

Chronicle of Séert: 3

Anthony Alcock

This is what Archbishop Scher calls Part Two of the Chronicle. What follows here is the first section of Part Two and covers the period 484 to 650 AD. The manuscript obviously passed through the hands of Ebedjesus Khayyat, the Catholic Archbishop of Dyarbekir and later Patriarch of Babylon (1860 to 1899), for it bears pencil notes made by him.

The longest section in the work is devoted to Joseph, a Catholicos of an interestingly varied character (section 32 pp. 176-188). From the outset it seems clear enough that he is an able physician, but that all is not well with him is signalled perhaps by the information that he is honoured by the Marzbân 'because of his clothing' (بسب لباسه). His self-indulgence and contempt for his fellow Christians are perhaps what make him interesting enough to justify this relatively long section on him.

I understand from Philip Wood¹ that an English translation with commentary of the second section of Part Two (*Patrologia Orientalis* 13 pp.438-636) is to appear in a series of translations (Texts in Translation) published by Liverpool University Press. It thus seems pointless for me to continue this series, which was originally intended to present a translation of this relatively long text in two parts.

I have referred to several dictionaries:

W.E. Crum *Coptic Dictionary* (1939)

E.W. Lane *Arabic-English Lexicon* (1863)

H. Wehr (tr. J.M Cowan) *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (1971)

J. Payne-Smith *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (1903).

I have just come across a book that has helped me thread my way through nomenclature and other things by Aubrey R. Vine *The Nestorian Churches* (1937).

¹ *The Chronicle of Séert* (Oxford, 2013)

1. Baboi the 20th Catholicos

[Beginning is missing]

[Baboi received] from them² a lot of money. He deposed those who had sees because they had insulted him when he was in prison.

In his time there was only trouble and confusion: men and women began to conspire to elect Bishops and, by means of bribery, have them consecrated.

People said: 'This one is the Bishop of so-and-so. That one is the Bishop of so-and-so.' The faithful ran the affairs of the Church, offered the Eucharist in their houses and baptized people outside the Church. The Bishops allowed women to enter the baptistery to see the baptism. Shameful things were done, adultery was common, monks and priests married illicitly. If someone were excommunicated for a sin and denied entry into the church, they were able to receive the sacraments in the houses of the faithful.

The fathers, after witnessing this, gathered in the 25th year of Piroz³ to censure Baboi for his conduct. They established canons to prohibit marriage with the father's wife, the brother's wife, with two women and many other things. Baboi was on the side of his brother Bishops and excommunicated them, but they in turn anathematized whoever transgressed against what they had just prescribed.

Barsuma Bishop of Nisibis wrote a letter in which he he allowed priests and monks to marry if they were unable to live chastely. He used the words of Paul as a justification: 'It is better to marry than burn with desire.'⁴ The Bishops with him approved this decree.

In year twenty-six of Piroz⁵ a persecution against the Christians broke out in Seleucia-Ctesiphon. He ordered Christians to call the sun 'god', and fire, water and the stars

2 The Bishops

3 Probably year 27 (484 AD), according to footnote 2 (p. 100). Synod of Beit Lapat (484 AD) in J. Chabot *Synodicon Orientale* (1902) pp. 308ff

4 1 Cor. 7,9

5 Reigned from 459 AD to 484 AD.

'children of the gods'. Those who refused were tortured. Christians were in great distress: some persevered, others succumbed. Baboi was alarmed and wrote to Zeno the Emperor to tell him what was happening to his flock and to ask him to write to Piroz that he might alleviate their suffering. He enclosed the letter in the hollow of a reed and sent it via messenger. On his arrival at Nisibis he was recognized by the followers of Barsuma, who intercepted it and sent it to Piroz. Others say that it was Barsuma himself.

The King summoned Baboi and returned the letter to him with his seal. Unable to deny its authenticity, he had put into the letter what Hanania and his companions had said concerning Nebuchadnezzar, to wit, that God had delivered him to an impious government, the worst of all governments on earth.⁶ The King had the message translated into Persian and became angry with Baboi: 'You deserve death because you have called my kingdom tyrannical and impious. I ought to have put you to death on the day when you disobeyed me by designating Bishops. But I did not, and your insolence has surpassed itself.'

The Christians present explained to Piroz that Baboi's phrase 'impious government' meant one opposed to Christians. 'If he had not said this, the Byzantines would have thought that you were a Christian, and that is why you think he has dishonoured your kingdom.' Baboi defended himself: 'I always pray for the King. I bless him and his kingdom.' Piroz replied: 'Your crime is too great to be pardoned. If the friendship you have just spoken of is sincere, worship the sun that I may see it.' Baboi refused. Piroz ordered him to be hanged on a gibbet by the same finger that bore the ring which he had used to seal the letter. He was hanged outside Seleucia-Ctesiphon by his small finger and was left there until he died. People from Hira took his body to their town, where they buried it. His name was inscribed with those of the martyrs. He had been Patriarch for twenty years.

2. The Emperor Leo

In year 769 of Alexander Leo became Emperor.⁷ He was courageous and was an orthodox supporter of the doctrine of Chalcedon. Timothy Patriarch of Alexandria and his

⁶ Daniel 3,32

⁷ 457-474 AD

supporters tried to make him renounce it.⁸ He even gathered fifty Bishops to find out about the 318 faith. He followed the orthodox faith revealed by them and sent dissidents into exile. At Constantinople there was a great earthquake that destroyed many houses and churches.⁹

3. Anatolius Patriarch of Constantinople

This pure man allowed Dioscorus to think that he held the same faith as he held.¹⁰ But at the Council of Chalcedon he anathematized Dioscorus and championed the faith of Pope Leo. He governed the church for twenty-one years. He testified in favour of the orthodoxy of Ibas Bishop of Edessa and Theodoret of Cyrrhus and attested that their only aim in anathematizing Nestorius was to allow matters to move on. They all professed the Two Natures. You can see this in their books and letters.

The teaching of the Theopaschites was unknown in the East. All the orientals held to the orthodox faith transmitted by Addia, Mari and their pious successors.

After peace had been concluded¹¹ between Yazdgerd and Theodosius, several Persians, in the hope of acquiring knowledge, went to Edessa, where they heard the words of Dioscorus and his followers, who had been anathematized at Chalcedon for professing and teaching One Nature in Christ. Their doctrine spread and took root. Among its adherents were Jacob Baradaeus, Jacob of Saroug Bishop of Batnan, Severus, Peter the Small, Philoxenus of Mabboug - may the Almighty make them and their innovations detestable. Their story, God willing, will find a place in this work.

4. The Emperor Zeno

In year 783 of Alexander Leo died and was succeeded by his son-in-law Zeno, of senatorial family, courageous and a leader of highwaymen.¹²

8 Timothy II (Aelurus), 457-460 and 475-477.

9 Evagrius *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2,12 calls it a fire

10 Leo Epist. 40

11 Theodosius made a treaty with Yazdgerd, but in 417 AD

12 قطاع الطريق

Leo had been warned of a plot orchestrated against him by his generals. He punished them and escaped their treachery. Now, Zeno enjoyed the estimation of the Emperor, who named him general of his army and sent him against the barbarians who had invaded his empire. Zeno despatched them and Leo married him to his daughter and left his empire to him. After the death of Leo, the leading figures gathered and nominated Zeno's son, the grandson of Leo. His mother said to him: 'When your father comes to you, take the crown off your head and put it on his.' When the people, accompanied by Zeno, came to pay their respects to the young King, he did what his mother had told him to do. The Byzantines praised God and thanked Leo with expressions of joy.

Zeno became Emperor. But his mother-in-law subsequently betrayed him. She urged her brother to betray him and Zeno was attacked and driven from the empire. But two years later he was recalled by army veterans and put his mother-in-law and her brother to death two years later. As master of the entire empire he drove out the heretics and subscribed to the Dyophysite teaching. But at the end of his life he changed his mind and protected Peter the Fuller. He made peace with the King of Persia. During his reign Syria was devastated by a great famine. His reign lasted seventeen years.

5. Death of Piroz

Two years after his return from the land of the Turks and his deliverance from the hands of the King of the Haital¹³ to exact vengeance for the affront he had suffered, returned to his position, violating the alliance he had made with these peoples, breaking the treaty and intent on killing their King. Without a thought for the patience of God with him, he vowed that, if he came back safe and sound, he would destroy Christianity. His heart became as hard as that of Pharaoh. The wretch did not know that it was there that punishment awaited him. Before he left he told the Marzbân of Iraq¹⁴ to destroy churches and monasteries before his return. He destroyed the School of Mar 'Abda¹⁵ and many monasteries. The Christians were afflicted by this, and many of them took refuge in

13 Bactria. The Ephthalites.

14 Scher: 'En syriaque: Beit Aramaye'.

15 This observation is merely by way of comparison: the 'School' here is dedicated to Christian learning, whereas the only comparable institution in Egypt, for example, was dedicated to pre-Christian learning and the word 'school' occurs probably less frequently in Coptic texts. Another point of comparison is lexical: Syriac uses the Greek term $\rho\alpha\sigma\kappa\omicron\lambda\omicron\varsigma$, while Coptic uses the native word ΔNCHBE .

faraway countries. On his way Piroz massacred 300 Christians.

The Haital saw his return and his treacherousness and waged a savage war on him, in which most of his soldiers were killed, the others taking flight. Piroz, fearful of being taken captive, threw himself on his sword, like Saul¹⁶ and killed himself. The Haital did not know this until they found his body among the dead.

God delivered people from him: his plans had rebounded on him and his violence revisited him. God had averted this blow from the Christians and did not deliver them to him. In this way He had punished Pharaoh, having him swallowed up by the sea because he had resolved to harm the children of Israel, and it was also how He had killed Sennacherib in the temple of his idols, for he had sworn to kill the children of Israel and destroy Jerusalem.

6. Gennadius Patriarch of Constantinople

Anatolius was succeeded by Gennadius as Patriarch of Constantinople. His was a time when the Church and the empire were disturbed in the East and the West. In the East Barsuma was struggling against Baboi. Peter the Fuller, Patriarch of Antioch, supported by Zeno, was disturbing the West and anathematizing anyone who professed the Two Nature in Christ. Gennadius and Felix, Pope of Rome, opposed him. His successor Hilidyon¹⁷ was Patriarch, who died in a village fire three years later.

7. Monk and demon

There was hermit in the desert. Sata, disguised as a monk, went to the hermit to ask if he would take him in and make use of his services. The monk agreed and took him in. After several years the accursed devil said to him: 'I would like some meat. If you help me, we can slaughter a sheep, which we can eat together.' The monk refused: 'God would not be

¹⁶ I Sam. 31, 3

¹⁷ Critical apparatus: Acacius (اقاقیوس)

pleased if I broke my agreement with Him. As for you, if you cannot control your appetite, eat what you will.' After several vain attempts to persuade the hermit, the demon brought a sheep, slaughtered it, roasted it and ate it in the hermit's presence. To tempt him, he left the hermit alone and put two kidneys on the window, as if he had forgotten them. The hermit saw them and supposed that his companion had forgotten them. He roasted one and ate it. The demon returned and commented that one of them had gone. He knew that the hermit had eaten it but said nothing.

