The Capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614

Antiochus Strategos (7th century)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

The Capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614

Antiochus Strategos Account of the Sack of Jerusalem in A.D. 614. IN the ninth volume of his Texts and Studies in Armenogruzinian Philology (Tekstwe i Razweskaniyah po Armyâno-Gruzînskoe Phîlo-logii) Professor N. Marr, of the University of Petersburg, published early last year the old Georgian version of a narrative entitled 'Antiochus Strategos, the Capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in the year 614 ' (Antiokh Strateg, Playnenie Jerusalima Persami). The Greek text of this narrative is lost, all except an insignificant fragment ; but as it is our only detailed narrative by an eye-witness of this important but hitherto obscure episode, I have thought it worth translating for English readers. The Georgian text, edited by Professor Marr from two codices, of which one was written in the thirteenth century, fills sixty-six large octavo pages of thirty-three lines each. I have much reduced its bulk by omitting pious ejaculations and other passages devoid of historical interest. These omissions I note. Professor Marr's book contains, besides the Georgian text, a long and learned introduction, and a careful Eussian translation of the Georgian. The latter materially aided me in my rendering, because, as students of Georgian well know, the lexicons of that language are very imperfect. Without it I could only have conjectured the meaning of several words omitted in the lexicons. Professor Marr ascribes the Georgian version to the tenth century ; and, on grounds which to me are a little doubtful, argues that it was made not directly from the Greek but from an Arabic version of the Greek. He prints a fragment of the Arabic text which contains the enumeration of the dead.

FREDERICK C. CONYBEARE. The Capture of Jerusalem. The treatise of the blessed monk Strateg, who lived in the Laura of our father Saba. He told about the devastation of Jerusalem, the capture of the Cross of Christ, which is the tree of our life, and of the burning of the holy churches, and their demolition ; the captivity of the patriarch Zachariah, |503 the destruction of priests, of deacons and monks ; about the folk which believed in Christ, and about all that befell Jerusalem and its inhabitants from Babylon, at the hands of Persians and Chaldeans by command of their king Chosro. For Zachariah, the chief of fathers of Jerusalem, patriarch and shepherd of the holy city, was shepherding his flock in a manner correct and decent and pleasing to God. But in these days there arrived certain wicked men, who settled in Jerusalem. Some of them aforetime dwelled in this holy city

with the devil's aid. They were named after the dress which they wore, and one faction was dubbed the Greens and the other the Blues. They were full of all villainy, and were not content with merely assaulting and plundering the faithful; but were banded together for bloodshed as well and for homicide. There was war and extermination ever among them, and they constantly committed evil deeds, even against the inhabitants of Jerusalem. . . .

Then the Judge of truth, who desires not the death of the sinner, but that he may turn again and live, sent on us the evil Persian race, as a rod of chastisement and medicine of rebuke. And they advanced with a great force and numerous host. They seized all the land of Syria ; they put to flight the Greek detachments and forces, and sundry of them they captured, and thereafter began to enter with a swarming army and to capture every city and village. And they reached Palestine and its borders, and they arrived at Caesarea, which is the metropolis. But there they begged for a truce, and bowed their necks in submission. After that the enemy advanced to Sarapeon, and captured it, as well as all the seaboard cities together with their hamlets. . . . Next they reached Judea ; and came to a large and famous city, a Christian city, which is Jerusalem, city of the Son of God. And they came on in wrath and mighty anger of soul; and the Lord surrendered it into their hands, and they fulfilled all in accordance with His will. And who can depict what took place within Jerusalem and in her streets? Who number the multitude of dead who lay stretched in Jerusalem ? . . .

But who, my brethren, will not grieve over this deed which was done in Constantinople by the Emperor Justinian, when he cried out 'Victory! Victory !' When a river of blood flowed in the middle of the city, from the massacring of an innumerable multitude? And who has not heard what happened in the great city of Antioch, what woes and disasters overtook its inhabitants ? Who will not lament and deplore the fate which overtook the city of Laodicea and its inhabitants, how that souls innumerable were destroyed by the jealousy and passion of a God-hating enemy ? Who can keep silence and restrain his tears in presence of all this evil and suffering ? Who compute the multitude of woes and labours, and how many tens of thousands were slain in consequence of the crime committed by the worthless Bonosus ? . . .

And if you would fain understand that which happened, listen to what I had related to me by a certain God-loving man about the death of that |504 worthless man who was called Bonosus, that you may know that I am telling the truth. For this worthy man, who lived in the Jordan region,recounted to me and said : ' Just when the ill-starred Bonosus died, I saw terrible folk who carried his soul to a well which was sealed, and on it sat a sentinel, and they said to him : "We bid thee, O man, open for us the well, that we may shut in it the soul of Bonosus." The man answered them, he that sat on the well: "I cannot open this well, until the Lord commands me so to do." But one of them that carried the soul of Bonosus, made haste and furnished unto him a document of the Lord. Forthwith the sentry that sat on the well glanced thereat, sighed from the depth of his heart, and, smiting himself on the breast, said : "Woe to this ill-starred soul, forasmuch as since the time of the impious Emperor Julian, I have not opened the door of this darkling abyss of hell." ' For this reason

we have told this, namely that you may know what men lived in our country ; and how many villainies they committed, in the way of slaughter and desolation and extermination of your brethren.

