

| AGATHANGELOS | MANICHEISM v. MISSIONARY ACTIVITY AND TECHNIQUE | The Theban Legion | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| <p>(Greek for "messenger of good news"), the supposed author of a History of the Armenians, which describes the conversion of King Trdat of Armenia to Christianity at the beginning of the 4th century. The Armenian version (Aa) of this History dates from the second half of the 5th century. The first mention of a history by Agathangelos in other Armenian sources is found in Lazar of P'arp (ca. 500). A Greek version of Aa (Ag) was made soon after the Armenian received its present form. On Ag depend an Arabic version and numerous secondary versions in Greek, Latin, and Ethiopic.</p> <p>In addition to the "A" recension of versions, which all derive from the known Armenian text, there is a less homogenous "V" cycle derived from a lost Armenian text which has left no direct trace in the later Armenian tradition. To the "V" cycle belong two Greek, two Arabic, and a Karshuni version.</p> <p>In the prologue to Aa, Agathangelos introduces himself as an eyewitness of the events he describes and claims to be writing at the express request of King Trdat. But the History received its present form well after the invention of the Armenian script (ca. 400). It is a compilation of various traditions welded into a none too coherent whole.</p> <p>The main divisions are the following:</p> <p>War between Armenia and Persia after Ardašīr I's revolution; the restoration of Trdat to the Armenian throne with Roman help and the imprisonment of Gregory;</p> <p>the martyrdom at Valarshapat of nuns supposedly fleeing from Diocletian;</p> <p>the release of Gregory and the conversion of king and court; the destruction of pagan temples and the establishment in Armenia of a regular Christian clergy and hierarchy.</p> | <p>The main primary sources on the beginning of Manichean missionary work are the Cologne Mani Codex (henceforth CMC), especially pp. 107-91, ed. Koenen and Römer, pp. 76-119, and Kephalaia 1 and 76, ed. Polotsky and Böhlig, pp. 9-16, 183-88; tr. Gardner, pp. 15-22, 193-97. More information may be expected from the still unpublished Dublin Kephalaia.</p> <p>The Manichean Missionary History, strictly speaking, consists of Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, and Old Turkish fragments of a hagiographic description of the beginnings of the missionary journeys of Mani and his first disciples (published or indicated by Sundermann 1981, pp. 17-28, 34-49, 55-57 under nos. 1, 2.2-7, 3.1-4, 4a.1). These texts are parts of a comprehensive hagiographic and homiletic description of Mani's life and the beginnings of the Manichean church preserved in Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, and Old Turkish and also in the Third Coptic Homily (ed. Polotsky, 1934, pp. 42-85; cf. Sundermann 1986a, 1986b, 1987). Some additional texts add more information on the Manichean missionary activities, such as MP. 5.1, 5.2 (Sundermann, 1981, pp. 93-95); these belong to Mani's Šābuhragān. Original Manichean traditions are also faithfully rendered in Ebn al-Nadīm's (d. ca. 995) Fehrest (ed. Flügel, pp. 51-52, 84-85; Ebn al-Nadīm, tr. Dodge, pp. 774-75). An exhaustive collection of source material on the spread of Manicheism in the Roman empire was compiled by Lieu (1988, pp. 383-99).</p> <p>The beginning of Manichean missionary activities. Hardly any other religion has undertaken its missionary activities with a view to winning the world for the truth of its faith in a better designed and more systematic way than the Manichean church. According to its hagiographical tradition, as attested in the CMC (pp. 17-19, 73; ed. Koenen and Römer, pp. 10-13, 50-51; Cameron and Dewey, pp. 18-21, 56-57) and in Ebn al-Nadīm's Fehrest (ed. Flügel, pp. 50.15-51.7, 84; tr. Dodge, p. 775), the missionary work is based on a command given to Mani by his Sysygos (spiritual Twin) when he had completed his 24th year of life. According to the CMC, the command was: "You have not only been sent to this religion [of the Baptists], but to every people, every school, every town and place; for [by you this] hope will be explained and proclaimed in all [zones] and regions [of the world]. [Men] in great numbers will accept your word. So step forth and walk about; for I shall be with you as your helper and protector at every place where you are proclaiming all that has been revealed to you. So do not worry and do not be distressed" (CMC, pp. 104-05; ed. Koenen and Römer, pp. 74-75). Therefore, the worldwide mission is inseparably tied with the separation of Mani and his followers from their paternal, Elkhasaite community and with the foundation of the Manichean church. What really happened is that Mani himself came to be the first missionary of his community.</p> <p>The time of Mani's first public appearance was connected by the Manichean tradition with one of the coronations of the Sasanian king Šābuhr [Šāpur] I (r. 241-372) which is dated, on the strength of the Manichean dates, to 18 or 19 April 240 (on these two dates, see with further literature Sundermann, 1990, pp. 295=2001a, pp. 103-4). This synchronism may reflect more or less exactly the actual time of the beginning of the Manichean world mission.</p> | <p>(also known as the Martyrs of Agaunum) figures in Christian hagiography as an entire Roman legion — of "six thousand six hundred and sixty-six men" — who had converted en masse to Christianity and were martyred together, in 286, according to the hagiographies of Saint Maurice, the chief among the Legion's saints. Their feast day is held on September 22.</p> <p>According to Eucherius of Lyon, ca. 443–450, the Legion was the garrison of the city of Thebes in Egypt. The Legion were quartered in the East until the emperor Maximian ordered them to march to Gaul, to assist him against the rebels of Burgundy. The Theban Legion[4] was commanded in its march by Saint Maurice (Mauritius), Candidus, Innocent, and Exuperius, all of whom are venerated as saints. At Saint-Maurice, Switzerland, then called Agaunum, the orders were given — since the Legion had refused to sacrifice to the Emperor — to "decimate" it by putting to death a tenth of its men. This act was repeated until none were left. According to a letter written about 450 by Eucherius, Bishop of Lyon, bodies identified as the martyrs of Agaunum were discovered by Theodore (Theodulus), the first historically identified Bishop of Octodurum, who was present at the Council of Aquileia, 381 and died in 391. The basilica he built in their honor attracted the pilgrim trade; its remains can still be seen, part of the abbey begun in the early sixth century on land donated by King Sigismund of Burgundy. The earliest surviving document describing "the holy Martyrs who have made Agaunum illustrious with their blood" is the letter of Eucherius, which describes the succession of witnesses from the martyrdom to his time, a span of about 150 years. The bishop had made the journey to Agaunum himself, and his report of his visit multiplied a thousandfold the standard formula of the martyrologies: We often hear, do we not, a particular locality or city is held in high honour because of one single martyr who died there, and quite rightly, because in each case the saint gave his precious soul to the most high God. How much more should this sacred place, Agaunum, be revered, where so many thousands of martyrs have been slain, with the sword, for the sake of Christ. As with many hagiographies, Eucherius' letter to Bishop Salvius reinforced an existing pilgrimage site. Many of the faithful were coming from diverse provinces of the empire, according to Eucherius, devoutly to honor these saints, and (important for the abbey of Agaunum) to offer presents of gold, silver and other things. He mentions many miracles, such as casting out of devils and other kinds of healing "which the power of the Lord works there every day through the intercession of his saints". In the late sixth century, Gregory of Tours was convinced of the miraculous powers of the Theban Legion, though he transferred the event to Cologne, where there was an early cult devoted to Maurice and the Theban Legion: At Cologne there is a church in which the fifty men from the holy Theban Legion are said to have consummated their martyrdom for the name of Christ. And because the church, with its wonderful construction and mosaics, shines as if somehow gilded, the inhabitants prefer to call it the "Church of the Golden Saints". Once Eberigisilus, who was at the time bishop of Cologne, was racked with severe pains in half his head. He was then in a villa near a village. Eberigisilus sent his deacon to the church of the saints. Since there was said to be in the middle of the church a pit into which the saints were thrown together after their martyrdom, the deacon collected some dust there and brought it to the bishop. As soon as the dust touched Eberigisilus' head, immediately all pain was gone.</p> <p>Thebaei is the proper name of one particular military unit, the Legio I Maximiana, also known as Maximiana Thebaeorum, recorded in the Notitia Dignitatum. According to Samir F. Girgis, writing in the Coptic Encyclopedia, there were two legions bearing the name "Theban," both of them formed by Diocletian sometime after the organization of the original Egyptian legion, stationed at Alexandria. It is not certain which of these was transferred from Egypt to Europe in order to assist</p> | | |
| <p>After the prologue, one manuscript of the Ag version (Florence, Laurentianus, Plut. VII cod. gr. 25; 12th cent.) inserts the story of Ardašīr's revolt against the Arsacid Artabanus V. It is derived from a lost Armenian version of the Pahlavi romance, Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pāpakān, and does not go back to the time of the translation of Ag. There is no suggestion in Armenian tradition that this episode was ever associated with the Armenian Agathangelos. The Armenian History proper begins with an account of the wars between Khosrov, king of Armenia, and the Persians after the fall of the Parthian Arsacid dynasty. Khosrov attempted to avenge the Parthians; for the Armenian Arsacids had second rank in the Parthian kingdom (Aa 18). He organized a coalition of peoples from the Caucasus and the "Huns;" but after ten years of war he was murdered by a renegade Parthian noble, Anak, at Ardašīr's instigation. Armenia was then made into a Persian province, Khosrov's son Trdat having fled to the Roman empire. Trdat was later restored to Armenia by an unnamed emperor (Diocletian in later Armenian tradition). Agathangelos has thus condensed the political events of some sixty or more years into the life of Trdat from childhood to adulthood. When Trdat was restored he was accompanied to Armenia by Gregory, the unrecognized son of the regicide Anak; he had been brought up as a Christian in Caesarea. Having refused to sacrifice to Anahit (Mid. Pers. Anāhīd), he was tortured and imprisoned for thirteen (or fifteen) years. Meanwhile a group of nuns from Rome supposedly take refuge from Diocletian in Armenia, but are martyred at Trdat's capital, VałĀ;arshapat. In retribution Trdat is turned into the form of a boar, but is cured when Gregory is brought alive out of prison. The rest of the History describes: the conversion of the Armenian court; the burial of the martyrs at sites revealed to Gregory in a vision; the destruction of pagan temples; Gregory's consecration as bishop for Armenia in Caesarea (an historical event, probably occurring in 314); the building of churches and missionary work throughout Armenia; the visit of Trdat and Gregory to the newly converted Constantine; and the attendance of Gregory's son and successor Aristakes at the council of Nicaea in 325.</p> | <p>Manicheism in Byzantium.</p> <p>We simply do not know by whom, when, and by which route Mani's gospel was taken to Asia Minor and to Byzantium, which from 330 AD was the capital of the Roman empire. We can only state that by that time Manicheism was already present there, more or less tolerated until the end of the 4th century and even supported by adherents and sympathizers in the ruling class, such as the dux, comes, and magister peditum Sebastianus (d. 378) who was supposed to be a Manichean auditor (which was, however, sheer calumny, according to Tardieu, 1988, pp. 494-500); the pagan rhetor and literate Libanius (d. 393?), who intervened in favor of the Manicheans (de Stoop, 1909, p. 70); and also the liberal Christian comes, proconsul, and praefectus praetorio Strategius Musonius (d.</p> | | | |

