

Ammianus Marcellinus 23.1.2-3: The Rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem

Abstract

Ammianus Marcellinus' report of the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in 363 by Julian the Apostate is the only pagan source we have on the affair. Its value as a historical source will be assessed by comparing it with the Christian and the Jewish sources on the subject. Furthermore it is argued that Julian's restoration of the Temple is not to be seen as a deliberate anti-Christian act of the emperor, as alleged by the Christian sources and much secondary literature, but that it was part of his policy to restore the old cults.

At the beginning of book 23 of his *Res Gestae*, Ammianus Marcellinus describes how the emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363) was eager to perpetuate the memory of his reign by means of great works, notably the restoration of the formerly splendid Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, that had been destroyed by Titus in AD 70. For this purpose the emperor made available a vast sum of money, and entrusted the supervision of the restoration, which had to be carried out speedily, to Alypius, an official from Antioch who had formerly held the position of vice-prefect of Britain. Alypius had hardly taken on the responsibility for this task, with the aid of the governor of the province, when fires kept on breaking out near the foundations of the Temple, which burned some of the workmen and prevented access to the place where the old Temple had stood and where the new one was to arise.

As a consequence the plans for the restoration were abandoned.¹

This account by the pagan Ammianus of Julian's restoration of the Jewish Temple in the year 363 has received little attention, on the whole. Nevertheless, this passage of Ammianus is of special significance with respect to the other sources on this subject.² These other sources are the writings of Christian authors and are very explicit in terms of the views they express. On the basis of a comparison of sources, including the Jewish sources – or rather the silence of these sources – as well as the writings of the emperor Julian himself, it is my intention to make an assessment of Ammianus' account of the restoration of the Temple as a historical source. In this connection I would like to offer a different perspective on the significance that is attached in most of the sources and much secondary literature to the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem in Julian's conflict with Christianity. In these writings it is stated in no uncertain terms that one of Julian's most important motives for his decision to restore the Jewish Temple was his desire to strike at Christianity.

Let us first take a look at the Christian sources concerning this restoration project. Before Ammianus wrote down his account of the events in Jerusalem, two other authors had already written on this subject: Ephraem Syrus in a hymn against Julian, and Gregory of Nazianzus in his 5th *Oratio*, also di-

¹23.1.2-3: *imperiique sui memoriam magnitudine operum gestiens propagare ambitiosum quondam apud Hierosolyma templum, quod post multa et inter neciva certamina obsidente Vespasiano posteaque Tito aegre est oppugnatum, instaurare sumptibus cogitabat immodicis negotiumque maturandum Alypio dederat Antiochensi, qui olim Britannias curaverat pro praefectis. cum itaque rei idem fortiter instaret Alypius iuaretque provinciae rector, metuendi globi flammaram prope fundamenta crebris assultibus erumpentes fecere locum exustis alioquotiens operantibus inaccessum hocque modo elemento destinatus repellente cessavit inceptum.*

²For an overview of all relevant source material, see Blanchetière, 1980, 61-81, 62 ff. Unfortunately I had no access to Levenson, 1979.

rected against Julian. Ephraem (c.306-373) was a Christian deacon from Nisibis who, following Julian's unsuccessful campaign against the Persians that resulted in the capture of Nisibis by the Persians, was forced to flee in 364 to Edessa, where he remained until his death in 373. Ephraem was well known and admired for his theological writings,³ including doctrinal hymns (*madrashah*). Four of these hymns were directed against Julian. Ephraem probably wrote these in Nisibis, shortly before his flight to Edessa. The fourth of these hymns contains a passage concerning Julian's restoration of the Temple.⁴ Ephraem describes how the Jews were restoring the Temple, with the support of Julian, in order to be able to offer sacrifices once again, but that the project had to be abandoned because the Christians in Jerusalem appealed to God, who then sent storms, earthquakes and thunderbolts. Fire burst out of doors that opened by themselves and burned the Jews. Concerning this disaster Ephraem refers to the book of Daniel (9.26-27), in which it is said that the place (of the Temple) will remain desolate forever.⁵

At about the same time that Ephraem

³ According to Hieron., *vir. ill.* 115 in some churches his work was read in addition to the Holy Scripture. See for other eulogies of Ephraem's work by Christian authors of Late Antiquity Griffith, 1986, 25-26.

