

James the Persian

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The following is an English translation of the Coptic version of the martyrdom of James the Persian, who is also known by adjectives that describe the manner of his death. There is no single adjective in the Coptic text used for this purpose, but the Arabic version of the Coptic Synaxary text has one, which can be understood, among other things, as 'severed'. The Coptic text has been preserved in Cod. Vat. Copt. 59 fol. 156ff. and was published in 1924 by I. Balestri and H. Hyvernat *Acta Martyrum* 2 (Paris: CSCO) pp. 24ff. The page numbers in brackets throughout the translation and the paragraphs are those of the printed text. I have used the notes on pp. 362-363 and simply referred to them by page number. The martyrology has been preserved in several languages, the most 'exotic' of which is probably Middle English.¹ I have been able to consult the Latin version only via an English translation.²

There are three sections in the text: one of the martyrdom (pp. 25 to 49), where the protagonist is James; one of the post-martyrdom translation of the remains (pp. 49 to 59), where the protagonist is Peter the Iberian;³ and one that contains what might be described as an 'apology' or attempt to explain why a Persian martyr has been buried in Egypt. It is not known who composed the text.⁴

It is clear that James, a high-ranking official at the court of Yazdegerd I (reign from 399 to 420), known in Coptic as Iskarat, had been a Christian before turning to the state religion of Persia. A letter from his mother and wife⁵ turned him back to Christianity, at which the king took offence and ordered him to be punished. His initial punishment was to be nailed to a cross and hung upside down. Archers shot arrows at him, but they never reached him. The onlookers were jubilant about

1 L. Carruthers 'A Persian martyr in a Middle English *exemplum*' *Medieval Sermon Studies* 55 (2011) pp. 13-30. I am grateful to Dr Carruthers for letting me have a copy of his text. I have added a few notes from his work in the Appendix.

2 M. Stouck *A short reader of medieval saints* (2009)

3 A extract of the Coptic text, with German translation, is supplied by Oscar von Lemm in his short book *Iberica* (St Petersburg, 1906), itself not a study but rather part of a larger study of Iberian Christianity.

4 The colophon: 'Isaac the least, the reader. May God give him understanding. I, the least sinner more than all men, remember me. Lord, forgive me my sins. The one who will remember me, may he say, 'God, forgive him his sins.' I wrote this in the 600th year of the holy martyrs (824 AD), the Lord Jesus Christ standing over us.'

5 It is a small point and probably of little importance, but the Coptic text writes 'his mother and his wife' and 'his mother, his wife and his sister' at various points in the text.

the power of the Christian God, which infuriated the king: he ordered his men to shoot at random into the crowd, with great loss of life. It is this incident that is given as the reason for the dismemberment of James, in the form of advice offered to Yazdegerd by a close confidant (p. 35): 'This one needs to die not once or five times or ten times but many times, for many have died because of him.'

The connection of the martyr with Egypt is intriguing. On p. 34 Christ tells James in a vision that Egypt will be his final resting place. After James' death his body is taken from Persia to Jerusalem. At this point Peter the Iberian⁶ makes an appearance in the story. Peter is described in the Coptic as a 'lover of martyrs' (p. 52) and in his biography as one who collected the bones of Persian martyrs and kept them in his bedroom (§26). As with James Peter's indifference to the world and its charms was a source of exasperation to some, e.g. the palace quartermaster (§27). After the Council of Chalcedon (451) Peter, as an anti-Chalcedonian, was forced to leave Jerusalem and fled to Alexandria, and 'two of his disciples took the remains of James in a silver casket and made their way to a monastery near Rakoti (Alexandria) and deposited them there' (p. 53) The Egyptian patriarch of the time was the pro-Chalcedonian Proterius, who had anti-Chalcedonian monks driven from their monasteries. Peter was on the point of returning to Gaza, when James appeared to him in a vision and told him not to leave for Palestine but to take his body to Pemje (Oxyrhynchus). Peter took the body there and consecrated a spot where the shrine was to be built. The companions of Peter wanted to take the body away with them, but in a vision James told them to leave his body where it was. This in turn is followed by a brief episode involving a local woman of Pemje, to whom James once again appeared in order to tell her that he had been sent to Pemje 'to be a strength and support for you and the whole town'. (p.58)

The final section of work seems to a sort of confirmation of this latter episode in the sense that it looks like an attempt, presumably on the part of the martyrologist, to explain to the reader/listener the rather curious circumstance of the body of a Persian martyr interred in Egypt.

6 C. Horn and R. Phoenix in *John Rufus: The Lives of Peter the Iberian, Theodosius of Jerusalem and the monk Romanus* Atlanta (2008), annotated Syriac text with English translation. The §§ given above refer to this text. Iberia (mod. Georgia) had become a Christian country by the time of these events and maintained friendly relations with Byzantium, but it was to some extent subject to a certain amount of pressure from neighbouring Persia. Constantinople developed the system of 'inviting' allies to leave family members at Constantinople, where they seem to have been treated well, to ensure neutrality. Brief chronology of Peter: Sent as a political hostage to the court of Constantinople at the age of twelve, Peter absconded from there and went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 437 when he was twenty; seven years later he settled in Gaza and was ordained; eight years later, in 452, he was consecrated bishop at Maiûma in Gaza; three years later, in 455, he left for Egypt and did not return to Gaza until 475. He died in 491, his biography having been started in 490 by Zachary the Rhetor.

The construction of a shrine at the martyr's resting place seems to play a prominent role: two terms are used for this building, *martyrion* and *topos*, the former a specific word used seven times and the latter an unspecific term used four times. The Arabic Synaxary uses, in addition to the word 'place' (*makân*), the word *deir*, which is the most common word for 'monastery' in Arabic. It may translate the term *topos*, often used in Coptic for 'monastery', but used here to indicate the *martyrion*. Popular as such shrines undoubtedly were (for example, the massively popular and successful shrine of Menas near Alexandria), there was also undeniably some ambivalence among leading Copts about shrines: Shenoute, for example, warns against using them for immoral purposes.⁷

For the sake of convenience I have added in what follows an English translation of the Arabic text of the Synaxary notice of James for Hathor 27 (November 23).⁸

On this day Saint James the Severed, one of the soldiers of Yazdgerd, son of Shapur king of the Persians, suffered martyrdom. ⁹There was great affection and friendship between them and they consulted in all matters. For this reason the heart of Saint James turned away from the worship of the Messiah. When his mother, his wife and his sister heard that he had the same belief as the king, they wrote to him asking why he was abandoning the Christian faith and following idol worship, that is fire and sun. 'Know that if you continue with this, we will be strangers to you.' When he read the letter, he wept grievously and said: 'If I become a stranger to my family and my people, how will I not become a stranger to the Lord Christ?' He began to read the Christian scriptures, to weep and remove himself from the service of the king of the earth. He told the king of his state of mind, and he, the king, summoned James to explain himself. When he saw that James was in this state of mind, he ordered a painful beating to be administered to him. The saint did not renounce his belief. The king ordered him to be cut with knives, and the fingers of his hands and the toes of his feet were cut off, and the thighs and the arm. He was then cut into thirty-two pieces.¹⁰ Every one of his limbs was cut off, and he said a prayer over it, praising God and saying: 'God of the Christians, receive to yourself the limbs of the tree in accordance with the greatness of your mercy, for the vintner, if he cuts the vine, it flowers and its roots grow.' When his chest, head and midriff were all that remained and he knew that it was time for him to deliver up his spirit, he prayed to the Lord for the world and the people to have mercy on them and pity them. He said: 'I have no