The History of Agathangelos is not of great value as a historical document. Authentic reminiscences of the bishop Gregory, whose episcopal see was at Ashtishat in western Armenia, have been overlaid with elaborate inventions based on biblical and hagiographical motifs. The missionary work of Gregory in Armenia has been based almost verbatim on the life of Mashtots' (inventor of the Armenian alphabet) written by the latter's pupil Koriun soon after 440. The association of Gregory with the cathedral at VaĀ;arshapat dates from after the division of Armenia in 387 into Roman and Iranian spheres of influence, when the patriarchs moved to eastern Armenia. Trdat and Gregory's visit to Constantine is legendary, but the signature of Aristakes does appear on the lists of bishops at Nicaea (see H. Gelzer, *Patrum Nicaenorum Nomina*, Leipzig, 1898).

The pagan deities and their cult sites mentioned by Agathangelos have attracted attention, but little reliable information can be gleaned from this hagiographical work. Indeed, the description of Anahit's cult at Erez (Aa 48-49) bears no relation to the account in Strabo (11.14.16) but is based on a combination of passages from the Books of Maccabees unrelated to Anahit. She is described by Agathangelos as the special protectress of the Armenian people, source of life and fertility, and as the "golden mother" or "golden-born goddess" from the wealth of her sanctuaries. At Ashtishat Gregory's first church was built on the site of a "trinity" of cults: Anahit, Aramazd (Mid. Pers. Ohrmazd, father of all the gods, creator of heaven and earth), and Vahagn (Mid. Pers. Wahrām), called vishapak' al ("who handles dragons"). Other deities mentioned by Agathangelos are AstĀ;ik ("little star," spouse of Vahagn), Tir (called "interpreter of dreams"), Name (Nanaia), Barshamin, and Mihr.

Agathangelos is also credited with a list of early Armenian kings supposedly culled from Trdat's archives and included in the so-called "Primary History". This is an account of the early mythical Armenian heroes, the settlement of Armenia, and the establishment of the Armenian Arsacid dynasty. It is of unknown authorship and date, and was later incorporated as the first chapter into the seventh century History of Heraclius attributed to Sebeos.

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AGATHANGELOS History of St. Gregory and the Conversion of Armenia

Introduction

Though we cannot date Agathangelos' History precisely, we know that it was written earlier than the tenth century, and most likely did not receive its final form before the year 450. There are several versions of the History, and there is also at least one other Armenian account of Saint Gregory's life which differs considerably from Agathangelos' in the facts and details its presents.

The name "Agathangelos" (which in Greek appropriately means "good news") is probably fictional, even though the writer introduces himself in the Prologue as a man from the great city of Rome who is well versed in literary skills and knows several languages. The Prologue also tells us that Agathangelos was an eyewitness to the events he describes. It is unlikely that this is true, especially because some of the words he uses are taken directly from the life of Mesrob Mashdotz written by that great monk's student, Koriun (about which you can read in the first volume of this series).

What, then, is this History? It is a piece of hagiography (a biography of a saint, written usually with affection and admiration rather than impartial judgment) which contains many of the traditional characteristics of that genre. It is customary for a hagiographer to say he witnessed the events he writes about, for example. It is also typical for the writer to describe the saints' tortures at the hands of pagans in great detail, as Agathangelos does here. The long public prayers which Gregory recites as he is being tortured, and his seeming imperviousness to the pain being inflicted on him, are typical of the descriptions in many lives of saints. Another thing that

371) who informed and advised the emperor Constantine the Great (r. 305-337, sole ruler from 324) on Manichean affairs. All these personalities have a Syriac background (Brown, 1969, pp. 96-97), and that points to Syria as the immediate starting point of the Manichean mission to Byzantium.

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While in exile in Cappadocia,

the Arsacid Tiridates

received a Roman education and acquired a good knowledge of Greek and Latin (Life of St. Gregory, Gk. version 159, 183=Ar. version 145, 176=G. Garitte, *Documents pour l'étude du Livre d'Agathange*, Vatican, 1946, pp. 97, 110). His restoration appears to have been the result of a compromise agreed by Vahram II and Diocletian at some uncertain date around 286-287. Under its terms the Persians must have kept possession of the greater part of Greater Armenia, because in 293 the Sasanian Narseh was still in residence in Armenia as its "king" (Humbach and Skjærvø, op. cit., and W. B. Henning, *BSOAS* 14, 1952, pp. 517f.). It was only after the defeat of Narseh, now the king of kings, by the Caesar Galerius at Osxa (Oskik' in the canton of CaĀ;kotn) in Armenia that the whole of the territory passed out of Persian control and the Arsacid dynasty was definitely reinstated in Armenia under Roman suzerainty. Under another clause of the treaty signed at Nisibis in 297, the five old "Provinces" or districts of southern Armenia—Sophene, Ingilene, Arzanene, Gordyene, and Zabdicene—were ceded to the Romans (Petrus Patricius, fragment 14=Dindorf, *Hist. Gr. Min.* I, p. 434; cf. Ammianus Marcellinus 25.7.9; see below).

The Christian Arsacids

Tiridates III and his successors until the partition. The reign of Tiridates II was marked by an event of far-reaching importance for Armenia's future, namely this king's adoption of Christianity as the state religion at the urging of St. Gregory the Illuminator (i.e. Baptist). The latter was probably a Greek from Cappadocia (Life, Gk. version 40=G. Garitte, *Documents*, p. 37) rather than a nobleman of the stock of the Suren family, as Armenian tradition maintains. At the king's behest, Gregory went to Cappadocia with an escort of naxarars to receive consecration as bishop. (The Armenian church remained dependent on the see of Caesarea until the reign of King Pap). The chronology of Armenia's conversion presents a problem. The event used to be dated about 300, but more recent scholars (notably P. Ananian "La data e le circostanze della consecrazione di S. Gregorio Illuminatore," *Le Muséon* 84, 1961, pp. 43-73, 317-60) tend to change the date to 314/315 — a surmise which seems probable but cannot be proved. B. MacDermot's arguments for 294 (in *Revue des études arméniennes*, N.S., 1971, pp. 281-358) are ingenious but not convincing. The war of Maximinus Daia in 311-312 (Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 9.66.3) might provide a terminus ante quem if it could be proved that "the Armenians allied to the Romans" were subjects of King Tiridates.

Nisibis

Considerable improvement must therefore have been made to its fortification under Diocletian and Constantine. Ammianus (XXV.9.1) mentions a citadel (arx) from which flew the Persian flag after the disgraceful surrender of the city in 363. Malalas (XII, p. 336.14-15) calls it "one of the towers" implying that there were several. Ammianus who knew the city well echoes the views of many in remarking that "the entire Orient might have passed into the control of Persia, had not this city with its advantageous situation and mighty walls resisted him (i.e. Šāpur II)" and the city was undoubtedly "the strongest bulwark of the Orient" (XXV.8.14). Besides the strengthening of her defenses, the morale of Nisibis' citizens was greatly raised by the growth of Christianity in this region after the conversion of Constantine. Jacob, one of the city's first bishops, was active in raising the morale of the garrison in the first siege. As Christians in Persia came to be suspected as a pro-Roman fifth-column and openly persecuted, the war between Rome

Maximian in Gaul.

