



*The Capture of Jerusalem by
the Persians in 614 CE*
by Strategius of Mar Saba

Sean W. Anthony ♦ Stephen J. Shoemaker

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF ANCIENT CULTURES
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LATE ANTIQUE AND MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC NEAR EAST • NUMBER 5

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BY THE PERSIANS IN 614 CE
BY STRATEGIUS OF MAR SABA

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Late Antique and Medieval Islamic Near East (LAMINE)

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To Fred McGraw Donner

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Abbreviations

Opusculum *Opusculum de persica captivitate*

Pandects *Pandects of Holy Scripture*

PG J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca*. 161 vols. Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1857–66

PLRE A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and John Morris, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*. 3 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971–92

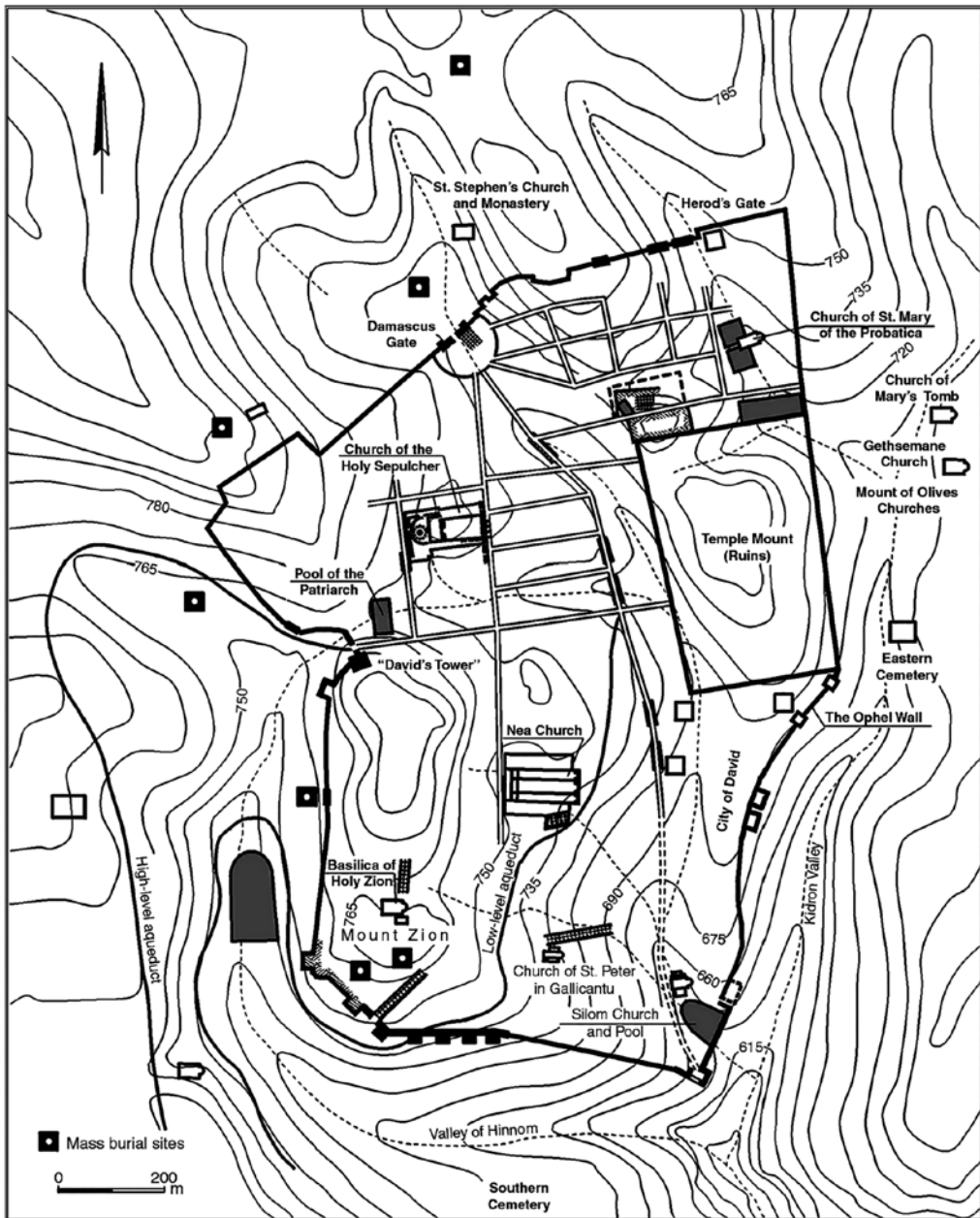
Acknowledgments

THE SEEDS FOR THIS VOLUME were sown in the fecund soil of Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, where both of us authors enjoyed the good fortune to be members of the School of Historical Studies in fall 2013. Already friends and colleagues from the University of Oregon (where Sean Anthony was a professor at the time), at the institute we had offices across the hall from each other. Obviously, there was constant back and forth, with numerous conversations about this, that, and the other thing. It was for us an extraordinarily productive experience of exactly the sort that centers like the institute are meant to foster. Among the topics of our many discussions was the fact that no proper translation had yet been made of the important text *The Capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614 CE*, by the monk of Mar Saba known as Strategius. The inherent value of the text for studying the transitions of empire and faiths in the seventh century made the absence of a complete, scholarly translation a major desideratum in our view. Indeed, if one were to look for something at all similar to Josephus's *Wars* as a source providing historical context for the rise of the Jesus movement and Christianity, this eyewitness account of the Persian invasion, occupation, and captivity comes as close as we are likely to get. And with our combined skill set covering Arabic, Old Georgian, late antiquity, and early Islam, we agreed that this project would make for a perfect collaboration.

We were additionally aware of important funding available for such collaborative scholarly translations from the US National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), through its Scholarly Editions and Scholarly Translations program. We applied in fall 2016 and were richly rewarded with a \$220,000 grant to realize our translation—funds for which we are both extremely grateful. Although we initially planned for a two-year project beginning in January 2017, we were granted an extension for a third year and were starting to wrap things up at the end of 2019, when, of course, the whole world suddenly changed with the emergence of a global pandemic. We had just reached the point in our work at which it was essential to sit down together, but for more than a year we found ourselves unable to travel and meet. Finally, in August 2021 we were able to collaborate in person on the final versions of our translations. The next several months were spent working together on an introduction and giving the translations their final polish before sending the manuscript off for review at the beginning of summer 2022.

We are most grateful to the publications office of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures for publishing this volume and for assisting with its preparation: in particular, our thanks go to managing editor Andrew Baumann and to freelance copyeditor Connie Gundry Tappy. We thank the editors of the series, Fred Donner and Antoine Borrut, for their assistance with this process and their helpful encouragement and suggestions, as

well as the anonymous reviewer of the series for some helpful comments and observations. Both of us are also grateful to our home institutions and departments for allowing us the release time (supported by the NEH grant) to work on this project. Additional thanks go to Daniel Galadza, Grigory Kessel, David Taylor, and Alexander Treiger for their help with newly discovered Syriac and Arabic versions of this text, and to Gideon Avni and the Israel Antiquities Authority for permission to reproduce their map of Jerusalem at the time of the Sasanian conquest. We dedicate this volume to Fred Donner in gratitude for the kindness and support he has given both of us throughout our careers, and we do so with great admiration for his many invaluable contributions to the study of formative Islam.



Map of Jerusalem in the time of the Persian conquest.
 Reproduced courtesy of Gideon Avni and the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Introduction

THE TEXT TRANSLATED IN THIS volume and known as *The Capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614 CE* is perhaps the single most important historical source for events in Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the decades immediately prior to the Islamic invasion and conquest, beginning in the mid-630s. The text is ascribed to a Palestinian monk of Mar Saba named Strategius (according to the Georgian version, at least),¹ who purports to be an eyewitness to the Persian conquest and occupation of Jerusalem and the fate of its captive inhabitants between 614 and 628. This important late ancient text offers a stirring account of this period in Jerusalem's history that has never been translated into a modern language other than Russian, a translation that was based on a now-outdated edition. Although the text was originally composed in Greek, that version of it is now lost, except for a few fragments. Today, *The Capture of Jerusalem* survives in only Old Georgian, Christian Arabic, and Syriac versions.²

In its current state, the text presents itself as a monastic homily, even as the composite and disparate nature of its contents is immediately apparent. Indeed, at least four distinct documents have been brought together in this treatise. The text begins with a monastic discourse, as Strategius addresses his brother monks concerning the tragic events that had recently transpired. The setting for this homily is the storied Monastery of Mar Saba in the Judean Desert, an ancient community that lived only 12 km from the Temple Mount and to which its author belonged. This discourse constitutes the bulk of the text (chs. I–XXI),³ comprising nearly 85 percent of its total content, the discourse relates at length and in highly rhetorical fashion the events of Jerusalem's capture and devastation by the Sasanian Persians in spring 614, as well as the massacre and captivity of its Christian inhabitants.

Following this oration are three shorter texts, two of which seem to have originally been independent. These writings are, in order: (1) a letter from the patriarch of Jerusalem, Zachariah, to his flock after having been taken captive to Mesopotamia (ch. XXII);

1 "Strategius" is the name given to the author in the Georgian version, and since the Georgian reflects, according to broad consensus, a more faithful rendering of the Greek text, we follow the Georgian rendering of the author's name. The Arabic versions, however, transcribe the author's name variously as *'str't* (A, C), *'str't* (D), or *'str'tyws* (C, V), transcriptions most commonly used to render "Eustratius"; e.g., see Trieger, "Unpublished Texts," 10n7. Although Peeters ("La prise," 10) already expressed some uncertainty as to whether the transcription of the author's name in the Georgian or Arabic version best represents the Greek original, the name as it appears in the oldest Arabic recensions (i.e., *'str't*, *'str't*) may merely be a truncated Arabized transcription of Στρατήγιος.

2 The Syriac version was only recently discovered and is itself a translation of an Arabic version rather than of the original Greek text. See Kessel, "Syriac Miscellany," 156–57; Taylor, "Syriac Version"; and further below.

3 All subsequent references to chapters with roman numerals in this introduction refer to the corresponding sections of the text translated in the present volume, Strategius's *The Capture of Jerusalem*.

(2) an accounting of the dead who had been slaughtered by the Sasanians and where their bodies were found (ch. XXIII); and (3) a brief account of the Roman emperor Heraclius's restoration to Jerusalem of the True Cross, which had also been taken captive to Mesopotamia (ch. XXIV). These three final pieces appear to have been added as something like appendices to Strategius's homily, which is the heart of this document. Strategius did not write Patriarch Zachariah's letter (or if he did, he certainly presents it as the work of Zachariah), and it is also significant that the text of this letter survives independently in Greek. Likewise, the account of the restoration of the Cross differs from the homily. It is written in the third person, and its language shifts to a less immediate, more matter-of-fact tone. The inventory of the dead, however, shares the homily's framing in the first and second person, as well as its heightened theological and polemical rhetoric. This account begins with the speaker addressing his brothers, thus seeming to resume Strategius's address to his fellow Sabaite monks after presenting Zachariah's letter. This inventory, as noted by Bernard Flusin, appears to be a report related by Strategius based on information given to him by a certain Thomas, who was among those who undertook the task of burying the many victims slaughtered during the Persian capture of the city.⁴

Strategius was, by his own account, among the many Christians whom the Persians led forth from Jerusalem into Persian captivity along with their bishop, Zachariah. Thus, in addition to providing a firsthand account of the capture and devastation of Jerusalem, Strategius also describes, based on his own experience, the patriarch's departure from the Holy City, as well as a pair of miraculous tales relating remarkable events that occurred among the captive Christians along their way to Persia. Likewise, he tells us of the hostages' arrival in Persia and their initial treatment, continuing then to describe Zachariah's courageous and consoling leadership of this community of exiles and his confrontation with the Sasanian authorities on behalf of his flock. Yet even for some of his stories about the patriarch, Strategius must rely on an additional informant, a monk named Simeon, rather than on his own experiences, because, as he informs us, after living for a time in captivity he fled Mesopotamia with some other monks and returned to Jerusalem to, in his own words, "make known to you all the things that my eyes had seen" (ch. XX.1). Immediately after relating these accounts of Zachariah's activities during the captivity, Strategius introduces Zachariah's letter to the Christians of Jerusalem as a witness to his continued care and concern for the flock he was forced to abandon in Jerusalem.

Strategius possibly obtained a copy of this letter from Zachariah himself while still in Persian Mesopotamia, or he may have acquired it from the authorities in Jerusalem after his return. However he acquired a copy of this missive, Strategius himself, rather than a later redactor, appears to be responsible for its inclusion in his original composition, as Józef Milik also concludes in his foundational study of this text. As Milik notes, Strategius also made piecemeal use of various other sources to compose his account of the Persian conquest and captivity, as we have indicated in the notes to our translation.⁵ These sources include, for instance, the story of a Sabaite monk named John (ch. VI) and the tale of a virgin who tricks her captors into murdering her in order to preserve her chastity (ch. XII), both of which are known independently in multiple versions in their original Greek. The

⁴ Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:133. Flusin's study remains the best and most extensive study of this text.

⁵ Milik, *La topographie*, 128–29.

letter of Zachariah also survives in its original Greek—as part of a peculiar document, known only from a single manuscript, titled the *Opusculum de persica captivitate*.⁶

Several scholars have proposed that the *Opusculum* was likely a sort of commentary on Zachariah's letter written by Modestus, the future patriarch of Jerusalem who served as *locum tenens* for Zachariah during his absence, although the attribution is highly speculative.⁷ Yet there are intriguing parallels between this *Opusculum* and Strategius's account beyond the letter of Zachariah, most notably in their inventories of the dead, the significance of which is presently not fully understood. Was this section of the *Opusculum* among Strategius's sources, or does it simply draw from the same sources as Strategius? Or is it a later author's revision of Strategius's original Greek account? Or, as some have suggested, is it the work of Strategius himself?⁸ Such questions remain unresolved, and, as Flusin observes, they cannot be easily answered.⁹ Despite the inherent uncertainties, Flusin proposes, somewhat tentatively, that the final three sections of our text—the homily, the register of the fallen, and the restoration of the Cross—were all added only well after Strategius wrote his account of the Persian conquest, occupation, and captivity (chs. I–XXI). This initial composition, Flusin proposes, was produced contemporaneously with the events that it describes, while the three final sections were appended only sometime after 630.¹⁰ Yet since Strategius actively drew from a range of written sources to supplement his own firsthand account, there is in our opinion every reason to conclude with Milik that he was himself responsible for incorporating the letter of Zachariah into his account of the Persian conquest and captivity, whether or not he may have taken it from the *Opusculum* or received it from Zachariah himself, along with the register of the dead.¹¹

In our estimation, therefore, the letter of Patriarch Zachariah and the inventory of the dead conveyed by Thomas likely belong to Strategius's original composition. More questionable, however, is whether the account of the restoration of the True Cross, as related in the final section (ch. XXIV), was also a part of his initial work. There is certainly no reason this account could not have been part of the original composition, assuming Strategius wrote it after the Cross was restored. At the same time, however, this final section is less directly linked to the rest of the text than the two sections that precede it—namely, Zachariah's letter and the inventory of the dead. Moreover, in the Georgian, the inventory of the dead, which immediately precedes the Cross's restoration, concludes with reflections on the role of Providence and the future resurrection of the dead, with a final paranesis

6 Vershinin has now identified the existence of a Church Slavonic version of these texts; see Vershinin, “Анонимный рассказ.”

7 Milik, *La topographie*, 128. The *Opusculum* has been published in PG 86.2:3235–68, with Zachariah's letter immediately preceding it in PG 86.2:3227–34.

8 So Vershinin, “Анонимный рассказ”; Krivov, “Историк Антиох Стратиг,” 53.

9 Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:135. Flusin, though, ultimately assumes that Strategius's account depends on the *Opusculum*, even as his reasons for this conclusion are not entirely clear. A recent dissertation on the topic, and one supervised by Flusin, concludes that it is “plausible to believe” that Strategius likely made use of the *Opusculum* in addition to the letter, while also noting the inherent uncertainties of this hypothesis. See Lauri, “La presa,” esp. 269.

10 Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:133–34. Howard-Johnston (*Witnesses*, 167) envisions the same two-stage composition, which he presents, however, simply as a matter of fact.

11 Milik, *La topographie*, 128–29. More recently, Lauri (“La presa,” 289) reaches the same conclusion—rightly, in our judgment.

and doxology. Such features could suggest that the original text ended at this point. Yet at the same time, there is no equivalent passage in any of the Arabic versions to suggest that this narrative was part of the original composition. While Arabic Recension C also includes a short concluding petition to the Lord at this point, the two passages differ so strikingly that no one could imagine they derive from a common source. Accordingly, it is possible that in both cases these brief remarks were added independently of one another during the process of translation and transmission, as a sort of blessing for the martyrs in the case of the Georgian or an intercession for the contemporary community in Arabic C.¹² One should additionally note that Strategius's homily mentions Heraclius's victory over the Persians much earlier in the text, in its opening sections, which could suggest that this section on the Cross was original. Nevertheless, this passage also is absent from the Arabic versions, so it too could be an interpolation.¹³ Yet if this reference to Heraclius derives from the original Greek, then the homily as a whole must have been composed after 628, in which case one would assume that the account of the Cross's restoration is original.

The textual status of this final episode is, therefore, difficult to determine, even as it holds great significance for estimating the date of this homily and the history of its composition. If it is judged to be original, then *The Capture of Jerusalem* could have been composed only following the latest event described in this section: the death of Patriarch Modestus in late 630/early 631.¹⁴ Yet it is no less possible that this terse account of the Cross's repatriation to Jerusalem (and the death of Modestus) was added to Strategius's account only sometime later, perhaps by the original author himself or even by someone else. This hypothesis was first advanced by Milik, who proposed that Strategius added this appendix after having composed the rest of the discourse at some earlier, unspecified time.¹⁵ More recently, Constantine Zuckerman has proposed that this account of the Cross's restoration was not composed until around 650, at which time it was appended to the rest of the text, which presents "an eyewitness account by one of the captives carried to Persia."¹⁶ Given that Flusin and James Howard-Johnston also believe this section to have been added secondarily (along with the two preceding sections, in their estimation), there would appear to be something close to a consensus on this point. According to this interpretation, then, after an original composition by Strategius at some unknown earlier date, the final section concerning the restoration of the Cross and the death of Modestus was appended to this recollection of Jerusalem's fall and captivity either by Strategius himself or by some anonymous redactor in the early 630s, or possibly, as Zuckerman argues, around 650.

12 Chapter XXIII.54 reads in the Georgian: "But I entreat you all to obtain excellent virtue, through which you will be numbered among the saints on the day of glory and meet with the blessed life through the grace of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom is due with the Father honor and glory and worship, along with the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen." In Arabic Recension C, the petition is notably different: "We ask the Lord, his power be exalted, to inspire us and you with obedience to him and to make for our spirits, us miserable sinners, a share and portion alongside them and for all the baptized children and the community of Christian peoples. Amen, Lord of the worlds."

13 Chapter V.18: "And he also humbled the multitude of the Persians by the emperor Heraclius, when the Beneficent looked upon his people with mercy"; see Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:134.

14 *PLRE* 3A:894.

15 Milik, *La topographie*, 129.

16 Zuckerman, "Heraclius," 201.

We have in *The Capture of Jerusalem*, therefore, a lengthy monastic homily by a certain monk of Mar Saba, most likely named Strategius, who addressed this discourse to an audience of his monastic brethren. In our judgment, the original version of this text likely also included an accounting of those who were massacred by the Persians and a letter from captive Patriarch Zachariah to his forlorn flock back in Jerusalem. Whether Strategius's homily originally included this concluding report of the Cross's restoration by Heraclius is somewhat uncertain, although, one must emphasize, there is no decisive evidence suggesting that this final section was not integral to Strategius's original composition. If this tale of the Cross's restoration and Modestus's death belongs to the original composition, then one must date the treatise as a whole to sometime after 630, yet also before the invasions of Muhammad's followers in 634, since the text shows no awareness of these convulsive events.¹⁷ Such a dating Glen Bowersock, for instance, has recently proposed.¹⁸

Alternatively, if one adopts Milik's hypothesis and views on the section recounting the restoration of the Cross as a later addition, then matters become somewhat more complicated. In Milik's scenario the original text was obviously written sometime after 614, but exactly when its composition should fall between 614 and the supposed addition of the Cross narrative sometime after 630 is uncertain. Flusin, for instance, who, as we already noted, suspects that all three of the final three sections were later additions, declines to speculate regarding the date of its original production—he notes only that it was “contemporary with the events that it describes.”¹⁹ Howard-Johnston, however, maintains that the original version of our text was composed almost immediately after the capture of Jerusalem, “within a few months of the events described,” concluding, in its initial form, with chapter XXI.²⁰ The final three sections (the letter of Zachariah, the inventory of the dead, and the restoration of the Cross) are all, he asserts without hesitation, later expansions added sometime after 630.²¹ Yet if this were the case, then the original, core version ends rather abruptly and lacks anything approaching a conclusion at this point. Viewed more

17 Compare, for example, the allusion to the Arab conquests in Arabic Recension C, which the redactor inserted from the Antiochene recension of the *Annales* of Eutychius of Alexandria. There the people of Jerusalem urge the emperor, Heraclius, to kill the Jews lest they once again aid another people to take the city: “We want you to kill every Jew in the land of Jerusalem and Mount Galilee, because we believe that another people hostile to us will come to us, and [the Jews] will help them against us just as they sided with the Persians against us” (ch. XXIV.g).

18 Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 36; *Crucible*, 86. These two books, one should note, bear a remarkable similarity. It is confusing, however, that while Bowersock states in both instances that this text “was written by a monk of Mar Saba after the return of the True Cross to the holy city by Heraclius in 630,” in the notes to the first volume he remarks, “The narrative of Strategios ends with an appendix on the recovery of the True Cross and the return of the Christian captives in 630. This not only follows a definitive conclusion (amen) to the preceding narrative but oddly refers to the Byzantine Christians as Greeks, rather than as Christians (or Romans). Inasmuch as the appendix was evidently written well over a decade after the account of 614 and exhibits such a startling change in language, I suspect that it is by another hand” (Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 84n9). One should note, however, that the Georgian translation regularly speaks of “the Greeks” but never of “the Romans” throughout the text, not just in its final section, while the Arabic translations speak of “the Romans (*al-rūm*)” but never of “the Greeks.”

19 Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:134.

20 Howard-Johnston, *Last Great War*, 99, 410; *Witnesses*, 166–67.

21 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 167. Yuri Stoyanov (*Defenders and Enemies*, 12) follows Howard-Johnston on this point.

holistically, it is hard to believe that the initial homiletic composition would have suddenly ended with the tale of the barren woman who refused the miracle-working water that her husband secured from Zachariah. One generally does not end such an extensive discourse with “but she remained barren until the end of her life.” By contrast, as we already noted, the doxology at the end of chapter XXIII, the inventory of the dead, certainly could have been the homily’s original conclusion. Yet even without the musings at the end of this section in the Georgian (ch. XXIII.44–54), presumably the somber tally of the dead alone could have marked a fitting conclusion to the account.

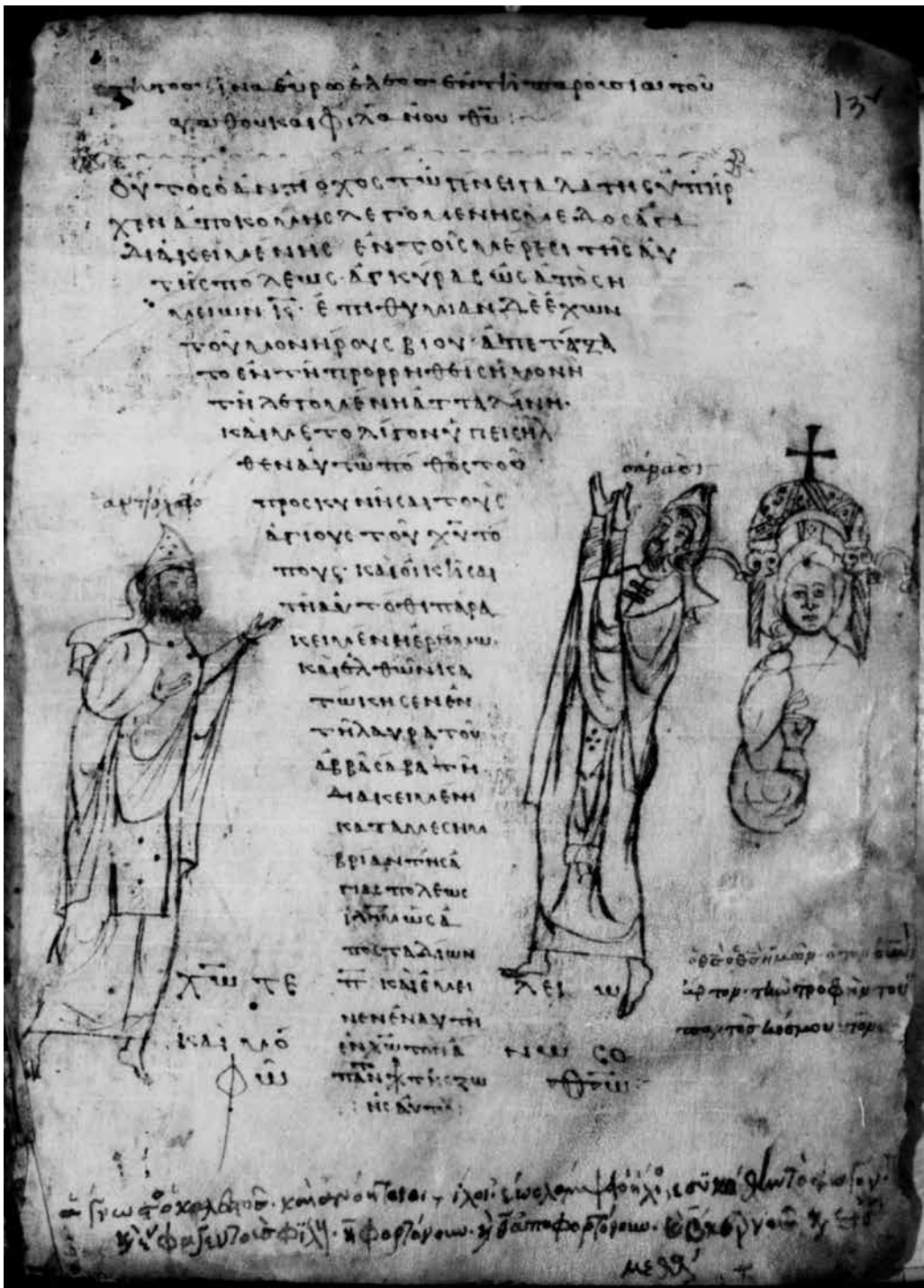
Howard-Johnston, one should note, advances additional arguments for an early dating, but his analysis of this text, on the whole, often seems rigid and overdetermined. Inasmuch as he has recently published two monographs that seek to overturn a long-standing consensus on certain key points regarding this text—an effort often based on claims that the text does not support—it will be necessary to engage his work in some detail in this introduction. For example, Howard-Johnston maintains that the final section of Strategius’s homily, that on the restoration of the Cross, must be a later addition, since, according to him, the text is otherwise silent regarding the theft of the True Cross, a silence he takes as further indication of an early composition.²² Yet it is unclear why he would make this suggestion, since the theft of the Cross is indicated several times by the text well in advance of this point. For instance, as readers will find in the translations that follow, chapter XIII of the homily openly laments the Cross’s removal from Jerusalem and its captivity by the Persians. Likewise, chapter XVIII describes, at some length, an incident after the arrival of the captives to Mesopotamia in which the Persians bring forth the Cross of Christ, which they had taken, try to force the Christians to step on it, and threaten them with death if they refuse. Chapter XIX subsequently depicts the Persian king Chosroes as boasting of having seized the Cross and parading it before the Christians while mocking and ridiculing it. The tables are then turned, however, when Zachariah works a miracle before the king by drawing on the power of the Cross, which again is to be found in the Persian capital. The following chapter reports that thereafter it was given to one of Chosroes’s wives, who was a “Nestorian” Christian, and both the Cross and the Jerusalemite Christians enjoyed her protection during their Mesopotamian captivity.²³ Certainly, Strategius is not at all silent about the removal of the Cross from Jerusalem, and this misleading claim therefore offers no basis whatsoever for dating the text.

Howard-Johnston also bases his dating on a curious claim that the Persian removal of the True Cross “was first introduced as a theme into Roman propaganda at the centre in 615.”²⁴ Perhaps that may be true, but if Strategius wrote his text before 616, as Howard-Johnston maintains, then clearly this theme had already come to prominence in Jerusalem by this time as well, judging from its recurring mention in the homily. Indeed, one would imagine that lamentation for the Persian theft of the Cross would have begun almost immediately in Jerusalem and passed only secondarily to the Roman capital. And

22 Such early composition of the text (without the final section) “would explain the stridently anti-Persian tone of his text, as well as its silence about the removal of the fragments of the True Cross, which was first introduced as a theme into Roman propaganda in 615” (Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 166).

23 Cf. Payne, *State of Mixture*, 178–80.

24 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 166.



Depiction of Antiochus of Mar Saba (left), St. Sabas (middle), and the Abbot Eustathius of Attaline (right). Hagios Sabas 76, fol. 132r (ninth century CE). Copyright Library of Congress Collection of Manuscripts in the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

as it turns out, Strategius is not the only contemporary Sabaite monk to mention the theft of the True Cross by the Persians. Antiochus the Monk, with whom Strategius was long confused and who would later be his abbot,²⁵ was also an eyewitness to the Persians' conquest of Jerusalem and their abduction of the True Cross. Thus in his most famous work, the *Pandects of Holy Scripture*, composed around 620,²⁶ he laments "over the burning of the

25 This conflation of Antiochus and Strategius and their combination into a single figure named Antiochus Strategius seems to have originated with Marr and, to the best of our knowledge, appears in no late ancient source. Although already flagged as an error by Peeters in 1924 ("La prise," 8; cf. Frendo, "Religious Minorities," 228), the error remains notoriously difficult to uproot and even appears as recently as in the *Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity* (2018), whose editors list our author under the name "Antiochus Strategius." According to both Peeters ("La prise," 8) and Booth (*Crisis of Empire*, 95), this Antiochus became the abbot (archimandrite) of Mar Saba sometime after the Persian conquest. An early Sabaite codex, copied in the ninth or tenth century by a certain Theodosius, contains a depiction of Antiochus, author of the *Pandects*, alongside St. Sabas. See Persteris, "Literary and Scribal Activities," 172, 179; Tzamalikos, *Ancient Commentary*, 2, 8.

26 Patrich, *Sabas*, 326–27. Recently, however, Booth (*Crisis of Empire*, 204) has questioned the established dating of this work, proposing that it was more likely composed sometime in the period from 629 to 630. Nevertheless, Booth's arguments are not convincing. According to him, we must date the text after 629 for the following two reasons. First, toward the end of the text "he speaks of the Persian ('Chaldaean') 'scourge' in the past tense." Yet this claim is not altogether accurate, as one can see by consulting Booth's own translation on the same page. Antiochus does not speak of the Persian "scourge" as having ended. Rather, he notes in the past tense that "we have not been educated by the Chaldaean scourge, nor has their yoke tamed our unpliant necks." Presumably, the scourge was continuing along with the irreligious behavior, thus giving us no reason to date the text after the Persians had been driven out on the basis of this passage. And, as will be seen below, to the contrary, Antiochus in fact described the Persian occupation as ongoing when he wrote. Second, Antiochus also mentions that "a certain forerunner of the Antichrist has come to the East wanting to obtain the throne of Antioch, and he is called Athanasius." According to Booth, this passage refers specifically to a meeting in 629 between Emperor Heraclius and the non-Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius I (ca. 600–631), a meeting aimed at reaching a compromise over the divisions introduced by the Chalcedonian Definition. According to an early ninth-century source, the *Chronicle of Theophanes* (A.M. 6121), Athanasius was seeking recognition as Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch in exchange for theological reconciliation at this meeting in 629. It is hard to accept that Antiochus here must refer to this specific event, known only in these terms from a chronicle composed two hundred years later, particularly since one imagines that Athanasius himself never harbored any dream of becoming the "Chalcedonian" patriarch of Alexandria. Rather, what he presumably sought instead was imperial recognition that he was indeed the rightful patriarch of Antioch, rather than some sort of recognition as "Chalcedonian patriarch." Moreover, one suspects that Athanasius, who was patriarch of Antioch from sometime around the beginning of the seventh century until his death in July 631, was constantly seeking a way to achieve imperial recognition of his status as the city's sole reigning patriarch. Truly, at any given moment Athanasius was likely seeking a way to attain such imperial recognition.

Far more persuasive on this subject are the recent arguments proposed by Frendo, who observes that in the *Pandects* Antiochus refers twice to the Persian occupation as ongoing at the time when he was writing. First, in its dedicatory letter addressed to Eustathius, the abbot of a monastery in Ancyra (who had commissioned the *Pandects*), Antiochus writes, "you wrote to me, reverend Father Eustathius, of how you have endured much tribulation, moving from place to place and from region to region through fear of the prevailing Chaldaean storm" (*Pandects*, Dedicatory Letter; see PG 89, 1421B; trans. Frendo, "Religious Minorities," 228). Elsewhere in the *Pandects* (ch. 66) he again mentions "the Chaldaean storm prevailing throughout all the civilized world" (see PG 89, 1628A; trans. Frendo, "Religious Minorities," 235). Furthermore, on the basis of the first passage Frendo convincingly concludes that "since the reference here is to the plight of Eustathius and his monks, of which Antiochus was made aware on receipt of Eustathius' letter, Antiochus' reply must be dated to a time close to the Persian capture of Ancyra in 620" (Frendo, "Religious Minorities," 235). As for the reference to Athanasius, Frendo rightly understands this as a Chalcedonian response to the fact that "Khusrau granted the status of a majority religion to the

Holy City, Jerusalem, over the removal of the Holy Cross of Christ, our God, in Persia, over the multitude killed in the wars, for they were part of us and shared our faith.”²⁷ The “Chaldeans,” he tells us, “slaughtered the people with the sword in Jerusalem itself and its surroundings, and no one buried them. And they removed the Cross to Assyria.”²⁸ Elsewhere, he writes that “The Lord handed over our strength, the precious Cross, to the Chaldeans, and the holy places were devastated.”²⁹ Likewise in the penitential prayer with which he concludes this same collection, Antiochus beseeches God: “you handed over our strength and adornment, and our salvation, the Cross of Christ, to the adversaries.”³⁰ Clearly, the monks of Palestine did not need to wait for imperial propaganda before lamenting the Persian theft and captivity of the Cross. And one suspects that it was very likely at the urging of this same Antiochus, his abbot, that Strategius composed his account of Jerusalem’s capture and the captivity of both its Christians and the Cross in Mesopotamia for his monastic brethren. All these things Strategius had experienced firsthand, while Antiochus and many of the other monks at Mar Saba, it seems, may have been spared some, if not all, of his harrowing experiences, as we shall see in a moment.

Accordingly, while it may be that the entire text was composed in two stages, with the narrative of the Cross’s restoration and the death of Modestus tacked on only at a later date, Howard-Johnston’s arguments for the composition of the homily that comprises most of the text in 615 are not persuasive. For the moment, all we can be sure of is that the homily that comprises the bulk of *The Capture of Jerusalem* was composed by a monk of the Mar Saba monastery, on the basis of his own eyewitness testimony as well as that of others, sometime between 614 and 634. Yet given that the author was, by his own testimony, initially taken to Persia before escaping with other captives and returning to Jerusalem (ch. XX.1), 614 or 615 certainly seems too early as well. Accordingly, perhaps we should allow several years after Jerusalem’s capture, until Strategius would have returned to Mar Saba from captivity, as the earliest possible date for the composition of this work, thus narrowing the range slightly while bringing the *terminus post quem* close to Antiochus’s *Pandects*. Yet we certainly may not rule out composition of the entire work after 630, as Bowersock suggests. Roman victory over the Persians and the restoration of the Cross would have provided an appropriate occasion for such reminiscence of the events of the conquest and captivity.³¹

Monophysites of Syria Palestine and Egypt (who in fact constituted the overwhelming majority in those provinces), thus allowing them to regain their churches and episcopal Sees after more than a century of Orthodox domination and intermittent persecution” (Frendo, “Religious Minorities,” 232). We would also note in addition that whenever Antiochus mentions the True Cross in the *Pandects*, he refers to it as removed rather than restored. For the same dating around 620, see also Papadogiannakis, “Education,” 61; Di Berardino, *Patrology*, 300.

27 *Pandects* 107 (see PG 89, 1764 BC; trans. Papadogiannakis, 67).

28 *Pandects* 38 (see PG 89, 1552D–53A).

29 *Pandects* 43 (see PG 89, 1569A).

30 *Pandects*, Concluding Prayer (see PG 89, 1852B).

31 In a forthcoming article, Montinaro argues that Strategius narrated this account to his monastic brethren from his deathbed, from memory, “about a generation after the events.” We thank Dr. Montinaro for sharing his work in advance, but we did not find his effort to redate the text convincing. See Montinaro, “Emperor, King, Patriarch, and Cross,” forthcoming.

There is near-unanimous agreement among scholars that Strategius composed his discourse on the basis of eyewitness testimonies, both his own and that of others, as he regularly indicates, distinguishing carefully his own knowledge from information he has received from other sources. He personally witnessed not only the capture of Jerusalem but also the captivity of its Christians: he too had been taken captive to Mesopotamia, whence he fled back to Jerusalem “to make known to you all the things that my eyes had seen” (ch. XX.1). Moreover, he composed his discourse for an audience of fellow witnesses, his monastic brothers, as he remarks in the opening section: “And you too have seen together with your eyes the remains and signs, the devastation that came upon the churches and the holy places and the slaughter that [came upon] the faithful people as a punishment for our sins” (ch. I.21).

Howard-Johnston, however, again poses a singular exception to this consensus; he maintains that Strategius could not have been an eyewitness to these events and persistently impugns the value of his account, characterizing it as inaccurate, imprecise, problematic, and prone to exaggeration. He even goes so far as to dismiss Strategius’s account completely as “propaganda, probably officially sponsored, produced for broadcasting as widely as possible, in the hope of outraging Christian opinion at home.”³² Indeed, Howard-Johnston, and he alone, seems to reject even the idea that this text was written by a monk of Mar Saba who had lived through these events, while incriminating the account for its “extraordinarily cavalier attitude to the truth on the part of those who concocted the text.”³³ Although it is somewhat awkward to note in regard to someone who otherwise has been a solid scholar and a friendly colleague, such unwarranted and persistent prejudice against this particular source marks, in our view, a clear and present tendency in his scholarship on this work and, unfortunately, limits its relevance.

Following up on some remarks by Flusin, Howard-Johnston assumes that most of the monks of Mar Saba in fact fled their monastery at the time of the Persian conquest to seek refuge just across the Jordan in Arabia. The text’s alleged Sabaite author, he argues, could have written his text only “without the benefit of eyewitness experience of the siege of Jerusalem (he presumably had taken refuge with the majority of the monks of St Sabas in the province of Arabia).”³⁴ His conjecture relies on a passage from the initial dedicatory letter of Antiochus’s *Pandects* addressed to a certain Eustathius, who was abbot of a monastery in Ancyra and had commissioned Antiochus to compose the *Pandects* for him.³⁵ The relevant passage reads as follows:

When the Ishmaelites approached our Lavra, one week before the [Persian] occupation of the Holy City, and plundered all the sacred vessels in the church, the bulk of the monks immediately withdrew. But the steadfast servants of Christ stayed on, not wishing to abandon the place. And the barbarians seized them and tortured them without mercy, thinking to find money in possession of men who had none of this world’s goods. In the end, failing to achieve their goal, they hacked them all to pieces

32 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 164–66; *Last Great War*, 89, 181, 410; Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, 2:207.

33 Howard-Johnston, *Last Great War*, 89.

34 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 166.

35 *Pandects*, Dedicatory Letter (see PG 89, 1421BC; trans. Frendo, “Religious Minorities,” 228).

in a fit of insane fury. But the blessed [martyrs], rejoicing with glad countenance, gratefully gave up their lives since they had long been harbouring the desire “to depart from life and be with Christ.”

Their scattered and dismembered bodies had lain unburied for many days by the time we got there from Arabia. The abbot Nicomedes fainted on witnessing the pitiful sight of the elderly monks and was lifted up almost lifeless. Meanwhile Modestus, that most holy man, arrived, gathered up all the dead bodies of the holy martyrs and washed them, shedding copious tears and embracing their holy and steadfast remains, and placed them in the graves reserved for senior monks. And after performing the customary service over them, he quoted the passage from Isaiah which runs: . . . [the letter cites Isa. 57:1–2, followed by Wis. 3:1–7]. . . . When he (i.e., Modestus) had spoken these words on the subject of the Sainted Fathers, he urged us not to abandon our own place but to stay on nobly in the face of our ordeal, being mindful of what the Lord said: . . . [citations of Matt. 7:14 and Acts 14:22]. Yielding to his exhortation, we stayed in the Lavra for about two months. And when once more we got wind of a barbarian presence, we were afraid and took refuge in a monastery, named after the abbot Anastasius, close to the Holy City (about twenty stades distant from it) and uninhabited at the time. And after spending about two years there, we were entreated by the aforesaid most saintly Modestus to return once more and dwell in our own place.³⁶

In this epistolary preface, Antiochus indeed relates an opportunistic “Ishmaelite” raid on the lavra that transpired “one week before the capture of the Holy City.” These “Ishmaelites” pillaged the monastery and beat the remaining monks mercilessly with the aim of acquiring more treasure. While the majority of the lavra’s inhabitants seem to have fled in advance of the marauders, the most steadfast remained behind, forty-four of whom were slain. As a result, Antiochus tells us, their bodies lay discarded and unburied “after many days” until he and the others crossed back over from Arabia. Modestus—who at this point was abbot of the Monastery of Theodosius, midway between Mar Saba and Jerusalem (Zachariah still being patriarch at the time)—visited the monastery to bury and eulogize the fallen and to exhort the monks of the monastery not to flee again in the face of danger. After only two months back at the monastery, however, Antiochus says that the monks grew fearful and relocated to another monastery, the Monastery of Abba Anastasius, which at the time was abandoned and was much closer to the city—only about 3 km, less than one-third of the distance from Jerusalem to Mar Saba. There they spent two years before returning to Mar Saba, doing so only after Modestus (now the locum tenens for the patriarch) begged them to. The memory of these martyrs, Antiochus tells us, is commemorated on May 15.³⁷

So, what shall we do with this report of nearly contemporary events from a monk of Mar Saba? Well, first, there is no reason to assume without any evidence that Strategius was among those monks who fled across the Jordan into Arabia, and clearly those who did returned soon thereafter. Yet according to Joseph Patrich, when these events transpired other monks like Strategius fled not across the Jordan but instead to Jerusalem, where

36 *Pandects*, Dedicatory Letter (see PG 89, 1424C–25B; trans. Frendo, “Religious Minorities,” 229).

37 The text reads, “15 May”; however, it is likely an error, as the memorial day in the Greek *menaia* and *synaxaria* is recorded as May 16; cf. Patrich, *Sabas*, 326n3.

Strategius was an eyewitness to all that transpired.³⁸ In fact, Strategius himself cites his status as eyewitness as the very reason that compelled him to prepare an account of what happened for others who had fled or were otherwise not present to witness the city's conquest, not to mention his firsthand account of its inhabitants' captivity in Mesopotamia. The fleeing monks whom Antiochus describes reacted to the imminent threat of the Ishmaelite bandits, but he reports that they returned "after many days," that is, once they presumed that the immediate danger the Ishmaelites posed had abated. Whether or not their return "after many days" preceded or coincided with the arrival of the Persians or the capitulation of Jerusalem remains ambiguous in the text. But suffice it to say that the community at Mar Saba was sufficiently restored before 620 so that Antiochus was able to compose his *Pandects* there, for instance.