And leader in all was this worthless Bonosus. For he was full of all sorts of godlessness and on the watch for the demolition of cities and desolating of churches together with the aforementioned worthless men ; so that riot and destruction overtook the churches, and he had a design to seize and kill the patriarch who preceded the patriarch Zachariah, and to lay waste the churches. Such deeds did these men commit, who sojourned among us. And as we knew not God, nor observed His commands, God delivered us into the hands of our enemies, and we fell under the lordship of this abominable tribe of Persians, and they dealt with us in all ways as they pleased. And now I will begin to tell you what happened. For these evil tribes, when they had seized all the land of Syria and the littoral, laid hold of a certain couple of monks out of the monasteries by the sea. . . .

And when they seized the monks and led them to their chief, he looked them in the face and considered their worth. And although the chief was an enemy of God, he ordered that they should be preserved until he should see how the matter should end. And as he approached the holy city of Jerusalem, he began from day to day to ask them, saying : 'What say ye, O ye monks, will yon city surrender to me or not?' The monks in answer said : 'In vain dost thou hasten, and idle are thy designs, leader of an evil and foul race, for the right hand of God protects this holy city.' And when they reached Jerusalem, the magnates and chiefs of his host went and reconnoitred the city and its walls. And when they perceived the number of the monasteries and habitations of the Godfearing ones, which were in the environs of the city, their mind was opened and they desired to conclude a treaty with the inhabitants of the city. Then the blessed patriarch Zachariah, when he learned their desire and understood from the Lord what had overtaken the city, likewise was minded to conclude a treaty with the enemies. . . ,

But when the leaders of the riotous factions became aware what the |505 patriarch designed to do, they gathered together and, assailing him like wild beasts, said to him : 'We warn thee, who art leader of this people, thou art intent on no good thing, in so far as thou thinkest of making peace with the enemy. . . . Then, beholding their folly and that on which they were bent, the blessed Zachariah began to lament and bewail his flock and the destruction of his faithful folk. He feared moreover the miscreants lest they should slay him. . . . And in the same manner the walls of Jericho, when it pleased God to lay them low, were suddenly overthrown ; and He, the all good, humbled also by the Emperor Heraclius the multitude of the Persians, so soon as He, the clement One, looked with pity on His people. But the blessed Zachariah, a true shepherd, invited them to make peace ; and when they hearkened not to him, he gave them other counsel ; and he summoned a monk, who was named Abba Modestus, and he was superior of the monastery of St. Theodosius, and bade him go and muster men from the Greek troops which were in Jericho, to help them in their struggle.

But the blessed Modestus received the order of the patriarch, went out, and mustered the Greek troops which were in Jericho.

The Persians however beleaguered the entire city, and surrounded it for the combat ; and hourly they questioned the monks in regard to the city, whether God would deliver it or not into their hands. And the first day they asked them the same question afresh. Then the monks consulted one with the other and said : 'If we lie, 'tis evil ; but if we tell the truth, woe to us. Rather, whether we tell or whether we conceal the truth, it cannot but be that this city be laid waste. So it is right that we should not conceal the truth.' Then the monks sighed from the depths of their hearts, and smiting themselves on the face, and shedding tears, as if in a flood from their eyes, they replied : ' For our sins God hath delivered us into your hands.'

We however, when we were delivered into captivity, said to those monks : 'Why did you then from the first not tell us that the city was to be delivered into the hands of the enemy ? On the contrary you declared that by God it would be saved ; and we know that your word was of the Lord ; and again you said that He had delivered it over to devastation.' The monks answered us and said : ' We were not prophets and forecasters of divine decree ; but rather were, because of our sins, given over into the hands of our enemies ; and have been taken captive at their hands, and been smitten together with this people according as our deeds merited. But as regards the holy city be not surprised at this having overtaken it ; for as we were with God, so too was God with us. But as for us, when the Persians had led us out of our caves, they conducted us here to Jerusalem. We looked on the wall of the city, and saw a marvellous sight. For on each of the towers and battlements stood an angel holding in his hands shield and fiery lance. And when we beheld this sign, we were much rejoiced. We understood that God was on our side. Wherefore we said to the enemy : "In vain you hasten, idly do you imagine of this city, that it is to be delivered into your hands." . . .'

In that season there came down from heaven an angel three days before this evil overtook us and advanced as far as the angels which were standing upon the wall of Jerusalem and guarded it; and he said to them : 'Depart hence, withdraw ; for the Lord has given over this holy city into the hands of the enemy.' And when the assembly of angels heard this, they departed; for they could not oppose the will of God. And thereby we knew that our sins exceeded God's grace. . .