The monastic accounts themselves do not specifically state that all the soldiers were collectively executed; an eleventh-century monk named Otto of Freising wrote that most of the legionaries escaped, and only some were executed. It is possible that the legion was simply divided during Diocletian's re-organization of units (breaking up legions of 6000 men to create smaller units of 1000), and that some of the soldiers had been executed, and that this was where the story of the legion's destruction originated from. Henri Leclercq suggests that it is quite possible that an incident at Agaunum may have had to do not with a legion, but with a simple detachment. Johan Mösch, after comparing information from the various chronicles on the events and geography of the martyrdoms of the legionaries, concluded that only a single cohort was martyred at Agaunum. The remainder of the cohorts (battalion sized units of which there were ten to a legion) were either on the march or already stationed along the Roman road that ran from Liguria through Turin and Milan, then across Alps and down the Rhine to Colonia Agrippinensis (Cologne). L. Dupraz and Paul Müller, by examining the military titles and ranks of the legionnaires and thereby determining the total number of soldiers involved, estimated that the Thebans martyred at Agaunum consisted of but one cohort whose number did not exceed 520 men.Thus the execution of an entire cohors is equivalent to decimation of a legion.

Denis an Berchem, of the University of Geneva, proposed that Eucherius' presentation of the legend of the Theban legion was a literary production, not based on a local tradition. David Woods, Professor of Classics at the University College Cork, alleges that the model of Maurice and the Theban Legion based on Eucherius of Lyon's letter was a complete fiction.

The strength of the account is based on the historical reputation for the first monks in the Christian tradition, the hermits of the Egyptian desert known as the "Desert Fathers", and the almost fanatical Christian following they inspired during the first two centuries. The most famous of the Desert Fathers was Anthony the Great. The persecution of high-ranking Christian nobility under Emperor Valerian following his edict in 258 and the purge of Christians from the military from 284 through 299 under Emperor Diocletian indicate that noncompliance with emperor worship was the common method for detecting Christian soldiers and eventually executing them.

Donald F. O'Reilly argues that evidence from coins, papyrus, and Roman army lists supports the story of the Theban Legion. A papyrus dated "in the sixth year of our Lord the Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Probus Pius Augustus, Tubi sixteenth" (**13 January 282**), shows rations which would sustain a legion for about three months to be delivered to Panopolis to the "mobilized soldiers and sailors". Coins from Alexandria from the same time period were minted in a style used only when troops for a new legion were leaving port. During the trial of the martyr Maximilian, it was noted that there were Christians serving in the Roman army, and the existence of Theban Christian legionnaires in the same units as mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum* was shown.

Henri Leclercq also notes that the account of Eucherius "has many excellent qualities, historical as well as literary". L. Dupaz countered Denis van Berchem's assertion by sifting through the stories, carefully matching them with archeological discoveries at Agaunum, thus concluding that the martyrdom is historical and that the relics of the martyrs were brought to Agaunum between 286 and 392 through the office of the bishop Theodore. Dora Ruinart, Paul Allard, and the editors of the "*Analecta Bollandiana*" are of opinion that "the martyrdom of the legion, attested, as it is by ancient and reliable evidence, cannot be called in question by any honest mind".

Saints associated with the Theban legion

[Attilio](#)

[Maurice](#)

[Alexander of Bergamo](#)

often appears, as it does here, is a "text" of an anti-Christian edict that a pagan king makes when the Christians threaten his price and power.

If so much of the History, including its writer's name, is fictitious, how can we accept it as a piece of history? What does it offer to the modern reader? In fact it offers a very great deal. Agathangelos does give us a history of Gregory's life and times; the people and events he writes about really existed and had a great impact on the life of the Christian Church and the Armenian people.

But we cannot look at this History as merely an impartial recording of events, for it was not written to be that. Agathangelos has produced an account which is meant to describe Christian faith and its powerful effects, and to inspire those who read it to greater faith. We can see this in many of the History's characteristics. First, the biblical references and similes are innumerable. The prologue uses the nautical imagery so popular in Agathangelos' time, and ties it directly to the Bible's story of the search for the pearl of great price. The long prayers of Gregory and of Hripsime are filled with Biblical phrases and references of those who preceded them in suffering and enduring for the Lord.

Even when Agathangelos describes well-known events, he borrows from the Bible. Diocletian's persecution of the Church is talked about completely in Bible images, with no reference to any actual events. Gregory is nourished in the terrible pit as Elijah was; Drtad's bestial transformation recalls that of Nebuchadnezzar. There are also countless references to liturgical and patristic writings, and it is unfortunate that we modern readers miss so many of these.

Agathangelos presumed on the part of his readers an intimate familiarity with the Scriptures, Liturgy, and spiritual writings that most of us today simply do not possess.

Agathangelos had a purpose in mind as he wrote about Gregory. That purpose is reflected in some of the differences in emphasis between Agathangelos' work about the saint and the work of others. For example, Movses Khorenatsi gives us much more detail about Gregory's origins, and tries to tie him to the first enlightener, Thaddeus. In general, he gives more detail about all aspects of Gregory's life than Agathangelos does. But Agathangelos is not interested in establishing an apostolic tie for Gregory, or presenting his life in detail. His purpose is mainly to enhance Gregory's role as the first bishop, first church builder, and first establisher of a hierarchy in the Armenian Church. He wants to show the importance of the hierarchical structure of the Church, and emphasize the authority of the patriarch's position, and this he does by tying both to the great saint so highly venerated in the Church.

Central to this effort is Agathangelos' description of Gregory's vision of the burial place of the martyrs. Gregory is shown a golden base where the cathedral at Vagharshapat (later Etchmiadzin) is to be built. Thus Agathangelos establishes a divine foundation for the cathedral and for the church leaders who will reside there so again, he makes a case for the "rightness" of the hierarchs and the hierarchical structure of the Church.

The History is, as we have said, hagiographical. To some people this means that its value is diminished because of it is invented, some facts are embroidered, and the writer is consciously trying to make his subject "look good". In many modern dictionaries of saints' lives, you will see events dismissed impatiently as "merely legendary" or "invented by a pious biographer". But we must remember that historical writing is always interpretive. Nobody can write about things that happened and not assign some meaning to them. And the truth is that the Christian saints and martyrs did stand up against the most powerful rulers the earth had ever known, so powerful that they were traditionally considered to be divine. The truth is that saints changed the world in ways that nobody else has ever done, and that they are known throughout the world despite the absence of "advanced" communications equipment in their time. They were persecuted by hard-headed kings; they did change history; they did bring whole nations to Christ.

Agathangelos wrote as those of his day wrote. It is not the way we write today, and perhaps we can grumble that he did not "stick to the facts". But if we believe that the greatest fact is Christ and His

and Persia acquired a new religious dimension; it was no longer a conflict of Romans versus "barbarians," but of the faithful against persecuting "heathens".

<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nisibis-city-in-northern-mesopotamia>

When **Hormizd II** died in **309**, he was succeeded by his son Adur Narseh, who, after a brief reign which lasted few months, was killed by some of the nobles of the empire. They then blinded the second, and imprisoned the third (Hormizd, who afterwards escaped to the Roman Empire)] The throne was reserved for the unborn child of Hormizd II's Jewish wife Ifra Hormizd, which was Shapur II. It is said that Shapur II may have been the only king in history to be crowned in utero, as the legend claims that the crown was placed upon his mother's womb while she was pregnant.

However, according to Alireza Shapour Shahbazi, it is unlikely that Shapur was crowned as king while still in his mother's womb, since the nobles could not have known of his sex at that time. He further states that Shapur was born forty days after his father's death, and that the nobles killed Adur Narseh and crowned Shapur II in order to gain greater control of the empire, which they were able to do until Shapur II reached his majority at the age of 16.

In 337, just before the death of Constantine the Great (324–337), Shapur II, provoked by the Roman rulers' backing of Roman Armenia, broke the peace concluded in 297 between emperors Narseh (293–302) and Diocletian (284–305), which had been observed for forty years. This was the beginning of two long drawn-out wars (337–350 and 358–363) which were inadequately recorded. After crushing a rebellion in the south, Shapur II invaded Roman Mesopotamia and captured Armenia. Apparently, nine major battles were fought. The most renowned was the inconclusive Battle of Singara (modern Sinjar, Iraq) in which Constantius II was at first successful, capturing the Persian camp, only to be driven out by a surprise night attack after Shapur had rallied his troops (344-or 348?). The most notable feature of this war was the consistently successful defence of the Roman fortress of Nisibis in Mesopotamia. Shapur besieged the fortress three times (in 338, 346, 350), and was repulsed each time.

Although victorious in battle, Shapur II could make no further progress with Nisibis un-taken. At the same time he was attacked in the east by Scythian Massagetae and other Central Asia. He had to break off the war with the Romans and arrange a hasty truce in order to pay attention to the east (350). Roughly around this time the Hunnic tribes, most likely the [...]

In any case, Christian communities had unquestionably existed in Armenia before the official conversion. In a passage in the church history of Sozomenus (Historia ecclesiastica 2.8.2) it is stated that the Persians began to become Christian as a result of their contacts with the Armenians and the Osrhoenians; but as far as the Armenians are concerned, this is not wholly true, because the first penetration of Christianity into Iran was definitely not by way of Armenia (see M. L. Chaumont, La diffusion du christianisme en Iran au IIIe siècle, in Temporini and Haase, op. cit., II, forthcoming). Christianization tended to strengthen Armenia's links with the Roman empire and to set back the Iranian cultural influence.

