

## The Martyrdom of Theodore the Anatolian<sup>1</sup>

Anthony Alcock

The text from which this translation has been made was published by I. Balestri and H. Hyvernat *Acta Martyrum* (1907) pp. 34-62. It is a Bohairic Coptic text, with the inventory no. Cod. Vat. 63 ff. 28-54. The final part of the text is missing. The Sahidic text is in M 613, but it has not been published and I have not read it. There is also an Ethiopic version. The only Arabic text seems to be in the Coptic Synaxary (Tôbe 12=Jan. 7), the text and translation of which have been published by R. Basset 'Le synaxaire arabe jacobite' *Patrologia Orientalis* 11 (1915) pp. 577-581. The following is an English translation of the Arabic :

*On this day Theodore the Anatolian, the great warrior, died a martyr's death. This great warrior was of a royal family in Antioch. His father was Sadrichos (Soterichus), the chief minister of the emperor in the days of Nûmarios (Numerius), the pagan emperor. His mother was called Patricia. She was the sister of Basilides the minister. When Numerian was killed in the Persian wars, his son the holy Justus was in the army and the empire was left without an emperor. The state was administered by Sadrichos and Basilides until the time of Diocletian, who originally came from Upper Egypt.<sup>2</sup> It is known that he married the daughter of Numerian, the sister of Justus, and she made him emperor. Theodore grew up and became a brave war hero. He took part in all military expeditions and put the enemy to flight, and it was said that when the Persians were told that he was marching against them, their hearts broke and they became dispirited. They all said in their ignorance that he was a god of the Byzantine forces. It was he who twice carried off Nicomedius the son of the Persian king. He was the reason why Diocletian worshipped idols. He entrusted the boy to the Patriarch of Antioch, who received a large sum from his father and returned him. Diocletian had entrusted him to the Patriarch until he made him swear an oath. After the patriarch had sworn the oath at Antioch, Diocletian then said:<sup>3</sup> . . . As for Theodore, he was campaigning on the River Antoush.<sup>4</sup> He had a friend named*

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1 The description attached to Theodore can be translated as 'Anatolian' or 'Oriental'. Some of the material in the Martyrdom can also be found in the Encomium delivered by Theodore of Antioch cf. E.A. Wallis Budge *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts* (1915) pp. 1ff. Texts can also be found in the publication of Eric Winstedt *Coptic Texts on St Theodore* (1910), but I have not been able to consult it.

2 Diocletian was in fact born in Dalmatia and was married to Prisca, of whom nothing seems to be known other than that she was his only wife and is thought to have been Christian. His predecessor Numerian died under unknown circumstances.

3 This text is missing and Basset has restored the sense of it from the *Acta Martyrum* text: the Patriarch of Antioch took the money but lied to Diocletian that the boy was dead.

4 The Bohairic text makes it fairly clear that the river is the Danube.

Leontius. One night in a dream he saw a ladder reaching from heaven to earth. At the top was Jesus, sitting on a magnificent throne, surrounded by thousands and tens of thousands. Beneath the ladder he saw an enormous dragon,<sup>5</sup> the devil. Jesus, the one sitting on the throne, said to him: 'Do you wish to be my son?' And he said: 'Who are you, sir?' And he said: 'I am Jesus the Word of God. Your blood will be shed in my name.' Then he saw an attendant take him and give him baptism of fire, with three immersions. He became a single mass of fire, like those around the throne. He said: 'Sir, I do not wish to be parted from my friend Leontius.' And he replied: 'Not only will you not be parted from him, but neither will you be parted from Baniqurûs the Persian.'<sup>6</sup> And then he seemed to see that Leontius and Baniqurûs were taken and baptized with fire and sent them back to Theodore, who rejoiced greatly. When he awoke, he told Leontius of the dream, and they embraced each other. They were taken by the power of the Lord to Baniqurûs, the head of the Persian army. He went to meet them and clasped them in his arms, though he had never seen them before. He told them of the vision that he had had, and they were astonished. Theodore said to him: 'My brother, know that we surrender ourselves to you, my brother and I.' They arose forthwith, rejoined their army and decided to die for the name of Jesus Christ. The emperor sent a message to Theodore to tell him that he had made peace with the Persians. For when he had abandoned Christ and begun to worship idols, the Persians rejoiced. Theodore said to his soldiers: 'Those who wish to save themselves, let them leave. Those who wish to fight for the name of Christ, let them stay with us. They cried out in one loud voice: 'The death which you die, we too will die it with you. Your God is our God.' He said to them: 'If that is the case, all of you descend into the river and immerse yourselves three times in the name of the Trinity.' They hurried to go down to the river. They took off their clothes and immersed themselves as instructed. After they had come up from the river, they heard a voice from heaven telling them: 'Be strong, those who have confessed me, and I will be with you.' And when Theodore reached the city, he left his soldiers outside and entered with his friend.<sup>7</sup> The emperor went to meet and received them well. He asked them for news of the war and the army, and then he suggested worshipping Apollo. Theodore and his friend insulted the emperor by rejecting his suggestion. His father Sadrikhos had died. The emperor became angry and ordered him and his friend to be taken to Ctesiphon to be punished because he was afraid of difficulties<sup>8</sup> with the Persians owing to Baniqurûs the Persian. Saint Theodore and his friend were punished and received the crown of martyrdom on Tôbe 12. Theodore had 153<sup>9</sup> large nails driven into his body before being crucified on a persea tree. The Lord sent his archangel Michael to console and comfort him in his sufferings. He then gave up his soul to the hands of Christ and received his crown of martyrdom in the kingdom of heaven. Before he died, the emperor sent to Theodore's army and asked the priests of Apollo, who were carrying the statue of Apollo, and a heralds, who proclaimed: 'Those who are with the emperor are to prostrate themselves before the great gods.' They all cried: 'We have no other God but Our Lord Jesus, king of kings and lord of lords.' At this the emperor sent in his guard to decapitate them all: as many as 2,500,000, with the result that the air was replete with beings of light placing crowns on the heads of all. May the prayers of these saints and their divine intercession always be with us. Amen.

