

[FIRST TREATISE]

/p. 3, 1. 1/[The Treatise of Zār'a Ya'eqob]

[CHAPTER I]

[The Story of his Life]

*In the name of God who alone is just. I shall describe the life, the wisdom and the investigation of Zār'a Ya'eqob who said: "Come and listen, all you who fear God, while I tell you what he has done for me."⁽¹⁾ Behold, I begin.

⁽²⁾In the name of God, who is the creator of all things, the beginning and the end, the possessor of all, the source of all life and of all wisdom, I shall write of some of the things that I have encountered during my long life. ⁽³⁾Let my soul be blessed in the sight of God and let the meek rejoice. ⁽⁴⁾I sought God and he answered me. ⁽⁵⁾And now you approach him and he will enlighten you; let not your face be ashamed. Join me in proclaiming the greatness of God and together let us extol his name.⁽²⁾

⁽⁶⁾I was born in the land of the priests of Aksum. But I am the son of a poor farmer in the district of Aksum; the day of my birth is 25th of Nāhasye 1592 A.*D., the third year of the reign of [King] Ya'eqob.⁽⁷⁾ By Christian baptism I was named⁽⁴⁾ Zār'a Ya'eqob, but people called me Wāraqye. ⁽⁷⁾When I grew up, my father sent me to school in view of my instruction. And after I had read the Psalms of David my teacher said to my father: "This young son of yours is clever and has the patience to learn; if you send him to a [higher] school, he will be a master and a doctor."⁽⁸⁾ ⁽⁹⁾After hearing this, my father sent me to study z'ema.⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾But my voice was coarse and my throat was grating; so my school-master used to laugh at me and to tease me. I stayed there for three months, until I overcame my sadness and went to another master who taught qan'ye and sāwasawā.⁽¹⁰⁾ God gave me the talent to learn faster than my companions and this compensated for my previous disappointment: I stayed there four years. During those days, God as it were snatched me from the claws of death: ⁽¹¹⁾for as I was playing with my friends I fell⁽⁷⁾ into a ravine, and I do not

(1) Ps 65:16 (LXX), 66 (Hebr.).

(2) See Ps 33:3-6 (LXX), 34 (Hebr.).

(3) August 31st 1599 according to the Gregorian calendar.

(4) The MS has ተሰየምኩ instead of ተሰመደኩ. (3:16).

(5) Sacred music taught in Church school.

(6) The first word may be translated as "poetry" or "hymns." The strict meaning of the second is "vocabulary;" but in reality it designates the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and is near to "beliefs-letters."

(7) The word ወደቁ is added above the line(3:30).

MS.DAB.2155

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*know /4/ how I was saved except by a miracle from God. After I was saved I measured the depth of the ravine with a long rope and found it to be twenty-five fathoms and one palm [deep.] Thanking God for saving me, I went to the house of my master. ⁽¹²⁾After this I left for another school to study the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. ⁽¹³⁾I remained ten years in this type of study; I learned the interpretations both of the Frang⁽⁸⁾ and of our own scholars. ⁽¹⁴⁾Oftentimes their interpretations did not agree with my reason; ⁽¹⁵⁾but I withheld my opinion and hid in my heart all the thoughts of my mind. ⁽¹⁶⁾Having returned to my native Aksum, ⁽¹⁷⁾I taught for four years. ⁽¹⁸⁾But this period was not peaceful: for in the XIX year of King Susanyos,⁽⁹⁾ while 'af'ons,⁽¹⁰⁾ a Frang, was 'ahunā, two years [after his arrival] a great persecution spread over all *Ethiopia. ⁽¹⁹⁾The king accepted the faith of the Frang, and from that time on persecuted all those who did not accept it.

/p. 4, 1. 18/[CHAPTER II]

[His Banishment, his Enemy Wāldā Yoḥannos and King Susanyos]

⁽²⁰⁾While I was teaching in my district, many of my friends came to dislike me. ⁽²¹⁾During this period there was no real friendship and as a result men became jealous of one another. ⁽²²⁾I surpassed the others in knowledge and in love of one's neighbour and I was on good terms with all, even with the Frang and the Copts. ⁽²³⁾And while I was teaching and interpreting the Books, I used to say: "The Frang say this and this" or ⁽²⁴⁾"The Copts say that and that," ⁽²⁵⁾and I did not say: "This is good, that is bad," but I said: "All these things are good if we ourselves are good." ⁽²⁶⁾Hence I was disliked by all; ⁽²⁷⁾the Copts took me for a Frang, the Frang for a Copt. ⁽²⁸⁾They brought a charge against me many times to the king; but God saved me. ⁽²⁹⁾At that time, a certain enemy of mine, Wāldā Yoḥannos, a priest from Aksum and a friend of the king, went [to bring a charge against me:] since the love of kings could be won by a perfidious *tongue. ⁽³⁰⁾This betrayer went to the king and said this about me: "Truly this man misleads the people and tells them we should rise for the sake of our faith, kill the king⁽¹¹⁾ and expel the Frang." He also said many other /5/ similar words against me. But being aware of all this and frightened by it, I took three measures of gold which I possessed and the Psalms of David, with which I prayed, and fled at night. I did not tell anyone where I was going. ⁽³¹⁾I reached a place close to the Tākkāzi

(8) A foreigner. Here: the "Europeans," the "Portuguese," the "Catholics."

(9) Reigned 1607 - 1632.

(10) Alphonsus Mendez, Portuguese Jesuit who in 1626 obtained the solemn profession of Catholic faith from King Susanyos.

(11) The words ወንቅተሉ ለንጉሥ (4:34) are written in the margin.

River, and the next day, as I felt hungry I went out in fear to beg the farmers for some bread. I ate what they gave me and ran away. I lived in this manner for many days. On my way to Shoa, I found an uninhabited location. There was a beautiful cave at the foot of a deep valley, and I said [to myself:] "I shall live here unnoticed." I lived there for two years until [King] *Susanyos* died. At times I would leave [the cave] and go to the market or to the country of the Ahmara as they took me for a hermit who goes about begging and gave me enough to appease my hunger. People however, did not know where I dwelt. Alone in my cave, I felt I was living in heaven. Knowing the boundless badness of men, I disliked contact with them. I built a fence of stone and thorny bush so that wild animals would not endanger my life at night, and I made an exit through which I could escape if ever people searched for me; there I lived peacefully praying with all my heart on the Psalms of David and trusting that God was hearing me.

*3 v°.

/p. 5, 1. 23/ CHAPTER III

[The Eternity of God and the Divisions among Believers]

After prayer, when I was not engaged in any kind of work, I used to meditate for whole days on conflicts between men and their depravity and on the wisdom of their creator who is silent while men do evil in His name and persecute their fellow men and kill their brothers. For in those days the *Franġ* prevailed. And not only the *Franġ* [were strong in their persecutions] but my own people were even worse than they. Those who had accepted the faith of the *Franġ* would say: "The Copts have denied the rightful see of Peter, and are therefore the enemies of God;" and so they persecuted them. The Copts did the same in defence of their faith. I said to myself: "If God is the guardian of men, how is it that their nature is thus deeply corrupted?" and I said: "How does God know, or is there anyone in heaven who knows?" Or if there is one who knows, why does he remain silent on men's depravity while they corrupt his name and act with iniquity in his holy name?" I said in my prayer: "O my Lord and my creator, who endowed me with reason, make me intelligent, reveal to me your hidden wisdom. Keep my eyes open lest they slumber until the moment of death. Your hands made me and moulded me; render me intelligent that I may know your precepts. My feet have nearly stumbled and the ground [under them] has nearly given way; and the labour stands before me." While I

*4 r°.

