

Shenoute

De eis qui e monasterio discesserunt

English translation

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The text from which this translation has been made can be found in J. Leipoldt *Sinuthii Archimandritae Vita et Opera Omnia 3* (CSCO, 1908) : 116-151. Leipoldt has given his own, in some cases, rather creative titles to Shenoute's works, based on a phrase in the text, often used more than once, that seems to capture best the main topic of the writing, in this case, **ΝΤΑΥΕΩΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΗΤΟΟΤΗ** 'they have left us' (and, of course, variations). S. Emmel *Shenoute's Literary Corpus* (CSCO 2004): 918, on the other hand, has employed the standard procedure for texts with no title of using the *incipit* (**ΕΤΒΕΟΥ ΠΧΟΕΙC** *Why, Lord*). The text can be assigned to a corpus of texts within Shenoute's *oeuvre* known as Canon 4.¹ It is an attack on those who have left the monastery and have, presumably, broken the covenant (διαθήκη) they entered into when they made their confession (ὁμολογία) on entering the monastery, but this covenant was not necessarily a lifelong commitment..² The text translated here makes it clear that some of those who have left blamed Shenoute for his ill-treatment, but others simply did not have the strength to remain there.

In 1931 Hans Wiesmann made a Latin translation of the texts published by Leipoldt in the same CSCO series, which has enabled me to supply some of the Biblical references. I have kept Leipoldt's paragraph division. The numbers in brackets are the page numbers of Leipoldt's publication.

I hope that this work may be of some use to those trying to navigate the complexities of Shenoute's prose. Conditional sentences are not unusual in his rhetoric, and this text is no exception. Some of his sentences are quite magnificent structures, such as the one that occupies more than two-thirds of p. 121, a conditional that finishes with a question followed by another conditional. There is a certain amount of repetition of various phrases: **ΕΤΒΕΠΑΙ** 'for this reason' (24 times); **ΕΠΙΧΙΝΧΗ** 'for no reason' (11 times); **ΖΑΖ ΝCΟΠ** 'many times' (clearly a rhetorical device that introduces 8 of the final 10 paragraphs of the text); **ΠΑΙ** 'this one' (13 times, often referring to Shenoute himself, but the three exx. on p. 141 seem to refer to unnamed dissidents, whose identity was doubtless known to the other monks). But since repetition is the stock-in-trade of those who use speech-making or declamation as a form of communication, this is perhaps hardly surprising. A striking piece of rhetoric, involving the pairing of opposites, is to be found on p. 148.

1 For the term 'canon' used in the compilation of Shenoute's works cf. Emmel *op. cit.* p. 146

2 J. Leipoldt *Schenute von Atripe* (1912): 110.

One can only speculate about what has prompted this fairly convoluted outpouring, which occasionally sounds like the self-serving whining of a bully. Shenoute is at pains to make it clear that he has in no way done wrong to those who have left the monastery and that, on the contrary, it was their dishonest and implied immoral (ΝΕΥΟΥΩΩ ΝΖΗΤ ΕΘΟΟΥ) shortcomings that made the leave. This constant shift from self-defence to attack and back again is probably responsible for Shenoute's use of 'them' (indirect address) and 'you' (direct address) of his adversaries, to whom he often refers dismissively as 'these people' (ΝΑΙ ΝΕΙΤΙΜΕ). Shenoute also varies the use of pronouns when he addresses the monastic congregation, alternating between 'you' (where he is not one of them) and 'us' (where he is one of them).

As the text progresses one senses a certain exasperation in his phraseology. I take 'entire mouth' (p. 134) to mean that the secessionists did not, as German says, 'take a leaf before the mouth' (*kein Blatt vor den Mund nehmen*) and were relatively outspoken to the point where they overstepped the boundary of ΠΑΡΡΗΣΙΑ (free speech). The section that follows this is full of deeply felt resentment at the unwillingness of the rebels to submit to Shenoute's authority and their wish to be 'their own master'. With a good deal of sarcasm he adopts the 'psychological' device of seeing things from their point, where he is the villain. The secession of the rebels reflects their lack of 'love' (ΑΓΑΠΗ) (p. 136) not only for monastic authority but also for those of their fellow monks who willingly submit to this authority, so that in effect the rebels become traitors.

Why, Lord, according to the words of your saints, have you led us astray from your path and hardened our hearts so as not to fear you ?³ I know, God, according to what is written, that I have committed great acts of wickedness in your presence. For this reason, as it is written,⁴ you have established me as a man burning from afar or one at whom some are looking that you may cast your arrows at me. You have caused them, the arrows of your quiver, to pierce my kidneys.⁵

For I have said, brothers, from the beginning, whether in the convent or letters, that I am not like you,⁶ not because I am blessed before God or more justified than you or that I find you contemptible - God forbid ! For they are impious who think in this way. But I say this, because according to what is written the Lord has siezed me and taken me to a dark place of groaning and grief and reproach and humiliation, and not to light and joy and comfort and

3 Is. 63, 17

4 Unidentifiable

5 Lam. 3, 13. This passage is referred to several times in what follows.

6 W. Till *Koptische Grammatik* (1961) §239.

happiness. He has turned His hand in me in great distress, as I deserve, for I (117) have sinned in His presence, and according to the extent of my faults. He has made me distressed day and night for I have caused Him to be angry with my wicked deeds from my childhood to the present day.

For this reason I say that I am not to be compared with other men, but I am to be compared with myself, to remain by myself, troubled at heart, repenting for all my wrongdoings.

Perhaps I will find mercy before the Lord, like the one found when he was lost,⁷ for His charity and mercy are eternal. And you are the ones to be compared with yourselves alone, rejoicing in the Lord and not in need of repentance, because you are without sin, like the hundred minus one, just and without need of repentance.⁸

For this reason it is not fitting to force you in grief and tears. For yours is total joy, brothers, because you contemplate deeply the written word: *Who will boast, his heart being pure ? Who will say openly that I am pure from sin ?*⁹ But woe to me for I have sinned against Him.

For this reason, my heart has become sad, as it is written,¹⁰ for the Lord is the one who has judged it right to give me grief, according to the Scriptures, causing pain and sighs to pierce my spleen and my kidneys, like arrows of fire, in repayment for all my sins. I say in the depth of my thoughtlessness that the Lord saw that I did not serve him according to the position I was in, my holy parents being just. For this reason, He has given all these things to my heart.