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5 Ar. تنين 'sea monster' to translate the Greek word used in the Coptic text ΔΡΑΚΩΝ

6 The Ar. is much more condensed than this.

7 This way of referring to Leontius occurs several times in the text.

8 Basset's translation. I cannot find the Arabic word: الشاعة. The only term I can find that has a similar meaning to that used here is in E.W. Lane *Arabic-English Lexicon* (1863) p. 1554

9 Follows the Coptic text exactly.

The Bohairic text makes no mention of Numerian and does make use of the tradition that Diocletian was from Upper Egypt.

The numbers in brackets throughout the text are the page numbers of the edition of the Coptic text. The term **ΡΩΜΕΟC** has been translated as 'Roman', but of course it refers to the eastern empire, usually described as Byzantine. In the interests of readability the translation of the Coptic has simplified various names, e.g. Lord God Jesus Christ, and the repetition of the names of Theodore, Leontius the Arab and Pankyrus the Persian to Theodore and his companions.



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This book illustration, from Pierpont Morgan Coptic M 613 fol. 1v, shows Theodore with nimbus, identified by an inscription on either side of him as **Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΠΑ ΘΕΩΔΩΡΟΣ ΠΑΝΑΤΩΛΕΟΣ** alone on horseback, armed like a warrior with spear in his right hand and the hilt of his sword appearing above his left shoulder, with what looks a satchel of some sort visible behind his right shoulder or perhaps a counterweight to the gold collar round his neck, like the Egyptian collar counterweight called *mn't*, and a dagger in his belt. His gold collar is studded with jewels and, on either side of his shoulders are two disembodied arms offering him what look like gold rings of some sort: the gold collar mentioned in the text is a gift from Diocletian, but it is not clear to me what the rings are for. The three red spots on his face indicate perhaps blood or fire. He is wearing a yellow (perhaps golden) garment with a border, below the waist divided into two parts to cover both legs separately, like trousers, with a band on his right ankle. He has a maroon cloak around his shoulders, depicted as blowing in the breeze. There are traces of letters on his garment, but I cannot identify them from the photograph. His left hand is holding the reins of a somewhat gloomy-looking horse. Both his feet are planted in sturdy stirrups. The horse is caparisoned with a yellow/golden cloth, tassels dangling from it. Trampled by the hooves of the horse is, according to the text, 'a large dragon with an iron ring through his nose. It had the head and neck of a man, but the body of a dragon. It made me fear and tremble. It was lying on the bottom step of the staircase to heaven, preventing anyone from entering the presence of God.' The caption above this figure reads **ΔΕΜΩΝΙΑΚΩΣ**: he looks as though he is attached by the chain to an object over which is the caption **ΤΚΑ ΘΡΑ ΠΛ** 'seat, chair, throne'. The text does not mention any attachment and has perhaps been imaginatively supplied by the illustrator. The object in question is part of a tripartite structure, consisting of step (**ΒΕΝΝΗ**), staircase (**ΤΩΤΕΡ**) and throne (**ΚΑΘΕΔΡΑ**). The object is subdivided into several sections of different colours, the longest being white, with

several bands between them, and perhaps represents the bottom step of the staircase, which is not depicted, leading to the throne, which is also not depicted. One might perhaps imagine a spiral staircase leading to a vaulted ceiling in a church depicting the glory of heaven.

*The martyrdom of Theodore called the Anatolian, the valiant martyr of Jesus Christ, together with his fellow martyrs whom Christ summoned to the same struggle as himself, namely Leontius the Arab<sup>10</sup> and Pankyris<sup>11</sup> the Persian, who all completed their struggle on Tōbe 12 in the peace of God. Amen,*

Come to us today, historiographer, and tell us the story of the acts<sup>12</sup> of the holy martyrs, Theodore the Anatolian, Leontius the Arab and Pankyris the Persian.

It happened that when there was no Roman emperor but that the affairs of state were being regulated by eparchs<sup>13</sup> on an annual basis,<sup>14</sup> there were two princesses in the palace but no<sup>15</sup> prince. When the Persians learned of this, they declared war on the Romans with the intention of taking the entire Roman empire and the capital city from them and becoming their masters: before there was an emperor in Antioch,<sup>16</sup> the Persian empire was superior to the entire Roman empire with the cities of the south as far as the cataracts in Egypt. From the west to the east and the north and the sea the entire area (35) was under their command and they paid tribute to them because of the greatness of their empire.

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10 The emperor Philip, who reigned from 244 until he was killed by Decius in 249, came from the area east of Lake Tiberias and was known as the Arab. He is said to have been sympathetic to Christians. There is evidence that six bishops from the region attended the Council of Nicaea, see G. Clarke 'Third century Christianity' *Cambridge Ancient History* 12 (2005) p.599. The presence of Christians in 4th cent. Persia is well attested by the Syriac Acts of the Persian Martyrs, published by several scholars, including P. Bedjan in 1891.

11 I have unified the variant spellings to 'Pankyris', the one most commonly used in the text.

12 ὑπόμνημα, to be understood here as plural, is probably a reference to the written account of their trial.

13 Senior officials who operated at a local level.

14 τριτοτετράμηνος. Text 'three four month periods, which is a year', evenly divided it may be supposed among the eparchs.

15 χωρίς

16 Antioch was besieged in 253 by Shapur I, but whether this may be a reference to a Roman attempt to secure this important city I cannot say.

It frequently happened that some of the eparchies broke their agreements<sup>17</sup> with them because Persian magnates ordered all of their subjects as follows: 'Let persea trees be planted in every country that it may become clear that they are under the power of the Persians<sup>18</sup> and let them pay tribute so that they do not rebel again.' Accordingly, the Romans have been paying tribute to the Persians until now. Sometimes they would rebel against the Persians, and the Persian would make war on them to re-establish their mastery of the Roman lands.<sup>19</sup> If they paid their tribute, as they were obliged to, the Persians would withdraw and stop fighting them, as was set out at the beginning.