Some time later the demon said: 'Why live here ? We can be of no use to our brothers. Let us go into the town. I know a place with a lot of money. We will take it and build a monastery, where monks can live and we can receive strangers and travellers. In this way we will deserve repayment.' The monk agreed and they set off to the house of a rich man, which they entered. It was night time. The wretched demon took a basket full of gold coins and put it on the head of the monk. As the monk reached the door, the demon woke the owner of the house, saying: 'Stop ! Thief ! He has taken everything in the house.' The house-owner rose immediately, took the basket without a word and imprisoned the hermit for delivery to the governor on the next day.

The demon came to visit him and, seeing him weeping and tearing his hair out, said: 'Let me give you some advice. If you follow it, you will be set free and have the money. When the house-owner comes to accuse you before the governor and brings the basket as evidence of theft, deny it and say' "I am not a thief. I am a carpenter monk. This man hired me to work for several days but did not pay me. When I claimed my rights, he argued with me, imprisoned me and called me a thief. To see if I am telling the truth, please look in the basket, which contains only the tools of a carpenter." I will ensure, with my magic spells, that the coins look like tools. If the governor believes this, he will give you the tools back and make sure you receive your wages. Thus you will be saved. If he gives you the money, we can divide it into three parts: one for you, one for me and the third for the one who ate the kidney.'

The hermit did what the demon said. He received the basket and his wages and went away in astonishment. Later, he met the demon, who said: 'You did well to follow my advice. I am not a man but a demon, an angel fallen from celestial glory. I wanted to repent and live

with monks. Having been received by God, I wanted to tell you, you and the other monks, how you must be on your guard. Go now and build a monastery with the money you have just got, to receive strangers. Pray for me. I told you to divide the money and give one part to the one who ate the kidney to warn you of your action that you may embrace the truth that you possess and not exchange it for dishonesty. I tempted you with meat, and you ate it; with money, and you stole it; with vainglory, and you were seduced into building a monastery. I overcame you. Now, persevere in prayer and be on your guard and put others on their guard against demons, whose only purpose is to destroy men.'

The demon parted and never appeared again. We beg God to deliver us from the perversity of mischief makers.

8. Acacius the 21st Catholicos

After the martyrdom of Baboi Acacius the doctor¹⁸ was elected Catholicos. He was related to Baboi, as he mentions in a letter to Barsuma. Acacius studied at the School in Edessa. He studied with Theodulus, a pupil of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who blessed him and named him 'pillar of the East'. He was good and virtuous. After some friction between Barsuma and Baboi, he went to Seleucia-Ctesiphon, where he taught for as long as Baboi lived, helping and supporting him with the Bishops against Barsuma. He wrote a refutation of the letter written Barsuma against the Catholicos. When he was head of the Church, he directed matters wisely. His opponents, the Magi, maltreated and imprisoned him for some time. The supporters of Barsuma, who hated him, accused him of adultery, but their accusation was unsuccessful. Acacius was able to refute his enemies by showing himself naked to the Bishops, who were able to see that he was a eunuch, which made his accusers blush.

He went to Constantinople during the reign of Zeno and asked him to recall the Bishops he had exiled. He wrote a treatise on faith, in which he refuted those who professed One Nature. He also wrote three other discourses on fasting. Both Greeks and Persian bear witness to his wisdom and virtue.

18 ملفان: seems to be a transcription of the Syriac ܡܠܦܢܐ, which refers to a learned person.

9. Mar Narsai the doctor

This venerable saint was from a village called in the region of Ma'althâye. Together with Acacius he went to visit Theodulus, who blessed him and called him 'the tongue of the East', which he was. He remained for twenty years at Edessa. The dissidents, when they learned that he professed the same faith as Diodorus and Theodore, tried to burn his cell down. He fled to Nisibis, where he found a small School set up by Simeon Gramaquiya and settled there. Barsuma took up his cause and supported him. Many went to stay with him. The Syrians at Edessa also withdrew to be with him. He wrote 360 metrical homilies, one for each day of the year in 12 volumes. In them he refutes the work of Jacob Saroug and revealed the malicious nature of his belief. He also wrote a book called *Corruption of Morals*, in which he discussed what was being done by heretic priests and monks. He wrote commentaries on the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Twelve Minor Prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel. He also wrote funeral orations. When he left Edessa, his books, or some of them, were burned by dissidents. He died after having lived in Nisibis for forty years and was buried in the church still known today by his name.

He had two disciples, Abraham and John, who followed in his footsteps. Abraham wrote commentaries on Isaac, Joshua, Judges, Ezekiel, Daniel, Ecclesiastes, the Twelve Minor Prophets, Book of Kings, Song of Songs, poetry, letters and a treatise on the reason for setting up schools. He directed the School at Nisibis for about 60 years and had more 1,000 disciples.

John compiled a volume of questions and commentaries on the Pentateuch, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Job, a polemic against Jews and one against Magi. He also composed funeral orations, homilies, discourses on the rogations¹⁹ and one on the death of Chosroes Qabad.

Ma'ana, who was named Metropolitan of Persia, was also with Narsai, Barsuma and Acacius at the School of Edessa. He was originally from Shiraz. When nominated Metropolitan, he translated the works of Diodorus and Theodore from Greek into Syriac.

¹⁹ The Syriac is very similar to the Arabic

Mâna and Ma'ana, Metropolitans of Persia, almost contemporaries of Theodore, had not translated them. It was this saint who proclaimed the orthodox faith in Persian after Mâna and Ma'ana. Ibas Bishop of Edessa wrote to Mari about what had happened to Nestorius with Cyril. Ma'ana compiled religious odes, poetry and hymns in Persian. He sent the books to the maritime countries and India. At first he was hostile to Baboi and supported Barsuma, but after participating in the council of Acaccius, he revised his initial opinions.

10. Anastasius the Emperor.

Events concerning Severus and his followers.

In Alexander 802, the year in which Piroz died, Anastasius became Emperor. He followed the faith of Severus, One Nature, and abandoned the belief of Macedonius Patriarch of Constantinople. Two wretches, Damastius the sophist and Mazfûla, had joined him and told him of the error of the dissidents. On the order of Anastasius, Severus and his followers gathered and anathematized those who professed the Two Natures and accepted the decrees of the Chalcedonian fathers, whom they excommunicated. They added to the *Sanctus immortalis* the words *Qui crucifixus es pro nobis*. People became agitated and tried to depose the King: 'How could he reign over us, the one who attributes the suffering of the Cross to Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth ?' The head of the army of Anastasius, who was orthodox, rebelled and marched against him. Confronted by this danger, Anastasius removed his crown and promised to rectify what he had done if the army did not rebel. Peace returned. But as soon as the *magister militum* withdrew to Thrace, Anastasius reverted to his former impiety. He restored the Trisagion, killed several hermits and exiled many of the orthodox fathers as a favour to the wretched Severus and his followers.

In the tenth year of his reign, on the 2nd of Hazîrân²⁰ at 9 am, there was a solar eclipse: the world was shrouded in darkness for four hours so that nothing was visible. There was a terrible earthquake at Constantinople. Large numbers of locusts came and ravaged the crops. For fourteen months the disc of the sun appeared to be uneven. This astonished everyone, who thought it was punishment for the exile of the fathers. The town of Nicopolis collapsed and swallowed up its inhabitants.

²⁰ June. An eclipse at Constantinople, that can be dated to June 29 512 AD ('six years before the death of Anastasius'), is recorded by John Lydus *De Ostentis* 6.

The Emperor and Severus believed that God was punishing those He loved. Anastasius supported the dissidents throughout his life. Severus came from Asia. He was a pagan and studied philosophy in Palestine. He was baptized at a monastery in Constantinople, known as that of Theodore and built by Eutychian monks. The monks did not permit baptism or the priesthood, claiming that all had been corrupted since Chalcedon, which professed Two Natures. The abbot of the monastery was called Epiphanius. When he fell ill, the monks said: 'What happens to us if he dies ? Who will transmit the priesthood to this congregation, which has no Bishop ?' The abbot blessed a headcloth and said to them: 'If you wish to ordain a priest or deacon, put this on his head.' After his death, his right hand was cut off, embalmed and put it with the headcloth. It was in this monastery that Severus settled. Philoxenus and the Bishops, his supporters, saw his wisdom and ability to defend their sect and elected him Patriarch. Severus, supported by Amantius the chamberlain of the Emperor,²¹ gathered together his followers and anathematized all those at Chalcedon who professed Two Natures. The birds of gold, which Constantine had had made and placed in the baptistery of the church in Antioch, were taken by Severus, melted down and given to his accomplice. Hormisdas Pope of Rome, having learned of this, gathered together the fathers and anathematized Severus. The latter begged Anastasius for help and caused a lot of grief. He sent legates to Persia with letters proclaiming his belief.

Jacob of Saroug, an orthodox student of Barsuma at Edessa who defended the Chalcedon fathers professing the Two Natures, saw that the Emperor was supporting the sect of Severus, abandoned his belief and went over to the heretics, an enemy of the truth. He was consecrated Bishop of Batnan by Severus and Philoxenus. His works include poems about the dispensation of Our Lord, in which he defended even the doctrine of Julian, who taught the immortality of the body of Our Lord, and that of Severus and his followers who admitted only One Nature and the hypostatic union, in a very general sense. He sent his books and discourses to Syria, where they were received by the Severans and those who professed the Two Natures. Impostor ! He attributed the suffering and death to the divine essence. He gave his name to the Jacobites, which is still used.

صاحب الملك 21

11. Milas King of Persia

After the death of Piroz the Persians could not agree about a successor. Ultimately Milas was chosen in place of Qabad. Milas was tolerant of Christians. Churches were rebuilt and he welcomed the Catholicos Acacius when he came to visit.

In year two of his reign the heretics and followers of Severus began to disseminate their doctrine in Persia and corrupt people's belief. They were able to instruct and baptize them and build churches for them with ease and rapidity. The Catholicos learned of this and anathematized them together with all enemies of the orthodox faith. He established canons for ecclesiastical discipline. He ordered monks and the devout to make their homes far from people, forbidding them to live in towns, villages and places where there were Bishops and priests, offer up the Eucharist, baptize and thus corrupt the laws of the Church, causing trouble among the faithful.

He did this because of the heretics, who had come to Persia and pretended to be ascetics. He anathematized those who resisted what he had just established. He made peace with Barsuma and began to correspond with him. He annulled all the anathemas and interdicts that Baboi and Barsuma had made against each other.

On the death of Acacius Patriarch of Constatinople Euphemius became the next Patriarch. He was old and well read in the writings of the Interpreter, in which he took pride. He was the friend and correspondent of Barsuma the Metropolitan of Nisibis. He was accused before Anastasius of being a Nestorian. It is said that he refused to be pressurized by the Emperor to anathematize Diodorus, Theodore and Nestorius and their followers. He was exiled and replaced by Macedonius the monk, who was an orthodox believer in the Two Natures. Anastasius did not know until after his election. He called for a synod, in which he anathematized Dioscorus and his Council. He even reproached Anastasius for his belief. The latter became angry and banished him on the pretext that he accepted the belief of Eutychius and Apollinarius.

12. Qabad King of Persia

When the Persians elected Milas, son Piroz, and rejected Qabad, the latter withdrew angrily to the King of the Hephtharities and told him the story of Milas before his accession. He was well received and stayed there for three years. In the fourth year he sent him with his troops to fight his brother. On his arrival at Seleucia-Ctesiphon he found him dead. So people gave up war and bloodshed. He had reigned four years. Some say that he was killed after his eyes had been gouged out. He had built a town on the banks of the Zab in the territory of Marga.

