Works of Shenoute: translated selections from the Sahidic Coptic

Shenoute of Atripe (c. AD 348–466)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

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Acephalous Work 22: YA 309-10

... they will be defiled in every way, whether they are abroad or whether they are in the community. And anyone among us who sins or will sin in secret before us or before you too and does not tell of the sin that they committed, may all these curses come upon them, and also who offers up sacrifices in any other place around us in strife while he is an associate of ours or also dwells with us And whoever offers up a sacrifice in any other place around us in strife, except in our community, the place in which all the brothers are gathered, the location of our father, the place in which the congregation is in the desert, may they be cursed. Our area is from the valley to the North of the village of Atripe to the valley which is to the South of the home of our father the elder Apa Bishoy, the place in which he first lived in the desert. Anyone who is to live among us, may they be bound by the law which is laid down by all the brothers who are assembled together. Four Sabbaths per year, the ones which our father has set for us Anyone who is in the desert around us, may they also gather with the brothers to come together, except [if] sick. But anyone who dwells in the desert who does not wish to go according to the manner which our fathers set down for us, if he is in our community, we will cast him out, whether it is a man or a woman.

And if he is in the desert around us, we will assemble and go to the place that he is in, and we will cast him out away from us. And if it is in strife, if he fights with us, we will bring down the place in which he dwells and throw him out of there as necessary. But we will take care to not have us strike him because of an incitement from him.

Acephalous 22: YA 421-28

... if one urinates into a vessel with a narrow neck or jar, into any other vessel like these, without having been ordered by the elder, except for the place of those who are very ill and the elders of advanced years and these others, he is to ask the elder. And if it is necessary for some among us to use anything of this sort, to defecate into vessels of this sort through necessity or physical incapacity or hindrance to the foot making him unable to walk, they are to ask the elder. Apart from these, children or anyone else, if they defecate into any vessels of this sort, let them be accursed. The one who ordains a sinful deed against his neighbour in deceitfulness is accursed. He does not know, but because of ill-feeling he says that which is not, whether a man or woman. He is accursed who says by way of confusion that he has seen in a dream how so-and-so and such-and-such destroy themselves with deeds of wickedness, whether man or woman. They are all accursed who practice deceit in any assembly of the Lord, so that God is angry with a great many people and turns His face from them in anger because of the iniquities of those among us who practice wrongful deeds, covertly or overtly. And woe to those by whom God will be distressed and from whose midst He will seek for a way to come, like a just man, having sought for a way to abandon a people because of their wicked deeds, as the prophet says: Who is it that will give to me in the desert a distant dwelling place? That I may abandon this people and remain far removed from them.'

Blessed is everyone with whom God will be satisfied that He may be pleased to remain in their midst, like a just man content with just men and pleased to remain in their midst, because He Himself the Lord is in their midst at all times because of the right and just deeds. All those of us who see a deceitful thing in defilement or blasphemy or any other sort of sin leading to death and do not tell me who or what those wicked deeds are, all these curses will come down upon them from God, whether man or woman. All the things that it is fitting to write in this letter and which we have not written, they are all written on the papers written from the beginning. The holy words of Our Lord Jesus written in the Scriptures and in this letter, I will tell you what they are like. They are like candles that burn in places of darkness. And they are like the light of day. And the mindless, whose acts of stupidity abound, are like bats. And like those who are struck down or run in to the darkness or places where bats are dug deep, namely bats, whenever they see the light of the lamps' flame and the light of day, in the same way the mindless and excessively stupid will

be struck down or into passions with their desires and the darkness of their false knowledge in the face of all the words of Our Lord, not only those from the Scriptures, or in this letter, but in the face of all the other words written in these documents from the beginning.

Again, the holy words of Our Lord Jesus are like the light of lamps in the hands of wise men. They illuminate him in places of darkness as he does his work. As it is written: 'Your word is the lamp for my feet.' They are like the light of day and the one who pays attention to them will not stumble, as it written: 'The one who walks in the day does not stumble.' For this reason, blessed are the children of light, that is, those who walk in the openness of submission and complete obedience and good. Woe to the children of darkness, that is, those who walk in complete disobedience and ignorance. They rush in and up to darkness in every iniquity, like the bats which rush in and up to a very deep place of darkness. Why did the Lord God say through His saints: 'If your enemy too is hungry, feed him and if he is thirsty, give him to drink'? Why too did He say: 'If your brother does not listen to you, let him be a gentile and tax collector to you'? But in saying this, do every good thing to your enemies, according to the commandment, He wishes the good person of God to achieve goodness through the wickedness of the wicked person who is allotted to his sinning, Satan.

For, in place of the wickedness of the wicked person, the goodness of the good person removes the wickedness of the hostile person. By repaying a bad deed with a good deed, he achieves the divine nature of God. By repaying a good deed with a bad deed he achieves the godlessness of the godless devil. By saying 'If your brother does not listen to you, let him be an enemy to you like one you have never seen,' in the first place the Lord wishes us to cut him off from us, and after rebuking him, perhaps he might repent after having been a stranger because of God, he being our brother, and return and repent that we may forgive him up to seven times seventy times if he does not repeat the sin for we had planned to cut him off. But if he decides not to turn from the sin for which we had planned to cut him off, we will cut him off from us and he will not return to us and we will not love him. But let him be an enemy for us because of God, though he is our brother. And in this way the God-loving one reveals his entire love for the Lord that he has loved Him more than his brother and more than his father and mother. For it is a great perfection for a man to cut himself off from his brother or his son or his daughter or his father or his mother or any other person of his for the sake of God, when they sin against the One who created them, God.

