

The Chronicle of Séert: 1

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The Arabic text and French translation of this Chronicle can be found in *Patrologia Orientalis*:

4 (1909) pp. 215-313

5 (1910) pp. 219-340

7 (1911) pp. 98- 203

13 (1919) pp. 432-639.

This text has no title. The above is the name by which it is usually known. Séert¹ is the home of the library to which the text seems originally to have belonged. The text was first discovered by Mgr Addai Scher in the Patriarchal Library at Mosul, where he copied it in 1902 before he became archbishop of Séert. This copy is called A. He later found 'bien des feuilles' of the same text in the Séert library. This copy is called S. and he states it as his belief that the Mosul copy probably came from Séert. The numbering is the work of Scher, who had to re-arrange the contents of A in the interest of chronological consistency. A note of the editors in *PO* 4 p.218 gives details of others who have worked on the Arabic text and produced the French translation.

The author of the text has been identified as Isho'denah of Basra² by establishing that the Chronicle was used extensively by Elias of Nisibis, who quotes the work of Isho'denah³ on six separate occasions. Scher is quite sure that the Séert and Mosul texts are one single

1 The diocese of Séert seems to have been created in the mid-16th cent. Addai Scher was the last bishop. He was murdered in the Assyrian Genocide on June 20th 1915, but not before he had rescued many Christians by bribing the local governor with money from the sale of church treasures. For an appraisal of the work of Addai Scher cf. J.-M. Fiey 'L'apport de Mgr Scher à l'hagiographie orientale' *Analecta Bollandiana* 83 (1965) pp. 121-142.

2 Pierre Nautin 'L'auteur de la 'Chronique de Séert': Isho'denah of Basra' *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 186 (1974) pp. 113ff.

3 Also known for a work entitled the Book of Chastity.

work. Perhaps the work that we have was compiled in the first half of the 13th cent. In *PO* 13 p.554 the death of the Caliph Zâhir (1226) 'in our time' is recorded, and there is reason to suppose that this information has been added by the copyist. In his review of Scher's first article in *PO* 4 C.F. Seybold⁴ suggested that the al Zâhir mentioned in the Chronicle was in fact the Fatimid Caliph who died of the plague in Egypt in 1036 AD, which appears to date the Chronicle. Scher suggests the names of three people who may have produced this copy.

Scher divides the text into two parts. Part One (*PO* 4 and 5) contains events belonging to the early centuries of Christianity. Part Two⁵ (*PO* 7 and 13) deals with events from 484 to 650. The missing pages at the end of Part One and the beginning of Part Two are those that cover the years from 422 to 484. The entire work can be described as a mixture of legend, rewritten from earlier sources, and reliable historical narrative. One striking feature of the text seems to me to be the relative rarity of Biblical citations and allusions.

The English translation will appear in five parts. It is not intended to be a work of scholarship, but I hope that there will be those who may find it both interesting and useful. I have consulted the French version to extract information that has gone into the notes. I have also added one or two notes of my own. Historically speaking, Part Two seems to be more reliable than Part One.

I have tried to be pragmatic about the transcription of names, but I am not sure that I have always been successful. In the matter of Greek and Latin names, for example, English has tended to use the Latin forms of Greek names, unlike other European languages, e.g. Thucydides as opposed to Thukydidēs. When it comes to transcribing other languages, e.g. Arabic or Ancient Egyptian, universally acceptable systems are used in the scholarly community, but usually not outside. I have to admit that I have no idea what system is used for Syriac. The result of all this is that there are various systems which seem to have reached the 'peaceful co-existence' mode.

4 In *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 66 (1912) pp. 742-746. I have not read this article. Nautin accepts this identification. There seems to be little known of this Fatimid ruler, but his permission to reconstruct the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 1027 after its destruction in 1009 by his father may have made him known and recommended him to Christians

5 It is now known as *Paris arabe* 6653 (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris).

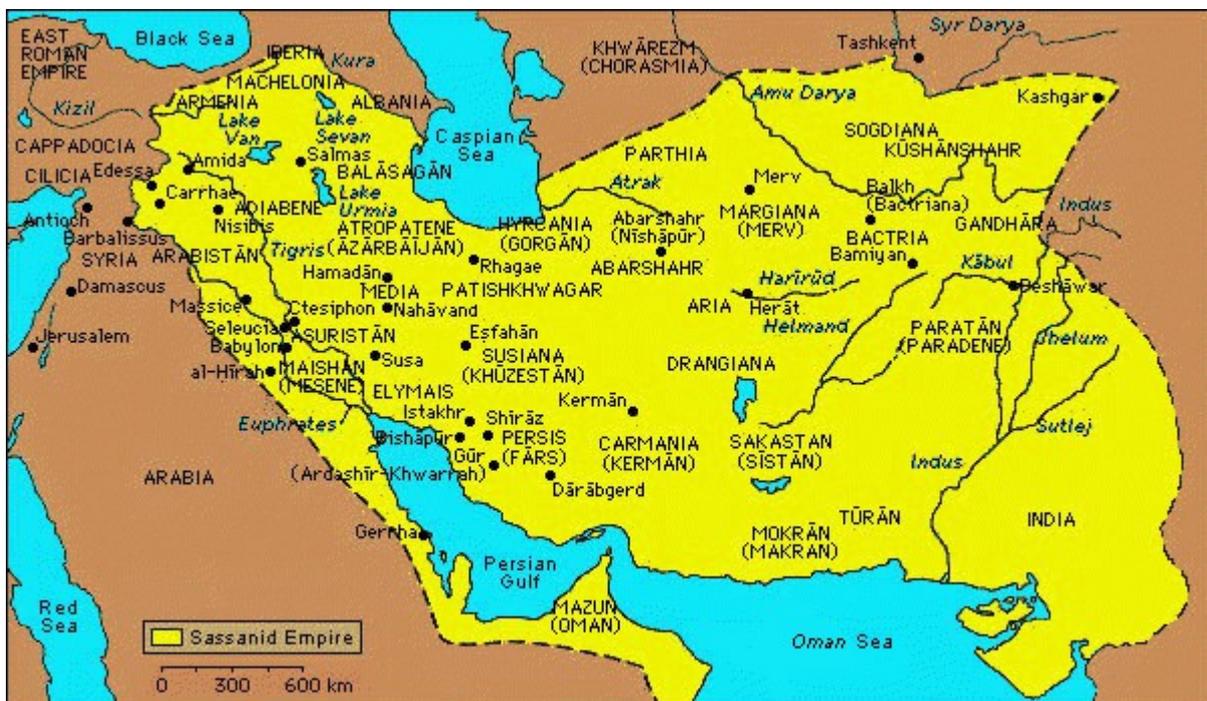
The translation presented here is from *PO* 4, which contains 30 stories.⁶ Since the stories themselves provide convenient subdivisions, I have used them as the divisions. The numeration provided by Scher is as follows:

pp. 219-300 contain A p.38 - p.64

pp. 303-327 contain S. p.29 - p.40

pp.329-330 contain S. p.64

I hope that this map will be of use to those who, like me, are not not familiar with the region.



⁶ I have reduced the various Arabic words used in the heading of each of the narrative units to 'story' or 'account'.

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[1. Story of Valerian]

The chief priest Novatian ⁷ of the Church at Rome withdrew and said that there was no forgiveness for anyone who apostasized after baptism and he forbade anyone who repented and put on sackcloth and ashes to enter the church. Some supported what he thought and said that there should be no forgiveness for those who apostasized at the time of persecution. Sixty bishops gathered at Rome and excommunicated him and his faction and made him leave the Church.

The Emperor Gallus⁸ changed his policy and reverted to treating Christians⁹ as Decius had done. He then died after a two-year reign. He was succeeded by Valerian, who made his son Gallienus co-regent.¹⁰ At the beginning of his reign he was benevolent to Christians. The leaders of the Church were constantly in his residence, where he honoured them. But an Egyptian magician turned him against the Christians, as Jannes and Jambres had done with Pharaoh.¹¹ He persuaded the Emperor that bad was good and advised him to kill the Christians because they opposed magicians and hated the Roman gods and their idols. And he believed them. They turned him away from good, as the blessed Apostle Paul says: 'Bad words corrupt good intentions.'¹² And the Emperor was persuaded by the Magician to kill new-born children to cut them open and practise magic on them. When he did this, he was justly punished, as the prophet of Israel says: 'They have chosen their life and done their works of abomination. I too chose their dishonour and their loss, said the Lord.'¹³

7 Known also Novatus. He opposed the re-admission into the Church of those who had 'lapsed' in the Decian persecution 251 AD. A certain amount of background can be found in letters 44 to 48 of Cyprian, his opponent. Generally speaking, I will say very little about the forms of the names in this text, except to try to make them intelligible.

8 Gaius Trebonianus Gallus 251-253 AD. He made himself Emperor and minted coins to confirm it.

9 Two names are used in Arabic for Christians, the one here referring to the place where Jesus grew up (Nazareth), the other to his royal status (anointed).

10 253-260 AD

11 2 Tim. 3,8

12 I Cor. 15,33. The Arabic text of Biblical passages quoted or alluded to in the Chronicle bears little resemblance to the text in what might be described as a standard Arabic version, such as the 19th cent. Smith and Van Dyck translation made for the American Bible Society. I will make no further reference to this subject.

13 Is. 66, 3-4

2. Death of Valerian

In the eleventh year of his reign Shapur son Ardashir attacked Rome and laid waste many cities. He conquered Valerian and took him prisoner to Nabatea. Valerian became ill and died there. Those of the fathers who had been exiled by the accursed Valerian returned to their sees. Shapur left Roman territory, taking with him the prisoners he later settled in Iraq and Susiane¹⁴ and Persia and the cities that his father had built. He himself built three cities, all named after himself. One of them, in Maishan, was called Sâd Shapur, which is (now) Deir Mahrâq. One was in Persia, still known as Shapur. He rebuilt Gundishapur, which had become a ruin and called it Antishapur, a Greco-Persian name meaning 'You are a substitute for Shapur.'¹⁵ He built a third city on the Tigris (Digla) and called it Merv-Habor, now known as 'Akborâ, with its surroundings. He settled prisoners in them and gave them land to cultivate and houses to live in. Christians too became more numerous in Persia and they built monasteries and churches. Among them were priests, prisoners from Antioch. They settled in Gundishapur and elected Azduk of Antioch bishop. Demetrius Patriarch¹⁶ of Antioch had fallen ill and died of grief. Before this second exile and after the first exile of Demetrius, Paul of Samosata had become Patriarch of Antioch. Daniel son of Maryam¹⁷ has told the whole history. Shapur also built a city in Kashkar, which he called Hasar Shapur and settled with Easterners. This is the story of its construction. When Shapur went to Persia, he crossed the Kashkar desert and met an old man gathering wood. The king disguised himself and went to ask him about his country and family. He also asked him if it were possible to build a city there. The old man replied: 'If I can learn to write despite my advanced age, you can build a city here.' The king ordered the old man to be entrusted to teachers to carefully instruct him in the religion of the Magi¹⁸ and fire-worshippers until he returned from Istakhr. The old man learned (to write) and the city was built.

Christians spread throughout the entire country and became very numerous in the East. At

14 al Ahwâz. The area around Susa, known to the Persians as Uvaza. Shapur's dates are usually understood to be around 240-270 AD.

15 The Persian name is given in Tabari. The only reference to the Arab historian seems to be via Th. Noeldeke *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (1879) p. 31

16 The unvoiced labio-dental fricative 'f' seems to regularly replace the voiced bilabial plosive 'b' in foreign words in this text.

17 7th cent. historian whose work has not survived.

18 Name given to priests of Zoroaster attested since the 6th cent. BC

Yaranshar, the Archdiocese of Persia, two churches were built. One was called the Roman Church, the other the Karamanian¹⁹, in which the divine offices were celebrated in Syriac and Greek. God was merciful to the Romans by mitigating the distress of exile and servitude in that their situation improved. They prospered in Persia and their situation became better than in their own country. God did not abandon them, in accordance with the word of the prophet to the sons of Israel, consoling them at the moment when the army of Sennacherib invaded and the ten tribes were captured and their hopes were dashed: *If a woman forgets the child who is still in her womb, if she has no pity on the fruit of her insides, if it is possible that she forgets it, I will not forget you. Here, I have written your name on my hand and your walls are always before me.*²⁰ David too said: *I have made merciful the heart of those who have taken them into captivity* '.²¹

It was through a divine gift that the Romans enjoyed the favour of the Persians: they received land from the Persians and were able to spread Christianity in the East. Gallienus, who was in the East, learned that his father had died. So he sent magnificent gifts to Shapur, who accepted them and returned the body of his father in a shroud. The two monarchs became friends and their two empires prospered. Gallienus wrote to all his subjects, telling them to be kind to Christians. He recalled those who had been exiled by his father.

This time witnessed the appearance of Sabellius²² of Egypt. He conceived a theory in which substances²³ are used to designate forces without personal reality. There is only one person and one substance. In the Old Testament, this unique person is called the Father, author of the laws. In the New Testament it appears under the form of the Son and, in the time of the apostles, the Holy Spirit. All are one substance and one person. The doctrine had many followers. Dionysius the Patriarch of Alexandria gathered 28 bishops and excommunicated him and those who believed his teaching.