Tiridates III, the St. Tiridates of the Armenians, worked closely with St. Gregory to spread Christianity through his kingdom and to suppress the pagan cults (described below), which nevertheless did not disappear altogether. While remaining a loyal ally of the Roman emperor, Tiridates did not break off all links with the Sasanians. Presumably he was on good terms with the prince Hormizd, who after the death of his father Hormizd II in 309 had been excluded from the throne and kept in prison until he escaped to the Armenian court (Zosimus, Historia nova, [ed. Mendelssohn, 1887] 2.27; see P. Peeters, in Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Belgique 17, 1931, p. 37). Tiridates is said to have been killed in a plot hatched by his adversaries (text published by Alishan=Langlois, pp. 193-94; Movsēs Xorenac'i 2.92=Langlois, I, p. 131). From the sources, his death would appear to have occurred not later than 320 (see Peeters,

[Bessus](#)
[Candidus](#)
[Cassius and Florentius](#)
[Chiaffredo \(Theofredus\)](#)
[Constantius](#)
[Defendens](#)
[Exuperius \(Exuperis\)](#)
[Felix and Regula, the patron saints of Zürich](#)
[Fidelis of Como](#)
[Fortunatus of Casei](#)
[Gereon](#)
[Magnus of Cuneo](#)
[Solutor, Octavius, and Adventor](#)
[Tegulus](#)
[Ursus of Solothurn](#)
[Victor of Xanten](#)
[Victor of Solothurn](#)
[Verena](#)

According to the hagiographical material, **Maurice** was an Egyptian, born in 250 in Thebes, an ancient city in Upper Egypt that was the capital of the New Kingdom of Egypt (1575-1069 BC). He was brought up in the region of Thebes (Luxor)

Maurice became a soldier in the Roman army. He was gradually promoted until he became the commander of the Theban legion, thus approximately leading a thousand men. He was an acknowledged Christian at a time when early Christianity was considered to be a threat to the Roman Empire. Yet, he moved easily within the pagan society of his day.

The legion, entirely composed of Christians, had been called from Thebes in Egypt to Gaul to assist Emperor Maximian to defeat a revolt by the bagaudae. The Theban Legion was dispatched with orders to clear the Great St Bernard Pass across Mont Blanc. Before going into battle, they were instructed to offer sacrifices to the pagan gods and pay homage to the emperor. Maurice pledged his men's military allegiance to Rome. He stated that service to God superseded all else. To engage in wanton slaughter was inconceivable to Christian soldiers he said. He and his men refused to worship Roman deities.

However, when Maximian ordered them to harass some local Christians, they refused. Ordering the unit to be punished, Maximian had every tenth soldier killed, a military punishment known as decimation. More orders followed, the men refused as encouraged by Maurice, and a second decimation was ordered. In response to the Theban Christians' refusal to attack fellow Christians, Maximian ordered all the remaining members of his legion to be executed. The place in Switzerland where this occurred, known as Agaunum, is now Saint-Maurice, Switzerland, site of the Abbey of St. Maurice. So reads the earliest account of their martyrdom, contained in the public letter which Bishop Eucherius of Lyon (c. 434–450), addressed to his fellow bishop, Salvius. Alternative versions have the legion refusing Maximian's orders only after discovering innocent Christians had inhabited a town they had just destroyed, or that the emperor had them executed when they refused to sacrifice to the Roman gods.

salvation, then the History is a factual work. It does give us the truth, for all the people in it lived through the things it describes. But it gives us that truth in light of the coming of Christ. In all the world, there is no brighter or clearer light than that to illumine the truth.

Prologue

The fervent wish of sailors, as their journey nears its end, is to reach port safely. So amidst surging billows and tempestuous winds they spur on their steeds made of wood and iron and held together by nails. They fly over the mounting waves until, finally escaping the troubled waters, they race to their homelands. They tell their loved ones how they braved the fearful tumult of the sea in order to come back home with the spoils of their perilous sea journey. With their profits they settle debts, free their families from servitude to kings and overlords, and make a name for themselves as being generous and rich.

Such people risk their lives not because they are greedy, but because they really want to make their lives better. Some of them then use their wealth for their country's good. They give the king treasures of every description. They create jobs for the poor; from their sea journeys they bring back new and wonderful things such as herbs that are beneficial to health. And for this they are willing to put themselves at the mercy of the sea, and allow the tumultuous winds to plot their course.

Like them, the one who writes this history now sets sail on the perilous sea of wisdom. Like them, the writer is at the mercy of another power that of the princes who command that an account of past events should be written. It is impossible to oppose royal commands, so here is the history, written to show forth the glory of God's workers, the saints. They shine like the priceless pearls, adorning the crowns of kings and consoling, refreshing, enlightening even the poorest in the kingdoms. They give rest and hope to the work-worn, and enrich the land by their prayers. They are guideposts on the road to God's Kingdom. They were tortured and died for God, and they gained life, leaving the fruits of their triumph for us to enjoy. They fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and opened the gates of Christ's compassion to all of us.

They battled through the sea of sin, and when they reached the heavenly port they offered the King of Light their prayers for us. Through their intercession we receive God's mercy and love. And what can we offer to be worthy of such a gift? Only a heart ready to hear God's word. If we bow our heads we will receive the spiritual crown. If we merely wash ourselves of sin, we will be clothed with an everlasting shining garment that makes us more splendid than the lily. If we just let ourselves be thirsty for His love, a living spring will satisfy us eternally.

From these historical writings, readers may gain some spiritual wisdom. Therefore I have set them down, I, Agathangelos from the great city of Rome and trained in the art of the ancients, proficient in Latin and Greek, a not unskilled literary practitioner.

And so we come to the Arsacid court during the reign of Drtad, who has ordered me to narrate not a false account of his brave deeds, but what really happened in the battles, the plundering of provinces, the capture of towns, the struggles of men for renown or revenge. Here are the deeds of the brave King Khosrov, and the equally valorous exploits of his son Drtad, and the works of God's beloved martyrs who rose like stars to scatter the mist of darkness from this land of Armenia. These martyrs died for God's truth, and He had mercy on the land, showing miracles through one man who endured countless afflictions and then triumphed for Christ, even making the mighty Drtad accept a salvation he had known nothing about.

This history will tell how the teaching of the Gospel came to be honored in Armenia, by the king and then by all his subjects. We shall see how they undertook to destroy the pagan temples and establish the foundations of the Holy Church, and how they appointed a man as shepherd of the land and benefited by his teaching. We shall see how Drtad visited and made a covenant with Emperor Constantine, and returned to glory and honor, dedicating many places to God.

All this we shall relate in detail, with the teaching of St. Gregory

op. cit., pp. 17, 37), but some (Markwart, Untersuchungen I, p. 220; R. Grousset, Histoire de l'Arménie des origines à 1071, 2nd ed., Paris, 1947, p. 120; Ananian, op. cit., p. 353) hold that his reign lasted until 330 or even later (Asdourian, op. cit., p. 143, places his death in 337). The view of H. Manandian reiterated by K. Toumanoff (in Revue des études arméniennes, 1969, pp. 263f.) that Tiridates III was succeeded by another king of the same name, Tiridates IV, seems unfounded.

Information about the successors of Tiridates, namely his son Khosrov Kotak (Kosrow the Lesser) and his grandson Tiran, is available only from the Armenian sources. Khosrov chose a site north of Artaxata on which to build a new capital, Dvin, and an aparank' (Parthian apadān) or royal palace (P'awstos 3.8=Langlois, I, pp. 216-18; Movsēs Xorenac' i 3.8=Langlois, II, pp. 136-37). The statement of Movsēs Xorenac' i that dvin was a Persian word meaning "hill" was generally doubted until V. Minorsky ("Transcaucasica," JA, 1930, pp. 41f.) drew attention to the use of dovin with the sense of "hill" in Persian place names. Khosrov Kotak had to contend with an invasion by the Massagetae of Balāsagān, whose king, named Sanesan or Sanatruk is said to have been related to him (P'awstos 3.7=Langlois, I, pp. 215-16; Movsēs Xorenac' i, 3.9=Langlois, II, pp. 137-38). Another problem is said to have been the defection of the vitaxes (bdeašx) of Arzanene, who sought to become a vassal of the Persian king (P'awstos 3.9=Langlois, p. 216; Movsēs Xorenac' i 3.4=Langlois, II, p. 135); but this defection, the date of which is unclear, cannot really have affected the king of Armenia because Arzanene had not been Armenian for many years, having been annexed to the Roman empire under the treaty of Nisibis. King Tiran (incorrectly called Tigranes VII) seems to have had serious conflicts with the Christian clergy and is said to have put St. Gregory's successor, the catholicos Yusik, to death. In his foreign policy he was mainly concerned to placate Šāpūr II of Iran. The latter made no secret of his designs on Armenia (Libanius, Orationes 59.71-72; Eusebius, Vita Constantini 4.56), where he could count on support from some of the naxarars. Probably ca. 334/335 or perhaps a little later, Šāpūr succeeded in capturing King Tiran, his queen, and the crown prince Aršak (according to the rather picturesque account given by P'awstos 3.20=Langlois, I, pp. 229f.). Tiran is said to have been betrayed by his chamberlain (senekapet) Phisak, who delivered him to the satrap of Arzanene, Šāpūr-Varāz (on the chronology of these events, see N. H. Baynes, "Rome and Armenia in the Fourth Century," English Historical Review 25, 1910, pp. 627-28; E. Stein, Histoire du Bas-Empire I, Paris, 1959, p. 130). In 338, however, Šāpūr after his first reverse outside Nisibis agreed to the release of the royal family of Armenia and to the enthronement of Aršak, apparently at the special request of the emperor Constantius II; the matter is the subject of oracular comments by Julian (Orationes 1.20d; ed. J. Bidez, p. 34 in which the personal name of the king of Armenia is not mentioned).

