

The Miracles of St Ptolemy

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The following is a translation of the Arabic text published by Jules Leroy 'Les miracles de Saint Ptolémée' *Patrologia Orientalis* 5 (1910) pp. 779-803 containing six of his miracles. The manuscript is numbered Paris ms. arabe 150 and can dated to the early 17th cent.

The Synaxary entry for St Ptolemy (*P.O.* 3 pp. 426-430), 11 Khoiak, is a brief summary of St Ptolemy's career and a fuller version, albeit fragmentary, may be found in the Coptic texts published by W. Till *Koptische Märtyrer- und Heiligenlegenden* 2 (1936) pp. 27ff. The Coptic martyrdom in Pierpont Morgan Coptic Codex 581 will undoubtedly provide the most complete form, but it is still, as far as I know, unpublished. In the absence of the published text, I have reproduced below the splendid painting of the meeting between Ptolemy and Papnoute from the frontispiece of M 581. The Synaxary says merely that the two met after Apa Papnoute had 'come from his desert to fill his water jar', while the Coptic version in Till text has St Ptolemy sitting in a chariot and Apa Papnoute wearing only a tunic with a sheepskin over it. I do not know how M 581 describes the encounter.

It is worth noting that, while St Ptolemy's martyrdom is commemorated on 11 Khoiak, the Arabic text celebrates the miracles associated with the consecration of his church on 11 Paône.

Where the text has been subdivided by Leroy in his translation of miracles 2 to 6, I have followed his subdivision. The Arabic text has no obvious subdivisions.

It becomes clear that the style of narration changes from a relatively unadorned account in Miracles 1 to 3 to slightly more elaborate in Miracle 4 to extremely elaborate with homiletic injunctions in Miracles 5 to 6. I do not know why this should be, except perhaps that the miracle stories were narrated by different people over a period of years and, for this occasion, were collected and written down by the anonymous compiler to produce this 'small preparation'.



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The story that informs the painting is that St Ptolemy is out hunting and meets Apa Papnoute, who has gone to fill his bottle with water.

Legends:

1. At the top, to the left of Ptolemy's head: **ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΠΑ** and to the right, which I cannot easily read, his name and place of origin, which looks like **ΝΗΚΕΝΤΟΡΕΙ**.¹

2. Below from the right shoulder to the horse's rear:

ΑΠΑ ΠΤΕΛΕΜΕ ΕΦΩΧΕ ΜΗΑΠΑ ΠΑΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΠΑΣΚΙΤΗΣ ΕΦΧΩ ΜΜΟΣ ΧΕΧΕΕΡΕ ΠΑΔ̄Σ ΠΑΕΙΩΤ .
Apa Ptoleme speaking with Apa Panoute the ascete, saying: "Hail, my lord father"

3. Between the horse's legs:

ΣΜΟΥ ΕΡΟΙ ††ΜΕΤΑΝΕΑ ΝΑΕΙΟΤΕ ΕΤΟΥΛΑΒ· ΑΝΟΚ ΠΕΠΙΣΒ(ΟΥ)² ΔΙΟΣΚΟΡΟΣ Δ̄Ι ΕΛΑΧ(ΙΣΤΟΣ)
Bless me. I prostrate myself, my holy fathers, I the apprentice, Dioscorus, humble deacon.

¹ On this spelling of Tentyra cf. E. Amélineau *Géographie d'Égypte* (1895) pp. 140ff.

² The word is contracted, and this is a possible meaning.

4. In front of the horse:

ΑΠΑ ΠΑΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΕΦΨΑΧΕ ΜΝΑΠΑ ΠΤΕΛΕΜΕ ΧΕΧΕΡΕΙ ΠΑΡΧΩΝ

Apa Papnoute speaking with Apa Pteleme: "Hail, noble one."³

5. Apa Papnoute is holding an object identified by the legend to his right:

ΠΑΛΚΑΝΕ⁴ ΜΑΥ

The flask of water.

3 However this title is to be understood in a 17th cent. Arabic text purportedly describing events in 4th cent. Egypt, an interesting feature of the Arabic form is its reduction of the final syllable from **ΑΡΧΩΝ** to أرخن. It normally referred to an official of some sort, cf. J.H. Moulton and G. Milligan *Vocabulary of the New Testament* (1914) p. 83, but my guess is that it was often a non-literal title of respect or deference, like *Pasha* in mod. Egypt.

