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COMMENTATIONES

The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana

David BRAKKE

Athanasius of Alexandria, states Jerome in 393, wrote “many books on virginity”¹. But how many such works did Athanasius (bishop 328-73) actually write? More than 20 ascetic works have been transmitted under the name of this venerable writer, some in Greek, Athanasius’s own literary language, but some, for circumstantial reasons, also in Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, and Arabic. Out of these, most scholars have accepted only eight ascetic works as being authentic and thus worthy of account in studies of Athanasius’s life and thought: a *Life of Antony* and seven letters addressed to Ammoun, Dracontius, Marcellinus, Horsisius, and other monks. It is possible that this standard approach ignores other works that are in fact by Athanasius. The purpose of the present article is to reexamine this fundamental question since it so profoundly affects the outcome of research. The disputed ascetic writings will be assessed under the following rubrics:

- (a) Textual witnesses;
- (b) Ancient testimonia;
- (c) Evidence for a Greek original, if not preserved in Greek;
- (d) Ancient title;
- (e) Nature of the work;
- (f) Internal evidence for the author’s milieu, including geographical setting and date;
- (g) Comparison of content with the accepted genuine Athanasiana (listed in Appendix A).

¹ “Feruntur eius Adversum gentes duo libri, et Contra Valentem et Ursacium unus, De virginitate De persecutionibus Arianorum plurimi, et De Psalmorum titulis, et Historia Antonii monachi vitam continens, et ἑορτάστικαι epistolae, et multa alia quae enumerare longum est”; *Vir. ill.* 87 (Richardson 45). My punctuation of this list follows the assumption of Michel Aubineau that “plurimi [scil. libri]” belongs with both “De virginitate” and “De persecutionibus Arianorum” (“Les écrits de saint Athanase sur la virginité”, *Revue d’ascétique et de mystique* 31 [1955] 140-73, at 143). — This article is a revision of chapter one of my doctoral dissertation, *St. Athanasius and Ascetic Christians in Egypt* (Yale University 1992). For their comments on earlier drafts, I am grateful to Bentley Layton, Rowan Greer, Hans Quecke, Henry Chadwick, Andrew Louth, Wayne Meeks, Arthur Shippee, and Thomas Head.

In each case, I will evaluate this evidence and draw a conclusion about authenticity and, if possible, the date of composition². Any conclusion based on comparison of content with the genuine Athanasiana will, of course, be preliminary: an additional, important demonstration of authenticity would be the coherence of a full-scale, synthetic description of Athanasius's ascetic policies and theology based on all the sources judges here to be authentic³.

Many of the works considered here do not survive in Greek; however, this may be nothing more than an accident of preservation. Athanasius's *Festal Letters* provide an example of the fact that his indisputably authentic works were transmitted in languages other than Greek: outside of eighteen quotations in Greek, all except one coming from a single author, the *Festal Letters* are known only in their Syriac and Coptic versions and in citations in Armenian⁴. This example should caution against a priori skepticism about Athanasian writings preserved only in such languages. Moreover, an attempt to understand Athanasius as a leader of the Egyptian church, not merely as a player in imperial politics, requires serious consideration of the Coptic tradition surrounding him⁵.

Authentic Ascetic Writings

The following works have been judged authentic. In the absence of scholarly doubt about their authenticity, the letters listed as nos. 1-7 will not be reconsidered here. The *Life of Antony* (no. 8) presents a special problem that must be reserved for its own study⁶.

1. *Letter to Ammoun* (CPG 2106), preserved in Greek: *Ep. Amun*.

² For earlier efforts along these lines, see Aubineau, *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 31, 140-73; J. Roldanus, *Le Christ et l'homme dans le théologie d'Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought 4; Leiden 1968) 396-401.

³ For such a study and English translations of the works numbered 9-13 below, see David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford forthcoming).

⁴ Alberto Camplani, *Le lettere festali di Atanasio di Alessandria: Studio storico-critico* (Rome 1989) 31-52.

⁵ William G. Rusch, "Coptic as a Resource in the Quest of the Historical Athanasius", *Enchoria* 8 (1978) 37*-42*; C. Detlef G. Müller, "Athanasios I. von Alexandrien als koptischer Schriftsteller", *Kyrios* n.s. 14 (1974) 195-208.

⁶ It has been suggested that the Syriac version of the *Life* is a faithful translation of a lost original *Life of Antony* written in either Copticizing Greek or Coptic; this hypothetical original *Life*, which could not have been written by a skilled Greek writer like Athanasius, would have been revised into the extant Greek version (René Draguet, *La vie primitive de S. Antoine conservée en syriaque* [CSCO 417-18; Louvain 1980]; Timothy Barnes, "Angel of Light or Mystic Initiate? The Problem of the *Life of Antony*", *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 37 [1986] 353-68). This hypothesis was supported by a linguistic argument, which argued for the presence of numerous "Copticisms" in the language of the Syriac text (Draguet, *Vie primitive* 2, 29*-104*), and by a redactional argument, which claimed that a comparison of contents showed that the Greek ver-

2. *Letter to Dracontius* (CPG 2132), preserved in Greek: *Ep. Drac.*
3. *Letter to Marcellinus* (CPG 2097), preserved in Greek: *Ep. Marc.*
4. *First Letter to Horsisius* (CPG 2103), preserved in Greek: *Ep. Ors. 1*
5. *Second Letter to Horsisius* (CPG 2104), preserved in Greek: *Ep. Ors. 2*
6. *Letter to Monks* (CPG 2108), preserved in Greek: *Ep. mon.*
7. *Letter to Monks* (CPG 2126), preserved in Greek: *H. Ar. ep.*
8. *Life of Antony* (CPG 2101), preserved in Greek: *V. Ant.*
9. (First) *Letter to Virgins* (CPG 2147) preserved in Coptic: *Ep. virg. 1*
10. (Second) *Letter to Virgins* (CPG 2146), preserved in Syriac: *Ep. virg. 2*
11. *On Virginity* (CPG 2145), preserved in Syriac and Armenian: *Virg. (syr./arm.)*
12. Two excerpts from *On Sickness and Health* (CPG 2160), preserved in Greek: *Mor. et val.*
13. Fragments from an unknown treatise on the moral life (CPG 2152), preserved in Coptic: *Frag. (cop.)*
14. *Letter on Charity and Continence* (CPG 2151), preserved in Coptic: *Car. et temp.*
15. An excerpt from a letter of consolation to virgins (CPG 2162), preserved in Greek: *Theod. Hist. eccl.*
16. An excerpt from a letter to virgins (CPG 2154), preserved in Arabic: *Sev. Hist. patr. Alex.*
17. An excerpt from an unknown writing (CPG 2150), preserved in Coptic: *Frag. ap. Shen.*

I turn now to a detailed exposition of the authenticity of nos. 9-17.

(9) (First) *Letter to Virgins* (CPG 2147), preserved in Coptic: *Ep. virg. 1*

(a) Textual witness: The text is attested fragmentarily by five series of leaves from a single manuscript, which are partly in the Bibliothèque Na-

sion was a revision of the Syriac's Vorlage (Draguet, *Vie primitive* 2, 15*-17*; Barnes, *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 37, 353-68). This hypothesis has been disproved. For refutations of the redactional argument alone, see Luise Abramowski, "Vertritt die syrische Fassung die ursprüngliche Gestalt der *Vita Antonii*? Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der These Draguets", in *Mélanges Antoine Guillaumont: Contributions à l'étude des christianismes orientaux*, ed. René-Georges Coquin (Cahiers d'Orientalisme 20; Geneva 1988) 47-56, and Rudolf Lorenz, "Die griechische *Vita Antonii* des Athanasius und ihre syrische Fassung: Bemerkungen zu einer These von R. Draguet", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 100 (1989) 77-84. For a refutation of both the linguistic and the redactional arguments, see David Brakke, "The Greek and Syriac Versions of the *Life of Antony*", forthcoming in *Le Muséon*.

tionale in Paris (B.N. 78 ff. 58-61; 131² ff. 90-113) and partly in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Naples (I.B. 10, 421). The manuscript has been dated paleographically by Lefort to the fifth or sixth century⁷. The language is Sahidic Coptic. No other parts of this manuscript have been identified⁸. The text has been edited by Lefort⁹.

(b) Ancient testimonia: (1) Ambrose of Milan, (2) Shenute, (3) Ephraem of Antioch, (4) Cosmas of Jerusalem.

1. Ambrose of Milan (ca. 334-97): paraphrase without attribution or title. Ambrose knew and used this work. It was a source for his *On Virgins*, which he wrote in Latin in 377¹⁰. So clear are the parallels between Ambrose's treatise and the present work that they enable the restoration of the Coptic fragments to their original order. In the absence of any scholarly disagreement, these parallels need not be reproduced here¹¹. Ambrose read Greek, but presumably did not read Coptic; thus, the text available to

⁷ L. Th. Lefort, *S. Athanase: Lettres festales et pastorales en copte* (CSCO 150; Louvain 1955) xviii-xx.

⁸ Lefort, on codicological grounds, originally believed that these leaves followed ones containing the first Pseudo-Clementine *Epistle*, which are now in Paris at the Bibliothèque Nationale (B.N. 131¹ ff. 2-7) ("Le 'De virginitate' de S. Clement ou de S. Athanase?", *Muséon* 40 [1927] 249-64). While the Coptic text of the Athanasian *Letter* bears no attribution since the *incipit* is lost in a lacuna, the Pseudo-Clementine *Epistle* is, in the Coptic leaves, falsely attributed to Athanasius. Further examination of the scripts in the two sets of leaves eventually led Lefort to abandon this hypothesis (*Les Pères apostoliques en copte* [CSCO 135; Louvain 1952] xvii n. 4). Thus, in his final view, the other contents of the codex containing the *Letter to Virgins* are unknown.

Lefort's original hypothesis has recently been revived, again purely for codicological reasons (Tito Orlandi, "Giustificazioni dell'encratismo nei testi monastici copti del IV-V secolo", in *La tradizione dell'enkrateia: Motivazioni ontologiche e protologiche*, ed. Ugo Bianchi [Rome 1985] 341-68, at 366). In the new version of the hypothesis, the Coptic codex in which the Pseudo-Clementine *Epistle* and Athanasius's *Letter to Virgins* were copied must have been a monastic miscellany in which various ascetical works (*not* by Athanasius) were gathered under a spurious attribution to Athanasius, in order to lend them authority in Egypt. It is assumed that all the works in this collection of Athanasiana were spurious, judging from the false attribution of the Pseudo-Clementine *Epistle* to Athanasius. Thus, the *Letter to Virgins*, it is concluded, must be non-Athanasian, like the Pseudo-Clementine *Epistle*.

There are two arguments against this hypothesis. First, the false attribution of one work in the monastic miscellany to Athanasius does not prove that all the works in it were spurious. Second, the very existence of this hypothetical monastic miscellany is open to serious doubt. As the hypothesis now stands, the Athanasian *Letter* and the Pseudo-Clementine *Epistle* are the only two works assigned to the reconstructed miscellany. Whether the overall contents of the mostly lost codex were monastic, or indeed Athanasian, are moot points.

⁹ CSCO 150, 73-99, reproducing his first edition, "S. Athanase: Sur la virginité", *Muséon* 42 (1929) 197-264.

¹⁰ He also used two works by Cyprian of Carthage as sources; see Yves-Marie Duval, "L'originalité du *De virginibus* dans le mouvement ascétique occidental: Ambroise, Cyprien, Athanase", in *Ambroise de Milan: XVI^e centenaire de son élection épiscopale*, ed. Y.-M. Duval (Études augustinienes; Paris 1974) 9-66, esp. 29-53; P. Janssens, *De Heilige Maagd en Moeder Gods Maria* (Antwerpen/Nijmegen 1930) 332-36; L. Th. Lefort, "Athanase, Ambroise et Chenoute", *Muséon* 48 (1935) 55-72; L. Dossi, "S. Ambrogio e S. Atanasio nel 'De virginibus'", *Acme* 4 (1951) 241-62.