*4 v°.

(12) See Pss 12:3-5 (LXX), 13 (Hebr.); 72:2 (LXX), 73 (Hebr.); 118:73 (LXX), 116 (Hebr.).

was praying in such and similar ways, one day I said to myself in my own thought: "Whom am I praying to or is there a God who listens to me?" At this thought I was invaded by a dreadful sadness and I said: "In vain have I kept my own heart pure" (as David says.) (13) Later on I thought of the words of the same David, (14) "Is the inventor of the ear unable to hear?" and I said: "Who is it that provided me with an ear to hear, who created me as a rational [being] and how have I come into this world? Where do I come from? Had I lived before the creator of the world, I would have known the beginning of my life and of the consciousness [of myself.] Who created me? Was I created by my own hands? But I did not exist before I was created. If I say that my father and my mother created me, then I must search for the creator of my parents and of the parents of my parents until they arrive at the first who were not created as we [are,] but who came into this world in some other way without being generated. For if they themselves have been created, I know nothing of their origin unless I say, 'He who created them from nothing must be an uncreated essence who is and will be for all centuries [to come,] the Lord and master of all things, without beginning or end, immutable, whose years cannot be numbered.'" (15) And I said: "Therefore there is a creator, else there would have been no creation. This creator who endowed us with the gifts of intelligence and reason, cannot he himself be without them? For he created us as intelligent beings from the abundance of his intelligence and the same one being comprehends all, creates all, is almighty." And I used to say: "My creator will hear me if I pray to him," and because of this thought I felt very happy. I would pray to my creator with great hope and love, and with all my heart I would say: "You, Lord, know the thought of my heart from afar. Indeed you know all that was and all that will be; and all my paths you know beforehand." Hence it is said: "You know from afar. For God read my thoughts before I was born," (15) and I said: "O my creator, make me intelligent."

*5 r°.

*5 v°.

/p. 7, 1.4/ CHAPTER IV

[The Investigation of Faith and of Prayer]

Later on I thought, saying to myself: "Is everything that is written in the Holy Scriptures true?" Although I thought much [about these things] I understood nothing, so I said to myself: "I shall go and consult scholars and thinkers; they will tell me the

(13) Ps 72:13 (LXX), 73 (Hebr.).

(14) Ps 93:9 (LXX), 94 (Hebr.).

(15) See Ps 138:3-5 (LXX), 139 (Hebr.).

truth." "But afterwards I thought, saying to myself: "What will men tell me other than what is in their heart?" "Indeed each one says: "My faith is right, and those who believe in another faith believe in falsehood, and are the enemies of God." "These days the *Franġ* tell us: "Our faith is right, yours is false." We on the other hand tell them: "It is not so; your faith is wrong, ours is right." "If we also ask the Mohammedans and the *Jews, they will claim the same thing, and who would be the judge for such a kind of argument? "No single human being [can judge:] for all men are plaintiffs and defendants between themselves. "Once I asked a *Franġ* scholar many things concerning our faith; he interpreted them all according to his own faith. "Afterwards I asked a well-known Ethiopian scholar "and he also interpreted all things according to his own faith. "If I had asked the Mohammedans and the Jews, they also would have interpreted according to their own faith; then, where could I obtain a judge that tells the truth? "As my faith appears true to me, "so does another one find his own faith true; "but truth is one. "While thinking over this matter, I said: "O my creator, wise among the wise and just among the just, who created me with an intelligence, help me to understand, for men lack wisdom and truthfulness; "as David⁽¹⁶⁾ said, no man can be relied upon."

"I thought further and said: * "Why do men lie over problems of such great importance, even to the point of destroying themselves?" and they seemed to do so because although they pretend to know all, they know nothing. "Convinced they know all, they do not attempt to investigate the truth. "As David⁽¹⁷⁾ said: "Their hearts are curdled like milk." Their heart⁽¹⁸⁾ is curdled because they assume what they have heard from their predecessors and they do not inquire whether it is true /8/ or false. But I said: "O Lord! who strike me down with such torment, it is fitting that I know your judgement. "You chastise me with truth and admonish me with mercy. "But never let my head be anointed with the oil of sinners and of masters in lying:⁽¹⁹⁾ make me understand, for you created me with intelligence." "I asked myself: "If I am intelligent, what is it I understand?" "And I said: "I understand there is a creator, greater than all creatures; since from his overabundant greatness, he created things that are so great. He is intelligent who understands all, "for he created us as intelligent⁽²⁰⁾ from the abundance of his intelli-

(16) Ps 115:2 (LXX), 116: 11 (Hebr.).

(17) Ps 118:70 (LXX), 119 (Hebr.).

(18) The words $\lambda\eta\sigma\sigma\ \epsilon\gamma\theta\ \alpha\beta\sigma\sigma$ (7:33-34) have been written in the margin by a second hand.

(19) See Ps 140:5 (LXX), 141 (Hebr.).

(20) The word $\Lambda\eta\omega\text{-}\rho\gamma$ has been added above the line by a second hand; but Δ is used instead of Λ (8:8).

gence; and we ought to worship him, for he is the master of all things. If we pray to him, he will listen to us; for he is almighty."

"I went on saying in my thought: "God did not create me intelligent without a purpose, that is to look for him: and to grasp him and his wisdom in the path he has opened for me and to worship him as long as I live." "And still thinking on the same subject, I said to myself: "Why is it that all men do not adhere to truth, instead of [believing] falsehood?" [The cause] seemed to be the nature of man which is weak and sluggish. "Man aspires to know truth and the hidden things of nature, but this endeavour is difficult and can only be attained with great labour and patience, as Solomon⁽²¹⁾ said: "With the help of wisdom I have been at pains to study all that is done under heaven; oh, what a weary task God has given mankind to labour at!" Hence people hastily accept what they have heard from their fathers and shy from any [critical] examination. "But God created man to be the master of his own actions, "so that he will be what he wills to be, good or bad.

"If a man chooses * to be wicked he can continue in this way until he receives the punishment he deserves for his wickedness. "But being carnal, man likes what is of the flesh; "whether they are good or bad, he finds ways and means through which he can satisfy his carnal desire. "God did not create man to be evil, but to choose what he would like to be, "so that he may receive his reward if he is good or his condemnation if he is bad. "If a liar, who desires to achieve wealth or honours among men, needs to use foul means to obtain them, he will say he is convinced this falsehood was for him a just thing. /9/ To those people who do not want to search, this action seems to be true, and they believe in the liar's strong faith. "I ask [you,] in how many falsehoods do our people believe in? They believe wholeheartedly in astrology and other calculations, "in the mumbling of secret words, in omens, in the conjuration of devils, and in all kinds of magical art and in the utterances of soothsayers. "They believe in all these "because they did not investigate the truth but listened to their predecessors. Why did these predecessors lie unless it was for obtaining wealth and honours? "Similarly those who wanted to rule the people said: "We were sent by God to proclaim the truth to you;" and the people believed them. "Those who came after them accepted their fathers' faith without question; rather, as a proof of their faith, they added to it by including stories of signs and omens. "Indeed they said: "God did those things;" and so they made God a witness of falsehood and a party to liars.