19 Kerman is in South Central Iran.

20 Is. 49,15

21 Ps. 105,46

22 May have come from Libya. His teaching has been described as a form of 'modalism' because each of the 'persons' of the Trinity is merely a 'mode'.

23 The plural form of a word used to mean hypostasis or person of Trinity: اقانيم

Gallienus was killed as the result of a conspiracy. He was Emperor for fifteen years, eleven during the lifetime of his father and four after his death.

3. Story of the young Roman girls²⁴

When Shapur returned from Roman territory with his prisoners and booty, his enemies in the most remote frontiers of his Kingdom became envious and resolved to attack him. He sent Uliahin²⁵ king of Kafranathan gems and beautiful clothes the like of which could not be found elsewhere in his Kingdom. He also sent him 300 young virgins whom he had taken prisoner from the Romans. He chose them, dressed them in magnificent clothes and gems and had them escorted by envoys. He ordered the envoys to take care of them and to bathe them every three days lest their complexion change. While on the road they learned that they were being sent as a gift to a barbarian king. They would rather die, so they discussed how they might escape being corrupted by the king. The envoys led them to a large river that they might bathe and withdrew. Holding each other by the hand, they drowned themselves. Only a small number of them survived. The envoys took them on to the king. From that moment there was an agreement between him and Shapur. After 32 years on the throne Shapur son Ardashir died.

4. Story of Mani²⁶ and explanation of his instruction

His father was called Fasaq²⁷ and his mother Nushit. His parents called him Cubricus. At the age of seven he was taken prisoner and bought by an Arab woman named Susaba,²⁸ whose

24 Story told elsewhere: John of Ephesus *Ecclesiastical History* part 3, with variant details. There is an account of the bravery of 300 Teuton women captured at the Battle of Aquae Sextiae in 102 BC, who committed mass suicide because their demands had not been met, in Roman writers, such as the 2nd cent. writer L. Florus *Epitome* I, 38: 16-17, and this was clearly so well known that it is found as late as the 5th cent. AD in Jerome Letter 123, 8.

25 The reading seems to be uncertain because the name lacks diacritical marks. Kafranathan: suggestion by *PO* translator that it might refer to Ephtalites or White Huns, whose empire stretched from Afghanistan to China in 6th cent. AD.

26 Story in Socrates *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1, 22. Early life of Mani is told in the 5th cent AD Mani Codex from Assiut in Upper Egypt. Reference is made to the 12th Chronicle of Michael the Syrian throughout this episode.

27 Two forms of the name in Syriac: Patiq and Pâtiq.

28 Syriac form slightly different. *PO* translator thinks it reflects the name Scythianus, which has been misattributed to the woman.

husband had studied in Egypt and was a follower of Pythagoras. He had a student called Terebinthus. On the death of her husband, the widow married the student, who took her away with the child she had bought. He tried to escape to Babylon. He told the Persians that his mother was the Virgin and that he had visions in the mountains. He wrote four books: Mysteries, True Gospel, Mine of Treasures and Principles of Debates and Contests. He continued to oppress people with his magic. All of this happened during the reign of Philip (the Arab), the Roman Emperor, and Shapur son of Ardashir. He taught the doctrine of two created gods and two creators, good and evil. The good one is beneficent and brings light. The bad one is the wicked god who brings oppression. He acquired a lot of wealth and came to Sa'ir al Nar. His wife took his books, his money, and the money of her first husband. She fell in love with Mani because he was handsome. She gave him her whole fortune together with the books and took him to be her third husband. He studied these books in depth and became learned. The second husband had already won him over to his impious ways. Susaba gave him a lot of money to support him and he applied himself to his studies, but she died before obtaining what she wanted from him. So he took the money and the books and made his way to Susa, his birthplace. He called himself Mani and claimed to be the author of the books and pretended to be a Christian. He was ordained priest by the bishop of Susiane. He taught there, interpreting the books and debating with Jews, Magi and all who attacked Christianity. This hypocrite then claimed to be the Paraclete. He became more deeply immersed in the science of soothsaying and, following the example of Christ, gathered twelve disciples around him. He denied the resurrection of the body and maintained that fire, water and trees have souls and that anyone who pulled up a tree, extinguished a fire and scattered water killed a soul. According to him, the sun and the moon are two ships that carry the souls to a place that was good. He did unspeakable evil.

He called two disciples, Thomas and Addai. He sent Addai to Yemen to get people to believe his stories and Thomas to India. Another disciple, Mâri, remained with him at Susa. Those whom he had sent to Yemen and India returned and informed him that nobody had believed their teaching and nobody wanted to embrace what they said. He then became angry, abandoned the Christianity that he had simulated and invented more perverse novelties. He claimed to be the Paraclete Christ had promised to send to his disciples He left

with his disciples travelling around and teaching the doctrine he had already preached, for example, that God is known under the aspect of three persons. He maintained that he had not altered his opinion. God is made up two beings: the first, God, is the source of good, the mine of light and benefits; the second, Matter, is the creator of evil, the source of ignorance, darkness and wickedness. The ascent of God on high is without end. The descent of Evil to hell is also without end. Both are removed from the centre. They are two bodies. The creator of evil was one day very disturbed: his children, the demons, the mischievous spirits, fire and water, kept vying with each other until they arrived in the place of the good God. When they saw his light, they wanted it and said: 'Right. If there is food, we will eat it. If there is drink, we will drink it.' And they tried to do just that. When the good God saw this, he took a part of himself and threw it to them. The divine part was revealed to the evil god, who mixed himself with it and thereby created this world. Parts of God are imprisoned in the parts of the evil god. God will gradually reunite the part taken by the evil God with himself and cast away the evil principle, so that this latter will be unable to return to the fray with Him again.

This impious one, this accursed one, this unbeliever (may God curse him for his lies !) denied the resurrection. He said that Christ is the son of this good God and that he himself was his apostle to the parts that had been taken from his being by the evil god to tell them that they will be saved from the prison of the evil god and will return to Him. He said that the spirits transmigrate. He claimed that he was of the same substance as Christ. After deceiving people and spreading his wickedness, he was crucified by Shapur at the gate of Susa. God cursed him and gave him what he deserved.

When Shapur son of Ardashir died he was succeeded by his son Hormiz,²⁹ a good king who administered his Kingdom well. He was merciful to the weak. He ruled for a year and ten months. When Cornelius Pontiff³⁰ of Rome died he was succeeded by Lucius, who died eight months later. The choice of successor fell upon Stephen, his pupil, a good and virtuous man who headed the Church for two years before dying. While he was Pontiff, the question of whether it was necessary to baptize the heretics into the true faith or not: the custom was

29 271 AD.

30 The word in the text is Patriarch

the laying on of hands and anointing of the forehead. As the discussions increased, Cyprian the Primate of Africa assembled 29 bishops and drew up 20 canons in which he ordered the re-baptism of those who had denied the faith in the Holy Trinity. He followed these canons, and did so on the instructions of Stephen Pontiff of Rome. Dionysius, the pupil of Origen, was Patriarch of Alexandria at that time. He was a wise philosopher. He wrote to Stephen that all heretics had to be re-baptized. He was Pontiff for eleven years before he died.³¹ He wrote several books to refute Sabellius and Nepos³² who lived in his episcopal see.

When Stephen died he was succeeded by Sixtus,³³ who died four years later. After him came his pupil Dionysius, a good and virtuous man who was Pontiff for nine years before dying.

On the death of the Emperor Claudius, Aurelian II succeeded.³⁴ He was astute and intelligent and his palace frequented by philosophers. One day he came to greet him, and he said: 'All of you, be humble before those who instruct you. Learn every day and know that you do not have perfect knowledge. Glorify and honour your masters and do not count yourselves among the great philosophers lest one day you be humiliated.' They replied: 'The Emperor has spoken well. Man must be constantly learning. We know of a famous philosopher who said that the sun was essentially black, but he was killed and his books burned. We know of another similar case and with him the philosopher Andamius ...'³⁵

Under Aurelian 60 bishops gathered at Antioch to excommunicate its Patriarch Paul of Samosata for his false doctrines and the changes he was making to the faith.

5. Story of Paul of Samosata

When Valerian and his son Gallienus were co-Emperors, he persecuted Christians and killed some of them, including the martyr Cyprian. Valerian was attacked and taken prisoner

31 264 AD

32 Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 7,24 mentions the relationship between Dionysius (259-269) and Nepos bishop of the Fayyum, in particular the point about which they disagreed in writing. The Arabic name of Nepos, which is given in the critical apparatus as 'Nîfûs', appears in the text as al Muwyay (vel.sim.)

33 Sixtus II 257-269 AD

34 Claudius II 269-270 AD. Aurelian 270-275 AD

35 Lacuna in the text. There is no note about this in *PO*. I cannot identify him.

by Ardashir king of Persia.³⁶ When Gallienus saw what happened to his father, he stopped treating them as his father had done. He gave them peace and asked for their help.

Paul of Samosata was Patriarch of Antioch at the time. He evolved a new teaching, according to which God is called Father, Son and Holy Spirit only metaphorically. Christ was born of Mary. He is merely a man with no divinity. He was opposed by several bishops, but had much wealth with which he was able to secure the support of the governor of Antioch. He made the nuns sing his hymns on Jesus Christ. The fathers railed at his sermons, and when they gathered to chase the wolf from the flock, he pretended to repent. But when the meeting was over, he returned to his impious ways. The bishops gathered once again and wrote to Dionysius, asking him to attend their council. Dionysius excused himself on the grounds of old age and infirmity. He said that he had excommunicated Paul and that, despite the distance, he was among them. The bishops excommunicated Paul a second time. But he was unwilling to leave Antioch and was supported by the governor, to whom he had given money. The Christians asked Aurelian for help, who ordered him to leave. He remained in exile until he died. May God not sanctify his soul,³⁷ and thanks be to God for ridding the world of his doctrine. Gregory Thaumaturgus attended the council and Domnus, nephew of Demetrius, succeeded Paul. Aurelian was Emperor for five years and killed in the sixth year. During his reign the Christians enjoyed peace. He was succeeded by Tacitus, despite other leading figures in the Empire, but he was killed six months later. His successor Florinus achieved the position by force but was defeated by the leading Romans, who were given to anarchy,³⁸ and killed after reigning a year.

6. Story of St Gregory the miracle-worker

This saint (may he pray to God for us) was born in the Pontus region. He was for a long time a student of Origen the theologian. From his childhood he imitated the saints and lived

36 The standard tradition is that Valerian was taken prisoner by Shapur., as depicted in the low relief at Naqsh-e Rostum.

37 From time to time in this one detects little of the spirit of Christian forgiveness that one might expect.

38 The phrase Crisis of the Third Century is sometimes used of the period.

alone in a cell. God granted him the gift of performing miracles and healing the sick. His virtues and miracles became known and he received the name Thaumaturgus. When he became bishop of Pontus, there were only seventeen Christians there. He spent much of his time converting and baptizing them, with the result that when he died there were only seventeen people in the Pontus who were not Christian. He was one of the bishops who excommunicated Paul. He had a brother who followed in his footsteps and also became a bishop.

When Bahram³⁹ the son of Shapur came to the throne, he was benevolent to the Christians and administered a kingdom based on justice. At the beginning of each month he held a council to examine the interests of his subjects. His reign started in the year when Florian the Roman Emperor was assassinated and he reigned for three years and three months. Florian was succeeded by Probus,⁴⁰ and the circumstances being in his favour, he killed his enemies and went to fight the barbarians. After six years and a few months he was poisoned. During his reign mortality at Rome increased from September to March. The main cause was the intense cold.⁴¹ At that time Felix⁴² was Pontiff at Rome for six years and he was succeeded by Eutychian for one year, who in turn was succeeded by Caius who remained on the pontifical throne for fifteen years.

7. Story of St Eugene⁴³

At this time St Eugene appeared in the land of the Copts. He came from Klyisma.⁴⁴ was a diver for pearls, which he sold and then gave the money to the poor. He did this work for twenty-five years. He walked on the water before the boats as a man walks on dry land. One day he saw a star walking in front of him on the water. Another time pirates tried to assault a ship in which there was large amount of money. He thus began to pray to God, and a storm arose that snatched the vessel from their hands and deposited it on the island where the saint

39 Bahram I 273-276 AD

40 276-282 AD. He achieved a certain celebrity by allowing all Gauls, Spaniards and Britons 'ut vites haberent vinumque conficerent'(to own grapes and make wine). *Historia Augusta* 18.

41 As one might expect this is not mentioned in *Historia Augusta*.

42 Felix I 269-274 AD

43 Receives a notice in Palladius *Lausiaca History*, but not a great Saint in the Coptic Church.

44 Suez. A story of Djidjoi in the Coptic *Apophthegmata Patrum* refers to Klyisma as an 'island'.

lived. The men in the boat were astonished by what they had witnessed and gave the saint 30 talents⁴⁵ of gold. With the money he built a monastery there.