Qabad reigned without difficulty. He sent gifts to the Hephtharite King. Far from punishing his subjects for what they had done, he was benevolent. He was the gentlest Persian King and the most knowledgeable about Magism. At the beginning of his reign he started building towns and villages of wood and stone. He built bridges and dams on the rivers that he might bring water in difficult places. He built many villages in Mosul and Iraq, where he brought people from elsewhere to work on the fields. He allowed churches and monasteries to be built. He supported the teaching of Zarâdost, who acknowledged two great and eternal principles and the commonality of women, to wit, that no man should ally himself to one woman to the exclusion of others. He also built temples and hotels²² to bring the most pleasure-addicted men and women, who were incapable of self-restraint. This upset the Magi because of their wives and children.

Like Julian the Emperor, he reduced kitchen expenses. on the grounds that luxury of that sort stems from prodigality. He followed the Byzantines by digging irrigation canals to improve agriculture. He hated war. The Magi asked to repeal laws in which he prescribed the practices of Zoroastrianism. His reason for refusing this: 'Magism orders a woman not to have a secret affair with a man other than her husband. If she bears the child of another man, she has to give it up to him.' They tried to kill him but were unsuccessful. After ten years on the throne they were able to depose him.

22 Ar. word still used in this sense: فندق

13. Elisha the doctor and Metropolitan of Nisibis

Qabad ordered each religion in the empire to draw up a document outlining its faith to be presented to him. Acacius, unable to work on it because he was otherwise engaged in church matters, wrote to Elisha, who had been an exegete at Nisibis and one of those who had left Edessa with Narsai, to ask him to prove in writing the reality and orthodoxy of Christianity. He produced a book with 38 chapters on the divine essence, the Trinity, the Creation, the Hexameron, the creation of man and the angels, the fall of Satan and the Coming of Our Lord to the end of time. He sent it to Acacius, who translated it into Persian and presented it Qaba. The same doctor also compiled commentaries on the Pauline letters, Job, Joshua and Judges. He completed the commentary of Theodore on Samuel from the first prayer he had made. He also wrote the *Reason for Founding Schools*.

14. Damâsf Persian King

The Magi deposed Qabad and chose Damâsf.²³ Qabad was imprisoned. Despite repeated efforts his sister never managed to visit him. She appealed directly to Damâsf, who yielded to her requests and allowed to stay with her brother in prison. She was tireless in her cunning attempts to liberate him. Finally she resorted to the following stratagem: she wrapped her brother in a mat²⁴ and claiming that these were the clothes she had been using during her menstruation period, she summoned the launderer to take them and wash them.²⁵ The prison guards would not go near for fear of being polluted. So Qabad escaped and fled to the land²⁶ of the Turks, with whom he had been on close friendly terms since his visit at the time of his father. He asked for and received an armed force with which he returned to his country and overthrew Damâsf after two years and expelled him. He killed several Magi and imprisoned others. He was benevolent to Christians because they had helped him flee to the land of the Turks.

23 I have written what is in Arabic. Scher: Zamasp.

24 Ar. فراش. Cf. Coptic $\pi\rho\eta\omega$ Crum 271a. J. Černý *Coptic Etymological Dictionary* (1975) p 128 thinks that the Egyptian word is of Dentic origin.

25 Perhaps the parallel may strike some as irreverent, but extraction from prison via the laundry, with the help of the jailer's daughter, also features prominently in the *Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame (1913).

26 The text seems to say بلد, but the critical apparatus has an unexplained ملكت, translated as 'King'.

15. Babai 23rd Catholicos

Acacius - may his prayers be with us - died in year ten of Qabad. The Bishop of Hîra, his disciple, transported his body to Hîra, where he buried him. Damâsf was King. The Christians needed to elect a Catholicos. Damâsf had a Christian astrologer called Mûsa. He asked his master for permission to have a Catholicos elected. When asked all the fathers chose a man of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, related to Mûsa the astrologer, and secretary of the Marzbân of Beit Aramâye.²⁷ His name was Babai, son of Hormizd. He was very old and had a wife and children. He was virtuous and learned in the Scriptures. He provided hospitality to bishops and strangers, imitating the conduct of monks and saints. Babai refused, but the bishops would not leave him until they had made him Catholicos. Both Damâsf and Qabad, after his return from the land of the Turks, were both favourable to him.

Babai gathered together 32 fathers. He made Church laws. He rejected the writings of Baboi, Barsuma and Acacius and their anathemas. He agreed to what they had said about marriage and ordered all the ministers of the church to contract open marriage with one woman only. He ordered a synod to be held every four years on the second of Tishrin,²⁸ near the Catholicos, to regulate the affairs of the church and provide assistance.

One day he appeared with Mûsa before Damâsf, who said to them: 'Why do you honour the bones of the dead? Dead bodies decay and become dust. Why do you venerate them and not put them in coffins, like the Magi?' 'We know that death is a state of inertia and bodies become dust. But we believe that they will be more beautiful and striking on their resurrection than they were before. This teaching has been given to us: "All men will be resurrected to immortality."²⁹ As Christ was resurrected, so will we be. Like the grain that dies in the earth and loses its beauty, it pushes up to be more beautiful than it was, and so will the children of Adam. If you do not believe what I have just said, consider that man owes his existence to a drop that forms in the darkness of the interior.³⁰ He then receives limbs, vein and bones, and after nine months, by the power of the Almighty God, he comes

27 Ar. 'Nabt territory' (بلد النبط)

28 November

29 1 Cor. 15,52

30 الحشا

perfectly formed. So it is with the resurrection and change of man and state of the bodies after the resurrection.'

He approved of what he had heard. Babai came away from him in joy. Matters went well in the days of Babai, who was Catholicos for five years before he died.

16. A pleasant story

This story was told by one of the fathers. In a certain place there was a rich woman, very charitable and virtuous. One of her neighbours was a poor widow, to whom she gave alms. One day the widow was with the rich woman, who had taken out her jewels to adorn herself after finishing her work. She was unable to find her pearl necklace. She looked everywhere and suspected that the widow had stolen it and demanded it back. The widow denied this and swore that she knew nothing about it. She would never repay her kindness with such a despicable act. The dispute continued and people got to know about it. Given the impossibility of finding witnesses, it was decided to make the accused swear an oath and excommunicate the one who had stolen the necklace. Both women agreed to this. A vigil priest³¹ who happened to be passing on his way to church with a child was asked to excommunicate the thief. The priest refused. But after more pressure he said: 'The one who has taken the necklace is obliged by the word of God to return it.' Hardly had he said this than a mouse appeared with the necklace in its mouth. After depositing it in front of those assembled and waiting to see what happened, the mouse moved off a little and exploded. The astonished group began to praise God for what they had seen. I have told this wonderful story that the ignorant might not despise the word of God or excommunication of priests.

17. The attack on Amid by Qabad: the Vision

On his return from the land of the Turks, Qabad attacked Amid and besieged it for a long time, but was unable to capture because of its wide ramparts. He decided to leave and went

31 Scher has a note: *praefectus vigiliarum - sacerdos caecus*. I am not sure that I understand what the latter part means. Payne-Smith (p. 561b) *ⲡⲓⲟⲩⲛ*: priest whose office it was to intone nocturns

to lay siege to the Byzantine cities. One night he had a dream: 'Do not be discouraged. Stay here.' Quite amazed Qabad stayed and on the following evening took the town by storm. There was much bloodshed. Some took refuge in the churches. Qabad went to a church and, on opening the door, saw an image of Our Lord and asked what it was. He was told that it was the image of Christ. He worshipped it, saying: 'This is the image that appeared to me and told me to go to the town and He would deliver it to me because the townspeople were sinners. He spared those who had taken refuge in the churches. He took everything he found and went back to Seleucia-Ctesiphon with it, leaving a garrison there. When news of the capture of Amid became known, the Greeks laid siege to Persians, defeated them and drove them out.

18. Mar Abraham the Great

It was at the time of Qabad that this virtuous man left Kashkar to devote himself to the religious life and works of heaven. As God made Abraham the father of the nations who believed in God, he also made this Abraham the father of the monks in Persia. He went first to Hia, where he converted many and turned from the worship of al Zohra (Venus). He left there and after much travelling made his way to Egypt to visit the anchorites in the desert and Tur Sina'. There the Holy Spirit revealed many things to him. He returned to Nisibis and settled at the School, where he studied with the Abraham the Exegete and John his companion.

The daughter of one of the nobles in Nisibis was possessed by a troublesome demon. God wished to reveal the virtues of Abraham. The demon cried out: 'Woe is me. Here is this Nabatean wearing a cloak who lives in the School, he is tormenting me.' The father of the girl heard this and went to the School. He found Abraham deep in the study of Theodore. The pupils implored him to pray for the girl, and he gave in and cured her.

He went out secretly at night to climb Mount Izla and live there alone. He occupied a cave that had once belonged to Jacob Metropolitan of Nisibis, living on mountain plants. His fame spread far and wide and people brought the sick to him, and he cured them.

There were many locusts on this mountain. The local people used to complain of them. He gave them holy water, which they mixed with the water used for their land. The locusts disappeared. When the brothers were disturbed by phantoms and diabolical voices, they took a fragment of the clothes belonging to the saint and the wretched creatures vanished.

He built a monastery in which many monks gathered from all over. It was he who prescribed the tonsure. He changed their habit and the form of the footwear, to distinguish them from heretic monks. He blessed his children before his death and ordered several of them to found monasteries in the hills and the desert. He lived down to the time of Hormizd, son of Chosroes. He died and was buried in his monastery. His numerous biographies reveal his actions and works. May his prayers be with us.

19. Shîlâ the 23rd Catholicos

Shîlâ was archdeacon of the Catholicos Baband came from Seleucia-Ctesiphon. He was elected Catholicos in year 16 of Qabad. He was married and had a daughter. He was extraordinarily learned, with a great love of money and worldly things. He excommunicated Mari of Tahal, who had reproached him for his conduct. Qabad honoured him for the sake of Bûzaq bishop of Susa, who had cured him and his daughter of an illness from which they were suffering. It was a time of peace for Christians, and they started to build churches.

Some say that it was his wife who persuaded him to amass money and leave the right path. In fact, many men have been deceived by women: Adam, Joseph, Samson, David, Solomon. Job on the other hand resisted his wife, who wanted him to blaspheme and whom he called mad, and was victorious and was saved. Ahab followed the advice of his wife Jezabel against Naboth and was punished with her. Mamoi, the wife of Barsuma, was so upset to see the people of Nisibis honouring Narsai that she persuaded her husband to exile Narsai from the School: 'What is there for us to do here ? Do you not see that the world is eager to see Narsai ?' The latter retired to the land of Qardon, where he wrote discourses, in which he dealt with what had happened to him and the spitefulness of

women. He sent these texts to Nisibis. They were spoken³² in the church before Barsuma, who repented of what he had done and recalled Narsai and honoured him with his friendship for the rest of his life.

Several women on the other hand have helped to make their husbands and encouraged them to do good. Sara the wife of Abraham, because she was hospitable to strangers, served the angels who visited Abraham. Rebecca was virtuous and told her husband not to let her son Jacob marry an unbeliever and went to consult Melchizedek about her affairs and her pregnancy. The mother of Gregory of Nazianze was responsible for her husband, two sons and a daughter becoming Christian. When her husband became bishop, she looked after his business, encouraging him to do good, as the Theologian tells us. The wife of Babai helped him to become a bishop and take good care of church matters.

