

Triadon

English version of a 14th cent. religious poem

written in Coptic and Arabic

Part One

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This English version has been made from the edition of the text by Oscar von Lemm, *Das Triadon* (1903). The first publication of parts of the text can be found in Georg Zoega *Catalogus Codicum Copticorum* (1810). Parts were also published by Ludwig Stern in his *Koptische Grammatik* (1880). Lemm announced a translation with commentary to follow in a second volume (p.xvii), but this sadly never appeared. This task was undertaken in 1983 by Peter Nagel, *Das Triadon* (Halle, 1983), whose work contains all the Biblical allusions and references in the work, together with linguistic notes on both the Coptic and Arabic versions. I have omitted most of the former here, but included many of the latter: my work makes no claim to scholarship and is largely intended for a non-specialist public, but I have added one or two comments of my own. For the Biblical quotations and allusions Nagel's work is indispensable.

The manuscript containing the work, written in 732 quatrains, of which 418 have been completely, is part of the Borgia Collection in the National Library of Naples. Originally it had 15 quires, each of 5 double pages. Nagel believes that the last stanza is not the final one, but Lemm points out (p.iv) that the writer has squashed the last lines together as if unwilling to start a fresh page. The text is continuous¹, but each line of the poem is marked by a red point. This poem is written in Sahidic that is already beginning, as it were, to fray at the edges. Lemm has made a fairly detailed study of the language and how the 'Procrustes' principle operated: if it does not fit, make it fit (pp. x ff), even if this means interfering with standard grammatical usage.

The Arabic word for 'Triadon' is *al-muthallathu* (المثلث), a term of lexicology which, in this

¹ As is the case with the 13 alphabetic acrostic hymns in the Pierpont Morgan text M 574, published by K. Kuhn and W. Tait in *Thirteen Acrostic Hymns* (Oxford, 1996), which might usefully have included the term 'alphabetic' in the title. In the Morgan text the end of the stanza is indicated by two sloping parallel strokes, while the *Triadon* indicates the end of a stanza with a sign that sometimes looks like ø. The *Triadon* text has a parallel Arabic text that is occasionally equipped with marginal notes.

case, seems to refer to the three vowels in the final syllable of the last word in the fourth line (**AN, ON, WN**).² Since there is not a great supply of Coptic words ending in these syllables, it was inevitable that Greek words would be deployed and they are done so in a way that makes them quite unlike the forms of Greek words used in earlier stages of the language.

The term 'triadon' is not attested as such elsewhere. The first part is probably 'trias' and the second part seems to refer to the one of the vowels in the final syllable of the line.³ One can only speculate that the unusual Coptic word is in fact a translation of the Arabic word. Lemm points to poems and songs with a similar structure in Arabic (from Mesopotamia) and Syriac and observes that this sort of rhyming work is not native to Egypt but is the result of outside influences. Lemm cites Arabic poems called '*atâbât*, 4-line stanzas in which the final syllable of each stanza was to be *-bât*. The composition seems to be based on a fairly regular set of eight syllables in the first three lines, which rhyme with each other, and an irregular number of syllables in the fourth line, each of which rhymes (more or less) with the other. Rhyming is not a feature of earlier Coptic verse.⁴ The first 137 stanzas have not been preserved, so the numbering starts with 138. Lemm points out (p. The other stanzas that are lacking will be indicated in the course of the translation. The form of the poem has been examined by Adel Sidarus in several works.⁵

It is not known who wrote it, why it was written or how it was used. It seems reasonably clear from stanza 471 that the author was not an Alexandrian. Whether stanza 312 indicates that he might have lived at some point in Akhmim is not known. The dialect of the text, Sahidic, suggests that the writer was from the south, because the standard northern dialect of the day was Bohairic. The ambitious project of writing such a long text where so much rhyme was required meant that the writer sometimes used unusual forms and relatively rare words. The Arabic is sometimes necessary in order to understand what the Coptic has unsuccessfully tried to say. One can only wonder how many people understood it and how 'didactic' the work was meant to be. It may be of no significance

² Edward W. Lane *Arabic-English Lexicon* (1863), p. 349

³ *Triadon* p. viii

⁴ For example, the 4th cent. Manichaean psalms, of which T. Säve-Soederbergh presented such a masterly study in *Studies in the Manichaean Psalm Book* (1949).

⁵ Adel Sidarus 'Coptic lexicography in the Middle Ages' in *The Future of Coptic Studies* ed. R.M Wilson (1978) pp. 125-141, where he points out that a lexical poem (based on homonyms) written by Athanasius of Qus in the 13th-14th cent., known only by its prologue, has the same 'strophical structure' as the Triadon. He cites other works by himself in his notes, but I have no access to them.

whatever, but the writer uses the phrase 'I am talking about' 5 times as a preface to certain items of information, and one can merely speculate that it was written for the benefit of those not so well versed in scripture, who might have been slipping gradually away from the faith, and of those to whom Coptic was becoming less important as a language of everyday communication. Even by 695 the 100 dioceses of the 4th cent. had shrunk to 70 and by the 14th cent. there were only 40 left⁶. It is not difficult to imagine that Arabic was beginning to replace Coptic as the language of everyday, and not only among the converts, but interestingly enough Arabic did not have the same impact on Coptic as Greek did: there are no words of Arabic origin in this text, whereas there are several words of Coptic and Greek origin to be found in the Arabic text.

It is not known if the work was meant to be performed in public or simply intended for silent reading: a delivery of 1 minute per stanza with a 15 second gap between stanzas would have meant a performance length of approx. 15 hours for the whole work.

⁶ J. Leipoldt et al. *Die Geschichte der koptischen Kirche* (Handbuch der Orientalistik ed. B. Spuler, Abt. 1,8 Abschnitt 2, 1961) p. 289.

138

He is the shepherd of the flock
Who gives life and age.
Tell me now: Yes,
His laws are boundless.⁷

139

Christ healed the withered hand.
He performed many miracles.
The demons he drove into swine,
I am talking now about 'legion'.

140

Know now that I speak the truth.
The entire herd perished under the precipice.
Christ healed the mother-in-law
Of Peter, who is Simon.

141

My brother, keep yourself from adultery.⁸
Come with us and see the consecration.
Prepare yourself now and receive bread
From this great feast.

142

Come with me quickly
That I may take you to the garden
And you may spread the net
And catch the great eagle.⁹

⁷ Ar. 'valid'

⁸ Ar. 'depravity'.