His fame spread throughout the land. He left his place for the monastery of Pachomius at Scetis.⁴⁶ He found brothers there heating an oven to bake bread. He took out embers and, standing in the middle of the oven, prayed. After blessing all the fathers living in the desert, he left. 70 people followed him as far as Nisibis. He lived near the mountain called Izala. The saint performed countless miracles, which are related in his history.⁴⁷ Because of the many visitors he built a monastery on the mountain where the monks could gather. He cured the son of Cerdon, governor of Nisibis, of an incurable illness. The governor and his entire family were baptized and he wrote to Constantine the Emperor to inform him. Eugenius predicted what would happen to the Church because of Arius and how his affair with the 318⁴⁸ would end. He then realized that he would have travel through the land with his children to convert people to the true faith. Large numbers were converted at at Qarda and Beit Zabda and Nisibis during the reign of Shapur, the enemy of the Christians. When he was advanced in years, Eugenius left his disciples. Each one of the went where God, the almighty and powerful, wanted. They built buildings, churches and monasteries. He died and was buried where he had lived. He had two sisters, one called Thekla and the other Stratonike.

8. Account of 'mulâfna',⁴⁹ namely scholars

In the days of Shahlouba and Papa, the two Metropolitans of the East, and Stephen Pontiff of Rome, there were eminent scholars: David bishop of Basra, who left his see and travelled to India, where he made many converts; Gadhimhab, bishop of Gondishapur; Ebed-Jesus, bishop of Kasker; John, bishop of Maishan; Andrew, bishop Deir Mahraq; Abraham, bishop of Shoushter; Milas al-Razi, bishop of Susa. These are the ones who assembled to censure Papa. In the Roman empire the scholars were Anatolius, bishop of

45 منقال According to H. Wehr *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (1961) just under 5 g in modern Egypt

46 Cenobitic monastery. Written by someone unfamiliar with Egypt.

47 Paul Bedjan *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* vol. 2 (pp.376-480)

48 The number seems to have a certain resonance in Eastern Christianity.

49 I cannot identify this word. The French translator seems to ignore it.

Laodicea; Theonas, Patriarch of Alexandria; Timaeus of Antioch. In Alexandria there were two priests Pierius and Achilles and at Caesarea Alacunaius. All were relentless opponents of the heresiarchs Simon,⁵⁰ Marcion and Mani.

9. Account of king Bahram son of Hawaran son of Shapur

When this man was king of Persia, in the year 590 of Alexander,⁵¹ he was benevolent to his subjects. His soldiers were very happy with him. At the start of his reign he went to al Ahwaz (Susiane). He examined Christianity, as his grandfather had done. He knew something about it, because he had been brought up in Karkha Judan, according to what Milas al-Razi says. He had learned a little Syriac. He had the fathers come to him and they explained the teachings to him. They said to him: 'I see that you regard this unique being as great and acknowledge and exalt him. but you are mistaken in prohibiting adoration of the gods.' Then he changed his opinion. Seeing that Manichaeans called themselves Christians, dressed like them⁵² and rejected marriage and the family, as the metropolitan and the bishops in this picture, he thought, because of his bad intentions, that the two religions were in agreement. He thus ordered Manichaeans to be killed and their churches to be destroyed. The Magi then persecuted the Christians indiscriminately. They killed Qandirâ his wife, who was Roman by birth, because she was a Christian. He also had the blessed Qâribâ, son of Ananias, killed. The Magi oppressed the Christians, and Papas⁵³ endured great suffering. The Christians complained to Bahram about what was happening to them. He asked them why their archbishop and bishops rejected marriage and the procreation of children. He said: 'If they think this is bad and prohibit it, they deserve to die, because they wish to destroy the world. If they think it is good and permissible, why do their leaders reject and despise it?' The Christians replied that Manicheans believed in two ancient gods: the earth is animated and has a soul, souls transmigrate from one body to another and marriage is wicked. Christians believe in in one God, creator of all, eternal and they teach that marriage is good

50 My guess is that the 'arch-heretic' Simon Magus is meant. The others are known from Michael the Syrian, Sozomen and Eusebius

51 I take this to be what is generally known as the Seleucid era starting in 311 BC. It is also sometimes known as the Year of the Greeks. It was used by Nestorians until the 14th cent. cf. A. Mingana 'The early spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East' *Bulletin of John Rylands Library* 9 (1925): 41ff.

52 Seems to imply that Manichaean dress was distinctive enough to identify them, as later on this section

53 Bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon d. 327

and order it in their books. But their leaders reject it so that they will not be prevented from doing what has been enjoined upon them, namely pastoral care, prayer and the intercession for the world and its people, the king and the Kingdom. Manicheans dress like Christians to conceal themselves. The king then accepted their response and ordered persecution of them to stop. He changed his behaviour and died after having reigned for 19 years and 10 months. Carus, Roman Emperor, adopted his two sons, Carinus and Numerianus, to whom he gave Syria, while he kept Rome and Italy. He said to his sons: 'There are three things of which the king, judge or governor should not be ashamed and which he must accomplish: standing up to greet his father, being mounted on his horse to wait for his men and raising his children during his lifetime.'

After three years he came to the region of Nisibis and, as result of the change of climate, died and was taken to Rome. At that time Carinus was killed in Barqâ. When Numerianus saw that Diocletian had been given to him as an imperial colleague, he conspired against him, killed him and ruled alone. He then allied himself with Maximian, whom he married to the daughter of Constantine. He was gentle and humble. The Kingdom was divided into four parts.⁵⁴ Each one was called Caesar. At the beginning of their reign, the Church was at peace until God neglected it, as the prophet said: *I have left my house, I have abandoned my heritage and delivered the dearly beloved of my soul into her enemies.*⁵⁵ And: *The Lord has abandoned Zion and thrown the crown of Israel to the ground.*⁵⁶ The devil entered Diocletian, his son-in-law and his son and drove them to persecute the Christians. On Easter day in the thirteenth year of Diocletian they wrote to their lieutenants in all the countries, telling them to destroy churches and monasteries, burn their books, destroy the houses of the bishops, priests and all Christians if they did not sacrifice to idols and to make them endure all manner of torture. Many Christians were killed: some were stoned, some thrown to wild animals, and some tortured. This happened in Syria, Egypt and Nisibis. Christians were forbidden to offer public service. Their blood flowed like water, and many denied their faith because of the cruelty. Diocletian had said that he would leave no trace of

54 The sequence of events known from Latin sources: when Carus died, Carinus and Numerianus were *augusti*. Numerianus died in Bithynia while retreating from Persia. Diocletian the commander of the Imperial cavalry, was chosen by the army generals in 284 to succeed him. The Tetrarchy usually refers to the institution created by Diocletian in 293, probably to put an end to the imperial vertigo of the 3rd cent.

55 Jer. 12, 7

56 Lam.2,5

Christianity in his empire. This continued for two years. God then had pity on his people, as the prophet said after the captivity: *Do not fear, Jacob of Israel. I have heard your prayer in my name. If even your sins became like dust and your faults like clouds, when you cross the waters, I will be with you. The rivers will not drown you. If you go through fire, you will not burn. Neither fire nor death will approach you.*⁵⁷ Enemies came from all sides to combat these impious people. Diocletian went mad. He left his palace and began to roam the streets. Caius the son of Quirinus, whose father had been killed by Diocletian, came with his army to besiege him in his palace. He seized him and cut open his lower jaw, as one does with wild beasts, and attached a rope to his toes. He then pillaged the palace and demolished it. In this way God paid him back for what he had done. He died after a reign of 20 years at the age of 72.⁵⁸ When his son-in-law Maximian received the news in Cilicia, he too went mad and was killed by his companions.

[Story of Peter the Patriarch of Alexandria]

During the reign of Diocletian Peter succeeded Theonas. He was good and virtuous and never stopped praying to Christ to save the Church and his children from the rule of Diocletian. During his Patriarchate Arius appeared with his accursed doctrine and corrupted the hearts of men. Peter excommunicated him and he saw in a dream that he would never absolve him. Diocletian sent five spies to kill Peter in the eleventh year of his Patriarchate. When the faithful learned of this, they resolved to seize and remove them from their Patriarch. But he stopped them for fear of punishment. When the news reached Arius, who, being excommunicated, had no wish for the Patriarch to be killed, he gathered some men together and went to find the Patriarch in prison, asking for absolution. They prostrated themselves on the ground, but he did not answer them.

57 An assortment of passages in Isaiah: 43,1ff., 1, 18 and 44,22.

58 Diocletian may have committed suicide in 311, but there is no other evidence that this incident is anything but a fiction. On the subject of the persecution that started in 303 it is worth remembering what Lactantius, a fierce opponent of the persecutions, wrote about Diocletian in *de mortibus persecutorum* (11,8): 'since he was unable to resist his friends, co-Emperor or Apollo (whom he had consulted by oracle), he tried hold this moderation that he ordered the matter to be conducted without bloodshed (*quoniam nec amicis nec Caesari nec Apollini poterat reluctari, hanc moderationem tenere conatus est, ut eam rem sine sanguine transigi iuberet*). Caius son of Quirinus: as far as I can tell, there is no historical foundation for these person .

He said to them: 'Arius is excommunicated and separated in the his word and the world to come. He said to Achillas and Alexander , his two priests who administered the Church of Alexandria after him: 'I have learned in a vision that I am to be martyred and that you will succeed me on this throne. Do not think that I am without mercy and that I do not suffer for the sake of sinners, because I too am a sinner. But Arius is full of deceit and has not truly abandoned his belief. I do not want to compel him. But last night I saw in a dream a young man, about 20 years of age, coming in to me by the door. His face shone like the sun and the house was illuminated. He was wearing a cotton tunic split into two parts from the top of his chest to the bottom He had folded it over his chest that the latter might not be exposed. When I saw him in this state, I was distressed and said to him: 'Master, who tore your garment ?' He replied: 'Arius. Make sure that he does not follow you in the Church, for you will be responsible for him. Order your disciples who will administer the Church after you not to receive him, for you will be a martyr. I have warned you, and you know the suffering caused to some of the fathers by Meletius.⁵⁹ So keep the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you bishop.' After hearing his words, his two disciples and a gathering of the faithful departed. For fear of provoking trouble he sent word to the imperial legates to come and find him during the night. He asked for permission to go to the church and this was granted. He came in at night and prostrated himself on the tomb of St Mark and returned to them. His neck was struck. A woman ...⁶⁰ praying to God saw someone who said to her: 'Peter, the chief disciple, and Peter, Patriarch of Alexandria, the last of the martyrs to be killed by Diocletian.' And it happened that a group of people passed during the night and found him on the ground. They wrapped him in their garments, carried him into the church and buried him with the Patriarchs near the tomb of St Mark, the evangelist and apostle. At that time Marcellinus the Roman Pontiff was flogged twice and sent into exile. The same was done to Eusebius, his successor for five years. Marcellinus was Pontiff for 16 years.⁶¹

59 The bishop of Assiut who refused the receive those who had lapsed druing the persecution back into the Church. There is some speculation that Arius was ordained by Meletius.

60 According to a note in the critical apparatus there is an unintelligible word here.

61 In fact for eight years: 296-304 AD. Marcellus was Pope from 307 to 309 AD.

10. Story of Arius the heresiarch, the reason for his death and what happened to his companions

When Peter, bishop of Alexandria, was killed, Arius became bolder and proclaimed his teaching before Alexander the successor of Peter. He said that the Son was created before everything and added the words of Solomon: 'God created Him at the beginning of creation before all His other works.'⁶² He attributed these words to the Logos and altered the text of the Gospel that names the Father, Son and Holy Spirit because of the vocation of nations and their baptism. He preached to the Alexandrians not to say: 'Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.' Alexander then assembled 120 bishops and excommunicated him with all who accepted his teaching. Among the bishops was Eusebius the archbishop of Caesarea, who made the reckoning in the Chronicon.⁶³ On his death Alexander was succeeded by Athanasius the Great, the beacon of the Church. He was continually oppressed and persecuted by Arius and his followers. Eusebius of Caesarea, Eusebius of Emesa⁶⁴ and Origen⁶⁵ came together and asked Athanasius to remove Arius from his manacles, but he refused. They then wrote to the Emperor and said that Arius had abandoned his error. In fact Arius had conceived a deceitful scheme: he wrote the profession of his teaching on a piece of papyrus which he had concealed about his person and, holding his hands high in the air, swore an oath that he acknowledged the true faith. Eusebius and the others resolved to allow and receive him into the church. This was prevented by Athanasius. During the night he prayed to God to deliver him from Arius and his false teaching or to recall him to Himself and remove all traces of him from the Church. This was on the night before Sunday, the day of when Arius would be allowed into the church. God heard his prayer and listened to his request. Arius came early, for he hoped to be allowed into the church despite Athanasius. He had gone to the toilets, where his insides came out of his body and he died instantly. Some say that it happened on his way to the church: because he had a stomach disorder, he went looking for a cubicle, and after entering his insides came out with what he had drunk, and this killed him. May God have no mercy on him ! The friends of Arius fled in confusion and shame. The saint thanked God who had granted his request to deliver the Church from the

62 Eccl. 24, 14

63 See section 21 below.

64 Homs

65 Chronologically impossible. Perhaps Gregory of Berytus.

wickedness of Arius.