⁴ *HcJul.* 4.18-23. Lieu, 1989 has an English translation of the four hymns. Brock, 1977, 283-286, presents the relevant stanzas of Ephraem's fourth hymn with regard to the rebuilding of the Temple, as well as later Syriac sources on the subject. For Ephraem's hymns against Julian, see e.g. Griffith, 1987.

⁵ *HcJul.* 4.20. Daniel 9.26-27: "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate".

wrote this hymn, Gregory of Nazianzus was also writing a detailed account of the rebuilding of the Temple. This is to be found in his *Oratio* 5, his second oration directed against Julian.⁶ After he has compared the wickedness of Julian with that of Old Testament figures like Jeroboam (3 Kings 12.25 ff.), Ahab (3 Kings 21), Pharaoh (Exod. 7.22) and Nebuchadnezzar (4 Kings 25.9), Gregory says that Julian incited the Jews, who were already filled with hatred for Christianity, against the Christians by giving them permission to return to Jerusalem,⁷ to restore the Temple and to re-establish the customs of their forefathers, i.e. the sacrificial ceremonies which could only be performed in the Temple. The Jews immediately began to rebuild the Temple. The Jewish women parted with their jewellery, presumably to help finance the enterprise, and even helped with the building work. Suddenly, however, while the work was in full swing, storms blew up and the earth trembled. The Jews gathered together and tried to enter houses of God, that is churches,⁸ to seek protection. But the doors of the churches shut, as if driven by an invisible force, and they remained shut. Then a fire broke out from the foundations of the Temple, causing many Jews to be burned. According to Gregory, the occurrence of this fire was a real event, about which there could be just as little doubt as about other divine miracles. As the greatest miracle of all Gregory describes the appearance of a cross of light in the sky above Jerusalem and the phenomenon that the sign of the cross appeared on the clothing and the bodies of all those present.⁹

⁶ *Or.* 5.3-4. Gregory's invectives against Julian, his *Orationes* 4 and 5, were composed in the Winter of 363-364; see Bernardi, 1978, 91.

⁷ Since the reign of Hadrian Jews were denied access to Jerusalem. This denial was repeated by Constantine the Great; see e.g. Stemberger, 1987, 42-44.

⁸ Stemberger, 1987, 172 thinks a provisional synagogue built there for the Jewish workers, or a still standing or newly restored part of the Temple, is meant.

⁹ For other appearances of celestial crosses, see

At the end of the 4th century John Chrysostom mentions the event several times.¹⁰ According to Chrysostom, Julian had conceived the idea of giving the Jews the opportunity once again of offering sacrifices. In reaction to this the Jews made the point that they may only offer sacrifices in Jerusalem: they therefore requested Julian to give Jerusalem back to them so that they could restore the Temple. Julian granted the request of the Jews and gave them his full support by sending engineers and craftsmen to Jerusalem. According to Chrysostom, Julian hoped that with the re-establishment of their sacrificial rites the Jews might perhaps come to adopt the pagan cults.¹¹ At the same time, he hoped that in this way he could negate the statement made by Christ that of the buildings of the Temple not one stone should be left upon another.¹² Work had started on the restoration and the foundations of the (ruined) Temple had been laid bare, when suddenly fire broke out from the foundations, causing the death of a large number of the workmen. As a result of this the Jews and Julian abandoned the project.

Also Ambrose refers to the restoration of

Vogt, 1949. Adler, 1978, 72 thinks that possibly all other accounts of the failure of the rebuilding project were based on Gregory's oration or his source; see also Neri, 1985, 47, n.117.

¹⁰ *Adv. Iud.* 5.11, *Jud. et Gent.* 16, *De S. Babyla* 119, *Exp. in Ps.* 110.4, *De Laud. Pauli* 4, *Hom.* 4.1 in Matt 1:17, *Hom.* 41.3 in Act 19:8. For Chrysostom and the rebuilding of the Temple, see Wilken, 1983, 128 ff. Chrysostom, *Adv. Iudaeos* 5.11 alleges that during the reign of Constantine the Jews rebelled and tried to rebuild their Temple. There is no other source which confirms Chrysostom's statement. Probably he confused Constantine's name with that of Constantius II. During the latter's reign, the Jews revolted in 351 against his co-ruler Gallus Caesar. See for this revolt e.g. Stemberger, 1987, ch.6.

