

A CATECHESIS AGAINST APOCRYPHAL TEXTS BY SHENUTE
AND THE Gnostic TEXTS OF NAG HAMMADI

Tito Orlandi

Unione Accademica Italiana

While the discovery of the Manichaean, and then the Gnostic, MS collections in Coptic¹ has provoked a number of studies on the broad cultural context of these two religious movements,² the specific Egyptian environment in which the MSS were transmitted remains largely unknown.³ Lack of documentation generally accounts for this ignorance. Especially in the case of the Coptic Gnostic library, all sorts of ideas and religious sects have been called forth to comment upon the corpus and to explain, it seems, everything except what was common in the Nile valley in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D.

In fact, the needed documentation does exist, though it is poorly known, mostly unpublished, and difficult to set in its proper historical context. During my investigation of works of Shenute originally from the library of the White Monastery but now in fragments scattered throughout more than twenty collections all over the world,⁴ I came across an almost unknown treatise that appears to be particularly important in this regard.

Its author, Shenute, though a prominent figure in Christian Egypt of the fourth and fifth centuries, is far from enjoying the place he deserves in Patristic studies.⁵ The subject of the treatise,

¹ On the Manichaean corpus of Medinet Madi, cf. C. Schmidt and H. J. Polotsky, "Ein Mani-Fund in Ägypten," SPAW (1933) 4-90; A. Böhlig, "Die Arbeit an den koptischen Manichaica," *Mysterion und Wahrheit* (Leiden, 1968) 177-87 (= *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universität* 10 [1961] 157-61). Recent assessment of the Nag Hammadi discovery, with bibliography, in *BA* 42 (1979) 193-256 (the entire fourth number).

² D. M. Scholer, *Nag Hammadi Bibliography, 1948-1969* (Leiden, 1971), continued in *NovT* 1971 and following. No such bibliography exists for the Manichaean corpus of Medinet Madi.

³ But cf. D. W. Young, "The Milieu of Nag Hammadi: Some Historical Considerations," *VC* 24 (1970) 127-37, where Shenute is taken into consideration. J. Doresse, *Des hiéroglyphes à la Croix, Ce qui le passé pharaonique a légué au Christianisme* (Istanbul, 1960) is more ideological than historical.

⁴ H. Hyvernât, "Introduction" [to an article by E. Porcher], *RE* 1 (1933) 105-16. T. Orlandi, "Un projet milanais concernant les manuscrits coptes du Monastère Blanc," *Muséon* 85 (1972) 403-13. This enterprise is now called *Corpus dei manoscritti copti letterari* (Roma, Unione Accademica Nazionale) and issues a *Bollettino d'Informazione*.

⁵ J. Leipoldt, *Schenute von Atripe und die Entstehung des national ägyptischen*

a polemic against Origenist and possibly Evagrian Gnosticism, was not thought to have been touched upon by Shenute, nor by any writer in Upper Egypt at the time. Its connections with the Nag Hammadi texts are in my opinion certain, though not direct.

I shall first present the MS evidence, then survey the contents of the treatise, and finally try to show what new light it can shed upon the theological landscape of Egypt in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Manuscript Witnesses

It is well known to students of Coptic that almost all the MSS of Shenute come from the White Monastery, and that nearly all have shared the same misfortune.⁶ From 1770 to around 1920, parts of the library of this monastery made their way from Egypt to the West, but not in the form of complete codexes, rather as *disjecta membra*, sold in fragments or groups of leaves to a variety of museums and libraries. One of the major tasks still lying before Coptology is the reconstruction of the individual codexes from this library. Obviously, in cases where the codexes exist also in a Greek original or a complete parallel MS, the task of reconstruction is not so difficult. But the works of Shenute were composed in Coptic and almost never⁷ copied outside the White Monastery: thus the situation is often nearly desperate. Indeed, previous editors, such as Amélineau or Leipoldt and Crum,⁸ limited themselves to the fragments available in a single main collection (Rome-Naples or Paris) and two or three minor ones. It is largely because of this material difficulty in the documentation that Shenute remains almost unknown as an author, despite Leipoldt's biography and some minor studies published later.