It is a great strength for a man to love his enemies for the sake of God and pray for those who pursue him that do harm to him for the sake of God and bless those who curse him and sin against him. This is what He meant by 'Let your brother be for you a gentile and tax collector for the sake of God if he sins before the Lord.' Your enemy too, who sins against you, love him and bless him for God's sake. We too, brothers, inasmuch as we are partners with each other, we are the children of a single man, God, and a single mother, heavenly Jerusalem, according to the Scriptures. Our father and mother who gave birth to us and nourished us in the flesh, are they better than our true father and mother? The One who gave birth to us with His holy blood [

Acephalous 22: YA 517-518

... pain ... very ... to every pain which is down upon me. But for the little girls which we have heard about, that they ran to each other in a desire of flesh. Tell me about them assuredly, that I may know And I will tell you what it is that you will do to them. But also because of that which you said about her, to make her go to the place that you determined for her, to make her do her deed in it, while she had said to you: If you take me out of this place and into that one 'I will not do anything about the thing that I did to him.' And if she did not truly desire it then tell me, I will teach you what you will do to her. But all of you, if you hide a deception from us on your behalf so as not to tell us about it, what you awaken is Satan upon you yourselves And it is by yourselves that you turn away from the help of God. Here is the old man, I have sent him to you in this other time as long as we exist.

I See Your Eagerness: GL 29-30

Christ. Also traitors. They are thieves and apostates, those who do these deeds. The abominations in the holy places What is the matter with a multitude of lamps that are left upon the lamp stands? They do not burn because they are not good... … Also the one of the holy men and the faith which dwells in it, making them see their good deeds, and which makes light in the holy places. It is not a man who is useful for him. And he will not benefit himself. How will he be useful? To a necessary act, or while a name that is honored will profit from him, Judas was not useful to him alone--... … ... that apostate to the Lord, saying: 'if man gains the whole world, he loses his soul' What will he give him in exchange for this soul? But still he listened to him saying 'one of you will betray me'. And he was not ashamed, nor did he pity him, he led himself astray alone for thirty silver-- ... … ... gave him alone down to a snare of the devil. For money, oh would that gold did not exist! Still again we receive it in plenty in making God give it to us for some purpose. But to bear the judgment for it. It is lawlessness. Would that gold did not exist and they would not hand over the righteous one for silver and -- ...

…

Not Because a Fox Barks: XH 204-216

It's not when the fox cries out, which is you, oh servant of Mammon, in voices that shout, that the lion, which is I, the servant of Christ, is afraid. I know it's not against me you fight, but against Jesus who dwells inside the Christians. Jesus still conquers you yourself and your father the devil who dwells inside you, for which you hope. And they too on their part, with their father who dwells inside them, Jesus, on whom they depend. A person who has Jesus doesn't ever have shame like you said. The shame of this place [i.e. this life], the glory of this place, I have forsaken them, for I know that which I'm looking out for. Those who have the glory and honor by the hand of Jesus what have they to do with the glory and honor of people? Indeed just as there is no 'robbery' for those who truly have Jesus, as you said against me, since I have carried your gods quietly [i.e. took away your idols without them resisting], and since I have had them bind your contempt and your shame to the gateposts of your house, written on pieces of papyrus—as they broke your urine, in jars like wine —upon the threshold of your house, and on your door and the doors of those who are like you, so also there is no freedom for those who trust in Kronos, which is you, and those who are like you in faithlessness and in every other impurity.

What act or which word among those which you have uttered is it, that does not constitute evidence against you that you belong to Satan? It's the letters, those that you tore up—didn't I know even before I had sent them that you would tear them up, oh accomplice in the work of those who destroyed with the scribe's knife the pages of the book of the words that the prophets sent in the name of God?— they were thrown on the burning embers! Even as you said: "the people and my stewards take things to him," it's you telling us and revealing your evil, for it's not that you want the children of God to carry an offering to his church, or to do another thing which is good in the name of Jesus. You will rejoice if you hear that they have gone to the oracles of demons, because you also worship and serve the creation rather than he who created all things, Jesus, who is blessed for all eternity, instead of listening or seeing them going to the feet of God in every place where he is called, and blessed, and given glory, If more than the many about whom you said, "They take things to him," if they transfer over to me without restraint—for I too am a good servant to them, for they are my

brothers, gathering for them into treasures in heaven, the things that they give in honour of God— is it that they took them from your house and the house of your fathers?

You rob those that are not yours oh evil man. You sin, however, and you lay down obstacles for those who give to the poor, while they know that the things that are given or that are given in charity for those who are in need belong to Christ, who gave them to them for joy and to be rich in deeds that are good. Do I still sit upon the middle of your head? For you say: 'Until what happens won't he sail away, since he says 'I will go', while he throws away day after day?' Why is it that I've become this great burden down upon you in this whole way, [whether] I have gone to the Emperors or I haven't gone. Aren't the heavens and the land Christ's, and all that is in them? Does your father Kronos for his part indeed have anything at all except sins, these that you are a cultivator of for him yourself and those who are like you, as you all sow and reap for him the acts of faithlessness and the lies, and the acts of violence, and the blasphemies and every evil deed. If you were a weed like this growing by yourself then it would be right to tolerate you until the harvest of the field according to the word of the Lord that you blasphemed. But you are a thorn tree and a thistle on the roads, as you form an obstacle to those who walk; for this it is right to cut and to pull out your root.

