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## **Another Athanasius : four Sahidic homilies attributed to St. Athanasius of Alexandria. Introduction, editions, translations**

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## **Homily on Murder and Greed and on Michael, the Archangel, attributed to Athanasius of Alexandria**

*Title.*

**0** A homily delivered by the man who truly bears Christ, the son of the apostles, Apa Athanasius, archbishop of Alexandria, which he delivered about murderers and greedy people. He delivered it in the presence of our holy father Apa Pachomius, the archimandrite, at the time he went north to visit the archbishop. He also spoke, at the end of this homily, about the archangel Michael. In the peace of God. Amen.

*Prologue.*

**1** Indeed, like a star arises for us today the feast of the archangel Michael, shining brighter than the sun. Even more, in being born it radiates more than all the luminaries of the firmament ... fervour ... we shall approach the holy spiritual table and satiate ourselves with its holy food. For when it happens, O my beloved, that the ruling emperor gives an order for something in this world, whether it is harmful or beneficial, nobody is able to contradict him or to argue with him. As for us, Christians, as the holy archangel Michael has brought us together today, let us listen gladly to the holy words and do what we are bid to do in the Church, for the Church is the consolation of the Christians.

*Christians should not transgress God's commandments.*

**2** Do not scorn God's commandments. Beware not to be found as a lamb in the church and, when you go out, to become a rapacious wolf. You are taught in the church: "You shall not fornicate,"<sup>1</sup> but you gaze at the women inside the church of Christ, and ponder upon your wicked lusts while you are in the house of the Spotless. And again, you are taught: "You shall not kill,"<sup>2</sup> but you go out by night to steal and to rob what is

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. 20: 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ex. 20: 13.

not yours, prepared, with a sword in your hand, saying: "If someone meets me, I will slay him with this sword that is in my hand."

*Warnings against murder, greed and other sins.*

**3** What is your excuse, O murderer, when the judge asks you about these things? What will you say to him in your defence? Woe to the man who will leave the body and be found answerable to his commandment, namely: "You shall not kill". For God has said long ago: "As for whoever will shed human blood, his own will be shed instead, for I have made man in my likeness and my image."<sup>3</sup>

**4** Therefore, woe to everyone who will kill a soul in this world and say: "I will repent and God will have mercy on me for what I did, before I meet him." How can God forgive you? He already told you through the mouth of his servant Moses: "A soul for a soul."<sup>4</sup> Would then the words of God lie? No, certainly not! I witness to you, I, your father Athanasius, that whoever will unjustly kill a human soul in this world, no person of this sort will ever be able to hold stead, neither in this life nor in the coming one. Still, O ... , walking ... the earth forever, as was written about Cain, the evil murderer.<sup>5</sup>

**5** And even if the murderer spends all his time praying and fasting, and if he goes into the desert and fasts for six days, there will be no repentance for him because of what he did and God will not be at peace with him. Rather you will find that (other) one crying out to God because of his sin. You will find the soul which he killed crying out before the judge, saying: "Lord, listen to me and avenge my blood which was shed unjustly. Yes, O Lord, ... after my blood ... and my vengeance ..." the judge ... because of ... go ... cruel punishments. Now then, my beloved, you have heard and come to know the punishments that await the murderers. Let us carefully avoid this great sin which is heavy and horrible.

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<sup>3</sup> Gen. 9: 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Deut. 19: 21.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. 4: 1-17.

**6** Furthermore, let us also avoid greed, for greed and avarice are the same passion. Indeed, everybody who is greedy is also avaricious. Do not let your brother, O Christian, suffer harm because of you. I tell you that when someone of this present generation makes a deal with someone (else) to sell him some goods and the buyer prayed with him and he promises him in front of him and God: "I will not give these goods to anyone, but you alone", and afterwards he meets some other men and discovers that he may gain a little more benefit than with the first man, to whom he made a promise and for whom he made God a witness, right away he will violate the promise and gives them (i.e. the goods) to the second man out of avarice and greed.

**7** Do you not fear, O man, when you make a promise and place God as witness between you and your brother, to violate the promise because of a small shameful gain? Therefore, just as you violated God out of avarice, God, in the same manner, will punish you in hell

because of greed. Do you not fear the righteous judgments of God? For God will say to you: "Look, you have denied me, without having seen a whip over you and without having been beaten for the sake of my name, yet you denied me because of something shameful. Now I will deny you too. Now find rest in the punishments, in return for the sins which you did and by which you have made me angry in this world."	(BnF. 131 <sup>6</sup> , f. 28r) ... of God, because of avarice. Do you not fear God? Christ will tell you: "Just as you have violated me, without having seen a whip over you and without having been beaten for the sake of my name, and denied me. Now find rest in the punishments, in return for the sins which you did and by which you have made me wroth."
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<b>8</b> You have learned, O my beloved, that it is a great sin to make a promise and to violate it. Therefore no Christian should make a promise and violate it, nor swear a false oath, nor be deceitful in any matter. The teacher Paul, the	You have learned, O my beloved, that it is a great sin to make a promise and to violate it or to swear a false oath for a vain matter. The teacher Paul, the tongue of fragrance, cries out: "Vain speech and foolish talk do not
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tongue of fragrance, cries out: "Indeed, we have seized Christ, when we hold to the firm confession forever."<sup>6</sup> He also says: "Avarice is the root of all evils."<sup>7</sup> Now then, O my beloved, let us pay heed to stick to the word ... and that we will not be found to corrupt holy baptism.

