

NEW COPTIC MANUSCRIPTS IN THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY.

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INTERSPERSED among the large number of important Greek papyri, which Dr. Rendel Harris recently acquired in Egypt for the Rylands Library,¹ there were a number—relatively small of course—of Coptic pieces, some on vellum, mostly on papyrus. Such a mixture of the languages has, for years past, been a foregone conclusion when professedly Greek papyri were to be bought; and in this case as elsewhere, a few texts older than either—in the demotic script—and some younger—in Arabic—lay among the Greek and Coptic.

The Coptic MSS., with the rest, were bought at various points: some at Cairo, others as far south as Luxor, others at Ashmunain or elsewhere in middle Egypt, or in the Fayyûm. It has long been recognized that the locality, where a mixed lot of papyri may chance to be on sale, is far from being an indication of original *provenance*. This is especially true of Ashmunain, the principal mart of recent years, and it is *a fortiori* implied when the purchase is made in Cairo, where the dealers attract papyri from the whole length of the Nile valley. Classification by dialect is therefore the primary guide to the homes of such MSS., and the indications thus obtained may be further particularized by help of place (and, to some extent, personal) names incidental in the texts.

Among the fifty odd pieces which seemed likely to repay more examination, I found the three southern dialects indeed represented, but those of Achmim and the Fayyûm by only one and two fragments respectively. All the rest showed a Sa'idic varying, as was to be expected, in degree of contamination and correctness of orthography. Chronologically the collection is extensive: two or three of the literary fragments can scarcely be younger than the fourth century; some of the private documents and at least one literary text should belong to

¹ *V. Bulletin*, v. p. 363.

the ninth or tenth. But the majority seem, as usual, to date from the sixth to eighth centuries.

1. Biblical. These form, of course, the principal element in the small group of literary texts. All the pieces are on vellum. To name them in their usual order¹:—

Two small fragments of the *Psalter* (12, 14).

One from *Ecclesiastes*, chap. i (2).

Fragments from two MSS. of *Sirach* (6, 7). The former of these, from chap. i, is strangely paged in the inner corners of the leaf, Γ and Δ. The second is written in a beautiful little hand, rivalling that of the Turin MS. and probably likewise of the fourth or fifth century. It shows verses from chaps. xviii and xxiii.

Fragments of *Lamentations*, chaps. ii, iii. (3).

A scrap from *Ezekiel* xxix and xxx (9).

A very small leaf (4) on which *Daniel* xi. 38 and xii. 9 are discernable, though it is hard to see how all the intervening passage could be accommodated on so minute a page.

The New Testament is represented by two fragments of *Acts*: one (8), in three columns of an early hand, has verses from chaps. x and xi; the other (17) some from chap. xiii.

Two from *Romans*: one (1) paged ξA, ξB, from the Fayyûmic version of chaps. xi, xii, is in a fine, early hand, and may possibly belong to one of the two already known MSS. of this version of the Epistle²; while the other (32), with verses from chap. i, is one of a number of scraps unmistakably reminiscent of the White Monastery.

A fragment (5) of 1 *Corinthians*, chap. i.

To the biblical texts may be added the remnants of a papyrus lectionary (18), showing (on now separate fragments) verses from *Acts*, chaps. viii-x, *Matthew* xxvii 63-xxviii 4, a *Psalms*, and *Galatians* v. 19 etc. Traces of early lectionaries on papyrus are very rare.³ This one may be of the sixth century.

2. Liturgical books are present in the form of some tenth or eleventh century vellum fragments of an Anaphoral Service—again, I suspect, from the White Monastery—one of which (11) shows title

¹ The numbers in brackets are those given *temporarily* to this Coptic Supplement.

² *Brit. Mus. Catal.* no. 506, and *Mitth. Erz. Rainer*, ii. 70.

³ Cf. my *Theolog. Texts*, p. 2.

and beginning of the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (εὐχαριστία), after the receiving of the Holy Mysteries, which closes the Liturgy of St. Cyril¹: "What blessing or what praise or what thanksgiving can we repay unto Thee. . . ." In our fragment, however, this prayer is attributed to "the Patriarch S[]", doubtless Severus of Antioch, to whom elsewhere other prayers, but not this, are ascribed.²

Another (33) is the best preserved of all these Coptic MSS.: a complete Hymn, on six small vellum leaves, in praise of St. Menas, the military martyr, whose picture, on horseback with raised hands (*orans*), adorns the outer page. The hymn is acrostical, the stanzas beginning each with a successive letter of the Greek alphabet, the five additional Coptic letters being ignored. A hymn of this type in Sa'idic is almost a unique survival.³ The present MS. dates indeed from the latest age in which Sa'idic was still a living idiom and our hymn may owe its inspiration to the same influences which were to produce such compositions as the Bohairic *Theotokia*.⁴ A subscription below the last stanza reads: "By me (δι' ἐμοῦ), *Paleu*, son of *Cosma*, the carpenter, the ψαλμωδός." The formula δι' ἐμοῦ, once the official attestation of the notary before whom a deed was drawn up,⁵ had by now come to be merely the introduction to the scribe's name,⁶ or even the artist's, where a volume is illustrated.⁷ And here, artless though the composition is, we are hardly entitled to credit *Paleu* with the authorship as well as penmanship of our hymn.

