

The Martyrdom of Apatil

Anthony Alcock

The Bohairic text from which this translation has been made was published by I. Balestri and H. Hyvernat in *Acta Martyrum* (1907) pp. 89 ff. Details of the manuscripts are published in the Latin translation volume (1908) pp. 6-7. There are two manuscripts: Cod. Vat. Copt. 62 and 66.

Cod. Vat. Copt. 66 f.156 has the following marginal note: **ⲱⲮ ⲙⲉⲑⲁⲓ ⲛⲱⲟⲣⲡⲓ · ⲙⲉⲛⲉⲛⲥⲱⲉⲓ ⲱⲮ ⲛⲓⲱⲁⲛⲛⲏⲥ
Ⲣⲁⲡⲓⲉⲅⲁⲓⲉⲗⲓⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲛⲟⲩⲃ · ⲛⲓⲥⲟⲩ ⲓⲥ ⲛⲉⲡⲓⲡ ⲉⲓⲩⲉⲛ ⲣⲉⲙⲓ ⲥⲁ // ⲡⲓⲃ ⲙⲉⲛⲟⲩⲉⲅⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲟⲩⲱⲧ** *Read this first and after it John of the golden gospel on Epip 16, 'it being in 143 and 91, the two on one day.* It is not clear what 143 and 91 refer to, but the editors suggest that they are book numbers.

There are several features of this text that seem to set it apart from other similar documents, and it is worth making a list of them.

1. It is not known for certain what the name is: **ⲁⲡⲁⲧⲓⲁ** or **ⲁⲡⲁ ⲧⲓⲁ**. If the latter, **ⲧⲓⲁ** is a name I do not know. If it is an abbreviation, it might be of something like Attilius. I have followed Balestri and Hyvernat by calling him Apatil
2. The date of the martyrdom is not given in the proemium of the text, where one would normally expect to find it, but this may have to do with the fact that there are two dates given in the body of the text: one of his execution (Emshir 7) and one of his formal burial in his village of Sabaru (Epip 16).
3. The absence of any mention of this martyr anywhere elsewhere, especially in the Synaxary.
4. The inclusion in the text of apparently complete 'copies' of official documents: the edict of Diocletian,² two gubernatorial letters and the text of his final death sentence, which is rather more extensive than in other texts I know.

The numbers in brackets are the page nos. of the printed text. I have mostly ignored the *apparatus criticus*, unless it contributes to a better reading of the text. I have taken the liberty of simplifying the sometimes extensive designation of the Lord Jesus Christ Our Saviour. I have used the footnotes for matters of historical and linguistic interest.

CD = W.E. Crum *Coptic Dictionary* (1939)

LSJ = H. G. Liddell and R. Scott *Greek-English Lexicon* rev. H.S. Jones (1940)

1 Coptic Synaxary Epip 16 describes John as the 'owner of the golden gospel' (صاحب الانجيل الذهبى).

2 Texts of the edict vary in length according to martyrology, one of the shortest I know being that in E.A. Reymond and J.W.B. Barns *Four Coptic Martyrdoms* (1973) p. 33 **ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲉⲛⲁⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁⲅⲉ ⲁⲛ ⲛⲛⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲛⲁⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲛⲧⲥⲏⲥⲏⲥⲉ** 'whoever does not sacrifice to my gods will die by the sword' (Paese and Thecla).

(89) *The martyrdom of the saint and martyr of the Lord Jesus Christ, the holy Apatil, which he completed nobly in the peace of God. Amen.*

In year 3³ of his reign the lawless emperor Diocletian instituted a great persecution against all Christians everywhere in the inhabited world. Many performed their struggle⁴ in the name of Christ and quite openly⁵ bore witness to the resurrection and ascension of Christ and his being seated in heaven at the right hand of his Father, having received the crown of confession⁶ from the Saviour.

