MALCOLM CHOAT

PAPNOUTHIOS IN SB I 2266: NEW MAN OR NEW PATRON?


© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn
PAPNOUTHIOS IN SB I 2266: NEW MAN OR NEW PATRON?

SB I 2266 is a letter on papyrus dating to the mid-fourth century, written by a certain Justinus to a holy man, Papnouthios. It was edited by Deissmann in his first volume of papyri from Heidelberg in 1905, later appearing in the collections of Christian letters by Ghedini and Naldini. Although the letter is virtually complete except for the opening greetings, a lacuna at the end of line 6 has produced difficulties of interpretation. Although the right emendation (with a small variation which shall be noted) has been proposed, not only has this not been widely noticed, but its implications have not been explored. It is the purpose of this note to comment on these.

The text runs as follows:

1. [. . . γράφῃ [σα] πρὸς τὴν]
2. σὺν χρηστότητας, κύριε μου
3. ἁγαπητέ: πιστεύομεν γάρ
4. τὴν πολιτικὴν σου ὑπὲρ γενόμενος.
5. ἐγώ θεοροῦμεν σε τὸν
6. δεσπότην καὶ κενὸν [α[ interchangeably]
7. ἵνα σὺν μὴ πολλὰ γραφοῦ κεκατέμενος
8. φιλικὴν ἡμῶν, ἐν γάρ [πολλὴ]
9. λοιπὸν οὐκ ἐκφεύγοντα[α]
10. δέσποτα, ἵνα μὴν μενοῦ[μεν] ὑπὸ
11. μοι δὲ τὰς θέλῃς σου εὐχῶς ἵνα
12. δυνηθῆμεν μέρος τὸν <κύριον>
13. αὐτῶν καθαρίσεως, εἰς γάρ
14. ἵνα δυνηθῆμεν ἐν τὰς ἐν ζωήν
15. ἵματας χρήσεος, εἰς γάρ
16. ὃς τὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ κύριον
17. πολλὰ
18. προσκυνῆτε <ὁ> πάντες τοὺς ἓν
19. δελφοὺς ἤμον ἐν κ[υ]ρι[ω]. ἐρωτό-
20. μένον σε ἣ [θεν]
21. α[πὸν] ἄλφαλιτήτας [κατὰ]
22. ἐπὶ μεγίστονον κρόον
23. νόν ἐν κ[υ]ρι[ω]ν Ἑρυθροτόκιον,
24. κύριε ἁγαπητέ [τε]

η. [. . . γράφῃ [σα] πρὸς τὴν]
σὺν χρηστότητας, κύριε μου
ἀγαπητέ: πιστεύομεν γάρ
τὴν πολιτικὴν σου ὑπὲρ γενόμενος.

Hence we regard you as master and new ..., in order that I not play the fool through multiplying words – for in many words they shall not escape sin – thus I beseech you, master, to remember me in your holy prayers in order that I might be able (to have) a share in the cleansing of sins. For I am one of the sinners. I beg that you deem it worthy to accept the little (gift) of oil through our brother Makarios. I give many greetings to all our brothers in the Lord. May divine providence guard you in health for a great number of years in the Lord Christ, beloved lord.

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at a seminar at Macquarie University on the occasion of a visit by Paul Weaver. I would like to thank the participants for their comments, especially Dr T. V. Evans, Dr C. E. V. Nixon and Emeritus Professor E. A. Judge.

1 The text has also been commonly referred to as P. Heid. I 6.
4 The text given here is based on that of Naldini, except that the word at the end of l. 6 has been left unresolved and some subsequent emendations have been noted. I have checked it against a photograph kindly supplied by the Universität Heidelberg.
To my lord and beloved brother Papnouthios Christbearer, from Justinus.

