Segal, *Edessa: "The Blessed City"* (Oxford and New York: University Press, 1970).]

likewise in writing. He blesses the king for believing without having seen. He must decline the invitation, since he has to fulfill his calling and his earthly life in Palestine. But after his death and ascension a disciple will come who will heal the king and will bring life to him, as well as to his people. Then this actually took place. [8]

Eusebius makes the transition from his account (EH 1.13.1-4) to the *verbatim* reproduction of the two letters as follows (13.5): "There is also documentary evidence of these things, taken from the record office at Edessa, a city which at that time was still ruled by a king. For in the public documents there, which also contain the experiences of Abgar among other events of antiquity, these things also have been found preserved from his time until the present. But there is nothing like listening to the letters themselves, which we have taken from the archives, and which translated literally from the Syriac are as follows."

After reproducing the letters (13.6-10) Eusebius continues: "To these letters the following is appended, in Syriac" (13.11). There follows (13.12-21) the account of how after the ascension "Judas, who is also called Thomas" sends Thaddaeus, one of the seventy disciples, to Edessa. There he heals Abgar and many others, and is requested by the "toparch" (13.13; cf. also 13.6) to tell him about Jesus' life and works. Thaddaeus declares his willingness, but he wants to do so on the following day before the entire populace. Thus all the citizens of the city are summoned (13.20). Still, nothing more is said about the projected apostolic sermon, but the account concludes with the statement: "These things took place in the year 340 [of the Seleucid era = 28/29 C.E.]" (13.22[a]). Finally the whole thing ends with the words of Eusebius: "Let this useful story, translated literally from the Syriac, stand here in its proper place" (13.22[b]).

The account of the conversion of Edessa, which we have just presented from Eusebius (EH 1.13; cf. 2.1.6-8), can in no way and to no extent be traced back as a report that is earlier than the beginning of the fourth century, when Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* originated. On the other hand, toward the end of that century or the beginning of the next, the report underwent further development, which reached a culmination of sorts in the so-called *Doctrina Addai*, a Syriac book which was written in Edessa around the year 400.[7] In it the material

7. G. Phillips, *The Doctrine of Addai the Apostle* (London, 1876).

known from Eusebius reappears, albeit to a considerable measure expanded, among other things, by a detailed account of the activity of the apostolic emissary[8] in Edessa, who preaches, baptizes, and builds the first church. [9]

In surveying this information from the earliest history of Christian Edessa there naturally occurs to us what had been said above xxiii about the ecclesiastical way of thinking. The decisive role that is attributed to Jesus and his apostle is viewed quite ecclesiastically. Indeed, the stronger the ecclesiastical coloring is applied, the more powerfully does doubt assert itself as to the truth of what is stated. In this instance we are in the happy position of not having to investigate the doubts individually. In the twentieth century the conviction has quite generally prevailed that Eusebius is not tracing the actual course of history, but is relating a legend. Today the only thing that remains to be asked is whether the church father's presentation is completely useless for shedding light upon the origin of the Christian church in Edessa, or whether in the justifiable rejection of the whole we may still single out this or that particular trait, in order to derive therefrom some sort of tenable insight for ourselves.

That the latter is legitimate is at present the almost universally acknowledged scholarly view. Thus one may point, for example, to the figure of Tobias, who according to Eusebius, lives in Edessa and mediates the contact between Thaddaeus and Abgar (EH 1.13.11 and 13). From this, one could deduce the historical fact that Christianity in Edessa had ties to Judaism there. Still, this conclusion is quite tenuous in view of the fact that Eusebius says nothing at all about the Judaism of Tobias, but it is left to the reader to draw from the name itself the necessary conclusion as a basis for all the rest.

Much more significant is the wide currency gained, especially through the work of the historian A. von Gutschmid, by the view that it was not Abgar V, the contemporary of Jesus, but in fact a later prince by the same name—Abgar IX (179-214)—who first turned Christian and thereby helped this religion to erupt.[9] Nevertheless, the

8. Here he is called Addai, not Thaddeus as in Eusebius.
9. Gutschmid, *Osroëne*, pp. 1 ff. [See also, e.g. H. Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church* in 4 vols. (ET by B. L. Woolf from the 1932-44 German; London: Lutterworth, 1937-53; reprint New York: Meridian paperback, 1961), 2: 260 (=German p. 266), in conscious disagreement with Bauer. (The date 250 in the ET is a typographical error for 200.)]

grounds for accepting a conversion of this later Abgar appear to me to be overrated, while the counterarguments are not given enough consideration.[10] [10] We must still give serious attention to the fact that without exception the ancient authors who speak of a Christian King Abgar of Edessa mean that one with whom Jesus is supposed to have been in correspondence. The possibility of this ninth Abgar has been uncovered by modern scholarship only as a substitute for the conversion of the fifth Abgar, which at present no one can seriously accept any longer.

The only support for the modern view is, after all, a passage from the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, one of the oldest monuments of original Syriac prose, a product of the school of Bar Daisan (whom the Greeks call Bardesanes), from the beginning of the third century. Chapter 45 reads: "In Syria and in Urhâi[11] the men used to castrate themselves in honor of Taratha. But when King Abgar became a believer, he commanded that anyone who emasculated himself should have a hand cut off. And from that day to the present no one in Urhâi emasculates himself anymore."[12] Thus we have reference to a Christian King Abgar by an Edessene author at the beginning of the third century. Since, on the basis of what is known, Abgar V does not qualify, one may now think of the ninth Abgar, who probably would have been an early contemporary of that author.

But does a person use the expression "from this day down to mine" to speak of his contemporary? Is not one who speaks in this way looking back to a personality who lived much earlier? But this observation, which serves to shake the opinion that the text refers to Abgar IX, by no means leads to the view that one must now refer it to Abgar V and suppose that the Abgar legend already existed in some form at the time when the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* was written. For that book really offers no guarantee for the presence

10. H. Gompertz opposes the idea that Abgar IX was converted to Christianity in an essay "Hat es jemals in Edessa christliche Könige gegeben?" in the *Archäologisch-epigraphischen Mitteilungen aus Österreich-Ungarn*, 9 (1896): 154-157. Also sceptical is F. Haase, *Altchristliche Kirchengeschichte nach orientalischen Quellen* (Leipzig, 1925), pp. 84 ff.
11. Urhâi is the Aramaic name of the city called Edessa by the Macedonians. The old name later regained its prevalence and still is reflected in the modern name Urfa (see above, 2). [Greek text Eusebius *Pr. Gosp.* 6.10 reads Osroëne.]
12. Ed. by F. Nau in PSyr 1.2 (1907): 606. [Separate ed. by Nau (Paris, 1931). Text and ET by W. Cureton, *Spicilegium Syriacum* (London, 1855); ET by B. P. Pratten, ANF 8:723-734.]

of Christianity within the Edessene royal household, be it earlier or later. The Syriac text from which we have proceeded can not be trusted. The earliest witness for the text of that [11] ancient Syriac writing under consideration is not a codex in that language, but is Eusebius, who has copied the *Book of the Laws* in his *Preparation for the Gospel* 6.10. When he comes to speak of the customs in Edessa, he is in close enough agreement, for the most part, with the Syriac text; but the explanation referring to the faith of the king—that is, the words "when he became a believer" in the passage cited above—cannot be found in Eusebius (6.10.44). But since he knew of a King Abgar of Edessa who had become a believer, as is clear from the *Ecclesiastical History* (see above, 2 f.), and since he had absolutely no reason to eliminate the words which would have been helpful to the Christian cause, the only remaining conclusion is that he did not find them in his source; and the Syriac text doubtless is indebted for them, as an appended postscript, to someone who knew the Abgar legend. If this sort of person heard of such a measure taken by a King Abgar, a measure which from his point of view must have seemed directed against paganism, to what else could he attribute it than the Christian faith of the famous prince Abgar? Actually, the decisive stand of an ancient ruler against emasculation requires no Christian motivation. From the time of Domitian, the pagan emperors proceeded with ever sharper measures against this offense.[13]

The rest of what is adduced in support of a Christian king of Edessa appears to me to be entirely without importance. The Christian Sextus Julius Africanus, who around the year 200 spent some time at the Edessene royal court, once refers to his contemporary Abgar as "a holy person."[14] This is not to be exploited as a Christian

13. Moreover, the measure instituted by that Abgar of whom the *Book of the Laws* speaks (above, n. 12) and to whom we are no longer able to ascribe a number in no way produced the thorough and lasting effect that one is led to expect when he reads the passage devoted to him. Even in the fifth century, Rabbula of Edessa in his rules for priests and clerics must stipulate that no Christian is to emasculate himself: J. J. Overbeck (ed.), *S. Ephraemi Syri Rabulae Episcopi Edesseni, Balaei, aliorumque opera selecta* (Oxford, 1865), p. 221.4. Isaac of Antioch, doubtless an Edessene priest of the fifth century, inveighs mightily against self-mutilation in *Carmen* 37.467 ff. (ed. G. Bickell, *S. Isaaci Antiocheni, doctoris Syrorum, opera omnia*, 2 [Giessen, 1877]: 260 ff. = ed. of P. Bedjan [Paris, 1903], no. 51, pp. 633 ff.)
14. *Hieros anēr*, in George Syncellus, *Chronicle* (*Chronographie*, ed. G. Dindorf [Bonn, 1829], 1: 676.13).

confession, and is understood quite correctly by Eusebius in his *Chronicle* for the year 2235 of Abraham (probably = 218 C.E.), when he says: [12] "Abgar, a *distinguished* man, ruled over Urrha, as Africanus relates." Also from Africanus derives the report of Epiphanius, when in the description of the heresy of Bardesanes he characterizes the contemporary Edessene ruler Abgar as a "most pious and reasonable person" (*anēr hosiōtatos kai logiōtatos, Her.* 56.1.3).

In support of our position is the fact that in a Syriac novel dealing with Julian the Apostate, from a manuscript no later than the seventh century, Satan explains: "From the beginning of the world, there was no nation or kingdom that did not honor me. Only this Constantine reneged."[15] It appears, then, that the original Syrian who is telling this story knows nothing of a Christian prince prior to Constantine; thus he knows of no such tradition from his own, Syriac-speaking area.

Further, two large marble columns are still standing on the citadel in Edessa (Urfa), one of which bears an inscription in honor of the Queen Chelmath, the daughter of Manu.[16] The form of the letters in the inscription is that of approximately 200 C.E. Thus it is quite possible that the princess named was the wife of that Abgar who is supposed to have become a Christian around the turn of the third century.[17] Now H. Pognon suggests what appears to me quite likely, that the columns originally were among those mentioned in an anonymous *Chronicle* that Rahmani has edited from an Edessene codex: "There was in Urhai a great pagan temple, splendidly built, from the time of the great king Seleucus. . . . It was magnificently decorated and in its midst were great marble columns."[18] Later, this temple was remodelled into a church and received the name "Church of our Redeemer." If Pognon's supposition is correct, and people have perpetuated the name of Abgar's wife in a pagan temple to her honor, and the inscription was not removed [13] subsequently, then from

15. T. Nöldeke in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 28 (1874): 665 (see 671 on the date of the manuscript). The Syriac text is given in G. Hoffmann, *Julian der Abtrünnige* (Leiden: Brill, 1880), at the end (fol. 53b-54a) [ET by H. Gollancz, *Julian the Apostate, now translated for the first time from the Syriac original* (London: Milford, 1928), p. 260].
16. According to Eusebius EH 2.12.3, several splendid pillars of Queen Helena of Adiabene stand in the suburbs of Aelia [= Jerusalem].
17. So H. Leclercq in DACL 4 (1921): 2102 f.
18. H. Pognon, *Inscriptions sémitiques de la Syrie, de la Mésopotamie et de la Région de Mossoul* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1907), pp. 206 f. I. E. Rahmani (ed.), *Chronicon civile et ecclesiasticum anonymi auctoris* (Mt. Libano, 1904), p. 66.3 ff.

this point of view also, the Christianity of her royal spouse is rendered somewhat doubtful.

Finally, it is to be remembered that Dio Cassius tells of the extraordinary cruelty of this very Abgar.[19] Thus at least in his case, the Christian faith cannot have had a very deep effect.