So, the lawless Diocletian, he wrote an edict⁷ to all places under his authority, as follows⁸:

The emperor Caesar Diocletian to all peoples in the inhabited world under the control of my kingdom and living under the forethought⁹ of the gods, hail. Whereas I have heard of the Christians that they worship only Jesus reject the rest of the gods, especially Apollo¹⁰ who keeps the world safe and gives us victory at all times, I now command them all to (90) abandon this vanity¹¹ and recognize the salvific gods who give victory to emperors and life to everyone. Those who disobey our honoured edict, to which the revered senate has given its approval, I order the magistrates who govern each state from the great Rome to Egypt and the Pentapolis and Africa and the Great South from Libya to Ethiopia to punish them without remorse. If they change their mind, let them be spared. But if they persist in their attitude, our power will order that after all their tortures they be put to the sword and burned. You who perform the orders of the edict¹² in great honour of the gods, you will receive from the gods great gifts and live under the care of the gods. We are in good health.

This edict was sent to Egypt to Armenius the count¹³ of Rakote with a courier¹⁴ named Dionysius.

3 For about twenty years of Diocletian's reign Christians lived relatively peacefully. The persecution did not begin until year 19/20 of his reign. The edict against the Christians, datable to 24 February 303, according to Lactantius *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 12, was attributed to Galerius, who became emperor in about 305. All together there seem to have been several edicts, but no actual text of one has survived. It was Diocletian who in 286 AD instituted the short-lived system known as the Tetrarchy after the empire had been effectively divided into East and West, with two rulers for each: *augustus* (senior) and *caesar* (junior). He was in fact *augustus*.

4 ἀγών. The language of the games is used in portraying the Christian struggle against the Roman Empire. e.g. ἄθλον (prize) and στέφανος (crown), often Coptic **Ⲭⲟⲙ**, as below.

5 παρρησία

6 Open declaration of Christianity that did not result in the loss of life but usually conferred great prestige.

7 Two words are used in martyrological texts: διάταγμα and πρόσταγμα, with scarcely any difference between them, except perhaps a matter of emphasis in the prefix διά meaning 'throughout'.

8 For the same Coptic formulation see p. 95

9 πρόνοια

10 Of the gods mentioned in other martyrologies familiar to me Apollo seems to make a regular appearance, whether alone or in the company of Zeus, Artemis. Athena.

11 B. pl. form of S **επρη** (CD 57b)

12 Coptic: 'them'.

13 Lat. *comes*, cf. C. Vandersleyen *Chronologie des préfets de l'Égypte de 284 à 395* (1962) pp. 86ff.

14 Lat. *veredarius* (*veredus*: a light fast horse)

Armenius, on receiving it, sent for Arianus the governor¹⁵ and Ammonius the *riparius*¹⁶ and many soldiers. He brought them to the city of Rakote. They came as quickly as possible, and he had the imperial edict read out to them.

After receiving it they dispersed to various parts of Egypt, from Rakote to the Great South to Ethiopia. Countless numbers of Christians were arrested. Some (91) were killed by the sword and cast to the dogs and animals and carrion birds for food. Others were consumed by flames. In all this God continued to glorify his elect everywhere and innumerable wonders continued to happen, which fortified the belief of the pious in Christ and reviled the impious, spurning the impiety of those to be damned on the day of judgement and the tribunal of truth to be held by God over all the apostate souls who had abandoned him.

This was how things were, when all Christians were visited by a great disturbance and fear.¹⁷ There was a holy priest in Sabaru,¹⁸ a small town in Timoui Pshati,¹⁹ a metropolis of Egypt, named Sôtêrichos, a God-fearing man. He had been a just man all his life and became father to two boys, Apatil and John, both true worshippers. Apatil was a handsome boy, full of faith and the Holy Spirit. When he was sixteen, he was taken from his unwilling father and conscripted into the army at a camp called Babylon,²⁰ to the south of the city of On to be with a tribune called Callinicus. Saint Apatil performed many spiritual exercises and said many prayers at night. With many tears he (92) performed as many acts of charity with the poor and orphans as he could.

When Arianus the governor moored at Babylon, Apatil enclosed himself in and, amid much weeping, he prayed to God to disperse the persecution against his flock and put an end to the trials and return his Church to peace. After completing this task, he fell asleep briefly, whereupon the Lord appeared to him in a vision as a handsome boy with an extremely radiant face and said to him: "Why are you

15 For the historical sources cf. Reymond and Barns *Four Martyrdoms* (1973) p. 7

16 For some idea of what this curiously named official did cf. A.H.M Jones (ed.) *History of Rome* (1970) vol. 2 text 104, where it is clear from the minutes of a city council meeting that the *riparius* was also the chief of police.