7 See, for example, the letter/sermon of Shenoute in G. Zoega *Catalogus Codicum Copticorum* (1805) pp. 421ff.

8 René Basset 'Synaxaire Arabe Jacobite' *Patrologia Orientalis* 3 (1909) pp. 342ff.

9 The martyrdom seems to have taken place under his successor Bahram V cf. article 'Martyrs, Christian' in *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

10 The Coptic version does not specify a number, but the Latin version specifies 28, cf. Stouck p. 153. The Middle English version has 30.

hands left to raise to you. Look at my limbs, discarded around me. Receive my soul to yourself, Lord.' At that moment the Lord Christ appeared to him and strengthened and fortified him. His soul rejoiced. Before he delivered up his spirit, someone hastened to cut off his holy head and went to the places of light to Christ who loved him. Then some arose and took his holy body and limbs and wrapped him in a splendid shroud and placed him in a fine place because they were fearful of God. When his mother and his wife and his sister heard of his martyrdom, they made their way to the where his body was, kissed him and wept and put precious linen and perfumes on him. In the days of Arcadius and Honorius, the pure kings, a church and a martyrion were built for him. The king of the Persians was told of the martyrion and the martyrs and their bodies and that, wherever they were, signs and miracles appeared from them. He ordered their bodies to be burned, that is of the saints everywhere, so that there was nothing left of them in his kingdom. Some of the faithful came and took the body of Saint James and transported it to Jerusalem and deposited it with Saint Peter of Edessa the bishop, where it remained until the time of Marcian,¹¹ at which point Saint Peter took him to Egypt to the town of Bahnasa.¹² He stayed there for some days with his brothers. While they were praying at the sixth hour, the body between them, Saint James appeared to him with all the Persian martyrs, dressed like Persians. They chanted with them, blessed them and left them after the saint said: 'My body is here in accordance with the instruction of the Lord.' Peter then wished to return to his home and asked to take the body with him. He carried the body with him to the sea. He disobeyed the word, and the body was taken from their hands to the place where it is. May his prayers be with us. Amen.

The martyrology of the victor and martyr of Christ, James the Persian, who completed his contest on the 27th of Hathor in the peace of God.

It happened during the reign of Iskarat son of Shapur king of the Persians that he instigated a great persecution against the Nazarenes, the name given to Christians, those who were in Persia, a large number of martyrs having received crowns through various kinds of torture and completed their confession and gone to heaven to the one they love, Christ. At that

¹¹ Peter of Edessa here confused with Peter the Iberian. Marcian became emperor in 450

¹² Pemje (Coptic) and Oxyrhynchus (Greek)

time Saint James was in Bêlpatê,¹³ a town of the Persian kingdom. He was well-born and well-known, being first in his rank in the palace, a Christian together with his mother and wife. He was prominent in the palace in the days of Iskarat the Persian king. He often advised him on the administration of the empire, sending official documents on behalf of the king, who loved him very much. He was confirmed by the king with many honours and he turned away from the faith of his fathers. He denied Christianity and followed the service of the king.

When his mother and wife heard what had happened to him, they wrote to him in (25) in great haste, following the rule of the church and saying: 'It is not fitting that that you deviate from the truth in your desire to please a mortal and temporary king, for you have turned from the sweet and true faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the deceitful worship of the pagans and you have chosen for yourself to please a king who will die and rot. You have removed yourself from the immortal king Christ and fallen in love with honours and gifts and preferments of temporary king. You have moved away from the love of God that will endure forever. Pay attention therefore and you will see what sort of man he is whose bidding you have done, for he is alive today and tomorrow will be a corpse who is taken away to be buried like all corpses, nor will his gifts be of use to you on the day of judgement or be able to save you from eternal punishment. For this reason, therefore, unless you turn immediately from this wicked error and the worship of the godless Persian and come to the true faith of the Son of God Our Lord Jesus Christ and stop being afraid of temporary punishment, *for the tribulations of this time of now are not worthy of the glory that will be revealed to us.*¹⁴ Our Lord also said: *What profit will man find if he finds profit in the whole world and loses his soul.*¹⁵ Awaken therefore from this diabolical error before you are visited by the anger of God, fearful and inscrutable, which overtook your companion,¹⁶ for after he had sacrificed to the idols (26), he died a very different sort of death as you know. If therefore you continue in this worship of the Persians, of the sun and the moon, fire and water, we will become strangers to you here and you will have nothing further to do with us in this life.'

13 Beth Lapat, known in Persian as Gundeshapûr (W. Iran). The Coptic seems to reflect a pronunciation such as Bel-Abad, which might have been understood as 'worship of Bel'.

14 Rom. 8, 18

15 Matth. 16, 26

16 I do not know who is meant by this

At that time the king was in the hills securing guardposts and all the things under his charge. He was thinking of evil plots with his great Magi against Christians. When Saint James received the letter from his wife and his mother, the moment he read the letter sent to him his heart came to its senses and repentance moved within him like a spring flowing to eternal life. He said to himself: 'Since my mother and my wife reproach me and have become strangers to me in this life and will deny me in the next life, what will God do to me, who have abandoned him, I having denied his faith and truth, lest he turn his face from me and repay me with woes for the things with which I angered him and deliver me to everlasting punishment.' At that moment he arose and went into the tent. He took the Holy Scriptures in his hands, read them and turned inwards to himself, his heart rejoicing from the reading, like one who had awoken from sleep. He began to speak to himself: 'Where are you now, my soul?' or 'Where is my mortal (27) body?' or 'Where is my heart and my reflection? Stir yourself, my wretched soul, and reflect that my mother who gave birth to me is sad at heart over the destruction of my soul; and my wife too, who has been at one with me since my childhood in the community of this world, has become a stranger to me. What is the defence that I will find at the tribunal of God on the day of the fearful judgement, when God will give to each according to his works? My relatives too are sad at heart over my denial. At the time when the earth is renewed and the upright of heart receive their reward and those who have turned from Christ receive their punishment, to which part will I be allotted because I have changed the truth of God into falsehood? Now I know what salvation is which I will seek for my soul so that I will not perish and be cast from eternal life, the place from which my soul has fallen. Now it is fitting for me to repent and beg with my hands, fasting and praying night and day until the gates of life are opened to me together with the good things in that place that I will not perish with those who have fallen and those who have denied and perished.'

While he was still thinking about this, some lawless people heard his words and, when they saw that he kept reading the Holy Scriptures, they made haste to the king and told him: 'James, to whom you have given many honours and great wealth, elevating him to high positions in (28) the kingdom of the Medes and Persians and Babylonians, wishes to turn his back on the worship of the Persians for the worship of the Christians.' When the king

heard this, he ordered the blessed James to be brought to him.