For what business do I have teaching others, a sinner more wretched (118) than all, whose need of teaching is greater than that of many ? I am there e one who has been thoughtless because I did not put my hand to my mouth at the beginning. Perhaps the Lord was waiting¹¹ to see for Himself if there was another one able and worthy to have others listen to him because he was just like our ancestors. I am a sinner, envying others who wish to become

7 Gen. 4, 12

8 Lk 15, 7

9 Prov. 20, 9 (LXX)

10 Seems to be another ref. to the Lamentations passage cited in fn. 4. I do not understand Wiesmann's ref. Eccl. 26, 25

11 This is an attempt to render the sense of **ΝΕΡΕΠΙΧΘΕΙC** **ΝΑΝΑΥ** (Future Imperfect) and there is no verb 'wait' in the Coptic.

faithful.

And if I were not a wicked man, some would not murmur against me among themselves in the convent, saying: *Why do we ... here ?* ¹²They said: *Because all the words of reproach and cursing that this one says, he has said them all for our sake.* Others said: *If we did not feel shame before the two eyes of our first father*¹³ *who has passed away, we would not stay here, for the speeches and rules which this one makes are, they say, all iniquitous.*

And I¹⁴ say these things because they have not considered them so that those may know that if we were the children of our first father, they would do his works, as it is written: *If you were the children of Abraham, you would do the works of Abraham.*¹⁵ Moreover, our fathers, they detested everyone who did not listen to their teaching and everyone who ignored all the things enjoined upon them by the commands of the saints. For this reason, if it is fitting to feel respect for our forefathers and to be patient in the convent, making those who live with us angry, then it is also all the more fitting for us to feel respect for our forefathers and run from all enmity and hatred (119) that we feel for those now living with us. Perhaps we love those who have died and long for them because they are not with us to forbid us our disobedience, our disputes, our strife, hating those who live with us and being unwilling that they should walk past us or that they should sit with us at all, because they admonish us not to gossip or murmur in blaming those who teach us, lest God be angry with us and destroy our works, as it is written.¹⁶ The wise among us who are alert know that they who disobey the teaching of those living with them are also they who disobeyed their forefathers and were never instructed by them. Otherwise,¹⁷ they would also listen to those living with them, like all these who listen to those living with them, like those who also all the more listened to our forefathers who have left us to enjoy the grace of God and relieved everyone in their submission, like those who humbled themselves obediently until death so that the Lord might elevate them even more, because he who humbles himself is he who

12 Leipoldt reads $\psi\alpha\iota$ 'fate' but that ms A possibly reads $\psi\alpha$ 'festival' Crum 731a suggests in his lemma on $\zeta\omicron\omicron\gamma$: $\epsilon\omicron\chi\iota\zeta\omicron\omicron\gamma \epsilon\pi\epsilon\gamma\psi\alpha\pi$, but offers no translation 'why do we take a day for their loan here' ?

13 Presumably a ref. to Pgol.

14 Read $\epsilon\iota\chi\omega$.

15 Joh. 8, 39

16 1 Jo. 3, 8

17 Crum 64a meaning (e).

listens to those who teach him, and he will be elevated; but the one who is proud and disobeys those who teach him, he will be humbled as it is written.¹⁸

For this reason, if one asks the teacher of men why he does not reproach the arrogant with contentiousness that disobeys the commands of the Lord laid down for us in the convents. let him say to him that, according to Scripture, God will deal with the arrogant using His raised arm and strong hand to fit **(120)** the jaws of those who do not approach him with bridles of reproach strong in the teaching of the Scripture and muzzles to prevent them from speaking at all,¹⁹ as the Apostle said:²⁰ *It is necessary to muzzle them*, because the disobedient said that the traditions of our forefathers are vanities, as they said with their entire mouth:²¹ *Did Pachomius go to heaven and bring down commandments for us to hear them and do them ?* When those people say these things, they tell the wise that that they are those to whom the written word says:²² *There is no food useful to the foolish*, because the words of the living are despised by the hateful, and our forefathers, their words of light are despised, which are nourishment for all the God-loving. And this is why these people are never upright in their deeds, according to the Scriptures.²³ And these people are those about whom the wise say: *Like some with whom God struggles, they also say that He agrees with them in what they do.* Their rejoicing has finally become a source of grief to them.

For this reason let contempt and cursing and scorn pierce the spleens and kidneys of those who say what they have all said about us, because in truth they have spoken about those. The joy, comfort, rejoicing and happiness in the Lord, let them pierce the spleens and kidneys of those who say what they have said about us, because in truth they have spoken about those.²⁴

(121) For, if some among us, whether man or woman, say: *The reproaches and curses*

18 Matth. 23, 12

19 Ps. 135, 21 and 31, 9

20 Tit. 1, 11

21 Same phrase occurs on p. 134 of the text. It seems to mean that someone has overstepped the limits of the permissible.

22 Unidentifiable

23 Ps. 89, 17

24 Leiboldt thinks that this passage is corrupt, and it is difficult to disagree with him. The only thing that seems to be clear is the contrast between 'us' and 'them'.

uttered by this man in letters or spoken while we are assembled together, he has said them all for our sake; and if others also say, as they are about to leave us, in their obduracy: We will stand before you at the tribunal of Jesus, for you have not let us perform the desires of our wicked heart, and if, when they leave us, they do not find their desires or rather do not satisfy their passions and then come back to us to live with us; and if, when we do not let them, they then say, in their immeasurably warped ignorance: We will be judged with you before God, for you have not let us enter the convent that we might once again corrupt others with destructive thoughts, for we were content in the place we left, doing as we wished with no-one to oppose us; and if some speak in this way, that others may think in this way too, then how can that person not be damned before these people when he speaks in the name of the Lord? Woe to him all the more before God if he does not say what he should say. Woe to him before God if he tolerates men who are disobedient and insidious backbiters in the convent of the Lord. Woe to him too before men who are ignorant, overweening and presumptuous, about to leave him in obduracy and mockery.