Overall, the sense of the letter is clear. It is written by one Justinus to his ‘lord and beloved brother’ Papnouthios. It is perhaps one of the most overtly Christian fourth-century letters, containing the name of Christ (24), relatively rare in fourth-century papyrus letters.5 nomina sacra for κύριος and Χριστός (20, 24), and, in several places, phraseology reminiscent or directly reflective of both the New and Old Testament.6 From the manner in which Justinus addresses Papnouthios the latter is clearly regarded as an exceptionally holy individual: the assertion that Papnouthios’ ‘citizenship is in heaven’ (4), the request to be remembered in Papnouthios’ prayers (11–12) and the title given to Papnouthios, Χριστοφόρος, ‘Christbearer’ (26),7 combine to suggest that Papnouthios is a monk of high standing. H. I. Bell’s suggested identification of him with the Papnouthios who receives P. Lond. VI 1923–1929 (see P. Lond. VI, pp. 101–2) has been accepted by all commentators.8 Both men were clearly regarded as extremely holy monks, and they are both given the same epithet, Χριστοφόρος.9 As regards Justinus, the deference he displays towards Papnouthios suggests he is a lay Christian.10

The focus here is on the end of line 6, which ends a clause begun in the previous line. The difficulties are presented by the last word: Deissmann saw κυνος[.], and (for reasons to be discussed below) resolved this as πάτρωνα. The only alternative suggestion was provided by Schubart,11 followed recently by Bärbel Kramer and John Shelton: άνθρωπον.12

Despite the difficulties of the reading, the restoration πάτρωνα has been retained by nearly every commentator on this papyrus since Deissmann,13 giving the sense of ‘hence we regard you as master and new patron’. Naldini’s acceptance of this reading in his Il cristianesimo, the most accessible and best known edition, has meant that the reading has found its way into general discussions of monasticism.14 However, not only is this reading palaeographically unlikely, but the examples of

---

5 See e.g. P. Lond. VI 1919.14, 15, 17; 1921.10; 1926.4; P. Oxy. LVI 3682.7; SB VI 9605.5.
6 See the discussion below, p. 162.
7 Line 26. In Greek papyri the title occurs apart from here only in P. Lond. VI 1926 and P. Neph. 11. For the related phrase in Coptic, ετθορεί πτήεξε, see O. CrumSt 175.14; 328.3–4; 361.8; cf. P. Neph. p. 70, n. 7, with additional references.
9 The suggestion by B. Kramer and J. Shelton in their introduction to the Melitian monastic archive of Nepheros (P. Neph.) that Papnouthios was attached to the Melitian community at Nathor has been widely accepted, eg. J. E. Goehring, Monastic Diversity and Ideological Boundaries in Fourth-Century Christian Egypt, JECS 5 (1997) 61–83, at 80, n. 8; R. S. Bagnall, Egypt in Late Antiquity (Princeton, 1993) 309 with n. 274; H. Hauben, Jean Arkahph, évêque de Memphis, dans la catalogue mélitien, Philohistôr. Miscellanea in honorem Caroli Laga septuagenarii, edd. A. Schoors and P. Van Deun (Leuven, 1994) 23–33, at 25 n. 16. However, the phraseological parallels adduced by Kramer and Shelton (P. Neph. p. 21–24) are not strong enough for any great probability to be attached to the suggestion that we are dealing here with a Melitian monk.
10 The opinion also of J. G. Winter, Life and Letters in the Papyri, (Ann Arbor, 1933) 168.
11 W. Schubart, Ein Jahrtausend am Nil (Berlin, 1923) no. 92 (pp. 142–25), in which he translated the reading which he had suggested to F. Preisigke, who included it in his edition in SB I 2266: κυνος [κυνος] [κυνος].
12 P. Neph. p. 70, n. 6, reported in BL 9, 236.
13 See the texts given by Ghedini, Wessely and Naldini (see above, n. 4); the translation of Winter, Life and Letters, 167–68, and the comments of G. Tibiletti, Le lettere private nei papiri greci del III e IV secolo d.C. Tra paganesimo e cristianesimo (Milan, 1979) 34.
use of \( \text{πάτρων} \) used to support the reading are inapplicable.

