Shenoute the Great (ca. 347–465) led one of the largest Christian monastic communities in late antique Egypt and was the greatest native writer of Coptic in history. For approximately eight decades, Shenoute led a federation of three monasteries and emerged as a Christian leader. His public sermons attracted crowds of clergy, monks, and lay people; he advised military and government officials; he worked to ensure that his followers would be faithful to orthodox Christian teaching; and he vigorously and violently opposed paganism and the oppressive treatment of the poor by the rich. This volume presents in translation a selection of his sermons and other orations. These works grant us access to the theology, rhetoric, moral teachings, spirituality, and social agenda of a powerful Christian leader during a period of great religious and social change in the later Roman Empire.


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SELECTED DISCOURSES OF
SHENOUTE THE GREAT

Community, Theology, and Social Conflict
in Late Antique Egypt

Translated with introductions by

DAVID BRAKKE

and

ANDREW CRISLIP
To Stephen Emmel

and in memory of Barbara Emmel
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David Brakke and Andrew Crislip
Frontmatter
More information
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of maps</th>
<th>ix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of figures</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Introduction: Shenoute’s life, times, and Discourses**

**PART I HERETICS AND OTHER ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH**

1. And it happened one day 35
2. As I sat on a mountain 39
3. I am amazed 54

**PART II SHENOUTE AS PASTOR AND PREACHER**

4. I see your eagerness 91
5. Some kinds of people sift dirt and Whoever seeks God will find 106
6. The idolatrous pagans, or, And we will also reveal something else 118
7. And let us also reprove 125
8. I answered 127
9. And after a few days 130
10. See how clearly revealed is the foolishness of pitiless people 132
11. Truly when I think 134
12. A priest will never cease 137
13. When the word says 146

vii
Contents

PART III THE CHRISTIAN’S STRUGGLE WITH SATAN 157
14 In the night 163
15 Because of you too, O prince of evil 166
16 A beloved asked me years ago 174
17 As we began to preach 183

PART IV THE CONFLICT WITH GESIOS 193
18 Not because a fox barks 201
19 Let our eyes (translated by Stephen Emmel) 206
20 A26 212
21 God says through those who are his 266
22 God is blessed 278

Bibliography 298
Index of names 305
Index of subjects 308
Index of biblical passages 314
Maps

1 Late ancient Egypt  page xiii
2 The White Monastery Federation  xiv
Figures

1. Shenoute the Great. Red Monastery Church, north lobe of the triconch apse, sixth century. Photograph courtesy Elizabeth Bolman. Copyright American Research Center in Egypt. (page 2)

2. Exterior of the church of Shenoute, east end, looking west toward the valley wall. Copyright Michael Burgoyne (6)

3. Ruinous nave of the church of Shenoute (looking northeast), showing the stone pulpit steps (background, between second and third columns) and Coptic Christian visitors. Copyright Michael Burgoyne (7)

4. Plan of the church of Shenoute, showing small narthex to the west and large narthex to the south (9)

5. Founder’s inscription (Greek), on interior (northern) side of lintel above south entrance of the church of Shenoute leading to the larger of two narthexes: “To the eternal memory of the magnifi cent Count Caesarius, the son of Candidianus, who built (the church).” Copyright Michael Burgoyne (10)

6. Tomb of Shenoute near the church of Shenoute; facing east with depiction of Shenoute on north wall. Fifth century. Photograph by Matjaz Kaciknik. Copyright Elizabeth Bolman (18)

7. Detail from tomb of Shenoute. Painted inscription (Greek) reads, “[The (holy) tom]b of Abba Shenoute the Archimandrite.” Fifth century. Photograph by Matjaz Kaciknik. Copyright Elizabeth Bolman (19)
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Elizabeth Bolman provided the images of Shenoute from the Red Monastery Church and Shenoute’s tomb. The Red Monastery photograph (cover and Figure 1) appears with permission of the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) and its director, Gerry Scott. The Red Monastery
project, under the direction of Bolman, conserved the church’s paintings. The United States Agency for International Development provided funding for the project with the support of the American people, and the grant was administered by ARCE. Matjaz Kaciknik photographed the paintings from the White Monastery tomb (Figures 6 and 7). The paintings were conserved with funding from an ARCE Antiquities Endowment Grant, under the auspices of the Yale Monastic Archaeology Project, South, of which Stephen Davis is the executive director and Bolman the director of conservation.

Map 1  Late ancient Egypt
Map 2  The White Monastery Federation