pronounce!"<sup>8</sup> He also says: "Avarice is the root of all evils." Now then, O my beloved, (BnF. 131<sup>6</sup>, f. 28v) let us fight bravely in the world, for "vanity of vanities is the essence of everything that is under the sun", said the Ecclesiastes.<sup>9</sup> Woe to us, O my children, in case we die in our sins before we repent.

9 A Christian who hoards up corn in times of famine, is not a Christian. A Christian who steals and takes what is not his, is not a Christian. A Christian who is a magician and goes to the sorcerers, is not a Christian. A Christian who swears false oaths and who makes a promise and violates it, is not a Christian. A Christian who is a murderer, not only is he far removed from Christianity, but also he is worse than the gentiles for to the gentile no law was given as to the Christian. To the Christians, on the other hand, commandments were given, saying: "You shall not steal, you shall not kill, you shall not give false testimony. Honour your father and your mother"<sup>10</sup> and love your neighbour as yourself."<sup>11</sup>

A Christian who hoards up corn in the storeroom when he expects times of famine, while the poor suffer hunger, is not a Christian, but a new Nineveh.<sup>12</sup> A Christian who is a magician and goes to a sorcerer, is not a Christian. A Christian who swears a false oath because of a vain matter of this world, is not a Christian. A Christian who is a murderer, is far removed from Christianity and he is more wicked than the gentiles to whom no law was given. To the Christians (BnF. 131<sup>7</sup>, f. 32r) laws were given, saying: "You shall not steal, you shall not kill, you shall not give false testimony. Honour your father and your mother and love your neighbour as yourself."

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Heb. 10: 23.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Tim. 6: 10.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Eph. 5: 4; 1 Tim. 6: 20; 2 Tim. 2: 16.

<sup>9</sup> Ecc. 1: 2-3.

<sup>10</sup> Ex. 20: 12-14.

<sup>11</sup> Lev. 19: 18.

<sup>12</sup> Lk. 16: 19 (the Sahidic version).

**10** These commandments are binding for all sorts of Christians to be observed, but when we are a little negligent and (then) turn back and repent, we will escape great tortures because of our sins. For there is penitence for everyone, except the murderers. Whoever will kill, even if they fast for six days like Moses,<sup>13</sup> there is no forgiveness for them.

These commandments are obligatory for all Christians to be observed. Even if we fall into sin, we should not remain negligent, but we should turn back and repent ... for the sins that we have committed. Because there is penitence at all time for those who will truly turn back to Him, but for the murderers alone. Even if murderers hang themselves from the hair of their heads and their eyebrows, God will not forgive them unless they pay a soul for a soul.

**11** Do not think in these matters, O my beloved, that we have made up these commandments ourselves! Rather, the teacher of us all, Christ, already stated them in the holy Gospel according to Matthew, when he spoke thus: "You have heard that it was said by the ancients: 'You shall not fornicate.' But I, for my part, say to you: Whoever will look at a woman and desire her, has already fornicated with her in his heart."<sup>14</sup> You have heard that it was said: 'You shall not kill.' As for me, I tell you: Whoever will say to his brother: 'Fool!', is liable to judgment.<sup>15</sup> You have heard that it was said by the ancients: 'You shall not swear a false oath.' As for me, I tell you: Do not swear by the sky, for it is

Do not let anybody object and say that we have made up these commandments ourselves! Rather, (BnF. 131<sup>7</sup>, f. 32v) the teacher of us all told us in the Gospel according to Matthew: "The ancients were told: 'You shall not fornicate and you shall not steal.' But I, for my part, say to you: Whoever will look at a woman and desire her, has already fornicated with her in his heart. You have heard that it was said: 'You shall not kill.' As for me, I tell you ...

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<sup>13</sup> I cannot identify this Biblical allusion.

