

A HISTORY OF THE TIME OF AFFLICTION AT
ÔRHÂI* AND ÂMID† AND THROUGHOUT ALL
MESOPOTAMIA.

I. I have received the letter of thy Godloving holiness, O most excellent of men, Sergius, priest and abbot, in which thou hast bidden me write for thee, by way of record, (concerning the time) when the locusts came, and when the sun was darkened, and when there was earthquake and famine and pestilence, and (about) the war between the Greeks‡ and the Persians§. But

* ܐܪܗܐ ܐܪܗܐ, Ôrhâi or Ūrhâi, ܐܪܗܐ *ar-Ruhâ*, called by the Greeks "Ἐδεσσα, now *Orfah* or *Urfah*. I have elsewhere used the Greek name.

† ܐܡܝܕ, ܐܡܝܕ, ܐܡܝܕ, now called *Kara Âmid* (Black Âmid) or *Diyyâr-bekr* (ديار بكر).

‡ ܩܫܩܝܢܐ or ܩܫܩܝܢܐ, literally, *the Romans*; but Constantinople was *nova Roma*, 'Ρώμη νέα, and hence the Syrians and Arabs use the words ܩܫܩܝܢܐ and ܐܪܪܘܡ, *ar-Rûm*, to designate the Byzantine Greeks.

§ ܦܪܫܝܝܐ, *Pârsâyê*, elsewhere written ܦܪܫܝܝܐ, *Pârsâyê* or *Pûrsôyê*. It has been thought that the spelling ܦܪܫܝܝܐ is meant to be insulting, as if connecting the word with ܦܪܫܝܝܐ, *exposure, shame, disgrace*, *ῥὰ αἰδοία*. I can hardly imagine this to be correct (see Cureton, *Spicil.*, p. 14, ll. 16—19; Wright, *Catalogue*, p. 1161, col. 2, ll. 4, 20; and compare in the present work, in ch. xc, ܦܪܫܝܝܐ for ܦܪܫܝܝܐ). To me it appears that it is only an example of the gradually weakening vowel-series *â, û, ô, û*; as in ܦܪܫܝܝܐ, ܦܪܫܝܝܐ; ܦܪܫܝܝܐ, etc.; not to mention Persian and Teutonic analogies.

J. S. a

besides these things, there were found therein great encomiums of myself, which made me much ashamed even when alone with my own soul, because not one of them pertains to me in reality. Now I would fain write the things that are in thee, but the eye of my understanding is unable to examine and see, such as it actually is, the marvellous robe (στολή) which thy energetic will hath woven for thee and clothed thee therewith; for it is clearly manifest that thou burnest with the love that fulfils the law, since thou carest not only for the brethren that are under thy authority at this time, but also for all the lovers of learning that may hereafter enter thy blessed monastery; and in thy diligence thou wishest to leave in writing memorials of the chastisements which have been wrought in our times because of our sins, so that, when they read and see the things that have befallen us, they may take warning by our sins and be delivered from our punishments. One must wonder at the fulness of thy love, which is poured out upon all men, that it is not exhausted nor faileth. Indeed I am unable to speak of it as it is, because I have not been nigh unto its working; nor do I know how to tell about it from a single interview which I have had with thee.

II. Like Jonathan, the true friend, thou hast bound thyself to me in love. But that the soul of Jonathan clave unto the soul of David, after he saw that the giant was slain by his hands and the camp delivered, is not so marvellous as this, because he loved him for his good deeds; whereas thou hast loved me more than thyself, without having seen anything that was good in me. Nor is Jonathan's delivering of David from death at the hands of Saul deserving of wonder in comparison with this (doing) of thine, because he still requited unto him something that was due to him; for he first delivered him from death, and gave life unto him and all his father's house, that they should not die by the hands of the Philistine. And though nothing like this has been done by me unto thee, thou art at all times praying unto God for me, that I may be delivered from Satan, and that he may not slay me through sins. But this I must say, that thou lovest me as David did Saul; for thou art intoxicated by the greatness of thy affection to such a degree that, because of the fervency of thy love, thou knowest not what my measure is, but imaginest regarding me