(21) Ecclesiastes 1:13.

/p. 9, 1. 17/ CHAPTER V

[The Law of Moses and the Meditation of Mohammed]

¹⁷To the person who seeks it, truth is immediately revealed. ¹⁸Indeed he who investigates with the pure intelligence set by the creator in the heart of each man and scrutinizes the order and laws of creation, will discover the truth. ¹⁹Moses⁽²²⁾ said: "I have been sent by God to proclaim to you his will and his law;" but those who came after him added stories of *miracles that they claimed had been wrought in Egypt and on Mount Sinai and attributed them to Moses. ²⁰But to an inquisitive mind they do not seem⁽²³⁾ to be true. ²¹For in the Books of Moses, one can find a wisdom that is shameful and that fails to agree with the wisdom of the creator or with the order and the laws of creation. ²²Indeed by the will of the creator, and the law of nature, it has been ordained that man and woman would unite in a carnal embrace to generate children, so that human beings will not disappear from the earth. ²³Now this mating which is willed by God in his law of creation, cannot be impure ²⁴since God does not stain the work of his own hands. ²⁵But Moses considered the act as evil; but our intelligence teaches us that he who says such a thing is wrong and makes his creator a liar. ²⁶Again they said that the law of Christianity is from God, and miracles are brought forth to prove it. But our intelligence tells us and confirms to us with proofs that marriage * springs from the law of the creator; and yet monastic law renders this wisdom of the creator ineffectual, since it prevents the generation of children and extinguishes mankind. /10/ The law of Christians which propounds the superiority of monastic life over marriage is false and cannot come from God. How can the violation of the law of the creator stand superior to his wisdom, or can man's deliberation correct the word of God? ²⁷Similarly Mohammed said: "The orders I pass to you are given to me⁽²⁴⁾ by God;" and there was no lack of writers to record miracles proving Mohammed's mission, and [people] believed in him. ²⁸But we know that the teaching of Mohammed⁽²⁵⁾ could not have come from God; ²⁹those who will be born both male and female are equal in number; if we count men and women living in an area, we find as many women as men; we do not find eight or ten women for every man; for the law of creation orders one man to marry one woman. ³⁰If one man marries ten women, then nine men will be without wives. ³¹This violates the order of creation and the laws of nature and it ruins the ³²usefulness of *marriage;

*8 v°.

*9 r°.

*9 v°.

³³Mohammed, who taught in the name of God, that one man could marry many wives, is not sent from God. ³⁴These few things I examined about marriage.

Similarly when I examine the remaining laws, such as the Pentateuch, the law of the Christians and the law of Islam, I find many things which disagree with the truth and the justice of our creator that our intelligence reveals to us. ³⁵God indeed has illuminated the heart of man with understanding by which he can see the good and evil, ³⁶recognize the licit and the illicit, distinguish truth from error, "and by your light we see the light, oh Lord!"⁽²⁶⁾ ³⁷If we use this light of our heart properly, it cannot deceive us; the purpose of this light which our creator gave us is to be saved by it, and not to be ruined [by it.] ³⁸Everything that the light of our intelligence shows us comes from the source of truth; but what men say comes from the source of lies and our intelligence teaches us that all that the creator established is right. ³⁹The creator in his kind wisdom has made blood to flow monthly from the * womb of women. ⁴⁰And the life of a woman requires this flow of blood in order to generate children; a woman who has no menstruation is barren and cannot /11/ have children, because she is impotent by nature. ⁴¹But Moses and Christians have defiled the wisdom of the creator; Moses even considers impure all the things that such a woman touches; this law of Moses impedes marriage and the entire life of a woman and it spoils the law of mutual help, prevents the bringing up of children and destroys love. Therefore this law of Moses cannot spring from him who created woman. ⁴²Moreover our intelligence tells us that we should bury our dead brothers. ⁴³Their corpses are impure only if we follow the wisdom of Moses; they [are] not, however, if we follow the wisdom of our creator who made us out of dust that we may return to dust. ⁴⁴God does not change into impurity the order he imposed on all creatures with great wisdom, but man attempts to render it impure that he may glorify the voice of falsehood.

⁴⁵The Gospel⁽²⁷⁾ also declares: "He who does not leave behind father, mother, *wife and children is not worthy of God." ⁴⁶This forsaking corrupts the nature of man. God does not accept that his creature destroy itself, ⁴⁷and our intelligence tells us that abandoning our father and our mother helpless in their old age is a great sin; the Lord is not a god that loves malice; those who desert their children are worse than the wild animals that never forsake their offspring. ⁴⁸He who abandons his wife abandons her to adultery and thus violates the order of creation and the laws of

*10 r°.

*10 v°.

(22) See Exodus 3:13.

(23) It seems we should read አይምሰሉሙ instead of አይመሰሉ (9:23).

(24) The word ተወክቱ has been added in the margin by a second hand (10:6). (15)

(25) The word መከላከል has been added above the line by a second hand (10:8).

(26) Ps 35:9 (LXX), 36 (Hebr.).

(27) See Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26.

nature. ²¹Hence what the Gospel says on this subject cannot come from God. ²²Likewise the Mohammedans said that it is right to go and buy a man as if he were an animal. ²⁴But with our intelligence we understand that this Mohammedan law cannot come from the creator of man who made us equal, like brothers, so that we call our creator our father. ²⁶But Mohammed made the weaker man the possession of the stronger ²⁷and equated a rational creature with irrational animals; can this depravity be attributed to *God?

²⁵God does not order absurdities, nor does he say: "Eat this, do not eat this; ³⁰today eat, tomorrow do not eat; ³¹do not eat meat today, eat it tomorrow," unlike the Christians who follow the laws of fasting. ³²Neither did God say to the Mohammedans: "Eat during the night, but do not eat during the day," nor similar and like things. Our reason teaches us that we should eat of all things which do no harm to our health and our nature, and that we should eat each day as much as is required for our sustenance. ³⁶Eating one day, /12/ fasting the next endangers health; the law of fasting reaches beyond the order of the creator who created food for the life of man and wills that we eat it and be grateful for it; it is not fitting that we abstain from his gifts to us. ⁴If there are people who argue that fasting kills the desire of the flesh, I shall answer them: "The concupiscence of the flesh by which a man is attracted * to a woman and a woman to a man springs from the wisdom of the creator; it is improper to do away with it; but we should act according to the well-known law that God established concerning legitimate intercourse. *God did not put a purposeless concupiscence into the flesh of men and of all animals; rather he planted it in the flesh of man as a root of life in this world and a stabilizing power for each creature in the way destined for it. ¹¹In order that this concupiscence lead us not to excess, we should eat according to our needs, because overeating and drunkenness result in ill health and shoddiness in work. ¹⁴A man who eats according to his needs on Sunday and during the fifty days ⁽²⁸⁾ does not sin, ⁽²⁹⁾ similarly he who eats on Friday and on the days before Easter does not sin. ¹⁷For God created man with the same necessity for food on each day and during each month. ¹⁸The Jews, the Christians and the Mohammedans did not understand the work of God when they instituted the law of fasting; ²⁰they lie when they say that God imposed fasting upon us and forbade us to eat; for God our creator gave us food that we support ourselves by it, not that we abstain from it.

(28) From Easter to Pentecost, a period during which fasting is forbidden.