Christentums (TU 25/1; Leipzig, 1903); a more judicious judgment is expressed in his *Geschichte der koptischen Literatur (Geschichte der christlichen Literaturen des Orients*; 2d ed.; Leipzig, 1909; reprinted 1972) 131-84. L. Th. Lefort, "Catéchèse christologique de Chenute," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache* 80 (1955) 40-45. H.-Fr. Weiss, "Zur Christologie des Shenute von Atripe," *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 20 (1971) 177-210. For an up-to-date bibliography on Shenute, see P. J. Frandsen and E. Richter Aerøe, "Shenoute: A Bibliography," in *Studies ... H. J. Polotsky* (ed. D. W. Young; East Gloucester, MA, 1981) 147-77.

⁶ Cf. above, n. 4.

⁷ As exceptions we can mention the "Sermon on Death and the Last Judgment" in the Turin papyri (ed. F. Rossi, *Memorie della Reale Accademia delle Scienze di Torino*, ser. 2, vol. 41 [1891] 4-121) and the so-called "On Christian Behavior" in the Hamuli codexes (ed. K. H. Kuhn [Louvain, 1960] 206-7) and in British Library MS Or. 12689.

⁸ C. Amélineau, *Oeuvres de Shenoudi* (2 vols.; Paris, 1907-14). J. Leipoldt and W. E. Crum, *Sinuthii archimandritae vita et opera omnia* (Paris/Louvain, 1906-13) vols. 3-4 (all published).

The treatise we present here is reconstructed from fragments of three codexes and one folio of a fourth. The evidence constitutes several blocks of text, which partly overlap with one another and which, on the whole, have enough shared elements to demonstrate that they are from one and the same work. This MS evidence is laid out schematically in the Table.

Four codexes are represented: (1) without siglum, a single folio in Paris; (2) cod. DQ, reconstructed from leaves in various collections; (3) cod. HD, from leaves in Paris; (4) cod. DS, from various collections.

Abbreviations of MS collections are: Berl = Berlin (W.), Staatsbibliothek; BL = London, British Library; BM = London, British Library, by Crum's numeration (*Catalogue*, 1905); K = Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, Papyrussammlung; P = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale; Z = Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, by Zoega's numeration (*Catalogus*, 1810).

<i>Manuscripts of the Treatise</i> ⁹			
(Paris folio)	DQ	HD	DS
	1α-1ε Z 277(A)		μθ-ν K 9198
P 129 ¹² 66	-----	-----	νε-νς K 9199
		ιζ — P 130 ⁴ 115-130	
		119 —	πθ-ϑ BM 215
	κθ-λ Berl 1613,1	----- 121	
		129 —	ρ ι K 9200-9205
		— MH	— ρ κ λ
	3α-3β P 131 ⁶ 32		
	3γ-3Δ BM 204, 1		
	οζ-οη BM 204, 2		
	πλ-πβ K 9196		
	4α-4β K 9197	-----	— ρ 3 K 9206-9209
	[4ε-4ς] K 9240	-----	----- 9208
			— ρ 3 ζ

⁹ Solid lines indicate runs of pages (e.g., ιζ to MH). Broken lines indicate correspondence of parallel codexes (e.g., Berl 1613,1 is parallel to the content of P 130⁴121). Fragments already published include:

DQ (BM 204,1-2: Shisha-Halevy; cf. n. 10), K 9196-9197, 9240-9242:
C. Wessely, *Griechische und koptische Texte theologisches Inhalts* 9 (Leipzig,

Since neither the beginning nor the end of any of the codexes is extant, nowhere in the fragments do we find written the name of the author. But from the Coptic it will be perfectly clear to anyone used to the MS tradition of Shenute, and to his style, that he is the author of this work.¹⁰

Contents of the Treatise

Though it is really a tractate, more suitable for reading than for listening, the work was conceived as a catechetical homily and was probably pronounced on some special occasion. Its aim is to oppose heretics and heretical opinions, and especially heretical books (*apokrypha* as Shenute calls them) that have been introduced into the Christian community and indeed (as it appears) the monastery of Shenute.

Thus there is a thread which connects all the different arguments, namely, the general polemic against heretics and their books, while single arguments are introduced by pertinent quotations that are discussed at length. It will be convenient to give first an idea of the running polemic against heretics and their books, and then to give a resumé of the individual topics.