If this one becomes troubled at heart and wants (122) them, as it is written, to stand upon their ways and see what the good way is and walk on it²⁵ that they may find purity of heart and that God may choose all their works, as the Scripture says,²⁶ because they have kept His laws and they too, the ignorant, will be consumed by them in their strife and contentiousness, wishing, as it is written, to abandon the upright ways²⁷ and to choose for themselves the ways of darkness so that, as it is written, God will despise²⁸ their works, and this one and those will be judged together by God, because it was fitting that those will pluck out their pupils,²⁹ as it is written,³⁰ and give them to him because He loves them very much. If not, they would not struggle against this one who speaks the words of the Scriptures to them and those of the holy fathers who went before us. For hatred provokes strife.

These things, when I say them, I do so to tell you that if I am the one who for no reason

25 Jer. 6, 16

26 Not identifiable

27 Eccl. 2, 16

28 Ps. 137, 8

29 Coptic **ⲗⲗⲱ** (pl. **ⲗⲗⲟⲟⲩⲥ**) can mean 'pupil (of eye) or 'daughter' Crum 5a

30 I cannot identify the quotation. I do not understand Wiesmann's attribution.

hates those who have left us or will leave us, then who will love them ? If I am the one who for no reason becomes hostile to them, then who will make peace with them ? If those people leave us for my sake, then for whose sake will they remain ? If I am the one who for no reason is abusive to them or humiliates them, then who will rescue them from the one who humiliates and ill-treats them ? Satan.

(123) Do they say that I hate them because I ill-treat them ? Am I like the fool who says that there is no God³¹ or like those who ask how God knows or if there is knowledge on high³² or like those of whom it is said:³³ *They said: The Lord will not see and the God of Jacob will not know* ? And how is it that I now ill-treat and humiliate them for no reason ? I know that if I ill-treat and humiliate them, God will ill-treat and humiliate me in the place to which we are going.

For this reason, as it is written,³⁴ I will cry out to the Lord and beg my God the merciful and long-suffering, whose mercy is great, that as He forgave me all my sins from childhood to the present, so also He will forgive me for all the abuses I have committed, because the entire convent and all who come to us from outside are my witness that I am a wicked man who ill-treats these people who have left us, handing me over to God complaining against me because I have not let them be counsellors of the devil and destroy the teaching of our fathers and shatter the law of the Lord,³⁵ as it is written: ³⁶*They have abandoned my covenant and shattered my law.*

I will dare³⁷ to say this word before my beloved brothers: Look, is there any man (124) who is not willing in any way to acknowledge that the work he is doing is well-organized and that it is his work ? And how will I sin before the Lord if I hate my neighbour for no reason, he being my brother and my companion, especially since neither of us has any hope except in God alone and Our Lord Jesus Christ and the works of justice ? If I say to others who

31 Ps. 13, 1

32 Ps. 72, 11

33 Ps. 93, 7

34 2 Kg. 22,7

35 This phrase, used several times in this text, occurs in Ps. 19, 7

36 Deut. 29, 25 and Ps. 118, 126

37 What follows is probably meant to be provocative or thought-provoking.

hate that the one who hates his brother is a killer,³⁸ the one who hates his brother finds himself in darkness and walks in darkness, not knowing where he is going, for the darkness has closed his eyes, and I am the one who for no reason has hated his neighbour, he being a just man, then what is the just work that I am performing ? What am I to do if the Lord asks me, I knowing that the one who hates the just man is a sinner ? For this reason, while I know that there is no violence in my heart or in my hands against those who say that I am being physically or verbally abusive of them or that I am telling them parables and making enigmatic threats of blame and scorn against them, these people who are disobedient and who say things like this, like people who have never felt respect for the law of the Lord and the traditions of our fathers set before us, I too will not refrain from warning them that all the curses of the Scriptures will visit them and that they will be scorned at all times, as it is written,³⁹ and they will be overcome by distress, **(125)** confusion, grief, groaning and the works of the devil and become slaves to them.

Which of all the sins is greater than disobedience, the cause of all sin in the world, according to the Scriptures ?⁴⁰ For this reason, woe to the disobedient, as it is written,⁴¹ *they are blind who are lost in the ways of the teaching of the Scriptures and are plants that God has not planted.* For this reason they will be uprooted. About disobedience the prophets said: *If the number of the sons of Israel is like the sand of the sea, a remainder will be saved.*⁴² About disobedience Our Lord Jesus said: *Many are called, but few are chosen.*⁴³ For this reason I say to you, brothers, if we do not obey the law of the Lord and attend to the tradition of our fathers and bend our ears to the words of those who are now teaching us, I bear witness before God that many of us will become estranged from the Lord Jesus, whether man or woman, and will lose the opportunity of going the place of rest where our just fathers are in the kingdom of God the Father of Our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Woe to me because of all my sins, if it happens to me that I should feel shame at what I am looking forward to. And **(126)** woe to every one of us who commits acts of depravity,

38 1 Joh. 3, 15

39 Unidentifiable

40 Rom. 5, 12

41 Matth. 15, 15

42 Is. 10, 22

43 Matth. 20, 16

pollution, defilement, theft, brazenness, disobedience and any other kind of wickedness. Woe to those who abandon their primacy of position⁴⁴ and deny their patience because of their ignorance and their own wisdom⁴⁵ that they wish to do what their hearts desire in the places they have gone to, whether those who wear the monastic habit when they do what their hearts wish in the places where they are after having left us or those who have cast aside the monastic habit, performing many acts of abomination in the places they have gone to after having left the convent of the Lord, fleeing without being pursued, because the Lord has removed Himself from them because of their wicked deeds.

If you read the books written from the beginning,⁴⁶ you will find in them things that are still relevant to those of us who sin or will sin and those who have left or will leave us, murmuring and fault-finding with no reason and those whom God has cast out or will cast out because of their wicked deeds which they have done or will do among us in these convents now and, more importantly, in the final days.

(127) For this reason let us repent, brothers, before the written word⁴⁷ tells us that the daughter of Zion will be left like a booth in a vineyard and like a lodge in a garden of cucumbers and a city under siege. Let us repent before the sun becomes dark and the light and moon and stars⁴⁸ and before the likeness of gold and the beauty of silver become dark. Let us repent before the written word⁴⁹ censures us: *How has gold become dark in great blackness and good silver changed?*

Blessed are those who have endured. Woe to those who turn back like Lot's wife⁵⁰ and woe to everyone everywhere whose end is worse than their beginning, according to the Scriptures. Woe to the fathers of the convent who have taken their ease by themselves in a hidden corner⁵¹ of the convent, not looking at the fellow monks who have been entrusted to

44 Jud. 1, 6

45 Ms A omits this phrase. If it is to have any meaning, then **МНТCABE** is probably meant ironically, reinforced perhaps by **ММAAY** 'own'. Or one might perhaps understand **EMHTOY**- 'they not having (wisdom of their own)'

46 It is not clear to me whether this means the earliest books written or from page one of the books. It might, I suppose, be a reference to the works cited in the next paragraph.