¹¹ They can be found in Aubineau, *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 31, 163-68, as well as in the works cited in n. 10.

him in the 370s must have been in Greek or Latin. It is possible that the text used by Ambrose diverged somewhat from the Greek text that stands behind the Coptic version, but any exact differences seem impossible to discern¹².

2. Shenute (ca. 350-466): quotation with attribution. Shenute, the monastic archimandrite, writing in Coptic, quotes 21 apostrophes to virginity and introduces them with this remark: “Moreover, as for virginity, the good man Archbishop Athanasius never tired of speaking about it, saying these things, among others, in his letters (ἐπιστολή).”¹³ Seven of the apostrophes quoted by Shenute do indeed appear in the *Letter* as we have it in Coptic, in the same wording and order. The text of the *Letter* is wanting where thirteen of the remaining fourteen would occur. Shenute, however, quotes only the apostrophes themselves, not the elaborations that follow some of the apostrophes in the *Letter*. It is possible that Shenute knew these elaborations but chose not to quote them because of their length. There are, however, two reasons to think that these expansions may not have been present in the text of the *Letter* available to him. First, the elaborations are found only after some of the apostrophes and are of varying length. Second, most of the expansions consist of commonplace exhortations that do not reflect the distinctive themes of the rest of the work¹⁴.

3. Ephraem of Antioch (bishop 527-45): epitome with attribution and title. Ephraem, quoted by Photius in the ninth century, lists the fathers who have written that the Son of God has two natures and yet is one person. This list includes “Athanasius of Alexandria in the *Letter* (ἐπιστολή) to the Virgins”¹⁵. The *Letter* as we have it in Coptic does indeed contain a christological discussion of the kind that Ephraem mentions¹⁶. Ephraem writes in Greek.

4. Cosmas of Jerusalem (VIII C.E.): epitome with attribution and title. Cosmas states in his commentary on the poems of Gregory of Nazianzus:

And it is said about a Pythagorean Theanos that, because she would not speak the ineffable things, she wept and spat out her tongue at the tyrant

¹² G. Jouassard, “Un portrait de la sainte vierge par Saint Ambroise”, *Vie spirituelle* 90 (1954) 477-89, at 487 n. 24; Giuseppe Rosso, “La ‘Lettera alle Vergini’, Atanasio e Ambrogio”, *Augustinianum* 23 (1983) 421-52, at 451-52.

¹³ CSCO 150, 106-08; the paralleled passage is *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 95.32-98.6).

¹⁴ For example: “Give up laughter, and you will not prepare yourself for destruction. Do not pay attention to the appearance of the face, and you will not pierce yourself with the defilement from the congregation of the lawless, for their envy is great. Abandon crooked people, and undertake to walk uprightly. Mingle with the saints, and you will be found righteous”; *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 96.16-21).

¹⁵ Phot. *Bib.* 229 (PG 103, 996C); discovered by Lefort, *Muséon* 48, 69.

¹⁶ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 91.17-94.29); in this section, the author of the *Letter* claims that he is quoting Bishop Alexander of Alexandria (bishop 312-28).

when she was compelled to speak, having cut out the organ of speech. It is useful to know that St. Athanasius has denounced the Pythagorean maidens as sexually immoral in his composition (λόγος) *To the Virgins*.¹⁷

The *Letter to Virgins* known in Coptic does indeed include a denunciation of the Pythagoraean “prophesying priestesses” as “unable to maintain their virginity” and tells how one of them “cut off her own tongue, so that we could not force her to reveal her mysteries”¹⁸. Cosmas writes in Greek.

(c) Evidence for a Greek original: Ephraem (3) and Cosmas (4) were Greek speakers and so provide reasons to assume the existence of a Greek original behind the present Coptic text. The evidence of Ambrose (1) and Shenute (2) is ambiguous, but the only language they share is Greek.

(d) Ancient title: Shenute (fourth- or fifth-century Egypt) and Ephraem (sixth-century Syria) knew the work as a “letter” (ἐπιστολή); Ephraem gives a precise title: *Letter to Virgins*. Cosmas, writing two centuries later than Ephraem, calls it a “composition” (λόγος), a term broader than “letter”, and yet includes the element, “to the virgins”. Thus, the most likely ancient title is *Letter to Virgins*. When it is necessary to distinguish it from another *Letter to Virgins* by Athanasius (see no. 10 below), this work will be referred to here as the “first” *Letter to Virgins*.

(e) Nature of the work: The *Letter* takes the form of a general exhortation to the proper virginal lifestyle (of which Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the ideal pattern), with a discussion of the relative merits of marriage and virginity and specific warnings against Arian christology and the ideas of Hieracas. The author describes a visit by a group of virgins to Alexander, bishop of Alexandria (312-28).

(f) Internal evidence for the author’s milieu: The work shows acquaintance with Egyptian customs and persons and thus seems to have originated in an Egyptian milieu. The author speaks about pagan Egyptian priestesses and conducts an extended polemic against Hieracas, a known Egyptian ascetic active in the early fourth century, treating this “heretic” not as a person from the distant past, but as a present danger¹⁹.

Elements in the work point to a date in the early fourth century. The treatment of Hieracas is evidence for such a date. The author refers to his personal friendly contact with Alexander, bishop of Alexandria (312-28), in the context of the early Arian controversy, which is a present concern to the author²⁰. The author does not refer to Alexander anachronistically as

¹⁷ Cos. *Car. Greg. Theol.* (PG 38, 577).

¹⁸ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 74.17-28).

¹⁹ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 74.29; 84.23-97.31).

²⁰ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 91.1-94.29).

“archbishop”, a title that came into use in the last decades of the fourth century, nor does he show knowledge of the fifth-century controversies over the teachings of Nestorius and the Council of Chalcedon. Some of the virgins addressed in the work live at home with their parents, a situation consistent with a fourth-century date²¹. It has been suggested that the *Letter* is closely related literarily to the Coptic *Gnomes of the Council of Nicea*, which is usually dated to around 400; but examination of the supposed parallels between between the present work and the *Gnomes* reveals little evidence for such a relationship (see Appendix B).

(g) Comparison of content: The content of this work coheres with that of the genuine Athanasiana²².

1. The author states that true virginity was rare before Christ (rather, sexual immorality ran rampant), but was enabled by the incarnation. Athanasius makes precisely this claim in four other works²³.

2. The important theme in the *Letter* that virginity, “having ascended higher (than marriage), has no law” recalls two Athanasian passages; in *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius writes that “even children who have not yet attained legal age promise virginity over and above the law”; and in his comments on Luke 1:48, Athanasius says that virginity has “transcended the law”²⁴.

3. According to the *Letter*, marriage is “in accord with nature” (κατὰ φύσιν), but virginity “surpasses human nature”; the virgin “exists not by nature (φύσις), but by free will (προαίρεσις)”. Athanasius says much the same of the martyrs, whom he correlates with virgins: although “humanity is by nature (κατὰ φύσιν) afraid of death and the dissolution of the body”, yet “the one who has put on the faith of the cross scorns even things that are natural (κατὰ φύσιν) and does not fear death on account of Christ”²⁵.

4. The author of the *Letter* returns to this opposition between “nature” (φύσις) and “free will” (προαίρεσις) several times; a similar opposition, although employing somewhat different terms, figures in Athanasius’s debates in other genuine works with the Arians over whether the Word of God is begotten “by nature” (φύσις) or “by will” (βούλησις) and whether

²¹ On the evidence for the lifestyle of Christian virgins in the fourth century, see J. Lebon, “Athanasiana Syriaca II: Une lettre attribué à Saint Athanase d’Alexandrie”, *Muséon* 41 (1928) 169-216, at 213-15, and Robert P. Casey, “Der dem Athanasius zugeschriebene Traktat Περὶ παρθενίας”, *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 1935, 1022-45, at 1025.

²² See Appendix A for a list of the genuine Athanasiana.

²³ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 74.13-76.25); *Gent.* 26.1-8 (Thomson); *Inc.* 48.2-4; 50.21; 51.1-5 (Thomson); *Apol. Const.* 33.8-12 (SC 56); *V. Ant.* 79 (PG 26, 953).

²⁴ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 73.24-25; 81.8-9); *Inc.* 51.4-6 (Thomson); *Fr. Lc.* (PG 27, 1394A).

²⁵ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 81.16-18; 84.18-19; cf. 74.3-4); *Inc.* 28.4-8; cf. 48.2-5 (Thomson), where virgins are correlated with martyrs.

the Word is good by “free will” (προαίρεσις) and thus of a changeable “nature” (φύσις)²⁶.

5. The *Letter* contains the characteristic Athanasian rhetorical device of demanding from his opponents the scriptural basis and other sources for their ideas: “Now where has Hieracas found this saying of his? What Scripture has he read that says these things?... Where does the lawless man get these ideas?”²⁷

6. The ascetic interpretation of the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:3-8) in the *Letter to Virgins* is exactly that found in Athanasius’s tenth *Festal Letter* and in his *Letter to Ammoun*²⁸.

7. The author’s exhortations to imitate the Virgin Mary’s “way of life” (πολιτεία) and to use her life as a mirror reflect a distinctive Athanasian teaching of self-formation through imitation²⁹.

8. Inspired by Cant 1:10-15, the author urges his readers to emulate “the moderation of the turtledove and the quietness of the dove”. Elsewhere Athanasius calls the turtledove “a symbol of moderation and quietness”³⁰.

Evaluation and dating: The evidence from ancient authors indicates that the Greek original of this work was known in antiquity as a *Letter to Virgins* by Athanasius. The extant Coptic version of the work contains elements that place the author in fourth-century Egypt and shows parallels with themes both distinctive and characteristic of Athanasius. Thus, the authenticity of this work appears certain. A date of composition early in Athanasius’s career is most likely. The Greek original or a Latin translation was available in Milan by the 370s (Testimonium No. 1). The *Letter* contains a vivid memory of Bishop Alexander and a lively polemic against Hieracas, both figures of the early decades of the fourth century. Thus, it is probable that Athanasius wrote this letter early in his episcopate. A striking parallel with the tenth *Festal Letter*, which was written in 338, may place this work in the sixteen months between Athanasius’s first and second exiles (November 337 – April 339). It is intriguing to note that

²⁶ Begetting of Word: *Ar.* 3.62 (PG 26, 453A-56A). Goodness of Word: *Ar.* 1.35 (PG 26, 84A-85A).

²⁷ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 85.5-6; 86.7); cf. *Decr.* 18 (Opitz 15.12-13); *Ar.* 1.8; 2.39 (PG 26, 28B, 229A); *Epp. fest.* (cop.) 40; 41 (CSCO 150, 22.21-22; 24.33-25.3); *Ep. Serap.* 1.3, 11 (PG 26, 536A, 557A).

²⁸ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 83.17-84.21); *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 10.4 (Cureton 74.5-6; Cureton-Burgess 146.4-14); *Ep. Amun.* 69.6-14 (Joannou); cf. Martin Tetz, “Athanasius von Alexandrien”, *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 4, 333-49, at 344.

²⁹ Way of life: *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 90.25-35); cf. *Ep. fest.* (syr.) 2.1-2, 5 (Cureton 20.13-21.13; 23.8-9); *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 1.1 (PG 25, 540A). Mirror: *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 78.1-2); cf. *V. Ant.* 7 (PG 26, 853B); *Gent.* 8.10-19; 34.22-26 (Thomson).

