

ISSN 0273-3269

# COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

*Volume 24, Number 3 . . . . . Fall 2003*

***THE COPTIC LITERARY DOSSIER  
OF ABBA MOSES OF ABYDOS***



Visit our INTERNET Home Page: <http://home.ptd.net/~yanney/>

*Society of Coptic Church Studies*

ADVISORY BOARD

Bishop Wissa  
(Al-Balyana, Egypt)

Bishop Antonious Markos  
(Coptic Church, African Affairs)

Bishop Isaac  
(Quesna, Egypt)

Bishop Dioscorus  
(Coptic Church, Egypt)

Fr. Tadros Malaty  
(Alexandria, Egypt)

Professor Fayek Ishak  
(Ontario, Canada)

William El-Meir, Ph.D.  
(N.J., U.S.A.)

Girgis A. Ibrahim, Ph.D.  
(Florida, U.S.A.)

Esmat Gabriel, Ed.D.  
(PA., U.S.A.)

**EDITOR IN CHIEF:**  
*Rodolph Yanney, M.D.*

**EDITOR:**  
*Maged S. A. Mikhail*

CIRCULATION MANAGER  
Ralph Yanney

© Copyright 2003  
by *Coptic Church Review*  
E. Brunswick, NJ

**Subscription and Business Address:**  
*Society of Coptic Church Studies*  
P.O. Box 714  
E. Brunswick, NJ 08816  
email: [Ralphyanney@hotmail.com](mailto:Ralphyanney@hotmail.com)

**Editorial Address:**  
*Maged S. A. Mikhail*  
Editor, *Coptic Church Review*  
1744 Oarkridge Cr.  
W. Covina, CA 91792  
email: [msmikhail@juno.com](mailto:msmikhail@juno.com)

**Subscription Price (1 Year)**  
U.S.A. \$10.00  
Canada \$12.00 (U.S. dollars)  
Overseas \$15.00 (Airmail)

This periodical is indexed in  
the *ATLA Regional Database*,  
published by the  
American Theological Library Assoc.  
250 S. Wacker Dr., 16th Floor  
Chicago, IL 60606  
E-mail: [atla@atla.com](mailto:atla@atla.com)  
WWW: <http://www/atla.com/>

Abstracts of articles appear in  
*Religious and Theological Abstracts*,  
Myerstown, PA 17067.

# COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

*A Quarterly of Contemporary Patristic Studies*  
ISSN 0273-3269

NOW IN ITS 24TH YEAR

*Volume 24, Number 3 . . . . . Fall 2003*

66 ***The Coptic Literary Dossier of Abba Moses of Abydos***  
Mark Moussa

91 ***Saint in One Hour - St. Paesia***  
Rodolph Yanney

- 93 ***Book Reviews***
- *Orthodox Prayer Life: The Interior Way*
  - *Christian Egypt*
  - *Among the Copts*
  - *Coptologia: International Journal of Coptic Thought and Orthodox Spirituality, Volume XVII*
  - *Cyril of Jerusalem: Mystagogue*

*Microfilm and microfiche copies of previous issues and articles are available from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106*

# ***THE COPTIC LITERARY DOSSIER OF ABBA MOSES OF ABYDOS***

*Mark Moussa*

## ***Introduction***

I present here an overview of a rather unknown Egyptian monastic leader of the sixth century by the name of Abba Moses, who flourished in the ancient pagan town of Abydos, situated on the left bank of the Nile at about 7 miles from the modern town of al-Balyana. In addition to a preceding summary of his life and a short discussion, I include for the first time an English translation of relevant literature by or about Abba Moses: his primary *vita* and a short compendium of monastic rules.<sup>1</sup>

The literature attributed or related to Abba Moses comes from a very distinctive Coptic literary milieu. These documents, while significant because of the anecdotes they contain describing post-Chalcedonian Egypt, remain highly suspect because they are biased and, more often than not, fragmentary in nature. The *vita* of Moses, along with his encomium, canon and letters, did not escape this same

<sup>1</sup> There also exists an encomium to Moses and several letters written by Moses to monastic personalities in his community. A translation of the letters will appear in a future issue of this journal. Due to a number of complicated textual issues, a translation of the encomium is not included here. The edition and translation of the remaining unpublished fragments of the *vita*, Cambridge 1699 and 1699Y<sup>a</sup>, appeared in my *Abba Moses of Abydos* (M.A. thesis, The Catholic University of America, 1998). Additional editions of texts from the *vita* are cited below. For the encomium, see J. Leipoldt, *Sinuthii Archimandritae Vita et Opera Omnia* (CSCO, *Scriptores Coptici*, tomus 2; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1906-1913), 209-214 and H. Wiesmann, *Sinuthii* (CSCO, *Scriptores Coptici*, tomus 4; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1931-1936), 127-130. For his letters, see Amélineau, *Monuments pour Servir à l'Histoire de l'Égypte Chrétienne aux IV<sup>e</sup>, V<sup>e</sup>, VI<sup>e</sup> et VII<sup>e</sup> Siècles* (Paris, 1886-1888), 693-701. For secondary literature, albeit limited, see R.-G. Coquin, "Moses of Abydos." *Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 6:1679; *ibid.*, "Moïse d'Abydos." *Cahiers de la Bibliothèque Copte* 3 (1986), 1-14; S. Schaten, "Zur Bearbeitung der Grabsteine mit Inschriften die Grabsteine des Apa Moyses-Kloster in Abydos," in *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies*, ed. D.W. Johnson and T. Orlandi (Rome: Centro Italiano Microfiches, 1993), 2:401-410; R. Schulz, "Vom Schutzgott zum Dämon," in *Lingua Restituta Orientalis: Festgabe für Julius Assfalg*, ed. R. Schulz and M. Görg (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1990), 311-320.

fate. Most of a critical section in the *vita* which relates the visit of the patriarch Severus of Antioch to Upper Egypt is missing. The *vita* as a whole does not tell us much about the development of the abbot's community, though he is portrayed as an able and much revered leader and one who carried on Shenoute of Atripe's legacy of adamant opposition to the Egyptian pagan community. He was a leader of a community of virgins like Shenoute. In one of his surviving letters, Moses uses Athanasius' treatise *On Virginity*, just as Shenoute used Athanasian material in his own sermons.<sup>2</sup> However, in spite of all the knowledge we have of Moses, there is no entry for him in the *Alexandrian Synaxarium* on his feast day 25 Epip (1 August).

Abba Moses' parents were pious Christians, who after hearing the Pentateuch read in church during Pascha week, vowed that they would dedicate a child to God and name him after the author of these five books, if God so granted. In due time the mother, Tshinoute, gave birth to an exceedingly beautiful child and she named him Moses. Stories of Abba Moses' extraordinary childhood abound from his biography.

In the story of his baptism, the presiding priest saw the likeness of a dove hovering over the boy as soon as he emerged from the water of the baptismal font. And when receiving the Eucharist, the celebrating priest saw a luminous hand approaching the boy's mouth. When the parents realized the promise of the boy, they entrusted that same priest of the village, named Theodore, to instruct him in the ways of a worthy spiritual life. A few years later, the bishop of his town was amazed at the young boy's ability to memorize scripture, (an otherwise common skill in ancient times) and particularly when Moses stood before him and recited the four gospels.

---

<sup>2</sup> There are a number of works by Shenoute which contain Athanasian material, including two well-known works entitled *I Am Amazed* and *I Have Been Reading the Holy Gospels*. For the former, see my "*I Am Amazed: Shenoute of Atripe's Endorsement of Alexandrian Theology in the White Monastery*," *Bulletin of the Saint Shenouda Coptic Society* 5 (1998-1999): 19-40; For further discussion of *I Am Amazed*, see E. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 151-158; M. Foat, "I Myself Have Seen: The Representation of Humanity in the Writings of Apa Shenoute of Atripe" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1996); T. Orlandi, "A Catechesis against Apocryphal Texts by Shenoute and the Gnostic Texts of Nag Hammadi," *Harvard Theological Review* 75 (1982): 85-95; S. Shoemaker, "Shenoute's *Contra Origenistas* and Gnosticism in Fifth-Century Upper Egypt" (paper delivered at the North American Patristic Society Annual Meeting, Chicago, May 1994); and A. Camplani, "Un Episodio della Ricezione del ΠΕΡΙ ΕΥΚΗΣ in Egitto: Note Di Eresiologia Shenutiana," in *Atti del I Convegno del Gruppo Italiano di Ricerca su "Origene e la Tradizione Alessandrina"*, ed. F. Cocchini, *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 57 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1997), 159-172. For further discussion of *I Have Been Reading the Holy Gospels*, see S. Emmel, "Shenoute's Literary Corpus" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1993), 951-952 and 1153-1157, and my "The Treatise *I Have Been Reading the Holy Gospels* by Abba Shenoute of Atripe (Discourses 8, Work 1): Coptic Text, Translation, and Commentary" (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, forthcoming).

The birth of Moses, according to his biography, was predicted by Shenoute of Atripe shortly before the latter's death. In this prophecy, Shenoute told of the coming feats of Abba Moses as a heralded monastic leader and a staunch enemy of latent pagan practices in the city of Abydos. From the time Abba Moses began his monastic life, as far as we know, he dedicated his work to these two causes.

Abydos was a longtime holdout of idol worship. The Egyptian province in general was well known for its many pagan cults. While idol worship decreased dramatically with the growth and governmental sponsorship of Christianity, certain practices, and apparently the worship of the god Apollo, continued well into the golden age of the Church. We are told that Abba Moses had a confrontation with such a pagan community well within his own neighborhood, during which the temple of Apollo was eventually destroyed and its priests were killed. Two other times Abba Moses encountered temples inhabited by demons, and there too Abba Moses came out victorious. In this regard Abba Moses was portrayed as a direct successor of one of the most anti-pagan monastic figures in the history of the Egyptian Church – Shenoute himself.<sup>3</sup>

Abba Moses' fame among his contemporaries lies more so in his ascetic life and the adoration he cultivated among his followers. We are told that Saint Severus of Antioch, who during his exile from his see remained in Egypt, made a visit to the monastery of Abba Moses and remained there for some time. Secular figures apparently paid regular visits to this same community. In one particular instance, a duke's son was warned by Abba Moses that he was needed further north for an emergency. Though not being told the nature of issue, the son proceeded north and found his father in battle defending the city of Antinoe against attacking Blemmyes. Because of his son's help, the general defeated this incursion, and thereby displayed the greatness of Abba Moses' clairvoyance and care for his admiring Christians.

