Preserved among the 53-odd writings found purportedly in an ancient Greco-Roman cemetery near the cliffs of Jebel et-Tarif in Upper Egypt 1) is a most important witness to the Gentilic Wisdom literature of Early Christianity. This is “The Teachings of Silvanus” 2), which occupies the 35-pages immediately following the first three writings contained in Codex VII (viz., “The Paraphrase of Shem”, “The Second Treatise of the Great Seth”, and “The Apocalypse of Peter”), and which is followed by “The Three Steles of Seth”. In the paragraphs which follow, there shall be offered a description of this text and its literary form, a brief sketch of its contents, some selected illustrations of its indebtedness to contemporary spheres of influence, and our provisional views on its authorship, date, and provenance 3).

A. THE TEXT AND ITS FORM

1. Physical Observations

The papyrus sheets comprising the text, which average 28.7 centimeters in height by some 17 centimeters in width 4), are in

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2) Hereafter, the abbreviation “Sil” is frequently used for the full title of the text.

3) These matters are developed more fully in our contribution, “VII, 4: The Teachings of Silvanus”, The Coptic Gnostic Library, Vol. III (FREDERIK WISSE, ed.) (Leiden: Brill, 1972—expected); and in our projected commentary on the text.

an excellent state of preservation. Small lacunae do appear in the bottom three lines of pages 84-106 and in the body of the text on pages 113-118, but these are so minor that few reconstructions have been required. The pagination is fully intact throughout the entire document.

The scribe who copied the text of Sil is apparently the same one who is responsible for all other texts in Codex VII, as well as the third and fourth tractates of Codex XI \(^1\). Noteworthy are his strict uniformity of left margins, and his use of compressed letters (e.g. in 89, 6; 93, 20; 102, 15) or the letter e with an extended center stroke (e.g. 84, 19; 85, 7; 86, 24) to maintain relative evenness of right margins. There are very few erasures, omitted letters, or corrections executed by writing one letter over another. Thus, generally, few emendations have been necessitated.

2. Dialect

The language of Sil is basically that of southern Egypt in the second and third centuries of our era, viz. Sahidic Coptic. This is a Sahidic, however, which reflects both strong incursions of Achmimic and Subachmimic \(^2\) and a few rather archaic forms. Some examples will serve to illustrate this \(^3\):

Among the Subachmimic (A\(^2\)) forms appearing in the text are the preposition a- (instead of the more usual S e-) in atmntatsooun (89, 13), atasumboulia (91, 21), aćine (93, 22-23), aemnte (104, 2), andunamis (114, 10); and certain noun and verbal forms formerly attested as A\(^2\): berēh (84, 28), mme (92, 15; 102, 14; 23-29; 115, 25); seće (107, 10-II); emnte (103, 22; 104, 2.14; 110, 29); teno (92, 18); ouei (93, 8); hetie (113, 2); jalk (105, 10). Note the Achmimic form e\(^+\) used in 96, 2.

The following rather archaic, or at least early (4th century) forms also make their appearance: holeć (for hole in 97, 23) and somt (for somt in 90, 22; 92, 16; 93, 1); aujpo (94, 26); the construct nah- (94, 20); rmhnēei (92, 8; 109, 5); bahou (113, 35); paśsf (114, 1); aeić (115, 1); and bbhe (115, 2-3).

An irregular palatalization of the letter k, that manifests itself in the substitution of ċ for k before the letter i, appears in several

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 111, n. 1; and Robinson, NTS, 12 (1967/68), pp. 371-72.
\(^2\) See Krause, MDIK, XIX (1963), p. 111.
\(^3\) More detailed explanations of these forms are to be found in our contribution mentioned in Note 3, p. 294, supra.