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978-1-107-62105-3 - The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite: Composed in Syriac A.D. 507

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things which are far beyond me. For in the time preceding this, thou didst supply my deficiencies by the teaching contained in thy letters; and thou didst take such care for me as parents do, who, though they have not profited aught by their children, yet care for everything that they need. And today in thy discretion thou hast humbled thyself, and hast begged me to write for thee things that are too hard for me, that hereby thou mightest be especially exalted; and though thou knowest them better than I do, thou wishest to learn them from me. So neither do I grudge thee this, nor do I decline to do what thou hast commanded.

III. Know then that I too, when I saw these signs that were wrought and the chastisements that came after them, was thinking that they were worthy of being written down and preserved in some record, and not let fall into oblivion. But whereas I considered the weakness of my mind and my own utter ignorance (*ἰδιωτεία*), I declined to do this. Now however that thou hast bidden me do this very thing, I am in such fear as a man who, not knowing how to swim well, is ordered to go down into deep waters. But because I rely on thy prayers to draw me out, which are constantly sent up by thee unto God on my behalf, I believe that I shall be providentially saved from drowning and drawn forth from the sea into which thou hast cast me; since I shall swim as best I can in its shallows, because its depths cannot be explored. For who is able to tell fittingly concerning those things which God hath wrought in His wisdom to wipe out sins and to chastise offences? For the exact nature of God's government is hidden even from the angels, as thou mayest learn from the parable of the tares in the Gospel*. For when his servants said unto the master of the house, "Wilt thou that we go and gather them up?" he that knew the things as they were said unto them, "Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." This then we say according to our knowledge, that because of the multitude of our sins our chastisements were abundant; and had not the protection of God embraced the whole world so that it should not be dissolved, the lives of all mankind would probably have perished. For at

* S. Matthew, ch. xiii. 24.

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what times did afflictions like these happen with such violence, save in these (times) in which we live? And because the cause of them has not been removed, they have not even yet ceased. In addition to that which we saw with our own eyes and heard with our own ears, and amid which we lived, there terrified us also rumours from far and near, and calamities that befel in various places; terrible earthquakes, overturnings of cities, famines and pestilences, wars and tumults, captivity and deportation of whole districts, rasings and burning of churches. And whereas these things have amazed thee by their frequency, thou hast sent unto me to write them down with words of grief and sorrow, which shall astonish both readers and hearers; and I know that thou hast said this through thy zeal for good things, that there may be contrition also in those who hear them, and that they may draw nigh unto repentance.

IV. But know that it is one thing for a man to write sadly, and another (to write) truly; for any man who is endowed with natural eloquence can, if he chooses, write sad and melancholy tales. But I am a plain man in speech, and I record in this book those things which all men that are in our country can testify to be true; and it is for them who read and hear, when they have examined them, if they please, to draw nigh unto repentance. But perchance one may say, "What profit have those who read from these things, if admonition be not mingled with the recital?" I for my part, as one who is not able to do this, say that these chastisements which have come upon us are sufficient to rebuke us and our posterity, and to teach us by the memory and reading of them that they were sent upon us for our sins. If they did not teach us this, they would be quite useless to us. But this cannot be said, because chastisements supply to us the place of teaching; and that they are sent upon us for our sins all believers under heaven testify, in accordance with the words of S. Paul, who says *, "When we are chastened, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." For the whole object of men being chastened in this world is that they may be restrained from their sins, and that the judgement of the world to come may be made light for

* 1 Corinthians, ch. xi. 32.

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them. As for those who are chastised because of sinners, whilst they themselves have not sinned, a double reward shall be added unto them. But there is mercy at all times even for those who are unworthy, because of the kindness and grace and longsuffering of God, who willeth that this world should last until the time that is decreed in His knowledge that forgetteth not. And that these things are so is clear both from the evidences of holy Scripture and from the things that have taken place among us, which we purpose to write down.