The purpose of this criticism is to contest the assumption that the presence of a Christian prince and of a state church for Edessa around the year 200 is in any way assured. But also, apart from the problem of the ruler, the existence of ecclesiastically organized Christianity in Edessa at this time cannot be asserted with any confidence, no matter how frequently and from what impressive quarters this is constantly repeated. If we examine the sources for the earliest history of Christianity in Edessa, it will appear to us that in his *Ecclesiastical History*, which went through four editions in the years 311/12 to 324/25,[20] Eusebius ought to be able to give us the best information. The learned bishop even lived in Palestine, not excessively distant from the region with which we are concerned, and he also understood Syriac, the language spoken there. But an investigation of what the "father of church history" knows, or at least communicates, concerning the situation in the Mesopotamian neighborhood before and during his epoch—apart from the impossible Abgar story—discloses a result that is disturbing for its poverty. I enumerate:

a) EH 4.2.5: Trajan has cleared Mesopotamia of the Jews. Eusebius knows this from the Greek historians who tell of Trajan's reign.

b) EH 7.5.2: A letter of Dionysius of Alexandria to the Roman bishop Stephen (255-257) is quoted, in which, among the Oriental churches which earlier were divided and now are united, there are also listed quite summarily "Mesopotamia, and Pontus and Bithynia" (*Mesopotamia Pontos te kai Bithynia*).

c) EH 9.12.1: Under Diocletian the Christians in Mesopotamia, in contrast to other provinces, were hung by the feet over a slow fire.

There is nothing much of significance there. But up to this point we still have not examined [14] *the* passage that always is adduced in order to prove that already in the second century there must have been ecclesiastically organized Christianity of a not-inconsiderable size in Mesopotamia.

19. *Roman History*, Epitome of 78.12.1a (ed. E. Carey, LCL [1927] = Exc. Vales. 369/p. 746); cf. Gutschmid, *Osroëne*, p. 36.
20. Cf. the GCS edition of EH by E. Schwartz, 3: XLVII ff.

d) EH 5.23.4: At the time of the Roman bishop Victor (189-99), gatherings of bishops took place everywhere on the matter of the Easter controversy, and Eusebius still knows of letters in which the church leaders have set down their opinion. In this connection, the following localities are enumerated: Palestine, Rome, Pontus, Gaul, and then the "Osroëne and the cities there." The phrase "and the cities there" is as unusual as it is superfluous. Where else are the Osroëne bishops supposed to have been situated except in the "cities there"? But what speaks even more decisively against these words than this sort of observation is the fact that the earliest witness for the text of Eusebius, the Latin translation of Rufinus, does not contain the words "as well as from those in the Osroëne and the cities there." This cannot be due to tampering with the text by the Italian translator, for whom eastern matters are of no great concern. In those books with which he has supplemented Eusebius' *History*, Rufinus mentions Mesopotamia and Edessa several times (11.5 and 8 at the end; see below, n. 24). Thus the only remaining possibility is that in his copy of EH 5.23.4 he found no reference to the Osroëne, but that we are dealing here with a grammatically awkward interpolation by a later person who noted the omission of Edessa and its environs.

The author of the *Ecclesiastical History* is not well informed about Mesopotamia; this verdict may be rendered without apology. He does mention Julius Africanus and makes excerpts from his *Chronicle*,[21] but without mentioning Mesopotamia or Edessa on such occasions. For him, Bardesanes belongs quite generally to the "land of the two rivers"; he has not learned anything more specific about him (EH 4.30.1). And by his own admission, it is only by hearsay that he is acquainted with the gospel in use by the Christians of that area in his own time, the so-called *Diatessaron* (4.29.6). This indicates to me that ecclesiastical Christianity cannot have been flourishing in Mesopotamia at that time, at least not in a form congenial to Eusebius. Apparently, he never felt the temptation to examine these areas in person, and he was able to secure only a few literary items of information about them. [15]

And for this reason alone he could fall victim to a forgery like the Jesus-Abgar correspondence. What then is the situation? Eusebius

21. See the index of literature cited in the Schwartz edition of EH, 3: 62.

declares often (above, 3) and with emphasis that he is dealing with a document from the archives of Edessa. Although we cannot be absolutely sure from his statement that he himself had translated the material from the Syriac, we can be certain that the material was given to him with the express assurance that it came from the public records of Edessa. It is well to note that it is not Jerome or some other questionable person that is speaking here, but a man whose devotion to truth and whose honesty are above suspicion. Thus for me, what he describes to be the state of affairs is reliable. This means that I proceed from the following assumption: Eusebius has not fabricated this himself, but has been deceived by someone else. And his credulity is explained first of all by his utter ignorance of the entire Mesopotamian situation, and perhaps also because the one who brought him the Syriac manuscript introduced himself in such a way as to preclude any misgivings. Later, we will suggest a possible solution to this problem (below, 35-39).

But first, a few observations. Naturally, based on the principle "Who stands to benefit?", the correspondence with its embellishments stems from Edessa. But it is noteworthy that even long after the appearance of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* the *Edessene* public knows nothing of this exchange of letters. Ephraem of Edessa (d. 373), who praises the conversion of the city with rhetorical exaggeration, knows only of the sending of the apostle Addai, nothing more.[22] At least nothing else seems to him [16] worth mentioning. It is not that

22. See F. Haase, *Kirchengeschichte*, pp. 71 f.; R. A. Lipsius, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden*, 2.2 (Braunschweig, 1884): 182 ff. Moreover, the only place, to my knowledge, in which Abgar appears in the works of Ephraem—and here not as a letter writer or author, but as a patient of Thaddeus—is in the appendix to his commentary on the *Diatessaron* (preserved in Armenian; Latin tr. by J. B. Aucher with ed. of G. Moesinger, *Evangelii concordantis exposito* [Venice, 1876], p. 287; ed. L. Leloir, CSCO 137/145 = Scriptores Armeniaci 1-2 [1953-54], 350/248; this material is lacking in the Syriac materials—see Leloir's introduction and French translation in SC 121 [1966]), against which one may raise doubts. Immediately after the interpretation of the gospel harmony, this text deals with the origin of the four canonical gospels, with which Ephraem had no close connection (cf. J. Schäfers, *Evangelienzitate in Ephraems des Syrers Kommentar zu den paulinischen Schriften* [Freiburg im B., 1917], especially 47), and adds a catalogue of heretics that has nothing in common with the struggle against false belief exhibited elsewhere by Ephraem, and can scarcely be derived from a treatise of Ephraem *"De Sectis"* (*On the Sects/Heresies*)—essentially it deals with the seven Jewish heresies that were known since the time of Justin and [16] Hegesippus (in EH 4.22.7). Ephraem *Carmina Nisibena* 27.62 (see below, n. 58) alludes to an apostle as the founder of the Edessene church, without saying more.

personal critical principles have determined Ephraem's selection; there is another apocryphal exchange of letters, between Paul and the Corinthians (from the spurious *Acts of Paul*), that he incorporates confidently into his Bible. Not until around the end of the fourth century or the beginning of the fifth do we find evidence that the Edessene Christians are acquainted with the Abgar saga, which has now increased considerably in scope beyond the form known to Eusebius (see above, 2-3)—it is attested by the pilgrim Aetheria,[23] who at the same time shows that her western homeland was acquainted with it, and by the *Doctrina Addai* (above, 3).

From this I conclude that someone in Edessa must have proceeded in an exceptionally cautious fashion. He did not endanger the undertaking by suddenly appearing in Edessa itself with the assertion that nearly three centuries earlier the city had stood in close connection with Jesus in person, which certainly would not have been accepted without contradiction, least of all by the opponents of those circles interested in the legend. Rather, this person made use of the zeal for collecting which characterized the learned and guileless bishop of Caesarea, who was wholly inexperienced with regard to the situation in Mesopotamia, slipped into his hands the "Syrian Acts," cheerfully and justifiably confident that this story soon would find its way back home in improved and enlarged form, now secure against all assaults.

Thus we find the Abgar saga to be a pure fabrication, without any connection with reality, which need not have emerged earlier than the beginning of the fourth century (see below, 35 f.), and which says nothing certain about the Christianity of Edessa in an earlier time. The converted king loses all claim to be taken seriously when one accepts him as a legendary figure and resolutely rejects any thought of a "historical kernel." The apostle Thomas, whose remains rested in Edessa from the fourth century,[24] and whose much earlier *Acts*

23. P. Geyer (ed.), *Itinera Hierosolymitana saec. IV-VIII* (CSEL 39, 1898), p. 19 (= 17.1). Cf. A. Bludau, *Die Pilgerreise der Aetheria* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1927), 245 ff.—dated no earlier than the very end of the fourth century (ca. 394; p. 248).

24. According to Ephraem *Carmina Nisibena* 42.9-40 (see below, n. 58); *Edessene Chronicle* 38, for 22 August 394 (the day on which the shrine in the great church at Edessa, which is still called that of Thomas, was transferred there); [17] Rufinus *Eccl. Hist.* 2.5 (= 11.5 in the Schwartz-Mommsen GCS ed. of EH); Socrates *Eccl. Hist.* 4.18 [ET by A. C. Zenos, NPNF 2, series 2]; Sozomen *Eccl. Hist.* 6.18 [ET by C. D. Hantranft, NPNF 2, series 2].

stems from this region, [17] also converted a king, Gundafor of India (*Acts of Thomas* 24 ff.). This story may have provided inspiration for the fabricator, but it is not necessary to conjecture such a connection.

If Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* does not reach back to an earlier period as a source for Edessa, where else do we hear anything about the earlier time? We know that Sextus Julius Africanus, who stayed at the Edessene court as a friend of Abgar IX and companion to his son, was a Christian. But his Christianity could tolerate not only the close association with pagan princes, but even contact with Bardesanes, and in general was of such a sort that one could hardly describe him as a particular "type," and certainly not as a representative of "orthodoxy" in any ecclesiastical sense.[25] But that there were Christians of *another* kind in Edessa at that time does not need to be demonstrated, since we have just mentioned one such example in the person of Bardesanes. I pose the question: With respect to the history of the church of Edessa, how well does the widely held view stand up, that in the various cities at the beginning there existed communities of orthodox Christians—naturally orthodoxy is understood to involve a certain development and unfolding—who form the genuine kernel of Christianity, and alongside are minorities of those who are "off the track" and are regarded and treated as heretics? I raise the question as to how well it stands the test, and find the answer, it stands up poorly. Up to now nothing has spoken in its favor.

Even the *Edessene Chronicle* requires no different interpretation.[26] Quite the contrary. Compiled at the close of the sixth century,[27] [18] the *Chronicle* contains a lengthy account of the great inundation in Edessa in November of 201 C.E. prior to the actual chronology, which

25. See below, 159-165. The same may be said of the scripturally learned Macarius of Edessa, with whom Lucian, the spiritual foster-father of Arius, is supposed to have pursued his first studies according to Suidas and Symeon Metaphrastes (texts in J. Bidez [ed.], *Kirchengeschichte des Philostorgius* [GCS, 1913], p. 184). On the whole, when someone has obtained something from Edessa, it is scented with the odor of heresy, as with Eusebius of Emesa (d. 359) whose astrological inclinations caused the members of his diocese to oppose his installation. For the subtleties of trinitarian orthodoxy, on the other hand, he had no capacity. See G. Krüger, RPTK³ 5 (1898): 618 f.

26. Ed. by I. Guidi in part 1 of *Chronica minora* (CSCO, Scriptores Syri ser. 3, vol. 4, 1903), pp. 1-11. L. Hallier, *Untersuchungen über die Edessenische Chronik* (TU 9.1, 1893). [ET by B. H. Cowper in *Journal of Sacred Literature* 5 (1864): 28 ff.]

27. Hallier, *Chronik*, p. 63.

is presented for the most part in short sentences or sections. According to the concluding remark, this flood account purports to be the authentic record that King Abgar—at this time it is Abgar IX, whom we already know (see above, 4 ff.)—had drawn up and incorporated into his archives. According to the account, everything that lay in the range of the river Daisan, which flowed through the city, had been flooded, including the king's palace and "the holy place of the church of the Christians."

Thus by the end of the second century, at the latest, there was already a special Christian cultic edifice in Edessa, and therefore certainly also an organized church group.