⁹ On the subject of bird-catching nets see also stanza 435.

143

If you do these things, you will rejoice greatly,
For you have become worthy to achieve
This glorious grace and you will call
In a gospel voice.¹⁰

144

And you will sing calls of blessing.
Lawlessness will wither and die.
Your soul will live in blessings
And you will obtain great goods.

145

When you reach the days of summer
Give the taxes to the landlord.¹¹
Look at Jethro,¹² the father-in-law
Of Moses, the brother of Aaron.

146

Come with me to the city of Oushêm¹³
And walk with me slowly
Until you see the wisdom of this small boy,
The holy martyr Phoebammon.

147

Why do you shave your beard and your hair ?
You must find your rest and your cooling

¹⁰ Does this refer to the sound of the voice when reciting the Gospel ?

¹¹ Ar. 'lord of taxes (land)'

¹² A fine painting of this subject (Ex. 18, 12-27.) can be seen in the the so-called Exodus Chapel in the 5th cent. cemetery of Bagawat in the Kharga Oasis has a fine painting of this subject. [http: // www.academia.edu/364953/Observations_on_the_Paintings_of_the_Exodus_Chapel_Bagawat_Necropolis_Kharga_Oasis_Egypt](http://www.academia.edu/364953/Observations_on_the_Paintings_of_the_Exodus_Chapel_Bagawat_Necropolis_Kharga_Oasis_Egypt)

¹³ AE *Khem* and Gk *Letopolis*. Phoebammon was from a prominent family in Ausim (Lower Egypt), martyred in Diocletian's persecution between Akhmim and Asyut. Another Phoebammon, a soldier from Middle Egypt, was martyred at Asyut. It is not known to which the monastery at Deir el Bahri (in Upper Egypt opposite Luxor) was dedicated.

When the days of your judgement
By the righteous judge will come.

148

Do not say: I am filled with wounds
And I am sated with humility and contempt.
You have the soul crying out
Towards the invisible God.¹⁴

149

My son, keep the teachings¹⁵
That you may be in line with the orders¹⁶
And partake of the enigmas¹⁷
Of spiritual truth.

Stanzas 150 to 236 are lacking

237

Let us not be elevated lest we come to humiliation,
For we are poor and we are weak,
But we have the seal of the circumcision
Of the heart of the spirit, not of the letter.

238

This word now cuts off
The defence of those who talk much
And the pretext of the Enemy
Who opposes the truth in conflict.

¹⁴ Written in the abbreviated *nomen sacrum* form.

¹⁵ Probably the Commandments.

¹⁶ Ar. 'the clergy'.

¹⁷ Probably in the sense of profound truth.

239

Listen now to the parable of the weeds.
Gather the good fruit and join
With those who have eaten roasted food¹⁸
And received the teachings of Apa Palamôn.

240

Do not sow on the rock or the thorn
Or the way lest your resin¹⁹ appear,
But sow in the good earth until
You bear perfect truthful fruit.

241

Do not be like the children of snakes
Lest the great misfortune overcome you.
Emulate the one who has settled in tents
As he looks on the city not made by hand

Stanzas 242 to 258 lacking

259

I am talking about the generation that is bent and twisted.
Those who wanted cakes²⁰ and fried fish,
They died while they were still eating and chewing
On quail in the graves of desire.

260

Their dining place has become for them a grave
Their faithlessness has shut them from rest and its places.

¹⁸ Ar. uses transliterated form of the Coptic word, still apparently used in Upper Egypt in the 1930s
cf. WE Crum *Coptic Dictionary* s.v. . Apa Palamôn was the mentor of Pachomius

¹⁹ Ar. 'stench'. Another Arabic equivalent of the Coptic word is 'pine'.

²⁰ Ar. 'onions', as a result of misunderstanding with similar Coptic word.

All these have become types for them
That we may not fall to the deceit of scandal.²¹

261

My beloved brothers, you are very welcome.
For this reason I praise you now
When you say to one another: Rise
And set straight the lameness of this cripple.

262

The things of the prodigal son, I wish to follow
And do as he did in his time
And say: How many multitudes has the bread
Of my father satisfied ?
But I will die here of hunger.²²

263

I have fled from this pig-like desire.
I have risen in haste and and come to
My father, saying to him: By
Your goodness, I have sinned, merciful one.

264

You are the helmsman of my ship on the narrow way
Your holy angel will go before
Me and make straight my way
Until I find this great rest with you.

265

Save me from the power of the Flayer,
This one who wished to flay my skin.
You are the one who heals the beaten,²³
The one who raises those in the graves.

²¹ Ar. 'treachery of doubt'.

²² Ar. 'high prices'. Perhaps because food scarcity and high prices go together ?

²³ Ar. 'sick'

266

You are the one who knows of the things of the Disputer
And you know where I have come from.
We all are poor and we have no
Help but your great name.

267

My brother did not know that I was fallen,
And my return is a great benefit
And the slaughter of the calf on the day
Of my return from the path of evil.

268

My brother, do you wish me to be censured
And blame our father because of a goat ?
You are the beloved, I am a servant.
Rejoice over my life from death.

269

I wore the (bridal) garment and I mounted the mule.²⁴
I took the ring of freedom but
I wanted to see Apollo
About whom Luke has told us.

270

For these blessed ones, Aquila and Priscilla,
Strengthened him about the teaching of the Lord and his pillar²⁵

²⁴ Ar. 'foal'.

²⁵ Lemm has a note to the effect that the Ar. might be emended to read 'guidepost'. The reference is to the story in the *Acts of the Apostles* 18,24., where the catechumen Apollo is given further instruction by Priscilla and Aquila before setting out to preach in Achaia. Lemm notes that the Coptic has been changed by the scribe from $\sigma\tau\eta\lambda\eta$ to $\sigma\tau\gamma\lambda\eta$.

Until he he brought his two feet in the saddle²⁶
He mounted the spiritual horse.

271

This is the man who obtained power.
He taught in Corinth like the judge,
While Barnabas and Mark were in Crete²⁷
And Paul was visiting the faithful brothers.

272

This man taught the Jews
And Greeks and many people
Until a great fragrance²⁸ diffused for him
And the noses of the wise inhaled it.

273

Keep yourselves from evil things
Lest you be excommunicated.
Take the sprinkling of blood and the coccus
And the water of the hyssop tree.