17 Lit. 'a disturbance not small and a great fear'.

18 The only ref. in E. Amélineau *Géographie de l'Égypte Copte* (1893) p. 407 is to this text.

19 The first part **ⲙⲟⲩⲓ** means 'island'. Curiously the name is not in Amélineau. However, he discusses the relationship between **ⲡⲱⲗⲓ** and Nikiûs (pp. 277 ff.).

20 Later called the Fortress of Babylon, a substantial ruin still highly visible in Old Cairo. The name may derive from *pr h'pj n jwnw* 'the temple of Hapi of Heliopolis'. As far as I know there are no known temples of Hapi, the Nile god, so this etymology may be faulty, but according to the Greek geographer Ptolemy (2nd. cent.), there had been a town in the area since Pharaonic times. When the canal connecting the Nile with the Red Sea was rebuilt in the 2nd cent., a fortress may have been built there that seems to have been enlarged in the time of Arcadius (4th cent.). In the 5th cent. it had its own bishop, Cyrus, who attended the Second Council of Ephesus in 449 cf. M. Le Quien *Oriens Christianus* (1740) cols. 556ff. In the *Notitia Imperii*, Babylon is mentioned as the quarters of Legio XIII Gemina.

sleeping while the struggle is spreading ? Arise and struggle for my name that you may receive the unfading crown from me by completing well the good struggle of confession so that I may bring you to my Father and present you to him as a gift and that you be in a state of inexpressible joy. Do not be afraid of the tortures, for I will be with you in all the tribulations suffered by you for my name, but be strong and struggle."

The good Saviour said this and disappeared. At daybreak the governor took his seat on the tribunal in the fortress. He summoned the entire unit²¹ and read the imperial (93) edict to them, commanding them to worship the gods. In a show of unanimity they threw themselves down and worshipped the idols. Apatil, however, stood in their midst and did not bow his head to the idols and did not worship them.

When the governor saw him standing there, he had him brought to him and said to him: "Why have you not worshipped the gods in accordance with this imperial edict ?" Apatil replied: "I worship God who is in heaven, my true king, the creator of all that is visible and invisible, the one in whose hands is the breath of everyone, the one who transcends monarchs, of whom rulers are afraid, who nurtures all creation in his love of man." The governor fell into a great rage when he heard this. "I will chastise your babbling, fool."

He had Apatil bound²² by four soldiers, who pushed him from one to another so that he fell a number of times. The saint cried out to the Lord: "Jesus, help me, for it is you alone in whom I hope." When he said this, an angel of the Lord appeared and touched him and gave him strength. His bonds fell loose and he stood before the governor, with no sign of distress on his body. The governor ground his teeth at the saint with murderous intent (94). On that day he passed sentence on many, who received the crown of confession from Christ the true bridegroom.

The heels of Apatil were pierced and ropes passed through them and he was dragged over²³ sharp stony places until the blood flowed on to the ground. A stake was then kindled and, when the flames rose to a certain height, the saint was bound and put into the middle of it. God, who was looking upon this true struggle and eager to hear those who hope in him, he cause clouds to gather around him. The fire was extinguished by the copious rain that fell from them.²⁴ The voice of the Lord said: "Be brave

21 *σπεῖρα*. The word has to do with 'anything twisted or wound' (LSJ) and in a military sense can mean 'unit'.

22 I have used only one word where the text uses Coptic and Greek words that mean essentially the same.

23 Lit. 'in'.

24 This is hardly a translation, but it is an accurate paraphrase.

and strong. Truly I am with you and I will not leave you." When Apatil heard this, he received added strength from the Lord. All the pains of his body ceased, and he stood before the governor without a blemish on him. When people saw this miracle, they cried aloud: "The god of the Christians is great and the god of Apatil is one." When the governor saw²⁵ this shouting (95), he ordered the saint to be taken to prison.

While he was there, he continued to perform miracles and wonders, and not a few of them, like one of the apostles: he healed the sick, expelled demons, curing the illnesses of anyone whatsoever, the grace of Jesus Christ. Word of the miracles he was performing reached the governor, who fell into a great rage and said to the great men in his entourage: "What shall we do with this magician, Apatil ? It will not be long before he has seduced everyone with his tricks ?" The great men replied: "Lord, let us not torture him here, for everyone will follow him. They are led astray by the tricks he performs. But let our lord send him to Peremoun²⁶ to Pompey the governor and let him be tortured there. For we have done nothing here that will stop people from dying with him."