The heretics and their books. "Hear, that you may know that those who write the apocryphal books are blind, and blind are those who receive them and believe in them" (Codex DQ, p. 14).

"They say that there is another gospel besides the four gospels, and that the church does not reject it as heretical. It does not say that 'there is not another one,' but that 'there are some who want to confound you, changing the gospel of Christ.' ... Why [then] did not all the holy fathers, and especially our father Apa Athanasius the archbishop, the truly wise man, receive them? On the contrary, he rejected them. And what is the 'Gospel of Jesus son of God, generation of the angels?'" (AD, pp. 18-19).

"Therefore, he who says, 'I know (ὄειν),' because he reads apocryphal books, is greatly ignorant. And he who thinks that he is a teacher because he receives apocryphal books, is more ignorant still.... Indeed, the great teacher of the faith, Apa Athanasius, said in his works: 'I wrote this because of the heresies, especially

1909) No. 41.

DS, K 9198-9209; Wessely, No. 42.

I am very grateful to Prof. Bentley Layton for revising the translation and English text of this article. I am also indebted to A. Shisha-Halevy's translation of the British Library fragments.

¹⁰ Cf. A. Shisha-Halevy, "Unpublished Shenoutiana in the British Library," *Enchoria* 5 (1975) 53-108 (at p. 56); *idem*, "Commentary on Unpublished Shenoutiana," *Enchoria* 6 (1976) 29-61 (at pp. 45-46).

the wretched Melitians who pride themselves upon what are called apocrypha'" (AD, pp. 21-22).

"And still others say that Origen was thrown out of the church because he disclosed things more hidden than the scriptures, or things that the scriptures did not write, and holier than what the saints say; and that he was thrown out not because he was heretical but because of envy. But I maintain it was not things more hidden than the scriptures that he revealed. For there is no deed or word that one can hear or think or bear fruit within, that the Prophets or apostles or faithful fathers and true teachers of the church did not fully reveal.... And extremely wicked is the knowledge (ἡ γνώσις) of those who say there is a different knowledge, which is more hidden than the scriptures, or which the scriptures have not revealed" (AD, pp. 33-34).

"Those who think this are worse than those who are ignorant of God. Even though true believers would not be scandalized by them because they are clearly atheists, yet even so, many are scandalized by this kind of men, because they trust that they 'know' (ἡ γνώσις). Truly such 'fatherhoods' and 'greatnesses' can greatly defile the hearts of many congregations (λαοὶ) in many establishments (τόποι) of Christ" (AD, p. 37).

"Such foolishnesses are not worth being examined. It is enough merely to say, 'They are deceptions and their authors are enemies of the truth: do not pay heed to them.' However, lest by our silence a pretext (of accusation) be found, it is better to refute them through open statements" (DS, pp. 110-11).

"Sometimes the hunter encloses the beasts that he wants to catch, and runs towards them with all his strength and catches them. Sometimes he lays snares or traps to catch the beasts he wants. Thus is Satan. The bloody and overtly sinful people, who do not know God, he takes like a tyrant. The others instead he tries to hunt with false knowledge, seeing that they incline to the good, and it is easy to deceive them so that they become heretics and antichrists and prophets of falsehood and false apostles" (DQ, pp. 77-78).

The above are some examples of charges brought against his opponents by Shenute. They are general enough — mainly because Shenute deals with specific charges in the other parts of the work, which we shall examine below. But several things deserve notice at once: Melitians and Origenists are explicitly mentioned; it seems that Arians are also tacitly (perhaps obviously) a target; for Origenists we should probably understand the Evagrian wing of the contemporary monastic movement.

Now we shall move to the specific arguments put forward in the treatise.

The plurality of worlds. "[The authors of the apocryphal books] also say: 'The Son said: It happened that when the Father had made the twelve worlds (κόσμος), which no angel knows, he then created another seven worlds'; and: 'inside the twelve are the ineffable goodnesses (ἀγαθόν)'; and: 'outside the seven he created another five worlds'; and: 'in them are the spirits of the power; and outside the five he created another three worlds, these being—they say—the locations of the angels'; and: 'the twenty-seven worlds are all outside this heaven and this earth.' ... [But] if there exist other worlds that no angel knows, because he did not show them to them, how is it possible that they personally know about them?" (DQ, pp. 14-15).