But since you still said in your empty words: "If he were truly a monk then he wouldn't have committed 3 murders in the 40 Days [=Lent]," as you called the pigs and the cow that I slew in the houses of the pagans "murders". I will say for my part as follows against your nauseating words: if what I did is not right because I made an example of idol worshippers, then how much of a condemnation is it for you that you transgressed in the 40 Days, and in the great holy Easter that every one celebrates down to the God loving Emperors too. But you for your part make your butchers work for you during it, while you live in luxury and stray without fear, making others stray with you because still you sent to me saying: "come search my houses (see) if you find idols inside them" after I have searched it on another occasion; your house - I didn't find any idols in it.

Or don't you have any others but those that I took? Or if I take the idols that are in your house, is it that I'll be able to hide the sun in the sky and the moon and the stars that you worship? Or is it that I'll build walls in the west so that you won't pray to the west side? Or is it that I'll watch over the river and over your canals so you won't pour libations for Kronos down into flood waters, then that's enough of you saying these words of blaspheme upon deception, oh man who has fallen down to great evils. For just as you are godless, so is the way that you oppress the poor in your violent doings, or isn't it another kind of persecution when you pursue men, most of all the elders of the church until you scare them out of their houses, in this very period no less, right in these great troubles that are upon the land as you come into their places, while there is no son and no father and nothing at all inside because they ran.

While you all take their beasts and their wagon, and their hay as you take them to your gardens as you force them to turn them around beyond their strength. And what about the great Easter too, you don't release them to engage in celebrating it. Right down to new boats

that you have built, and you make them launch them into the water during it [i.e. Easter], instead of mourning during it. You have made them shout aloud while it's not their desire, who is he who will be able to recount all your evils? As still you slaughter your calf when it is about to die, or if it exhausts [its] measure, being unuseful for your work, and you divide it piece by piece as is your will, and you throw it at them, right down to the widows, and the old men, the old women, the orphans and the strangers.

And you extort them for copper beyond its value until you collect the price of the calf doubled for ones least of flesh, while they are bones on something useless. As still you give calves to them and cows according to the field for them to feed until they are strong enough for you to take them. Some of them to give them to you in honour, you do nothing good for them in exchange. Whereas others are still fed to you in this way: horses, and asses, sheep, calves, and pigs. Oh would that you all would stop in this way for you would have desired them in their animals or even in other matters You rob them by using them, some for naught, and others with a little honor, except for bread and wine, finding food and chaf. And barley for your animals with all the others And as still you gather them, to make them watch over you and the boats at the time while you flee in the face of the barbarians. Or doesn't the barbarian chase after them? It's their wives and their children and the furniture of their poverty upon their livestock. And in their wagons as they run for their part out of their places to other places to make them rescue themselves. This is the way that many of them hire men under their pay and send them to you to watch over you And you are not content with these things.

But rather you still add to your violence. Just as you still extort from some people a vessel full of wheat for the house, because they are numerous—some twenty five dry measures, others one measure of grain. through the pretext of washing in baths as they weep, 'We don't want to to bathe. We don't have bread to eat. Such a thing is not our concern, while our children are hungry, while our children are naked.' While their majority testifies, 'We are not washing in baths.' Aren't they the ones who force them until they build them [i.e. the baths]? and other buildings as you force them concerning them [the buildings]. Or it's also farmsteads of a village. Wasn't it you who also built their houses inside them? And every single one of these acts of oppression, you were oppressing them inside with your forced labor and your wine that is foul, with your toils and your violence. Oh you men whom a sound threatens, 'Those out of a quarrel who are disobedient of the truth, but obey violence; anger and rage and oppression, and the crushing of every human soul that does something evil.' However I will say in your presence, the Lord of powers, ruler of all, don't be angry at my stupidity. I know that you do not forget anything.

You, who have spoken through your holy prophets in the presence of this boastful man there, Pharaoh: 'Let my people go, so that they may serve me or celebrate for me.' And you who have said through them, 'Be at ease, as you know that I am God,' therefore, have pity on your people, o patient one, whose mercy is great. As you rescue them from those who oppress them. In the way of your people, Israel at that time, so that they shall be at ease to know

that there is no other god but you. Or don't you see that the pagans and the other peoples and the godless, were not able to know you, as they were not at ease in their apostasy? And all their impurities. Therefore, curb every lawlessness. And every violence in every place. From those who did violence to them, from the head of the land to the end of the world, those who know you shall be at ease to serve you. For they are not able to serve you, while they serve those who do violence. Did you not rescue your people Israel on that occasion from the hand of that lawless Nebuchadnezzar, and those others which are like him, who afflicted them in making you deliver them to their hands, since you were angry with them? And they even ask after you in those places, but they wouldn't know to say your blessings in the way that they wish it.

As no open speech exists to them in the servitude of the deeds that are many. In the way that they said: 'how will we be able to say the ode of the house of the lord in those of strange lands?' In this way also if you don't rescue those who have violence done to them from the hands of these merciless ones, although they proclaim your name, but they wish also to do their desire since you are their hope. They will not be able to give you their vow. In blessings and prayers and fasts, since no freedom exists for them right now in the servitude of the deeds of those men who think of wicked things at every hour inside them.