(29) The MS has አይከብስ instead of አይከብስ (12:16).

[p. 12, l. 24/ CHAPTER VI
[How to Recognize a False Faith]

²⁴There is a further great inquiry, [namely:] all men are equal in the presence of God; and all are intelligent, since they are his creatures; he did not assign one people for life, another for death, one for mercy, another for judgement. Our reason teaches us that this sort of discrimination cannot exist in the sight of God, who is perfect in all his works. ²⁹But Moses was sent to teach only the Jews, and David himself said: ⁽³⁰⁾ "He never does this for other nations, he never reveals his rulings to them." ³¹Why did God reveal his law to one nation, withhold it from another? ³²At this very time Christians say: "God's doctrine is only found with us;" similarly with the Jews, the Mohammedans, the Indians /13/ and the others. ¹Moreover the * Christians do not agree among themselves: the *Frang* tell us: "God's doctrine is not with you, but with us;" ²we hold the same thing, and if we would listen to men, God's doctrine has reached only a very few people. ³We cannot even ascertain to which of these few it goes. Is it not possible for God to entrust his word to men whenever it pleases him? ⁷God in his wisdom has not allowed them to agree on what is false, lest it appears to them as the truth. ⁹When all people agree on one thing, that thing appears to be true; ¹⁰but it is not possible that all men agree on falsehood, just as by no means do they agree on their faith. ¹¹I pray [you,] let us think why all men agree that there is a God, creator of all things? ¹³Because reason in all men knows that all we see was created, *that no creature can be found without a creator and that the existence of a creator is the pure truth. ¹⁵Hence all men agree on this. ¹⁷When we examine the beliefs taught by men, we do not agree with them, because we find in them falsehood mixed with truth. ¹⁷Men quarrel among themselves; one says: "This is the truth;" another says: "No, that is false." All of them lie when they claim to attribute to the word of God the word of men. ²³I kept on reflecting and said to myself: "Even if the faith of men does not come from God, it is however necessary for them and produces good effects, since it deters the wicked from doing evil and comforts the good in their patience." To me such a faith is like a wife who gives birth to an illegitimate child, without the knowledge of the husband; the husband rejoices taking the child for his son, ⁽³¹⁾ and loves the mother; were he to discover that she *bore him an illegitimate child, he would be sad and would send her out with her child. ²⁸Likewise, when I found out that my faith was adulterous or false, I became sad on account of it and of the children that were born from this adultery,

(30) Ps 147:9 (LXX), 147:20 (Hebr.).

(31) The word ወልደ. has been added in the margin by a second hand (13:28).

namely: hatred, persecution, torture, bondage, death, seeing that these had forced me to take refuge in this cave. However, to say the truth, the Christian faith as it was founded in the days /14/ of the Gospel was not evil, since it invites all men to love one another and to practice mercy towards all. ²But today my countrymen have set aside the love recommended by the Gospel [and turned away towards] hatred, violence, the poison of snakes; they have pulled their faith to pieces down to its very foundation; they teach things that are vain; they do things that are evil, so that they are falsely called Christians.

(p. 14, l. 6/ CHAPTER VII
[The Law of God and the Law of Man])

"I said to myself: "Why does God permit liars to mislead his people?" God has indeed given reason to all and everyone so that they may know truth and ^{*}falsehood, and the power to choose between the two as they will. ¹⁰Hence if it is truth we want, let us seek it with our reason which God has given us so that with it we may see that which is needed for us from among all the necessities of nature. ¹²We cannot, however, reach truth through the doctrine of men, for all men are liars. ¹³If on the contrary we prefer falsehood, the order of the creator and the natural law imposed on the whole of nature do not perish thereby, but we ourselves perish by our own error. ¹⁶God sustains the world by his order which he himself has established and which man cannot destroy, because the order of God is stronger than the order of men. ¹⁸Therefore those who believe that monastic life is superior to marriage are they themselves drawn to marriage because of [the might of] the order of the creator; ²¹those who believe that fasting brings righteousness to their soul, eat when they feel hungry; ²²and those who believe that he who has given up his goods is perfect, are drawn ^{**}to seek them again on account of their usefulness, as many of our monks have done. ²⁸Likewise all liars would like to break the order of nature: but it is not possible that they do not see their lie broken down. ²⁹But the creator laughs at them, the Lord of creation derides them. ⁽³²⁾ God knows the right way to act, but the sinner is caught in the snare set by himself. ⁽³³⁾ ³⁰Hence a monk who holds the order of marriage as impure will be caught in the snare of fornication and of other carnal sins against nature and of grave sickness. ³²Those who despise riches will show their hypocrisy in the presence of kings and of wealthy persons in order to acquire these goods. ³⁴Those who desert their relatives for the sake of God lack temporal assistance in times of

(32) See Ps 2:4.
(33) See Ps 9:16.

difficulty and in their old age; they begin to blame God and men and to blaspheme. / 15 / Likewise all those who⁽³⁴⁾ violate the law of the creator fall into the trap made by their own hands. ^{*}God permits error and evil among men because our souls in this world live in a land of temptation, in which the chosen ones of God are put to the test, as the wise Solomon said!⁽³⁵⁾ "God has put the virtuous to the test and proved them worthy to be with him; he has tested them like gold in a furnace, and accepted them as a holocaust." After our death, when we go back to our creator, we shall see how God made all things in justice and great wisdom and that all his ways are truthful and upright. ¹⁰It is clear that our soul lives after the death of our flesh, for in this world our desire [for happiness] is not fulfilled: those in need desire to possess, those who possess desire more, and though man owned the whole world, he is not satisfied and craves for more. ¹⁴This inclination of our nature shows us that we are created not only for this life, but also for the coming world; ^{*}there the souls which have fulfilled the will of the creator will be perpetually satisfied and will not look for other things. ¹⁸Without this [inclination] the nature of man would be deficient and would not obtain that of which it has the greatest need. ¹⁹Our soul has the power⁽³⁶⁾ of having the concept of God and of seeing him mentally; ²⁰likewise it can conceive of immortality. ²¹God did not give this power purposelessly; as he gave the power, so did he give the reality. ²²In this world complete justice is not achieved: wicked people are in possession of the goods of this world in a satisfying degree, the humble starve; ²⁴some wicked men are happy, some good men are sad, some evil men exult with joy; some righteous men weep. ²⁶Therefore, after our death there must needs be⁽³⁷⁾ another life and another justice, a perfect one, in which retribution will be made to all according to their deeds, ²⁸and those who have fulfilled the will of the creator revealed through the light of reason and have observed the law of their nature will be rewarded. ³⁰The law of nature is obvious, because our reason clearly ^{*} propounds it, if we examine it. ³¹But men do not like such inquiries; they choose to believe in the words of men rather than to investigate the will of their creator.

(34) The word አለ has been added above the line by a second hand (15:1).
(35) Wisdom 3:5-6.
(36) The word ትክል has been added above the line (15:9)
(37) The MS has ኢትዲቅድ instead of ደትዲቅድ (15:26).