Abba Moses of Abydos survived years that saw, on the one hand, assured imperial tolerance, and on the other, exile and expulsion. He also lived alongside monastic peers who were later lauded as the staunchest defenders of the "orthodox" faith in Egypt. Abba Moses finds in his company both patriarchal and monastic figures who have left a lasting record in the annals of Coptic history. Thus, the most difficult question to answer might be why Abba Moses has turned out to be a comparatively unknown figure. While that question might never be answered, a number of Moses' accomplishments can be verified.

---

<sup>3</sup> See discussion and citations in Emmel, "From the Other Side of the Nile: Shenute and Panopolis," in *Perspectives on Panopolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest*, ed. A. Egberts, B.P. Muhs, and J. Van der Vliet (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 95-113; and H. Behlmer, *Schenute von Atripe: De iudicio* (Turin, Museo egizio, Cat. 63000, cod. IV) (Turin: Museo egizio, 1996); and idem, "Historical evidence from Shenoute's *De extremo iudicio*," in *Sesto Congresso Internazionale di Egittologia: Atti* (Turin: Società italiana per il gas p.A., 1993), 2:11-19.

The earliest date attested for Abba Moses is 465/466, the year in which Shenoute of Atripe died.<sup>4</sup> The *vita* relates that Shenoute announced the birth of Moses shortly before he died. We are then told that Shenoute died on the 7th of Epip. The *vita* is not explicit as to how soon thereafter Moses was born. The narrative, nonetheless, places the beginning of Moses' life span in the second half of the fifth century,<sup>5</sup> and more likely in the late 460's or early 470's.

The next date occurs during the reign of Emperor Anastasius I. The *vita* speaks of a journey by the patrician Komete to the capital, where he relates to the emperor the deeds of Moses and his ascetic community. The emperor was so impressed that annual revenues were assigned to the monastery. If they are to be considered part of the *embole*, imperial gifts of wheat revenue attested by papyri for monasteries in Byzantine Egypt, then this event must be placed on or before 518, the year of Anastasius' death.

The *vita* recounts a visit by the patriarch Severus to Moses and his community. Severus began his exile in the Egyptian desert in 518, and eventually died in Sakha on 8 February 538. Severus missed the Christological dialogue sponsored by Justinian which took place between March 532 and March 533. However, he did make a journey to Constantinople in 535. It is after this journey that Severus most likely met Moses and stayed with his monks for ten days.<sup>6</sup> The title "defender of the faith" that was applied to Severus would have been an unlikely slogan during a period in which Egypt was not experiencing persecution. Thus, Severus' meeting with Moses most likely occurred during Justinian's reign, and probably after the patriarch's journey to the capital.<sup>7</sup>

An incident related to Severus' arrival to Egypt is a prophecy that Moses made concerning the interview at Constantinople between the emperor and the patriarchs Anthimus, Severus, and Theodosius. The emperor is said to have returned to the upright faith. The meeting is attested by other sources to have taken place at the end of the summer of 535; and thereafter, Severus returned to Egypt.<sup>8</sup>

We can determine another date in the *vita* of Moses. Cambridge 1699Y 2V<sup>0</sup> tells us that towards the end of his life Moses was visited by the son of the *dux*.

<sup>4</sup> See Emmel, "Shenoute's Literary Corpus," 4-5; idem, "Historical Circumstances," 94; and Behlmer, *Schenute*, lx, n. 150.

<sup>5</sup> Coquin, "Moses of Abydos," 1679.

<sup>6</sup> Coquin suggests that Severus met Moses soon after the former left Antioch in 518 (*ibid.*, 1680). He sites the place of death (Sakha) as the location where Severus remained from 535-538, though that does not prevent Severus from having visited other regions in Egypt. Coquin also cites the Panegyric of Saint Claudius which says that Severus stayed in the monastery of Abydos.

<sup>7</sup> The visit of Severus is substantiated by an entry in the Alexandrian Synaxarium on the 7th of Baramudah. In it Macrobius, the son of an official in the city of Kaw, is said to have accompanied Severus to the monastery of Abydos. Upon seeing the austere practices of Moses and the devoutness of the monks who followed him, Macrobius decides to join the community there. The whole narrative is devoid of any dates, and thus merely supplies us an additional anecdote related to Severus' presence in the monastery of Abydos.

<sup>8</sup> Coquin, "Moses of Abydos," 1680.

Upon the latter's arrival, Abba Moses warned him of impending danger in his father's region. Moses' concern was not in vain, for "at that time the Blemmyes had risen and gone north to the inner mountain in order to take over the city of Antinoe."<sup>9</sup> Assuming that this event is placed after Severus' visit to the monastery of Abydos, the incursion of the Blemmyes can be dated between 540 and 543.<sup>10</sup>

A final significant occurrence for dating purposes is the confrontation between Justinian and the monk Abraham of Farshut. James Goehring has already established that the date of the confrontation is between 537 and 548.<sup>11</sup> Before Theodora's death in 548,<sup>12</sup> Abraham had been summoned to Constantinople, met with the emperor on two occasions (with Theodora as his adamant advocate), and later returned to Atripe, Egypt.<sup>13</sup> At the White Monastery Abraham copied the "canons" of Shenoute, placed them in sealed vessels, and sent them to "the monastery of the Saint Abu Masis."<sup>14</sup> The *Alexandrian Synaxarium*, however, makes no mention of Moses himself. Abraham, when he came to visit the monastery after he had sent Shenoute's canons, was greeted by an unnamed superior of the community. Therefore, it can be safely assumed that the *terminus ante quem* for Abba Moses' death can be no later than 550, before which Abraham would have had enough time to leave Constantinople, stay in Atripe for a period of time, and send the canons to Abydos.

The state of the monastic community during and after the reign of Justinian remains a challenging problem. Virtually all sources, including the *Alexandrian Synaxarium*, the *History of the Patriarchs and vitae* of other major monastic figures during this period such as Daniel of Sketis, Abraham of Farshut, and Apollo of the Monastery of Isaac,<sup>15</sup> remain silent concerning the plight of the monasteries in

<sup>9</sup> For the unpublished Coptic text, see my "Abba Moses of Abydos."

<sup>10</sup> Coquin, "Moïse d'Abydos," 8.

<sup>11</sup> J. Goehring, "Chalcedonian Power Politics and the Demise of Pachomian Monasticism." (*Occasional Papers of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity* 15; Claremont, CA: Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1989), 9 and the reprint in idem, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 249.

<sup>12</sup> Frend, *Monophysite Movement*, 281.

<sup>13</sup> It is unlikely though that the confrontation would have occurred so close to the death of Theodora. No hint of an impending end to her life is found in the sources.

<sup>14</sup> Forget, *Synaxarion Alexandrinum*, 411.

<sup>15</sup> Apollo: Stephen of Heracleopolis Magna. *A Panegyric on Apollo* (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 394-395), ed. and trans. K.H. Kuhn (Louvain: Peeters, 1978); Abraham: His fragmentary *vita* and encomium remain unedited in White Monastery codices GB and GC, but discussed in Goehring, "Chalcedonian Power Politics"; Daniel: M.I. Guidi, "Vie et Récits de l'Abbé Daniel, de Scété." *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 5 (1900) 535-64; 6 (1901) 51-87; L.S.B. MacCoul in "When Justinian was Upsetting the World": A Note on Soldiers and Religious Coercion in Sixth-Century Egypt," in *Peace and War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis, S.J.*, ed. T.S. Miller and J. Nesbitt. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 106-113. The system of referring to codices of the White Monastery, and principally of Shenoute's works, were developed by Orlandi and Emmel for the Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari project; cf. T. Orlandi, "The Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari," *Computers and the Humanities* 24 (1990): 297-405.

Upper Egypt. We know for instance that Apollo left his original monastic home for another place with anti-Chalcedonian convictions. Neither Evagrius' *Ecclesiastical History* nor Zacharias of Mitylene's account supply much information about events in the Egyptian desert. While Zacharias prefers to publish the correspondence between the anti-Chalcedonian leaders, Evagrius at one point relates the deeds of three prominent Chalcedonian monks – Barsanuphius the Egyptian, Simeon, and Thomas.<sup>16</sup> No mention is made of violence among the monks in Egypt. The confrontation between Daniel of Sketis and imperial troops, found in the Bohairic Coptic version of his *vita*, is not found in the Greek Chalcedonian redaction.<sup>17</sup>

As for Abba Moses, it appears that he rebuilt his own community after leaving his first settlement under imperial pressure. In all other respects, the Coptic accounts of Abba Moses' community offer a unique picture of the period. There is no record of any violent confrontations between the Abba Moses' monks and imperial troops. Neither is there any evidence of the communities' monasteries being destroyed. At one point Justinian and his religious leanings are actually shown in good light. Severus is portrayed championing the orthodox faith in Constantinople. The *vita* of Abba Moses, otherwise, is mainly concerned with spiritual matters, not political statements.

Abba Moses is portrayed as very strict in his ascetic practices, both for himself and his disciples. Moses became such a revered father to his monastic community that monks claimed to have felt awe and fear towards him even while he sat in his own cell.<sup>18</sup> Moses also patterned his monastic settlement after the example of Shenoute of Atripe. While Shenoute's prophecy of the birth of Abba Moses seems to have been included in the primary *vita* only as an instrument of legitimacy and authority for Moses, Shenoute's ascetic practices and later the White Monastery canons were the means which Moses used to establish his reputation and raise a flourishing community.

Three main issues are dealt with in the *vita* of Moses of Abydos. The first concern is to show that the community of this abbot, and particularly its longevity, is based on the unity and cohesiveness of its members. This is illustrated in several instances. One monk is singled out who, "while performing great ascetic feats, was overcome with these two evil passions: impatience and quarrelling."<sup>19</sup> Later the monk is caught in the act of being offensive to a brother by Abba Moses himself, and while the rest of that episode has been lost, one can assume that the abbot counseled him to be less aggressive to his fellow monks. In one of the fragments edited in this thesis, Cambridge 1699Y f. 3, the very issue of quarreling and peaceful coexistence is shown to be a main topic of Moses' sermons. The author tells us

<sup>16</sup> Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV.13-15.

<sup>17</sup> MacCoull, "Coercion in Sixth-Century Egypt," 107, n. 1.

<sup>18</sup> From the encomium on Abba Moses. The relevant section is published by Leipoldt, *Sinuthii*, 213.