In the Night: BV278-282

By Shenoute Down in the night in which we taught unwise men in the house of God, at dawn on the ninth of the month of Tobe, with them loaded inside and bound, as we were going to condemn the impure there to become strangers to the place of Christ, This I was seeing while petitioning the Lord of all creation, asking 'is it appropriate to place them in these communities, or is it appropriate to pluck their root from out of them?' Behold, a man who takes on the form of authority, who has been sent by one who is greater than him; he has gone into those places without asking permission with another following him as though beneath him. He grabbed me as I passed in the streets of those places, suffering for the pestilent people there. He starts to raise his hand against me, to fight with me, acting like someone who takes care of those ones who were there. As for me, I fought against him, choking him with the thing that was wound around his neck or on his shoulders, saying these things: 'I am not afraid at all nor disturbed! What are you? What, why do you hide yourself and don't reveal yourself? If you are a spirit or an angel come from God, I too am his servant!', and: 'If you persist, I will not persist. Will you tell me if they have sent you, whether it is they who have sinned before God or we who have sinned before him? For we have deliberated about leaving them there in our midst. Otherwise we won't forgive you, rather I will fight against you more.'

As I was saying these and other things, he wrestled with me because he wanted to go, and I wrestled with him, and I was able to best him and top him. And after he acted like he wanted to topple me, I struck him to the ground. I prevailed against his hatred with my feet, as I stood calling to the brethren I saw around me looking after me in all this struggle: 'seize this other one!' For I considered within me that it is impossible for a human to defeat a spirit or angel of God, rather a human falls to the ground because of fear if they see them, as those who appear to them scarcely make them firm against this thought in this way. And behold, they appeared a second time quickly, as they are demons, and I knew that this is the haste of Satan letting him deceive the multitudes that are gathered inside in places so that they endure the mysteries of the impeity of those who commit offensive acts inside of them until the weed becomes much more abundant than the good seed. For the people have chosen to see to please those who belong to the ones who do evil, rather than to please God. This is the way that one person was not cast out on account of his father because they were ashamed, another on account of his brother, another on account of his vain desire, another

for hypocrisy and favoritism, others looking for what they drink and reject, everything for the sake of people and not for the sake of Jesus, according to the way in which we have said many times in many places, not we alone, but also those who were before us choosing God truly.

Therefore we wait for a testimony in other forms to cut out of the body the members which have rotten inside it. Are the Scriptures not enough, which command to pluck out and destroy, to build and to plant? But I have told you, brothers, that the enemy misleads many among those who believe quickly, with every word and every soul. This is the way it happens in many places while many fight against impiety, as they trust a spirit of deception and the teachings of demons. Truly it is no evil if one who loves Christ fights with a good spirit if it appears before them! He will love them more and be happy about them. For he knows that they are not fighting against him, as they guard and keep from bending to a demon and falling under the authority of a spirit (...) thinking that it is a holy [a]ngel. As long as I dwell in the same places together with people, male and female, great men and great women, little boys and little girls, as long as I partake with them and they partake with me of the mystery, as long as I pray with them and they pray with me, as long as I eat bread with them and they eat with me, or while my hand and theirs are in the same bowl upon this same table, and they dare to destroy the creations of God in any defilement or profanity down in this house or those houses and those places (...) turn them to (..) [h]is name in great toils and in heaps of gold upon copper upon every thing, all of which you will not accept, until we set them up so some souls will benefit, and some souls serve God in every purity.

not only do I become an enemy to them in the days of my life in the way that we have said many times, as long as I speak with them in peaceful words, as long as I act as one who rejoices with them and who blesses them, they are more cursed, and all their deeds, and those who know about their deeds and hide them, they are more cursed together with them, and all their deeds.

So Concerning the Little Place BV 277-278

... a person who is sick, as we send him to you or also while he is among you, since it's to us that you will send him. Especially due to our guidance, if you do not call [me] 'father' only with your tongue. What is happening when I give him to one of you with my hands, or also to you (Fem.)? It is not fitting for me to seize him from the hand of others to not give him to them, or that I urge you to drink wine, it is not my wish that the strong among us perform acts of martyrdom. And it is not the act of all the saints, not the toil upon grief, that which is written in the scriptures: Is there or is there not also someone at peace who does not drink it until they die? But what I want, apart from the Rule which is laid down for us, is to not cause any of you to be vexed or to make accusations, and to not make their goodness be according to necessity, but rather their wish. Therefore tell me assuredly in all of your letters at once, without nonsense, by what have you carried this condition among you, because I will know what the advantage is before God and before the people. And your six times in the evening make your prayers only in your house, don't do anything until I am unoccupied and consider this matter; This one and other matters similar to these as well, since I judge not to make someone find something to say on any occasion on judgment day.

And also in the morning do your prayers well, and also your other little handiwork, do it according to your rules. Don't reach midday beyond the measure, so that you do not do them in haste. Also don't do them earlier than the [appointed] hour. I have said many times that it is not the place to show the strength of a person, the midst of the elder men and women, and the children, and those that are working more among us. But the hour of ceaseless prayer or much meditation or spending nights of vigil with strength, it appears before the wise. And whoever wants to strengthen themselves, to suffer more, who would not rejoice with them in heaven and on earth among all people who want the glory of God and the honor of his holy places? Just don't be negligent, and tell me, for the fear of God is in my presence for you at every moment. I entreat you to take care in every matter that is fitting, giving refreshment to my heart. Stay safe as you pray for me.

God Says Through Those Who Are His: GL283 par GF350

... destroy his heart to not come to us, say 'what did you say which gives glory to God, since you have made the desert into a city?' They said in Panopolis in another way as they change the words and lie. It was of use to them from two sides, o miserable wild men, according to the name that they only don't call you by: so as not to hearden your hearts until all these toils come down upon you, especially as you say ...