The brought him and placed him before the king. The king said to him: 'Tell me, James, are you one of the Nazarenes who anger the gods and kings and whom my father has been zealous to cast out of his kingdom ?' James replied: 'Yes, I am a Nazarene.' The king said: 'Are you still a Magos ?' James said 'God forbid' and that he was Christian.. The king replied: 'Did you not receive many honours and gifts from my father the king for your skill in magic ?¹⁷' James said: 'Where is he now, the one who gave me this wealth and these temporary honours, has he not passed away in the grave like the dead ?' The king became very angry and ordered him to be bound hand and foot and beaten with rods full of thorns until the earth was wet with his blood. The king told him: 'Sacrifice to the great Persian gods, the sun and moon, fire and water, so that you may escape great punishments and find profit from your rank and your youth and your wealth. Look, do you see the things that have happened to all the others (29) who disobeyed the laws of the Persians like those who died a terrible death for the name of Christian, they having lost the good air.' The blessed James said: 'I am strengthened by the prayers of those who have completed their contest before me. I hope to reach them soon myself and enjoy with them the good things that *the eye has not seen or the ear heard or that have entered into the heart of man, that God has prepared for those who love Him and those who do His will.*¹⁸

When the king heard this, he was full of anger and ordered him to be stabbed with sharp stakes¹⁹ until his flesh became thick and extremely swollen, saying: 'Sacrifice to the gods and remove yourself from Christ so that you do not die a horrible death.' The blessed James said: 'God forbid that I should ever desert the creator and worship His creation.' The king said to him: 'Do not think that I will destroy you with the sword. Think about this that, if you do not return to the path where you were before, I will inflict severe tortures on you.' The blessed James looked him in the eye and: 'Do not trouble yourself, my lord, and say no more, but carry these things out. Your words do not disturb me and your threats will not

17 Translates the Coptic word and reflects the tradition that seems to have originated in 5th cent. BC Greece ,where the title Magos became associated with charlatans (cf., for example, Sophocles *Oedipus Rex* 387), a pejorative meaning that is perhaps not entirely surprising, given the political circumstances of the time. Later, on. 31 the Coptic and Greek words are used in the same paragraph. It would seem that the word is used here in a complimentary way as a Persian virtue, but later on in a derogatory way, as a Christian vice.

18 1 Cor. 2,9

19 Hybrid: *kontos* (Greek) and *baculum* (Latin).

enter my ears, for I am in a hurry to go to the one I love, Christ.' The king said to him: 'Those of your belief, they were disgraced in the days of my father, worshipping in a belief of this sort. (30) They were subjected to many tortures and prisons because they refused to obey the order of the king.' The blessed James said: 'I will tell you again, this is the prayer that I bring before God in faith that, like those who completed their belief in Christ, I too walk in the same way and I will be as glorious as them.' The king said: 'Do not be shameless and disobey my order lest you destroy your youth and lose your property and then die a horrible death.' The blessed James said to him: 'This death is no death to me. For it is like a dream now, when one wakes from sleep.' The king said to him: 'Go quickly and worship our lord the sun who illuminates us with his brightness, increasing the fruits, and the moon and fire and water, worshipped by all Persians.' The blessed James said: 'God forbid that I should worship this idolatry, these things that the Lord my God created for my service and everyone who worships him. *For the sun will become dark and the moon become blood*²⁰ and the rivers and the sea will dry up and in place of this fire there will be another one, in which all who abandon the true God and worship his creations will be punished. I, openly a Christian, will not worship the sun or the moon or water or fire, this in which you will be punished (31) with all those who have removed themselves from God and all those who are lawless like you.'

The king then angrily ordered him to be nailed to a cross and hung upside down. He ordered arrows to be shot at him. Those shot at him did not touch him at all, but remained suspended in the air. One of the archers, who had laid an accusation against the saint with the king, went up to him, his bow in his hand, and struck him a blow in his belly with the bow, looking up at him. At that moment an arrow came flying through the air and fell upon his right eye. He died instantly. Everyone around him, when they saw what happened, cried out: 'The God of St James is One.' The king was then filled with anger when he heard the voices of the crowd. He ordered the soldiers to shoot at them with arrows²¹ so that many fell together and died, to whom God opened the gates of paradise for a single act of confession, as he did for the thief.

The king then ordered the saint to be released and brought to him and said to him: 'Do you

²⁰ Acts 2, 20

²¹ Lit. 'surround them with hostile arrows'.

see ? All the things that have happened because of you and because of your magic, because you caused the arrows to stop, hanging in the air. And you have killed the great man of consular rank with the entire multitude, who died because of your magic. But even if it is only from now on, go and worship the gods (32) of the Persians. For you are a companion of my father the king and I do not wish to do you any harm.' Saint James replied: *The companionship of this world is inimical to God.*²² The king said: 'Let not the Nazarenes deceive you that this death is sleep, of which you are not to be afraid. For they too, the great kings, are afraid of death.' Saint James said: 'The kings and rulers and those who do not serve the living God are afraid of death because they do not know what they have done in this world and they have no hope in the flesh of the final day and the ensuing good things, for their hope is directed at this place. For this reason they fear death, as it is written about you: 'The unbeliever²³ has died and his hope with him and the hope of the impious will perish.' The king said to him: 'You think, you Christians, that we are unbelievers of this sort. But it is in this way that you will perish, removed from the worship of the great gods and not worshipping our lord the sun and the moon and fire and water, which are the children of God.' The blessed James replied: 'You are lost, my lord. For it is written that *those who struggle for God, they are the sons of God.*²⁴ But you think to yourselves only that you know God and you worship idols of stone and creations, likening them to God and provoking the wrath of the one who has given you (33) the kingdom, you wishing to please those who are unable to be of any use to you whatever.'

The king then became very angry and, his wise men and courtiers being gathered around him, he ordered them to bring out sharpened reeds and thrust them into his entire body and the nails of his hands and feet. He ordered them to bring out another very sharp one and drive it into his nose and then throw him into prison until he thought about how he would execute him. The blessed James suffered much torture in prison. He walked slowly, stopped and and cried out to the Lord: 'God whom I have served since my childhood until now,²⁵ the one also for whose holy name I am receiving this pain, may you look upon your

22 Jas. 4,4

23 Lit. 'Hellene', which does not normally refer to the person of Greek birth or culture. For this purpose Coptic, like other Eastern languages, uses a word that derives from 'Ionian', which leaves 'Hellene' free as a marker that distinguishes between Christianity (believer) and other religions (unbeliever). The idea of calling a Persian, of all people, 'Hellene' would be more than slightly ludicrous.

24 Rom. 8, 14

25 Clearly to be understood *cum grano salis*.

holy church and grant your peace to it and the whole flock and people and rescue your servant from the distress I am in and the prison of this life that I might reveal your holy name, God of my fathers.'