Regardless, Antiochus's description of the monks' reactions implies that the crisis remained ongoing and that many monks remained in the nearby vicinity of Jerusalem. Indeed, Strategius's account in chapter VI of the death of the elder John, of the Lavra of Heptastomos, demonstrates as much, too. Other testimonies, such as Antony of Choziba's *Life of George of Choziba* (ca. 631) and the *Anonymous Life of John the Almsgiver*, likewise provide further confirmation of these conditions insofar as they reveal that the depredations visited on the Palestinian monks by Bedouin raiders spread beyond a single lavra.³⁹ Antiochus himself confirms that the Bedouin remained, in the estimation of many of his fellow monks at least, a continuing threat. After burying the dead, Antiochus and some—but not all?—of the monks once again fled Mar Saba two months later and relocated to the abandoned Monastery of Anastasius, closer to the city, where they remained for two years, presumably until the beginning of early summer 616. Unlike the open Lavra of Mar Saba, the Monastery of Abba Anastasius was a walled coenobium and thus provided its inhabitants with greater security from marauding nomads.⁴⁰ Yet by this time Strategius was almost certainly already in exile in Persia along with the other captives, so making these further details seemingly irrelevant to our text.

Howard-Johnston, however, for some reason believes that the accounts of the deportation and captivity in this text come not from Strategius but, rather, from some other individual, an imagined "escaped" prisoner whom he has seemingly invented to accommodate his interpretation of the text. As readers will notice, there is in the text no anonymous escaped prisoner who serves as Strategius's informant. To the contrary, Strategius relates his account as one taken captive to Mesopotamia alongside other Jerusalemites and as an eyewitness to most of what he describes—when he was not an eyewitness to what he reports, then he informs us. We are not sure where this error comes from, and it is not presented as a hypothesis but, rather puzzlingly, as fact.

According to Strategius, the siege of Jerusalem began on April 15, and the city was captured and pillaged twenty-one days later, on May 5. Other sources, however, present different dates for these events, all of them falling sometime in either April or May 614, with the exception of the Greek *Paschal Chronicle* (ca. 630), which says that they took place

38 Patrich, *Sabas*, 326–27.

39 Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 95–97.

40 Patrich, *Sabas*, 327.

“around June.”⁴¹ The Armenian *Chronicle of Sebeos*, from the mid-seventh century, reports that the capture of Jerusalem took place after nineteen days of siege on the twenty-eighth of the month Margats, which was the nineteenth of May, thus pushing everything about two weeks later than Strategius’s dating, although Sebeos miscalculates the year as 615 rather than 614.⁴² Similar dates appear in the tenth-century *Georgian-Palestinian Calendar*, which commemorates “the burning of Jerusalem” on May 17 and “the devastation of Jerusalem” on May 20.⁴³ Presumably this calendar inspired the rubric appearing at the beginning of the Georgian version of Strategius’s account: “20 May.”

Some scholars, particularly those working with Armenian sources, have sought to privilege Sebeos’s dating, although given the inconsistencies of his report on this point it is hard to understand why. The *Chronicle of Sebeos* reports that the capture of Jerusalem took place not only on Margats 28 (May 19) but also on the tenth day after Easter. But in 614 Easter fell on March 30, which would place the capture of Jerusalem on April 9 (while in 615, the year actually indicated by Sebeos, Easter fell on April 18). Robert Thomson proposes in his translation of Sebeos’s *Chronicle* that we must here read “Ascension” instead of “Easter,” which would place the date on May 18. But no reason is given other than a need to make Sebeos’s report conform more closely to other accounts of this event.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the text clearly indicates Easter, and so does the *History* of Thomas Artsruni, which reproduces Sebeos’s text almost verbatim at this point—a concordance that, as Flusin rightly notes, seems to exclude the possibility of any textual emendation other than pure conjecture.⁴⁵ Thus we can be quite sure that Easter was indeed originally indicated in Sebeos’s *Chronicle* and that his memory of the precise date of these events is accordingly clearly confused. According to Flusin, “the information that we find in Pseudo-Sebeos therefore seems to us, in the present state of things, problematic and more likely to invite mistrust in the value of the chronological information of this source.”⁴⁶ For this reason it seems better to stick with the information provided by Strategius, who after all seems to have been an eyewitness writing shortly after the events in question and within a community that had experienced them firsthand, as opposed to our anonymous Armenian chronicler, whose source of information for these events is unknown.

The simple fact of the matter is that different sources record varying dates for these events, all falling sometime in April or May 614. Yet it is not at all uncommon to find such discrepancies in ancient sources: the time of the conquest of Jerusalem by Muhammad’s followers is also difficult to determine, and dates provided vary even more widely—by a matter of years rather than months.⁴⁷ Memories are tricky, and it is easy to understand how various individuals might have remembered the exact date and the timing of the conquest

41 *Paschal Chronicle* (see Dindorf, *Chronicon*, 1:704).

42 Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:154.

43 *Chronicle of Sebeos*, 34 (see Abgarian, Պատմութիւն Սեբէոսի, 115; and, on the tenth-century *Georgian-Palestinian Calendar*, Garitte, *Le Calendrier*, 67).

44 Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, 1:69n429.

45 On Artsruni’s *History*, see Patkanean, Պատմութիւն տաւն, 89; see also Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:156.

46 Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:156.

47 Most Arabic sources, following Syrian historiography, date the capitulation of Jerusalem to the caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb in 17 AH/638 CE; e.g., see Balāḍurī, *Liber Expugnationis*, 139. However, other early chroniclers place the conquest of Jerusalem in either 15/636 or 16/637. See Hoyland, *Theophilus*, 114n254.

differently, even within only a short amount of time.⁴⁸ There is, however, no reason to fall into the positivistic trap of an either/or binary. We are content to let the ambiguity in the sources stand, as does Flusin in what remains the best discussion of this topic.⁴⁹ Thus we may conclude that the Persian conquest of Jerusalem took place sometime in spring 614, seemingly between April and May. More specificity is simply not needed, even as it might be nice to have.

DAMAGE AND DESTRUCTION IN JERUSALEM: THE LITERARY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The topic of memory, however, brings another set of questions regarding this text and its account of the Persian conquest and sack of Jerusalem. As readers will soon discover, *The Capture of Jerusalem* describes in considerable detail the widespread destruction of lives and property in the aftermath of the Persian capture of the city. And *The Capture of Jerusalem* is not at all alone in remembering these events as bringing great violence against both the city itself and its inhabitants. Indeed, most contemporary sources similarly attribute pervasive devastation and slaughter to the Persians, even if, unlike Strategius, their authors often cannot claim to be eyewitnesses to the events that unfolded. So, for instance, his contemporary Sophronius, who followed Modestus as patriarch and oversaw the capitulation of Jerusalem to the caliph ʿUmar just several years after the Roman restoration, reports similar death and destruction at the hands of the Persians. In his early years, Sophronius became a monk at the Monastery of Theodosius between Bethlehem and Mar Saba, about 3 miles (5 km) from the latter. Nevertheless, Sophronius spent much of his life abroad, either traveling among the monastic communities of the Mediterranean with his friend John Moschus or fleeing political disruptions in the Near East, including the Persian invasion and occupation in particular. When the Persians captured Jerusalem, Sophronius fled with Moschus to Rome, where soon thereafter he composed his fourteenth Anacreontic Poem, “On the Capture of Jerusalem,” briefly describing these events in terms that echo Strategius’s reports of wanton slaughter and destruction of churches:⁵⁰

O Christ, grant (us) to see Persia burning soon instead of the holy places! Possessed of a steadfast mind, they kept the approaching Mede from the strong walls by showers of missiles and rocks. Then indeed, with raging spirits, the Persian, barbarian that he was, after thousands of clashes, employed siege engines. Having set fires everywhere beneath the wall, (as well as) an army of siege engines, he destroyed the strong wall and came to be inside the city. Equipped with bloody sword, he cut down the people—the city of sacred and holy old men, children, and women. O Christ, may you curb by the hands of Christians the ill-fated children of impious Persia! Accomplishing everything with cruelty, he despoiled the holy city and with blazing fire burnt the holy places of Christ. After shouting an insult to God, who had once died there, he

48 For more on these topics as they relate to sources from this period, see, e.g., Shoemaker, *Creating the Qurʾan*, chs. 6 and 7.

49 Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:158.

50 On Sophronius, see Di Berardino, *Patrology*, 303–4. Regarding this poem in particular and its dating, see Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 98–99.

despoiled the sacred spoil and with the spoil marched (off). O Christ, may you curb by the hands of Christians the ill-fated children of the dreadful parent, Persia!⁵¹

Likewise, the Constantinopolitan author of the *Paschal Chronicle* (ca. 630) expresses the palpable shock felt at the fall of Jerusalem to the Persians in 614. He writes:

In this year in about the month June, we suffered a calamity which deserves unceasing lamentations. For, together with many cities of the east, Jerusalem too was captured by the Persians, and in it were slain many thousands of clerics, monks, and virgin nuns. The Lord's tomb was burnt and the far-famed temples of God, and, in short, all the precious things were destroyed. The venerated wood of the Cross, together with the holy vessels that were beyond enumeration, was taken by the Persians, and the patriarch Zacharias also became a prisoner. And this has not taken a long time to come to pass, not even a whole month, but a few days.⁵²

Accordingly, for many years scholars of this period understood the Persian conquest and occupation of the Near East as a ruinous set of events that crippled the region and left it vulnerable to capture by Muhammad's followers less than a decade later. Indeed, the relative ease and alacrity with which they conquered and colonized the Near East has been difficult for scholars to explain fully. Yet with the Sasanian Empire brought to its knees, Rome exhausted from its hard-fought victory, and the Roman Near East ravaged by the Persian conquest and occupation, it was at least a little easier to understand the success Muhammad's followers experienced in confronting these two once-mighty empires. For the better part of a century scholars, understanding that "the region was so physically, economically, and spiritually ruined that it was inevitably receptive to the armies of the Prophet [Muhammad],"⁵³ took these reports more or less at face value. Thus this narrative of Persian spoliation and slaughter, as brought by the ancient sources, formed an integral part of understanding the events of the Islamic conquests that would follow soon after.

In recent decades, however, several specialists on the archaeology of late ancient Palestine have challenged this narrative on the basis of the material remains from this period.⁵⁴ The archaeological record, they have noted, generally does not support the accounts of widespread destruction and abandonment of churches and other property at this time, and often seems to contradict it. Accordingly, many scholars have now decided that Strategius's account is both highly exaggerated and inaccurate, and there was no wanton destruction of property during the Persian conquest and invasion.⁵⁵ His and other similar accounts, the argument goes, are mere literary fictions belied by what is presumed to be

51 *Anacreontic Poems* 14 (see Gigante, *Sophronius Anacreontica*, 106–7; trans. Greatrex and Lieu, *Roman Eastern Frontier*, 191). Cf. Sarris, *Empires of Faith*, 246–47; Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 94–97, 276.

52 *Paschal Chronicle* (see Dindorf, *Chronicon*, 1:704–5; trans. Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, 156).

53 Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 32; also Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 13–14; Sarris, *Empires of Faith*, 272–73.

54 Most notable in this regard are Robert Schick (*Christian Communities*), Gideon Avni (*Byzantine-Islamic Transition*), and Jodi Magness ("Archaeological Evidence"). Stoyanov (*Defenders and Enemies*, 15–22) presents a helpful survey of studies advancing this new perspective on the Persian conquest and occupation.

55 Thus Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 164–67; cf. Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 94–95.

the more reliable evidence of the archaeological record. The Persian invasion and occupation were consequently not responsible for the subsequent collapse of Roman power in the Near East, and on the whole these events left little material impact. It would also follow, many of these same scholars suggest, that the collaboration of the Jews with the invading Persians should also be attributed to Christian imagination and polemic. Yet as others have noted, the latter is a tricky topic, and one on which the archaeological evidence cannot weigh in. While we must always bear in mind the eagerness of late ancient Christians for slandering and impugning their Jewish rivals, at the same time there are credible reasons to suspect that the Jews may in fact have allied themselves, at least initially, with the Persians against their Christian persecutors, as is hinted even in some contemporary Jewish sources.⁵⁶

We are left, then, with a significant tension in our sources: the literary accounts tell us one thing, but the reigning interpretations of the material evidence suggest something quite different. As a result, the impact of the Persian occupation on this region is no longer as clear as we once thought, and the scope of its significance has become a subject of renewed scholarly debate. This new reading of the archaeological data demands a return to the literary sources to reevaluate their collective witness. This endeavor must include, above all, engagement with Strategius's account, since it remains our single best source of information regarding these events. For this reason, in particular, it seems timely to offer a complete translation of this text as an important contribution to better understanding the remarkable transition of empires and faiths that took place with the invasion and occupation by Muhammad's followers beginning in the 630s. It is essential to understand the extent to which this Persian subjugation brought with it significant loss of life and property, thereby possibly setting the stage for the sudden collapse of Roman dominion as Muhammad's followers expanded northward.

As we have already noted, Strategius is hardly alone in reporting the destruction of numerous churches by the Persian invaders and/or their local collaborators—most other contemporary sources present more or less the same picture of what happened.⁵⁷ This effective consensus therefore presents us with a difficult fact that we cannot simply elide no matter how much one might be inclined to favor recent interpretation of the material evidence. Clearly these reports disclose how those who were involved and who lived through the Persian conquest and occupation remembered these events. Memory is indeed a tricky thing, and collective memory of a traumatic experience no less so. All the same, those who remembered these events regularly and independently recalled massive destruction of property and loss of life at the hands of the Persians in relatively close chronological proximity to the events in question. Now, mere remembrance by no means guarantees accurate recollection. Nor should we automatically take confidence in any specific accounts of destruction from these sources just because they come from eyewitnesses. Nevertheless, the agglomeration of all these memories is no trifle either and cannot be merely shoved to the side. If in fact current interpretations of the archaeological record

⁵⁶ Dagron and Déroche, "Juifs et chrétiens"; Sivan, "Byzantine to Persian Jerusalem"; Cameron, "Blaming the Jews"; Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 50–56; Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 34–42.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 94–55; Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 13; Greatrex and Lieu, *Roman Eastern Frontier*, 234–35.

purport to have discovered an otherwise untold truth about these events, how should we reconcile this perspective with what we find in the literary sources? If archaeology were somehow to “prove” that there really was no widespread destruction of churches, then we must confront another difficult question: Why did the Christians of this age, including eyewitnesses such as Strategius, separately and persistently remember the destruction of so many churches if no such destruction actually occurred? Why would all of them simply invent such devastation, independently, if in fact there had been none at all?

We should note at the outset that there is in fact some archaeological evidence for the destruction of churches and other architecture during the Persian occupation, but certainly nothing on the scale recounted in the literary sources.⁵⁸ Yet something more than the relative silence of the archaeological record seems necessary to understand the memories we find in the literary sources. While Howard-Johnston, for instance, attributes these accounts of destruction to exaggeration and willful misrepresentation aimed at inflaming Christian outrage—particularly in the case of Strategius—this explanation is altogether unsatisfactory for such persistent and pervasive reports of destruction, and it seems there must be something more going on here.⁵⁹ Indeed, the stark differences in our repositories of evidence, as Yuri Stoyanov observes, make “critical scrutiny of the discrepancies between the written and archaeological evidence all the more important” for understanding these crucial events on the eve of the Islamic conquests.⁶⁰ There are any number of points to consider in this regard, and while we will here offer a few observations, it is our hope that this translation will invite renewed scholarly investigation of this important text and these events from a range of perspectives.

First, we should begin by acknowledging that there must have been destruction on a much wider scale than the archaeological record presently seems to indicate. If archaeology has tempered an earlier, uncritical acceptance of these literary accounts, now it is time for the literary sources to return the favor. The testimonies of the literary sources alert us to the reality that there was certainly more going on than we can learn merely from the archaeological remains alone. Archaeological analysis, no less than textual study, requires interpretive work, and material evidence is often ambiguous and can accommodate multiple readings. There is also often a positivistic trend among certain scholars, especially those who are not archaeologists themselves, to impute to the archaeological data an intrinsic facticity that permits it to transcend the messy and complicated world revealed by texts. In the first place, we do well to recall the oft-repeated historian’s maxim: absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence. Yet admittedly, in this case the absence of evidence is particularly significant. If there had been significant destruction of churches and other property, there should be an explanation for why it appears to be largely absent from the archaeological record.

One likely explanation is that most of the destruction of property seems to have taken the form of burning, rather than outright demolition, and indeed the sources themselves consistently refer to the burning, rather than destruction, of churches. Strategius himself tells us that “the holy churches were burned with fire, and some were destroyed. Glorious

58 E.g., Schick, *Christian Communities*, 33–39, 47–48; Magness, “Archaeological Evidence,” 87–94.

59 Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 165–66; *Last Great War*, 88–89.

60 Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 12.

altars were torn down, precious crosses were trampled underfoot, and life-giving icons were spat upon by the impure ones” (ch. VIII.17). More specifically, he laments that “many souls fled to the churches, to the Anastasis and Zion and other churches, and therein were massacred and consumed by fire” (ch. XI.7). Then, as the captives are led forth from Jerusalem, they behold Jerusalem and its churches in flames, including again “the Holy Anastasis burning and Zion in flames” (ch. XIII.14–15). Likewise, Antiochus the Monk relates on multiple occasions that “Zion was set ablaze,” as we have seen already above.⁶¹ Sophronius, too, in his poem “On the Capture of Jerusalem” mentions the burning of churches. Likewise, the *Chronicle of Sebeos* remarks that when the Persians captured Jerusalem, “they burned the city with fire,” without indicating any further sort of destruction.⁶² This theme also appears in the East Syrian *Khūzistān Chronicle*, which blames local Jews for the conflagrations that consumed the churches and credits Yazdīn, the powerful Christian minister of the Persian shah Chosroes, with the punishment of the guilty and the repair and renovation of the damaged churches.⁶³ Perhaps, then, we must understand that whatever real destruction took place consisted primarily of setting fire to many of Jerusalem’s churches and possibly other important buildings as well. So compelling is the evidence that even Howard-Johnston, in his most recent work, concludes that “as for the churches in the city, they undoubtedly suffered considerable fire damage.”⁶⁴

It remains possible that other, more structural damage may have been done to some buildings, but one would imagine that doing so was not entirely in the interest of the Persian invaders. Tearing down a building was hard work, and it destroyed structures that could be put to other uses by the new sovereigns should they wish. Setting fire to a building, however, and looting it and stealing or disgracing its holy objects would take far less effort, while sending much the same message to the Christians of Jerusalem. And setting fire to buildings is a major thread of Strategius’s account. Likewise, a number of the churches in question show evidence of fire damage at some point.⁶⁵ While in the past the default understanding of this evidence assigned it to the Persian invasion and occupation, now it has seemingly become the default to assume that it was not. Perhaps moving forward we might wish to reconsider the possibility that this evidence of burning derives from a time when a range of literary sources tell us that churches were in fact set on fire. Indeed, on the whole the archaeological evidence concerning the destruction of Jerusalem’s churches is, as its best interpreters have noted, more ambiguous than some recent interpreters have assumed.⁶⁶

Accordingly, when Strategius—and other writers—decry the devastation or destruction of Jerusalem and its churches, perhaps indeed they are at some level exaggerating for rhetorical effect. Such heightening of the city’s collective trauma certainly would not be

61 See also *Pandects*, Concluding Prayer (PG 89, 1852A, 1853D).

62 *Chronicle of Sebeos*, 34 (see Abgarian, Պատմութիւն Սեբէրի, 115). Although translations from this text are our own, one may also consult Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, 1:68–76, 2:207–10.

63 *Khūzistān Chronicle* (see Guidi, *Chronica minora I*, 1:26–27; trans. Greatrex and Lieu, *Roman Eastern Frontier*, 235). Cf. Anthony, *Crucifixion*, 16–17; Payne, *State of Mixture*, 182–83.

64 Howard-Johnston, *Last Great War*, 95.

65 Avni, “Persian Conquest,” 36.

66 Avni, “Persian Conquest,” 43–44.

out of place in a writing such as this one. But that should not lead us to conclude there was no significant destruction of property at all, as some might seem to suggest—only that Strategius and others employ language that intensifies their account of the city’s plunder. Indeed, such expressions are not all that uncommon even in ordinary patterns of speaking: we routinely speak of something as “devastating” or will say that “the place was destroyed” when, in truth, nothing was actually torn down or obliterated. Therefore, we must allow that the shared memory of the devastation and destruction of Jerusalem and its churches originated from some sort of experience of wreckage by the Persians, and the widespread burning and looting of churches seems to be a likely cause for such reaction.

Is it possible, then, to narrow the gap between our literary sources and the material record with this hypothesis? Indeed it is. First, if burning were the primary destructive act, then it would explain why we find no evidence of Jerusalem’s churches being torn down and find them in continued use later in the seventh century. Burning could do significant damage to a church, but it would certainly not destroy the large stone structures that served as the places of worship for Jerusalem’s Christians in late antiquity. A burned church could, with some effort, easily be repaired, restored, and returned to worship within a short period of time. Accordingly, the apparent discrepancies between the archaeological data and Strategius’s narrative (among other accounts) are almost certainly to be explained, as Phil Booth notes, by the extensive repairs to Jerusalem’s damaged churches that Patriarch Modestus of Jerusalem (628–34) oversaw, as many sources corroborate.⁶⁷ Modestus initiated these repairs even while he was still *locum tenens* for the patriarchate during the Persian occupation, as we learn again from Antiochus the Monk, who praises Modestus for his rebuilding activities in a letter to Eustathius from the early 620s (wherein note also the emphasis on burning):

Behold, therefore, reverend Father Eustathius, what I have indicated briefly with regard to our holy [martyrs] and to the Lavra. Moreover, I bring you other glad tidings to cause your soul and that of every Christian who hears them to rejoice. For, the aforementioned most holy Modestus has in his care not only the monasteries in the desert but also the city and the entire region; and the hand of God is at work in everything [he does]. Indeed, this man, truly our latter-day Besaleel or Zerubbabel,⁶⁸ was filled with the Holy Spirit and has raised up anew the venerable temples of our Savior Jesus Christ which were set on fire: the holy edifice of Golgotha, the [Church of] his Holy Resurrection, the hallowed abode of the venerable Cross, the Mother of churches,⁶⁹ and the [Church of] his Holy Ascension and all the other revered abodes. In consequence of this we have fair hopes for the future, as do especially those who come from abroad to do homage to the Holy Places.⁷⁰

So too the *Chronicle of Sebeos* tells us that soon after the sack of Jerusalem, the Persian king directed that his representatives in Jerusalem were themselves expected to contribute actively to rebuilding the city. This change in policy likely came, as Howard-Johnston notes, in “response to pressure from the important Christian communities of Mesopotamia

67 Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 95, 99–100.

68 See Exod. 31:1–6; Ezra 3.

69 I.e., Zion.

70 *Pandects*, Dedicatory Letter (see PG 89, 1428AB; trans. Frendo, “Religious Minorities,” 231).

and their powerful patrons at court who included Shirin.”⁷¹ There is even a fragmentary inscription at the Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives memorializing the church’s repair by Modestus.⁷²

In fact, we know from none other than Modestus himself that not only were such repairs required, because of the destruction wrought by the Persians, but also this damage was quickly repaired. The *Chronicle of Sebeos* includes a letter from Modestus to Komitas, the catholicos of Armenia at the time, together with a response from Komitas, both of which communications are considered to be genuine.⁷³ In his initial missive, which generally is dated to 616, Modestus repeatedly informs Komitas that much of the damage caused by the Persians had already been repaired. Within just two years or so of the sack, according to Modestus, “all the churches of Jerusalem were restored and in use for worship.” In particular, this extensive program of “reconstruction” specifically included repairs to the churches of the Anastasis and Zion (as well as the Ascension), which Modestus reports had already been “repaired” and “restored.”⁷⁴ Nevertheless, if these churches had once again been made functional places of worship, it would appear that significant repairs still remained to be done, since Modestus asks Komitas for financial assistance to help with “rebuilding [the places] of the life-giving Passion,” which one assumes is the complex of the Anastasis church.⁷⁵

We may conclude, then, on the basis of Modestus’s own words, that it is precisely because he and the city’s ecclesiastical authorities were so quick to repair the damage and return the despoiled churches to service that we find so little evidence of their destruction in the archaeological record. As noted above, the East Syrian *Khūzistān Chronicle* (ca. 660) even purports that these repairs took place with Persian sponsorship thanks to the Sasanids’ minister Yazdīn, the most powerful Christian magnate at Chosroes II’s court.⁷⁶ To be sure, given the importance of Christian pilgrimage to these holy sites for the local economy of Jerusalem, which Antiochus mentions, such rapid restoration is only to be expected. Indeed, the occasion for Modestus’s letter to Komitas was the arrival of some pilgrims from Armenia to the Holy City. Clearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem continued even after the Persian plunder and occupation, and it certainly would have been an important factor in the city’s economy and its efforts to repair the damaged shrines.

Howard-Johnston is skeptical that such repairs could actually have been accomplished so quickly after the city’s capture, yet there is no reason to doubt what Modestus writes,

71 Abgarian, Պատմութիւն Սեբէոսի, 116; Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, 2:208.

72 Schick, *Christian Communities*, 42, 354.

73 Abgarian, Պատմութիւն Սեբէոսի, 116–21; Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, 1:70–76, 2:208–10.

74 Abgarian, Պատմութիւն Սեբէոսի, 117.

75 Abgarian, Պատմութիւն Սեբէոսի, 118.

76 “Yazdin sought from the king (permission) to rebuild the churches of Jerusalem and, having sent not inconsiderable moneys, he renovated (them) with all their beauties; and everywhere he built churches as well as monasteries” (*Khūzistān Chronicle* [see Guidi, *Chronica minora I*, 1:27; trans. Greatrex and Lieu, *Roman Eastern Frontier*, 235]). Yazdin was not merely a wealthy, aristocratic benefactor whom the East Syrian sources praise for his generous patronage of churches, but also, in a secular capacity, he acted as “head of the believers (*rēš mhaymnē*),” a title that extolled him as the leader of all the Christians in the Sasanid Empire. See Budge, *Book of Governors*, 1:47 (Syr.), 2:81–82 (Eng.); cf. Payne, *State of Mixture*, 101–2, 182–83.

especially insofar as such activities are also confirmed in East Syrian sources.⁷⁷ By Modestus's own acknowledgment, much restoration and repair remained to be done at that point. Yet this fact does not in any manner contradict his report that some important repairs and restorations had already been done, particularly at the major pilgrimage sites he specifically mentions. Repairs certainly were not yet complete and remained ongoing, but the important point of Modestus's letter is that these churches were sufficiently restored so that they were again "in use for worship." If the damage to these buildings came primarily through burning, rather than physical demolition, then it is relatively easy to understand how these stone structures could quickly be returned to the service of worship. Moreover, in conclusion Modestus expresses his commitment to continuing restoration of the damaged buildings, while asking for assistance with this task. One imagines, then, that during the remainder of his tenure as *locum tenens*, over the next twelve years Modestus continued to sponsor the repair of Jerusalem's damaged churches, with the result that there is presently little evidence of their damage to be found in the archaeological record.

One should also note that the primary expert on the archaeology of Jerusalem in this period, Gideon Avni, has reached much the same conclusion. As he writes:

Comparing the historical sources and archaeological evidence for the Persian conquest of Jerusalem, we thus find a clear contradiction: vivid descriptions of the massacre of local Christians and the destruction of churches and monasteries, versus physical evidence of mass burials but no large-scale devastation of residential areas or ecclesiastical compounds. This conflict between the textual and archaeological findings leaves two options. Either the historical accounts are deliberately falsified and misleading, or repairs took place soon after the invasion, obliterating all traces of damage from the archaeological record. If no evidence for damage or destruction was found in many sites, and the assumption is that building damage was quickly repaired, questions arise about how discernible short-term changes are in the archaeological record. Praise for the restoration work in Jerusalem after the conquest appears in several texts. Would it be possible for such repairs to escape detection in excavations or architectural analysis? Certainly.⁷⁸

Likewise, in an earlier study Avni similarly concludes:

The visibility of a military conquest in the archaeological record should be treated with caution. The long-term consequences of such conquests were related not only to the destructive forces of the conquerors, but also, and mainly, to the resilience of the local society and its capability to invest resources in rapid restoration and reconstruction of the damaged buildings. It is evident that the Persian conquest of Jerusalem

77 Howard-Johnston (*Last Great War*, 91) suggests that these letters somehow "give the lie to the stories of wholesale destruction and atrocities transmitted by most other sources," although it is not at all clear how or why such a conclusion should follow. Moreover, in his earlier commentary on Sebeos, referred to above, he seems to acknowledge that there was indeed widespread damage to Jerusalem's churches that was repaired in quick measure under Modestus's supervision with support from the Persian authorities. See Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, 2:208–9.

78 Avni, *Byzantine-Islamic Transition*, 310–11.

did not involve the abandonment of urban areas. Even if buildings were damaged or destroyed, the restoration was conducted within a short period of time.⁷⁹

Accordingly, it stands to reason that the destruction Strategius and others report is not today visible in the archaeological record because it was so quickly effaced through repairs. Yet at the same time, we must still conclude that, in contrast to many earlier interpretations of the broader impact of the Persian conquest on this region, the Persian conquest and “devastation” of Jerusalem clearly did not result in the general collapse of the region. Rather, instead we find remarkable resilience, so that Jerusalem’s church leaders and its citizens quickly banded together to begin repairs on the numerous holy shrines the Persians temporarily destroyed by setting them on fire. And so it does not seem that the Persian conquest and its concurrent destruction left the region particularly vulnerable to conquest by Muhammad’s followers several years after the Persians were defeated and expelled. Certainly these events did not help matters, but neither did they leave the region “physically, economically, and spiritually ruined” so that we might imagine them as a primary cause for the apparent ease with which Muhammad’s followers captured most of the Roman Near East.

While archaeology has introduced some healthy skepticism regarding Strategius’s account in regard to the destruction of property, on other important points Strategius has been vindicated by it. The massacres of civilians he describes in such harrowing detail have been largely confirmed by excavations. Archaeologists have now identified seven mass burials from this period, the most notable of which is at Mamilla, about 120 m west of Jerusalem’s Jaffa Gate, where a cave holding hundreds of remains was discovered. There is a small chapel at the cave’s entrance with an inscribed prayer “for the redemption and salvation of the dead, God knows their names.” The finds in this cave, including the coins, date the burial to the Persian invasion, and as Avni notes, the location is significant since it correlates almost perfectly with Strategius’s report of a mass slaughter and burial of Christians “in the grotto of Mamel.” Strategius further identifies the location of thirty-four additional mass graves, although so far only six of them have come to light, each one similarly containing hundreds of corpses.⁸⁰ The archaeological record thus substantiates Strategius’s reports of massacres of Christians by the Persians. Admittedly, the total number of casualties does not approach anything close to the roughly 33,000 to 66,000 dead, as Strategius reports (depending on the version; see ch. XXIII.44),⁸¹ but ancient writers regularly inflated the number of casualties, often dramatically, as one finds, for instance, in the martyrological literature.

79 Avni, “Persian Conquest,” 43.

80 Avni, *Byzantine-Islamic Transition*, 306–7. The grotto where the bones of the dead of Mamilla were deposited was known and described by local Christians for centuries to follow. One medieval Arabic Christian account relates how an elderly woman and her dog found the corpses and deposited them in the nearby grotto (a detail entirely absent from a version of Strategius’s account); see *Notitia de locis sanctis*, §31 (D’Agostino, *Notitia*, 712–13).

81 Milik, *La topographie*, 133; Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:160; Taylor, “Syriac Version,” 455. That the *Opusculum* mentions the number of the dead as being 65,000 (see PG 86.2:3236B) suggests that the higher number is quite early, even if incredible, as noted in Milik, *La topographie*, 132, and Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, 167n15.

Previous scholarship has made much of comparing the differing tallies of the slain across the various relevant sources in the hope of securing the actual number, but such endeavors seem to miss the broader significance of the numbers that are reported. The relevant point is that a great number of Christians were in fact massacred by the Persians after their invasion, and the inflated numbers reported by Strategius merely reflect the tendencies of the genre. Although his report creates the impression of a certain precision in his accounting, generally it is wise to take such large counts of the slain in ancient sources as actually something more akin to “a whole lot of people—more than can be counted.” Nevertheless, this archaeological confirmation that the Persians did in fact massacre a massive number of Jerusalem’s Christians, as Strategius relates, should caution us against concluding too hastily that the corresponding reports of destruction of property are spurious. Instead, it seems more likely, as noted above, that the material damage has been concealed by extensive repairs. For obvious reasons, the massacres of Christians could not be similarly repaired and so remain visible in the archaeological record.

Strategius’s account of the Persian conquest and the ensuing havoc in Jerusalem thus constitutes the most important literary witness to these pivotal events. *The Capture of Jerusalem*, therefore, is an essential and unequalled source for understanding broader developments in the tumultuous history of the seventh-century Middle East, as it sheds considerable light on these important events antecedent to the Islamic conquests. And despite the new findings of archaeology and a revisionist tendency to minimize the impact of the Persian conquest and occupation, it remains difficult to improve on Robert Schick’s sober assessment of their broader effect on the region on the eve of Islam’s emergence:

One must not conclude that the Sasanian conquest was a minor event or that by 628 almost everything was again as it had been before the conquest. The Christian communities did not fully recover. In particular the Christian population of Jerusalem could not have fully recouped their numbers from the sack and exile; nor did they rebuild all the churches, or rebuild them on so splendid a scale. Nor did the monasteries in the Wilderness of Jerusalem ever again thrive as they had before the Sasanian invasion. Even while one must be careful not to exaggerate the impact of the Sasanian invasion and occupation, their effects were undoubtedly serious, both materially and psychologically. The Christian population suffered heavy blows, and the brief period of Byzantine restoration that followed was not long enough for their recovery to be complete.⁸²

THE GEORGIAN VERSION

No doubt one of the main reasons this invaluable text has not yet received the broader scholarly consideration it merits is the fact that, until the relatively recent discovery of a Syriac version (see below), it has been known to survive only in Old Georgian and Arabic translations, languages that are known by relatively few specialists of late antiquity. Of the two versions in which *The Capture of Jerusalem* survives, scholarly consensus has consistently recognized the Old Georgian version as by far the better witness to the original Greek, and such unanimity is hardly surprising as soon as one looks at the different

⁸² Schick, *Christian Communities*, 47–48; cf. Patrich, “Impact.”

versions. Moreover, particularly in those passages where the original Greek has been preserved, “it is easy to see,” as Flusin remarks, “that the Georgian version represents a state of the text older than what is represented in the four Arabic versions.”⁸³ Similarly, Paul Peeters also concluded that “the Georgian version is without any possible dispute incomparably better preserved than the Arabic version in all respects, so that the latter was merely a summary or rather an abridgment, unfaithful to the point of completely distorting the original.”⁸⁴ This consensus survives, in our judgment, even with the discovery of recensions unknown to either Flusin or Peeters, such as the newly discovered Syriac version and a new Arabic version found among the new finds at Sinai (discussed in the following section). Peeters’s original observation holds true: all these Arabic recensions regularly abbreviate and adapt the more complete version found in the Georgian in ways that should be obvious to most readers. Yet despite the clear superiority of the Georgian translation, the relations among these different versions and recensions have still not been fully investigated, so that it remains essential to consult the Arabic in any study of the text. Since both the Georgian and the Arabic translations of the original Greek text were undertaken independently, a synoptic presentation of both texts is indispensable to any analysis of the reception history and redaction of the lost Greek original.⁸⁵ Accordingly, we have provided in this volume full translations of both the Georgian version and the longest Arabic recension (Recension A; see below), along with notes indicating important differences in the later Arabic recensions, which hopefully will make this important text more accessible to a broad range of scholars of late antiquity and early Islam.

Prior to the present volume, there was no complete translation of either the Old Georgian or the Arabic versions of Strategius’s account from the original languages into a modern language, excepting only a Russian translation of the Georgian.⁸⁶ This translation was made by Nicolai Marr to accompany his initial edition of the Georgian text in 1909, which he based on the only two manuscripts known at the time, Jerusalem Georg 33 (120r–164v)

83 Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:131.

84 Peeters, “La prise,” 6. Also on this point, see, e.g., Bowersock, *Crucible*, 86; Taylor, “Syriac Version,” 447; Frendo, “Religious Minorities,” 236; Delgado, “Las versiones árabes,” 180. The superiority of the Georgian to the Arabic is expressed in even stronger terms in Phenix and Horn, *Strategius*, 34: “the Classical Georgian text tradition . . . is better than the Arabic one. Therefore, the Arabic versions are of little relevance.” (With regard to this recent publication, see n86 below.) We do not, however, think the Arabic versions are of little relevance, to be sure, even as the Georgian is by all indications a superior witness to the lost Greek original in general. Indeed, it was for this reason that we decided to publish the Arabic in translation alongside the Georgian, for there is every reason to suspect that in some instances the Arabic may have preserved the original better than the Georgian.

85 So also Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:131; Speck, “Beiträge,” 39. Speck’s article, one should note, is a running German summary of the text with incidental commentary.

86 There is now a self-published translation of the Georgian in Phenix and Horn, *Strategius*. Nevertheless, this translation was not made directly from the Old Georgian. Rather, as the authors indicate, their translation of the Georgian version was made by translating into English Garitte’s Latin translation and then checking the translation against the Georgian edition, with the result that in their own estimation this translation “differs from Garitte’s Latin in relatively few places of any substance” (Phenix and Horn, *Strategius*, 104, 106). By contrast, the translation of the Georgian in this volume was made directly from the Georgian edition using the newly available philological tools (as noted below) to provide the best possible translation, with constant consultation of the previous translations by Marr, Conybeare, and Garitte.

and Tbilisi A 70 (216v–259r).⁸⁷ Marr’s edition has now been superseded by a critical text, and accompanying Latin translation, published in 1960 by Gerard Garitte on the basis of a third, much earlier and generally superior, eleventh-century manuscript, Bodleian Georg b. 1 (124r–169r); Garitte’s edition forms the basis for our English translation of the Georgian version.⁸⁸ Some years later, in 1973, Garitte published a critical edition of the Arabic recensions, also with Latin translation, and it serves as the basis for our translations of the Arabic.⁸⁹

This volume cannot claim, however, to be the first translation of any part of *The Capture of Jerusalem* into a language other than Russian or Latin. That honor belongs to an English translation of lengthy excerpts from the text done by Frederick Conybeare from Marr’s edition shortly after its publication.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, it has long been clear that Conybeare’s snippets are not sufficiently representative of such an important text. Bowersock, for instance, disparages Conybeare’s translation for being “crude” and “selective.”⁹¹ At least on the latter point he is correct, but his judgment of the translation’s quality is unfair and does not reflect, as far as we know, any knowledge of Old Georgian on Bowersock’s part. Judging Conybeare’s translation strictly on the basis of its rendition of Georgian into English and according to its era, it is not bad at all, excepting two inevitable limitations: it is based on an inferior and outdated edition of the work in question, and it was produced at a time when our knowledge of the Old Georgian language was far more limited than it is today.

The study of Old Georgian was long hindered by the lack of an adequate dictionary, even into Modern Georgian. Now we have two excellent dictionaries, both published in the early twenty-first century, that have documented and opened up the Old Georgian lexicon, thus making possible far more accurate translations of Old Georgian texts.⁹² So too the enormous searchable database of Old Georgian texts made available online by the Thesaurus Indogermanischer Text- und Sprachmaterialien project⁹³ has enabled continued expansion of our knowledge of the Old Georgian language beyond even these two fine dictionaries. Conybeare, by comparison, translated his excerpts at a time when Georgian lexicography was still in its infancy, so much so that he noted he had to rely on Marr’s translation into Russian to render many words and passages, “because, as students of Georgian well know, the lexicons of that language are very imperfect.”⁹⁴ Therefore, our translation of the Old Georgian version will be not only complete but also more philologically sound and accurate than Conybeare’s excerpts. Accordingly, the significant advances that have been achieved in Old Georgian philology alone merit a new translation of the text.

⁸⁷ Marr, *Антиохъ*.

⁸⁸ Garitte, *La prise*. Note that Phenix and Horn (*Strategius*, 43) identify three additional, unedited Georgian manuscripts, all in Tbilisi: H 341 (11th c.); H 535 (11th c.); and H 987 (19th c.).

⁸⁹ Garitte, *Expugnatio*.

⁹⁰ Conybeare, “Antiochus Strategos.”

⁹¹ Bowersock, “Polytheism and Monotheism,” 10.

⁹² Sarjvelaṣe et al., *Altgeorgisch-deutsches Wörterbuch*; Rayfield, *Georgian-English Dictionary*.

⁹³ See <https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/indexe.htm>.

⁹⁴ Conybeare, “Antiochus Strategos,” 502.

Nevertheless, by far the most significant shortcoming of Conybeare's translation is that it is incomplete. Alas, this "seriously abridged English version" frequently marks the limit of most scholars' engagement with this main source for the events of the Persian occupation.⁹⁵ Moreover, excerpts selected by Conybeare also reflect the positivist historiography that governed much early twentieth-century scholarship, as he openly notes in the introduction to his translation by explaining, "I have much reduced its bulk by omitting pious ejaculations and other passages devoid of historical interest."⁹⁶ Yet such positivism no longer guides the history of late antiquity, and often it is precisely such "pious ejaculations" and other elements "devoid of historical interest"—to a positivist at least—that hold the greatest interest for historians working in the early twenty-first century. Indeed, as Flusin remarks, Strategius's account is invaluable not only for the specific details it provides about the Persian conquest and occupation but especially also for its witness to how these traumatic events were interpreted by contemporaries.⁹⁷ This perspective is precisely what is lost as a result of Conybeare's excisions and now is provided in these complete translations.

According to Marr, the text's initial editor, the Georgian version was made not on the basis of the Greek original but rather from an Arabic intermediary. Such transmissions from Greek to Georgian via Arabic were not at all uncommon in the monasteries of medieval Palestine, and so this pathway remains a distinct possibility.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the accuracy of Marr's judgment has gone largely unscrutinized since his initial edition, with scholars either following his lead without question or noting his position while themselves remaining agnostic on the matter. Yet only a year after Marr's edition was published, Conybeare, rightly in our view, found Marr's arguments for an Arabic intermediary "doubtful."⁹⁹ According to Marr, there are several marks of an Arabic source for the Georgian translation, yet only a few of them are truly significant, and none can be considered decisive.¹⁰⁰ For instance, the Georgian text uses the word *birk'a* (ბორქა) for the Pool of Mamilla, which Marr maintains must have been borrowed from the Arabic *birkah*. Likewise, the Georgian in one instance refers to the region of Syria using the Arabic toponym *al-Shām* (შამი: Shami), although in its first reference to the region it uses instead "Asurastani" (ასურასტანი). The form of the name "Cosman" (კომმან) in the Georgian instead of "Cosmas" also, he suggests, indicates an Arabic intermediary.

The form Κοσμάν in Greek, however, is already attested well before the seventh century, and კომმან is the form of the name commonly used in medieval Georgian literature. Likewise, medieval Georgian texts employ the term *Shami* to refer to greater Syria, even in texts that were not translated but were composed originally in Georgian, so in this case it is merely a translator's anachronism.¹⁰¹ As for *birk'a*, here this term does not seem to derive so much from the Arabic *birkah* as from the Hebrew בִּרְכָה, *berekah*: by late antiquity,

95 As noted by Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 36–37.

96 Conybeare, "Antiochus Strategos," 502.

97 Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 136–37; also Speck, "Beiträge," 38–39.

98 See, e.g., Pataridze, "Christian Literature," esp. 210–15.

99 Conybeare, "Antiochus Strategos," 502; this point is noted also by Cerulli ("La 'Conquista,'" 454).

100 See the discussion in Marr, *Антиохъ*, 11–13.

101 We thank David Khoshtaria for clarifying this point. See also Rapp, *Studies*, 215–16.

this word seems to have become effectively part of a toponym for the pool of Mamilla. Moreover, in the sentence immediately following the first use of *birk'a*, this same place is identified as a *p'riskina* (ფრისკინა), a term clearly borrowed from the Latin *piscina*, which undoubtedly derives from a Greek, rather than an Arabic, original. Marr suggests that somehow this use of *piscina* also should indicate an Arabic intermediary, but his reasoning is hardly convincing.

The careful transliteration of various Greek names and technical terms in the Georgian version also suggests that the translation was made directly from a Greek exemplar. Most telling in this regard is the term *patronikon* (პატრონიკონ), a location in the Church of the Anastasis where, according to Strategius, three hundred corpses were found. A *patronikon* was an upper gallery located on the second-floor level, usually found in Christian churches and ceremonial halls and generally in the western part of the building, sometimes attached to the nave from the south, west, and north. A church's *patronikon* was initially intended for social elites and was later used by singers, musicians, and organists.¹⁰² This term, however, has not yet been documented in the Georgian lexica, nor is it well attested even in Greek dictionaries or texts. Nevertheless, it is not altogether uncommon in medieval Georgian texts, and, more to our point, the term seems to appear only in Georgian texts that have been translated directly from Greek, including, in addition to our text, the *Treatise on the Construction of St. Sophia*, the *Life of Sts. Cosmas and Damian*, and the *Life of St. Maximus the Confessor*, for example.¹⁰³ The presence of this term, transcribed from the Greek, would appear to be a compelling sign that the Georgian translation of *The Capture of Jerusalem* was made, like these other texts, directly from the Greek.