God Who Alone Is True BV 119-122

...place(s?) and not in another place. For it is not the matter for someone who is a solitary to tend to people who are not near him all the time in the congregation, and he does not [...] his bread with them. And he is not with them because he may be seen and because he will know everything and this person will be seeking the news from the ones in the other congregation, and he will struggle to speak to them the word of God every day. Even more on the Saturdays they gather together when he teaches, he and these two men and the ones who are appointed there to keep the scriptures for us. And if he is able to visit the ones who are in the village from year to year, he and these two men with some others who fear (?God) ... ... who receives ... can(?) ... to go ... that of this man ... teach according to fasting each one at his time. ... to his work. For we brethren all of us are a single shepherd who tends to sheep. One thing is to fight, another thing is to go according to rank. For what was said, 'He is the one who made some apostles, others prophets' is not hidden from each other. Each one speaks his word in his time, being in this single place.

And it is the way that the saints ... speak while ... as it is written ... ...phet ... with the ... but ... and ... Paul used to speak with Barnabas and with .. who were silent. Jacob answered. At times they would speak one by one, not being divided, but being together. And this is the way that the Lord Jesus would send them two by two, and also the great prophet from ancient times Moses and Aaron. At times it was Moses who would speka, and at times it was Aaron who would speak when they were together. At times it was Moses who would carry the staff, and at times also it was Aaron who would carry the staff, but not without Moses—all these things according to the command of God ... in obedience ... according to rank. But if one says, 'These are brothers' and 'Because of this matter they are at ease' and 'This is the way that there is no envy or malicious thing moving to them.' Therefore he is a brother according to the flesh and not a spiritual brother who takes care for his heart out of arrogance that causes everyone trouble who gives it a place i.n their heart For the people of God in this time —Israel— are appointed in this way to rule over thousands and hundreds and fifties and tens when the holy Moses became their leader. ... over ... and over... all the fathers ... over all the ... and over all the people.

In this way also Joshua (Jesus [son of Naue]) after him also ... judges according to this way up to the holy Samuel and afterwards the kings and the ones with them, each one according

to his rank. If this matter does not please the proud person, then let him remember that there is a time coming when God and his Christ Jesus who is over everything so that the heavens and earth and all the things in them are in his hands, in the way of these things, (they) will rule, and he will have the saints judge all of the world. ... the earth ... death ... dwells in them ... gathers together with their companions, and they see the one who will care for their souls, and a ruler will be established for them, indeed the one through whom everything came to be established, whom the ones who rule over these congregations and all their other companions who are appointed with them, and the house-leaders, and the ones who are appointed with them, and the old men with ... who will be in this way each one alone, and they will not hide any deed, nor anything else at all from each other down to a small shoe.

And another truly faithful person who was appointed with them, and they shall not do anything without asking their companions, and their words and their actions will be examined together every ten days ... each time ... find their ... If ... pleases him ... that is at the gate, which they will ... near each other every week. And they speak with the people who came, and they took care in every thing and the thing that is reckoned to be, all of it. And the way that I will appoint them to it together, while I am alive, they shall do it every time. And it shall not be said to them, 'Each one will give an account before God or for his place.' And it shall be said, 'You (all) will give an account for these places,' and 'God will seek out the soul of the ones who dwell in these...

Abraham Our Father: YA 518-20

Letter of Shenoute Abraham our father wished to have children with Sarah. And Sarah wished to have children with Abraham. And thus the Lord God gave a child to Abraham in his old age, begetting Isaac with Sarah in her old age. They had him, their child beloved like a myriad of children, being one . . . Neither . . . is . . . after his . . which came from his part. And thus he gives rest to the mother who bore him and in this way he inherited the inheritance of his ancestors according to that which was said to Abraham through God: 'That one who is Ishmael, he will not receive inheritance from you but I will bless him on your account and I will glorify him greatly and make him a great nation which is numerous and those who come from your [...] Isaac [it is he alone who will inher]it from you.' Therefore indeed she spoke boldly in the knowledge of God, namely, the mother of the child whom she had borne: 'cast out this slave with her child. For the child of this slave will not inherit along with my child, Isaac.' Isaac prayed to the Lord, wishing that he would have children with Rebecca and Rebecca also wished that she would have children with Isaac, and thus the Lord God gave to them according to their heart, filling all their requests, and Esau and Jacob were born. And Isaac blessed Jacob through God by the design of Rebecca, the mother of Jacob, while Esau became a servant to Jacob, according to the Scriptures, 'The great will serve the lesser' and also, 'Jacob, I loved. But Esau, I hated.'

And Jacob wished that he would have children with Rachel, as he had with Leah, and as he had with Zelpha and Balla. And Rachel wished that she would have children with Jacob. And she grieved, and found fault with Jacob in her ignorance, in the abundance of [her] grief, 'Give me children, or I will die.' And Jacob, who was discouraged, said to her, 'Am I myself the Lord who robs the fruit from you[r womb]?' And Jacob said these things angrily because he also wished to have children with Rachel. And thus God saw their grief, and so he gave children to Jacob by Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. And Jacob blessed all his children through the Lord God, he who blessed Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the children.