With respect to the course of argument being pursued, I do not now intend to withdraw from the field by insisting that the co-religionists of Bardesanes could have sung their hymns in the above-mentioned house of God. Nor will I maintain that the Marcionites, of whose tremendous importance for the establishment of Christianity in Edessa we shall hear more (below, 16 and 21 ff.), were the owners of the building, and thus rule out the orthodox church at Edessa around the year 200. Finally, it is also not my intention to seek cover behind the *Chronicle* of Dionysius of Tell Mahrê (from the year 776),[28] which contains the same account of the inundation, only briefer and without mentioning the church building. Something else arouses my suspicions. Could there already actually have been a Christian church in Edessa around the year 200 that a neutral observer would have singled out for mention from the general catastrophe as the only building besides the royal palace? Is it not far more likely that Christian interest is manifest here? "The holy place of the church of the Christians" is too emphatic. The pagan archivist who was commissioned to frame the report would, in my opinion, have spoken either of the "holy place" or of the "church"—both in the sense of the cultic building. The redundance points to a Christian. For at this time simply the *one* word alone—the church—can designate the building; with the expression "holy place," on the other hand, the emphasis falls upon the concept implied therein, which is to be rendered adjectivally—"the holy church of the Christians." But this,

28. Ed. by J. B. Chabot, CSCO Script. Syri 3.1-2 (1927, 1933), with corresponding Latin translation in CSCO 121 (= Scr. Syri 3.1, 1949). German translation by T. Nöldeke in Gutschmid, *Osroëne*, p. 7.

it seems to me, is an impossible mode of expression for an unbeliever. [19]

In addition, something more is recorded, and that settles matters for me. The Christian *Chronicle* which follows the pagan archival account notes for the year 205/6: "Abgar built the palaces[29] in his city," but it says nothing about that which must above all else have been of interest to its readers, the rebuilding of the church. And to illumine the state of things even more clearly, even to the most remote corner, it is more than a century before the *Chronicle* declares, for the year 313: "Bishop Kûnê (= *Koinos*) laid the foundation for the church in Urhâi. His successor Scha'ad built and completed it." Thus it was not a rebuilding, even of a structure that had lain in ruins for more than a century, but an initial construction of *the* church of Urhâi. *This* church was actually destroyed by flooding in the year 525 and was restored by the Emperor Justinian in lavish splendor.[30] Therefore a Christian of the sixth century, to whom it was, of course, self-evident that the apostolic emissary Addai had already built the church of Edessa,[31] may have felt the impulse to include the destruction of the church with the account of an earlier inundation. At any rate, this much seems certain to me—in the year 201 there was still no "church of Edessa."

Nevertheless, the *Edessene Chronicle* offers us also some important positive insights. In it an Edessene Christian of the sixth century has listed the succession of events that are of particular significance for his countrymen and his fellow believers. At the beginning, he also brings forward matters from secular history, but later the secular recedes more into the background. If we count as number 1 the chronologically, materially, and formally different account of the flood,

29. The pural number is explained by the official report, which speaks of a temporary winter dwelling for the king, and of a new palace ready for occupation in the summer. Cf. Hallier, *Chronik*, p. 91. That also helps us to understand the chronological interval between 205 and the year of the catastrophe in 201.
30. Procopius *Buildings* 2.7 (ed. Dindorf, 3 [Bonn, 1838]: 228; ed. and ET by H. B. Dewing and G. Downey, LCL [1940]).
31. *Doctrina Addai* (ed. Phillips, p. 30). This is repeated by, among others, Solomon of al-Basra, *The Bee* (ed. with ET by E. A. W. Budge [Oxford, 1886]), p. 109; and Bar Hebraeus (see Haase, *Kirchengeschichte*, p. 74). According to the Syriac biography of Bardesanes by Michael the Syrian (ed. J. B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, 1 [Paris 1899]: 183 f.; reproduced in F. Nau [ed.], P Syr 1.2 [1907]: 523), in 169, Bardesanes passed by the church built by Addai; see below, 38.

which today stands at the beginning, the *Chronicle* proceeds as follows: [20]

2. In the year 180 (of the Seleucid era = 133/32 B.C.E.), kings began to reign in Urhâi.
3. In the year 266 (Sel. = 44/43 B.C.E.) Augustus Caesar (*qsr*) entered upon his reign.
4. In the year 309 (Sel. = 3/2 B.C.E.) our Lord was born.
5. In the year 400 (Sel. = 88/89 C.E.) King Abgar (VI, 71-91 C.E.) built his mausoleum.
6. In the year 449 (Sel. = 137/38 C.E.) Marcion departed (*npq mn* = to go out) from the catholic church.
7. Lucius Caesar, in company with his brother, brought the Parthians into subjection to the Romans in the fifth year of his reign (this would be in 165 C.E.). [See below, n. 33]
8. On the 11th of Tammuz in the year 465 (Sel. = 11 July, 154 C.E.) Bar Daisan was born.
9. In the year 517 (Sel. = 205/06 C.E.) Abgar built the palaces in his city (see above, 14).
10. In the year 551 (Sel. = 239/40 C.E.) Mani was born.
11. In the year 614 (Sel. = 303 C.E.), in the days of the Emperor (*mlka*) Diocletian, the walls of Urhâi collapsed for the second time.
12. In the year 624 (Sel. = 313 C.E.) Bishop Kûnê laid the foundation for the church in Urhâi. And Bishop Scha'ad, his successor, built it and completed the construction (see above, 14).

And now it proceeds along the lines of ecclesiastical reporting:

13. In the year 635 (Sel. = 324 C.E.) the cemetery (*koimētērion*) of Urhâi was built, in the days of Bishop Aithilaha,[32] one year before the great synod of Nicaea.
14. In the year 636 (Sel. = 325 C.E.) Aithilaha became bishop in Urhâi. And he built the cemetery and the east side of the church. (This does not agree at all with 13, and it does not fit very well with 12, according to which Bishop Scha'ad had *completed* construction of the church.)

32. In Greek, *Aeithilas*. Cf. H. Gelzer (et alii), *Patrum Nicaenorum nomina* (Liepzig, 1898), p. LXI no. 78; also pp. 102 f. and Index 1 (p. 216), under Aithalas.

15. And in the next year the synod of 318 bishops was gathered in Nicaea. (This bypasses 14 and is connected with 13.) [21]
16. In the year 639 (Sel. = 328 C.E.) an expansion of the church building of Urhâi was undertaken. (This again relates back to 14, where construction on the east side of the church is mentioned.)
17. In the year 649 (Sel. = 338 C.E.) Mar Jacob, bishop of Nisibis, died.
18. In the year 657 (Sel. = 346 C.E.) Abraham became bishop of Urhâi. And he built the chapel of the confessors.

Here I break off; the form of the *Edessene Chronicle* probably has been adequately illustrated. One further word about its contents is indispensable. In its particular details, the *Chronicle* cannot have been composed entirely by the Christian of the sixth century who is responsible for the work as a whole. Otherwise we could not understand how Jesus, in his relation to Abgar, and the apostolic missionary after Jesus' death could have been completely overlooked. Abgar V is not referred to at all, a fact that is all the more significant since we hear of Abgar VI; we also hear that Abgar IX had rebuilt his ruined palace, but find nothing of what modern scholarship says about him, that he was converted. The *Chronicle* has grown up gradually, as is already indicated by its inorganic connection with the originally independent archive account;[33] and the material surrounding the Council of Nicaea, with its discrepancies, leaves the impression of a literary seam, in which new material is joined to the old tradition. The older portion of the *Chronicle* certainly comes from the time in which the Abgar legend had not yet taken root in Edessa, and from a person who was still aware that the earliest history of Christendom in Edessa had been determined by the names of Marcion, Bar Daisan, and Mani. The first and third of this trio probably never had been in Edessa; at any rate Marcion's departure from the church, referred to in the *Chronicle*, took place not in Edessa, but in Rome. The inclusion of these names in a *Chronicle* from Edessa thus must be due less to the relationship of their persons to this city than to that of the doctrines that they advocated. If these three, and *only* these—with no "ecclesiastical" "bishop" alongside of them—are specified by name in

33. Item seven also is open to suspicion of being a later interpolation, on both formal and chronological grounds.

a Christian *Chronicle* of Edessa, that indicates that *the* form of religion and of Christianity which they advocated [22] represents what was original for Edessa. Ecclesiastically organized Christianity, with cultic edifice, cemetery, and bishop, first appears at the beginning of the fourth century—the time of Eusebius and of the Emperor Constantine —and from then on, it unremittingly determines the course of things for the chronicler.

To be sure, the existence of three other predecessors of Kûnê can be verified historically—Palût, 'Abshelama, and Barsamya.[34] But the sources on which one must rely in this matter are quite questionable: the *Doctrina Addai* from the turn of the fifth century, with its expansion of the Abgar story which wanders into utter impossibilities, and martyr acts from the same time and of equal worth. Only Palût need occupy us here. The other two figures are much less certain than is he. The *Doctrina Addai* asserts that Palût, who was made a presbyter in Edessa by the apostle Addai (one of the seventy-two disciples), betook himself to Antioch after the death of the apostle and there was consecrated bishop of Edessa by Serapion of Antioch (in office *circa* 190-210), who for his own part had received consecration at the hands of Zephyrinus of Rome (198-217).[35] Simon Cephas, who for twenty-five years had occupied the Roman chair, had chosen Zephyrinus as his successor. Even a critic of the stature of R. A. Lipsius discovers in this rumor a historical kernel, that Palût actually was consecrated to the office of bishop of Edessa by Serapion of Antioch.[36] And yet, apart from the actual names Serapion, Zephyrinus, and Simon Cephas, the statement of the *Doctrina Addai* is devoid of all credibility. No one can force the apostle Addai and his presbyter into the same time period with Serapion. Simon Cephas was not bishop of Rome, least of all not for twenty-five years; he could not have selected Zephyrinus, who was active a century and a half after his own time, as his successor; and again Zephyrinus could not have ordained Serapion, who already had ascended the throne almost a decade earlier. And finally, an Edessene presbyter around

34. Cf., e.g. Hallier, *Chronik*, p. 52.1; H. Leclercq, DACL 4 (1921): 2082-2088. F. C. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity* (London: Murray 1904), pp. 31-35 (cf. 18-21), goes even further.
35. Phillips, *Doctrine of Addai*, pp. 5 (Addai as one of the 72 in Luke 10.1), 39 (Palût as presbyter), and 50 (Palût made bishop) of the translation.
36. Lipsius, *Die edessenische Abgarsage* (Braunschweig, 1880), pp. 8 f. [See also Lietzmann, *History*, 2: 264.]

200 would not have the slightest reason for receiving a higher consecration from Antioch. [23]

It is indeed confidently asserted that such a necessity did exist for him. But with what justification? Konrad Lübeck argues that even in the middle of the third century no one troubled himself about Antioch and its bishop. In the Easter controversy (at the end of the second century) Antioch played no role. "The bishops of Palestine and Syria ignore it and are united into a synod under the presidency of the bishops of Caesarea and Jerusalem in Palestine. Or on the other hand, the provinces [that is, those in the vicinity of Antioch] act independently and for themselves. . . . Antioch is still without any leading hierarchical central position among the Oriental provinces." [37] We can appreciate this to some extent when we consider what intellectual mediocrity this church endured at this time in having Theophilus as its bishop.[38] Others may have been like him; we can at least evaluate him with the help of his books to Autolycus. It does not follow that we ought to deny him authorship of this well-attested work (EH 4.24), as Viktor Schultze recently has recommended on the grounds that it "seems impossible that an Antiochene bishop could have composed a writing filled with so much folly and so many errors." [39] We can only receive this opinion of Schultze as an acknowledgment of the state of affairs in Antioch, as to what sort of inferior personalities could at that time be called to the leadership of the "church" there. On the basis of such leadership, it is hard to avoid drawing an inference as to the kind and number of those subject to him.

Nor does Serapion of Antioch, in his helpless conduct with respect to the gospel of Peter (EH 6.12.2-6), make a particularly imposing impression. If we consider all this, in addition to what Lübeck has adduced (above, n. 37), we are all the more disconcerted when

37. K. Lübeck, *Reichseinteilung und kirchliche Hierarchie des Orients bis zum Ausgang des vierten Jahrhunderts* (Münster, 1901 = Kirchengeschichtliche Studien 5.4), p. 100.
38. I fully realize that F. Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien adversus Marcionem* (TU 46.2, 1930) thinks otherwise. He respects Theophilus more highly and concludes that Theophilus "was greater than Irenaeus both as a writer and as a theologian" (431). To me, there is no comparison between the superior theologian Irenaeus and the shallow babbler of the *Apology to Autolycus*. A. Ehrhard has also raised objections to Loofs' judgment; *Die Kirche der Märtyrer* (Munich: Kösel, 1932), pp. 217 f.
39. V. Schultze, *Antiocheia*, Altchristliche Städte und Landschaften 3 (Gütersloh, 1930), p. 57.