<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/armenia-ii>
[The trilingual inscription of Šābuhr at "Kaaba i Zardušt"](#)

Res Gestae divi Saporis

Kidarites, whose king was Grumbates,

make an appearance as an encroaching threat upon Sasanian territory as well as a menace to the Gupta Empire (320-500). After a prolonged struggle (353–358) they were forced to conclude a peace, and Grumbates agreed to enlist his light cavalrymen into the Persian army and accompany Shapur II in renewed war against the Romans, particularly participating in the Siege of Amida in 359.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shapur_II

who became bishop and inherited the patriarchal title as a champion of virtue who he was, and from what descent and family he came. Then, when future generations look to their past, they will open this book and come to know what happened. They will read how the Gospel was preached in Armenia, and how a man appointed by divine grace did teach and endure tortures, and how by his love for God the cults were crushed. They will read how the first churches were built, and how the people were pulled from the treacherous sea of sin by his preaching.

Part 1

Artashir, a Sassanian prince from the province of Stahr, put an end to the Parthian kingdom when he murdered the Parthian ruler Artavan. He had united the Persian forces, and now they rejected Parthian sovereignty and chose him as their leader.

Khosrov, king of the Armenians, was greatly distressed by this news and soon took up arms to avenge Artavan's death. He gathered Albanian and Georgian forces, and called on the Huns to invade Persian territory. Khosrov and his armies ravaged the land, destroying towns and cities, trying to overthrow the Persian kingdom and wipe out its civilization. Even though the Parthians refused to help him, having attached themselves to Artashir, Khosrov was able to inflict devastating losses on the Persians.

Then Khosrov returned victoriously to the Armenian city of Vagharshapat to celebrate his conquests and reward his soldiers, whom he showered with gifts and sent home. He also honored his family's ancestral worship sites, with white oxen, white rams, white horses and mules, and he gave a fifth of all his plundered booty to the priests. He similarly honored the temples of the idol-worshipping cults throughout the land.

The following year, still full of his intoxicating victory, Khosrov called his armies together again, and for the next ten years they freely plundered all the far-reaching lands under Persian rule. So completely did they scatter the enemy's forces that finally the Persian king could stand it no longer. He called together all the governors, princes, generals, and nobles of his kingdom, and said to them: "If a man can be found to take vengeance against this bloody Khosrov, I will elevate him to the second rank in the kingdom. Only I will be above him, no matter how humble or honorable his origin. I will bestow gifts and rewards without measure upon him if only he will avenge me!"

Among the king's council was a leading Parthian chieftain named Anak. He stood up, strode forward, and offered to carry out the king's wish. And the king said to him: "If you can manage this, Anak, I shall honor you with a crown". Anak agreed to the plan, asking only that the king look after the rest of his family during his absence.

Then he and his brother, along with their wives and children, made their way to Armenia. Anak presented himself to King Khosrov at the winter quarters in Khalkhal, saying he was emigrating to Armenia in revolt against the Persian king. Khosrov received him gladly, honored him, and passed the long winter days with him in good cheer and happiness.

But when spring came, thoughts of the Persian king's promises stirred in Anak's mind. He began to yearn for his own country of Pahlav. So he made a plan with his brother, and together they got Khosrov alone as if they wanted to speak with him. Then they raised their swords and struck the king dead.

When the Armenian princes realized what had happened, they split into groups to scour the countryside and find the killers. This they did, and cast them from a bridge into the swollen waters of the Araxes River. An then, according to the king's deathbed decree, they slaughtered the murderers' families. But two infant sons were saved by their nurses, one of whom fled with her charge to Persian and the other to Greek territory.

The Persian king rejoiced at his enemy's death. He took the opportunity to invade Armenia, correctly surmising that the stunned and grieving people would not offer much resistance. One of Khosrov's sons, Drtdad, survived this terrible raid; his tutors took him to the emperor's court in Greek territory. Meanwhile, the Persian

Manichaeism's views on Jesus are described by historians:

Jesus in Manichaeism possessed three separate identities: (1) Jesus the Luminous, (2) Jesus the Messiah and (3) Jesus patibilis (the suffering Jesus).

(1) As Jesus the Luminous... his primary role was as supreme revealer and guide and it was he who woke Adam from his slumber and revealed to him the divine origins of his soul and its painful captivity by the body and mixture with matter. Jesus the Messiah was a historical being who was the prophet of the Jews and the forerunner of Mani. However, the Manichaeans believed he was wholly divine. He never experienced human birth as notions of physical conception and birth filled the Manichaeans with horror and the Christian doctrine of virgin birth was regarded as equally obscene. Since he was the light of the world, where was this light, they asked, when he was in the womb of the Virgin?

(2) Jesus the Messiah was truly born at his baptism as it was on that occasion that the Father openly acknowledged his sonship. The suffering, death and resurrection of this Jesus were in appearance only as they had no salvific value but were an exemplum of the suffering and eventual deliverance of the human soul and a prefiguration of Mani's own martyrdom.

(3) The pain suffered by the imprisoned Light-Particles in the whole of the visible universe, on the other hand, was real and immanent. This was symbolized by the mystic placing of the Cross whereby the wounds of the passion of our souls are set forth. On this mystical Cross of Light was suspended the Suffering Jesus (Jesus patibilis) who was the life and salvation of Man. This mystica cruxificio was present in every tree, herb, fruit, vegetable and even stones and the soil. This constant and universal suffering of the captive soul is exquisitely expressed in one of the Coptic Manichaean psalms.

king imposed his own name on Armenia, sending the Greek army in retreat back to its own borders. He drove out the inhabitants of the land he had conquered and made it his own.

Drtad was raised and educated in the house of a count named Licinius. The other exile, Gregory, was raised as a devout Christian in Caesarea, capital of Cappadocia. In an effort to make amends for what his father had done, he offered himself to Drtad as a servant, without ever revealing his parentage. But Drtad had been taught to hate and persecute the Christian Church, and when he heard that Gregory belonged to it he made frightening threats, even imprisoning and tormenting Gregory in order to get him to renounce the worship of Christ, and worship instead the pagan gods of Armenia.

At about the same time, the king of the Goths sent a message to the Greek emperor. It said: "Why should both our countries suffer the devastation of war? Instead, let you and I come forth as the single champions of our armies, and fight. If I win, your Greeks will submit to my rule. And if you win, my people shall become your subjects". The Greek king, not a physically strong man, was terrified by this proposal. He called all his troops and their commanders in from the fields of battle to meet with him. Among those answering the summons were the count, Licinius, and his soldiers, including Drtad.

At a place where they camped overnight there was no forage available for the hungry horses. But there was a vast pile of hay locked in a pen with a wall so high that no one thought it could be breached. No one, that is, except Drtad, who climbed over and tossed back heaps of hay until there was plenty for all the horses.

Licinius, amazed by this feat, hastened to meet with the emperor as soon as they reached him the next morning. He told the king what Drtad had done, and together they agreed that his young man from the family of the Armenian king must be the one to meet the challenge of the Goths. Drtad was called into the emperor's presence, and everything was explained to him. Having obtained his consent, the emperor arranged a duel for the very next morning.

So the "false emperor," dressed in royal purple and wearing the royal emblem, went out to meet the king of the Goths. He beat the king handily, and was duly honored by the Emperor. Drtad returned to Armenia with a great army. He beat back the Persians who had subdued his native land, and brought it under his own rule.

During the first year of his reign, Drtad and his courtiers visited a provincial town to sacrifice to the goddess Anahid in her temple there. He ordered Gregory to venerate her statue, and when Gregory refused Drtad asked him: "You have served me well these many years. Why in this one matter do you refuse to do my will?"

Gregory answered: "You speak truly. I have served you as God commands us to serve our earthly lords. But He alone is the creator of angels and men, of heaven and earth. We can worship only Him"

Drtad frowned and said: "By saying this you render all your service to me completely worthless. I shall punish rather than reward you as I had planned. It will be prison and bondage for you unless you honor the goddess Anahid". Gregory replied: "My service to you is not worthless; God values it as He promised always to value our efforts for Him. It is He I seek to please. And if you punish me, I rejoice, for my lord Christ suffered affliction and death, and I will gladly follow Him into death so that I can be with Him in everlasting life. You speak of Anahit, and perhaps demons did once bedazzle men into building temples for them and worshipping them. But I will not worship lifeless objects of stone. We must worship the One who lives and gives life".

Drtad then asked Gregory to tell him more about this living One. Gregory proceeded to explain that Christ is the Lord of creation and the true light for those in the darkness of idolatry. He exhorted the king to use his intelligence and put away the mulishly stupid devotion to mere images.

Drtad exploded in anger. He shouted: "You have insulted the gods and insulted me by calling me stupid for worshipping them. You had the audacity to speak to me as if you were my equal. You said I was stupid as a mule; now you shall feel the burden of such words".