³⁰ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 88.23-24); *Fr. Lc.* (PG 27, 1396B).

Athanasius spent part of his second exile (339-46) in Milan, where Ambrose used this letter some thirty years later; perhaps Athanasius brought a copy of the Greek original of this letter with him.

(10) (Second) *Letter to Virgins* (CPG 2146), preserved in Syriac: *Ep. virg. 2*

(a) Textual witness: The text is attested by a single manuscript in the British Library in London (B.L. Add.14607, no. 747 in Wright's catalogue). The manuscript has been dated paleographically by Wright to the sixth or seventh century³¹. The language is Syriac. The manuscript is damaged, but the text of the present work is fully preserved. In addition to two works attributed to Athanasius (the present work and no. 11 below), the manuscript contains works by John Chrysostom, Jacob of Batnae, Isaac of Antioch, and Basil of Caesarea. The text has been edited by Lebon³².

(b) Ancient testimonium: The only ancient testimonium is the transmitted attribution and title found in the Syriac manuscript. In the manuscript, the work bears the superscript title, "By St. Athanasius, Archbishop of the Alexandrians: A Letter to Virgins who Went and Prayed in Jerusalem and Returned" (f. 102v). There seems little reason, in light of the evidence below, to take the personal name as referring to some other Athanasius of Alexandria, such as Athanasius II (bishop 489-96)³³.

(c) Evidence for a Greek original: That the Syriac text is translated from Greek is suggested by anomalous word usage and biblical text type³⁴. For example, in its context, the Ethpaal of ܐܘܪܝܢܐ (Lebon 82-83) must mean (anomalously) "to visit". In normal Syriac usage, the Ethpaal of ܐܘܪܝܢܐ means only "to tell, narrate"; the neologism in our text is explained as a mistranslation of a (hypothetical) Greek model, ἰστορεῖν, which means both "to visit" and "to tell, narrate". As a further example, the Syriac translator twice uses ܢܘܠܘܢܐ to introduce the comparative (Lebon 136, 305), rather than the standard ܢܘܠܘܢܐ, reflecting the use of ἤ in the Greek base. As a third kind of example, the quotations from the Old Testament conform not to the Peshitta, but to the Septuagint; the New Testament quotations sometimes conform to the Peshitta, sometimes to the Greek.

(d) Ancient title: The only known title of the work is *Letter to Virgins*

³¹ William Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired since the Year 1838* (3 pts.; London 1870-72) 683-84.

³² Lebon, *Muséon* 41, 169-216. References are to the line number(s) in Lebon's edition.

³³ *Ibid.* 204.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 205-08.

Who Went and Prayed in Jerusalem and Returned. Here it will be referred to briefly as the “second” *Letter to Virgins*, in order to differentiate it from the *Letter to Virgins* discussed above (no. 9).

(e) Nature of the work: The work is a letter of consolation written to virgins who have returned from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and are distressed at their separation from the holy places there. After offering his consolation, the author turns to a general exhortation to the proper virginal lifestyle and condemns the practice of a virgin living with a celibate man.

(f) Internal evidence for the author’s milieu: The author and his addressees live at some distance from Jerusalem since a trip there is a rare and important event. They live in a city, where public baths are available and where ascetic men who live by themselves are able to offer virgins shelter and support³⁵. These conditions are consistent with Alexandria. There is nothing in the text that would argue for a specific date, but the various living arrangements of the virgins addressed (at home with their parents, in a community, and with a celibate male), the simplicity of their ascetic regime, and their pilgrimage to Jerusalem are consistent with a dating in the fourth century³⁶.

(g) Comparison of content: The content of this work coheres with that of the genuine Athanasiana.

1. The reference in the *Letter* to Christ as “the unchanging image of the Father” represents a central and distinctive notion in Athanasius’s understanding of the Word of God: “How can such a one be the Fathers’ image (εἰκὼν) without having the likeness of his unchangeableness (ἀτρεψία)?”³⁷

2. At the beginning of the *Letter*, the author compares the actions of the “first” and “second human beings” (Adam and Christ) in the Garden of Eden, Bethlehem, and Golgotha; this comparison is characteristic of Athanasian christology³⁸.

3. The image of life in “the world” to being on a storm-tossed sea found in the *Letter*, although common enough in patristic literature, finds three parallels in authentic writings of Athanasius³⁹.

4. The idea that the virgin chooses her way of life by her own free

³⁵ *Ep. virg.* 2 (Lebon 208-381).

³⁶ Lebon, *Muséon* 41, 213-15; Susannah Elm, “Perceptions of Jerusalem Pilgrimage as Reflected in Two Early Sources on Female Pilgrimage (3rd and 4th centuries A.D.)”, *Studia Patristica* 20 (1987) 219-23.

³⁷ *Ep. virg.* 2 (Lebon 10); *Ar.* 1.35 (PG 26, 85A); cf. *Ar.* 1.36 (PG 26, 85B). Cf. Roldanus, *Christ et l’homme* 401 n. 4.

³⁸ *Ep. virg.* 2 (Lebon 4-34); *Ar.* 1.51 (PG 26, 117C).

³⁹ *Ep. virg.* 2 (Lebon 153-59); *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 19.7; *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 90.7-9); *Ep. Ors.* 2 = *V. Pach.* 150 (Halkin 95.28-96.1).

will and not under any compulsion of force of law is found both in this work and in the first *Letter to Virgins*⁴⁰.

5. The author's use of the dove as a model for the virgin's quiet and withdrawn life echoes similar use of the dove or turtledove in two genuine works of Athanasius⁴¹.

Evaluation and dating: The manuscript's attribution of the work to Athanasius dates to the sixth or seventh century. The contents of the work are consistent with a fourth-century date and contain themes that are distinctive and characteristic of Athanasius. This work is most likely authentic⁴². Nothing in the work indicates a precise date, but most of its parallels to genuine Athanasiana are to works written after Athanasius's second exile, which ended in 346. The absence of any explicit reference to the Arian conflict may indicate the last decade of Athanasius's reign. This *Letter* contains a lengthy polemic against the practice of spiritual marriage (*virgines subintroductae*), a problem not discussed at all in the first *Letter to Virgins*. If, as argued above, the first *Letter to Virgins* was written early in Athanasius's episcopal term, then it may be deduced that spiritual marriage became more common in Alexandria during the time between the writing of these two letters.

(11) *On Virginité* (CPG 2145), preserved in Syriac and Armenian: *Virg.* (syr./arm.)

(a) Textual witnesses: The text of this work is preserved in two versions: Syriac and Armenian.

The Syriac text is attested by a single manuscript in the British Library in London (B.L. Add.14607, no. 747 in Wright's catalogue)⁴³. The manuscript has been dated paleographically by Wright to the sixth or seventh century. The end of the text is lost in a lacuna. In addition to two works attributed to Athanasius (the present work and no. 10 above), the manuscript contains works by John Chrysostom, Jacob of Batnae, Isaac of Antioch, and Basil of Caesarea. The Syriac text has been edited by Lebon⁴⁴.

The Armenian text is attested by two manuscripts, both anthologies of

⁴⁰ *Ep. virg.* 2 (Lebon 290-302); *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 73.18-27; 75.24-28; 80.33-82.3).

⁴¹ *Ep. virg.* 2 (Lebon 191-208); *Fr. Lc.* (PG 27, 1396B); *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 88.23-24).

⁴² Cf. Roldanus, *Christ et l'homme* 401; Elm, *Studia Patristica* 20, 219.

⁴³ Wright, *Catalogue* 683-84.

⁴⁴ J. Lebon, "Athanasiana Syriaca I: Un Λόγος περί παρθενίας attribué à saint Athanase d'Alexandrie", *Muséon* 40 (1927) 205-48. References are to the line number(s) in Lebon's edition.

writings attributed to Athanasius and now in the Mechitaristen-Bibliothek in Vienna (Cods. 629 and 648)⁴⁵.

Cod. 629 has been dated paleographically by Casey to the nineteenth century; there are many pages left blank in the manuscript, indicating that its archetype was defective, possibly due to the effects of aging. The text of the present work is fully preserved. The manuscript contains 24 works attributed to Athanasius.

Cod. 648 has been dated paleographically by Casey to the thirteenth or fourteenth century. The text of the present work is damaged near the end. The manuscript contains 17 works attributed to Athanasius.

The Armenian text has been edited by Casey⁴⁶.

(b) Ancient testimonia: Transmitted attributions and titles are found in the Syriac and Armenian manuscripts and in an Armenian colophon.

1. A superscript title in the Syriac manuscript reads: “31. By the same: a composition on Virginity” (f. 115v). The significance of the number 31 is not known; “the same” must refer to Athanasius, who is identified as the author of the preceding work in the manuscript (no. 10 above).

2. The Armenian manuscripts contain the superscript title: “By the same Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, on Virginity”. Cod. 629 omits “of Alexandria”.

3. An eighth-century Armenian colophon of a lost manuscript containing 17 works by Athanasius includes the title *On Virginity*. Comparison of the colophon with the order and titles of the Athanasian works in the two Armenian manuscripts indicates that “the corpus of Cod. 629 [the first Armenian witness described above] was based on that of the colophon”⁴⁷ and thus that the *On Virginity* listed in the colophon was the present work. The colophon claims that the Armenian version of this work was made by Mesrop and his school (ca. 375–475 C.E.); however, this statement has been rejected on philological grounds, and the translation attested by the two manuscripts has been dated instead to the seventh century⁴⁸.

(c) Evidence for a Greek original: The Armenian colophon explicitly treats the work as a piece of translation literature, i.e., not originally composed in Armenian. Anomalous word usage, transliterated Greek words, and biblical text types indicate that both versions are direct translation

⁴⁵ Robert P. Casey, “Armenian Manuscripts of St. Athanasius of Alexandria”, *Harvard Theological Review* 24 (1931) 43–59; *SPAW* 1935, 1022.

⁴⁶ Casey, *SPAW* 1935. References are to the line number(s) in Casey’s edition.

⁴⁷ Casey, *Harvard Theological Review* 24, 55.

⁴⁸ The colophon is cited without identification of its source by Zarphanalian Karekin, *Catalogue des anciennes traductions arméniennes siècles IV–XIII* (Venice 1889) 287–88, and reproduced by Casey, *Harvard Theological Review* 24, 52–53. Rejection and new dating: Casey, *SPAW* 1935, 1022.

from Greek⁴⁹. Where the versions differ, the readings in the Syriac text are usually better⁵⁰.

(d) Ancient title: The only known title of the work is *On Virginity*.

(e) Nature of the work: The work is an exhortation to proper conduct of the virginal lifestyle, with the general theme of the acquisition of inner virtues (humility, kindness, etc.) in addition to outer ones (continence, vigils, fasting). The discourse concludes with a description of the virgin's heavenly reward, a series of apostrophes to virginity, and a list of ascetic figures to be emulated, including Elisha, Miriam, John the Baptist, and Thecla⁵¹.

(f) Internal evidence for the author's milieu: There is nothing in the work that argues for any particular place. The ascetic life implied is primitive and typical of the fourth century⁵². The virgins live at home, financially support themselves, and practice simple ascetic acts: fasting, vigils, the chanting of Psalms⁵³.

(g) Comparison of content: The content of this work coheres with that of the genuine Athanasiana.

1. The author describes the manifold virtues of the virgin as a multi-colored cloak as Athanasius does in the second *Letter to Virgins*⁵⁴.

2. The author defends marriage as good and honorable, which is Athanasius's teaching in two other ascetic writings⁵⁵.

3. The author's descriptions of the devil's work (masking bitterness as sweet) and of the virgin's fall (a turn from the immortal to the mortal, resulting in nudity) resemble those in authentic Athanasiana⁵⁶.

