

EVODIUS OF ROME

The “successor of Peter at Rome” and author of three homilies of special interest transmitted in Coptic.

1. *De* This is a homily directed primarily against the Jews, who, according to the author, must bear the guilt of the murder of Christ. It begins with praise for Roman justice, law, and order, stating that the Romans might be partially excused for their part in that terrible crime against Christ because they were pagan. Next, the author affirms before all unbelievers that he himself has witnessed the risen Christ; thus he discusses the relations between the Jews and [Alexander](#) the Great, even citing the sibylline predictions before following his argument with a lengthy and detailed statement of Christ’s trial and passion, concluding with an account of the Resurrection. In the midst of the homily proper, another person (a “reporter”) steps into the picture to relate how the narrator, Evodius, was interrupted during his sermon by Jews protesting against his words. This work survives in an incomplete codex at Turin (Egyptian Museum, cat. 63000, XII; ed. [Rossi](#) 1892), and in another codex from New York ([Pierpont](#) Morgan Library, M595), which is complete but is as yet unedited.
1. *Encomium in Apostolos*. This work has survived in three very fragmentary manuscripts from the White Monastery (DAYR ANBA SHINUDAH) that have been examined in a cursory manner but as yet remain almost completely. However, by piecing together their fragments, a good part of the text may be reconstructed. It seems to begin with praise for the apostles and continues in a long colloquy with Thomas concerning the Eucharist. Then comes an account of the resurrection of Lazarus and a narration of the passion, with characters derived both from the apocrypha, such as Carius (a Roman proconsul), and from the Gospels, such as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Peter plays an important role in these

events and hence is proclaimed head of the apostles. The author also proclaims that he himself is a disciple and witness to some of the incidents.

2. *Encomium in Mariam*. This text begins with praise for Mary and a [polemic](#) against the Jews. Actually, it merely reports the well-known apocryphal work *Dormitio Mariae*, making, however, some very interesting [variations](#) concerning Mary's assumption (on this general question, see VIRGIN MARY). In the *Encomium*, Evodius identifies himself and says he is at Rome. This work has been transmitted in two principal redactions, which in turn may be classified into subredactions. In all, we can count at least eight manuscripts of its text. Seven are in Sahidic and one is in Bohairic (Lagarde, 1883).

The figure and tradition of Evodius are pure invention, made by the authors from the era of the CYCLES, and thus Evodius' works can be dated from the seventh century. Such a conclusion may be readily proved by the contents of the three texts, all of which share similar characteristics synthesized in the anti-Judaic polemics and in the reevaluation of the Egyptian posture toward Rome, that is, its attitude toward Byzantium. Regarding this last item, there are in these manuscripts many quotations of "theosophic" nature (cf. Van den Broek, 1978), very rare in most Coptic texts, that bear witness to the seventh-century remains of Christianized pagan culture in Egypt. In fact, these homilies were probably written as anti-Islamic polemics masked by the authority of an ancient and venerated person. It is very probable that in creating "Evodius of Rome," the Copts were inspired by the Evodius who succeeded Peter of Antioch, and of whom very little is really known apart from one remark in the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Broek, R. van den. "Four Coptic Fragments of a Greek Theosophy." *Vigiliae Christianae* 32 (1978):118-42.
- Lagarde, P. A. de. *Aegyptiaca*, pp. 39-63. Göttingen, 1883.

- Rossi, F. "Papiri copti II 4." *Memorie Accademia di Torino*, ser. 2, 42 (1892):107-252.

TITO ORLANDI

Tags: [Eminent](#)