While he was still praying in this way, a great light shone in his cell and he saw a chorus of saints, the Lord Jesus Christ in their midst. The Lord said to him: 'Be victorious and find strength, valiant warrior. Look, I am with you and give you strength in this great stadium in which you are standing until you receive the crown of confession. Look, you will suffer great pains for my name until you complete your contest, but after a little you will rejoice with me at my table in my kingdom in heaven and I will (34) cause your name to be famous everywhere, even as far as Egypt, the place where your body will remain. After a short time a *martyrion*²⁶ will be built in that place in your memory, where great miracles will occur to all those who pray to me in your name.' The chorus of saints made their way and plucked all the reeds from his body. He was healed instantly and his body became whole. He sang psalms thus: *I saw the Lord in my presence at all times lest I should move. For this reason my heart rejoices and my tongue is glad and you have healed my flesh.*²⁷ At that moment the Lord ascended above him and he began singing again: *God has ascended in glory, the Lord in a sound of trumpets. Sing the praise of God, sing allelujah.*²⁸

When morning came, the king sat on the tribunal and ordered the blessed one to be brought to him. He was singing psalms: *Many times have I been assaulted since my childhood, but they have not prevailed over me. Allelujah.*²⁹ When they saw him strengthened and singing, the king and his magnates were astonished. The multitude cried out: 'The God of Saint James is One.' The king was utterly perplexed. He rose and went into the palace. He ordered all his courtiers to enter with him and he said to them: 'Tell me what sort of death (35) it is fitting that James should die because he has dared to oppose our royal laws in this way and shamelessly refused to obey the will of the king and the teaching of the Persians?' One of them, in permanent consultation with the king about the malefactor, answered and said: 'This one needs to die not once or five times or ten times but many times because

²⁶ This term occurs

²⁷ Ps. 15, 8

²⁸ Ps. 46, 5ff.

²⁹ Ps. 128, 1ff.

many have died because of him³⁰. I therefore wish my lord king, son of the sun and the fire, to order him to be hung by his hands and feet and all his joints to be cut³¹ because he refused to follow the worship of the Persians and my lord king.' The king commanded as follows: 'James, after having received great honours from my father and from me too so that he became third person in the kingdom of the Babylonians and the Medes and the Persians, has detached himself from these gifts of my beneficence by disobeying our Persian laws and not worshipping the great gods, our father the sun and the moon, those who make crops grow, and fire and water, worshipped by kings and magnates. Since therefore he has been disobedient, I order that, in accordance with the counsel of the one who loves our health, his hands and feet be bound and his fingers and thumbs be cut and his legs be cut and the joints of his knees be broken up to his thighs at the time when he is dismembered and beheaded by the sword.'

(36) When the order came from the king, they seized James and brought him to the place of his contest and at that moment the entire city and all the magnates of the king followed him. A great many of our fellow believers, when they heard the final sentence pronounced on the saint, prostrated themselves on their faces and worshipped the Lord of Hosts: 'Lord on high, God of all the saints, you who give strength to all those in distress, increase your goodness³² to us, you who give strength to the weak, the salvation of all those destroyed, give strength now to your servant James and let him come forth quickly from this life in victory, for it is you who give victory to all your servants who struggle for your holy name, Our Lord Jesus Christ Our Saviour and the Lord of mercy.' When the blessed James reached the place in which he was to complete his contest and receive his crown for it. He politely requested³³ those about to execute him: 'Give me a little space to reveal the Lord in the name of whom I am to receive this pain' and they did. When he looked to the east, he bent his knees to the ground, his heart believing in God who is in heaven. His prayer was as follows: 'Lord, hear the voice of your servant and have mercy on me in accordance with your great mercy, I James begging you. And be merciful with me quickly and hear me so

30 Referring to the incident earlier. I have no access to other versions, so I am unable to say if this detail is included in any of them

31 There is a relatively wide selection words in the text with this meaning, and I have to say that I have simplified them all to 'cut'.

32 Abbreviated as a *nomen sacrum*, which would normally mean 'Christhood'. However, the two forms 'christos' (Christ) and 'chrêstos' (good) seem to be used interchangeably.

33 This is not the dictionary meaning of *kataxioun*, but this is how it seems to be used here.

that I might be worthy to join the community of those who fear your holy name and receive the crown that does not fade in heaven and those who love you. For this reason they have come to you and you have crowned them. Let my enemies see (37) and feel shame that you the Lord have helped me and have given me strength.'

When he had prayed thus, they laid their hands mercilessly on the saint and bound him hand and foot and said to him: 'What are you going to do now ? There is no mercy here or patient tolerance, but your joints will be cut and you will be dismembered and, as you look upon the destruction of your limbs, your head will be removed by the sword. Consider carefully what is preferable to you, for with a single word you can buy back your life.³⁴ But if you persist in this attitude, you will die from frightful tortures of this sort.' Some of the unbelievers standing nearby wept when they looked upon his beauty and the exquisite charm of his youth and all said the same to him in unison: 'Do not destroy your body in vain, but spare your beauty and your strength and your servants who attend you, your substantial property and gold, silver and numerous animals and perform the will of the king and you will live. Afterwards, if you wish, you can return to your worship.' The blessed James replied: 'Do not weep for me, but weep for what awaits you and your children, for you will receive comfort for a short time in this world and thereafter inherit eternal punishment together with the demons you worship. For I will die (38) this death but inherit eternal life. When I look upon all my limbs, they will collect for me a reward, especially because everyone will receive the reward for tribulation³⁵ from God, for there is no injustice or partiality with him.'³⁶

At that moment the envoy of the king came to execute the order of the king. He said to the torturers: 'Start by removing his fingers' and they removed the fingers of his right hand. When they cut off his thumb, the blessed James cried out: 'Saviour of the Nazarenes, receive to yourself the branch of your tree in your mercy. For the branch of the vine is also cut off by the hand of the harvester and in the month of Parmoute it puts forth shoots and becomes fruitful³⁷ and the branch grows very large.' The agent of the king then said: 'Is it

34 Not a literal translation

35 1 Cor. 3,8

36 2 Chron. 19, 7

37 Lit. 'bearing'

not enough for you that one of your fingers has been removed because of your God ?³⁸ If you wish, you can be medicated. Only, do not destroy your soft body. There is enough money for you that you can give to the poor, and your transgression will be forgiven. This word alone.'³⁹ The blessed James replied: 'Have you not seen the wood of the vine when it is cut and has been planted, is it not bare because of the winter ? But when the summer approaches in the month of Parmoute, it reveals its growth. Fill yourselves, fools. Since the vine (39) grows all the more, then the faithful man who remains in the vine of truth and is nourished at the hands of God, the light of truth, how much more will he not grow and reveal a multitude of branches ?'

They went to him and cut the second finger and he said joyfully: 'Let my heart magnify the Lord'⁴⁰ and 'my spirit will hope in him.' He also said: 'Lord, receive to yourself this second finger from the tree which your right hand planted.' His face was full of joy and rejoicing in the glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ. A third finger was removed and he cried out: 'I will sing out to the Holy Trinity that is in the single Godhead before the angels and the Three in the Furnace and the chorus of holy martyrs.' A fourth finger was cut off and the victorious one said: 'Of the twelve sons of Jacob Judah was the fourth, and we regard him as the one on whom the blessing of Jesus Christ has settled. For this reason I too, with the fourth finger, will make a confession with it that in his blessing all the unbelievers⁴¹ will be saved.' His fifth finger was removed and he said: 'My voice is filled with joy and my tongue with rejoicing.'⁴² He resumed and said: 'With this fifth finger of the right hand⁴³ of the tree the fruits are offered to the one who planted the tree.'