With that he ordered Gregory to be bound and strung up, with a muzzle over his mouth and a heavy block of salt hung on his back. After a week of this torture Gregory was brought before the king,

who said: "Now like a mule you have carried a load. But worse things can happen to you if you further insult our deities". Gregory, however, had not been subdued by his suffering. He told the king that he did not mind tortures, and that only those who worship idols need fear the Lord's wrath. So Drtad tortured him further, hanging him by one foot for seven days. But Gregory passed the time in prayer. He recalled in his prayer how God had prepared mankind for eternal life, a gift which we threw away with our disobedience. Yet God did not abandon us rather He sent the prophets, and finally His own Son, to show us His will. Christ became the image of God so that we, who love to worship images, might finally worship the Truth. He gave us a wooden cross rather than wooden idols. He called us to sacrifice as Christ had sacrificed, and to partake of His body and blood as we had once eaten sacrificial animals. After recalling these wonderful acts of God, Gregory asked Him for strength and grace to endure torments and to fight for the truth, receiving the crown promised to those who are steadfast. Then Gregory praised God's creation of the light and the darkness, with the sun and moon as their rulers. Finally, he prayed that his tormentors might be shown the truth, and turn from false worship, so that they could live everlastingly in God's Kingdom, along with those whose faith was always true. Even this terrible torture, which broke his body, did not sway Gregory. After a week of it, he was again brought before Drtad, who asked him once more to pay homage to the idols. Gregory again refused, and Drtad submitted him to many more hideous tortures. But Gregory withstood them all and told the king: "I can endure all this not through my own power but by the Lord's grace. Now you will see that nothing can separate us from His love". It was about this time that a prince of the court told Drtad that Gregory was the murderer Anak's son. Upon hearing this, Drtad ordered Gregory to be put in a deep pit until he died. As it turned out, Gregory would be there for thirteen years.

Part 2

King Drtad spent much of his reign devastating the Persian kingdom. One of the proverbial sayings of the Armenians was: "Like the haughty Drtad, who in his pride devastated the dikes of rivers and in his arrogance dried up the currents of seas". He was exceedingly brave and daring, and also very proud. While Drtad was thus flourishing, Gregory continued to survive, though still in a pit that had killed all others condemned to it because of the filth, the snakes, and the stench. But Gregory was secretly fed by a widow who had heard God command her in a dream to toss a loaf of bread into the pit each day. So the two men, each in his own way, were moving toward the day when they would meet again. Drtad, still devoted to idol worship, remained an implacable foe of the Christian faith. He issued two edicts, one commanding his people to pay proper homage to the gods to insure that they would make Armenia prosper. The other edict instructed all citizens to reveal any members of the cult of Christians, because this cult was an insuperable obstacle to the proper worship of the gods. Drtad even threatened those who dared to hide Christians, and reminded his subjects of the severe way he had dealt with Gregory, a member of his own court. With Christians, there could be no leniency. During these days the Emperor Diocletian was seeking a wife. He sent portrait painters out into the kingdom to find lovely women and bring back portraits of them, so that from these pictures he could choose a beautiful wife for himself. The painters found, in the city, a group of nuns living a monastic life of constant prayer and ascetic fasting. Their abbess was named Gayane, and one of them, Hripsime, was very beautiful. The painters were quite taken with her, and rushed to complete her portrait to show to the king. He was so smitten that he immediately wanted to arrange a grand wedding. His arrogance and vanity led him to persecute the Christian churches in order to show his power over them. This was all terribly upsetting to the nuns. They were saddened by the persecution of their fellow Christians, and worried by the king's

unseemly interest in Hripsime. They prayed fervently to God that he would enable them, like the virgins in the parable, to keep their lamps filled with oil and that worldly cares would not distract them from His service. They asked for His protection against the pagan powers assailing them.

The women decided to flee, and that was how they came to be in Vagharshapat, the residence of the Armenian kings. They lived by selling the glass pearls which one of them made. But in the very same city, King Drtad received an emissary from Diocletian. He brought a royal edict which said: "Let my brother Drtad know of the evils that constantly beset us because of this error-ridden sect, the Christians. For they worship a dead man, adore a cross because he was crucified, and consider their own death on his behalf to be glory and honor. They teach dishonor for kings and hold as nothing the power of the sun and moon and stars. Everywhere among our people they discourage the worship of the gods, and our threats and punishments against hem are to no avail.

"I happened to see among them a lovely young girl, and wanted to have her as my wife. But she and her companions have insulted my majesty by fleeing to the regions of your kingdom.

"So, my brother, find them for me and take vengeance. Send her back to me unless you wish to keep her for yourself. And may you be well by the worship of the gods".

Drtad immediately ordered a search, and the nuns were soon found. For it was ordained by God that their light should not be hidden under a bushel, but shine out over the world. And since word of the emperor's edict had spread across the land, there were soon crowds of people straining to catch a glimpse of Hripsime's now-famous beauty. The nuns, whose only wish was to have a holy and solitary life, offered up constant prayers and lamentations to God.

Drtad, having heard from those who saw her that she was indeed a great beauty, sent a golden litter with attendants and filled with magnificent robes so that Hripsime could adorn herself and come to meet him in the palace. Seeing all this, the abbess Gayane told the younger woman: "Remember, my child, that you have abandoned your father's throne (for Hripsime was of royal lineage) and longed instead for the never-ending life of the Kingdom of Christ. Do not give up your choice now, and risk your holy virtue with these infidels".

Inspired by her abbess' words, Hripsime prayed intently, asking God to protect her as He had protected all the Old Testament people who faced danger. Her sisters prayed with her, and soon they heard a voice like thunder, assuring them of God's love and care. The thunderous sound caused panic among the throngs of people looking on they trampled each other in their confusion. But when King Drtad was told what had happened, he was not at all frightened. He was furious that Hripsime would not come to him, and ordered that she be brought to the palace by force. So she was dragged along, with a great crowd following, and as she went she prayed that like Daniel and Susanna, she would be saved from her tormentors.

Drtad, seeing her at last, was enthralled by her beauty and tried with all his great strength to seduce her. But Hripsime, delicate as she was, struggled against him so hard that he could not overcome her. Exhausted by his efforts, he ordered the abbess Gayane to intercede with the young nun and tell her to accede. But Gayane took the opportunity instead to strengthen Hripsime in her resistance to the king. Drtad's attendants beat and threatened her, but she persisted in encouraging the younger woman to stand firm and trust in God.

Hripsime did so for many hours, and then finally escaped from the palace. She ran through the city to the nuns' dwelling place to tell them what had happened. Then she went out from the city to a high, sandy point near the main road to Artashat. There she thanked God for keeping her safe. She prayed that soon she might be allowed to leave the temptations of the world behind and enter, by His mercy, the heavenly realm. She thanked Him for the certainty that if torments were to come, He would be there with her. Hripsime ended her prayer with these words: "Let the light of the Lord God be over us".

That very night, Drtad's men came and tortured Hripsime to death. Other followers of Christ were also killed, and so were many of

those who came to wrap and bury their bodies. But all of them prayed to God and thanked Him for making them worthy of martyrdom. The king's men dragged their bodies out and threw them as food for the prowling dogs.

Drtad was unashamed of what he had done. Indeed his heart was more inflamed against the Christians and especially against Gayane, who had counseled his wonderful Hripsime not to yield to him. He commanded that the abbess should be killed, and so she was taken to the place used for criminals' executions. But like her companions, Gayane was unafraid, and expressed her wish to join her sisters speedily. She died as they had, with a prayer on her lips.

King Drtad was not an introspective man, and after a week of grieving over Hripsime's death, he had to have some strenuous activity. He arranged to go hunting, and when the hounds and nets and traps and beaters were all ready, he climbed into his chariot to leave the city for the plain where he loved to hunt.

Suddenly, Drtad fell from the chariot, as if struck down by a demon. He began to rave and grunt, like an animal. As their king was crazed, so all the people suddenly seemed to be, and there was chaos and ruin throughout the city and from the highest to the lowest of the king's household.

But one person had a solution. The king's sister, Khosrovitookht, had a heavenly vision which told her that only the prisoner in the pit, Gregory, could end the terrible nightmare. At first people said she too was mad; Gregory must be dead after so many years in the awful place. But the vision came to her again and again, and each time it disturbed her more. So it was finally decided to send one of the young princes to Artashat. When he arrived, the prince convinced some people there to lower long ropes into the pit, and he called out: "Gregory, if you are down there, let us know!" They felt a tug on the rope, and pulled it up out of the pit. There was Gregory, his body blackened by dirt to the color of coal. The people helped him get clean, and brought clean clothing for him, and he was taken to Vagharshapat with joy and high hopes that he could remedy the situation there.

A pitiful sight greeted him in the great city the people, raving and foaming at the mouth, rushed toward him like wild dogs. He knelt and prayed, and at once the people regained at least enough of their senses to listen to him. The king knelt before him and begged forgiveness. But Gregory pulled Drtad to his feet and said: "I am just a man like you. The One who has had mercy on you is your creator, the Lord and Creator of all things".

Gregory gathered up the remains of those who had been martyred no dog had touched the bodies, and they were not decomposed and he enshrouded them and took them to the nuns' former dwelling place. He spent that night praying for the salvation and repentance of the Armenian populace. The next morning, Drtad and a great crowd of people came to see Gregory, and asked him:

"Intercede with your God to save us, and not let us perish for all the crimes we have committed against you". For they realized that whenever he left them for a moment, the demons assailed them again.

Gregory answered: "You say 'your God', but the One you speak of created all things and is your creator. Recognize Him, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and you will have everlasting life with Him. Do not be like those who, even though they are His creatures, fail to recognize Him.

"You see how much He loves those who believe in Him. He kept firm the maiden Hripsime so that she could fulfill her vow of chastity. Even to such an unworthy one as myself He gave the great privilege of suffering for His sake, and He granted me the endurance to survive.