Anastasius exiled Macedonius Patriarch of Constantinople and replaced him with Euphemius, who despite being orthodox and an adversary of Peter and his followers, nevertheless changed and gave up his belief to follow the Emperor. Felix in Rome wrote to him and asked him to retract and anathematized him when he did not. Acacius summoned the synod, he anathematized Euphemius and all his followers. Timothy, who succeeded him, died the same year as Anastasius, after being head of the Church for six years.

20. The Emperor Justin

After Anastasius the next Emperor was Justin from year 829 of Alexander. He was orthodox his entire life. He proclaimed the Council of Chalcedon, which professed the Two Natures. He recalled the fathers exiled by Severus under Zeno and Anastasius and wrote to Hormizdas of Rome to repairs the damage that had happened in Egypt over the last thirty years and estranged honourable men. He gathered 134 bishops to anathematize Severus and all tho professed One Nature. He executed Amantius, the protector of Severus who had fled and changed his name. He exiled to Philippopolis Philoxenus, bishop of Mabboug, who was incarcerated in a room above the kitchen and asphyxiated by the smoke rising through a hole in the ceiling.

32 قیلا

After the flight of Severus, John Patriarch of Jerusalem, convened thirty bishops and excommunicated him. In the same year 40 bishops assembled at Tyre to anathematize him too. In the course of his extensive travels Severus wrote to Theodora the wife of Justin for support. After some time hiding in Constantinople he fled to the desert of Egypt, where he remained unknown until his death. His body was eaten by wolves, as the prophet of the Israelites³³ said when they were being chastized: 'This is why the lion of the forest has met them. The wolf of the evening has torn them to pieces and the tiger is waiting for them on the road. They have ignored the Lord.'

The teaching of Severus spread at Nisibis and the surroundings. Severus had written two liturgies, hymns and other works.

There was heavy snowfall in the time of Justin. Crops and seeds were ravaged by locusts for five years. Justin exiled those who rejected Chalcedon and the synod of Hormisdas. He destroyed their churches. He cleaned the land of dissident heretics, and most of them fled to Syria.³⁴

21. Jacob Baradaeus

In year 5 of Justin Jacob Saroug died. His teaching had been disseminated by a certain Jacob Baradaeus. He was given this surname because of his threadbare clothes.³⁵ He was originally from a village in Nisibis, called al Âjma.³⁶ Severus in his flight at the time of Justin consecrated him bishop with two other priests called Theodore and Paul the Black, who were to travel the land spreading their false belief of Two Natures and the synod convened by Justin. Severus retired to Egypt and Baradaeus went to the East, where he was joined by two Armenians Jiyorji and Jiyorjius. He made them bishops and they made him Catholicos. He constantly ordained priests and deacons and caused conflict between bishops and their flocks. He often wore the uniform of a soldier and sometimes wore monastic, sometimes lay clothing. Mostly he wore rags, hence his name.

33 Jer. 6

34 Scher says that this passage is full of historical inaccuracy

35 Կախ

36 Կախ

Justin, to whom he had been denounced, sent people to look for and arrest him But they were unable to find him because he kept changing his appearance. Anthimus Patriarch of Constantinople, Peter bishop of Apamea and Jacob supported him during his life. He made his way to Persia, where he exposed the depravity agreed upon at Chalcedon, confirmed the doctrine of Severus and his followers and exposed the lies of Jacob Saroug. He was received by the people of Takrit, Karme and Hassassa. Some of those who at the time of Justin had fled to Persia joined him, spread and recruited people for the sect. He lived to the age of 73, according to the Jacobites. It is said in books of the Byzantines that Jacob had been ordained in a town³⁷ near Constantinople with others exiled at the time of Justin the Christian Emperor, may God have mercy on him.

22. The Heretics with Justin

When Justin learned that heretics were receiving Communion in order to throw it away, he became angry with them and, on the advice of John Patriarch of Constantinople, he ordered them to be arrested on Palm Sunday. Several of them were thrown into narrow prisons and others fled to Syria. He wrote to all the officials responsible for the border with Persia to exile monophysites who refused to profess Two Natures. Some fled to Hîra. The Catholicos Shîlâ, fully confident in God, sought them out to give them three choices: profession of the Two Natures, argument or exile. Supported by the heretic al Hajâj, son of Qais of Hîra, courtier of al Mundhir son of Na'aman King of the Arabs. They rejected his proposal.

Shîlâ questioned them in the presence of Mundhir and his people and said: 'What do you say ? Has God the Logos taken a body from Mariam or has His person been changed into flesh ? If you admit the union in the second sense, who is the one who is said to have begun life in the body of a woman, was conceived and born ? Who wept, was thirsty, died and was buried ?' They had nothing to reply. Those present approved the orthodoxy of their belief.

Justin wrote to Mundhir to drive out the dissidents who had fled there. Mundhir agreed, and some took flight, whole others remained concealed. Some withdrew to Najrân, where they settled and spread the teaching of Julian, Severus' teacher, whic claimed that Jesus'

³⁷ قسطنطرا: castrum

body had descended from heaven. This teaching became popular throughout the land of Pîram.³⁸ The heretics deceived the people of Upper Egypt, who had fled there from the imperial authorities. They were converted later by Mar 'Abda, son of Hanif who built the monastery at Gamra. Shîla died in year 34 of Qabad, after 18 years as Catholicos.

Justin ordered John, the Patriarch of Constantiniople who succeeded Timothy, to anathematize Severus, Jacob and their followers. John gathered 43 bishops and excommunicated them. He transported the bones of Macedonius and and put them with those of the fathers. He died after being head of the Church for two years. He was succeeded by Epiphanius, a scholar. Ordered by Justin he excommunicated Peter, Severus, Jacob and all their followers. He asked the Emperor to exile pagans, but some of them were baptized, some for religious reasons and others for fear of the Emperor.

23. The Emperor Justinian

Justin - may God have mercy on him - died in year 838 after 9 years on the throne. His relative Justinian, who followed him, followed his example by driving out heretics and Manichaeans from Syria. On 1st Tishrin of year 1 of his reign there was a terrible earthquake that destroyed Laodicea. He fought the Persians for four years, with many dead on both sides. In Palestine there was a Jewish revolt and the rebels appointed a King. Justinian sent an army against and crushed the rebellion. In year seven of his reign in the month of Nisan there was a solar eclipse, and for forty days there was a sign in the sky that looked like a lance.

24. Chosroes Anûshirwân

Qabad reigned for 42 years. He had many children, and before he died he appointed Chosroes his successor, who had been born while Qabad was in exile in the land of the Turks. He loved him more than his other children. After his father's death Chosroes showed the will made in his favour and was accepted by the Magi. He murdered his brothers and army generals lest what had happened to his father happened to him. He was well read in philosophy, which he says he learned from Barsuma bishop of Qardû and Paul

³⁸ However this name is read, it seems to be near Hîra

the Persian philosopher, who renounced Christianity after having been denied the Metropolitan see of Persia. He was sympathetic to Christians and preferred their religion to all others. But peace between Persia and Constantinople came to an end. Mar Âbâ refused to go with him to Constantinople and he began to behave differently and display his hatred of Christians. But he continued to employ Christians, as his father had done. He became a student of Mani, who believed in Good and Evil, and abandoned Magism.

25. Narsai the 24th Catholicos and Elisha the 28th Catholicos

When Shîlâ died, the Church and Christians were at peace. But the deliberations on the choice of a successor caused disagreement between the higher clergy and the faithful. Narsai and Elisha wanted to be Catholicos and had their supporters. The faithful gathered at Seleucia-Ctesiphon. There was disagreement over the election. Bûzaq of Susa intervened and his decision was accepted by the majority because he was not a candidate for the position. His vote was the same as that of the majority: Narsai the scholar, the benevolent, the virtuous, the one dedicated to fasting, to prayer and reading the Scriptures, a skilled debater with great prestige among the other scholars and the people. Votes were cast before the Gospel in the church of Aspanir. Taiman archbishop of Basra was summoned to be present for the consecration.³⁹ Bûzaq bishop of Susa went to the Emperor at Helwan, where he had gone because of the climate.

The priests and other ministers of the church were against the election of Narsai, on the grounds that he was worldly and, because he did not know the laws of the Church, was incapable of administering it. They elected Elisha of Ctesiphon,⁴⁰ the site of the cathedral church. He had spent some time in the Byzantine Empire and had studied medicine. On his return to Seleucia-Ctesiphon this skill recommended him to the King and his ministers. Shîlâ, who saw his influence and the friendship of the Magi, gave him his daughter in marriage and, in his will, made him his successor. 'This man', said the people, 'is a child of the Church. He knows his business, is able to do it and is respected and honoured by the Magi.' One group agreed to him, the other did not, on the grounds that he would never renounce the engagements that he had contracted and signed. The fathers arrived to

39 Ar. اسياميد. Syr. ܘܫܝܡܝܕ

40 Arabic: from Seleucia-Ctesiphon from Ctesiphon (من المدائن من اقسيسفون)

consecrate Narsai, but those in favour of Elisha also arrived to prevent it. The matter remained thus hanging from Haiziran until Nisan.⁴¹

At length David of Merv bishop of arrived with several bishops differing as to equity⁴² and consecrated Elisha in the church of Aspanir, overriding the rules that laid out the consecration of Patriarchs in the church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon known as Âkwâkh. Elisha, thanks to the royal decree obtained for him by Biron, the imperial doctor, and the plentiful gifts distributed to government ministers, occupied the see in church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon built by Mar Mari, the apostle (God bless him) Jûbar, bishop of Nisibis, the bishops of Zabe and Hîra, with other bishops, arrived to consecrate Narsai, according to custom, in the cathedral church. Jacob bishop of Gundishapur⁴³ and Samuel bishop of Kashkar remained neutral.

The confusion, simony and complaints were unheard of and unprecedented. Both Patriarchs consecrated bishops, whom they sent everywhere. Two altars were set up in every church. When Christians went to church, they did not pray but fought each other and sometimes even tried to kill each other. There was enmity in families. Dissidents laughed about it, while monks and hermits wept and prayed to the Almighty to disperse the testing clouds that had darkened the Church, as He had ended the misfortunes in the reign of Piroz through the intervention of Qabad and Chosroes.

Elisha, with the support of the King, had Narsai and some of his followers imprisoned, but he was released thanks to Chosroes' son. Elisha travelled the country. He went to Rai and Merv, where he incarcerated some of his opponents. He then returned to Persia, where he consecrated Metropolitans and bishops in Khuzestan and Bahrain and punished opponents. Jacob the Metropolitan of Gundishapur was an opponent who wrote a book about the duties of superiors in the matter of ecclesiastical affairs and the notorious damage caused by Elisha.

When Elisha returned to Seleucia-Ctesiphon, he made common cause with the

41 June to April

42 Arabic: المخالفين للاستوا. I do not know what it means.

43 In the same province as Susa, Khuzestan. Christianity seems to have been established there in the 4th cent. and by the 7th cent. it was well-known as a centre of medical knowledge.