4 The Gk word is fem. and Coptic uses the masc. article, but I suspect that not all Coptic speakers were totally familiar with the intricacies of Greek.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God. It is with the help of God on high and the bounty of his success that we begin the composition of the summary⁵ of the miracles which the Lord performed through⁶ the great and holy martyr, St Ptolemy,⁷ on the day of the consecration of his church,⁸ that is, 11 Paône.⁹ May his blessed healing be with us. Amen.

The first miracle of St Ptolemy

What can I say and how am I to speak, holy and pure lord, martyr of Jesus Christ, Apa St Ptolemy, about¹⁰ the many cures that have been effected in your church ?

There was a noble¹¹ man well known in Ashmunein¹² with a son who was paralyzed.¹³ He had an assortment of doctors attend his son. but they were unable to heal¹⁴ him. When he heard of cures that had been effected by the blood of St Ptolemy, who was in the well¹⁵ of the church, he took his son immediately and brought him to the church and bathed him in the water of the well three times. Afterwards, he laid him out under the body of the saint. While he was sleeping, he saw the saint lying on him and covering him,¹⁶ in his hand a drawn sword and his appearance that of a great

5 Ar. تهبيا اليسير 'the small preparation'

6 Ar. على يدي 'on the hand of' is strikingly similar to the Coptic preposition that would be used here: 𐩨𐩢𐩨

7 Ar. ابطلماوس

8 Abu Salih *Churches and Monasteries* (ed. and tr. B. Evetts) p. 253 mentions a church dedicated to Ptolemy at Ishnin (اشنين). Amélineau does not mention it and I can find no reference that might locate it. Taha (طحا) features in various miracles (e.g. Miracle 4 §3) and is mentioned by Abu Salih on p. 213. According to the fragments in Till (see Index of Places) St Ptolemy was executed and buried in the 'palace' 𐩧𐩱𐩨𐩠 𐩧𐩱𐩨𐩠𐩧𐩱𐩨𐩠 'pasture, stables'. Amélineau has an entry on p. 471 for 𐩧𐩱𐩨𐩠 in connection with St Ptolemy and an entry on p. 524 for the Arabic place name which incorporates part of the Coptic name: نوخ الخيل.

9 Coptic 𐩱𐩱𐩨𐩠. Ar. بوونة

10 من اجل

11 Leroy thinks this might be a form of the term 𐩱𐩱𐩨𐩠, a word used in the painting.

12 Coptic 𐩱𐩱𐩨𐩠/Gk. Hermopolis.

13 مقعد

14 برئ

15 There is no mention of a well in the Synaxary text or the fragmentary texts published by Till. I do not know if a well is mentioned in M 581.

16 بطوله lit. 'with his whole length'

warrior. He struck the boy, who woke up in fear. He stood up and broke into a sprint like a runner, crying aloud: "Thank you,¹⁷ Jesus Christ." At that moment his father woke up, and everyone heard the cry: "The God of St Ptolemy is One." The noble father of the boy, whose name was Mark, sent to his house for much money, which he gave to the church named after the saint. The father took the boy and went to the church and both glorified God and his great martyr St Ptolemy. May his healing be with us. Amen.

The second miracle

One day a man came to the church of St Ptolemy. He had dropsy and his body was so bloated that people who looked at him were afraid of the malady that affected him. He spent many days in distress and weeping inside the church, but he did not find a cure. His wife said to him: "My brother, let us go home. Perhaps our sins are preventing the martyr from listening to us. I saw a woman in great pain come to this church, afflicted by migraine.¹⁸ She bathed in the water of the well which contained the saint's blood and was immediately cured and not a day later. On my life, this martyr cures only those he chooses." She kept on saying such things, and he replied: "You can say what you like to me, but I have to stay here for two more days so that I might see if the martyr is merciful to me as well as the others who have been cured." While he was asleep, the saint came to him in the guise of a doctor with medicines and said to him in his sleep: "My good man, why are you in such a hurry. you poor-spirited fellow with not enough patience to bear your painful condition ? Do you not know that all sickness and poverty are the result of fornication ? Now admit it: you will not sin again in this way and you will be relieved of your sickness. " He confessed all his sins to the saint and expressed his intention to remain pure and would desist from fornication for the rest of his days. The saint placed his finger on the man's belly, and he was cured immediately of his illness. His health was restored and he awoke full of joy. He called his wife and told her of the great glorious figure he had seen who had cured him of his illness. Thereupon he made his way to the monastery of Pachomius¹⁹ and took up residence there until the day he died. May the healing of the saint and his holy blessing be with us until the final breath. Amen.