Some said that the heretic had been a deacon at Alexandria in the time of Constantine. When Peter the Patriarch learned of his teaching, he excommunicated him. But Peter was martyred and succeeded by Alexander who released him and moreover ordained him priest. After some time Arius began to resent Alexander for his learning and knowledge. One day Alexander ordered him to preach the festal sermon. In his sermon Arius cited the words of Solomon, son of David: 'The Lord created me first of his creatures'⁶⁶, and some attendants wanted to know what this meant. He replied that the words referred to the Messiah, the Son, for he was created before all creatures. He repeated this in another sermon. He was then forbidden, like all the priests, to preach at Alexandria. When people asked him for his opinion, he said that, for him, Christ was a created servant and the Son began by creating the Holy Spirit. When the Patriarch of Alexandria learned of this, he gathered 100 bishops from Egypt and neighbouring countries and wrote to the the Patriarch of Constantinople to tell him what he had done. Arius the heretic wrote to Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia,⁶⁷ to ask him for support because he knew that other bishops shared his opinions. Arius then left for Rome to see the Emperor and denounced the plot against him orchestrated by the Patriarch of Alexandria. He maintained that his teaching was true (supported elsewhere) by other bishops, such as Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine, Theodore of Laodicaea, Paulinus of Tyre and Athanasius of Ainzarbe. The Emperor then summoned all the bishops to his presence. The stories concerning this wretch are too numerous and too long, and this is only a brief summary for this account. Those wishing more extensive information should consult the work of Socrates, who provides all the necessary details.⁶⁸ The commentator Theodore has also recorded the erroneous teaching of Arius at length in his book *The Precious Stones*.⁶⁹ We will also relate a few anecdotes about Arius and his faction because they continue to persecute those opposed to their irrational teaching. One of their machinations was directed at Eustathius. They suborned a pregnant woman to testify that Eustathius⁷⁰ was

66 Eccl. 24,5

67 He seems to have been an astute ecclesiastical politician who eventually persuaded Constantine that Arius' views were orthodox and acceptable. Died 341 AD

68 *Historia Ecclesiastica* I

69 A well-known work *On the Twelve Precious Stones* was composed by Epiphanius bishop of Salamis at the request of Diodore of Tarsus in about 394 AD. One of Diodore's students was Theodore of Mopsuestia.

70 Became bishop of Antioch in 323 AD

the father of the child. She agreed to this and spread a malicious rumour and many friends and supporters of the accursed Arius were assembled when the harlot came forth and accused the bishop of having made her pregnant. The Patriarch asked her to produce witnesses. The bishop said nothing. The woman then said: 'You astonish me, Patriarch, by asking me of his acts with me.' Some of his attendants said: 'She is right, but she has to swear an oath that she is telling the truth in her accusations and that she has been induced or compelled.' She then swore that Eustathius had made her pregnant, but in fact it was a goldsmith called Eustathius who had done it. The saint was excommunicated, defrocked and removed from his see and his flock. A short time later, the woman was possessed by a demon, who tortured her continually, not that he was not determined to do himself, but because of the humble prayers of the saint before God. As the torture continued day and night, she began to understand that it was because of the lies she had told about Eustathius. She hastened to the Patriarch, who was with several of his friends and told him that supporters of Arius had made her do it and paid her. She added that the bishop was innocent and the man who had made her pregnant was a goldsmith called Eustathius.

Several of those present at the judgement of Eustathius, though bishops, believed secretly in Arius. But they maintained their show of hostility to him to keep their dignity, for they had bought their bishoprics. These impostors said to Constantine: 'Athanasius no longer wishes to obey you. He has not replied and ignores you.' The Emperor sent for him and he attended, accompanied by two priests, one called Timothy, a man of sound judgement. When he arrived, some of these impostors made an agreement with an attractive young woman, to whom they have a large amount of money, to go before the Emperor and accuse Athanasius of having made her pregnant. When all were present before the Emperor, the woman entered, asking for help: 'The Patriarch Athanasius raped me and I am pregnant. He drove me away and refuses to recognize or help me.' Timothy said: 'Did I do this to you?' She replied: 'Yes, you enemy of God' and shook him, saying: 'This is the one who raped me, Athanasius here.' The Emperor and his attendants knew that this was a trick conceived by the impostors, supporters of Arius. These men were confounded, even though they were not ashamed.⁷¹

71 Jer. 6, 15

Another trick: Several bishops and others hid Arsenius their bishop. They found a dead man, cut his hand off and took it to the Emperor, claiming that Athanasius had killed Arsenius and that this was his hand. There was general uncertainty, some affirming it, others denying it. Timothy the priest of sound judgement went and, by means of largesse, eventually found Arsenius, who was supposed to have been killed. He had him brought to the Emperor's throne room, full of Patriarchs and bishops and said to them: 'Do you know bishop Arsenius ?' They replied that they did. Timothy then asked if it were possible that Arsenius had an extra hand. But still their wiles and stratagems did not cease, even to the point where they told the Emperor that Athanasius had forbidden the export of wheat from Egypt and that he had written telling the Egyptians that he would excommunicate them if they sent anything. The Emperor believed them, because in fact the provisions were late. He exiled Athanasius for six months.⁷² As he approached death the Emperor had a dream that frightened him. He became afraid and ordered Athanasius to be brought back to the city immediately. He wrote The saint returned to his Patriarchate. Before his enemies had claimed that the Emperor had not known what he was ordering because of his illness. But Julius the Roman Pontiff supported Athanasius and sent him back to Alexandria. When he died he was buried in the palace next to the Emperor. The saint returned after having appeared as one conversing with them. Constantine died in the thirtieth year of Shapur, the eighth of the Persian Kings. On another occasion they asked the Emperor to allow the most foolish child to be presented to him and ask him for one of his churches. Athanasius did not agree. Constantine gave in to the impostors and allowed them every freedom to take action against him. They concealed themselves to kill him, as the Jews had done against Paul. When he learned of this, he boarded a boat and fled. Some of his enemies, having met him, did not recognize him, for God had hidden him from their vision. They said: 'Did you meet Athanasius on the way here ?' They replied that they had said that they would catch up with him if they continued. In this way he escaped from them. It is said of Athanasius that when he was young he would say to the children he was playing with: 'I am your bishop.' He nominated priests and deacons among them. Alexander, his predecessor, said to him: 'One day you will really be bishop', and he was.

⁷² 335 AD. Athanasius was exiled to Trier.

11. Story of Papnoute the monk⁷³

In the time of Diocletian, the Emperor before Constantine, there was a monk in the desert of Egypt called Papnoute. He was pious and worked miracles. Word of him reached Arianus the governor of the region to the effect that he was instructing Christians to disobey the Emperor and was contemptuous of the gods. The Emperor sent for him, and he knew that he was to endure martyrdom. When he arrived before the accursed Emperor, the latter had the instruments of torture brought and threatened him with them if he did not renounce Christianity and deny Christ. But he ignored the threats and was not afraid. He subjected the monk to torture and when he saw that Papnout despised the suffering, he tied him to a stone and threw him into the water. He was not drowned but swam to the surface. People were amazed and their hearts were strengthened by what they had seen. When Arianus no longer knew what to do with him, he sent him to Diocletian, who ordered him to be crucified, and he remained on the cross for a long time, praying and chanting. May his prayers preserve the faithful.

12. Story of the martyrs Sergius and Bacchus

St Sergius was related to and a confidant of the accursed Maximian. St Bacchus was pure and was occupied in his house and estate. Both were in his service and both were Christian. They knew each other. Both fell out of favour with Maximian as Daniel had done with the king of Babylon. The Emperor came to the place of the high priests to make his offerings as usual. The two saints stayed behind. He sent for them, and they were praying somewhere. Maximian made them come to him and asked them about their beliefs. They told him, and he asked them to leave their faith to worship his gods because he had pity on them. They refused. He then had their garments torn from them and subjected them to all manner of

⁷³ The Greek form is Paphnutius and his name means 'the one of God'. It is a common name. There is an ascetic of the same name who lived at Denderah, site of the late Ptolemaic temple of Hathor in Upper Egypt with one of the earliest Christian churches made from the stones of the temple (5th cent. AD), who was martyred under Arianus. His feast day is the 20th Barmudah (mid-April). The Arabic form is Faqûtiûs, which is easily explained by the incorrect positioning of dots above and below the letter forms.

torture in the hope of converting them. But it had no effect, and they persevered in their resistance. Maximian cursed them and sent them to his agent in the land of the Euphrates, a relative of Sergius, and told him to kill them. The agent spoke to them and wanted to save them, but they would not yield. Bacchus was whipped until he died. Sergius submitted to torture, but then he was decapitated. Both were thrown to the wild beasts, but they would not go near the saints. The faithful took their bodies and buried them at Resafa⁷⁴ and built over their tomb a church, which is still there, on the banks of the Euphrates. May their prayers preserve us.

At the time of Diocletian Bahram son of Bahram called Shahanshah, was king of Persia. He was weak and given to illness. He was benevolent to Christians and ordered the churches demolished by his father because of the Manichaeans to be rebuilt. After four years on the throne he died childless. Narses son of Shapur succeeded him. He was old, wise and intelligent. Many of the things he did showed his intelligence. He became king in the ninth year of Diocletian. In year 5 of his reign he went against the Roman empire and Armenia but was defeated. During his reign Christians did not suffer. After a reign of nine years he died and was succeeded by his son Hormizd. He showed himself to be independent in government and did not listen to the Magi. He organized an expedition against Diocletian to avenge his father, but suffered losses. Christians did not suffer during his reign of seven years and a few days.

13. Story of St Sylvester, Pontiff of Rome

At that time Miltiades was Pontiff at Rome for three years. Sylvester, at the age of 40, was chosen to succeed him. He was good and pious. He converted many people, resisted the friends of Diocletian and tolerated persecution of them. He uncovered soothsaying practices among pagan priests and demonstrated their wicked behaviour. He convinced many Jews with his arguments. He predicted the death of Diocletian and what was to happen to him.

⁷⁴ In N. Syria. Also known as Sergiopolis (and Anastasiopolis). It is mentioned in Is. 37, 12.

14. Story of the dragon⁷⁵

In the reign of the impious Maxentius there was an enormous monster living near a hill. Every year, in May, conjurors and magicians assembled around it and offered it a young virgin. Most Romans became ill from the stench of its breath that rose up to them. They changed colour. The monster lived in a cave to which one went down 360 steps. The saint, seeing the residents, urged them to abandon their error. Many notable people promised to convert to Christianity if the saint could get rid of the monster. So he asked God for help and spent a month on the matter. In a dream he saw the two blessed apostles Peter and Paul, who said to him: 'Go to the door of the cave. Take the priests Theodore and Julius and three deacons with you and celebrate Mass. When the people are assembled, go down into the cave and do not be afraid. Take iron locks with you, for you will find large bronze doors with chains on them. Locks them and say: "Thus have Peter and Paul, the two apostles of Christ, ordered these doors to be closed until the appearance of Our Lord Christ in memory of salvation." Then take the keys and hide them in the earth.' Sylvester did what he was told to do. People were convinced that he would die of the stench until he re-appeared with the keys in his hand. All those present gave thanks to God and many were baptized. Some did not for fear of Maxentius. The saint told them how he would die and how Constantine would become Emperor. They listened to what he said. As God had rescued the Babylonians from the cult of the dragon by the prophet Daniel, so He rescued the Romans by the hands of Sylvester their Pontiff.

15. Story of the Emperor Constantine

The empire was divided among four Emperors: Diocletian, Maximian, Maxentius, son of

⁷⁵ Sea monster. Or, in astronomy, Draco. The story may be part of a more elaborate and historical story involving Sylvester, who is said to have cured Constantine of his leprosy and seems to have played a major part in the Church-State concordat (papal authority as the basis of imperial power), later inscribed in the fiction known as the 'Donation of Constantine'. Sylvester died on Dec. 31, and this is why some continental European countries use the name.

Maximian Hercules, and Constantius Chlorus.⁷⁶ Diocletian and Maximian had the East, Armenia, Egypt and Syria to Constantinople; Maxentius governed Rome alone and the neighbouring countries, Constantius ruled Constantinople, that is Byzantium. The residents of Egypt and Alexandria rebelled at that time. Diocletian sent an army against them, but it was routed. In the eleventh year Narses reigned in Persia for seven years. He was succeeded by Hormizd, who reigned for five years. In year 19 of Diocletian Christian churches were demolished and many were killed in the persecution lasting eight years. Peter was martyred, the Alexandrian Patriarch who had excommunicated Arius. In that year there was such a shortage of food that a measure of wheat cost 2,500 drachmas. When Diocletian and Maxentius, who followed Shapur in his attacks on Christians, were conquered and put to flight by enemies from the East and West. They went mad, lost everything and merged in with the people. They were succeeded by Severus and another Maximin. They persecuted Christians and had many put to death. After a year Severus was killed and Constantine the Great, son of Constantius, succeeded him. Constantius was humble and gentle. In the country of his origin, Gaul, Christians lived in peace. They were protected from the persecution that had reached those in other countries. His wife, Helena, who was from Nisibis, forbade him to do what Diocletian and Maximian had ordered and encouraged him to do good to people. She implored God ceaselessly to turn her husband from idolatry to Christianity. He reigned for twelve years, his son Constantine having begun his reign three years before his father died. He died aged 57 and Helena aged 90.

The entire Roman empire fell to Constantine in the year 616 of Alexander, that is 273 of the Ascension of Our Lord to heaven. He ...⁷⁷ the country of Gaul, in which he was with his father, for Nicomedia. He was married to the daughter of Diocletian, Maximiana. Maxentius at Rome and Maximian in Syria rebelled against him, persecuted Christians and destroyed churches. Maxentius disembowelled small boys and with the entrails had torn out tried to take the auguries with the help of his soothsayers. He appeared dangerous to Constantine, who was afraid of him because of the size of his army and wanted to engage him in battle.