47 Is. 1, 8

48 Joel 2, 10

49 Lam. 4, 1

50 Alternative writing of **С2IME**, in which only the second part of the AE *st-hmt* is written: **2IME**.

51 Lit. **NCAYCA N2WIT** 'apart in secret'.

them and are living together with them. I say to you that, except for illness, there is no greater impiety than leaders, whether man or woman, who take their ease more than those they lead.⁵² Again I acknowledge to you that there is no other act of godlessness than that some scorn men in their sickness in any way, and it is a great act of lawlessness for men to be contemptuous in their illness and utter imprecations against those who minister to them and take care of them, finding fault (128) with those called 'our fathers', so that they speak great wickedness about them, imagining baseless thoughts against them and saying that there is favouritism and the fathers of this convent change their eating and their clothing more than us, whether they are genuinely sick or merely malingering.⁵³

For this reason woe to those who err in their hearts, thinking of vanities and contemplating them as much as the impurity of their soul permits, believing in deceit and rather trusting of the demonic word that speaks in them in whispers,⁵⁴ they denying the Lord of glory Jesus, who speaks with them in a loud voice in all the Scriptures. Woe to those who provide evil in place of good, their intention being an act of lawlessness against just fathers, reproaching them: *You have taken more ease than us, because you have eaten the best food and given us the bad food.*

As these people, and I know about them, said to our forefathers, good men who have left us and gone to the Lord, crucifying the flesh and desires,⁵⁵ as the whole convent knows about this, that our fathers mortified their bodies for the sake of God and for our sake. This is why I am not worthy to call them 'my fathers', because God is witness to what I say: *I have not been able at all to follow their example in all their tribulations.* (129) These whom our fathers received, they have left us praised by the whole convent. But these sinners deride our forefathers, because they are not worthy of them.

And I know who the thankless boasters are, from the beginning until now. Some are presumptuous and, whether man and woman, became estranged from the convent of God

52 I understand this to mean that the only excuse for certain people to take it easy is that they are sick.

53 Neither of these adverbs is in the Coptic.

54 The word **κἄκρῆ** has an uncanny similarity to the Arabic **الوسواس** used in Sura 114, also of the insidious ways of the devil.

55 Gal. 5, 24

from the beginning, when our fathers were still with us. Some have just left us in their stubbornness. If there are others among us who have not cleansed their heart of the wickedness of Satan the serpent, I bear witness to those before the Lord that if they do not repent, they will be estranged from the convents of our fathers, like all those cast out from the beginning until now because of all their sins and all their abominations, whether man or woman.

The Lord is an impartial judge of truth, as it is written and according to the Scriptures,⁵⁶ that He will not take a gift from anyone to corrupt the judgement between rich and poor or influence the judgement of the leader and those whom he leads unjustly or even justly.

(130) But as the Lord will question the impious and the just, so also will the Lord question the leader and those whom he leads, whether tyrannically or justly. If he ill-treats or hates them or they hate or ill-treat him, then that one and these others will be judged by God at the tribunal of truth. For this reason, if I am the one who ill-treats those who have left us, or if I am the one who truly hates them, grudging the salvation of their soul, according to those who have taken their leave of us with excuses that find fault with the word of the Lord and teaching of the Scriptures, it is mostly the case that a man wishing to part from his companions seeks an excuse, for how will he leave us except by abandoning good thoughts and reviling the entire convent, as it is written⁵⁷: *Those who do not honour the convent abandon counsel*, and if I am the one who humiliates these people who have become estranged from us or if there are others here with us who think this about⁵⁸ me, whether whether man or woman, that I hate them or prevent them⁵⁹ from worshipping God, as these people say, then *let not (131) the Lord hear me*, as it is written, for I have taken wickedness into my heart against my neighbours that I may hate them for no reason. And if those who think evil things about me, hating me for no reason, whether they want to or are unable to⁶⁰, then God will hear them where they are now and will save them from all evil and give them

56 e.g. Deut. 10, 17

57 Prov. 15, 22. W. Worrell *Proverbs in Sahidic* (1931): 49. The Coptic version was clearly made from the LXX.

58 or 'against'

59 The pronoun **ANOK** is repeated in a quizzical rhetorical appeal to show the absurdity of such a suggestion: 'I, prevent them?' The Greek verb **κωλεγε** (prevent) is followed by the negative form of a Coptic **ΕΤΡΑΤΜΚΑΛΥ** (that I do not allow them), rather like the use one occasionally encounters in English: 'to forbid someone from doing something'.

60 Coptic: **ΕΖΝΑΥ Η ΝΤΟQ ΕΝΤΕΥΒΟΜ ΑΝΤΕ**

strength in all good things. And if it is not pleasing to me or my wish that the Lord forgive them, then, according what it written, *let Him obliterate me from His book*. For I was not more select than the just and saintly one who said:⁶¹ *If you do not forgive those who have sinned against you, and people have been murmuring against me, take me out of your book*. And not only did the man of God say this with a heavy heart, but he also truly wished to forgive them. This is how the Lord answered him, having persuaded his heart for a little: *I will forgive them as you say*.

But I will tell you what will happen to these people. If I do not cause the earth to open up and swallow them, if I do not send fire upon them from heaven and burn them, if I do not send venomous serpents against them and extinguish them, if I do not strike down and lay low 23,000 of them to die in one day, if I do not pour the wrath of my anger upon them, the food still in their mouth, they being deceived in the desire of their soul, if I do not (132) cause the limbs of them all to fall in this desert, if I do not estrange them from the land which I promised them that they would not go into it at all. And this is how He removed them from His book as He said from the beginning: *They will sin, those whom I will remove from my book and from my presence, like Pharaoh and his army and the Egyptians whom I have laid low with great plagues, and like the people of Sodom and Gomorra and like all those many people I have destroyed by death in the beginning, and like Cain, whom I cursed and the angels I cast into Amente*.⁶²

See, wise ones, that as God destroyed all the lawless cities, putting down everyone who had sinned from the beginning after He had removed them from His sight, whether they were those had known Him or those who do not know Him,⁶³ this is how He struck down all those who had sinned against Him in the desert⁶⁴ in any way, unleashing His anger against His people and sons and daughters to obliterate them, because they spent forty years looking at miracles and signs and all the glorious and terrible things the Lord did (133) to them, and the unbelievers did not repent. For this reason the Lord hated them for forty years, according

61 Ex. 32, 32. The speaker is Moses. The words not in italics are not those of Moses, but rather a parenthesis of Shenoute, perhaps a neat 'inter-textual' device by means of which Shenoute identifies himself with the OT patriarch.