They then came to his left hand and said to him: 'What on earth⁴⁴ are you thinking (40) of ? You can live if you do what the king wants. For there are many in the world now, against whom there is a single hand⁴⁵ and who live well. Do not be despondent that one of your

38 This is actually a statement: 'The matter is enough for you ...'

39 This must mean something like: 'This is all I have to say.'

40 Perhaps an allusion to Lk. 1, 46

41 Gk. *ethnos*.

42 Ps. 125, 2

43 Translates the suggestion made by the editors of the text. Syriac (p.362): 'on the right palm of my tree'.

44 Colloquial rendering of 'What and what is it that you are ... ?'

45 The phrase 'I have against me' means 'I owe', as in Matth. 6, 12 'Forgive us the things we have against us, as we forgive the things we have against them'. I can only assume that the speaker is somewhat callously telling James that he will have only one hand but that life may not be so bad.

hands has been cut off. Now is the time to spare your life from torture and to prevent your limbs from being cut off while you watch them being pulled out before you.' The blessed James said to them: 'If a shepherd takes a sheep to be flayed, its entire body is flayed, not at once but first the right side and then the left for its master, and he too the sheep is ashamed,⁴⁶ wishing all its wool to be removed. Since the beast does this, I too, as a reasonable person, it is fitting for me all the more to bless God and glorify his holy name that I have been found in the sheepfold of Christ, having been flayed in my hands and feet. I, as the one who is cut, will offer myself totally as a sacrifice. The good Lord has given me to those who will flay me like a sheep of God.'

They approached him to cut the fingers of his left hand, starting with the little finger. When they had cut it off, he spoke freely and said: 'I am small before the Lord. You are great. You humbled yourself and came down to us. I will give my life for your holy name. You are the Lord of everyone. You will raise me as one who is perfect, my soul and my limbs being one, I being entirely whole and full of every blessing.' They cut off the finger that was after the little one and (41) he became stronger through the love of Christ. He said: 'With the seventh finger I will glorify seven times the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.' They continued and cut off his eighth finger. The truly valiant Saint James responded and said: 'On this day, the eighth, the Hebrews are circumcised⁴⁷ so that he might be revealed and separated to them. I too, your servant, you have removed the thought of my heart from polluted uncircumcision. *My soul has thirsted for you, the living God, when I am to come and appear before the face of God.*⁴⁸ The ninth finger was removed and he said: 'At the ninth hour, my Lord, you were hanged on the cross, distended for our sins, I too thank you Lord at the ninth finger, because as you were distended on the cross, I too your servant was made worthy by you to be distended and worthy that the branches of my body should be cut for your holy name which was called over me.' The tenth finger was cut off and he appeared saying: 'In *iôta* all things are counted and in it myriads and myriads. Jesus is in *iôta*, which is the salvation of the entire world.⁴⁹ For this reason I will sing to you in the

46 The passage is somewhat perplexing cf. note on p. 362

47 This passage is an allusion to Lev. 12, 2ff., which specifies that the mother, after the birth of a male child, is unclean for seven days 'as when is menstruating'. The baby is circumcised on the 8th day, but the mother continues to be impure for another 33 days. 'Hebrews' is plural in the text but the following pronouns are all singular. One might consider emending the text 'to them' (*nôou*) to read 'in glory' (<he>n<ou>ôou).

48 Ps. 41, 2

49 For an early Christian commentary on the verse of Matth. 5, 18 alluded to here cf. M. Simonetti *Ancient*

psalter ten times,⁵⁰ namely my fingers, the one who has made me worthy to come to this death in place of the intestines of the sheep with my ten fingers.⁵¹ I will bless your glory in a song and I will sing of your holy name that it is good.'

The magnates of the king approached him with his companions who were standing in that place. (42) They wept bitterly and begged him: 'O beloved, if you wish, you can live. Because your fingers have been cut off, do not let this disturb you. There are skilled doctors who can heal you. Only do the will of the king and you will escape this dire condition that envelops you and you will not die and lose your life and this very agreeable air. For you have much wealth. You can live in comfort. If you were poor, you would say to yourself: "My fingers have been removed, so what hope is there for me or what is the use of my life? For I cannot do everyday work." We know as well as you that you are wealthy and have much property and could lead a pleasant life with your wife to whom you have been married since youth and your mother who gave birth to you. At the moment they are in your home town of Jusios,⁵² while you are in Babylon and are willing to lose your life and not see them again. Only a brief word from you and you will live. It is a trifle. Your God will forgive you for it. For we hear that the God of the Nazarenes is merciful and forgives those who have angered him if they return to God.'

The blessed James replied: 'He is the one in whom we hope. I will never do it. *For nobody puts his hand to the plough and looks back and is able to go to the kingdom of heaven.*⁵³ (43) Is it possible for my mother who gave birth to me or my wife to quench the faith of God in me, the one who said *Everyone who loses his soul for my sake will find it,*⁵⁴ for eternal life and He who abandons his mother, sister, brother, son, wife or wealth and follows me, I will give him everlasting life⁵⁵ and rest with my chosen ones. In what way will your words be of use to me?⁵⁶ I will not be harmed, but you will suffer eternal

Christian commentary on Scripture: Matthew 1-13 (Institute of Classical Christian Studies, 2001) p.97
50 Ps. 143, 9

51 Translates emendation proposed on p.362

52 I cannot identify this place. Could it perhaps be Beth Huzaye, of which Beth Lapat was the metropolitan see.

53 Lk 9, 62. The final part of the text here differs from the standard NT: '... and will be fit for the kingdom of heaven.'

54 Matth. 10, 39

55 Matth. 19, 29

56 Based on the suggestion made on p.362. The conjunction *je* seems to be superfluous.

punishment. But approach me and do to me what you have been ordered to do.'

When they approached him, they cut off the big toe of his right foot. The blessed one opened his mouth and said: 'Glory to you God, who has worn the body and who was pierced with the lance. Your foot was stained with blood and water when they came forth from your stainless side, you having baptized the thief as you ascended to paradise.⁵⁷ I your servant thank you, rejoicing that my soul has suffered for its dwelling place and my blood flowed from inside me when they cut off my hands and feet.' They then cut off the second toe and he said: 'God is greater for me than all my days. For before I came to worship him, my glory was empty and my concern was for nothing but the things of this world. The lack of leisure was keeping me from prayer. For the place where my heart is treasure will also be there⁵⁸ and when I was about to pray, my body was in the house (44) of the Lord, but my heart was below the pit of Amente.⁵⁹ But today I have turned my face from the empty world and all its concerns, hastening towards its good things.' He was rejoicing with all the limbs of his that had been cut off, glorifying God. They cut off third toe of his foot and threw it in front of him. When he saw it, he smiled and said: 'Go, third finger, and join your companions and do not sigh. For as the grain of wheat stands on the earth and dies, it gives fruit. And as the eyelid rests upon the eye, so will you be at the time of the Resurrection, when you will rest with your companions.' They cut off his fourth toe and he said: 'Why do you grieve, my soul, and why do you disturb me. Hope in God that I will appear to him. The wholeness of my face is my God.'⁶⁰ They cut off his fifth toe. The blessed and noble Saint James opened his mouth and said: 'When I began to speak with my Lord, he came to dwell in my heart and made me worthy to stand before him in the contest and gave me strength to endure it.' They turned their attention to his left foot and cut off the little toe. He said: 'Do not be discouraged, for the little one and the big one will find rest with each other. Since he said *the hairs of our head all numbered*,⁶¹ how will you get lost in the midst of your companions?' And they cut off the second toe after the little one. He said rejoicing in (45) joy: 'Dissolve the entire man because he is ready to return more quickly.' They cut off his third toe and the blessed James said: 'You know how much ironwork has been