The work of the Son; the value of suffering; against magic. "What is the work that he does? Does he create new heavens or a new world? Is it not that he works towards our salvation? ... The Lord too works towards our salvation and healing of our iniquities in illnesses and pains, in times of poverty and every suffering that from time to time he brings upon us, teaching (παιδεύειν) us not by his anger but by his desire, that we might repent. And after the sufferings that he sends upon us, he also sends his blessing and his pity and every relief through his mercy" (DS, p. 49).

"In the moments of the suffering, however, [there are some who] when they fall into poverty or become ill—or indeed other temptations—abandon God and have recourse to enchanters or oracles or ... other deceptive things: just as I myself have seen—the snake's head bound to the hand of some, and another with the crocodile tooth bound to an arm, another with fox claws bound to his legs: especially as there was a magistrate who told the latter that he was wise to do so. Indeed, when I reproachfully asked him whether it was the fox claws that would heal him, he said: 'It was a great monk who gave me them saying, Bind them to you, and you will recover'" (P 129¹² 66 + DS, p. 59).

The Pascha. "[The apocryphal books say] that the Father announced (κηρύσσειν) the Pascha in the heavens and in all the worlds (κόσμος), that they should celebrate the Pascha in six days, speaking of the Pascha that we celebrate in this world, and likening it to those (days) within whose fulfillment God created the whole creation. 'When they get to this day in the year, the Father and the angels and the spirits celebrate it.' Is there any greater blasphemy than to say that God celebrates a Pascha or that he experiences suffering? 'And also the twelve worlds too [they say]

celebrate it in this season of the year, and will go on doing it until the world will pass away, for it even came into existence because of him (or: it?) and suffering.' Are there other worlds in which the Pascha is celebrated apart from this one alone? I have already said that if these words were not in all the earth, I would not say them, so that no one might hear them" (AD, pp. 20-21).

The Father and the Son. "The most wise Apa Athanasius the archbishop revealed the wickedness of those who say these impieties and the other evil words, i.e., 'the Father has not always been Father, and the Son has not always existed, but rather the Son of God too came into existence from what was not, like everything that was created; he too is a creature and a creation'" (AD, p. 24).

"That blasphemer has spoken, whose other abominations I shall not mention, the great enemy of mankind, truly ignorant that the Son has always been with the Father and he is the craftsman of the all. Let me not speak too much: what the holy man Apa Athanasius the archbishop has said to overthrow the impiety of that fellow is enough. Some, then, dwelling in this same insanity, speak of the Seraphim (plur.), whom the holy prophet describes as standing near-by the Lord Sabaoth with six wings in one (part?) and six in the other ... interpreting them allegorically to mean that those who stand are the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having become dim in their thoughts, they did not understand that the Seraphim are servants who wait upon God" (AD, pp. 25-26).

Souls. "And others [say] that souls sinned and were given or sent into bodies. O these enormities! Let those who say these things tell us where (the souls) committed sin, or from what sort of place they would have come into bodies. Did they possibly sin in the sky before entering bodies? ... Did they possibly sin in another world and were put into bodies that are in this one?—even though there is no other besides this. Or do bodies exist without souls, and a soul without body? Is it possible for souls to sin without bodies and the bodies without souls?" (AD, pp. 26-27).

"I shall ask them this other question: the right men are souls without sin, otherwise they would be sinful souls. If they are without sin, how is it possible that the souls sin among themselves before coming into the body? Or how is it possible that they may avoid sin before entering the body? And if every kind of man, since God created the man on the earth and till the end, are sinful souls, and they are given to the body of the men, how is it possible that some of them are righteous and are not all impious? Because if they sin in some places, according to your words, how is it possible that they become pious in the world which is full of any

wickedness?" (DS, pp. 89-90).

Christ's conception. "Some blasphemously say that Mary did not conceive the Christ, and that if she had conceived him, then her belly would have protruded before it collapsed" (AD, p. 29).

The Eucharist. "Some also [say] that the bread and the chalice are not body and blood of Christ, rather only a symbol (τύπος)" (AD, p. 30).