4. The author's admission that God and virginity are topics beyond

⁴⁹ Casey, *SPAW* 1935, 1022-23; Lebon, *Muséon* 40, 228-31. For examples of the kinds of evidence in the work, see the discussion of no. 10 above.

⁵⁰ See Casey's notes to his edition of the Armenian text (*SPAW* 1935, 1035-43).

⁵¹ Although Thecla is a figure from the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, a work not part of the canon promulgated by Athanasius in his 39th *Festal Letter*, the use of her as a model is no bar to Athanasian authorship. Such use of Thecla was common in Greek Christian discourses addressed to virgins beginning in the third century. Earlier in the work, the author does not, as some have thought, cite a beatitude from the apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla* ("Blessed are those who have kept their flesh pure, so that they might be God's temple") as the "ninth beatitude", but rather contrasts the apocryphal beatitude with the nine in Matt 5:2-11, counting 5:11 (*Virg.* [syr.] [Lebon 145-51]; *pace* P. Resch. *La doctrine ascétique des premiers maîtres égyptiens du quatrième siècle* [Paris 1931] xvii, and Roldanus, *Christ et l'homme* 400-01).

⁵² Lebon, *Muséon* 40, 235-36; Casey, *SPAW* 1935, 1025.

⁵³ *Virg.* (syr.) (Lebon 8-12, 79-99, 111-12).

⁵⁴ *Virg.* (syr.) (Lebon 178-81); cf. *Ep. virg.* 2 (Lebon 49-58).

⁵⁵ *Virg.* (syr.) (Lebon 103-11); cf. *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 81.10-82.3); *Ep. Amun.* 68.16-69.14 (Joannou).

⁵⁶ Devil: *Virg.* (syr.) (Lebon 45-48); cf. *Ar.* 1.1 (PG 26, 13B); *Ep. virg.* 2 (Lebon 32-34). Virgin's fall: *Virg.* (syr.) (Lebon 48-61); cf. *Gent.* 3.17-22 (Thomson); P. Athanasius Recheis, "Sancti Athanasii Magni Doctrina de primordiis seu quomodo explicaverit Genesis 1-3", *Antonianum* 28 (1953) 219-60, at 248, 250.

human language and understanding, although common enough in early Christian literature, nonetheless is paralleled in the genuine Athanasiana⁵⁷.

5. The author uses the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:3-8) to warn virgins against being “negligent”; elsewhere Athanasius draws from this parable the danger of becoming “negligent”⁵⁸.

Evaluation and dating: The parallels with the genuine Athanasiana are not as numerous and distinctive as in the previous two cases. On the other hand, the contents of the work are consistent with a fourth-century date and present no obstacle to authenticity; the attribution to Athanasius is transmitted in two different language traditions and by one source possibly as old as the sixth century (the Syriac manuscript). This work is therefore accepted as authentic with hesitation. Nothing in the work indicates a particular date in Athanasius’s career.

(12) Two excerpts from *On Sickness and Health* (CPG 2160), preserved in Greek: *Mor. et val.*

(a) Textual witness: The text of these excerpts is attested by a single manuscript in the Biblioteca Vaticana in Rome (Vaticanus Graecus 2200 in Lilla’s catalogue)⁵⁹. The manuscript has been dated paleographically and codicologically by Diekamp to between 750 and 850⁶⁰. The language is Greek. The text of the excerpts is completely preserved. The manuscript is an anthology of excerpts from various Christian authors; it contains a florilegium of patristic teachings on the incarnation of the Word of God; an extract from Theodoret of Cyrrhus’s *Quaestiones selectae in Genesin*; “a harmony from the ancient philosophers of the Greeks with the holy and divinely inspired New Testament”; extracts from Pseudo-Dionysius; the two excerpts from *On Sickness and Health* by Athanasius; a work “concerning the six holy and ecumenical synods”; and an extract from Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem. The text of the excerpts from Athanasius has been edited by Diekamp⁶¹.

(b) Ancient testimonium: The compiler, writing no later than 850,

⁵⁷ *Virg.* (syr.) (Lebon 208-14, 219-21); *Ep. Serap.* 1.17 (PG 26, 572C); cf. *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 91.1-5).

⁵⁸ *Virg.* (syr.) (Lebon 205-06); *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 83.19-84.5).

⁵⁹ Salvatore Lilla, *Codices Vaticani Graeci: Codices 2162-2254 (Codices Columnenses)* (Rome 1985) 149-55.

⁶⁰ Franz Diekamp, *Doctrina Patrum de Incarnatione Verbi: Ein griechisches Florilegium aus der Wende des siebenten und achten Jahrhunderts* (Münster 1907) IX-XIV.

⁶¹ Franz Diekamp, *Analecta Patristica: Texte und Abhandlungen zur griechischen Patristik* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 117; Rome 1938) 5-9. References are to the page and line number(s) in Diekamp’s edition.

states that the two excerpts are “from the composition *On Sickness and Health* of St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria”⁶².

(d) Ancient title: The only known title of the work is *On Sickness and Health*.

(e) Nature of the work: The work was composed in the form of a letter since it begins, “We have received the letter about your health”⁶³. The author, addressing an ill person who seems to be looking in the Scriptures for guidance on how to improve his health, explains the spiritual meanings of biblical references to the body’s members and senses.

(f) Internal evidence for the author’s milieu: There is no indication of any geographical setting. The author refers to ascetics who try to sleep as little as possible; various ascetic movements of the fourth and fifth centuries practiced sleep deprivation: the Messalians, for example⁶⁴.

(g) Comparison of content: The content of this work coheres with that of the genuine Athanasiana.

1. The language used to describe “heretics” (they act “as if they really had no mind”; they “defraud” people) is distinctive of Athanasius⁶⁵.

2. The author claims that the soul can travel to distant places while the body sleeps, as does Athanasius in *Against the Nations*⁶⁶.

3. The author condemns that “sleep of the soul” which is “idleness and negligence of virtue”. Athanasius says elsewhere that “the sleep of the soul is negligence and forgetting death”⁶⁷.

4. The author says that discourse about human health is “twofold” (διπλοῦς) because human beings exist “in two modes (ἐκ δύο), having been made from body and soul”. Athanasius elsewhere says that “humanity is twofold (διπλοῦς), that is, from soul and body”⁶⁸.

5. The use of Isa 26:17-18 is similar to that in Athanasius’s first *Letter to Virgins*⁶⁹.

6. It is possible that the addressee is Marcellinus, who received a letter from Athanasius while he was ill but was still practicing his ascetic discipline; this Marcellinus may have been a deacon of the Alexandrian

⁶² *Mor. et val.* (Diekamp 5.1-2).

⁶³ *Mor. et val.* (Diekamp 5.2-3).

⁶⁴ Diekamp, *Analecta Patristica* 8-9.

⁶⁵ “No mind”: *Mor. et val.* (Diekamp 7.4); cf. *Gent.* 30.22-23 (Thomson); *Dion.* 12, 24 (PG 25, 497B, 516C); *H. Ar.* 69 (PG 25, 776C); *Ep. Serap.* 1.17 (PG 26, 572C). “Defrauding”: *Mor. et val.* (Diekamp 7.6); cf. *Ar.* 1.4 (PG 26, 20B); *Gent.* 15.3 (Thomson); *Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 2 (PG 25, 541A); *H. Ar.* 44 (PG 25, 745D).

⁶⁶ *Mor. et val.* (Diekamp 7.9-16); *Gent.* 31.38-44; 33.24-28 (Thomson).

⁶⁷ *Mor. et val.* (Diekamp 6.31); *Fr. Lc.* (PG 27, 1397C).

⁶⁸ *Mor. et val.* (Diekamp 5.3-6; 6.10); *Fr. Lc.* (PG 27, 1396D).

⁶⁹ *Mor. et val.* (Diekamp 6.22-25); *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 74.7-12).

church⁷⁰. Athanasius told Marcellinus that the different Psalms describe the various “dispositions of the soul”⁷¹, a notion similar to what is found in *On Sickness and Health*.

Evaluation and dating: Given how little of the text survives, these parallels are strikingly numerous, thus soundly supporting the attribution of this work to Athanasius. There is no way to date this work in the career of Athanasius. The possible identification of the addressee as Marcellinus is of little help since the *Letter to Marcellinus* has not been dated, although it has been said to be a work of Athanasius’s maturity or old age⁷².

(13) Fragments from an unknown treatise on the moral life (CPG 2152), preserved in Coptic: *Frag. (cop.)*

(a) Textual witnesses: The text is fragmentarily preserved in two distinct Sahidic Coptic versions⁷³.

The first manuscript (called Codex A by Lefort) is in the John Rylands Library in Manchester (Ryl 62 in Crum’s catalogue)⁷⁴. The manuscript has been dated paleographically by Lefort to the twelfth century. The fragments in Manchester may be part of a manuscript in the British Library (B.L. Or.8802; see no. 14 below); both are palimpsests and may be written in the same script. Three of the preserved pages contain portions of the text of the present work. The manuscript also contains works by Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom.

The second (called Codex B by Lefort), consisting of five pages of a manuscript, is in the British Library in London (B.L. Or.6007, no. 990 in Crum’s catalogue)⁷⁵. The manuscript has been dated paleographically by Lefort to the seventh or eighth century. The other contents of this poorly preserved codex have not been identified.

In Lefort’s opinion, these two manuscripts appear to attest independent Coptic translations of the same Greek text, rather than being two descendants of the same Coptic archetype. The text has been edited by Lefort⁷⁶.

⁷⁰ *Ep. Marcell.* 1 (PG 27, 12A); *Apol. sec.* 73 (Opitz 153.20), where a Marcellinus is listed among the deacons of the Alexandrian church.

⁷¹ *Ep. Marcell.* 30 (PG 27, 41C).

⁷² M. J. Rondeau, “L’Épître à Marcellinus sur les Psaumes”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 22 (1968) 176-97, at 192-94.

⁷³ Lefort, *Lettres festales xxxi-xxxiii*.

⁷⁴ W. E. Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the Collection of the John Rylands Library, Manchester* (Manchester 1909) 24-26.

⁷⁵ W. E. Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London 1905) 410-11.

⁷⁶ CSCO 150, 121-29.

(b) Ancient testimonium: No manuscript attribution or title has been preserved. In his homily *To the Brethren on Maintaining Unity* 5.3, Besa, a fifth-century Coptic archimandrite and the successor to Shenute, quotes four or five sentences found in both Codexes A and B and attributes them to Athanasius⁷⁷. Besa's quotation matches exactly the text found in Codex A, while Codex B differs slightly. Besa writes in Coptic.

(c) Evidence for a Greek original: The existence of two Coptic versions may indicate two independent translations from a Greek original. There is strictly speaking no evidence for a Greek original.

(d) Ancient title: The title given to the work by the manuscripts has not survived, nor does Besa give a title.

(e) Nature of the work: The work appears to be a homily, addressed to a mixed group of Christians, both ascetics and laypersons, baptized and catechumens. The author urges his addressees to live a moral life, whatever their calling and station; to adhere to an orthodox christology; and to follow the example of the martyrs in perseverance.

(f) Internal evidence for the author's milieu: none.

(g) Comparison of content: The content of this work coheres with that of the genuine Athanasiana.

1. The author's description of the ascetic life contains themes and vocabulary (προαίρεσις, ὁ βίος τῶν ἀγγέλων) that are familiar from the authentic writings of Athanasius⁷⁸.

2. While the ascetic life is a matter of "free will", when the author turns to marriage, he speaks of "the law of nature", as does Athanasius elsewhere, again using vocabulary (νόμος, φύσις) that appears in genuine Athanasian literature⁷⁹.