76 The English novelist Evelyn Waugh, in his novel *Helena*, has an imaginative account of how Chlorus came to be part of Constantius' name: it was given to him by Helena when they first spoke to each other on the morning after a banquet at which he had drunk too much, and Helena said that he looked 'green', a colour used in English to indicate illness.

77 The meaning of the verb is not clear. One might expect 'left'

He was still unfamiliar with Christianity: his mother had concealed herself from him and revealed her faith. She prayed constantly to Our Lord to convert him. His thinking was: 'The god who gives me victory over this enemy and helps me against him will be my god.' At midday he raised his head and saw a column of light in the form of a cross bearing this inscription: *With this sign you will be victorious*. It is said that all those with him saw the same thing. He knew that this sign could be only Christian and he embraced ...⁷⁸ the faith. Then again, while asleep, he saw in a dream the Lord, who said to him: 'Take the form of this emblem you saw today. Let the general of your army carry it before and you will conquer your enemy.' He then made a cross of gold, encrusted it with diamonds and placed it on his standard. He was victorious over his enemies, and Maxentius drowned. He had reigned for twelve years. Constantine returned from the war four years later, with the cross in his hand and built the new city that bears his name: Constantinople. Since then Romans have carried the cross before them in battle, in the hands of the leader.

There was another reason for Constantine's conversion: leprosy. This had appeared on his body, and the cure suggested by various impious people was to strangle children and bathe in their blood. He did this with several children ...⁷⁹ It caused a great tumult in the city and there was much weeping. When he heard of this, he was gripped by compassion and released the other captive children. In the night he saw two men, who said to him: 'If you wish to be cured of leprosy, summon bishop Sylvester, who is in hiding for fear of you. He will cure you.' The next day he sent for the bishop and, when he arrived, said to him: 'Who are the two Christian gods I saw in a dream last night?' 'Those you saw during your sleep are not gods, but two mortals: Peter and Paul, disciples of Christ the Saviour of humanity.' The bishop had images of the church brought. And the Emperor admitted that these were the images he had seen in his dream. The bishop preached and showed him the truth of the Christian faith. Constantine was baptized by a bishop. He was cured immediately of leprosy, which fell from him like the scales of a fish. Not counting women and children 52,000 people were baptized. This happened in the eleventh year of his reign. The faith took root in his heart: he destroyed temples and built churches. His wife Maximiana was baptized and became a good Christian. Sylvester put a stop to the Roman practice of naming the days of the week after the names of the seven stars: Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus,

78 Two words missing

79 Lacuna in the text

Saturn.⁸⁰ Maximin, having learned what had happened to Maxentius, submitted to Constantine, sent him fine gifts and asked for his pardon. He also had the churches and monasteries in his provinces opened. Soothsayers and pagan priests were condemned for their conduct ...⁸¹. He rebelled once again and persecuted Christians. Constantine sent Licinius his brother against him, and he cut his army to pieces, was victorious, killed him and his children, eradicated the soothsayers, built monasteries and churches, honoured the Christians and settled in Syria. Constantine also wrote to his friends to protect Christians, stop the evils inflicted on them by Kings and build churches. Constantine was not baptized in the year of his victory over Maximin Daia, th seventh year f his reign, but in the eleventh, building churches and embracing the true faith, because he wanted to be baptized in the Jordan, where Christ had been baptized. He wrote to Eusebius of Caesarea to order him to destroy pagan temples, extirpate them and build new churches on them. He sent large sums of money for this. Eusebius destroyed the old building and raised more stylish buildings and enlarged the churches, telling the Emperor of this. The Jews, when they saw, became very envious: 'It is the One God who cured the Emperor of his leprosy not Christ.' The Emperor was troubled and began to hesitate. He wanted to know the truth and assembled a dozen Jewish high priests and a dozen Christian bishops, who discussed the matter before him. He separated the truth of the proofs brought by the bishops from the weakness of the Jewish arguments. He became closely associated with Christianity and worked zealously for the triumph of the truth and the destruction of error.

16. The discovery of the Cross and the nails

Helena the mother of Constantine went to Jerusalem with a large retinue, magnificent riches, veils, precious cloths and elaborate ornaments of gold and silver for the altars. Once in Jerusalem she began a search for the Cross and the nails that had pierced the hands of the Saviour and, with the help of bishop Eusebius, found them. The impious Jews had concealed everything in a well, upon which they had piled the garbage of the city, so that over time it had become a large mountain. Helena paid people to remove the waste and

80 It was also Sylvester who ordered the day of rest to be transferred from the Sabbath (Jewish) to the Lord's Day (Christian), according to the 9th cent. Abbot of Fulda, Rabanus Maurus *de clericorum institutione* (Patrologia Latina 107).

81 Lacuna

eventually the three crosses and the nails were found. To test the crosses she brought the into contact with a woman who had been long dead. She did not move when touched by the crosses of the thieves, but rose instantly when she came into contact with the Cross of Christ. The faithful Queen entrusted the Cross to the bishop and from the nails made a bit for her son's horse. God had inspired her to act in this way to fulfil a prophecy.⁸² Eusebius abandoned his heresy and anathematized Arius and his followers, burning all his books. Constantine wrote to all his provinces ordering all of Arius' books to be burned under pain of severe punishment.

17 Helena the faithful and her victorious son

Helena, the faithful and blessed Queen, was born in Edessa in Mesopotamia, in a village called Kafr Fahar.⁸³ She became a Christian thanks to Barsamya, 'the son of the Gospel', bishop of Edessa, where she had learned the holy books. A man named Valentinus, from a family of Roman Emperors, son of Caius, son of Dar Samis, son of Decius, son of the Emperor Claudius II, was sent by the Roman Emperor to inspect the Eastern part of the Empire. This included the home of this woman. When he saw her, he was pleased by her beauty and asked her parents for her hand in marriage. They agreed, and she went back to Rome with him. He became Emperor.⁸⁴ She worked hard to defend the interests of Christians in her husband's pagan empire. He obeyed her because he loved her and ignored her religion. She bore him a son whom he named Constantine and who grew up in the religion of his father. On the death of his father Constantine became Emperor. For about 270 years Christianity had been persecuted in Syria and other provinces, that is from year 15 of Tiberius to year 19 of Diocletian. Helena did not think it necessary to tell her son about her religion or try to convert him, afraid of his youth, the pernicious influence of his friends, lack of constancy after baptism, lack of faith.

In January of the seventh year of Constantine the barbarian armies came out against him and descended on the Danube to pillage the Romans and lay waste their country. Costa⁸⁵ says

82 Zach. 14,20

83 Various traditions make her Bithynian, British and so on

84 Constantius Chlorus

85 Historian cited below.

that Constantine attacked Maxentius because the latter had rebelled against him at Rome, had refused to recognize him as Emperor and seized the city. Constantine therefore went against them with his army and camped near them, by the river, to attack them. But he knew that the enemy arm He learned that the enemy was prepared to attack in the morning. That night he had a dream of a bright radiant light in the sky and a cross made of stars with this inscription: *With this sign you will be victorious*. Others say he had the vision in the day time. It was May 19th, the day of the appearance celebrated by the Greeks. Isho ' barnun the archbishop says in his Questions of the Deacon Macarius⁸⁶ that Constantine saw the cross near his tent, spread over it like a lance made up of different stars. At the tip of the lance was the form of a cross in distinct stars. The stars were in the form of letters. It is a custom among the Greeks and most nations to tie a band of cloth around their lances below the metal part, and this is why Nestorians attach a small veil instead a band to the staff that bears the cross. Others claim that this band at the base of the cross serves to represent what Our Lord did when girding himself with a cloth when he humbly washed the feet of the disciples.

Let us return to our account. Constantine was very afraid of this vision. He assembled his wise men and soothsayers, told them and asked what it meant and which Roman god it belonged to. None of them knew. He made cross of gold like the one he had seen and ordered it to be put on his standard. He fell upon the enemy, cut them to pieces, killed their king, and the rest took flight.

Costa son of Luke say that Constantine, after his victory, began to wonder who this god was who had helped him to defeat and rout his enemy. In thought, in the middle of the day, he looked up at the sky and saw the Cross, as bright as fire, with this inscription: *With this sign you will be victorious*. Several others saw it at the same time and were astonished. The following night he had a dream in which some said to him: 'Make the form of this cross in gold, and with it you will conquer your enemies.'

Constantine entered Rome The Christians were moved and Eusebius the bishop of Rome

86 The only work of the 9th cent. Nestorian Catholicos to have survived is the *Questions on the Pentateuch*.

hid. Constantine once again asked the pagan priests in the temples about the Cross. They were not sure. They reported that on the day when he had this vision many statues in the temples were destroyed. Constantine became afraid. The matter was talked of among the Christians of Rome, who sent to him in secret that the sign he had seen was the form of the Cross on which the Christ had been crucified. He thought about it, asked about it and learned. He liked the faith. After first reassuring Eusebius, he asked the bishop to come and explain Christianity to him. Eusebius agreed, and the Emperor was convinced and had himself baptized with his wife Maximiana, the daughter of Diocletian. Most of his friends were also baptized. It is said that Constantine's leprosy was also cured. Others say that when the Roman Christians heard of his arrival in they fled. The idolaters⁸⁷ came to him and said: 'If you wish to be cured of your leprosy, Emperor, cut the throats the children of the city and bathe in their blood.' The Emperor ordered this to be done. But when the children were seized, the city began to resonate with the tears and laments. The Emperor, seized with compassion, spared the children. In the night he had a dream in which he saw two men, who said to him: 'If you wish to be cured of leprosy, send for Eusebius bishop of Rome, for he is in hiding and has fled for fear of you.' The following day the king ordered Eusebius to be brought and said to him: 'Where are the two Christian gods I saw last night ?' The bishop replied that the two he had seen were not gods, but men: Peter and Paul, disciples of Christ, God of gods. Eusebius gave him an image of the two apostles, taken from the church. When the Emperor saw it, he cried out: 'Truly these are the ones I saw last night in my dream.' He was then baptized. The leprosy fell from his body, like the scales of a fish. Some say that the number of those baptized with the Emperor amounted to 12,000; others say that it was 52,000. According to some it was the Pontiff Sylvester who baptized the Emperor in year 11 of his reign, year 628 of Alexandria.

Constantine thereafter removed the Jews from his empire and the pagans from the offices of state. He weakened them and lowered their status after their scholars and the scholars of the Christians had discussed religious matters together. The defenders of the truth triumphed over the propagators of error. The Emperor applied himself to searching for the Cross. He charged his mother Helena with travelling to Jerusalem to take care of the matter. She

⁸⁷ This is a somewhat confusing term, but here I think it must mean 'idolaters' Hans Wehr *A dictionary of modern Arabic* p.210

arrived at the site on May 28, Year 631 of Alexander. Some say that it was Eusebius bishop of Jerusalem who went with her and not the bishop of Rome. When she arrived in Jerusalem, she called on Alexander the bishop. who had been transferred to Jerusalem because of his worth, piety and religious zeal. She told him about her quest and requested the presence notable Jewish teachers and scholars. They attended and were doubtful that they had been summoned because of the Cross. One of them, Judas the son of Simeon, said to them: 'My father told me the location of the Cross and how Jesus died because of the jealousy of the rabbis and high priests. He told me to reveal the place if anyone asked. His belief in Christ and his truthfulness made me determined to believe in Him too. He also told me that one of the disciples named Stephen, my father's uncle who was publicly stoned by the Jews for having believed in Him and called upon people to acknowledge Him. So if I am asked where the Cross is I will say.' The Jews replied. 'Do what you think is right.' Helena assembled them and asked about the Cross. They all replied that only Judas could help her. She then questioned him, but the demon, reminding him of the Judaism so deeply rooted in his soul, persuaded him to renounce his faith, and he denied any knowledge of the location of the Cross. Helena threatened to throw him down a well where he would die of hunger and thirst and thus forced him to reveal the place. He hastened to it and dug up the earth. A sweet fragrance issued forth, and three crosses were revealed. When questioned about the nails, he resumed his excavation and discovered four. To remove doubt Helena proceeded to verify the Cross. At that moment two men appeared with a shroud. Judas said: 'Now we will know which one is the Cross of Christ.' He said that as he proceeded to test it. He stepped forward and put two crosses on the dead, one after the other. There was no sign. Then he put the third on him and the dead one rose up. The voices resounded to praise and thank God for His grace. Helena covered the Cross with gold and encrusted it with precious stones. She made a gold case for it and left it in Jerusalem. Some say that she took with her to her son.