"Who will say that it is not He who is on the holy place, the altar, and not (thus) be scornful of those things that fall and flow into them, as I myself realized? ... But they do not care, just as if they were eating bread and drinking wine. Truly whoever says that it is not his body nor his blood, especially those belonging to us (Christians)—not just the pagans—is worse than dogs and pigs.... Especially if, as pertains to his position in the holy hierarchy, he is a presbyter or a member of the clergy, if he does not believe that God can do everything, and even more than this, let him fall silent from praying and petitioning the Most High" (AD, pp. 30-31).

The resurrection of the body. "Some also despise the body, (saying) that it is swine's flesh and will be thrown away, because they do not believe that it will arise. But if it is pork, who made it so, and made it worse than the sow? Was it not you? It is those especially who say that when the soul sins it has been given to the body, that are like the body of that animal, and rightly they despise their own flesh" (AD, p. 32).

God and the stars. "They say of God almighty that he runs in the orbit (δρόμος) of the sun, and that the fullness of the moon augments (αὐξάνειν) the trees and the animals (τῶν ζώων). O what impiety! Indeed, is it not an impiety to say that the God of the all runs in the sun and grows full in the moon?" (AD, p. 40).

The four elements. "I have said this because of those who say that there will be no resurrection—those who are like the pagans that dream dreams and say that the body was formed of the four elements, water, earth, air, fire; and that bodies will dissolve and return into the elements from which they were born" (AD, p. 44).

These are the principal opinions that Shenute ascribes to his opponents. We have only to add that at the end of the treatise, he quotes the festal letter of 401 by Theophilus in its entirety.¹¹

I think these remarks will suffice to call attention to this

¹¹ We have also a Latin translation by Jerome (*Ep.* 96) and some Greek fragments (*Doctrina Patrum*, ed. Diekamp, pp. 180-83). Cf. W. E. Crum, *Der Papyruscodex ... der Phillippsbibliothek* (Strassburg, 1915) pp. XVII-XVIII.

interesting work, which may prove to be very important for the study of the later Gnostic movement in Egypt. I shall make the Coptic text available to scholars as soon as possible through publication in microfiche, and I hope to publish a complete Italian translation in the near future. Critical editing of the text will have to wait for completion of research on the different codexes and their reconstruction. On that basis it will be possible to comment on the precise connection of Shenute's opinions with other texts actually at our disposal. In addition, the large portions of Theophilus's letter that survive in Coptic should be carefully compared with the Latin translation by Jerome. All of this, I think, might be the work of more than one scholar, and it is not necessary that they collaborate personally.

I will conclude by suggesting how the treatise may affect our view of Egyptian Gnosticism and the significance of the Nag Hammadi texts.

The Treatise and Egyptian Gnosticism

The relationship of the Nag Hammadi texts to the monastic movement of Upper Egypt has long been debated. The fact that the place of discovery turned out to be so near the first Pachomian settlements suggested of itself that the codexes might come from a Pachomian monastery. After documents that appeared to come from one such monastery were found inside some of the leather covers of the Nag Hammadi MSS, scholars began to take for granted that all the codexes had one and the same provenance; it was only their actual use inside a monastic library that was still a matter of question. The theory first proposed by T. Säve-Söderbergh,¹² that the texts were collected as documentation for heresiological purposes, though possibly correct, has been questioned on many grounds, especially by F. Wisse.¹³ The most convincing objection is that during the fourth century the doctrines which later were to prevail as orthodox were not unchallenged within the Pachomian monasteries; and that the books found at Nag Hammadi might have been collected by Pachomian monks who in good faith believed that the doctrines expounded in them were orthodox. Even some of the letters of Pachomius are capable of being interpreted in the spirit of the Nag Hammadi texts.

Yet there remains something unconvincing in the view just

¹²T. Säve-Söderbergh, "Holy Scriptures or Apologetic Documentation? The *Sitz im Leben* of the Nag Hammadi Library," *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi* (ed. J.E. Ménard; Leiden, 1975) 3-14.

¹³F. Wisse, "Gnosticism and Early Monasticism in Egypt," *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen, 1978) 431-40.

described. It is beyond question that our sources for Pachomian monasticism (lives of Pachomius, late as they are;¹⁴ *Historia Lausiaca*; other minor sources) are far from indicating that heretical, Gnosticizing doctrines were ever present within the Pachomian movement, and no scholar had ever proposed such a hypothesis before the discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts.