62 For those interested in the various Biblical citations in this complex referential web, see Wiesmann *op.cit.*: 76.

63 The an could be understood, I think, as negating both verbs.

64 Num. 14, 36

to the word of the Apostle: *Who are those He hated for forty years ? Did they not sin, those whose limbs⁶⁵ fell in the desert ? And again: They have seen my works for forty years, and for this reason I hated those who commit evil, and I said: They err in their hearts at all times, all who are arrogant and lawless and have not known my ways.*⁶⁶

But if they have left us because I have not let them worship the Lord, saying that he⁶⁷ is the one who has not let us make our vows to God, then is it possible for them now in the place where they are now to complete their vows ? It is no sin of mine that I have not sent for them and there is no blame attached to the convent as a whole that I have not let these disobedient and ignorant people come to live with us again, after having left us, reckoning that the one who loves them very much *hates us all the more*, because there is no love in their hearts for him, they having put hatred there in place of love for him, as it is written: *They have repaid my good deeds with evil and my love with hatred of me.*⁶⁸ If after they left the convent of the Lord, these disobedient ones (134), saying in their malevolent thoughts: *We have not been allowed to do the will of God in this place*, and again, after having gone to the place where they thought to do the will of God and perform their wicked desires in that place, woe to them from the Lord who will judge them truthfully. Who has prevented you from making your vows to God ? Is he still among you, this one of whom you said: *He is conspiring against us not to let us fulfill our vows*. Is God ever with the evil person ? Or is it ever possible for a wicked individual, with whom the Lord is not, to ill-treat the many, with whom the Lord is, in all their just deeds from old age back to childhood ? I say this before these people who have said with their entire mouth:⁶⁹ *We will go or we have gone from the place from which we have come because he has ill-treated us, making us do things we were not able to do*. If I am the one who ill-treats you, though you are just, then would it not be possible for the convent as a whole, where there are good people with whom the Lord is, to estrange me from them on the grounds that I ill-treated you and estranged you from them ? But you are people of deceit.

65 S $\phi\alpha\lambda\gamma$ and B $\kappa\epsilon\lambda\iota$ cf. Crum 600b

66 Ps. 94, 9-11

67 Shenoute has converted the direct speech of the dissidents into indirect speech, so 'he' refers to Shenoute himself.

68 Ps. 34, 12 and 108, 5

69 The next section, in my view, fairly bristles with deeply felt resentment at the unwillingness of the dissidents to submit to his authority, expressed in ill-disguised sarcasm.

If you say, you who are presumptuously (**135**) about to leave or have left us, that the convent as a whole, everyone who is of a single mind in the teaching of the Scriptures, they are persuaded by that one whom you hate and they agree with him in all good things, not regarding him as a stranger, then I know that you are truly wicked and ill-treat the law of God in your disobedience, like one who ill-treats his father and mother. If you say, you who are hard-heartedly about to leave or have left us, that the convent as a whole, violent sinners, agree with that one who resembles them, he being a malefactor, then I know that it is woe to you in this too because you have set yourselves up as a just people - but in fact⁷⁰ you are wrongdoers in your ignorance and you have derided those of whom you are unworthy, they being just students of God, according to the Scriptures.⁷¹ If you say presumptuously that the entire convent of the Lord is persuaded by this person as a violent sinner, then woe to you in this too that you have made yourselves true - you are liars who have made the entire convent dishonest, because it is never possible for a great many holy and just people to listen to a single violent sinner, as you have acknowledged orally, displaying your hatred towards this man who loves you and in whose heart there is no evil against you.

For this reason the Lord will forgive these people so that He may forgive me too. For they can (**136**) pray for me and the Lord forgive me that they are now master in the place where they are and the one who ill-treats them and prevents them from doing good, viz. myself,⁷² is not among them. For as they became their own master and left us by throwing off the yoke of the submission of life, they are also their own master in repenting in the place where they are, because the one who grudged them, viz. myself, is not among them. If they had any hope in the convent of the Lord apart from themselves, they would not be leaving us. But because there is no love in any one of them for those who teach them, there is also no love in them for those who receive the teaching of those who teach them. And this is how these people left this place, because there is no love⁷³ of the truly faithful, only for others

70 The conjunctions **ꝥꝰꝰꝰ** and **ꝰꝰꝰꝰ** (often accompanied by **ꝰꝰ**), originally pronouns, can have an adversative meaning cf. Crum 652a (B)

71 Joh. 6, 45. For those using the excellent Sahidic NT of J. W. Wells (2000-2007), available free of charge on the internet, it should be pointed out that **ꝰꝰꝰꝰꝰꝰꝰ** is a misprint for **ꝰꝰꝰꝰꝰꝰꝰ** cf. G.W. Horner *Sahidic NT* (1911) vol.3 p.98

72 One can only speculate that Shenoute has added this specification after having become dimly aware that perhaps the use of the 3rd person was not entirely limpid. It is interesting that the next few pages contain hardly any scriptural allusions.

73 Another word for 'love': **ꝰꝰꝰꝰ**

who are like themselves in every form of contentiousness or even according to the flesh.⁷⁴

We beloved have no hope as a group but in God alone and Our Lord Jesus. For this reason, we are not our own master to leave each other in a spirit of estrangement, but we will love our fathers who instruct us in the word of the Lord and we will love the instruction from those who teach us and we will keep the traditions set before us in the teaching of the Scriptures and we will be patient, the faithful with the faithful, all who love their fellow monks who teach them, just as the love of those who teach them is great towards them.