Abraham Our Father: YA 525-30

(4 page lacuna, and at least part of it must be a continuation of this list to include Anna, and the mother of the prophet Sampson, and Elizabeth, the mother of John, who was filled with the holy spirit from the time he was in his mother's womb who are mentioned below. What else is missing is, of course, unknown but it seems that we begin again at the main (?) point of Shenoute's argument.) So we are foolish, or blind, when male monks in our community refuse argumentatively and disobediently to do certain labors that they are capable of doing, taking care either of people who are entrusted to them, duties, or any other kind of good work that we can do for one another through God for the salvation of our souls. But you are stupid and wickedly stubborn when female monks in your community choose to be barren women through God yet still argumentatively and ignorantly insist on renouncing certain labors that they are capable of doing, taking care either of people, duties, or any other kind of good work that you do for one another in fear of the Lord. Given that the woman who lives with a husband according to the flesh usually is willing to have sons and daughters, and given that Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Anna, and the mother of the prophet Sampson, and Elizabeth, the mother of John, who was filled with the holy spirit from the time he was in his mother's womb given that these women and others of the ancient holy women called out to the Lord, praying and beseeching that they not be barren women, then, whenever female monks in your community renounce people who are entrusted to them through God, how greatly will they be disgraced since they chose to be barren women and widows?

For God despised many of our ancestors, both men and women, from the first until now because they did not wish to labor with others, so that they exist to them as sons and daughters through God. But on account of sloth and arrogance many men renounce, so that they do not labor with others through God even as some themselves labor with them; likewise, many women renounced so that they do not labor with others through God, even as others themselves labor with them, And because of their arrogance and their love of their bodily rest they were willing that they be barren and the Lord shut the womb of their souls like a barren woman, and caused the counsels of the teaching to dry up in our community like empty breasts, so that they should not again teach others, from this moment, through God. But the Lord blessed many of our ancestors down from the beginning until now, both men and women, because they were willing to take on labor with others through God. in the manner of our ancient ancestors and the prophets and apostles, who were 'father' to a great many

people through God; and in the manner of Deborah, who was judge and mother in Israel; and of Odolla (Hulda), the prophet whom Josiah, the righteous king . . . and Anna, the daughter of Phanuuel. This is not the time for parents who have children through God to say in their ignorance, The Lord will give eunuchs and virgins choice rank and a reputation better than sons and daughters.'

Just so [it is not the time] for male monks in our community and female ones in yours, to choose to renounce those who are entrusted to them, and to not take care of them, saying, 'We are pleasing to God,' or, 'These people and others are not our concern.' And in their stubbornness they insert the saying of the prophet, interpreting it according to their heart's desire, 'and their own laziness (bodily comfort?), saying, 'The Lord will give eunuchs and virgins the kingdom of heaven.' And so they renounce others, and do not take care of them … [the eternal teaching] of the apostle, who said, 'Do not let [a person] seek his own salvation, but another's,' even as he himself did not seek his own salvation, but that of many, that they might be saved. But especially the prophet, whose saying the ignorant interpret according to their own desires, saying, The Lord will give eu[nuchs and virgins?] choice rank [and] a reputation better than sons and daughters,' he himself, Isaiah, not only took on many labors for the name of God, but he died for the sake of a great multitude of people, and indeed, for all our sakes. A father or a mother, who have sons and daughters and grandchildren and numerous possessions and whom affairs of life make incapable of ever [caring] for their sons and daughters and all the other things of this age, they therefore care for sons and daughters through God and all kinds of righteous works.

For it is not possible that people like these be servants to their relatives according to the flesh, and they therefore are servants to others through God. But people who do not have sons and daughters according to the flesh, or who have renounced those they did have, along with their numerous material possessions, because they wished to follow according to the worth of the calling which called them to this life, are indeed eunuchs and virgins—and this means you, brethren, as well as everyone everywhere on the whole earth who is celibate, either those who have not known honorable marriage and the pure bed, or those who took a wife or husband but when they were willing, through God by the counsel of the one who said,

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that he will not take vengeance on those who kill them and whip them even as they [drag?] them and who throw them out of the city, as happened to all [the prophets and apostles] in the synagogues and the sanhedrin, and as was done to them by governors and kings, with great sufferings even unto death. And so we remember the sufferings of all the saints, and we consider how our Lord Jesus despised shame as he remained steadfast on the cross for all our salvation, because he is our savior, he is our Lord and our father. And also we know that the good and compassionate God supports all of us from the start of the earth to the ends of the inhabited world, from the beginning when he created the human being on the earth until today. And he also will support [us] in the multitude of his mercy until the consummation of the ages, for we are his servants and he is our ruler and our king. Therefore let us not renounce such that we do not support our companions, so that God does not become angry with us, for because we did not delay to support our companions as the Lord, in the way the Lord, and his Christ, and his holy angels have supported us from the beginning of creation until today and forevermore. But let us be servants to one another, like Jesus, who took the form of a servant for us, and like Paul, the servant of Jesus, and like all the apostles and prophets who were servants to the Lord and his Christ, according to the Scriptures, saying, 'I sent you my servants, the prophets on the day at the first hour; I sent them and you did not listen.'

How have the prophets and the apostles been servants to the Lord and his Christ except that they chose to labor with others and that they died for the name of Jesus? Therefore, when the Lord Jesus realizes that our fathers, the apostles, would do anything that he commanded them to do, he will leave them up to heaven, according to the Scriptures; and thus they completed what he commanded them to do from the beginning, while the Lord of glory, Jesus, was with them. Therefore he said to them, 'I will not call you my servants from now on because the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I will call you my brothers and my companions because I have told you all the things I have heard from my father.' He said, 'It was not you who chose me but it was I who chose you, and I send you out like sheep in the midst of wolves. Do not fear the people who will kill your (pl.) body. If they persecuted me, surely they will persecute you. If they guarded my saying, surely they will guard yours. If they called the master of the house, 'Beelzebol,' 'then how much [more] will they insult a member of his household sneeringly and insultingly?' See now, brethren,

how much we are disgraced because our fathers, the prophets and apostles, completed great sufferings in a great servitude in the midst of evil and good, and in the midst of those who hated them and those who loved them?