Let us return to the power of the Roman kingdom in Antioch and look at the establishment of their kingdom, for there were no male children in it except for two young unmarried girls in the bloom of youth. When war began with the Romans, many were killed and the eparchs decided to send abroad for recruits to combat the Persian might so that their kingdom would be taken from them. They sent an imperial representative to Egypt to recruit nine myriads of soldiers from various cities and neighbouring territories, physically strong and hardened in spirit, like the lions who growl at their prey.<sup>20</sup> They included (36) many pseudo-prophets,<sup>21</sup> necromancers,<sup>22</sup> magicians who secretly made poison and magicians of plausible appearance.<sup>23</sup>

Among the myriad sought in Ptolemais<sup>24</sup> and its surroundings a multitude of recruits were found, high-handed killers of an unruly disposition, physically tough and courageous warriors. Among

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17 Gk. ἀθετεῖν

18 An interesting but mistaken correlation between the tree and the country. The name *περσέα* seems to have been given to the Egyptian tree (*ωβε*) by, among others, Theophrastus, the student of Aristotle.

19 Ancient languages sometimes have a tendency to use pronouns in ways considered indiscriminate by modern languages, but I am fairly sure that this is the meaning here.

20 Is. 31, 4

21 I have followed Balestri-Hyvernat here because it seems to fit the context. However, the Gk word is ψήφισμα, and one expects ψευδόμαντις.

22 In the phrase **ΝΖΑΝΡΕΦΩΝΙ ΝΖΩΟΥΤ** (those who examine males), one should probably read the second word not as 'males' but as **ΜΩΟΥΤ** (dead).

23 Coptic: **ΛΑΛΖΟ** 'deceiving of face' CD 648b.

24 Egyptian: **ΠΣΟΙ**. cf. E. Amélineau *Géographie Copte* (1895) pp. 281ff.

them was a young man called Agrippidos,<sup>25</sup> who had been groomed<sup>26</sup> by Satan to perpetrate great acts of lawlessness through him.

He was a goatherd and was taken as a recruit. Nobody was looking for him because he was without anyone.<sup>27</sup> It was clear that he was strong both physically and psychologically. He was a young goatherd<sup>28</sup> and handsome. He<sup>29</sup> rejoiced over him more than the rest of the myriad and he was sent with the others to Paneudemonia,<sup>30</sup> that is Antioch, the capital city of the Romans. Philadelphus the eparch of Thebais saw how superior Agrippidos was to all the others and took him with him as *strator*<sup>31</sup> and made him master of the imperial stables.<sup>32</sup>

A hundred days later Satan appeared to him in the stables, clad in imperial purple and adorned in fearful pomp. He said to him: "Agrippidos, do you know who I am?" Agrippidos replied (37): "Who are you, my lord, in this great splendour of yours?" The devil replied: "It is I who caused you to be made a recruit when you were a goatherd in Psoi. It was I too who caused the eparch to take you into his house and make you his equerry. Now,<sup>33</sup> if you obey me, I will grant you the Roman empire and make you emperor in my place, for it is I who give monarchy to all the monarchs of the earth, and they are my servants. I will make you my son. Are you not an orphan?"<sup>34</sup> Agrippidos said: "Whatever you order, I am prepared to do it." He replied: "First, I want you to worship me." Agrippidos did so without hesitation and threw himself and made obeisance to him. Agrippidos said to him: "Who are you, my lord?" He said: "I am the great Demoniacus."<sup>35</sup> Having said, this he

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25 The name of Diocletian before he became emperor, also used in the Encomium but not in the Synaxary. I have used this form throughout even though the text varies its spelling.

26 Lit. 'whom Satan kept for himself' (ΦΑΙ ΕΤΑΠΙΣΤΑΝΑΣ ΑΡΕΖ ΕΡΟΦ ΝΑΦ).

27 Probably means that he had no family.

28 I cannot find the form given here, but it is clearly related to τράγος.

29 The imperial representative.

30 The All Blessed, a title used of Constantinople in P. Masp. 32, 93.

31 Groom.

32 Latin *comes stabuli* has given rise to the title 'constable', which is used of important state official and law enforcement officers. The approximate English equivalent is 'equerry'.

33 This is how I understand the particle **ON**.

34 On this type of question cf. W. Till *Koptische Grammatik* (1966) § 436

35 Name occurs later on p. 39

disappeared instantly.

On the following day he saw the houses mounted on each other. He began to play a Theban tune on his cithara.<sup>36</sup> The eldest daughter of the emperor was attracted by his speech and song and made haste to the stables, where she saw Agrippidos and Satan made her fall in love with him. She then ordered the eunuchs and servants of the bedchamber, the matrons, to bring him into the palace. When they met, she said that they should be joined together in holy wedlock. When he went into (38) her, as was the custom among Roman emperors. she arose in the middle of the night, clothed him in his royal garments and crown and diadem and put them on him and made him sit on the throne of Condelianos<sup>37</sup> her father and made him emperor. At sunrise on the following day the gatekeeper of the palace opened the palace gate and found the emperor sitting speechless, for he had been gripped by fear that rendered him unable to speak. The empress had the herald announce: "Long live the emperor." Afterwards she had everybody dismissed<sup>38</sup> until the following day. The devil appeared that night and said to him: "My son Agrippidos, you have seen how your father has made you emperor. Please do as I tell you, and you will see things greater than these." The emperor replied: "Whatever you instruct, I am prepared to do it and carry it out. For I am your son." The devil hastened to embrace him and said to him: "From now on you will no longer be called Agrippidos but your name is to be Diocletian, for my name and yours are one. You will be hostile to

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36 Thebes in 5th cent. BC Greece had a reputation for song (e.g. Pindar). But the Thebaid in 5th cent AD Egypt was also known for its poetry (e.g. Nonnus). I hesitate to speculate about the activities of the horses.