Arianus wrote to Pompey the governor of Peremoun, as follows:

Arianus the governor of the Thebaid to Pompey the governor of Peremoun, hail. In following the instructions of the emperors²⁷ it is our duty to (96) perform every act of worship for them and the honoured gods that we may live under their forethought and be glorified by them. Look, in accordance with the edict of Diocletian, we are sending²⁸ Apatil to you, the condemned soldier of the Fortress of Babylon. When he was found to have disobeyed the order of our god-loving emperor and revered senate, following the error of the Christians and worshipping the one called Christ, I examined him with vigorous enquiries and I have sent him to your authority that you may hear him in public and pass your sentence in accordance with imperial law. Health in all honour of the imperial gods.

Apatil was taken bound in chains to Peremoun and brought before Pompey the governor by the soldiers sent with him. He gave him Arianus' letter. He read it and ordered Apatil to be taken off to

25 Interesting synesthesia, doubtless arising from the two elements of sound and vision. Balestri and Hyvernat (p. 64) translate: *turbarum clamore audito*.

26 Probably Pelusium, the city in the NE where the Nile debouches into the Mediterranean, about 3 miles from the sea. The same governor is mentioned in 'Shenoufe and the Brethren', cf. Reyond and Barns p. 185 n. 4. Curiously enough, it is where Pompey was murdered in 48 BC. In 325 it sent a bishop to the Council of Nicea. Cf. E. Amélineau *Géographie Copte* (1893) pp. 317 ff.

27 This was the brief period of the tetrarchy.

28 Lit. 'we have sent'

prison until the following day, when he summoned Apatil to his presence. The guard brought Apatil in chains before the governor: "Are you Apatil who has been sent to us by the mightiest Arianus, governor of the Thebaid. ?" He replied: "Yes, I am. But I am not a magician, and God forbid (97) that I should become one, for I am Christian, a servant of the true Christ God." The governor: "If you wish to keep your health, abandon this error and serve the truth and recognize the salvific gods that you may become a son to us and we may rejoice over your obedience." The martyr of Christ replied: "Leader of lawlessness, counsellor of darkness, companion of destruction, he who has not recognized the true God, son of the devil, the enemy of all truth, are you not ashamed to counsel the servants of Christ to become godless and impious villains like yourself ? So listen to me. I am openly a Christian and worship the Christian God. I curse the emperor and his abominable gods, with whom you will be cast into the fire of hell with the demons you adore. It is written: *Their worm will not die and their fire will not be put out.*"²⁹

On hearing this the governor raged like a wild animal and ordered the nails of his hands and feet to be removed and his eyes plucked out. He then ordered vinegar and ashes to be brought. They were mixed together and the mixture poured into his wounds. In his great agony Apatil prayed: "Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all creation, the one who saves at all times those who trust (98) him,³⁰ the harbour of all those in distress and the salvation of the oppressed. Come, Lord, and help me and save me from the distress I am in lest the heathens say: 'Where is their God ?' You are the one to whom glory belongs, with his good Father and lifegiving Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen."

When he said 'Amen', an angel touched him and healed him. His limbs became as they had been, without a blemish on him. The governor was amazed and said that Christian magic was very powerful. The crowd declared that there was no god but the God of Apatil.

The governor said to Apatil: "Will you not obey me and sacrifice and I forgive you so that you might escape great tortures ?" Apatil replied: "It is written:³¹ *If the Lord is my salvation, I shall fear no-one and if one wages war on me, I will be hopeful because of him.* I will not fear your torture and your threats will not make me renounce the love of Christ. So do as you wish." The governor replied: "I will chastise your audacity, fool, so that you recognize the salvific gods." He then had him drawn up on the rack (99) and flayed until his insides became visible.

29 Is. 66, 24

30 Lit. 'whose hearts are with him'

31 Ps. 26, 3. The Coptic version follows the LXX

The saint's flesh and blood together started to detach themselves from his body,³² and he was in great pain. When his soul became faint, he cried aloud: "Arise, Lord, and help me, for they have been killing us the whole day. We have been counted as sheep for the slaughter."³³ Rise up and save us for the sake of your name, for it is you alone in whom I have put my hope." The who said *While you are still praying, I am here*³⁴ hastened to hear his servant. Immediately, an angel of the Lord came and healed him. His chains became loose and he stood before the governor without a blemish on him.