But the Persians when they found that the inhabitants of the city would not consent to submit, were agitated with lively anger, like ferocious beasts, and planned all sorts of hurt against Jerusalem ; and they laid siege to it with much watchfulness and gave battle. Meanwhile the monk Abba Modestus, who had been sent by the patriarch to collect Greek troops to aid them in distress, persuaded them to start. But God willed not to help them. For when the Greeks saw the numbers of the Persian host which was encamped around Jerusalem they fled with one accord, put to flight by the Persians. Then the Abba Modestus was left alone, inasmuch as he could not flee. He saw a rock in a ravine and climbed up on to it. The rock was already surrounded by Persians : some of them stood on it, and others again

stood over against the rock. But God, who preserved the prophet Elisha and destroyed the murderers who came against him before they sighted him, darkened the eyes of the enemy, and preserved His servant unscathed. And he peacefully went down to Jericho. But the inhabitants of the city began to grieve when they learned of the flight of the Greeks, and there was found from no quarter any aid for them. Then the Persians perceived that God had forsaken the Christians, and that they had no helper ; and with intensified anger they began to search out ways and means to the extent of building towers around the city ; and they placed on them balistas for a struggle with the inhabitants of Jerusalem ; and they made ready every sort of military engine, as is customary with warriors ; and with lively wrath they engaged the Christians. They were however all the more on the watch, and desired to get possession of Jerusalem, because they knew that that city was a refuge of all Christians and a fortress of their dominion.

The beginning of the struggle of the Persians with the Christians of Jerusalem was on the 15th April, in the second indiction, in the fourth year of the Emperor Heraclius. They spent twenty days in the struggle. And they shot from their balistas with such violence, that on the twenty-first day they broke down the city wall. Thereupon the evil foemen entered the city in great fury, like infuriated wild beasts and irritated serpents. The men however who defended the city wall fled, and hid themselves in caverns, fosses, and cisterns in order to save themselves ; and the people in crowds fled into churches and altars; and there they destroyed them. For the enemy entered in mighty wrath, gnashing their teeth in violent fury; like evil beasts they roared, bellowed like lions, hissed like ferocious serpents, and slew all whom they found. Like mad |507 dogs they tore with their teeth the flesh of the faithful, and respected none at all, neither male nor female, neither young nor old, neither child nor baby, neither priest nor monk, neither virgin nor widow. . .

Meanwhile the evil Persians, who had no pity in their hearts, raced to every place in the city and with one accord extirpated all the people. Anyone who ran away in terror they caught hold of ; and if any cried out from fear, they roared at them with gnashing of teeth, and by breaking their teeth forced them to close their mouths. They slaughtered tender infants on the ground, and then with loud yelps called their parents. Their parents bewailed the children with vociferations and sobbings, but were promptly despatched along with them. Any that were caught armed were massacred with their own weapons. Those who ran swiftly were pierced with arrows, the unresisting and quiet they slew without mercy. They listened not to appeals of supplicants, nor pitied youthful beauty, nor had compassion on old men's age, nor blushed before the humility of the clergy. On the contrary they destroyed persons of every age, massacred them like animals, cut them in pieces, mowed sundry of them down like cabbages, so that all alike had severally to drain the cup full of bitterness. Lamentation and terror might be seen in Jerusalem. Holy churches were burned with fire, others were demolished, majestic altars fell prone, sacred crosses were trampled underfoot, life-giving icons were spat upon by the unclean. Then their wrath fell upon priests and deacons: they slew them in their churches like dumb animals. . . .

And who can relate what the evil foes committed and what horrors were to be seen in Jerusalem ? However, my beloved brethren, listen to me with patience, because my heartache impels me to speak and forbids me to keep silent; and once having begun to describe this calamity, I am minded to recount to you the whole of it. For when the Persians had entered the city, and slain countless souls, and blood ran deep in all places, the enemy in consequence no longer had the strength to slay, and much Christian population remained that was unslain. So when the ferocity of the wrath of the Persians was appeased, then their leader, whom they called Rasmi Ozdan, ordered the public criers to go forth and to make proclamation saying : 'Come out, all of you that are in hiding. Fear not. For the sword is put away from you, and by me is granted peace.' Then, as soon as they heard that, a very numerous crowd came forth that had been hidden in cisterns and fosses. But many of them were already dead within them, some owing to the darkness, others from hunger and thirst. Who can count the number of those who died ? for many tens of thousands were destroyed by the number of privations and diversity of hardships, before those in hiding came out owing to the number of their privations ;

and they abandoned themselves to death when they heard the chief's command, as if he was encouraging them for their good, and they would get alleviation by coming out. But when those in hiding had come out, the prince summoned them and began to question the whole people as to what they knew of the art of building. When they had one by one specified their crafts, he bade those be picked out on one side who were |508 skilled in architecture, that they might be carried captive to Persia ; but he seized the remainder of the people and shut them up in the reservoir of Mamel, which lies outside the city at a distance of about two stades from the tower of David. And he ordered sentinels to guard those thus confined in the moat.

O my brethren, who can estimate the hardships and privations which befell the Christians on that day ? For the multitude of people suffocatedone the other, and fathers and mothers perished together owing to the confinement of the place. Like sheep devoted to slaughter, so were the crowd of believers got ready for massacre. Death on every side declared itself, since the intense heat, like fire, consumed the multitude of people, as they trampled on one another in the press, and many perished without the sword. . . .