¹¹ See also Sozomen, *HE* 5.22.2 ff.

¹² Matthew 24.1-2: "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Cf. Luke 19.44, 21.6; Mark 13.2.

the Temple in a letter to the emperor Theodosius in which he mentions a fire sent by God that put an end to the restoration.¹³ The story of the unsuccessful restoration of the Temple was naturally also included in the *Historiae Ecclesiasticae* of the 5th-century church historians Rufinus, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret and Philostorgius.¹⁴ Although the accounts of these church historians differ in points of detail, they all contain for the most part the same elements that were mentioned previously by Ephraem Syrus, Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom: the great enthusiasm of the Jews for the restoration, the reference to the prophecy of Daniel and the Gospel according to Matthew that it would not be possible to restore the Temple, Julian's intention to give the Jews the opportunity to offer sacrifices once again by means of restoring the Jewish Temple, the provision by Julian of financial aid and a functionary to supervise the restoration, the support given to the project by Jewish women who parted with their jewellery to help finance the restoration, the failure of the project caused by storms, earthquakes and fire resulting in the death of many Jews, the appearance of a cross in the sky and on the clothing of the Jews, and the ultimate recognition by the Jews of the omnipotence of the Christian god.

From this short overview it will have become clear that Ammianus' account is very different from that of the Christian authors. Although there are some points of correspondence – the financing of the project from public funds, the appointment of an administrative official to supervise the project, and the occurrence of the fire that caused the restoration to be abandoned – the differences are nevertheless more conspicuous. Ammianus does not mention the phenomena such as storms, earthquakes, the appearance of the cross in the sky and/or on the clo-

¹³ *Ep.* 40.12.

¹⁴ Rufinus, *HE* 10.38-40; Socrates, *HE* 3.20; Sozomen, *HE* 5.22; Theodoret, *HE* 3.20; Philostorgius, *HE* 7.9.

thing of the Jews. Because Ammianus' source for his passage on the restoration of the Temple is unknown, we do not know whether he was unaware of these miracles or whether he simply did not believe them and therefore left them unmentioned.¹⁵ Ammianus does not place the restoration of the Jewish Temple in a religious context, whereas the Christian authors do so emphatically. Ammianus merely says that Julian wanted to perpetuate the memory of his reign by means of great works, and therefore decided to restore the Temple in Jerusalem.¹⁶ The direct involvement of the Jews in the restoration is not mentioned by him at all, whereas all of the Christian authors agree that Julian wanted to provide the opportunity to the Jews of offering sacrifices. In this connection the Christian sources mention as a very important motive for Julian's plans for restoration of the Temple the refutation of the prophecy of Daniel and the prediction of Christ in Matthew 24.2 that of the buildings of the Temple not one stone should be left standing upon another. Such a refutation would have constituted a direct attack on Christianity and a triumph for Judaism over the Christian faith.

In the secondary literature the arguments mentioned in the Christian sources have been adopted. As motives the following points are added: 1. that Julian wanted to restore the Temple in order to gain the support of the Jewish communities in Mesopotamia for his Persian campaign,¹⁷ a motive

¹⁵ According to M. Avi-Yonah, 1976, 201 Ammianus' source was most likely an official report. According to Adler, 1978, 80 Ammianus made use of Gregory's *Oratio* 5. It is not unlikely that Ammianus knew Gregory's invectives against Julian. Whether he used Gregory as a source for his own description of the events in Jerusalem in 363 is another thing. If he did, he deliberately left out the parts about divine miracles, which he most likely did not regard as historical events.

¹⁶ Ammianus is critical of the costs of the project, as is clear from his use of the words *sumptibus immo-*
dicis.