Lübeck continues: "On the other hand it [i.e. Antioch] exercises, even if only temporarily, jurisdiction [24] even in countries that later were never subject to it, such as Edessa, whose bishop received consecration from Antioch." As evidence he makes reference to two books by Tixeront and Duchesne. In sum, among Greeks of the immediate neighborhood Antioch has nothing to say; but it exercises jurisdiction over Syriac-speaking people in a city which lies nearly three hundred kilometers away, as the crow flies [= 186 miles.] In my opinion such an interpretation collapses of its own weakness without any refutation. The two Frenchmen do not frighten us. They base their argument on those sources whose usefulness we have already contested (above, 17 f.), the Syrian legends from around the year 400 and later.

Just how loose the connections between Antioch and Edessa still must have been in the second half of the fourth century is well illustrated by the fact that in a recently published two-volume work on John Chrysostom [40] Edessa is not even mentioned, in spite of the fact that the church father was born in Antioch, worked in his home city for some decades, and composed a large part of his writings there.

In agreement with this is the fact that in the following instance where we are able to grasp the facts, nothing is said of Antioch. In 379 Eulogius was consecrated as bishop of Edessa by Eusebius of Samosata (Theodoret *Eccl. Hist.* 5.4). And the famous Rabbula, according to his *Life* (below, n. 60), was indeed elevated to the office of bishop in Antioch. Nevertheless, along with this is contained the recollection that the one who actually brought him to the bishop's chair in Edessa had been Bishop Acacius of Aleppo.[41] Not until the fourth century do we note something of Antioch's extending its ecclesiastical influence beyond its own territory. The Council of Constantinople in 381 says in Canon 2: "The bishops of the Orient [42] are to limit themselves to the ecclesiastical administration of the Orient

40. C. Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time* (ET by M. Gonzaga from 2nd German ed. [post 1947], Westminster [Md.]: Newman, 1959–69).
41. Cf. C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der christlichen Literaturen des Orients*[2] (Leipzig, 1909), p. 34. Basil of Cappadocian Caesarea is supposed to have offered Ephraem the Edessene episcopate (see E. Nestle, RPTK[3] 5 [1898]: 407.42 f.).
42. This means the bishops from the eastern diocese according to the divisions of the empire established by Diocletian in 292. Mesopotamia and the Osroëne are included. Cf. Lübeck, *Reichseinteilung*, pp. 106 ff.

with the preservation of the privileges which the Canons of Nicaea [what is meant here is Canon 6, which however does not [25] more precisely define the "privileges"] guarantee to the church of Antioch." An effort at expansion by Antioch is obvious here, which is met by the attempt of a part of those Syrian nationals to link up with the West. We need not investigate whether, how and when this led to the point where the Edessene bishop actually received consecration from Antioch. It suffices that we now recognize the basis upon which, for example, the legend could grow that the *"catholikos"* or primate of the East, the head of the Persian church (he resides in the Mesopotamian city of Seleucia-Ctesiphon) is to be consecrated in Antioch. The men who occupied this office are found listed in *The Bee* of Solomon of al-Basra (see above, n. 31) and in some *Patriarchal Chronicles*.[43] The list begins—and already the somewhat musty air of Edessa hits us—with the apostle Addai, the missionary of the East. He is followed by his pupil Mari, who serves the Oriental church as actual founder of the patriarchate of Seleucia-Ctesiphon.[44] After him comes Abris or Abrosis (= Ambrosius), a relative of Jesus who is elected in Jerusalem and consecrated in Antioch. Next comes Abraham—related to James the Just—who also is ordained in Antioch. It is clear that we are dealing here not with history, but with legend.[45] When the *Doctrina Addai* then asserts that Palût had received his episcopal consecration in Antioch, we immediately recognize the legendary thrust, and sense that we are not in the second century, but in the fourth, at the earliest. Thus even with reference to the figure of Palût, there is no confirmation of the claim that there was already a bishop deserving of the name in Edessa prior to the year 200, that is, a bishop consecrated in the context of the "great church." The *Edessene Chronicle* apparently is correct when it begins the series of bishops only in the fourth century.

43. Cf. Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, pp. 28 f. G. Westphal, *Untersuchungen über die Quellen und die Glaubwürdigkeit der Patriarchenchroniken des Mâri ibn Sulaimân, 'Amr ibn Matai und Saliba ibn Johannân* (Strassburg inaugural dissertation, Kirchhain, 1901), pp. 38, 40, 44, 46-48.
44. Westphal, *Patriarchenchroniken*, p. 30.
45. Seleucia-Ctesiphon had never been dependent on Antioch. At the place where the legend must be brought into relationship with the existing situation at the time of the chronicler, there is a section explaining why the patriarch no longer, as previously, is consecrated in Antioch (see Westphal, *Patriarchenchroniken*, pp. 47 f., 53). For Edessa, which was part of the Roman Empire, conditions may have been different—but certainly not in the second century.

Not that the figure of Palût himself dissolves under the acid test of criticism. [26] But we must remove from his hand the episcopal staff of the West. Ephraem of Edessa testifies to his existence, and that in a form which astonishes us. In his twenty-second *"Madrash"* [metrical homily] against false teachers the church father, after he has named and abused all kinds of heretics, says in verses 5 and 6:

> They [i.e. the heretics] again call us [i.e. the orthodox] 'Palûtians,' and this we quite decisively reject and disown. Cursed be those who let themselves be called by the name Palût instead of by the name Christ! . . . Even Palût would not wish that people call themselves by his name. And if he were still living, he would anathematize all disobedience. For he was a pupil of the Apostle, who was filled with pain and bitterness over the Corinthians because they had given up the name of Christ and called themselves after the name of men [see 1 Cor. 1.13].[46]

Thus at the end of the second century (or possibly a bit later), Palût was the leader of those people in Edessa who confessed what later developed into orthodoxy in the sense acceptable to Ephraem. It is quite possible that Palût's own group called him "bishop." Certainly no one will want to introduce modern conditions into the picture and suggest that for one to be a "bishop," there must be thousands upon thousands of people who are his spiritual subjects. He who was called "bishop" at that time certainly would, in many cases, have had room for his entire constituency in a private house. But much more important than clarity about the title that he enjoyed in his own circles is the insight that Palût was the leader of a minority that was of such limited significance that the *Edessene Chronicle* could completely forget him in favor of such significant personalities as Marcion, Bardesanes, and Mani.

In addition to this, another point is of great importance—the fact that Palût and those in agreement with him first appear after Christianity of another type already is in existence. They had to identify themselves, and to allow themselves to be identified, by the name

46. See below, n. 58. The Syriac text from the Roman edition (vol. 2, pp. 437 ff.) is reproduced in the *Chrestomathia syriaca, sive S. Ephraemi Carmina selecta* of A. Hahn and F. L. Sieffert (Leipzig, 1825), pp. 137 ff. Cf. also the Letter of Jacob of Edessa to John the Stylite (below, nn. 49 and 55), in W. Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac MSS. in the British Museum acquired since the year 1838* (London, 1870–72), p. 300, and *Journal of Sacred Literature* 10 (1867): 430 ff. [H. E. W. Turner, *Pattern of Christian Truth* (see below, p. 297 n. 9), p. 44, gives an ET of this passage from Jacob of Edessa.]

of their leader. The name of "Christians" was denied them. Surely [27] this was because that name could in no way clearly distinguish them from the Marcionites and the Bardesanites, probably also because the name "Christians" already had been appropriated by another group—naturally those who had come first, and had introduced Christianity of their own brand into the city.

When we ask who that might have been, the chronological sequence favors the Marcionites. Already around the year 150, Justin says that their false teaching has spread to the whole human race, and in the same connection, he emphasizes that they placed great value in being called "Christians" (*Apol.* 26.5-6). Similarly, Tertullian states: "Marcion's heretical tradition has filled the whole world" (*Against Marcion* 5.19). One may also suggest in support of Marcionite priority that although the teaching of Bardesanes, at least in its earliest stages,[47] remained a local Edessene phenomenon in which the name of the great "local son" hardly could have failed to play a role,[48] the Christianity of Marcion had become even more international than that of the apologists. It is true that Ephraem, like Justin before him (*Dial.* 35.4,6), is of the opinion that only the representatives of the unadulterated apostolic teaching may be called "Christians." The heretics on the other hand should have had to call themselves after the current human leader of their sect (*Madrash* 22.7). This view is so firmly rooted in his circles that later on it was even found necessary to defend Palût against the belief that he had been a heretic or even a heresiarch.[49] But that with Ephraem it expresses more a wish than a reality is clearly seen by his vexed acknowledgment: "They call us 'Palûtians.'" This is how things still stood in the fourth century. Since the appearance of Palût, nothing had changed in this regard.

As for the other side of the question, whether the Marcionites designated themselves simply as "Christians," here, as is so often the case, the true state of affairs has become unclear because we are informed about the heretics primarily by men of the church for whom it is simply self-evident that the name Christian belongs only to people of their kind. That in the early period this had not been true,

47. His students seem to have been the first to enter Greek-speaking areas; see EH 4:30.1.
48. This is confirmed by the indignation of Ephraem; *Madrash* 23.5.
49. See the twelfth Letter of Jacob of Edessa (above, n. 46, and below, n. 55), page 27 of the Syriac text.

at least not everywhere, in my opinion follows from the account of the conversion of Mar Aba, [28] patriarch of the Orient who died in 552. I have no thought of accepting the "History of His Marvellous and Divine Struggles"[50] as a whole. But one passage, which does not seem to be tendentious—indeed it stands in contrast to the otherwise prevailing rule—may still prove to be useful.

Mar Aba, originally a fanatical pagan, during an attempt to cross the Tigris was brought to see the light through a miracle and an ensuing conversation with a Christian ascetic Joseph, whose surname was Moses. He was struck by the strangeness of Joseph's clothing (the Syriac uses the Greek loan-word *schēma*), and wishing to know whether Joseph might be an orthodox, a Marcionite or a Jew, he asked (chap. 3): "Are you a Jew?" The answer was "Yes." Then comes a second question: "Are you a Christian?" To this comes also an affirmative response. Finally: "Do you worship the Messiah?" Again agreement is expressed. Then Mar Aba becomes enraged and says: "How can you be a Jew, a Christian, and a worshipper of the Messiah all at the same time?" Here the narrator inserts by way of explanation: "Following the local custom he used the word Christian to designate a Marcionite." Joseph himself then gives his irate companion the following explanation: "I am a Jew secretly [cf. Rom. 2.29]; I still pray to the living God . . . and abhor the worship of idols. I am a Christian truly, not as the Marcionites, who falsely call themselves Christians. For Christian is a Greek word, which in Syriac means Messiah-worshipper (*mᵉšīᵊhiā*).[51] And if you ask me 'Do you worship the Messiah?', I worship him truly." [29]

50. Syriac text in P. Bedjan (ed.), *Histoire de Mar Jabalaha, de trois autres patriarches, d'un pretre et deux laiques nestoriens*[2] (Paris, 1895), pp. 206-274. German translation by O. Braun, *Ausgewählte Akten persischer Märtyrer*, BKV[2] 22 (Munich, 1915). In chapter 7, Mar Aba comes to Edessa. [For a brief summary of the life of this Mar Aba (Mār-abhā, Marī-abha; "the Elder"), see W. Wright, *Short History of Syriac Literature* (London: Black, 1894), pp. 116-118.]
51. The same comparison is used to explain the (Syriac) proper name *Kristiāna*, applied to the believers on the basis of Acts 11.26, in Aphraates, *Demonstrations* 20.10 [ed. J. Parisot, PSyr 1.1 (1894)], and in Marutha (ed. Braun, p. 41; see below n. 64). *Kristiāna* was used especially in Edessa as a designation for Christian: *Book of the Laws of the Countries* 46 (see above, n. 12); *Edessene Chronicle*, (addition to) the flood report (ed. Guidi, p. 2.4; see above, n. 26); Ephraem *Syrische Schriften* 2 (above, n. 46), 490 E—cf. ed. Overbeck, p. 161.24 (above, n. 13); *Doctrina Addai*, Syriac p. 49 (ed. Phillips; above n. 7); *Martyrdom of Shamuna and Guria*, chaps. 1, 7, 8, and *passim* (in F. C. Burkitt, *Euphemia and the Goth with the Acts of Martyrdom of the Confessors of Edessa* [London: Williams and Norgate, 1913]); Syriac *Apology* of Aristides 2.6 [ed. and ET by J. R. Harris and J. A. Robinson (Cambridge, 1893[2])].