Thereupon the vile Jews, enemies of the truth and haters of Christ, when they perceived that the Christians were given over into the hands of the enemy, rejoiced exceedingly, because they detested the Christians ; and they conceived an evil plan in keeping with their vileness about the people. For in the eyes of the Persians their importance was great, because they were the betrayers of the Christians. And in this season then the Jews approached the edge of the reservoir and called out to the children of God, while they were shut up therein, and said to them : 'If ye would escape from death, become Jews and deny Christ; and then ye shall step up from your place and join us. We will ransom you with our money, and ye shall be benefited by us.' But their plot and desire were not fulfilled, their labours proved to be in vain ; because the children of Holy Church chose death for Christ's

sake rather than to live in godless-ness : and they reckoned it better for their flesh to be punished, rather than their souls ruined, so that their portion were not with the Jews. And when the unclean Jews saw the steadfast uprightness of the Christians and their immovable faith, then they were agitated with lively ire, like evil beasts, and thereupon imagined another plot. As of old they bought the Lord from the Jews with silver, so they purchased Christians out of the reservoir ; for they gave the Persians silver, and they bought a Christian and slew him like a sheep. The Christians however rejoiced because they were being slain for Christ's sake and shed their blood for His blood, and took on themselves death in return for His death. . .

When the people were carried into Persia, and the Jews were left in Jerusalem, they began with their own hands to demolish and burn such of the holy churches as were left standing. . . . How many souls were slain in the reservoir of Mamel ! How many perished of hunger and thirst! How many priests and monks were massacred by the sword ! How many infants were crushed under foot, or perished by hunger and thirst, or languished through fear and horror of the foe ! How many maidens, refusing their abominable outrages, |509 were given over to death by the enemy! How many parents perished on top of their own children ! How many of the people were bought up by the Jews and butchered, and became confessors of Christ! How many persons, fathers, mothers, and tender infants, having concealed themselves in fosses and cisterns, perished of darkness and hunger ! How many fled into the Church of the Anastasis, into that of Sion and other churches, and were therein massacred and consumed with fire ! Who can count the multitude of the corpses of those who were massacred in Jerusalem!

We have recounted this, for it all happened to us in reality, that in this chastisement we may recognise the Lord, as Paul the Apostle said : 'If we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened, that we may not with the world be condemned. . . ' Listen to me, my brethren, and I will relate to you what befell the holy mothers. In Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, there was a monastery, in which lived holy virgins 400 in number. The enemy entered that monastery, and expelled, like doves from their nest, those brides of Christ, blessed, of worthy life and blameless in chastity. Having led them out of the monastery, they began to pen them in like cattle ; and they shared them among themselves and led them away each to their own quarters. . .

Now listen, my brethren, and I will relate. For after all this evil doing they captured the good shepherd, the patriarch Zachariah, and conducted him to Sion through the gate through which our Lord Jesus Christ came in ; and he was conducted cautiously, like a brigand, pinioned with cords. . . . Then they led out the good shepherd, as they did Christ when He went forth from Sion to the Cross. But Zachariah they led forth from the gate of Jerusalem, like Adam forth from paradise. . . Then went forth the blessed pastor with the people by the gate called Probatike, from which also went forth the Saviour for His Passion ; and he sat down on the Mount of Olives, and as for a widowed bride so he wept for the holy church. Then there came up before him all the people. They fell prone on their faces furrowed

with excess of mourning. He gazed upon them, and beheld the members of his flock, that weakened with lamentation, overcast with grief, and beset with perils, were brought nigh unto death. Then he began to console them. . .

Once more they raised up their eyes, and gazed upon Jerusalem and the holy churches. A flame, as out of a furnace, reached up to the clouds, and it was burning. Then they fell to sobbing and lamenting all at once and loudly. Some smote themselves on the face, others strewed ashes on their heads, others rubbed their faces in the dust, and some tore their |510 hair, when they beheld the holy Anastasis afire, Sion in smoke and flames, and Jerusalem devastated. These words the blessed Zachariah uttered before the people on the holy Mount of Olives. And as he ended his words, he heard a tramping and outcry of the people. He looked round and perceived that the multitude of the Persians was advancing, who intended to take them to Persia into captivity. . . . Then the enemy were mingled with the company, like wild beasts among sheep ; they carried them off to slaughter like lambs, and seized the blessed Zachariah, and led him off. Meanwhile the righteous man ceased not to lament and sob, but every moment he looked away and said : 'Farewell, O Jerusalem!' And from that time forth he never beheld her again. But he said : 'Farewell, holy city ! Forget not thy servant! Thou knowest my love for thee, and my earnest zeal to serve thee ; and therefore I pray thee to remember me and this people, whenever thou shalt pray to Christ:' . . .

And they descended from the Mount of Olives in the direction of Jericho by the road which leads to Jordan. Then, my brethren, there took hold of all the Christians of the whole world great sorrow and ineffable grief, at the fact that the city, the elect, famous, and imperial city had been given over to rapine ; that the holy places and refuges of all the faithful had been given up to fire, and Christian folk vowed to captivity and death. . . . My own eyes witnessed further more another incident, worthy of tears. For there were two striplings, brothers in the flesh, twins born in one and the same hour, and they were carried off into captivity from the Holy City. About them we heard of a marvellous episode, which their parents and neighbours related of them, how that between the boys there existed such intense affection, that they could not be parted even for a minute from one another. For their birth was on the same day, and their baptism was on the same day, their mother brought them up together, and they shared a single bed.