3. The phrasing of the author's appeal, "Do not, for the sake of a little pleasure, make it (God's creation, the human person) a stranger to eternal blessing", echoes Athanasius's exhortations to women living in spiritual marriage: "Do not, when you consider a small pleasure or gift, fall away from the true one. ... Do not, for the sake of a corruptible garment, lose the name of him who is incorruptible. Do not, for the sake of the gift of nourishment, remain outside the banquet of Paradise, lest by fearing to leave a house you fall from the heavenly mansion."⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Ed. K. H. Kuhn, *Letters and Sermons of Besa* (CSCO 157; Louvain 1956) 82.12-18; cf. Crum, *Catalogue John Rylands* 27-28.

⁷⁸ *Frag.* (cop.) (CSCO 150, 121.15-20); cf. *Ep. Amun.* 69.1-2 (Joannou); *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 82.21-22; 89.10-12) (virginity as "life of the angels"); *Ep. virg.* 2 (Lebon 290-302); *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 73.18-27; 75.24-28; 80.33-82.3) (virginity a matter of "free will").

⁷⁹ *Frag.* (cop.) (CSCO 150, 124.7); cf. *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 73.18-74.12; 80.33-82.3); *Inc.* 51.4-6 (Thomson).

⁸⁰ *Frag.* (cop.) (CSCO 150, 126.4-6); *Ep. virg.* 2 (Lebon 314-20).

4. The author's comparison of baptism to receiving a king in one's house is reminiscent of Athanasius's comparison of the incarnation to a king's visit to a house⁸¹.

5. The author exhorts his hearers to adhere to a Nicene christology⁸².

6. The use of Lot as a type for the Christian life, pictured as an ascent to higher things, is akin to the treatment of the patriarchs and prophets in *Festal Letter* 24 (actually no. 2, for the year 330) as "shadows of the withdrawal from darkness to his marvellous light and the ascent to the city in heaven"⁸³.

Evaluation and dating: The attribution of this work to Athanasius by an Egyptian monk in the fifth century and the parallels with the genuine Athanasiana indicate that it is authentic. There is nothing in the work that would date it precisely, but its similarities to the first *Letter to Virgins* and the *Festal Letter* of 330 may point to the early years of Athanasius's career.

(14) *Letter on Charity and Contenance* (CPG 2151), preserved in Coptic: *Car. et temp.*

(a) Textual witness: The text is attested by a single palimpsest manuscript in the British Library in London (B.L. Or.8802, no. 175 in Layton's catalogue)⁸⁴. The manuscript has been dated paleographically by van Lantschoot and Lefort to the eleventh or twelfth century⁸⁵. The language is Sahidic Coptic. The text is completely preserved. The manuscript also contains two letters attributed to Severus of Antioch. The best edition of the text is by van Lantschoot⁸⁶.

(b) Ancient testimonia: (1) the Coptic manuscript, and (2) Pachomius.

1. A superscript title in the manuscript reads: "A letter of our holy and completely honorable father Apa Athanasius, the Archbishop of Alexandria, concerning charity and continence, in peace".

2. A substantial portion of this work was paraphrased without acknowledgement by the author of the *Instruction Concerning a Spiteful Monk*, attributed to Pachomius⁸⁷. Even if not by Pachomius himself, the *In-*

⁸¹ *Frag.* (cop.) (CSCO 150, 125.14-22); *Inc.* 9.17-28 (Thomson).

⁸² *Frag.* (cop.) (CSCO 150, 126.30-127.128).

⁸³ *Frag.* (cop.) (CSCO 150, 122.14-31); *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 24 (CSCO 150, 38.24-25).

⁸⁴ Bentley Layton, *Catalogue of Coptic Literary Manuscripts in the British Library Acquired since the Year 1906* (London 1987) 216-18. Layton identifies Ryl 62, which contains no. 13 above, as a fragment of the same ancient codex (*Catalogue* 216).

⁸⁵ Arnold van Lantschoot, "Lettre de saint Athanase au sujet de l'amour et de la tempérance", *Muséon* 40 (1927) 265-92, at 265; Lefort, *Lettres festales* xxiv.

⁸⁶ Van Lantschoot, *Muséon* 40, 265-92; re-edited by Lefort, CSCO 150, 110-20.

⁸⁷ Ed. L. Th. Lefort, *Œuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples* (CSCO 159; Louvain 1965)

struction does seem to have originated in the Pachomian milieu of the fourth century⁸⁸. Thus, the present work was available in Coptic or Greek in the fourth century.

(c) Evidence for a Greek original: none. Both testimonia are in Coptic and have raised the possibility that the *Letter* was composed in Coptic⁸⁹.

(d) Ancient title: The only known title of the work is *Letter on Charity and Continence*.

(e) Nature of the work: The work is a homiletic epistle, which urges ascetic Christians to love one another and to base their continence on humility.

(f) Internal evidence for the author's milieu: There is nothing in the work that would indicate a particular geographical setting. In terms of date, the author distinguishes three types of ascetic Christians: "virgin" (παρθένος), "renouncer" (ἀποτακτικός), and "anchorite" (ἀναχωρήτης)⁹⁰. This three-fold distinction is characteristic of the early and middle fourth century, when literary sources distinguished a group of city-based ascetics called ἀποτακτικοί from the more removed ascetics called ἀναχωρήται, but without disparaging the former. Later literary sources (e.g., Jerome) either ignore or condemn these ἀποτακτικοί⁹¹.

(g) Comparison of content: The content of this work coheres with that of the genuine Athanasiana.

1. The author employs the image of the human life as a boat on a storm-tossed sea heading for safe harbor that appears in four other works by Athanasius⁹².

2. As Athanasius does in *On Virginity*, the writer uses the declaration

1-24; trans. Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia* 3 (Cistercian Studies 47; Kalamazoo, Mich. 1982) 13-41. The text is attested by a single manuscript in the British Library (B.L. Or.7024, no. 159 in Layton's catalogue), dated by a colophon to 987. Lefort demonstrated the dependence of the *Instruction* on the *Letter* in "S. Athanase écrivain copte", *Muséon* 46 (1933) 1-33.

⁸⁸ E. A. Wallis Budge (*Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* [London 1913] lvii-lx) and W. E. Crum (rev. of Budge; *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 68 [1914] 176-84, at 181) accept the *Instruction* as an authentic work of Pachomius. Veilleux believes the work is by a Pachomian monk of the fourth century, but not by the founder himself (*Pachomian Koinonia* 3.2). Philip Rousseau suggests that it is a "reworking" of an instruction that may have been delivered by Pachomius himself (*Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* [The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 6; Berkeley, Calif. 1985] 37-38).

⁸⁹ Lefort, *Muséon* 46, 30-32. Among others, Tetz has rejected the idea that Athanasius wrote in Coptic (*TRE* 4, 344); cf. Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., and London 1993) 13-14.

⁹⁰ *Car. et temp.* (CSCO 150, 116.25-27).

⁹¹ E. A. Judge, "The Earliest Use of Monachos for 'Monk' (P. Coll. Youtie 77) and the Origins of Monasticism", *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 20 (1977) 72-89; James E. Goehring, "The Origins of Monasticism", in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, eds. Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Detroit 1992) 235-55, at 240-44.

⁹² *Car. et temp.* (CSCO 150, 117.13; 119.5-10); cf. *Ep. virg.* 2 (Lebon 153-59); *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 90.7-9); *Ep. fest. (syr.)* 19.7; *Ep. Ors.* 2 = *V. Pach.* 150 (Halkin 95.28-96.1).

of the bridegroom in the Parable of the Ten Virgins, “I do not know you” (Matt 25:10), to construct a speech of Jesus at the last judgment directed to ascetics who cultivated virginity but ignored the other virtues⁹³.

3. The author, as Athanasius does elsewhere, urges most Christians not to abstain entirely from wine, but to drink it in moderation⁹⁴.

Evaluation and dating: This work is known to have existed in the fourth century (Testimonium no. 2). There are few parallels to the genuine Athanasiana, but also no internal grounds for questioning the manuscript’s attribution of the work to Athanasius. This work is therefore accepted as authentic with hesitation. It is uncertain whether Athanasius would have composed the work in Coptic. Possibly certain publications of the bishop, such as the *Festal Letters*, were issued simultaneously in Greek and Coptic. According to the Bohairic *Life of Pachomius*, however, the Pachomian monks had to translate Athanasius’s 39th *Festal Letter* into Coptic⁹⁵. There is nothing in the work that suggests any particular time in Athanasius’s career⁹⁶.

(15) An excerpt from a letter of consolation to virgins (CPG 2162), preserved in Greek: Theod. *Hist. eccl.*

(a) Textual witness: The text of this excerpt is attested by a word-for-word quotation by Theodoret of Cyrhus in his *Ecclesiastical History* 2.14.12-13, which he completed about 450. Theodoret’s original text is attested by a number of medieval manuscripts. The excerpt is in Greek. The text has been edited by Parmentier and revised by Scheidweiler⁹⁷.

(b) Ancient testimonium: Theodoret claims that Athanasius wrote these “consolatory words” to virgins who had suffered violence during the imperial takeover of Athanasian churches in Alexandria in the spring of 356⁹⁸.

(d) Ancient title: Theodoret gives no title for the work, but implies that it was a letter of consolation: Athanasius, he says, “wrote consolatory words to those virgins who endured these most burdensome events”⁹⁹.

⁹³ *Car. et temp.* (CSCO 150, 116.23-117.10); *Virg.* (syr.) (Lebon 132-50).

⁹⁴ *Car. et temp.* (CSCO 150, 118.12-119.10); cf. *Frag.* (cop.) (CSCO 150, 124.28-125.1).

⁹⁵ *V. Pach.* (boh.) 189.

⁹⁶ Lefort suggested that the use of this *Letter* without acknowledgement in the Pachomian *Instruction* indicates that Athanasius wrote it early in his career, before his reputation became formidable, perhaps even before he became bishop (*Muséon* 46, 28).

⁹⁷ Léon Parmentier and Felix Scheidweiler, ed., *Theodoret Kirchengeschichte* (GCS 44; Berlin 1954) 127.14-128.3.

⁹⁸ *Theod. Hist. eccl.* 2.14.12 (GCS 44, 127.14-15).

⁹⁹ *Theod. Hist. eccl.* 2.14.12 (GCS 44, 127.14-15).

(e) Nature of the work: In the surviving sentences, the author urges the addressees not to be grieved by the efforts of “the Arians” to prevent them from burying their dead.

(f) Internal evidence for the author’s milieu: The author states that Arians are preventing the addressees from burying their dead. Athanasius complained that during the violent events of 356 in Alexandria his opponents did not permit the burial of virgins and other persons who had been killed¹⁰⁰.

(g) Comparison of content: The vocabulary and content of the work compares well with that of the genuine Athanasiana. The word used for the Arians in the excerpt (οἱ δυσσεβεῖς) is a favorite of Athanasius; it particularly appears in works composed shortly after the events of 356¹⁰¹. The word used for the dead persons (οἱ ἀπογενομένοι) is that used by Athanasius in his description of the work of the Arians to prevent burials in 356¹⁰².

Evaluation and dating: The Athanasian vocabulary in this excerpt supports Theodoret’s attribution of it to Athanasius. The circumstances described in the excerpt precisely match those in Alexandria in 356.

(16) An excerpt from a letter to virgins (CPG 2154), preserved in Arabic: Sev. *Hist. patr. Alex.*

(a) Textual witness: The text of this excerpt is attested by a word-for-word quotation by Sawīrus ibn al-Muqaffa’, bishop of el-Ašmūnein (fl. 955-87), in his *Biographies of the Holy Church (Siyar al-Bī’ah al-Muqaddasah)* 1.8, more commonly known as *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*. Sawīrus’s original text is attested by a number of medieval manuscripts. The excerpt is in Arabic. The text has been edited and translated by Evetts¹⁰³.