17 A paraphrase of the Arabic that expresses the same sentiment.

18 شقيقة

19 It would seem that Tabennese is meant, which is quite a long way from Middle Egypt cf. also Miracle 6 §7. I do not know how common it was to send sinners to holy places in distant parts of Egypt to atone for their sins.

The third miracle

There was a man called Tafsir in a village called Tarfiyat al Gedida.²⁰ He spent most of his time living in caves quite naked, not allowing anyone to sleep near him because of the demons that afflicted him. He was seized by a group of men, bound and taken to the church of St Ptolemy. He was placed, firmly bound, in the middle of the church, whereupon he cried out in a loud voice: "What have I to do with you, St Ptolemy ? Why are you driving me from my home ? There were seven of us who entered this man, and a man called Jesus drove us out. We left in great sadness. We entered a herd of pigs and he drove them with his strength and might into the sea, where they all died. Now we take up residence in this man and you want to oppress us and drive us out unjustly,"²¹ and as he was speaking, he cried out and fell as if were dead. Then he arose in the pink of health, as if he had never been ill at all or possessed by a demon. All the people of Ashmunein rejoiced because of this great miracle. Many people brought invalids to the holy place. After they had praised the grave, they were cured and healed of all their sicknesses.

I who am truly wretched say that my tongue is too weak and feeble to utter even a fraction of your many healing virtues which you have exhibited at the place of your holy body. Kings have heard the testimony of your marvellous deeds and they glorify your name because each of them has heard of your constancy and patience praise and bless God. For example, Cyril the bishop, who came to visit your church to obtain the blessing of your pure body because your patience and constancy are in equal measure in the great struggle for the true faith in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Many are the miracles that God has performed through you and the knowledge of which has spread through the world. In truth, my lord martyr St Ptolemy, my tongue is becoming increasingly unable to do justice to them, and I beg my Lord to have mercy on my shortcomings. Amen.

The fourth miracle

In the time when the Muslims were conquering this country, they plundered many townships in the region of the Fayyum after which they went and captured many homes. While they were doing this, they lost their way and veered off the road and continued lost until they came to the desert of Qalamun.²²

²⁰ Leroy thinks it might be Tarfa on the Bahr Yusuf in Minya cf. E. Amélineau *Géographie d'Égypte* (1895) p, 492.

²¹ I do not know what the form is here or how it is used: اظلماه

²² This may be a reference to the early days of the Arab Conquest. Balâdhuri in *Origins of the Islamic State* tr. P. K. Hitti (1916) quotes a source to the effect that Arab troops were sent by Amr ibn al 'Âsi to subdue various parts of Egypt, including the Fayyum. Or it may equally be a reference to the events narrated in the life of Samuel

They took many prisoners there from the holy church and took away many of the brothers of the monastery.²³ They then proceeded to the monastery of al-Dâkhil until they reached Bahnasa.²⁴ They captured many villages there in the foothills of the desert. From there they made their way to the shrine²⁵ of St Ptolemy. They deposited their baggage beside the garden planted by Anba Binouda²⁶ with his pure hands. The Arabs took off their saddles, bows, swords and lances and, on horseback, they came to the door of the church with the intention of pillaging it, when St Ptolemy appeared dressed as a soldier of the imperial army, splendid, strong, awesome, mounted on a horse, his drawn sword in his hand, stationed at the door of the church. The Lord saw to it that these barbarians,²⁷ when they saw him, became blind, their hands paralysed and their knees stuck to their mounts. They were seized by great fear and cried aloud, weeping. They said to each other: "Come and see this great prince, what he has done to us. He intends to take us captive and kill us for our sins and what we have tyrannically done to the villagers and their children." At that moment they withdrew and stopped their pillaging and robbery. They promised to restore all the money they had taken and the people they had taken prisoner. As for St Ptolemy, he drove them away until they returned to their home, like a shepherd with his sheep, and they never again committed such acts. When those who had been dispossessed of their property and those who had been captured heard of this great miracle of St Ptolemy, they came joyfully to recover their property and their children. They donated their property to the church of St Ptolemy.