Metropolitans and bishops to punish the people of Kashkar. He consecrated for them a

bishop called Barshabâ in place of Samuel, but the people of Kashkar would not accept him and he returned to Elisha. Thanks to Biron the doctor, who obtained for him a royal edict to help him, and high-ranking soldiers, who were ready to support him, Elisha resolved to attack Kashkar. When they learned of this, they prepared to defend themselves by repelling anyone who advanced against them. They were supported by people in Khuzestan and Beit Garmai, opponents of Elisha. Elisha was very angry: 'How can people in Kashkar, these loathsome flies, who claim that they have never accepted me and have even humiliated me, conquer me, who have triumphed in all countries?' When the people of Kashkar heard this, they became angrier. Elisha went into his house, with the royal edict in his hand. A Kashkarian approached him to kiss his hand, and Elisha held out his hand. The Kashkarian took the decree from him and gave it to someone else, who disappeared without trace. A fight broke out, in which clothes were torn and fists flew. Elisha was very upset at the loss of the edict, which he had obtained with difficulty, and at the humiliating mockery to which he had been subjected by his adversaries.

Narsai died. Biron asked the King to authorize Elisha by decree. The King ignored him and ordered Elisha to be stripped of his office and replaced Paul the bishop of Susa. Bishop Samuel returned to Kashkar, where there was a synod to anathematize Elisha and his supporters. The schism between the two Patriarchs lasted for twelve years, from year 35 of Qaba to year 6 of his son Chosroes.

26. Paul the 26th Catholicos

Paul was the archdeacon of Bûzaq, bishop of Susa. He succeeded Narsai. Jacob, Metropolitan of Gundishapur and the bishop of Kashkar persuaded him to help neither Narsai nor Elisha, and he did not. Chosroes was favourable to him, because in the third year of his reign, when leaving Persia during stifling heat, Paul had brought water on his animals enough for the whole army dying of thirst in the mountains. He admired Paul, because he was the only one in Susa who had the interests of the King at heart. Out of love and gratitude he resolved to make him head of the Christians. When the events described earlier were over and the Christians needed a new Catholicos, the King ordered it to be

Paul. He died two months later, the day of the Hosanna⁴⁴ in year six of Chosroes. After becoming Catholicos, Paul inclined somewhat towards Elisha and forgot his oath and what he had resolved.

27. Mar Âbâ the Great the 27th Catholicos

This holy and virtuous father came from the village of Hale in the region of Radan. He was a fervent Magus. He was a secretary of the Marzbân of Beit Aramâye, who lived in Radan. God wanted to select him and did so as follows: One day as he was crossing the Tigris to go to his village, a student named Joseph offered to go with him. Mar Âbâ chased him away and made him leave the skiff. The skiff arrived in the middle of the river when a strong wind arose and drove it back to the bank. The wind subsided, and Joseph repeated his offer. Mar Âbâ once again rejected it, reprimanded him and told him to go away. At about the midpoint of the river, the wind rose again and drove the skiff back to the bank. This time, when the wind subsided and they started to cross again, Joseph was already in the skiff and his modest and unruffled demeanour persuaded Mar Âbâ to let him remain there. From the start there was no wind at all. Mar Âbâ asked him what his religion was, and Joseph told him. Mar Âbâ was impressed and started to question him about the faith. Joseph told him and convinced him of the truth of Christianity. From that moment he gave himself up to fasting, prayer and study. He even confessed his Christianity to his master, who wanted to know why he was going to church. Mar Âbâ received baptism in a village called Ahad from a priest called Bar Sahde, who had founded the monastery of Alleja at Hîra, where he was later buried. Alleja was the daughter of Na'aman, the son al Mûndhir the Arab.

He then went to Nisibis, where he enrolled in the School and became a pupil of Ma'na, who later became bishop of Arzun. He learned quickly and became an exegete. He went to the Byzantine empire, where he met a man of Edessa named Thomas, who was well versed in Greek and so was able to teach him. Mar Âbâ, who knew Persian and Syriac, also learned Greek. Once in the Byzantine empire, they reached Alexandria, where they gathered the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Mar Âbâ spoke in Syriac and his companion translated into Greek. The Jacobites became angry that so many went to listen to them and gathered

44 Probably Palm Sunday

in great numbers to drive them out of Alexandria. They withdrew to Constantinople, where they displayed their knowledge. Justinian heard about them and forced them to anathematize Diodorus, Theodore and Nestorius. They refused. He ordered them to be mutilated, but the bishops refused to do this, as a mark of respect. Thereafter they were obliged to flee.

After arriving at Nisbis the people there went to find Mar Âbâ to ask him to take charge of instruction, interpretation and preaching because his words were so clear and pleasant. They selected him at the request of Mar Abraham, who had been before him. Abraham had retired two miles from Nisibis. He began to write essays and to drop pearls from his lips that had until then remained concealed. He reformed some of the abuses that had occurred in the churches of that country. His fame spread. He made great efforts to unmask the ignominy and the shame of Zoroastrianism, to turn people from their impurity and show them the horror of this teaching, in which all bodily pleasures are permitted. He brought back the true faith and restored Theophilus to the path from which he had strayed.

Paul the Catholicos died after a short Patriarchate without being able to repair the disorder caused by the disagreement between Narsai and Elisha. The fathers and all Christians in the service of Chosroes convened to elect his successor. The merits and virtues of Mar Âbâ persuaded them to appoint him in year 847 of Alexander, the 16th year of Anûshirwân. He reformed the church and removed abuses. He ended the episcopal duality precipitated by his predecessors. He founded at Seleucia-Ctesiphon a school where he appointed Ishai as exegete, followed by Ramisho'. He renewed the canons that had been established successively in Byzantium, the Orient and Edessa, with additions required by the circumstances. He translated the Old Testament from Greek into Syriac. He wrote canons for the Psalms. He wrote a commentary on Genesis, the Psalms, the Wisdom of Solomon and the Letters of Paul. He wrote many letters and much on ecclesiastical knowledge.

When Anûshirwân invaded Byzantium, Mar Âbâ did not accompany him so as not to see bloodshed. The Magi, who hated him, made four accusations against him before the King: he had renounced Magism to embrace Christianity; he had forbidden Christians to marry more than one wife; he cancelled the decrees of their judges and removed trials from their

jurisdiction; he baptized the Magi and made them Christians. By these accusations he made the King hate him. By order of the King he was imprisoned for seven years in Azerbaijan, from where he continued to direct church matters, performing miracles and corresponding with all regions by letter. He composed the canons of the Psalms in prison.

Mar Âbâ, aware of what had happened at the the time of Shîla, decreed that priests would not be married but remain celibate like Simeon bar Sabâ'i and those like him. One of the miracles he performed in prison:he was asked to help a pregnant woman was suffering from an internal illness and was becoming exhausted from the medicines and cures she had been subjected to; Mar Âbâ sent her a piece of bread and gave instructions that she should eat it; after three days she would be cured. And so she was.

In Azerbaijan there was an aged renegade bishop of Djordjan whom Mar Âbâ had deposed and excommunicated for shameful conduct, adultery and promiscuity, and because he had embraced Magism and taken on their manners. He gathered support to oppose Mar Âbâ, even to try to kill him and later claim that he had fled to Byzantium. Mar Âbâ learned of this and fled to the gate of the royal palace. The King was told of this and sent him a note asking why Mar Âbâ had not remained in his place of exile. Mar Âbâ replied that he had left because attempts were being made to kill him and that, if he were killed in secret, there would be no-one to accuse of his murder. Mar Âbâ submitted himself willingly to capital punishment imposed by the King, who told him to return to his place of exile and await the punishment of the Chief Mobed appropriate to a Christian convert who worshipped as God a man who had been crucified by the Jews.

But the Magi did not stop intriguing until the King put the Catholicos in chains, where he remained suffering for a long time. At length the King released him but also crucified several bishops and killed many Christians.

The reason for this persecution was: there was a ship on its return from India filled with precious objects of great value that was attacked by the Marzbâns; the owner of the ship went to the Byzantine Emperor and obtained⁴⁵ a letter from him for the Persian King that he might ask for them. They refused but were prevailed upon to give back small things.⁴⁶

45 Text has to be emended

46 I do not understand the alternative reading suggested in the critical apparatus.

They then began to goad the King against the Catholicos and all the Christians for what had happened to them because of the Byzantines.

God struck Chosroes Anûshirwân with a serious life-threatening illness. He applied to Justinian for help and wrote asking for a competent doctor to cure him of his weight problem⁴⁷ so that he could once again breathe easily and enjoy the pleasures of life. Justinian sent Trikhoma.⁴⁸ Before he arrived, the Queen said to him: 'If the king offers you gold, silver, pearls or the riches of Khorâsân, do not accept them. I will pay you double. Ask him only to send back the Christian of Antioch who are his prisoners. If you do this, I will give you more gold than you could wish for.' The doctor attended the King and relieved his fat problem. Chosroes was delighted and asked him what he wanted. He asked for what the Queen had suggested. The King was angry and knitted his eyebrows. But he was loath to reject the request of someone who had cured him and whom he had invited to request anything he chose. The doctor realized that sending the prisoners back might be difficult, so he asked that villages be given to them. One of the assistants saw that there was an obligation to do what he asked and declared that he would make him abandon the request. The King entrusted the matter to him to do as he saw fit. He entrusted him with all the treasures so that he could take from them what was necessary to satisfy the doctor, who was summoned and offered pearls, silver and splendid garments: 'These will be of much more use to you than what you have asked for.' The doctor's base and vile soul was seduced by what he saw and he rejected the Queen's suggestion and took these things which it preferred to the souls of the afflicted. The Queen summoned him and said: 'Did I not assure you that I would satisfy your need for gold beyond your wishes and pay you double what the King was offering? Nevertheless, though your ambition has made you renege on your word and you have not fulfilled my promise, I will pay you what I promised.' A great quantity of gold was brought immediately. It was melted until it became like water. The doctor was bound and made to drink it until his stomach could take no more. He died instantly.

One of the children of Chosroes rebelled against him and took Gundishapur, where he built fortifications and the residents supported him against his father. The Magi told the King

47 سمن افراط

48 Otherwise unknown, I think.

that the Catholicos had urged him to rebel. The King was angry and summoned the Catholicos and said: 'Since the people of Gundishapur do as they wish by taking my son's side, I will begin a persecution of Christians. I will punish you, their head.' 'You are right,' said the Catholicos. 'I am their head, as you say. But I do not deserve to be even their servant. How can you make me responsible for the crimes of an entire community ? Look, the King is head of the Magi and all other men. Now, is he responsible for the crimes of single one of them ?' The King was appeased and told him to write to the people of Gundishapur and not to side with this young madman. The Catholicos wrote to them and excommunicated them. They distanced themselves from the King's son and opened their gates to the royal army. The King felt admiration for this obedience and fear of excommunication and stopped harming Christians for some time.

Anûshirwân was then impelled by a demon to maltreat the Christians. He called the Catholicos: 'If you want me not to massacre Christians, go to Susa, to Gundishapur and the surroundings, impose a tax on your people and send it to me. Otherwise I will destroy their churches and make fire temples out of them.' The Catholicos, fearing that if he resisted what happened to Simeon bar Sabâ'i at the hands of Shapur would happen to him and his people. He collected large amounts of money and offered it to the King. But the King did not keep his promise and sent someone to torture them. The Catholicos felt mortal anguish and retired to the suburbs.

28. Dispute between Catholicos and a Magus.

The miracle that converted the Magus, who gave the Catholicos a fire temple.