274

I did not speak about the law-giving of Sinai

.....
.....
.....

Lacking

²⁶ Ar. 'stirrup'

²⁷ After his rift with Paul Barnabas took Mark with him to Cyprus cf. Acts 15, 39.

²⁸ Lit. 'smell'. The form CTNOYQE 'fragrance' is also used metaphorically to mean 'good reputation'. Interestingly enough, the form CTNOYQE is found in a letter from Kellis in the Dahkla Oasis (no.19) *Coptic Documentary Texts* vol. 1 (Oxford, 1999) ed. I. Gardner, A. Alcock and W-P. Funk, which means literally 'good reputation'.

284

.....

He did as God said.

The wind of his strong faith drew the cloud,
In which there is no water, to the land of Harran.

285

He supported a great heat²⁹
Until he saw God face to face.
He received him with his two angels under
The tree of Mamre, which is a hedge.³⁰

286

The one who nodded his head bent his knee
He received communion³¹ with bread and wine in the cup
From Melchizedek, the one of the vestments and the shawl
Who performs the true priesthood.

287

Look, do not restrain me, master
For all these things are written in Genesis.
For Moses is the one who wrote
These things for the Hebrew children.

288

Lord, illuminate the darkness
Protect me like the eye and the eyeball

²⁹ Ar. 'tribulation'.

³⁰ Ar. 'oak'.

³¹ The Greek vb refers in general to performing the mass (lit. come together), but here (as elsewhere) in particular to receiving the Eucharist. The Ar. verb, in line with the Gk verb, can also mean both.

That I may build well³² and not leave another
Foundation beyond what the architect has made.

289

Clothe me, my God, in humility
Put upon me the garment of purity
That I may find favour to call out to you: Father,
Father, our Father.³³

290

Teach me, God, that I may make you happy.
Allow me to do what pleases you,³⁴
That I may write like Enoch,
The one you transported alive to the place of rest.

291

And the sun of your justice has risen for me.³⁵
Fill me with love and pity.
Give me the zeal of your prophet Elijah,
The guide and guardian of Israel.

292

Lord, through your holy name
Grant me your holy spirit.
Give me your good name
So that my deeds may become second.³⁶

³² Ar. 'extremely well'

³³ In Coptic and Greek

³⁴ Nagel claims that the Ar. reads 'let me hear'. The only Arabic text I can read in Lemm's publication says the same as the Coptic.

³⁵ The text becomes partially Greek in this and the following stanza.

³⁶ Nagel translates this as 'doubled' and cites Job 42,10, where the LXX uses διπλά. The Coptic uses the Greek word δεύτερος, which means 'second'. The Arabic word, according to Hans Wehr's *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (1960), means 'excluded'. Lemm does not offer any emendation of the text.

293

My saviour, receive my prayer.
Attend to me and know
That all my deeds are
Before your face.

294

My king and my light-bearing³⁷ God,
Anoint me with a holy spirit and fire.
Make me the useful servant, the great merchant,
The one to whom you have granted honour and power.

295

You know my weakness and that I
Am your creature, a servant to you,
Teach me to do business with the things that are yours
That I may generate ten mna³⁸ with the mna and increase it still more.

296

True judge,³⁹ do not bring me to condemnation.⁴⁰
You are my justification and my glory.
My heart, let it not be deprived
Of your heavenly gifts.

297

Look upon your servant and equip his dwelling.
Turn his 'no' that it may become 'yes'
And his six hundred debts, let them be sixty.
Forgive him what he owes until the last penny.

³⁷ Ar. 'light-wearing'.

³⁸ For an example of this weight cf. http://www.academia.edu/1789708/Sofia_Torallas_Tovar-K.A._Worp_An_official_MNA_weight_from_the_Museum_Biblicum_Montserrat_

³⁹ Ar. 'just judge'.

⁴⁰ Ar. 'destruction, grief' (depending on the vocalization).

298

Lord, you have ruled and assumed a beauty.
At your wish you were crucified at the ninth hour.
Water of life flowed from your side for those who will drink
And blood was a sign of your life-creating death.⁴¹

299

Emmanuel, these beautiful names are yours.
You became incarnate in the completion of time and its end
Until you freed Adam and Eve (Zoe)
From the bondage of the Ruler of Demons.

300

You had pity on the generations of man.
After their error you made them free.
Yours is the glory and honour and wealth
Forever until the end of the ages.

301

My brother, say to me: πολλά τὰ ἔτη (many years).
Know now that this is
The good portion that was given to man who
Has not sat on the throne of the Corrupt Ones⁴².

302

My son, rectify your heresy⁴³
And see the one who wanted to flee to Tarsis.
When he saw the great vision
About Niniveh the great city.

⁴¹ Nagel has a detailed note on this passage, which starts with a discussion of the passage in Jo 19,34 and progresses to an iconographical examination of this scene, with particular reference to the work of Klaus Wessel *Die Kreuzigung* (1966) .

⁴² Ar. 'corrupters'.

⁴³ Ar. 'belief'. The Greek word (ἀίρεσις), originally meaning among other things, a 'school of thought', has been re-defined by Christian thought.

303

This one which God wanted to destroy
And crush like a clay vessel and cup,
The one sent to her was swallowed by the whale
When the ship's crew, after casting lots, threw him overboard.

304

This is the man over whom the colocynth grew.
It covered his body which had become lame.⁴⁴
He sat in his tent like one on a bed,
Looking forward to his final great kerygma.

305

He heard the voice of reproach when the worm
Struck the root of the pumpkin and it dried up in its stem.
He grieved and said: It would have been better for the Lord to have taken me
And brought me from this mortal body.

306

I am now speaking of the prophet Jonah,
He who resembles the one who loves John,
Who resembles the one who overcame Iambres and Iannes
Who were against the amazing miracles.

307

These two evil magicians
Who made a spectacle of⁴⁵ Moses and Aaron.
And, like them, Simon and Nero

⁴⁴ Ar. 'heated, scalded'.

⁴⁵ Ar. 'ridicule'. The story is told in Ex. 7, but the magicians there do not have names. According to Manetho, Iannas, a form of Khyan, was the 5th Hyksos king of Egypt (*Aegyptiaca* fr.42) and was succeeded by Assis. It is possible that the latter name is to be equated with Sheshi, who is generally thought to have been the 1st Hyksos or even a pre-Hyksos king, whose throne name was *m33-ib-r'* (seeing is the heart of Re). and could possibly be identified with Iambres. But these are the murky waters of speculation, involving as they do a transformation of these two figures from possible Israelite rulers of Egypt (fr.54, 228 *Aegyptiaca*) to two 'henchmen' of the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

Disputed with Peter and Paul a second time.