So far I have given you an account of what happened in Jerusalem and on the road to captivity. But henceforth I shall inform you of how our entry into Persia took place, of what sorrow fell upon God's children, and how their grief, pain, and mourning burst out afresh. For before our entry into Babylon they halted us in an enclosure of great dimensions, and afterwards they brought the Cross of Christ, the tree of our life, and laid it at the threshold of the gate which led into the enclosure. Then the wicked enemy came up and began to arrest the faithful. They drove them, like lambs out of a pen, with great haste, and they said : 'You shall trample on this Cross of yours, in which you set your trust. If not, we will slay you and throw your bodies to the dogs to devour.' . . . And |511 godless and merciless, they acted as follows; for they took their stand at the gate with naked swords in their hands

and cut down those who had faith in the Lord, but left alive the renegades. All the same not many obeyed their godless word so far as to go through the gate, and insult the Cross of Christ by denying it, but only a few, of weak mind.

But the majority of the folk perished for the sake of Christ, preferring to die rather than insult the Cross with their feet. Then, my brethren, vehement sorrow and immeasurable pain befell us all, because on our approaching Babylon, it was not to the river of Babylon they led us, but to the river of Persia. Nor was it to a purifying bath that they presented us, but drove us into a bloody river. And not before a Christian emperor they brought us forward, but before a Persian emperor, by name Khosro; and we reached not confessors of the Holy Trinity, but for our sins were ranked with deniers of the Holy Trinity.

But the blessed Zachariah the Patriarch on reaching the gate remembered the captivity of the children of Israel and exclaimed : 'Blessed be the Lord, who hath brought on us also all that happened in former days of the people of Israel and in the time of Moses.' Then the man of God asked the Persians to leave him for a time and cease their molestation. And when they did so, the blessed man bade assemble all the priests, deacons, and monks; and as soon as they were assembled he took his stand in their midst, and he kneeled down to the East, and all together with him kneeled down to the Lord. When they rose from prayer, the saint ordered them to chant three psalms of David. . . . When they had ended the chanting of the psalms, the blessed Zachariah went up to much higher ground and uttered the 'Allejuia,' which the monks repeat at the hour of the rising sun. He twice uttered it together with the sticheron, and all the people chanted it after him. Then the blessed one extended his hand in the direction of the river and said: 'By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Sion. If I forget thee, Jerusalem, then may thy right hand forget me.' When he uttered this, the people were moved to sobs and could no longer utter the second Alleluia.

But they bowed their heads in pensive grief to the earth, while the good pastor, the holy Zachariah, prayed to Christ with tears and groans. And then, while the people with bowed heads prayed a long time to the Lord, Zachariah ordered them to collect the children from seven years of age and less. And their number was 3000. The enemy however did not prevent their collecting them, but looked on to see what they were about to do. When they had collected the crowd of children, the blessed Zachariah stood to the East some space away from the people, placed the children before him and behind him the people, and bade all to call upon the Lord out loud and say : ' Merciful Lord, have mercy on us! ' . . .

Now listen, my brethren, and I will tell you. For when we reached Babylon, and they had informed the evil King of our arrival—one day previously he summoned his table-companions and princes, his magi, sorcerers, and diviners, for he imagined that our faith in the Cross was |512 vain. And he said to us : 'Look ye, the might of the fire in which we put our trust, has given us the great city of the Christians, Jerusalem, and their Cross which they trust in and adore. There has also been delivered into our hands the leader of their religion, and he will to-morrow arrive before us together with his people. Therefore hasten ye now and

prepare for an encounter with him, and work some miraculous effect such as they are not able to work ; and if you can prevent their doing anything, and they do not accomplish the like of your achievements, I will magnify you with gifts and great honours.' Then one of the Magi answered the King as follows : 'O King, live for ever, and let not your heart be disturbed about their leader, the Christians' president. For to-morrow you shall see and know of what quality your servants are and of what the table-companions who sit in your presence.'

When we reached the city, they led us like sheep to be slaughtered ; and they conducted us to the palace and set us in the presence of the King. Before him stood also the Cross of our Redemption, even as our Lord Jesus Christ stood before the ruler Pilate ; and they began among themselves to mock and rail at the Cross. . . . Then the King commanded them to present and set before him the blessed Zachariah, and he said to him : 'Who are you, or whence come you? What miracle have you the power to accomplish, that we may behold it and believe in you ? ' But the holy man addressed the King in answer : 'O King, I am a sinful man and sunk in sins ; and now behold, how because of our sins the Lord has delivered us into your hands for chastisement; yet I will not tempt the Lord my God, but rather accept with gratitude this visitation of misery ; but you desire me to tempt Him. Thou knowest.' The King said to him : 'How can you affirm that there is no other god like unto your God? Behold, now you know that my faith is above your faith, and my god greater than your God.' And when he had said this, he invited the Magus in presence of all the people, and said : 'Tell me what you are minded to do or with what sign you intend to overcome him.'