<sup>19</sup> Codex EL 121-122



that many visitors used to come to Moses on Saturdays and Sundays, and when summoned to speak, he would often emphasize vigilance “lest you sin against God and become angry at one another in vain.”<sup>20</sup> This harmonious community was therefore able to endure hardships, and particularly to survive well after other Upper Egyptian monasteries had suffered dissolution during the reign of Justinian I. We know from the *Alexandrian Synaxarium* that the monastery of Abba Moses continued to flourish after its founder’s death, and this was accomplished amid difficulties in the surrounding region as a result of staunch support for the anti-Chalcedonian cause. The strength of the community, guided later by the abbot’s letters and rules, is a testament to his leadership and diplomatic skills in an unstable environment.

A second concern of the *vita* is directly related to Shenoute of Atripe. A common title for Shenoute found in his own *vita* is “prophet.” While this is not unique to him *per se*, the same title has some importance in the narrative about Abba Moses. We are told that his birth was prophetically revealed, and that Shenoute himself predicted that Moses was the one “who will abolish the sacrifices of the pagans and overturn their temples.”<sup>21</sup> Moses’ own legitimacy and ability to undertake such a task is supported by Shenoute’s words right before his death. That Shenoute was not wrong in his prediction is something that the author of the *vita* attempts to show later in his account.

The prophecies concerning Moses continued later in the *vita*. We are told that a bishop saw Moses in a vision standing alongside two well-known monks, one of which is likely to be Antony.<sup>22</sup> Other similar incidents include the prediction of a siege of Antioch by Blemmyes, the fact that respect for Moses by the local rulers of the area was “because they regarded him as a prophet,”<sup>23</sup> and finally a prediction of the supposed conversion of Justinian to the Egyptian cause against Chalcedon, which is said to happen due to the efforts of Severus of Antioch, Anthimus of Constantinople and Theodosius of Alexandria at the imperial court. It is difficult to assess the purpose of such a statement in the *vita* considering the historical evidence we have about Justinian’s convictions, though it is similar in character to anti-Chalcedonian anecdotes found in related Coptic polemical literature.

A final concern of the *vita* of Abba Moses is his struggle with pagan communities in the surrounding region. Abba Moses is undoubtedly portrayed as a successor of Shenoute of Atripe in attempting to abolish pagan practice in Upper Egypt, and particularly around the Mount of Abydos and the city of Shmin. Shenoute was a formidable presence in the city of Shmin, according to Besa. He

---

<sup>20</sup> See my “Abba Moses of Abydos” for the Coptic text.

<sup>21</sup> Codex EL 11-12.

<sup>22</sup> My deduction is probable, though the passage containing this point is fragmentary. It comes before and after a break in the column of the manuscript. Right after the (missing) name of one of the two monks standing beside Moses is mentioned, the author writes “the father of all the monks.” This is a title commonly attributed to Antony of Egypt.

<sup>23</sup> Cambridge 1699Y f. 3 (pagination is lost from Codex EM).

fed multitudes from the city in time of famine,<sup>24</sup> met with dignitaries from there,<sup>25</sup> and entertained its bishop when he was on his way to Alexandria.<sup>26</sup> Shenoute's works were, on the one hand, benevolent towards Christians, yet quite violent towards pagans. According to Besa, Shenoute destroyed the idols of "Gesios' house"<sup>27</sup> and was a constant undermining force against pagan religious activity in the nearby towns.<sup>28</sup>

Moses' own efforts were sanctioned and predicted by Shenoute before his death. Moses' activities in the same city serve, at least for the purposes of the *vita*, as fulfillment of Shenoute's prophecy that Moses would be the rising star who would fight the local pagans. The legacy of Shenoute as the determined opponent of pagan religion was carried on by the abbot of Abydos. On the Mount, in a violent confrontation, Moses destroyed a temple dedicated to Apollo, and thirty pagan priests were killed inside it. North of the community's monastery, a demon named Bes challenged Moses' authority and moved into a temple, where he maimed and tormented those who passed by. The demon's eventual fate, surely grave, is missing from the *vita*'s fragments. Perhaps the most significant incident is at another point, when Moses is confronted by a demon in the form of a "tall Ethiopian with many demons following him and carrying lances like the Blemmyes."<sup>29</sup> The demon is so disturbed by Moses' courage and prowess that he declares that no home remains for him: "In Shmin Shenoute threw me out. He took away my temples and converted them into churches. Even my pagan children, he took from me. And he was not satisfied with this, but chased me out of the region."<sup>30</sup> This is significant since it is external evidence for Shenoute's activities against pagans and for the view that Moses continued this assault well after Shenoute's death.

Moses of Abydos was undoubtedly an able monastic leader. He formed and maintained a successful monastic community based on and inspired by Shenoute of Atripe's own model. Yet, it is an historical puzzle as to why Moses has remained so obscure. Certainly it is not because of his anti-pagan practices nor because of his strict asceticism. The *vita*, his encomium, letters, and canon all laud him for these very characteristics. Perhaps the most striking feature of the *vita* is Moses' close connection to Shenoute. He fought Shenoute's fight, taught the monks Shenoute's monastic discipline, relied on the same arguments of their consummate teacher, Athanasius, and his community thus survived without splintering, even in the face of relocation. The image of Moses of Abydos, then, must be formed by

<sup>24</sup> D. Bell, *The Life of Shenoute* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1983), 50.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 77. For an interesting discussion of Gesios, see Emmel, "From the Other Side of the Nile."

<sup>28</sup> For an opposing view on the presence of pagans in Egypt by Shenoute's time, see R. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>29</sup> Codex EL 49-50.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

the writings that directly relate to him. It is through them alone that the image of this early Byzantine Egyptian monk has become manifest.

Sadly, Abba Moses of Abydos is virtually an unknown personality today in the history of the Coptic Church. He is not mentioned in the regularly recited diptychs of the eucharistic liturgy or any other liturgical office. He does not have his own entry in the *Synaxarium*, though he is mentioned briefly on the feast days of the monk Saint Macrobius (Baramudah 7) and Abba Abraham of Farshut (Tubah 24). However, the information we can gather from his letters and rules, along with his biography, shed light on Abba Moses as a veritable leader of his region and times. He was undoubtedly a unique personality and saint with aura of an authority and zeal for monastic tradition.

### Introduction to Coptic Text of the *Vita*

The primary *vita*, extant in two White Monastery codices, is scattered in manuscript collections in Paris, Vienna, Cairo, Naples, and London. Codex EL is much better preserved than EM and provides the bulk of the leaves of the *vita*. There are approximately 32 pages preserved from EL, while only 16 survive in EM. Of these 48 pages, only the Thompson Collection fragments in Cambridge have remained unedited until now.<sup>31</sup> Otherwise, the texts have been studied and published by Amélineau,<sup>32</sup> Till,<sup>33</sup> Crum,<sup>34</sup> and Meunier.<sup>35</sup>

White Monastery Codex GB contains what appears to be an encomium on Abba Moses. As René-Georges Coquin suggested,<sup>36</sup> the source of this work is distinct from that of the *vita*. The subject matter differs markedly from the *vita*, and so should be treated as an additional historical source on the contemporary role of Abba Moses in sixth century Christian Egypt. Abba Moses' "canon," published by Coquin,<sup>37</sup> tells us very little about the abbot's personality, but they are informative in regards to his vision of asceticism among both male and female desert inhabitants under his supervision. There are also a number of letters written by Moses. They were published by Amélineau<sup>38</sup> and amendments were later supplied by Walter Till.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Antonella Campagnano proposed other dubious fragments as part of the primary *vita* in EL, Zoega 308 and British Museum 341 f.1. (cf. A. Campagnano, "Monaci Egiziani fra V e VI Secolo." *Vetera Christianorum* 15 (1978), 227). However, on both paleographical and topical grounds, neither portions appear to be related to Abba Moses.

<sup>32</sup> Amélineau, *Monuments*, 680-706 and 826-827.

<sup>33</sup> W. Till, *Koptische Heiligen-und Märtyrerverlegenden* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 108; Rome, 1936), 46-81.

<sup>34</sup> W.E. Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1905), 157-158.

<sup>35</sup> H. Munier, *Manuscripts Coptes* (Cairo, 1916), 53-54.

<sup>36</sup> Coquin, "Moïse d'Abydos," 3-4.

<sup>37</sup> R.-G. Coquin, "La 'Règle' de Moïse d'Abydos." *Cahiers d'Orientalisme* 20 (1988), 103-110.

<sup>38</sup> Amélineau, 693-701.

<sup>39</sup> Till, 61-63.

The unpublished Cambridge leaves, a translation of which is included here, are divided among the two primary White Monastery codices containing the text of the *vita*.<sup>40</sup> 1699Y<sup>a</sup> (two leaves) are in EL and 1699Y (three leaves) are in EM. The relative position of the 1699Y pages is clear from the subject matter that is common to both codices, particularly Paris 129<sup>12</sup> 94.<sup>41</sup>

### Translation of the Coptic *Vita*

#### *Codex EL 3-4: K 9557*<sup>42</sup>

[*text incomplete*] ...we are enjoined to follow his commandments. And in addition, he gave us the way by which we would bring our ship to port, so as to grow old in the harbor of salvation. Meanwhile, we are fearful that after this long life, after hunger, thirst and nightly vigils, after ceaseless meditations, a small hole might appear in the ship. It would then sink and its entire cargo would be lost.

For the devil never ceases to hunt down man, right up to his last breath. Indeed, if the righteousness of man ceases reaching for God, the devil overpowers him and draws him to perfidy, ignorance, and especially negligence, concerning which it is written, "All negligence is sinful." Now then, brethren, defend yourselves and fight him who fights with you, the devil, so that you preserve your humility and peace towards each other, but especially the purity of your bodies and your hearts. As for these, if you guard them, the devil will become ashamed and flee from you. It will then become manifest that you are sons of the saint, Abba Moses.

Though your God-loving brethren had written to us the life of our holy father Abba Moses, I initially did not wish to write because I know that I am uneducated in discourse and unequal to his achievements. Yet, I remember the proclamation of the Lord, "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away" (Matt. 5:42; cf. Luke 6:30). Therefore, I shall implore God who is above all that He might enable me to begin the discourse and give me what is beneficial to say to those who are listening. Listen now, O brethren, as I begin by the grace of God with [Abba Moses'] birth.