This story reveals that even at a relatively late date, Marcionites designated themselves as *the* Christians—much to the offence of the orthodox, who must be content with misleading alternatives such as "Messiah-worshippers." Is it not reasonable to suggest that something similar was true with respect to the beginnings of Christianity in Edessa?[52] That would be an excellent explanation of why the orthodox call themselves Palûtians until far into the fourth century, or at least are known by that name to the public.[53]

How hard they must have had to struggle for their existence is indicated clearly in our sources. For centuries the theologians among them had no demand more pressing than to contend against Marcion, Bardesanes and Mani, precisely those three who appear in the *Edessene Chronicle* as bearers of Christian thought prior to Eusebius. The first native Syrian ecclesiastical author of any importance, Aphraates the "Persian" sage (that is, he lived in or came from the Sassanid kingdom) dealt with Marcion, Valentinus, and Mani in his third treatise,[54] which according to his own account was written in 336/37. The absence of the Edessene native son Bardesanes is easily explained and is balanced by the inclusion of the gnostic Valentinus, whose influence penetrated both East and West and whom Hippolytus (*Ref.* 6.35.7), Eusebius (EH 6.30.3), and Epiphanius (*Her.* 56.2), as well as Syrian authors[55] and even the Armenian Moses of [30] Chorene[56] described as the spiritual foster father of Bardesanes. What persisted as Valentinianism in the areas known to Aphraates,

52. Naturally, it is not my intention to suggest that the Marcionites have made a universal claim to the name Christian, as their own monopoly. Well known is the Greek inscription from the year 318/19 from the vicinity of Damascus, referring to a *synagōgē Markiōnistōn* (W. Dittenberger, *Orientis graeci inscriptiones selectae* [Leipzig, 1903-1905] 608.1). But in those places where Marcionites *introduced* Christianity, the designation "Christians" was quite simply used of them.
53. See also below, n. 82, on the question whether the Marcionites called themselves "Christians" in Edessa.
54. *On Fasting* 9 (ed. Parisot, p. 115; see above, n. 51).
55. Jacob of Edessa (d. 708), in his 12th *Letter* to John the Stylite (ed. Wright, above nn. 46 and 49, Syriac page 26, line 2 from below); Theodore bar Khoni (ninth century) in his scholion ed. by F. Nau PSyr 1.2 (1907): 517 f. (= H. Pognon, *Inscriptions mandaïtes des coupes de Khouabir* [Paris, 1898], pp. 122 f.). Biographical materials concerning Bardesanes from Syrian sources are contained in the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (Jacobite patriarch in Antioch, 1166–1199), ed. J. B. Chabot 1 (above, n. 31), p. 184 = ed. Nau, p. 523. Cf. F. Nau, *Une biographie inédite de Bardesane l'astréopologue* (Paris, 1897). For the heresies according to Philoxenus of Mabbug (d. 523), see Nau, PO 13 (1919): 248.7.
56. *Historia Armenia* 2, chap. 63 (ca. 450 C.E.). The text is in A. von Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius* 1.1 (Leipzig, 1893; supplemented reprint ed. K. Aland, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1958), p. 188.

apparently became absorbed in Edessa by the teaching and the community of faith of Bardesanes.[57]

Concerning the situation in Edessa in the middle of the fourth century we would do best to let Ephraem inform us. He indeed names still other heresies, and behind the "pedants" whom he attacks but does not describe more specifically, more than one kind may be concealed. In poetry and in prose he fights against the followers of Marcion, Bardesanes, and Mani, whose names again and again he exposes to hatred and scorn; and he attacks them so vigorously, so frequently, and so explicitly that one cannot escape the impression that there is a pressing, present danger.[58] Of what significance is an Arius in comparison to them? He does, in fact, appear. Still, compared to them—this is around the year 370—his appearance is almost infinitesimally rare, and he is not "the ravening wolf," "the filthy swine," "the dreadful blasphemer." These designations are reserved for the "raving Marcion," the "deceiver Bar Daisan," and the "deranged Mani."[59]

Despite all his efforts, Ephraem was not able to exorcise the danger. With great tenacity the heretics held firmly to what appeared to them to be true. Their suppression was finally accomplished—to a large extent only by expulsion—by the powerful personality of the Bishop

57. H. H. Schaeder, "Bardesanes von Edessa in der Überlieferung der griechischen und der syrischen Kirche," ZKG 51 (1932): 21-74, has disputed (41 ff.) that Bardesanes may have been a student of Valentinus. He maintains that only contacts of a general gnostic sort and origin exist between the two figures (43).
58. The second Syriac-Latin volume of the Roman edition of the works of Ephraem, by S. E. Assemani (1740), contains 56 *Madrashes* (learned discourses in poetic form) against the heretics, primarily against the three named above (pp. 437-560; selections are reprinted in Hahn-Sieffert [above, n. 46], and there is a German translation by A. Rücker in BKV² 61 [= *Ephraem* 2, 1928], pp. 80 ff.). [The material has now been reedited by E. Beck in CSCO 169-170 = Scriptores Syri 76/77 (1957); for an introduction and ET of a few selections, see H. Burgess, *Select Metrical Hymns and Homilies of Ephraem Syrus* (London, 1853), xxviii-xxxi (from *Madrashes* 2, 53, 1, 55), lxv f. (*M.* 46), 142-155 (*M.* 14, 27).] See also G. Bickell (ed.), *S. Ephraemi Syri Carmina Nisibena* (Leipzig, 1866), nos. 43-51 and 66-77 [reedited by E. Beck, CSCO, pp. 218-219 and 240-241 = Scr. Syri pp. 92-93 and pp. 102-103 (1961 and 1963); ET of nos. 66-68 by J. Gwynn, NPNF 13, series 2 (1898)]. For anti-heretical prose writings of Ephraem, see C. W. Mitchell, *St. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan* (2 vols., London, 1912–1921). The *Madrashes* against the remaining unnamed "pedants" ["disputers"] are in vol. 3 (1743) of the Roman edition, pp. 1-150 [ET by J. B. Morris, *Rhythms of St. Ephrem the Syrian* (Oxford: Parker, 1847), pp. 106-361].
59. Of the close relationship between Marcion, Bar Daisan, and Mani in Edessa, John of Ephesus still speaks in the sixth century in his *Lives* [or, *History*] *of the Eastern Saints*, ed. E.-W. Brooks, PO 17.1 (1923): 138 f.

Rabbula of Edessa (411-435). [31] And here, indeed, we find ourselves in a period in which the power of the state also was already deliberately cooperating in the suppression of outspoken heresy. The "Life of Rabbula,"[60] composed after his death by a colleague of the bishop, pictures the heresies of their time and the attitude of Rabbula in the following manner, in which panegyric judgments and exaggerations are evident enough: "Even with many words I could not show how great was his zeal with respect to the Marcionites. This putrefying malignancy of Marcionite false teaching he healed with the solicitude of the great physician [= Christ] . . . full of long-suffering toward them. For God sent into their hearts fear in the presence of the holy Rabbula and they faithfully accepted his truth, so that they renounced their false teaching" (193.17-25).

Bardesanes had already been treated previously, and this entire section about the heretics was introduced by a comparison of Rabbula with Joshua (192.3 ff.): as Joshua found the land of Canaan full of the thorny undergrowth of paganism, so Rabbula found the Edessene region completely overgrown by the thicket of sins. Particularly flourishing in Urhâi was the evil teaching of Bar Daisan (192.11 ff.), until it was uprooted by Rabbula. "For once, through his cunning and the sweetness of his songs, this accursed Bar Daisan had drawn all the leading people of the city to himself, so that by them as by strong walls he might be protected." That is, Bardesanes nourished the foolish hope of being able to secure the permanency of his false teaching through the transient power of influential patrons. Rabbula did not proceed against them as had Joshua, did not blow them down with frightening trumpets, but with his gentle and kind language (193.1 ff.) succeeded in having their meeting place torn down and all their property transferred to his church; in fact, even obtained their building stones to use for his own purposes. He gently persuaded the heretics themselves of the truth of the apostolic teaching so that they abjured their error. Then he baptized them into Christ and took them into his (i.e. Christ's) [32] service. In this manner through his

60. Syriac text in Overbeck (above, n. 13), pp. 159-209; also in P. Bedjan, *Acta martyrum et sanctorum*, 4 (Paris, 1894): 396-470. German translation in G. Bickell, *Ausgewählte Schriften der syrischen Kirchenväter Aphraates, Rabulas und Isaak von Ninive*, BKV 102-104 (Kempten, 1874), pp. 166-211. [The references that follow in the body of the text are to pages and lines in the Overbeck edition.]

teaching he converted many sects and brought them into subjection to the truth. And he baptized thousands of Jews and tens of thousands of heretics into Christ in all the years of his episcopate (193.10 f.).

"And likewise, through his divine wisdom, he brought the deluded Manichaeans to careful consideration of reasonable understanding. Therefore they made their confession as he desired. And they believed in the truth, allowing themselves to be baptized into Christ and to be joined to his people" (193.25 ff.).[61]

Even when we make considerable allowance for the tens of thousands of heretics whom the enthusiastic disciple pictures as pressing for baptism at the hands of Rabbula, there is still enough left over for us to recognize the abiding attraction of those "heretical" teachings. Only through rather coarse methods[62] [33] was the "tyrant of

61. The danger of the Manichaeans for the environs of Edessa, in both a narrow and a broad sense, is also attested by the *Acts of Archelaus* by Hegemonius (from the first half of the fourth century [ed. C. H. Beeson, GCS 16 (1906); ET by S. D. F. Salmond, ANF 6: 179-235]), in which (the setting is fictitious) Archelaus, Bishop of Charchar (= Carrhae-Harran, in Mesopotamia) disputes with Mani himself. A biographical sketch of Mani (see below, n. 93) in Syriac by a Christian author can be found in the *Chronicon Maroniticum* (MS of the 8/9 century) ed. by Brooks, *Chronica minora*, 1.2: 58-60 (above, n. 3; Chabot's Latin translation, 47 ff.); similar materials are found in Theodore bar Khoni (ed. Pognon, *Inscriptions mandaïtes*, pp. 125-127 and 181-184; see above, n. 55), in the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (ed. Chabot, vol. 1: pp. 198-201; see above, n. 31), and already in Epiphanius *Her.* 66.1 ff.

62. Cf. also Rabbula's *Rules for Priests and Clerics* (ed. Overbeck, pp. 215-222; see above, n. 13), where arraignment in chains before the municipal judge is prescribed as a means of ecclesiastical discipline (218.16 [ET in Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, p. 146 #27]); similarly 219.11 f. Moreover, pressure is brought to bear on ascetics and consecrated virgins who withdraw from monastic life that not only they, but also their parents be cut off from communion (218.22 [ET in Burkitt, p. 147 #28]). This harsh step was later considered too severe. To the words "their parents" is added the phrase "if they agree with them" in Bar Hebraeus ("Book of Directions" or *Nomocanon* for the Syrian church of Antioch, a Latin translation of which, by J. A. Assemani, appears in A. Mai, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e vaticanus codicibus* 10.2 [Rome, 1838]), p. 58.

In general, Rabbula was neither the only one nor the first to employ such unscrupulously callow and violent measures in the struggle with heresy. Emperor Julian writes to the Bostrians, who had been persecuted by his imperial predecessor, how "many multitudes of the so-called heretics had even been executed" (*polla de hēdē kai sphagēnai plēthē ton legomenōn hairetikōn*) in Samosata, which is near Edessa, and various regions of Asia Minor. Entire villages had been completely depopulated and destroyed (*Epistle* 41 [ed. and ET W. C. Wright, LCL 3 (1923)] = 141 ed. Bidez = 52 ed. Hertlein). This is the context to which belongs the cry of triumph that Theodoret strikes in his letters—eight whole Marcionite villages he has "converted" in his bishopric, a thousand, yea ten thousand Marcionites (A. von Harnack, *Marcion: das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*[2] [TU 45, 1924; repr. Darmstadt, 1960], pp. 158, 341* f., and 369* ff. (cf. 454* f.).