There was a meeting between the Catholicos and one of the main and most illustrious Magi, who asked him: 'What persuaded you to embrace Christianity and reject the religion of your ancestors ?' The Catholicos replied that he had seen Christians rightly confessing One God, the Creator and Director of all things. That he had seen the Magi confessing two creatures: the sun and the moon. That they claimed that the universe had two authors, one good and one bad, and worshipped two created beings that were deaf, blind and without perception, intelligence or reason.

The Magus said: 'For me to follow you, I need you to show me an astonishing prodigy that will confirm the truth of your assertion.'

The Catholicos replied: 'Stop worshipping the fire and the sun, and the Creator will give you convincing proof of the truth.'

'How am I to renounce the fire, my god ?'

The Catholicos replied: 'I will stamp on it with my foot and he will be unable to harm me or be useful to me.'

'Impossible.'

'Good. Let us make a fire of wood with plentiful strong firebrands, and I will show you the power of the God I worship and the weakness of your gods.'

The Magus at once ordered a fire to be prepared, with lots of wood, in the fire temple, which is now the School of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Its flames reached up to the sky, and over them the Catholicos made the sign of the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the hidden God and source of forgiveness. He took off his shoes and walked bravely over the fire, ridiculing its worshippers. He took the Magus by his hand and said to him: 'Walk with me. Do not be afraid. Our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of all that breathes and Disperser of darkness, will help us.' The Magus said: 'I am afraid for myself.' The Catholicos told him not to be afraid, but to walk in his footsteps.' He encouraged him like a good leader exhorting his troops before the enemy. He finally persuaded him to walk on the fire, in his footsteps. They walked in various directions making the sign of the Cross. When he saw the fire recede before his steps, the Magus believed and was baptized by the Catholicos with his entire family except for his brother and gave the Catholicos the property on which the miracle had happened. The Catholicos built a school on it with the money given to him by the Magus. He made a plaster Cross with his own hands, which the pupils used like a key to open the door of their spirit and allow instruction to penetrate when one of them found it difficult, and indeed God opened the spirit of those who took a fragment of the Cross. When the Cross was put in place, the house filled up with mice, cats and lizards, the demons who had been living in the fire temple. But Mar Âbâ took possession of it and the exorcized the demons, and they never dared to return. God replaced them with men of learning, letters and culture. The place where the fire worshippers had made their guttural cries became the repository of spiritual books of the church. The seat of the Chief Mobed was replaced by that of the fathers. All this happened after the debates in the presence of

the King between the Catholicos and this man, one of the nobles of his nation. The Catholicos was asked three questions, to which he triumphantly replied.

29. Question posed by the Catholicos Mar Âbâ

The Catholicos, after his successful reponse to the three questions, said to the Magus: 'I will ask you one question. If you can answer it, you will win. If not, you will be defeated before the King.' The Magus: 'Say what you have to say. ' The Catholicos: 'What do you say of a woman who, after leaving the house with fire in her hand, is surprised by the rain, and then menstruation happens to her.⁴⁹ She is afraid to throw the fire to the ground lest the rain should put it out. What ought she to do, in your opinion ?' The Magus was unable to reply, and he was given three days to find a reply. But after the three days they were unable to give the Catholicos an answer. The victory was his, and he received the fire temple, having performed the miracle we have just mentioned, and built a school there. It was still standing when the Catholicos Ezekiel restored and rebuilt it.

It is said that the King was profoundly sad when his son rebelled. He used to say that his education had cost him much, that he had taken a lot of trouble to make sure that he stayed on the right path, that he hoped that he would succeed and make him happy, but that he had proved to be a bad son. He had no wish to console himself in spite of all the ways one used to dissipate one's sadness. But the saint had an ingenious stratagem. He told the King that he wanted to ask the Chief Mobed a question. The King agreed.

The saint said: 'Look, on the hearth there is a pot of water and beneath it is wood fire which makes the water boil. What does the boiling water say to the pot ? What does the pot say to the wood ? And what does the fire say ? We see the fire burning. We hear a sound and we notice the water boiling. Tell me now, what does each of these say to its fellow ?'

The Mobed was perplexed and said nothing.

The King, who had said nothing for several days, began to laugh: 'Among those who attend us, there is none as clever as you. What is the answer ? Tell me.'

'With pleasure. The boiling water says to the pot: *Am I not the reason why the clay from which you are made has become hard ? Without me you not would be a pot. So why do*

⁴⁹ Scher uses a delicate circumlocution. I have tried to translate as literally as possible, but I feel that there may be some cultural-anthropological dimension to this detail that simply eludes me.

you make me suffer and torment me ? The pot said to the wood: Is it not the water that makes trees grow with their branches, from which you come ? So why do you heat me and burn me unjustly and make me maltreat the water which has hardened my clay and made me into a pot ? The wood said to the fire: You are the one who has oppressed society because you have made us punish our fathers when we were happy with the heat of the sun in winter. When your heat became excessive, we changed our nature and repaid the good of our parents with bad. You are clearly the cause of injustice.'

The King understood what the Catholicos wanted to say, namely that it is difficult for parents to be protected from the wickedness of their children. 'You must support your son, for fingernails are not torn out without great pain and torture or the insides of an animal without causing death.' The King recognized the truth of these words, accepted his consolation and thanked him. He ordered the people of Gundishapur to withdraw their support of his son. As was said earlier, this was done.

The Catholicos was frequently troubled by priests, deacons and those who managed ecclesiastical matters.⁵⁰ He suffered from colic for several days and went to his rest - may God bless him. It was on one of the days of Firûzdejan, during which, according to the Magi, only the good and the virtuous die. When the King learned of his death, he ordered a funeral in honour of the saint. It was a magnificent, solemn and long funeral. He died in the night of the second Friday of Lent. Qiore took him to Hîra, where he was buried and a monastery built over his grave, which is still there. He was Catholicos for 16 years. In a funeral oration written for him the Catholicos Isho' barnûn said that he had been ordained at Hîra and had requested that he be buried there. He died in year 21 of Anûshirwân, year 863 of Alexander.

There is a story that the saint had brought from the barbarians a tall strong man clothed in rags. He was very gracious to him, made him shave and wash, gave a rough wollen garment to him and sent him to evangelize foreigners.⁵¹ After showing him how to address the King and present his vows, he introduced him. The King admired the wisdom, discernment and goodness of the Catholicos, for he had seen him before and knew who he was.⁵²

50 علوم البيعة: 'sciences of the church'

51 العجم: non-Arabs

52 Scher offers no information concerning the identity of the non-Arab stranger

30. His pupils

Narsai bishop of Anbâr; Jacob Metropolitan of Beith Garmai; Paul Metropolitan of Nisibis, Ezekiel, later Patriarch; Qiore, who founded a school at Hîra; Ramisho', the exegete who became bishop of Anbâr; Moses Bishop of Karkha in Susa; Barshabba Bishop of Shaherzor; David Metropolitan of Merv; Thomas of Edessa; Shubhalmârân Bishop of Kashkar; Sergius son of Sâhiq the doctor of Hîra; Jacob the penitent.⁵³ They were all pupils at his school, and Bar Sahde mentions them in his history.

31. Abraham of Nefthan and Job his pupil

A contemporary of this father (Mar Âbâ), Abraham came the people of Hazza⁵⁴ from the village of Beit Nefra and was related to those martyred in the time of Shapur at the hands of his brother Ardashir. He was old, venerable, an astute philosophe, devout and ascetic monk, he managed, with Abraham the Great,⁵⁵ to spread news of the rules and institutions of the monastic life in Persia. He changed monastic habits to distiguish them from those of heretics. In the time of Mar Eugene and his disciples, monks used to dress like Egyptian monks. These two monks redesigned monasteries and cells, which before them had been like those of Mar 'Abda and his peers. Abraham live in cave at Hazza. He travelled to Jerusalem and Egypt, where he met saints in the desert. On returning to his cave, he stayed there for 30 years, living on bread and wild herbs, healthy and free from illness. He was moved by a vision to retreat to the mountains of Hazza to evangelize the pagans there. He summoned them to worship the true God and renounce their error. They were deaf to his appeal and persecuted him. Nevertheless he admired them and remained among them for several days without eating. He then said to them: 'Here is my staff. I will put it on your sacrifices. If the fire consumes your sacrifices but does not burn my staff, will you promise to believe what I say and respond to my appeal ?' They promised. It happened as he had

53 الحزين. This is the translation of Scher, but the only meanings I can find in the Arabic dictionaries of E.W. Lane and H. Wehr are 'sad, mournful'. It is used also in section 39.

54 In the translation: Adiabene, an area in what may now be called Iraqi Kurdistan, with its main city of Arbela (Erbil)

55 See earlier no. 18

said, and they allowed themselves to be baptized. He built churches and monasteries for them and wrote books on the ascetic life. He died in the mountains of Hazza. His shroud was taken in the night and buried in a village church.

When his disciple Job arrived, he transformed the cave into a monastery, still known as Rabban Job. He was from Daisam,⁵⁶ a Metropolitan see in Persia. His father, at the time of Anûshirwân son of Qabad, had been a pearl dealer, was wealthy, with slaves and a hospital in his country. One day Job fell ill and vowed that if he were cured he would renounce the world and the vanities he had just been contemplating. His cure, due to God, was the beginning of his salvation, as the blindness of Paul had caused him to believe. He renounced everything he had and went to Abraham of Nefthar, who gave him the tonsure, together with his two disciples, Isaiah and Elisha. He withdrew to his cell to live alone. He learned the monastic life of the saints.

Hearing of the monastery of Abraham, he went there to seek the blessing of the saints there and learn the rules of the monastic life. He stayed there some time with Dadisho' and Mar Babai. After some time he returned to his cell and translated the rules and writings of Abraham from Syriac into Persian. His fame spread and many monks went to him. After the death of his two companions, they remained near his cave. He made his cave into a monastery and introduced the rule of Mar Babai there. He predicted the hour of his death. In a single day he cured 31 sick people who had come for his help. He said to his assistants: 'Do not reject the request of Job the weak. The Lord Christ will today grant a cure to all the sick.' He made announcement in the Hazza villages: 'Let those who wish to see Job come to him on Wednesday of the last week of Mar Elias,⁵⁷ for he has something secret to tell them.' The Sunday before that day, after reciting the office with the two brothers and eating with them, he blessed them with the sign of the Cross and withdrew to his cell. On Wednesday, the people drawn by his promise, crowded around his cell. After three hours, when it was clear that nobody was coming to speak to them, they went into his cell and found him dead, wrapped and prostrate before the Cross. They prayed over him and buried him in the sanctuary⁵⁸ before the altar. We ask God to have mercy on us through the prayers of this

56 Scher: Riwardshir (SW Iran)

57 Liturgical designation (Scher): after Pentecost are the seven weeks of the Apostles, the seven weeks of summer and the seven weeks of Mar Elias.

58 الهيكل

venerable saint, to forgive us our sins, to deliver us and hear our prayers.

32. Joseph the Catholicos,
who was deposed and is the 28th in number

This man spent most of life in Byzantium, where he studied medicine. On returning to Nisibis he went into a monastery and became attached to a Nabatean King, who functioned as the Marzbân in this area. He honoured Joseph because of his dress and even presented him to Chosroes Anûshirwân, who had just fallen ill. The King sent for Joseph, who treated him successfully. People were deceived by his appearance. After the death of Mar Âbâ, the Christians asked for permission to elect a new Catholicos. Joseph was nominated by Anûshirwân and consecrated Catholicos. In year 2 of his period of office, the fathers in synod ratified 22 canons concerning church administration. He ruled for 3 years with great prudence, but then he changed and began to receive gifts,⁵⁹ treat bishops with disrespect and humiliate priests and allow himself things contrary to the laws of the Church and Christianity.