<sup>14</sup> Mt. 5: 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> Mt. 5: 21-22.

the throne of God, nor swear by the earth, for it is His footstool, nor swear by your own head, because you are not able to make one single hair white or black."<sup>16</sup>

**12** You have learned that it is God who gave all these commandments. Therefore, let us keep and observe them, for we will be asked about the commandments which our teacher, Christ, ordered to be observed by us, starting with this commandment: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart and your whole soul and all your thoughts and love your neighbour like yourself,"<sup>17</sup> up to this commandment: "For every idle word that man will say, they will account in the day of judgment."<sup>18</sup>

**13** Now then, O my beloved, let us fight bravely in this world and keep all the commandments of God, knowing that we will be called to account for all the commandments that were imposed upon us. Woe to every sort of Christian who, when he dies, will be judged together with the gentiles ... as he has become foreign ... No! ... Do not ... ever.

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<sup>16</sup> Mt. 5: 33-36.

<sup>17</sup> Mt. 22: 37-39.

<sup>18</sup> Mt. 12: 36.



14 [---] heretics or eats or drinks with them or says "Hail!" to them.<sup>19</sup> Do not befriend a man who despises your God, and do not say "Hail!" to him, for the Lord already enjoined us: "He who does not gather with me, disperses."<sup>20</sup>

Truly, it is a shame for a true Christian if he befriends with a gentile and a heretic or if he eats or drinks with him or says "Hail!" to him. Do not befriend of a man who despises your God and do not mix with him in any way, for the Lord enjoined us ...

*St. Pachomius and the murderous deacon.*

15 Now then, O my beloved, until when will we be taught and not understand? Remember that it is inevitable for us that we leave this world behind and go to God and will be judged for what we have done and what we have omitted. I will tell you an incident that happened in these times, for the glory of God who performs these miracles through his saints ... for him ... those who ... them ... the saints who fear him and do his will. Hear, O listeners, and I will tell you a miracle which happened through the holy Apa Pachomius, the archimandrite of Tabennese.

16 After the Lord, then, had granted us rest from all the snares that had stood up against us and the church, namely the Arians, at that time, Apa Pachomius, the archimandrite of Tabennese, came northward to Alexandria to visit us and in order that I myself and all the inhabitants of the city enjoyed his blessings. When he had been announced to us, we went out to meet him and received him with honour and glory as fitted him, for we were much honoured by his blessing.

17 It happened, when we had celebrated the nightly Eucharist for the feast of the holy Archangel Michael, that we sang hymns of praise and psalms and spiritual odes, being together, until the morning. When we had reached the moment of sacrificing the bread upon the holy altar, I, Athanasius, prepared myself to celebrate the holy offering. The holy Apa

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. 2 John 10.

<sup>20</sup> Mt. 12: 30; Lk. 11: 23.

Pachomius, however, withdrew alone to a distant corner inside the sanctuary, stretched out his hands after the pattern of the cross and prayed to whom he loved, Christ, for the holy archimandrite, my father Pachomius, had not been ordained a priest, so that he could stand in the holy sanctuary,

since it is not allowed to any order which belongs to the church to stand in front of the priest when he celebrates the offering or to pass around him, except for the priests and deacons who stand at the altar to fan over the holy body of the spotless, Christ. (BnF. 129<sup>12</sup>, f. 72+70r) ... to anybody to stand inside of the sanctuary while the offering is being celebrated, except for the priests and the deacons.

**18** Because of this, I order you, the priests and deacons: Do not let any lay-person approach the neighbourhood of the altar when the priest celebrates the holy offering, for the Son of the living God together with his great incorporeal order, which are the fearful and glorious powers, are coming down upon the holy altar. Because of this, I order you, the priests and deacons: No lay-person shall come in the neighbourhood of the altar while the holy offering is being celebrated, for the Son of God is upon the table together with all his incorporeal orders, the angels and the archangels, the Cherubim and the Seraphim.

**19** But let us return to the story ... So when I had celebrated and brought the holy service to an end and the offering was sung upon, we, the priests, took first from the body and the blood of Christ. Afterwards, also the deacons approached to take the holy mystery from my hands. God granted our father Pachomius a revelation. He saw a deacon of the clergy of Alexandria who had come and was about to approach to take from the holy mysteries, the But let us return to the subject that we had begun, about the holy Apa Pachomius. When we had celebrated the holy offering, the priests took (first), afterwards the deacons. And when the deacons began to take, God granted the holy Apa Pachomius a revelation. He saw one of the deacons of the clergy who had come to take from the (BnF. 129<sup>12</sup>, f. 72+70v) holy mysteries, the body and the blood of Christ. He saw the angel of the offering. He stretched out his

body and the blood of Christ. The holy Apa Pachomius saw the angel of the offering. He stretched out his hand, took the mystery away from the deacon and put it upon the altar ... as if that deacon was not worthy of the holy mystery.

hands, took the mystery from the hand of the deacon and put it upon the table.