When the crowd saw this, they glorified God: "There is no God but the Christian God. Anathema to Diocletian and his gods." The governor became enraged at the sounds that the crowd was making and said to the saint: "I will burn you on a bed of iron, and then let me see if Jesus will be able to rescue you from my hands." The saint replied: "He has saved me in the past and will save me again. Just be aware that the form of your anger will not be able to intimidate me in any way. This fire with which you want to make me afraid is only temporary, but it will remind me of the eternal fire in which (100) your father the devil and all wrongdoers who, like you have not recognized God, will be burned. The governor ground his teeth and had the iron bed brought. He caused the saint to be laid upon it and fire lit beneath him. Oil and fat were poured on him so that the fire increased substantially and the flesh of the just man was burned, while he was beaten by four groups of four soldiers with fresh rods. Through all of this God was protecting his servant and not allowing him to faint³⁵ from the suffering. While Apatil was being consumed pitilessly by fire, he prayed as follows:

God who sits upon the chariots of the cherubim, as they sing incessantly of the invisible and incomprehensible glory of your greatness, for you have been my strength since I was in the womb and my hope since I suckled at the breast of my mother.³⁶ Do not leave me or turn your face from me, God my saviour, for you are my strength and a help to those who are oppressed for the sake of your holy name.³⁷ Glory belongs to you and the Father who generated you and the Holy Spirit who gives life to all, now and forever. Amen.

(101) After he had said this, he was restored immediately and miraculously to full health and without any pain before the governor. When the crowd saw this, they cried out: "God who saves his servant Apatil from the fire is blessed. The Christian God is one, and there is none besides him." The

32 Lit. 'coming down'

33 Ps. 44, 22. The Coptic is slightly faulty.

34 Is. 58, 9

35 Coptic Ⲅⲱⲗ ⲄⲄⲱⲗ (CD 33a)

36 Ps. 21, 10

37 Allusion to Ps. 26,9

governor raged like a wild beast and stamped his foot on the ground. He said: "Look, the next fire will be really serious,³⁸ so let me see if your God will save you from my hands." On his instructions the saint was enclosed in a furnace and the fire lit, which was kept alight for three days and three nights. God looked upon the love of Apatil his servant and did not let him die in the fire lest the godless idolaters boasted. He sent his angel to him and he put out the flames and made the middle of the furnace like a breath of fresh dew. There was not a blemish on the righteous one. When Apatil saw the help that had come from God, he confessed God like the three young men in the furnace:

Blessed are you, Lord God of our father, and more than blessed. Your name is full of glory forever. Amen. For you have sent your angel and freed me from the fire and not allowed my enemies to rejoice over me (102). For this reason I will reveal³⁹ to you, Lord, in a large assembly and in the middle of a multitude I will bless you, for you have made me rejoice over your salvation and I will rejoice under the protection of your wings,⁴⁰ for yours is glory forever. Amen.

By the grace of Almighty God the saint was removed from there and set before the governor. The latter, when he saw him, was astonished, together with his colleagues, and said: "I am amazed that you are still alive !" The saint replied: "Did I not tell you at the beginning that you would learn how constant the servants of Christ are ? For it is his will at all times to save those who believe in him." The governor said to him: "I do not believe in these words. Will you sacrifice or not ?" The saint replied: "I will not. Do with me as you wish." The lawless one ordered him to be taken to the sea and thrown into the depths bound in chains. By the grace of God he was brought out of the sea and set before the governor before the boat from which he had been thrown returned. The governor was confused and speechless. He ordered him to be thrown into prison until he decided what to do with him.

There was a blind man who had been thrown⁴¹ into prison, who had no relatives.⁴² When the saint saw (103) him, he placed his hand upon his eyes. He made the sign of the Cross in the name of the Trinity and breathed on him three times and the man regained his sight.⁴³ He cried aloud: "There is no God but the Jesus Christ, the God of the holy martyr Apatil."