308

Come with me to the island
And consider this beautiful lamb.
The milk of its breast, we will drink it
And eat the flesh of its life-giving young

309

See now this great flock
Whose share with each other is equal,
Its choice fragrance diffusing
Until it fills this great garden.

310

All glory to the daughter of the King of Hesbon⁴⁶
The one who did not go according to the counsels of the impious⁴⁷
The same as the way of Matthew in the mountain of Esbon⁴⁸
In the district of the Christ-loving city of Latopolis.⁴⁹

311

Come with me to the city of Pape⁵⁰
And know now that this is
The 13th of Paope,
Which is the 9th of October.

312

Hear now this great praise,
Which is fitting to the city of Panopolis,⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ar. 'from within' cf. Ps. 44,14. Lemm has a note: Hasîbûn.

⁴⁷ Ar. 'hypocrite'.

⁴⁸ Ref. to Matthew the Poor, the abbot of a monastery at Esbon, about 20 km west of Esna

⁴⁹ Esna, where the Lates Niloticus (perch) was sacred. One of the AE names of the town is *sn3t*.

⁵⁰ Ar. 'Luxor'. *j3pt* (private room) was the AE name of the modern town of Luxor. Whether the writer was aware that the name of the month $\pi\alpha\omicron\pi\epsilon$ (*p3-n-jp3t*), the second month of the inundation, contains this word cannot be determined. Nagel has a note on this passage (p.135)

⁵¹ Ar. name Akhmim. AE *jpw*.

Which is brighter than the light of torches
And the light of candles.

313

Set up a festival in the tents⁵²
Up to the tops of the altars in
The courtyards of the house of the one who has covered
His upper chambers with water, i.e. water.⁵³

314

Hear now this great discourse
Whose sea⁵⁴ cannot be cut,
For no whorer or soft person
Will inherit the kingdom of heaven.⁵⁵

315

This is the word of the one who has stood before Gallio,
The one who is companion to Priscilla and Aquila,
Who says: That which is offered on the meat market,
Eat it without scandal.

316

I am talking about Saul the companion of Barnabas,
The one who resembles him who saved Barrabas,
Both of whom helped Silas and Judah, who is Barrabas,
They came to Antioch with spiritual commandments.

⁵² Ar. 'heights'.

⁵³ Coptic and Greek words.

⁵⁴ This word is also used of the extent and depth of a discourse. For example, E.W. Budge *Coptic Martyrdoms* (1914) p.49, but later p. 63 where it is used literally.

⁵⁵ Greco-Coptic text.

317

The one who first met Peter and James
The last to prophesy about him was Agabus,
Who kept the books from Moses to Maccabees⁵⁶,
That the lawless Jews in this way will bind him.

318

Come with me to Joppa
And look at Simon and his trade
And know now that he was
A tanner, as Luke has told us.

319

Look at Salome the midwife⁵⁷,
She is not able to cleanse or wash her sins
Unless she says: Messiah
Have pity on your little servant girl.

320

Do as this woman did and do not neglect
To take the wheat from its threshing floor.
All your thoughts, question them,
For they will bear witness to you in the tribunal.

321

Look now and see
Those who have come in joy, carrying their sheaves,
And say to your brother: Do you see
How the Lord has done much with us ?

⁵⁶ Agabus was martyred in Jerusalem, according to the *Synaxarium Alexandrinum* ed. I. Forget (Louvain, 1905-1909) vol. i p. 471.

⁵⁷ Nagel has an extensive note (p.136), in which he points to two passages in apocryphal gospels in which she appears as a midwife (*Evangelia Apocrypha* ed. C. Tischendorf) pp.77-79, where she is paired with another midwife called Zelomi and as a companion (*ibid.* pp. 36ff. . In both she is punished for her doubt about the birth.

322

If you do these things, you will rejoice in the Lord and boast
And sacrifice the spotless and valuable sheep
And divide its meat piece by piece and bit by bit
And eat it at the full moon in April.

323

For these you will hear the one who says: Whenever
The Paraclete comes who is with
The great father, then you will receive through
Association with him the power of dominance.

324

This word Christ said it to those who filled their hearts
From his bounty. He caused the spirit to live in them.
He gave them to drink from the waters of life which bubble up and
From his evangelical teachings.

325

For this reason I will not die but I will live
And confess God⁵⁸ and reveal
His holy words which are full of life
And I will skip on his great Lord's Day.

326

And I will be a student also at
The feet of the one with great treasure
And I will see the mystery face to face
And rejoice with the great bridegroom.

327

⁵⁸ Ar. 'to God' (indicated by the dative). Coptic could be 'God' or 'to God'.

Then I will rejoice for these things
And see bedchambers and houses
And I will say: My Lord, this what pleases me,
To drink of a part of your great goods.

328

This is how I have believed in the Lord and how
Will they say to my soul: Turn away and fall
Upon the hills like a sparrow ? It will not be in this way,
For I, not having put my trust in a ruler, have put my trust in the Lord.

329

For this reason he will give me great endurance,
Like Job the just who endured
This great trial, as remembrance of him
Has told us about his upright endurance.

330

After these things you have seen the last of Job,
The one who scratched his wound with his nail,
His name also being Jonab son of Joab⁵⁹,
One of the seed of Esau the true.

331

This is the man with whom God increased his mercy.
His land put forth fruit more than the land of Moab
The One gave him a hundredfold and sixtyfold and thirtyfold.
He lived a blessed life.

332

Do not grieve, my brother, and do not be upset
But bend your head and submit in your sorrow

⁵⁹ Ar. 'Jonab, not Joab'. Nagel (p. 136) suggests that Jonab should be read as Jobab, an alternative of Job. The LXX addition to the end of Job, if read in connection with Gen. 36, 32-33, makes it possible to establish a connection between Job and Esau.

Before God that he may fulfil you and fill you
With spiritual gifts.

333

Do not continue to be angry with your brother without peace,
But forgive him before the sun sets
That you may be like the tree that is laden
With fruits on its leaves that do not fall.

334

O my beloved, come to me and draw
Near and hear John saying in
His catholic letter that
Wordly desires are not from the father.