Support for the combination \( \text{δεσπότης καὶ πάτρων} \) was found by Deissmann and Naldini in several of the letters in the archive of Abinnaeus,\(^{15}\) and another fourth century letter, \( \text{P. Lond. III 982},^{16} \) in which the combination \( \text{δεσπότης καὶ πάτρων} \) appears. The addressees of 9 other letters from the fourth to the sixth centuries are also called \( \text{δεσπότης καὶ πάτρων} \). But what sort of parallels do these provide? They show that the combination was used by Christian letter writers for their correspondents, although not all the letters bearing this phrase are securely Christian; some have no religious content whatsoever. However, it is more important to consider what sort of people were actually addressed as \( \text{πάτρων} \) in late-antique Egypt. Although from the first century BC to the end of the second century AD the word occurs in the papyri overwhelmingly with the sense of the patron of a freedman, by late antiquity it seems to have lost any technical sense.\(^{17}\) In letters from the fourth and fifth centuries (the only late-antique documents in which the term is found) \( \text{πάτρων} \) seems to have had its sense diluted to that of a mere term of respect.\(^{18}\) Still, who was called \( \text{πάτρων} \)? Abinnaeus, the mid fourth-century military commander in the Fayum, is commonly called \( \text{πάτρων} \). The ‘master and patron’ addressed in \( \text{P. Lond. III 982} \) (the other letter cited in support of the proposed restoration of \( \text{P. Lond. III 2266} \)) is a \( \text{πρωτεύον} \), a village official.\(^{20}\) The \( \text{πάτρων} \) Necos, to whom the villagers of Euhermeria write in \( \text{P. Ross. Georg. III 8} \), was a powerful local landowner;\(^ {21} \) likewise the addressee of \( \text{SPP XX 111} \).\(^ {22} \) In \( \text{P. Ath. Xyla 16} \) and \( \text{P. Princ. II 104} \) the \( \text{πάτρωνες} \) are the writers’ employers. The \( \text{πάτρων} \) Sarapamon is a business associate of the Ammonius who writes \( \text{P. Oxy. XLVIII 3420} \). The writer of \( \text{P. Oxy. LI} \) 3646 greets his correspondent as ‘lord patron son’, out of deference rather than in recognition of a formal relationship.\(^{23}\) \( \text{SB VIII 9683} \) is a letter written by a monk, but his \( \text{πάτρων} \) Heron to whom he writes seems to have been a military officer acting as protector and sponsor.\(^ {24} \) The editor of this letter took the phrase \( \text{δεσποτίς καὶ πάτρων} \) (l. 1–2) as indicating definitively that he was a secular benefactor.\(^ {25} \) The ‘beloved sisters’ whom the writer of \( \text{P. Kell. V Copt. 31} \) addresses as patron were seemingly important members of the Manichaean community in Kellis, but not monks.\(^ {26} \) In only one letter, \( \text{P. Lond. VI 1916} \), are \( \text{πάτρωνες} \) indisputably monks; the \( \text{έγκατατικοι πάτρινες} \) addressed in l. 9 are Paieous, Dioscorus, Hierax, Souros, and ‘all the brothers with you’, i.e. the monks of the monastic community at Hathor. The editor’s only comment on the word was to refer to \( \text{P. Lond. III 982} \) and \( \text{SB I 2266} \), neither of which clarifies matters. However, given the lacuna in the text, and the fact that monks do not seem to be securely called \( \text{πάτρωνες} \) elsewhere in the papyri, \( \text{πάτριες} \) may be a better restoration there.

---


\(^{17}\) See the comments of J. R. Rea, in \textit{CPR} V 19, 18–19n.

\(^{18}\) \textit{Ibid}.

\(^{19}\) \textit{P. Abinn.} 28.1–2; 29.1; 25; 31.1; 34.1–2; 35.33; 37.1.

\(^{20}\) Rea, Letter of a Recruit: \( \text{P. Lond. III} \) 982 Revisited, 190.

\(^{21}\) On this letter see now P. van Minnen, Patronage in Fourth-century Egypt. A Note on \( \text{P. Lond. III 982} \).


\(^{23}\) See the editor’s note \textit{ad loc}.


\(^{25}\) Zilliacus suggested he was the \( \text{πάτρων} \), although noted the possibility of reading \( \text{κέντρον} \) after Heron’s name at the end of line 2 (The Stolen Anchor, 205). From the plate, \( \text{κέντρον} \) seems likely, and is difficult to reconcile with any other title; for the use of the Latin loan-word, see e.g. \textit{O. Douch} III 186.3 (IV–V). That the troublemaker who Heron is asked to deal with is a soldier (\( \text{στρατηγώτης} \) (l. \( \text{στρατηγώτην} \)), 4) supports the restoration, as do the greetings sent to the tribe at l. 26.