It is said that Chosroes, son of Hormizd, after conquering the city of Dara and leaving for Jerusalem, summoned the bishop of Jerusalem and questioned him about the Cross found there by Helena. The bishop replied that the Jews had seized it by force. Chosroes sent for their leaders and punished them, so they handed it over to him. He took it to Theodosius, son of the Emperor Maurice. It is said that Greeks, before leaving to fight, had this Cross in

their vanguard. When Chosroes Anushirwan⁸⁸ planned to attack the Greeks, the latter equipped a fleet and placed the Cross in the vessel with the treasure. A strong wind arose and blew the vessel from the Greek side to the sea of Khorasan.⁸⁹ The ship with the Cross was captured and taken to Chosroes, who took the Cross for a weapon of war and put it in his arsenal. Shirin, secretly a Christian, learned of this and asked for and received the Cross. When the Byzantine Emperor learned that the Cross had fallen into the hands of Chosroes, he agreed to many suggestions made by Chosroes and asked him for the return of the Cross. Chosroes agreed. Shirin was sad and broke off a piece to be blessed by it. It is said that this is the only part of the Cross that Eastern Christians still have. Shahdost,⁹⁰ bishop of Tehran, said of the Cross that Heraclius⁹¹ during the Persian wars took all of the royal treasures of Syria and sent them to Constantinople with the Cross that he had taken at Jerusalem. A strong wind blew the vessel off course to Alexandria. The Persians seized the vessel and took the contents and sent them to Seleucia-Ctesiphon with the Cross. Heraclius was very angry and set off to make war on the Persians. The Persian king lived at Daskarat al Malik on the road to Khorasan. As Heraclius approached, he took flight, came to Seleucia-Ctesiphon and crossed the bridge of Tamarra and Dayala.⁹² Heraclius camped on the bridge of Nahrawan. Chosroes then sent the Cross to him with a band of Christians to ask Heraclius to withdraw. At the sight of the Cross his anger subsided, and he acceded to the request of the Christians and made peace with Chosroes.

Costa son of Luke writes that Helena in Jerusalem found the Cross in two equal sections. She took a piece and sent it to her son and left the other at Apamea. Roman Emperors tried to seize it, the Apameans refused. They eventually agreed to give them half, one quarter remaining at Apamea. In the time of Justinian⁹³ the Persians made war on the Romans and destroyed the city of Apamea. They removed the quarter of the Cross and took it back to Ctesiphon. Heraclius asked Shahrbaraz⁹⁴ for the quarter and he sent it. Heraclius joined it to the other half and had it gilded. The wood is said to be fig. It is also said that when the Cross

88 The Persian means 'undiminishing soul'.

89 Caspian Sea.

90 'Friend of the King'. Primate of the Eastern Church from 341 to 343 AD, he was martyred under Shapur II

91 Became Emperor in 610 and pursued the series of wars between the Byzantine and Persian Empires until 628 AD. It was Heraclius who made Greek the official language of the Eastern Empire.

92 Two names for the same small river near Baghdad.

93 Emperor from 527 to 565 AD.

94 King 627-629 AD

arrived citizens cut off an arm of the Cross and replaced it with a golden arm. The wood of the Cross was known by a miraculous sign: it was immune to fire. The fragments of the Cross dispersed throughout the world come from this division. Nestorians celebrate the Cross on Sept. 13, the anniversary of the discovery of the three crosses. Melkites celebrate the 14th, the miracle by which a corpse was brought back to life. Some say that the discovery and the miraculous resurrection happened on the 13th and the 14th was the day when Helena placed it in the church at Jerusalem. She wanted to know what to do with the nails. God reminded her of the prophecy of Zachary,⁹⁵ saying that they were for the bit of the Emperor's horse, blessed of the Lord. And they were so made for use in important wars by Emperors.

Judas, who had pointed to the place of the Cross, sincerely believed and was baptized. Later, he was consecrated bishop of Jerusalem, after the death of Alexander, and was given the name Cyriacus. Helena made a vow that if her son became a Christian and protected Christians, she would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to pray and build churches on the places hallowed by the footsteps of Christ. She fulfilled her vow and her devoutness. One day Alexander said to her: 'Empress, I see you are much involved with building, while our religion is in agony because of the number of heretics who are corrupting so many of the faithful. Since no attempt has been made to exterminate this corruption and break up their meetings and refute their teachings, they are now strong and have destroyed buildings and caused the death of the faithful. The rest have accepted their error, voluntarily or as a result of force. It would make more sense for you to make this aspect of the religion your concern.' So Helena wrote to her son, told him what Alexander had said and asked him ...⁹⁶

18. Council of Nicaea

... no-one of this whole assembly. But the thought had already arrived at some and they were distinguished by it. Among them were chosen those whose virtues and the tortures they had

⁹⁵ Zach. 14, 20

⁹⁶ Lacuna.

suffered, still visible on their bodies, at the hands of the enemies put them in the first rank. The total number was 318: Patriarchs, Archbishops, bishops and priests. Some said that only these 318 were present at Nicaea. They included the bishop of Marash, who bore the wounds inflicted on him in prison, because the followers of Arius had seized him and tortured him for 22 years. They cut off his hands, feet, ears, nose and lips. They gouged out his eyes and ripped his teeth out. What remained of his body, in its dryness and blackness, looked like a branch of wood burned by fire. There was also Viton and Vincent, two priests representing the bishop of Rome; Alexander bishop of Alexandria, Macarius bishop of Jerusalem, Germanus of Samaria, Eusebius of Damascus, Anatolius of Emesa, Eustathius of Antioch, Zenobius of Seleucia, Jacob of Nisbis, who was of great standing and who is said to have brought someone back to life on that day in the Council. St Ephrem was also present, as was Theodore of Tarsus (not the commentator).⁹⁷ Among those not present, who had been summoned by the bishop of Rome, was Papas the Patriarch because of his great age and immobility. He was represented by Simeon bar Sabbae and Mar Shahdost. Some said he was represented by Simeon and Jacob bishop of Nisibis. It is said that Jacob was accompanied by the learned Ephrem, who had not been invited, to refute Arius. Isho' barnun the archbishop reports that Eustathius of Antioch was president of the Council ...

Constantine arranged a large hall for them and had the appropriate number of seats installed. They sat according to their rank. Constantine went to them and, starting with the bishop of Marash, kissed the ground before them as well as the places where his limbs had been mutilated. He did the same for all the others. He then sat down on a seat below theirs and encouraged them to examine matters of religion and the faithful, to demonstrate the truth and define articles of faith to be held in accordance with what was received from the apostles. He said this submissively and calmly. He then took his sword, his sceptre and his ring and placed them at their feet, saying: 'God has given you the power over the priesthood and me the power over the empire. But today God has given you both. I submit to you and I will follow your orders. Judge according to the truth in accordance with the order of God and the will of His Christ. You are the reason for life and living and the reason for the perdition of those who are lost, and that for ever. Look also among those who are dissidents,

⁹⁷ Presumably Diodorus of Tarsus. The commentator referred to is probably Theodore of Mopsuestia, a pupil of Diodorus and controversial theologian.

known as heretics, if there are not some who would have warped the divine books, adding to and taking away from them. Bring them here and debate with them to open their eyes. Perhaps they will return sincerely to the truth and those who support it. As for those who are clearly enemies of the truth, who would have warped the Scriptures and changed the faith, avoid them and keep them away from your discussions, except for those who retreat from their error and give reassuring signs of their true repentance and sincere conversion.'⁹⁸ The assembly heard these words and promised him and blessed him for his obvious good intentions, the strength of his faith and the sincerity of his concern. They deliberated that day, June 9 in the Year of Alexander 635, Year 21 of Constantine.

From this day the members of the assembly went into conclave to discuss, converse, exchange views and adduce clear and solid proofs until they were in full agreement on the contents of the Gospel, Apostolic tradition and the letter of the above-mentioned Alexander.⁹⁹ They put everything in writing and called it the Creed. It is said that the Council lasted for three years. The Creed was read out in their assembly before Mass. They all pronounced the anathema of Arius. The Emperor wrote a circular letter to all the bishops and heads of the Church to let them know of the anathema against Arius and that his books were to be burned. This is the text of the letter: *From Constantine the Emperor to all those who are to receive the letter, bishops, Archbishops, priests, officials and to all our subjects. Greeting. Arius the impostor, like the wicked devil, has violated the faith, estranged himself from the faithful and invented an unbelievable heresy. This is why he has brought upon himself frightful misfortunes and calamities. All his books and writings and opinions therefore are to be burned and disappear without trace. Anyone who has kept, in his dwelling or in his possession, any writing of Arius will be subject to civil and religious penalties. Let no-one give a reason (for these penalties to be inflicted) upon himself. Greeting.*¹⁰⁰

98 The text of a speech delivered by Constantine to the Council at the beginning is given J.D. Mansi *Sacrorum Conciliorum Collectio* vol. 2: Years 305 to 346 (1759) col. 661. The final sentence expresses sentiments that echo those expressed at the beginning: *sic enim estis et Deo omnium gubernatori rem gratam facturi et mihi vestro conservo maximum praestaturi beneficium* (For you will thus be doing something pleasing to God governor of everything and performing a great favour to me your fellow servant). I have no access to Schwartz.

99 To Alexander of Byzantium. The text can be found in cols. 641-660.

100 There is no letter in Mansi, but there is the text of a speech, in which the name of Arius does not occur.

Some report that the fathers of the Council, when counting their names, found 317 and, when counting the people, found 318. They understood that Our Lord (how great His name is) was among them, as He had said: 'If two or three gather in my name, I will be among them.'¹⁰¹ Shahdost, bishop of Tehran, said that the hymn sung on Christmas Eve (lailda tamiha)¹⁰² was composed by one of the fathers at the Council. The bishops went home after defining the the most important teachings. There are twenty canons on which Nestorians, Melkites and Jacobites agree. They were written by those acceptable to Melkites and Jacobites. These count 73 canons, originating from the copy of Maruta, bishop of Maifraqin. It is said that the Council fathers asked Eusebius bishop of Caesarea to draw up a calendar for the holy days, Lent and Easter, he being skilled at mathematics. They said to him: 'We have defined the teachings. It is now up to you to make Christians agree on the holy days.' He agreed and went off to an island, where he spent three years asking God to inspire him to complete the task known as the Chronicon. May God make us share in the merits of their prayers for all.

19. Description of Constantinople

Constantine ordered the Jews to be driven from all his provinces. He wanted to build a city: he looked for a suitable place at the heart of his empire. He asked men who were learned and men who were practical. He found no place more suitable than Byzantium, a city built by Byzus¹⁰³ in the time of Osiah and Joatham, kings of Israel. He built it and named it. It was built on seven hills, between the hills a tongue that came out from the great sea. It was surrounded by an impregnable rampart from one side of the sea to another. Byzus had made it ten miles long. Constantine added another two miles. He built it, embellished it and provided it with ornaments. It became the imperial residence. He brought in traders, for it is the middle of the Byzantine Empire and near Persia. At the gates of the city he built one graveyard for Emperors, one for Patriarchs and hippodromes for games. At the entrance to it he put an equestrian statue of bronze, the rider wearing a gold crown. He brought to it the

¹⁰¹Matt 18,20

¹⁰² The first word seems to be connected to 'birth', and the second may be associated with 'wondrous'

¹⁰³According to legend the name of the leader of the Megaran colonists who settled there in the 7th cent BC.

treasures of the kings, the relics of martyrs and the Cross. On each bank he built two large towers, on which he put iron siege engines like those used by Emperors in war. He bound them together with an iron chain to surround the place, serve as ramparts and deny enemy ships access to the city. They were also meant to serve as ramparts for his own ships because it was impossible to build walls here because of the depth of the water on three sides around the city, the west side being on land. The ramparts went from water to water. There were many churches and monasteries. He brought the relics of Joseph son of Jacob, the chair of John the Evangelist. He also consecrated two churches to the Virgin, one of which was the Anastasia and the St Sophia.

The walls of the latter were covered in sandal wood, the altar plated with gold and encrusted with jewels. He built squares in the city. One of his successors made golden gates for the west side of the city. All of this has been taken from a book found at Beit Abé, according to Mar Abâ the Patriarch (God bless his soul). He had seen these things when he visited the city.¹⁰⁴

Licinius, who had established himself in Syria, rebelled against Constantine, for he had become jealous of him. Constantine was patient and felt sorry for him because of his sister.¹⁰⁵ But Licinius did not change: he destroyed the churches of Antioch and put Christians into prison. Constantine did not tolerate this and preferred the safety of the Christians to the love of his sister. He turned against him, defeated him and took him live. He tried to convert him. When he learned of the treachery of Licinius, he killed him. He increased his kindness to his sister to help her forget and ordered his nephews to give her anything she wanted.

20. Description of Central Rome

An eye-witness account of Mar Jacob the Metropolitan of Nisibis

He said: It is square, 28 miles long by 28 miles wide. Three quarters of it is on the coast, one quarter on land. It has twenty bronze gates covered with gold. It is surrounded by two

104 525 to 533 AD

105 They were brothers-in-law.

ramparts, with walls 16 cubits thick and 70 cubits high. A river called Constantia separates the ramparts, crosses the city, bearing talsimat,¹⁰⁶ drums of bronze each 46 cubits in circumference. There are 10,000 drums. When an enemy attacks, the drums beat themselves, making a much louder noise than ordinary drums. The Emperor hears this from his palace, though they are 15 miles away. The river is 93 cubits deep and 150 wide. The city has 1,000 markets for Easterners and Westerners. Three of the markets are laid out with white marble columns, each one 100 cubits round and 30 cubits high. The columns support white marble aqueducts for the sea waters, along which the merchants ships pass, coming to the markets from all over the world. There 1,270 baths. Each Saturday at 3 pm the shops are closed and business is suspended. People flock to the churches in the evening and on Sunday for to hear petitions. It is 120 *jarib*¹⁰⁷ wide, and the walls and ceilings are gilded. It has 72 double doors of gold, 600 doors of bronze, copper and iron. Rome also has the Church of SS Peter and Paul: 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide and high. There are so many wonders to relate about this city that they cannot be told here.