57 The second reference in this text to this incident.

58 Allusion to Lk. 12, 34

59 Coptic term from the earlier *jmnt* 'west', abode of the dead.

60 Allusion to Ps. 41, 6ff and 42, 5

61 Matth. 10, 30

hammered into me and how much lighter my body has become, but it feels like nothing and has no pain in this great amount of torture.' They cut off his fourth toe and he said: 'Give me strength, my Lord God of Truth, for my soul has put its hope in you.' They cut off his fifth toe and James became like one who has awoken from sleep. He cried out: '*Judge me, God, and take my judgement from a polluted nation.*'⁶² Look, Lord, I have been killed harshly for your holy name and, like ravenous wolves, they have not spared your creature because they are merciless.'

The priests and the virgins standing by began to say: 'We have never seen or heard anyone speaking like this from the Holy Scripture.' James the champion of Christ said to the executioners: 'Why are you standing here, not doing the work that has been assigned to you? Cut down the tree as you have unsparingly cut off its branches. For this contest of mine is coming to an end that I may receive the crown.' He then started to sing joyfully: *May my heart rejoice over the Lord and my spirit over God my Saviour.*⁶³

(46) The executioners approached him angrily. They ground their teeth at him. They cut off his right leg⁶⁴ and the blessed James said: 'Every limb of mine you cut off, I offer it up as a sacrifice to God and offering to the Almighty, the king of heaven and earth.' They also cut off his left leg and the blessed James said: 'Hear me, my Lord, because you are good and your mercy to everyone is great.' They cut off his right hand and he cried out: 'Your mercy, Lord, has helped me. Save me and rescue me from Amente below.' They cut off his left hand and the blessed one said: '*You God are the one who alone performs miracles,*'⁶⁵ hear me and save me.' They cut off his left arm. The noble one once again said; '*My soul blesses the Lord and I will sing to my God as I am. My word will become sweet to my God.*'⁶⁶ They then cut off his right arm and Saint James said: 'With the arm of your strength you will scatter your enemies. The Lord is my strength and blessing. He has been for me a salvation.' They cut off the knee of his right leg. They smashed it as far as his thigh. He felt the pain and cried out in a loud voice: 'Lord Jesus Christ, help me because I have been

62 Ps. 42, 1

63 Ps. 85, 6

64 Coptic= knee, leg, foot. Its AE forerunner means 'knee'. Two different words are be used in this passage meaning 'leg': *phat* (here) and *qalaj* (later). Syriac (p. 362): 'they approached his right leg and cut it from the socket of his knee'.

65 Ps. 81, 18

66 Ps. 103, 33

seized by the pains of death.'

The executioners said to him: 'Did we not say to you at the beginning that great tortures are coming upon you ?' (47) The blessed one said: 'You fools, do you not know why I have suffered ? For my love of Christ, that I might know that I am made of flesh and a man of flesh and blood. All the saints suffered as they left the world. Know that every torture you inflict on me, I have not felt it so far because my mind has been taken and is now with the Lord, so do not stand around idly but hasten to execute your orders. I am hastening to the Lord, whom I have loved more than the whole world.' The executioners stopped cutting off his limbs and throwing them before him from morning to the ninth hour. His faith in God grew and they broke his left knee as far as his thigh. Saint James, at the moment when they cut off his limbs, was like a tree without branches. There was nothing left of his body but his head and chest and belly. Like a cypress emitting its fragrance when it is harvested, this was also the manner of James the servant of God, whose his head alone remained with his chest and his belly. All his limbs were scattered on the ground before him and half of his body like a corpse before him. He kept saying: 'I thank you, Lord and I bless you God of my fathers.'

During a brief respite from his pains he opened his mouth and said: 'The Lord is (48) my light and my salvation. The one who receives me to him, receive my prayer, Lord, and hear my plea as I have become a stranger to all my limbs, half of my body being dead and the other half in your presence without fingers and hands as you created me so that I might spread them before you. My legs have been broken and my thighs and my arms have been removed. Look, I am cast before you like a house that has suddenly collapsed, of which only a little remains. This is how I have become. I beg and implore you, Lord, to hear my prayer and bring my soul from this prison that I may reveal your name. Lord, and all your saints and everyone on whom behalf your philanthropy has rested and all the martyrs who have been killed and all those who are killed for your holy name, give, Lord, peace to your Christian people everywhere who are persecuted. May the peace from you gather them together and may they cleave together, though they are scattered throughout the earth. Your Church, Lord, may you establish it in your peace. The bishops too whom you have confirmed in your faith, let them find the way of tending your people. Your priests and

deacons, grant them strength to pray to you, Lord, for your people and your heritage. Lord, may you look from your heaven upon this multitude standing here today looking at the pains and struggles which you have given me strength to bear for (49) your name, may you preserve everyone who looks at my body and bless everyone who asks you in my name, either those who receive strangers to themselves or are good to orphans and widows or those who make an offering to my memory. Lord, may you receive the offerings from them to be incense over your altar in heaven. I, your least servant, appear to you, sending up for your greatness and all your martyrs and confessors from the north and the sea⁶⁷ a blessing and glory, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. forever Amen.'

At that moment he saw the Lord Jesus Christ standing above him, saying: 'You are blessed for you have suffered a little pain here. Come now and receive your portion of eternal life and the good things prepared for you, things that last forever. Lift up your eyes and see the throne that has been prepared for you. See, your crown is in the hand of Michael the Archangel, and all the first-born slaughtered by Herod are coming to meet you, singing psalms before you with all the saints until they take you to the presence of my Father, the place where there is no pain or suffering or sighing and you rejoice with all the saints, who are in the same aeon as Abel, Noah, Abraam, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and the others.' After our Saviour had said these things, he ascended gloriously to heaven. ⁶⁸At the moment when he was about to give up his spirit, one of his companions took the head of the holy and noble martyr, Saint James (50), who died in peace, having received the crown of confession, the valiant magnate, Saint James in the kingdom of Yazdegerd the son of Shapur, king of the Persians called Skhôrdat⁶⁹, which means 'son of the sun' in Persian. It was the time of the kings Arcadius and Honorius, the sons of the pious king Theodosius the Roman Augustus on day 27 of November, which is Hator, on Friday evening.

When it was over, some men of our faith came and collected a large quantity of *miliarésia*⁷⁰ and gave them to those watching over him so that they might apply it to the body of the saint, but they refused because they were afraid of the king. As the sun was

67 If this were a reference to Egypt, it would mean the Mediterranean.

68 This is the beginning of the post-martyrdom text discussed by Lemm in *Iberica* pp. 3ff.

69 I am unable to locate this as a title in Persian. It is a well-known title in Egypt, having been used for the first time by Unas in the 5th dynasty. As far as I know the Persian word *khûr* means 'sun'.