3. As for the gold and silver property taken from the monastery church of Qalamun, they ensured that it reached the place from which it had been removed. Bishop Epiphanius, who supervised the return, held a divine service of thanksgiving for the miracle of St Ptolemy. This blessed bishop wrote an account of the miracle of St Ptolemy that he had witnessed in his days. He was bishop of Taha at this time.

concerning marauding Berber groups whose base seems to have been Siwa (ΑΜΟΥΝΙΑΚΗ) and for whom outlying monasteries seem to have been easy prey, cf. A. Alcock *Life of Samuel of Kalamun* (1983) §7 of the translation. It is interesting that the name of Samuel is not mentioned here.

23 It is difficult to believe that they would have taken their captives with them, who could only have been an encumbrance.

24 Coptic ΠΕΜΧΕ / Gk. Oxyrhynchus is about 60 km south-east of Qalamun. I cannot find any reference to this monastery in Abu Salih or Amélineau.

25 مشهد

26 If one were to read بينودة, one could easily construe the name as ΑΠΑ ΠΑΠΝΟΥΤΕ, whose garden (ΚΟΜΑΡΙΟΝ) is prominently featured in the encounter between St Ptolemy and Apa Papnoute. The garden reference would of course be 'unhistorical' but understandable

27 Or perhaps 'Berbers'.

4. We too glorify God, who elected this man of purity and chose him to be with his martyrs and gave him the strength to offer his body as a pure sacrifice to the Lord, like the blood of Abel the just. He was pleasing to God, like Enoch in his time. Like Noah's ark he saved his people and, like Job the just, distributed his goods among them. And I say to him in my turn: "My revered master St Ptolemy, how magnificent are the things God has granted you in the kingdom of heaven and, in particular, how striking are the miracles you have performed in the church where your pure body rests. Now, my brothers, you will recall the impure priest he punished for his lack of sanctity, his weak faith and his lack of respect for the one whom he celebrated each time he said Mass, God himself. He had forgotten the excellence of the title 'priest'. He had forgotten the divine seed in the food he took, and he lost it for lack of reverence. All of this is from the dark place of fornication and hypocrisy in his heart. He did not understand the Scripture passages: *Let there be no fornication in Israel* and *Let him remove sinners from the land and the wicked will be as if they had never existed*. Listen, all those gathered here with us. Ask God not to disgrace us in this world and the next. Let him keep you from falling into the path of misfortune. Amen.

The fifth miracle

1. There was a priest in the church of St Ptolemy. When a poor, weak and totally destitute person walked past him, he did not invite him to enter his kitchen²⁸ to take bread there. The priest had ended the custom of Anba Yushab, his predecessor. But not only was he lacking in charity and pity, he was also impure. God wished to expose his impurity, for his wife was dead and Satan had taken up residence in him and sowed the seeds of the sin of impurity in him.

2. In a district called Sabih there was a young woman of great presence and beauty. She was subject to migraine. She was in distress day and night. She had heard of the miracles of St Ptolemy and the powers that resided in his body. So she asked her father to take her to the shrine of St Ptolemy. He brought her and placed her on the tiled floor of the church to be cured. She sought from God the intercession²⁹ of St Ptolemy and God heard her prayers and relieved her suffering. She took some oil from the lamp, anointed herself with it, found instant relief and was cured. Her father made several donations to the church.

28 'Place of eating' موضع الطعام

29 عز وجل

3. This was the occasion when the impure priest began to look at the girl with an evil eye.³⁰ Her father often returned to the church to visit the girl and be blessed by the body of the saint. When the girl was cured, she went back to her father. Some days later the father invited the priest to dine with him. This wretch had sin hidden inside him, like the old men of Susanna whom Daniel the prophet was able to expose. He ate and drank in this man's house. The girl was concealed in a private part of the house. The father, because of the innocence of his heart and the purity of his house, signalled to the priest to go to the girl to bless her and pray for her. The polluted priest had found an opportunity to be near her. As he approached, he spoke to her with devilish perfidy:³¹ "Young woman, since I first saw you I have been seized³² by you. I desire you and seek intercourse with you, but I have not found a way until now. But now here I am."