And we ourselves, are we not ashamed to say, 'We will not take care of our brethren,' revealing that we are unworthy of the gift of the Lord, who made us worthy to approach him through deeds-- We are not worthy of them. Therefore let no male monks or female monks in your community pour forth the gift of the Lord and flee from taking care of others who were entrusted to them through God, just as others have taken care of them from the beginning and still now there are others taking care of them in everything, either in teaching of the Scriptures or with food and clothing and also in their sickness and everything by which those who care for them are servants to all of them. Therefore let us not say blasphemously, 'Those who rule us are our masters and we are beneath them like these servants.' Those who rule us are not over us, but we are over them and they are beneath us, indeed they serve us because they take care of us in everything through God. How was it that the prophets and the apostles and all the saints from the first until now were willing to be servants to others, so that they might receive [eternal] life, except that they saw the Lord of glory, Jesus, take the form of a servant for our sakes? Moreover, from the beginning, God also became a workman like a servant, he being Lord and king, in as much as he created his angels as spirits, as it is written, and in as much as he created the entirety out of that which did not exist; he caused everything to exist: the heavens, and the earth and everything in them, according to the Scriptures, You established the foundations of the earth.

Your manual labor is the heavens. And even as he spoke so that everything might exist, and they all came into existence by his commandment, the days and the sheep and all the other beasts of the field, and all the birds in the sky, and the things in the water, and the trees that bear fruit and all the things that grow on the earth, according to the Scriptures. And also even as God took soil from the earth, and he consulted with the first-born child of all creation, Jesus, who existed before everything, saying, 'Let us create a human being according to our image and according to our likeness', and when they created the human being according to their image and according to their likeness, according to the Scriptures, God breathed into him a breath of life. The human being became as a living soul, male and female God created them, as it is written. And even as God planted a garden in Eden, he put the person in it . . .

Abraham Our Father: YA 547-50

[lacuna of 3 folios/6 pages].... . . and in your community. So that truly we shall be like the sons of Abraham and the sons of all our ancient ancestors, whom the Lord blessed because they not only loved their sons and daughters of the flesh and all their relatives, but they loved everyone who believed in God and who guarded God's commandments, and thus their seed inherited everyone who is faithful and just, from the beginning until today and forever. But if our ancient ancestors had disobedient and sinful children, they did not then remounce their just children in order for them to flee from them because of the amount of ignorance of the evil children, but they cut off the sinful children and remain with the just children all the days of their lives.

Therefore just as many sinful children cause grief to our ancient ancestors, so also many just children bring them joy; and just as God often becomes angry so to destroy many ancient tribes on account of the many sinful children among them, so also God often turns his anger from many ancient tribes because of the just children among them; and just as a great number [of people] died in their wickedness in every lawlessnes, on account of many false prophets who lived among the many ancient tribes, praising them and deceiving them and drawing the anger of God on them, so also a great many lived in every righteousness on account of the prophets of the Lord God, who lived among the many ancient tribes, speaking the truth, and blaming sinners and blessing those who do good; and just as some in the ancients tribes were the deceivers (which means the false prophets and the deceptive priests), so also some in the ancient tribes were prophets of the Lord, such as Moses and Joshua the prophet, and Isaiah, Jeremaiah, Ezekial, and all the prophets who find fault with everyone who sinned or who will sin in the presence of the Lord, and they praise everyone who did, or will do, every righteousness.

But all the prophets of the Lord God and the apostles of our Lord Jesus are all from the seed of our father Abraham, and those from Abraham were not spared when they sinned in the presence of the God who made them, but great curses were brought upon their brethren, their kin, as it is written in the law of Moses. And also they bless everyone who gives glory to the Lord God by their just works, but even more greatly do they curse every false prophet and all the priests who deceive and every anti-Christ, and all false teachers, and everyone who did not believe in our Lord Jesus from the beginning until now. But if all the prophets,

apostles and ancients ancestors and righteous people from the beginning until today are people who perform the truth, and speak the truth, because the truth is in them, and thus they are upstanding in all their deeds through God. As for us, brethren, let us perform the truth and speak the truth so that we are upstanding in all our works, and so that we might belong to the prophets, apostles and all the saints, and we would be worthy of God, because God is truthful, and our Lord is truthful, who said, 'I am the truth.' Therefore let us not lie about evil deeds that we do in the darkness so that we do not belong to Satan, in whom no truth exists, because he is a liar and he does not ever stand fast truthfully.

Therefore indeed he is cursed, sowing lies and every sin among his companions, as it is written, Whenever a liar speaks, he speaks among his companions. [??] that everyone who sins and who lies belongs to…' [text picks up in YA 551-54]

Abraham Our Father YA 551-54

[continued from YA550] Satan. Let us not be traitors and thieves, so that we are not like Judas about whom it was said, with the Holy Spirit's help, Let the curse descend on him like water and oil in his bones.' Therefore let us not be deceitful in the presence of the Lord, through any wicked deed, either a pollution or a defilement, or thieving or lying, or hatred or bragging or hypocrisy, and vainglory. Who are the braggarts but those who shout, and who put their noses in the air and look down at those who guide them, who take care of them and teach them so that they might live orderly according to God's ordinances? Who are the hypocrites but the people who live with [braggarts] and conceal their transgressions through every wickedness? Therefore let us not be deceitful falsely, and conceal our sins from our companions because that causes disturbances in every community, when people sin in the presence of God for all time. But let us teach our companions by instruction not to sin in the presence of the Lord. And if we stumble and act wickedly through a mistake, let us share blame with our companions because that is the strength and the foundation of every community which is pleasing to God for all time. Indeed it is not wonderful whenever we act like the false prophets and we conceal our sins from our companions, and God must pour his curse on us angrily and wrathfully.