**20** When our holy father Pachomius saw this miraculous revelation, he wondered greatly, he approached, he drew close to that deacon, observed him carefully and fixed him. Apa Pachomius went back to his place and stood there and remained praying until the Holy Mass came to an end. For me, however, Athanasius, the Lord had hidden this, either because of my negligence or because He wanted to be glorified in his saint, Apa Pachomius, as He had revealed to him the acts of the man, I mean that deacon. As it is written: "God is glorified in the council of the saints."<sup>21</sup>

When the holy Apa Pachomius had seen these things, getting very disturbed, he approached that deacon, observed him carefully, fixed him and went once more to his place until the Holy Mass had ended. For me, however, Athanasius, the Lord had hidden this, either because of my negligence or because He wanted to be glorified in his holy servant Apa Pachomius, as He had revealed to him the acts of that man. As it is written: "God is glorified in the council of the saints."

**21** It happened that after we had ended the Holy Mass, the man full of all glory, Apa Pachomius, approached us and said to me: "Lord archbishop, I have something to tell you." And I, Athanasius, told him: "Speak, O holy old man, whose gray hairs illuminate his body like the luminaries of heaven!" The old man, Apa Pachomius, told me: "At the moment when you were at the

It happened that after the Holy Mass had come to an end, the man (BnF. 129<sup>12</sup>, f. 71+133<sup>2</sup>, f. 57r) full of all glory, our father, Apa Pachomius, approached me and said to me: "Lord archbishop, I have something and I want to tell it to your holiness. For I know that you are the shepherd and the lord of the entire country and that the Spirit of God dwells within you." I told him: "Speak, O old man,

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<sup>21</sup> Ps. 88: 8.

holy altar, I saw a deacon, belonging to the clergy, who had come to take from the holy mysteries from your hands. I saw the angel of the altar. He approached that person, took the mystery from him and put it on the altar as it was."

whose gray hairs emit light like the luminaries of heaven!" He told me: "..., my father, at the moment when you were standing at the altar today and were giving the mystery in the hands of the people, I saw a deacon, belonging to the clergy. He came in order to take this mystery from your hands. When you gave the mystery in his hands, I saw the angel who stands with you. He took it from his hands and placed it upon the altar again. When I saw him, I was amazed."

**22** I, Athanasius, when I heard these things from him, I was much amazed. I said to him: "When you see that deacon, will you recognize him?" The holy Apa Pachomius said: "Yes, I observed him carefully." And after I had heard these things from him, I called the archdeacon and made him gather the entire clergy of Alexandria, and they assembled at our place together with the holy Apa Pachomius. There was also the Augustalis who had come to receive the blessing of Apa Pachomius.

I said to him: "Have you (BnF. 129<sup>12</sup>, f. 71+133<sup>2</sup>, f. 57v) fixed him?" He said to me: "Yes." I had the archdeacon summoned and made him gather the entire clergy and there was the Augustalis, who had come to be blessed by our father Apa Pachomius.

**23** After all of them had entered, they one by one were blessed by us and went out. When that wretched deacon entered in order that he too would be blessed by us, the holy old man, Apa Pachomius, gave me a sign ... there, for his evil smell struck us before he had reached us.

And after they had entered, while we were sitting, they were blessed and remained standing. And when the deacon came to enter, the monk Apa Pachomius gave me a sign, indicating that it was that one. I tell you that his evil smell struck us. I let him be brought in our presence.

I, Athanasius, I made the force of the Augustalis, that was guarding him at that moment, seize him. They brought him in our presence, before us and Apa Pachomius and the Augustalis as well, who was sitting there with us.

**24** Then I spoke with Apa Pachomius, full of respect and concern for Jesus, and also with the Augustalis who was sitting there, saying: "Our father Pachomius, man of God, ask this deacon about his situation, since you already learned it from the Spirit of God which is within you." He said to me: "See, all discernment is at your disposal ... ."

I spoke with the old man, Apa Pachomius, and said: "Tell me his works, since you learned them through the Spirit of God which dwells within you." He said to me: "The grace of God is at your disposal, O illuminator of the entire inhabited world." I said to him ...

"What have you done? For God is not at peace with you. For that reason, He did not make you worthy of his holy body today".

**25** He, that murderous deacon, answered with great fear: "My holy fathers, what has happened to me is not hidden for you, but I will recount you my life. Truly, my sin is great before you. It happened to me at the time when I was consecrated as a deacon that I saw all my fellow deacons entering the church, dressed in white, wearing their bleached clothes, looking splendidly. As for me, I wore a dingy dress because of my poverty, for I was extremely indigent.

**26** I, this wretched person, I thought by myself what I could do in order to become rich too, like my fellow deacons. There was a merchant next door to me, who lived in my street. He was a foreigner and he owned more than a *centenarium* in gold.<sup>22</sup> I gathered frequently with him, since

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<sup>22</sup> A weight of Roman origin, equal to 32 kg. See G. Dagron and C. Morrison, "Le kenténarion dans les sources byzantines", *Revue numismatique* 17, 1975, p. 145-162.

he lived next door to my house. And this evil idea entered me, that I would go and kill him and steal his possessions.