¹⁷ E.g. Avi-Yonah, 1976, 188-189; Head, 1976, 146.

for which there are no sources available, and 2. that Julian wanted to make Jerusalem a Jewish city again after Constantine had made it a Christian city.¹⁸ Clearly, in the secondary literature too the restoration of the Temple is considered mainly as an anti-Christian act on Julian's part.¹⁹ The question remains whether this view of the restoration of the Temple is convincing, and whether, even if we consider the restoration of the Temple as an anti-Christian act, an intentionally anti-Christian policy of Julian is really responsible for this state of affairs. It is remarkable that Ammianus does not have anything at all to say in this respect.

It is known that in his *Res Gestae* Ammianus indicates hardly or not at all the implications that the decisions of his hero, Julian the Apostate, had for the Christians, even when referring to those events that certainly did have consequences for Christianity.²⁰ This could also have been the case with respect to the restoration of the Jewish Temple,²¹ but this is by no means certain. It is very likely that Julian was well aware of the great importance that Christians attached to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. From the Christian point of view this was convincing proof of the culpability of the Jews for the crucifixion of Christ and of the fact that God had abandoned his once chosen people for the Christians.²² Julian would

¹⁸ Linder, 1976, 1034: "...the whole project was designed to defeat Constantine's Jerusalem project by undermining its most ideological foundation – its exclusive character with regard to the Jews". Wilken, 1983, 143.

¹⁹ E.g. Geffcken, 1914, 110; Bidez, 1930, 305; Browning, 1975, 176; Avi-Yonah, 1976, 192-193; Bowersock, 1978, 88-89; Wilken, 1983, 143; Wilken, 1984, 188 ff.; Lewy, 1983, 72 f.; Barnes, 1990, 78.

²⁰ Tränkle, 1962, 32; Hunt, 1985. Hunt is of the opinion that Ammianus is reticent on Christian affairs, even when they affected the history of the Roman Empire, because they were no part of his literary heritage (p. 188). Cf. Barnes, 1990, 76-77. See also Matthews, 1989, 435-451 about Christianity in Ammianus' *Res Gestae*; Neri, 1985, *passim*; E.D. Hunt, (forthcoming).

²¹ Cf. Hunt, 1985, 194.

have been acquainted with the bible texts that had predicted the permanent destruction of the Temple, and he would probably have seen the opportunity to refute these bible texts by restoring the Temple. But was the refutation of these bible texts, and hence doing harm to Christianity, really one of Julian's primary motives for giving back to the Jews their Temple, as the Christian texts and much of the secondary literature would have us believe?

Much has been written about Julian's attitude towards Judaism,²³ and Julian himself had a few things to say about the Jews and their faith. His opinion of Judaism can be deduced from his *Contra Galilaeos* and from passages in his letters. Particularly in the *Contra Galilaeos* Julian regards the Jewish faith and the Jewish god as inferior to the Hellenic cults and gods. He considers the Old Testament story about the creation to be absurd (75 a-86 a), and he has the same opinion about the story of the tower of Babel (134 d ff.). He considers the Jewish god to be a jealous god (93 e; 155 c ff.) who, despite the fact that the Jews are his chosen people (99 e ff.; cf. 141 c), has given them no material advantages (176 ff.) and has kept them underdeveloped (221 e; here Julian makes a comparison with the development of the Greeks and Romans). Moreover, Julian finds it impossible to regard the Jewish god as the god of the whole universe. He sees him as a national god whose influence is regionally limited; thus Julian clearly regards the god of the Jews as one of the many gods (100 c; 148 c). He considers the Jewish law to be severe and rigid, even barbaric, and he regards the Jews as stubborn people (201 e). He finds it very regrettable that the Jews venerate only their own god, whom he regards highly and considers to be a very powerful deity.²⁴ In spite of his criticism, and sometimes even his disdain,

²² E.g. Simon, 1986, 67-68.

²³ E.g. Adler, 1978; Vogt, 1939, 34-45; Aziza, 1978; Stemberger, 1987, 160-163; Lewy, 1983, 78-83.

²⁴ *Ep.* 89 a, 454 a; *Ep.* 89 b, 295 d. See also Lewy, 1983, 79-83.