\(^{26}\) \textit{P. Kell. V Copt.} 31.17; cf. the editor’s note \textit{ad loc}., suggesting the sense of ‘benefactor’ may be appropriate.

\(^{27}\) H. I. Bell, ed., \textit{P. Lond. VI} 1916, see the note to l. 9 on p. 79.
One of the roles monks fulfilled in relation to Christian communities in Late Antiquity was that of ‘spiritual patron’.28 This paradigm is seen particularly in the letter of Serapion of Thmuis to the disciples of Antony,29 although it is perhaps less prominent in the Life of Antony attributed to Athanasius.30 The Papnouthios with whom our monk has usually been identified was certainly seen in the same way as late-antique bishops and clergy can. However this general historical process does not seem to have resulted in a situation where monks were regularly called ‘patrons’. Leaving aside the text under discussion here, only one doubtful papyrological instance presents itself (P. Lond. VI 1916). The corresponding Greek term προστοτής is used in both Greek and Coptic as a term for a leader of a monastic community,33 but the Latin loan-word πάτρων seems not to be used of them. This is not to declare it impossible that Justinus would address Papnouthios in this way, but it should sound a note of warning that it seems without parallel.

In fact such discussion is beside the point, because the reading πάτρωνα is palaeographically impossible. Deissmann arrived at the conclusion that this was to be read largely because he could conceive of no other possibility to explain α[.][ποστ.].34 He explained the problems by proposing that Justinus intended to write πάτρων, left out the initial pi, and, on realising this halfway through the word, simply wrote a pi there. This proposal is unsatisfactory: Justinus’ use of interlinear correction after omitting the alpha and phi of διαφωλοξεία in l. 22 indicates he would have employed this had he left out the pi of πάτρων. It is true that Justinus left off the first two letters of the word ἐμπροσθίων at the end of line 13, but as the first letter he wrote is the same as the first letter of the word as intended, this is a different case. Naldini tried to avoid half the problem by reading the last fully surviving letter not as pi but as nu. However, in this he was clearly mistaken. The letter in question cannot be a nu, as Justinus regularly writes nu in three strokes that resemble in no way the letter which stands at the end of line 6. It is clearly a pi, as comparison with Justinus’ other writings of pi shows, especially the pi of παρακαλῶ in line 15.

Examination of the photograph reveals that εὐροτο[ ] should be read. The best sense that could be obtained from this is that proposed long ago by Schubart,35 αὐθνοτον. This has recently been modified by Kramer and Shelton in light of the impossibility of reading a theta between the alpha and the rho. They read εὐροτο[ν (l. αὐθνοτον)],36 with the nu having dropped out and the theta assimilating to tau.37

---

31 P. Lond. VI 1923–1929.
32 See in particular in late fourth-century archive of Apa Johannes, in P. Herm. 7–10, 17, SB XVIII 13612, P. Ryl. Copt. 268–76, on which, see P. van Minnen, The Roots of Egyptian Christianity, APF 40 (1994) 71–85. See also the letters written to the Melitian monk Paieous, P. Lond. VI 1913–22 (330–340), and, in general, the discussion of Brown cited above at n. 28.
33 See the papyrological references in F. Preisigke and E. Kiessling (edd.), Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrus-urkunden, vol. 3 (1931) 406 (all from the sixth and following centuries); see also O. Mich. Copt. I 11 (VI?), a letter from περιστασιων τίτουσι ετούκαρ αὐτονα ὁμοίως. For a fourth century example see P. Lond. VI 1913 (334) 1: τοῖς προστοτο[ι]ν[υ]ς μονοχων (l. μονοχων).
34 Deissmann, Die Septuaginta-Papyri, 98.
35 See above, n. 11.
36 P. Neph, p. 70, n. 6.
37 For the loss of medial nu before a dental see F. T. Gignac, A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods, vol. 1, Phonology (Milan, 1975) III.C.a.2 (p. 116); for the interchange of theta and tau before or after a
Deissmann had already considered this resolution, and rejected it, because there was not enough space for ζηροποιοῦν. His problems with the first lacuna can be solved orthographically, but inspection of the photograph indicates that he was correct in stating that there was insufficient space for a nu after the last visible traces in line 6. However, this does not rule out the resolution ἄνθρωπον. In line 10, Justinus leaves off the final nu of ἐμαρτήσαν (as well as writing ἥ instead of τήν for the article). Naldini preferred to correct to εἰ ἐμαρτήσατι, but the supralinear stroke above the final etα of ἐμαρτήσαν should be interpreted as a mark of abbreviation for nu; λῆν ἐμαρτήσαν (l. ἐμαρτήσαν) would be closer to Proverbs 10.19, which Justinus follows closely here, indicating we should retain the reading of Deissmann. As it seems impossible to read a nu at the end of line 6, it is likely that Justinus either used a similar abbreviation here, or left off the final nu, and that we should read ετροπο (l. ἄνθρωπον) here.