"Now recognize Him, and throw off the yoke of evil. What you did to Hripsime and the others you did in ignorance. Ask them to pray to God for His mercy on you. Know God; put away your idols. He is long-suffering, pardoning, and nourishing in His mercy, and He cares for you all.

"God calls you; that is why He sent the martyrs to shine their light among you. They were witnesses to the majesty of the Trinity, and sealed their faith with martyrs' deaths. Recognize what they were

showing you that the Son of God humbled Himself in death so that we might be exalted. You tortured me, but my sufferings did not kill me; they exalted me instead. I endured so that, by His will, I could offer you spiritual healing. Now will you hear the teachings of the Lord?"

All the people fell down, and tore their clothes, and said that they did want to hear God's word so that they might live and be pardoned for the things they had done to Gregory. He began to teach them.

"You have seen the power of God. For who but the One who made all things could change their character as He wishes to? Yet God changed the poisonous snakes in the pit into harmless creatures for your sake so that I, his unworthy servant, would be saved and you would see the power of His miracles. And you saw a young girl defeat a powerful giant of a man, your king. She was martyred so that you might be healed. These are God's mighty works, done for your sake.

"And if you will turn to Him, then I shall gladly tell you how He made the world and showed Himself in it. For even though we cannot know Him, being only creatures, still He sent men called prophets to tell of eternal and divine life. They were men of the pious race of Hebrews, the seed of Abraham who is called the father of all races. Among these luminous men who spread God's words was one called Moses. He handed down true knowledge through the generations. So by the grace of the Spirit will I also try to teach you, trusting that He will place the proper words in my mouth. Let us begin".

Part 3

So Gregory taught the people about God and His desires for our salvation. Then he urged the people to build chapels for the martyrs, as a way of showing reverence for God and in order that the saints' intercessory prayers would enlighten them. He encouraged them to fast, study, and pray to become ready for baptism, and become worthy partakers in God's life and His eternal Kingdom. Having said all this, he sent them home to get a good night's rest before beginning the work of building the martyrs' sanctuaries.

But King Drtad and the nobles would not leave Gregory's side because they were still fearful and tormented. Day and night they fasted and sat on ashes, dressed in hair shirts. Gregory used the time for they were like this for sixty-five days to tell them the whole long history of God's salvation for mankind. Many other people also came to hear Gregory's tales of the saints and his explanations of the word of God. They were a huge crowd, attentive and filled with wonder at what they were hearing.

On the morning of the sixty-sixth day, the king and nobles and the crowd with them approached Gregory and begged him to free them entirely from the torments which had beset them all this time. The king especially was eager for this, because his form was still more like a beast's than a man's. But it was God's will not yet to heal them completely, and to give them only enough understanding to comprehend Gregory's teaching. One way he taught them was by describing a wonderful vision which had come to him, concerning the chapels for the martyrs.

Gregory said: "One night I heard a fearful thunderous sound like roaring sea waves. The firmament of heaven opened, and a man descended in the form of light. He called my name; I looked up and saw him and fell to the ground, struck by terror. But he commanded me to look up and see great wonders.

"I did look up, and saw the firmament opened with the waters above it divided as is the firmament itself. The waters were like valleys and mountaintops, with infinite expanses that went far out of sight. Light flowed down to the earth, and the light was filled with shining two-winged creatures, human in appearance and with wings like fire.

Their leader was a tall and fearful man who carried a golden hammer. He flew down near the ground in the middle of the city, and struck the earth. The rumbling sounded even in the depths of hell, and as far as the eye could see the earth was struck as level as a plain.

"I saw him in the middle of the city, near the palace, a circular base of gold as big as a hill, with a column of fire on it. On top of the

column was a capital of clouds, and above that a cross of light. There were three other bases at the sites where St. Gayane and St. Hripsime were martyred, and one near the wine press where the nuns lived. These bases were blood-red, and they had columns of clouds and capitals of fire. From the columns, marvelous vaults fitted into one another and above this was a dome-shaped canopy of clouds. Under the canopy were thirty-seven holy martyrs in shining light I cannot even describe them.

"At the summit of all this was a wonderful throne of fire with the Lord's cross above it. Light spread out in every direction from it. And an abundant spring gushed forth, flowing over and filling the plains as far as one could see. They made a vast bluish sea, the color of heaven. There were numerous fiery altars shining like stars, with a column on each altar and a cross on each column.

"There were herds of black goats, which when they passed through the water became sparkling white sheep. They gave birth to more sheep, filling the land. But some of these crossed to the other side of the water and became brown wolves which attacked the flocks. But the flocks grew wings and flew up to join the shining host, and a torrent of fire carried away the wolves.

"I stood amazed at this sight. And the man who had earlier called my name and said: "Why do you stand gaping? Pay attention to what is being revealed to you. The heavens have been opened! Here is what the vision means. The voice like thunder is the beginning of God's mercy raining down upon mankind. The gates of heaven are opened, and also the waters above them. There is nothing to keep us mortals from rising up, for those who were martyred here have made a path for others.

"The light filling the land is the preaching of the Gospel, and the fearsome man is the providence of God, who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke, as the psalm tells us. This fear of God has flattened and destroyed error on the earth.

"The golden base is God's true Church, gathering all His people, and the shining cross above it is Christ Himself. The three blood-red bases are the martyrs' torments. But the columns of cloud show how quickly they will rise to heaven at the universal resurrection. The capital is fiery because they will love in the fire of divine light. And the crosses show that they are fellow sufferers with their lord Christ.

"The vaults joining the columns show the unity of the Church, and the cloud canopy above shows the gathering place of all believers, the celestial city. The throne, above which the whole structure is held together, is almighty God, the head of the Church. The shining light around the throne is the Holy Spirit, who glorifies the Son. The spreading waters are the grace of the Spirit, which will save many through baptism and make earth like heaven (that is why the plains became the color of heaven.) The herds of goats are sinners, washed clean by God's mercy, and worthy of His Kingdom. The flocks of sheep give birth because many generations will hear the preaching of the Word; but the flocks that became wolves are like those who depart from the truth. They lead sheep astray with their falsehoods. But the sheep that endure will rise to Christ's Kingdom, and the wolves will be handed over to eternal fire."

Gregory continued: "And when he had told me the vision's meaning, he said to be strong because I had a great task. I was to build a temple to God on the place where the gold base had been shown to me, and the martyrs' chapels in the places where they suffered and died. After he told me all this, there was an earthquake, and I could see him no more.

"God showed me this vision of the future so that I could do His will among you. Let us go now and build the chapels, giving the martyrs rest!."

"So all the people took up tools, and gathered materials, and set to work. Gregory himself took the architect's measuring line and laid out the foundations. They built three chapels, and made a casket for each saint's body. After Gregory had sealed the caskets, the king and people brought sweet oils and incense and rich robes. But Gregory said: "I am glad to see you honor these saints. But do not offer gifts to the holy ones until you have been purified by baptism. One day, we shall use all these beautiful things to adorn God's altar. But until

true worship is established in this land, let them remain in the royal treasury".

The time had come for the king and all the people to be completely freed from their tormenting demons. Gregory knelt by the saints' caskets and prayed for Drtad and all the rest. Then he turned to the king, and by Christ's grace cured his hands and feet enough so that he was able with his own hands to dig graves and bury the caskets in them. His wife Ashkhen and sister Khosrovitookht helped him to arrange the places. With his prodigious strength Drtad carried stones from Mount Massis to make thresholds for the chapels.

When the chapels were ready, the martyrs were laid to rest in them. Gregory placed a cross in front of each, and told the people that the proper place for worship was in front of that saving sign of Jesus Christ. Then he took them to build a high wall around the place where the golden base had been revealed, for that was to be the site of the Lord's house. There too, a cross was placed so that people could worship God truly.

Gregory could see that the people were willing to heed his words, give up idol worship, and give themselves to study, fasting, and prayer. He gathered them to pray together for healing, and as they all prayed the king was fully restored to his human appearance, and the people were freed from their various afflictions. The news of this wonder spread through the land, inspiring people everywhere to come to Ayrarat and hear about Jesus Christ, and learn how to live as He calls us to do.

Gregory then asked the king for permission to overthrow and destroy the pagan shrines and temples. Drtad readily issued an edict entrusting Gregory with this task, and himself set out from the city to destroy shrines along the highways. Together the men worked feverishly, and they distributed the temple treasures among the poor. In all the cities he visited, Gregory marked sites for Christian churches, but because he did not hold the rank of priest he did not erect any altars. At each place he set a cross, and he also placed crosses along roads and at squares and intersections.

Drtad and his family members were then thoroughly instructed in the faith by Gregory. When they had all been convinced to worship the only true God, Gregory and Drtad began traveling to other parts of the country to instruct the people and to destroy the altars of the false gods. In many of the provincial towns, demons in the form of armed soldiers fought against the evangelist's efforts. They were put to flight each time, and then Gregory would tell the people not to be afraid, but to drive out their own personal demons of false worship, and follow Christ. He performed miracles to show the people how loving and powerful God is. And the king gave testimony about his sinful acts, and the miracles and mercy of healing which God had shown him.

So they traveled through the provinces and everywhere they spread the light of the Gospel and destroyed the dark pagan superstitions which had held the people captive.

After they returned to Vagharshapat, Drtad called together all his courtiers and the leaders from every corner of the land. The king wanted to make Gregory their pastor, so that everyone could be baptized and begin in earnest to live the new life in Christ. Gregory protested his unworthiness, but Drtad had a wonderful vision from God urging him to carry out his plan, and the angelic vision also appeared to Gregory, telling him not to thwart it. So Gregory said: "Let God's will be done".