38 **ΖΗΗΠΕ ΦΗΝΟΥ ΕΧΩΚ ΝΧΕ ΠΙΧΡΩΜ ΕΘΝΑΩΤ** (Look, the fire which is hard is coming upon you).

39 **ΟΥΩΝΖ** in the sense of 'profess', cf. Bohairic text of Heb. 3,1 (where Sahidic uses the Greek **ΖΟΜΟΛΟΓΙΑ** as a verb)

40 Balestri and Hyvernat point out the foregoing contains an amalgam of scriptural allusions.

41 **ΖΩΟΥΓ**: CD 732b

42 **ΡΩΜΙ** 'man': Balestri and Hyvernat translate *nullum sanguinis sui*.

43 The emperor Vespasian, also credited with healing miracles, cured a blind man by 'spitting' on his eyes cf. Suetonius *Divus Vespasianus* ch. 7.

The prison janitor, when he saw this great miracle, threw himself down and kissed his feet and his head: "I beg you, my holy father. Have mercy on me. I am in great distress. I have an only daughter who is just about to give birth and for the last seven days has had birth pains. Her son is stuck in her womb. She has been attended by many doctors and incanting exorcists, but they have been unable to provide a remedy. Have mercy on me and pray to your God for her. I believe that she will be saved from death." The saint said to the girl's father: "Bring me a little oil and I will pray over it. Take it and anoint the girl and the glory of the Lord will be revealed." The girl's father brought him the oil and he prayed over it and blessed it. The girl's father took the oil and anointed his daughter with it. She gave birth immediately and without difficulty to a son whom she called **(104)** Apatil after the saint. There was great rejoicing in the house of her parents.

Thereafter, the fame of Apatil reached the governor, who became very angry and took counsel about he was to do. As he was thinking, the devil appeared to him in the guise of a soldier and said: "Listen to me and I will speak with you, for I know what sort of strength Christians have. Find yourself a harlot and dress her in royal robes and throw her into prison with him that she might trick him." ⁴⁴

The governor ordered a harlot to be procured and to be given her clothing⁴⁵ and all manner of adornment and had her sent into the prison to the saint, thinking that in this way he would trick the just man, the one whose purity the angels envied. When she went into him, he knew in his spirit and prayed to God: "My Lord Jesus, do not dilute⁴⁶ the love with which you have loved me." When the woman saw the grace of God in Apatil, she prostrated herself and worshipped him, she began to ask him to save her. He said a lot to her regarding her salvation, and she was filled **(105)** with longing for heaven and left him with a firm resolve to become a servant of Christ and desist from her previous ignorance. She concealed herself thenceforth from everyone and became a devoted Christian,⁴⁷ converting many in the fear of God.

When the governor found out, he had Apatil brought from prison and said to him: "By the gods, I have tried with you and failed." The saint replied: "Stop trying:⁴⁸ either put me to the sword or give me to the wild beasts so that you will realise that nothing can separate me from the love of God, God

44 Sex was an instrument of the devil known from the first monastic biography of St Anthony, which gave later European painters and writers ample scope to indulge their imagination.

45 ἄπτεροῦς: the clothing of a harlot.

46 Lit. 'scatter'.

47 The Greek phrase shows gender agreement (fem.): πιστή χριστιανή

48 The text here has the word οὐδ' 'and', which is either redundant or introduces text that has since disappeared.

to whom I am hastening - if indeed I am worthy to receive the eternal gifts he has prepared for those who love him." The lawless one said: "The eternal gifts you speak of are no concern of mine, These are things you use to trick the people so that they do not recognize the salvific gods, who give real life and provide the enjoyment of fruits to those who believe in them. I will teach you a lesson for the ingratitude you have shown to them and then I will feed you to the wild beasts so that everyone might know that it is from the gods alone that they live, the gods who have made the earth fertile⁴⁹ for the pleasure and consolation of man but scatter from the land the fools who are ungrateful for the gifts they give them."

(106) The lawless one then had the saint shackled and flayed from head to foot and, while he was bathed in blood, he had a lioness that had just given birth come in so that, as he said, there should be nothing left of his body. When the lioness was brought in, she ran towards him, but when she got there, she licked his wounds. When the governor saw that she was not eating him. he ordered her to be removed from him. And what a cry there was at that moment from the multitude, as they glorified God !