(137) Which brother or which father or which son wishes to reject their brothers, fathers, sons or daughters, as they have rejected us by leaving us in a spirit of estrangement? But one will say: *Which brother or which father or which son will ill-treat their brothers, fathers or children, as this one, viz. myself, has ill-treated those who have left us?* Let the wise ones say to that one: *Tell us, through two or three witnesses, not from among those who are like the disobedient but from the truly faithful how this one, viz. myself, ill-treated those who have left us.*⁷⁵ And if they tell me, through two or three genuinely truly faithful witnesses, that I am the one who ill-treated them or I am the one who prevented them from making their vows to God here, God will forgive me through the prayers of the faithful who are my witness that I ill-treated these people or hated them. I know that the Lord will exact vengeance on everyone who exceeds the limit or who defrauds his brother in the work of the Lord, as it is written.⁷⁶ If those wretches say before people that I have ill-treated them when this is not true, will they become genuinely credible when they have lied before God? Or, if I, the poor man before people, say that I have not ill-treated them when I have, will I become credible, though I have lied before the Lord? Truly, it is possible for many ignorant and stupid fools to say many things before each other, shamelessly⁷⁷ telling lies. If at any time they (138) are able to reply before the Lord and say that I have ill-treated them, they will appear blessed because they have been able to say the truth before the Lord. But if at any time I am able to reply and say before the Lord that I did not ill-treat these people, I will

74 Not sure what this phrase is supposed to mean

75 It is difficult escape the conclusion that, the more Shenoute tries to justify himself, the more complex his syntax becomes.

76 1 Thess. 4, 6

77 The words **ΜΗΤΑΤΕΒΑΛ** and **ΜΗΤΑΤΨΗΠΕ** mean approximately the same thing, and I cannot think of a synonym.

become one of those who have found mercy before God because I have been able to account for a single matter that the Lord has found me to be true when He questions me and judges me with them.

I bear witness to you before God that unless Jesus is merciful enough to forgive me all my sins, my mouth will remain closed. If He questions me about my sins, my deceit, my lies, my misleading thoughts, my negligence, my sloth, my insatiability, my closed heart, my gossiping, lies, acts of pollution and all the other wicked things I have committed before the Lord, knowingly and unknowingly, these and many other things, if the Lord questions me about them, my mouth will close on the day when every mouth closes, as it is written. And I will not be able to account at all before the Lord for a single word or deed in all the wrong things I have done.

But I say to you that these two words, I will dare to say them before my truly faithful brothers and before the Lord that I will give an account of them: that is, there is no wickedness or envy or hatred or violence at all in my heart towards those who say that I ill-treated them (139) and used my whole strength and the exertion of our fathers, that is to say, our convent. I have not concealed from you in my heart a good word or deed.

About my acts of ignorance, perhaps I have ill-treated some of you without knowing; said in letters and made all of you swear many times, I making an oath to you with a heavy heart while we were gathered together, the oldest and the youngest, and I repeat that if there are some of you I have ill-treated, tell me that I may know. Not only have I asked you this but I have also sworn many times that if there are some of you, old or young, who know truly that I have ill-treated some, knowingly or unknowingly, tell me and I will repay them and beg them to forgive me because I have humiliated them for no reason.

In truth, if there are some among us who murmur and say that I have ill-treated them and they inform me by means of two or three just men or by means of all the God-fearing brothers, these people sin it is against themselves. And all of you, beloved ones, everyone who is of one heart with the laws of the Lord, whether man or woman, whether our senior

holy fathers who are among us or all the faithful brothers from the oldest to the youngest, you know truly that I have ill-treated some of us, whether man or woman, or humiliated them for no reason or hated them and you did not tell me, you sin before the Lord. (140) For, with all my heart and strength, I want you to be holy in the true judgement of God by which He will judge all the sinners of the entire world. But you bring upon me a great judgement which I will be unable to bear on that day, because you did not say to me that I ill-treated these people who said: *You humiliated us and in great hatred you will uproot us or have uprooted us from the convent.*

And this is how they left us, raising their hands to heaven and saying: *We will settle with in that place because you did not let us fix laws for ourselves in our heart of darkness, ignorance and our perverted wisdom that we would abandon the law of the Lord and the commandments of our ancient fathers, about whom these ignorant ones said: Did they go to heaven and bring down words for us to hear ?*⁷⁸

For this reason the word which the men of God said has chased those fools from the convents of our fathers, that is, if the commandments of our father are what show us the way to life, then let us walk in them with an upright heart and in sinlessness. If it is the wish of our heart that is upright before us, then let us go openly⁷⁹ to the place where we will find the wish of our heart.

Is there any thing or any word concealed from you that I have not said about those who have gone or those whom we have cast out of the convent of God that the thought has occurred to you: *Perhaps he really did ill-treat them separately ?*

(141) This one,⁸⁰ he left us the other year, giving us to God,⁸¹ you all know the good things that we did for him in return for the contemptuous insults which he levelled at me in exchange for the derision with which I insulted God for all my sins.

78 This thought is expressed earlier (p.120) in connection with Pachomius.

79 Lit. 'in an openness of speech' **ἄνοιταρρηία**. The first sentence of the following paragraph continues this theme. The contrast, it seems to me, is between the straight-talking honest Shenoute and the somewhat underhand secessionists.

80 I take the phrase to refer to the first of three unnamed rebels, but I do not understand what follows.

81 I do not understand this phrase

This one too, whom we stripped of his monastic habit and speedily cast out his son, his wife and his daughter out of the convents of our fathers, you know his utter hypocrisy, his arrogance, his deceit, his lies and all his other wicked deeds. For this reason I said to him with divinely inspired anger: *Hypocrite, if you make progress as a monk, all your words and regulations are true and mine are lies.* Those who wish to know, if they seek, they will find that tree that has been uprooted with its leaves from the places about which he thought it would take root and has been planted in the salty and hostile ground from which it had originally been taken, and in this way he has come to be in that place, like a dog returning to its vomit, and is hated.⁸²

This one too, he left us, is at this time now sneering and jeering at the word of God, finding fault with me: *You have cursed me in parables. If you open your mouth to speak in the name of the Lord from the Scriptures,* how have I ill-treated him ? He says to those he meets: *He distressed me greatly with things beyond my endurance, he not having let me make my vow and He is the one who uprooted me violently from the (142) convent,* ut it was not I who uprooted him from his convent but Jesus, for He is the one who knows how much that one derided my just forefathers, in particular great acts of wickedness which he performed in disputing with our aged holy father,⁸³ who died not long ago, and⁸⁴ we all know that he oppressed our father to his death. I say to you that they have often been my witness in my heart and in my faith that the wickedness of that one will visit him as it now leaves me, for he angered my fathers of old that he might become like Semei,⁸⁵ who cast earth⁸⁶ upon the just king. For this reason he gave that impious one to his holy son that he might repay him with a true judgement, because he had belittled one who did not deserve it. This is also the way of this one and others who scorned our forefathers when they were with them. And we also, they seek evil to say against us now in words of untruth: *This one has not let us worship God,* as this one said. If I am the one who prevents that one from making his vows