There is, however, one element of all the translations that is difficult to explain. In all the versions, the text identifies Caesarea as “the mother of cities,” clearly a reference to its status as the “metropolis.” According to Marr, the presence of this phrase in the Georgian version indicates its borrowing from the Arabic *umm al-mudun* (lit., “the mother of the cities”), the common Arabic translation of the Greek μητρόπολις.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, there is certainly no reason to assume that the original Greek identified Caesarea as ἡ μητρόπολις rather than as ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πόλεων. Admittedly, the latter is a somewhat unusual expression for a Greek author to use, yet it is certainly not unprecedented.¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, it is no less reasonable, if not much more so, to understand the original author, Strategius, as the source of this phrase, who for whatever reason decided to use this literal rendering. Moreover, the translation “mother of cities” for μητρόπολις has precedent in Georgian texts translated directly from the Greek—for instance, in 2 Kingdoms 20:19, where there can hardly be any possibility of an Arabic intermediary. Thus, even as some lingering doubts may remain, it seems highly likely, for a variety of reasons, that the Georgian version of *The Capture of Jerusalem* was translated directly from the Greek rather than via an Arabic intermediary.

102 Abashidze, ქართული საბჭოთა ენციკლოპედია, 7:713.

103 Again, we thank David Khoshtaria for clarifying this point.

104 E.g., see, with reference to Caesarea, Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 2:421b, “of old it was one of distinguished metropolises (*kānat qadīman min aʿyān ummuhāt al-mudun*)”; Abū l-Faṭḥ, *Annales Samaritani*, 179, “it was called the metropolis (*kāna yuqālu lahā umm al-mudun*).”

105 Thus a search of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* will demonstrate, although, admittedly, the phrase is more commonly used in reference to Rome. See, e.g., Guidi, “Un ‘Bios’ Di Constantino,” 321.

THE ARABIC VERSIONS

The Arabic version of *The Capture of Jerusalem* survives in at least six manuscript testimonies, five of which survive as an integral whole. Of the complete testimonies, four were edited and translated into Latin by Garitte and published in 1973–74.¹⁰⁶ We follow Garitte in labeling these four recensions as A, B, C, and V; however, we also consult a fifth recension, unknown to Garitte, which we label as D. These five recensions derive from the following manuscript testimonies:

A—MS Sinai Ar. 428 (ca. late ninth/early tenth c. CE), fols. 238r–289v (= Garitte, 1–56)

B—MS Sinai Ar. 520 (ca. tenth c. CE), fols. 199r–265v (= Garitte, 57–105)

C—MS Sinai Ar. 531 (6837 AM/1231–32 CE), fols. 277v–340v (= Garitte, 107–50)

D—MS Sinai Ar. NF parch. 1/6 (late ninth c. CE) (unpublished)¹⁰⁷

V—MS Vatican Ar. 697 (1328 CE), fols. 59v–97v (= Garitte, 151–92)

In addition to these five recensions, Alphonse Couret edited and translated a sixth, much abbreviated Arabic recension based on a fifteenth-century manuscript,¹⁰⁸ which Marr also published as an appendix to his editio princeps of the Old Georgian version.¹⁰⁹

We give priority to Recension A and place our translation thereof alongside the translation of the Old Georgian version. Of all the Arabic translations of *The Capture of Jerusalem* currently known to be extant, Recension A may be the oldest; and of all the Arabic recensions, it is certainly the closest in content and form to the Old Georgian version. All the same, Recension A is not necessarily always and consistently the most faithful to the Greek original, insofar as the other Arabic recensions appear to draw on details present in the Greek original that are either omitted from or abbreviated in A.

The manuscript of Recension A (MS Sinai Ar. 428) likely belongs to a library of Christian Arabic manuscripts copied in the late ninth or early tenth century CE by a prolific scribe and monk of Mar Saba named Anthony David of Baghdad,¹¹⁰ whose scribal hand was first identified by Kate Leeming.¹¹¹ As the text is currently bound together with several others, the scribe of MS Sinai Ar. 428 likely copied the text of Recension A from an even older copy rather than undertaking a fresh translation anew. Recension A, therefore, is likely the earliest Arabic testimony for the text to survive. Its age is seriously rivaled only by the incomplete Recension D (MS Sinai Ar. NF parch. 1/6), first described by Meimarīs in the catalog of the new finds discovered at the Monastery of Saint Catherine in 1975. However, unlike Recension A, the text of Recension D is incomplete. Recension D appears at the end

106 Garitte, *Expugnationis*.

107 Meimarīs, *Katalogos*, 21–22, \V–\A. The date provided by Meimarīs for the manuscript (Rabīʿ II 255 AH) derives from a translation note stating that a certain Ishāq translated one of the manuscript’s texts from Greek (*al-yunāniyyah*) into Arabic in the month of Rabīʿ II of the year 255 of the Arabs (February–March–April 869 CE). The date, however, refers to the translation of a work included in the manuscript, not the copy itself. All the same, the manuscript does likely date to the end of the ninth century CE; see Hjälms, “Paleographical Study,” 70.

108 Couret, “La prise . . . en 614,” 147–61.

109 Marr, *Антіохъ*, \–\•, based on BnF Arabe 262 (Paris), fols. 140a–54a.

110 Hjälms, “Paleographical Study,” 64–65n53; Binggeli, “Les trois Davids,” 85–86.

111 Leeming, “Adoption of Arabic,” 243; see also Griffith, “Anthony David,” 7–19.

of a badly damaged codex: many of its folios are lost, and even the folios that survive are severely marred, often from moisture damage and, as a result, from textual erasure. In its current state, the text of Recension D extends no further than the beginning of chapter XX.8, where it abruptly ends.

Although all the Arabic recensions clearly represent the same underlying text, they differ so widely in wording and coverage that each is impossible to reconcile with the others. This fact led Garitte to provide a separate textual edition and Latin translation for each recension, given that a critical edition would be impracticable and undesirable. The Sinai recensions (A, B, C, and D) generally resemble one another in the main body of the text. Indeed, B and C appear to be independent revisions of Recension A, though not direct copies thereof. Recension C stands out because of two peculiarities: (1) it has two prologues, the first of which ceases *in medias res* and thereafter begins the second; and (2) it likewise includes in chapter XXIV an interpolated story about Heraclius and the Jews of Tiberias taken from the Antiochene recension of the *Annales* of Eutychius of Alexandria (877–940).¹¹² Last, the Vatican manuscript (Recension V) is the latest of the Arabic recensions taken into account. Because of its brevity, it offers the least comparative material.

The Arabic recensions clearly descend from a common source text, but the translations, as a general rule, depart freely from the original text, which is often abbreviated. Interpolations rarely amount to more than a phrase or two except for the lengthy interpolations found in Recension C. There is also the distinct possibility that more Arabic recensions existed than currently survive, as may be reasonably inferred from a Syriac translation of our text recently discovered by Grigory Kessel and David Taylor among the Syriac manuscripts of Saint Catherine's monastery (Sinai Syriac 82), copied in Jerusalem by a certain Bar Ṣawmā in about 1142–43 CE.¹¹³ The translator of *The Capture of Jerusalem* into Syriac identifies himself as a certain Basil “the tailor¹¹⁴ of Edessa”—possibly to be identified with the Syrian Orthodox bishop and historian Basil bar Shumānā (d. 1169)—and explicitly notes that he translated the text from Arabic (lit., “the Ishmaelite tongue”).¹¹⁵ The Syriac recension shares the most commonalities with Arabic Recension C. As David Taylor has meticulously documented, although the Syriac translator frequently omits and abbreviates materials found in C, his Syriac version does offer a handful of significant expansions, where it embellishes, for instance, the plaintive cries of the captives thrown into the pool of Mamilla, as well as dialogue found in the stories of the virgin's gambit and the martyrdom of the daughters of the deacon Eusebius, whom the Syriac (uniquely) names Girazaḥ and Theodora.¹¹⁶

Such wide divergences among the Arabic recensions pose a challenge for presenting them in translation. The organization of this volume reflects the strategy we have adopted to address this challenge. First, we aim to prioritize and facilitate comparisons between

112 The Antiochene recension contains many expansions added by Melkite chroniclers that likely do not originate with Eutychius himself; see Griffith, “Eutychius of Alexandria.”

113 Kessel, “Syriac Miscellany,” 144; Taylor, “Syriac Version,” 451–53.

114 Taylor (“Syriac Version,” 454) plausibly suggests that ܐܝܬܝܢܐ may result from a copyist's mistake for ܐܝܬܝܢܐ “the sinner.”

115 Kessel, “Syriac Miscellany,” 147; Taylor, “Syriac Version,” 454.

116 Taylor, “Syriac Version,” 456–58.

the Old Georgian version and the oldest extant Arabic version (Recension A) since, in our judgment, these two versions reflect the Greek original most faithfully. For this reason, we do not provide a complete translation of all the Arabic recensions but, rather, a complete translation of Recension A only. However, we believe this decision is not tantamount to a total neglect of the other Arabic recensions, nor is it an attempt to minimize their significance entirely, for in the endnotes following the main text of our translation we also provide translations of passages from Recensions B, C, D, and V that we have judged to contain significant or major departures from Recension A. Likewise in the footnotes we point out more minor differences in wording between the Arabic recensions.

NOTES ON THE TRANSLATIONS

While every part of this volume is, from start to finish, a product of intense collaboration between us, the two authors, for obvious reasons responsibility for certain sections fell more to one of us than the other. Stephen Shoemaker is responsible for the translation from Georgian, and Sean Anthony for the Arabic versions, although we have both contributed to the final version of both translations. The translations were made directly from the original texts as published in the editions by Gérard Garitte. Initially we prepared our translations independently, and just as we were finished and ready to sit down together, a global pandemic brought things to a halt. As soon as possible after the pandemic lifted, we met in Oregon, where in early August 2021 we spent a week working together on our translations. At that time, we sat side by side and read each of our translations aloud, then discussed the differences, while regularly going back to the original texts to check whether we might need to make any adjustments. Therefore, while the translations are inescapably the work of one of us more than the other, we collaborated to the best of our ability to make sure that any major differences in the two translations are indeed indicative of differences in the two versions themselves.

As a matter of convenience and practicality, we decided to place most footnotes relevant to the historical interpretation of the treatise together with the Georgian version. Not only did it make sense to have these together with a single version of the text for ease of reference, but also the nature of the Arabic version, with its numerous recensions, required many notes specific to comparing these different transmissions of the text. Accordingly, while comments in the notes relevant to linguistic matters are the work of the respective translator, other comments of a more general nature were coauthored, even though they appear with the Georgian translation. Nevertheless, we have not made an effort to unify our identifications of biblical references, since these references are often specific to the particular version in question. Biblical references are abbreviated according to the system outlined in *The SBL Handbook of Style*.¹¹⁷ All references to the Christian Old Testament are specifically to the Septuagint's version of this corpus rather than to the Masoretic text, since the former was the authoritative version used in our author's milieu.

117 Alexander, *SBL Handbook*.

The Capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614 CE
by Strategius of Mar Saba

Translations of the Georgian Recension and Arabic Recension A

May 20—The Capture of Jerusalem (Georgian Recension)

The Discourse of the Blessed Monk Strategius, who was dwelling in the lavra of our holy father Sabas. He said this about the devastation of Jerusalem and the capture of the Cross of Christ, which is the tree of our salvation, and about the burning and destruction of the holy churches, and about the captivity of Patriarch Zachariah, and about the slaughter of priests and deacons and monks, and about the people who believed in Christ, and about everything that befell Jerusalem and its inhabitants from the Babylonians, Persians, and Chaldeans at the command of their king Chosroes.

I. 1. O Christ-loving brothers, turn your ears to me, for I wish to tell you about something dreadful, and in preaching and proclaiming the words of Christ our God I wish to imitate the evangelist Matthew, who wrote the gospel for the whole world, in which is every joy and all gladness and the proclamation of the words of God. With a lovely voice this blessed evangelist cried out and said: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham.”¹ 2. Nevertheless, I, my brothers, will speak words and describe things according to his example, but these my [words] will not resemble his narrative and discourse, for I will not tell you of joy and gladness, nor will I proclaim jubilation and rejoicing, but sorrow and mourning. 3. Have pity, my brothers, have pity today for my soul, crushed and shattered by a multitude of tears, and grant me forgiveness, for I wish to speak truly and make my words known like the evangelist Matthew, and I say thus: “The book of the devastation and capture of Jerusalem, the Holy City, which is the city of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”

4. This book, written by me, makes known the capture of the tree of salvation and the devastation of the churches of Christ and the burning and conquest of Jerusalem. This book makes known the slaughter and massacre of the flock of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. And why do I prolong my words to you, O listeners? But now I will begin and speak briefly. This book is full of the sufferings and struggles and afflictions that came upon Jerusalem, the city of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. 5. How do I call this book mine? But it is much more for all of you, for this does not, as a parchment, announce joy but sorrow. I do not call this a book, but a weeping over captivity. I do not call this a writing, but a mourning for a massacre. I do not call this a letter, but a lamentation of devastation. 6. This will awaken the soul of its hearers, and those who hear this voice with understanding will be amazed in their mind. It teaches mourning for the annihilation, as the master and teacher of lamentation, the prophet Jeremiah. 7. O my brothers, how did it happen that this land of promise became scattered, and this place of sanctity devastated? How did destruction fall upon the churches of Christ, and devastation befall the altars of God, so that they became dwellings of the enemies? How did our consolation become sorrow? How was this spiritual singing transformed into lamentation? How did Jerusalem, the desired city, which is translated, “the visage of goodness,”² become devastated and loathsome?

¹ Matt. 1:1.

² The derivation of this meaning is not entirely clear. Perhaps it comes from Ps. 127:5: “may you see the good of Jerusalem.”

The Capture of Jerusalem (Arabic Recension A)

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God. This is from the account of the monk known as Abba Strategius [ʾstrʾt], a saintly man who resided in the Monastery of Saint Mar Saba the Blessed. He told of Jerusalem’s destruction, the seizing of the Cross of Christ, the plundering of the churches’ vessels, and the captivity of the flock and the holy patriarch Zachariah, who was patriarch of Jerusalem, as well as the menacing Persians who destroyed Jerusalem.^a

I. 1. O beloved of Christ, O brothers! I wish to imitate Matthew the Evangelist and preacher of God’s word—the author of the Gospel of the world containing all manner of jubilation and delight and even the word of God. Thus did this monk cry out with a beautiful voice and say: “This is the book of the nativity of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. 2. But, brothers, it is not its equal, but rather a substitute,³ for I will not report to you a cause for celebration and delight. I will not call upon you to celebrate but rather I call upon you to mourn. 3. Lament, O brothers, lament! For my heart today is sad from much weeping. Pardon me, for I wish to begin this account of mine and substitute the word of Matthew the Evangelist. I will dictate this book about the destruction of Jerusalem, the city of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham.

4. This book I dictate concerning the captivity of the Blessed Cross. This book I dictate concerning the destruction of the churches of God’s city, Jerusalem, the city of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. This book I dictate concerning the slaughter of the flock of Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. This book I dictate concerning the wounds of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. What moves me now to begin my story with so many [words] and to utter so many words to you, my listeners? Rather I speak sparingly of the matters I have begun to address! This book is full of afflictions on account of the flock of Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. 5. How shall I name this, my book? But this is for all who hear it. I will not call it a booklet [*daftar*], rather I will call it sadness; I will not call it a book, rather I will call it captivity; I will not call it a letter, rather I will call it lamentation; I will not call it jubilation, rather I will call it sadness; I will not call it delight, rather I will call it sorrow. 6. With a voice it repels the heart that hears it and renders it astonished; the learning of the erudite it discloses and reads aloud for all to hear. 7. O brothers! How the world has become scattered! How the churches of Christ have been destroyed! How God’s altars have become dwellings for the enemy! How spiritual comfort has become wailing! How Jerusalem, whose name means a vision of thriving, has become ruin and sadness. Yet, my beloved, pardon me, listeners, that I may begin to relate to you the cause of all that has befallen the city and its destruction and so that I might teach you about the Persians, the Babylonians, who destroyed these cities. I begin for your sake with the city of Jesus Christ, Jerusalem, and its destruction; yet before I begin to speak of such things (because we wretched are not deserving, for we are but beasts) I shall inform you of what befell Christianity.

³ A, C متبادل; B خلافة, “its opposite.”

Georgian Recension

8. But I implore you, my beloved brothers, to pray for me, a wretched sinner, that [God] will give me the words to begin my discourse, for I know the infirmity of my mind, and I fear that perhaps I will begin to speak and not be able to finish, and I will be reproached by many, and they will say: “This person does not understand his infirmity; he begins to build but cannot finish.”⁴ [Pray] that it will not be so for me. 9. Together with the prophet David we also say what was gravely said: “O Lord, you will open my lips, and my mouth will proclaim your praise,”⁵ so that I too will begin to expound these words of God instructed by his grace, for he gives freely to those who beseech him for a gift and to those who hope in him for a good and perfect reward, and he will bestow these things also on us, who lack understanding. 10. We certainly are not worthy of his gifts, but as faithful servants we ask the benevolent Lord for strength and words of knowledge so that we might complete this beginning, for I know that he will not bestow something of little use to those who hear, nor will he grant something of small benefit to those who are faithful. 11. Nevertheless, I will not relate the thoughts of philosophers, nor will I concern myself with eloquent speech⁶ as those who are highly articulate, but I will speak mournful words and make this known to you with tearful weeping, and with lamentation I will relate the horrors and woes of the battle that befell Jerusalem on account of our sins and its occupation by the Babylonians.

12. And now, my brothers, I weep not only for a single city and not only for a single temple,⁷ nor for the humiliation of the place,⁸ as it was in days of old. And I weep not for an earthly king and his people, but I weep and lament for the faithful people, at how the Most High, who holds the whole world in the palm of his hand, disregarded his flock and today abandoned his people on account of their sins. 13. I do not weep for the temple of the Jews, which the prophet Jeremiah mourned and lamented, and I do not weep for the Ark, in which are the staff and the manna and the book that Moses wrote with his own hand after he smashed the tablets on account of the hardness of heart of the sons of Israel.⁹ Nor do I weep for the gilded walls and the stone that was carved out and for the beautiful gates and for the high courtyards and for the jasper columns.¹⁰ 14. I do not weep for the priests, who executed the prophets,¹¹ or for the people who crucified the Lord and the wicked assembly that cried out, “Crucify, crucify Jesus Christ,”¹² these who repaid the Lord with evil for good,¹³ gave him vinegar and gall to drink¹⁴ in exchange for the manna, and instead of the staff of Moses, with which he parted the Red Sea, they pierced him with a

4 Cf. Luke 14:30.

5 Ps. 50:17.

6 Lit., “take care for adornment of words.”

7 The word “temple” in Georgian also commonly refers to a church.

8 Lit., “for the place of humiliation” or possibly “of disgrace.” Cf. Matt. 24:15?

9 Cf. Heb. 9:4; Exod. 32:19, 34:1.

10 Cf. 3 Kgdms. 6:28–7:12.

11 Cf. Matt. 23:37.

12 Cf. Matt. 27:22–23.

13 Cf. Ps. 37:21.

14 Cf. Matt. 27:34.

Arabic Recension A

8. But I beseech you to pray frequently on my behalf that God might grant me, a wretched man, what to say and to open my mouth, for I am afraid and do not know how to report this affair, which exceeds my power and understanding—this deep tremendous sea. I fear I will drown amid the depths of this sea like one hardly able to swim and thus be unable to tell the story of the affair I have already begun. I fear I will be disgraced before the crowds and that they shall say: “This is a man who has overstepped his bounds and who knows not the feebleness of his ability and the paucity of his wisdom. How did he come to take on this task and how did he have the audacity to speak on such matters?” 9. But lest all this afflict us, we say, though our tongues may be heavy, with the prophet David these words he spoke: “O Lord, open my mouth and my mouth will declare your glory.”¹⁵ Only then do I begin speaking of this. So, beseech the Word of God to grant me speech and thus open my mouth, because God alone is he who gives every good gift and perfect, righteous reward to those who believe in him—even to us lacking much wisdom. 10. It is not that we deserve such a thing. Rather, we ask as believing slaves from a righteous master, and we ask of him strength and to give us strength and speech and to aid us in what we have begun; for you know that no meager benefit will come to those who hear this speech. 11. Because we began not with bad thinking or earthly wisdom or carnal logic but with fear and weeping and sorrow, we begin with this evil that befell Jerusalem as chastisement.¹⁶ Yet, since God has chastised us, we are also deserving of his mercy.

12. For now, O brothers, I weep not for a single city or for a single temple, and I weep not for a loathsome place. I weep not over a pagan encampment; I weep not for an earthly king; I weep not for humiliated fathers. Rather, I weep for the land in his possession! 13. I weep not for the temple of the Jews. I weep not for the temple over which the prophet Jeremiah lamented. I weep not for the Ark containing the rod, manna, and the tablet that God wrote with his finger and Moses broke because of the lack of faith of the Israelites to whom it was given. I weep not for gilded walls; I weep not for hewn stones; I weep not for exalted gates; I weep not for lofty arches; and I weep not for pearly columns.¹⁷ 14. I weep not for the priests who used to murder the prophets; I weep not for those who crucified Jesus Christ; I weep not for the ignorant throng without a wiseman; and I weep not for those who cried out, “Seize him and crucify him”—Jesus Christ, to whom they gave vinegar and gall instead of manna, and instead of the staff that split the sea they stabbed him with

15 Ps. 50:17. All biblical references cite the LXX.

16 A, C العذاب; B العذاب, “torment.”

17 A, C من در; B رخام, “marble”; D جواهر, “jewels.” C also adds لحم ملا, “nor do I weep for kettles full of meat.”

Georgian Recension

spear.¹⁸ 15. I neither weep nor lament for them, for they were deserving when adversity struck them in the occupation, because they abandoned the Lord and worshipped the idols of Jeroboam and Jezebel, as the Law makes known.¹⁹ 16. Nevertheless, I weep and mourn for the Holy City and for the magnificent churches and the holy altars and the sanctified priests and the faithful people who were mercilessly slaughtered. For the Jews had only images, but we [have] the truth. They held a shadow, but we [hold] the mystery of the Sun of Righteousness,²⁰ upon whom every iniquity fell.

17. Do not think of me, beloved, as an eloquent person, for the calamities compel me to speak, and the pain in my heart stirs me to tell you about these things, which are full of sorrow and weeping, which the Lord also spoke through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah concerning the assembly: “Nevertheless, you, when you hear good counsel, you hasten there, and a sorrowful report incites you to lamentation and repentance, and you turn to the Lord with doleful tears.”²¹ 18. Therefore, I will also tell you words of mourning in which much profit is stored for those who hear, as Wisdom says: “Go into the house of mourning, and not the house of mirth.”²² 19. But it is fitting that we, and only more so we who have been sold into sin,²³ should obtain weeping rather than laughing and mourning rather than rejoicing, as the Lord said: “Blessed are those who are mournful in heart, for they will be comforted.”²⁴ 20. It is right that we make known to you the sorrow that came upon us, which befell us who were in Jerusalem, for I will not tell you anything that is secret but what is manifestly clear, what has gone forth throughout the whole land, and news of our devastation has gone forth to the ends of the earth. And you too have seen together with your eyes the traces and signs, the devastation that came upon the churches and the holy places and the slaughter that [came upon] the faithful people as a punishment for our sins. 21. And now I will begin and will tell you what befell us from the Babylonian Persians.

II.1 For Zachariah, the patriarch of Jerusalem and the patriarch and the shepherd of the Holy City was shepherding his flock in a manner that was proper and fitting and pleasing to the Lord. 2. And in those days some wicked men came and settled in Jerusalem. And through the devil’s assistance some of them had been in the Holy City before. 3. And they were named according to the clothing that they wore, and one group was called the Greens and the other the Blues.²⁵ 4. And they were full of every iniquity, and it was not enough

18 Cf. Exod. 14:21; John 19:34.

19 Cf. 3 Kgdms. 12:25–33, 16:31.

20 Cf. Mal. 4:2.

21 The source of this quotation is unknown.

22 Cf. Eccl. 7:4; lit., “house of drinking.”

23 Cf. Rom. 7:14.

24 Matt. 5:4.

25 The most authoritative study of these two rival circus factions remains Cameron, *Circus Factions*. With regard to the period here in question, see also Janssens, “Les Bleus et les Verts.” Their presence in Jerusalem is also attested in the late ancient epigraphic record; see Di Segni, *Late Antique Epigraphy*, 73–74.

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the lance. 15. But, brothers, they deserved what befell them! I weep not for the Law because we are punished by it; rather, I weep for the spiritual gift. 16. I weep not for those who were taken with phantasies but for those who were committed to the Truth. I weep not for those caught up in evil, but rather those who were in the right.

17. O brothers, do not take me for a loquacious man. I weep over the length of my speech on this day, and whoever hears my words, words full of sadness and weeping and words that God spoke on Jeremiah the prophet’s tongue speaking of this gathering, “Because you heard sad reports you rushed to her, then you return and repent with tears.”²⁶ 18. So I begin with the word in which there is much of benefit for many. As the sages have said: “Go to the house of mourning rather than the house of drink.”²⁷ 19. But it is fitting for us, especially him who has sinned, to cry more tears than to laugh, for Christ has said: “Blessed are those who weep, for they will be comforted.”²⁸ 20. In this way it is necessary for us ourselves to explain this sadness that has befallen us, because we shall not report to you some trifle but that which is told in all the world and those wonders and signs you have all seen, so that we may begin from here with what destruction befell God’s churches and holy places.

II. 1. As for Zachariah the blessed patriarch, patriarch of Jerusalem the City of God, when he was over the flock,²⁹ 2–3. a people called the Greens and the Blues turned toward the Holy City, and that was from the snares of Satan. 4. They were full of every affliction. They were not

26 Uncertain.

27 A, B شرب; C سرور, “pleasure.” Cf. Eccl. 7:2.

28 Matt. 5:4.

29 A, C على الرعية; B مدبر الرعية, “the overseer of the flock.”

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for them to torment and plunder the faithful, but they united for bloodshed and murder. Fighting and destruction were always among them, and they were constantly working wicked deeds against the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 5. For the prophet Ezekiel prophesied this event and what would befall Jerusalem, saying: “Son of man, say to Jerusalem: that which is among you remains wicked and is still standing. The Lord said this: I have placed a crown of mercy on your head and have made you a queen and have sent forth your fame among all peoples, and your pride was a hindrance to them. And you received your treasure and prepared from it graven images and adorned that [crown?] of your head. And you led your children, whom you brought forth for my sake, and sacrificed them as offerings to the idols to their perdition, and you multiplied your fornications. Therefore, God has given you into the hands of your enemies.”³⁰ This the Lord said through Ezekiel. 6. Nevertheless, he was speaking not about idols, but about the men of the Greens and the Blues who were dwelling in Jerusalem. For this reason, God brought devastation upon us and gave us over into the hands of our enemies when the wickedness of the Greens and Blues multiplied and their corruption, fornication, and adultery grew even more. 7. And fear of God was not before their eyes, nor were awe and dread of him in their hearts, but they turned all together to wickedness and madness, and they cast away every good thing and acquired every bad thing and were constantly practicing hatred and lying. 8. Then the Judge of truth, who desires not the death of the sinner, but repentance and salvation,³¹ sent upon us the wicked race of the Persians as a rod of chastisement and a medicine of reproof.

III. 1. And they came with great force and a massive army and seized the entire region of Syria. And they routed the muster and army of the Greeks and captured some of them. 2. And then they began to enter with many troops and soldiers and to capture every city and village until they reached Palestine and its environs, and they came to Caesarea, which is the mother of cities.³² But they begged for a truce and bowed their necks in submission. 3. And then they came to Serapeon³³ and captured it and all the coastal cities along with their villages. 4. For they were stirred up by God, and with his consent the devil called forth this wicked people, and so the enemies were blazing like fire, and they passed through the cities and captured them. 5. And after that they reached Judea, and they came with great fury and rage to the great and famous city, a Christian city, which is Jerusalem, the city of the Son of God. And the Lord gave it into their hands, and they fulfilled everything according to his will. 6. And who is able to describe what took place in Jerusalem and her streets? Who will count the number of the dead that lie within Jerusalem, who were slaughtered by the wicked at the devil’s incitement? 7. For his seed had been sown among them, he who constantly envies our salvation. As before, when he saw the Lord Jesus Christ raised up on the Cross and the

³⁰ Cf. Ezek. 16:2, 12, 14, 16–18, 20, 26–27.

³¹ Cf. Ezek. 33:11.

³² I.e., the metropolis.

³³ The location to which the author refers is unknown. Perhaps the Arabic is correct and we should read instead “Sozousa.”

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content to inflict injuries and to despoil alone—they brought bloodshed and murder to this matter to all who were in Jerusalem. 5. For Ezekiel prophesied what would transpire in this city, saying, “Son of man, say to Jerusalem: The wickedness that is in it is permanent in this way. The Lord says, ‘A crown of mercy I have placed upon your head, and I have made you a queen and made your name known among all the nations and your pride was in your beauty. You took your vestments and called for woven idols³⁴ for yourself and adorned yourself with them. You took your sons whom you brought forth for my sake and made them a sacrifice unto destruction and went to excess in the multitude of fornication. For that God has given you over into the hands of your enemies.’”³⁵ Thus said the Lord. 6. Do not suppose, brothers, that the Lord said this only about the idols,³⁶ but [he also said that] about the Greens and Blues residing in Jerusalem. For that he gave you over to destruction and you have been cast into the hands of the enemy when the wickedness of the Greens and Blues residing in Jerusalem multiplied as did the rioting, fornication, and lasciviousness. 7. And the dread of God and the fear of him was not in their hearts, but altogether they turned to wickedness and cast aside works of goodness. They turned to lying and enmity. 8. At that time the Righteous Judge, who desires not the death of sinners but loves rather for them to return and to live, sent against us and gave authority over us peoples called the Persians like the rod of chastisement.³⁷

III. 1. They came with a mighty force and seized all the regions of Syria and the armies of the Romans. 2. With their armies they began to conquer city after city and village after village till they turned to the heart of Palestine and its environs until they came to Caesarea, the mother of cities.³⁸ They gave them the treaty of safety and conquered it. 3. They also went to Arsūf³⁹ and seized it and each of the coastal settlements. 4. For God was the one who set this affair into motion and set these nations into motion to do this. Like the flame that catches fire, the Persians made the rounds of the cities and captured them. 5. Then they, brothers, reached the great city, the city of the Christians, Jerusalem, the city of Jesus Christ. 6. Who could count the number of those slain in Jerusalem? And who could count those who committed brigandage in the heart of the city? 7. All this, brothers, was from the seed of the enemy [i.e., Satan], who wishes to cut off our salvation because he, when he beheld Jesus Christ upon the Cross, despaired, seeing the faithful who had surrounded him. He placed

³⁴ D أصنام محيطة, “protecting idols.”

³⁵ Cf. Ezek. 16:2, 12, 14, 16, 20, 26, 27.

³⁶ A الأصنام; B, C, V الخيطة, “the woven idols”; D الأصنام المحيطة, “the protecting idols.”

³⁷ D أمة الفرس الذي ليس [كذا] لها رحمة, “the nation of the Persians, who are without mercy.”

³⁸ A, C, V أم المدن.

³⁹ Apollonia-Sozousa-Arsūf, a port approximately 10 mi north of Jaffa. Called Sozousa (Σωζουσα) in the Byzantine period, the town’s ancient name, Arsūf (أرسوف), was revived in the Islamic period; cf. Sharon, *Corpus inscriptionum*, 1:112.

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multitude of the faithful standing around him, he also stirred up his treachery like the tares he sewed among the Jews, and through them he wanted to trouble the faithful. And so now again this wicked, accursed one was hastening and commanding these wicked beasts so that every harm and ruination and captivity came upon us with God’s allowance. For in those days there was bloodshed in every place through his incitement.

8. Who will not grieve, my brothers, on account of the deed that was done by the emperor Justinian in Constantinople, when they were crying out: “Victory, victory,”⁴⁰ when the river of blood was flowing in the city from the massacre of innumerable people? 9. And who has not heard what happened in the great city of Antioch, and what woes and trials befell its inhabitants?⁴¹ 10. Who will not mourn and weep for the events that befell the city of Laodicea and its inhabitants: how innumerable were the souls that were slaughtered by the envy and provocation of the God-hating enemy!⁴² Who can keep silent and hold back his tears in the face of such wickedness and suffering? 11. Who will count the multitude of troubles and toils, and how many myriads were slaughtered on account of the acts that were done by the wicked Bonosus?⁴³ Who will not weep for Jerusalem and what befell its inhabitants? Who will not lament the captivity of the priests and monks and the corruption of the virgins and the chaste? Who will not be saddened by the destruction of churches and altars? Who will not mourn and weep for the incomprehensible and innumerable torments of the faithful?

IV. 1. Now if you want to understand this matter, listen to what was related to me by a certain God-loving man about the death of that worthless man named Bonosus, so that you will know that I am telling you the truth. For this worthy man, when he was dwelling near the Jordan, told me and said: 2. “When the wretched Bonosus died, at that time I saw some dreadful men who brought his soul to a well that was sealed, and a guard sat upon it. And they said to him: ‘We say to you, O man, open this well for us, so that we may put the soul of Bonosus in it.’

40 I.e., “*Nika, nika*”—a reference to the Nika riots of 532 in Constantinople. For more information, see Cameron, *Circus Factions*, 277–80.

41 On this general uprising blamed on the Jews, see Howard-Johnston, *Last Great War*, 37. These events are mentioned with slightly more detail in John of Nikiu’s *Chronicle* 104–5 (see Zotenberg, *Chronique de Jean*, 185 [Eth.], 419–20 [Fr.]); *Chronicle of Sebeos*, 31 (see Abgarian, Պատմութիւն Սեբեոսի, 106; trans. Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, 1:57); and *The Teaching of Jacob the Newly Baptized* 1.40 (see Dagron and Déroche, “Juifs et chrétiens,” 128–31). For further discussion, see also Stratos, *Byzantium*, 1:76–67, 85–91.

42 I.e., Laodicea in Syria, modern Latakia. Agapius of Manbij mentions plots by Jews in the city to slaughter Christians throughout Syria and a counterattack by the Christian populace. In 610 CE, Phocas punishes the Christians by raising their taxes in “Antioch, Laodicea, the rest of the Syrias and Mesopotamia” (Vasiliev, *Kitab al-‘Unvan*, 2.2:449 [trans. Hoyland, *Theophius of Edessa*, 59]; Breydy, *Annalenwerk*, 121.10–13 [Ar.], 101 [Ger.]).

43 Bonosus was a general loyal to the usurper Emperor Phocas, and during the struggle between Heraclius and Phocas, he subjected the empire’s eastern cities, and especially those inhabitants who were loyal to Heraclius, to harsh treatment as *comes Orientis* (ca. 609–10). See Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 44–45. For more on Bonosus and his role in the struggle between Phocas and Heraclius, see John of Nikiu’s *Chronicle* 106–11 (in Zotenberg, *Chronique de Jean*, 186–99 [Eth.], 420–33 [Fr.]); *PLRE* 3A:239–40; Olster, *Politics*, 112–14, 225–63; Booth, “Shades of Blues and Greens,” 582–88.

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treachery as a stumbling block and sowed tares. The cursed one was not content with this but brought against us wickedness, ruination, and captivity.

8. Brothers, who will not think upon what bloodshed had been wrought in Constantinople at the hands of Justinian, and who could count those slain? 9. Who had not heard of the calamities that were in the great city of Antioch? 10. Who was not grieved at what was wrought in Laodicea?⁴⁴ All that was chastisement from God to heal our souls. As the prophet said,⁴⁵ “The Lord chastised me sorely, but unto death he did not deliver me.” Why are we silent? Why do we not grieve?⁴⁶ 11. How many multitudes were slain on account of this wickedness which befell Jerusalem? 12. Who will not weep for the captivity of the priests? Who will not grieve for the destruction of its churches?⁴⁷ Who will not weep for numerous calamities and torments to befall the people?

IV.1. And if you wish to know the cause of this, listen well. A righteous man related to me the story of the death of that wicked man so that you would know that all that I speak of is true. This righteous⁴⁸ man [informed me]⁴⁹ while he was dwelling in the region of the Jordan, and he said: 2. “When Bonosus was killed, at that very hour I caught sight of some dreadful men who had brought him to a sealed pit. At that pit was a man who guarded it. Those men who were carrying him spoke and said, ‘O man, open this pit for us so that we can place the corpse of Bonosus in it.’”

44 B adds الفنا, “of destruction,” and C adds القتل, “of killing/slaughter.” Cf. with the Georgian, which also mentions slaughter.

45 Ps. 117:18.

46 A, C كيف اسكت ولا اخبرك بهذه الأحزان; لماذا نسكت ولماذا لا نحزن, “How can I be silent and not tell you of these sorrows?”

47 A, C, D, V الكنائس; B الهياكل, “temples.”

48 A, C البار, الصالح; B البار, “pious.”

49 B, C اخبرني; omitted from A.

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3. The man who sat on the well answered them and said: ‘I cannot open this well until the master commands me.’ 4. Then one of them who carried the soul of Bonosus hurried and brought a document written by the master. 5. Then the one who was sitting on the well as a guard looked at them and groaned from the depth of his heart and beat his breast and said: ‘Woe to this wretched soul, for not since the time of the apostate Julian have I opened this well of the dark abyss.’” 6. I tell you this so that you will know what sort of men were dwelling in our land, and how many wicked things they committed through the killing and annihilation and massacre of their own brothers. 7. And the wretched Bonosus was the leader of all this, for he was completely full of godlessness and eager for the destruction of cities and the devastation of churches together with the previously mentioned worthless men, until unrest and devastation fell even upon the churches. And he also was planning to capture and kill the patriarch who preceded Patriarch Zachariah and to lay waste to the churches. 8. Such deeds did these men accomplish, who were living among us. And when we did not recognize God and did not keep his commandments, God delivered us into the hands of our enemies, and the impure race of the Persians ruled over us, and they did everything to us as they wished.

V. 1. And now I will begin and will tell you what happened. For these wicked peoples, when they had seized the entire land of Syria and the coast, captured two monks from the monasteries on the coast. 2. And these men were adorned with virtue and living worthily, and also well spoken and perfected in holiness. And they were radiant from divine gifts, for they loved the Lord, fearing his name. 3. And the one who ordered the prophet Daniel to be taken into captivity and the three youths to be taken captive for the peace of the world,⁵⁰ it was pleasing to this same Lord that these monks should be taken captive to teach many people about the law of God. 4. And when they captured these monks and brought them to their leader, he looked at their face and considered their value, even though he was an enemy of God. And he ordered that they should be kept until he saw just what would be the end of this matter. 5. And when he drew near to Jerusalem, the Holy City, he began to ask them from day to day, saying: “What do you say, O monks? Will this city be delivered into my hands or not?” 6. The monks answered and said: “You are hastening in vain and your intent is vacuous, O leader of this wicked and impure nation, for the right hand of the Lord protects the Holy City.”

7. And when they reached Jerusalem, the magnates and the leaders of his people⁵¹ went forth, and they examined the city and its walls. And when they saw the multitude of the monasteries and the dwelling places of those who fear God, which were in the surroundings of the city, their mind was opened, and they wanted to make peace with the inhabitants

⁵⁰ Cf. Dan. 1:1–7.

⁵¹ Or “army.”

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3. The one who was seated upon that pit answered them and said to them, ‘I cannot open this pit unless the Lord commands me. 4. One of those who were carrying the body of Bonosus quickly departed and brought a document. 5. When the man entrusted with the pit looked at it, he groaned from the depth of his heart. He beat his chest, saying, ‘Woe to this soul. Not since Julian the Apostate⁵² have I have opened this pit!’” 6. I have only told you this for you to know what sort of wickedness, slaughter, and wars transpired as well as the slaughter of brothers, 7. the destruction of cities, and the desecration of churches until the slaughter reached inside the temple so that the leader of the Christians could be seized and the entire temple laid waste. 8. But, brothers, when we did not recognize God and defied his commandments, he cast us into the hands of the enemies, an impure nation, so that they could plunder us against our wishes.

V.1. And now I will begin with what happened. When this nation seized the coasts, two monks were among those captured from one of these monasteries,⁵³ 2. two saintly, ascetic monks adorned with good words and deeds, and they were radiant with the divine gift,⁵⁴ because God loves his saints. 3. God was the one who ordained the captivity of the prophet Daniel and the three youths for the peace of the world;⁵⁵ likewise, God found it pleasing for these two monks to be taken captive so that they would teach God’s law [*dīn*], which otherwise could not be investigated. 4. When the enemies took the two monks to the leader [*al-wālī*], he looked at them, and even though the leader was an enemy of God, he recognized that they loved God and that they were devout men. He ordered them to be bound so that he could know what would become of the city. 5. When he drew near to Jerusalem, the Majestic City, he had no plan except to ask them each day about the state of the city. He would say to them, “What do you say, O monks? Do you say that the city will fall to me or not?” 6. The monks answered him, “You filth! Your pursuit is in vain, for the hand of God protects this Holy City!”

7. When leading magnates⁵⁶ approached the city and beheld it and the monasteries surrounding it, their hearts were opened, and they desired to make peace with the inhabitants

⁵² A *min lly’nws ’lbr’b’t*; B *min zamān lly’n al-brb’t*; *min ’l’nws ’lbrb’t*; V *min ywly’nws ’lbrb’t*. Here the Arabic البراباط derives from παραβάτης “transgressor,” the usual Greek epithet for Julian. Julian reigned as sole Augustus in 361–63 CE.

⁵³ D كانوا قد أصابوا في مغاير جبل لبنان راهبين قدسين, “they had taken captive from the caves of Mount Lebanon two saintly monks.”

⁵⁴ A, C الموهبة; B المواهب الروحانية, “spiritual gifts.”

⁵⁵ Cf. Dan. 1:1–7.

⁵⁶ A, C القواد الكبار; B كبار الفرس, “magnates of the Persians.”

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of the city. 8. Then blessed Zachariah the patriarch, when he realized their intent and understood from the Lord what was happening to the city, he also wanted to make peace with the enemies. 9. And in this way he was seeking the salvation of his flock and deliverance from the enemies and the peace of the holy places, for he knew the multitude of sin and the abundance of lawlessness that took place from day to day in the city. 10. And when those who had been stirred up and their leaders understood what the patriarch intended to do, they gathered together and set upon him like wild beasts and said to him: 11. “We are telling you, you who are the leader of the people,⁵⁷ what you intend is not good, for you are thinking of making peace with the enemies. Even though you consider yourself holy and are not afraid of them, for you are fond of the race of the Persians, we will not serve your will, for in your ignorance you do not intend something agreeable when you want to make peace with men who do not fear God.”

12. And by force they crushed his plan.⁵⁸ Then when the blessed Zachariah saw their foolishness and what they intended, he began to lament and weep for his flock and for the ruination of the faithful people. But he feared the wicked men, that they would kill him, about whom the prophet David said: “Deliver me from hostile people.”⁵⁹ 13. And death did not trouble him, for in everything he was expecting death like a friend, but he was seeking the salvation of the people and the protection of the holy places. Therefore, he wanted to make peace with the enemies, because he knew the allowance of God and what would happen to the city. 14. For this reason he was sad, and he wept for the people, and he said to the assembly with tears: “See what you are intending: I am innocent of your blood.” 15. And then with weeping and lamentation he said to them: “I fear that among you the words of the prophet are being fulfilled that say: ‘Woe to evildoers and those who are joined with them.’”⁶⁰ 16. And indeed all this was done by the Lord to chastise sinners and cleanse the poison of their sins through many tribulations. And this was like a painful remedy that the master physician gives to heal suffering to put to flight the multitude of illnesses and to purge the impurity of sin from their minds. 17. And after that the invincible power is able to demolish the enemies and devastate their force, when he who overcomes kings and rulers turns his unsleeping eye to mercy and has mercy on his people. 18. For Israel too was chastised before by the Egyptians, and then, when God saw fit to overthrow them, their chariots and horses were demolished, and the weapons of their armaments were swallowed up. And so also the walls of Jericho, when their collapse was pleasing to God, were

57 Speck (“Beiträge,” 62) concludes that this designation of Zachariah as the leader of the people suggests that the Roman authorities had already fled the city.