But the Magus began to praise [himself], and said to the blessed Zachariah in presence of the King : 'Tell me what I did yesterday and what I mean to do to-day, in order that I may recognise the power of your God and believe in you. If not, I will tell you what you did yesterday and what you are prepared to do to-day ; and you will put your trust in fire and abandon your Christian faith.' On hearing this the holy patriarch, the peaceful shepherd, was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to the King : 'O King, is it right that your servants should lie before you and outrage your majesty with lies and phantasy? 'But the King when he heard these words began to swear and imprecate in the presence of all the people, and said : 'In truth, I declare, if my servant dares to utter a lie before me, I will order his head to be cut off: but if my servant tells the truth I will order the Christian president to be slain.' Then the saint rejoiced because he knew what God intended to do through him. He went up to the Magus and said : 'Tell me, O evil Magus, and enemy of God, are you able to tell me what I did yesterday and what I intend to do to-day?' The Magus replied : 'Yes, I am able to tell to you the secrets of your heart.' |513

That very moment, the good shepherd stretched out his hand and took the rod which the Magus had, for that the Magi should hold a rod in their hands is their custom, and he said to him : 'Tell me, evil Magus, this very moment what I mean to do, and do not slily busy yourself with lies for yesterday or to-day. Am I going to smite you with this rod or not?' Then the Magus, when he heard this, was surprised. His face changed colour, and he could

not answer anything ; but he began to take counsel with himself and said : 'What have I done ? I have doomed myself to ruin ! I know not now what answer to make. If I say : You intend to strike me, he will reply to me : I do not intend to strike you. But if I tell him : You do not intend to smite me, then at once he will strike me. And I do not know what to answer. For I am defeated in either case. Where is the essence of fire and the majesty of the sun ? I pray he may come to aid his servant, and save me now in the hour of disaster.' So he spake in his mind, but it did not advantage him. And inasmuch as the Magus and sorcerer remained silent, stupefied by his own reflections, and could make no answer, the King ordered his head to be cut off, because of his oath and of his table-companions.

For shame took hold of them because of the people. But the Magus, as soon as he knew of this, was seized with fear and trembling. And all the Chaldaeans were confounded when they witnessed the speedy execution of the Magus, and from that moment forth no one any more dared to go near the Lord's Cross, the tree of our salvation, because fear took possession of all alike owing to this miracle.

Now, my brethren, I will acquaint you with a miracle which was wrought by our holy Father, and which I learned from others. For I myself only witnessed the one of the Magus ; and owing to my impatience I, herein negligent, became pusillanimous and fled. I could not display perfect endurance along with the holy Father Zachariah, so as to remain with him for a long time. Nor could I persevere with the people, so as to share with them in the reward. Among the prisoners on the contrary there were certain monks, who fled from the Persians by night, and I, poor wretch, fled together with them, reached Jerusalem, and longed to acquaint you with all that my eyes beheld. But what remains I learned from the brethren who deserve credence. Now there was a certain monk whom they called Abba Simeon. He recounted to me about the patriarch Zachariah and said : After a good time they began to show much honour by the will of God to him, who was magnified on all occasions and respected by those who truly honour and magnify him, as the Word of God says : 'I magnify them that magnify me.' For there was found among the wives of the King Khosro a certain woman who adored the tree of holy Cross and the holy man, the patriarch Zachariah. For this woman was in name a Christian, but after the heresy of Nestorius, the impious and despised of God. She petitioned the King and obtained of him the tree of the holy Cross duly sealed, together with the patriarch and certain of the prisoners, as she chose. She led them into her palace and gave them a good place and reposeful. She lavished honour on them and gifts, and bestowed upon them abundance of fragrant incense with candles and everything they wanted. |514

After a certain time one of the Hebrews became jealous of the honour which all bestowed on the man of God, and delated him to the King ; for with the triumphant help of the devil the Hebrews had liberty of access to him. And they said : 'He is given up to fornication.' And they promised money to a certain wretched girl, who had only a few days before been delivered of a child, and so induced her to complain of him to the Shah. . . . And another similar wonder to this in connexion with the holy patriarch Zachariah was related to us by

the same Simeon. The wife of a prince of that land was barren and had no child. She had petitioned several sorcerers and soothsayers in order to have children, but did not attain her object. Her husband however went in faith to the holy man and besought him to pray, and then God would grant him a son.

The number of the slain that were found in Jerusalem. Hear, my beloved brethren, the number of the slain who were found in Jerusalem after the invasion of the Persians, and the massacre of the population, and their taking into captivity ; and by what sort of death the flocks of Christ our God were destroyed. In Jerusalem there was a certain one by name Thomas. He, blessed one, was armed with the might of Christ. He resembled Nicodemus who buried the body of the Lord, and his wife Mary Magdalene. For they accomplished good deeds, for which they are worthy to be remembered ; and it is our duty to mention them. He who wishes to inform himself of what happened to those of Jerusalem, let him ask them. For these blessed ones displayed divine zeal. They were on the spot when the Persians came ; and they knew in detail everything which was done by them, and in every deed shewed true zeal in God's service.