The parents of Abba Moses were God-fearing Christians. They kept the entire law of Christianity in the same manner as those who are custodians of the truth-bearing witness.

---

<sup>40</sup> Campagnano, 227-229.

<sup>41</sup> The overall structure of the *vita*, combining disparate leaves found in the two codices, is set out in convenient tables in Campagnano, 227-228.

<sup>42</sup> Till, 48-49.

*Codex EL 5-6: P 129<sup>12</sup> 90*<sup>43</sup>

The parents of Abba Moses were God-fearing Christians. They kept the entire law of Christianity in the same manner as those who are custodians of the truth-bearing witness. They attended church twice daily, in the morning and evening, and would taste their first fruits, their offerings, as well as their meal.

His father's name was Andrew and his mother's, Tshinoue.<sup>44</sup> God blessed everything that belonged to them, just as it is written, "It is the blessing of God that enriches" (Prov. 10:22). They had three sons - Abba Paul, Abba Joseph, Abba Elijah - and two daughters as well - Mary and Theodote. Then their mother ceased to bear children. For a long time the children grew, their parents having raised them in all knowledge and fear of God just as it says in [the book of] Solomon, "He who lives justly and acts righteously shall have blessed children" (Prov. 20:7).

It came to pass during Holy Week that his parents attended church services, just as I have previously stated. As they paid attention to that which was being read, they heard in the Pentateuch<sup>45</sup> how God spoke with [Moses] many times, about the wonders that God worked through his hands in the land of Egypt, and what God did for the children of Israel in the wilderness. They also heard that Moses spoke and God answered him in speech. Also, Moses entered the darkness of the place in which God dwelt, and God spoke to Moses just as two men converse with each other. His face, moreover, was glorified when God spoke with him. When they heard about all these things, great zeal for God entered their hearts, and so they passed the entire week.

When they returned home they did not cease speaking with each other about the magnanimity of God and the great grace which God had bestowed upon [Moses]. Thus, the mother vowed in the fervor of her heart, "If God hears me and grants me a son, I shall name him after the great prophet Moses. If He permits him to grow and reach the age of five,

*Codex EL 7-8: Cambridge 1699Y<sup>a</sup> 1R<sup>o</sup>/V<sup>o</sup>*<sup>46</sup>

I shall offer him to His church so that he becomes a servant before the Lord for all the days of his life. May the Lord also bestow His grace upon him so that he might be named among the saints." As for her husband, he agreed with all this. And thus they completed Holy Week rejoicing and humbly believing, just as if God had already fulfilled their wish.

Before long, God heard their entreaty, just as it is written, "He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him" (Ps. 145:19), and the wife conceived. When the

<sup>43</sup> Amélineau, 680-681.

<sup>44</sup> I follow Coquin's transliteration of the Coptic *jinoute*; cf. "Moses of Abydos," 1679.

<sup>45</sup> Literally "the five books of Moses."

<sup>46</sup> See my "Abba Moses of Abydos" for the Coptic text.

days had been completed, she gave birth to an exceedingly beautiful son, in accordance with what was written about the lawgiver: "They saw that he was beautiful" (cf. Ex. 2:2). Thus they named the young son "Moses" saying, "When we asked the great prophet, he implored Christ on our behalf and He bestowed him upon us." They then celebrated a great feast on the day of his birth saying, "May righteousness go before him." And the young boy grew in beauty, by the grace of God.

As for the miracle that came to pass on the day he was born, it is fitting for us to commemorate it. There was a priest in that city whose name was Theophanes and who was also called Theodore. Truly, he was a God-fearing man who witnessed many revelations. When he had prepared the baptistery, the children to be baptized were brought to him. When he took hold of the young boy Moses, immersed him in the pool, and immediately took him out of the water, he saw the likeness of a white dove hovering over the head of the boy. After the priest returned to his senses, a voice immediately came to him saying, "Baptize! Do not be afraid." And thus he baptized the rest [of the children] joyfully and with confidence.

When...[several letters missing from lines B12-15]...to baptize them and that they would be given the Eucharist. But when he came to the young boy Moses to give him communion, the priest saw a luminous hand approaching the mouth of the boy.

*Codex EL 9-10: Cambridge 1699Y<sup>a</sup> 2R<sup>o</sup>/V<sup>o</sup>*<sup>47</sup>

When the liturgy ended, the priest withdrew and prayed to the Lord to instruct him concerning that which he had seen. And while praying he fell into a trance<sup>48</sup> and words came to him saying, "This young boy...[most of lines A13-14 missing]...before God. And it is you who will become his spiritual father and raise him in the fear of the Lord." After this was said to him, he came to his senses and summoned the parents of the young boy. He said to them, "Pay heed to this boy, for he shall become a prophet of the Lord." His parents declared, "It is to the Lord that we have pledged him." [The priest] blessed them and they returned to their home.

Then, another story came to my mind. It is not necessary for us to repeat it in order to know that he was prophetically revealed before he was born. For the Lord declared: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you and I ordained you as a prophet" (Jer. 1:5).

The guardians of the truth said that in the course of the illness that led to the death of the prophet Abba Shenoute of the mountain of Atripe, the brethren gathered around him. They told him about the riots that took place in the eparchy of Psoi and that much blood was shed there. Also, the pagans were offering their sacrifices and performing their abominable worship on the Mount of Abydos. They

<sup>47</sup> See my "Abba Moses of Abydos" for the Coptic text.

were neither afraid of God nor ashamed before the piety of the righteous rulers. Since the governors who were holding office at that time were avaricious, they purposely overlooked [the pagans]. Thus, the pagans, out of enmity, began to speak out boldly and would gather on the Mount of Abydos regularly and perform their sacrifices.

As for these events, while they were being related the prophet Abba Shenoute became increasingly sorrowful...[*most of lines B13-14 missing*]... Afterwards, when he had gone into a trance for a short time, he prophesied to those who were gathered around him and said: “Be long-suffering my brethren and my sons, for it is yet a while before a star shines over the Mount of Abydos, and a man shall

***Codex EL 11-12: P 129<sup>12</sup> 91<sup>49</sup>***

rise from that village and make his home near the desert escarpment next to the cultivated land. It is he who will abolish the sacrifices of the pagans and overturn their temples. Their malice will be made void and peace will come to pass during his days and forevermore.” When these predictions had been made by the prophet Abba Shenoute, he died on that same day, the seventh of the month of Epip.<sup>50</sup>

Now the pagans, when they heard these words, became agitated and were filled with fear. They kept looking for the fulfillment of this prediction. They were saying among themselves: “Undoubtedly, it is a ruler who will arise and degrade us.” Yet, they did not (truly) believe the prediction. It was during the office of our Christ-bearing father, Abba Moses, that the last words [of Abba Shenoute] were in accord with deeds, and the prophecy was fulfilled.

Let us now return to the story of the young boy Moses. When he reached the age of five, his parents took him to the church as an offering and placed him in front of the sanctuary. They called the priest, named Theodore, about whom we have previously spoken, and said to him: “This young boy, we give him to God until the day of his death. Now then, you are henceforth his father. If you neglect the frailty of his soul, it is you who will render an account to God for him.” The priest responded: “Indeed, I have been mindful of him. For on the day on which I baptized him I truly saw the grace of the Holy Spirit Who came down upon him. Now then, return to your home in peace. The Lord has accepted him from you, just as with Samuel at the time when he became a prophet of the Lord” (cf. 1 Sam. 1:27-28). His parents accepted the blessing of the priest and returned to their home thanking the Lord.

As for the child, he grew better every day, like Samuel. He was physically strong and perfect through the grace of God. The priest disciplined him, having taught him...[*end of section*]

<sup>48</sup> Literally “a trance fell upon him.” See 1699Y<sup>a</sup> 2R<sup>o</sup> lines A9-10 in my “Abba Moses of Abydos.”

<sup>49</sup> Amélineau, 682-683.

<sup>50</sup> July 14.

*Codex EL 15-16: P 129<sup>12</sup> 92*<sup>51</sup>

The boy stood as [the bishop] had commanded him, and by the grace of God recited the four gospels without omitting a single verse so that the bishop and the people with him were amazed. The bishop said: “Truly, what I have heard about this young boy is true.” Then someone from the congregation approached the bishop privately and said to him: “If this matter pleases you...[rest of column missing]...That same evening the bishop saw a vision. The next morning he described it to the metropolitan clergymen. (And the latter, for their part, related the story to the clergymen of their own towns.) “I saw,” he said, “a vision last evening in which the young boy Moses was wearing a monastic habit and a crowd of monks stood along the way...[rest of column missing]...Behold, someone came near me and said to me: ‘Do you know this man who is standing between these [other] two?’ I replied, ‘He is Moses.’ He said to me, ‘Do you know him?’ I said to him, ‘Yes.’ He further asked me, ‘Who are the other two men who are standing on either side of him?’ I stated that I did not know them. He said to me, ‘You have told the truth, for you do not know them. But I will introduce you to them...[rest of column missing]...the father of all the monks. In addition, this youth whom you see, he too will become a father for a multitude of monks. Furthermore, many people will be saved through his teaching. Now then, do not drive him away from this place for God will purify this defiled mountain through him.’ As for all that I saw, I have not concealed anything from you.” The clergymen confided in him, “We have also been aware that a holy spirit dwells in him...”...[rest of column missing; end of section]

*Codex EL (pagination lost): Cairo 9244<sup>13</sup>*<sup>52</sup>

...I am afraid lest the adversary pursue my soul or give it away and trample my life on the ground, just as it is written: “How would I loathe the creation of God?” (cf. Titus 1<sup>16</sup>). For one of the saints said, “I have not reckoned any from among all the sinners to be more disgraceful than me, even him who has shed blood...”...[rest of page fragmentary]...he embraced...the books of Moses and the Proverbs of Solomon. As it was a source of temptation, he listened...[end of column]...After fourteen days, the woman, that is, the mother of Abba Moses, gave birth to a son and named him after his father Andrew. Then also in that same week [Moses’] sister gave birth to a baby boy. She named him Abraham...[end of section]

*Codex EL 49-50: K 9554*<sup>53</sup>

When they had heard [the things that Moses had said], they chose forty men armed with spears and sent them to lie in ambush throughout Abydos in order to

<sup>51</sup> Amélineau, 683-685.

<sup>52</sup> Munier, 53-54.