21. Chronicon: History of its Composition

When the 318 fathers assembled to define the faith and establish teachings on which they could agree and notify the rest of the Christian world, they turned their attention to the variations in the information which the Jews gave to the Christians to celebrate their festivals: Lent and Easter. The fathers asked Eusebius of Caesarea to draw up a calendar which would let them know these dates. He went off alone to an island for three years. The fathers continued to pray that he would receive true inspiration from Jesus Christ. Fasting every day, using his intelligence and praying every night, he asked God to enlighten him. God heard their prayers. He inspired Eusebius with all the necessary knowledge. Eusebius returned and handed over his Chronicon, which is still used by Christians, who will never again need Jews, astrologers or mathematicians.

106 It bears a striking to the word from 'talisman' is derived.

107 The only meaning I know for this is a term to measure a plot of land. Measuring systems tended to vary according to place, as they did in Europe before the advent of standardization.

22. Easter and the Resurrection

After this there was a discussion between the bishop of Asia and Victor bishop of Rome. All the bishops thought that Easter should be on the 14th of the lunar month, whatever day it was. Victor said that they should celebrate the end of Lent and Easter on a Sunday, for this was the day when God began the creation of the world, when Our Lord came back to life, when the Resurrection will happen, when Christ will re-appear at His Second Coming. Polycarp¹⁰⁸ the Patriarch wrote to them that he had received the teaching of the two luminaries buried in Asia, John the Evangelist and Philip. The bishops of Jerusalem did not celebrate Easter according to this rule, but they adopted it for the future.

It is said that one of the bishops of Jerusalem changed water into oil, when he was celebrating this feast. Water was poured into the lamps because the oil was taking so long to arrive and the time for prayer had arrived and the faithful were gathered. The bishop told the deacons to light the lamps, and they burned throughout the entire office without going out.

23. Story of Shapur, son of Hormizd, known as Dhu'l Aktaf¹⁰⁹

On his death Hormizd left no male child. But his wife was pregnant. The Magi put the diadem on the belly of his wife without knowing what the child would be. She gave birth to a boy called Shapur. He was named king in the fifth year of Constantine. The doctors of the Church state this and add that Shapur began his reign when he was 15. He was proud and courageous. He worshipped the stars, in which he had great confidence. He hated Christians but was unable to harm them because of Constantine. In the 10th year of his reign he imitated his predecessors and began to build cities. He built one at Susiane, fortified it and called it ...¹¹⁰ which is Karkha of Ladhan. He settled Byzantine prisoners of war there. It is now in ruins. The inhabitants were taken to Susa. When Constantine died, he no longer concealed his evil disposition. In year 31 of his reign, while the children of Constantine

108 There is a question mark after this name. I cannot identify him.

109 'He of the shoulders'

110 Lacuna

were still young, he attacked Christians, destroyed Churches and turned towards Nisbis. But he came back defeated and disappointed. God saved the people of Nisibis because of the prayers of Jacob their bishop and the blessed priest who succeeded him and the virtuous Ephrem. God instigated an Emperor against Shapur who was even more cruel: Julian¹¹¹, the Emperor who put him to flight and destroyed many Persian towns. When Julian died, he was succeeded by Jovian. ¹¹²Shapur stopped his persecution and allowed Christians to build churches. After the death of Jovian Shapur started again. Maruta bishop of Mafrekat and Akhi the Patriarch wrote a martyrology of those suffered martyrdom at the time of Shapur. Daniel son of Mary did the same in his ecclesiastical history.¹¹³ The pagan priests had said to Shapur, representing their god, that if he eradicated the Christians he would not die. The madman believed this and continued to search for and murder Christians.

On the death of Constantine his empire was divided between his children. He died at the age of 65, having reigned for 33 years.

24. Death of the Emperor Constantine (may God bless his soul)

When the death of Constantine was near, Eusebius the Roman Pontiff assembled 40 bishops and said to them: 'The pious Constantine will soon leave this earth, and his successor Julian, who is corrupt, will reign after him. Let us go to see Constantine to receive his blessing and his will.' When they arrived they found him in pain and began to weep: 'Woe to us, Constantine, when you are no longer here we will be dispersed. Woe to us, when we Christians are enfeebled in our torments, lapsing into paganism and the works of the devil.' Constantine understood what the bishops were saying. He gave him the strength to open his eyes and say: 'Help me to sit.' He stretched forth his hand and, taking their hands, he kissed them. 'You have nourished me, like a child, on the milk of the Scriptures. It is not necessary to fear the one who kills the body but the one who kills the soul and the body.'¹¹⁴ Watch over the flock of which you are the shepherds. You are accountable for them. Fear the day of resurrection and do not bow before the diadem of the king, his anger, his sword or his

111 361-363

112 363-364

113 No longer extant

114 Matt. 10, 28

punishment. This wolf will be short-lived and will move on to die in another country. As for you, you will be happy forever, for your suffering is for Christ. Pontiff, you will endure three struggles against him, and you will be victorious in all of them, with the help of Christ. I do not know what will become of me in the next life.' The Pontiff replied: 'Do not worry. Your faith and baptism will provide you with entry into the kingdom of heaven.' Constantine then ordered something to eat, and they ate. On Sunday morning, when Christians do not eat meat before the fast, Eusebius urged people to be steadfast in the midst of the general corruption and desolation assailing the Church. He ordered people to refrain from meat in that week and a period of mourning for the deceased Emperor. This was observed in all churches in the East and the West until an arrow from heaven struck the wretched Julian,¹¹⁵ who was succeeded by his general Jovian, and the imperial crown was seen descending from heaven. The misfortunes of the Christians had come to an end. Eastern Christians stopped observing this usage, but Western Christians continued to do so. Constantine told the Pontiff and the bishops to bury his body with the remains of his parents and to return home. Julian would be reassured to learn of this and begin his reign at Rome. A member of the assembly at Edessa asked him to bless the people of his city before he died. Constantine wanted to know if he should bless a city that had been blessed by God. He was told that the blessing of God was a rampart of Edessa but that Constantine's blessing would be the supporting wall of that rampart. He made vows to the people of Edessa and made his soul holy. On the third day after the burial with his parents the fathers went home. Julian sprang like a cruel lion, as Constantine had prophesied. In fact, he surpassed the prophecy with his behaviour. May the wrath of God and his damnation and the punishment he deserves fall upon him. We will tell his story elsewhere at another times, God willing.

It is said that Constantine died at Nicomedia, aged 65, on the day of Pentecost. His body was taken to Constantinople, the city which he had founded in year 31 of his reign. It is also said that his son Constantius transferred it to Constantinople. His feast day is May 22. Helena his mother died after him, aged 90. She was buried in the Church of the Apostles

115 His dying words, according to Theodoret *HE* 3,25, were: *νενίκηκάς με, Γαλιλαΐε* 'You have defeated me, Galilean.' His death came at a crucial point for both pagans and Christians, and not surprisingly perhaps became the stuff of legend cf. Norman H. Baynes 'The death of Julian the Apostate in a Christian legend' *Journal of Roman Studies* 27 (1937): 22-29. He died of a spear wound. The introduction of this episode in a passage that is said to be about the death of Constantine is clearly intended to be a prophecy.

built by her son.

25 Some of the distinguished and the holy in the days of Papas

They include Athanasius bishop of Alexandria, Eusebius bishop of Emesa, Miles al Razi bishop of Susa, Macarius the Egyptian monk, Mar Eugenius Abbot of Izala, Aphraate the Persian doctore, Sergius and Bacchus, the martyrs executed by Maximin, whose story has been told. David bishop of Bassora, having left his his see, departed for India. He preached Christianity to the inhabitants of this country and converted many. Gregory Thaumaturgus, bishop of Pontus and disciple of Origen the wise, lived at the time of Severus the Roman Emperor. bishop Alexander, when he saw Gregory playing with children who had made him bishop, predicted that he would become bishop. Gregory fought against the Arian heresy and, for that reason, was exiled with Eustathius bishop of Antioch. After his recall from exile, his enemies accused him of fornication, but God confounded them with the statement made by a priest named Timothy, who revealed ...¹¹⁶ their depravity and falsehood. This holy Father died in his see.

26. Story of the Ephrem the Scholar

His father was from Nisibis and his mother from Amid. Ephrem became a Christian, was baptized and until he was eighteen lived in a town called 'Arbiya. He went to Nisibis where he was ordained deacon by Jacob the bishop. From there he left for Amid, where he stayed for some time. He then went to Edessa. Among the wonderful stories told is the following: 'When I came to Edessa, I stopped on the banks of the river Daisan, which surrounds the city. There I saw women washing their clothes. One of them looked at me in an unsuitable way. I rebuked her and told her to look at the ground and not at me. She replied instantly that it was I who should look at the earth because I had been created from it and that she should look at me because she had been created from my side. I marvelled at her response and realized that the city had many such educated and intelligent people'. St Ephrem

¹¹⁶ Apparently something missing in the text after the verb 'and he revealed' (وابان). The translator speculates, without great conviction, that 'there may be nothing missing and that in fact Wâbân is the name of the priest who defended Athanasius.

remained for some time in the mountain of Edessa, where he taught many. He then left for Egypt where he spent eight years opposing Arianism. From there he went to Caesarea where he met Basil the Great, bishop of Caesarea. He asked Basil to pray to Christ that He may grant him a knowledge of Greek, and this was granted. St Ephrem continued his journey to Edessa. He opposed the teaching of Arius, Bardaisan and other heretics. He wrote much and when he died he was buried at Edessa. The Melkites commemorate him on February 1st. The Nestorians are among those who commemorate him during the week devoted to the Syrian fathers. May God remember us, thanks to their prayers. Among the students of Ephrem were the deacons Zenobius, Abâ, Isaac, Asaria, and Julian Saba. It is told in certain histories that Julian was the teacher of Ephrem. According to Costa, son of Luke, Julian died at Mt Sinai. Among his well-known works are the Commentary on the Old Testament, Commentary on the Psalms, Commentary on the Diatessaron, a Greek word meaning 'quadruple', a mixture of the four composed by Tatian. In explaining this book Ephrem wanted to avoid repeating the chapters, and this had also been Tatian's intention. Ephrem wrote twenty-two poems¹¹⁷ following the order of the Greek alphabet. Several books contain anti-heretical poems. Some are for holy days and the dead, martyrs, supplication and all those recited in church. He composed a Mass still used by the Melkites. The Nestorians also celebrated this Mass at Nisibis during the time of Jesyuab,¹¹⁸ who chose three Masses and banned the rest.

27. Story of Mar Simeon bar Sabbae the Martyr and Ninth Catholicos

This holy Father was from Susa. Some say that he was from Seleucia-Ctesiphon. His parents were royal dyers. He was chosen that the sign of Christ might appear in him. He was the archdeacon of Papas the Catholicos and he administered his affairs until his right hand became paralysed. It is said that there was a dispute between Papas and his bishops and the latter took Simeon by force and made him Catholicos while he was still an archdeacon. Papas then said to Simeon: 'Christ will not forgive your consent to what has been done unless you shed your blood and become a martyr. The Byzantines later wrote to Papas and asked the Catholicos to forgive Simeon, saying that he was innocent. Papas accepted this

117 Long poems (memra) and short poems (madroshe).

118 Jesyuab II bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon from 651 to 660.

and decided that one day Simeon would be Catholicos, and he was elected to the position by the fathers when Papas died.

But Satan, the enemy of merciful God, became envious of the peace and tranquillity of the Church. He decided to incite Shapur to persecute Simeon, as he had incited Nero to persecute Simon Peter, and stir up the Persians against him as he had done against others. On the death of Constantine, in year 31 of the reign of Shapur - Constantine had reigned for 33 years, honouring and glorifying the faith and smashing idols - the Persian monarch made his preparations and attacked Nisibis. Constantine the Younger¹¹⁹ resisted and was victorious, thanks to the prayers of Jacob bishop of Nisibis. God sent down upon him a black cloud and stones from on high. Shapur withdrew, defeated and in shame. Like the viper he was he spat out his poison against the fathers and the faithful in his kingdom.

Shapur liked Simeon, but the Jews, friends of Satan, knowing his hostility to Christians, made false claims that Simeon had converted the Magi to Christianity and, more seriously, had converted and baptized the king's mother, whose father was a Jew. Christ left his flock in the hands of the enemy, not out of weakness or loss, but to arouse them from the negligence and relaxation that leads to evil.

God (how great He is) spread Simeon's fame and made known his sweetness and charity to the poor, to whom he gave the fortune left to him by his parents. Nuns were in the habit of keeping men company at night when they prayed, but Simeon put an end to this. He required deacons and priests to discharge all their obligations and ruled on other Church matters.