58 According to Sebeos, the citizens of Jerusalem initially submitted peacefully to the Persians, but soon thereafter “the youths of the city” killed the Persian officials and began a rebellion. The Jews fled the city to side with the Persians, who came with their army and, according to Sebeos, besieged the city for nineteen days, mined its walls and brought them down, and took the city on what would appear to be May 19, 614 (*Chronicle of Sebeos*, 31; see Abgarian, Պատմութիւն Սերբէնոյի, 115; trans. Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History*, 1:68–69). As Cameron notes (in *Circus Factions*, 75–76), “the youths,” νεανία, often refers more specifically to members of the circus factions.

59 Cf. Ps. 58:2.

60 The reference is uncertain—Mic. 2:1? Isa. 1:4? Isa. 10:1?

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of the city. 8. At that moment, the holy patriarch Zachariah knew what would befall the city and desired to make peace with the enemy, 9. whereby he sought the salvation of his flock and the deliverance of these holy places, for he knew of the sins of the inhabitants of the city and their multitude. 10. When the leaders of the city learned about what the patriarch desired to do and that he would seek to make peace, they all gathered before him and came at him like lions. They gathered before the righteous shepherd, the patriarch Zachariah, and said to him, 11. “O leader, this matter that you want to do is not a righteous thing! Perhaps you are a friend of the enemy, since you want to make peace with him. You are a man given to weeping,⁶¹ and that is why you wish to make peace with those who do not fear God!”

12. Then the blessed patriarch Zachariah, when he beheld them and heard what they said, wept for the destruction of the flock. And he was afraid of them and feared that they would kill him because the prophet David knew of their wickedness; for that reason he used to say, “Deliver me, O Lord, from the hostility of the people.”⁶² 13. The patriarch was not fearful of death only, for in his eyes death resembled sleep; rather, the patriarch sought to make peace with the enemy. But the mobs prevented him from doing so, for this war and the tribulations were, O brothers, from God. 14. When the patriarch saw that, he grieved for the flock, because he desired to make peace with the enemies. He cried out and said to all the inhabitants of the city, “Suffer patiently what has befallen you!” And with much weeping and lamentation he said: “I am innocent of the blood of this congregation! 15. I fear that the word of the prophet will be fulfilled, ‘Woe to the wicked and those who are with them.’”⁶³ 16. All that was from Jesus Christ in order for this to be a chastisement for a sinful flock. That was like the remedy which causes pain from the wise physician to remove the sicknesses and sins⁶⁴ that are in our hearts. 17. For God can thwart the strength of the enemies when he turns his eye, which does not slumber, to vanquish all kings and authorities. 18. For Israel, when his command was from God, vanquished the Egyptians, and likewise the walls of Jericho, when God so willed, fell.^b

61 A مایق; C صایق (read: ضایق), “distressed.”

62 Cf. Ps. 58:2.

63 A, C الذين يكونوا معهم; B ولتباعهم, “and to their followers.” Uncertain.

64 B الدنس, “uncleaness.”

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suddenly demolished. And he also humbled the multitude of the Persians by the emperor Heraclius, when the Beneficent looked upon his people with mercy.

19. Nevertheless, the blessed Zachariah, a true shepherd, invited them to make peace. And when they did not hear him, he came up with another plan. And he called for a certain monk named Abba Modestus—he was the hegumen of the Monastery of Saint Theodosius.⁶⁵ And he ordered him to go and assemble the host of the Greek army that was in Jericho, to aid them in their fight. 20. And blessed Modestus received the patriarch's order, and he went forth and assembled the army of the Greeks that was in Jericho. 21. The Persians, however, surrounded the whole city and laid siege for combat. 22. And they were constantly asking the monks about the city, whether God would deliver it into their hands or not. And one day they asked again. 23. Then the monks consulted one another and said: "If we lie, that is wicked, and if we tell the truth, that is sorrowful. But, whether we tell or we keep it secret, it is impossible that this city will not be laid waste. And so it is right that we should not conceal the truth." 24. Then the monks groaned from the depths of their hearts and struck their faces, and from their eyes flowed tears like a river on the earth, and they answered and said: "God has given us into your hands on account of our sins."

25. Nevertheless, when we were given into captivity, we said to the monks: "Why did you not tell us from the beginning that the city would be given into the hands of the enemies? Instead, you said that it would be protected by God, and we know that your word is from the Lord. And then you said that it would be given over to devastation." 26. The monks answered us and said: "We were neither prophets nor prescient of God's decision. Rather, we were given over to the hands of the enemies on account of our sins, and we have been taken captive by their hands and chastised with this people in accordance with our deeds. 27. But with respect to the Holy City, do not be surprised at what has come upon it, for when we were with God, so also was God with us. 28. But as for us, when the Persians brought us out of our caves, they led us here to Jerusalem. We looked at the city's wall and saw an astonishing sight: for an angel stood on all the battlements and on each one of its towers and held a shield and a fiery spear in its hands. 29. And when we saw this force, we rejoiced greatly, and we understood that God is on our side. Therefore, we told the enemy: 'You are hastening in vain, and your intention with regard to this city, that it will be delivered into your hands, is empty.' 30. And when we abandoned obedience to God and spurned his commandments and neglected prayer and forsook supplication and seeking mercy and amassed our wicked deeds, the Lord heard of this and was infuriated, and fire was kindled over Zion, and wrath came upon the people, and they were handed over to death and captivity. 31. At that time an angel came down from heaven, three days before this evil arrived, and approached the angels that were standing on the walls of Jerusalem and protecting them. 32. And he said to them: 'Go forth from here and depart, for the

⁶⁵ This Modestus is seemingly the future patriarch of Jerusalem, who would succeed Zachariah and serve in this position from 628–30. The Monastery of Saint Theodosius was founded by Saint Theodosius in 465 on the spot where, according to tradition, the three magi rested on their return from Bethlehem after visiting the newborn Jesus. The site is 8 km east of Bethlehem and about the same distance southeast from Jerusalem. The distance to Jericho is approximately 30 km—likely longer, depending on the route Modestus would have taken.

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19. As for the righteous patriarch Zachariah, when they did not accept his words, he presented them with a different plan. He called for a monk called Modestus, the hegumen of Dayr al-Dawākis,⁶⁶ so that he would go forth and assemble the army of the Romans who were in Jericho to provide aid to the patriarch. 20. The monk accepted that charge from him and then set forth and assembled the armies that were in Jericho. 21. As for the Persians, they surrounded the Holy City. 22. And at every moment⁶⁷ they were asking the two monks about the fate of the city, whether they would conquer it or not. On one of those days they again asked the two monks. 23. The two pondered the fate they shared, saying: "If we lie, it is wicked, and if we tell the truth, it is mournful. But whether we tell them or we do not, its destruction is inescapable. We will not conceal the truth." 24. Then the two monks groaned from the depths of their hearts and struck their faces. Their eyes flooded the earth with a multitude of tears. At that time they said to the Persians, "Because of the multitude of our sins, God has given us over into your hands."

25. At that time the inhabitants of the city said to the two monks: "How could you not have said to us from the beginning and informed us that the city would be destroyed? And now you say that it will be destroyed!" 26. The two monks answered and said: "We are not prophets. Rather we were taken captive with the rest and given over to their hands. 27. As for the City of God, Jerusalem, we are not surprised, for as we were with God, so is God with us. 28. We will tell you that when the Persians brought us out of our caves, they brought us to Jerusalem. We beheld the city wall, and on each of the towers of the city wall was an angel carrying in his hand a spear of flame. 29. When we saw that delight, we were jubilant and knew that God was with us. For that reason, we said to the enemies, 'You pursue the destruction of the city in vain!' 30. But when you abandoned obedience to God, neglected prayers, and perpetrated vile acts known to you yourselves and God, God beheld you with his gaze and saw evil. Fire fell upon Zion, and slaughter overtook the populace. 31. Then an angel descended from heaven before the destruction of Zion by three days. He went to the angels who were on the towers, 32. and he said to them, 'Depart from here, for

⁶⁶ A, B, C, V دبير الدواكيس; D دبير مار ثدوسيوس. Dayr al-Dawākis is the more common Arabic name of the Monastery of Saint Theodosius in the Islamic period. See Pringle, *Churches of the Crusader Kingdom*, 2:271.

⁶⁷ A, C في كل وقت; B في كل يوم, "every day."

Georgian Recension

Lord has given the Holy City over into the hands of the enemies.’ And when the assembly of the angels heard this, they departed, for they could not oppose God’s command. 33. And because of this we knew that our sins had overcome God’s mercy. But do not be sad, brothers, and do not despair, for God did this to us not out of hatred but to chastise us, for he chastises and again he consoles. We will endure this struggle so that we will escape future torments. 34. Hear what the prophet David says: ‘Waiting, I waited for the Lord, and he paid attention to me’;⁶⁸ and again he says: ‘Blessed is the man whom you chastise, Lord’;⁶⁹ and also the apostle James says: ‘Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for having passed the test and endured troubles, he will obtain the crown of life.’⁷⁰ 35. And the monks spoke words to the people and instructed them, and the sadness and anguish were lifted from their minds and dispelled.

VI. 1. And⁷¹ there was also another monk in the Lavra of Saint Sabas who lived worthily and was adorned with virtue, who was called John. And he sat in the place that is called Heptastomos.⁷² He had a disciple with him. 2. And when the brother saw that Jerusalem was surrounded by the enemies and his teacher’s sadness on account of this event, he besought him and said: “I know that whatever you ask of God he will not conceal from you. Therefore, I beseech you, holy father, that you reveal to me whether the Holy City will be given into the hands of the enemies and if its inhabitants will be given over to captivity.” 3. The blessed elder John answered and said: “I am a sinful man, and how do I know God’s decision and a hidden matter?” 4. Nevertheless, the disciple fell down at his feet and besought him fervently. Then the elder began to weep, and he said to his disciple: 5. “Why, my child, do you want to know this future event? Listen, and I will tell you what the Lord made known to me five days ago. For I was thinking deeply about this matter, and I saw in a vision as though someone had caught me up and stood me before holy Golgotha. And I

68 Ps. 39:2.

69 Ps. 93:12.

70 Cf. Jas 1:12.

71 A version of the tale in this chapter also survives in Greek among the *Apophthegmata patrum*, although it is sufficiently different that it cannot, in its surviving form, be identified as Strategius’s direct source. See Wortley, *Anonymous Sayings*, 620–23, §761. (We thank the anonymous reviewer for this reference.) Inasmuch as stories were added to this collection into the seventh century, it is quite possible that this tale indeed arose out of the context of the Persian invasion and conquest.

72 The Lavra of Heptastomos was founded in 510 when a monk named James from the Lavra of Saint Sabas founded a new lavra at the “seven-mouth” cistern about 3 km from the monastery, while Saint Sabas was away and without his permission. The monk eventually repented, but shortly thereafter Patriarch Elias of Jerusalem learned of this new foundation, which had been established irregularly, without his approval. Therefore, he had the few buildings that James and the other monks had built destroyed. Saint Sabas, however, had a new lavra constructed about 1 km north of the original site, presumably with the patriarch’s permission. By the beginning of the seventh century, it would seem that the Lavra of Heptastomos was not actually a separate institution from the Lavra of Saint Sabas but was instead a place of retreat and seclusion for the monks of Saint Sabas. Presumably the opportunity it afforded is what brought John and his disciple there just before the Persian invasion. See Cyril of Scythopolis’s *The Life of Sabas* 39 (in Schwartz, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis*, 129–30). See also Patrich, *Sabas*, 110–13, for information about the archaeological remains of this lavra identified at a place called Khirbet Jinjas.

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the Lord has given the Holy City over into the hands of the enemies.’ At that moment the assembly of angels departed, for they could not oppose God’s command. 33. And then we knew that our sins had prevented God’s mercy. But, O brothers, do not despair, for God did not do this to us out of his hatred but, rather, to chastise us, for he chastises and then again consoles. Bear this with long-suffering so that we will profit and be delivered from evil. 34. Hear the words of the prophet David when he said, ‘Patiently I endured, and God showed me mercy’;⁷³ and again he said, ‘Blessed is the man whom the Lord chastises.’⁷⁴ And also the apostle James said, ‘Blessed is the man who endures misfortunes, for when misfortunes come, and he endures, he will obtain the crown of life.’⁷⁵ 35. Such words and their like did the two monks teach to the inhabitants of the city, and their righteous words removed the sadness from their hearts.

VI. 1. And there was another blessed monk in the Monastery of Mar Saba whose name was John,⁷⁶ and he was seated with a disciple of his. 2. The disciple saw that he was saddened on account of Jerusalem. He began to beseech the elder, his teacher, saying to him: “O father, I am certain that whatever you ask from God, he will not conceal it from you. I bow before you and beseech you to tell me that Jerusalem has been destroyed and all who are therein taken captive.” 3. The monk answered his disciple and said, “Who am I that you ask me about this matter? I am a sinful man.” 4. Then the disciple began to beseech him with tears and humbled himself. The elder monk wept and said: 5. “My son, I see you wish to look into this matter. I shall tell you what God made known to me. I shall tell you that it was five days ago that I was thinking about this matter. When I looked into my soul, there was someone who caught me up and stood me before Golgotha. And I saw all the people

73 Ps. 39:2.

74 Ps. 93:12.

75 Cf. Jas. 1:12.

76 D كان في بعض الديارات [كذا] في الدير الذي فيه الجب الذي له سبعة أفواه “he was in one of the monasteries . . . [called?] Heptastomos in the monastery in which is the cistern that has seven mouths.”

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saw the whole assembly of the people there, who were crying out and saying: ‘Lord, have mercy on us.’ 6. And I went up on the rock of Golgotha, and I saw our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross, and the Holy Theotokos Mary stood before him. And she was beseeching the Lord on behalf of the people, that they would receive favor from him and mercy from the coming wrath. 7. But the Lord turned away his face so as not to hear her supplication, and then he said to her: ‘I will not hear their supplication, nor will I grant their plea, because they corrupted my temple and defiled its sanctity.’

8. “And although we were crying out forcefully with tears and great groaning and were saying ‘Kyrie eleison,’ the Lord did not look upon us. Then all the people went up to the Katholikon, which is Saint Constantine, where the wood of the Precious Cross was found. 9. And I went up into the sanctuary to pray, and as I bent my knees to worship and placed my head at the place of the Cross, I saw there great filth flowing in that place, and the church was full of that filth. 10. And two elders of the city were standing there, and I cried out to them: ‘Do you not fear God? What is this? For we cannot pray on account of this filth.’ The distinguished elders answered me and said: ‘All this is from the wickedness of the priests and their impurity.’ 11. Nevertheless, I said to them: ‘And are you not now able to purify it?’ But the elders said to me: ‘Have faith, brother, for this filth will not be purified until fire comes down from heaven and burns it up.’ The vision was up until this point.” 12. Then the monk began to lament with great tears, and he said to his disciple: “O my son, know that this Holy City will be handed over to the hands of the enemies. And my struggle and departure from the world have drawn near, and the command has gone forth concerning all this. And I besought the Lord fervently to remove me from the coming ordeal, and the Lord did not hear me.” 13. And while the monk was speaking with his disciple, the wicked enemies arrived and seized the blessed elder John and slayed him. 14. Nevertheless, the disciple fled and was saved. And when the wretched enemies went forth, the brother went and found his master slain. And he began to lament with great tears. And after that he buried him in the tomb of the holy fathers.

VII. 1. The Persians, however, when they understood that those who were in the city were not willing to submit to them, were stirred up with great wrath like ferocious beasts and were plotting every wickedness against Jerusalem. They surrounded it with great care and began the battle. 2. Nevertheless, the monk Abba Modestus, who had been sent by the patriarch to assemble the army of the Greeks to come to their aid in their distress, persuaded them to come. But God did not want them to help. 3. For when the Greeks saw the multitude of the army of the Persians, who were encamped around Jerusalem, they all fled together, put to flight by them.⁷⁷ 4. Abba Modestus, however, remained alone, for he was

⁷⁷ For some inexplicable reason, Bowersock asserts that “the Greeks who bolted must have been local pagans” (see Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 39; *Crucible*, 88; so also “Polytheism and Monotheism,” 10). Yet Bowersock nowhere gives any explanation whatsoever for this claim, and certainly nothing in the text itself would suggest it. One should note, however, that the Georgian translation regularly speaks of “the Greeks” and never once of “the Romans.” The Arabic translations, in contrast, regularly refer to “the Romans (*al-rūm*)” but never to “the Greeks.”

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gathered crying out, ‘O Lord, have mercy on us!’ 6. I looked up and I beheld Jesus Christ upon the Cross and Our Lady Mary beseeching and seeking his intercession for the people. 7. Jesus Christ was answering her, saying, ‘I will not hear a supplication for them,’⁷⁸ because they have defiled my temple.’

8. “And when we cried out, ‘O Lord, have mercy on us!’ with tears and groans, we went up to the temple of Saint Constantine, where the Cross is. 9. Then I went alongside them to the temple of Saint Constantine, and when I bowed my head to prayer at that place where the Cross is, I saw great filth flowing out of the place and filling the temple. 10. There were two elders from the leaders [of the city] standing there, and I called out to them and said to them, ‘Do you not fear God? I cannot pray on account of this filth!’ The two elders answered and said to me, ‘All this is because of the wickedness of the priests and their sins.’ 11. I replied and said, ‘You are not able to purify it now?’ The two elders said, ‘This filth will not be purified until fire descends from heaven and burns it up.’” 12. The learned elder monk then wept and said to his disciple: “My son, now the time of my departure from this world has come. The decree has gone out from Jesus Christ.” The monk then beseeched God to delay it, but he did not grant his request. 13. As the monk addressed his disciple, the Persian enemies came, and they seized him and killed him. 14. As for the disciple, he fled. After that the disciple came and beheld his teacher who had been killed and wept with many tears. He prayed over him, as is right and good, and placed him in the tomb of the holy fathers.^c

VII. 1. As for the Persians, when they saw that the inhabitants of the city did desire to submit to them, they fell into tumult and wrath.^d 2. As for the monk⁷⁹ who issued the order to bring the armies of the Romans from Jericho to be an aid to them, God did not wish to aid them 3. because the Romans, when they saw the multitude of the army of the Persians, all fled together. 4. The monk alone remained because he was not able to flee. At that time

⁷⁸ A, C لا اسمع لهم دعا; D ما اشفعك فيهم; B ليست اسمع لهم دعا ولا اقبل منهم طلبا; “I will not accept your intercession on their behalf.”

⁷⁹ I.e., Modestus; see V. 19.

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not able to flee. And he saw a single rock in the valley and went into it. 5. And the Persians surrounded the rock, and some stood upon it, and again others stood across from the rock. 6. But God, who protected the prophet Elisha and slayed the murderers who were approaching before they saw him,⁸⁰ closed the eyes of the enemy and protected his servant unharmed. And he returned to Jericho in peace.

VIII. 1. Nevertheless, those who were in the city began to grieve when they learned that the Greeks had fled, and they found nowhere anyone to help them. 2. Then the Persians realized that God had abandoned the Christians and no one was their helper. 3. And with increased rage they began to strategize, so that they built towers around the city and placed catapults on them to make war against those in Jerusalem. And they prepared various sorts of weapons, as is customary for warriors. And with great fury they attacked the Christians. 4. Therefore, they were even more prepared and eager to capture it, [since] they knew that this city is the refuge of all Christians and the strength of their rule.

5. And the beginning of the attack by the Persians against the Christians of Jerusalem was on the fifteenth day of April, in the second indiction, in the fourth year of the emperor Heraclius. And they spent twenty days in combat. And they shot violently with the catapults, so that they knocked down the city's wall on the twenty-first day. 6. Then the wicked enemies entered the city with great wrath, like enraged beasts and angry serpents. 7. Nevertheless, the men who were defending the city wall fled and hid in caves and caverns and cisterns to save themselves. And the multitude of the people fled to churches and shrines, and therein they were massacred. 8. For the enemies entered with great fury, and cruelly gnashing their teeth with rage, they barked like evil beasts, roared like lions, hissed like poisonous serpents, and killed everyone whom they found. And like mad dogs they feasted on the flesh of the faithful with their teeth. And they showed mercy to no one at all, neither man nor woman, neither young nor old, neither child nor infant, neither priest nor monk, neither virgin nor widow.

9. And why do I say so much? For I am not able to relate the extent of the misfortune that befell us, so that the heavenly Jerusalem lamented for the earthly Jerusalem. 10. And the truth of this, brothers, is made clear by this, for darkness and gloom spread over the earth on that day, as on that day when the sun did not send forth its light, on the great day of the Lord's crucifixion.⁸¹ And so also when the Lord handed over Zion to chastisement and reproof with fire, he chastised them justly. 11. Nevertheless, the wicked Persians, who had absolutely no mercy in their hearts, ravaged every place in the city and massacred all the people together. 12. And any who fled from them in terror they captured, and if any cried out with fear, they roared at them with gnashing of teeth and silenced them by smashing their teeth. 13. And they beat small infants on the ground, and they called out to their parents with great pain. And their parents struck themselves with cries and weeping for their children, and they were also slaughtered with them. 14. And if they found anyone armed, they slew him with his own weapons, and if anyone ran swiftly away, they killed him

⁸⁰ Cf. 4 Kgdms. 6.

⁸¹ Cf. Luke 23:45.

Arabic Recension A

he sought safety on a rock which was in that valley. 5. The Persians surrounded that rock, others climbed atop it, and [others] stood before it. 6. But, O my beloved and the beloved of God, who extinguished the light of the enemies' eyes, he was the one who protected that monk. Then he returned to Jericho in peace.^e

VIII. 1. The inhabitants of the city began to grieve when there was no aid [from the Romans]. 2. The Persians were certain that God's wrath was upon the Christians. 3. They did not cease to strategize until they built siege towers and erected mangonels⁸² to make war against the inhabitants of the city. And with great fury they attacked the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

5. And the attack of the Persians against the Christians of Jerusalem began on the thirteenth day of the month,⁸³ and it was in the fourth year of the reign of Heraclius.⁸⁴ They remained twenty days hurling them with mangonels until they destroyed the wall⁸⁵ of the city. 6. Then with a great fury the enemies entered the city, the City of God. 7. As for those who were guarding the walls and the city, they fled and hid in these mountains and caves⁸⁶ seeking to save themselves, and multitudes of them took refuge in the churches. 8. With fury like lions the Persians went in after them. Their teeth gnashed with rage, their anger like growling dogs. When they conquered the city, they slew any whom they encountered and showed no mercy to either man or woman, to either old, young, or babe, and to either priest or monk or virgin.

9. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were in dire straits, and the heavenly Jerusalem wept for the earthly Jerusalem. 10. O brothers, know that much darkness was in the city on that day, as the sun was likewise blotted out at the time of the crucifixion of Christ; when Zion was chastised by fire, it was justly chastised. 11. When the Persians entered the city, they slew all whom they encountered, 12. as well as any who ran or fled. The strong were in terror, and the one who screamed was castigated. 13. They threw down young infants as they cried out with tears and as the mothers screamed with lament for their small children.

⁸² "Mangonels" (Ar. *al-manḡaniqāt*; from the Greek *μαγγανικός* via the Syriac *mangnīqā*) may refer to a variety of siege artillery, but here the traction trebuchet is likely intended. See Petersen, *Siege Warfare*, 413–16.

⁸³ *Sic* in A, B, C, D (omitted in V); cf. "the fifteenth day of April" in the Georgian recension.

⁸⁴ 614 CE.

⁸⁵ A, B حائط; C, D حيط; V أبرج, "towers."

⁸⁶ A الجباب والمغائر والمخادع; B تلك الجبال والمغائر; C الجباب والمغائر والمخادع, "the pits, the caves, and the chambers"; V تلك الجباب والمغائر, "these pits and caves."

Georgian Recension

with arrows, and if anyone was peaceful and still, they killed him without mercy. 15. And they did not hear the pleas of those beseeching them and had no mercy on the beauty of youth, no compassion⁸⁷ for the age of the elderly, and no shame before the humility of the monks. 16. Instead, they slaughtered those of every age and butchered them like livestock. And some they mowed down like grass, and they all drank together the cup full of bitterness.⁸⁸ And terror and fear were seen in Jerusalem. 17. The holy churches were burned with fire, and some were destroyed. Glorious altars were torn down, precious crosses were trampled underfoot, and life-giving icons were spat upon by the impure ones. 18. Then their wrath fell upon the priests and deacons, and they slaughtered them like mute beasts in the churches. 19. And a mother was lamenting the separation from her children, and children were chirping⁸⁹ like baby birds. A river of blood was flowing through the city, and all the virgins were mourning the corruption of their virginity. And all who were pregnant and married were lamenting for their husbands, and the married men wept for their wives.

20. O my brothers, who could enumerate the afflictions of that day and describe them to you? Or what hard-hearted person saw the wickedness that took place and did not begin to lament on the spot with great weeping and a broken heart? 21. For brothers and friends were separated from each other. Newly married grooms abandoned their brides, and brides found their husbands dead in the streets. And monks and virgins were killed like thieves. 22. Who would not be terrified by these enemies, when they saw them as they entered the churches of God and had their swords drawn in their hands, and they were massacring priests and deacons? 23. A priest stood at the altar and offered the bloodless Sacrifice and raised up with his hands the Holy of Holies, the body of the Lord. And the sword enveloped him and cut him down therein and besmirched the sanctuary with his blood. The priest sacrificed the Lamb of God for the whole world, and he was sacrificed with it, and his blood was mixed with the blood of the Lord. 24. The deacons raised up the vestment⁹⁰ and were slaughtered like sheep in the same place, and the holy altar was besmirched with their blood. 25. The monks and virgins were beseeching with tears and groaning in the churches of God, and they were slaughtered like mute beasts. 26. And who could relate what the wicked enemies did and such horrors as were seen in Jerusalem? But, my Christ-loving brothers, listen to me with fortitude, for my heartache compels me to speak and does not allow me silence. And once I have begun to tell you about these events, I will want to make all of it known to you.

IX. 1. For when the Persians entered the city and massacred innumerable souls and blood abounded in every place, thereafter the enemies could no longer continue the slaughter. 2. And many Christian people remained who were not massacred. And when the ferocity

⁸⁷ Lit., “no suffering.”

⁸⁸ Cf. Matt. 20:22.

⁸⁹ The same word can also mean “weeping.”

⁹⁰ This would appear to be a reference to the deacons’ raising of the orarion, the narrow stole worn by deacons, during the liturgy when they are leading prayer or calling the congregation to attention. Or, in light of the context, possibly some sort of eucharistic practice is in view.

Arabic Recension A

16. They slaughtered old men like livestock. Each group suffered this affliction, and all drank from this cup. They cut down the people like grass, and the people beheld terrible deeds.^f 17. The churches of God were demolished, and the Persian enemies spat upon the offering on the altars and trampled crosses underfoot. They had neither mercy nor compassion. 18. And then the punishment fell upon the priests, and the elders were slaughtered. 19. Then death even fell upon small children as the mother wept over the loss of her son. Blood ran in the heart of the city like rivers. All the pregnant women cried out weeping, and the virgins mourned the corruption of their virginity.

20. O beloved, who could behold the sadness in Jerusalem on that day and not weep and lose heart? 22. Who was not stricken with terror when he beheld the enemies enter the temple of God with swords unsheathed? Who did not grieve when they killed the priests on the altars? 23. The priest stands raising the Host to heaven, and the swords take him! 24. The priest at the altar raises the cloth from the Host as he is slain! And there was much terror upon all who resided in Jerusalem because the priest who was raising the Sacrifice to heaven was slaughtered in a single hour. 26. Formidable acts were undertaken by the Persians in this Holy City. O beloved of Christ, I shall not be silent. I have begun this matter, and I wish to finish it thoroughly.⁹¹

IX. 1. I will tell you of how, when the Persians entered the inner city, much blood was shed therein. 2. Many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem remained who were not killed. After this

⁹¹ Read بالاستعصا بالاستقصا for بالاستعصا in A.

Georgian Recension

of their rage subsided, their leader, who was called Rasmiozdan,⁹² ordered that a herald should go forth to proclaim, and he said: “All of you who are hiding, come out. Do not be afraid, for the sword is removed from you and you will have peace from me.” 3. Then, when they heard this, many people came forth who had been hiding in cisterns and caves. But many of them had died therein, some from the darkness, others from hunger and thirst. 4. And who can count the multitude of the dead? For many myriads were dead from the many hardships and various struggles before those in hiding came forth, on account of the multitude of their hardships. And they handed themselves over to death when they heard the ruler’s order: they were thinking that he was encouraging them for their own good and that they would find relief when they came forth. 5. But when those who were in hiding came forth, the ruler summoned them and began to question all the people: “What craft do you know?” When each one declared his trade, he ordered that they separate those skilled in a trade to the side, so that they could be taken away as captives to Persia. 6. But he seized the rest of the people and cast them into the pool⁹³ of Mamilla, which is outside the city, about two stades from the Tower of David. And he ordered the guards to watch over those who were imprisoned in the pool.⁹⁴

7. O brothers, who can enumerate the woes and struggles that befell the Christians on that day? For the multitude of the people was suffocating one another, and men and women expired on account of the confinement of the place. Like sheep selected for slaughter,⁹⁵ so the people of the faithful were preparing for a massacre, and death arose from every side. 8. For an intense heat like fire scorched the multitude of the people, and they trampled each other on account of the confinement. And many perished without a sword, and hunger and thirst beset them all. 9. And they cried out to the Lord, and the Most High disregarded them. And like sheep prepared for the slaughter, the Lord delivered them into the hands of their enemy.⁹⁶ 10. Then they all, O my brothers, were yearning for death as life.⁹⁷ Remember the words of the righteous Job, what he said about his afflictions: “Those who were in anguish were longing for death and did not find it.” And they were also

92 This moniker is one of the nicknames for the Sasanian general Shahrvaraz, who led the invasion and later would briefly reign as Shah after the Romans defeated the Persians. He is also so-named in *Life of Saint John the Almsgiver* 9 (Delehay, “Une Vie inédite,” 23; trans. Dawes and Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints*, 203). The nickname is most commonly interpreted as meaning “eager for battle.” See Banaji, “Identity of Shahrālānyōzān,” 30, 34–35.

93 Although ბირკეთი is a common Georgian word meaning “pit, hole,” or “ditch,” here it likely reflects the Hebrew בִּרְכָה, which means “reservoir.” The word “birket” has long been part of the toponym for this place: Birket Mamilla.

94 In this case the Georgian word ფლობჳიზი borrows from the Latin word *piscina*, which was presumably also borrowed in the original Greek. Archaeologists have recently excavated at this site, which is about 120 m west of Jerusalem’s Jaffa Gate. There they found a cave holding hundreds of human remains and a small chapel at the cave’s entrance with an inscribed prayer “for the redemption and salvation of the dead, God knows their names.” See Avni, “Persian Conquest” as well as *Byzantine-Islamic Transition*, 306–7.

95 Cf. Ps. 43:23.

96 2 Esd. 19:27; 4 Kgdms. 21:14; 2 Chr. 25:20.

97 Or possibly, “as salvation.”

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anger subsided, the enemy grew angry [again]. They were informed^g that people were hiding in cisterns and underground storehouses.⁹⁸ At that time, a herald gave an order proclaiming: “Let anyone who was in hiding come out. He has a guarantee of safety. He should not be afraid.” 3. When those in hiding heard, many of them came forth, for a great number had died from the darkness in which they were and the foulness of the place. Some died of hunger and others of thirst. 4. Brothers! How many multitudes died of hunger and thirst! 5. When they came forth, the leader⁹⁹ began questioning them about their crafts, so they informed him of each craft they practiced, and he chose from among them the most skilled teachers to take as captives to Persia for the sake of their craft.^h 6. Then he seized the remaining men and imprisoned them in the Mamilla reservoir¹⁰⁰ two arrow shots¹⁰¹ outside Jerusalem [and] and half a mile from the Tower of David, and he commanded the sentries to cast them¹⁰² into that reservoir.ⁱ

7. My beloved, who could tell the story of the suffering that befell the Christians on that day? For due to their multitude and the tightness of the place, brothers, they were trampling one another, women and men, like beasts chosen to be brought forth for slaughter. They were cowed by fatigue 8. because heat the like of fire scorched them, and they perished without a sword. Death befell everyone in that reservoir, for they had neither food nor drink. 9. God disregarded them, and they submitted themselves into the hands of the enemy Persians to be slaughtered like beasts. 10. Brothers, they sought death just as people seek life. Thus did they seek death as the righteous Job said: “Those who suffer hardship seek after death, but it does not come to them. They yearn for death and seek

98 A في الجباب والمكامير B في الجبال والمغائر; “in mountains and caves”; C في المطامير والجباب والدواميس; “underground storehouses, cisterns, and crypts”; D في المطامير والجباب V في الحباب [كذا] والمطامير وغير ذلك; “in cisterns and underground storehouses and other such places.” Garrite’s reading of *makāmīr* in A is a misreading of *maṭāmīr* (Eng. “mattamore”). The additional mention of the caves and crypts (Ar. *al-dawāmis*; sing. *dīmās* < Gk. *dēmōsion*) in recensions B, C, and V seems *prima facie* to be mere embellishment; however, archaeological data confirms mass burials of corpses in a cave, cistern, and family tombs that “are not the ordinary burials of the Byzantine period” outside the Old City dating to this period; see Avni, *Byzantine-Islamic Transition*, 306.

99 A القائد; B الأركون; from the Greek *archōn*; C ملك الفرس, “the king of the Persians”; V الملك, “the king.”

100 A بركة ماملا; B بركة الماء; “the reservoir of water.”

101 A برميتين نشاب; B بعلوتين; “by two bowshots”; D رمية نشابة, “a single arrow shot.”

102 A أمر الحراس يحفظوهم; B أمر الحراس أن يحفظوهم; “he commanded the sentries to watch over them”; D أمر بحفظهم, “he ordered them to be guarded.”

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seeking death as one seeks a treasure, and they did not find it.¹⁰³ And when someone died, they rejoiced greatly, and the others were blessing him. 11. At that moment they all cried together to heaven, to the Lord, and said: “O Lord do not abandon us completely and deliver us, your faithful, to corruption at the hands of your enemies. Watch over us from your holy heaven and have mercy on your people. O Lord do not disregard the voice of those crying out to you. O Lord may your grace quickly come to our aid, either in life through deliverance from the enemies, or with a swift death, so that we may be released from torment. The sword is better for us, O Lord, than death from starvation; the spear is better for us than death from thirst; death by the knife is better for us than our defilement by our enemies.” 12. Then the little children were weeping and seeking their parents, and they did not find them. And parents were seeking their children with much weeping, and they did not find them, for some had expired and others had been taken captive, and those whom they had in their hands were expiring from hunger and thirst. And this great pit, which is usually filled with water, became filled with blood.

X. 1. Then the wicked Jews, the enemies of the truth and haters of Christ, when they saw that the Christians had been given over to the hands of the enemies, rejoiced greatly, for they despised the Christians. And they devised an evil plan befitting their wickedness toward the people, for their standing was great before the Persians because of this, since they were the betrayers of the Christians. 2. And at that moment they approached the edge of the pool and called out to the children of God while they were confined and said to them: “If you wish to be saved from death, become Jews and deny Christ, and you will come up from that place and join us, for we will buy you from the Persians with our money, and it will be made well for you by us.” 3. But the wicked intent of their plan was not fulfilled, and their effort was in vain, for the children of the holy church chose death for Christ rather than life in godlessness. And they considered torments of the flesh better than the corruption of their souls, and so their portion was not with the Jews. 4. And when the unclean Jews saw the steadfast persistence of the Christians and their unshakable faith, they were stirred up with great fury like wicked beasts, and then they devised another plan. As before they bought the Lord from Judas with silver,¹⁰⁴ so now they bought the Christians from the pit, for they gave the Persians silver and bought a Christian and slaughtered him like a sheep.¹⁰⁵ 5. The Christians, however, were joyful, for they were being slaughtered for the sake of Christ, shedding their blood for his blood, taking death upon themselves for the sake of his death, and choosing eternal life over this fleeting one. 6. And they cried out to the Jews and said: “O wicked enemies of God, how much you want to corrupt us! And your evil intent is not fulfilled. For first you became our betrayers and did not stand with us in battle against the enemies, and now you want to make us Jews and to share in your perdition. 7. But behold, now we are being made soldiers and martyrs for Christ by you, and intercessors for all the people before the Lord,

¹⁰³ Cf. Job 3:21.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Matt. 26:15.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Rom. 8:36; Ps. 43:23.

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after it like one who seeks after a treasure he cannot find. When death comes to them, they rejoice.”¹⁰⁶ 11. They cried out with a loud voice to heaven saying: “Lord, do not cause us to perish! Lord, do not deliver us into the hands of the enemy! Our souls have faith in you. Lord, gaze upon us from heaven! Lord, look upon us and grant us your mercy! Lord, do not reject the cries of those who implore you! Lord, send us your mercy quickly and deliver us from our suffering! The sword is more desirable to us than starvation! The lance is preferable to us than to die of thirst! It is easier for us to be destitute than to die at the merciless hands of the enemy.” 12. The little child was calling out in tears for his mother, and the mother was crying out for her son, but no one answered. God received their cries, and that reservoir, once filled with water, became [filled with] blood.

X. 1. My beloved, listen to me so that I might tell you what happened. When the Jews, the enemies, saw that the Christians had been given over into the hands of the Persians, they rejoiced greatly because they despised the Christians. And at that moment the Jews contrived a wicked plan regarding the Christians, for the standing of the Jews among the Persians was great. 2. The Jews approached the edge of the reservoir and called out to the Christian children of God in the Mamilla reservoir, “Whoever wants to become a Jew, let him come up to us, so that we can purchase him from the Persians.” 3. But their wicked scheme did not succeed, and their effort came to naught. As for the children of the Christians, they chose for their bodies to perish rather than for their souls to die and not to have their lot and survival depend on the Jews. 4. When the Jews saw the [Christians’] faithfulness to the truth, they became furious with rage and howled like dogs. Then they thought of another plan: Just as they had bought Christ from Judas with silver, likewise they wished to buy the Christians from the reservoir with silver. Just as lambs are slaughtered, the Jews would buy the Christians from the Persians and slaughter them. 5. The Christians were greatly joyed when they were slaughtered for their faithfulness to Christ. They sought and chose the hereafter over this world. 6. They cried out to the Jews saying: “O enemies of God! Why can you not endure, as we endured now that we have become useful because you asked us to become Jews like you? 7. Rather we have become believers martyred for God. You have made us into intercessors for this multitude that was slain.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Job 3:21–22.

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so that your torments will be multiplied with doubled suffering. 8. For previously you murdered the prophets¹⁰⁷ and crucified the Lord of glory,¹⁰⁸ and now you have prepared for us a bitter death of a sort such as not even our enemies would devise.” 9. And when the people were led away captive to Persia and the Jews remained in Jerusalem, they began to destroy and burn with their own hands the holy churches that remained intact.

XI. 1. And do not be astonished, my brothers, for wherever sin abounds, there trials and tribulations are multiplied even more through wrath and the power of the enemy is increased. And that is why Jerusalem was handed over to devastation and its inhabitants to perdition. 2. How many souls were slaughtered in the pool of Mamilla! How many souls expired from hunger and thirst! 3. How many priests and monks were slaughtered by the sword! How many infants were crushed underfoot or perished from hunger and thirst or expired from fear and terror of the enemy! 4. How many virgins were given over to death by the enemies for not accepting their depraved defilement! 5. How many parents expired on top of their children! How many people were sold to the Jews and slaughtered and became martyrs for Christ! 6. How many souls, fathers and mothers and young children, who had hidden themselves in caverns and cisterns expired from the darkness and hunger! 7. How many souls fled to the churches, to the Anastasis and Zion and other churches, and therein were massacred and consumed by fire! 8. And who can count the multitude of the dead who were massacred in Jerusalem?

9. All this rightfully befell us, and therefore we cry out and say: “Rightfully, Lord, you have delivered us into chastisement; rightfully, Lord, all this has befallen us, for you are just and righteous is your judgment,¹⁰⁹ death and hunger and captivity and servitude and deliverance into the hands of our enemies. And as the Lord desired, so he has done. May the name of the Lord be blessed from now unto the ages.”¹¹⁰ 10. We say this because all this rightfully happened to us, so that through this chastisement we will know the Lord, as the apostle Paul said: “If we are judged by the Lord, we are chastised, so that we will not be condemned with the world.”¹¹¹ 11. For the Lord raised us up, and we could not bear the height; he honored us, and we did not understand. Therefore, he delivered us to this wicked death, and instead of raising us up he humbled us, and instead of honor he delivered us over to contempt, and instead of holiness we have been delivered to corruption, and instead of serving God we have become servants of our enemies. 12. We abandoned God, and God abandoned us; we withdrew from God, and God withdrew from us.

13. But, my brothers, even though the benevolent Lord delivered us to chastisement, nevertheless he brought about this anguish for the sake of our improvement, with mercy and not with hatred. 14. For many were led to repentance and raised up from ruin, and those who were slain for his name he numbered among the saints, and through us the

107 Cf. Matt. 23:30–31.

108 Cf. 1 Cor. 2:8.

109 Ps. 118:137.

110 Ps. 112:2.

111 1 Cor. 11:32.

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O Jews, you have caused us to multiply your torments, 8. for the Persians did not kill us. Rather, it is you who are the ones who killed us.” 9. And when the inhabitants of Jerusalem were led away into captivity, the Jews began to destroy the churches.^j

XI. 1. O my beloved, let not anyone of you be astonished at this, for where there is a multitude of sins there is a multitude of troubles and mighty enemies. Because of that, Jerusalem was destroyed.^k 2. And like sheep led to slaughter were the Christians slaughtered in the reservoir of Mamilla. A great multitude died of hunger and thirst. 3. How many priests expired due to hunger? How many small children were taken by terror because of the narrowness of that place and the multitude of people who were there inside? 4. How many chaste women died of grief for children? 5. How many did the Jews purchase and slay of the multitudes who thus became martyrs? 6. How many women, men, and children died in cisterns of hunger and thirst? 7. How many multitudes fled to the churches, the Anastasis and Zion, and were massacred and consumed by fire? 8. And who can count the multitude of the dead who were massacred in Jerusalem?

9. Truly, O brothers, this befell us, and therefore we cry out and say: “Truly, Lord, you have chastised us; truly you have brought all this upon us; and because of the multitude of sins, death and captivity have visited us. Therefore you have delivered us into the hands of our enemies, an evil nation. And as God wills, so it is. May the name of the Lord be blessed from now unto the ages.”¹¹² 10. This we say because this, all of it, truly befell us so that when our Lord chastises us, we will know him, as the apostle Paul said, “We are judged by the Lord, and he chastises us so that we will not be judged with the world.”¹¹³ 11. For the Lord raised us up, and we could not bear the height; he honored us, and we could not bear the honor or accept it. Therefore he submitted us to slaughter, and instead of being raised up, we were humbled; and instead of being honored, we were debased; and instead of being purified, we were corrupted; and instead of being servants of God, we became servants of the enemies. 12. We abandoned God, and God abandoned us; we withdrew from God, and God withdrew from us.

13. But, O brothers, our righteous Lord chastised us with his mercy, not according to our sins; our Lord Christ treated us thusly, O brothers, to chastise us, not according to our deeds but according to contrition and repentance.^l 14. We fell, but he stood us back up.

112 Ps. 112:2.

113 1 Cor. 11:32.

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whole world has been edified. 15. For he shed his blood for us and accounted us as his children, and when we did not keep his commandments, this chastisement came upon us. 16. For a soul that is chastised here will find mercy in eternity. And when a person is taking pleasure in this life, he does not care for his soul but is lazy and does not remember the eternal judgment. And those who live in this way, they are like sheep who do not have a shepherd, and with their dissolute life they enrage God. 17. And when the Lord saw our deeds, for we were living wickedly, through this suffering he placed a bridle in our mouths as a bridle of chastisement and shattered our insolence to save our souls from future torment. 18. For we did not keep his commandments on our own, and it seemed fitting to him to turn us to repentance through this, so that we would recall the [situation] in which we were and would understand how God will hear the voice of our prayer.