A second small vellum book (34), of later size and date, but not complete, has two hymns, one paraphrasing Christ's words to the

¹ Renaudot (1847), i. 50, Cairo *Euchologion* (1902), 673. A prayer somewhat similarly beginning (but before communion) is in the so-called *Anaphora of St. Matthew the Evangelist* (Paris 12920, f. 126): "What tongue of flesh or what mind of man can tell Thy marvels. . . ."

² Renaudot, *op. cit.*, 26; Brightman, *Lit. Eastern etc.*, 144. A fragment belonging to Prof. Sayce preserves the title of an *Anaphora of Severus*.

³ One (fragmentary) is printed by Munier, *Ann. du Serv.*, 1918, 65; another (*ditto*) by Erman and Junker (*v. Lemm, KKS.*, no. xx, p. 160). Both MSS. are quite late.

⁴ Cf. my *Theolog. Texts*, p. 27 n. for its possible date and authorship; also A. Grohmann in *Abh. d. Phil. hist. Kl. d. Säch. Akad.* xxxiii, iv, p. 11.

⁵ V. Gardthausen in C. Wessely's *Studien*, xvii.

⁶ V. Crum-Steindorff, *Kopt. Rechtsurkunden*, p. 403, *inf.* It occurs too on stelæ: Hall, *Coptic and Greek Texts*, p. 1.

⁷ Hyvernat, *A Check-List of Coptic MSS. in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (1919), pl. iv.

disciples at Pentecost; the other a dialogue between Him and the martyr Victor, son of Romanus.

Under this rubric we may place one of the most interesting of our MSS. (47, 48): two fragments of papyrus preserving parts of one of those Festal (Heortastical) Letters, annually addressed by the Alexandrine patriarch to his suffragans and to the monasteries, of which Athanasius has left us the best known examples.¹ The text here is written upon one side only of the leaf: a fact which goes to confirm my previous explanation of three other fragments, already in this Library,² as parts of similar Letters; for the two extant specimens in Greek³ are likewise so written. Both these Greek Letters are upon scrolls, which the text covers in successive broad columns. What our new fragments preserve are the remnants of two (or three) of the columns from such a scroll. Now the last of these columns happens to be also the conclusion of the Letter, and thus we have the customary dating formula, which is the *raison d'être* of each Festal Letter and which in the present instance announces Easter as the 27th of Pär-moute, *i.e.* 22d April. Since the issuing patriarch's name is not preserved, we have only the script of our MS. to help us to its date. It is written in an upright, rounded uncial (A, M, T in one stroke each), of the type generally ascribed to about the seventh century.⁴ Among the years that had their Easter on 22d April, the most likely alternatives seem to me 596 or 675. The text itself, where legible (upon the first of the fragments), treats of Christ's body before and after the Resurrection, quoting 1 *Corinthians* ii. 8, with an admonition against unorthodox distinctions between the two.

¹ On the means of circulating them *v.* the interesting covering letter, *Brit. Mus. Catal.*, no. 464. A letter of Cyril to Shenoute (*CSCO.*, 42, 225 A) speaks of a lector as entrusted with one for the bishops; but he appears to be accredited to the great archimandrite likewise. Several fragments (titles etc.) of the Letters of Damianus (*ob.* 605) are to be read upon contemporary ostraca (*v.* my *Coptic Ostraca*, no. 18 n.).

² *Catal. of Coptic MSS.*, nos. 81-83.

³ Grenfell and Hunt, *Gk. Pap.* ii. 163 and C. Schmidt and W. Schubart, *Altchr. Texte* (Berlin, 1910), 55. As regards the title *πρωτοπρεσβύτερος*, which Schmidt takes to be that of the addressee of the Berlin Letter, two instances nearer in time to the date there assumed than those cited (p. 91), are found in the *Life of John the Almoner*, ed. Gelzer, p. 31, and in Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁴ Cf. for especial resemblance *Brit. Mus. Catal.*, pl. 9, no. 951 = *The Coptic (Sahidic) Version etc.*, ed. H. Thompson, frontispiece.