335

Look now to yourself and do not pollute
The temple of God with the one who is polluted,
For the whorers themselves and the polluted,
Their portion is with those who worship idols.

336

See this multitude who have gathered so that they may be with
Each other in their number and they were hot,⁶⁰
The saviour taught his disciples to keep themselves from
The leaven of the Pharisees and Herodosians.

337

Your name, God, from the east to west,
You protected me and hid me
In your tent on the day of the evil ones. You assigned me
To those who turned and offered you a praise sacrifice⁶¹.

⁶⁰ The Coptic could also mean 'trampled'. Ar. 'blind'.

⁶¹ The Ar. has to be emended to produce this meaning.

338

You saved me from the thieving nvious one
The arrogant, deceitful and murderous one,
The one who is not truthful and cannot be trusted.
You made ineffective his traps, his thorns and his wicked hooks.

339

Tell me now, my daughter
That the Lord has done much
With these and removed them
From the snares⁶² of the Opponent.

340

Come and see the great Potter
That he may cure the one who has been brought down from the tiles.⁶³
He said to him before the scribes:
You are forgiven sins again.

341

My God will give rest to my eyelids
Until I see your spring and drink from its waters
And gather with my bride and her mothers⁶⁴
And sing praises with my bridegroom.

342

And stretch forth my hand to the vine and its fruits
And see the turtledove in its nests
And look upon the doves, they having filled
The temple and the altar.

⁶² Ar. 'strength'.

⁶³ Presumably the roof tiles. Ar. 'drain, water pipe'.

⁶⁴ Presumably to be understood as sing., like the Ar.

343

And I will see those who have filled their vessels with water
And have taken pride in the Lord God.
They, having become perfect, have become equal to those
Who have eaten the spiritual manna.

344

Come ! Let us go into the garden and worship
The holy place where the one who loved me
Was crucified and
Gave up his life for my insignificance.

345

This one whose divine body the Jews pierced
Upon the beam
Of the wooden cross, saying: This is
The one who will raise the temple in three days.

346

The one too who drank vinegar for my sake,
Whose disciples cut the chains.
The counsel⁶⁵ of the Jews he trampled on it.
He upbraided them in the things of the first⁶⁶ priests.

347

This is the one who said to his people⁶⁷: Do not mingle with heathens.
Then he said to them: Go and summon the heathens.
He let them conquer the tribes of the heathens
With the strength of the holy Paraclete spirit.

348

⁶⁵ Arabic word means the same as the Greek.

⁶⁶ The Gk word ἀρχαῖος usually means 'ancient'. The Ar. has 'first'. Nagel understands it 'high priests', and this makes more sense. The writer has probably used this form in this position to obtain a rhyme.

⁶⁷ One of the meanings of the Ar. is 'upper classes, the educated'.

This one who came victorious and conquered,
He quenched the blazing fire of Gehenna.
The counsel of the Opponent he dispersed
And took from him those who were bound in the netherworld.

349

I am speaking about the faithful of amen⁶⁸,
The one who said to me: You are cold and are not hot.
You are warm water. They will beat
Your footsteps again if I abandon you openly.

350

But if you wish to be saved from harm,
Take for yourself from me melted gold
And know that I am the one who tests
The kidneys and the heart.

351

Then he said to me: Let not your soul be alien.
Think about what place you have fallen into
And repent with tears dripping on the true sand
Until they fill the riverbed and drink the Lebanon.

352

He also said: Why are you grieving and distressed ?
Come, take the sweet yoke on your neck
So that you will fulfill yourself and and I may fill you
With my light spiritual burden.

353

He then said: If you raise my yoke,
See, do not be unwilling and hasten to throw it
Down and be like a beast of burden

⁶⁸ In the sense of 'truly'.

Or an animal who does not know great glory.

354

But strive after the things of the prodigal son
And let not your bright lamp go out,
For I am God whose gaze truly seeks
The impious and the just.

355

My soul, walk in his way and in his footsteps
That he may take from you this great fear
And cause their dry land to be sources
Of water bubbling from springs of eternal life.

356

My soul, wake up now and sing
To God⁶⁹ who puts a crown on your head
In pity and mercy in the same way as
David the Psalmist⁷⁰ sings.

357

He said: If you keep my commndments, I will return
And set up your lamp which is fallen and build
Your tower that has been destroyed and make myself
For you a guard and watchman.

358

You, my soul, know the things of shame.⁷¹
You also know well the years, they are not more than seventy
According to the days of the week, for their number is seven,
But a hundred and twenty is the age of the blessed fathers⁷².

⁶⁹ Ar. 'praise God'.

⁷⁰ Ar. 'writer of blessings'.

⁷¹ Ar. 'despicable'

⁷² Moses lived to be 120. An ideal age in Pharaonic Egypt may have been 110, as with Djedi the magician in the Tales of the Magicians, set in the 4th Dynasty (WK Simpson ed. *Literature of Ancient*

359

Wake up, my soul, from this sleep and oblivion,
For the night has passed and the light of the sun has risen.
See that the Lord has become king from his cross
And has made firm the world, and it will not move.⁷³

360

He also is the one who took up his cross
And came to Jerusalem walking
To his glory, and the Jews in oblivion
Did not know that this was his resting place.

361

I am talking about Christ who died for us
Who received the priesthood of Melchizedek and Aaron
To whom Philip said: Tell us about the father, and it is enough for us.
He is the father who protects us and guards us.

362

This is the mystery that happened as appointed,
That God decided according to the⁷⁴ decision.
He has reached the lands of the earth and its borders
Through the preaching of the holy apostles.

363

He has neutralized the power of death and its sting
He is the one that has created eyes for the blind from clay
He said to his disciples: Know my truth
In you, that I have called you my trusted brothers.

Egypt, 2003, pp. 18ff.).

⁷³ On the the concept of 'immovability' in Sethian gnosis, cf. the *Three Stelae of Seth*.

⁷⁴ Probably 'his'.

364

He is the one who sat on the Mount of Olives.
He praised the one who would endure and be strong.
He blessed the one whose testicles are taken away,
These which are called 'the necessities'.⁷⁵

365

Rise, you of this generation
And let us stand in honourableness
That we may be saved from the fire of Gehenna
And its gloomy darkness of⁷⁶ the underworld.

366

Let us then awake now
And hear the word that
Paul said: Now I am
With sin, I the wretched.