XII. 1. Hear me,¹¹⁴ my brothers, and I will tell you what happened to the holy women. There was in Jerusalem a monastery on the Mount of Olives in which there were four hundred holy virgins. 2. And the enemies entered the monastery and brought forth the brides of Christ like doves from their nest, these blessed women who were living honorably and were pure in virginity. 3. And when they brought them forth from the monastery, they began to process¹¹⁵ them like cattle, and they divided them among themselves and took them away to their own places. 4. Then a grievous thing took place, for they defiled the virgins of Christ against their will and forcibly corrupted their virginity. 5. And there was among the Persians a young man, and he seized one of the virgins and was intending to defile her degenerately and shamelessly, and he dragged her off by force. 6. Then the virgin said to him: “I beseech you, young man, that you grant me my virginity, and I will give you a gift that you would choose more than all other treasures, for I will give you an oil

114 The tale related in sections 1–15 survives in several Greek versions, though none of these can be identified with Strategius’s source. Instead, these versions reflect independent transmissions of a story Strategius used as a source. Earliest among them, perhaps, is the *Patrum Spirituale* of Strategius’s contemporary, John Moschus (d. 619 or 634 CE), insofar as some of the Greek manuscripts of the work also include the story. See Mioni, “Il Pratum Spirituale,” 74, 88–90; Levi Della Vida, “Stratagème de la Vierge”; Cerulli, “La ‘Conquista’”; Cerulli, “Nuovi testi sulla”; Bonner, “Maiden’s Stratagem.” Bonner includes the Greek text and an English translation of what seems to be a particularly early version of the tale. A rather different version, in which the story is separated from the context of the Persian conquest, can be found in Hamartolos’s *Chronicle* 51 (see de Boor, *Georgii monachi chronicon*, 2:478–81), which places the story during the Diocletian persecution. See also Halkin, *Bibliotheca hagiographica*, 3:9, 194–95. The story also survives in an Armenian version, Վարք սրբոց հարսանց (*Vark’ srboc haranc* [*The Lives of the Holy Fathers*]), 2:461–62. The suffering of women from convents at the hands of the Persians appears also in *The Life of Saint John the Almsgiver* 9 (Delehay, “Une Vie inédite,” 23; trans. Dawes and Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints*, 204).

115 The word used here literally means “butcher” or “cut up”; Marr translates the word as “slay.” Conybeare suggests the reading *aghdcherad* (აღჭერად?), so that he gives the translation “they began to pen them like cattle.” Nevertheless, I am not entirely certain how Conybeare arrives at this solution. There is a relatively uncommon Georgian verb ატყერა, but it means “to write down” or “to describe,” neither of which fits the context. Garitte translates the word as *dispertere*, “to disperse.” The Greek versions offer no help on this point, nor does the Arabic. The context, however, does not seem to indicate any cutting of the virgins, so we have chosen the more neutral term “to process,” which seems to retain some of the original meaning while also adapting to the immediate context and allowing for a broader range of meanings.

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15. The shedding of his blood for us made us as [his] children, and when we do not keep his commandments, he inflicts this captivity and war upon us. 16. For the soul, if chastised in this world, finds mercy in the hereafter, because a person, O brothers, when he is in mourning, is not concerned with the salvation of his soul, for people are lazy and unconcerned with the hereafter. They are like a people without a shepherd, king, or leader committing evil deeds and blaspheming God. 17. And when God saw us while we committed these evil deeds and sins, as beasts are bridled thus he bridled us with this chastisement to redeem our souls. 18. He did not leave our souls to persist in ruin. Rather, he returned us to repentance so that we could remember our former state and know how God hears our voices.

XII. 1. Listen, O brothers, to what befell some saintly women.¹¹⁶ There was a monastery in eastern Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives.¹¹⁷ 2. The Persians entered that monastery and brought forth the women of God’s flock as though they were doves. There were four hundred pure, holy virgins. 3. As for the Persians, when they brought forth the nuns from the monastery, they began to divide them between themselves. 4. Then the Persians began to lie with the virgins of Christ to defile their virginity. 5. Among the Persians was a youth, a young man, and he went to a nun from the virgins of the monastery to defile her body. 6. She said to him, “Boy! Give me my virginity and I will gift you an oil. You will not want to

116 This story boasts a substantial afterlife in Arabic literature, Christian and otherwise. John the Deacon (d. after 768 CE), for instance, recounts the same story in his biography of the Coptic patriarch Michael (744–68) but sets the events rather amid the Umayyad suppression of a revolt in Upper Egypt during the caliphate of Marwān II (r. 744–50). See Davis, “Variations,” 205–17; Mikhail, *Byzantine to Islamic Egypt*, 190–91. Tāğ al-Dīn al-Subkī (1327–70) relates a story of an unnamed wife of the last Abbasid caliph al-Musta‘sim (r. 1242–58), who uses this gambit to trick the Mongol conqueror Hülegü into killing her and thus preserves her honor (al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 5: 272–73).

117 C names this monastery Dayr al-‘Adārā (“Convent of the Virgins”), which may refer to an actual location attested in the sixth-century Jerusalem itinerary of Theodosius the archdeacon (*De situ Terrae Sanctae*, §11; see Geyer et al., *Itineraria*, 113–25, 119; cf. Mazar, “Temple Mount Excavations”).

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that will protect and shield you in the battles of war. And no wound will vanquish when you anoint your body with it. And it will protect you better than a weapon and shield in the battle of war.” 7. And when the young man heard this, he was amazed and said to her: “Bring me this oil, and I will grant you your virginity.” And what the young man said to her [was] not from the heart but in deceit, to swindle the oil and then to fulfill his desire. 8. Nevertheless, the virgin, when she brought the oil in a bottle, said to the young man: “Take this and anoint your neck, and I will strike you with this sword, and nothing will harm you, so that you will know the truth of my words.” 9. The young man answered and said to her: “No, you anoint your neck first, and I will strike you.” 10. Nevertheless, the virgin rejoiced greatly, for this is what she wanted, that her body would not be defiled by impurity and mocked by demons, but she wanted her body to be cut down and die so that her spirit would not be damned. 11. And the young man also rejoiced at acquiring the oil, and he did not know what her plan was, for she chose life rather than death. 12. Then the virgin took some of the oil and anointed her neck. And when the young man saw this, he was thinking that the virgin was telling the truth. Nevertheless, he did not understand the secret, for she was doing this for Christ. 13. And when she anointed herself with oil, the blessed woman offered her neck to the sword, so that she would die for the one who died for her. 14. Then the young man drew his sword, and he was thinking that he would not vanquish the virgin, through the anointing of oil. Therefore, he struck her forcefully with her sword. 15. And when he saw the virgin’s head lying on the ground, then he understood that he had been fooled by the virgin through deception. And the wicked one became very sad, for his desire was not fulfilled.

16. But, my brothers, let us give a blessing to this holy virgin who chose what is eternal instead of what is temporary. Let us give a blessing to the beloved one who conceived this deception, and it delivered her from evil and was a source of good and a crown, for she gave herself over to death as a martyr for Christ and to keep her virginity uncorrupted. 17. Hear this also, O women, and imitate this contending virgin, and cast out from yourselves love of the world, for nothing is as great before the Lord as purity of the flesh, and likewise nothing is more odious before the Lord than corruption of the flesh. 18. And anyone who would go astray into fornication should consider for herself that the resurrection is coming, and the Judge will be seated for judgment, and before him everything that is hidden will be made manifest, and no one belonging to this earthly world will be delivered to eternity. 19. And behold, my brothers, what this virgin did, for she handed over her flesh to death for the sake of purity and received the crown of battle from the Savior. 20. And she saved not only herself but many others, for when other virgins saw her courage, they also began to imitate her deeds. 21. And they were slaughtered by the enemies and shed their blood for the sake of Christ. And they guarded their flesh from corruption and hurried to a martyr’s death with great zeal, not only by the sword and wounds, but also through hunger and thirst and the endurance of many afflictions. 22. Have not monks who fast and endure inherited the kingdom of heaven with the martyrs? So also the many souls in this city who were martyred for Christ in various travails have inherited the kingdom. 23. Remember the Maccabees: did they not become martyrs through observing the Law

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be in a war or battle without it. This oil cures every strike of a sword or lance.”^m 7. When the boy heard this wonder, he said to her, “Give me this oil and I will give you your virginity,” though he was thinking in his heart that he would take that oil from her deceptively and after that use her to satisfy his lust. 8. When she brought forth that oil in a bottle, she said to him, “Take it and place it on your neck. I will come and strike you with this sword, and then you will know that my words are true.” 9. The young man answered her and said, “No, rather I will place it on your neck first.” 10. The virgin nun was seeking this from him and rejoiced at that so that Satan would not get the better of her. She desired for her body to be slain but her soul to be saved. 11. The boy greatly rejoiced. 12. Then the virgin took some of that oil and anointed her neck. When the boy¹¹⁸ saw her, he thought that her words were true, for the wretch did not know that she had done that to escape to Christ. 13. When she had anointed her neck with that oil, she stretched out her neck. 14. Then the boy unsheathed his sword thinking that the sword would not pierce her. 15. When he struck her neck and saw that her head had fallen to the ground, he knew then that she had got the better of him.

16. Blessed be this virgin who conceived this lie, for that lie was the deliverance of her soul! Blessed be her holy head that was severed for faith in Christ! 17. Hear this, O women! Imitate this martyr and leave behind your worldly desire. What is worse than debauchery and fornication? 18. The person who commits adultery should repent and show remorse. Woe to the hearts of those who think not upon this. And we say: “O soul! The resurrection is nigh, and each will be given according to his deeds. O soul! Repent and do not be heedless, and do not commit wicked acts. Your life is short, and you will not live forevermore. 19. O brothers, the nun did not act like this, but she submitted her body unto death and gave her soul eternal life and took the crown of martyrdom. 20[a]. She did not take the crown because of her resolve only, but she saved many others because they, when they saw her honest resolve and her actions, imitated her. 23. Consider the Maccabean woman and how much she endured. Was it not for the sake of preserving the Law that she and her sons became martyrs?¹¹⁹ Consider Lazarus. Did he not become a martyr for what he endured? 22. I know that martyrdom has been on account of a paucity of food, thus monks for the sake of a paucity of food redeem their souls from the enemies. And perhaps there is martyrdom on account of a paucity of lusts 20[b]. as this young woman did, because she did not save her soul only but [also] saved many of the people, for a multitude of the nuns who were with her in the monastery, when they heard

118 V calls him الغلام المجوسي, “the Magian boy.”

119 2 Macc. 7.

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and become praised in Jerusalem?¹²⁰ Or the poor man Lazarus, was he not placed in Abraham’s bosom for enduring affliction like a long-suffering warrior?¹²¹

XIII. 1. Now listen, my brothers, and I will tell you. For after all this wickedness, they captured the good shepherd, Patriarch Zachariah, and led him to Zion through the gate through which our Lord Jesus Christ entered, and he was led like a thief, bound carefully with ropes. 2. Nevertheless, even though he entered Zion as Christ did, it was not the same as he. For when Christ entered Zion, he sat upon a donkey, but the enemies were dragging him.¹²² 3. The children were singing to him with joy, but the multitude of the people were mourning for him with tears. And they were not saying, like the children who were praising Christ, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” but he was beaten with sticks, as it was pleasing to the Lord. 4. Likewise they were not crying out, “Hosanna in the highest,” but they went with him lamenting. They did not spread their garments, but they drenched the earth with their tears. They did not raise up palm branches before him, but the drawn swords around him were terrifying. And there was no affirming praise from the mouths of children, but children and adults perished together. And he was led forth not to honor but to torment and wounds. 5. O gates of Zion, how many evils have come upon you! O gates of Zion, how many shepherds have come in and gone forth through you! 6. First the Cross went forth with Christ, and now again the Cross goes forth with the shepherd, with Patriarch Zachariah, into captivity. O Zion, how much joy and sadness, jubilation and weeping have we seen within you! 7. Then they led forth the good shepherd, as they did Christ when he went forth from Zion to the Cross.¹²³ But Zachariah went forth from the gates of Jerusalem like Adam from paradise.¹²⁴ 8. Christ our Lord came to Golgotha, and Zachariah went forth from Golgotha. Christ went forth and bore the Cross; Zachariah was going forth and mourning the captivity of the Cross. 9. Christ went forth to suffering for the salvation of the world, and Zachariah went forth for the salvation of the captives. Adam dwelled before paradise, and Zachariah dwelled in the tents of Kedar.¹²⁵

10. Then the blessed shepherd went forth with the people through the gate that is called Probatike,¹²⁶ through which the Savior also went forth to suffering. And he sat down on the Mount of Olives, and as for a widowed bride thus he wept for the holy church. 11. Then all the people stood before him, and they saw his face saddened with great grief. And he saw them and beheld his flock, crippled with sorrow, weighed down with sadness, and beset with affliction, they had been brought to the point of death. 12. Then he began to console

120 Cf. 1 Macc.; 2 Macc. 7.

121 Cf. Luke 16:19–31.

122 Cf. Mark 11:8–11.

123 Cf. Mark 15:20–22.

124 Cf. Gen. 3:21–24.

125 Cf. Gen. 3:24; Ps. 119:5.

126 Also known as the Lion’s Gate or Saint Stephen’s Gate, on the eastern side of the city opposite the Mount of Olives.

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that the holy woman had been martyred, imitated her. 21. They were slain, and they shed their blood. They did not submit their flesh unto sin, but rather hastened unto martyrdom.

XIII. 1. And now, brothers and beloved of Christ, I shall tell you. After they forced the patriarch Zachariah to enter Zion through the gate through which Christ entered, the patriarch, the righteous shepherd, was forced to enter as they led him in bonds like a thief. 2. He did not enter Zion like Christ, because Christ was riding a donkey as he entered Zion, but the enemies led the shepherd Zachariah tied with ropes. 3. And there were no youths praising him, but the multitude was wailing for him. They were not saying, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” but he was scourged with the lash, as God willed. 4. The multitude was not crying out “Hosanna!” but they walked alongside him weeping. They did not spread out their garments upon the ground, but they drenched the earth with tears. They carried not the hearts of palms¹²⁷ but swords drawn against him. They did not carry olive branches but slew children along with their mothers. They did not honor him but like a tyrant walked alongside him. They did not lead him forth to honor, but rather they led him forth to disgrace. 5. O gate of Zion, how many calamities have entered through you! O gate of Zion, how many shepherds have come in through you, and how many shepherds have gone forth through you! 6. O gate of Zion, twice the Noble Cross went out through you, for in the past the Cross was expelled alongside Christ, and now the Cross goes forth alongside the patriarch, the shepherd Zachariah, into captivity. O gate of Zion, how much joy, sorrow, and weeping you have shown us! 7. Then they led forth the good shepherd, the patriarch, just as Christ was led forth from Zion to be crucified; but the patriarch Zachariah went forth from the gate of Zion as Adam went forth from Paradise. 8. Jesus Christ came to Golgotha, but the patriarch Zachariah went forth from the Golgotha of Christ. Christ went forth carrying the Cross, but the patriarch Zachariah went forth mourning for the Cross. 9. For the salvation of this world Christ went forth, but the patriarch Zachariah went for the salvation of Jerusalem. Adam dwelled before paradise, but Zachariah stood facing the salvation of the world. Adam was fearful in consolation, but the patriarch Zachariah took consolation in the church.

10. When Zachariah went forth through the gate of Probatike,¹²⁸ through which Christ also went forth unto to the Cross, he looked to a mountain called the Mount of Olives alongside the multitude. Then he sat upon the summit of that mountain and was as a bridegroom gazing upon the bride.” 11. At that moment, the flock drew near to him to behold his face while fearfully beseeching him to console them and to soothe their sadness. 12. When he beheld them, his heart was aflame, and he began to sigh, with

127 A قلوب البايا B, V قلوب النخل

128 V الباب الذي خرج المسيح إلى الصلب “the door from which Christ exited unto crucifixion.”

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them to lessen the severity of their sorrow a little. And he said to them with great sorrow and sadness: “O my children, everything has been fulfilled that was appointed for us.”

13. Nevertheless, when they heard these words from him, they began to lament and weep, and they stood before him with their heads hung low, so that he would reduce the sadness in their hearts. 14. Then their eyes looked and saw Jerusalem and the holy churches, and flames, as though from a furnace, reached up to the clouds, and it was burning. 15. Then they all began to lament and weep together with a great voice. Some struck their faces, and others put ashes on their head, and some smeared their faces with dust, and others tore their hair when they saw the Holy Anastasis burning and Zion in flames and the devastation of Jerusalem. Some struck their breast, and others raised their hands to heaven and said: 16. “Have mercy on us, Lord, and have mercy on the city of your holiness, and look upon your altars! O Lord, have mercy on your churches! O Lord quench the fury of your wrath! Rise up and help us! Awaken, Lord, and see your enemies, how joyful they are at the devastation and demolition of your altars! 17. Lord, do not forget us completely! Lord, look upon us and have mercy on us, for our soul is humbled to the ground, and our belly has reached the earth! Lord, look upon us, for our joy has been displaced by sadness, and our jubilation has been turned into mourning, and our celebration has been displaced by captivity! 18. Lord, death is better for us than servitude to the enemies! Lord, do not rebuke us in your wrath, but save us through your mercy! Lord, do not treat us according to our sins and do not repay us for our iniquities, but have mercy on us through your goodness! 19. We have sinned against you, Lord, and you have delivered us into chastisement. And now look upon us in your compassion and have mercy on us, and do not allow our enemies to say, ‘Where is their God?’¹²⁹ or ‘Where is the Cross and their refuge?’” 20. These words and similar things the captive lambs said in supplication to the Lord while they were on the Mount of Olives across from Jerusalem.

21. And when the blessed Zachariah saw the assembly of the people in such lamentation, he held forth his hand to them so that they would cease their lamentation, and then he opened his mouth and said to them: 22. “Blessed is the Lord who brought this chastisement upon us. Remember, my children, the great patience of the Savior and how much suffering he endured for us. Was not the Lord of Glory handed over to captivity at the time of his Passion for us paupers? Did he not suffer death on the Cross and endure spitting in the face for our salvation? 23. And now he is with us on our journey. Do not be sad, my children, and do not be afraid, for Christ our Lord is with us, and his Cross also has been given into captivity with us. 24. Do not lament, my children, because of captivity, for I too, the sinner Zachariah, your shepherd, am with you in captivity. 25. But I beseech you all, do not be mocked by the devil, and do not be lured in by his deception and blaspheme the Lord in this time of affliction. 26. Behold, we have his Cross for protection, and he is with us who was raised up on it. With us is the True Shepherd who dwells in the heights. And I too, your sinful shepherd, am with you. We have, my children, the royal scepter; we have the ageless weapon.

¹²⁹ Cf. Joel 2:17.

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tears running down from his eyes. And he said to them, “O my children, everything has been fulfilled.”

13. When they heard this from him, they began to cry as they sat grieving and weeping into their hands, for they wanted him to still the sadness that was in their hearts. 14. At that moment, they lifted their eyes and cast their sights to Jerusalem as it burned with flames. 15. They began to mourn with tears. Some struck their faces, some threw ash on their heads, some threw dust upon their faces, and some tore the hair from their heads. That was not because they bemoaned their chastisement but because of the destruction of Jerusalem. Some beat their chests, and some lifted their hands to heaven crying out and saying: 16. “Have mercy on us, Lord! Have mercy on your city! O Lord, have mercy on your altars! O our Lord, have mercy on your holy temples! O Lord, lessen your wrath! O Lord, rise and do not slumber! O Lord, look upon your enemies, how they rejoice over the destruction of your city and your altars! 17. Do not forget us! O Lord, look upon us, for our souls have reached the earth! O Lord, look upon us, for our joy has turned to sadness! O Lord, our delight has turned to lamentation! O Lord, look upon us, for our celebrations have become captivity! 18. O Lord, death is better for us than to be led into the hands of wicked enemies! O Lord, do not be angry with us. Chastise us by your mercy and not to repay us according to our sins, but rather for the sake of your loving-kindness. 19. We have sinned. Show us mercy and chastise us, but with your mercy. Do not let the enemies say, ‘Where is their God?’ Do not let the enemies say, ‘Where is their Cross?’” 20. With these words and similar such things the multitude were beseeching God while they were on the Mount of Olives.

21. And when the patriarch Zachariah looked upon the multitude as they mourned, he gestured to them with his hand to quiet them. Then he opened his mouth and said: 22. “Blessed is the Lord, who brought this chastisement upon us. How wondrous! For was not Jesus Christ taken captive in the days of the crucifixion? Was he not upon the Cross for the sake of our salvation? 23. Even now he walks with us. Do not be afraid, my children, for Christ is with us. Do not lament, my children, for the Cross has been taken captive with us. 24. Do not weep, my beloved, because we are taken captive, for so is this man—I, the patriarch Zachariah, your leader. 25. I beseech you all, do not be deceived and do not be ungrateful, 26. because the Cross walks with us. It is he who was crucified for our sake. He is the Good Shepherd who resides in heaven. And I too, the sinful shepherd, am in captivity with you all. With you all, my children, is the royal scepter; with you all, my children, is the ageless weapon.

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27. “And like the apostle Paul I say to you: ‘Now is the time of salvation.’¹³⁰ Now is the day of liberation. This is the day of rejoicing. And this is the day of endurance, and the one who endures to the end will be saved.¹³¹ This is the day of the crown. This is the day on which the king opens his doors. This is the day on which sins are destroyed and the kingdom of heaven is disclosed, and the righteous will enter into it.¹³² 28. Now, my children, let us remain strong and firm, so that we will not be vanquished and fall into blasphemy of the Lord. 29. O my children, do not shake with fear, for our Lord Jesus Christ is with us, and he fights on our behalf. The myriad host of angels is with us. The assembly of the cherubim is with us. The congregation of the seraphim is with us. The holy apostles and prophets are with us. The martyrs and all the righteous are with us, and they fight against our enemies and beseech the Lord on our behalf. 30. Let there be no evil thoughts in your mind, but strive and struggle until the closing of the gate. Strive for the fulfillment of his commandments, so that you will meet with eternal joy, where the mind does not mourn and the soul is not sad.

31. “Rejoice, my children in the Lord, and accept this affliction with gratitude and receive this instruction from your elder and infirm shepherd. 32. Let us be joyful toward the Lord, O beloved children led forth into captivity, for it is the time of rejoicing, not for the fleeting things of this world, but for that which remains unto eternity. For this earthly world will be destroyed, and its joy will vanish. The joy that is from the Lord, however, remains for all time. 33. Understand, my children, that the Lord is a helper to us, and whatever a human being may do to us, let us not be separated from the love of Christ, not in tribulation, nor in affliction, nor in persecution, nor in hunger,¹³³ so that we too may say with the one who says: ‘All this has come upon us, and we did not forget you.’¹³⁴ 34. Console yourselves that you will be victors over your enemies. Let evil find no place among you, so that its seed will not inseminate and trouble you with sadness. 35. The tribulation is for a short time, and the repose is forever. The time is short, and the reward is very abundant.¹³⁵ The martyr’s death prepares for the crown.

36. “Do not be sad, my children, that you were free but now you are handed over to servitude. Wealth and freedom were pampering you, but now captivity at the hands of the enemy rules over you. Before this day you were hastening to the churches, and now you are abandoned, driven into a strange land. Before this day you hastened to the shrines of the martyrs, and now like sheep you are driven to the slaughter. 37. Behold, the Good Shepherd and righteous Judge who handed over his flock to captivity has also raised me up from the throne of the shepherds and joined me to his flock. And may he be blessed unto eternity, for rightly has he done all this to us, for I was not shepherding his flock in a manner pleasing to him, and therefore all this evil has befallen us. 38. Woe unto me and my

130 2 Cor. 6:2.
131 Matt. 10:22.
132 Ps. 117:20.
133 Cf. Rom. 8:35.
134 Ps. 43:18.
135 Cf. 2 Cor. 4:17.

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27. “And like the apostle Paul, today I say to you, ‘Now is the time of salvation.’¹³⁶ This is the day of restitution and salvation. This is the day of rejoicing. And this is the day of endurance, and the one who endures until the end will live.¹³⁷ This is the day of crowns. This is the day the gate of the king is open. This is the day sins are removed and one enters paradise. 28. Now we shall stand in power, my brothers, and we will not waver. 29. Brothers, do not be afraid! Children of Christ, do not let your hearts cower! For we have warriors with us! With us are myriads of angels! With us are myriads of seraphim, and with us are all the cherubim! With us are the martyrs, and with us are the righteous! All the prophets are with us. They fight against all our enemies and beseech God on our behalf. 30. Let there be no evil thoughts in your minds, but hasten before the gates are closed. Now the gates are open. We hasten to fulfill the commandments with which the Lord Jesus Christ charged us. We hasten to joy. The sadness of the heart will not remain in us, but rather humble submission.

31. “Rejoice, my children! Rejoice and accept a harsh word from a feeble elder. 32. Rejoice in the Lord, O captives, for the sake of a time of joy for those who ponder. 33. Rejoice in the Lord, for he is with us, so who can be against us?¹³⁸ 34. Thus, my children, console yourselves, and thus you will conquer the enemies. The enemy will find no place to sow sadness within your hearts. 35. For the sadness is but a small thing, but the profit is great. Time is short, but martyrdom is great, and the crown is prepared.

36. “Do not be amazed, my children, that once you were free but now have become like slaves being led into captivity. Before today you used to hasten to the church, but now you are led away with the enemies. Before today, you used to hasten to the altar, and today you are led to the slaughter.¹³⁹ 37. Behold the Good Shepherd, the Judge, who handed over the flock to captivity. He is with us. Blessed be the one who raised us from our thrones, the thrones of shepherds, and who rightly has done this to us because we did not shepherd his flock with true righteousness. For this reason he brought this chastisement against us. 38. Woe to my gray hair, for I, a sinner and wretch, have seen a great thing. For if a person

136 2 Cor. 6:2.
137 Matt. 10:22.
138 Cf. Rom. 8:31.
139 Here there is wordplay between “altar” (*maq̄bah*) and “slaughter” (*dab̄h*).

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gray hair, for I, a sinner and wretch, have seen great and terrible things! For if someone had two children and saw them in affliction, he would be sad and crushed on their account. Nevertheless, what will I, an infirm man, do on account of so many people by whom I am called father? 39. Or how will I behold this boundless affliction that has come upon them? I beseech you, Lord, receive my soul so that I will not see the affliction that is coming for your people, for you are blessed unto eternity and beyond.

40. “O my children and servants of Christ, remember the word of the Lord and take comfort from it, for he said: ‘If they persecuted me, they will persecute you, and a servant is not greater than his master.’¹⁴⁰ 41. And if these enemies now cast me and you out, they too will be cast out from this world and also from the kingdom of heaven. And if these enemies hate me and you, they will also be hated by the Lord. And if these enemies kill me and you, they will be handed over to a merciless death. 42. But, beloved, endure all this, so that by your endurance you will gain your souls.¹⁴¹ Do not fear those who would slay your flesh but are not able to destroy your soul.¹⁴² And know that the one who endures to the end will be saved.¹⁴³ 43. My children, do not be sad at the Lord’s chastisement, and do not forsake his reproof, for the Lord admonishes and chastises the child whom he loves. And the prophet David says, ‘you tested us and tried us,’¹⁴⁴ and ‘you lifted us up from the depths of the earth.’¹⁴⁵ And again he says, ‘With discipline the Lord disciplined me, and to death he did not deliver me’¹⁴⁶—although I speak of the death of the soul and not of being delivered to death. 44. And so also the apostle Paul says, ‘what child is there whom the father does not discipline? If you are without the discipline, you are illegitimate and not his children.’¹⁴⁷ And you have also heard the saying of the Lord when he said, ‘For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to eternal life.’¹⁴⁸

45. “And why now will we not find the narrow road and endure this tribulation, so that we will obtain eternal life? 46. For the garment of holiness that we put on in baptism,¹⁴⁹ we have defiled with our sin and guilt. And now behold, God has sent upon us that which will purify our sins, and he washes the filth of our blame through our enemies like a hand washing. 47. Since the soiled garment is made white through washing and wringing, will then filth of the soul be made brilliant without anguish and affliction through the judgment of kings and tyrants? 48. Who receives a treasure without trouble and toil? Who defeats a stalwart [opponent] without a struggle? Who receives a crown without a fight?

140 John 15:20.

141 Luke 21:19.

142 Matt. 10:28.

143 Matt. 10:22.

144 Ps. 65:10.

145 Ps. 70:20.

146 Ps. 117:18.

147 Heb. 12:7–8.

148 Matt. 7:14.

149 Cf. Gal. 3:27.

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has two children or three and is sad on their account, then how much more so do I, a wretch, who looks upon the like of this multitude in such affliction! 39. But the name of the Lord is blessed for all time.

40. “O children of Christ, we remember the word of the Lord to be consoled when our Lord Christ said, ‘If the enemies are cast out for my sake, they are cast out for your sake. 41. If the enemies are likewise slain for my sake, they will also be slain for your sake. 42. But by your endurance you will profit your souls. Do not be afraid of those who kill the flesh but cannot kill the soul.’¹⁵⁰ And know that the one who endures to the end will be saved.’¹⁵¹ 43. My children, do not be grieved by the Lord’s chastisement, for we are not sad because the one who loves God is thus reproved. And David said, ‘You test me, Lord, and you try me,’¹⁵² ‘and you have turned and lifted us up from the depths of the earth.’¹⁵³ And also David says, ‘With discipline the Lord disciplined me, but to death he did not deliver me.’¹⁵⁴ 44. As so also Paul said, ‘What child is there whom the father does not discipline? If you were not disciplined, then you are not one of the children’¹⁵⁵ who shall be led to the path to eternal life. The path to eternal life is hard, and by much toil does one enter it.’¹⁵⁶

45. “And why do we not toil? 46. For the garment of our souls that we put on in baptism.¹⁵⁷ We have defiled it with our sins and trespasses, but now we toil until we wash it clean. 47. Behold filthy garments, by the fullers’ washing, pulling, scrubbing, pounding, grinding, and stretching out—thus do they emerge clean, and so it is with the sins of the soul. They are not released except by sadness and toil and chastisement from the King of the Earth and the King of Heaven. 48. Who becomes rich without toil? Who receives the laurel but does not run? Who conquers but does not fight? Who gathers wealth if he does not work?

150 Matt. 10:28.

151 Matt. 10:22.

152 Ps. 65:10.

153 Ps. 70:20.

154 Ps. 117:18.

155 Cf. Heb. 12:7–8.

156 Cf. Matt. 7:14.

157 Cf. Gal. 3:27.

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No one, ever. 49. For where there is respite, there is the dwelling place of the enemy. Where there is joy and rejoicing, there the fruit of the soul does not bloom. Understand this and be diligent to keep the commandments of the Lord in your hearts. 50. Now raise the voice of your cry before the Lord and do not cease from praying, so that he will save you from the hands of your enemies.

51. “Receive this anguish as you have received joy. Endure this struggle, my children, so that you will find the Lord. He alone made this come upon us. Let us receive it with gratitude, so that he will not be infuriated with us. Let us endure his chastisement, so that he will look upon us with mercy. 52. For he chastises, and he comforts. He wounds, and again he heals. He smites, and then he makes strong. He cleanses the venom of sin through struggle, and then in his mercy he prepares the crown of heaven for those who struggle: for more abundant than the sands of the sea are his mercies. 53. And if he pleaded with his Father for his crucifiers and said: ‘Father, forgive them this sin,’¹⁵⁸ how will he not show more mercy for us? 54. Even though we are not righteous, nevertheless, like sinful servants, we fall down before him and turn away from our wicked ways. 55. Rightly he has given us chastisement and reproof, so that he will then bestow us his kingdom. He delivered us into servitude, so that he will bestow us authority. He delivered us into affliction and sorrow, so that he will grant us repose in the kingdom of heaven. He handed us over to the ferocity of the flame, so that he will save us from the fire of hell. 56. Here they tormented us with cold and ice, so that he will save us from gnashing of teeth there. Here he handed us over to be devoured by wild beasts, so that he will save us from the worm and Tartarus there. Here he has stripped us of garments and wealth, so that there he will give us the incorruptible garment and inexhaustible wealth and endless riches and grant us the delight of eternal goodness, which no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived.¹⁵⁹

57. “Now then let us strive to guard our faith and to follow its precepts, so that in the next life we will rejoice before the Savior and say to him with boldness: 58. For your sake, Lord, we have endured hunger and thirst, and persecution and nakedness and captivity and death and every wretched thing fell upon us through the hands of the enemy. For your sake, we have shed our blood and kept our baptism, and behold your gift remains with us holy and uncorrupted. And we have kept your love and your faith by the giving of ourselves, and your seal on us has been preserved undamaged. 59. Then, my children, you will be blessed, for you will meet with great joy and happiness, which will have no end. Endure a little chastisement, and you will be granted every good thing, which remains unto eternity. 60. Your enemies, however, will melt like wax in hell. Those who torture your flesh here, there they will have gnashing of teeth and groaning, and they will mourn with great weeping, and they will fall on their faces in shame, and they will be driven into the outermost darkness, frightened by great torments. And at that time they will have no answer, but they will be overcome with terror from the horror, for they will see terrifying

158 Luke 23:34.

159 1 Cor. 2:9.

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No one. 49. For where there is respite, there the enemy dwells. Therefore, listen now and understand, and preserve God’s commandments in your hearts. 50. Cry out thusly to God and do not cease, so that he will save you from the enemy.

51. “Receive the sadness just as you would receive blessings and joy. Endure, my children, so that you will earn the reward. It is the Lord that commanded this. We should not provoke God or be sad. 52. God is the one who fortifies and strengthens the displaced. God is the one who converts adversaries and purifies the impure. In his mercy, he chastises us and turns to save us, for his mercies are many. More numerous than the sands on the shore of the sea, so great is his loving-kindness. 53. If he pleaded for those who crucified him saying, ‘Father, forgive them this sin,’¹⁶⁰ how will he not show more mercy for us? 54. Even though we are not righteous but are like sinners, we plead like servants who have sinned and returned to him. 55. He wished to chastise us so that we would prevail over hardships. He handed us over to these throngs to give us his kingdom. He handed us into servitude to give us freedom. He handed us over to this sadness to give us joy and respite in paradise. He torments us by the heat of this flame to deliver us from the heat of Gehenna. 56. He torments us with cold to deliver us from the gnashing of teeth. He hands us over to wild beasts to deliver us from the worm that does not sleep.¹⁶¹ Here he stripped us naked of our possessions to give us the riches of the kingdom of heaven and the blessings prepared there, which no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart conceived.¹⁶² He has given us the kingdom of the earth and also gives us the kingdom of heaven.

57. “Let us strive now and pray to guard our faith, for if we guard our faith, in the next life we shall rejoice and be with the Savior. And we will say to Christ with boldness and joy without sadness, 58. ‘O Righteous Judge, give us the crown! For the sake of your name we were hungry and thirsty, and we were cast out and stripped naked. We suffered every evil thing from the enemies. We did not lament the shedding of our blood to preserve your love, your faith, and your baptism. This is your true, pure gift that we present to you.’ 59. Blessed are you, O brothers, at that time. Any joy within you, any hymn and any delight will have no end. Because you were sad for a short while, you shall be greatly joyous unto eternity. Because your flesh has been tormented, your souls shall be delivered. 60. As for your enemies, they will gnash their teeth. They will wail and greatly weep. We shall behold them disgraced and covered in darkness, and each one will be condemned. If one who stands with guilt and shame before an earthly king will be disgraced and will have no answer to clear him of his guilt and shame, then how much more so when one stands before the King of Heaven?

160 Luke 23:34.

161 Mark 9:48.

162 1 Cor. 2:9; Isa. 64:4.

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faces, and they will be worn out from distress. 61. The sinners will be in great torment, and the Lord will admonish them and say to them: ‘You miserable and wicked ones, did I not come down from heaven and take on flesh and take on the form of a servant and endure spitting in the face and suffered slaps and reproach and received crucifixion and death, I, the king of all creation? 62. Is it not fitting that you have become like me? But you rejected me. Therefore, I will also reject you. Depart from me, you cursed ones, into the fire that has been lit for you and for the devil and his minions.’¹⁶³ 63. At that time, my children, there is no more repentance or offering of tears, and accordingly I bear witness to you today before Christ and before his chosen angels, that you should receive this my teaching and keep the commandments of the Lord, and I am innocent of the judgment of you all.

64. “O children of Christ, remain steadfast, even unto the shedding of your blood for Christ, so that you will not fall into the filth of the enemies. Endure it for his sake, as he endured this for our sake. 65. For the devil stands and tempts your hearts, in order to find idleness and to sow his seed and the treachery of his wickedness in you, and he will say to you: 66. ‘O Christians, why have you gone astray and led yourselves into error? For Christ has abandoned and ignored you. Why do you hope in him in vain? 67. For you are hated by him, and you are his enemy and not his friend. For he has aided your enemies and made them stronger than you, and he stripped you of his armaments and removed his protection from you. 68. And after all this, what hope do you have or what do you expect from him? For you have been abandoned by him, and from now on you are no longer his people, and he does not shepherd and lead you, because you are an abomination before him. Therefore, he has delivered you into the hands of your enemies to be tortured. They have been gathered together, and you have been dispersed. Why are you now so eager? 69. For this your prayer is in vain, and your fasting and weeping and lamentation are in vain, for he no longer hears you.’

70. “These words the wicked enemy the devil will say to you to turn your heart away from the Lord. Now listen, my Christ-loving children, and learn the words that you will say in response. Prepare yourselves and make yourselves ready to give a reply, so that he will not find you exposed¹⁶⁴ and take you captive. Behold what you will say to him, and having been put to shame, he will flee from you. 71. Say to him: ‘What do we have in common with you,¹⁶⁵ you who are hated by God and have been thrown out of heaven? What do we have in common with you, who were cast out and expelled by the Lord? What do we have in common with you, O evil and wicked servant, who did not preserve your dominion and were banished from the angels and became Satan?’¹⁶⁶ 72. You have corrupted yourself through your wickedness, and you want to corrupt the faithful as well. What do you have in common with Christians, O hell of darkness and abyss of the underworld? What do you have in common with the children of light, O impure and defiled one? 73. Depart from us and expel your madness from our heart. Be gone and dispense with

¹⁶³ Cf. Matt. 25:41.

¹⁶⁴ Lit., “naked.”

¹⁶⁵ Lit., “What is ours and yours?”

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Apoc. 12:7–10.

Arabic Recension A

How great their terror will be at that time, 61. when God torments the sinners and condemns them saying: ‘You wicked ones! Did I not come down from heaven for your sakes and take on flesh and become like a servant and enduring spitting on my face, and was I not scourged and was crucified, though I am the God of creation? 62. Is it not fitting for you to become like me? Now, therefore, because you rejected me, I say to you, “Depart from me, you accursed ones, into the eternal fire for you and for the devil and his minions.”’¹⁶⁷ 63. At that time, brothers, there will no repentance. At that time, there will be no petitioning. And I, children of Christ, say to you and bear witness to you today before God and all his angels that I am innocent of the blood of this multitude, the enemies of the flock of Christ.¹⁶⁸

64. “Stand firm even unto the shedding of your blood with the love of Christ and for the sake of his name, lest you fall into the hands of the impure. Endure for the sake of the name of Christ just as he endured for you. 65. For now the devil stands and tempts your hearts. The devil searches to insert his head into your hearts and to sow his seed in you. And this is what his words are for you when he cries and says: 66. ‘O Christians, why do you deceive yourselves? Why? Your hope is in vain. Your Christ has abandoned you as orphans! 67. Your Christ despises you. He has rejected you, and you have become like the enemies. He has sided with your enemies and rejected you. Because you did not honor him, he has stripped you of his gifts. 68. After this, what do you expect now? What hope do you have? Rejoice! Rejoice in this world, because he has rejected you, and he will not shepherd you after this day. He will not call you children. You have become his enemies, and for that reason, he has cast you into the hands of those who despise you. They have grown rich, and you have become poor. So why do you toil? 69. Be silent, because your prayers are in vain. Your fasting is in vain. Your weeping is in vain. Be gone!’

70. “These are the words of the devil to the Christians. Listen now, beloved of Christ, to how you shall answer him! Learn and remember and overcome him with an answer, lest he find you naked and take you captive. Behold what you shall say to him. 71. Answer him by boldly saying, ‘What business do we have with you, you who have fallen from heaven? What business do we have with you, you who were banished from the angels? 72. What business do you have with the children of Christ, the Christians? O darkness, what business do you have with the children of light? O filth, 73. be gone from our hearts! Be gone!’

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Matt. 25:41.

¹⁶⁸ Following for the concluding phrase the reading of B, الجمع الاعداء برعية المسيح, over the truncated reading of A, الجمع الاعداء.

Georgian Recension

your wickedness, for Christ our Lord expels you, and his glorious name casts you out. We know your treachery and deceit. Depart from us, you jealous, evil liar. 74. For God cast you out of heaven and has chosen us, and he who alone has sovereignty over you and over all of us has made us better than you. 75. We have sinned against him, and our repentance and prayers are to him, so that his wrath will cease from us. For we have his body to eat, and we have his blood to drink. As God and Father he chastises us, and he does not want our death, but conversion and salvation.¹⁶⁹ 76. You, however, go forth into the eternal fire that is prepared for you and for your angels¹⁷⁰ and those who follow in your footsteps.”

XIV. 1. These words the blessed Zachariah spoke to the people on the holy Mount of Olives. And as he finished his words, he heard the clamor and cry of the people. He looked around and saw the multitude of the Persians approaching, who were intending to lead them away as captives to Persia. 2. And when he realized that he would depart from the Holy City, he said to the whole assembly the words that Christ spoke to his disciples at the time of his Passion: 3. “My children, rise up and go forth, for the time has come and the day of sorrow drawn near,¹⁷¹ and since our bodies will go forth with our enemies, our hearts nevertheless will remain with Christ.”

4. Then he turned to the east, and he prayed and said: “Blessed is God, blessed is God, wholly blessed is God above all things.” 5. And then he turned to Zion, and the bridegroom Patriarch Zachariah lamented it as a widowed bride with great tears. And he raised his hands over it and spoke doleful and mournful words that pierced hearts and wounded souls like swords. 6. And he said: “Peace to you, Zion, the bride of Christ. Peace to you, Jerusalem, the Holy City. Peace to you, Holy Anastasis, illuminated by the Lord. Peace to you, land more glorious than all lands, peace to you. May Christ who has chosen you keep you in peace. 7. Peace to you, Zion, my last peace and final greeting to you. And what hope and length of days will I have that I might later gain sight of you again? 8. Glory to him who desired to separate me from you. And from now on I will no longer see you. 9. Peace to you, Holy Anastasis. Peace to you, Zion, light of the world, for salvation reigns within you, and the Holy Spirit descended upon you and proclaimed peace to the world, and today you have been handed over to condemnation.¹⁷² Salvation appeared upon you, and today wrath has descended. 10. Accordingly, I too will say the words of the prophet Jeremiah: ‘I behold your devastation.¹⁷³ O walls of Jerusalem, weep for me, and I will lament for you.’ But the Lord, whose name is glorious, will rebuild you according to his promise and make peace descend upon you.¹⁷⁴ 11. But what use is that for me, a frail, old man? For from this point on I will never see the visage of your beauty again.

169 Cf. Ezek. 33:11.

170 Cf. Matt. 25:41.

171 Cf. Matt. 26:45.

172 Cf. Acts 2:1–4.

173 Garitte suggests Jer. 51:22. Perhaps Jer. 51:2 (LXX) is intended? It is not clear which passage(s) the author has in mind here.

174 Cf. Jer. 30:18; Zech. 8.

Arabic Recension A

We command you in the mighty name of Jesus Christ! We recognize you, deceiver! Be gone, jealous one! 74. For God cast you out of heaven but has chosen us over you, and he alone has sovereignty over us and you. 75. We have sinned against him, and we ask him forgiveness for ourselves beseechingly so that he will be pleased with us. We have his body and his blood. He as Father and God chastised us, and he desires not our death but for us to repent. And he will give us life and save us. 76. As for you, be gone to the scorching inferno¹⁷⁵ that is never extinguished, that has been prepared for you and all your angels and those who follow you and do your bidding.”

XIV. 1. These are the words of the patriarch Zachariah which he spoke to the righteous flock on the Mount of Olives. And as he finished speaking with them, he heard a great clamor. He looked to see, and there had arrived the Persian enemies who would lead them away. 2. And when he looked upon them and realized that he would leave Jerusalem and be barred from it, he said to the assembly the like of what Christ said to his disciples: 3. “My children, rise up and go forth. As for our bodies, they are with the enemies; but as for our hearts, they are with Christ. Blessed be Christ!”