But the wonder occurs whenever we follow the pattern set by our fathers, the prophets and apostles and we teach our companions not to sin in the presence of God; our companions so that we repent, so the Lord can pour his blessing on us mercifully and patiently. In addition to it being appropriate that we write many words to you in this letter, it is also appropriate that we are sufficient and we instruct you by God and all the sayings of the Scripture, just as the apostle said, I instruct you by God and the saying of his grace . . . and so I give you the inheritance with all the saints.' And now, since you wrote to us, 'The sister whom you appointed instead of the one who died has refused the task that you assigned to her.' I want you to tell me why she refused the post that was assigned. Because if I know that she refused because she was not capable of bearing up under the task appointed to her, then she can stay peacefully in the rank where she was before. But if it's the case that she refused argumentatively and ignorantly and she lied in the presence of the Lord, saying, 'I refuse because I am not capable of doing this task.' And after some days or after some time should we find out, then you know what it is you shall do to her because she did not inform us that she had been abused administratively or anyway in which she had been humiliated.

Finally, if we find out that she did not tell the truth because others prevented her, it shall not be hidden from you how we shall punish them. For both they and she have made a covenant with falsehood, on the advice of Satan. After all this, behold, I will send the male elder to you so that you can remember God, and pity yourselves, female monks in your community and male monks in ours, and you tell us all the disturbances that happen in your community so that we can be free from pain, we and you

Abraham Our Father: ZH fragments 1a-d

But people who do not have sons and daughters according to the flesh, or who have renounced those they did have, along with their numerous material possessions, because they wished to follow according to the worth of the calling, which called them to this life are indeed eunuchs and virgins—and this means you, brethren, as well as everyone everywhere on the whole earth who is celibate, either those who have not known honorable marriage and the pure bed, or those who took a wife or husband but when they were willing through God by the counsel of the one who said, 'Let whoever can receive, receive.' They renounced honorable marriage, and the pure bed, and they renounced their sons, their daughters, their siblings, their parents and everything they had, remembering the word of the Lord, 'The one who follows me must hate his father and his mother, his children, his brothers and sisters and even also his own soul.' (Lk. 14:26) These in this way are those who are capable of being disciples of the Lord, according to the Scriptures.

And these people are the eunuchs, who do not have children according to the flesh. But they instead are fathers to many children of God, because, since they do not have children, or renounced all those they did have along with all their material possessions, they 'took their cross and followed the Lord.' And such are our holy ancestors, the prophets and the apostles, who truly were 'eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of God,' and as a result they were fathers to many people, according to the saying of the Lord, Everyone who renounces household, or brother or sister, or father or mother, or wife, or son or daughter, or community, he will receive them back manifold and will inherit eternal life.' Therefore, brethren, do not let each one of us be a burden to our neighbor due to the alienation which exists among us and by it we are divided in our hearts towards our companions so that we, by our thoughts which only seem wise to ourselves alone (Isa 5:21), are forced to not take care of our companions. But as fellow-laborers of God, Let each one of us support our neighbor, either senior or junior in rank, and let us love living with our companions peacefully, without sin or deceit, just as God and his angels live in heaven. [Who] are the children of wise men who will not wish to do the work which their righteous father did?

Which wise brother will not follow the pattern of their faithful brethren who are superior in rank to them? This means: which wise people will not wish to do the works which their father who is in heaven did; who is God and our Lord Jesus? Moreover, they follow the pattern of the angels of the Lord and the pattern of the prophets and the pattern of Paul, and all the apostles who said, Follow our pattern, our ordinance, our faith, our patience, our love, our endurance, our persecutions, our labors.' Then also, 'We gave ourselves to you as a pattern [to follow].' And also, "Receive, my brethren, the pattern of the labor and patience of the prophets." Again, You will make yourself a pattern in everything.' Then also, 'The elder women of this sort are a holy pattern.' And most especially the Scriptures teach us about our Lord Jesus, that he is the one who set for you a pattern so that you might follow his lead. What is the work of God and our Lord Jesus except the work of his hands? It was his hands that formed us and created us. Therefore, according to the Scriptures, God and our Lord Jesus work to save all humanity up to now, according to the saying of the apostle, The one who works for us is God.' What is the pattern of the angels in heaven, except every day to complete their glorious deeds, blessing and praising God and our Lord Jesus, and so to complete all the duties for those on earth so that they will inherit salvation?

What is the pattern of the prophets and apostles except to choose to suffer with others even unto death? And in all these things they give thanks to the Lord, blessing those who curse them, praying for those who persecute them, and praying to God that he will not take vengeance on those who kill them and whip them even as they [drag?] them and who throw them out of the city, as happened to all [the prophets and apostles] in the synagogues and the sanhedrin, and as was done to them by governors and kings, with great sufferings even unto death. And so we remember…

Source. The Coptic text was edited and translated by the Coptic SCRIPTORIUM project and is published in its open corpora (https://github.com/CopticScriptorium/corpora). English translation credited in the corpus to: Amir Zeldes, Anthony Alcock, Caroline T. Schroeder, Rebecca Krawiec, Heike Behlmer. SermonIndex has joined the project's sentence-by-sentence translations into paragraphs, divided them into short sections and numbered them; the wording is the translators' own. Square brackets and dots mark damaged or missing places in the manuscript. The Coptic text itself is not shown here; documents of the corpus that have no named English translation are not included.

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