V. For behold, there leaned heavily upon us the calamities of hunger and of pestilence in the time of the locusts, so that we were well nigh going to destruction; but God had mercy upon us, though we were unworthy, and gave us a little respite* from the calamities that pressed upon us. And this, as I have said, was because of His goodness. But He changed our torments, after we had had some respite, and smote us by the hands of the Assyrian, who is called the rod of anger†. Now I do not wish to deny the free will of the Persians, when I say that God smote us by their hands; nor do I, after God, bring forward any blame of their wickedness; but reflecting that, because of our sins, He has not inflicted any punishment on them, I have set it down that He smote us by their hands. Now the pleasure of this wicked people is abundantly made evident by this, that they have not shown mercy unto those who were delivered up unto them; for they have been accustomed to show their pleasure and to rejoice in evil done to the children of men, wherewith the Prophet too taunts them and says, prophesying regarding the desolation of Babylon as it were by the mouth of the Lord‡: "I was wroth with my people, who defiled mine inheritance; and I delivered them into thy hands, and thou didst show them no mercy." Unto us too, therefore, they have similarly wrought harm in their pitiless pleasure, according to their wont. For though the rod of their chastisement did not reach our bodies, and they were unable to make themselves masters of our city, (because it is not possible for the promise of Christ to be made void, who promised the believing king Abgâr, saying, "Thy city shall be blessed, and no enemy

* ܠܚܝܬܐ, ܠܚܝܬܐ, "breathing-space."

† Isaiah, ch. x. 5.

‡ Isaiah, ch. xlvii. 6.

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shall ever make himself master of it*"); yet, because of the believers who were spoiled and led away captive and slain and destroyed in the other cities which were captured, and who were like mud in the streets, all those have tasted no small degree of suffering who have learned to sympathise with them that suffer. And those too who were far away from this (sight) have been tortured with fear for their own lives by their lack of faith, for they thought that the enemy would make himself master of Edessa too, as he had done of other cities. About which things we are going to write unto thee.

VI. Since then, according to the saying of the wise Solomon†, "War is brought about by provocation"; and thou wishest to learn this very thing, namely by what causes it was provoked; it is my intention to inform thee whence these causes took their rise‡, even at the risk of its being thought that I speak of things the time of which is long past. And then, after a little, I will make known to thee too how these causes acquired strength. For although this war was stirred up against us because of our sins, yet it took its origin in certain obvious facts, which I am going to relate to thee, that thou mayest be clearly acquainted with the whole subject, and not be led, along with some foolish persons, to blame the all-ruling and believing emperor Anastasius. For he was not the exciting cause of the war, but it was provoked from a much earlier time, as thou mayest understand from the things that I am going to write unto thee.

VII. In the year 609 (A.D. 297—8)§ the Greeks got possession of || the city of Nisibis¶, and it remained under their

* On the promise of our Lord to king Abgâr that Edessa should never be captured by an enemy, see Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents*, p. 10 and p. 152; Phillips, *The Doctrine of Addai*, p. 1 and p. 5; Lipsius, *Die Edessenische Abgar-Sage kritisch untersucht* (Braunschweig, 1880), pp. 16—21.

† Proverbs, ch. xxiv. 6. ‡ Literally, *called*.

§ The era of Alexander, or of the Greeks, begins with October 312 B.C.

|| The MS. has *built or rebuilt*, ܩܝܝܬ; but we should probably read either *sacked*, ܩܝܬ, or *got possession of*, ܩܝܬ. The former has the support of a similar passage in chapter xlviii.

¶ Νάσιβις, Νέσιβις or Νισίβις, Nisibis. نَاصِبِينَ Naṣībīn.