<sup>53</sup> Till, 49-51. This section approximately parallels Codex EM 37-38 (P 129<sup>12</sup> 95; Amélineau, 685-687), where Amélineau’s edition supplies additional material preceding the parallel section.



kill Abba Moses and the brethren. For (the latter) were not able to travel north for the consecration because imperial soldiers were stationed on the edges of town, and also, because a band of the Mazikes (were in the area). Yet, Abba Moses and the brethren, as soon as they arrived in the region, went up the hill. They were five in all: Abba Moses, Abba Elijah, Abba Paul, Abba Andrew, and Abba Abraham, his nephew.

Abba Joseph, their brother who was in the village, heard about the matter and went to find his brothers, located them, and approached them on the hill. An angel met him and pointed them out on the hill. [Joseph] then went to them and told them how [the pagans] were plotting against them.

Abba Moses said: “Let us stay here tonight until we see what God will do for us.” Abba Moses and the brethren stood in prayer from the evening until the seventh hour of the night. And behold, an angel spoke with Abba Moses saying: “Be strong, O Abba Moses! Direct yourself to pray for the destruction of the temple of Apollo, for the Lord has heard you and He will take vengeance upon all the temples of Abydos and their priests forever.” Abba Moses then prayed, saying: “O God who took vengeance on the priests of Bel through Daniel!<sup>54</sup> Having destroyed his temple and the priests of Baal, He killed them by the hand of Elijah. Now then, O Lord, may Your name be glorified. Just as You destroyed the tower that the sons of men built at another time, You also scattered the people who were gathered around it. Now again, O Lord, may Your holy name be glorified!”

Immediately<sup>55</sup> the temple shook and the pagans became fearful. They opened the doors and came out, each one fleeing to his family. Only the priests remained since they were confident that their god was not going to allow any evil to befall them. They claimed that their gods came to them inside their own temples, and so they remained there until destruction came upon them. And immediately the temple of Apollo fell and twenty-three pagan priests as well as seven ministers were killed.<sup>56</sup> At dawn,<sup>57</sup> another four temples fell. Thus no man came to the Mount of Abydos to offer sacrifice from then on, since those who were deceiving them died. And the pagans and the sons of the priests finally became Christians.

Abba Joseph the bishop slept with his ancestors. In his place Arius became bishop. But Arius also died before he had completed a year [as bishop]. Afterwards, Apion became bishop in his place; he was an exegete, knowledgeable in the Scriptures, and continually teaching about the impending judgment. He is the one who baptized the pagans and the sons of the pagan priests, great peace having arrived during his days [as bishop].

<sup>54</sup> The reference here to Bel is possibly the unnamed gold idol set up for worship by King Nebuchadnessar in Babylon (cf. Dan 3).

<sup>55</sup> For the remainder of this section, Till's edition (49-51) is used.

<sup>56</sup> The author makes a distinction between two classes of pagan priesthood, *oueeb* and *hont*, which are otherwise difficult to render in translation.

<sup>57</sup> Literally “the hour of light.”

Let us now return to the story about the saint, Abba Moses. As he was coming from the mountain, the devil saw [Moses] looking like a mighty man who had built his home after being victorious in war. Whereupon, the devil was intimidated and, having taken the likeness of a tall Ethiopian with many demons following him and carrying lances like the Blemmyes,...[few letters missing]...[the devil] leaped and cried out saying, “Who is this man who is doing this to me?” After a little while, he screamed, weeping and saying, “Woe unto me, I, the wretched one, for I have been cast out of every place, even this house that was left for me. See how I have been thrown out of it and left outside like a beggar. In Shmin Shenoute threw me out. He took away my temples and converted them into churches. Even my pagan children, he took from me. And he was not satisfied with this, but chased me out of the region...” [end of section]

*Codex EL 75-76: P 129<sup>12</sup> 93<sup>58</sup>*

“...the consolation of this world, whether by food, clothing, or all bodily comfort. I believe that God will give you two-fold in the other world [all] the things of which you have deprived yourselves. And as for everything that you will ask of God, God will bestow it upon you. For certainly, my heart and my body are grieved when I examine your dwelling places”...[end of column]... “in his presence on the day of my death, for my soul has confounded me greatly.” Our father said to him: “Have you not heard Paul say, ‘Without struggle it is impossible to please God?’ (cf. Phil 1:20; Gal. 3:4). Now then, my son, follow what pleases God and preserve the faith of your fathers and God will be with you.” He thereafter blessed him and thus...[end of column]...and thus these three saints stood before the emperor and confessed the orthodox faith fearlessly. They are Saint Severus, Anthimus the archbishop of Constantinople, and Saint Theodosius of Alexandria. God turned the heart of the emperor towards the upright faith and, having benefited from their visit, he dismissed them in peace. The prophecy of our father Abba Moses...[end of column]...and thus it came to pass. For truly, I have already stated that everything that he said, God would cause it to happen. The secretary contributed so much to the fame of our father Abba Moses’ prophecy that this [prophecy] reached the emperor and he marveled at how He revealed his plans to his saints. When the patriarch, Saint...[end of section]

*Codex EM (pagination lost): Cambridge 1699Y IR<sup>0</sup>/V<sup>059</sup>*

...the mountain. They informed the saint, Abba Moses, concerning the patriarch, saying, “He is coming to you.” But, our father, took three brothers with him and went out to the road by the place which is called “Korx.”<sup>60</sup> When they met [the

<sup>58</sup> Amélineau, 687-688.

<sup>59</sup> See my “Abba Moses of Abydos” for the Coptic text.

<sup>60</sup> Literally “raven’s beak.”

patriarch] they kissed his hands and his feet and said to him, “It is good that you have come, O our father the good shepherd, the fighter for the faith, the judge of the truth. Truly you have become like the holy Athanasius in your doctrine and you shall receive the crown of the holy Dioscorus.” The patriarch Severus said, “You have prophesied well for us! For I too think this is what the Lord has determined for me.” Afterwards they walked together until they entered the monastery and he spent ten days among them in a tranquil place.

He prayed in all their houses and he gave them all communion with his [own] hands on a day that our father had chosen for us, when we celebrated the liturgy by ourselves. Having given us...*[few letters missing]*...at the tenth hour of the evening, he blessed each one of us and departed from us...*[end of column]*...*[brought]* to Abba Moses to receive a blessing. When he met him he said to him, “Bless me for I am on my way to the Emperor.” Abba Moses answered him, “O patrician, watch yourself and remain steadfast in the faith of your fathers.” Now the patrician preferred pleasing people, and he said, “What shall I do, my father, that I may not also cause the Emperor any grief?” Thereupon, our father prophetically proclaimed concerning [the patrician] and suddenly said to him, “Well...you have transgressed the orthodox faith...*[most of lines A24-32 missing]*...and thus it came to pass. When [the patrician] then [decided to] please the Emperor and come into communion with the adherents of [the Council of] Chalcedon he received the governorship of the Thebaid.

God incited [the region] against him and removed him from the governorship which [the Emperor] gave to him, having extorted a great deal of money from him, so that this man, who was prosperous with many goods, became destitute. And I testify to you that alms were collected for him that his body might be buried.

You have seen, O brethren, how the discourse of the saints has taken effect. It is the Holy Spirit Who speaks through all of them...*[end of section]*

### *Codex EL 97-98: K 9556<sup>61</sup>*

But he said to them: “Be patient my sons, for you will truly see the first solidus that he earned. Everything that he has obtained He will take away so that he will not benefit at all. And as for the second solidus that he obtained, and everything [else] that his parents had obtained for him, He shall take them away so that [the man] will need mercy before he dies.” And thus without delay all the soldier’s possessions were brought to naught. He would go to the gate of the monastery and beg, just as the prophecy of the saint [predicted]. You have seen O brethren, how evil is cruelty and what is its end result - the end of all merciless men.”

It happened on a certain day that a soldier came to him weeping and saying, “My father, they have taken a hundred solidii unbeknownst to me. I questioned the people in whose house I live and they said, ‘We swear to you.’” Our father said,

<sup>61</sup> Till, 51-52.

“Bring these people to me.” The soldier then went and brought to him a man and his two sons. Our father said to the soldier, “Swear to me that if you find your gold you will not hand over the guilty party to the governors, nor act with any malice against him.” When he had sworn an oath, our father Abba Moses said to the young boys, “Fear God! Return the man’s possessions to him.” As for them, they continued to deny [it]. But then, the spirit of God engulfed the saint, Abba Moses, and he rose and took hold of the younger of [the two boys]. He said, “Truly, you shall not leave this place without confessing what you have done. Otherwise, God will take vengeance on you now in the midst of those present.” At that moment the boy became afraid and confessed that it was he who stole [the money], and thus the soldier secured the gold. [Abba Moses] commanded him not to say anything and he dismissed them in peace.

When Abba Isaac of the mountain of Erebe heard this, he got up and went to him. He remained with him a few days. He saw the asceticism of the brethren and their deep humility. When he returned to his dwelling place...[*end of section*]

*Codex EL 111-112: K 9555*<sup>62</sup>

...shines in him more than the sun, just as the Lord had said.

After these things [happened], the citizens of these two villages came and prostrated themselves before our father Abba Moses and pleaded with him, for an evil demon, named Bes,<sup>63</sup> had entered the temple north of the monastery. He would come out and afflict those passing by. Some of them he blinded in one eye. In other cases, their hands would shrivel up. He would cripple others in the feet. In some, he caused facial deformities. Some he would make deaf and dumb. Indeed many saw him leaping down from the temple and transforming his appearance many times. Thus that demon did much harm, as long as God allowed [it], until his miracles would become manifest.

The saint, Abba Moses, took with him seven brethren who were mighty in the faith. They were Abba Paul, Abba Andrew, Abba Elijah, Abba Joseph, Abba Psate and Abba Phoebamon. I, the sinner, was also there. He took us and went out in the evening. The saint said to us, “Pray continuously that we might find favor with God.” But when we began to pray the ground under us began to shake and a great noise resembling lightning and thunder was heard around us. Our father said, “Do not be afraid. These are demonic deceptions. It is his great boldness that we witness.” As for us, we carried on and remained in prayer. Later, in the middle of the night, the demon cried out, “How long will you trouble us, O Moses?! Know that I shall not grow afraid of you, nor will your prayers be able to do anything to me. It is in vain that you now hold vigil. Flee! Do not die and kill those who are with

<sup>62</sup> Till, 52-54. This section coincides with Codex EM 89-90 (Zoega 214; Amélineau 689-90). Given the fuller text, Till’s edition is utilized here.