Anûshirwân's aversion to Joseph began when Joseph visited people in prison who had been put there by the King for revealing one of his secrets. Joseph turned to Badanfarouj the great Marzbân, who was well respected by the King. With gifts and his medical skill he asked him for help in driving out certain bishops and Metropolitans from their sees, and the Marzbân obliged.

He then assailed the priests and bound them with halters to lead them to stables which he had built full of straw. He told them to eat forage, because they were animals devoid of intelligence and reason.⁶⁰ He began to shave their head and soil them (God curse him !) and laugh out loud like a madman.⁶¹ He seized Simeon bishop of Anbâr, known for his piety and purity, and left him in prison for a long time. After a long captivity he set up an altar in his hiding place to celebrate Mass and the Eucharist on all Sundays and feast days. One day the cruel Joseph entered his hiding place. The monks had just celebrated Mass.

59 Critical apparatus: رشوة

60 Ar. بيان: usually signifies 'clarity' or something of the sort.

61 There are several terms of abuse, but I think one is enough.

Before the offering Joseph took the host and assaulted the bishops. He fouled the Eucharist beneath his filthy impure feet and overturned the chalice - may he be visited by the wrath of God. We pray that God will deliver us from his crimes. This bishop, victim of an injustice perpetrated by this wretch misleadingly called Catholicos had to drink from glasses of bitterness until he died in prison and went to his rest, where he would be rewarded for his endurance and be revenged on his oppressor.

Joseph then assaulted the bishop of Zâb, whom he drove from his see and replaced him with a certain Ezekiel, who because of his social aplomb, medical profession and knowledge of Persian had an entrée to the court and made a friend of the King. Chosroes sent him with divers to fish for pearls. He found one of rare wonder and great value. He rose even more in the estimation of the King and became a permanent member of his staff.

Mar Mâlekh bishop of Darabgerd⁶² came to ask Ezekiel to obtain for him a royal decree to suspend the persecution in his diocese. Ezekiel, as was his custom, obtained the decree. But Joseph became angry at this and went to see the chief Magus: 'If I am the head of the Christians, it is my task to take care of and regulate their affairs. Why did you let this bishop obtain a royal decree to protect them and allow them to practise their religion ?' He took the decree from Mar Mâlekh. The people in Persia, when they learned of this, cut out his name from the diptych⁶³ and refused to obey him and were unanimous in pointing out his ignominy. May God send him to pit of hell to be with those like him.

The crimes of this loathsome man increased daily. The fathers and the faithful joined together to send him three messengers to lay bare their feeling, to force him to say what he planned, to explain himself, to renounce his past conduct in order to resume his responsibilities. But he received them with contempt, shouted at them and did not listen to them. They sent another three messengers, whom he treated with the utmost arrogance, and a further three, whom he treated with his customary contempt.

The reason for this meeting and correspondence with Joseph was his testimony against a

62 SW Iran

63 Ar. *حطبه*: lit. 'his sermon'. Scher takes it to mean removal of the name from the diptych, which symbolizes that the congregation is no longer in communication with its bishop.

Christian that he had stolen a precious object of great value from the royal treasury. The matter had been relayed to the King, who had judged him innocent and released him. Joseph was convinced by the false testimony of a non-Christian against a Christian. The King had then ordered several Christians to bring the Catholicos before them and punish him for his wickedness. Joseph protested in vain against this summons, he was not heard and the fathers collectively entered into correspondence with him, as we have just said. Paul the Metropolitan of Nisbis and other Metropolitans and absent bishops wrote to him to fulfil the order of the King. They excommunicated him unanimously. stripped him of his dignity and deprived him of the degrees of priesthood. They anathematized all who in future received baptism and the Eucharist from him, invalidated all his excommunications and excommunicated Isaac, a supporter of his. Joseph disregarded this excommunication and continued ordaining priests and deacons. The Christians complained about this to the King.

Moses of Nisibis made use of a clever parable: 'A King receives a poor man and gives him his friendship. He then gives him one of his elephants. The poor man takes the elephant home. But the elephant is too large to go through the door of his house. In any case, he cannot feed the elephant. Greatly embarrassed, he thinks about it and returns to the King with the elephant, asking the courtiers to take it back and give him cash instead, because he has discovered certain aspects of this elephant that he is unable to deal with: his house is too small, the door is too narrow and he is unable to feed him. The King agrees and takes back the elephant.' When he heard this story, the King smiled and understood what Moses meant.

Moses continued: 'We are poor. This is the elephant that the King has given us. We are frustrated in the hopes we placed in it and his supremacy. Let the King be kind enough to take it back and we will be grateful to him.'

As a result the King deposed and prevented him from ruling the Christians. He removed from him the possibility of exercising his power over those who did not like his arrogance. God thus punished him, as he deserved. In the month of Shabat of year 36 of Chosroes Anûshirwân preparations were made to elect a new Catholicos. Joseph had been tolerated for twelve years, from his elevation to the position to the day when God delivered

the people from him, uprooting him by means of anathema. After his excommunication⁶⁴ it was unanimously agreed to elect Ezekiel bishop of Zawâbe.⁶⁵ The supporters of Joseph, who were irreligious, refused to accept this. The faithful began to quarrel. The King forbade them to elect a Catholicos until they were all agreed to depose Joseph. Mari of Kashkar was interim head of the Church for three years until God had rooted out Joseph by death, who went to His Lord to find his works.⁶⁶ His punishment lasted for 15 years, some say 18. He was buried at Anbâr.

During this unspeakable period, while Justian was Emperor, Chosroes invaded Antioch, sacked it and took prisoners back to Seleucia-Ctesiphon. He built a new town for them, like Antioch, and called it Antiachosroes⁶⁷ and settled them there. It came to be known as Rome, which was a source of great distress to the Emperor.

In year 10 of his reign there was a plague in his land and the lands of Persia, India and Ethiopia. There appeared in the palm of the hand three black spots in the hollow of the flesh like blood and, while people were walking, they opened their mouths and fell down dead. Others suffered from ulcers so bad that the skin came away from the flesh. Towns and villages became deserted. Property remained abandoned, because nobody wanted to take it. People, afraid of death, fled from place to place. Those who escaped from the plague in one place were struck by a terrible illness in another, which made them sigh after death. The evil was terrible and the punishment universal, as David the prophet said: *He sent the angel of evil against them, opened the bad paths and did not preserve their souls from death.*⁶⁸

Death first struck the poor and the needy, and the rich had to bury them. It soon attacked the rich. When someone left the house, he wrote the name of his family and house on a piece of paper which he put round his neck so that, if he died, his family would be known and his remains taken to them. Often bodies remained for several days without burial on the roads and the stench made the roads impassable. This scourge spread throughout the

64 'catharsis' قنرسة.

65 زواىى

66 A literal version of the somewhat dark Arabic phrase: ليلقى عمله

67 Probaby 'Antioch-Chosroes'

68 Ps. 78,49

regions.

This is second anecdote about the plagues. The townspeople of Beit Nabt were all killed by the plague. There were only seven adults and a boy left. Driven by fear to take flight, they collected their goods and left them in one house. Seven of them died there. Only the boy was left, and he fled instantly, but was brought back to the gate of the town by a human form who would not let him leave. One of the dignitaries of the town, who was not there, learned of this. He came and stopped before the gate with his slaves. He sent one of them to find out what had happened in the house. The slave found the boy sitting there. He asked him where the house with all the goods was. The boy showed him. The slave took as much as he could carry, but was unable to leave. The man who had prevented the boy before appeared. The slave thought that the man was stopping them because of the goods he had just taken and went back to the house with the boy, where both died. Those outside who were waiting for the slave to return were saved.

The plague caused enormous damage. The gravediggers were buried in the graves they had dug for the dead.

At this point John, a relative of Mar Narsai, died. Chosroes was also struck by an illness called Shar'ûta,⁶⁹ with loss of blood. This illness raged at Alexandria so intensely that it made people deranged and look as if they were drunk. Justinian appointed a gravedigger and gave him a lot of money. He threw many corpses into the ditches he was digging. The suffering of the world was indescribable and immeasurable. It is said that three people engaged by a courtier to bury the bodies earned 40 dinars by carrying away and burying the dead, and that even as they were dividing the money people kept dying.

The plague is said to have lasted for three and a half years. Finally Almighty God had mercy on His creatures and delivered them. At the time of David God said to the angel who had stretched his hand over Jerusalem⁷⁰ to destroy it:⁷¹ *You have destroyed much. Withdraw your hand.* People have abandoned their crimes and sins.

69 A Syriac word for 'plague': *ܫܪܘܬܐ*

70 اورشلم. The Biblical name seems to be used when there is a Biblical reference involved. Otherwise, the other form used is: *بيت المقدس*

71 2 Sam. 24,16

Bar Sahde has a story about how Joseph the Catholicos helped to bury the dead thrown into the streets and on the roads, the only worthwhile thing he did. The plague was followed by a devastating famine at the time of Justinian, when no amount of food could satisfy people. In year 26 of his reign the plague killed so many oxen that it was necessary to use donkeys, camels and other beasts to plough the field. People fled from one town to another.

One of the unfortunate events of this unfortunate time was the destruction of Tripolis, situated on the seaside. It became the grave of its residents. People tried to flee but the earth subsided beneath their feet and they were engulfed by the waters.

When Justinian had finished his wars, he wrote a book on the Two Natures, in which he professed a union and inclined towards the doctrine of Julian, the teacher of Severus. He sent it to Anastasius bishop of Antioch, ordering him to convene the bishops and force them to sign it. Anastasius rejected it, and Justinian wrote another one, in which he said that one of the persons (of the Trinity) had suffered with his body and that Almighty God is limited and passible. He sent this book with one of his generals to force the fathers to put their signatures to it.

It is said that Justinian, after the conclusion of peace with Chosroes, asked him to send him some Persian scholars. He sent Paul of Nisibis; Mari of Balad; Bar Suma of Qardû; Isaiah the exegete at Seleucia-Ctesiphon; Isho'yahb of Arzun, who became Catholicos of the Orient; and Babai of Sigar. Justinian received them all with honour. The dispute lasted three days. The Orientals laid out the orthodox faith. Justinian said to Babai: 'I want you to tell me the passages of Scripture and Commentaries quoted by the fathers.' Babai quoted many passages, which the Emperor was inclined to accept. He understood from them that nature⁷² was unable to exist without the hypostasis⁷³ or the hypostasis without nature and that, as a result, the Two Natures could only be a single hypostasis. He heard them and sent them back in great honour. Justinian then changed his mind and anathematized

72 جوهر

73 قنوم

Diodorus and his companions. After 39 years as Emperor he died. Some say that Abraham and John, disciples of Narsai, were among those sent to the Emperor, who approved of their explanations, praised what they had to say and showered gifts on them at the same time as Paul.