(b) Ancient testimonium: Sawīrus states that Athanasius wrote the letter from which this excerpt is taken during his third exile (356-62).

(c) Evidence for a Greek original: none.

(d) Ancient title: Sawīrus provides no title for the work from which the excerpt is taken.

¹⁰⁰ *Apol. Const.* 27.37-41 (SC 56); *H. Ar.* 72.6 (Opitz 223.13-14).

¹⁰¹ *Theod. Hist. eccl.* 2.14.13 (GCS 44, 127.17); cf. *H. Ar.* 3.1; 35.3; 42.1; 57.1 (Opitz 184.12; 203.1; 206.19; 215.7); *Ar.* 1.11, 36; 2.63 (PG 26, 33B, 88B, 280C).

¹⁰² *Theod. Hist. eccl.* 2.14.13 (GCS 44, 128.3); cf. *H. Ar.* 72.6 (Opitz 223.13).

¹⁰³ B. Evetts, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria, Patrologia Orientalis* 1 (1907) 404-05. All references to this work are from p. 405 of Evett’s translation.

(e) Nature of the work: The author urges the addressees to be obedient to their “bridegroom”, Christ, and describes a meeting of Bishop Alexander of Alexandria (reigned 312-28) with a group of virgins, in which the bishop discussed the importance of moderation in eating, drinking, and sleeping.

(f) Internal evidence for the author’s milieu: The author speaks of his personal friendly contact with Bishop Alexander of Alexandria (reigned 312-28), whom he calls his “father”, indicating that the author lived in Alexandria. The author’s acquaintance with Alexander is evidence for a date in the early fourth century. However, the author speaks somewhat anachronistically of “nuns” from a “convent” visiting Alexander, the existence of virgins in a community was possible, although uncommon, during Alexander’s career. Such communities became more numerous during the career of Athanasius¹⁰⁴.

(g) Comparison of content: The content of this work coheres with that of the first *Letter to the Virgins*. The works contain similar descriptions of virgins visiting Alexander and of Alexander himself¹⁰⁵. Alexander’s exhortation in this work to moderation in eating, drinking, and sleeping is similar to what Athanasius recommends in his first *Letter to Virgins*¹⁰⁶.

Evaluation and dating: The similarities to Athanasius’s first *Letter to Virgins* support the attribution of this excerpt to Athanasius. Sawirus’s dating of this excerpt to Athanasius’s third exile (356-62) is possible, but not certain.

(17) An excerpt from an unknown writing (CPG 2150), preserved in Coptic: *Frag. ap. Shen.*

(a) Textual witness: The text of this excerpt is attested by a word-for-word quotation by Shenute in an untitled sermon. Shenute’s original text is attested by a single manuscript in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Naples (I.B. 3, 362; no. 188 in Zoega’s catalogue)¹⁰⁷. The manuscript has been dated paleographically by Amélineau to the twelfth century¹⁰⁸. The excerpt is in Sahidic Coptic. The text has been edited by Lefort¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁴ For discussion of this development, see Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*, chapter 1.

¹⁰⁵ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 91.1-16).

¹⁰⁶ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 79.5-11).

¹⁰⁷ Georg Zoega, *Catalogus Codicum Copticorum Manuscriptorum* (1810; reprint: Leipzig 1903) 415-29.

¹⁰⁸ E. Amélineau, *Œuvres de Schenoudi: texte copte et traduction française* 1 (Paris 1907) xc.

¹⁰⁹ CSCO 150, 108.6-18. It was edited earlier by Amélineau, *Œuvres de Schenoudi* 1, 204-05.

(b) Ancient testimonium: Shenute attributes the quotation to Athanasius, but does not identify the work from which it is taken.

(c) Evidence for a Greek original: none.

(d) Ancient title: Shenute gives no title for the work from which he took the excerpt, nor is the work otherwise known.

(e) Nature of the work: The author condemns virgins who keep vigils over night for a dead sister.

(f) Internal evidence for the author's milieu: none.

(g) Comparison of content: The content of this work coheres with that of the genuine Athanasiana. The author's belief that virgins should be secluded is shared by Athanasius¹¹⁰. The author claims that the devil uses martyr shrines and vigils to deceive Christians. Athanasius makes precisely this claim about the demons in his 42nd *Festal Letter*¹¹¹.

Evaluation and dating: Although it is brief, the early attribution of this excerpt to Athanasius by a Coptic monk and its coherence with Athanasius's campaign against practices associated with burial sites support the authenticity of the excerpt. Perhaps the excerpt was taken from the 42nd *Festal Letter*, portions of which have been lost; Shenute appears to have known Athanasius's two *Festal Letters* on martyr shrines¹¹². Athanasius's polemics against practices associated with martyr shrines appear in the *Festal Letters* of 369 and 370. There is no other basis on which to date this excerpt.

Inauthentic or Uncertain Ascetic Writings

The following writings either have been judged not genuine or are too fragmentary to form a conclusion about their authenticity. In the absence of scholarly disagreement about its inauthenticity, the *Life and Activity of the Holy and Blessed Teacher Syncletica* (no. 25) will not be reconsidered here¹¹³.

¹¹⁰ *Frag. ap. Shen.* (CSCO 150, 108.16-17); *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 78.13-16; 79.17-19); *Ep. virg.* 2 (Lebon 193-200).

¹¹¹ *Frag. ap. Shen.* (CSCO 150, 108.10-13); *Ep. fest.* (cop.) 42 (CSCO 150, 64.24-66.25). On Athanasius's criticism of practices associated with martyr shrines, see David Brakke, "'Patterns of the Heavenly Civic Life': Holy People, Their Bodies, and Their Places in the Thought of Athanasius", forthcoming in *Pilgrimage, Miracles and Magic in Late Antique Egypt (and its Mediterranean Neighbors)*, ed. Leslie S. B. MacCoull (Religions in the Later Roman World; Leiden).

¹¹² Camplani, *Lettere festali* 274.

¹¹³ This work reflects the influence of Evagrius Ponticus and John Cassian; see Lucien Renault, with Odile Bénédicte Bernard and J. Bouret, *Vie de Sainte Syncletique et Discours de salut à une vierge* (Spiritualité orientale 9; Bégrolles-en-Mauge 1972) x-xiv. Also not considered here are the Coptic fragments from an unknown work on virginity published by Lefort (CSCO 150.101-06; CPG 2149); no ancient testimonium attributes this work to Athanasius, and there are no internal grounds for making such an attribution.

18. An excerpt from an unknown writing (CPG 2150), preserved in Coptic: *Frag. ap. Shen.*
19. Two excerpts from an unknown writing (CPG 2150), preserved in Coptic: *Frag. ap. Mos.*
20. An excerpt from an unknown writing to virgins (CPG 2150), preserved in Coptic: *Con. Enc. Ath. 2*
21. *Teachings and Commandments Concerning Virgins* (CPG 2148), preserved in Coptic: *Praec. virg.*
22. *Concerning Brothers Who Came to Us* (CPG 2186), preserved in Coptic: *Frat.*
23. *Account of Salvation Addressed to the (Female) Virgin* (CPG 2240), preserved in Greek: *Virg.*
24. *On Virginity*, preserved in Syriac
25. *Life and Activity on the Holy and Blessed Teacher Syncretica* (CPG 2293), preserved in Greek.

I turn now to a detailed examination of nos. 18-24.

(18) An excerpt from an unknown writing (CPG 2150), preserved in Coptic: *Frag. ap. Shen.*

(a) Textual witness: The text of the excerpt is attested by a word-for-word quotation by Shenute in an untitled sermon. Shenute's original text is attested by a single manuscript in the Louvre in Paris (no. 10.162). The manuscript has been dated paleographically by Guérin to the sixth or seventh century¹¹⁴. The excerpt is in Sahidic Coptic. The text has been edited by Lefort¹¹⁵.

(b) Ancient testimonium: Shenute attributes the quotation to Athanasius, but does not identify the work from which it was taken.

(c) Evidence for a Greek original: none.

(d) Ancient title: Shenute gives no title for the work from which he took the excerpt, nor is the work otherwise known.

(e) Nature of the work: The author condemns virgins who have broken their vow and married.

(f) Internal evidence for the author's milieu: none.

(g) Comparison of content: The content of the fragment does not cohere well with that of the genuine Athanasiana. Athanasius also condemns

¹¹⁴ H. Guérin, "Sermons inédits de Senouti", *Revue égyptologique* 10 (1902) 148-64, at 151.

¹¹⁵ Lefort, *Lettres festales* 108.20-109.4. It was edited earlier by Guérin, *Revue égyptologique* 10, 159.

virgins who have married¹¹⁶, but the author's condemnation is strikingly more severe than what is found in the genuine works: "The fallen virgin has not been brought down to marriage; rather, she has been brought down to the lowest evil rank... For to fall from virginity is not marriage, even if one gets married."¹¹⁷

Evaluation: It is possible that Athanasius wrote these stern sentences, but without any positive parallel the excerpt is too brief to make a certain conclusion.

(19) Two excerpts from an unknown writing (CPG 2150), preserved in Coptic: *Frag. ap. Mos.*

(a) Textual witness: The text of the excerpts is attested by a word-for-word quotation in an untitled writing by Moses of Abydos, a Coptic archimandrite of the fifth or sixth century¹¹⁸. Moses' original text is attested by a single manuscript in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Naples (I.B. 8, 393; no. 214 in Zoega's catalogue)¹¹⁹. The manuscript has not been dated. The text has been edited by Lefort¹²⁰.

(b) Ancient testimonium: Moses attributes the quotations to Athanasius, but does not identify the work from which they were taken.

(c) Evidence for a Greek original: none.

(d) Ancient title: Moses gives no title for the work from which he took the excerpts, nor is the work otherwise known.

(e) Nature of the work: Each excerpt is a single sentence. The first commands that a virgin should not visit a rich woman; rather, the rich woman should go to the virgin. The second is an apostrophe to virginity.

(f) Internal evidence for the author's milieu: none.

(g) Comparison of content: The content of the excerpts coheres with Athanasius's emphasis on the virgin's exclusion and his praise for virginity.

Evaluation: It is possible that Athanasius wrote these sentences, but the excerpts are too brief to make a certain judgment.

¹¹⁶ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 73.6-10; 75.23-24; 77.23-34).

¹¹⁷ *Frag. ap. Shen.* (CSCO 150, 108.23-24, 28-29).

¹¹⁸ See René-Georges Coquin, "Moses of Abydos", *Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York 1991) 1679-81.

¹¹⁹ Zoega, *Catalogus* 530-33.

¹²⁰ CSCO 150, 109.6-13.

(20) An excerpt from an unknown writing to virgins (CPG 2150), preserved in Coptic: *Con. Enc. Ath. 2*

(a) Textual witness: The text of the excerpt is attested by a word-for-word quotation by Constantine of Assiut (fl. ca. 600) in his second *Encomium on Athanasius*, chap. 11¹²¹. Constantine's original text is attested by a single manuscript in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (M579, no. 162 in Depuydt's catalogue)¹²². The manuscript is dated by a colophon to before 30 August 823. The excerpt is in Sahidic Coptic. The text has been edited by Orlandi¹²³.

(b) Ancient testimonium: Constantine identifies the excerpt as something that Athanasius wrote "somewhere about virginity". Constantine writes in Coptic.

(c) Evidence for a Greek original: none.

(d) Ancient title: Constantine gives no title for the work from which he took the excerpt, nor is the work otherwise known.

(e) Nature of the work: In the surviving sentences the author forbids the use of cosmetics.

(f) Internal evidence for the author's milieu: none.

(g) Comparison of content: Athanasius does not speak elsewhere about the use of cosmetics by virgins.

