CHAPTER THREE

A COPTIC TEXT ON THE PHOENIX

In January of 1956, the Utrecht University Library purchased a number of papyri and parchments from the estate of Prof. Carl Schmidt, the well-known student of Coptic literature.¹ This material included five parchment sheets written by the same hand and comprising pages 31-34, 41, 42, and 67-70 of the codex to which they had originally belonged. The last four of these pages contain part of an already known sermon ascribed to Theophilus of Alexandria (A.D. 385-412), on the assumptio Mariae.² The text on pages 31-34, 41 and 42 is part of a sermon on the Virgin Mary and the birth of Christ which requires our attention since it contains a remarkable


² Published by W. H. Worrell, *The Coptic manuscripts in the Freer collection*, (= Univ. of Michigan Studies, Hum. Ser., X), New York, 1923, 249-322 (text), 359-380 (trans). This sermon is also in the Morgan Collection, Copt. Ms. 600; see facsimile-edition in *Bibliothecae Pierpont Morgan codices coptici photographice expressi*, XVI, Rome, 1922; it is discussed by C. D. G. Müller, *Die alte koptische Predigt*, Thesis, Heidelberg, 1954, 190-191, 195-204 (see below, p. 38, n. 2 on the spuriousness of this text). The Utrecht pages 67-70 correspond to Freer, Washington Copt. Ms. no. 2, p. 67, col. a, l.10-p. 71, col. b, l.2 (ed. Worrell, 262-271) and with Pierpont Morgan, Copt. Ms. fol. 48v, col. b, l.18-fol. 52v, col. b, l.29 (facsimile ed. tab. 96-103). The Utrecht sheets were, according to a letter from Mrs. E. M. Huisman, dated 7-11-1956, to Professor G. Quispel, were offered for sale in 1930 to Enoch Peterson of the University of Michigan, who had them photographed but did not take up the offer. These photographs were sent to W. E. Crum, who used them for his *Copt. Dict.*: Utrecht, p. 41-42 mentioned e.g. on p. 363a, s.v. *CTO* and p. 568b, s.v. *IHHN, cf. ibid.* XI under *En. Peterson*, with the comment "originals not now traceable". The photographs in Michigan indicate that in 1930 the sheet with p. 71-71 had been included, but its present whereabouts are unknown.
passage on the phoenix covering most of page 41 and all of page 42.

Three versions of this Coptic Sermon on Mary are known, all of them in manuscripts written in the Sahidic dialect and all of them fragmentary, but together forming a coherent section of the sermon that gives a good idea of the whole.\(^1\) The greater part of this fragment is provided by Copt. Ms. 72(36) of the John Rylands Library at Manchester; six parchment sheets comprising pages 349-360 of the codex to which they belonged.\(^2\) The Utrecht University Library's pages 31-34 coincide with Manchester, page 351, col. a, l.17 to page 355, col. a, l.6. The Utrecht page 41 begins at Manchester page 360, col. a, l.33 and starting at page 41, col. b, l.4 gives a part of the text not duplicated by the Manchester manuscript. Of the Manchester manuscript, only the part dealing with the phoenix has been published (page 360, starting at col. b, l.7).\(^3\) The continuation of the Utrecht fragment is to be found in Kopt. Ms. no. K.9666-7 of the extensive manuscript collection of Archduke Rainer, now in the Austrian National Library at Vienna. This manuscript was inexplicably lost many years ago,\(^4\) but thanks to Wessely's publication its contents are known.\(^5\) Only two parchment sheets of this third manuscript of the Sermon on Mary have survived, and these are numbered in the codex as pages 39, 40, 44, and 45. Since the text shows no interruption, however, this numbering must be erroneous.\(^6\)

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\(^1\) If in the codex to which the Utrecht sheets belonged only the Sermon on Mary preceded the sermon of Theophilus, the former must have occupied 61 pages of the codex. This is not an unusual length for a Coptic sermon. The surviving fragment would then represent not quite a third of the original text.


\(^3\) A. van Lantschoot, A propos du Physiologus, in Bulletin of the Byzantine Institute, 2, (= Coptic studies in honour of Walter Ewing Crum), Boston, 1950, 356; translated by Robinson, XXIII.

\(^4\) According to Dr. Helene Loebenstein, "Direktor der Papyrussammlung", in a letter dated 13-4-1966.

\(^5\) C. Wessely, Griechische und koptische Texte theologischen Inhalts, V, in Studien zur Paläographie und Papyrushiende, 18, 1917, 30-33 (no. 270). Also in Van Lantschoot, 356-357 (text and trans.).

\(^6\) The conclusion of the Vienna Ms., p. 40, and the beginning of p. 44 contain a quotation from Ps. xliv.17 (LXX), see Wessely, 31-32.