4. The girl was unversed in the condition of women. She did not know the way of the world. She said to him: "What do you need, my father ? What are you saying to me ?" He said: "I love you passionately. " She said: "What do you want ? What is this passions of yours ?" He said: "I want to sleep with you. You know that my wife is dead and has left me money, jewels and many womanly adornments.³³ I will bring them all to you if you will lie with me."

5. When she heard him say this, she was astonished. She said: "Where is the respect for the Lord and your office of priesthood ?" She was well read and added: "Moses said that the daughter of priests who has fallen into fornication should be burned alive. So what is the punishment for a priest who falls into fornication, a priest who says the sublime words by which the bread is turned by the agency of the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ as the wine in the chalice becomes the blood of Christ ? Why do you say such things and do such things, you who would punish them in the last of the young men found guilty of them ? But, father, we have only an hour left to us. Soon the man will be sought and he will no longer be found. He will be taken from this world and appear at the judgement tribunal, and each of us will bear witness to the ignominy of his neighbour. Woe to the priest who tears the habit of his priesthood and profanes the sublimity of his ministry. He will be cast into the outer darkness forever. Woe to the consecrated minister who profanes his ministry: he will be cast into hell for his defilement and sins. I tell you, my father, drive all thought of fornication from your heart lest you fall into an illness that has no cure and brings with it corruption and disgrace."

30 بعين ردية

31 خداع

32 The text reads مشغوف. I cannot find the word, but the meaning is clear enough.

33 اناث

6. The depraved cleric listened to these words of the girl, broke off the interview for the day and went home. He committed many sins with women of ill repute, and not a day went by when he did not engage in fornication. On 1 Parmoute, the day of St Ptolemy's birth, the nobleman, the girl's father brought her to the martyr's shrine. The priest received them in all honour and conducted them to his rooms above the church, to a private place where there was nobody else. He was very kind to them, but his thoughts were wicked and devilish, and the affability he displayed was feigned. After some time he took a lot of wine and offered it to them, with trickery in his heart. Neither knew what he wanted to do. They strongly believed in his goodness and in everyone who attended the shrine of St Ptolemy.

7. The deceitful priest offered them great quantities of wine until, overcome by alcohol, they fell asleep. He then brought the girl's father to a separate place, where there were many nobles gathered. He then withdrew and went back to the girl. She was fast asleep and conscious of nothing. He approached with the intention of committing an infamous act of which she would know nothing, but the saint would not let him do this and commit the crime he intended. He appeared in a royal garment of white with wonderful embroidery³⁴ and seized the priest by the head and marched him down to the middle of the church and held him suspended in mid-air in terrible and painful torture. He was not released until he confessed from beginning to end all that he had done and thought of doing. There were many people in the church on that day, and they all saw the priest hanging there upside down. He then fell to the ground and his body split into two parts. A large black Ethiopian then appeared and opened his mouth, which was as big as that of a lion, and swallowed the defiled hypocrite.³⁵ He then disappeared into the middle of the church and has never been seen since. When the girl regained consciousness, she went off to the monastery of Shenoute at Atripe, where she became a nun. She thanked God for keeping her in ignorance of what had happened.

8. As for my poor self, I am telling you this, brethren, to instruct each of you to avoid fornication and not be uncharitable or excessively proud and remove yourselves from sin and be content with you have: food, wife and other things. The enemy wishes to increase discord among brothers who love each other. Know indeed that strife, hatred, calumny, insults, enmity, hatred of others are all from Satan (may God confound him). It is he who causes disputes between husband and wife, hatred between father and son and daughter and mother. It is he who wages war on all people.

34 يلمع لميع

35 On the general subject of the perception of black people/figures in early Christian texts cf. Gay Byron *Symbolic blackness and ethnic difference in early Christian literature* (2002).

especially the sons of baptism, to drag them into misfortune and cause them to lose eternal life. Be on your guard, Christians, and love each other truly and sincerely with a love that precludes dishonesty and cannot be damaged by rancour and suspicion.