Julian's attitude towards the Jews is also characterized by admiration. He expresses this admiration notably in his letters, which reveal Julian's great respect for the strict religious attitude of the Jews.²⁵ But what is most important is that Julian perceived a great deal of similarity in terms of ritual practices between Judaism and the pagan cults. Just like the pagans, the Jews had (had) a Temple, with an altar for the ceremonial offering of sacrifices. It was this aspect of the Jewish faith, the ritual offering of sacrifices, that strongly appealed to Julian. Ritual and sacrifice were of the greatest importance in Julian's religion. There is clearly a link between the essence of his own religious experience and this sympathy for the ritual aspect of Judaism.²⁶ The fact that according to Mosaic law it was only permissible for the Jews to offer sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem may have been for Julian a very important reason, if not the most important one, for the restoration of this Temple.

From a remark in a letter of Julian, which has been fragmentarily preserved, it is clear that the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple was a serious matter for Julian.²⁷ This becomes also clear from his letter 'To the Community of the Jews', in which in addition to other privileges, Julian promises the Jews that he will restore their Temple. There is, however, some dispute as to the authenticity of this letter. Because of this I shall exclude it from my argumentation. The plan was indeed carried out, contrary to what Adler stated in his important article of 1893.²⁸ The importance that Julian attached

²⁵ *Ep.* 89 a, 453 d.

²⁶ See e.g. Avi-Yonah, 1976, 186-187; Bowersock, 1978, 86-89; Lewy, 1983, 76-77. For Julian's extravagant sacrifices, see the critical remarks in Amm. 22.12.6-7.

²⁷ "For I am rebuilding with all zeal the temple of the Most High God" (*Ep.* 134). Cf. *Ep.* 89 b, 295 c: "...I myself, after so great a lapse of time, intended to restore it, in honour of the god whose name has been associated with it" (transl. Wright).

²⁸ Adler, 1978, 71-72. Julian's own recognition that the rebuilding had failed speaks against Adler's argument (*Ep.* 89 b, 295 c: "...their temple, which

to the enterprise is evident from the availability of an exceedingly large sum of money from public funds and the appointment of Alypius, who is only mentioned by Ammianus. Alypius was not only a government official – and not just any one at that – but also a good friend of the emperor.²⁹ Clearly his appointment was intended to emphasize the importance of the project.

Let us now take stock of the situation, as it were. 1. Julian was convinced of the importance of the sacrificial ritual, to such an extent that he had respect for Judaism for this reason, even though he took exception to Jewish monotheism. 2. The reintroduction of the Jewish sacrificial ritual was possibly the motive for the restoration of the Temple. 3. The Christian sources regard the restoration of the Temple not only as a pro-Jewish but also especially as an anti-Christian act of the emperor. 4. This viewpoint of the Christian authors can be traced in the secondary literature. Let us now look at the Jewish sources.

While the emperor evidently attached the greatest importance to the restoration of the Temple, the Jewish attitude towards the enterprise is by no means clear. Could Julian rely on widespread Jewish support? If the Christian sources are to be believed then this was indeed the case. However, if we look at the other sources then it is very debatable whether the Jewish support for the

was overthrown three times and even now is not being raised up again?"; transl. Wright). Knowing that the first and second destruction of the Temple took place in 586 BC and AD 70, the third destruction must have taken place during Julian's reign. Another proof that indeed a start was made with the restoration is the discovery of an inscription during excavations at the Temple Mount. The inscription is dated in the time of Julian. Its text is derived from Isaiah 66:14: "And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb". The text is considered a reference to Julian's restoration of the Temple; see B. Mazar, 1975, 94; Stemberger, 1987, 169.

²⁹Julian addressed two letters to Alypius, both written in a cordial tone (*Ep.* 9 and 10). For Alypius, see *PLRE* I, Alypius 4.

enterprise really was so great. Ammianus has nothing to say about any Jewish involvement, in any case. And this lack of interest on the part of the Jews is confirmed by the Jewish sources.