The governor turned to his assessor⁵⁰ and said: "What are to do with this magician ? He opposes the esteemed edict of the emperors and does not sacrifice to the gods, but declares himself to be a Christian." His assessor said: "My lord governor, pass sentence up on him, for he will lead us astray." The governor wrote his sentence as follows: *Apatil the undeserving soldier, since he has opposed the edict of our emperor⁵¹ and has not worshipped the gods, but confesses to being a Christian, I order him to be beheaded by the sword in accordance with imperial law.*

When the saint heard the end of the sentence, he rejoiced in spirit. He was taken to the place of execution on Emshir 7.⁵² He asked the soldiers with him to let him pray. They left him and he turned to the east (107) and prayed as follows:

I thank you, my Lord God and Saviour that you have made me worthy of the life-giving pains and

49 The sentiments expressed here have a certain amount in common with the the prayer known as the *Precatio Terrae*, with a contrast, expressed perhaps in somewhat crude terms, between earth as the source of life and rebirth for non-Christians and heaven as the source of rebirth and life for Christians. A material expression of the *Precatio Terrae* may be seen in Augustus' monument of 13 BC, the *Ara Pacis*.

50 Still used in several countries to mean, among other things, the assistant of a judge.

51 Here the Greek ἀυτοκράτωρ is used instead of the Coptic word ⲡⲣⲱⲟϥ (kings), which has so far been the usual way of referring to the emperor. Sign of an attempt to produce a 'copy' of an official document ?

52 According to the Gregorian calendar Emshir begins on Feb. 8, which would make this the equivalent of the Western St Valentine's day.

have allowed me to die for your blessed name. I beg you to receive my soul in peace. Do not attribute to me those acts of negligence of which I am aware or unaware. May peaceful angels of yours accompany me lest the powers of darkness in the air do me harm which are quick to evil and wish to block my way to you, my Lord God, who has allowed me to navigate the sea of this life easily with the patience and strength you have granted me that I may shame the emperors and reveal your name to the governor. Allow me now also, my Lord, to negotiate the stage of the air without danger and reach the harbour of your love without fear that I may find a place with you, whom my heart loves, and embrace you, the one who has allowed me to be victorious and receive the crown of confession and rejoice with the martyrs. For you are the one to whom glory before all ages belongs together with your good Father and the life-giving Holy Spirit, now and at all times and forever. Amen.

When he had finished the 'Amen', there was a voice (108) from heaven: "Come now, holy martyr of Christ, Saint Apatil. Take your rest with all the saints with whom you will share endless eternal gifts to ease your eternal life in heaven." When Apatil heard this, his spirit rejoiced in him and he hastened to the soldiers, saying: "Finish what you have been ordered to do." He knelt down and stretched out his neck in silence. One of the soldiers seized the death sentence⁵³ and dealt him a blow with the sword in his hand and severed his blessed head. In this way Apatil departed from this life and went to Christ who loves him to be⁵⁴ with him forever.

When the soldiers withdrew, faithful Christians came and clothed the body and buried him with honour and dignity and placed his body next to those of other martyrs who had died before him. Afterwards, Sôtêrichus, Apatil's father, heard that his son had died. With his son John he went to bring the body to Sabaru their town. When they found a peaceful time,⁵⁵ they built for him shrine⁵⁶ and placed his body in it on Epip 16. Great miracles and cures happened at the site to the glory of the Trinity. The holy martyr of Jesus was glorified by Christ, who ensures that honour and glory is respectfully paid to him and his good Father and the life-giving Holy Spirit, now and at all time. forever. Amen.

The blessing of St Apatil be with us all.

I prostrate myself;⁵⁷ my lord fathers. Remember the unworthy pupil, dust and ashes, that God may have mercy on me. Amen.

53 Presumably the document containing the sentence

54 Coptic uses the tense known as the 1st Perfect in a structure that dispenses with a conjunction and can thus be described as 'asyndetic' (unjoined), but I prefer the English infinitive, which signals the future.

55 Does this refer to non-persecution time ?

56 τόπος. The transport of the body and the construction of the shrine seem to have taken about 5 months.

57 μετάνοια. Originally meaning 'repentance', it came to refer to the act of prostration. For its many uses in patristic Greek see G.W.H. Lampe *Patristic Greek Lexicon* (1962).