9. Read the Gospel attentively and understand what it says and remember what God said to Moses: *Let the commandments of God be always before your eyes and engraved in your heart. Teach them to your children and avoid wickedness and everything that brings blame.*³⁶ As the Apostle Paul says: *Remove yourselves from culpable actions, the result of which is hell and death.* Let no priest look at a woman with an impure eye. Do not incur the eternal punishments of hell, where there is no rest and no end. Consider, priest, the title you bear and whether your actions are worthy of it. Our Lord says in the Gospel: *He who does not hear my word and does not do it, the Son of Man will disgrace him when he comes in the glory of God surrounded by his pure angels.* And when a man is disgraced by the Lord, who will console and receive him? The impure priest is cursed by the Lord and damned forever. He does not deserve to see the glory of the Lord on the day when the latter glorifies his saints. The priest whose wife has died and who is unable to contain his passion should prefer continence to burning from the fire of lust, in the words of Paul the true apostle. Impurity burns the heart inflamed by it. Many cannot do without³⁷ marriage, while others struggle to preserve purity in their hearts and bodies and keep their souls in perfect continence. The punishment of impurity is misery in this world and the next. It is eternal punishment. Unless the guilty one repents, does penance and abstains entirely from wickedness. God rejoices over penitence. Impurity is a poison for which there is no remedy other than absolute continence and sincere penitence.

10. We know that people have died sudden deaths because of their impurity. For example, the Scriptures tell us about the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah, who fell into impurity and were annihilated, consumed in fire by divine wrath and perished miserably. Misery is rapidly approaching you for your sins, impure one. Impurity has removed and taken away the sign of baptism from your face. We know that Nabadhouros,³⁸ the bishop of Taha, often used to look at the faces of his assistants while he was saying Mass. He saw the glory of God withdrawing from the sinners and their faces becoming dark. He also saw their angels presenting them with their evil deeds. He would drive them from church and forbid them to exercise their priestly duties. Is there any sin more serious than that of a priest discharging his sacred duties with an impure conscience, like

36 I cannot identify any of the 'quotations' that follow, though they contain some allusion to Scripture.

37 ترك

38 I take the second element of the name to be -ΔΩΡΟΣ, but the only name I can think of that is suitable for the first is Naue (Nun), father of Joshua.

this impure priest whose name was banned from all churches everywhere and whose name will be deleted from the Book of Life. For this reason, brethren, let us reject this grave sin which is so horrible in the sight of God. We know indeed that at the beginning angels disobeyed the commandment of the Lord and were hurled into the outer darkness until the Day of Resurrection. Consider also those who indulged their desires in the desert, how they died and their bones remained neglected. Let us ask God for help against these sins to makes us strong enough not to ignore his commandments. Think of the miracles of St Ptolemy that we have just recounted. His blood has become a means of salvation and cure. It cures the sick and strengthens the weak, as manna did for the Israelites. The ground where his body was placed is also a source of healing for those who visit and prostrate themselves on it, for it has been sanctified by contact with the saint's body. Whoever visits his church and anoints his body with sincere faith obtains a cure from his illnesses from the Lord. Whoever washes himself with the holy water or with water from the well where the body was deposited and in which the blood of the saint is mixed is cured, becomes joyful and gives thanks to God for all the miracles performed by the saint. Woe to those who come with polluted heart to the church, for they will lament³⁹ it on the day of judgement.

11. This zealous saint, this chosen one, renounced all worldly glories for the Lord Jesus, the Good God, living and eternal. He ignored the fine clothes⁴⁰ of the world and its ephemeral glory. This is why God clothed him in the glory of heaven. St Shenoute wrote an account of your fine life and the sufferings you endured among the unfaithful.⁴¹ The angels of heaven rejoice for your sake and proclaim you blessed, for your place is in heaven. St Dorotheus⁴² also speaks of your perfect patience and your zeal for the name of the Lord. You delight⁴³ in the crowns which you deserved and earned when you were hanging from the tree,⁴⁴ praising God and sanctifying his name with perfect praise that was pleasing to him. David the prophet and all the saints rejoice with you now that the

39 The verb seems to be *بكي*, but I am not sure of the form here.

40 *لباس*. Used intentionally to highlight the opposition between the literal/mundane in this sentence and the non-literal/celestial in the next.