4. Then he turned to the east and prayed. And he said, “Blessed is our Lord and our God, Jesus Christ. Blessed is Christ in all things.” 5. At that moment he turned to Zion and like a bridegroom laments for a bride, thus did the patriarch Zachariah begin to lament for Zion weeping, stretching out his hands and crying out 6. and saying, “Peace to you, Zion!” with mournful words causing hearts to weep. “Peace to you, Jerusalem! Peace to you, land made holy over every land! Peace to you! May Christ keep in peace the one who chooses you. 7. Peace to you, Zion. The final greeting is yours and the last of my greetings to you, Zion. What hope do I have and what years so as to look upon you again? 8. Glory to the one who separated me from you! 9. Peace to you Zion, light of the word, because life dwells in you, and the Spirit dwells in you, and in you peace is proclaimed, and in you the curse is unleashed. In you salvation has come, and in you wrath has come. 10. O walls of Zion! O walls of Jerusalem! Weep for me! But God will rebuild you, and glory will return to you. 11. But what does it benefit me, a frail, old man? How will I look upon you? I will never look upon your face again.

175 A, B النار الحامية; cf. Q. Qāri‘ah 101:11.

Georgian Recension

12. “Nevertheless, I ask you to remember me, a sinner, when your king comes,¹⁷⁶ our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I beseech you, do not forget me, your servant, so that your Creator will not forget you. ‘If I forget you, Jerusalem, may your right hand also forget me! May my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you!’¹⁷⁷ 13. Peace to you, Zion, who once were my city. Now I have become a foreigner to you. I revere you, Holy Anastasis, and I revere that which is within you. Peace to you, Zion, for today I depart from you and will never see you again. 14. Woe unto me, a wretch and a sinner! How many days have I attained? O death, how have you left me behind? Or to what place have you gone forth and hidden and not received my soul, so that I would not behold this affliction and the sorrow of these lambs of Christ and their death full of bitterness? 15. It is better to be wounded than to be separated from you, Jerusalem. Torture and death are better than leaving you, Zion, bride of Christ, and all-glorious Jerusalem. 16. I beseech you, Lord, receive my soul and remove this cup of bitterness from me,¹⁷⁸ so that I will not see the death and slaughter of your flock. 17. O my mother, why did you give birth to me for such sorrow and affliction? O Zion, why did you raise me from my childhood, and today you have been separated from me? And now I say with the righteous one: ‘Why did I not die there in my mother’s womb?’¹⁷⁹ 18. And why was I not slain with the children of Christ? Then I would now have fallen asleep and would be in repose. I would sleep the eternal sleep and would be at rest. Do not forget the cry of your children, Zion, but remember us when Christ will remember you.” 19. Blessed Zachariah, the good shepherd, said these words when he stood and beheld Jerusalem. And who could relate, beloved brothers, what he said while weeping? Or who could count the multitude of his tears, which he shed on account of his separation from Zion and the Holy Anastasis?

XV. 1. At that time the Persians came to lead them away. The Christians, however, when they saw them coming, wanted to tell the blessed Zachariah. But when they saw him in lamentation and tears, they were no longer able to tell him, but they were themselves also moved to lament and weep and could not utter any words. 2. Then the enemies mixed in among the assembly, like wild beasts among sheep. And they carried them off like lambs to the slaughter.¹⁸⁰ And they seized blessed Zachariah and led him away. 3. Nevertheless, the righteous one did not cease from weeping and lamenting, and at every moment he was looking back, and he said: “Peace to you, Jerusalem.” And from that moment forward he never saw it again. but he said: 4. “Peace to you, Holy City. Do not forget me your servant, for you know my love for you and my fervent desire to serve you. Therefore, I beseech you to remember me and this people whenever you pray to Christ. 5. Peace to you, Zion. Peace to you, Jerusalem. Peace to you, Holy Anastasis.

176 Cf. Luke 23:42.

177 Cf. Ps. 136:5–6.

178 Cf. Matt. 26:39.

179 Cf. Job 10:18.

180 Cf. Ps. 43:23.

Arabic Recension A

12. “I ask you, O Zion, to remember me when Christ comes to you.¹⁸¹ O Zion, do not forget me, your servant, lest your Creator forget you, because, ‘if I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right-hand be forgotten.’¹⁸² May my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you.’¹⁸³ 13. Peace to you, Zion, who once was my city. Now I have become estranged from you. I prostrate before you, Zion, and I prostrate to him who resides in you. I am leaving you, O Zion, 14. but woe unto me! O death, to what place have you gone? Why have you disappeared from me? Since you abandoned me, I live and look upon this sorrow. 15. Death and dying by the sword are better than leaving you, O Zion. Death by the sword is better than leaving you, O Jerusalem. 16. Lord, take this cup from me!¹⁸⁴ 17. O mother, why did you give birth to me for such sorrow? Why did you raise me from my childhood, and why am I being separated from you? I am like that righteous man, ‘Why did I not die while I was inside Zion?’¹⁸⁵ 18. Why was I not slain alongside the children of Christ? For I would have fallen asleep and entered repose by now. I would have slept the final sleep and been mourned. Do not forget the cry of your children, O Zion! Remember us, O Zion, when Christ remembers you!” 19. These words were spoken by the patriarch Zachariah, the good shepherd, when he turned toward Jerusalem. Beloved, who can measure his weeping at that time, and who can tell its story?°

XV. 1. At that time an assembly of Christians came reporting news to him saying, “The enemies have arrived intending to take you all away.” When they looked upon him as he wept and lamented the departure from Jerusalem, their hearts could not bear to speak a single word to their shepherd, the patriarch. 2. Then the Persians approached them and seized them. They took the hand of the patriarch Zachariah and led him forth as a lamb is led to slaughter. 3. When the holy one looked upon them, he wept exceedingly and turned around toward Jerusalem and bade her greetings of peace until he was far away. The patriarch would move his head saying: 4. “Peace to you, Jerusalem. Do not forget your servant, for you know me and how I loved you and my service to you. I beseech you to remember me and this assembly whenever you petition Christ. 5. Peace to you, Zion. Peace to you, Jerusalem. Peace to you, Anastasis. Peace to all God’s holy sites. The gift [of God] is with

181 Cf. Luke 23:42.

182 A تنسا يميني; B, C, D, V تنساني يميني, “may my right hand forget me.”

183 Cf. Ps. 136:5–6.

184 Cf. Matt. 26:39.

185 Cf. Job 10:18.

Georgian Recension

Peace to you, holy Golgotha. Peace to you, all the holy churches and shrines of Christ. May his peace be with you and with us who are forsaken at all times.” 6. And they went down from the Mount of Olives toward Jericho on the road that goes down to Jordan. 7. At that time, my beloved brothers, great sorrow and ineffable grief befell all the Christians of the entire world when the chosen, renowned, and royal city was handed over to devastation, when the holy places and refuges of the all the faithful were put to the flame and the Christian people were delivered into captivity and death. 8. Then fathers wept for their children, and children wept for their parents. Then friends mourned for friends and acquaintances for their acquaintances. And all the faithful were scattered and separated from one another like sheep to be slaughtered by the enemies, wife from husband and father from child and brother from brother and sister from sister.

XVI. 1. And¹⁸⁶ as they were all going along the way to captivity, there was among the people a certain holy Jerusalemite named Eusebius, and he was a deacon of the Holy Anastasis. 2. He had two daughters. One was eight years old and the other ten. And they were very beautiful. 3. One of the magnates of the Persians seized them, and when he saw their grace and beauty, he fell madly in love with them. And he fawned over them and besought them to worship fire and to renounce Christ. 4. Their father, however, the deacon Eusebius, was close to them. He instructed them and besought them not to renounce Christ the Lord. Nevertheless, the wicked magus prevented them from serving the Lord. 5. But hear, beloved, in your minds, how much endurance the children found and give glory to God.

6. For the enemy led forth the daughters and stood them before him. And he ordered that a great fire be lit and began coaxing them to worship the fire. 7. And their good father saw them and raised his hands to the one who is in heaven and said: “My children, do not do this deed, and do not trust the word of this vile man.” 8. The wicked magus, however, was encouraging them, and their father was instructing them in the word of the Scriptures with sweet words, for they were learned and unflappable. 9. The wicked man was violently enraged, and he drew his sword at the daughters. 10. Nevertheless, the eldest was initially standing in front, and her father was saying to her: “Do not fear, my child: be strengthened by Christ and stand firm. Raise your eyes to heaven and see the Lord of Glory, for behold, he has come with myriads of angels to help you. Bind your hands together for him who was bound for you and endured death, for he endured death for you and his body received a spear in the side.” 11. And when the child heard this, she stood before the impure one and was not afraid of his sword, as her father had instructed her. But the evil one violently put the sword to the beautiful girl and cut her to pieces. And by suffering death she became a martyr for Christ and received the crown of battle from the Savior of all.

186 The martyrdom of Eusebius and his two daughters survives in independent form in an Armenian version: see Վարդ արքայի մարտիրոսաց, 2:462–63.

Arabic Recension A

you and with us. Amen.” All the Christians cried out, “Amen, amen. Let it be, let it be.”^p 6. And they went down from the Mount of Olives to the road leading to Jericho and the Jordan. 7. My beloved, what sorrow! How great it was on that day upon all the Christians. 8. How parents wept for their children! How children wept for their fathers and mothers! How friends wept over their friends! How all the faithful were separated like cattle from one another—the wife from her husband, the father from his son, and the brother from his brother.

XVI. 1. When they proceeded on the road, there was among them a saintly man from the Christians of Jerusalem, one of those who had been taken captive. He was one of the deacons of Anastasis and was called Eusebius. 2. He had two daughters. One was eight years old and the other ten.¹⁸⁷ And they were very beautiful. 3. One of the magnates of the Persians¹⁸⁸ took them, and when he looked upon them, their beauty made him fall sorely in love with them. And he besought them to worship the fire and serve it and forbade them to practice the religion of the Christians.^{189q} 5. Listen, my brothers, with understanding, how the children endured and glorified God.

6. The enemy stood them before him, for he had lit a great fire. He began to beseech them to worship the fire. 7. And their father, the deacon, was next to them. When the enemy beseeched them to worship that fire, their father, the good deacon, gestured to them saying, “My daughters, do not heed or accept the word of a vile man.”¹⁹⁰ 8. And the enemy began to frighten them, but their father often spoke to them with sweet words from the scriptures. The saintly women were tormented from two directions. 9. Then the enemy became angry and unsheathed his sword against those two maidens. 10. As for the elder, she was in the fore, and her father said to her, “Do not be afraid, my daughter. Be firm by the power of Christ. Bind your hands behind you and endure unto death as Christ endured for you and his side was pierced with the lance.” 11. The maiden stood before the enemy as her father instructed her. The enemy struck her furiously, and she became a martyr for God and endured unto death and was granted the crown of martyrdom.

187 A, B, V; C الواحدة بنت ثمانية عشر سنة والآخرى بنت خمسة عشر سنة, “One was eighteen years old, and the other was fifteen.”

188 A, B واحد من كبار الفرس; C واحد من جهال الفرس, “one of the barbarous Persians”; V احد قواد الفرس, “one of the leaders of the Persians.”

189 A, B ثم طلب ان يبعدهن عن عبادة الله وان يطلب اليهم ان يسجدوا للنار ويعبدوها ويمنعهم عن دين النصارى V, “يسجدوا للنار مثله لانه كان مجوسى”, “Then he sought to take them away from the worship of God and [to make them] worship the fire like him because he was a Magian.”

190 A كلام نجس; V, قول العدو, “the word of the enemy.”

Georgian Recension

12. Hear, my brothers, what happened to the other child, the sister of the blessed martyr, and what courage she found. 13. For the wicked one seized her and brought her forth, and he was persuading her to become a Zoroastrian¹⁹¹ with flattery and fear at the same time, so that she would renounce the Lord and worship the fire. And he thought that she would obey him then and there through fear and on account of the horror that she saw come upon her sister. 14. But contending for God, she did not fulfill the magus's wish. For her father besought her and said: "Do not fear, my child, and do not be terrified. Endure the sword so that you will become an offering to Christ and a source of pride to me, your poor father. Hold on just a little while, my child, so that you will join your sister and dwell with her in the heavenly bridal chamber in the presence of the immortal bridegroom. And I, infirm as I am, am eager to follow you both." 15. And when the impure one saw that the child obeyed her father's instruction and not him, he raised his sword and struck her and cut her to pieces.

16. Their father, however, when he saw that his children had died for Christ and had fulfilled their contest, raised his hands to heaven and gave thanks to God, who made them worthy of the martyr's death. And he was filled with joy and with sadness: with joy because he offered his daughters as a sacrifice to God and an offering of righteousness, but with sadness because he remained behind and was separated from his children. 17. Then he began to reproach the magus, and he was rebuking him and saying: "O wretched and miserable man, what is your strength and the fortitude of your armament? Do not boast because you have slain two young children. Rather, you have been vanquished and put to shame by them, because you did not fulfill your wicked intent. But if you genuinely speak the truth, then begin tormenting me and compel me to worship this fire." 18. And when the magus heard this, he was filled with great rage. He rose up and was gnashing his teeth at him like a wild beast and began striking his teeth with a stone. 19. And when he had struck him excessively and had smashed his face, he grew tired and ordered the lighting of a great fire. And when they had lit the fire, they bound the man of God Eusebius the deacon and threw him into the fire. 20. The blessed one was perfected, adorned with the martyr's struggle, and he became a priest of the truth by his good deeds, which he acquired from his youth.

21. And you, listeners, imitate the virtuous deacon and second Abraham. For the first Abraham offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice,¹⁹² but the second Abraham offered his daughters as a sacrifice to the Lord. Then, Abraham offered Isaac with his intention, but he fulfilled the sacrifice in deed. The one offered his only son, but the other offered himself with his children as a sacrifice to the Lord. 22. Who among the Jews was ever so eager to die for the Lord, as today myriads and thousands ran to meet the martyr's death for Christ? 23. They ran to crucify Christ, but these people were handing their children over to death for Christ, even as fathers and mothers, young people and children did not spare themselves but joyfully received death as life.

¹⁹¹ Here we follow Garitte, who translates ჰმკვეთდა as *magorum-fidem-ei-persuadebat*. The lexica, however, give instead the meanings "to practice magic or sorcery," "to enchant or bewitch," or "to impress."

¹⁹² Cf. Gen. 22:1–19.

Arabic Recension A

12. Listen, brothers, to the deeds of her sister and what was done to her. 13. The enemy brought her before him and began to beseech her. But he was not granted his wish, because he thought that she was stricken with fear from what befell her sister and expected that she would obey him. 14. Her father beseeched her because he wanted to protect her from the mouth of the wolf. Listen now, brothers, what her father did. He said to her, "My daughter, do not dismay. Rather, endure and become a sacrifice to Christ and a source of pride for me. Endure a single hour with your sister and, lo, I shall strive to join you two." 15. When her father said this to her, the enemy raised his sword and slayed the young maiden.

16. When their father saw what had befallen his two daughters, he was filled with joy and sadness: with joy because he offered his two daughters as a sacrifice and offering to God,¹⁹³ and sadness because he remained behind after them and [because of] what separated him from his children. 17. At that moment he began to reproach the enemy saying, "You wretch! What have you done? Do you have strength because you have overpowered small children? If you speak truly, then order me as well to worship this fire!" 18. And when he heard that from him, he became filled with anger. He rose up gnashing his teeth and began to pelt him with stones and strike him on his teeth.^{194r} 19. And when he did this to him, he became weary of dealing with him. At that moment he ordered a fire to be made, and it was set ablaze. He then bound the deacon and threw him into that fire. 20. He made him into a martyr for God and a priest by virtue of his righteous deeds.

21. Emulate now, listeners, this deacon, for this deacon emulated the first Abraham because this man had taken hold of him. Abraham offered up his son Isaac to be sacrificed as he was commanded. And this deacon offered up his daughters to be slain for the faith of Christ. Abraham offered up his son Isaac to be sacrificed, but he did not sacrifice him in deed. As for this deacon, he offered up his daughters to be slain, and that was accomplished in deed. Abraham did not offer up himself, but as for this deacon, he offered up his daughters and himself. 22. How many Jews were slain for the sake of Christ? We think that they are 330 Jews. Today thousands and myriads are slain because of Christ. 23. How many of those died because of the crucifixion of Christ? As for right here, women, children, and men have been killed.

¹⁹³ A, B ذبيحة وقربان لله; V من ثمرة حقويه; ظلية [كذا] من ثمرة حقويه, "a sacrifice from the fruit of his loins."

¹⁹⁴ A اسنانه; B فمه, "his mouth."

Georgian Recension

XVII. 1. And again my own eyes also saw another lamentable thing. For there were two children, brothers in the flesh and twins born at the same time, and they were taken captive from the Holy City. 2. And we heard something amazing about them, which their parents and relatives said about them, that there was great love between them so that it was not possible to separate one from the other even for a moment: for on the same day they were born, on the same day they were baptized, the same mother raised them, and they shared a single bed. And one of them would not nurse unless the other one nursed, one would not eat anything before his brother, and neither one of them appeared in distinctive clothing, but they shared everything, food and clothing. And each of them found it unbearable whenever one was separated from his brother even for a moment on account of love. And their heartbroken mother told us all this with tears and lamentation. 3. And when the children were grown up and were ten years old, this same love was between them, and they were bound to each other like one soul divided in two bodies. And if one of them wept, the other one also wept. And if one of them laughed, the other one also laughed. There was between them a love that no one could describe.

4. But hear what happened to them and lament for them. And who will not weep and who will not be sad when he hears their fate? 5. For when the children were eleven years old, tremendous wrath befell them, and these two beautiful lambs were taken captive, and they were separated from each other, like the fledglings of a dove. And not only were they separated from each other, but they also never saw the faces of their parents again. 6. Nevertheless, when they were being separated from each other, a lamentable thing was seen between them, for brother was embracing brother, and tears of blood were falling from their eyes. 7. Then the wicked enemies separated them unwillingly and with compulsion. And when one held on to the other and they would not be separated, the evil men began to beat them, and they sundered them against their will. 8. Nevertheless, they let forth a loud cry with great weeping and much lamentation so that the earth, too, mourned for them. 9. The Persians, however, took them away, one to the east and the other to the west. And they were no longer allowed to greet each other¹⁹⁵ in their separation. And they became like Joseph, who was separated from his father and his brothers.¹⁹⁶ 10. And after this their sorrow, which had been extinguished, was again renewed: for after many days, one brother saw his brother for a moment while on their journey. 11. And who would have imagined their meeting since, although still alive, they were forgotten as dead?¹⁹⁷ 12. And on the way into captivity, as though coming forth from the tomb, they were looking around to the right and to the left, so that a brother might spot his brother. 13. But how was this possible? For they did not lead them along the same way, and they were not even going on foot, but they were seated on horses, and they were sending them forth quickly. And they were not able to stop and greet one another. 14. And while they were sitting on

¹⁹⁵ Lit., "to leave peace," which suggests something on the order of, as Garitte notes, *saluationem*.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Gen. 37:28.

¹⁹⁷ This sentence is a difficult one in the Georgian. Garitte renders it as follows: *Et quisnam putavisset* (litt. *putabat*) *congregationem iri* (litt. *congregari*) *illos, cum* (litt. *quia*), *vivi, sicut mortui in oblivionem* (*alter alterius*) *venissent* (litt. *venerant*).

Arabic Recension A

XVII. 1. Listen now so that I can tell you what my eyes saw. I saw something that confounds the mind. Among those taken captive from Jerusalem, the city of God, were two brothers. 2. They loved each other and were twins. Both of them were born in a single hour, and both of them were baptized in a single hour, and both of them were carried by their mother when being raised; and one of them did not nurse before his companion, as their poor mother has related to us. And one could not bear to lose the other, but each sought out his companion. 3. The two boys grew into young men and were ten years old, and they were like a single soul in two bodies. And if one cried, the other would cry with him; and if one laughed, the other laughed with him. There was between them a love that cannot be described.

4. But listen, brothers, so that I can tell you what befell them. Who will not weep and be sad, and who will not lament for them when he hears that? 5. When the brothers reached and became eleven years old, they were separated from each other. 9. They took one of them to the east and the other to the west; like sheep they were separated. Who can describe the sorrow between them and the words that they spoke to each other. The Persians did not allow one to bid the other farewell. When they were separated, they became like Joseph when he was separated from his brothers. 10. Then after that sorrow, with the long passage of time, sorrow returned to them. 11. Who can say or hope that one of them looked upon his companion? 12. They were like people who had exited from the tombs of the dead turning left and right on the road. 13. They were not on one road or walking on foot, but they were riding on horses. They did turn around, but they could not stop. 14. While they were marching, the one saw the other, and when he recognized him

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horses and were being led forth by the enemies, one of the brothers spotted his brother. And when he recognized him, he raised his voice and began to cry out to him with great weeping and said: “I adjure you, young man, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you tell me if you are from Jerusalem the Holy City and the son of the distinguished John?” 15. The other one answered and said while weeping: “I am the son of John of Jerusalem and your brother.” 16. Then they both raised their voices with great weeping and were looking back at each other. And they were striking their faces and crying out with pitiful utterances. 17. And they were not able to greet each other themselves, for their masters prevented them from stopping or alighting from their steeds, but they sent their horses running with great haste.

18. Then, my brothers, even the inanimate stones were crying out and weeping at their lamentation.¹⁹⁸ For one brother cried out to the other one with doubled weeping and said: “I beseech you, my brother, stay with me for a little, so that I may see you and be consoled in my misery. Wait for me one short [moment]. I adjure you by the Son of God: remember the breasts that we sucked together. Stay a little, so that I may see your face and kiss you and greet you and go forth in peace.” 19. The other brother answered and said: “How can I wait for you, my brother? For they will not allow me to see even a glimpse of you, and they will not allow me to answer you with words. And I do not have the ability to stop and stay for you, for I am no longer free, but a slave. 20. Go forth, my brother, go forth. And may the Lord console your soul, and may the Lord grant your heart patience, and may he give it to me also, for from now on I will no longer see your face. First you were separated from me, and now I have seen you for a moment. Nevertheless, from now on I will be separated from you forever, which is even more bitter than before. 21. But I hope in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that I will see you on the eternal day and be comforted. Peace to you, my beloved brother, peace to you. May the Lord be with you, who is able to bring us together and alone has the power to show me your face, for he is most merciful.” 22. These words one brother spoke to the other with great weeping, and then he was separated from him. And he vanished from his eyes, and he never saw him again. And their hearts held inexpressible sadness and doubled anguish, for when they thought that they would fill each other with brotherly love, they were separated forever, wounded by the thought.

XVIII. 1. To this point I have told you with these words what happened in Jerusalem and on the way into captivity. From this point on, however, I will tell you how our entry into Persia took place and how much sorrow fell upon the children of God, and their sorrow, pain, and mourning were renewed. 2. For before our entry into Babylon, they held us in a single enclosed area, and then they brought the Cross of Christ, the tree of our salvation, and they laid it at the threshold of the gate that went into the enclosure. 3. Then the evil enemies came, and they began to seize the faithful. They brought them forth with great haste, like lambs from a pen, and they said: “Trample on this your Cross, in which you hope. If not, we will slay you and give your bodies to the dogs to eat.” 4. O my brothers, how

198 Cf. Luke 19:40.

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he lifted his voice and spoke. And he cried out with a loud voice and said: “I adjure you, young man, in the name of Christ. Are you not from Jerusalem, the city of God? Are you not the son of the leader John?”¹⁹⁹ 15. The other answered him and said, “Yes, and I am your brother.” 16. At that moment they shouted and cried out to each other, speaking with eyes weeping great tears. 17. But they could not dismount from the horses, because their masters forbade them from doing so and the horses were galloping.

18. The stones, my beloved, cried out and wept. When they were turning toward each other, the weeping multiplied among the people. One was calling to the other and saying: “My brother, stop for me. Wait for me, by the breasts you and I nursed! Wait for me, by Jesus Christ! Why don’t you wait for me, my brother, so that I can see your face? Wait for me so that my lips can touch yours! Wait for me so that I can take consolation in you and then let you go in peace!” 19. His brother answered him saying to him, “My brother, how can I wait for you? You think that I can see you, but I am forbidden. I cannot, because I have no authority over myself and I cannot stop for you. 20. Go forth, my brother, go forth! God is the one who will console you. Ask God to help you endure, my brother! You left me the first, but this second time is harder than the first. 21. But I hope that I will see you on the Last Day and be comforted. Peace to you, my brother! Peace to you from God, who is able to show me your face, for he is merciful and full of compassion.” 22. Thus were they speaking until they were separated. When one was hidden from his companion, their sorrow increased, for when they were first separated their sorrow abated. But when they looked upon each other on the road and spoke to each other, their sorrow was renewed and multiplied, and their hearts were wounded.

XVIII. 1. Now, my beloved, it is necessary to complete what we began. Its completion must come about, so I tell you all how we entered the land of Persia. 2. Before our entry into it, they detained us in a large structure. Then they placed the Cross of Christ at the threshold of that place, on the path by which they had taken us into that place. 3. And like sheep when they exit from the pen, likewise they quickly brought [us] out while they said to us, “Trample the Cross!” 4. O brothers, whosoever obeyed them would die the final death, and

199 A, B, D, V [ابن يحنا الرئيس].

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much sorrow befell us! For anyone who obeyed their words and trampled on the Lord's Cross with their feet died in his soul for eternity. And anyone who did not obey their command was killed in the flesh by the sword and remained alive in his soul for eternity. 5. And the godless and merciless men did thus: for they stood at the gates with drawn swords, and they massacred those who had faith in the Lord. 6. But those who renounced [him] they allowed to live, although not many obeyed their godless word to go through the gate and insult the Cross of Christ in denial, but only a few who were weak in mind. 7. Most of the people, however, were cut to pieces for Christ and chose to die rather than trample on the Cross of Christ with their feet. And men and women were strong and became martyrs for the Lord—for where torments are abundant, there repose through struggle abounds even more.

8. Then, my brothers, great sorrow and immeasurable pain fell upon us all, for as we approached Babylon, they led us not to the river of Babylon²⁰⁰ but to the river of Persia. And they did not bring us to a cleansing bath, but they cast us into a river of blood. And they led us not before a Christian king, but before a Persian king, who was called Chosroes. And we met not with those who confessed the Holy Trinity, but on account of our sins we were counted among the deniers of the Holy Trinity. 9. Nevertheless, when the blessed patriarch Zachariah drew near to the gate, he remembered the captivity of the children of Israel and said: "Blessed is the Lord, who also brought on us everything that took place in the ancient days of the people of Israel and also in the time of Moses." 10. Then the man of God asked the Persians to release the people for some time and stop their torment. And when they did this, the blessed one ordered all the priests, deacons, and monks to assemble. And when they had assembled, he stood among them and worshipped toward the east, and all together they worshipped the Lord. 11. And when they arose from praying, the holy one ordered them to sing three Psalms of David in praise: first, Psalm 119, "In my affliction, I cried out to the Lord, and he heard me";²⁰¹ and second, Psalm 120, "I lifted up my eyes to the mountain; from where will my help come?";²⁰² and third, Psalm 117, "In my affliction I called on the Lord, and he heard me and led me into open space."²⁰³ And their psalmody was with great weeping and much lamentation, and each one of them mournfully spoke each of the Psalms. 12. The blessed Zachariah began to sing the psalms and said: "Woe is me, for my sojourn has been prolonged for me, and I dwelled among the inhabitants of Kedar."²⁰⁴ And certain others said: "Our feet have arrived to stand in your courts, Jerusalem."²⁰⁵ And others were saying: "When the Lord returned the captive of Zion, and we became comforted, then our mouth was filled with joy and our tongue with praise."²⁰⁶

200 Cf. Ps. 136:1.

201 Ps. 119:1.

202 Ps. 120:1.

203 Ps. 117:5.

204 Ps. 119:5.

205 Ps. 121:2.

206 Ps. 125:1–2.

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whosoever did not obey them they killed by the sword, 5. for those who carried swords stood at the gate and were killing the martyrs. 6. Few of them exited in haste and rejected God. 7. As for most of the people, they became martyrs, for where torments are multiplied, there lamentations are multiplied. Many women and men were martyred in that hour.^s

8. When we reached that place, they led us not to the river of Jordan but to the river of Persia. They led us not to a place of cleansing but to a river of blood. We went not joyfully to Saint John the Baptist²⁰⁷ but to the king of the Persians who is called Chosroes.²⁰⁸ 9. And when the patriarch Zachariah reached the gate, he recalled the captivity of the children of Israel and said, "Blessed is our God! Just as everything was in the time of Moses of old, so it became in the time of the disciples of Christ in the gospel."^t 10. At that moment the patriarch Zachariah beseeched the Persians to release the people and to lighten their toiling, and when they obeyed him, all the deacons and the monks gathered together. And he stood in their midst and worshipped toward the east, and they worshipped, too, like him. 11. And the multitude stood with him, and the patriarch ordered one of those who were with him to start the canon and to recite three psalms from the canon, the first of them the 119th, "In my affliction, I cried out to God,"²⁰⁹ and second the 121st, "And I was glad when it was said to me."²¹⁰ And their recital was full of weeping and sorrow, for they had much sadness. 12. And the patriarch Zachariah recited saying, "My home has been taken captive, and I dwelled in the dwelling of Kedar";²¹¹ and another he recited saying, "Make our feet firm until we enter your courts, O Jerusalem";²¹² and another he said, "When the Lord returned the captives of Zion, our hearts rejoiced."²¹³

207 A مار يحنّا المعدان; B ماري يحنّا المعدان; C دير القديس مر يحنّا, "the Monastery of Saint John."

208 A خسرايس; B خزرايس; C كسرى; D كسرا ملك فارس.

209 Ps. 119:1.

210 Ps. 121:1.

211 Ps. 119:5.

212 Ps. 120:3, 121:2.

213 Ps. 125:1–2.

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13. And when they finished this psalmody, the blessed Zachariah went up to slightly higher ground, and he said the “Alleluia” that the monks say at the time of the rising of the sun. He said it twice with the sticheron, and all the people cried out after him. 14. And then he began to cry out with a mournful voice, and he spoke to the people while weeping. Nevertheless, when they saw the patriarch’s lamentation, they began to cry out with great lamentation. 15. Then the blessed one extended his hand toward the river and said: “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. If I forget you, Jerusalem, may your right hand also forget me.”²¹⁴ And when he said this, the people were stirred to lamentation, and they no longer said the second alleluia, but they bowed their heads to the earth in grief. The holy good shepherd Zachariah, however, prayed to Christ with tears and groaning. 17. And when the people had prayed to the Lord for a long time with their heads bowed, then he ordered them to assemble the young children of age seven or less, and their number was three thousand. The enemies, however, did not prevent them from assembling them, but they were watching what they were doing. 18. And when they had assembled the multitude of the children, blessed Zachariah stood to the east at some distance from the people. And he stood the children before him and the people behind him. And he ordered them all to cry out to the Lord with raised voice and say: “O merciful Lord, have mercy on us.”

19. The patriarch, however, raised his eyes toward heaven and lifted his hands and said: “Lord, we do not have the right to speak before you, on account of the multitude of our sins. For our lips are defiled and our hands are besmirched, and our souls and our tongues are impure, and our guilt and sins weigh down on us, and we have no answer before you so as to pray to you. 20. But now, Lord, receive the cry of these pure infants and children, and receive their prayer, which they raise before you and ask for mercy from you. Receive their plea and have mercy on us all. And do not look upon our previous sins, for today our hearts are pure, and we hope in you. Do not turn your face away from these infants. 21. Remember, Lord, the destruction of your churches. Remember, Lord, the devastation of Zion. Look, Lord, at what they have done to your Cross and how they trample it underfoot with contempt, and we your faithful have also been compelled to perform their deed. Remember, Lord, the Holy Anastasis and the city of your holiness. 22. Remember, Lord, the words that you spoke to your disciples: ‘I will not leave you as orphans’,²¹⁵ and again, Lord, you said: ‘Behold, I am with you always and unto the end of time.’²¹⁶ 23. You alone are merciful, Lord, and the forgiver of sins. Do not condemn us, your servants, and do not repay us according to our sins. For we have greatly angered you. Receive, Lord, the prayer of your people. Behold, we have been handed over into captivity, Lord, and we stand before your enemies. You, Lord, are the helper of the afflicted. You, Lord, are the comforter of the abandoned and the one who fulfills our hopes.”

²¹⁴ Ps. 136:1, 5.

²¹⁵ John 14:18.

²¹⁶ Matt. 28:20.

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13–14. And when he finished this psalmody, the patriarch Zachariah went on top of a lofty outcropping of rocks, and he spoke the “Alleluia” that the monks say. And the patriarch wept, causing all the people to weep [and lament?].²¹⁷ At that moment the flock answered the call of the shepherd; then he responded to them in turn saying the “Alleluia,” and they responded to him. 15. When he said this, he extended his hand toward the banks of the river showing the people what to do. He began reciting and saying: “By the river of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. If I forget you, Zion, may my right hand be forgotten.”²¹⁸ 16. When he finished this speech, all the people wept and bowed their heads to the ground, and the righteous shepherd, the patriarch, sang psalms to Christ with weeping and moans, but he restrained himself due to his pity for the flock. 17. The people tarried for a long time beseeching God. Then the patriarch ordered those who were with him to assemble each small child between ten and five years of age²¹⁹ taken captive. When they gathered them all, their number was three thousand.²²⁰ And the enemies did not prevent them from doing that, but they watched everything they were doing. 18. And when they had brought the righteous flock, the patriarch took them and stood their assemblage behind him and commanded them to cry out with a raised voice saying, “O Lord, have mercy on us.”

19. The patriarch raised his eyes to heaven, with hands outstretched, saying: “We, O Lord, have no claim with you due to the multitude of our sins, because our lips are corrupt and our hands impure, and our tongues and our hearts are crooked. You have repaid us for our sins, because they resembled a weighty burden. We have no claim and no boldness with you to ask you. 20. But now we come before you. And we come like sheep crying out. Receive them [i.e., the flock], Lord. O Lord, receive and forgive them because their hearts are pure. Do not look, Lord, upon the multitude of our sins, and do not turn your face from these children. 21. Remember, Lord, the destruction of your churches. Remember, Lord, the destruction of Zion. Remember, Lord, what was done to your Cross. Remember, Lord, the church of the Holy Anastasis. 22. Remember, Lord, the word that you yourself said to your servants: you said, ‘I will not leave you as orphans.’²²¹ Lord, you said, ‘I am with you always and unto the end of time.’²²² 23. You are the forgiving, the merciful. Do not judge, Lord, your servants because our deeds are not straight before you. Accept, Lord, this prayer of your servants and the creation of your hands. We have become distressed, Lord, and have been taken into captivity, and we stand before the enemy. You, Lord, help all who seek refuge in you.”

²¹⁷ A يبكون وشواوايا, which seems corrupt; V ان يبكون ويتنهدون, “to weep and lament.”

²¹⁸ Ps. 136:1, 5.

²¹⁹ A عشرة سنين إلى خمسة عشر سنين; B من بن عشر سنين إلى خمسة سنين; V العشر سنين, “ten to fifteen years old”; B ابن خمس سنين وما دونها إلى العشر سنين, “five years old and above up to ten years old.”

²²⁰ ثلاث تالاف [كذا] صبي لان جميع السبي لم يكونوا قد [كذا] ثلاث تالاف, “three thousand young men”; V ابيع منها احد, “three thousand children because all the captives had not yet been sold, not one.”

²²¹ John 14:18.

²²² Matt. 28:20.

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24. These words of prayer the good shepherd spoke to the Lord. And when the infants said Kyrie eleison, then we all prayed to the Lord with fear and trembling. 25. For word reached our ears, what the wicked king was planning for us, that we would become partakers of his wickedness. Therefore, we prayed to the Lord that he would not grant authority to the evil king and he would make us servants of his idols. 26. And then Patriarch Zachariah began to console us. He opened his mouth, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and said: “The greatly merciful Lord our God loves the peace of the world, and he desires the salvation of sinners and their conversion to repentance. And he does not desire their death and ruin, but he waits and expects their conversion,²²³ and he strengthens the faithful. 27. My children, remember the word of the Lord, which he said to his disciples: ‘When they hand you over to kings and rulers, do not worry about what words you will reply, for the Lord of heaven will speak instead of you at that time.’²²⁴ 28. And also now, do not worry, for the Lord will speak instead of you before the king. 29. And if it were a human being who handed us over to this torment, we would be sad. But since the Lord is the one who brought this torment upon us, we will not be sad and will not be afraid, for death and life are in his hands, as he said: ‘I will kill, and I will make alive.’²²⁵ 30. And if a king is able to fulfill his command on earth, how much more then is the King of Heaven, who holds death and life in his hands, able to fulfill his command in an instant.

31. “But now we say with the three youths: ‘Our God is in heaven, who is able to deliver us from torment and also from the hands of this king.’²²⁶ 32. Behold, my beloved, as the Lord willed, so he has done. May his name be blessed unto the ages.²²⁷ 33. Behold, we have come to the place where the fiery furnace was lit for the three youths. And now we will come to the place of the furnace and will see the pit of Daniel.²²⁸ And when we see the places of the holy martyrs, let us hasten to imitate their deeds. 34. Let us not be frightened, let us not be afraid, and let us not be sad in this torment, for Christ our Lord, who is in heaven, is merciful, and he extinguished the fiery furnace and shut the mouths of the lions.²²⁹ 35. When the trials of temptation are multiplied, his mercies also are multiplied. Therefore, his mercy will come to us swiftly in this our affliction. And the Lord alone will save us from this torment. 36. Now let us put on the Holy Spirit and take up the Lord’s Cross,²³⁰ for he²³¹ is our strength. And let us not deny Christ the Lord, for he is our God. Let us become the temple and dwelling place of his Spirit,²³² for he is the Word

223 Cf. Ezek. 18:23, 33:11.

224 Matt. 10:19.

225 Deut. 32:39.

226 Dan. 3:17.

227 Ps. 113:3.

228 Cf. Dan. 3, 6.

229 Cf. Heb. 11:33–34. Here we follow the reading of J for a past tense of “extinguished,” which better suits the context and also better reflects the biblical passage.

230 Cf. Mark 8:34.

231 Or “it.”

232 Cf. 1 Cor. 3:16.

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24. With these words the righteous shepherd implored God. And when we looked upon the children, they cried and were unable to speak from the outcry. We began to beseech God trembling with terror, 25. because we heard the words of the king and were terrified. And we beseeched God not to allow the king to have authority over us and not to compel us to believe in his idols. 26. Then the patriarch consoled us and opened his holy mouth and put on the Holy Spirit and said: “God the Merciful loves the peace of the world in order to return them to the truth, and he does not desire the death of the sinner but rather awaits his reconciliation and repentance.²³³ And he does not desire to give power to those who test him.” 27. He began to exhort us saying, “My children, when they hand you over to the rulers and kings, as Christ our Lord said, do not worry about what you should say, because the Lord in heaven will speak on your behalf at that time.”²³⁴ 29. And if a human being had handed us over to this torment, we would despair. But this matter is from God, so do not be discouraged, for he holds life and death in his hands. For he has said, “I will give life, and I will kill.”²³⁵ 30. If an earthly king issues a command, it comes to pass. How much more so when the King of Heaven,²³⁶ who holds life and death in his hands, issues a command?

31. So now we say with the three youths, “Our God is in heaven, and he is able to save us from the hands of this nation.”²³⁷ 32. Now, my beloved, just as God wills, so it is.²³⁸ 33. We have reached the place of the fiery furnace into which they threw the three youths. Now we will go into the fiery furnace. Now we will look upon the pit of Daniel. And when we see their places, we will hasten and become like them. 34. We will not be frightened and will not dismay if we see the torment, for Christ, who is in heaven, will cool the fiery furnace and subdue the lions. 35. Because when misfortunes increase, mercy increases. Thus God reminds us and helps us in this hardship. God sends us his mercy in the time of torment. 36. We ourselves will put on the Holy Spirit and grab hold of the Cross, for he is our strength. We will not reject Christ, for he is our God. We accept, and are the dwelling

233 Cf. Ezek. 18:23, 33:11.

234 Matt. 10:19.

235 Deut. 32:39.

236 A ملك السما; B ملك الملوك, “king of kings.”

237 Sic; cf. Dan. 3:17.

238 Ps. 113:3.

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of the Father. 37. Let us endure death for him, so that he will make us martyrs for his name. Let us arm ourselves and fight against our enemies for our faith, so that they will be astonished and terrified when they see our courage and death for the sake of the Law. 38. O my children, behold, Christ the Lord stands among us, and all his angels and all his saints are helping us. And who is god as our God?²³⁹ For he fights against our enemies in our place, as he said: ‘I am with you always and unto the end of the world.’”²⁴⁰ 39. And when the people heard this instruction and consolation from the blessed Zachariah, they were strengthened, and all together they raised their voice and blessed God. The enemies, however, ceased tormenting the people and compelling them to trample on the Cross.

XIX. 1. Now listen, my brothers, and I will tell you. For when we reached Babylon, and they informed the wicked king of our arrival one day before, he summoned his table companions and princes, the magi and sorcerers and soothsayers, for he was thinking that our hope in the Cross was in vain. 2. And he said to them: “Behold the power of the fire, in which we hope, has given us the great city of the Christians, Jerusalem, and their Cross, in which they hope and which they worship. And the leader of their faith has also been delivered into our hands, and tomorrow he will come before us with his people. Now then, make haste and prepare for a contest with him, and work some marvelous deed that they are not able to work. And if you prevent them from doing anything, and they do not accomplish anything similar to what you do, I will enrich you with gifts and presents.” 3. And one of the magi answered the king and said: “O king, may you live forever, and do not let your heart worry about their leader, the head of the Christians: for tomorrow you will see and know what sort of servants you have with you and what sort of table companions are seated before you.”

4. And when we reached the city, they led us like sheep to the slaughter. And they brought us to the palace and stood us before the king. And before him stood the Cross of our salvation, just as our Lord Jesus Christ stood before the ruler Pilate. And they began to mock and ridicule the Cross among themselves.²⁴¹ 5. Then our blessed shepherd Zachariah stood before the king like Moses before Pharaoh and like Daniel before king Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonians.²⁴² And God showed a wonder by his Cross, as he showed Pharaoh a wonder by the staff of Moses. 6. Then a wicked magus had the audacity to attack the holy one, as the sorcerers did to Moses. Nevertheless, the king, when he saw the people standing before him, began to boast and preen, and he was exalting himself. And although it was not possible, he was exalting himself to heaven with delight.²⁴³ 7. But Christ our Lord, who fulfilled all

239 Ps. 76:14.

240 Matt. 28:20.

241 Cf. Mark 15:1–5, 16–20.

242 Cf. Exod. 7:1–18; Dan. 2.

243 სალაღობა is very difficult to translate here. A corresponding form does not appear in the lexica. Garitte translates it as *prae iactantia*, “from boasting.” Nevertheless, the lexical basis for this translation is not entirely clear. Instead, we have translated above on the basis of a supposed relation to სალაღობელი or სალაღობო, “festive,” “amusing,” or “entertaining,” according to the lexica.

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place of, the Holy Spirit because he is the Word of God. 37. We endure death for Christ so that we become martyrs for our beliefs, and the enemies will be confounded when they see us endure death for our beliefs. 38. Brothers, be steadfast. Christ is with us, as are his angels and his martyrs. What god is like our God? He fights on our behalf.²⁴⁴ He said, ‘I am with you in your well-being until the end of time.’”²⁴⁵ 39. When the multitude heard this speech and this prayer, their worries departed from their hearts.

XIX. 1. Now I wish, brothers, to tell you what was. Listen, my children, to what happened, for I know that you desire to hear what happened before today. When the Persian king learned that we had drawn near to him, he called his table companions: magi, sorcerers, and astrologers.²⁴⁶ 2. He said to them, “Behold the power of the fire. It delivered to us the city of the Christians, the great city of Jerusalem, and the Cross they worship.”²⁴⁷ And their great leader is in our hands, and tomorrow he will come before us. Now, conceive some deed to do for them that they will not be able to match. If you defeat them, I shall grant you many gifts.” 3. As for one of the magi,²⁴⁸ he answered the king and said to him, “O king, may you live forever. As for the leader of the Christians, worry not, because tomorrow you will learn just what sort of servants and table companions you have.”