/p. 15, 1. 34/ CHAPTER VIII

[The Nature of Knowledge]

²⁴The will of God is known by this short /16/ statement from our reason that tells us: Worship God your creator and love all men as yourself. ²⁵Moreover our reason says: Do not do unto others that which you do not like to be done to you, ²⁶but do unto others as you would like others to do unto you. ²⁷The decalogue of the Pentateuch expresses the will of the creator excepting [the precept] about the observance of the Sabbath, for our reason says nothing of the observance of the Sabbath. ²⁸But the prohibitions of killing, stealing, lying, adultery: our reason teaches us these and similar ones. ²⁹Likewise the six precepts of the Gospel are the will of the creator. ⁽³⁰⁾ ³¹For indeed we desire that men show mercy to us; it therefore is fitting that we ourselves show the [same] mercy to the others, *as much as it is within our power. ³²It is the will of God that we keep our life and existence in this world. ³³It is by the will of the creator that we come into and remain in this life, and it is not right for us to leave it against his holy will. The creator himself wills that we adorn our life with science and work; for such an end did he give us reason and power. ³⁴Manual labour comes from the will of God ³⁵because without it the necessities of our life cannot be fulfilled. ³⁶Likewise marriage of one man with one woman and education of children. ³⁷Moreover there are many other things which agree with our reason and are necessary for our life or for the existence of mankind. We ought to observe them, because such is the will of our creator, and we ought to know that God does not create us perfect but creates us with such a reason as to know that we are to strive for perfection as long as we live in this *world, and to be worthy for the reward that our creator has prepared for us in his wisdom. ³⁸It was possible for God to have created us perfect and to make us enjoy beatitude on earth; ³⁹but he did not will to create us in this way; instead he created us with the capacity of striving for perfection, and placed us in the midst of the trials of this world so that we may become perfect and deserve the reward that our creator will give us after our death; as long as we live in this world we ought to praise our creator and fulfil his will and be patient until he draws us unto him, ⁴⁰and beg from his mercy that he will lessen our period of hardship ⁴¹and forgive our sins and faults which we committed through ignorance; /17/ and enable us to know the laws of our creator and to keep them.

⁴²Now as to prayer, we always stand in need of it ⁴³because [our] rational nature requires it. ⁴⁴The soul endowed with intelli-

(38) The word ረግሪ has been added in the margin by a second hand (16:11-12).

gence that is aware that there is a God who * knows all, conserves all, rules all, is drawn to him so that it prays to him and asks him to grant things good and to be freed from evil and sheltered under the hand of him who is almighty and for whom nothing is impossible, God great and sublime who sees all that is [above and] beneath him, holds all, teaches all, guides all, our Father, our creator, our Protector,⁽³⁹⁾ the reward for our souls, merciful, kind, who knows each of our misfortunes, takes pleasure in our patience, creates us for life and not for destruction, "as the wise Solomon said:⁽⁴⁰⁾ "You, Lord, teach all things, because you can do all things and overlook men's sins so that they can repent. "You love all that exists, you hold nothing of what you⁽⁴¹⁾ have made in abhorrence, you are indulgent and merciful to all." God created us intelligent so that we may meditate on his greatness, praise him and pray to him in order to obtain the needs of our body and soul. Our reason which our creator has put in the heart of man teaches all *these things to us. How can they be useless and false?

/p. 17, 1. 20/ CHAPTER IX

[Prayer]

⁴⁵I know that God answers our prayers in another way, if we pray to him with our whole hearts, with love, faith and patience: during my childhood I was a sinner for many years, I neither thought of the work of God nor prayed to him; I made many sinful acts that rational nature forbids; because of my sins I fell into a trap from which man cannot free himself [by himself;] I began to be despondent and the terror of death overcame me. ⁴⁶At that time I turned to God and I began to pray to him that he free me, for he knows all the ways of salvation. ⁴⁷I said to God: "I repudiate my sin and I search for your will, O Lord, that I may accomplish it. ⁴⁸But now forgive me my sin and * free me." ⁴⁹I prayed for many days with all my heart; God heard me and saved me completely; I for my part praised him and wholeheartedly turned to him. ⁵⁰And I said Psalm /18/ CXIV: "I love! For God listens to my entreaty."⁽⁴²⁾ ⁵¹I thought that this psalm was written for me. I then said: "No, I shall not die, I shall live ⁵²to recite the deeds of God."⁽⁴³⁾

⁵³There are people who constantly accused me in the presence of the king ⁵⁴and said: "This man is your enemy, and the enemy of the *Franç*;" and I knew that the king's wrath was inflamed against

(39) The MS has ወዓቃቤጎ instead of ወዓቃቤጎ (17:9).

(40) Wisdom 11:23-25.

(41) The MS has አጎጎ instead of አጎተ (17:15).

(42) Ps 114:1 (LXX), 116 (Hebr.).

(43) Ps 117:17 (LXX), 118 (Hebr.).

me. ⁷One day the king's messenger came to me, and said: "Come quickly to me; thus spoke the king." ⁸I was very much frightened, ⁹but I could not flee, because the king's men were guarding me. I prayed the whole night with a grieved heart; in the morning I rose and went up to the king. ¹⁰But God had made his heart ¹¹soft, he received me well and mentioned nothing of the things I was afraid of. ¹²He only questioned me on many points concerning the doctrine and the [sacred] Books and he said to me: "You are a learned man, you should love the *Franġ*, because they are very learned." ¹³I answered: "Yes, they truly are;" for I was afraid and the *Franġ* are really learned. ¹⁴After this the king gave me five measures of gold, and sent me away peacefully. ¹⁵After leaving [the king,] as I was still marvelling [at my fate,] I thanked God who had treated⁽⁴⁴⁾ me so well. ¹⁶When *Waldā Yohannes* accused me, I ran away, but I did not pray as before that [God] rescue me from the peril, because I was able to flee; ¹⁷man ought to do everything possible without tempting God needlessly. ¹⁸Now I praise Him; because I fled and am now living in a cave, I find ample opportunity to turn myself wholly to my ¹⁹* creator; I am able to think of those things which eluded me previously and to know the truth that gives great joy to my soul. ²⁰And I say to God: "I deserved the affliction which made me know your judgement." I have learnt more while living alone in a cave than when I was living with scholars. ²¹What I wrote in this book is very little; but in my cave I have meditated on many other such things. ²²I praise God for the wisdom he gave me and the knowledge of the mysteries of creation; my soul is drawn by him and despises everything except the meditation of God's work and of his wisdom. ²³Everyday I recited [19/ the Psalter of David with a heart dilated [with joy,] and this prayer helps me considerably and raises my thoughts to God. ²⁴And when in the Psalter of David I encounter things that do not agree with my thought, I interpret them and I try to make them agree with my science and all is well. ²⁵While praying in this manner, my trust in ²⁶*God grew stronger. ²⁷And I said: "God, hear my prayer, ²⁸do not hide from my petition.⁽⁴⁵⁾ ²⁹Save me from the violence of men. For your part, Lord, do not withhold your kindness from me! ³⁰May your love and faithfulness constantly preserve me.⁽⁴⁶⁾ ³¹I invoke you, O Lord; do not let me be disgraced.⁽⁴⁷⁾ ³²So I shall always sing of your name, that day after day ³³you will fulfil my desire.⁽⁴⁸⁾ ³⁴Turn to me and pity me. ³⁵Give me your strength, ³⁶your saving help, to me your servant, this

(44) In the MS, 𐌹𐌺 was first written, and then corrected: 𐌹𐌺 (18:19).

(45) Ps 54:2 (LXX), 55:1 (Hebr.).

(46) Ps 39:12 (LXX), 40:11 (Hebr.).