70 Silver coin weighing between 4g and 6g. Syriac uses its own word *zûz*, roughly equivalent to drachma, from which the Arabic *dirhem* is derived.

about to set, the guards, afraid of the wild beasts, withdrew, because it was evening. As they left, some men of our faith came and took the body of the saint with all his limbs, thirty-two of them, and his head and body. They buried him in great haste in a secret place as was fitting to him. When it was evening, they put him in a decent place to the glory of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, forever Amen. When his mother and his wife and his brothers, who gave him strength to complete his contest of martyrdom, heard, they came to the place where he had been put, with noble garments of pure silk (51) and perfumes of great value. The body of the holy and noble Saint James was buried with great honour with the other holy martyrs who had died in the time of Shapur the Persian king, who had valiantly endured much torture of various sorts and, having completed their course, went up to heaven to the one they love, Christ: Akepsama the bishop, Aithalas, Joseph the priest, Abdiêsou and Dadiêsou the priests, Ormisedek and Daniel the deacons and Cubitlaas the son of Shapur and Xou his sister.⁷¹

His mother, his sister and his wife gave much to those in that place, and they built a *martyrion* to the glory of the holy martyr of Christ, which is in Persia and stands to this day, the place where many of the faithful gather singing psalms and blessings and spiritual songs and giving glory to God. His mother and his sister and his wife prostrated themselves over his glorious body and embraced him. They returned home in peace. After many days the king was told: 'These Nazarenes whom we expelled from your kingdom are gathered at the bodies of those you brutally executed because they did not worship the gods of the king of the Persians and Babylonians and Medes. They are gathered together and worship them, singing psalms the whole night and day (52). Great honours were given to them lest the country turn from the Persian religion and abandon the gods of the Persian king, the sun, the moon, fire and water?'

When Yazdegerd heard this, he became very angry and issued a written order: 'I Yazdegerd, king of the Persians and Babylonians and Medes, order every place in which the bodies of Nazarenes executed for disobedience are found to be burned completely to ashes. Everyone found with them will be stabbed with pikes and left hanging in the air until they die.' When the order came from the king, the whole country trembled greatly and started to

⁷¹ Details of these personages can be found in Lemm *Iberica* p. 10

inspect all passers-by. The brothers gathered with the saints became very afraid lest the bodies of the holy martyrs be taken away and burned. They rose that night and took away the bodies. They pulled them down one by one and put them safely into bags and changed their appearance and made them look like Persian Magi. On top of them they put James and the other martyrs. They went directly, a journey of forty days, to Jerusalem and deposited the bodies of the saints and the body of James the noble martyr in a monastery called Phaniuberious.⁷² There was a great saint in the monastery called Peter the bishop of Gaza, the city of Maiûma,⁷³ the son of kings (53) of the Iberians, who had been given as a hostage to the Romans but found a way to escape and made his way to Jerusalem. He became a well-known monk and received the see of the city mentioned above. He was a great lover of the saints and, for this reason, was called Abba Peter the lover of martyrs.

It happened at that time that Marcian was king of the Romans and he ordered the orthodox bishops because they did not follow the synod that had taken place in Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo.⁷⁴ Abba Peter the bishop was also pursued. He came to Rakoti⁷⁵ the metropolis of Egypt. Two of his disciples took the holy remains of James in a silver casket and made their way to a monastery near Rakoti and deposited them there. The patriarch in Rakoti at the time was Proterius,⁷⁶ who had been responsible for much bloodshed of the saints to make them repent, these who had struggled for the truth to their dying day. This Proterius was thus able to win over the army commander of the city and all the magistrates and convinced them by means of large sums of money to pursue all the monks of the city and eject them from their monasteries. When this came to the attention of the holy bishop and confessor Abba Peter (54), he decided to leave Rakoti and make for Maiûma in Gaza. While he was considering this, Saint James appeared to him and said: 'Do not go to

72 'The one of the Iberians', mentioned by Procopius *De Aedificiis* 5, 9.

73 The port of Gaza, but in fact an independent town.

74 Refers to the letter sent by Leo (in Latin) to the Council of Chalcedon cf. J-P Migne *Patrologia Latina* 54 col. 756

75 The Egyptians never used the name Alexandria in writing. What happened in speech is not and cannot be known. I know of only one Coptic text where the name Alexandria is used, a text written on the wall of a tomb on the west bank of Aswan cf. F. Ll. Griffith and G.M. Crowfoot 'On the early use of cotton in the Nile Valley' *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 20 (1934) p. 8. It is dated quite precisely to Jan. 17 (Julian calendar) 1173 and records a sortie of the Seljuk Turks from Aswan against the fortress at Ibrim near Wadi Halfa. It is my guess that the writer of the text was not Egyptian by upbringing but Nubian.

76 The Chacedonian replacement of Dioscorus, who was deposed at Chalcedon. Proterius is not recognized by the Coptic Church and there is no mention of him in the *History of the Patriarchs*. A gory account of his murder by the Alexandrian mob is recorded by Evagrius *Ecclesiastical History* Bk 2 ch. 8. It is worth noting that Evagrius, in the same passage, claims that the biographer of Peter the Iberian maintains that Proterius was put to death by one of his soldiers.

Palestine, but make your way to the city of Pemje⁷⁷ and live there. It is in that place that I wish to settle, as the Lord wished to build me a *martyrion* there. I will guide you there along every path on which you travel until you deposit my bones in the place which I will tell you about, in a small area about 5 stades to the east of the city of Pemje called Paim⁷⁸ in Egyptian.'

When he left the city of Rakoti, he made his way to Pemje, accompanied by men carrying the bones of the saint. He stayed with a great magistrate⁷⁹ of the city called Moses, who received him with great joy. Moses was a great God-loving man and very hospitable, like the faithful Abraam and Onosiphorus.⁸⁰ It was said of Moses that he had an income of 2000 holokottinoi per year, half of which he spent on his taxes and needs and the other half on strangers and the poor. He spent some time with Moses in Pemje, edifying the residents of that city and confirming them in the upright faith.

Proterius, the one who ruled (55) over the Church of Rakoti, heard of him that he was staying with Moses at Pemje and confirming them in the orthodox faith. He sent very many soldiers to apprehend Abba Peter. When Moses, the host of Peter, learned that they were looking for him to apprehend him, he asked Peter to move from the city to a place belonging to him called Paim a little to the east so that he might find some peace because he was near him. Abba Peter therefore went to that place. The brothers brought the body of James and put it with them in the place where they were, holding masses around him in the morning, midday and in the evening. It happened one midday, when the holy Abba Peter was performing his liturgy with the brothers who accompanied him, the martyr suddenly appeared to them with a multitude of martyrs wearing Persian dress as in the portrait of the prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Children, and they were standing in their midst, singing psalms: *The saints will be glorified in their glory, the heights of God in their throats.*

*Allelujah.*⁸¹ When Peter saw them and the brothers with them, they prostrated themselves and worshipped the saint and James the holy martyr of Christ said: 'This is my home, I will

77 The Egyptian name of Oxyrhynchus, a town south of the of lake known as Fayyum that had become extensively Christian by the 4th cent. For documentation of that city cf. L. Blumell and T. A. Wayment *Christian Oxyrhynchus* (Baylor U.P. , 2015)

78 E. Amélineau *La géographie de l'Égypte à l'époque copte* (1893) p. 294 cites this text as the only instance of the occurrence of the name.