Edessa"[63] able to alienate the heretics, at least outwardly, from their former faith. That makes it easy to imagine how strong an appeal these beliefs might have had in the freshness of their youth, before any pressure was exerted against subscribing to them. What was achieved in Edessa—to be honest about it—was at best only the outward submission of people whose buildings had been torn down, whose scriptures had been burned, whose community goods had been confiscated, and who found themselves subjected to the worst kind of harassment, including danger to life and limb. Thus it would be illegitimate for one to reason back from the situation which Rabbula had brought about by force, and to use this as a corrective to the picture that we have discovered for the time of Ephraem, when orthodoxy in Edessa still occupied a quite secondary place.

Our case is supported by still another consideration. The situation in Edessa during the fourth century would hardly have been much different from that in the southwest part of Greater Armenia, a region not far from Edessa and part of the Roman Empire. Here an older colleague of Rabbula, Bishop Marutha of Maiperkat (= Martyropolis), who died prior to the year 420 and like Rabbula, spoke Syriac, describes the situation as follows:[64] Satan brings a profusion of heresies to the church, and things go so far that there are as many heresies as there are bishops—an instructive use of the superlative from both points of view. "The orthodox decreased and became like *one single* stalk of wheat in the great field of tares. . . . Thus the heresies flourished." Of course, this too is an exaggeration of pious anxiety. But it certainly strengthens the impression that even far into the fourth century orthodoxy simply had not prevailed against heresy in its various forms. [34]

In the picture that the representatives of the church sketch, it is precisely the detail about a great apostasy from the true faith that is seen to be incorrect—in any event, it is not true of Edessa. Here it

63. This is what the presbyter Ibas calls his bishop, Rabbula; cf. his letter to bishop Mari [or Maris] of Hardashēr in Persia (probably from the year 433), in J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova collectio*, 7 (Florence, 1762): 245—*ho tēs hēmeteras poleōs tyrannos*.

64. German translation by O. Braun, *De Sancta Nicaena Synodo* (Kirchengeschichtliche Studien 4.3 [1898]). See also A. von Harnack, *Der Ketzerkatalog des Bishofs Maruta von Maipherkat* (TU 19.1[b], 1899). The Syriac text is edited by I. E. Raḥmani in *Studia Syriaca* 4: *Documenta de antiquis haeresibus* (Mt. Libano, 1909), pp. 76-80 and Syriac pp. 43-98.

was by no means orthodoxy, but rather heresy, that was present at the beginning. Christianity was first established in the form of Marcionism, probably imported from the West and certainly not much later than the year 150.

After some time, probably considerably before 200, a dangerous rival to Marcionism developed in the person and doctrine of the native son Bardesanes. The differences became obvious to everyone and demanded a decision. "Bar Daisan adorns himself,"[65] so Ephraem orates, "with fine clothes and precious stones; Marcion is clothed with the garb of a penitent. In the grottoes of Bar Daisan are heard hymns and songs—amusements for the youth; Marcion fasts like a serpent" (*Madrash* 1.12 and 17). Elegance, education, artistic sense, culture, in a word openness to the world collided with ascetic fanaticism and the most extreme world-rejection. With respect to Christology, Bardesanes would have been able more easily to come to an agreement with Marcion than with the orthodoxy of the "great church." Here it is instructive to observe that Bardesanes did not dispute with orthodoxy, in spite of the fact that, even apart from Christology, sufficient sources of irritation would have been present in Bardesanes' astrology, belief in fate, and rejection of the resurrection. Instead, he engaged in a feud with the Marcionites, noise of which echoed for a long time.[66] Orthodoxy, embodied in the handful of Palûtians who perhaps already were in existence, apparently presented no threat for people like him in Edessa at that time. But Marcion had to be eliminated, or at least repressed, in order to gain room for the new development.

This was achieved by forming his own community with its own meeting place and its own order of worship, in which the splendid psalms of the accursed "new David"[67] played such a great role, and also by using his own "scripture," since the Marcionite Bible was unsuitable both in terms of content and for personal reasons. [35] Perhaps Bardesanes acknowledged no Old Testament, if his 150 psalms were intended to take the place of the Davidic corpus and if the statement by Ephraem can be taken literally: "He [= Barde-

65. Schaeder, "Bardesanes," 30.12, renders it "he [= the devil] adorns Bardesanes."

66. Cf. EH 4.30.1, Bardesanes writes *dialogoi* against the Marcionites; Theodoret *Her.* 1.22; Hippolytus *Ref.* 7.31.1, refers to a polemical writing against Bardesanes by the Syrian Marcionite Prepon.

67. This is what Ephraem calls Bardesanes in *Madrash* 53.5 f.

sanes] did not read the prophets but the books of the Zodiac" (*Madrash* 1.18). But certainly he possessed a New Testament. It is not simply our idea to equip the rival of Marcion in such a way, but Ephraem refers expressly to Bardesanes' *Apostolos*.[68] And an *Apostolos* without a corresponding "Gospel" to precede it never existed anywhere. Thus we are confronted with the question: what did the gospel of Bardesanes look like? As has been said, it is out of the question that Bardesanes could have adopted the gospel used by the Marcionites; but it is equally unlikely that there was a special "Gospel of Bardesanes," of which we scarcely hear anything, and never anything of value.[69] Likewise, it could not have been the so-called Gospel of the Separated [*Evangelion da-Mepharreshe*]—i.e. the four canonical gospels arranged one after another but regarded as a unit. At a time in which Irenaeus strives rather laboriously to establish the fourfold gospel in the "great church," it cannot already have been in use in Edessa. Furthermore, if that had been the case, it is inconceivable how the fourfold gospel then could have disappeared once more from this city for a quarter of a millennium, or at least have receded so completely into the background for Edessene Christianity. The view that one or another of the four constituted the gospel of Bardesanes—perhaps the Gospel of John, which the western Valentinians Heracleon and Ptolemy treasured so highly—is purely a hypothetical possibility, the further pursuit of which is unrewarding.

Thus there remains, it seems to me, only the so-called *Diatessaron*, the [36] harmony of the gospels which Tatian, shortly before the appearance of Bardesanes, offered to the Syriac speaking Christians as the first written gospel in their native language. In favor of the *Diatessaron* as the gospel of Bardesanes is first of all the general observation that for a Syrian living among Syrians, the most obvious

68. *Commentary on the Pauline Epistles;* see T. Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons,* 2.2 (Leipzig, 1892): 598.

69. A collection of Nestorian narratives, preserved in Arabic and published in PO 5 (1910), contains a "History of Ephraem" in which it is reported on the basis of ancient authorities that Bardesanes used a gospel different from the canonical gospels (p. 298). But this evidence cannot be used. Bardesanes and Ephraem supposedly are contemporaries here. The manner in which Ephraem obtains a copy of the book is completely unbelievable, all the more so since it is quite similar to what is related in the panegyric on Ephraem by ps. = Gregory of Nyssa, only there the story refers to Apollinaris and his blasphemous writing (cf. also Haase, *Kirchengeschichte,* p. 334). Even if, in spite of this, there is some validity to the report, it is not difficult to bring it into harmony with the view that I have suggested above.

thing to do would be to obtain that Syriac book, the recent appearance of which in Mesopotamia could not have been unknown to Bardesanes because of his connections and his sophistication. It was much more comprehensive than the scanty[70] gospel booklet of the Marcionites that had been used previously in Edessa. And even though Tatian himself had not done so, a member of his school by the name of Rhodon composed writings in opposition to the sect of Marcion just at the time Bardesanes flourished (EH 5.13.1), and thus established himself as a desirable ally. Under such circumstances there would have been hesitation only if the contents were felt to be objectionable, thus precluding it from acceptance as the true gospel.

Clearly this was not the case. On the contrary, it contains certain similarities to Bardesanes' teaching that are all the more comprehensible if, as Irenaeus had already claimed, Tatian also had come under the influence of Valentinus.[71] While the Syriac gospel-harmony excluded Marcion's view that Jesus had come directly from heaven to the synagogue at Capernaum by eliminating the genealogies of Jesus as well as everything that was connected with the birth of Jesus from the seed of David according to the flesh,[72] it could accomodate the interpretation of Bardesanes concerning the heavenly body of the Lord, which had only passed through Mary but had not been formed in her.[73]

If Bardesanes already had introduced the *Diatessaron* in Edessa and [37] had made it popular there, it becomes easier to understand how that later, among the orthodox Edessenes, the gospel edition of a person whose heretical position the church had never been able to overlook[74] could gain canonical status. The numerically weak

70. This peculiarity requires little demonstration. That Marcion's opponents clearly perceived this is intrinsically self-evident. According to Irenaeus, the Marcionites had a "circumcised little Gospel"; H. Jordan, *Armenische Irenaeusfragmente* (TU 36.3, 1913), 135, no. 10.16 f.

71. Irenaeus, AH 1.28.1 (= 26.1) = Hippolytus *Ref.* 8.16 = *Eusebius* EH 4.29.3. Cf. Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 3.(13.)92; *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (ed. Chabot, vol. 1: p. 181; see above, n. 31).

72. Theodoret *Her.* 1.20.

73. See the Bardesanite Marinus, in Adamantius *On the True Faith* 5.9 (ed. van de Sande Bakhuyzen, GCS 4 [1911], 190.24 ff); Ephraem in his interpretation of *3 Corinthians* (Zahn, *Geschichte,* 2.2; 597 f.; see above, n. 68). Cf. also the eastern Valentinian *"Ardèsianès"* in Hippolytus *Ref.* 6.35.7.

74. Irenaeus AH 1.28.1 (= 26.1), 3.23.8 (= 37)—*Tatianus connexio quidem factus omnium haereticorum;* Rhodon, once a student of Tatian; Clement of Alexandria; Origen; Tertullian; Hippolytus; *Acts of Archelaus;* and later witnesses. The passages are listed and the most significant reproduced by Harnack, *Geschichte,* 1.1: 486 ff.

group of Palûtians, composed of poor people—the wealthy Christians in Edessa adhered to the prominent Bardesanes (see above, 26, 29)—were probably not in any position to provide their own Syriac gospel. Of the two books available, that of Marcion and the *Diatessaron*, the latter was decidedly more orthodox in orientation—indeed, under a not very penetrating examination, it was simply orthodox. It would have had very little to fear from a comparison with the gospels used in the "great church" as books of instruction. There was scarcely a single instance in which Tatian had expressed his particular views by means of additions, but to a much greater degree had expressed them by means of omission. But such omissions are so characteristic of the style of a harmony that in a particular case one can almost never determine for certain whether the omission was due to literary considerations, or whether it reflects the malicious wickedness of the false teacher.

"Not only Tatian's group have used this book," says Theodoret of Cyrus as late as the fifth century (*Her.* 1.20), "but the adherents of the apostolic teaching also have innocently employed the book as a convenient compendium, since they did not recognize the deception of the compilation. I myself found more than two hundred such books which were being held in honor in the congregations of our region; I collected and destroyed them and in their place introduced the gospels of the four evangelists." This is the way in which the Palûtians also may have come into contact with the *Diatessaron*, and without prejudice, had put it to use. It was much better than having no gospel at all in the language of the people, in spite of its being tainted with the approval of Bardesanes—possibly the Palûtians knew nothing of Tatian, since the name of a human author seldom remains attached to such gospel compilations, by their very nature.

As for the letters of Paul, it is first of all indisputable that a collection [38] of writings of the Apostle to the Gentiles was used by the Christians of Edessa from the very beginning. For if Marcion stands at the beginning of Edessene Christianity, with him stands also the apostle Paul. It was only in the contents and order of this corpus that a difference existed between Marcionites,[75] Bardesa-

75. Mention of Marcion's particular textual recension, which obviously was not, as a whole, used beyond the bounds of his own community, will suffice at this point. [See Harnack, *Marcion*².]

nites,[76] and the orthodox. To be sure, it is not entirely certain when this difference became obvious. The fact that both Ephraem and an orthodox Syrian canonical list from around the year 400 agree with Marcion in the arrangement of the letters of Paul at important points [77] encourages the suggestion that in Edessa, with reference to the Pauline canon, Marcion's influence was not limited to his immediate adherents. We observe how "heretical," or better "original" conditions effect later epochs and how even the ecclesiastical structure cannot avoid this. That strengthens our belief in the correctness of the view presented above, that Edessene orthodoxy received the *Diatessaron* through Bardesanes and his community, just as it received the letters of Paul ultimately from Marcion.