**27** When the evening had come, I arose and took a large quantity of wine and some things to eat and I went to him in his shop. I said to him: 'Lord merchant, get up that we may celebrate together today.' And when he saw me with the wine that I had with me, he got up and set the place in order. As for me, I prepared the wine and the foodstuff. We lay down and ate and drank together. I made him drink a lot of wine until he became drunk, so that he fell down stupefied because of the great quantity of wine which I had made him drink. I had misled him in order to kill him. And when the hour had advanced, it became quiet and I stood up against him, while he was stupefied by the wine, and killed him. And what money I found I took to my home and hid it in my dark hiding places. I left the doors of his shop open, and escaped to my home.

**28** And when it had become morning ... they found him lying dead. They made a search, wanting to know what had happened. After they had investigated every place, they did not find the one who had committed the murder. They arrested everybody who lived next door to the merchant and imprisoned them, saying: 'Tell us what happened to that man.' After they had investigated every place, they did not find any of the merchandise that was his. Some God fearing people shrouded him and buried him. When we had been in jail for a month, without the affair of the blood of the man being found out, they released us.

**29** As for me, after I had entered my home, I spent many days ... A great wealth had come to me, but since the moment that I had killed the man, a great darkness covered my heart and a great fear had fallen upon me, as I was constantly afraid of every representative of authority whom I passed by. But even worse happened to me when I slept at night. I saw a huge shape before me like a big snake-like dragon of about twenty cubits length. It terrified me extremely, as it wanted to swallow me and I cried out from fear and woke up finding my body shivering from fear. And many times I said to myself: 'Woe to me, wretched man. If God has sent me this beast in this world, then what shall become of me when I pass out

of this world and fall in the hands of the living God and He asks me about this great sin, which I committed? What shall I answer Him in my defence?"

**30** But after another three days, after I had gone to sleep in the evening, in the middle of the night I heard a voice, calling my name. I answered it, saying: 'Who are you?' It told me: 'I am the merchant, whom you have killed unjustly. Since the day you killed me, I appeal daily to the Judge against you, saying: 'O master of the universe, claim my blood that has been shed unjustly! And now, see, the requital of my blood has come to pass today.' Immediately, I woke up trembling from fear. Now then, my holy fathers, I have told your holiness all what has happened to me. See, I am in your hands. Do with me as you wish."

**31** When I had heard this, I, Athanasius, and Apa Pachomius and also the Augustalis who was sitting (with us), we wrung our hands, saying: "Really, woe to the man, that he was even born in the world, so that he could dare to commit such great sins!" I, Athanasius, told him: "Why did not you tell me, so that I could give you something out of the properties of the church, before you fell in this great and heavy sin?" ... fear him ... .

**32** And immediately we deliberated among ourselves, saying: "It is better for him to be killed by the authorities of this world, rather than to die and be tortured in the Gehenna of fire forever." And when the Augustalis heard this, he ordered him to be taken to the agora of the city of Alexandria, to be impaled upon the wood, in the sight of everybody. And the remainder of the money which was found in his house, was taken and given to the Augustalis.

*St. Pachomius' vision of Hell.*

**33** After these things had taken place, the holy Apa Pachomius rose and we received him in the Episcopal residence ... sit ... me, Athanasius ... "... your armour, you fought and overcame the beasts and did not let them wound your sheep." And he remained with us one week, consoling me and himself every night with the words of the Holy Scripture. And I,

Athanasius, begged him to explain to me a problem which I proposed to him.

**34** I said to him: "My holy father, if somebody is a Christian and he committed a small sin, will he then be punished together with the pagans and the godless gentiles?" The Christ-loving old man answered, saying: "Do you not know that there is repentance for everybody, except for the murderers and the magicians, who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit? For their sins are unpardonable."<sup>23</sup> And I asked him that he would tell me the full story. He said to me: "I will relate your holiness what I was told some time ago, o my holy father. Only, I am but a feeble man.

**35** There was an ascetic old man in our monasteries and probably through the exceeding goodness of his heart, he frequently received revelations. 'It happened, he said, once when I was standing for prayer and doing repentance to the Lord, that an ecstasy came over me. I was snatched, he said, to the tribunal of God and I saw a lot of souls being tortured in hell. And at my side I saw an underground space which was dark and closed by a huge iron door, so that I said to myself

that iron door must be about fifty	(Naples I. B. 09, f. 25r) that door
<i>centenaria</i> in weight, and upon that	must be about fifty <i>centenaria</i> in
door iron bolts were set.	weight, and upon it iron bolts were
	set.