It was then that the wretched Shapur, the hairless wolf, began his work, as the youngest of the prophets Daniel said when he compared the Persian king to a ravenous lion. Ezekiel compared him to the eagle and every violent creature. This prophecy has also been applied to Nebuchadnezzar by all the wise men. It was fulfilled in Shapur, who was said to be of his race and descent. For this reason he did not stop shedding the blood of the faithful. God

¹¹⁹ Constantine the Younger reigned from 337 to 340 and it is likely that Constantius (337-361) is meant.

want to test men and root their faith in the Lord. He ignored His pact with them and removed the angels charged with protecting them. The sufferings of the Christians lasted for forty years. Shapur was like a hard-hearted butcher who starts with the fattest sheep and eventually kills the entire flock. Thus, he started with the notables and priests, but spared nobody. He made them die in different ways, some in prison and poverty, some of hunger and thirst, some by blows, some on the cross, others by the sword. This wretched king ordered pregnant women to be cut open so that he could see the baby removed, cut in two and crucified with its mother. He denied burial to those killed. They were to be crucified to bake in the sun and be eaten by birds. Thus the prophecy made for the Maccabee family when they were killed by Antiochus was fulfilled¹²⁰: *He gave their bodies to the eagles of the sky to eat and the flesh of the just to the lions of the earth*

Around Nisbis the Christian persecutions lasted for six years. The wretch swore by the sun, his god, and by the fire, his creator, to shed the blood of Christians until they adored his gods or were wiped out. He sent out orders accordingly throughout his empire. The friends of Satan said to him: 'The king's orders against Christians will be useless as long as Simeon encourages them and helps with his money and resources, as long as he commands them not to obey the king and promises the delights of the next life.' When Shapur heard Simeon's name, he ordered him to be brought before him. Simeon was in a gathering of hundred members of the clergy when he was seized. Gushtazad and his two sons, who were monks, were also seized.

When Simeon arrived before the king, he was ordered to impose a poll tax on monks, double the tax paid by Christians and bring contributions for the swamps of the country ...¹²¹ Simeon replied: I did not receive my appointment in the Church to tell people what to do but to watch over the Church, tend the flock and keep them from wolves.' This took place in year 650 of Alexander and 290 after the Ascension and 117 of the Persian Kingdom. The same demand was sent to Simeon. He repeated his earlier reply and said that he had no money and that, besides, he was bound to distribute what he had, because the rules of his faith told him to do so. He was very gracious and prayed for the king, who ordered him to

120 Ps. 79, 2 cf, also I Macc. 7, 16-17.

121 Lacuna The history of this passage is suspect. Simeon was martyred in 341.

be brought to the palace gate with his companions, 130 in total. Simeon appeared among them like the moon among the stars. When he reached the gate, the porter said: 'Who are you to resist the king and refuse to obey him ?' Simeon replied: 'I am not, despite my rustic exterior,¹²² one who looks after the horses and tackle of the king. But what he orders me to do is against the law of God.' He then had him chained and brought before the king. This happened at Karkha Ladhan. The king subjected Christians to all sorts of torture. But the Catholicos gave them strength and reminded them of the suffering of Jesus and strengthened their faith and their soul.

Gushtazad was brought before the king. He confessed his Christianity, but after several interviews he denied it and worshipped the sun and fire. Simeon grieved when he learned of this. Gushtazad repented when he realized his error. He sent to ask for forgiveness from Simeon, who said: 'Your sin will be forgiven only if you confess your faith in Him on the spot where you rejected Him.'

Discussions between Simeon and Shapur lasted until the latter asked the former to worship the sun and fire. Their discussion continued without a break. The saint used no insulting or wounding words. The king finally ordered his execution and that of his companions. Gushtazad ran to him and shouted out his Christianity, begging the king to let it be known that he had not been condemned to death for a crime but for loyalty to his faith. He was beheaded like the others. Simeon asked to be the last and this was granted to him. While they were being taken to their death in groups of ten, he would give them courage: 'Remember the words of Christ: *Do not fear those who kill the body because they cannot kill the soul* and *The one who loves his soul will lose it for my sake and the one who loses it will save it.*¹²³ He blessed them and wiped their faces, saying: 'Christ, Lord of the Universe, receive this agreeable victim who is sacrificed for your sake. May his blood be a sacrifice for mankind.' The assembly replied: 'Amen.' They underwent martyrdom. None turned his neck away or trembled at the sight of what was awaiting him. Simeon then began to chant the hymn sung on the first Sunday after East: *Be firm and cast off your outer*

122 This reading is not certain, but I think Simeon is politely telling the gatekeeper that, despite his appearance, he is not a person to be trifled with.

123 Matth. 10, 28 and 39

*garments ...*¹²⁴ The faithful, present but concealed because of the infidels, retained this hymn and wrote it down, and they are the source of it. He received it while the tears flowed down his white beard and his children were being slaughtered like sheep. He continued to preach to them, saying that though they were leaving their outer garments, their bodies, they were not leaving their inner jewels, baptism and faith. He kept saying: 'How brilliant these crowns are ...'¹²⁵ They do not differ from each other but are all of the same kind.'

The last two were Simeon and aged priest called Ananias. Simeon saw that he was trembling. He hastened to him: 'Do not be afraid, my brother. Close your eyes while the surgeon's knife passes over. He was beheaded like the others. The saint was then led away to be executed, crying out 'I bless God Who has shown me the crowns of my brothers and I thank God Who has not let me lose any of my children. I pray for all men and the earth that has drunk the blood of the martyrs.' Also: 'Lord God, make this earth a place of mercy and this mud a medicine for the cure of illnesses.' At the end of his prayer a terrifying voice was heard saying: 'Amen.' The hearts of the those in attendance were troubled and their spirits deadened. They hastened to behead him. This took place on a Friday, the day of the Crucifixion at the ninth hour of the day. During the night young prisoners of Karkha of Ladhan came to take the bodies of those they knew and buried them. They were on their guard because they feared the persecutions of their enemies. A great wind came and deposited dust on the spot where the saint and his companions had been killed to form a high hill. Simeon was Catholicos for eighteen years. Some say that it happened on the 13th or 14th of April. He is commemorated on the first Friday of the month, the day known as the Small Branches.

The first Friday after the Resurrection is called Commemoration of the Confessors because Shapur, after executing Simeon and his companions, proclaimed that those who wished to remain Christian should do in secret and those who were open about their religion would be put to death. Christians began to rush to the doors of Shapur to confess and obtain the crown of martyrdom. They came spontaneously, men, women and children, When Shapur saw the crowd of those prepared to die, he ordered them not to be killed, not out of pity, but because

124 This seems to be what the Syriac text says.

125 Lacuna

he wanted to deny them the magnificent reward they sought. People went about their business, and a general Commemoration of Confessors was appointed for them, in which all were associated because they had been willing to die.

The people then came to find the bishop of Ladhan and asked him for parts of the martyrs' bodies to keep in their churches as a blessing. He gave them parts of the blood-soaked garments, which wrought great miracles and performed acts of healing.

We have given here only a short summary of the story of our father the holy martyr because it is very long. We have said nothing of the faithful of Deir al Ahmar and Beit Garmai, Ninive, Maraj and many other cities, where 60,000 Christians were killed. About 30,000 were killed in Iraq. The Church was without a head for a long time. It is said that on Maundy Thursday, the eve of his death in prison, Simeon said Mass. The back of one of the priests also imprisoned with him served as an altar. On his right was the patena and the left the chalice. He sang the hymn of the Mass: *By the eyes of the Spirit*. Since that day this hymn has been sung on Maundy Thursday.

28. In the Days of Simeon the Catholicos

At the time of Simeon Constantine divided his empire among his three sons: the eldest Constantine, the second Constantius, the third Constans. Each was a Caesar. The name of Caesar began with Marcianus Caius, who brought the kingdom of Macedonia to Rome.¹²⁶ The Romans relate that the mother of Julius Caesar died before giving birth, and her son was removed from the womb by cutting it open, and this is why he is called Caesar. The name has remained with Roman Emperors.

At the death of Constantine the Great his son Constantine reigned alone over the West. He had made his home during the lifetime of his father, while he was with him at Constantinople. Constantius took the East, with Antioch as his residence. Constans reigned

¹²⁶ Macedonia became part of the Roman Empire in 146 BC as the result of a victory Quintus Metellus over the last Macedonian king.

over the high countries of the Romans.¹²⁷ Three years after the death of his father Constantius attacked his older brother, killed and took his part of the empire. Shapur took the opportunity to invade the Eastern provinces and took prisoners because there was division there. Magnentius attacked Constans and killed him after he had been Emperor for five years. He was a devout believer, like his older brother. The whole empire reverted to Constantius, who attacked Magnentius, putting him to flight. Pursued by Constantius, Magnentius killed his brother, his mother and finally himself. Rid of him, Constantius became sole Emperor. He built several cities in the West and Tell Mazwan in the East, to which he gave his name. He assembled 140 bishops at Seleucia in Syria and exiled anyone opposed to the faith of the 318. He exiled Eunomius bishop of Cyzicus, who had broken with the Arius sect and invented his own particular heresy. At the end of his life Constantius changed his belief and adopted that of Eusebius that said: 'Two Beings whose birth is different. Their substance is also different. The Father is different from the Son, who cannot be said to be consubstantial with the Father.' Constantius exiled Athanasius Patriarch of Alexandria and the faithful. He later repented and abandoned this teaching, returning to the true faith. When he left to do battle with his cousin Julian, he passed through Cilicia, where he died aged 45. He had reigned for 38 years, 13 of them with his father.

At that time the Patriarch of Constantinople was Alexander, one of the 318. He was Patriarch for 23 years. Before his death he asked Paul to be his successor, and he was Patriarch for two years. Constantius then exiled him and replaced him with the Arian Eusebius of Nicomedia, who lasted for eighteen months. Paul and Athanasius then went to Rome to find the Emperor Constant, who wrote to his brother to have them recalled from exile, adding that if this did not happen, he would attack him. Constantius assembled the bishops and asked for their opinion. They advised him to do as his brother had asked, so the two bishops were recalled. At the death of Constant he persecuted them again and had Paul exiled. Athanasius had been warned and he fled. He wrote an apologia about what he had done, showing that a man has to feel from a monarch persecuting him. He supported this argument with texts taken from the prophets and the apostles. The Arians seized Paul and executed him after he had been Patriarch for four years.

¹²⁷ Italy and Africa, to which were added Illyria and Thrace.

At that time a hateful teaching made its appearance. A number of the fathers assembled and excommunicated those who believed it.

29. Story of Shahdost the Martyr and Tenth Catholicos

The name 'Shahdost' is Persian and means 'friend of the king'. He was from Beit Garmai, but some say he was from Susa. He was the archdeacon of Simeon bar Sabbae. As the Church was without a head after the death of Simeon, he offered himself to Our Lord Jesus Christ and was secretly named Patriarch. He was a good and pious man. It is said that the fathers and the faithful in secret prayed to God, wrote several names and drew lots. The name of Shahdost was drawn. He accepted the charge entrusted to him without fear of death and was invested as Patriarch in the house of a Christian. He chose those who were to replace the fathers martyred with Simeon. Among them was Barbâ'ashmin, the nephew of Simeon bar Sabbae. They pledge to die for their flock. They visited Christians night and day to give them strength to resist the persecution of Shapur. Then the authority of Shahdost became clear and he was arrested by the Magi. Three nights previously he had a dream, in which he saw a ladder on the ground pointing to the sky. Simeon was standing on the ladder and saying: 'Shahdost, come up to me, as I came up here.' He knew what it meant. He spoke to the faithful, who became worried about him. Three days later he was seized at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, with 128 bishops, priests, deacons, monks and nuns. They remained in prison for five months, were subjected to all manner of torture and were urged to accept the religion of the Magi, but they did not give in. The satrap of Seleucia-Ctesiphon had 120 of them killed and then sent Shahdost with the nuns to Shapur. When the Patriarch appeared before Shapur, the king said to him: 'I killed Simeon the head of the Christians and many bishops and priests. Why have you become the head of these people whom I detest?' Shahdost replied: 'The head of the Christians is God and it is He who gives them the leader of His choice. In the same way that the water of the sea will not dry up, Christianity cannot be destroyed. The more you massacre them, the more they will multiply.' The wretch became angry with him, but then tried a gentle approach to persuade him to worship the sun and spoke kindly that he might embrace the religion of the Magi. He did not get a

favourable answer from him, but only coarse language and harsh words. Shapur ordered him to be killed, and Shahdost was executed on the same spot as Simeon. His companions were also killed. This happened in March after five months in prison. Among those killed were Miles al Razi and his pupil Aborsam, and others including the two sisters of Simeon. The faithful took their bodies and buried them in the church. According to what this story shows about him, his period (of office) was two years and five months.

30. Among the noble men of those days was

Gregory, whose name means 'the wakeful', also called the Theologian, which means the one who speaks of divine matters. He came from Caesarea, from a village called Arianze. His father, also called Gregory, was a Samaritan. His mother, Nonna, was Christian. When she became pregnant, she vowed that she would send her child to a monastery if it were a boy and that her husband would convert. This was at time of the meeting of the 318. His father had a dream in which he believed that he was reciting the Psalm that begins¹²⁸: *I rejoiced when I was told that we were going to the House of the Lord*. He became afraid. after a long His wife gently did so much to bring him to the faith that, after a long period of persuasion, he responded to her desire. He went to find a priest to receive baptism. As is customary the priest said: 'You are receiving baptism and renouncing Satan and his minions.' But he made an error and said: 'You will govern the Church without shame,', as is said over a bishop. When the priest had finished, he saw the neophyte enveloped in a dazzling light and predicted that he would on day become a bishop. In fact he was named Gregory of Nazianze towards the end of his life. He was of outstanding virtue and extremely learned.

¹²⁸ Ps. 122, 1. There are three words before the quotation, which look like Arabic words but do not make any sense to me. There are three words that preface this Psalm but they are quite different: (English) 'Song of degrees of Savic'.