4. When we entered the city, they led us like sheep to the slaughter. And they stood us before the king, and the Cross also stood before him just as Christ stood before Pilate. And they mocked the Cross and treated it like a plaything among themselves. 5. Then the righteous shepherd, the patriarch Zachariah, stood before the king just as Moses had stood before Pharaoh and Daniel stood before Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon. God showed him his marvels through the Cross like those God showed to Pharaoh through the staff of Moses. 6. That vile magus had prepared like the Egyptians.²⁴⁹ When the king looked upon the multitude²⁵⁰ that had come before him, he boasted and exalted himself. In his arrogance he nearly exalted himself to heaven, 7. but Christ in his power was the one who cast him down to earth.

244 Cf. Ps. 76:14.

245 Matt. 28:20.

246 A, V جلساه ووزراه ومنجميه وسحراه; C جلساه المجوس والسحرة والمنجمين, “his table companions, his viziers, his astrologers, and his sorcerers.”

247 Lit., “the Cross to which they prostrate [كانوا يسجدوا له].”

248 A, B, V من المجوس; C من السحرة, “of the sorcerers.”

249 I.e., the Egyptian sorcerers at the court of Pharaoh in Exod. 7:11; 8:7, 18–19.

250 Read الخلق for الخق in A.

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his divine plan with humility and through his descent to earth annihilated the power of the enemy and shattered the strength of hell, was laughing at him.

8. Then the king ordered them to bring the blessed Zachariah before him, and he said to him: “Who are you, or where are you from? Or what wonder can you accomplish so that we may see it and believe in you?” 9. Nevertheless, the holy man of God Zachariah was filled with the Spirit and was not beset by fear of him or his princes or officials. But his eyes looked up to heaven and his mind was fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ and his Glorious Cross, and with the power of its might came an assistance like a host of angels. 10. And he answered the king and said: “O king, I am a sinful man and mired in faults. And behold, you see that the Lord has delivered us into your hands for chastisement on account of our sins. And I will not test the Lord my God,²⁵¹ but I will receive the miseries that have befallen us with gratitude. Nevertheless, you want me to test him, you know.” 11. The king said to him: “How then do you say that ‘there is no other god as our God’? Behold, now you know that my faith is greater than your faith, and my god is greater than your god.”

12. And when he said this, he brought the magus before all the people and said to him: “Tell me, what do you intend to do, or with what wonder do you wish to triumph over him?” 13. The magus, however, began to boast, and he said to the blessed Zachariah in the presence of the king: “Tell me what I did yesterday and what I intend to do today, so that I may recognize the power of your god and believe in you. Otherwise, I will tell you what you did yesterday and what you intend to do today, and you will believe in the fire and abandon the Christian faith. 14. And when the holy patriarch and peaceful shepherd heard this, he was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he said to the king: “O king, is it right for your servants to lie in your presence and mock your majesty with their lies and fantasies?” 15. The king, however, when he heard these words began to swear and curse before all the people, and he said: “I say in truth, if my servant dares to speak a lie in my presence, I will order that his head be cut off. And if my servant tells the truth, I will order the death of the leader of the Christians.” 16. Then the holy one rejoiced, for he knew what God intended to do through him. And he approached the magus and said to him: “Tell me, O wicked magus and enemy of God, are you able to tell me what I did yesterday and what I intend to do today?” 17. And the magus answered him and said: “Yes, I am able to tell you the secrets of your heart.” 18. Then the good shepherd stretched forth his hand and took the staff that belonged to the magus, for it is their custom to have a staff in their hands, and he said to him: “Tell me, O wicked magus, what I intend to do at this very moment, and do not treacherously concern yourself with lies about yesterday or today: will I strike you with this rod or not?”

19. When the magus heard this, he was astonished, and the color of his face changed, and he responded with nothing. And he began to think to himself and was saying: “What have I done? I have delivered myself to perdition. Now I do not know what I should respond. If I say, ‘You intend to strike me,’ he will say to me, ‘I do not intend to strike you.’ And if I say, ‘You do not intend to strike me,’ he will strike me immediately. And I do not know what I should respond—either way I am vanquished. Where is the nature of fire and the power of the sun? Come to aid your servant and save me now in this time of affliction.”

²⁵¹ Cf. Deut. 6:16.

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8. Then the king issued the command for the righteous leader Zachariah to be brought before him. The king said, “Who is this man, and where does he come from? What sort of marvels can he accomplish for me to behold and believe?” 9. As for the holy man of God, the Holy Spirit resided within him. He was not troubled, and he was not fearful at that hour, for his eyes looked up to heaven and his heart cried out to Jesus Christ. He looked upon the Holy Cross and sought its aid like the angels. 10. He said to the king: “O king, I am a sinner guilty of many sins. And behold, now you look upon us, and we have been delivered into your hands so that you may chastise us for the sake of our sins. But I will not tempt my God. Rather, with thankfulness, I accept all that has befallen me.” 11. The king said to him: “How do you say that there is no god like your God? Behold, now I will make you recognize that my faith is greater than your faith.”²⁵²

12. Then the king called for the magus who had spoken to him and said to him, “Tell me what you intend to do. Show me the power of your fire.” 13. The magus said to the patriarch before the multitude, “Tell me what I did yesterday and what we intend to do today, and I will recognize that your God is great. If not, I will tell what you did yesterday and that which you intend to do today.” And the magus said, “I tell you that you will believe in the fire and abandon the Christian faith.” 14. When the peaceable, righteous shepherd, the patriarch Zachariah, heard that, he was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to the king, “O king, does it befit your servants to speak with disdain and lies before the king?” 15. When the king heard, he swore an oath before the fire and said, “If my servant lies, I will order his death, but if he speaks the truth, I will order the death of the leader of the Christians.” 16. Then the holy patriarch rejoiced. And the holy patriarch Zachariah drew near to that magus and said to him, “Tell me! Tell me, O enemy of God! Can you tell me what I did and what I intend to do?” 17. And the magus said to him, “Yes, I can do that.” 18. At that moment the righteous shepherd stretched out his hand and took the staff that the magus was clasping, and he said to the magus, “Tell me. Will I strike you with this staff, or not?”

19. When the magus heard that, he was astonished²⁵³ and fell quiet, thinking to himself, “I am undone. What will I do? And what can I say? If I tell him that he intends to strike me, he will not, and if I tell him he will not strike, he will. Woe is me! I am undone! Where now is the power of the fire? Come now and save me!” 20. When he thought thus, he could

²⁵² A, B, V; C ساعرفك بان الهة النار اقوا الالهة, “I will make you recognize that the gods [sic] of fire are the strongest of gods.”

²⁵³ A, B, V بهت, which can be read either as *buhita*, “he was astonished,” or *bahita*, “he turned pale.”

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20. He said this in his heart, but it was of no use. And when the magus sorcerer remained stunned in his deliberation and answered nothing, then the king, on account of his oath and his table companions, ordered his head cut off, for shame from the people overcame him. 21. When the magus realized this, fear and trembling fell upon him.²⁵⁴ And all the Chaldeans were horrified when they saw the swift death of the magus. And from that point on, no one dared any longer to draw near to the Lord’s Cross, the tree of our salvation, for fear seized them all together, on account of this wonder.

XX. 1. And now, my brothers, I tell you of a wonder, worked by our holy father, which was made known to me by others. For I myself saw only the one of the magus, and I, worthless as I am, through my lack of resolve became cowardly and fled. And I did not find perfect endurance with the holy father Zachariah, so as to remain with him for a long time, nor could I contend with the people, so that I would share in their prize. But there were some among the captive brothers who fled from the Persians at night, and I, wretch that I am, fled with them. And I came to Jerusalem and wanted to make known to you all the things that my eyes had seen. But this other thing I learned from trustworthy brothers. 2. And there was a certain monk, who was called Abba Simeon, and he told me this about Patriarch Zachariah and said: 3. “After a while, they gave him great honor through the will of God, who always glorifies and honors those who honor and glorify him, as the word of God says, ‘I glorify those who glorify me.’²⁵⁵ 4. For a certain woman was found among the wives of King Chosroes who honored the tree of the Holy Cross and the holy patriarch Zachariah, for this woman was a Christian in name but was from the heresy of the infidel and God-hated Nestorius.²⁵⁶ 5. She petitioned the king and received the tree of the Holy Cross still sealed, along with the patriarch and certain others of the captives whom she chose. And she led them to her palace and gave them a nice and restful place. And she

254 Cf. Job 4:14.

255 1 Kgdms. 2:30.

256 The *Khūzistān Chronicle* states that Chosroes had two Christian wives (see Guidi, *Chronica minora I*, 1:17; trans. Greatrex and Lieu, *Roman Eastern Frontier*, 230), one named Shīrīn the Aramaean and the other Maria the Roman, identified by later historians with a daughter of the Byzantine emperor Maurice—e.g., Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī in his *Tārīḥ* (see de Goeje et al., *Annales*, 1:994, 999; trans. Bosworth, *History of al-Ṭabarī*, 305, 312). Flusin identifies the wife referred to here in this story with Maria the Roman (see Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, 2:102–3, 172, citing Eutychius, *Annales* 1083B); however, this identification appears to be incorrect, for the designation of Shīrīn as “Aramaean” in the *Khūzistān Chronicle* seems more suggestive of a Nestorian than a Roman woman, and it was Shīrīn whom later historians famously claimed converted from “Nestorianism” to miaphysitism. Cf. Hutter, “Shirin, Nestorianer und Monophysiten,” 273–86; Baum, *Shirin*, 41–48. See also the comments of Chosroes about his wife Shīrīn in a letter written in about 593/4 in honor of Saint Sergius as reported by the seventh-century Byzantine historian Theophylact Simocatta in his *History* 5.14.3–4: “And since Seirem is a Christian and I a pagan (*hellēn*), our law does not grant us freedom to have a Christian wife. So on account of my gratitude to you, for this reason I disregarded the law, and I held and hold from day to day this one among my wives as legitimate” (see de Boor and Wirth, *Theophylacti*, 214; trans. Whitby and Whitby, *History of Theophylact*, 151; cf. Payne, *State of Mixture*, 172–73, 178–79). The romance between Chosroes II Parvez and Shīrīn becomes immortalized in Persian literature via epic narrative poems from the *Šāhnāmah* of Ferdowsī (d. 1020) and the *Ḥamsah* of Nezāmī (1141–1209); see Orsatti, “Kosrow o Širin.”

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not say anything, and he became afraid and overwhelmed with trembling. None would draw near to the Cross, for they all feared it.²⁵⁷

XX. 1. Now, brothers, I will tell you what transpired before our entry into Babylon, because I did not enter Babylon with the leader, the patriarch. I did not see what he did to the magus—I, the wretch, did not endure alongside the captives. Among those taken captive were also people who escaped from the Persians,²⁵⁸ and I myself fled with them and returned to Jerusalem. I, the destitute, am one who did not endure until the end. Now, brothers, I do not wish to write other than what I saw, but I sought out the brothers who fled after me from the Persians, because they were present for what happened between the patriarch and the magus. They informed me what transpired, and I wrote down what I heard from them. 2. As for a monk, who was called Abba Simeon, he related to me on the authority of the holy patriarch Zachariah that 4. when the Persians had taken him, one of the king’s consorts²⁵⁹ took him, and she took the beams of the Cross, because she was a Christian in name, for she was a Nestorian. 5. Along with him she took a great number of the captives to the royal palace,²⁶⁰ and she provided them with provisions and dispatched

257 Such Christian contests with the magi are a major theme in sixth-century hagiography; see Wood, *Chronicle of Seert*, 214n105.

258 A, B من الفرس V من بلد الفرس. The word *al-furs* can mean either “Persia” or “the Persians.”

259 A, B جارية من جواني الملك C سرية نصطورية, “a Nestorian concubine”; V جارية سرية, “a maiden concubine.” In contrast to the Georgian version, the Arabic calls her a *ġāriyah*—a word meaning “maiden” but also “slave-girl”—thus implying that she was either of servile origin or, at the very least, not his fully legitimate wife.

260 A إلى دار البلاط V في البلاط C في دار عزلة في البلاط. Cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, 1:111.

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showed them great honor and generosity and gave them fragrant incense and candles and everything that they needed in abundance.

6. “After a while, some men from the Jews became jealous of the honor that they were all showing to the man of God, and they accused him before the king, for they had standing to speak before him by the devil’s will. And they said to him: ‘He is a fornicator.’ 7. And they promised money to a certain wretched girl who had given birth to a child a few days before and persuaded her to accuse him before the king.”²⁶¹ 8. The king, however, summoned the blessed one and handed him over to the judges for trial. And the Jews, always enemies of God, stood with the girl. They cried out and insisted that the child whom the girl had was his. The child was fifteen or twenty days old, and the girl cried out loudly. 9. But the man of God stood fearlessly before the judges and was leaning on his staff, and he remained silent for a long time. The judges, however, were urging him to give his response. 10. Then the blessed one asked for the child, and when he had picked him up in his arms, he made the sign of the Cross over his mouth and asked him before all of them and said: ‘In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, speak the truth, child. Am I your father?’ And the child answered as a grown man and said: ‘No he is not.’ 11. And all those who were there heard this. And they were seized with wonder at the marvel of God’s mercy. The king, however, when he heard from the judges, added even more to his honors, and he regarded him as a prophet.”

XXI. 1. And this same Simeon told us another story about the holy patriarch similar to this one, and he said: “The wife of a certain prince of that land was barren and had not given birth. She besought many sorcerers and soothsayers that she would be given a child. And her petition was not received. 2. Her husband, however, came with faith to the holy one and besought him to pray and that God would give them a child. Nevertheless, he did not consent, but he said to him: ‘Forgive me, for I am a sinful man, and I do not have standing to pray to the Lord.’ 3. The man, however, persisted in his supplication for a long time. Then the blessed one stood toward the east before the Holy and Glorious Cross, and he offered prayer and veneration for the man. He then asked for water and washed his face before the man, and he gave the water that he rinsed with to the man and said: ‘Go forth and give this water that I rinsed with to your wife and tell her to drink from it and anoint her body with it.’ 4. He gave the water immediately, and when she took it, the woman asked them: ‘What is this?’ And they told her the truth, what it was. Nevertheless, she refused it and ordered them to pour it out. 5. And when her husband came, the wretched woman began to accuse him and said: ‘Does it seem right to you to send me water that such a person has rinsed with to drink?’ 6. When he heard this, he said to her: ‘And you neither drank

²⁶¹ The story employs a popular topos of late-antique hagiography: an infant granted the gift of speech by God to acquit the innocent of a false accusation. See, e.g., John Moschos’s *The Spiritual Meadow* (in PG 87, 2977–80; trans. Wortley, *John Moschos*, 94–95). Also Canart, “Le nouveau-né.”

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to the leader, the patriarch Zachariah, every honor and sent him precious and fragrant incense for perfuming the Cross.”^v

6. After many days, some people from the Jews began to envy the patriarch, the righteous shepherd, due to the honor he enjoyed from the woman, the consort of the king, and they accused him of fornicating with a young slave-girl. 7. At that time, the Jews had sought out the slave-girl to inform the king of that. The slave-girl came forward and informed the king what the Jews had told her. 8. The king sent after the patriarch, and when he came, he stood before the king. Then the Jews came to the king and alongside them was the slave-girl, who had a small child with her, and she was crying out and saying, “This boy who is with me is from this old man!” And the boy was fifteen days old, or a bit more, and she was crying out with a loud voice. 9. The patriarch stood not saying a word. The leaders said to him, “Won’t you speak, old man?” 10. Then the patriarch extended his hand and took the child and carried him in his hands and made the sign of the Cross across his mouth. And he said to him, “O boy, speak in the name of Jesus Christ and say before this entire assembly the truth. Am I your father?” The boy answered and said, “It is not true. You are not my father.”²⁶² 11. All who were in attendance were stupefied, and they heard the child speaking. From that day, Zachariah was held in even more honor by the king, and the king took him to be like a prophet.”^w

XXI. 1. Abba Simeon also related to us, brothers, the story of another marvel. He said that there was a man among the palace notables²⁶³ who had a barren wife. He treated her with every medicine,²⁶⁴ but he was not granted a child. 2. When her husband saw the patriarch and recognized him and his holiness became evident to him, he beseeched him to pray to his god so that, by the prayer of the holy Zachariah, he would give him a child. 3. At that moment, the patriarch stood facing east before the wood of the Cross. He wept profusely and finished his prayer. Then he took some water, washed his face, and gave the ablution water to that nobleman. And he said to him, “Go and give this water to your wife and have her anoint her face with it, and if she wishes to drink, let her drink it.”^x 4. That leader departed with the water for his wife and gave it to her. She took it and asked one of her servants, saying, “Where did this water come from?” The servant said to her, “This water is here because that elderly Christian man has sent it to you.” When she heard that, she ordered it to be poured out.²⁶⁵ 5. When her husband had returned to her, she said to him, “The ablution water that this elderly Christian man washed with, is it fitting for you to send it to me so that I can wash my face with it or drink it?” 6. When her husband heard

²⁶² The Qur’an famously portrays the infant Jesus as speaking from the cradle to defend his mother Mary from accusations of sexual impropriety (Q. Maryam 19:29–34), and the topos also reappears in a famous canonical *ḥadīth* attributed to Muḥammad about an ascetic of the Israelites named Ġurayḡ. See Anthony, “Jurayj.”

²⁶³ A رجل من أشرف البلاط; B رجل شريف, “a noble man”; C رجل من أشرف الملك, “a man from the nobles of the king”; V انسان من بلاط الملك, “a person from the palace of the king.”

²⁶⁴ V adds بكل طب وسحر وتعزيم, “with every medicine, enchantment, and spell.”

²⁶⁵ In C, she has her servant pour it out into a watered plot of her garden, في بعض روايا بستان لها.

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from it nor anointed yourself?’ And she said: ‘No, I ordered instead that it should be poured out.’ 7. And he asked them: ‘Where was it poured out?’ And when he came to that place, he found two beautiful flowers that had suddenly come forth. 8. And he took them and brought them to his wife and said to her: ‘Do you see, wretch, how in envy you rose against yourself? For God wanted to help us, and if you had drunk from this water, two children such as these would have been given to you to bear. But you were neither worthy nor did you obtain what you want.’ 9. Nevertheless, she blamed herself on account of her rage and her pride, and nothing was any use to her, and she remained barren until the end of her life.”

XXII. The Letter of Patriarch Zachariah, Which He Wrote from Babylon to Jerusalem to Those Who Remained from the Captivity:²⁶⁶

1. To the widowed bride, the Church of Zion, and to the Holy City, whose children have been made captive, the glorious city, and to the flock that does not have its shepherd, the city of Jerusalem and all the children of Christ who dwell in it, from Patriarch Zachariah, afflicted and forsaken and beset with toil. 2. I have sent you this letter of perseverance, children of the holy church. I have sent you grace and comfort from Christ our good and merciful Savior, who wipes away our sins. And this is the beginning of my letter. 3. May the name of the Lord be blessed from now unto the ages,²⁶⁷ for the Lord will not do with us according to our sins, nor will he repay us according to our transgressions.²⁶⁸ 4. But woe is me, a feeble man, for I have been separated from Zion and come to abide in the dwelling places of Kedar, as the prophet David said.²⁶⁹ And so day and night I recite and rehearse, and my lips do not cease from this saying: “If I forget you, Jerusalem, may your right hand also forget me.”²⁷⁰ 5. Know, my children, that “by the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion,”²⁷¹ and holy Golgotha and the glorious Anas-tasis and Bethlehem, desired by all. 6. Behold, my brothers, we have raised our eyes to the mountain; from where will our help and salvation come?²⁷²

266 This letter is also extant in an independent state in Greek: *PG* 86.2, 3227–34. Although the two versions are often close, they are nonetheless significantly different.

267 Ps. 112:2.

268 Cf. Ps. 102:10.

269 Ps. 119:5.

270 Ps. 136:5.

271 Ps. 136:1.

272 Ps. 120:1.

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her say that, he said to her, “So you neither drank it nor anointed your body and face with it?” “No,” she said, “but I ordered it to be poured out.” 7. Then he asked where it was poured out and went to the place. And when he saw the place where the water was poured out, behold, two shoots had sprung up in that place—two shoots of myrtle because of that water. 8. The man plucked them and brought them to his wife and said to her, “You idiot! You wretched woman! Look how you have brought yourself to ruin, for God wished to provide you with a child. If you would have drunk it, then you would have been like these two shoots, giving birth to two boys in a single womb.”²⁷³ But you do not deserve this and will not be given what you desire.” 9. The woman felt profound regret, but it did not benefit her a thing. She remained without a child until the day of her death.

XXII. Now, brothers, do not be troubled, but listen so I can tell you the story. When the patriarch’s time in the land of Persia and Babylon grew long, he wrote a letter from the land of Persia and Babylon to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and in it these words are written:

Christ, my God, my strength, my hope, and my salvation, this is the epistle²⁷⁴ of Zachariah the patriarch from the land of Babylon to those Christians who remain in Jerusalem.

1. To the widowed bride, the Church of Zion, and to the Holy City from which its children have been taken, the city of the Glorious King, and to the flock that does not have a shepherd, Jerusalem, and to the churches of God and to all those children of Christ who remain there, from the patriarch Zachariah, the wretched. 2. This letter is a letter of joy that I address to you, children of the church. I send you mercy and loving-kindness from Christ. Our Father is loving and merciful. This is the beginning of my letter to you. 3. The name of the Lord is blessed because he has not repaid according to the measure of our sins, our intentions, and transgressions.²⁷⁵ 4. But woe is me, for I have been exiled from Zion and dwell in the dwelling places of Kedar, as the prophet David said.²⁷⁶ Thus I recite and say night and day by my lips, which do not cease from this saying, “If I forget you, Jerusalem, I will forget my right hand.”²⁷⁷ 5. Know, brothers, that “we sat down by the river of Babylon and wept when we remembered Zion”²⁷⁸ and holy Golgotha and the Sepulchre and Bethlehem the remembered. 6. Behold, brothers, we have raised our eyes to the mountain, whence comes our salvation.²⁷⁹

273 Read *في بطر* for *في بطن* in A.

274 The word marked as illegible here in Garitte’s edition of A is *صحيفة*.

275 Cf. Ps. 102:10.

276 Ps. 119:5.

277 *Sic* A *انا نسيك يا اورشليم تنساني يميني* [كذا] B *ان انا نسيك يا بيت المقدس انسا يميني* C, V *ان انا نسيك يا اورشليم تنساني يميني*. Cf. Ps. 136:5.

278 Ps. 136:1.

279 Ps. 120:1.

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7. Listen, you who have been saved by Christ from the enemy,²⁸⁰ and he has delivered from affliction and sadness, hear the voice of your shepherd Zachariah, and do not be amazed that God has delivered you from the captivity of the enemy. 8. Remember the words of the apostle, which he says: “If you are without discipline, you are illegitimate and not children.”²⁸¹ Therefore also beware of pride, so that you will not wander into useless thoughts and be handed over to chastisement. But prepare yourself even more to be pleasing to God, so that when you go forth from the world the matter of the rich man and the poor man Lazarus will not be fulfilled in you.²⁸² 9. If you live in rest, and affliction and discipline do not befall you, know that eternal torment is prepared for you. 10. See then that your heart does not grow fat from pleasure and [that] joy reigns over you and you increase the drinking of wine, but then when you need a drop of water, you will not find it. 11. Do not boast and think that you have been delivered from the enemies and God has protected you on account of your worthiness, but on account of your weak faith and infirmity God did not deliver you into the hands of the enemy. 12. Guard yourselves against laziness and deviance, for there are many who war against you, and remember that fearsome day. And if, when you are brought before a mortal judge, fear and trembling reign in your hearts and many of you flee in terror, how much more so when you will be brought before the immortal Judge and the Creator of heaven and earth!

13. Do not rejoice that some from among you were made captive and you remained, and do not be amazed that many of the saints have been captured and sinners have been spared. 14. Hear the word of the Lord that he said to the Jews: “Was the assembly whose blood Pilate mixed with sacrifices to idols particularly sinful? It was not. Nevertheless, I say to you, if you do not repent, it will be even worse for you than for them. And you saw the twelve men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell: do not think that they were worse sinners than all those who were in Jerusalem. They were not. But I say to you, if you do not repent, you will perish just as they did.”²⁸³ 15. Hear this word and fear the Lord, and do not forget us, for we and you are one body. And remember the word of the apostle that says, “If one member of the body suffers, all members of the body suffer with it.”²⁸⁴ And again he said, “Who is weak, and am I not weak?”²⁸⁵ 16. Therefore know, my brothers, the sorrow of your brothers and grieve with them and do not forget their friendship, so that they will not say of you, “We have become estranged from our brothers and visitors to the sons of our mother,”²⁸⁶ that is Zion and its children.

17. Incline your hearts toward those who are in affliction and become like them in your thoughts, and in your mind also mourn for them who are in sorrow and torments. 18. Find patience like the captives, for those who are in captivity have been separated

280 Cf. Ps. 106:2.

281 Heb. 12:8.

282 Cf. Luke 16:19–31.

283 Cf. Luke 13:1–5.

284 1 Cor. 12:26.

285 2 Cor. 11:29.

286 Ps. 68:9.

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7. Listen, you whom Jesus Christ saved from the enemies’ hands and whom he delivered from sadness. Listen to my voice, the shepherd Zachariah. Do not be amazed that God delivered you from the captivity of the enemies. 8. But beware lest you are deceived now. Prepare, and do not be afraid. And do not go and become like the destitute Lazarus and the rich man, 9. as you live at ease and do not look upon any miserable thing only to be tortured by the torment that has no end. 10. See that you do not rejoice and multiply the drinking of wine, and in heaven you will not find any drink. 11. Do not boast, brothers, because it is not because you are righteous that God blessed you but because you have little faith. 12. Guard yourselves, because you have committed many sins. When you look upon your brothers in torment, do you not know that, if you stand before the ruler, you will stand with fear and trembling? How then before the Creator of heaven and earth!

13. Do not rejoice that some of you were taken captive and you remained. 14. Listen to the Lord when he said: “Perhaps the assembly whose blood Pilate mingled with the blood of sacrifices to idols were the worst of people. I will not say that to you. But you, if you do not repent, thus you will perish like them.” And he also said: “Consider the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell. Do you regard them as having been worse sinners than those who were in Jerusalem? Now I say to you that if you do not repent, thus you will perish like them.”²⁸⁷ 15. Listen, be afraid, and do not forget us. You and we are one body while we are in captivity. Listen to Paul and how he said, “If something befalls one member, all the members suffer.”²⁸⁸ And he also said, “He who is ill, am I not ill with him?”²⁸⁹ 16. Brothers, know from your hearts our sorrows, because you are like us. And do not forget us, brothers. Do not say, “We have become the enemies of our brothers, and we have become estranged from the children of our mother Zion.”²⁹⁰

17. Incline your hearts toward those who are in hardship, be like them, and feel pity for those who are in sorrow and torment. 18. Be like those who were taken captive and do not be without sorrow, lest you find yourselves naked without crowns, for an hour will come in

287 Cf. Luke 13:2–5.

288 1 Cor. 12:26.

289 2 Cor. 11:29.

290 Ps. 68:9.

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unwillingly by sin. And you too must abandon sin and not give yourselves any relief from sorrow, for without sorrow, no one will receive a crown. 19. Remember the rich man, for those who live at ease in luxury will become like him. And those who eat in affliction and sorrow with the poor man Lazarus will rejoice and say, “Why did we not endure more affliction and toil for Christ, so that we will be worthy of the highest glory?” 20. Cry out to Christ and say, “We went through fire and water, and you have brought us out to a place of rest”;²⁹¹ and again say, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous,”²⁹² for as gold is proved in the furnace, so the holy are proved in toil.²⁹³ 21. Do not boast, my children, and do not be joyful that you have been spared from this ordeal but worry and fret even more about that day. Consider with what deeds you will meet Christ: abandon your wicked deeds and pursue prayer and supplication. 22. And if the apostle Peter through denial was almost handed over to destruction, how much more will you be handed over to perdition! If you do not remember your Lord and us, his people, who have been delivered into affliction for his name, you will be handed over for judgment on the day of resurrection. 23. Lift your eyes and look upon the Lord and prepare yourselves for prayer. And pray for us also to the Lord, so that he will deliver us from this affliction. And if there was fervent prayer for the apostle Peter,²⁹⁴ how much more is prayer needed for us who are in prison, and you are at ease. We are in torment and you are in comfort. Servants wait on you, and we have been delivered to servitude and chastisement.

24. Hear the saying of the Lord, which says, “You will be measured by the measure with which you measure.”²⁹⁵ And know that it will be repaid to you according to your deeds.²⁹⁶ 25. Remember the words that I commanded you, when I stood on Zion: “My children, I see that you have been lax in praying and have spurned the law and the canons, and I do not know how the Lord will look upon you or what your end will be. For you are in indolence, and you say: ‘The Lord is merciful and did not create us to be in torment, but he will save us.’ Hear what the prophet David said: ‘God will make all doers of lawlessness to perish,’²⁹⁷ and ‘He will repay them according to their works.’”²⁹⁸ 26. And as I was saying this to you, you became furiously enraged with me, and therefore the wrath of God came upon us. Then we rose from sleep and understood that we had led ourselves astray and were holding false hope. We were chastised, but not all of us. 27. Guard yourselves; forsake drunkenness; flee sin and iniquity. Take care of the churches together, and hasten to prayer, and divide up your possessions for the poor. And do not be afraid, for Christ will deliver you from the enemies. And do not hand over your souls to perdition. And know that if someone is able to save his brother and does not deliver him from suffering, God

291 Ps. 65:12.

292 Ps. 33:20.

293 Cf. 1 Pet. 1:7; Prov. 17:3; Wis. 3:6.

294 Cf. Acts 12:5.

295 Mark 4:24.

296 Cf. Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; Ps. 61:13.

297 Cf. Ps. 5:5–6, 36:28, 100:8.

298 Cf. Ps. 61:13.

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which the crowns are given. 19. All who lived in comfort shall become like that rich man, and those who endured in toil and misery with the destitute Lazarus will rejoice, saying: “Why did we not endure more hardships alongside Christ? But we rested too much.” 20. Cry out to Christ, saying, “We passed through the fire and water, and you have brought us out to a place of rest.”²⁹⁹ And also say, “Many are the sorrows of the righteous,”³⁰⁰ for just as gold is proved in the fire, so are the virtuous proved.³⁰¹ 21. Do not boast, my children, and do not boast that you have been saved from these afflictions. Strive and be concerned with what righteous works you will meet your God. Abandon your vile works and multiply prayer and supplication. 22. If the apostle Peter denied and was cast down in rank, then take care yourselves lest you forget your Lord. For if you do not remember, you shall be judged on the last day. 23. Open your eyes and be prepared for prayer. We are imprisoned. While you are at ease, we are in torment, and while you have servants to serve you, we in bondage serve.

24. Hear the Lord, how he said, “By the measure which you measure, you will be measured.”³⁰² 25. Remember when I exhorted you as I stood on Zion: “My children, I see that you have been lax in observing the prayer and the law and the canons, and I do not know when God will show you compassion. I do not know what your end will be.” And you answered me, saying: “God is merciful, and he did not create us to torment us. But God will save us.” Hear what the prophet David said: “God will cause the wicked to perish,”³⁰³ and “he will repay each one according to his works.”³⁰⁴ 26. And you were angry with me at the time. God’s anger came. Then we rose from sleep and knew that we were deceiving ourselves and had hoped in vain. He chastised us, but we were not all made to fear. 27. Now beware of drunkenness. Beware of sin and transgression. Be altogether concerned for the churches, and hasten to them. Distribute your wealth among the weak, and do not be afraid. O mortal, do not hide wealth from your brothers, and Christ will deliver you from the enemies. And do not hand yourself over to them. For if a man is able to redeem

299 Ps. 65:12.

300 Ps. 33:20.

301 Cf. Prov. 17:3; Wis. 3:6.

302 Mark 4:24.

303 Cf. Ps. 5:5–6, 36:28, 100:8.

304 Cf. Ps. 61:13.

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will seek his blood from him. 28. I beseech you all to strive according to your ability and to do good either through prayer or with your possessions or with fasting and tears, for a contrite soul is near to the Lord. 29. And again we who have been delivered into captivity beseech you to beseech the Lord, and he will have mercy on us and will have mercy on the orphaned children and widows and the poor and will bring us out of this affliction and lead us to Jerusalem, this Holy City.

30. O Zion, your children greet you. Receive our greeting in peace and remember your children who cry out to you and say, “Do not forget us and do not forget our prayers, holy and glorious one.” 31. Peace to you from me to the holy and glorious places. Peace to you, Holy Anastasis and Sepulchre covered with light. Your captive children greet you, Holy Anastasis. 32. Peace to you, Jerusalem, the Holy City, and peace to all the places that shine within you. Peace to you, holy Mount of Olives. Peace to you, Bethlehem, the glorious and renowned city. Remember your servant who has been handed over to captivity, and remember your captive children who have been delivered into servitude. 33. The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all at all times and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

XXIII. The Number of the Dead Who Were Found in Jerusalem:³⁰⁵ 1. Hear, my beloved brothers, the number of the dead who were found in Jerusalem after the invasion of the Persians and the massacre and captivity of the people and by what sort of death the flocks of Christ our God were slaughtered. 2. There was in Jerusalem a certain man named Thomas. This blessed one was armed with the power of Christ. And he was like Nicodemus, who buried the body of the Lord,³⁰⁶ and his spouse like Mary of Magdala, for they accomplished good deeds, on account of which they are worthy to be remembered and it is fitting to speak about them. 3. And whoever wishes to understand what happened to the inhabitants of Jerusalem should ask them, for these blessed ones took upon themselves the divine zeal, these who also were present when the Persians arrived. Everything that they did they understood thoroughly, and through their actions they fulfilled the aspiration of faith. 4. And when the Persians withdrew, they began to search for all the dead who had been killed by them in the city and its environs and in all the streets and squares. And whoever they found, they gathered with great haste and zeal, and they gathered them and buried them in the cave of Mamilla and other caves as well.

5. And from these blessed ones we learned about the horrifying death of the faithful people, and we saw some of the people ourselves, killed by such wounds. 6. For one was lying there and was split open from head to chest. Another one lay torn apart from the shoulder to the belly. Another lay impaled by the sword and chopped to bits like leafy greens. Another lay cut in two. Another had his belly cut in two by a sword and his guts were hanging out. And another lay chopped limb from limb into small pieces, like carcasses in a butcher shop. 7. And it was especially painful and tragic to contemplate, for some were

³⁰⁵ A version of this account is also extant in independent state in Greek: *PG* 86.2, 3236–68. Again, although the two versions are occasionally close, they are nonetheless significantly different. For comparison of the two versions, along with a related report in the tenth-century *Annales* of Patriarch Eutychius of Alexandria, see Speck, “Beiträge,” 102–23.

³⁰⁶ Cf. John 19:38–40.

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his brother and he does not redeem him, God will hold him accountable for his blood. 28. I beseech you to do these things to the best of your ability, whether by means of wealth or by means of prayer, fasting, and tears, because numerous sorrows heal souls. 29. Brothers, we who are in captivity ask you and beseech you to beseech God to show us mercy and have mercy upon the children and widows and to bring us out of this torment back to Jerusalem.

30. “O Zion, your children remember you with greetings of peace. O Zion, receive our greetings. O Zion, remember your children since they remember you in peace. O Zion, do not forget us, and do not forget our supplications!” 31. Peace to you from us, glorious places of God. Anastasis, peace to you and to the Sepulchre. Anastasis, your captive children send greetings of peace to you. 32. Jerusalem, peace from us to you and to every place in you. Peace from us, all of us together taken captive, to the blessed Mount of Olives. From us peace to holy Bethlehem. From us peace, Bethlehem! Remember your servant and your captive children. 33. Peace from our Lord Jesus Christ be with us and with you.

XXIII. 1. Listen, brothers, how many of the dead they struck down in Jerusalem after the entry of the Persians and after the captivity. 2. There was a man called Thomas [*twm*'] who was left behind among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, he and his wife.

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lying in the streets mixed together with the soil, others in clay and muck, covered in dirt. And others lay in the churches and houses besmirched with blood. 8. Some fled to the Holy of Holies, and therein they lay chopped up like leafy greens. And another one of those who were slaughtered was found holding in his hands the glorious and life-giving body of Christ, and as he was receiving it, he was slaughtered like sheep. And others were clinging to the horn of the holy altar, others to the Precious Cross, and the dead were lying on them. Others fled to the baptistery and were lying dead at the edge of the font. Others were massacred while hiding beneath the holy table, and they were offerings to Christ.

9. Listen, however, and I will make known to you the number of all those who died, for this blessed Thomas told us and said: 10. “After the Persians left, I remained in Jerusalem and began to look for the corpses of the dead who had been massacred by the evil enemies. 11. And I went to the church of the holy martyr George,³⁰⁷ which is outside the city, and I began to look for the dead in that place, and I buried them in caves. And we found seven souls lying on the altar of the holy church. The Lord and Saint George gave us strength, and we buried them. Then we began to look for and bury all the dead. Some we gathered into caves, and others we buried in graves and tombs. And in this way we found them.

- 12. For we found 28 souls in the government house.³⁰⁸
- 13. And we found 275 murdered souls in the cisterns.
- 14. And we found 2,270 souls at the gates of Holy Zion.
- 15. And we found 600 souls beneath the altar of the Holy Nea.
- 16. And we found 477 souls in the Church of Saint Sophia.³⁰⁹
- 17. And we found 2,212 souls in the Church of Cosmas and Damian.³¹⁰
- 18. And we found 70 souls in the library of the Holy Nea.
- 19. And we found 212 souls in the Monastery of the Holy Anastasis.³¹¹
- 20. And we found 38 souls in the marketplace.
- 21. And we found 919 souls in front of the temple of the Samaritans.³¹²

307 According to Milik (*La topographie*, 138–41), this church was approximately 1 km west of Jerusalem along the road to Jaffa.

308 I.e., the Praetorium. According to Milik (*La topographie*, 141–42), this house was at the Tower of David near the Jaffa Gate.

309 Milik (*La topographie*, 151–55) locates this church in the Tyropoeon Valley near the center of the city.

310 This church was built, according to Milik (*La topographie*, 155–57), not long before the Persian invasion, and it stood in the north of the city, close to today’s Damascus Gate and between the Cardo Maximus and the Tyropoeon Valley.

311 According to Milik (*La topographie*, 157–60), this reference indicates the Monastery of the Spoudaei, whose monks served in the Holy Anastasis. The monastery lay just to the west of the Holy Anastasis.

312 According to Milik (*La topographie*, 163–67) this “temple” was the Monastery of Photine the Samaritan on Mount Zion, which is known from the first part of the fifth century. Note, however, that the Georgian word translated here as “temple,” ძაგოფო, refers specifically to a non-Christian/pagan shrine or a synagogue. Regarding the Samaritan presence in Jerusalem in this era, see Gil, “Jewish Quarters,” 276–77; cf. Di Segni and Tsafirir, “Ethnic Composition, 410.

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9. He informed us and told us: 10. “I remained in Jerusalem seeking out the corpses of the slain who were killed. 11. I went to the monastery of the holy martyr George.³¹³ I found at the altar of Saint George seven souls from the dead. God and the prayers of Saint George gave us strength, and we buried the seven. And we began to bury the dead who were in Jerusalem.

- 12. I buried³¹⁴ from the house of government³¹⁵ 18 souls.³¹⁶
- 13. And I buried from the cisterns 257 souls.³¹⁷
- 14. And I buried also at the gate³¹⁸ of Zion 2,250 souls.
- 15. And I buried from the altar of the Nea 290 souls.³¹⁹
- 16. And I buried from the Church of Saint Sophia 367 souls.³²⁰
- 17. And I buried from the Monastery of Cosmas and Damian 2,112.³²¹
- 18. And I buried from a school³²² that was in the Nea 70 souls.
- 19. And I buried from the Monastery of Anastasis 212 souls.³²³
- 20. And I buried from the marketplace 38 souls.
- 21. And I buried from the quarter of the Samaritikē³²⁴ 723³²⁵ souls.

313 A, B, C; V reads دير سرجيوس الشاهد “the Monastery of Sergius the Martyr.”

314 Reading *qabartu*; also plausible is the reading *qubirat*, “[X number of souls] were buried.” Where the other recensions consistently have “I buried” (A, B, C قبرت), V has “we buried [دفنا].”

315 A, B, C دار الامارة viz. the Praetorium; V reads كبار الامرا “high-ranking commanders.”

316 A, B, V; C ثمانية وعشرين “28.”

317 A, B, V; C مايتي وخمسة وتسعين “295.” The number in C should likely read, rather, “275 [مايتي وخمسة وتسعين]” in agreement with the Georgian. The words “ninety” and “seventy” are easily confused in the Arabic script.

318 A, B, V ابواب C باب “gates.”

319 A, B; C ستماية “600;” V ست انفس “6 souls.”

320 A, B; C اربعمائة وسبعة وستين “467;” V اربعمائة وخمسين [كذا] “457.”

321 A, B, V; C الفين ومايتي واربعة عشر “2,214.”

322 A, B, V خارج الكنيسة النية C كتاب “from outside the Nea church.”

323 A, B, V; C مايتي واربعة عشر “214.”

324 A, B قدام الكنيسة السامية [السامرية]; C من حارة سمريقا “opposite the Samaritan church”; V من قدام الكنيسة السامرة “opposite the church of the Samaritan woman.”

325 A, B; C سبعمائة وثلاث اعشر “713;” V تسعمائة وتسعة عشر “919;”

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22. And we found 1,449 souls in the valley of Saint Kyriakos.³²⁶
23. And we found 196 souls to the west of Holy Zion.
24. And we found 2,107 souls at the Probatike.³²⁷
25. And we found 308 souls in the valley of Saint James.³²⁸
26. And we found 921 souls in the meat market.
27. And we found 2,818 souls at the spring of Siloam.³²⁹
28. And we found 4,518 souls in the pool of Mamilla.³³⁰
29. And we found 318 souls in the *gerokomeion* of the patriarch.³³¹
30. And we found 1,202 souls in the place that is called the City of Gold.³³²
31. And we found 4,219 souls in the Monastery of Saint John.³³³
32. And we found 780 souls in the imperial *gerokomeion*.³³⁴
33. And we found 1,207 souls on the Mount of Olives.
34. And we found 300 souls in the Patronikon³³⁵ of the Anastasis.
35. And we found 202 souls in the small assembly.³³⁶
36. And we found 317 souls in the large assembly.

326 According to Milik (*La topographie*, 167–69), this “valley” refers to Wadi Nasul, just south of Abu Tor, about 1 km south of the Zion Gate.

327 The Probatike, also known as the “Lion’s Gate” or “Saint Stephen’s Gate,” is on the eastern side of the city opposite the Mount of Olives. This name is often given to the church at the Bethesda pools and is probably what is meant here.

328 I.e., the Valley of Josaphat.

329 According to Milik (*La topographie*, 180–82), the spring is located in the southeast corner of the Byzantine walls, roughly 0.5 km east of Mount Zion.

330 As indicated above, the pool is “outside the city, about two stades from the Tower of David,” that is, to the west.

331 Milik (*La topographie*, 138) identifies this home for the elderly (Gk. γηροκομειον) as a facility attached to the Church of Saint George.

332 This toponym is otherwise unknown, although, according to Milik, the movement around the city followed by this account would seem to suggest a location to the northwest of the city. Speck (“Beiträge,” 115) proposes that this place name may be a reference to the Temple Mount.

333 This monastery is located on the summit of the Mount of Olives.

334 Milik (*La topographie*, 148) locates this facility at the Nea church.

335 This word პატრონიკეოთა in Georgian does not have an obvious match in the lexica. Garitte renders the term *gradus*, “steps,” although it is not entirely clear why; it would seem that he, like Conybeare before him, merely replicates Marr’s translation, ступеняхъ (Marr, *Антиохъ*, 62). Milik, relying on the Arabic here, comes up with the interpretation that this word refers to some part of the church that was reserved for women’s use (Milik, *La topographie*, 157–58). Nevertheless, as we noted in the Introduction, a *patronikon* was an upper gallery located on the second-floor level, usually found in Christian churches and ceremonial halls and generally in the western part of the building, although sometimes it can be attached to the nave from the south, west, and north. A church’s *patronikon* was initially intended for social elites and was later used by singers, musicians, and organists. See Abashidze, ქართული საბჭოთა ენციკლოპედია, 7:713.

336 “Small assembly” could also be translated “small monastery.” Likewise, the following location could also be interpreted as the “large monastery.” Milik (*La topographie*, 162) identifies both this location and the following one with the marketplace.