37 Presumably Quintilianus, but I know of no emperors with this name.

38 συγγώρησις: the meaning 'forgiveness' may be the nearest suitable one in the sense of 'dismissed them from their duties'



and pursue the Galileans until you destroy them all, for they are most assuredly my enemies at all times. I will eradicate them through your hands, for they truly place their trust in the one who was crucified by the Jews. He was my opponent when we were still in heaven together."<sup>39</sup>

(39) When the emperor arose in the morning, the senate said: "As our lord emperor lives forever, tell us your name." He replied: "Diocletian is my name, given to me by my father." He then mustered all his soldiers for battle against the Persians. They assembled on the Danube. On the third day they crossed the river with their horses and those who were with them. They were as numerous as the sands of the sea.<sup>40</sup> They stood and faced the Persians, equipped for battle. His father Demoniacus stood on his right side and spoke to him: "Diocletian my son, I will deliver Nicomedius<sup>41</sup> the son of the Persian king into your hands. Guard him, but do not kill him until you know that my words are true." As they arranged themselves for battle, an Anatolian archer took aim at Nicomedius and struck him in the chest,<sup>42</sup> at which he blacked out<sup>43</sup> and collapsed. Most of the Persians cried out and fled. But the Anatolian boy called Theodore hastened to Nicomedius in his distress and revived him before the emperor Diocletian.

Diocletian, when he received (40) the young man, rejoiced over him and put a strict watch over him. He entrusted him to the archbishop of Antioch for safekeeping<sup>44</sup> until the day when he was to ask for him again. He sent straightaway and requested the presence<sup>45</sup> of Theodore and gave him a gold collar<sup>46</sup> for his neck and two rings<sup>47</sup> for his right hand. He appointed him commander of the Roman army, gave him many royal gifts and made him very rich.

The Persians became quiet. For six months they did not attack the Romans because they were

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39 The tradition in Lk 10, 18 may suggest that the two were at one point in heaven together.

40 Among other refs. Gen. 22, 17.

41 Regularly written: **ΝΙΚΟΜΗΔΟΙΣ**. One can only wonder if there is a reason for this

42 An abbreviated formulation of the Coptic.

43 **αφερσκοτος**

44 παραθήκη. For an example of the use of the word in this sense cf. J. Mouton and G. Milligan *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (1929) p. 483.

45 The verb **ταζο** has a number of meanings, of which this might be one CD 455ff.

46 **μανιάκης**

47 **ψέλλιον**

mourning the king's son, who had fallen in battle. When they heard that he was in the custody of the bishop of Antioch, their spirits revived a little. Hostilities with the Romans re-commenced. As a result of the great slaughter that occurred, the Roman army cried out: "Theodore the Anatolian has attacked you." When they heard his name, the one by his side, Leontius, stopped his horse and ran on foot, struck the Persian leader<sup>48</sup> and cut off his right arm, which fell to the ground with the sword in his hand. He took him by the feet and brought him alive to Theodore. The latter bade Leontius the Arab to take him to Antioch to the emperor. That day many Persians were killed. Diocletian ordered Manducianus Getulus<sup>49</sup> to strike the (41) Persian commander on the neck in front of him and decapitate him. The battle abated.

After Diocletian had been emperor for a year, when he was in the theatre, a young princess sent a messenger and took for herself an Antiochene *protector* of the senate, He went to her and she bade him sit on his throne. She made him emperor. His name was Maximianus the Tyrant. At that moment Demoniacus the father of Diocletian, the devil father of all lawlessness and enemy of truth, made his way to Diocletian and sat, wearing the garments of an Egyptian. He said to him: "Agrippidos my son, I have put your brother on the throne with you. Do not begrudge him but make a pact with him that you may both be sons to me who will be harsh to Christians and slay them before me." The emperor arose in the morning from his attendance in the theatre,<sup>50</sup> mounted his horse with all the palace magnates and went home, where he turned his attention to food and lay down to breakfast alone.<sup>51</sup> He saw his father Demoniacus reclining at table opposite him like a companion. He rose immediately, prostrated himself and made obeisance to him. The devil embraced him and said: "Diocletian my beloved son, on your feet and be off to the imperial throne that you (42) take the hand of your brother Maximianus, kiss him and bring him to me and I will tell you what is in my heart."

As instructed by his father the devil, Diocletian arose and had his brother Maximianus brought to him while he was sitting in the dining room. He<sup>52</sup> greeted him and they both kissed his feet. They

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48 CD 799a

49 The Gaetuli were a people of N. Africa. Manducianus may be his name: *manducus* means a gluttonous figure.

50 Balestri-Hyvernat suggest the end of all-night performance

51 I understand  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\ \epsilon\zeta\pi\lambda\sigma\iota$  as 'he turned his attention'. The phrase might perhaps be understood as turning attention from the theatre to food, but this may be a little fanciful.