<sup>63</sup> On the significance of Bes, see Schulz, “Vom Schutzgott zum Dämon,” and more recently D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), esp. 129-130 for a discussion of this incident.

you. For I have killed many who were proud like you.” He then shrieked like a young animal. Sometimes he sounded like horses. Other times it was the sound of horses that we heard. And other times it was the sound of many [horses] stampeding towards us, but they did not come close to us. At certain moments he would shake the place in which we stood, as though it would fall down on us, and one of us fell on his face because of the way he shook the ground beneath us. Our father, though, took hold of us and held us up saying, “Do not be afraid. Rather, be courageous and you shall see the glory of God...” *[end of section]*

***Codex EL 115-116: K 9553***<sup>64</sup>

They came to the monks and the Lord granted healing through them. Because of this, many wives persuaded their husbands and they came together and became monastics. The latter were in monasteries and the former in convents. Abba Reuben consecrated a church for them and named it after Mary. I bear witness to you that some who were monks spent thirty years without seeing the faces of their children...*[some letters missing]*...without seeing their siblings or their children saying, “We have already died. Our concern is not for a son or a brother or father or mother.” They fulfilled the saying of the Lord: “He who comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and his children, he cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:26).

It happened one day that one of the brethren approached our father and asked him if he could go and visit his relatives...*[few letters missing]*...He said, “I am not in the habit of receiving such a request from the brethren, because they [usually] do not wish to see their relatives, having fulfilled the saying of the Lord: “No one who has left behind a house, brother or sister, father or mother, son or field for the sake of my name shall not receive a hundred fold in the coming age” (Luke 18:29-30)...*[end of section]*

***Codex EL 119-120: BM 341 f. 1***<sup>65</sup>

...that I may become a solitary so that the Lord would have mercy on us on the day of our death.” He then obeyed her, so she took him and brought him to one of the believers who were at the entrance so that they might present him to our father. As for the mother, she too went to the virgins and remained with them.

The faithful, however, informed the father of the young boy saying, “Behold, your son has come wishing to see you.” But he said, “My son is not of any concern to me, for I have already died. What do I have to do with my son?!” The little boy nevertheless stood weeping. When the brethren saw that he was orphaned - not only did his father not receive him, but even his mother rejected him - one of the

<sup>64</sup> Till, 54-55, beginning with column B.

<sup>65</sup> Crum, 157-158 or Till, 55-57.

brethren had pity on him and took him at dawn and placed him near the water-wheel. He said to him, "Watch closely because all the brethren come here to draw water. I too will come following your father. Come quickly and grasp him." When the father of the boy was going to draw water, the monk followed him. When they came to the waterwheel, the monk beckoned the little boy saying, "Behold, your father!" The [boy] came to greet him. But the boy's father noticed his son and threw the water jug on the trough and fled. The young boy then cried out, "I am Severus your son!" His father, however, continued running until he no longer heard his voice. And he went into his cell and fell down on his face and cried to God saying, "O Lord, you know that it is with all my soul that I renounced the world. Now then, my Lord, do not allow my seed to become estranged from me." Immediately, God heard his prayer. The monk whom we have previously mentioned approached our father and told him the whole story. Immediately thereafter [Abba Moses] had the young boy and his father summoned. When they met each other

*Codex EL 121-122: K9558*<sup>66</sup>

[the father] cried for a long time. Our father said to him, "Take your son with you, for I know that God will save him from evil if you struggle with him." His father said, "Be merciful and give him to one of the elders so that he might be raised in the *[three letters missing]* and the fear of the Lord. It is enough for me only to see his face." Our father said to him, "Do not be disobedient, for truly just as you ran to God, he also ran and I believe that he will arrive before you." When our father had prophesied in this way about the young boy, he commanded that he be dressed in the monastic habit and given to his father. I testify to you that within a year from that day the little boy rested and went to the Lord. The prophecy of the saint was fulfilled just as he had stated it to his father ("He shall arrive before you").

You have seen, O brethren, the strength of these holy men, who rejected the world with all of their heart, carried their cross, and followed their Lord.

There was one of the brethren who, while performing great ascetic feats, was overcome by these two evil passions: impatience and quarreling. Our father Abba Moses was pained concerning him when he saw the great struggles that [the monk] endured and he prayed to God on his behalf.

One day, while he was upset with a brother over a small matter, the ascetic brother abruptly jumped up and cursed his fellow monk. At the same time our father passed by. When the ascetic brother saw him, he left and took hold of [our father] saying, "Come, my father, and see the great injustice that this brother has done to me." But through reverence, Abba Moses said to him, "This brother...*[end of section]*"

<sup>66</sup> Till, 57-58.

*Codex EL 127-128: P 129<sup>12</sup> 94<sup>67</sup>*

...While this multitude of the pious went through such a famine, I attest to you that not a meal was offered to him until he was prepared for burial at the time when he left his body. You have seen, O brethren, how the word of the saints works. It is the Holy Spirit that speaks through all of them. Observe, further, what sort of outcome there is for those who please men more than God. For it is written: "The Lord shall scatter the bones of those who please men" (Ps. 52:5).

One of the brethren approached him one day and said to him, "My father, if the monk guards the commandments that were given to him and passes his life in that which is proper, and yet is not able to perform great feats of asceticism but rather accepts only all that is necessary for the monastic life, shall the glory in which John the Patrician, the son of Komete, is basking now on earth, be given to him in heaven, once he has left this life?"

Our father answered him and said, "If it were only the degree of glory of John, the son of Komete, that shall be given to the monk who guards his life without stain, truly even Moses would no longer spend the day in the *schema*!" It was in order to reveal the glory that awaits the righteous that he made this statement.

It happened at that time that the son of the duke came to survey the cities of the South and went out of his way to our father Abba Moses to receive a blessing from him. When [Abba Moses] saw him, he said to him, "Make haste and go north for your father needs you." The young man, though, was disturbed by the order and said to the saint, "Has my father died?" He said to him, "No, but hurry and go north to your father because he needs you." It was not in vain that Abba Moses had said this

*Cambridge 1699Y 2V<sup>068</sup>*

but rather at that time the Blemmyes had risen and gone north to the inner mountain in order to capture the city of Antioe. And as soon as they moved toward the mountain, Abba Moses knew by the Spirit (about this circumstance). Therefore, he continued to urge the duke's son to travel northward. For he was a mighty man and a fighter who knew the elements of warfare. And indeed, as soon as he went to the city, the barbarians about whom we spoke came out against Antioe. And the son of the duke performed many brave deeds in that battle until he defeated the barbarians, while God gave salvation to the whole city through him. The duke's son became famous since the prophecy of our father had been fulfilled so that they marveled at his perfect knowledge and the way that God informed his saints about what was going to happen. You have seen, O beloved, these great favors which

<sup>67</sup> Amélineau, 701-703.

<sup>68</sup> Cambridge 1699Y 2V<sup>0</sup> here supplies a continuation of the narrative provided by the Paris leaves, beginning with Column A, line 9; see my "Abba Moses of Abydos" for the Coptic text.

God has bestowed on his saints. Let us return, though, to the life of these men...[*end of section*]

*Codex EM (pagination lost): Cambridge 1699Y 3R<sup>o</sup>/V<sup>o</sup><sup>69</sup>*

...even if we will not be able to give a hundred, let us give sixty or thirty - that is to say, lest we do not become perfect like men of this sort. Let us be zealous to be found following in their footsteps, with our lamps full (of oil) in order that we might enter the bridal chamber with the guests.

For He says through the prophet, "If a single grape falls from its bunch, it is said, 'Do not destroy it for the blessing of the Lord is in it' (cf. Is. 65:8). Thus also, if we lose purity and humility, we would not be cast out, but rather we will be recognized, for the sign of our fathers shall be found among us, and a small place in the kingdom of the heavens will be given to us."

Let us return now, O brethren, to the discourse. They were travelling to our father Abba Moses from every place because of various sicknesses and they would return joyfully because each one received that for which he had come. As for the people who suffered injustice at the hands of the rulers, he used to write concerning them and [the rulers] would forgive them as soon as they received his letters, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Now many multitudes used to come to him on Saturdays and they would stay until Sunday to receive communion from him. The women as well and their children would go to him along with the virgins. On the eve of Sunday if they [...] meditate and read and if they stopped, he would speak with them about the word of God. He used to say to them, "Be vigilant, my children, lest you sin against God and become angry at one another in vain. The life in this world is nothing and we are strangers [in it], for we are like a shadow – during the day we live, but on the morrow we do not live. Who indeed is left in this world that we too might be left? Where are our fathers who brought us forth? Now then, keep watch over your children and your brothers because we shall be questioned regarding their souls. For it is written, 'Each one shall help his brother' (cf. I John 3:16). Keep watch over your beds with every purity and observe Saturday and Sunday and the days of Lent and the (feast) days of the saints, in order that our fathers the apostles would establish them for us. The wedding is honorable in everything and the marriage bed is pure from prostitution and adultery. It is these that God will judge. You are a Christian! Guard yourself! As for the one who is married, let him keep himself for his wife. He who is not married, let him guard himself against prostitution, for he is not able to endure the eternal fire in Hades. Truly you have found [the Scripture] saying, "God has struck down twenty-three..."[*end of section*]

---

<sup>69</sup> See my "Abba Moses of Abydos" for the Coptic text.



***Codex EM (pagination lost): P 129<sup>12</sup> 97<sup>70</sup>***

“...He who commits sin, let him repent and keep the fast of Wednesday and Friday and not transgress them, and even more the holy Forty Days during which it is proper for all Christians to mourn. For if the man mortifies himself, he remembers his sins and fear God. When he eats and drinks, he becomes forgetful of God just as it is written, ‘Israel ate and drank and forgot God who created it’ (cf. Hosea 8:14). What sin is greater than this, that the man forget God who created him? Now then, my sons, remain vigilant and do not incur the wrath of God because the devil hunts man until his last breath. Do not say, ‘I have committed many sins. God will not forgive me.’ No! Do not despair of repentance from sin, which will return you to him. Repent, O my beloved, and God will accept your repentance from you. But do not return to your vomit like a dog who returns to his vomit and is despised (cf. Prov. 26:11). Let us turn, then, to God with all of our heart and he will forgive us our sins.”

It was these and other things [Abba Moses] was teaching the people. He was loved by everyone because his speeches were convincing and we never saw him angry. He lived in great humility in [our] midst like a child. As for his way of life, we will not be able to speak about it, for we are not able to achieve the measure of his successes.