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sway for sixty-five years. After the death of Julian in Persia, which took place in the year 674 (A.D. 362—3), Jovinian*, who reigned over the Greeks after him, preferred peace above everything; and for the sake of this he allowed the Persians to take possession of Nišibis for one hundred and twenty years, after which they were to restore it to its (former) masters. These years came to an end in the time of the Greek emperor Zēnōn; but the Persians were unwilling to restore the city, and this thing stirred up strife.



VIII. Further, there was a treaty between the Greeks and the Persians, that, if they had need of one another when carrying on war with any nation, they should help one another, by giving three hundred able-bodied men, with their arms and horses, or three hundred staters (*estīrā*, *στατήρ*) in lieu of each man, according to the wish of the party that had need. Now the Greeks, by the help of God, the Lord of all, had never any need of assistance from the Persians; for believing emperors have always reigned from that time until the present day, and by the help of Heaven their power has been strengthened. But the kings of the Persians have been sending ambassadors and receiving money for their needs; but it was not in the way of tribute that they took it, as many thought.

IX. Even in our days Pērōz†, the king of the Persians, because of the wars that he had with the Kūshânâyê or Huns‡, very often received money from the Greeks, not however demanding it as tribute, but exciting their religious zeal, as if he was carrying on his contests on their behalf, “that,” said he, “they may not pass over into your territory.” What made these words of his find credence was the devastation and depopulation§ which the Huns wrought in the Greek territory

* That is, Jovian. See Noeldeke in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Bd xxviii, p. 263, note 2.

† See Noeldeke, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden*, translated from at-Ṭabari, p. 117, with note 2.

‡ See the references to Noeldeke's *Geschichte der Perser* u. s. w., in the note on the Syriac text.

§ , the carrying away captive of the inhabitants into slavery.  is the deportation of the whole population from one district to another. See ch. iii.

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in the year 707 (A.D. 395—6), in the days of the emperors Honorius and Arcadius, the sons of Theodosius the Great, when all Syria was delivered into their hands by the treachery of the prefect* Rufinus and the supineness of the general (στρατηλάτης) Addai.

X. By the help of the money which he received from the Greeks, Pêrôz subdued the Huns, and took many places from their land and added them to his own kingdom; but at last he was taken prisoner by them. When Zênôn, the emperor of the Greeks, heard this, he sent money of his own and freed him, and reconciled him with them. Pêrôz made a treaty with the Huns that he would not again cross the boundary of their territory to make war with them; but he went back from and broke his covenant, like Zedekiah†, and went to war, and like him he was delivered into the hands of his enemies, and all his army was destroyed and dispersed, and he himself was taken alive. He promised in his pride that he would give for the safety of his life thirty mules laden with silver coin‡; and he sent to his country over which he ruled, but he could hardly collect twenty loads, for by his former wars he had completely emptied the treasury of the king who preceded him. Instead therefore of the other ten loads, he placed with them as a pledge and hostage (ὄμηρος) his son Kâwâd§, until he should send them, and he made an agreement with them for the second time that he would not again go to war.

XI. When he returned to his kingdom, he imposed a poll-tax || on his whole country, and sent the ten loads of silver coin, and delivered his son. But he again collected an army and went to war; and the word of the Prophet was in very reality fulfilled regarding him, who says ¶, “I saw the wicked uplifted like the trees of the forest, but when I passed by he was not, and I sought him but did not find him.” For when a battle

* “Ἐπαρχος τοῦ πραιποσίτου or τῆς αὐλῆς. See Du Cange, *Glossarium ad Scriptores mediæ et infimæ Græcitatatis*, Ἐπαρχος.

† 1 Kings, ch. xxiv. 20; 2 Chronicles, ch. xxxvi. 13; Jeremiah, ch. lii. 3.

‡ 𐤐𐤕𐤍, zûzê, drachmas or dirhams.

§ See Noeldeke, *Gesch. d. Perser* u. s. w., p. 135, note 1.

|| 𐤐𐤕𐤍 𐤕𐤕𐤍, head-money.

¶ Psalm xxxvii, 35, 36.

