CHAPTER THREE

ON THE LIFE AND THE PASSION OF CHRIST AND THE OTHER COPTIC HOMILIES ATTRIBUTED TO CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

1. Eight Cyrillian Homilies

Cyril of Jerusalem, the famous anti-Arian bishop (348–386), was a popular figure in Coptic homiletic literature, as testified by eight homilies that are explicitly attributed to him. Seven of them have been preserved completely, some even in more than one copy. They once belonged to the Library of Saint Michael's Monastery at Hamuli and are now kept at the Pierpont Morgan Library (New York). Fragments of some of them have also been preserved in

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1 The study of Coptic homiletic literature has been enormously facilitated by the Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari (CMCL), created and directed by Tito Orlandi, Rome, which inter alia contains the Clavis Patrum Copticorum (CPC). The CPC aims to number all known Coptic literary texts and provides much relevant information on the preserved texts and manuscripts (to be found at http://www.cmcl.let.uniroma1.it).

2 Scholars have also attributed three anonymous Coptic homilies to Cyril of Jerusalem. The first is called In 24 Seniores (CPC 0560), published in A. Campagnano, A. Maresca, and T. Orlandi (eds), Quattro omelie copte. Vita di Giovanni Crisostomo, Encomi dei 24 Vegliardi (Ps. Procile e Anonimo), Encomio di Michele Arcangelo di Eustazio di Tracia (Testi e documenti per lo studio dell’Antichità, Serie Copta, 60), Milano, Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1977, 49–50, 83–104. An Arabic translation of this homily, which ‘correspond dans les grandes lignes au texte copte,’ is ascribed to Cyril (see E. Lucchesi, ‘L’ homélie copte acéphale en l’honneur des XXIV vieillards,’ AB 117 (1999) 289–290), but this need not imply that also the Coptic tradition likewise attributed it to the bishop of Jerusalem. The second homily is called In Canticum Vineae. In Is. 5 (CPC 0020). Orlandi, in CMCL, sub CPC 0020, suggested that it might be attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem ‘per motivi puramente interni all’opera,’ though he thought the attribution also ‘molto dubbia.’ In an equally inconclusive manner, it has been suggested that the homily might be a work of Hesychius of Jerusalem, see S. Bacot, ‘Le “Chant de la vigne” en langue copte: Une nouvelle approche,’ in A. Bouhéras and C. Louis (eds.), Études Coptes XI. Treizième journée d’études (Marseille, 7–9 juin 2007) (Cahiers de la Bibliothèque copte, 17), Paris: De Boccard, 2010, 201–211. Of the third homily that has been ascribed to Cyril of Jerusalem only a few fragments have been preserved, which deal with the Virgin Mary (CPC 0005). CMCL probably attributed these fragments to Cyril because some other fragments, which are now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, C4, 1–2 (Depuydt, Catalogue, 212, Nr. 109; see also ibidem, 208–211, Nr. 108), once were part of the same codex that also contained Pseudo-Cyril’s homily On the Resurrection and the Passion (Pierpont Morgan Library C4, 3–4; see below on Homily 4). However, the fragments C4, 1–2 did not belong to this homily.
other manuscripts that came from other monasteries and are now in several European and Egyptian libraries. One homily has only partly been recovered, in two manuscripts of which fragments are kept in Cairo, New York and in a private collection. Although some of these homilies may have been translated from the Greek, there are no indications that any of them were really authored by Cyril of Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the scholars who wrote about the Cyrillian homilies have used various and sometimes misleading names to indicate the separate texts.\(^3\) Campagnano and Depuydt distinguish four homilies on the Passion, which the former numbers as ‘Sulla Passione I, II, a and \(\beta\),’ whereas the latter speaks about them as, respectively, ‘On the Passion, II, I, III, and IV.’ That the fourth homily, ‘\(\beta\)’ or ‘IV,’ is called ‘On the Passion’ is rather incomprehensible, because it exclusively deals with the resurrection of Christ and for that reason should be entitled On the Resurrection.\(^4\) A similar situation occurs with the homily which is called ‘Sulla Passione II’ by Campagnano and ‘On the Passion I’ or ‘On New (Low) Sunday’ by Depuydt. Only the last title is correct, for the homily does not say a word about the Passion and only deals with the events of the first Sunday after Easter, which the Greeks and the Copts called ‘New Sunday.’ Moreover, our text, M610, is not included in these four homilies on the Passion, although it almost entirely focused on the arrest of Jesus and the events preceding his crucifixion. The observation that there are interconnections between some of these texts, has led to the idea of a ‘Cyrillian cycle’ of Coptic homilies, to which, however, not all the homilies ascribed to Cyril are thought to belong. This unsatisfactory state of affairs makes a fresh look at the eight Cyrillian homilies and their possible interconnections indispensable. In order to avoid further confusion, I suggest to number the homilies that are attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem, starting with those that deal with the Passion and the Resurrection of Christ, and to give them a title that is based on the analysis of their contents given below. Thus the following homilies can be distinguished:

1. On the Life and Passion of Christ (CPC 0113)
2. On the Passion and the Resurrection (CPC 0116)

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\(^4\) Hyvernat, Checklist, 16, already gave it the correct title: Discourse on the Resurrection of Christ; also Orlandi, ‘Cirillo de Gerusalemme,’ 98: In Resurrectionem Domini.