(47) Ps 30:18 (LXX), 31:17 (Hebr.).

(48) See Ps 60:9 (LXX), 61:8 (Hebr.).

son of a pious mother, give me one proof of your goodness.⁽⁴⁹⁾ ⁵⁰For the sake of your name, guide me, lead me!⁽⁵⁰⁾ ⁵¹Rescue me from my persecutors, for the goodness you show me.⁽⁵¹⁾ Let dawn bring proof of your love, ⁵²for one who relies on you.⁽⁵²⁾ ⁵³Protect me and lead me into the land, do not let me fall into the hands of my enemies. Let me hear [your] joy and exultation; do take away my hope. Counter their curses with your blessing, ⁵⁴and let them know that you have done it.⁽⁵³⁾⁽⁵⁴⁾ ⁵⁵I was praying day and night with all my heart this and other similar prayers.

/p. 19, 1. 20/ CHAPTER X
[Prayer, Physical and Spiritual Work]

²⁰The prayers I said in the ²¹*morning and in the evening were usually as follows: "O my creator and guardian! I worship you and I love you with all my heart, ²²and I praise you for the kindness you have shown me this night" — ²³in the evening I would say "this day," — "Protect me for the coming day" — in the evening I would say: "during this night." — "Make me wise this day and all the days of my life, that I may know your will and accomplish it; forgive me my sin. Give me each day what I need to satisfy the necessities of life, always strengthen me in your own strength, O my Lord, through your mercy, power and greatness, save me from poverty, from the hands and the tongue of men, from bodily sickness and sorrow of the soul." ²⁴In addition I was praying Psalm XXX: "In you I take shelter."⁽⁵⁵⁾ ²⁵I meditated further and said to myself: "I ought to work to the best of my ability for the things necessary for my life — prayer alone is not enough. ²⁶Though I am not [skilled,] I shall undertake work relying on the power of God; my work without your blessing, [20/ O Lord, is of ²⁷*small importance. (You) bless my thoughts, my work and my life; give me goods and happiness in the measure that you know and will. Change the heart of men who live with me that they behave well with me; for everything is fulfilled by your blessed will; in my old age stay close to me with your goodness."

²⁸I know that our heart is always in the hand of God; ²⁹it is possible for God to make us happy and content if we are in difficulties, poverty and sickness; ³⁰again it is possible for him to make

(49) Ps 85:16-17 (LXX), 86 (Hebr.).

(50) Ps 30:4 (LXX), 31 (Hebr.).

(51) Ps 141:7-8 (LXX), 142:6-7 (Hebr.).

(52) Ps 142:8 (LXX), 143 (Hebr.).

(53) The word 𐌹𐌺 has been added above the line by a second hand (19:18).

(54) Ps 108:27-28 (LXX), 109 (Hebr.).

(55) Ps 30:1 (LXX), 31 (Hebr.).

us miserable even if we live in wealth and all the luxuries of this world. ⁹Hence we see every day poor and wretched people enjoying the bliss of their heart; ¹⁰but the rich and the kings are sad and depressed in their riches, because of their limited desire. Sadness springs in our heart, without our willing it and without our knowledge of the cause of its beginning. ¹¹We need to pray God that he grant us joy and felicity and keep us happy on earth. ¹²God makes his *light dawn for the just and his joy [dawn] for upright hearts; ⁽⁵⁶⁾ he knows and governs all the ways of our heart; he can make us happy when we are in trouble, and when we are happy. ¹³For happiness and sorrow do not come to us as it pleases men, but as God grants it to us. ¹⁴And I said: "My lord and my creator, give me joy and felicity, and keep me happy as long as I am on earth; ¹⁵after my death draw me to you and satisfy me fully."

¹⁶With these words was I praying day and night: I was admiring the beauty of God's creatures according to their orders, the [domestic] animals and the wild beasts. ¹⁷They are drawn by the nature of their creation towards the preservation of their life and the propagation of their species. ¹⁸Moreover trees in the fields and plants which are created with great wisdom grow, bloom, flourish, produce the fruit of their respective seed according to their orders and without error; they seem to be animated. ¹⁹Mountains, valleys, rivers, springs, all your* works praise your name, O Lord; highly praised is your name on earth and in heaven. Great are the works of your hands! Behold the sun, source of light and source of the light of the world, and the moon and the stars which you made and which do not deviate from the paths you prescribed for them; who can know the number, the distance and the size of the stars which, because of their remoteness, appear so small; clouds give out showers of rain to make plants green. ²⁰All things are great /21/ and admirable, and all are created with great wisdom.

Thus did I remain for two years admiring and praising the creator. ²¹I thought within myself: "The work of God is splendid and the thought of him whose wisdom is ineffable is deep indeed. How then can man who is small and poor lie by saying, 'I am sent by God to reveal to men his wisdom and his justice?' But [man] reveals to us nothing but vain and contemptible things, or things whose nature is by far inferior to the reason that the creator gave us that we may understand his greatness." And I said: "I am little and poor in your sight, O *Lord; make me understand what I should know about you, that I may admire your greatness and praise you every day with a new praise."

(56) See Ps 96:11 (LXX), 97 (Hebr.).

/p. 21, 1. 11/ CHAPTER XI

[Zār'a Ya'əqob's Entrance into 'ənḥaraz]

"When King *Susənyos* died in MDCXXV A.D., his son⁽⁵⁷⁾ *Fasilādās* reigned in his place; at first he liked the *Frang* as his father did, but he did not persecute the Copts, in order that there be peace all over Ethiopia. ¹During this time I came out from my cave and set out for the country of the Amhara; then I passed to the country called *B'egāmdār* where to all the enemies of the *Frang* I appeared as one of the monks who was ousted during *Susənyos*' period. Because of this, they liked me and provided me with food and clothing. ²In this manner, I was moving from region to region, never wanting to return to Aksum, for I knew the wickedness of its priests. ³Remembering that man's path is made firm by God,⁽⁵⁸⁾ ⁴I said: "Direct me, O Lord, in the way I should go and to the land I shall dwell in." ⁵I intended to cross [River 'abbay] and to *stay in the land [known as] *G'āzzam*, but God led me to a place I had not thought of. ⁶One day I arrived at 'ənḥaraz and went to a rich person by the name of *Habtu*, whose [name] is [the same as] *Habtä 'əgzabher*; I spent a day with him. The next day I asked him to give me paper and ink to write a letter to my relatives in Aksum. ⁷He asked me: "Are you an expert at writing?" ⁸I answered: "Yes, I am." He then said: "Stay with me for a few days and copy for me the Psalter of David; I will pay you for this." I agreed ⁹and heartily thanked God for showing me the way by which I could live from the fruits of my work. ¹⁰I hated to go back to my previous profession, for I did not wish to teach falsehood, [knowing] that if I thought the truth, /22/ people would not listen to me, but would hate me, accuse me and persecute me. ¹¹But I preferred to live with all men in peace and friendship; I wanted and preferred to feed on the fruit of my work, ignored by men and *secluded with the wisdom God had taught me, rather than to live richly in the house of sinners. ¹²A short time later, ink and paper were ready and I wrote a Book of the Psalms of David. My master *Habtu* and all who saw my writing were in admiration, for it was beautiful. ¹³As wages, my master *Habtu* gave me a fine suit of clothes; later on the son of this *Habtu*, whose name was *Wäldä Mika'el*, told me: "Write for me as you did for my father." I did so and he gave me a cow and two goats. ¹⁴After this many persons came to me and asked me to write the Book of David and other books and letters; there was no other writer except me in this region; they provided me with clothing, salt, cereals, and other similar things. ¹⁵My master *Habtu* had two

(57) The MS has ወልደ instead of ወልደ. (21:12).