Drtad then chose some of the leading princes to take Gregory to Caesarea, in Cappadocia, with an edict for the bishop Leontius. The edict gave the whole history of Armenia's pagan worship, the suffering of the nuns, Gregory's witness and work among the people, and the king's own desire to have Gregory be the spiritual leader of Armenia.

The group set off with Gregory in a royal carriage, taking along gifts for each of the churches they would pass. They were welcomed heartily in the land of the Greeks, who rejoiced to hear of God's miracles and the great conversion which had taken place. When the men reached Caesarea, Gregory was duly ordained, and the bishops laid their hands on him and prayed for him. He, too, was now consecrated as a bishop for God's church.

With joyous and loving farewells, the nobles and Gregory set out for home, and as they stopped at various towns, Gregory persuaded some good Christian men to return with him and be ordained to serve the people. In all the towns, crowds of people gathered to see the new bishop pass, and to receive his blessing.

Part 4

Back within the borders of Armenia, Gregory heard that in a certain region there was a large, richly-appointed temple devoted to the cult of Vahagn. It was on a mountain peak near the Euphrates, and contained three altars, one for Vahagn, one for his mother, and one for his spouse Astghig who corresponded to the Greek Aphrodite. People still made sacrifices at these pagan altars.

Gregory had brought from Cappadocia some relics of John the Baptist and the martyr Athenogenes. He intended to take these up to the mountain, destroy the pagan temples, and build chapels for the relics there. But as his carriage neared a small valley, the horses halted and would not go any farther. An angel appeared and said: "It has pleased God that the saints should dwell here". So the entourage set to work and made a chapel for the relics.

While they were doing so, Gregory took some of the men with him to destroy the pagan altars. Pounded as they might, they could not batter down the gates. So Gregory took the cross and held it up saying: "Let your angel drive the demons away, Lord". And a wind like a hurricane blew from the cross and leveled the altars so that later not a trace of them could be found. Many people seeing this came to believe in Jesus Christ, for as Gregory told them: "See, your stumbling blocks have been removed". It was on that spot that Gregory first laid the foundations of a church and erected an altar to the glory of God, and then arranged a baptismal font. He was with the people for twenty days, and more than one hundred and ninety thousand of them were baptized. This was the beginning of Gregory's effort to fill the land with church buildings and priests. And in each place he left a tiny portion of the saints' relics so they could be venerated.

King Drtad, informed that Gregory was back in the country, set out from Vagharshapat to meet him. He had to wait a month, because Gregory was traveling far and wide to provide every region with churches and priests to do services in them, and was also baptizing scores of people.

Finally Gregory did arrive, and the king went out to greet him on the banks of the Euphrates. Everyone was filled with joy, and the nobles who had gone with Gregory presented Drtad with Bishop Leontius' reply to his edict. In it, the bishop praised God's loving mercy in showing the Armenian people His will for them through the efforts of Gregory, whom they at first had despised but who became their spiritual champion. The bishop quoted Scripture: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner" (Matthew 21:42). He asked the new Christians to remember him in their prayers, and wished them well.

When the welcoming festivities were over, Gregory once again settled down to the task of instructing the people, and ever more of them came to learn how to live in a new way. Then he and the men he had recruited began a period of fasting and prayer, vigils and tearful repentance. The royal camp also prayed and fasted for a full month. Gregory built a church and placed in it the last of the relics he had brought to Armenia. When all this was done the month of preparation was completed, the whole royal camp went down to the Euphrates one morning at dawn, and he baptized them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As this was being done, a bright light appeared over the water, with the cross above it. The people were amazed and blessed God's glory. That evening they went forth, more than one hundred fifty thousand new Christians, with lighted candles and in their white garments, praising God with psalms and prayers. They received Holy Communion in the new church which Gregory had built.

During the next week, Gregory baptized more multitudes of people, and he fixed a date for commemorating the martyrs. This date was the same as that of a former pagan festival New Year's Day. He then continued to travel around the land to give instruction and blessings

to all the people, urging them to give up their old worship and pagan feasts, and come instead to know and worship the one true God. Gregory was especially concerned with leadership and education. He made sure that each church had a priest and each region had a bishop. Then he persuaded the king to gather peasant children from all over the country so that they, too, might learn from him and the men he had chosen. The king was willing also to have some children taught to read and become better acquainted with the Scriptures and other sacred writings. Some learned Syriac and some Greek, but all found new and precious knowledge in the word of God. So Gregory's work continued. He spread the gospel message everywhere; he helped many in distress and despair, and established monastic orders in the populous plains and the isolated mountain caves. He educated many of the pagan priests' children and when they were ready he made them bishops of the Church. The first of these, Albanos, was often left in charge of the court so that Gregory could retreat to a lonely place and live austere with pupils from the monasteries. They would give themselves to prayer and works of humility, proclaiming god's strength by their own weakness. They did the worship services together, studied the Bible, sang spiritual songs, and encouraged each other to live according to God's way rather than the world's. But Gregory was always ready to visit a city to work with the people in churches there, and met often with priests and bishops. He was their best example of how to live and do their work as the Lord would want, and constantly reminded them to teach others as Christ had done. where he could pray and fast. King Drtad lamented Gregory's absence very much, but at about this time he learned that from a youthful marriage Gregory had two sons, Vertanes and Aristakes. Both had been raised to be priests, but Vertanes was living a secular life. Armenia's light shone so brightly in the world in this wonderful time that other lands truly admired her and felt she was blessed. Everything was flowering, and the king continued to travel around the land to urge his people to follow Christ. But Gregory no longer went with him; instead he lived in the desert Aristakes, on the other hand, was living a stringently ascetical life of prayer as a monk. Elated by the news, Drtad sent for them both. Aristakes was at first reluctant to leave his desert hermitage, but fellow Christians persuaded him to go and do whatever God called him to. As soon as they arrived at court, Drtad went out with them to seek their father. They found him on the mountain called the Caves of Mane, in the province of Daranalik. Drtad asked Gregory to make Aristakes a bishop, so he could carry on his father's work. This was done, and Gregory himself visited some of the churches he had established. Drtad was also a tireless servant of the Lord, both in his witness to others and his personal spiritual life. He kept the feasts and fasts, asked forgiveness for his sins, and strove to do God's will. He used his royal authority to promote the teaching of the Gospel everywhere, and tried to be a living example of it for his people. While all this was going on in Armenia, Constantine became emperor in Spain and Gaul. He was a Christian and made a covenant with his large and mighty army that they would work together to glorify God. So with his soldiers, Constantine marched against the heathen kings Diocletian, Marcianus, Maximianus, Licinius and Maxentius. He rebuilt the Christian churches they had destroyed during the persecutions, and built chapels for those they had martyred. He destroyed the temples of idols and took the cross as his sign. Constantine greatly fortified his rule over a large part of the known world, honoring all who worshipped the true God and fighting vigorously against all others. King Drtad was eager to pay his respects to another monarch who believed as he did. He set out with Gregory, the bishops Aristakes and Albanos, and some of the highest-ranking members of his own court. As they traveled from Vagharshapat through Greek territory they were honorably received along the way, and when they arrived in Rome the emperor and the great Patriarch Eusebius greeted them warmly. After the lavish ceremonies, Constantine pressed them to

tell about the miracles that had come to pass in Armenia. So Drtad told his spiritual brother all that had happened, not even keeping back the details of his own bestial transformation. He spoke about the brave sacrifice of the martyrs, and introduced Gregory to the emperor as the man through whom God's will had been done. Constantine was amazed by the story, and humbly asked Gregory's blessing. The emperor was also able to tell Drtad more about the martyrs, whom he had known of while they were still in his land. He spoke of how he himself had come to know God, and made an alliance with his fellow king to keep the love of Christ as a bond between their kingdoms.

When they returned to Armenia, Drtad offered all the gold and silver gifts they had received to the service of the Church, and placed several precious articles in the martyrs' chapels. Gregory and Aristakes continued their travels and teaching across the land. It was Aristakes, too, who journeyed to the city of Nicaea when Constantine convened all the Christian bishops there for an ecumenical council. At that council, doctrines were expounded and canons were formed. Aristakes made these known when he came back to Armenia, further strengthening the Church and insuring good practices among the people.

Gregory continued his teaching and writing to make the faithful think about things of the Kingdom by his stories about things of this world. With fasting and prayers, taking only minimal rest, Gregory spread forth the word of the Lord until the end of his days. He had taught his students well, and they too spent time in reading Scripture and urging each other to follow the words of Saint Paul: "Take care for yourself and your teaching, and persevere in the same. If you do this you will save yourself and those who hear you". (Timothy 4:13-16). Thus it was that Gregory spent the days of his life in acts like those of the Apostles, following God's commands until he died. And immersed in the love of Christ, he shone forth to all.

Now according to your command, King Drtad, we have written all this down as a chronicle in the literary style of the Greeks. Like the Old Testament prophets and rulers, we have put down these events for future generations everywhere to read and learn from; we have not set them down from old tales but according to what we ourselves saw and heard. An like the writer Luke, we have put down the main points, not including each small detail but passing over some things and describing only those that are most important and illuminating.

We have made our story not to honor those who have already pleased God with their service, but to inspire their children and all those in every land who will receive these words. May they come, one day, to say to Him, "You are our God," and hear His life-giving answer, "You are my people".