Justinus, then, addressed Papnouthios as ‘new man’, rather than ‘new patron’. Monks were the spiritual ‘patrons’ of Egyptian Christianity, but this letter cannot be used to provide evidence that they were called πάτριοι. However, by hailing Papnouthios as a ‘new man’, Justinus is not using the phrase as a monastic title. Rather, Justinus is referring to the important theological concept of ‘putting on the new man in place of the old’. Developed in the letters of Paul, it finds a place in many patristic discussions. The theme was readily applicable to monasticism: monks were citizens of the new city in the desert, who had ‘renewed themselves’ and ‘put on the new man’ when they began their ascetic lives. Justinus’ use of the phrase should be understood within the context of the consistent use of, allusion to, and quotation from scripture which he makes throughout the letter. Scriptural citations in...
Macquarie University, Sydney

Malcolm Choat

fourth century papyrus letters are rare, and often little more than what might be called ‘reminiscences’, such as the echo of Hebrews 1,3 and 2 Peter 1,9 in lines 13–14. His rendering of Proverbs 10,19 in lines 8–10, however, probably warrants the term ‘citation’, as it is much closer to the Septuagint. However, Justinus’ use of Scripture goes beyond mere citation; he shows an awareness of two of the most important concepts in monastic spirituality. His echo of Phillipians 3,20 in line 4 indicates familiarity with the importance of σωτηρία, the monastic ‘way of life’ in Christian ascetic discourse. His use of the phrase κατα τούς τέρματα in line 6 should be seen in the same light; Justinus not only echoes the New Testament passages where the theme is developed, but also addresses the monk by a theological imprecision, it seems hardly strong enough to warrant the conclusion the author was ‘Arian’.


50 See the discussion in Harris, Biblical Echoes, 156, 158.


52 See above, n. 45.

53 See the assertion of Kramer and Shelton (P. Neph. Intro., p. 21) that ὁ τῶν [ὁ λαὸς δεισιτής] restored in P. Neph. 5.24–26 and the use of the verb ἐπιγενέσις with reference to God in P. Neph. 6.8 are evidence of ‘Arian’ beliefs. See too the suggestion of Ghedini that ὅ πε[πληκτός] κρε [η] ἔριστος κτήτος ἐν τούτῳ in P. Lond. VI 1929.3 (probably to the same Papnouthios as the one under discussion here) displays a ‘sapore ariano’ (Ghedini, Paganesimo e Cristianesimo nelle lettere papiroee greche dei primi secoli d. Chr., Atti del IV Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia (Milan ,1936) 333–50, at 343).

54 ὁ τῶν [ὁ λαὸς δεισιτής] is not found in Christian scripture, and in only one other documentary papyrus (P. Oxy. VI 939, a letter whose writer is placed under suspicion of heresy by Kramer and Shelton on this basis). However, attestations among ‘orthodox’ patristic writers are not infrequent; see the Pseudo-Athanasian Disputatio contra Arium (PG 28.492.54); Eusebius of Caesarea (H. E. 10.4.9; Vita Constantini 5.53.3), as well as Origen, John Chrysostom and Theodoret of Cyrrhus (the latter two extensively). Cf. A. Camplani, In margine alla storia dei Meliziani, Augustinianum 30 (1990) 313–51, at 326. For ἐπιγένεσις used with reference to God, see e.g. Athanasius, Epistles in Psalmos, PG 27.521.9; John Chrysostom, In Joannem, PG 59.358.19, In Psalmum, PG 55.573.31. As regards the proposal of Ghedini, while the phrase may indicate theological imprecision, it seems hardly strong enough to warrant the conclusion the author was ‘Arian’. 