(58) The word እግዚአብሔር has been added above the line by a second hand (21:

young sons: the name of one was *Wäldä Gäbr'äel*, who was called *Täsämma*, the name of the other was *Wäldä Həyywät*, who was called *Mətku*. Their father **Habtu* said to me: "Teach them to read the psalms; I shall supply you with boarding: what you earn by writing will be yours." *24 r^o. "I said: "O my father! I shall do all that you have ordered me to do. "I only ask that you be as a father, a mother and kinsfolk to me; for I have no relatives."

/p. 22, 1.23/ CHAPTER XII

[Lawful and Voluntary Marriage]

"And then I understood that it is not good for a man to be alone without a wife; for such a life leads to sin. "It is not fitting that men remain in a situation which is against their nature, lest they be trapped in the crimes the ancients committed, as they used to say: "It is not good for man to live alone; "a wife should be given him." "I therefore said to my master *Habtu*: "I am not a monk, but I pretended to be one because of the difficult circumstances." "There was a certain maidservant of my master whose name was *Hirut*; she was not beautiful, but she was good-natured, intelligent and patient. I said to my master *Habtu*: "Give me this woman as a wife." My master *Habtu* agreed and told me: "Hereafter she is not my *maidservant, but yours." But I replied: "I do not wish her to be my maidservant, but my wife; husband and wife are equal in marriage; we should not call them master and maidservant; for they are one flesh and one life." "My master /23/ *Habtu* told me: "You are a man of God, do as you wish." "We called this woman, and I asked her: "Would you wish to be my wife?" "She replied: "I shall do] as my master wills;" "and my master *Habtu* said to her: "It is my will." "She said to me: "This is according to my likings, for where can I find a better person than you?" "Then we said to our master *Habtu*: "O our father, bless us!" "He said: "God bless you, and protect you, and give you health and love for many days, and children [along with] riches of this world, and keep you away from evil!" "We said: "Amen! Amen!" This *Hirut*, as soon as she became my wife, loved me greatly and was very happy. Formerly, she was looked down upon in the house of *Habtu*, and men in the house made her suffer. "But * since she loved me so, I took the decision in my heart to please her as much as I could, and I do not think there is another marriage which is so full of love and blessed as ours. "From what I had taken with me when I fled from Aksum, there remained only two measures of gold; "with the money I earned by writing, I was able to own cows, goats and cloth. "I built a small house in

the neighbourhood of my master *Habtu* where I and my wife dwelt in love. Without interruption, she used to spin while I was writing and teaching the children of *Habtu* and of his neighbours. My master *Habtu* used to give me each month one jug of *täyf* as payment for teaching his children. "In this manner I lived with my wife for four years in love and in beauty; during this time she bore me no son. After this period she conceived and gave birth to a son on Monday, the XI of *Təqəmt* MDCXXXI A.D., and we rejoiced at having a son. "I named him after my father *Bäsāga Habtä** 'əgzi'abher.

*25 r^o.

"Three years later 'abunä 'əf'ons returned to his country; all his enemies rose against him, while his friends were expelled with him. During those days in all regions, teachers were in great demand who would teach and strengthen the traditional doctrine; my relatives in Aksum begged me to return to my profession and to teach the Sacred Books in Aksum as before. People thought I had fled through fear of the persecution aroused by 'abunä 'əf'ons; so they sent [a message] saying: "Come back to us; for your enemies have perished, but your friends are saved." I replied (to them:) "I have no enemy, and no /2/ friend except my master, this man of God, *Habtu*, his children and my wife; I will never leave them; live in peace, "but as for me, I cannot come back to you."

"But my enemy the hypocritical *Wäldä Yoħannəs*, who brought accusation against me to King *Susənyos*, once 'abunä 'əf'ons was gone, came back to the faith of the Copts; [to say the truth] he had no particular *faith except that which afforded him material advantages at any given time. "He was perfidious enough to become the friend of King *Fasilädäs* once he had presented himself to the king; kings love the hypocrite and the treacherous. Having heard that I was living peacefully in 'ənfəraz, *Wäldä Yoħannəs* once more began accusing me, saying: "He is a *Franğ* master and teaches in secret(59) the doctrine of the *Franğ*;" the same he said to the chief of 'ənfəraz. "His betrayal grieved me sadly; at first he had said I was the enemy of the *Franğ* and now he was saying I was their friend. "With a heavy heart I said: "May God snatch away perfidious lips!" For many days I prayed the words of Psalm XXXIV ("Accuse") and of Psalm CVIII ("Lord, break your silence"). And God heard my voice; for this man later became the head of several regions in *Dämbəya*; the people hated him so much that they killed him. His corpse was found in his house, but the murderer was not found; another man took his post and his wealth.

*26 r^o.(59) The word $\eta\gamma\theta$ has been added above the line (24:11).

/p. 24, 1. 21/ CHAPTER XIII

[The Story of *Fasilādās*: Catastrophe]

²¹In MDCXXXV A.D. a great famine befell *all the regions of Ethiopia and the blow was strong on account of the sins of our people and the absence of love of neighbour: for those who had accepted the faith of King *Susānyos* and of *'abunā 'af'wons* first persecuted the men who did not follow their faith, and slayed them; but now those who had fled into exile paid back to their enemies a persecution seven times worse and murdered a great number of them. It was obvious they did not have the fear of God before their eyes nor did they know the way of peace. ²²They were called Christians in vain; because Jesus Christ orders Christians to love one another before and above all. ²³This mutual love is extinct among those who are called Christians; all have sinned against their brothers and devoured one another as we devour food. ²⁴King *Fasilādās*⁽⁶⁰⁾ governed at first with good advice and wisdom; but /25/ he did not persevere in goodness; he became a wicked king and persevered in his wretchedness; he shed blood, he came to hate and persecute the *Franġ* who had deserved well from *him by building towers and beautiful houses, and had adorned his reign in so many wise ways; in return for their good he mistreated them. This *Fasilādās* was doing evil in every respect: he killed people without a trial; he used to fornicate with women, and then to murder those he had committed adultery with; in his iniquity, he would send soldiers who plundered the land and houses of the poor. ²⁶God had given a cruel king to a cruel people. ²⁷Because of the sins of the king and of the people, famine struck ²⁸and after famine, the plague; many died, others were stricken by terror and this was no help to them. ²⁹For they were hardened in their error and their hatred. Half of them said: "This chastisement has befallen us because you expelled *'abunā 'af'wons*;" others said: "The plague has broken out because previously you denied the true faith and have sullied the Church;" they were divided among themselves and they quarrelled; they failed to realize that they were worthy of the plague because they had abandoned brotherly love and *transgressed the order of justice, which God has placed in all creatures, and had chosen instead a man-made order, and broken natural laws in favour of human laws of this or that faith. ³⁰Isaiah and the Gospel spoke well of them: "This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. The worship they offer me is worthless; the doctrines they teach are only human regulations."⁽⁶¹⁾ ³¹Indeed John said: "Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother

(60) The successor of *Susānyos*; he reigned from 1632 to 1667.