But at what point did the orthodox actually become something of a power factor—we do not mean for Edessa as a whole, but rather, within the Christianity of that city? It makes sense to pose the problem in this more modest form, for at the beginning of the third century the totality of those baptized, including all kinds, constitute only a small minority by comparison to *the* [non-Christian] Edessenes with their customs (*Laws of the Countries* 32 and 40; see above, n. 12). Perhaps the wisest thing to do would be to refrain from offering a more detailed answer to the above question on the grounds that it is impossible to do so. In spite of this, however, I will seek to give an answer, although with full awareness that I am thereby treading on uncertain ground to a greater degree than previously.

I should like to ascribe the decisive influence to *that* person whom the *Edessene Chronicle* names as the first bishop, Kûnê (*Koinos* in Greek). He was the one, if I am correct, who organized orthodoxy [39] in Edessa in an ecclesiastical manner and gave to it significant impetus—with the assistance of favorable times, yet not without merit of his own. At the beginning of such a development, especially in a region in which one must prevail against strong rivals by his own power, must stand a person of energy, ability, and determination, who also has time to expand. That Kûnê was a man of exceptional

76. It is uncertain whether Bardesanes had been influenced by Tatian also with respect to his "Apostolos"; cf. EH 4.29.6, and the comments of Zahn, *Geschichte* 1.1 (1887): 423 ff.

77. Cf. T. Zahn, *Grundriss der Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons*² (Leipzig, 1904), pp. 48-50. W. Bauer, *Der Apostolos der Syrer in der Zeit von der Mitte des 4. Jahrhunderts bis zum Spaltung der syrischen Kirche* (Giessen, 1903), pp. 32 ff.

importance is confirmed by the fact that among the sacred buildings of Edessene Christianity a "house" (Syr. *beit*) of Mar Kûnê later was displayed,[78] probably a chapel dedicated to him. At any rate this is evidence that grateful recollection distinguished him from the multitude of bishops, although he had not suffered a martyr's death.

As to his length of time in office, I would prefer to appeal to Leclercq, who has Kûnê active from before 289 until 313.[79] Unfortunately, however, only the year of his death is unquestionably established by the *Edessene Chronicle* (above, 15, item 12). A *terminus ad quem* for his entrance into office is provided by the *History of the Martyrs Shamuna and Guria,* which can be trusted as far as the externals are concerned because they are two of the three Edessene marytrs who are named already in the ancient Syrian martyrology contained in a manuscript written in Edessa in 411/12, the contents of which certainly go far back into the fourth century.[80] They suffered in the days of Kûnê,[81] but perhaps not until the year 309. This in no way rules out a more lengthy episcopate for Kûnê, but neither does it champion that possibility with the desired vigor. Only a period of some half-dozen years is a firm necessity. [40]

In any event, in that which the *Edessene Chronicle* lists as his achievement, the building of the church, Kûnê waited until the end of his days, when he had to be content only with laying the foundation. Too much should not be ascribed here to accident. If Kûnê allowed the year 313 to arrive before remedying a deficiency that he surely had already been aware of for a long while, this demonstrates the powerful purposefulness of a person who knows how to interpret the signs of the times and to take advantage of favorable circumstances without hesitation. For it is certainly significant that 313 is the very year in which, on the 13th of June, after the victory over Maximinus in Nicomedia, Licinius issued an edict of toleration that

78. *Chronicle* of Joshua the Stylite 43 (ed. W. Wright [Cambridge, 1882 repr. Amsterdam, 1968], p. 39.8). The context indicates that this does not refer to the church founded by Kûnê [mentioned above, 15 item 12].

79. Leclercq, DACL 4: 2088 f.

80. See H. Achelis, *Die Martyrologien,* Abhandlung der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, 3.3 (1900), pp. 30-71, with extensive reference to the work of L. Duchesne. A German translation is given by H. Lietzmann, *Die drei ältesten Martyrologien,* Kleine Texte, 2² (1911), pp. 7-15.

81. So chap. 1 of the *History;* the text is found in Burkitt, *Euphemia,* Syriac p. 3.8 f. (see also pp. 90 and 29 ff.). [Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity,* 22 and 131, dates their martyrdom in 297.]

now guaranteed Christians the free exercise of religion even in the East and explicitly decreed that the confiscated meeting houses and all possessions should be returned to the church without cost to them. Kûnê took advantage of the favorable situation immediately, and certainly did not hesitate to present the claims of his community. There was no meeting house to be returned to them, but there were all sorts of possessions, which facilitated the construction of a new building.

Just as I have refused to view as coincidental the contemporaneity of the church building and the edict of toleration, I now wish to go a step further and to oppose the assumption that it happened by chance that Eusebius prepared and issued his *Ecclesiastical History* precisely in the same years that Kûnê was in office. In this, we turn back to the question as to who had been the *spiritus rector* [guiding light] in the fabrication of the Abgar legend (see above, 10-12). I would suggest that it was Kûnê, who surely did not intend to give expression to his parochialism thereby, but wished to strike a powerful blow against the false beliefs. It has already been established that only Edessene Christians had an interest in the falsification (above, 10). But we can describe these Christians with even more precision; they were solely the orthodox. Marcionites and Bardesanites could not trace their origins back beyond the founders of their sects. Or, if they attempted to do so, the story that served such a purpose must take a turn that shows how the revelation of Jesus has come down unadulterated through the generations to Marcion or Bardesanes—something like what is reported by Hippolytus (*Ref.* 7.20.1), that Basilides was said to have been in contact with the apostle Matthias, to whom Jesus in secret instruction had communicated the Basilidian teaching. Yet in our case nothing of this sort occurs. On the contrary, from the very beginning it is one of the anti-heretical [41] devices of orthodoxy to demonstrate how the church, in contrast to the heresies which stem from men and are named for them, establishes through the apostles a sure line of contact with the Lord himself, which it never needed to break. If Jesus in person already has ordered the gospel to be preached in Edessa by his apostle, then the teaching of Marcion, Bardesanes, or even Mani immediately is unmasked and condemned as a human work by way of imitation. They have belatedly stolen their sheep from someone else's flock. Ephraem says: "Bar Daisan designated and called his flock by *his* name. More-

over, the flock of Mani is called by *his* name.[82] Like stolen sheep they are marked with the detestable brand of the thief. It is Christ who has gathered them; [thus] the sheep are [to be called] Christians" (*Madrash* 56.1). Then the apostles, the "sons of truth," are described as *the* ones who as the wedding attendants of Christ have secured for him the bride who is to be called by his name (*Madrash* 56.2; cf. 22.3).

Thus, with the tentativeness that limits all such conjectures, it was Kûnê who gave the impetus for the establishment of the Abgar saga and secured for it the widest conceivable distribution and credibility by slipping the "Syrian records" into the hands of Eusebius, who was collecting materials for his *Ecclesiastical History*. If the latter had been inclined at all to examine his materials critically, such thoughts must have been further from his mind than ever in this case.

We need not make excuses for the Edessene bishop to whom we attribute such a deed. He lived in an epoch in which the growth of Christian legends flourished, and which accepted a remarkable number of them to help oppose the heretics. So as not to go too far from Edessa, we need think only of the Syriac *Didascalia* as an apostolic writing, of the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the expansion and reworking of the collection of Ignatius' letters, and of the *Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ*.[83] [42] It is not necessary to point to examples such as Juvenalis of Jerusalem in order to establish the probability that even bishops were associated with "forgeries."[84] It was simply self-evident that they would look after the interests of the true faith in the most effective manner. What other authority stands behind the church orders mentioned above, if not the bishops?[85]

Even the apostles had not viewed things differently and had not shrunk from using methods that a lesser mind perhaps would have

82. Here only Bardesanes and Mani are lumped together, whereas in the wider context of the hymn, Marcion again fills out the trilogy of leading heretics in the usual way. Could this be additional evidence that such a rebuke would not apply to the contemporary Edessene Marcionites because they call themselves simply "Christians?" See above, 24.
83. The numerous legends of martyrs and saints can be left aside. [On *Didascalia*, see below, 244-257 (244 n. 7 also provides material on *Apostolic Constitutions*); the *Testamentum Domini* was edited by I. E. Rahmani (Mainz, 1899).]
84. Cf. Schultze, *Antiocheia*, p. 231.
85. Concerning such forgeries in the first half of the fourth century, see A. von Harnack, *Die Briefsammlung des Apostels Paulus und die anderen vorkonstantinischen christlichen Briefsammlungen* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1926), pp. 31 f.

called questionable. Possibly Kûnê was acquainted with the story that found its way into a metric homily of Jacob of Sarug (d. after 519), and tells of the conversion of Antioch by the apostles Peter, John, and Paul.[86] At first the former two begin to preach in Antioch. But Aëtius, the high priest of the city, stirs up the populace against them and, instead of having success, they are beaten and their heads are shaved as a mark of disgrace. Paul meets the men thus humiliated, and explains to them that one cannot proceed in such an innocent and simple manner—purely as a preacher of the gospel. He proposes the following crafty procedure, which meets with their approval. He pretends to be a pagan and becomes an associate of Aëtius. As the chief defender of the religion then dominant in Antioch, he demands a miracle of the newcomers as proof of the correctness of their faith. Thereupon Peter heals a blind man. But Paul proceeds to do the same, seemingly with the help of the pagan gods, but in truth by means of a secret invocation of the name Jesus. Thus the scales are evenly balanced. So as to bring about a decision, Paul demands that his alleged opponent raise a dead person. If he can do this, Paul would then accept the faith in the God of the Christians. So, in the theater in the presence of all the people, Peter calls back to life the dead son of a prominent Antiochene. Now Paul enacts his conversion, and great masses of people follow his apparent example. In the house of Cassian, the father of the resuscitated young man, a church is established, and in it the new converts are baptized. [43]

If the apostles themselves proceed in such a fashion,[87] who would blame the bishop for his actions on behalf of the correct faith? To wish to apply here the categories of "honest" and "dishonest" is to employ a standard that is simply out of place. Moreover, to the extent that Kûnê also shares the firm conviction of his circle that heresy is conceivable only as a departure from the true (i.e. his own) faith, he is operating in good faith. The orthodox Christian was not able to understand that at the beginning the heresies often were nothing

86. A. Baumstark, *Die Petrus- und Paulusacten in der litterarischen Überlieferung der syrischen Kirche* (Leipzig: Harrasowitz, 1902), pp. 27-29.
87. Cf. also the recently published *Apocalypse of Peter;* A. Mingana, Woodbrooke Studies, 3.2 (Manchester, 1931), p. 93 ff. Here the Apostle to the Gentiles, and Peter with him, plays almost a double role (132 ff., 396 ff.). He behaves like an idolater before the "King of Antioch" and then before the emperor, and by this clever, obliging conduct, which Peter supports with great miracles, secures the conversion of the rulers and of their people.

but mixtures, produced in the soil of syncretism, in which elements of the most diverse kinds, including some Christian, were bound together into a new unity. He interpreted Christian elements as indications of original adherence to the *one* church, the protectress of all genuine Christian possessions. And if the originator or the representative of the divergent approach actually stood outside the "church," this was either because he himself had withdrawn from it, usually for impure motives, or because he had been expelled from the church as being unworthy.

That the apostolic teaching, which is identical with the conception of orthodoxy of all times and places, had been present long before there was heresy is also the view of Edessene orthodoxy of the fourth century. As Ephraem explains (*Madrash* 24.20 f.): "For years the apostles preached, and others after them, and still there were no tares." They first emerge with Marcion.[88] And, in fact, they emerge in such a way that Marcion withdrew from the orthodox church, a point that the *Edessene Chronicle* also explicitly noted.