Evaluation: It is possible that Athanasius wrote these sentences, but the excerpt is too brief to make a certain judgment.

(21) *Teachings and Commandments Concerning Virgins* (CPG 2148), preserved in Coptic: *Praec. virg.*

(a) Textual witness: The text is attested fragmentarily by leaves from a single manuscript, which are in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (B.N. 130² ff. 75-88)¹²⁴. Other leaves from the manuscript are at the University of Oxford (Clar. Pr. b⁴, 21 ff. 1-7) and in the Bibliotheca Nazionale in Naples (I.B. 7, 386). The manuscript has been dated paleographically by Lefort to about 600. The language is Sahidic Coptic. The other contents of the manuscript are works attributed to Shenute. The text has been edited by Lefort¹²⁵.

¹²¹ Tito Orlandi, *Constantini episcopi urbis Siout encomia in Athanasium duo* (CSCO 349; Louvain 1974).

¹²² Leo Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Louvain in press) 317-21. I am grateful to Prof. Depuydt for making available to me portions of his manuscript in advance of publication.

¹²³ CSCO 349, 27.12-15; also in CSCO 150, 109.15-19.

¹²⁴ CSCO 150, xxii-xxiii.

¹²⁵ CSCO 150, 99-100.

(b) Ancient testimonium: A superscript title in the manuscript reads “These are the teachings and commandments that Apa Athanasius the Archbishop spoke concerning virgins”.

(c) Evidence for a Greek original: There is no direct evidence for a Greek original, but the work does contain two parallels to a work known only in Greek, the Pseudo-Athanasian sermon *On Endurance*. It is not clear which author borrowed from the other. *On Endurance* cannot be by Athanasius because it refers to the persecution of Christians by the emperor Maximinus Daia in 311-12, when Athanasius was still a boy¹²⁶.

(d) Ancient title: The only known title is *Teachings and Commandments Concerning Virgins*.

(e) Nature of the work: After an opening description of the virgin as a “votive offering” and someone who has transcended human nature, the author presents regulations for the life of virgins, of which only those concerning clothing have survived.

(f) Internal evidence for the author’s milieu: none.

(g) Comparison of content: The content of the work coheres with that of the genuine Athanasiana. The author’s statement that the virgin “by her free will and commitment transcends nature” is characteristic of Athanasius¹²⁷. The work’s precepts that the virgin’s clothing should be modest and cover her entire body are paralleled in genuine Athanasian writings¹²⁸.

Evaluation: Nothing in what survives from this work would contradict the attribution to Athanasius, but it is very brief and closely related to a sermon that is certainly spurious. Thus, it seems prudent not to accept the authenticity of this work until more of it is known.

(22) *Concerning Brothers Who Came to Us* (CPG 2186), preserved in Coptic: *Frat*.

(a) Textual witness: The text is attested by a single manuscript in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Naples (I.B. 11, 428; no. 251 in Zoega’s cata-

¹²⁶ The following are the parallels: (1) The *Teachings* reads, “She (the virgin) is a woman by nature, but by her free will and commitment she transcends nature” (*Praec. virg.* [CSCO 150, 99.32-100.1]). The *On Endurance* reads, “The virgin is by nature like other women, but by her free will she has transcended nature” (*Pat.* 1 [PG 26, 1297A]). (2) Both works have, “As great as her promise is, so much more is her fall evil” (*Praec. virg.* [CSCO 150, 100.5-6]; *Pat.* 1 [PG 26, 1297A]). For the dating and provenance of *On Endurance*, see Martin Tetz, “Eine asketische Ermunterung zur Standhaftigkeit aus der Zeit der maximinischen Verfolgung (311/13)”, *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 81 (1990) 79-102.

¹²⁷ *Praec. virg.* (CSCO 150, 99.32-100.1); *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 74.3-4; 81.16-18; 84.18-19).

¹²⁸ *Ep. virg.* 2 (Lebon 68-69); *Virg.* (syr.) (Lebon 85-86).

logue)¹²⁹. The manuscript has been dated paleographically by van Lantschoot to the eleventh century¹³⁰. The language is Sahidic Coptic. Much of the manuscript has been lost, but the text of the present work is completely preserved. The manuscript also contains a sermon on the Passion and Ascension attributed to Athanasius and two sermons on the Virgin Mary attributed to Basil of Caesarea. The text has been edited by van Lantschoot¹³¹.

(b) Ancient testimonium: A superscript title in the manuscripts reads: “Likewise, Concerning Brothers Who Came to Us”. A subscript reads: “Of Athanasius, Archbishop”.

(c) Evidence for a Greek original: none.

(d) Ancient title: The only known title of the work is *Concerning Brothers Who Came to Us*.

(e) Nature of the work: The work is an allocution addressed to a group of visiting monks, whom the author praises as “patrons (προσώτων) of our ancestors, who have become your children by obtaining grace through your purity”; the author also applies Moses’ prayer for Levi and his descendants (Deut 33:8-11) to the monks¹³².

(f) Internal evidence for the author’s milieu: none.

(g) Comparison of content: The content of the work does not cohere with that of the genuine Athanasiana. The designation of monks as “patrons” of past Christians and the comparison of them to the ancient Levitical priests are not paralleled in Athanasius’s genuine works; these ideas are closer to the monastic theology of Bishop Serapion of Thmuis (IV C.E.)¹³³.

Evaluation: The lack of coherence with the genuine Athanasiana renders the eleventh-century attribution of this work to Athanasius unlikely.

(23) *Account of Salvation Addressed to the (Female) Virgin (CPG 2240), preserved in Greek: *Virg.**

(a) Textual witnesses: The text is attested by at least eleven medieval manuscripts containing works by Athanasius, the earliest of which date to

¹²⁹ Zoega, *Catalogus* 607.

¹³⁰ Arnold van Lantschoot, “Une allocution à des moines en visite chez S. Athanase”, *Angelicum* 20 (1943) 249-53, at 249-50.

¹³¹ Van Lantschoot, *Angelicum* 20, 250-52.

¹³² *Frat.* (Van Lantschoot 250.1-7; 251.7-252.8).

¹³³ For Serapion’s presentation of Antony and other monks as spiritual patrons, see the letter

the tenth century¹³⁴. The language is Greek. The text has been edited by von der Goltz¹³⁵.

(b) Ancient testimonia: (1) Greek manuscripts, (2) Pope Hadrian I.

1. All of the Greek manuscripts attribute the work to Athanasius, but under two different titles (see “Ancient Title”).

2. In a letter to Charlemagne written in Latin about 794, Pope Hadrian (772-95) attributes the following quotation to a work by Athanasius entitled *On Virginity*: “(you should believe) also in the Holy Spirit, who is with the Father and the Son, sent by the Father and given through the Son”¹³⁶. This is an exact quotation from the present work¹³⁷.

(d) Ancient title: An excerpt from this treatise was known by Hadrian in the eighth century under the title *On Virginity*. The Greek manuscripts give the work two titles: “On Virginity or on Discipline” and “Account of Salvation Addressed to the (Female) Virgin”. The original title was probably the latter because it more accurately describes the peculiar contents of the treatise; the more generic title, *On Virginity or on Discipline*, was therefore probably added later¹³⁸.

(e) Nature of the work: The work is an exhortation. The author tells the virgin how she can attain salvation: what doctrines she should accept, what ascetic regime she should follow, and what virtues she should acquire.

(f) Internal evidence for the author’s milieu: There is nothing in the text to indicate a geographic setting for the author. As for date, the virgins in view here live at home with their families; if they do not, the author encourages them to live “under a rule” and guided by an elder woman¹³⁹. This situation is consistent with a date in the fourth century.

(g) Comparison of content:

1. The work contains themes familiar from genuine Athanasian writings for virgins: the image of Christ as bridegroom; an emphasis on humility; a willingness to allow the consumption of moderate amounts of wine; injunctions against using the public baths¹⁴⁰.

2. In the opening chapter, the author speaks of God having “three

edited by René Draguet, “Une lettre de Sérapion de Thmuis aux disciples d’Antoine (A.D. 356) en version syriaque et arménienne”, *Muséon* 65 (1951) 1-25.

¹³⁴ Eduard von der Goltz, *Λόγος σωτηρίας πρὸς τὴν παρθένον. Eine echte Schrift des Athanasius* (TU 29; Leipzig 1905) 7-35.

¹³⁵ TU 29; cf. PG 28, 251-82.

¹³⁶ Had. *Imag.* 1 (PL 98, 1249D).

¹³⁷ *Virg.* 1 (TU 29, 35.8-9).

¹³⁸ Von der Goltz, *Echte Schrift* 60-65.

¹³⁹ *Virg.* 9, 14 (TU 29, 43.6-7; 48.16-49.3).

¹⁴⁰ *Virg.* 2, 5, 12, 11 (TU 29, 37.12; 39.16-26; 45.24-26, 15-17).

hypostases, one divinity” (τρεις ὑποστάσεις, μία θεότης)¹⁴¹. It is doubtful that Athanasius spoke of God as having “three hypostases”. The phrase does appear in the disputed tract, *On “All Things Were Delivered To Me”* (Matt 11:27), and its use by others was accepted by Athanasius at the Council of Alexandria in 362¹⁴². Otherwise, however, it does not appear in the genuine writings of Athanasius, but rather is more at home in the theology of the Cappadocian fathers¹⁴³. The presence of the phrase in the present work is suspicious, although perhaps not decisive¹⁴⁴.

3. This work contains no extended theological discussion similar to the section on christology in the first *Letter to Virgins* or the comparison of Adam and Christ in the second *Letter*. Athanasius usually included an exhortation to theological orthodoxy in his longer ascetic writings.

4. The official leadership of the Athanasian church, priests and bishops, is completely absent from this work¹⁴⁵. These virgins, unlike the ones addressed in the genuine *Letters to Virgins*, seem never to go to worship services; instead, they worship at home with each other. The usual Athanasian warnings against interactions with men, especially false teachers, do not appear here; instead, these women are to accept, honor, and even bathe visiting holy men:

If a holy man comes into your house, receive him as you would the Son of God. For our Lord Jesus Christ says, “Whoever receives you receives me” (Matt 10:40). If a righteous man comes into your house, greet him with fear and trembling, and do homage before his feet on the ground. For it is not him that you reverence, but the God who sent him. Take water, and wash his feet, and with great reverence listen to his words.¹⁴⁶

It is hard to imagine Athanasius writing these instructions; he thought that Mary, the model virgin, was afraid of the angel Gabriel because she had never heard the male voice¹⁴⁷.

5. This work privileges the ascetic life to a greater degree than do the genuine works of Athanasius. The treatise, although it describes the lifestyle of virgins only, tends to include everyone in its audience: the author speaks to the “maidservant of Christ and all who wish to be saved”¹⁴⁸. The work treats the ascetic regime that it describes as the only path to salva-

¹⁴¹ *Virg.* 1 (TU 29, 35.10-11).

¹⁴² *Hom. in Mt. 11:27* 6 (PG 25, 220); *Tom.* 5 (PG 26, 800C-01B); cf. von der Goltz, *Echte Schrift* 118-19.

¹⁴³ Aubineau, *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 31, 146.

¹⁴⁴ Roldanus, *Christ et l'homme* 397.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 398.

¹⁴⁶ *Virg.* 22 (TU 29, 57.12-20).

¹⁴⁷ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 80.7-19).

¹⁴⁸ *Virg.* 2 (TU 29, 36.17-19).

tion, introducing married people into the discussion only as negative examples: it shows no sense of Athanasius's understanding of virginity and marriage as "two ways of life"¹⁴⁹. This author speaks of the married woman's body as being "defiled by her husband"; Athanasius, in contrast, devotes large sections of his writings to ascetics to defending the goodness of marriage¹⁵⁰.