3. Apocrypha etc. Among these is probably the oldest MS. in this collection (44) : part of a vellum leaf (ca. 15 × 12 cm. complete), showing very small, square uncials, much like the script of the fourth century Deuteronomy-Acts papyrus, published by Budge. Further, the text is in the primitive Achmimic dialect, whereof so little has reached us, and it appears to be from a narrative relating to St. Paul. The phrases I had time to decipher are : (Recto ?) “ . . . to-day. . . . But (ἀλλά) go now down to . . . and when (?) thou hast quitted that place, do thou go to Jerusalem'. Now (δέ) when Paul had heard this, he went to Damascus in great joy(?). And (δέ) when he was entered in, he found them . . . -ing the fast (νηστεία) . . . ” (Verso ?) “ . . . Lo (?), God will accept(?) faith (?), for ye are . . . ye (have ?) received it, it being (inherited) from your fathers ; that (ὥστε) ye might not (?) remain therein as in an iniquitous city (πόλις), but (ἀλλά) . . . the great treasure without (?) . . . ”

These passages do not occur in the *Acta Pauli*, so far as extant. Perhaps they will be traced to their source by some one more versed than I in apocryphal literature. Once more we have to note how works, popular in the early centuries of the Egyptian church, and those alone, have preserved to us the remnants of the oldest of Coptic idioms : before the later literature had grown familiar, the old dialect had disappeared from literary use.

A wooden tablet (11 × 44 cm.) bears yet another copy of the Letter of Christ to Abgar, the scribe of which signs himself : ηγη υιω Παυλου απο Μεγαλοκτηματος του Εξωριθιτουπολιτου νομου, meaning thereby that his home was at Oxyrhynchus.¹ Whether this, like the copies of more portable form, was intended as an amulet, may be doubted.

On a scrap of a paper MS. (15) we discern the names Paul and Dionysius, showing that the text concerns some form of the legend of the Areopagite, whereof the Library already possesses a Coptic specimen.²

Another popular story was that of Eudoxia, the imaginary sister of Constantine, and her visit to Jerusalem in search of the holy places.

¹ Distortions of the name, almost as strange as this, may be seen in the town and episcopal lists, Amélineau, *Géogr.* 561, 569, 573.

² *Catal.*, no. 89.

A fragmentary papyrus leaf (20) preserves a passage from it corresponding to one in the Turin text.¹

4. Legal Documents. The two largest are a further addition to the already voluminous eighth century cartulary from Jême (Medinet Habû).² One (23) is the lower half of a deed of sale (πρᾶσις), in the well-known hand of John, son of Lazarus. The other (36) is part of a similar deed, in a freely ligatured hand, much resembling that of that most popular of scribes, Aristophanes, son of John.³ But here the scribe's name, Theodore, is visible.

We have a specimen (30) of a class of document found usually upon ostraca and peculiar apparently to the seventh century.⁴ Each opens with the formula: "Lo, here is God's word to thee, NN." The writer, a magistrate or other official, generally promises the person addressed that he may return, dwell in his house and go about his business unmolested, adding "neither will I suffer thee to be wronged because that thou didst flee". In the instances which, like the present one include these last words,⁵ we have, I think, to see the official promises or safe-conducts issued to villagers who had previously absconded, or were yet in hiding,⁶ to avoid taxation, conscription, or some other burden.

5. Letters. These, as usual in miscellaneous collections, form our largest class. I noticed eighteen, all fragmentary, which showed features of interest. They could not, however, be profitably described here: for that the texts themselves are indispensable.⁷ Several of them were bought at Luxor (24-29) and might have been unearthed in Western Thebes, for their script closely resembles a series of letters,

¹ F. Rossi, *I Papiri*, i, III, 36. One may suspect that the story of Theodosia, likewise Constantine's sister, found in Ethiopic (Zotenberg, *Catal.*, p. 64, no. 51), is the same as this one. The two names would look almost identical in roughly written Arabic.

² Over 120 deeds are collected in Crum-Steindorff, *Kopt. Rechtsurkunden*.

³ Cf. Revillout, *Actes*, pl. 15.

⁴ *V. my Ostraca*, no. 107 ff. A Greek text somewhat similar is no. 1032 in Brit. Mus. *Gk. Pap.*, iii.

⁵ Another is *Rylands Catal.*, no. 154. I had not recognized the force of the verb *pôt* when describing this MS. Berlin *Kopt. Urk.* i, no. 37 shows an abbot making these promises to a runaway monk.

⁶ E.g. my *Ostraca*, no. 113.

⁷ By Mr. Guppy's kind permission, I am including two or three of them in my forthcoming *Short Texts from Coptic Papyri* etc.

of about A.D. 600, known to have been found there. But the names *Apollo* (the addressee of two or three of this group) and *Anoup*, point to middle, rather than to southern Egypt. Incidental names in other letters, such as *Akoui*, *Naferho*, likewise recall middle Egypt; as does one of the only two place-names which I noted, *Pohe*, found in another Rylands MS.¹ The other place, *Perwónesh*, is apparently unknown, but not without significance here. For, containing as it does the word "wolf," it perhaps points to the neighbourhood of Siût and so hints at a *provenance* for other reasons not improbable.

¹ *Catal.* no. 255. Also named on ostraca from Wadi Sarga, S. of Siût. Cf. ? *Peshgepohe*, Zoega 307, between Dêrut and Siût.