79 Gk *politeuomenos*.

80 2 Tim. 1 and 4

81 Ps. 149. 5ff.

live in it because I have chosen it. This is the place appointed for me by the Lord since I was in the country of the Persians (56). Arise and come a little to the south of the town and pray. For it is fitting that a *martyrion* be built for me in that that place and that my body be deposited in it so that it will provide healing for everyone who comes to the Lord in it and pray in my name.'

The saint came out with the brothers and they prayed. Our father Abba Peter made the sign of the cross over the ground of that place and put the martyr's body in a small cell, for the *topos* had not yet been built there. Abba Peter was about to return to his monastery in Maiûma in Gaza, but the brothers who had carried James' body and ministered to him wanted to take the body of the saint. **They refused to accompany Peter and remained behind, wishing to take the body. For they loved him very much.** Laying hold of the body of the martyr that evening they arose and took him to the river, looking for a boat to sail away before anyone there might find out and take him away from them.

They stood on the bank looking for a boat as they hastened to flee. Suddenly the saint stood over them and said to them: 'What are you doing ? Have I harmed you in any way ? Did I not accompany you this whole time, day and night, shining on you like the sons of Israel, God covering them by day in a column of cloud and throughout the night in a column of fire ?⁸² When you were in danger from numerous thieves coming upon you from the desert after leaving Persia, did I not cause them to flee through the fear of the Lord that came upon them ? When the devil became envious of you, trying to capsize your ship because of me, did I not save you from the sea of salt water ? Why now do you wish to break a covenant confirmed by the Lord ? For he is the one who wanted me to remain here where I was put that his name be glorified by it. So put my body into this stone trough⁸³ and board this boat which is coming and sail away. For the one who seized Habbakum in the pit at that time in Babylon and Ezekiel from Babylon to Jerusalem.⁸⁴ It is he also who will put me in the *topos* from which you have taken me. The Lord Christ will reward you for your troubles and will lead the way for you and rescue you from every tribulation of the Wicked One. Keep yourselves in all fortitude from transgressing against

82 Seems to be a mixed reference to Exod. 13, 21ff. and Num. 9, 23, cf. P. de Lagarde *Der koptische Pentateuch* (1867)

83 Crum (833a): 'drinking trough' ?

84 Seems to be an allusion to Ezek. 8,3 and the story of Bel and the Dragon

the upright faith and I will be with you everywhere you go.' After he had said this to them, the body of the saint and the stone trough were suddenly seized in the air and deposited in the dyke⁸⁵ south of Paim at night.

There was a God-loving woman in that town who had been training for the life of virginity since her youth. She was respectable, God-loving and (58) saint-loving and her name was Theodora. James the martyr appeared to her as the prophet Daniel and many others dressed as Persians. When she saw them, she became very frightened. But the saint said to her: 'Do not be afraid. I am James the Persian. It is not long since I was martyred for the name of Christ. The Lord sent you. He granted me to you that I may be a strength and support for your whole town. Arise and go to the priest with all his clergy and make your way south upon the road to the dyke. You will find this great stone trough where my body is. Take it and dispose of it in accordance with the will of God.' The respectable virgin arose, came and told the priest of the town everything. He came with the clergy and the town notables with candles and incense full of fragrance and many perfumes. He brought Saint James up in the trough and sang psalms before him until they they reached the town with him and deposited him in the church with great haste. They started to build a *martyrion* for him on the dyke to the south of the town and had finished it in a few days by the 3rd of Mechir,⁸⁶ a noble church such that the word written in the Acts was fulfilled in it: *The church in Judea and Galilee and Samaria was in peace when it was built and grew in the fear of the Lord and with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit it began (59) to increase.*⁸⁷ When the holy *martyrion* was completed, the body of the saint was brought to the accompaniment of psalms. A great multitude assembled and the holy martyr was brought out amid psalms, blessings and hymns. He was taken to the place built for him and laid there in honour, respect and glory of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever Amen.

One may object: 'How did this saint appear in the land of Egypt when he was from Persia ?' Let him understand that the one who brought Joseph out of Egypt after his death and took him to the land of his heritage is also the one who led Saint James and brought him from a country in which the created is worshipped rather than the creator, having

85 I understand *ouan* (dyke) here, but Crum also cites it as a place name (CD 480a) Lemm translates 'valley' (*eia*).

86 Jan. 28

87 Acts 9, 31

brought him to Egypt, the place where many martyrs have completed their struggle and received the unfading crown. They also gathered together from all over Egypt and came for the consecration of the *topos* built for him and they accompanied him, taking him to his oratory and watching over the multitude lest the devil do harm to one of them. They accompanied him with psalms rejoicing as one that they had been worthy of this great beacon among them in their country and blessed all the people who had gathered to celebrate this noble martyr of Christ, Saint James, and greeted him. Each one returned to his dwelling in peace (60). For all the saints of Our Lord Jesus Christ Our God were glorifying Saint James. Great cures happened through him on the day when he was taken into his holy *martyrion*, cures which I will not be able to count as an assurance⁸⁸ and solace to those of that whole place for it was a gift of a certain size that they deserved. He dwelled with them, a strength to them in everything they were to do and he led them along every path they were to walk on. He continues⁸⁹ to heal all who are sick and to medicate all who are in pain with various illnesses. He expels demons and often appears, blessing those of his people which he has loved. He is with them. He also, Saint James, prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of everyone who comes to his holy *topos* and everyone who assembles here in his name and he receives from them their gifts and offerings and tribute, interceding on their behalf with our Lord Christ Jesus, glory be to him and his good Father and the Holy Life-Giving Spirit, forever and ever Amen.

Appendix

Notes on the Middle English version

The term *exemplum* refers to a story told to illustrate a sermon or a homily with the intention of 'enlivening' preaching matter that might otherwise have been received with indifference. There seems to have been a revival of popular preaching after the Lateran Council of 1215 and, with it, the search for 'enlivening' material.

A major source of *exempla* was the *Golden Legend*, put together in the 13th cent. by Jacobus de Voragine. The work was soon translated into the vernacular languages, such as English and French, that were beginning to grow in importance. The text known as *Jacob's Well* also has a version of the

88 The verb of this Gk word first appears in Eccl. 8, 11, where it means 'to be set on'. It is used in the papyri to mean 'fulfil'. In the NT it means 'assurance'. In modern Greek it means 'information'.

89 There is an interesting change of tense in Coptic, from the past to the present, the reason for which is not clear to me.

martyrdom that is not a simple translation, but rather an adaptation, in which the English writer directly addresses his audience, these interpolations accounting for about 20% of the text. For example, the promise of the mother and wife to remain estranged from James when he renounces Christianity is contrasted by the writer with the behaviour of members of English families ready to comply with any wickedness the husband/father proposes. A novelty introduced by the English text is the use of rhyming couplets for each response of James to the removal of a limb or part of a limb. The text says that James' 'surname' was Intercisus.