52 Presumably the devil, whose feet are kissed by both men.

they went up to the dining room with their father and ate together. He then made them ungrudging co-regents and said to them: "If you obey me, your father, and make war on those who confess that the crucified one is God, you will both be blessed in my sight. For I am your god. I will not leave you. I will give you strength and power, whether in battle<sup>53</sup> or on the march. I will cause the Persians to submit to you and adore me as they adore their idols. They agreed to set up statues and stelae for him, and in return he gave them power and left.<sup>54</sup>

Mastema the father of all lawlessness, the enemy of truth, flew as quickly as a bird to Persian and instigated a war against Diocletian because of Nicomedius the Persian prince. Indeed, great Persian spies secretly sent great gifts and much gold to the (43) archbishop of Antioch. Scarcely<sup>55</sup> had the gold been measured out for Nicomedius than he was released. He was taken back to the Persian king, who was very happy because Nicomedius was a general. After a few days he went forth with his army to attack the Romans, who cried out to them: "Theodore and Leontius his kinsman have come to destroy you." On hearing these names the Persians cried out and fled, abandoning the prince. The prince's horse took fright and bolted. Theodore and Leontius bound him, completely without trace of fear, and brought him to Diocletian. The latter asked him before Maximianus why he had been set free, and the prince replied that his father had given a large sum of money to the bishop for his release. Thereupon the emperor fell into a godless rage and sent for the bishop. He pressured<sup>56</sup> him: "Give me the man I gave into your safekeeping that I may give him to his father, for he has stopped fighting for his sake." The bishop lied to the emperors that the boy had died and was being buried in the bishopric. He started to swear to the emperors by God (44) in heaven and the might of the Romans and the common baptism of Christians that this is what had happened: God had visited him, taken him across and he had died. With all the anger of the Antichrist the emperors had Nicomedius brought out. He accused the bishop before the court:<sup>57</sup> "You took my money and sent me away." The gold that the bishop had received for the prince was melted by order and poured down the bishop's throat until it flowed from his nostrils and he died. The emperors

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53 Coptic **ⲙⲟⲓⲧ** lit. 'way, road'. Balestri-Hyvernat suggest 'peace'. I can see no obvious support for either suggestion among the various exx, in CD 188a.

54 I do not understand the thought processes involved, but the somewhat tortuous policy seems to be based on the devil's conviction that his real enemies are Christians and that it is Diocletian who will defeat them. The Persians apparently will be so devoted to worship of the many idols that they will be easily overcome in battle.

55 *σχεδόν*

56 *ἀναγκάζω*

57 Areopagus

withdrew until the following day. They went off angrily to the palace and sadly rested themselves on a couch with taking any food. In the middle of the night Saklabaath, who disturbs heaven and earth, appeared to them like a fine gentleman and said to them: "My sons, you know that what your father says is true?" They replied: "Yes, lord. Those who believe in the crucified one are magicians. So, what do you want us to do?" Satanael said: "In the morning, arise and set up temples and stelae of gold and silver and worship them and I will reward you. Sacrifice in them and offer incense. Order (45) the herald to proclaim: "These are the imperial gods. Tear down the churches in all the lands under your control that the temple doors might be opened in every district. Erect statues in my name and do it properly. Seek out Christians and destroy them all."

The emperors were ardent in their zeal to do this. They hastened to destroy the churches and open the gates of the temples and worship the idols. All high-ranking government officials and every local government prosecutor instituted a search for Christians to punish them with fire, sword and various forms of torture at the tribunal until they sacrificed to the imperial gods. If they persisted in confessing the crucified one, they would be sentenced to death [I say to you all the things in my heart, my beloved brothers, these things which I have generated in my mind.]<sup>58</sup> During the reign of the two lawless and criminal emperors ordered all senators, office-holders and soldiers with their armies as well as<sup>59</sup> everyone in Antioch to make for the temple and offer sacrifices and libations to Apollo. Those who refused were to be burned alive. A governor was appointed (46) for the Thebaid as far south as the cataracts, another for Tripolis and another for Pentapolis as far west as the whole of Cyrene and one for Rakote and all places under its control. There was a great disturbance throughout the country. Suffice it to say that it reached as far as here because of the great impiety ordained by the sons of the devil, Diocletian and Maximianus, in the whole world.

So, my beloved Christians, for whom God gave his body and blood, let us tell you of the sufferings endured by Theodore the Anatolian and Leontius the Arab and Pankyrus the Persian, who were saved by Christ the Logos to complete their martyrdom and joint<sup>60</sup> confession of his holy name. They fought well in the struggle of their Lord against the apostate dragon and his evil emperors.

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58 I follow Balestri-Hyvernat in the use of square brackets, but they do not explain the use of them.

59 This is how I understand the phrase  $\epsilon\tau\iota \ \Delta\epsilon$ .

60 Adj.  $\nu\omicron\gamma\omega\tau$

We will now tell you the story from the many memoranda<sup>61</sup> and thoughts that you may also marvel at divine providence that leads everyone to make their way to him with an upright heart, for God shows no favouritism whatever: he leads them to make their way to heaven in peace without any trouble. <sup>62</sup> Listen, my beloved, to the wonders of God who loves mankind.

One night, while Theodore and Leontius were sleeping (47) beside the Danube, where they were commanders of Roman troops. The emperors had not yet sent for them because of their impiety and idolatry and how<sup>63</sup> they had abandoned God and worshipped man-made objects. Theodore said:<sup>64</sup> "We were sleeping in great grief because of the iniquities perpetrated by the emperors against God and their apostasy from him. In the morning I saw a path rising from the ground like a staircase of a *cathedra*,<sup>65</sup> the top of which reached to the apses of heaven. I saw a young man of twenty with an incorruptible face sitting on the top of the staircase of the *cathedra*. There was great glory and great faces around the throne, on the right side the faces of a lion and a calf and on the left those of an eagle and a man. Their faces were veiled by many wings. In a wheel there were four saws, arranged in pairs above each other<sup>66</sup> going round like a turbine. When I looked again I saw a great tabernacle on top of the *cathedra*. I was not told the secret of the *cathedra* and the tabernacle, but I was told: 'This place is the vision.'

"The one sitting on the *cathedra* said to me: 'Theodore, do you wish to be my son ?'<sup>67</sup> and I said: 'What sort of person are you ? I see that you are very (48) glorious. Tell me, my lord, that I might tell Leontius my brother about you. Tell me, my lord, for I am afraid of the man-hating enemy. ' The Lord said: 'Very well, my dear Theodore. Tell my beloved Leontius that I am the first Logos of God the father. I am the one whose name is spoken that fear of it may humble him and he run away away

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61 ὑπόμνημα are written documents and are perhaps contrasted with oral information (νοήμα)

62 Eph, 6, 9. Bohairic NT: **ΜΜΟΝ ΧΟΥΨΤ ΕΖΟ ΝΑΖΡΑϸ**

63 Coptic **πρηϥ** usually means 'how, way in which', but here 'because' seems to me to be more appropriate. The writer understands that the two emperors were once Christian but have apostatized.