Names other than that of Pachomius (and followers) also suggest themselves as possible landmarks of groups interested in reading the texts.

First is Hieracas,¹⁵ an obvious candidate since he was a founder of monastic groups; who held somewhat heretical opinions, especially as concerns marriage (the Nag Hammadi texts are generally ascetic in tenor); and who wrote, according to Epiphanius, in the Egyptian language. But the link between him and the Nag Hammadi texts is made very doubtful by chronological considerations. Hieracas appears to have flourished in the first half of the fourth century, and what we know about his school, which may have lasted into the second part of that century, comes from uncertain sources.

Second, and much more likely in my opinion, are Evagrius and his followers.¹⁶ Here we are on much firmer ground, for Evagrius's efflorescence perfectly suits the date of the Nag Hammadi codexes, and the Origenistic-Gnosticizing ideas of his group are well known, especially after the work of Guillaumont.

The only significant obstacle to connecting the Evagrians and our texts is the common supposition that their culture was exclusively Greek, that is, developed only in the Greek language; and that they did not penetrate into Upper Egypt. This objection is now overcome by my realization¹⁷ that a group of treatises, originally composed in Greek in the Evagrian milieu and then translated into Coptic (apparently in the early fifth century), circulated in the monastic world of Upper Egypt, and finally altered in part to suit the prevailing orthodoxy.

¹⁴ J. Vergote, "La valeur des vies grecques et coptes de S. Pachôme," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 8 (1977) 175-86, with bibliography. C. W. Hedrick, "Gnostic Proclivities in the Greek Life of Pachomius and the *Sitz im Leben* of the Nag Hammadi Library," *NovT* 22 (1980) 78-94.

¹⁵ C. Schmidt, "Die Urschrift der Pistis Sophia," *ZNW* 24 (1925) 218-40 (at pp. 221-27). K. Heussi, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums* (Tübingen, 1936). Coptic sources on the Hierakites: M. Chaîne, "La double recension de l'histoire Lausiaque dans la version copte," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 25 (1925) 232-75.

¹⁶ A. Guillaumont, *Les "Kephalalaia Gnostica" d'Evagre le Pontique* (Paris, 1962) esp. 51-61.

¹⁷ T. Orlandi, "Il dossier copto di Agatonico di Tarso," *Studies ... Polotsky*, 269-99.

Now, it should be noted that Shenute somewhat confuses Origenistic and Gnosticizing doctrines, and thus the intellectual milieu to which he refers may be rather near to the Evagrian movement. That there was an Evagrian movement beyond the death of Evagrius himself is proved by the lengthy dispute of Theophilus and the Nitrian monks, led by the Tall Brothers. Indeed, one Coptic document may indicate an earlier polemic between Evagrians and other monks of the Nile Valley.¹⁸ The latter document attributes Theophilus's celebrated change of opinion to the intervention of a Coptic monk and confessor. Though possibly exaggerated, Theophilus's sudden change of heart seems comprehensible only as the effect of strong external pressure, possibly by the more conservative monks.

Indeed, what might have seemed inconceivable—that some part of the Evagrian movement could reach Upper Egypt by infiltrating the Pachomian and Shenutean monasteries—is also proved or at least implied by this work of Shenute. If our deductions are correct, we may have here documentation for all the main points in the connection between the Nag Hammadi texts and Egyptian monasticism in its various forms.

Is this evidence sufficient to demonstrate that the Nag Hammadi texts were collected and read by a group of Evagrian disciples in the South? Of course not. As we have already said, the Shenutean work presented here needs more study on many sides. The same must be said for the Evagrian works alluded to above.

But I believe that two points are established by these remarks. First, that Evagrian monasticism should not be ruled out in our investigation of the environment of the Nag Hammadi texts. Second, that Egyptian (Coptic) literature, and Shenute above all, should be considered within the scope of that investigation. The relevance of any final result to study of the Nag Hammadi texts in themselves is a matter of one's critical orientation. But is not the appreciation of every ancient work always more or less affected by our knowledge of the people who read it and handed it down?

¹⁸ *Life of Aphou*, ed. F. Rossi, *Papiri Copti del Museo Egizio di Torino* (Turin, 1887-92) 1/3. 5-22.