<b>36</b> And I heard those souls, who were down there, exposed to great heat, while they were being punished in hell. And I saw all of them crying out painfully and the heat which was coming out of the cracks in the door, was burning extremely high, so that I thought that it could burn the entire world. I spoke with the one who showed me these things, <sup>24</sup> saying: 'Who are	I heard a multitude of souls down there, in a great heat, while they were being punished in hell and crying out loudly. And the heat which was coming out of the cracks in the door, was burning very much, so that I thought that it would burn the whole world. I spoke with the one who showed me these things, saying: 'Tell me, who are these behind this door, who are
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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Mt. 12: 31-23; Mk. 3: 29.

<sup>24</sup> I.e. the *angelus interpres*.



these behind this iron door, who are being punished in such a great heat?' He told me: 'Those are the pagans ...' I said to him: 'Are there Christians among them?' He said to me: 'Let any Christian who has been baptized and who has transgressed once more while he was still in the world, know that such a person is counted among the pagans and that he will be punished with the pagans.' This is what the old monk told me, as what had been reported to him. Now I revealed it to your fatherhood."

being punished in such a great heat?' He told me: 'Those are the pagans who have never known God in the time they were in the world, and do not believed in him.' I said to him: 'Are there Christians among them?' He said to me: 'Let any Christian who has been baptized and who has transgressed it once more, let such a person know that he is counted among the pagans and that he will be punished with them in hell in a great punishment of which there is no relief. They are the ones about whom it is said: 'Their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched.'<sup>25</sup> (Naples I. B. 09, f. 25v) That old man also said: 'I was taken to the heavens and I saw a great tree growing in the middle of heaven and its appearance was very beautiful to see, although it was bearing no fruit. I looked again and saw ten thousands of angels surrounding that tree and it was very rich in leaves that were beautiful to see. I said to the angel who showed me these things: 'My lord, tell me about the nature of that tree which is so very beautiful and bears no fruit, while these angels surround it, and how it is stretched out.'<sup>26</sup> The angel answered ...

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<sup>25</sup> Mk. 4: 48.

<sup>26</sup> Lefort translates 'it is extended' and Kasser accepted his translation, while Crum was doubtful about it. See L. Th. Lefort, "Analecta philologica", *Le Muséon* 62, 1949, p. 14; R. Kasser, *Compléments au dictionnaire copte de Crum*, Cairo, 1964, p. 97; Crum, *Dictionary*, p. 672a.

As for me, Athanasius, I immediately knew that it was the old man, Apa Pachomius, who had seen these things, but that he did not want anyone to know it.

*Various admonitions.*

**37** Now, my beloved, holy sons of the Catholic Church, take care ... the sins for ... us ... without ... . For it is a great shame for a Christian to be thrown into hell when he passes out of the body. Truly, the pagans and the infidel Jews will probably say to a person of this sort: "Why have you, Christians, come here? Maybe you have renounced the name which you bear? As for us, we too have not been worthy of him, so as to believe in him while we were in the world. Therefore we are suffering these punishment which we cannot escape."

**38** A Christian who is a magician and does the works of the devil, such a person has taken off his baptism which he received and will be punished more heavily than the pagans, because they have never known God. A Christian who will go to an enchanter to make a woman abort, really, woe to such a person that he was born in the world at all. This is the one about whom the prophet said: "O evil seed, prepare your children to be slaughtered, for they shall not stand and will fill the earth with blood."<sup>27</sup> Such a person has become a murderer and committed adultery and has made God wroth. Therefore, as he has transgressed the great commandment of the Gospel, that is: "You shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not fornicate,"<sup>28</sup> in this way too God will transgress him and not remember him in the day of the judgment, but He will accord him a severe punishment, according to the measure of the sin which he has committed, and reduce him to indigence up to three generations.<sup>29</sup>

**39** A Christian who will enter the house of God and swear a false oath, such a person will call up to God and God will not hear him, and he will afflict him in this world. Nobody who partakes from the holy mysteries

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<sup>27</sup> Isa. 14: 21.

<sup>28</sup> Mt. 19: 18; Mk. 10: 19; Lk. 18: 20, quoted from Ex. 20: 13-15.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ex. 20: 5.

shall mock someone else, from a gentile up to a publican or a Christian, for everybody who mocks another person, mocks God. For God told us in the holy Gospel: "Verily, I say unto you, what you will do to one of these little ones, you did to me."<sup>30</sup> Now, if you do good to a man in this world ... sin against him.

**40** Therefore, no Christian shall hate anybody in this world, nor shall anybody cause harm to him, nor shall he keep two measures in his house, a big one and a small one, but he shall observe righteous measures for all goods that are measured with them. For the Lord said long ago: "Righteous measures you shall have, the Lord said."<sup>31</sup> He also says: "A measure firmly pressed and flowing over shall be given into your lap."<sup>32</sup> And also: "With what measure you will measure, it shall be measured to you."<sup>33</sup> Now then, O my beloved, let us secure the work in accordance with the faith of the Lord, so that we will be transferred from the sojourn of this world ... before it and not a single one will be left upon it.