82 2 Pet. 2, 22 (quoting Prov. 26, 11)

83 Presumably Pgol

84 Lit. **ΝΟΕ ΕΤΣΟΟΥΝ** 'as we all know'

85 2 Sam. 16,5ff. The background to this is a rather complicated little story (which in a magical text would be known as a 'historiola'): Shimei, of the house of Saul, was opposed to the accession of David and expressed critical disagreement. David humbly points out to his followers that Shimei was merely doing the bidding of the Lord by cursing him (David) (v. 11) . Later on, Shimei abandons his criticism and repents.

86 'stones and mud'

to God, then who will urge him to do this ? In particular, he reveals his arrogance, as I sent to him just elders at night, and we sat in the house of God, that is our convent, and I said: *Come and tell me through the brothers how I have ill-treated you.* He did not pay us the courtesy of coming to us, for we are sinners and he is a saint. The others who went to him were not worthy of a civil reply from him, **(143)** because he is more just than any man. This is how he spoke with his accursed words: *Let each one of you remove himself from me. I am not coming to the one who ill-treats me,* and so he became like those for whom Moses sent, saying: *Come to me that I may see how I have ill-treated you.* Those ones did not come until God became angry with them and they went down to Amente while they were still alive.

All the others who have left us in their pride and self-regard, together with those whom God has cast from our midst from the beginning until now because of their sins, you all know that they have become estranged from you because of their wicked deeds.

I say these things so that you may know that our just fathers and the entire holy convent of Our Lord Jesus, whether man or woman, are free of the charge of those who have left or are going to leave us. Their blood will be upon their own head, and the charge against them will revisit the entire convent. For those defiled in their hearts who generate evil say that I ill-treat them or that I prevent them from doing the work of God.

Am I a pagan governor, forcing you to turn away from God and sacrifice to idols of wood and stone ? Or am I a priest of Baal, teaching you to abandon the work of the Lord and worship those who have no ears to hear and adore those who have no feet ?⁸⁷ Am I a king over you, using a power against you like that of heathen rulers who are lords of those in their power who are treated by them like slaves, according **(144)** as it is written ? How are you ignorant people slaves to me that I ill-treated you because you did not obey me or submit to me ? Am I a ruler over you, forcing you to cut stones and wood and make bricks to build houses and towns for me or to gather in the fruits of my fields, having oppressed you to send me at harvest time the crops and fruits that you planted for me to bring in their fruits for me or to feed the sheep and cattle for me without wages, to take care of them and

⁸⁷ Ps. 115, 6ff. I wonder if the startling phrase 'adore those who have no feet' might be some confused reference to the story of Bel and the Dragon (Deuterocanonical Daniel 14): Daniel convinces the Persian king Cyrus that this idol has not consumed its food by itself but rather with the help of the priests and their families, who have stolen into the sealed sanctuary and whose footprints are clearly visible in the shrine of the idol, implying that the idol had no feet.

pasture them for me ? Or will you stand to attention for me day and night like slaves, doing all the things that slaves do ? What is the sin or what is the ill-treatment I have inflicted on you, you murmuring fault-finders, except that I chastise you vigorously that you might abandon hostility, contentiousness, hatred, conflict, defilement, blasphemy, lies, backbiting, deceit and wickedness of every sort that you might run towards love, peace, truth, purity, humility and good of every sort ?

These and many others are the sins and ill-treatment I meted out to those who said: *We intend to leave this place* because of me,⁸⁸ because I humiliate them with my ill-treatment. Are they the ones who say that they intend to leave this place because of me ? Is it not enough for them that God forgive them that they have made me too a stranger to the place many times in my heart ? For (145) they became their own master and fled from me when I ill-treated them like a tyrant and went to the place that pleased them. But I was not my own master to flee from them who were ill-treating me with their disobedience and all their other wicked deeds, which they were doing, those people. I say to you, brothers, that as everyone who is of this sort says ...

[2 pages are missing]

... if I have been hard on you, like a burden, do not misbehave. I will not hesitate to leave you. It is not possible for a large multitude to leave one for God in haste. But it is necessary for one to hastily leave many for God.

Many times⁸⁹ I have said about these people angrily that if I am upright before you, brothers, this is what has to be said: *Pay attention to yourself and remain above them in teaching. For, you do this, and you will be saved together with those who hear you.*

And about these people I have often said angrily: *If you are just, I will be just with you. But if you are bad, I will be even worse to you, because I am bad every day. As these people say, I ill-treat others.*

88 Direct and indirect speech are confused here.

89 This phrase is used anaphorically to introduce eight of the remaining ten paragraphs of the text.

Many times I have said about these people in my hardness of heart, I being full of scorn: *God and the Lord of All Jesus, I beg you with all my might in distress of heart. If you wish to wrench ⁹⁰me away from this convent, let me not die at this time (146) now or become quickly estranged from this place ,until I see you, God, reproving the arrogant one who eats from the flesh of the lion, Satan, and who drink of his blood, that is, the evils of contentiousness, envy, hatred, disobedience, ignorance, defilement, blasphemy, lies and deceit, and in particular arrogance, boasting and all the other evils.*

Many times I have said about these people, prostrating myself on the ground on my face: God, God, I beg you with all my heart and all my thoughts, if I am the one who ill-treats those who oppress my inner soul for no reason, or if I am the one who hates them or truly grudges them, as I hear, then I will be overcome by utter sorrow, distress, and this is what I deserve, because instead of loving my neighbour as myself⁹¹ I hated them all the more. But if I have done them no harm, as you who know all my words, then you will teach these people a lesson with grief, groaning, distress, compulsion, oppression without respite. But, Lord, not in your anger, as it is written,⁹² lest you may make us small with your wrath, and not because of me, that they thought wicked thoughts against me. For truly I am very wicked in your sight, Lord, because I ill-treated myself with every act of lawlessness. But I hope that I have not sinned against these people, in a way that would test my heart and my kidneys.⁹³

For many times because of these people, when I approach the convent, I become like someone at whom arrows have been shot by enemies: when I think of the pain of these people, (147) not because I hated them, but because I grieve over them, knowing that God is angry with them and does not attend to what they do in their arrogance and false boastfulness and all the other wicked deeds they commit in their contentiousness and neighing⁹⁴ about what they are taught, because they have never received instruction from the Scriptures.