367

If we awake on the third watch or fourth
And do these things, we will take his
Very good share, which is his
In the heavenly tent.

368

Come and let us look and inhale
The fragrance and be alert
And rejoice right quickly
With those who have obtained eternal life.

369

⁷⁵

Euphemism for the genital organs. The passage is a ref. to Mat. 19,12.

⁷⁶

Coptic should probably be emended to read 'which is the underworld', as the Ar. text does.

And let us cast off the care of this life and its weight
And consider the matter of Zara and Phares,
The two children of Judah the wakeful,
Whose mother was Tamar, the intelligent wife.

370

Now, Tamar, I wonder at you
As I look with my eyes upon you,
Saying in my heart: Who
Told this woman about this mystery ?

371

She said: How will I live alone
And now become like an idol ?
But in this my counsel I was made
Mother of children who became fathers of David and Solomon.

372

This is the woman who rejoiced when alive
She bore the strong root while still living.⁷⁷
The Word grew in her that is able to bind
And loose those who are bound with the demons⁷⁸.

373

My brother, call your people and tell it
About this great grace which he has obtained,
That Christ sacrificed his body and fed it
And made it drink his holy blood.

⁷⁷ Nagel says that the phrase 'still living' in Coptic must refer to the 'root'. It could, but it does not have to: it seems to me fairly obvious that it refers to Tamar, and the Arabic translator has had no difficulty in seeing this.

⁷⁸ Nagel translates the phrase 'die Gefesselten und die Dämonen', but the Coptic can also be understood as 'those bound with the demons', which is what the Arabic text has.

374

When he sacrificed his body for you,
He annulled the sacrifice to idols and statues.
He granted us alone divine filiality
In the spirit that we may call out, 'Our father'.

375

My brother, as I did, do you also,
And see all these words and their limits,
And do with me now like Horion,
The companion of Victor the son of Romanus⁷⁹.

376

This martyr, we are confident of his prayers
According to the set arrangement,
For God will forgive
Us all of our sins.

377

Then the mother of God will intercede for you and
The intercession will be enough for you
On the day when we stand
Before the true and just judge

378

My beloved brothers, you
Are the ones who know what he has ordered us,
Saying explicitly : If you
Practise charity, you will be perfect.

⁷⁹

Two well-known martyrs of the Diocletian persecution cf. E.W. Budge *Coptic Martyrdoms*: 1-100.

379

My beloved, take your lamps with oil⁸⁰
And you will inherit life everlasting
With those who have pleased God from the beginning
They have gone into the bridal chamber.

380

Listen to the voice that says: Arise, Peter
And sacrifice and eat and do not let
Your heart be scandalized, for I will cause
My ways to be straight for the upright.

381

Do not be afraid of the gatekeeper
But put your hope in the Word of God
Who says: I have said to you that you are gods
And you are the sons of the merciful one on high.

382

My brothers, if one of you manages
To prevent the progress of the sun and the moon,
Let him not say to his brother, 'Vain one'⁸¹,
Lest he become liable to eternal wrath.

383

You know that the one who gives himself to wantonness,
His soul will be pierced with a sharp sword
And he will set against himself the bow of the strong one
And his arrows that will justly search out hearts.

⁸⁰ Ar. reads the same as the Coptic, but there is an alternative reading in Lemm's critical apparatus: 'light your firebrands'.

⁸¹ The Coptic word used is unknown. The Arabic word *raqa* is the same as the Hebrew used in Mat. 5,22, from which this passage has been loosely adapted. Nagel translates 'Du Narr' because it translates what the NT passage says, not because it is what this passage says.

384

But let each one of us submit.....

.....
.....
.....

following lines missing until l.2 of stanza 389

389

.....
And he was first wrapped in rags and put in a crib
Finally, he nullified death and trampled on him
He granted us eternal life.

390

Lord God, do not destroy
My soul together with those who have perished
On the earth. You destroyed them speedily
Because of their unlawful⁸² deeds.

391

But do with us according as you did with this other
Woman to whom you said: You are
Free from your illness. You cured her without payment
Because you are a merciful God.

392

Let me, my God, build and construct
The foundation of my house on the rock and forgive
My neighbour that I may become king of ten
Cities over the great host.

⁸² Ar. 'hypocritical'

393

Fill us, God, with wisdom that we may
Do as the one who said to you: No,
And we will repent finally and find mercy
In your great fearful tribunal.

394

Do not throw me, God, together with those to whom you have given the deed of divorce,
But be good to me in retribution and apportioning.
Make me worthy to stand with those who washed
Their garments and have gone to meet their bridegroom.

395

Allow me, you who live in heaven, to
Build the foundation of my house on the rock.
Do not give my flesh as food to the crows and kites⁸³.
Do not do with me as Pharaoh did with his cook.

396

Save me from the cup which is full of poison.
Give me a share with those who have obtained
Eternal life. They have bent their necks
Under your hand, which is high and invisible.

397

You are the one who said: Do not gather for yourselves material things⁸⁴
On earth, the place where moths and decay
Destroy, the thieves dig and take away
All the wealth of gold and precious stones.

⁸³ Nagel reads the word as $\rho\epsilon$, but in fact the word is $\tau\rho\epsilon$, and only the def. article needs to be supplied to produce the required reading $\langle\tau\rangle\tau\rho\epsilon$ cf. *Crum Dictionary* 429b.

⁸⁴ Ar. 'straw'.

398

You also said: Gather for yourselves immaterial treasure
In heaven, the place where moths and decay
Do not destroy or robbers dig and steal what you put
In the great treasure chamber.

399

You then said: Be careful
Of your accusers, lest they consume you
And give you over to the bailiff until they take away from you
The last farthing⁸⁵, the smallest coin.

400

You also say: The one who compels you for a mile,
Go with him two so that you will thereby be able to build
Your house on the rock with those who have filled seven baskets
With pieces of the seven loaves blessed by you, blessed one.

401

You also said: Let none of you think too much about clothing
Or about what you eat or drink,
For the body is above clothing
And the soul above food, wise one.⁸⁶

402

You then said: Look at the lilies of the field, which are plants,
How they will they be dressed ? How much more are you above
All these, and your father who is in heaven has already
Given you the kingdom, you small group of rational ones.