The earliest Jewish texts that refer to the restoration of the Temple date from as late as the 16th century, and, as Adler has already pointed out, are all based on Christian sources on the subject.³⁰ There is one contemporary source that indicates that there was indeed some Jewish support for Julian's plan. Here we are concerned with a sentence of Rabbi Acha, who lived around the middle of the 4th century, in the Talmud of Jerusalem, in which it is said that the Temple would be restored before the coming of the Kingdom of David.³¹ Consequently, in spite of what the Christian sources have to say on this matter, I doubt whether there was much contact between Julian and the Jews, for example those of the large Jewish community of Antioch, about the plans for restoration and whether many Jews were actively involved in Julian's project.³²

Apart from the silence of the Jewish sour-

³⁰ Adler, 1978, 81 ff.

³¹ See Bacher, 1898. Avi-Yonah, 1976, 197-198 also mentions a Rabbi Yudan as a supporter of Julian's undertaking. See also Stemberger, 1987, 167-168.

³² It is unlikely that Julian discussed his plan with the Jewish patriarch in Tiberias, as suggested by Avi-Yonah, 1976, 193-194. Avi-Yonah even postulates a correspondence on this matter between the emperor and the patriarch. The patriarch could not have been too happy with Julian's rebuilding of the Temple, not only for religious reasons but also because he would forfeit his position as leader of the Jews in favour of the Jewish high-priest who undoubtedly would have been restored after the restoration of the Temple. Not taking into consideration Julian's letter "To the Community of the Jews", about the authenticity of which there is still some debate, contact between Julian and the Jews only can be deduced from *Ep.* 134 and possibly from *Ep.* 89 b; see n.27 and 28 above. It has been suggested by Blanchetière, 1980, 62-63, that there is a reference in Gregory's *Or.* 5.3 to a letter from Julian to the Jews; however, it is not clear whether a letter is concerned here.

ces, it is also remarkable that Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, mentions nothing at all about the restoration of the Temple in his city. Rufinus and Socrates state that when the project was initiated Cyril referred to the prophecy of Daniel and the utterance of Christ in the Gospel according to Matthew.³³ In Cyril's own writings that have been handed down we do not find any reference whatsoever to the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple.³⁴ It is true that recently a letter from Cyril on this matter was found in a Syriac manuscript (*Harvard Syriac* 99), but this letter should not be considered as authentic. S.P. Brock, who discovered it, dates it to c.400, some fifteen years after Cyril's death.³⁵ It is very well possible that the restoration project made very little impression on Cyril and the Christians in Jerusalem. Evidently Cyril did not find it worthwhile wasting any words on it. Cyril's apparent lack of interest may be connected with the duration of the enterprise. It is striking that the unauthentic letter of Cyril gives very precise dates for the beginning and ending of the restoration. According to Brock, who is of the opinion that the letter cannot be ascribed to Cyril but that it does contain authentic elements, these dates are correct. The project is said to have been started on Sunday 18th May in the year 363, and terminated already on Monday 19th May on account of earthquakes, which may have caused the fires that are mentioned in the other sources.³⁶ It is hard to say whether these dates are correct, but other attempts at dating lead to the conclusion that actual restoration cannot have taken place and that the plan had to be abandoned in the very first phase of its execution.³⁷

³³ Rufinus, *HE* 10.38; Socrates, *HE* 3.20.7.

³⁴ Cyril does refer to Matthew 24.2 in his *Catech.* 15.15. However, this sermon dates from the 350s and has no connection with the restoration of the Temple.

³⁵ Brock, 1976 and 1977. According to Brock the letter, although not genuine, has a *Sitz im Leben* and is therefore of informative value. Wainwright, 1986 considers the letter as authentic, as does Barnes, 1990, 90 n.93.

³⁶ Brock, 1976, 104; Brock, 1977, 268.

The absence of any reference to Julian's enterprise in these contemporary sources evidently reflects the slight importance that was attached to it. It seems as though only Julian himself considered it to be of great significance. However, in undertaking the restoration of the Temple he did not intend to do any harm to Christianity by refuting the prophecy of Daniel and the prediction of Jesus. Julian's most important motive was to give the Jews once again the opportunity of offering sacrifices because in this ritual aspect he saw a great similarity between the Jewish faith and the Hellenic cults. And now in my opinion the motive that Ammianus mentions for Julian's plan also becomes clear. Ammianus says that Julian wanted to perpetuate the memory of his reign by carrying out great works. It has indeed been suggested that in proposing this motive for the restoration of the Temple Ammianus did not actually understand what Julian really intended to accomplish, namely the destruction of Christianity by means of restoring the Temple.³⁸ But it is very well possible that here Ammianus is describing precisely Julian's intention. The *magnitudo operum* that was to constitute the memorial to Julian's reign could certainly refer to his policy of reintroducing sacrificial ceremonies and the reopening of temples. It was precisely by means of this policy of repaganization that he wished to acquire fame. In the short space of time in which Julian was in power he allowed many temples to be reopened and restored,³⁹ and he presented