90 The verb **αμαρτε** has to be understood as an infinitive after **ογαω** cf. Crum 501b

91 e.g. Mk 12, 31

92 Ps. 6, 2

93 Jer. 11, 20

94 The word **ζμζμ** (Crum 682b) is often used of sounds made by animals

Many times I have said to myself in sorrow about these people that I will eat my bread separately, apart from the convent as a whole, like an enemy, paying attention to my ordinance ⁹⁵as a foreigner. Again I used to take counsel with myself lest I become a stumbling block to these people in this matter too. In particular, I did not want to grieve all the faithful brothers, knowing that they, as good merciful people, would be very grieved.

Many times, because of the pain caused by those people we were unable⁹⁶ to say a word of comfort or supplication to those worthy of every blessing and comfort. For what time, opportunity or day did we sit content in our convent, when these people made God angry so that He brought down upon us great curses, reproaches, and insults because of the ignorance of the disobedient? And this is why I speak angrily when all the brothers are listening because we see nothing but the secession of these people from the holy brothers whenever we go to speak the word of God, as the Apostle did, when some became hard (**148**) of heart at this time, disobeying and blaspheming the way before the multitude.⁹⁷ For this reason the holy Apostle removed himself from the unbelievers and separated the brothers from them, and this way spoke his words to those worthy of hearing them. The God-haters, since they were unworthy, he did not speak a word to them after they had refused to consider the word of the Lord, saying: *Do not give what is holy to the dogs.*⁹⁸ These and other things like them were what he said to them: *Your blood is upon your own head.*⁹⁹

Many times we have spent half the night until dawn and we have spent half the day until evening and we have spent the entire day speaking and reproaching, begging and consoling and blessing, cursing and struggling, speaking words of hostility and uttering words of placation, being fierce and then gentle, mild and harsh, taking pleasure in¹⁰⁰ anger and then humility in confusion and anger, weeping with tears and then amusedly smiling in the fear of the Lord, knowing that we are condemned for smiling, because it is right and fitting that

95 Leipoldt *Schenute* p. 113 speaks of an **OPAINON** as a subdivision of the monastery

96 Crum 541b

97 Acts 19, 9. Ref. to Paul's preaching in Ephesus.

98 Matth. 7, 6

99 The reference must be to Acts 18, 6, when Paul famously shook the dust from his garments, departed from the synagogue and went to preach to the Gentiles

100 The verb is **ME** 'love'

our laughter be turned into sadness, as it is written,¹⁰¹ because our sins are many, gloomy and then rejoicing in the Lord, according to the Scriptures, patiently gathered together, saying words of this sort: *Where are they, our companions outside who come to us and call us angels?* They see all our acts of wickedness and deceit and all our evil deeds and they see us **(149)** behaving badly in hostility to each other because of our arrogance and ignorance. We disobey the written word: *Let us pursue the things of peace and things of mutual edification.*¹⁰² We say harsh and heavy words and then say words that are emollient and light. We chastise brutally so that every one who has committed a fault will forgive his fellow monk for every fault, and he humbles himself for his fellow monk, not willingly but under compulsion. With staffs and hands we angrily strike the one whose heart leaps up in pride. We burn with a fire of divinely-inspired anger over those whom the enemy has bound with his own hand in chains, like the people of Judah.¹⁰³ We do wrong and oppress, because there are others who wait for us, looking to us to speak with them about God. We also say words of this sort: Where are those who are called sinners, like those we see with our own eyes sitting beside us and repenting, in floods of tears? Let them come and spit in our face, for we boast that we are just, though we are impious, because we have eaten of the honey that drips from the lips of the whore: lawless conduct.

These words and these deeds and many other things, we used to do and say, wishing to persuade the mindless, but we were unable to persuade them to avoid all evil and reconcile themselves with God and remove from hostility from their heart and make peace with their fellows. And this is how we stood up decisively and refused these **(150)** people and gave them to the Lord that He might take counsel and order retribution in the anger of His wrath to be carried out among them.

Many times, because of the distress caused by these people, I was unable to meet those coming to us from outside. Except that the Lord is praised that I have found¹⁰⁴ our fathers who are with us now, sending them in their love to meet them and persuade them in

101 Jas. 4, 9

102 Ro. 14, 19

103 An allusion perhaps to Jer. 40, when Jeremiah was taken prisoner during the capture of Jerusalem in 587 BC

104 Coptic: **NCABHA XEΠXOEIC CMAMAAT XEΨINE** ... I take the 'Lord is praised' to be something like the Arabic سبحانه الله I have translated the Coptic 1st Present using the English Present Perfect.

everything, for there were many who were scandalized because of me, as if I were contemptuous, there was nobody like in me, but I wanted to see them more than they wanted to see me, though I was undeserving.

Many times, if I then sat with those who came to us from outside and I came from them to the convent and thought of these people, I was distraught in great grief, like the woman in birth pangs about to give birth. It was fitting that we leave those who come to us from outside, as we grieved for their sake that they were ignorant and we came to the convent and rejoiced about them. Even though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God. But they did empty things in their thoughts like me and their ignorant heart was dark over them, saying: *We are wise*¹⁰⁵ they became more foolish than fools and the mindless. In particular, how foolish they will become compared with our just companions whom we know outside and who come to us for God's sake because we love them as they too love us, ten times more than those who say: *We hate them, and they hate us.*

There are some among those who have left us (151) with no hatred or evil in their heart towards our forefathers or us, but it was because of their weakness of succumbing to sin that they became estranged from the convent. For this reason I say to you that if they repent where they are, it will be easy for God to forgive them more than those who have scorned our forefathers and who oppress them¹⁰⁶ ...

105 Rom. 1, 21

106This word is incomplete: Leipoldt reads 'them' and G. Zoega *Catalogus Codicum Coptiorum* (1810) p. 481 reads 'us'