⁸⁵ Before 1971 the smallest coin in the UK, with the smallest bird (wren) depicted on it. The English coin represents the same proportion of a larger coin as the Latin *quadrantarius*, from which the Greek word is derived. The Latin term is used by Cicero *pro Caelio* 26, 62, where he disparagingly describes Clodia, the wife of Metellus, as *mulier potens quadrantaria*.

⁸⁶ Ar. plural. Possibly ironical ?

403

You have also said: Every one who follows me
Let him leave all his goods under his roof
With all his companions and the one from whose loins⁸⁷ he has come
And take his cross with a clear purpose.

404

O only son who is perfect in grace and truth,
Save me from the movement of the winds and the waves.
O one who has risen from the root of him who took the wife
Of Uriah, namely David the father of Solomon.

405

Look upon my weakness, yes of me,
And keep my new wine which I have put in the wineskin
And prepare for me a table in view
Of those who oppress with their evil works.

406

I beg your goodness and ask
You to give me the chance to to make my way and pay
My debts as long as I live and am still
In this place of sojourn before I am buried in the grave.⁸⁸

407

Let me find the one whom the saints found
For their thoughts have not fallen into impurity.
They have not torn out one tooth in place of another.
They have repaid evil with good.

⁸⁷ Coptic usually understood as 'back'

⁸⁸ Coptic and Ar. plural.

408

You are the one who came to Jerusalem sitting on a donkey and a foal.
You are the one who healed the crippled and the lame.
For this reason the stupid foolish Jews
Found fault with you because you practised healing on the Sabbath.

409

You created your angels in divisions
You said to the woman with the haemorrhage: My daughter, be strong.
You told the one who wanted to follow you: You have no place
To lay your head, you having possession of everything from the beginning.

410

You are the one to whom Jairus said: My Lord, come
And raise my daughter, because she is already dead.⁸⁹
You raised her. You told them to give her what she eats⁹⁰.
This chief of the synagogue believed you.

411

My sins, my God, increase greatly and have increased.
Take my wretched soul from the bottom of this pit.
Do not compare me with those who will use a new piece of cloth
To mend a ragged garment with a heart that is not upright.

412

But heal my flesh and my bone,
Like the one whose hand you took and the fever left her.
Give me the chance of putting new wine into new
Skins that they may be preserved together for completion⁹¹.

⁸⁹ Slight emendation of text required here. The Arabic text tries to translate the Coptic verb $\alpha\gamma\omega$ 'to have already' with a construction that seems peculiar to me, but I am no Arabist.

⁹⁰ i.e. something to eat.

⁹¹ Presumably refers to the maturing process of the wine.

413

My brothers, come and hear these sweet words
And understand these easy⁹² thoughts,
According as I started and told you
About the the value of this Coptic language⁹³.

414

.....
.....
..... sea up
and they will take him down to the netherworld

415

I ask you, who live in these areas:
Do not hasten to remove the veil
Which is upon me lest the defects should be revealed
Of all my evil works.

416

.....
.....
.....
And they will take me mercilessly down to hell.

417

Woe to me, the poor one, if I am taken quickly
And set before the throne of the Existing One⁹⁴
And the one who buys and sell,
Who buys punishments and sells rest.

⁹² The verb means 'to be at ease', which could also mean 'healthy*' here. The Ar. has understood the former.

⁹³ Presumably a reference to what the writer has said in the early stanzas of the work.

⁹⁴ Ar. 'the eternal'.

418

What will I do on the great day of judgement
When my great judgement, the oracular response,⁹⁵ happens to me ?
There is no salvation for me in silver and gold
Or partiality before the great fearful tribunal.

419

I am afraid lest my fate might be
Together with those who desired onions and cucumbers,⁹⁶
Those who lived in the desert and were also
Inclined to the land of Egypt, that is, Babylon.

420

I am talking about those who were in the desert for 40 years.
God sent them manna from the gates of heaven
And, but for Moses his holy one, God would not
Have been merciful to this lawless people.

421

Through Moses mourning became joy for them.
God showed them the way. He opened the gates of heaven.
He gave them manna to eat, and it grew.
But still they became angry with Moses and Aaron.

422

These are the people who desired beet⁹⁷ and leeks.
They saw their life before them, while he was hanging from the beam
Of wood, the cross. They followed him in their flesh on foot.
They did not believe him in their thoughts and hearts.

⁹⁵ Coptic has to be emended here. Ar. 'When the great special judgement happens to me'.

⁹⁶ Ref. to the Israelites in the desert with Moses reminiscing about the plentiful food available in
Egypt.

⁹⁷ Ar. 'onions'.

423

This is the people who went in great profligacy.
Its land flourished for it with thistles and thorns⁹⁸.
It went wandering until it fell into the nets
Of the anger of God because of its wicked deeds.

424

This is the generation which the wasps⁹⁹ stung.
Its flesh fell in the desert together with its bodies.
Their bodies were eaten by the birds and the grasshoppers¹⁰⁰.
It became food for the snakes and the wild beasts.

425

Come now, my daughters
And weep with me for this great crowd,
Which fell suddenly and did not find salt or acacia
That they might salt their skin which was rotting and giving off a foul smell.

426

Come to me now my companion and leave the feast,
And look at the one who fell asleep on the palm thorn.
He trod on the thorns and left the sand
With the blankets¹⁰¹ on the ivory beds.

427

My brother, come and take from me this book¹⁰²
And call my sister and instruct her
About sinful desire, not to have it,
That she may be saved from the hand of the Opponent.

⁹⁸ Ar. 'boxthorn and prickles', cf. E.W. Lane *Arabic -English Lexicon* p.2042 and p.1398.

⁹⁹ Ar. 'snakes'

¹⁰⁰ Ar. 'wasps'

¹⁰¹ The Ar. form is in fact the pl. of the word for 'blanket' and not the sing. form of a similar word, as Nagel suggests on p.67.

¹⁰² Ar. 'tablet'.

428

Do with me, my brothers, as the one whose
Brother puts on himself the ephod¹⁰³ and cloak.
He adorned his boat with sailors and oars¹⁰⁴
He filled it with his merchandise and his cargo.

429

Look¹⁰⁵ at this captain whom I have hired
And do not berate him or hate him,
But know truly that this lamb is his,
Born to the young lion, king of beasts.

430

I love this captain
Because I know that he has been chosen by lot
To be a priest and clergyman¹⁰⁶
In the time when he is chosen by lot.¹⁰⁷

431

Then he will wear the ephod and the cloak
And he will perform as a priest. If
The grain of mustard grows and becomes a large tree
The birds of the air will take cover in its branches.