64 Theodore's account continues in the 1st person as far as the middle of p. 51 of the Coptic text. There is a certain amount of direct speech within this oral narrative, indicated by the single apostrophe pair.

65 Throne. See the description of the book illustration on p. 4 of this article, where the word is written against the bottom step of the staircase.

66 Ref. to the elaborate description in Ez. 1, of whom Balestri-Hyvernat drily comment: *quem si intelligas, nos intelliges*.

67 Parallel with the exchange between Agrippidos and the devil earlier on pp. 36ff.

in great disgrace, the enemy. I am the one who was crucified before Pontius Pilate the governor among people. I am the God of all flesh.'

"I, Theodore, said to the one who was speaking to me: 'I am your servant, Lord, the son of your servant with Leontius. Break our chains, Lord, and remove from us this burden of idolatry and mitigate the anger of these two dragons, Diocletian and Maximianus, the lawless emperors, Come, I beg you.' The Saviour said: 'Your brother and you will see, Theodore, that the one in whom they believed is like a feeble prisoner. If you really want to be my son, Theodore, then throw yourself on this lake of fire that you may become clean.' I said to him: 'I am afraid, my Lord. But those standing around took me by the hair of my head and dipped me in the flames three times. They put me on my feet and clothed me in a clean garment. At that moment I spoke freely<sup>68</sup> before God like those standing (49) prepared to do what came forth from his mouth. I said to him: 'My Lord and my God, do not let Leontius be separated from me.' The Saviour said to me: 'It is not only Leontius, but also the great Persian leader, I have chosen him for myself to be a chosen vessel in my kingdom.' When I turned around, I found my brother Leontius on my right and Pankyrus on my left wearing Persian armour. I became very afraid at the sight of him. But when he saw that I was frightened, he bowed his head to me.

"One of those standing around the *cathedra* stretched out his hand and took Leontius and Pankyrus by the hair and immersed them in the lake of fire. He entrusted them to me as a father entrusts his children to a teacher. The Lord said to them both as well as to me: 'Go in peace and endure hardships for my name. My grace will be with you.' I left him in a rush of my spirit,<sup>69</sup> Leontius and Pankyrus on either side of me, and descended the steps, fired by the strength of Christ. When I got to the last step,<sup>70</sup> I saw a large dragon with an iron ring through his nose. It had the head and neck of a man, but the body of a dragon. It made me fear and tremble. It was lying on the bottom step (50) of the staircase to heaven, preventing anyone from entering the presence of God. If the angels were about to go up or down, with the just and the blessed, it covered its face in great embarrassment and withdrew beneath the staircase.

"I said to the angel with me: 'Who is that, my lord?' He replied: 'That is the enemy of God and man.

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68 παρρησιάζομαι

69 Translates: **ϠΕΝΠΕΝΟΓΟΙ ΗΠΑΠ̄Ν̄Α**, where the first noun should probably be **ΠΟΓΟΙ**.

70 CD 266a

The father of all lawlessness who led Diocletian and Maximianus, the idolatrous emperors, astray, He is the father of the Antichrist. He will not be able to prevail against you and your brothers if you are baptised in the name of the Saviour, the Christ and Lord of everyone.' The power<sup>71</sup> walking with us said: 'I will walk with you and the Roman army on the Danube until you achieve the crown of martyrdom and return to the staircase of God,' At that moment the power stretched out his hand<sup>72</sup> from beneath his wings and brought out a book closed with seals, The power said to me: 'Open the book and read it.' I opened it and, when I started reading, I was at the first step of the way leading to heaven. I began to read it as it was written in the Holy Gospel: *Whoever confesses me before the people, I will confess him before my father God in heaven and the one who denies me before the people, I will deny him before my father (51) God in heaven and his blessed angels.*<sup>73</sup>

"At that moment the power took the book in my hand. I went together with my two companions. I woke up in the morning to a dream, in which I marvelled at everything I saw in the vision and was strengthened by everything said to me, for they were truths. I glorified God, to whom all glory is fitting.

"I arose in the morning and told Leontius my companion all that I had seen. He said to me: 'My brother, think of me too that I was immersed in the lake of fire with Pankyrus. We were handed over to you like children to a teacher.' At that moment I leaped up and kissed Leontius on the mouth and said to him: 'Are you with me ?' He said: 'Yes.' And I said to him: 'God is with us. Truly we will not fear anything that man does to us.'"

That night a luminous power came to stand over Theodore and his companion Leontius. It took them away to Persia as if they had been mounted on horseback. Pankyrus was commander of the Persian army. As he was about to reconnoitre parts of the Roman empire, Leontius was inspired by the philanthropy of God and the providence of Christ and said in a firm voice: "Behold, Theodore the Anatolian has come (52) to you." When Pankyrus heard the name, he was dumbfounded, like someone lost. Through divine providence which cares at all times for those who belong to God. with Theodore on the right and Leontius on the left, Pankyrus was brought on horseback to a place

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71 Gk. δόναμις. Balestri-Hyvernat translate *virtus*.

72 This word has to be supplied.

73 Matth. 10, 32ff

called Bouneuterion.<sup>74</sup> The fire was lit, and they sat and talked to each other of the greatness of God. Pankyrus sat there but said nothing. Theodore said to him: "What is your name?" Pankyrus replied: "Do you not know who I am?" Theodore said: "How should I? You are Persian." Pankyrus said: "I know both of you." Theodore retorted: "How am I to know that?" Pankyrus said: "I have known you as my teacher since being in heaven with you, from the baptism that I received from Christ in the lake when I was immersed with my brother Leontius. We were given into your safekeeping. So I gave you a sign to do whatever you wish."