And thus in those days the brethren increased and there was great peace and zeal for God and countless ascetic works: prayer, numerous meditations, manual labor, and vigils. As for Abba Moses, he saw their eagerness for virtue, how each one was zealous for virtue. Therefore he rejoiced with them, seeing their perseverance. Whenever one spoke with him saying, “My father,” he would respond, “God is the father of us all. But all of us, we are brethren. For many of you have attained the status of paternity.” [Abba Moses] taught everyone humility and bodily purity.

He used to say to us many times, “Recitation and manual labor will chase away the demons,” and again, “The purification of the body is prayer and vigils. But it is humility that keeps watch over the labors of man for him. O man who has known the snares of the devil is the man for whom everyone is of value, and he does not despise anyone at all. Man is also created by the hands of God...”*[end of section]*

***Codex EL (final page): K 9559<sup>71</sup>***


---

<sup>70</sup> Amélineau, 691-693.

<sup>71</sup> Till, 58. In the overall structure of the *vita*, extent fragments of two incidents during Abba Moses' life appear to directly precede K 9559. Paris 129<sup>12</sup> 96 relates an event in which the intercessory influence of the abbot “as a prophet” is highlighted. K 9496 relates the last days of the abbot, the commission to his disciples to maintain the community, and miracles that happened because of him after his death. Due to the fragmentary nature of both of these portions, they will not be included in the translation here. They appear in Amélineau, 704-706 and Till, 59-61.

Thus did our Lord wish to leave him in his suffering for a long time. But He (finally) gave him rest and took him to Himself, and all the more because he saw the joy of the brethren who died like him [*sic*] so that he might rejoice with them in the kingdom of heaven.

As for you, brethren, rejoice in the Lord, be glad, and celebrate all the more since there is this great ambassador with the Lord. Blessed are you now, according to what is written: "Blessed is he who has his seed in Zion and a kinsman in Jerusalem" (Is. 31:9). Peace be with you all, brethren. The Lord shall bless you, empower you and save you from every evil thing. He shall bring you to his kingdom that is in heaven. The grace, mercy, peace and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and our King, be with you all...[*end of text*]

### Translation of the Canon of Abba Moses<sup>72</sup>

[*incomplete text*] strong. Let your hearts be firm (cf. Jas 5:8). Keep yourselves, brethren, from exchanging harsh words among yourselves, or a word which would hurt your brother, especially a word from the scripture. I have heard that someone exchanges words in such a manner.

Shall we not bring anger from God unto ourselves, O arrogant haters of one another, when we use scripture as a weapon? Henceforth, when one shall dare to utter a word from the scripture in this way to his neighbor to anger him, he who dwells in this holy place and your entire congregation shall find it fit to curse him. [Shall we do this] to cut off an ignorant man or so that one may know the matter more accurately? As for myself, behold, I have cautioned you not to invite a grave matter upon yourselves, for this is not our model, brethren, after these hardships which we have accepted. The Lord Christ Jesus shall bless everyone who is attentive and who shall guard himself from telling any word to his neighbor which will grieve him or anger him through it.

It is because you have questioned me regarding the blessed brother Abba Andrew, wishing to know what kind of monasticism he is in, that I shall inform you, brethren, that just as my tongue is unable to speak of the honor of the sun, the moon, and the stars, in their glory and their light, so also I am unable to speak of the honor of Andrew. He is a man who resembles the sun and the moon. He is a virgin without blemish, whose body is like pure gold and silver, since he is pure and wise while his words are few. And he is full of grace and joy while his flesh is abused. It is like the sun that he shines in his purity, and obedient like a small child. But blessed is he who emulates his life, having appeared in his days as the face full of joy.

---

<sup>72</sup> Abba Moses' canon appeared in an edition and French translation by R.-G. Coquin, "La 'Règle' de Moïse d'Abydos." *Cahiers d'Orientalisme* 20 (1988), 103-110.

Woe to me if I were to become a stranger to him! Blessed am I if I am worthy of him! These five days which he spent in this world have made him rich – the man who is ignorant of the things of the world, without evil, without guile, wise in his words and his deeds, worthy of love from God and his angels, lector, singer, lover of human beings, lover of his brethren, monk, the salt that is never insipid – Andrew – our brother, our son. [That will suffice] so that I may not prolong a discourse concerning him.

While my heart grieves that an angel has been lifted from me, I also rejoice that he has gone to the kingdom, having become encouraged that he shall become a gift in the hands of God. He shall tread upon a serpent, a basilisk, and all the power of the enemy (cf. Luke 10:19). I shall remain silent since my tongue is unable to speak of his honor.

As for us, brethren, it is proper for us to take care of our souls, day by day and hour by hour, since renunciation is the entire value of virginity, and so also not being sated with bread. A man or a woman who shall eat with Christ – it is not fitting for them to fill themselves completely because fasting is the sign of purity. But he who increases his nourishment, many are his ailments. It is God who is our hope. He is our monastery. He is also our congregation. He is also our home. He is our ministry. He is our place of rest. He is our happiness. It is He who shall receive us. As for the monastery, let us go and abandon it like our fathers. There is nothing sweet like Jesus, the Son of God. The Son of He who is sweet in his pleasantness.

Strengthen yourselves. The world is nothing (cf. 1 Jn 2:17). God is our hope. Rejoice and pray to God at all times. Our hearts shall be glad. Do not become timid nor become discouraged. We will not remain long. He who desires to know the taste of purity and the sweetness of God, let him keep these words and he shall see the help of God surrounding him at all times, a great calmness in his body, and protection for his heart and his thoughts.

Through the grace of the Holy Spirit He shall comfort your hearts (cf. 2 Thess 2:17). Be strong! May your hearts be firm. Grace be with you all (cf. Rom 16:20). Amen. The canon of our father Abba Moses the Archimandrite has ended.

## ***SAINT IN ONE HOUR - ST. PAESIA***

*Rodolph Yanney*

Paesia lived in the city of Menouf in the Nile Delta sometime in the last two decades of the fourth century. Her parents died while she was still very young, leaving for her a big fortune. Having no attraction for worldly luxuries, the pious girl made her house a hospice for the poor and homeless, and especially for the monks during their passage to or from the dessert. She tried thus to help everybody till the wealth was exhausted.

At that time some wicked men met her and persuaded her to stop her good work. Little by little she was overwhelmed by the life of the world, and being inexperienced she lost her chastity. The house where Christ had often been attened to became a center for the devil.

The sad news reached the nearby desert of Scets where there were four monasteries. The elders met together and addressing St. John the Short, who was the head of all four monasteries, they said, "Our sister Paesia has exercised towards us all charity in her power. Now we should pity her and with the wisdom bestowed upon you try to save her from the pit she has fallen in."

See the will of God in that decision, Abba John asked the elders to assist him by their prayers, and he went at once to the house of the poor girl. When he reached there her servant refused to admit him in saying, "Don't you have any shame to appear here, you monks, after you have swallowed all the fortune of my mistress and driven her into poverty." Abba John insisted, "Tell her I have come to her with a great help." When Paesia heard this she said to the maid, "These monks go often to the Red Sea where they find any precious pearls. Let him in."

Abba John entered and seeing Paesia he saluted her and sat beside her. Then looking at her in the face he said, "My daughter, what do you have to say to Christ about your present condition?" She was stunned, and the elder seeing her trouble, began to weep. "Why do you cry father?" she asked. He answered, "How should I not weep while I see Satan playing on your face?" Paesia asked again, "Is there any repentance for me?" "Yes," he answered, "but not in this place." Without hesitation, she said, "Then take me at once wherever you wish."

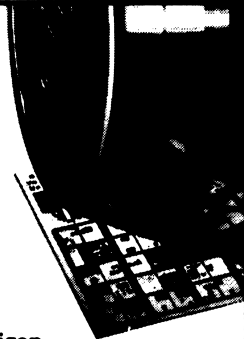
In an instant, both were in the way to the desert: Abba John was surprised that she even did not make any arrangement about her house. It was evening when they reached the edge of the dessert. St. John arranged a bed for Paesia on the sand and after signing her with the sign of the cross he told her to have some sleep. At a short distance from her, he knelt down and started his midnight prayer, thanking God for the success he had in his mission. Suddenly, he saw a beam of light coming from the sky. In it he saw angel's coming down; then they returned back carrying with the soul of his companion.

John rose at once, approached Paesia and called her. Hearing no answer, he held her hand but he found it stiff and cold with death. He was shocked. Then he prostrated himself before God asking for the poor soul that has just begun and had no time to show any work of repentance. God revealed to him that one hour of ferevent repentance has brought her more than years of penances of many others.

Paesia is venerated as a saint in the Coptic Church: her feast day is commemorated on August 8.

*References: Coptic Synaxarion:  
Herlots of the Desert by Benedicts Ward:  
The Desert Fathers by Helen Waddell*

**This publication  
is available  
in microform  
from University  
Microfilms  
International.**



**Call toll-free 800-521-3044. In Michigan,  
Alaska and Hawaii call collect 313-761-4700. Or  
mail inquiry to: University Microfilms International,  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.**

## ***BOOK REVIEWS***

### ***Orthodox Prayer Life: The Interior Way***

*By Father Matta El-Maskeen (Matthew the Poor). Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003. Paper: ISBN 0-881-41-209-0. U.S. \$14.95 U.K. £11.99. Hardcover: ISBN 0-88141-198- 17. U.S. \$22.95 U.K. £17.99. 6 x 9, 292 pp, US \$16.95. UK £11.99. ISBN 0-88141-250-3.*

This book is the fruit of more than fifty years of solitude by a contemporary desert monk besieged by prayer. Father Matta's prayer life was formed under the direction of the sayings of the Church Fathers, both Eastern and Western. He is the abbot of the Monastery of St Macarius the Great, in the ancient desert of Scete, Wade El-Natroun, Egypt. He is also the author of *Communion of Love*, published by StVladimir's Seminary Press.

The first edition of this book in Arabic that appeared in 1952 had a great impact on the spiritual life of many Coptic and other Arabic-speaking Christians who found in it for the first time the wealth of the patristic Tradition. The second edition, published in 1968, that is much larger than the first, added new chapters and more quotes from the Church Fathers. This is the first English translation of the book, taken from its second edition.

The book includes writings from both the eastern and the western Fathers, from the early Church till the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most quoted Fathers are Basil the Great, John Cassian, Augustine, Pseudo-Macarius, Isaac of Syria, Gregory the Great, John Saba, and John Kronstadt.