**41** This world is a prison and a temporal residence. Therefore, the prophet David says: "Save me from all my sojourns."<sup>34</sup> Also Jeremiah says: "Woe to me, my mother, that you bore me as a man who will be judged and mocked on the whole earth. I found no profit and none I have obtained."<sup>35</sup> You have heard, then, how the saints weep upon themselves in this world, full of suffering.

(Cairo 9286r) For this world is a prison and a temporal residence. The singer of psalms, David, says: "Save me, O Lord, ... and ... while I ... upon ... like ... . Also Jeremiah says: "Woe to me, my mother, that you bore me as a man who will be judged in court. Why has my mother's womb not become a tomb for me?"<sup>36</sup> You have seen, O my beloved, that the saints are distressed about their perdition.

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<sup>30</sup> Mt. 25: 40.

<sup>31</sup> Ez. 45: 9-10.

<sup>32</sup> Lk. 6: 38.

<sup>33</sup> Mt. 7: 2.

<sup>34</sup> Ps. 7: 1.

<sup>35</sup> Jer. 15: 10.

<sup>36</sup> Jer. 20: 17.

**42** As for us too, we know that our time of life is shorter than that of the ancients. From nine-hundred-and-thirty years, it is (only) seventy years that the people of this generation live. Worse, there is no one in this generation, except a very few, who will become seventy years old, for God is no longer at peace with us because of our sins. Our forefathers of old used to live for hundred years, before they got married. The people of this generation, however, yield to the defilement of sin already when they are ten years old, both men and women. Therefore, then, God shortened their time of life and He reduced our power, compared to our forefathers, and removed his grace from us, because of our sins.

As for us too, we know that our time of life is shorter than that of our forefathers of old. From where to where? From nine-hundred-ninety years to one-hundred-and-twenty years. I confess to you that, apart from a very few, (Cairo 9286v) none will live for a hundred years, for God is no longer at peace with us because of our sins. For our forefathers of old used to live for forty years, before they got married. The people of this generation, however, yield to defilement already when they are ten years old, both men and women. Therefore God made our life time become shorter and removed his grace from us. Now this we said for the profit of your souls.

*Michael comforts Athanasius during his exile.*

**43** Let us return to the great commander-in-chief of the host of the Lord, Michael, whose feast we celebrate today. For the translation of "Michael" is: "The peace of God," as there is no one in all the ranks of heaven who is equal to him in greatness. Furthermore, through his grace, He (God) made him closely attending upon Him. Do you want to know

Then, let us return to the great commander-in-chief of the host of the Lord, Michael, whose feast we celebrate today. ... equal to him in all the ranks of heaven ... because ... him closely attending upon Him. Do you want to know

the great glory of the archangel Michael, the great commander-in-chief before God? Listen to me and I will relate you a bit of his amazing glory that he revealed to me, Athanasius, who speaks to you now.

**44** It happened to me, Athanasius, at the time that the emperor pursued me and I was fleeing from place to place because of the accursed Arians, that I went to the south of Egypt, while they were hunting me down, and I entered the city of Pan, that is Shmin,<sup>37</sup> and I remained there for three full years. I went to the ... of a dyer in ... without any sluggishness at all, while I daily fetched him water for his craft and obeyed him in everything which he would tell me, without any sluggishness or negligence.

**45** And whenever it was necessary and people would bring wool for us to dye for them, we did this diligently and dyed it or, alternatively, they bought some (dyed wool) from us as they wished. And when my master retained the men with him and invited them and when he asked me to take care of the place where they would eat and when they came in in order to lay down to eat and to drink, I served them all ... take away the dishes and I did not taste anything until they returned and went home. Afterwards, I also would rise and take my little bit of food and have some rest in the place where I slept. I did not reveal my identity to anybody during the three years that I worked for this dyer, neither to clergy, nor to laymen, except to God alone, who knows and fathoms the heart of everybody.

**46** When I had lived three years in that place, the merciful God wanted me to be searched for and as it took another three days before the brothers who were sent to seek after me, reached me in the south, I stood up as usual, I stretched my hands out and prayed to the storeroom full of all mercy, begging him with tears: "O Lord, God almighty, have mercy on your bride, the Church, and chase the wolves that prey upon souls<sup>38</sup> and spare your flock of sheep, O Lord, my God."

**47** While I was still saying these things, imploring and begging him, He who had said: "While you are still speaking, I will say: 'Behold, I

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<sup>37</sup> I.e. Panopolis/Akhmim.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Ez. 22: 27.

am here,<sup>39</sup> immediately had pity on me. Rightaway, He sent the great archangel Michael to me, to console me in my exile. I raised my eyes to the sky and saw a great light above me like a flash of fire. And I saw the archangel Michael while his appearance was of splendid height and his wings were stretched out and each of his wings was more than five cubits (long), resembling flaming fire. He was dressed in an armour of fire, his legs were like fine brass melting in a furnace, a huge wand of light was in his right hand, a fiery sword in his left, while his face and his eyes radiated fire into my face.