When Theodore heard this from Pankyrus, he knew that it was Pankyrus the Persian who had been baptized in heaven with Leontius and handed over to him. They became a glory to God, who saves all who hope in him. Theodore was full of admiration and great joy and straightaway said to Pankyrus and Leontius that which Christ had instructed him to do. Theodore said (53) to Pankyrus: "Will you come with us as far as your homeland?" Pankyrus replied: "I will die with you for the one in whose name, together with that of his good Father and the Holy Spirit, we were baptized and I will give you thanks for my soul, now and at all times, forever." They were confirmed together in the Christian God and accompanied each other to the Danube. Pankyrus renounced his Persian army rank and turned his back on it together with all his armour and never returned to combat and has not been back to their troubles until now.

Six months later the Persian king sent reliable messengers to the lawless emperors when he heard that they were worshipping idols and learned about Nicomedius his son. He said to them: "If you send him to me alive, we will become one kingdom and worship the just gods. Whatever you want, ask for it and we will give it to you." The emperors sent him messengers: "We wish you to send us the crown of your kingdom so that you will not go to war with us again." So, out of love for his son, he sent it to them with the royal purple and wrote, swearing to Apollo, Zeus, Artemis and Athena and the other gods, that there would be no more war during his lifetime. To which he added: "My gods are your gods. My kingdom is your kingdom. What is yours is mine. Be of good cheer, my beloved."

When they received the letter, the emperors rejoiced greatly (54) over the greetings and thanks of the king, particularly the sentiments 'my gods are your gods' and 'my kingdom is your kingdom.'

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<sup>74</sup> As it stands I have no idea what this refers to. βουλευτήριον sounds like a reasonable alternative, but I do not understand how it would fit the context.



Without delay<sup>75</sup> they sent for Nicomedius, who appeared before them in all pomp. They showed him his father's crown, but kept it for themselves. After three days, during which they honoured him, they crowned him with Diocletian's crown and imperial purple and great honours of the Roman empire. They sent him with a large armed escort<sup>76</sup> to his father in Persia. They then made peace with each other, for they worshipped the same statues as gods.

Let us now turn to the contest before us of Theodore, Leontius and Pankyrus and consider the prize of their bravery, unimpaired faith, unbending peace and love of Jesus Christ.

When the saints were camped on the banks of the Danube exercising their horses, the evil dragon they had seen in the vision came up to them on the road and said to Theodore: "Stand there while I greet you." Theodore recognized him as soon as he saw him. He drew his spear, split open the dragon's head, and there was a flow of blood (55), which poured onto his face.<sup>77</sup> The spear planted in his skull, the dragon called upon the crucified one to refrain from killing him before his time. Theodore said to him: "You will not leave until you have told me who you are." The devil, suffering from<sup>78</sup> the blow of the spear, said: "Do you not know me, Theodore? I am the dragon you saw bound on the stairs leading to heaven." Leontius said: "Who allowed to come here?" The devil replied: "The one who immersed you ordered me to come here and exercise my power over people to take them with me to hell, for my time has already come." Theodore and Leontius said: "Until when?" The devil said to them: "For a limited time I have power."<sup>79</sup> The saints said to the defiled one: "This does not interest us."<sup>80</sup> The devil then retorted: "A thousand years is like a single day. Count for yourselves, and you will know." They then withdrew the spear from his head. Theodore and his two companions then stood, marvelling at the wicked dragon, renounced him and sent him away. As he left Theodore and his companions, he bellowed at them like a lion intent on devouring them. He said to them: "As you have seen my blood dripping on the earth, I will (56) cause yours to

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75 There seems to be no other way of understanding the phrase: **ΑΠΛΩΣ ΛΟΙΠΟΝ**.

76 This renders: **ἡ ΕΝΟΥΣΤΡΑΤΕΥΜΑ ΕΦΘΩ ΝΕΜ ΟΥΝΙΩΤΙ ΝΒΟΗΘΙΑ**

77 An abbreviated translation of **ΑΠΕΦΡΕΥΜΑ ΤΗΡΑ ΦΟΥΟ ΣΝΟΦ ΕΒΟΛ**

78 The preposition **ΖΙΤΕΝ** usually signals agency, meaning in this case that it is the blow that has prompted the devil to speak, which I do not understand.

79 Dan. 7, 12

80 Coptic: **ΠΙΖΩΒ ΑΝ**. The somewhat pithy remarks so typical of conversation are not always easy to understand, especially in a language no longer spoken. One might also understand: 'This is not important'. In this case the meaning would be the same.

be shed like that of beasts." Thereupon he vanished.

He then went angrily to the emperors while they were still in the palace garden. They were horrified when they saw his face covered in blood and said to him in fear: "What sort of person are you?"<sup>81</sup> He replied; "I am your father Demoniacus." They said: "Who did this to you?" He replied: "Theodore and his two companions, who refuse to worship the gods. They now observe the religion of the Christians. I told them: 'My sons, the emperors will not let you abandon the honoured gods and not worship those who nourish you.' They and the leading soldiers in the Danube army are ambushing<sup>82</sup> the worship of the gods. Unless you punish them for what they have done to me, I will go to the Persian king that he might punish them for me." When the emperors saw that their father had been delivered such a mighty blow by Theodore, they were greatly distressed. Diocletian grasped the purple he was wearing and tore it. Maximianus did the same and snorted like a wild boar. He hurled the sceptres in their hands to the ground. They moved their heads before God (57) the Galilean.<sup>83</sup> They then sent a high-ranking palace official to Theodore and his companions as well as their army: "Come, let us celebrate together in the name of the gods, because we have no more war whatever on earth." Theodore spoke to his companions. They addressed the troops: "My brothers, he who loves God, let him follow us and confess his holy name before these deluded emperors that he may inherit life. Know, my beloved, that nothing is forever. He who wishes to live, let him follow us." The whole troop began to shout aloud in one voice: "Your God is our God and your death is one we too are prepared to die." Theodore and his companions said: "If it is so, remove your garments and plunge into the Danube and immerse yourselves in the name of the holy Trinity so that if we go to the emperors you can confess the name of Christ and receive the immortal crown and go to him in glory." They all threw themselves into the Danube and were all baptized in the name of the Trinity.