When the Persians withdrew, they began to search for all the dead that had fallen at the hands of the Persians in the city and in its environs, in all the alleys and public places. Those whom they found they collected in great haste and with much zeal, and buried them in the grotto of Mamel, and in other grottos they collected and buried them. And from these blessed persons we learnt about the terrible massacre of the faithful people, and some people we ourselves saw destroyed by similar wounds. For some were lying cloven asunder from head to breast; others lay with fissures from shoulder to belly ; some lay transfixed with the sword and cut in bits like grass ; some lay cut in twain. Some had their belly cloven asunder with the sword and their entrails gushing out, and others lay cut into pieces, limb by limb, like the carcasses in a butcher's shop. But above all it was piteous and deplorable to think of, how some wallowed |515 in the streets mixed up with the soil; others with clay and mud, besmirched with impurities ; while others wallowed in the churches and houses imbrued in blood. Some had fled into the Holy of Holies, where they lay cut up like grass. And some were found of the slain who had in their hands the glorious and life-giving body of Christ, and in the act of receiving it had been butchered like sheep. Others were clasping the horns of the altars ; others the holy Cross, and the slain were heaped on them. Others had fled to the Baptistery and lay covered with wounds on the edge of the font. Others were massacred as they hid under the holy table, and were offered victims to Christ.

Listen, and I will acquaint you with the number of all the slain, for the blessed Thomas informed us of the following : After the departure of the Persians, he said, I remained in Jerusalem, and began to search out the corpses of the slain that had died by the hands of the evil foe. And I found in the church of the holy martyr George, which is outside the town, and I began from this spot to search for corpses and to bury them in the grottos. We found at the altar of the holy church seven persons lying. The Lord and Saint George gave us strength and we buried them. Next we set about to seek for all the dead and to bury them.

Some we collected in the grottos, others we buried in sepulchres and graves. And we found them as follows :—

For we found in the court of the government 28 (18) persons. In the cisterns we found of the slain 275 (250) persons. In front of the gates of Holy Sion we found 2270 persons. At the altar of the Holy New we found 600 (290) souls. In the church of St. Sophia we found 477 (369) souls. In the church of Saints Cosmas and Damian we found 2212 (2112) souls. In the Book room of Holy New 70 souls. And we found in the monastery of Holy Anastasis 212 souls. And we found in the market place 38 souls. In front of the Samaritan temple we found 919 (723) souls. In the lane of St. Kiriakos we found 1449 (1409) souls. And we found on the western side of Holy Sion 196 (197) souls. At the gate Probatike we found 2107 souls. In the passage of St. Jacob we found 308 (1700) souls. In the flesher's row we found 921 souls. And we found at the spring of Siloam 2818 (2318) souls. And we found in the cistern of Mamel 24,518 souls. In the Gerakomia of the patriarch we found 318 souls. In the place called the Golden City 1202 souls. In the monastery of Saint John we found 4219 (4250) souls. In the imperial Gerakomia 780 (167) souls. We found on the Mount of Olives 1207 souls. On the steps of the Anastasis we found 300 (83) souls. In the place of Little Assembly we found 202 (102) souls.

In the place of Large Assembly we found 317 (417) souls. In the church of Saint Serapion we found 338 souls. We found in front of Holy Golgotha 80 souls. We found in the grottos, fosses, cisterns, gardens, 6917 (6907) souls. At the Tower of David we found 2210. Within the city we found 265 souls. Just where |516 the enemy overthrew the wall of the city we found 9809 (1800) souls. And in Jerusalem we buried many others in addition that were massacred by the Persians beside these saints. The total number of all was 66,509 souls. . . .

The story of how the life-giving Cross was brought back from Babylon to Jerusalem. In the 15th year after the capture of Jerusalem, in the 19th year of the reign of Heraclius, the 10th indiction, Khosro the Persian king was slain by his son, Siron by name, in the month of March. Now about that time King Heraclius with his forces had already reached Persia, and took possession of many of his cities and of the royal palaces, slew thousands of the Persian soldiers, and led back again the Greeks who had been carried into captivity and liberated the Christians from slavery by force. But the King Siron who had taken possession of his father's kingdom died in the month of September ; and his son Artasir took the kingdom. He was only a child, and his reign lasted three months. Between the Greeks and the Persians was then concluded a written peace through the mediation of Rasmi-Ozan, who was the Persian commander-in-chief. But before this King Heraclius sent a eunuch whose name was Nerses, his principal chamberlain. He advanced with a numerous army to fight the Persians. The multitude of the Persians drawn up in battle was defeated, and they fled in terror before the face of the eunuch : so that the Persians in great sorrow exclaimed once more : 'How has this happened to us? For we have been worsted by a eunuch who is despised

among women and is not reckoned a man. And this piques our spirits all the more, that we flee before a woman.'

But in the 17th year however after the capture of Jerusalem, in the 3rd year after the murder of Khosro, in the 21st year after the accession of Heraclius, the 3rd indiction, the Persian general Rasmi-Ozan slew the Persian king Artasir, whom we mentioned above. He seized the kingdom, became an ally of the Greeks, and bestowed on the King Heraclius the life-giving tree, the Cross of Christ, as the treasure of the whole world, and as the richest of gifts, and he gave it him. But King Heraclius took it to Jerusalem on the occasion of his going there with Martina, who was daughter of his father's brother ; and he had married her against the law, and therefore was very much afraid that the high priests would rebuke him on the score of that indecent action. And when he had entered Jerusalem, he on the 21st of the month of March re-established in its own place the glorious and precious tree of the Cross, sealed as before in a chest, just as it had been carried away. And it was set up altogether unopened ; for just as the ark of the covenant was left unopened among strangers, so was left the life-giving tree of the Cross, which had vanquished death and trampled on Hell. Then King Heraclius, seeing the glorious event—namely, the restoration of the holy places, which had been rebuilt by the blessed Modestus, was much rejoiced and ordered him to be consecrated patriarch over Jerusalem; for the blessed Zachariah had died in Persia, and the church was widowed.