41 I do not know any such work of the pre-Muslim period, nor am I familiar with any post-Muslim tradition that links Shenoute with Ptolemy. The writer has switched to a direct address of the saint for the remainder of the passage, perhaps because he addresses the congregation directly towards the end of it. It may be connected with the subject matter of the miracle, the longest in the collection, about the which the speaker feels obliged to expatiate.

42 Ptolemy was sent to him by Papnoute to learn how to become a monk. He is known in the Synaxary text (*P.O.* 4, 428) as 'lamp of light' or perhaps 'garment of light', according to whether one reads the first word as *لانيس* or *لباس*. Some of his instruction is recorded in the Synaxary.

43 *تنتهج*

44 The Synaxary (p.429) records that the soldiers left him hanging for nine days from a tree (*سدر*), its botanical name *zizyphus spina christi*

worthy faithful have seen the angels rejoicing over you and serving you. Those who have witnessed your endurance and zeal, glorious martyr, have left their homes and goods and offered themselves up to torture to imitate you. Through your holy passion and patience in a foreign country you have prepared for yourself a dwelling of light in the kingdom of heaven. Because of your patience and perfect zeal God has summoned you to the sacred banquet with your brothers. And now, my beloved assembled here in this shrine, we have to unite our hearts in love of God and great spiritual affection. Let us drive wicked thoughts from our hearts that we may go forward and claim the victory of the Christian faithful.

The sixth miracle

1. In a village of Taha there was a deacon named Sabih. He was extremely idle and lived well from the church without doing any work. He was capricious⁴⁵ and never read books, but occupied himself with pleasure, food and drink. He was self-regarding, proud and arrogant both in his opinions and about his intelligence. He committed many sins but did not like to recall them. He had only one son.

2. There was a large tomb in this village, which for some time had been inhabited by demons. One day this deacon went into the tomb, examined it and found an inscription written in Greek. He did not know a word of Greek. But one of the demons told him what it said, and the deacon was very impressed. It read: *Whoever gives up worshipping God and serving Christ and comes here to worship the idol in this place, the inscription will teach him everything and tell him where the treasures of the tomb are.* He said to himself: "I will leave the service of Christ and go in search of the idol." He then cried out in a loud voice with his impure lips: "Satan, I renounce the service of Christ and will come, together with my wife and children, to adore you."

3. At that moment, the demon having heard these words appeared to him and said to him: "If you wish to become my friend and companion, I will tell you everything. I am very much disturbed by this wooden sounding board.⁴⁶ I would like you to stop the use of it in this village and no longer strike them in the church. When we hear the sound of them, we leave instantly, for we cannot listen to it." The deacon said he would throw it on the fire. He went to the church and set fire to it. He left the church and stopped praying. He began praying to devil, but his wife refused and reproached him for abandoning Jesus to worship Satan. She said to him in great anger: "It would be better for us,

45 According to H. Wehr *Dictionary of Modern Arabic* (1961) the form given here ملون means 'coloured, variegated', but the form متلون can mean 'inconstant, fickle'.

46 ناقوس. Wooden sounding board that had the same function as a metal bell. The Coptic word is κελελε cf. W.E. Crum *Coptic Dictionary* (1939) 103b. It is no longer used.

husband, to die in poverty as Christians than to renounce God the creator of heaven and earth. Let us not renounce that which endures in favour of that which does not. My brother, our worship is the best of all, and there is no amount of money that is preferable to the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ to make us renounce his blessed name and his cross of salvation." He replied: "My sister, I will not disregard the evidence of my eyes and ears, namely that the one who rejects this worship will be enriched." He left her, went to the tomb and said to the demon: "I have done as you wish. Show me the treasure of the tomb." The demon said to him: "If you do not bring your wife and children to worship me, we have no agreement."

4. So he went out and told his wife; "If you do not come to worship the demon with me, I will no longer live with you or speak to you." The woman was extremely upset by these words. She became angry. She left and went back to her father in Taha. In the night of Sunday the priests went looking for the deacon that he might accompany them in prayer at the church. He told them that he was sick. But this was a ruse on his part. He said: "I am very ill and cannot go to church." So they left and went to the church, but when they looked for the bells, they could not, to their surprise, find them.