33. The Emperor Justin

He was a relative of Justinian⁷⁴ and began his reign in year 877 of Alexander. He professed the Two Natures and exiled the followers of Severus and sent back to their sees those whom Justinian had convened to subscribe to his book. He then changed his mind and anathematized Diodorus and his followers. He was attracted by Justinian's doctrine and wrote a book in which he defended Chalcedon. However, his belief was that the body of Our Lord was incorruptible. He suffered from mental problems in year 9 of his reign and, because of his illness, he was unable to go forth and repel Chosroes, who had invaded his empire and destroyed many towns. His madness made him bark like a dog and bite anyone who came near him. A house of teak⁷⁵ covered in gold was built for him in the form of a box with doors, where he enclosed himself whenever he had an attack of madness, and he spent his time listening to stories. The affairs of the empire began to fall into disrepair because his illness became worse and he co-opted a man called Tiberius in year 16 of his reign. He died after a reign of three years.

34. The Patriarch Eutychius

When Eutychius resigned his office, he was replaced by John. The latter, who was orthodox, convened the fathers and anathematized the Jacobites. He died after 14 years of administering the Church. A group then formed around Eutychius, whose services to Justinian during the latter's illness were well known, to ask him to resume office. In his time the affairs of the Church were in good order, and he died after five years in office. He was in office for a total of twelve years. At that time there were certain scholars, whose work, for the sake of brevity, I have not mentioned and who wrote various works against

74 Ar. قرابة. Justin II, Justinian's nephew

75 ساج

Severus. The Church has collected their works.

35. Bâbûkir

He interpreted the Old Testament and translated it from Hebrew into Syriac. He later embraced the teaching of Ebion, who claimed that the humanity of Christ was stripped of his divinity and that he was of the same race as the charlatan known as Paul the apostle.

In this period the fathers convened to decide upon the erroneous teaching that the soul of man is mortal like his body and that it will be resurrected with him. Origen had already refuted these people, but in so doing had invented a worse teaching of the transmigration of a soul of one body to another.

This Origen was an exegete at Alexandria. After mutilating himself he was driven out by the Patriarch Demetrius, who forbade him to teach, on the grounds that 'this man is a murderer, for God created this member to be the respectable cause of procreation'.⁷⁶ This saint did not exceed the boundaries, but was obeying the instruction⁷⁷ given by Simon Peter to his pupil Clement in the rules he established.

36. Ezekiel the 29th Catholicos

This father was bishop of Zawâbe and disciple of Mar Âbâ the Catholicos. After the death of Joseph, from the Catholicate had been taken away, there was a synod to elect a replacement. Ishai the scholar was elected. But Paul of Nisibis and other fathers were opposed to this and wanted to keep their choice, Ezekiel, whom they had elected when they met to depose Joseph and who was beloved of and esteemed by Chosroes, who had once sent him to Bahrain and Yamâma, from which Ezekiel had brought him pearls. The chief physician Marûzi, known as Nûrûzi, informed the King of the choice that had just been made and asked him to authorize him. The fathers convened and consecrated him Patriarch. He was astute in wordly matters, a scholarly man, who conducted the affairs of the Church well.

⁷⁶ Eusebius *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6,8: Demetrius is said to have thought the action ἀτοπώτατος (quite unnatural).

⁷⁷ The opinion expressed here seems to confirm the admiration that made the bishops in Caesarea ordain Origen presbyter despite the apparent opposition of Demetrius.

Everyone was happy with him, and even those who had opposed him at the time of the deposition of Joseph. He was tolerant of those who had been ordained by Joseph and was satisfied with making them stand before the altar and saying over them the prayers of forgiveness without repeating their ordination.

In year 45 of Chosroes he convened the fathers and established 36 canons for church discipline. He travelled to the mountain⁷⁸ with Chosroes. He then did something shameful with regard to the fathers, towards whom his conduct was coarse.

He accompanied Chosroes to Nisibis when he attacked Dara to capture it and drive out the Byzantines. Paul of Nisibis welcomed the Catholicos with great honour and pomp and took him to his cell, from there they entered the church. Paul mounted the pulpit⁷⁹ and delivered a fine discourse, in which he said, among other things: 'Christians. Christ has come to visit⁸⁰ you today. Purify your bodies. Remove your old clothes and increase your ...'⁸¹ The assistants understood that he wished to flatter the Catholicos but took him for an ignoramus and regarded him as unworthy of respect or consideration. They even began to look down on him. The Catholicos swore an oath that if the King managed to capture Dara, he would depose Paul and remove him from office as Metropolitan. I⁸² think that the Catholicos resented Paul, because the latter had said: 'Increase your ...' Paul learned of this and devoted himself to prayer and fasting, prostrating himself night and day before Our Lord Christ and asking Him to let him die and hasten his end before the capture of Dara that he might not be anathematized. At the very moment when Chosroes took the town, the siege of which had cost the Persian King dearly, the angel came to take away the soul of the Metropolitan Paul - God bless him. So, by his death he escaped the terrible anathema threatened by the Catholicos.

At this time Isho'yahb was exegete at Nisibis. His successor was Abraham, son of the blacksmith, who was succeeded by the well-known Hanânâ, who had 300 students, some

78 الجبل. Scher has capitalized the French word. I do not know if it refers to a particular place.

79 البيم. Loan word from Greek (βήμα) via Syriac

80 According to J. Haywood and H. Nahmad *A new Arabic grammar* (1965) ch. 12 §10 the form used here (قد زاركم) seems to have the same meaning as the English Present Perfect, which usually expresses the present consequence of a past action.

81 دواشنكم: I cannot find the word in Lane's dictionary. H. Wehr gives دشن, meaning 'consecrate, inaugurate', but only as a verb. The only nominal form he offers is تدشين. Scher: 'Increase your new (clothes).'

82 This may be the first instance of the narrator expressing an opinion.

of them very powerful about whom there are *vitae*.

When the conceitedness⁸³ of this father Ezekiel increased, the pain in his eyes from either covering or spreading drew near. He called the virtuous and brave fathers blind. Christ tested him with water that came down from his eyes and He inflicted on him the bitterness of blindness. He was blind for about two years. He died after this. His period of office was 11 years. Some say 20. He was taken to Hîra and buried there. According to some at Seleucia-Ctesiphon. This was in year 13 of Hormizdad son of Anushirwân. At that time the affairs of the church were in good condition.

37. The reign of Hormizdad

Chosroes died after a reign of 47 years. His successor Hormizdad proved to be favourable to Christians. The Magi found this intolerable and complained. The King, to make them understand that the empire could not rely on the Magi alone, quoted this proverb to them: 'As a throne with four legs cannot be stable on the two in front if it does not also rest on the two behind, as also the religion of the Magi will not be stable if there is no other religion to counterbalance it. Beware of resisting the orders I have given for the protection of Christians, observance of their laws and practice of their customs, for they are faithful and obedient.'⁸⁴ Hormizdad honoured Ezekiel greatly. Anûshirwân had designated him as his successor, as his father had done with him. He was crowned after the death of his father, in the days known as Firûzdejan in a fire temple at Gundishapur. His brothers paid their respects him. My God have mercy on him.

38. The death of Chosroes Anûshirwân and events in Byzantium before and after

The war between Byzantium and Persia continued. Anûshirwân, three days after the capture and destruction of Dara, invaded Byzantine territory. When he saw that the

83 Or, perhaps 'blindness'. I have to admit that I am not sure what this means

84 The source of the 'proverb' is given as Tabari

Byzantines had just devastated an area of more than of 50 parasangs⁸⁵ around Mosul and Beit 'Arabaye, he became angry and gathered his troops to attack Callinicum,⁸⁶ which he destroyed with the surrounding area. He also devastated Caesarea and pillaged it. The Byzantine forces who caught up with him cut off his escape route and surrounded him completely, but he was able to swim across the Euphrates with a large part of his army. Many soldiers and animals were drowned. Others were pursued by the Byzantines and massacred by them. They seized the fire temple that the King had brought with him and where he hid his treasure. Sixty Persian officers were executed and the fire extinguished. Chosroes left Byzantium and his great sorrow caused a chest problem from which he died three and a half years later. The Byzantines in Antioch, whom he had taken captive and for whom he had built the city, gathered to pay their last respects, according to the custom of the Christians,⁸⁷ with censers and candles, lined up along the route to their final resting place.

He reigned 47 years and a few months. Maxims and proverbs have been written about him, and these are read by people the whole time. It is said that Anûshirwân saw bad omens and had astonishing visions. One day he was sitting on his throne, with his crown on his head, and a large dog stood in front of him and then disappeared. The gatekeepers and chamberlains, who were punished for this, said that they did not know how this could have happened. It is also said that on another occasion he saw a hideously ugly man in rags approach him on the throne, come up and sit down beside him. He had no idea how this happened. This was all in the time of his father.

39. Daniel the penitent*

While Ezekiel the Catholicos was still living: Daniel the penitent, who performed miracles and wonders, built a monastery on the royal road⁸⁸ in a difficult place called Besloi and

85 The parasang in Xenophon (*Anabasis*) was calculated in 1920 by Kenneth Mason of the Royal Geographical Society as about 2½ miles. From the little I have read the ancient parasang seems to me a unit of measurement that was far from standard.

86 City founded by Seleucus Kallinikos, now al Raqqah (الرقّة)

87 على عدة النصارى. It is difficult to believe that a Christian writing for Christians about Christians would feel it necessary to say this.

88 From Susa to the Aegean. Herodotus *Histories* 5, 52ff. has a fairly detailed description of it. The irony for the Persians was it was the road used by Alexander in his conquest of Persia.

gathered disciples⁸⁹ in it; Abimelek built a monastery at the gates of Nisibis; and Simeon founded a monastery in the hills of Arûkh. This information can be found in the book written by Bar Sahde.

40. Rabban Qûsra

This saint was originally from Niniveh and lived at the time of Chosroes Anûshirwân and his son Hormizdad. From childhood he was devoted to the Scriptures. When he grew up he sought out Rabban Job, the disciple of Abraham of Nethfar. He learned the monastic life from him and spent 15 years with him, serving the brothers and eating only bread and water. He wears a sleeveless tunic, converted many Jacobites at Niniveh to the true faith and performed many miracles.

It is said for example that one day as he passing by some shepherds eating meat. They invited him to join them. He agreed because of the oath⁹⁰ and ate three mouthfuls. The monks with him disapproved of his conduct and felt a certain contempt for him. They had to Cross the Tigris to get from Niniveh to the garden. He made the sign of the Cross over the water, sat down on his cloak which he had just spread out, and after having taken aside the monks who had rebuked him for eating meat, and went through the water with them without getting wet. The guards of the town saw this and thought he was a god.

He then built a large sanctuary, where two monks came to live with him. At that time there were no building opposite the garden. It was Chosroes who built many buildings where people could stay. When the Arabs invaded, taking prisoners, many took refuge around the saint. During the attack, one of the drew his sword to kill the saint but his hand froze. His hand was cured by the saint, who prayed for him whenever he could. It was this that ensured the release of all the prisoners and booty to his charge. He predicted the founding of Mosul, its glory and the end of Persian domination.

When the Arabs ruled, they added many buildings where Chosroes had built and called it Mosul, which became a town. It is said that this saint during Lent ate only fruit.⁹¹ He died

89 الاسكولانيين

90 اليميم. I do not know which oath is meant.

91 According to H. Wehr this word (النقل) means 'dried fruit'.

an old man and was buried in his monastery, known as Rabban Qûsri, which is still the see of the Metropolitans of Mosul.