But in the 4th indiction, in the 21st year of the reign of Heraclius, the blessed Modestus assumed the patriarchate of Jerusalem. Not long |517 time afterwards the blessed Modestus set off to go to the king about certain advantages conducive to the administration of the churches, to ask Heraclius the king for his gracious sanction. Having reached a town called Sozos, which is on the borders of Palestine, he died on September 17. Some say that he was poisoned by malignant people who were with him. From that city they brought the holy body of Modestus and laid it side by side with the holy patriarchs in the Martyrium, with chanting on the part of the crowd, with incense and candles in the hands of the faithful folk, who carried his body to the tomb. Let us with all them give glory to God extolled in the Trinity and glorified as Unity, to whom is due reverence and prostrations to Father together with Son and Holy Ghost now and ever.

[Footnotes have been moved to the end. Greek text is rendered using the Scholars Press SPIonic font, free from here.] 1. Spelled Khuasro. Here I omit four pages. 2. I omit half a page. 3. Berdzen. 4. Three lines omitted. 5. Eleven lines omitted. 6. Spelled Lavdikia. 7. Five lines omitted. 8. This story seems to contradict the generally received account, according to which Bonosus was murdered in Constantinople. 9. = xeiro&grafon. 10. Shami. 11. I omit eight lines. 12. Four lines omitted. 13. Seven lines omitted. 14. I omit half a page. 15. Thevdos. 16. Berdzen. 17. Five lines omitted. 18. Two pages omitted, of which the original Greek exists in two Sinai MSS., no. 448, f. 335 and no. 432, f. 162, of the years 1004 and 1334 respectively. The episode is that of John, a monk of St. Saba who

lived in the place called Seven Mouths, who narrates to his disciple a vision he has had of the impending ruin of the Anastasis church, and is then slain by the Persians.

19. Eight lines omitted. 20. Lit. 'beat themselves,' i.e. e0ko&yanto. 21. Nearly one page omitted. 22. Or 'carpentering.' 23. Birqa. 24. Fliskhina. 25. Lit. 'submerged.' 26. One page omitted. 27. Birqa. 28. Here but a single Christian is mentioned. In the sequel however many are declared to have thus perished at the hands of the Jews. 29. Half a page omitted. 30. Four lines omitted. 31. Fliskhina. 32. A page is here omitted. 33. Or 'women.' 34. Professor Marr renders 'slay,' which offends in the context. I conjecture aghdcherad ' for the form, omitting the e, given in the MS. 35. There follows the story of a maiden who offered her would-be ravisher, if he would spare her virginity, a phial of miraculous oil of a kind to guard him from being wounded in battle. She rubs her neck with it and invites him to smite her with his sword, in token of her good faith. He smites and beheads her. This episode fills two pages.

36. Two-thirds of a page omitted. 37. Six lines omitted. 38. Lit. 'destroyed.' 39. Six lines omitted. 40. Eight pages omitted. 41. Two and a half pages omitted. 42. Or 'Peace with Thee,' and so below. 43. Six lines omitted. 44. I omit the episode of Eusebius, deacon of the Anastasis, who is martyred along with his two daughters because they will not accept the Magian religion. It fills three pages. 45. In the sequel their parting scene is described, and also how, subsequently, they met by accident for a moment on the way to Persia. Three pages omitted. 46. Five lines omitted. 47. Spelled Khuasro. 48. Or 'adored.' 49. Psalms cxix., cxvii., cxx., cxxii., cxxvi. (in the Greek numeration) are cited. I omit half a page. 50. Dasdebeli. I use Professor Marr's equivalent. 51. Two and a half pages omitted. 52. Thirteen lines omitted. 53. 'Or 'sold.' 54. 1 Reg. ii. 30.

55. In the sequel the infant speaking like an adult denies before the judges that Zachariah is its father. Half a page omitted. 56. The patriarch washes his face in water and sends the water to the wife to drink. She refuses, and remains sterile. I here omit three quarters of a page. 57. Four pages omitted. 58. This is preceded by the Epistle of Zachariah, here omitted, to those who had escaped captivity. 59. Embasis. 60. Trapeza. 61. Georgian akaldama. 62. Or 'Praetorium.' The numbers given here and below in parenthesis are those of the Arabic text wherever it differs from the Georgian. 63. The Arabic omits this item. 64. Nia i.e. nea&. 65. Or 'writing room '; perhaps 'library.' 66. Bagin. 67. The Arabic omits this. 68. Birqa. 69. Sapatronike. 70. One page omitted. 71. Berdzen. 72. Senakapan.

Source. English translation: an out-of-copyright translation as transcribed, or commissioned and given to the public domain, by Roger Pearse for his collection ***Early Church Fathers – Additional Texts*** (tertullian.org/fathers). SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Footnotes are left out, and Greek or Latin words, square brackets and any transcription error are as the source prints

them. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.

Licence. translation by F. C. Conybeare, English Historical Review, 1910.