With Bardesanes it is no different. The *Edessene Chronicle*, it is true, does not claim that he withdrew from the church, or that Mani did so. And in Eusebius the correct information is still preserved that Bardesanes originally was a Valentinian of sorts (see above, 24 f.) and [44] had never shared the faith of the church (EH 4.30.3). However, already in Epiphanius he is depicted as having withdrawn from the church (*Her.* 56.1.2). Jacob of Edessa clearly pictures him as having been removed by force.[89] But alongside this, the Syrians tell the following edifying story, which has been transmitted in various forms.[90] Bardesanes had grown up somewhere outside Edessa as the adopted son of an idolatrous priest, who taught him pagan hymns. When he was twenty-five years old, his father sent him to Edessa to make some purchases. There he passed the church built by Addai and heard Bishop Hystaspes explaining the scriptures to the people. The discourse pleased Bardesanes so much that he wished to be

88. Cf. also *Madrash* 23.10: "Let us go back even before Bar Daisan and Marcion to the earlier ones, who are more ancient than Marcion."
89. In his twelfth epistle (see above, n. 55), Syriac page 27 (ed. Wright): "The adherents of Bar Daisan . . . got their start from him. When he was expelled from the church of the orthodox of Urhâi, many adherents of his wickedness followed him and founded a heresy and a sect for themselves."
90. Theodore bar Khoni (above, n. 55), ed. Nau, 517 = ed. Pognon, pp. 122 f. Michael the Syrian (above, n. 31), ed. Chabot, vol. 1: pp. 183 f. = ed. Nau, 523.

initiated into the secrets of Christianity. Hystaspes taught him, baptized him, and ordained him as a deacon or presbyter. Now he would have liked to become bishop. But when he was not able to do this, he left the church[91] and became a Valentinian; and when even in this setting his ambition was not completely fulfilled, he founded his own sect.[92]

From the same sort of viewpoint, Mani is said to have become a Christian presbyter who fought against Jews and pagans, but then he turned his back upon the church because his pupils were not accepted with their message.[93] Thus for Bishop Kûnê, the Abgar legend is only a concrete expression of his bedrock [45] conviction that *his* faith is older than all heresy and therefore also must have made its appearance in Edessa, with a clearly apostolic seal, earlier than heresy.

But the Abgar legend is perhaps not the only example of the way in which Kûnê attacked the heretics through literature, and summoned Jesus with the apostles against them. If with some confidence we may conjecture such efforts on his part, then surely it is also permissible to explore this approach still further, and to explain a peculiarity of the Edessene Bible that is particularly striking along with the presence of the *Diatessaron*. The Pauline canon also had a peculiar shape in Edessa, since it contained a third letter to the Corinthians, or more correctly, an exchange of letters between Paul and the

91. This is yet another recurrent device in the struggle against heresy: frustrated ambition drives the one in question out of the church and causes him to become a heresiarch. Tertullian already says this of Valentinus (*Against Valentinus* 4; cf. *Prescription against Heretics* 30). Epiphanius reports a similar story about Marcion, who is supposed to have wanted to be bishop of Rome (*Her.* 42.1).
92. Burkitt (*Eastern Christianity*, pp. 30 f., 156 ff., 187 ff.) agrees with this presentation to the extent that he pictures Bardesanes as having first belonged to the orthodox church, after which he turned to "gnosis" and was excommunicated. [But Burkitt is himself quite sympathetic to Bardaisan, whom he calls "the best scientific intellect of his time," and is saddened that Syrian orthodoxy rejected him through "intellectual cowardice" (189; see also 34 f.). It is not clear that *Burkitt* would want to call him "gnostic."]
93. See above, 27 n. 61, for the relevant materials from *Chronicon Maroniticum* and Michael the Syrian. According to Epiphanius *Her.* 66.5 ff., Mani deceitfully passes himself off as a Christian. [For other similar references, see K. Kessler in RPTK³ 12 (1903), 202.20 ff., and the recently published Arabic material in S. Pines, "Jewish Christians" (below, p. 314 n. 31), pp. 66 ff.—Mani was first a priest, then bishop/metropolitan in Christian Persia, before proclaiming his objectionable message. By way of contrast, Eusebius has nothing of the sort in his vituperative paragraph on Mani (EH 7.31); see also Cyril of Jerusalem *Catecheses* 6.21 (on the Unity of God)—"Mani was not a Christian. Far be it. He was not thrown out of the church like Simon" (for text, see Migne, PG 33; ET by E. H. Gifford, NPNF 7, series 2 [1894]).]

Corinthians with a connecting passage in between. At the time of Ephraem, this material had a firm spot in the New Testament, and in Ephraem's commentary on Paul it is dealt with after 2 Corinthians. Since Aphraates already cites two passages of "3 Corinthians" as the words "of the apostle," the letter must have been accepted as canonical in Syriac-speaking areas, and above all in Edessa, around the year 330. Neither the Syriac *Didascalia* nor Agathangelos' notice about Gregory the Illuminator, the apostle of the Armenians,[94] provide any evidence that this would have been the case earlier.

Indeed, Ephraem asserts that the Bardesanites had not admitted "3 Corinthians" into their Bible because it contradicted their teaching.[95] And if he were correct, we would have to conclude that the letter was already regarded by the Palûtians as sacred by the time Bardesanes' false teaching arose; and that would guarantee for the Palûtians greater antiquity than has been conceded to them. However, the discovery and deciphering of the Coptic version of the *Acts of Paul* by Carl Schmidt[96] has established that the correspondence originally formed a part of the *Acts of Paul,* and that makes the assertion of Ephraem impossible. For, [46] as we learn from Tertullian, the apocryphal story of Paul had been composed only about the year 180 or even later, after Bardesanes was fully active, by a presbyter in Asia Minor, "as though he could add something on his own authority to the reputation of Paul" (*On Baptism* 17). The author himself confessed that he had acted out of love for the Apostle to the Gentiles. Thus we see here quite clearly an officer of the "great church" perpetrating a "forgery" that focuses upon an apostle. In view of these considerations, a Syriac translation of the correspondence and its use in Edessa before the third century is quite inconceivable. And it is not the patrons of "3 Corinthians" but rather Bardesanes and his people who bear witness to the earlier situation by their silence concerning the letter.

But Ephraem was correct at one point. In a life devoted to fighting

94. See E. Rolffs, "Paulusakten," in Hennecke[2], p. 195.
95. In the Armenian works of Ephraem, ed. by the Mekhitarists in Venice, vol. 3 (1836), p. 118. German translation in Zahn, *Geschichte,* 2.2: 598; J. Vetter, *Der apocryphe dritte Korintherbrief* (Vienna, 1894), p. 72.
96. C. Schmidt, *Acta Pauli aus der Heidelberger koptischen Papyrushandschrift Nr. 1* (Leipzig, 1904, 1905[2]). [This material was reedited by Schmidt and W. Schubart (Hamburg: Augustin, 1936); for more recent developments, see W. Schneemelcher in Hennecke-Schneemelcher, 2: 322 ff.]

heretics he had learned by experience that the Bardesanites rejected "3 Corinthians" as non-apostolic because it conflicted with their viewpoint; they had become acquainted with this material at a later period through its incorporation into the Bible of their orthodox fellow citizens, and from their disputes with them. This makes sense, since the correspondence was intended, in the context of the work of its orthodox inventor, as part of the anti-gnostic polemic. Once again the question arises: who was interested in introducing such literature in Edessa? And again comes the only possible answer: only the orthodox —with their farsighted and industrious bishop Kûnê leading the way. For it was in the century in which his tenure falls, from the beginning of the third to the beginning of the fourth century, that the exchange of letters must have been incorporated into the canon of the orthodox in Edessa.

Even in this case, the integrity of Kûnê is to a large extent maintained. He certainly never doubted for a moment the authenticity of this Pauline correspondence. To him it was only a new confirmation of his unshakable confidence that he, rather than the heretics, was in agreement with the apostles. We can perhaps infer from a remark made by Ephraem in his commentary on "3 Corinthians" how the *Acts of Paul* came to Edessa. According to this, the Bardesanites have written apocryphal Acts of the apostles in which the miraculous deeds of the apostles are told, but at the same time the teachings of the Bardesanites also had been put into the mouths of the apostles—[47] perhaps the *Acts of Thomas* is the main target here.[97] We know how the "church" met the efforts of the heretics to influence the common man through such popular books—partly by reworking the heretical works in an orthodox fashion, and partly by using their own newly created works containing barbed thrusts against the enemy, where such works existed. In the latter category, we may include the *Acts of Paul;* which Eusebius values much more highly than the gnostic *Acts of Peter*—the latter he simply rejects (EH 3.3.2), while he counts the former among those writings whose canonical worth is not sufficiently firm (EH 3.3.5, 25.4). By using a little imagination, we might picture Kûnê's emissaries to Eusebius returning home to their bishop and bringing the Pauline material in exchange for the

97. See G. Bornkamm, *Mythos und Legende in den apokryphen Thomasakten* (Göttingen, 1933), pp. 86 f., [and more recently, Bornkamm's treatment of the *Acts of Thomas* in Hennecke-Schneemelcher, 2: 425 ff.].

"Syriac records," as an instrument for combatting the apostolic books of the Bardesanites.

We will disregard such possibilities. But I would consider it certain that the *Acts of Paul* came to Edessa *as a whole*,[98] for the correspondence probably became separated from the body of the work in an area in which the former actually came to have a separate existence, which up to the present time is not demonstrable for the Greek-speaking world.[99] I do not wish to dwell upon hypotheses as to why Kûnê, or whoever it was, did not incorporate into his New Testament the entire document, but only the correspondence most immediately connected with the apostle, with its clearly discernible anti-heretical attitude. (I have already had to assume much more than I would like, but unfortunately, in this area, there is very little that one can know for sure.) Perhaps this was decided for him by the fact that the Lukan Acts of the Apostles, which was exegeted as holy scripture by Ephraem some decades after Kûnê's tenure, already occupied a place in the Edessene Bible. Possibly the *Acts of Paul* also was too extensive for him and was still not sufficiently authenticated as a whole. Or he was offended, as were other churchmen, by the role played there by Thecla—especially since in the Marcionite communities women possessed the right to administer baptism.[100] [48] Furthermore, there certainly would be much less resistance to the innovation if only the correspondence were added, and thus it would become all the more difficult for the heretics to parry the thrust. One could easily turn the figure of Thecla into something ridiculous. Perhaps Kûnê was on his guard because he could observe an actual example such as the Sabbatians,[101] who later were opposed by Ephraem. "A woman," scoffs Ephraem, "brings the Sabbatians under her power, so that they bow their heads beneath her hand. Sitting on the teacher's chair in the chancel,[102] she rants at them and derides their beards. Is that not a reproach and a shame to nature itself?" (*Madrash* 2.6). Thus there are reasons that could make it seem advisable to an Edessene churchman to limit the addition to the exchange of letters between Paul and the Corinthians.

98. On the use of the *Acts of Paul* among the Syrians, see Baumstark, *Petrus- und Paulusacten*, and W. Bauer, *Apostolos*, pp. 19-21.

99. [Discoveries subsequent to 1934 necessitate some readjustments in this argument, for a Greek text of "3 Corinthians" has appeared among the Bodmer papyri (several Latin fragments also are known)—see M. Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer X-XIII* (Cologne-Geneva: Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, 1959), and W. Schneemelcher in Hennecke-Schneemelcher, 2: 326 f. For the Latin text, see A. Harnack, *Die apokryphen Briefe des Paulus an die Laodicer und Korinther*², KT 12 (1912): 8 ff.]

100. Cf. Harnack, *Marcion*², pp. 147 and 365*, n. 2.

101. In the heresy-catalogue of Marutha (above, n. 64), they are treated first. More precise information concerning them is found in the 12th letter of Jacob of Edessa (above, n. 55). The text is on Syriac p. 25, line 13 from below (ed. Wright). See also Rücker, *Ephraem*, 2: 12 f. (above, n. 58).

We need not tarry longer on this point. These closing comments about Kûnê are intended only to bring into some kind of focus various lines of the investigation that we had to pursue. The time of Kûnê itself lies far beyond the boundaries of the period which we have in view. We are concerned with the beginnings. And the investigation of these beginnings for the history of Christianity in Edessa has made us aware of a foundation that rests on an unmistakably heretical basis. In relation to it, orthodoxy comes to prevail only very gradually and with great difficulty, becoming externally victorious only in the days of Rabbula, and then through means the use of which leaves behind a bitter taste—means that no one had dared to use in the pre-Constantinian era.

102. Jacob of Edessa stresses explicitly that at that time, there had been a church of the Sabbatians in Urhâi (Syriac p. 26.5 ff., ed. Wright). Jacob knows from personal experience (lines 13 ff.) that the place where they gathered was still called by his contemporaries "church of the Sabbatians."