432

My brother, be strong and let your heart take courage
And may you go up on the high and firm mountain
And bless God, saying: Yours
Is the power and the glory for ever.

¹⁰³ Priestly garment in Judaism, e.g. Ex. 28,4 (עֶפְדִּים). Related to AE *jfd* '4-cornered sheet' ?

¹⁰⁴ The Gk word is 'spear', also used of oars cf. *Hymn. Is.152*

¹⁰⁵ All these imperatives are sing. in Coptic and pl. in Arabic.

¹⁰⁶ An attempt to translate the Coptic and Greek synonyms.

¹⁰⁷ The word used here *OPAINON*. The Ar. 'lot, ballot'.

433

Be patient with me, my brother, and be silent.

Do not find fault with me and say to me: Why

do you talk so much ? Have words increased your mouth

Or do you talk now in mysteries ?

434

Pay attention now to my response and receive it

And know that I have prepared a large feast.

Come and eat from it. Let yourself not be prevented in that

Which you have acquired from your worldly business.

435

Come with me and stand upon the soles of your feet

And cast your net that may catch and trap

The pigeon who has never been caught,

Like the black crow with the just man, Noah.

436

Stand with me, pigeon, and stay

Until I ask you, who planted

The olive tree for you to find the leaves of its branches

And take them by the eighth day of those rescued from the flood.

437

When the one saved and his sons and wives saw you

Coming to him at the time of evening, he seized you in the palm

Of his hand. He knew that the water had subsided. The mud became visible.

He knew that this mystery was over the true oil.

438

He knew in his clear mind that it was time for

Christ, the Divine Logos, to dwell in the womb

Of the Virgin and become incarnate, with bones and flesh and tendons¹⁰⁸
With an understanding soul and become a perfect man.

439

And he is the God who measured heaven with the span of his hand.
He was with men until he completed his time and became old.
He is the one who knows the number of my days, how great it is,
And he knows what I the least of all, need.

440

This is the God whom I ask to protect me until I
Clean my land of the thistles and thorns
And prepare myself to receive this medicine and incense¹⁰⁹
That will save me from the the poison of the Ancient Serpent.

441

My brother, do not say to me that these words require explanation,
But look well that I have not brought them from outside
And know, wise man, that apart from
The foresight of God I am not able to put this 'triadon' into order.

442

The glory of God who arouses the north wind and the south wind
The one who gives me, the forgetful one, a wakeful heart
Who returns the garment of the understanding soul to it
Who gives me life everlasting on the final day of judgement.

¹⁰⁸ Nagel (p.138) derives the word from AE *jdr* 'thread'. He makes the connection between this form and the word in Manichean Psalm Book 220,18. J. Černý *Coptic Etymological Dictionary* (1975) p. 39 cites the Psalm Book ref. and, following Säve-Soderbergh (loc.cit., where he relates it to Hebrew and Syriac words), understands the word as 'waste'. Neither form is in Crum *Coptic Dictionary*. Given the Arabic word, which means 'ties', Nagel is surely right to see the connection, especially in view of the AE etymology.

¹⁰⁹ Ar. 'antidote'.

443¹¹⁰

He, the one to whom belongs authority and strength,
He revealed himself to Cleopas and Luke when they were in the garden
On their way to Emmaus. They saw him and became strong
In their limbs, as they sat down to eat with him.

444

He spoke with them: Do you not know these things,
That all that is written in the Law was written for me ?
Then he opened their hearts that they might know and understand
That which is written in the Law and the Psalms.

445

After this he concealed himself from them. They did not know where he had gone,
As they did not know at the beginning where he had come from,
They said: Truly, this conscience of ours is of stone,
Because we did not know him while he was explaining scripture to us.

446

My beloved, look well at this great time
When the calf that was to nourish was slaughtered, the sheep,
And let us eat of it that you may be satisfied
And be worthy of the Passover that leads to peace.

447

If you achieve this, you will find great value
And be saved from the evil days
And fortify yourselves, because you not have fallen
Into the wicked trap of stumbling blocks¹¹¹.

¹¹⁰ The next three stanzas refer to passages in Luke, and details of these are provided by Nagel in his translation footnotes.

¹¹¹ Ar. 'doubts'.

448

And be worthy to eat of the unleavened bread,
And they will not find leaven in your tents,
And you will share with the one to whom it has been assigned
To offer incense on the altar.

449

I do not speak with you about the unleavened of the commandment that has become old
But about the bread which we will be confident enough to eat tomorrow,
We seeking it today, the kingdom to which we look,
To which we will attain if we forgive those who sin against us.

450

We achieve these things when we taste the sweetness
Of continuing to ask and persistence,
And ask with a broken heart and soft word
And receive great gifts of heavenly grace.

451

We all know, my beloved, with certainty
That the commandments of God are light and will not be heavy,
As he says: He who will give you a cup of cold water to drink,
For you are of Christ, his reward is great.

452

This is God who is able to create life and destroy it
And he is the one who created the Pleiades.
It behoves us to bend our head to him with our neck,
Worshipping him in truth and a holy spirit.

453

He is the merciful God who inclines
To some of this sort who worship and call out
To him in both times of wideness and narrowness,

Blessing him in distress and rest.

454

He who appeared from the root of David,
He looked at Peter while he was in the antechamber,
Who regretted and wept in great sadness
Because he had openly denied his Lord.

455

He knew that it was he who said:
The one who puts his hand with me in the bowl,
He is the one in whose heart the devil sows,
That he may give me into the hand of the lawless ones.

456

Truly this word has come to pass
About Judas, the one whom the Enemy
Put in his heart hostile thoughts
To betray his teacher.

457

Woe to him that he did not turn from the sin in which he was.
He closed his heart so as not to examine it,
Until he put it in his heart to kill
His soul and go to the eternal flames.

458

He is the one who innherited Gehenna and its flame
Because he was so bold in his deceit as to touch
His Lord to kiss him, who did not prevent him from touching
Him, but rebuked him with his word of truth.

459

Blessed are you , Demas,¹¹² that you have sought
The kingdom of heaven and then found
The promise, which is unlike
Anything in the garden of rest.

¹¹² The robber on the cross to the right of Jesus, who has, perhaps not surprisingly, become a figure in apocryphal elaborations of the passage in Lk. 23, 39-43.