When they came up out of the water to (58) go to the emperors to receive the crown, they heard a voice: "Be strong, holy martyrs, and go in peace. Do not be afraid. My strength and my grace will be with you." At that moment they leaped for joy and went to the emperors. The whole city was in turmoil because the size of the army. The emperors ordered the army to remain three miles outside the city. Theodore and his companions presented themselves to the emperors.

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81 Renders: **ΝΟΟΚ ΝΙΜΠΕ ΕΠΑΙΡΗΤ**

82 Translates: **σεοι νχροσ.**

83 Some sort of hostile gesture perhaps.

Theodore said to them: "What is the sin that we have committed, emperors, that you send for us so angrily?" They said: "Why did you attack<sup>84</sup> and fall upon our father with a javelin blow in the middle of the head when he was advising you to worship the just gods? Indeed, you cast them aside and went over to the Galilean madness." Theodore and his companions said: "Do you wish to forsake God, who was crucified for us all, and worship the one who is loathsome to God and arrogantly removed himself from heaven? Turn to Christ that he may forgive you." The emperors replied: "By the revered god, Theodore, I will have you crucified on a cross, like the one you believe in, the one crucified by the Jews, who was unable to save himself from them." They then ordered him to be taken to one side. (59)

The emperors then spoke to Leontius: "And what is your name?" He replied: "The lion that is called 'fire', and I will burn you and your gods in the inextinguishable fire of my God." They said to him: "Where are you from? Tell us." Leontius said: "I am Arabian." The third said that his name was Pankyrus and that he was Persian. When the emperors heard the word 'Persian', they became afraid that the hostility between the two nations would be re-kindled. They said to the saints: "What do you say? Will you worship the gods or not?" Leontius and Pankyrus said: "You will be consumed with your gods together with the one armed by Theodore and you will descend to the lowest part of Amenté, the place unvisited by eternity. For there is no God but the Christian God."

The emperors then passed sentence on them, Theodore to be crucified on a perseae tree in the middle of the city and the companions to be taken and handed over to Germanicus, the governor of Tripolis,<sup>85</sup> to be interrogated and not be spared, in boiling cauldrons with oil and wax until they were dead. And this is how Leontius in Tripolis and Pankyrus in Pentapolis completed their struggle in accordance with the imperial decree and received their imperishable crown (60) in heaven, forever in peace. Amen.

Theodore was taken to the tree as ordered by the emperors and hung on it, his hands spread out like

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84 **επιχαρι** presumably for **ἐπιχειρέω**

85 The Coptic seems somewhat fanciful here, unlike the Arabic synaxary text, which not only cites **المدائن** (Ctesiphon) as the place where the two saints were sent but also provides a plausible reason for sending them there.. I do not know what the Sahidic M 613 reads.

a cross, doing to him, they said, as was done to his Lord.<sup>86</sup> They then brought 153 nails,<sup>87</sup> each one half a cubit long and drove them into his body on the tree from head to foot and left him in this torture. In the middle of the night the devil came and stood before him and said: "Theodore, give me your word on the one who was crucified that you will not throw your spear at me again, and I will remove you from these nails." Theodore replied: "As the crucified one lives, I will strike you with a spear as many times as the number of nails fixed in my body." The devil was reduced to tears and fled in shame.

At daybreak Christ came, the archangel Michael on his right side and Gabriel on his left and said to him: "Theodore, my beloved, do you want me to give you rest from this pain, as I have given rest to your companions, who have gloriously preceded you to heaven?" He said: "Yes, my Lord." At that moment he gave up his spirit to the Lord and the Saviour gave his soul to Michael, who watched over it and took him up to heaven with him. He made him (61) a second general and placed him on his right. Leontius was at the right hand of Gabriel and Pankyrus at his left. This was the way in which Christ had organized them in heaven.

The Lord called out to them: "Everyone in every country, I will cause them to celebrate you on the day of your remembrance. I will cause emperors and nobles to bring gifts to your shrines. Anyone who calls out your name for help, I will rescue them from all tribulation. All those who read your martyrdom will reveal the pains you have suffered in my name. I will write his name in the book of life and give it to you as a gift in my kingdom." After these words the Lord took Theodore's soul up to heaven, preceded by a choir of singing angels.

The lawless emperors went to the tree on which Theodore was hanging and, when they looked at him, saw that he was already dead. They ordered the nails to be removed and buried him because of the valiant way in which he<sup>88</sup> had endured martyrdom on Tobe 12 in the peace of God. Amen.

The troops who had marched with Theodore and had to remain three miles outside the city on the emperors' orders were told to bring Apollo to the place where they were so that those (63)

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86 Doubtless a sarcastic remark.

87 The Arabic synaxary text has the same number, which seems unrealistically large, and one wonders if the copyist has simply changed '3' to '153'. On the subject of how many nails were used in the only known archaeologically attested crucifixion, see the article by J.Zias and E. Sekeles "The Crucified Man from Giv'at ha-Mitvar: A Reappraisal". *Israel Exploration Journal* 35 (1985) pp, 22ff.

88 A much abbreviated translation of the Coptic. It is interesting to note that they still admired his bravery despite his intransigence.

worshipped him would receive great honours from the emperors. Anyone who disobeyed would be killed with his own sword. Not a single person in that multitude worshipped the defiled Apollo but began to say to each other: "These are idols and those who worship them will go their destruction. We confess Christ the Logos, that he was crucified for us, died and was resurrected to save us, the God of Theodore, Leontius."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> How much texts is missing I do not know.