(Strasbourg 248r) ... for me ... He who had said: 'I am here' ... . Rightaway, He sent the archangel Michael to me, to console me in my exile. I raised my eyes and I saw a great light like a flash of fire. I saw the archangel Michael while his appearance was of great height and his wings were stretched out and each of the wings would be about five cubits (long), resembling flaming fire. He was dressed in an armour of fire, bound upon his head with a golden girdle, his legs resembled fine brass melting in a furnace, a huge golden wand was in his right hand, a sword of fire in his left, while his eyes radiated fire into my face.

**48** When I saw all these attributes of the archangel, I fell down on my face so (terrified) that no more breath of life was left within me. But he, the great archangel Michael, approached me and made me stand up. He greeted me and comforted me. He said to me: "Hail, true shepherd ... the Church, which the gates of hell shall not be able to overcome.<sup>40</sup> Hail, true husbandman who roots out the tares from the field of his Lord to make it produce splendid fruits.<sup>41</sup> Behold, the time of the flood has passed and now it is the time of

(Strasbourg 248v) When I saw all these attributes of the archangel, I fell upon my face so (terrified) that no more breath of life was left within me. But he, the great archangel Michael, approached me, made me stand up and greeted me. He said to me: "Hail, good shepherd who pastures his sheep. Hail, pillar who supports the Church, which the gates of hell shall not be able to overcome. Hail, true husbandman who roots out the tares from his field to make it produce more fruit. Behold, the time of the flood has passed and

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<sup>39</sup> Isa. 58: 9.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Mt. 16: 18.

<sup>41</sup> Mt. 13: 30.

sowing, in order that you sow the good seed which is the holy words of God with which you will teach the people. God has sent me to you to console you in your sufferings and your exile that you are enduring. For I am the commander-in-chief of the host of the Lord. It is me who is prostrated at the feet of the God of the powers, begging him for the peace of the church, he who begs him ... For it will be three more days until the brothers clerics, who were sent to fetch you, come to take you to your city in peace.

**49** For it is incumbent upon you to go to the emperor of the earth and strengthen him in the faith of Christ. Afterwards you will return to your city in peace and you will not face more suffering for the faith, because Christ has brought to nought the people who raised a storm against the Church. Be valiant and be brave! I am with you wherever you shall go." And when the archangel Michael, he whose feast we are celebrating today, had said these things, he became invisible for me and I saw him no longer. And within the three days, the brothers clerics came, in according with what the holy archangel Michael had said.

now it is the time for you to sow the words of God, with which you will teach your people. God has sent me to you to console you in all your distresses (BnF. 161<sup>6</sup>, f. 38r) and your exile that you are enduring. I am the commander-in-chief of the host of heavens. It is me who is prostrated all the time at the feet of the Father, begging him for the peace of the church and the growth of the fruits of the earth and the inundation of the river and the dew and the good air. Now then, do not be afraid. Three more days ...

... and you strengthen him in the faith of Christ Jesus. Afterwards you will return to your city in peace. Do not be afraid for you will not face suffering again for the orthodox faith, because Christ will bring to nought those who stand up against the Church. (BnF. 161<sup>6</sup>, f. 38v) ... today ... and peace, he left to heavens while I watched him. And when dawn rose on the third day, one of the Alexandrian brothers came to fetch me. I was astonished about what had happened and glorified the God of the archangel Michael. ... the brothers ... Michael, he who is the greatest of all the ranks of heavens.

*Praise of St. Michael.*

**50** Let us realise then, my beloved, Let us thank him that he is such a that we have such a great great intercessor and our patron intercessor before God. Let us beg who intercedes for us before Christ. him in order that he prays for us The king of kings will accept his and sends us his gifts of mercy. For prayer on our behalf. It is he who Michael is the intercessor for the begs before Christ ... for the well-being of the whole world. whole world, who intercedes for us before God

and it is he too who appoints the angels who do service before him and he worships God ... Christ ... holy ... angel ... Michael ... "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways and bear you in their hands in order that not your feet will stumble on a stone."<sup>42</sup>

**51** Now then, my beloved, let us fight bravely before we pass out of the body and are placed before the true judge in order that He judges us according to our deeds ... the gifts of the ... do not ... think ... John, than whom a greater has not arisen among those who are born of women.<sup>43</sup> That He may remember us, agree to rule over us, and let us inherit his kingdom through the grace and the love of humanity of our Lord, Jesus Christ, to whom the glory is fitting together with his good Father and the Holy Spirit, life-giving and consubstantial, now and at all times, forever and ever. Amen.

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<sup>42</sup> Ps. 91: 11-12; quoted in Mt. 4: 6; Lk. 4: 10-11.

<sup>43</sup> Mt. 11: 11.