5. On Sunday morning the deacon went to the tomb to worship Satan, who appeared before him and said: "See how your wife treated me. It was not enough for her to not worship me, but she also turned her son away from me. I am going to punish her child and torment him to see if Jesus is able to deliver him from my hands." At that moment the devil entered the child, who began to cry out: "My mother has ruined me." As the child became angrier, his hands were bound and a chain put around his neck, and he was taken to the shrine of Apa Paul. The latter said: "My blessed children, take him to the shrine of St Ptolemy and lead him into it. There he will receive a cure immediately." His mother took him to the church and, on entering, he was hurled to the ground, as the demon cried out: "What business do you have with me, Ptolemy?" He began to foam, as he continued: "Our methods of enticement have been powerful for a long time, Ptolemy, but your blood has overcome us and ruined us. What are we to do now that the blood from your body has defeated and destroyed us? The demon began to appeal for help:⁴⁷ "What to do? Alas! We have raised a man called Diocletian, having made him emperor and our son. We ordered him to destroy churches, overturn sanctuaries and rebuild temples, to seek out all the Galileans and exterminate them. He killed many of them, but then they became martyrs and their blood is now hostile to and will be the ruin of us. Woe to us! What are we to do? The world is full of the blood of martyrs and the prayers

⁴⁷ The outburst that follows is probably intended as a contemptuous portrait of a demon employed in the service of Satan, whose world, constructed on the foundations of an exhausted set of beliefs, is crumbling in the face of a more vigorous ideology.

of solitary monks have torn up our roots from the place where they were us. Look, I have just left the South and came to live here, and now Ptolemy is persecuting me. Woe is me ! I have fallen from heaven and find no rest on earth. I beg you, saint of God, do not persecute or torment me, and I will leave this man's body immediately."

6. The saint continued to torment him and he said: "I beg you, saint of God, by the sufferings you have endured for Christ, do not torment me. I will leave the boy and not return to him, wherever your name is spoken, because I will have left him not to return." As the demon said this through the young man, he came out of the boy in a violent rage, like a burning fire, in full view of the bishop and the people.

7. At that moment the boy was delivered and his mother took him home, glorifying God and thanking Ptolemy. She told the bishop that her husband had renounced Christ and begun worshipping idols. The bishop then decided to examine the deacon. "Where is your fear of the Lord and worship of God, you who have rejected God ?" he said. "How have you come to serve the demon and worship his idols ? And you have burned the wooden sounding board of the church !" His reproaches were harsh. The deacon experienced a salutary fear. He wept abundantly and bitterly and repented of his sins of infidelity. He made a salutary penance. The bishop received him favourably and sent him to the monastery of Pachomius to embrace the religious life, and he remained there for the rest of his life, weeping and begging the Lord's forgiveness. He made a firm resolve to become and remain a monk for the rest of his life and to lead a perfect life. He had achieved an eminent degree in the religious life, as a reward for his mortification, to the point where he could see things that were hidden and far away. He grew to a happy old age and persevered in the perfect life until he died peacefully.⁴⁸

8. We⁴⁹ ask Our Lord through the prayers of the martyrs and this saint and especially through the intercession of Our Lady, the mother of Jesus, to pardon our sins and expunge our faults. May he indulge our wrongs and inadequacies, overlook our sins and find us a place with the saints and martyrs. May he accept our prayers and fasts and may he receive the offerings and supplication acceptable to him. May he guide us in good works and not subject us to adversity. May he feed the orphans and care for the widows. May he make young men continent, older men wise and old men strong. May he help our children grow. May he give rest to our deceased parents. May he make us

48 One has to assume that he had made peace his wife and obtained her consent to pursue his new life.

49 It will be clear to anyone who reads the Arabic that I have abbreviated the final section in such a way that the form is reduced but the sense, I hope, remains.

strong on the rock of faith. May he give us peace and let us hear this joyous news: "Come to me, blessed ones of my father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the earth, what the eye has not seen nor the ear heard nor has it entered the hearts of men, by the intercession of the Mother of Mercy, source of purity and blessing from whose womb the Saviour came, and through the prayers of the apostles whose prayers opened the doors of the churches and who overcame the heretics and rebels, as well as the intercession of all the martyrs and saints and all those who have been pleasing to the Lord." Amen.

God will bless those who read the work of the poor copyist. Those who pray will be doubly rewarded. Praise and glory be to God.