The book has sixteen chapters that are divided into three parts- *The Nature of Prayer*, *The Interior Activity of Prayer*, and *Impediments to Prayer*. Each chapter has a long introduction by Father Matta . followed by the sayings of the different Church Fathers on the subject. Neither the introductions nor the sayings in each chapter are for casual reading, but are for a life-long meditation of those who really want to progress in their spiritual life.

*Rodolph Yanney*

## ***Christian Egypt: Coptic Art and Monuments through Two Millennia***

*By Massimo Capuani, Otto Meinardus, Marie-Helene Rutschowskaya and Gawdat Gabra. Published by The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 2002. Pp.272, large size, hardcover with dust jacket , : \$79.95 ISBN: 0-8140-2406-5*

This 272 page Monumental work is a masterpiece of art and history of the Christian Era of Egypt. The book is the result of Massimo Capuani's comprehensive examination of the archaeological studies and historical literature of Coptic monasteries and churches, supported by photographs and architectural drawings as well as many color plates. Massimo Capuani, an engineer and researcher is an expert in the history of the Eastern Christian Churches and has a thorough knowledge of the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean worlds. He has also collected rich documentation about their cultural and artistic development.

Dr. Gawdat Gabra's thorough knowledge of current archaeological activity and the most recent consensus regarding the dates and other questions concerning churches and monasteries enhanced the stove of information of the book. Dr. Gabra is the former director of the Coptic Museum in Cairo and member of the board of the Society of the Coptic Archaeology, has a doctorate in Coptology from the University of Munster. He is the author and coauthor and editor of numerous books and articles on Coptic studies.

The important contribution of Dr. Otto Meinardus and Marie He'le'ne Rutschowskaya provided comprehensive surveys of the two thousand year history of the Coptic church and the artistic expression of the Coptic world. They brought back in this book to life, the history of Coptic culture. Dr. Meinardus, a fellow of the Institute of Coptic Studies in Cairo and a member of the German Archaeological Society, is a doctor of philosophy and theology who has been a professor at the American University in Cairo, and Athens College in Greece. He has published many major works on Coptic Christianity.

Marie-He'le'ne Rutschowskaya is head curator of the department of Egyptian antiquities at the Louvre and director of the Coptic section. She is also a professor at the 'Ecole du Louvre.

*R. Marcus*

## ***Among the Copts***

*By John Watson.. Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2002. 176 pp. p#\$ 30 (per back). \$ 50.00 (hardcover). ! SBN 1-902210-56-5 (Orders from North America should be sent to: Sussex Academic Press, c/o ISBS, 5804 NE Hassalo St., Portland, OR 97213-3644).*

This is a comprehensive presentation of the life and thought of the Coptic Orthodox Church at the turn of the millennium. It is the fruit of the author's

work during the last two decades, in which he studied the Coptic Church history, theology, liturgy, spirituality, art and language. During these years he has been in close contact with many of her members in the Diaspora and he had prolonged visits to the mother church in Egypt.

In nine chapters, the book explores all the important themes of the Copts from the earliest years of Christian history to the present day. Among these are sections on monasticism, liturgy, history, mission, theology, and martyrdom.

The chapter on monasticism describes important ancient monastic centers that have enjoyed an outstanding revival during the second half of the twentieth century. Among these are the Monastery of Al-Muharaq, built on the site where the Holy Family, according to ancient tradition, stayed for three years during their sojourn in Egypt; the Monastery of St. Bishoi in Scete, the Monastery of St. Macarius where Father Matta El-Meskeen has led one of the greatest monastic revivals in recent history; and the Monastery, of St Antony, the cradle of monasticism in the whole world. In the chapter on Liturgy, Dr. Watson describes the rites of the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil as used in the Coptic Church. This leads him to a discussion of Coptic icons as well as Coptic music that is regarded as the successor of the ancient Egyptian music.

The chapters on history deal with the significant events in the Church since the middle of the twentieth century. They include a biography of the present Patriarch, Pope Shenouda the Third, and of his predecessor Pope Kyrillos the Sixth, who is venerated as a saint by many Copts. The book describes the austere situation of the Copts, who, under the pressure of the Islamic resurgence during the last decades, have suffered from discrimination, attacks of the Moslem extremists and even the occasional frank persecution by government officials.

In the section 'Thinking with the Church', Father Watson examines the writings of contemporary Coptic authors and gives a sympathetic, though frank, portrait of Coptic Orthodox theology that is still trying to keep its biblical and patristic Tradition against a background of rising Islamic fundamentalism, infiltration of Latin philosophical terms, a tendency for clericalization of teaching positions, and the rise in publications that deal with monastic spirituality at the expense of neglecting the patristic theological studies.

Biographical summaries of representative Copts are found throughout the book. Among these we find the neomartyr Father Rueiss Fakher (1956- 1988); Abba Justus, a monk of St. Antony who the author believes to be one of the great mystics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; Fr. Marcos El-Eskiti; the Coprology scholar Professor Aziz Atiya, Botros Ghalli, who was a Secretary General of the UN; the iconographer Isaac Fanous and others.

This book, which is finely printed and well illustrated with pictures of Coptic life and historical sites, is one of the best-informed and most authoritative books on the contemporary situation in the ancient Church of Alexandria. It



fills a gap in the literature on the recent history and contemporary status of the Coptic Church and will be greatly welcomed by all who have an interest in Eastern Christianity.

R. Yanney

***Coptologia: International Journal of Coptic Thought and Orthodox Spirituality, Volume XVII***

*Edited by F.M. Ishak, Ph.D. (P.O. Box 235, Don Mills Postal Station, Don Mills, Ontario, Canada M3C 2S2) 2001. Pp. 173. \$8.50 (US), \$10 (Canada), \$12 (Other Countries), \$15 (Libraries and Institutions), \$5.00 (for full-time students); plus postage.*

The 2002 volume of *Coptologia* contains a variety of articles that reflect the different aspects of Coptic life. They include *Spiritual Awakening* by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, *Csyrillian Christology* by the editor, *The holy Apostles* by Otto Meinardus, *The Spirituality of St. Athanasius*, by Fr. Mathias Faarid Wahba, *Saint Regula*, by Samir Fawzy Girgis, *The Great City of Rakoti* by Rachad Mounir Shohcri, and *The Coptic Church of the Old Temple of Dandarah* by Boulos Ayad Ayad, and *Pan-Orthodoxy (on Orthodox Unit) y* by Fayek .M. Ishak.

R. Yanney

***Cyril of Jerusalem: Mystagogue***

*By Alexis James Doval. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press; 2001. \$49.95 (hard cover). Pp. 293.*

This is the 17th volume of the Patristic Monograph series, published by the North American Patristic Society.

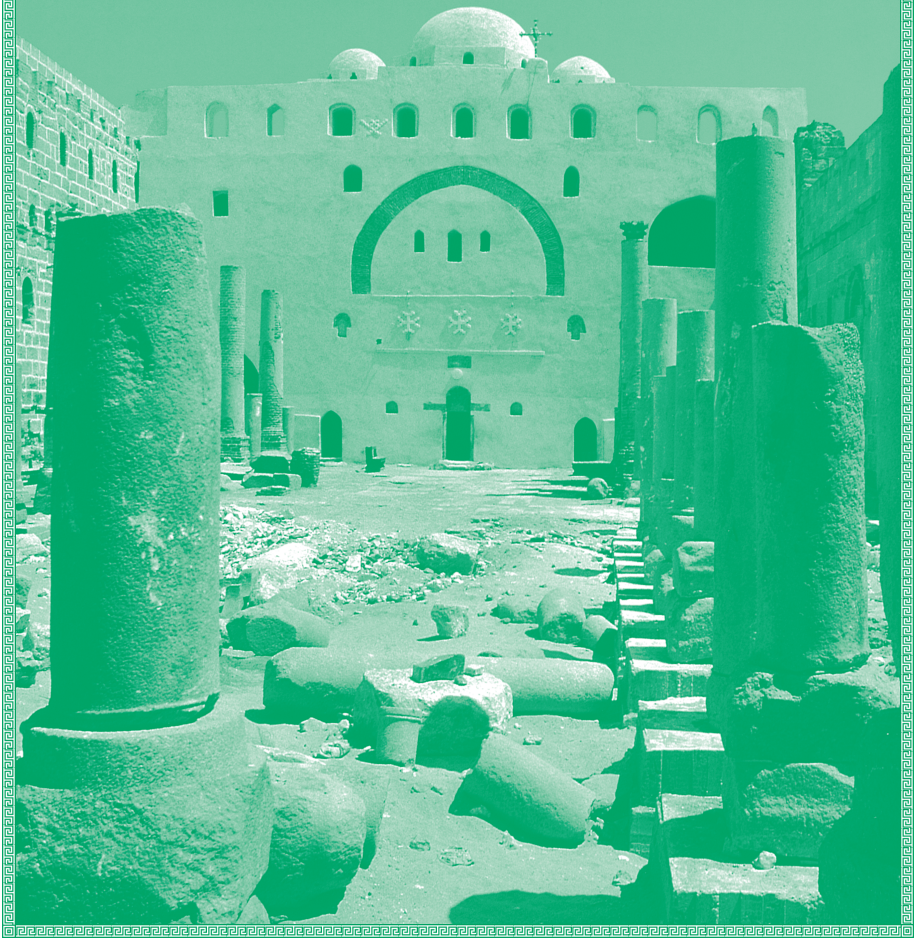
The *Mystagogues* are eight lectures given to the newly baptized, starting on Easter Monday. The *Mystagogues* followed twenty-five lectures given by St. Cyril before their baptism on the Saturday before Easter. For centuries, patristic scholars argued about the authorship of the *Mystagogue* lectures (*On the Mysteries*) whether they belong to St. Cyril or to his successor on the See of Jerusalem. John II using various methods of comparison between the literary style of the *Mystagogue* lectures on that of the two authors, Professor Doval proves beyond doubt that they belong to St. Cyril. Beside solving the scholarly problem of authorship, the book has a lot of information about Cyril's life and works in Jerusalem.

R. Yanney

MASSIMO CAPUANI

# CHRISTIAN EGYPT

Coptic Art and Monuments Through Two Millennia



**Front cover of the book 'Christian Egypt' showing a picture of the Monastery of St. Shenouda the Archimandrite at a village in the desert of Upper Egypt**  
**(See the review of the book on page 94)**