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took place, and the two hosts* were mingled together in confusion, his whole force was destroyed, and he himself was sought but not found; nor to the present day is it known what became of him, whether he was buried under the bodies of the slain, or threw himself into the sea, or hid himself in a cave under ground and perished of hunger, or concealed himself in a wood and was devoured by wild beasts.

XII. In the days of Pêrôz the Greek empire too was in disorder; for the officials of the palace (παλάτιον) hated the emperor Zênôn because he was an Isaurian by race, and Basiliscus† rebelled against him and became emperor in his stead. Afterwards, however, Zênôn strengthened himself and was reestablished on the throne. And because he had had experience of the hatred of many towards him, he prepared for himself an impregnable fortress‡ in his own country; so that, if any harm should befall him, it might be a place of refuge for him. His confidant in this was the military governor (στρατηλάτης) of Antioch, by name Illus, who was likewise an Isaurian; for he bestowed posts of honour and authority upon all his countrymen, and for this reason he was much hated by the Greeks.

XIII. When the fortress was fully equipped with everything necessary for it, and a countless sum of money§ had been deposited there by Illus, he came to the capital (Constantinople) to inform Zênôn that he had executed his will. But Zênôn, because he knew that he was a traitor and was aiming at the sovereignty, ordered one of the soldiers to kill him. After the person to whom this commission had been given was for many days seeking an opportunity|| of executing it secretly, but found none, he accidentally met Illus inside the palace, and drew his sword and raised it to smite him. Instantly, however, one of the soldiers who formed the retinue of Illus struck him

* Literally, *camps*.

† The Syriac text has *Basiliscus*.

‡ Τὸ Παπούριον καστέλλιν or τὸ Παπουρίου καστέλλιν, which afterwards served as a last refuge for the rebels Illus and Leontius (ch. xvii). See *Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. Classen, vol. i, pp. 196, 201, 203, 204.

§ Literally, *much gold without tale*.

|| The word **ܝܠܘܣ** is not given in any of the native Syriac lexicons to which I have access, but its meaning is evident from this passage and that in ch. lix.

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with a knife on the arm, and the sword fell from his hand and merely cut off Illus's ear. Zênôn, in order that his treachery towards Illus might not be disclosed, at once gave orders that that soldier's head should be cut off, without any inquiry. But this very circumstance only made Illus think the more that Zênôn had ordered him; and he arose and departed thence and went down to Antioch, having made up his mind that, whenever an opportunity offered, he would take measures to requite him.

XIV. Zênôn, being afraid of Illus, because he knew his evil design, despatched to him at Antioch certain men of standing, and sent him word to come up to him (to Constantinople), as if he wished to make excuses to him, pretending that that treachery was not committed at his instigation, but that he did not wish to kill him. However he could not soften the hard heart of Illus; for he despised him, and did not choose to obey his command and go to him. At last Zênôn sent to him another general, whose name was Leontius, with the troops under his orders, and bade him bring Illus up to him by force, and if he offered any resistance even to kill him. When this man arrived at Antioch, he was corrupted by the gold of Illus, and disclosed to him the order which had been given to him to put him to death. And when Illus saw that he had hidden nothing from him, he too showed him a large quantity of gold that he had in his hands, for the sake of which Zênôn was wishing to kill him; and he persuaded Leontius to conspire with him and to rebel along with him, pointing out to him also the hatred of the Greeks towards Zênôn. After he had consented, Illus was able to disclose his design, for alone he could not rebel nor make himself emperor, because the Greeks hated him too on account of his race and of his hardness of heart.

XV. Leontius then became emperor at Antioch in name, whilst Illus was in fact the administrator of affairs. As some say, he was even scheming to kill Leontius, in case they should overcome Zênôn. But there was in their following a certain rascally conjuror, by name Pamprepius*, who confounded and upset all their plans by his perfidy. In order that their throne

* Παμπρέπιος. See Lebeau, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, ed. Saint-Martin, t. vii, p. 132.