³⁷ Bowersock, 1978, Appendix I, dates the beginning and failure of the rebuilding in the first months of 363 when Julian was in Antioch preparing his campaign against the Persians. Even if Bowersock is right, there was only a short space of time between the beginning and ending of the attempt to restore the Temple. See also Stemberger, 1987, 173-174.

³⁸ E.g. Tränkle, 1962, 32: "Für den Plan, der hinter diesen Vorhaben steckte, und für die Bedeutung dieser Geschehnisse im Kampf zwischen Julian und den Christen hatte Ammian offensichtlich keinen Blick...".

³⁹ See Athanassiadi-Fowden, 1981, 110-111; also for references to the relevant sources.

himself as a *restaurator templorum*. It is therefore very likely that the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem has to be viewed within the broader context of Julian's policy of reopening temples and reintroducing sacrificial ceremonies. And in this case an additional and by no means unimportant aspect was undoubtedly the fact that the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem had been a very large and splendid complex, as Ammianus also remarks, which for that reason alone deserved to be rebuilt and restored to its former state.⁴⁰ All in all this means that the restoration of the Temple should not be interpreted as an intentional and direct anti-Christian act of Julian, even though the Christian sources would have us believe so. It was the Christians who, after Julian's death, saw in the plan for restoring the Temple a direct attack by the emperor on the Christian faith; the emperor's primary motives were different.

In the 4th century Christian theologians were engaged in a fierce controversy with the Jews because Judaism was a formidable rival of the Christian faith. It is understandable therefore that Christian authors placed the restoration of the Temple, and especially the failure to achieve this, within the framework of the Jewish-Christian controversy. It was an ideal way to show that the Christians and not the Jews had God on their side and were in the right. That the Christians seized on the failure of the attempt to restore the Temple in their con-

troversy with the Jews can be explained on the one hand by the fact that the Jewish communities and the Jewish faith were still very much alive in Late Antiquity;⁴¹ on the other hand the fierce contention of the Christian authors must have been motivated by fear, fear that a non-Christian emperor might once again occupy the throne and deprive Christianity of its privileged position in the Roman Empire in favour of the old cults and/or the Jewish faith.

Although the Christian sources concerning the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem make stimulating reading, partly because of the miraculous, legendary events that are mentioned in them, their historical veracity is slight as far as Julian's motives for the restoration are concerned. They have a function primarily in the Jewish-Christian controversy of Late Antiquity. Ammianus Marcellinus, on the other hand, probably gives the real reason for Julian's intended restoration. Quite rightly he leaves out of his report the involvement of the Jews, because the majority of the Jews would not have been interested in the enterprise. Quite rightly he does not attribute the termination of the restoration to divine miracles.⁴² Perhaps it would not be an exaggeration to conclude that with regard to the rebuilding of the Temple Ammianus Marcellinus is historically more trustworthy than the other sources on the subject.

⁴⁰ According to the sources the (first and second) Jewish Temple was of great architectural beauty and of very large size; Fl. Jos., *Jud. Ant.* 8.63-98; *Jud. Ant.* 15.380-425.

⁴¹ E.g. Wilken, 1983, 46.

⁴² The fires that broke out near the foundations of the Temple, which led to the abandonment of the project, were most probably caused by an earthquake. The unauthentic letter of Cyril mentions several towns in Palestine, including Jerusalem, which were (partly) overthrown by an earthquake; see Brock, 1977, 276. The list of devastated places corresponds very well with the archaeological evidence; see Russell, 1980, 47-64. Also Ephraem Syrus, Gregory of Nazianzus as well as the church historians mention earthquakes.