(61) Matthew 15:8; Mark 7:6; see Isaiah 29:13.

is still in the dark; but anyone who loves his brother is living in the light and need not be afraid of stumbling. ³²The man who hates his brother is in the darkness; he knows not where he is going, because it is too dark to see."⁽⁶²⁾ This prophecy is fulfilled in the people of our country; they have no idea where they are going, they quarrel over their faith, they do not know what they believe in, they live in darkness.

³³When our gold was finally spent during the period of famine, we sold our *cattle and clothes, and — glory be to God! — we did not starve like the others, but we ate and we fed those who were starving and suffering during the two years of famine and plague; we did not suffer in any way, and the saying was fulfilled in us: "They will not be at a loss when bad times come, in time of famine they will have more than they need."⁽⁶³⁾ We praised God for the unlimited kindness he showed us.

/p. 26, 1.1/ CHAPTER XIV

[The Death of *Habtu* and the Story of his Son]

¹A year later my master *Habtu* died; we mourned deeply and wept bitterly. Before he died, he called us and said: "I am going to die. May God protect you and bless you! You shall be father of my children." ²He gave me two oxen and a mule, and to my wife, two cows with their calves, and said: "Pray for my soul." ³He died in the 'peace of God; 'may [God] let his blessed soul rest [in peace]! After we buried him with great honour, his eldest son *Waldā Mika'el* loved me as his father and accepted my advice; he had a wife whose name was **Wālāta P'etr'os*, whom we called *Fāntayā*; she was a most respectable woman, good natured, full of love for her neighbour and humble; she loved us as a mother loves her children. ⁴Likewise the two sons of my master *Habtu*, *Tāsamma* and *Mətku*, grew up, and learned how to read the Psalms. But *Mətku* also learned the Scripture and the *sāwasawā* and the [interpretation of the Holy] Books, and was closely associated with me in science and in my great affection; he knew all my secrets; there was nothing I kept hidden from him. ⁵After his constant entreaties, I wrote this small book just for the sake of his love.

/p. 26, 1. 18/ CHAPTER XV

[The closing of the Story of *Zār'a Ya'aqob*]

¹My son grew up and became a handsome young man. When he reached twenty,⁽⁶⁴⁾ I knew he would do wrong unknow-

(62) I John 2:9-11.

(63) Ps 36:19 (LXX), 37 (Hebr.).

(64) The MS wrongly writes 𐌹 ("one"), for which Littmann has substituted 𐌺 ("twenty") (26:19).

ingly because of man's desire for marriage; I warned him strongly and told him: "This does not become [you] because it breaks the order our creator made for us; ²²marry and live according to the law of our nature." ²³He replied: *²⁴"Yes, but provide me with a wife." ²⁵I began searching for a wife and after a time I found a beautiful girl named *Mādhanit*; she was the daughter of the chieftain of herdsmen, from a place called *Langʿe*. ²⁶My son loved her; the father gave this [daughter] fifteen [heads of] cattle and clothes, she became the wife of my son and we lived together in love. ²⁷Two years later, she bore him a son whom I called *Yatbarāk*⁽⁶⁵⁾ saying: "Blessed be God." — ²⁸Again, she begot another son and I named him *Dāstayā*.⁽⁶⁶⁾ — She also begot a girl whom I called *ʿabʿetayā*.⁽⁶⁷⁾ I thanked God for gratifying me with all his blessing. ²⁹People took me for a Christian when I was dealing with them; but in my heart I did not believe in anything except in God who created all and conserves all, as he had taught me. ³⁰I thought and said: "Will it be a sin in the eyes of God /27/ if I pretend to be what I am not and deceive men?" But I said [to myself]: "Men want to be deceived; if I tell them the truth, ³¹instead of listening to me they will curse me and persecute me; it is useless to open my thoughts to them; it will harm me greatly. ³²And therefore I shall be with men as one of theirs; but with God I shall be as he taught me." In order that those who will come after me will know me, I have written down those things I hide within me until my death. ³³I entreat any wise and inquisitive man who may come after I am dead to add his thoughts to mine. ³⁴Behold, I have begun an inquiry such as has not been attempted before. ³⁵You can complete what I have begun so that the people of our country will become wise with the help of God and arrive⁽⁶⁸⁾ at the science of truth, ³⁶lest they believe in falsehood, trust in depravity, go from vanity to vanity, that they know the truth and love their brother, lest they quarrel about their empty faith as they have been doing till now. ³⁷If there is an intelligent [man] who understands these things and even higher ones, and who ³⁸teaches and writes them, let God give him all he wishes in his heart ³⁹and bring to completion all he longs for and satisfy him with all the things of the world as he satisfied me; ⁴⁰as he made me joyous and happy in this world, let him also make this man joyous and happy. ⁴¹As to the one who will criticize [me] on account of this book and who will not understand it so that he may benefit therefrom, let God pay him according to his merit. Amen.

*29 r°.

*29 v°.

*30 r°.

(65) I.e. "Blessed."

(66) I.e. "My joy."

(67) I.e. "My wages."

(68) Should read ወይብጽሐ instead of ወይብጽሐ (27:12).

/p. 27, 1./24 END OF THE BOOK⁽⁶⁹⁾

written by *Zār'a Ya'əqob*, who is [the same as] *Wärqʿe*, at the age of LXVIII, the year *Fasilādās* died and *Yohannās*⁽⁷⁰⁾ came to the throne. After *Zār'a Ya'əqob* had written this book, he lived for twenty-five more years; he had a peaceful old age, loving God our creator and praising him day and night; he was highly respected. ²⁹He saw his children and his grandchildren. ³⁰His son *Habtu* begot five sons and four daughters by his wife *Mādhanit*. ³¹This *Zār'a Ya'əqob*, who was called *Wärqʿe*, lived for ninety-three years * without any sickness. He died strong in his faith in God our creator; his wife who died a year later was buried in the same grave. ³²May God receive their souls in peace forever. ³³His son and his nephews were highly esteemed in /28/ our country and their father's blessing dwelt upon them; their houses could not accommodate the great number of their cattle. Some of them went down to the valley where the relatives of their mother lived, and remained there.

*30 v°.

³⁴Such are the blessings that are given to the man who fears God⁽⁷¹⁾ — 'may God bless us in the name of *Habtu*, my father, and of *Zār'a Ya'əqob*, my teacher. For I am well advanced in age; I have grown to an old age; ³⁵but I have never seen a just man who is cast aside, nor his progeny that is left without food; he is blessed for ever ³⁶! *Wäldä Həywät*, known by the name of *Mətku* have added these few words to the book of my teacher that you may know of his happy death.⁽⁷²⁾ ³⁷And now impelled by the wisdom God gave me that I may understand things and which my teacher *Zār'a Ya'əqob* taught me for fifty-nine years, I too have written a book in order that all the children of Ethiopia grow in knowledge and be counselled. ³⁸May God give them understanding, wisdom, love, and bless them for ever and ever. Amen.

END OF THIS BOOK⁽⁷³⁾(69) Added by *Zār'a Ya'əqob*'s disciple, *Wäldä Həywät*, author of the Second Treatise.

(70) Reigned 1667 - 1682.

(71) See Ps 127:4 (LXX), 128 (Hebr.).

(72) Literally: "end."

(73) Words added in the lower margin.