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22. And I buried from the valley of Saint Kyriakos³³⁷ 1,409 souls.³³⁸
23. And I buried from the west of Zion 196.³³⁹
24. And I buried from the Probatike [gate] 2,107 souls.
25. And I buried from the valley of Saint James 1,700 souls.
26a. And I buried from the stones covering the cisterns(?)³⁴⁰ 8,111 souls.
26b. And I buried opposite the Passarion³⁴¹ 1,708 souls.^y
27. And I buried from the pool of Siloam 2,318 souls.³⁴²
28. And I buried in Mamilla 24,518 souls.³⁴³
[29. And I buried from the *gerokomeion*³⁴⁴ of the patriarch 318.]³⁴⁵
30. And I buried from the City of Gold 1,202.³⁴⁶
31. And I buried from the Monastery of Saint John [the High]³⁴⁷ 4,250 souls.³⁴⁸
32. And I buried from the imperial *gerokomeion* 167 souls.³⁴⁹
33. And I buried from the Mount of Olives 1,207 souls.³⁵⁰
34. And I buried from the Matroneum of the Anastasis³⁵¹ 83 souls.³⁵²
35. And I buried from small market 202.³⁵³
36. And I buried from the large market 317 souls.³⁵⁴

337 A, B, V; C واد جهنم “the valley of Gehinnom.”

338 A, B, C; V الف واربعماية وسبعة واربعين نفسا بمعونة الله تعالى “1,447 souls with the support of God Most High.”

339 A, B; C مائة وستة وسبعين نفسا V “193;” مائة وثلاثة وتسعين

340 A القابيل; B القبيل. For the interpretation of this word, I rely on Milik, *La topographie*, 178–79; cf. Kaplony, *Haram of Jerusalem*, 202–3.

341 A البساريون; B البساريون. On this monastery, built on Mount Zion ca. 400, see Patrich, *Sabas*, 5, 39.

342 A, B; C وقبرت من عين سلوان الفي وتلثمائة ومن قدام سلو[ا]ن حمسمائة وثمانية عشر “I buried from the pool of Siloam 2,300 and opposite the Siloam 518”; V الفين و مائة وثمان اعشر نفسا وقبرنا في عين سلوان “And we buried in the pool of Siloam 2,118 souls.”

343 A, B; C وقبرت من بركة ماملا أربعة الاف وخمس مائة وثمانية عشر “And I buried from the Mamilla reservoir 4,518”; V ودفنا في الماملى اربع تلاف وستماية وثمان عشر نفسا بعون الله تعالى “And we buried in Mamilla 4,618 with the aid of God Almighty.”

344 Reading الجاراقرميرن for الجاراقوميون

345 From C; V وكان الله يقوينا على دفنهم في جرقيمون البطرک ثلاث مائة وسبع اعشر نفسا “And it was God who gave us the strength to bury them, and we buried in the gerokomeion of the patriarch 317 souls”; omitted from A, B.

346 A, B; C وقبر من حجر الذهب الف ومايتي واثنى عشر “And I buried from the Chambers of Gold 1,212”; V ودفنا في مدينة الذهب ألف ومايتين وثمانين نفسا “And we buried in the City of Gold 1,280 souls.”

347 دير مار يحنا الفوقاني V

348 A, B; C الف ومايتين وثلاثة اعشر نفسا V “4,213;” أربعة الف ومايتي وثلاثة عشر

349 A, B, V; omitted from C.

350 A, B, V; C الف مايتي وثلاثة عشر “1,213.”

351 A mtrwnyqy’t; B mtrnq’t; cf. Milik, *La topographie*, 157.

352 A, B; V ثلاث مائة نفس “300;” omitted from C.

353 A, B, C; V مائتين وثلاثين نفس “230 souls.”

354 A, V; B ثلاثة مائة وتسعة عشر نفس “319 souls;” C ثلثمائة “300.”

Georgian Recension

37. And we found 338 souls in the Church of Saint Serapion.³⁵⁵
38. And we found 80 souls in front of Holy Golgotha.
39. And we found 6,917 souls in caves and cisterns, and in pits and gardens.
40. And we found 2,210 souls at the Tower of David.
41. And we found 265 souls within the city.
42. And we found 9,809 souls in the place where the enemies knocked down the wall of the city.³⁵⁶
43. And we buried many others in Jerusalem who had been massacred by the Persians in addition to these saints, who were counted among them. 44. The number of them all together was 66,509 souls.”

45. And although sadness and affliction fell upon all together, their death appeared in diverse and various ways. This was according to Divine Providence, so that some would escape eternal torment through a horrible death and the debt of their transgressions would be annulled. 46. And some he spared from death so that they would comfort the captive people, while others who were hard-hearted and merciless were converted to repentance by the sight of horrifying death, and others still he will make to dwell in the kingdom of heaven by enduring affliction. 47. This all took place according to Divine Providence. For neither was the sin equivalent nor the transgression of all equal, but the just Judge arranged it well for each one individually. 48. Even young children were delivered into captivity, so that they would not share in the sin of their parents and would remain pure, and so that their parents would see them in captivity and would repent to the Lord with contrition. 49. And this death, which came in many ways, was beneficial to the soul, for some handed themselves over to death for Christ, so that they would receive the crown of glory, while others who were twisted with sin were slaughtered and were purified from their transgressions, and still others who had fallen were raised by the vision of death.

50. This will shut the mouth of the Samaritans, who deny the resurrection—otherwise, how will the Lord’s justice be justified, if there will not in fact be a resurrection? 51. For many who were pure and fasting perished in a bitter death, and others who were sinners and unrepentant and godless escaped death. 52. If judgment for all this is not coming, and recompense for one’s deeds, how will the just Judge be proclaimed as true and just? 53. Nevertheless, I say, according to the apostle, that the resurrection is truly coming,³⁵⁷ and each one will receive recompense according to his deeds.³⁵⁸ 54. But I entreat you all to attain noble virtue, through which you will be numbered among the saints on the day of glory and meet with the blessed life through the grace of our Lord God and Savior Jesus

355 According to Milik (*La topographie*, 186–87), this church was near the Damascus Gate in the north of the city.

356 Regarding the archaeological evidence for such a wall breach at the Damascus Gate, see esp. Magness, “Archaeological Evidence.”

357 E.g., Acts 24:15.

358 Rom. 2:6.

Arabic Recension A

37. And I buried from the Church of Saint Serapion 38 souls.³⁵⁹
38. And I buried opposite Golgotha 80 souls.
39. And buried from the caves, pits, and gardens 6,917 souls.³⁶⁰
40. And I buried from the Tower of David 2,210 souls.
41. And I buried from inside the city³⁶¹ 265.
42. And I buried from the place where the wall was destroyed 1,809 souls.³⁶²
43–44. All those from the righteous souls whom I buried, from those and others whom the Persians killed, were 62,455.”^{363 z}

359 A, B, V; C ثلثماية وثلثين “330.”

360 A, B, C; V “And we buried in the caves and pits 6,727 with the aid of God Almighty.”

361 A, B المدينة وداخلها; C من داخل المدينة وخارجها “from inside the city and outside it”; V من حواضر المدينة “from the palisades of the city and its walls separately.”

362 A, B; C من عند ثغرة البلد ثمان مائة وتسعة “from the breach of the city 809”; V من موضع السور المهدوم “from the place of the destroyed walls 2,100 souls.”

363 A; B 36,509 souls; C “36,509 souls;” A; B جميع المدى توليت انا قبرهم سبعة وثلثين الف “The sum total of those whose burial I myself oversaw was 37,484 corpses”; V وهذا جملة الذين دفنهم من قتلا وموتا ثلاثة وثلثين الف وسبعة وستين نفس جميعهم قتلوهم الفرس “And this is the total of those killed and dead whom I buried: 33,067; all of them the Persians killed.”

Georgian Recension

Christ, to whom is due with the Father honor and glory and worship, along with the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

XXIV. The Account of How the Precious and Life-Giving Cross Was Brought Back from Babylon to Jerusalem: 1. In the fifteenth year after the capture of Jerusalem, the nineteenth year of the reign of Heraclius, in the tenth indiction, in the month of March, the Persian king Chosroes was slain by his son, who was called Shērōē (*Siron*).³⁶⁴ 2. At that time King Heraclius reached Persia with his army, and he seized many cities and royal palaces and slaughtered thousands of their soldiers. And he led back those Greeks who had been taken captive and liberated them from servitude by the power of Christ. 3. Nevertheless, King Shērōē, who had seized his father’s kingdom, died in the month of September, and his son Ardashir took over his kingdom. And he was only a child, and his reign was only three months. And an armistice was drawn up between the Greeks and the Persians through the mediation of Rasmiozdan,³⁶⁵ who was a military commander³⁶⁶ of the Persians. 4. Before this, however, King Heraclius had sent the eunuch named Nerses, his principal chamberlain. He went forth with a great army to fight the Persians. 5. And the multitude of their troops was vanquished, and they were dispersed in terror before the face of the eunuch, so that again the Persians said with great sorrow: “What has befallen us? For we have been vanquished by a eunuch who is counted among the women and is not numbered among the men. And this vexes our minds even more—that we were put to flight by a woman.”

6. Nevertheless, in the seventeenth year after the captivity of Jerusalem, the third year after the murder of Chosroes, the twenty-first year in the reign of Heraclius, in the third indiction, Rasmiozdan the commander of the Persians slew Ardashir the king of the Persians, whom we mentioned above. 7. And he seized the kingdom and became a friend of the Greeks, and he granted the life-giving tree, the Cross of Christ, to Heraclius as a treasure for the whole world and the most enriching gift, and he gave it to him. 8. King Heraclius, however, brought it to Jerusalem when he went there with Martina,³⁶⁷ who was the daughter of his father’s brother. And he had taken her as a wife against the law, and therefore he was very frightened that this unseemly act would be condemned by the bishops. 9. And when he entered Jerusalem on the twenty-first of the month of March, he restored the glorious and precious tree of the Cross to its very same place, sealed in a chest, as it was taken away. And it remained completely closed, for the one who kept the Ark of the Covenant closed among foreign peoples also protected the life-giving tree of the Cross, by which death has been vanquished and hell trampled down. 10. Then, when King Heraclius saw this glorious thing and the restoration of the holy places that had been rebuilt by the blessed Modestus,

364 Shērōē is better known by his dynastic title, Kavadh II.

365 Again, this moniker is one of the nicknames for the Sasanian general Shahrvaraz, mentioned above in IX.2, who led the invasion and later would briefly reign as Shah after the Romans defeated the Persians. The nickname is most commonly interpreted as meaning “eager for battle.” Cf. n92 above.

366 Or “prince.”

367 Heraclius’s second wife.

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XXIV. The Return of the Cross after Heraclius Brought It Back from Babylon to Jerusalem after Fifteen Years of the Rule of Heraclius: 1. As for Chosroes, the king of the Persians, he had a son named Shiroe [*šr’yh*], who attacked his father and killed him in the month of March [Āḏār]. 2. The Romans were with Heraclius and fighting very fiercely against the Persians, and they had captured many cities and killed thousands. And they captured those who were taken as captives from the land of Rome. 3. After that the king Shiroe died in the month of April [Nisān], and in his place ruled Ardashir [*ʾrṭ’sh*], his son, who was a child. Then the Persians and the Romans made a treaty, because Heraclius desired to make peace with them. The inhabitants of Persia fled before Heraclius as though they were being struck with swords. 4. Heraclius sent them his servant, a eunuch named Nerses.³⁶⁸ And the eunuch killed the Persians, 5. and the Persians would say, “Heraclius has sent against us a man to battle us who is like a woman!”

6. After nineteen years³⁶⁹ passed since the destruction of Jerusalem and three years since the killing of Chosroes and twenty years into the reign of Heraclius, there was a man named Rasmiozan,³⁷⁰ and he was a patricius of the Persians.³⁷¹ He killed Ardashir and reigned as king himself after him in his place. 7. He sent to the king Heraclius gifts and sent him the Great, Blessed Cross. 8. And Heraclius the king brought it to Jerusalem with Martina, the daughter of his sister,³⁷² because he had married her. He feared to go to Jerusalem lest something happen to him. 9. The Blessed Cross returned to Jerusalem on the twenty-first of March [Āḏār], and the Cross was in the location it was on the day the Persians captured it, and it was not opened, for the one who saved the Ark from the children of Israel is the one who saved the Cross from the enemies.^{aa} 10. Then King Heraclius appointed Modestus the monk,³⁷³ who had brought the armies out from Jericho, as patriarch

368 A برسة; V نرسة.

369 A تسعة عشر سنة; V ستة عشر سنة B تسعة عشر سنة, “sixteen years.”

370 Following the Georgian, as the name is garbled in most of the Arabic recensions: A *smysd’n*, C *ʾrsysd’n*, V *rsmys’h*.

371 A, B; C من عظماء الفرس, “from the mighty leaders of the Persians”; V من اكابر قواد الفرس, “one of the great leaders of the Persians.” He is called the *patricius* of the Persians in the Syriac *Chronicle of 724*; see Brooks, *Chronica Minora II*, 147.19.

372 A, B ابنة اخيه; V ابنة اخته, “the daughter of his brother.”

373 A, B; V ليطوس [كذا] الراهب ريس دير الدواكس, “Modestus [*lytws*] the monk, hegumen of Dayr al-Dawakis.”

Georgian Recension

he rejoiced greatly and ordered that he should be consecrated as patriarch of Jerusalem, for the blessed Zachariah had died in Persia, and the church stood widowed.

11. Nevertheless, in the fourth indiction, in the twenty-first year of the reign of Heraclius, the blessed Modestus assumed the patriarchate of Jerusalem. 12. And after a short time, the blessed Modestus went to see the king on account of a need to repair the churches, to ask King Heraclius to grant it. 13. And when he arrived at the city that is called Sozousa, which is on the border of Palestine, he died in the month of December on the seventeenth. And some say that he was killed by poison by some of the wicked men who were with him. 14. And they brought his precious body from that city and placed it with the holy patriarchs in the Church of the Disciples³⁷⁴ with much singing and incense and candles held by the faithful people, who led his body forth to the grave. 15. And with them all let us give glory to God, exalted in the Trinity and praised in unity, to whom is due honor and worship, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

374 This wording follows Garitte in translating სამოწმეობ as “Church of the Disciples,” from მოწამე. Presumably this mention refers to the Church of Zion, also known as the Church of the Apostles.

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of Jerusalem. He blessed him and sat him in his place.

12. Modestus went to him in the land of Syria to petition him on behalf of the churches. 13. When he reached Arsūf in the land of Palestine, he died in the month of April [Nisān] on the fifteenth of the month. They say about him that a group who was with him gave him poison to drink and murdered him. 14. They carried his body to Jerusalem in secret and placed him in the sepulchre of the patriarchs in the mountain.³⁷⁵ 15. To our Lord, our God, and our Savior be thanks and praise unto the ages of ages. Amen.^{bb}

375 I.e., Mount Zion.

Notes to Other Arabic Recensions

^a The prologue to each recension differs considerably:

Recension B (Sinai Ar. 520)

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God. This is the explication of how Jerusalem was taken captive and the captivity of the Cross and the patriarch Zachariah during the reign of the wicked Persians.

Recension C (Sinai Ar. 531)

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the one God. We begin with the aid of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in adoration of his memory. We shall explain and commit to writing the story of the martyred saints and captives during the time of the conquest of Jerusalem in the days of the kingdom of Heraclius over Rome and Chosroes Anushirvan [*sic*] possessed the kingdom of the Persians.

O my brothers! O my dear ones! I, wretched as I am, will teach you of what my eyes saw and my hands felt, and I will inform you of what transpired in God's city, the holy temple (بيت المقدس), Jerusalem: the captivity of its inhabitants, its burning by fire, the slaughter of Christ's flock, even the priests and monks, along with [the seizing of] the Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the lord patriarch Abba Zachariah, as well as a great multitude of our believing brothers. And now, my beloved, this can be called neither a book, nor a codex, nor a treatise, nor a tome, nor a jubilation, nor a delight, but rather a sadness, a captivity, a dismay, a sorrow, a despair, a weeping, a woe, and a loss.

Now, my brothers, I will teach you—I, the wretched Strategius [*ʿstrʿtyws*]. I was one of the captives taken into captivity with the Cross and the saintly blessed patriarch Abba Zachariah to the land of Persia by Chosroes, king of the Persians. I will tell you, my beloved, that of the inhabitants of this Holy City were a people called . . .

[Here is a lacuna, and when the text resumes, it proceeds with yet another generic incipit.]

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one God triune in hypostases and unitary in substance. This is from an account of a monk called holy Abba Strategius [*ʿstrʿt*], a holy man who was in the Monastery of Mar Saba the Blessed. He told of the destruction of Jerusalem, of the taking of the Cross of Christ, of the plundering of the churches' vessels, and of the captivity of the flock and Zachariah, the patriarch of Jerusalem, and the menacing Persians who destroyed Jerusalem. Blessed be, blessed be, O Lord!

Recension D (Sinai Ar. NF parch. 1)

The Story of the Destruction of the Jerusalem [خبر خراب بيت المقدس]: This is what the saintly Abba Strategius [*ʿstrʿt*] related to us concerning the destruction of Jerusalem [بيت المقدس] and the slaughter of . . . [lacuna] those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and concerning . . . the terrible [and calamitous?] misfortunes that befell all the Christian inhabitants of the city of God, Jerusalem, and their captivity alongside the captivity of the Cross of Christ to the land of the Persia at the hands of Chosroes, the king of the Persians, and the captivity of saintly Patriarch Zachariah, as well, alongside a great multitude of our brethren.

Recension V (Vatican Ar. 697)

This is an account I found and that Strategius [ʿsṭrʿtyws] of the Lavra of Saint Mar Saba composed, relating herein how Jerusalem was conquered when Chosroes, king of Persia, marched against it with armies. No one knows their number save God, blessed and exalted is his name. He destroyed its walls and killed a great multitude of its inhabitants. He took masses from the city into captivity along with the patriarch Zachariah. He also seized the Cross of our Lord Christ along with the vessels of the churches. He demolished the city and conquered many other cities besides.

^b D draws here on further biblical examples:

The Israelites, when they were made victorious by God's might, vanquished Pharaoh and all the Egyptians. And so it was also in the time of Joshua son of Nun, the disciple of Moses and his servant. When they approached Jericho, the enclosure of its walls fell at that very hour, and the Israelites entered the city.

^c C, VI.6–14 is by turns embellished and abbreviated:

6. "And I beheld our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross and Our Lady Mary before him beseeching the Lord and saying to him, 'My Lord and my God, listen to this grieving people!'" 7. And the Lord Christ turned his face from her and answered her saying, 'I will not hear a supplication for them, nor will I accept a petition for them, because they have defiled my temple and my place of sacrifice. 9. I looked and, lo, filth and squalor issued forth from the place of the Pure Cross. 10. Lo, two radiant elders were saying, 'This is the squalor that you see from the wickedness of the priests and vileness of the people. 11. Nothing will cleanse it from this place except burning by fire and the sword. 12. While they and the disciple were speaking of this and its like, lo, a group of Persians entered their midst. 14. As for the disciple, he leaped up to flee, for he was a young man. He was saved that very hour by the strength of God. As for the blessed elder, they killed him and quickly went out."

^d V, VII.1 is embellished considerably:

1. As for the king of the Persians, when he saw that the inhabitants of the Holy City would not accept the terms of peace, he readied against them their siege machines: mangonels, ballistas, battering rams, testudos, and all that is suitable for conquering cities.

^e V, VII.6 invokes Elisha, as does the Georgian (cf. 4 Kingdoms 6):

6. But God, who protects those who fear him, did not will to hand him over into their hands. He blinded their eyes to him so that they could not see him, just as he blinded the eyes of those who wished to capture the prophet Elisha. Thus did God save him from them, and thus did he save this monk. Then he returned to Jericho.

^f C, VIII.16:

16. You would see old men slaughtered like sheep, and young men cut down as one cuts down trees.

V, VIII.16:

16. They had no mercy upon old men; rather, they butchered them. All were like sheep led to the slaughterhouse for butchering. And the people were cut down like grass.

^g C, IX.2 makes the Jews far more instrumental players in these events by stating that it was “the accursed Jews” who revealed to the Persians where the Christians were in hiding.

^h C, IX.5 embellishes this section:

5. Then the profligates gathered all those captives who had survived the slaughter and interrogated those of them who were craftsmen and who were knowledgeable and possessed wisdom and understanding in order to take them along with the Glorious Cross [الصليب المعظم] as captives to Persia.

ⁱ C, IX.6 attributes many of these actions to the Jews, rather than the Persians, in anticipation of the events to be recounted in chapter X and places the patriarch of Jerusalem among those cast into Mamilla:

6. The holy patriarch Zachariah and those who remained they [i.e., the Persians] handed over to the accursed Jews. They imprisoned them in the reservoir located a single bowshot west of the city and appointed guards over them to ensure they would remain therein for a long time so that, perhaps, they could cause them to abandon their faith. But by the power of God their plan was a failure. When the Persians saw that hunger and thirst would not cause them to abandon their faith even though they remained in the reservoir for a long time, the accursed Jews began to buy them, each four or five in exchange for a mere loaf of barley bread or strap for a horse.

^j C, X.6, 9 is considerably embellished:

6. But those of them who were spared death by starvation remained for a long time in the reservoir of water. They were crying out saying, “O leaders of the Persians! You Jews who seized control of our bodies! Know for certain that the many tortures you afflict upon us shall not cause us to abandon our righteous faith in the Holy Trinity. I beseech the Lord, whose glorious power has been cast into our hearts, that you shall hasten to remove us from this fleeting life and this passing world. People! Hasten our death by the sword and grant us joy and honor for the sake of the anguish and torments we are in!” At that time, the Jews became furious, and the accursed Jews slaughtered as one slaughters lambs and sheep those holy martyrs who numbered 4,508 souls. By my life, these saints were happy and filled with great joy when they were killed for the sake of their faith in our Lord and our God and our Master and our Savior Jesus Christ (may his mention be adored), because we chose the eternal life of the hereafter over the fleeting and transient life of this world. At their death they were patient like passive sheep led to slaughter. They rejoiced, saying,

“Our faith is in you, the only Son of God, our Lord and our God, Jesus Christ! Accept our blood before your holy feet as acceptable offerings in your heavenly dwelling. Our Lord and our God, whosoever appoints some day and makes for us a remembrance and offering on the day of our martyrdom, remember not his sins and errors on the Day of Judgment. Our Lord and our God, whosoever is suffering, ailing in body [read *سقم جسم* for *سقر جسم*], or ill and asks help of your holy name by power of your Glorious Cross and in adoration of the shedding of our blood, heal him quickly from his ailment!” The day of the martyrdom of these 4,508 saints was the twentieth of May, which was the day of the destruction of Jerusalem. So we ask our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, through the intercession of his mother and through the intercession of these martyrs and all the saints, to spare us and you from an event as evil as this and from all [read *جميع* for *جهيع*] misfortunes. Amen. 9. So it was that when the Persians finished plundering the lands and killing Christians, they drove the captives who remained with the holy patriarch Zachariah and the Glorious Cross to Mount Zion, mother of all churches, and the land was emptied of the name “Christianity.” At that time, the accursed Jews began to destroy the churches and burn them down with fire.

^k C, XI.1 differs considerably:

When the lord patriarch saw the tongues of flame rise into the air and the towers of smoke billowed [Garitte’s suggested emendation of *الدخاخين متمججة* to *الدخاخين معججة* is to be rejected; cf. Lane, *Lexicon*, 1955] into the sky, he called out to the captives who were with him with sweet tears, 1. “Know, my children, that when sins and transgressions multiply, calamities and tragedies become great.”

^l C, XI.13 differs considerably:

13. Now, O brothers, we must obey him and keep his commandments. We must offer perfect repentance and continuous prayers so he will bring back his mercy and our salvation and have pity upon us. As a father has pity upon his children, so will our Lord have pity upon us if we return to him from our slumber and our negligence with a pure heart and wise mind, for thus does he show mercy to those who repent wholeheartedly. Ask him by the power of his True Cross and the blood of the holy martyrs to not exclude us from his mercy forevermore. Amen.

^m C, XII.5–6 offers a fuller description of this nun and a somewhat different take on her gambit (cf. Taylor, “Syriac Version,” 457):

5. Among the Persians was a youth, a young man. A very beautiful girl fell into his share [of the nuns divided between the army]. She was from a household possessing intelligence, good breeding, and nobility [أهل بيت ذو عقل ونسب وشرف]. That barbarian [البربري] wished to defile that holy, virgin maiden. 6. She answered him saying, “Listen, you, know and realize that I have become yours, and you are mine. Your joy gives me joy, and your sadness makes me sad. I know something that I learned in the house of my father. I will make an oil, and it will benefit you especially because you are a man who must go to war all the time and because, if you anoint yourself with some of it, you will be safe from the effect of

any blade that strikes you in battle or elsewhere. But I can only make this oil as long as I remain a virgin. Give me my virginity so that I can make it for you!"

ⁿ C, XIII.1–10 is by turns embellished and abbreviated; it turns much of the text into the direct speech of the patriarch Zachariah:

1. And so it was when the Persians wished to exile the patriarch Zachariah from Zion alongside the captives who were with him, he was bound like a criminal and like a thief or a brigand, and the True Cross hung from his neck, marching alongside the enemies as a captive resembling our Lord. When he was expelled from Holy Zion and while they marched him toward mighty Golgotha, he carried his Cross around his neck. For that reason, the lord patriarch consoled himself joyfully that the Holy Cross would be in his love taken captive. 2–4. My beloved, on that day, where were the flames of the candles? They were not before him. Where on that day were the incense burners that fill the air with perfume before him? Where on that day were the priests, clothed and draped in white, reciting liturgies and psalms? They were replaced by drawn swords that blotted out his sunlight. For that reason, when he was expelled from Zion with dishonor and disgrace, he began to mourn and weep and tear out his gray hairs, saying, 5. "O gates of Zion! How many calamities and sorrows have befallen you! How many shepherds entered you joyfully but went forth from you mournfully! 6. O gates of Zion, the Noble Cross twice went forth from you: once with Christ, who by his will was crucified thereon, and once again with me, the wretched one taken as a captive to the land of the Persians. O gates of Zion, how many joys and delights have visited you! How many sorrows, cries, and laments have emerged from you!" 7. The Persians did not cease to lead the lord patriarch forth alongside the multitude of captives until they brought him to the Mount of Olives. There they rested to wait for the rest of their armies. 10. At that time the holy lord patriarch sat on the summit of the Mount of Olives and beheld the temples of the Lord from which the captives were expelled, and he began to mourn and weep. These captives wept alongside him and exhausted their tears like beloved rain.

^o C, XIV.16–19 renders Zachariah's words:

16. "Lord, take this bitter cup from me. 17. Mother, why did you give birth to me? And how did I not die before this day? Perish the day that I was born! May that day not be reckoned among the number of the days! May darkness cover the morning of that day when the doors of my mother's womb were not closed! 18. Why did I not die in you, O Zion? Why was I not reckoned among the slain, Jerusalem? Remember us, and do not forget us, Zion. Do not forget the cries of your servants. Christ lost you in his mercy, O Zion. The Creator sustains you by his power and his benevolence, O Jerusalem. The Lord will reestablish your holy altars. The Lord will rebuild your holy temples. The Lord will rebuild your ruins, Holy Anastasis. The Lord will return the captives with the True Cross to you, O Zion, the chaste mother. The Lord, the Lord Christ, reared you by establishing the religion of Christianity, and the priests were baptized within you, O Sepulchre of Christ, loving mother." 19. And with this and its like the patriarch Zachariah was speaking and proclaiming while he lamented and wept over leaving the holy places.

^p C, XV.4–5 renders Zachariah's words thusly:

4–5. "Peace to you, Jerusalem. Peace to you, Holy Anastasis, giver of eternal life. Peace to you, mighty Golgotha. Peace to you, Zion. Peace to you, Bethlehem, because from you appeared the news of eternal life. Peace to you, Gethsemane, because in you is the sepulchre of the treasure of the poor. Peace to all the holy places where our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was bound and where his Holy Spirit dwells. Thus does he dwell within us. And he will return our captives and rebuild our temples by intercession of the Mediatrix [بشفاعة ذات الشفاعة; viz., the Virgin Mary] and by the power of the True Cross and John the Baptist and all the saints. Amen." At that moment those captives cried out as though from one mouth and said, "May God answer your prayers, our father! And may the Lord accept your petitions, our master! God will not allow your many tears to be for naught. Amen."

^q C, XVI.3:

3. One of the impudent Persians had taken them captive, and he strived with great effort to remove them from their faith. He lit a fire for them and began to mock them and terrify them in turns. At night and in secret their father would encourage their maidenhood so that they, by God's power and the delight of their father, were crowned with the crown of martyrdom by the sword of that filthy barbarian [تلك البربري النجس]. Because they rebelled in his custody and would not do what he wished and did not prostrate to his fire, for that reason he became severely angry with them and caused them to pass from the perishing life of this world to eternal life. That vile Persian [تلك الفارسي الخبيث] was informed about the saintly deacon, that he was the one whose whispers and words to them had removed the shame from his daughters. The deacon implored God to make easy the drawing nigh of his departure from this world after his daughters. The anger of that magus [المجوسي] intensified, and he increased the flame of the fire and threw that deacon in it at his time. The servant of God offered up his spirit, and the servant of God became a sacrifice accepted before the Lord alongside his daughters. And the name of this deacon was Eusebius. We ask the Lord to grant us all their prayers and a portion of their purity. How many precious things are gained in exchange for being slain and bitter death for the sake of your love, Lord Christ. To you belongs gratitude for having so arranged things, for each thing you bring about with wisdom. And to you belongs the glory until the end of time. Amen.

^r V, XVI.17–18:

17. Then their father said to that Persian [ذلك العجمي] mockingly to provoke him against him, "You hypocrite! What have you done to these girls so that you overpowered them and murdered them? Rather put me to the test as well! If I do not listen to you, kill me!"
18. Then that hypocrite filled with anger at his words and swiftly pounced upon him and gnashed his teeth on his account. He took stones and began to beat him on his mouth until his teeth were ground into powder.

^s V, XVIII.3–7:

3. And we became like the flock exiting from the pen as they crowd against one another. Thus was our exit through that gate as they forced us to make haste, saying to us, "None

shall exit through the door until he tramples the Cross of Christ. And whoever does not trample it beneath his feet we will kill.” 5. And the soldiers were carrying unsheathed swords in their hands. 4. Whoever obeyed them and trampled the Cross exited the door with his flesh whole but his soul damned, and whoever did not obey them and did not trample the Venerable Cross [الصليب المكرم] they killed him immediately and cut him to pieces with their swords. 7. A great multitude of men, women, and children were martyred that day, 6. because few were those who crossed through that door and rejected the Cross of their Lord, and those captives were very many.

^t C, XVIII.8–9:

8. And when we reached the river, our terror mixed with great sorrow, because they had not brought us to the river of Jordan but to the river of Babylon, and on that day they were not bringing us to the Monastery of Saint John [دير القديس مر يحنأ] but to the court of Chosroes [مجلس كسرى]. 9. And when the patriarch Zachariah arrived at Chosroes’s court, he remembered the first Babylonian captivity: “Blessed be the Lord our God. Just as it was in the time of Moses of old, so it transpires in this age in the time of the disciples of Christ.”

^u C, XVIII.25–28:

25. “And we ask you and beseech you to inspire this king and to put in his heart love and compassion for us, lest he charge us to do what we are not capable of or to worship his impure idols or to hand us over to destruction or to reject your name. But make him pity us by your mercy, Holy One. By your great compassion provide us relief in this distress of ours, and be our protector and savior by the intercession of the lady who gave birth to you, Holy Mary, and the prayers of Saint John the Baptist and all the saints. Amen.” And all of them said, “Amen.” 26. Then, after the lord patriarch completed this prayer, he began to exhort [read يعظ for بعض] the assembly and say to them, “Do not be grieved, my children, by these trials. 27. Remember the word of our Lord and our God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who said, ‘I am sending you like sheep among wolves, for you will be handed over to judgment, and before their assemblies you shall be brought and flogged, and they will stand you before governors and kings for the sake of my name. If they hand you over to them, do not worry how or what you will say. Your heavenly Father, he will speak on your behalf, and you will be given the spirit of wisdom’ [Matt. 10:16–20]. 28. Now, my children, do not despair, because life and death are in the hands of God, who said, ‘I will kill, and I will give life. I will strike, and I will heal, and there is no one who will be delivered from my hands’ [Deut. 32:39].”

^v V, XX.4–5:

4. There lived with the king a young concubine of his. Later she asked for the Noble Cross from the king because she was a Christian, except that she was a Nestorian. 5. She took it along with many of the captives. The patriarch Zachariah was among the group of them, and she gave them generous provisions and honored the patriarch with the most excellent of honors. They had him reside in the palace with her, and she gave him precious incense with which to perfume the Noble Cross. She made him her confidant in all things because

God Almighty cast into the heart of that maiden that reverence for his Cross and his servant, the patriarch, and she would console the captives.

^w C, XX.7–8, 10–11 construes the miracle somewhat differently:

7. [The Jews] went to a young, pregnant maiden and bribed her and told her what they would say. 8. And they forced her to go to the king crying out for aid, while saying, “My lord, give me justice from the patriarch who has defiled my honor [فضحني هذه الفضيحة], ensnared me, and raped me [هتك أمري]!” He summoned the patriarch before his head men and viziers and said to him, “What do you say to this woman, patriarch?” He said to him, “O king, the truth of this maiden’s testimony will not be clear until she gives birth, and I will show you the wonders of my Lord and the power of the Cross in them.” The king kept the maiden in safekeeping until she gave birth and the infant had been in the care of his mother for forty days. He summoned his viziers and judges and called for the patriarch, and he summoned that vile maiden and said to her, “To you I say, O maiden, who is the father of this child that you carry?” She said: “This old man whom they claim is the patriarch of the Christians. I went to see him many times to behold the wonders of his Cross. But one day he took me aside and defiled me, as you see, with this bastard child [read بلا بي for بلا أبي].” He said to the patriarch, “What do you say, elder?” 10. The patriarch went over to the child and lifted him from the arm of his mother and carried him in front of him in the presence of all those assembled and said to him, “In the name of the Lord Christ and by the power of the Great Cross, tell me, O child, the truth. Am I your father or not?” The child answered with an unimpeded tongue and said, “No, truly you are not my father.” 11. The gathering was stupefied, and he set him down in front of him and said, “I adjure you, O child, by the power of the one crucified upon this Cross by his will, rise up quickly and show me who is your father. The child went off running and pointed his hand to one of the soldiers who served the king among those involved with this wicked plot. Those gathered in attendance were stupefied when they heard him and saw it occur, and once again the patriarch was honored by the king [read الملك for الملغ] and all his nobles. And the king began to regard him like a prophet or the leader of a people [نبيا أو مدير شعب].

V, XX.6–11 also embellishes the narrative:

6. After a long while, some people from the Jews became jealous of the patriarch on account of the honor showed to him by the king of the Persians and his station in the palace of the king, and they accused him, saying, “He has fornicated with a Jewish slave-girl, who is a young girl.” 7. For they had informed her and promised her that they would give her money, and they informed her to seek the help of the king against the patriarch. 8. Then the slave-girl bore that child and brought him before the king. And she said to him, “O king, I became pregnant with this child from the patriarch of the Christians.” When the king heard that, he became angry at the patriarch and summoned his table companions, his viziers, and the magnates of his kingdom. Then he summoned the patriarch, and the slave-girl came forward with that child. And the Jews were with her as she cried out, saying: “This is the child to whom I gave birth, and he is from the seed of this elderly man. It has been fifteen days since I gave birth to him.” She was calling out to the king and screaming that this child was from this elderly man. 9. The patriarch, while looking

to heaven in his thoughts, had not said a word in response to them. When the king saw that he was silent and gave no answer, he was convinced that he committed that vile act. Then the king consulted his viziers about what to do with the patriarch, and the leaders said to him, "What do you have to say in response to what you did?" 10. Then the patriarch took the child from the lap of the slave-girl and carried him in his arms. He sighed from his innermost heart and made the sign of the Cross on the mouth of the child three times, and he lifted his voice and said, "To you I say, O child, in the name of Jesus Christ, tell this gathering the truth of whether or not I am your father." Then the child by the power of God opened his mouth and said, "It is not true that you are my father." 11. The king and all his kingdom and the entire world were stupefied by the speech of the child, and they were overcome with wonder at the patriarch. Then they began from that moment on to honor the patriarch and exalt him. As for the Jews, they despaired and began to tremble with fear. As for the slave-girl, she became terrified and threw herself to the ground and said to the king that her companions, the Jews, told her to do that. The king then ordered for them to be punished for their accusation and vile acts against the patriarch, and the king once again honored the patriarch and regarded him to be like a prophet.

^x C, XXI.2–3 makes it more explicit that the request came after the man had witnessed the patriarch's prior miracle:

2. When this Persian man saw the wonders wrought by the Cross through the lord patriarch by his boldness before Christ, he began to beseech him to provide a son by his hands.
3. When the patriarch saw the faith of this person, he implored God. . . .

^y The other recensions more closely resemble the Georgian.

C, XXIII.26:

26. "And I buried from the bathhouses [921] الحمامات."

The mention of bathhouses likely results from a corruption of الحمامة.

V, XXIII.26:

26. "And we buried from the meat-market 721 souls."

^z C adds XXIII. 54:

54. "We ask the Lord, his power be exalted, to inspire us and you with obedience to him and to make for our spirits, us miserable sinners, a share and portion alongside them and for all the baptized children and the community of Christian peoples. Amen, Lord of the worlds."

^{aa} V, XXIV.9 clarifies the text of A, B and, like Thomas Artsruni (*History*, 2.3; see Patkanean, Պատմութիւն տաւն, 97), notes explicitly that the Cross remained in its wrapping:

9. And [Heraclius] put the Cross in the place from which the Persians had taken it, and that was on the twenty-first of the month of March [Ādār], for God protected it and did not allow them to touch it. Just as he protected the Ark of the Covenant when foreign peoples

captured it and brought it back to the children of Israel whole, likewise he protected his Revered Cross and returned it to its place as he willed.

^{bb} C, XXIV.1–4, 6–7, 9–10, a–n, 12–13, 15 offers a considerably more elaborate conclusion to the treatise by inserting a passage (a–n) from the Alexandrian recension of the *Annales* of Eutychius of Alexandria (d. 940 CE) (see Breydy, *Annalenwerk*, 1:128–29):

Those matters and events were during the reign of Heraclius, who was twenty-five years old on the day he became king of the Romans. When he had heard what transpired during the destruction of Jerusalem and about the killing of its inhabitants, he prepared to go forth to the lands of the East and resolved to wage war against the Persians and to unite all the peoples of the world for the sake of the true religion [دين الحق], the religion of Christianity. And God gave him strength, victory, and success over his enemies. 2. He began to conquer city after city and killed myriads and thousands of Persians and liberated many of the captive Romans who had been taken into captivity. 1. The reason for that was that Chosroes, the king of the Persians, had a son named Shiroe [sr'yh]. He attacked his father and murdered him. The return of the Glorious Cross to Heraclius, the victorious king, was from him. 3. When he returned the Cross and all the captives, Shiroe the king of the Persians died, and his son Ardashir [ʔrʔ'sh] reigned. He was young and feeble in strength. His ministers slandered him for making peace with the Romans, for at that time Heraclius wanted that. 4. He sent to them a servant of his with a mighty army. He greatly ravaged their lands and won a mighty victory, but he tarried too long in the land of Babylon and its environs and was killed there by means of a plot hatched against him. As his army returned, 6. a man from the mighty leaders of the Persians called Rāhzād [ʔrsyd'n] rose up and murdered Ardashir because he would not permit him to pursue the Roman armies. 7. He himself reigned as king and concluded the treaty between himself and Heraclius and sent him the Glorious Cross. 9. The entry of the Cross into Jerusalem was on the twenty-first day of March [Āḏār], and that was the ides of forty days of Lent, which is the holy fast. As for the lord patriarch Zachariah, he died after having crossed the Jordan returning with the captives. They carried his noble corpse, and he was buried inside the Holy City. 10. Heraclius appointed a man called Modestus to be patriarch over Jerusalem, and by the help of the Lord and his power, the religion of Christianity flourished.

a. When Heraclius reached the province of Damascus, the Jews residing in Tiberias and Mount Galilee and that region met him and presented him with gifts. And they asked him for a guarantee of safety. b. He gave them the guarantee of safety and thereby made a covenant with them. c. He marched to Jerusalem, and the monks of the lavras and inhabitants of Jerusalem received him, and Modestus the patriarch was with them. d. When he entered the city and saw what the Persians had destroyed and burned, a profound sorrow overtook him. e. Then he saw what the patriarch Modestus had rebuilt from the church of the Anastasis, Calvary, and Saint Constantine. He was filled with joy at that, and he thanked the patriarch for what he did. f. The monks and all the community said to the king Heraclius, “The Jews, at the time the Persians came, they were the ones who oversaw the killing of the Christians and the destruction of the churches and their burning.” And they showed him those who were killed in the cave of Mamilla. g. Heraclius said to them, “What do you want for me to do?” They said to him, “We want you to kill every Jew in the land

of Jerusalem and Mount Galilee, because we believe that another people hostile to us will come to us, and they will help them against us just as they sided with the Persians against us.” h. Heraclius said to them: “How can I permit them to be killed? I have given them a guarantee of safety and wrote this for them as a covenant, and you know that a covenant must not be broken. How shameful this would be for me! I will be a liar and a treacherous, untrustworthy man among all people, with the terrible sin and transgression that will be accounted to me by our Lord Christ!” i. They said to him: “Our Lord Jesus Christ will render your killing them a remission for your sins and an expiation of your sins, and the people will pardon you because the time that you gave them the guarantee of safety you did not know and did not realize that they had killed Christians and destroyed churches. They merely set out to meet you with gifts as a plot of theirs and a curse against the killing of them as a sacrifice to God. j. We will bear this sin for you and ask our Master and our Lord Jesus Christ not to hold you accountable for it, and we will establish for you a full week at the beginning of the Great Lent. We will fast it for your sake, abandoning only the consumption of meat as long as Christianity endures, and we will establish for this a canon and a ground for excommunication and anathema that will not be altered, and we will send it in writing to the horizons as a pardon for what we have asked you to do.” k. Heraclius assented to their request and killed from the accursed Jews around Jerusalem and Mount Galilee what cannot be counted l. from those whom he was able to kill [read *ممن قدر عليهم* with Eutychius for *ممن قدر عليه*], but some of them went into hiding and others fled to the mountains and valleys. m. [The Christians of Jerusalem] wrote in time to Egypt, and they began the first week of the fast, for which the Melkites abandon only the consumption of meat, fasting it for Heraclius the king to pardon the breaking of the covenant and his killing of the Jews. n. They wrote to all the horizons that they should fast from the consumption of meat and fast therein an entire day of Thursday and Friday only and that they should eat on these two days the minor fast of cheese and eggs.

12. Modestus was commanded to meet him in Damascus so that he could give him some of the wealth of Damascus and issue him some of the wealth of Palestine for the construction of all the churches of Jerusalem, which the Persians had destroyed. And Heraclius returned to Damascus from Jerusalem. 13. Modestus remained patriarch for seven months and died, and the chair of Jerusalem remained without a patriarch for six years after his death. 15. To our Lord, our God, and the Master of our salvation be the eternal glory, and may he show us mercy. Amen.

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In 614 CE, the armies of Sasanid Persia shocked the Eastern Roman Empire when they besieged and captured Jerusalem, taking a large swath of its population into captivity along with the city's patriarch and the famed relic of the True Cross. This astounding Persian victory over Christian Jerusalem was a key episode in the last war between Rome and Persia in 602–628 CE and occurred at the high tide of Persian advances into the Roman territories in Asia Minor, the Levant, and Egypt. Among those taken captive was a certain Strategius, a monk of Mar Saba, who subsequently took it upon himself to compose a homily recounting the events leading up to the Persian siege of the Holy City and its aftermath.

Strategius presents his pious and harrowing account as that of an eyewitness to many of the events he recounts. For events he did not himself witness, he purports to rely on contemporary informants who did, making his treatise a source with few parallels in late antiquity. Although Strategius's original account in Greek is lost, it survives via later translations into Georgian and Christian Arabic, two languages that attained prominence in the monasteries of Palestine during the Islamic period. This volume provides, for the first time, a complete side-by-side English translation of both the Georgian and the Arabic recensions.

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