6. Unlike Athanasius, who urges moderation in fasting in order to preserve the body's health, this author warns against people who make this appeal: "If some people come to you and say, 'Do not fast too much; if you do, you will become weak', do not believe them or obey them, for the enemy is inciting them"¹⁵¹. He calls fasting, not virginity, "the life of the angels"¹⁵².

Evaluation: Although this work belongs to the fourth century, the inconsistencies with the genuine writings of Athanasius make it impossible to accept the manuscripts' attribution of this treatise to the bishop¹⁵³.

(24) *On Virginity*, preserved in Syriac

(a) Textual witnesses: The text is attested by three manuscripts in the British Library in London.

The first manuscript (B.L. Add.14649, no. 950 in Wright's catalogue) has been dated paleographically by Wright to the ninth century¹⁵⁴. The language is Syriac. The text of the present work is completely preserved. The manuscript also contains a work by John Chrysostom as well as various martyrdoms and biographies of saints.

The second manuscript (B.L. Add.14601, no. 795 in Wright's catalogue) has been dated paleographically by Wright to the ninth century¹⁵⁵.

¹⁴⁹ *Ep. Amun.* 68.21-22 (Joannou).

¹⁵⁰ *Virg.* 2 (TU 29, 37.8-9); *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 81.10-82.3); *Ep. Amun.* 68.16-69.14 (Joannou); *Virg.* (syr.) (Lebon 103-33).

¹⁵¹ *Virg.* 6 (TU 29, 40.11-14).

¹⁵² *Virg.* 7 (TU 29, 41.21-22). The author is not consistent on this point, for he later writes: "The enemy suggests even great discipline so that you will make the body weak and useless. Therefore, let your fast be moderate; fast for a period of time, without any compulsion"; *Virg.* 8 (TU 29, 42.24-43.2).

¹⁵³ So Aubineau, *Reveu d'ascétique et de mystique* 31, 149-50; Roldanus, *Christ et l'homme* 396; G. Christopher Stead, "Athanasius", *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (New York 1992) 93-95, at 94. It has been suggested that the treatise originated among the Eustathians condemned by the Council of Gangra (P. Battifol, "Le περί παρθενίας du Ps. Athanase", *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 7 [1893] 275-86) and that it was written by Evagrius Ponticus (E. Buonaiuti, "Evagrio Pontico e il De Virginitate di Ps. Atanasio", *Saggi sul cristianesimo primitivo* [Castello 1923] 242-54).

¹⁵⁴ Wright, *Catalogue* 1108.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 789.

The language is Syriac. The text of the present work is fragmentarily preserved on two leaves. The manuscript also contains works by Pseudo-Dionysius, Philoxenus of Mabug, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Theodotus of Ancyra, Epiphanius of Salamis, John Chrysostom, Nilus, Severus of Antioch, and Gregory of Nyssa.

The third manuscript (B.L. Add.14650, no. 949 in Wright's catalogue) is dated by a scribal note to 875¹⁵⁶. The language is Syriac. The text of the present work is fragmentarily preserved on sixteen leaves. The manuscript also contains works by Jerome, Evagrius of Pontus, Palladius, Eusebius of Caesarea, John of Antioch, Ephraem Syrus, Severus of Antioch, and John of Ephesus, as well as various martyrdoms and biographies of saints.

The text has not been edited¹⁵⁷.

(b) Ancient testimonia: Superscript titles in the three manuscripts attribute the work to Athanasius. In the first and third manuscripts, the title reads, "On Virginité, said by him [viz., Athanasius] as if to a single virgin, the daughter of a noble". In the second, the title reads, "On Virginité to the Virgins".

(c) Evidence for a Greek original: Preparation of a critical edition will make it possible to study the text for internal signs of translation from Greek. There is no known external evidence for a Greek original. The work is not related to the other writings attributed to Athanasius with the title *On Virginité* (nos. 11 and 19 above).

(d) Ancient title: The only known title is *On Virginité*.

(e) Nature of the work: The work is a general exhortation to the proper virginal lifestyle, stressing the link between the purity of the body and that of the soul and the grave consequences of abandoning the ascetic life.

(f) Internal evidence for the author's milieu: There is nothing in the work that argues for any geographical setting for the author. As for date, the circumstances of the women addressed are not consistent with the early or middle fourth century. The author does not know home-based virgins. He urges the virgins not to "return to corporeal parents and the kinship of family", citing Luke 14:26 ("Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother ... cannot be my disciple")¹⁵⁸. The virgins addressed here are portrayed as living not in the city, but in the desert. The author does

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 1103.

¹⁵⁷ For the following comments, I rely on my reading (from a microfilm) of only the first manuscript, B.L. Add.14649.

¹⁵⁸ B.L. Add.14649 f. 54r, 4-9.

not offer the young Mary at home with her parents as the model for the virgins, but Thecla, who “left behind wealth and the hope of noble birth”, and biblical figures who lived totally outside the city¹⁵⁹. This would indicate a date later than the career of Athanasius, who otherwise shows knowledge only of virgins in urban settings.

(g) Comparison of content:

1. The work contains themes and images that are found in other Athanasian writings on virginity: the virgin as the “bride of Christ”; an emphasis on being virtuous in the soul, not just in the body; the ascetic life as a contest, ending in the reward of a crown, and as the life of the angels¹⁶⁰.

2. The author has nothing positive to say about marriage; rather, he refers to it once as “defiled intercourse”¹⁶¹. Athanasius, in contrast, defends the goodness of marriage in his writings to virgins and monks¹⁶².

Evaluation: The desert-based lifestyle of the virgins addressed and the negative attitude toward marriage make it unlikely that Athanasius wrote this work.

APPENDIX A

Reference List of the Genuine Athanasiana

The major works attributed to Athanasius that are considered genuine for purposes of comparison in this essay are the following. Ascetic works judged to be authentic in the course of this essay should be added to this list for purposes of comparison in subsequent discussions of other works.

Oratio contra gentes (CPG 2090)

Oratio de incarnatione Verbi (CPG 2091)

Epistula ad episcopos Aegypti et Libyae (CPG 2092)

Orationes contra Arianos iii (CPG 2093)¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ “Great is the word of praise for those who dwell on earth, but show themselves not to be enslaved to mortal nature, and are able to attain to the excellence of the angels. Virginity has enslaved them to this end: so that they might be like them (the angels). And it is clear from this: for if they had had a wife and children, they would not readily have dwelled in desert places and scorned houses and the rest of the other things of the world. When they cast off all bonds, they settled on earth as if they were in heaven. They did not need walls, or a roof, or a bed, not even a table, or anything else like these. Rather, instead of a roof, they had heaven; instead of a bed, the earth; instead of a table, the desert”; B.L. Add.14649 f. 57v, 5-17; f. 50r, 7-8 (Thecla).

¹⁶⁰ B.L. Add.14649 f. 49r, 9-10; f. 51v, 3-20; f. 51r, 20; f. 52r, 26-34; f. 54r, 14-34; etc. (bride of Christ); f. 49r, 18; f. 51r, 23-32 (inner virtues); f. 51v, 22-35 (contest, crown); f. 56r, 18 - f. 57v, 11 (life of the angels).

¹⁶¹ B.L. Add.14649 f. 55v, 17.

¹⁶² *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 81.10-82.3 Lef.); *Ep. Amun.* 68.16-69.14 (Joannou); *Virg.* (syr.) (Lebon 103-33).

¹⁶³ Charles Kannengiesser has argued that the third *Oration Against the Arians* is inauthentic (*Athanase d’Alexandrie, évêque et écrivain: Une lecture des traités “Contre les Ariens”* [Théologie historique 70; Paris 1983]), but his hypothesis has not been generally accepted. On this is-

Epistulae iv ad Serapionem (CPG 2094)
Epistula ad Epictetum (CPG 2095)
Epistula ad Marcellinum (CPG 2097)
Epistula ad Adelphium (CPG 2098)
Epistula ad Maximum (CPG 2100)
Epistulae festales (CPG 2102)
Epistulae ii ad Orsisius (CPG 2103-04)
Epistula ad Amun (CPG 2106)
Epistula ad Rufinianum (CPG 2107)
Epistula ad monachos (CPG 2108)
De decretis Nicaenae synodi (CPG 2120)
De sententia Dionysii (CPG 2121)
Apologia de fuga sua (CPG 2122)
Apologia secunda (CPG 2123)
Epistula encyclica (CPG 2124)
Epistula ad Serapionem de morte Arii (CPG 2125)
Epistula ad monachos (CPG 2126)
Historia Arianorum (CPG 2127)
De synodis Arimini in Italia et Seleucia in Isauria (CPG 2128)
Apologia ad Constantium (CPG 2129)
Epistula ad Iohannem et Antiochum presb. (CPG 2130)
Epistula ad Palladium (CPG 2131)
Epistula ad Dracontium (CPG 2132)
Epistula ad Afros (CPG 2133)
Tomus ad Antiochenos (CPG 2134)
Epistula ad Iouianum (CPG 2135)
Fragmenta in Lucam (portions) (CPG 2141, 2119)

APPENDIX B

The First Letter to Virgins and the Gnomes of the Council of Nicea

Parallels between the descriptions of the life of the Virgin Mary found in the first *Letter to Virgins* extant in Coptic and in the Coptic *Gnomes of the Council of Nicea* have suggested to some commentators that one work depends on the other, or that their authors used a common source, or even

sue see recently Luise Abramowski, "Die dritte Arianerrede des Athanasius: Eusebianer und Arianer und das westliche Serdicense", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 102 (1991) 389-413.

that Athanasius wrote both works¹⁶⁴. Dependence of the *Letter* on the *Gnomes* would bear significantly on the authenticity of the *Letter* because the *Gnomes* have been dated on historical grounds to the beginning of the fifth century¹⁶⁵. However, a comparison of the parallels between the *Letter* and the *Gnomes* provides little evidence for any such relationship. The following are the most obvious parallels¹⁶⁶.

(1) Mary the model for the virgin

Gnomes

It is a wise virgin who resembles Mary. ... If a woman wants to be called “virgin”, let her resemble Mary (Revillout 241.15-16; 244.8-10).

Letter

Therefore, let the life of Mary, the bearer of God, be for all of you, as it is written, an [image and likeness of] her virginity. ... This is the image of virginity, for holy Mary was like this. Let her who wishes to be a virgin look to her (CSCO 150, 77.35-78.1; 80.20-21).

The only element in common here is the ordinary notion that a virgin should pattern her life after Mary’s. The *Letter*, in contrast to the *Gnomes*, uses philosophical terms like “image”, “type”, and “mirror” to describe how Mary should function for the virgin and it urges the virgin to serve a similar role for less advanced virgins: “your life as well for a time might be an image of it (virginity) for others; continually look to the instruction of others”¹⁶⁷. In the *Letter*, Mary is the image of Virginity itself, just as Christ is the image of God.

¹⁶⁴ C. W. Neumann, *The Virgin Mary in the Works of Saint Ambrose* (Fribourg 1962) 17-31; Yves-Marie Duval, “La problématique de la *Lettre aux vierges* d’Athanasie”, *Muséon* 88 (1975) 405-33, at 415-16 n. 44. It has now been suggested that Ambrose of Milan made use not only of Athanasius’s *First Letter to Virgins* in writing his *On Virgins* but also of the *Gnomes* (Neil Adkin, “Ambrose, *De Virginibus* 2, 2, 10 f. and the *Gnomes of the Council of Nicea*”, *Revue des études augustiniennes* 38 [1992] 261-70).

¹⁶⁵ H. Achelis, “The Γνωμαί of the Synod of Nicea”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 2 (1900-01) 121-29, at 129. If, as Adkin argues (*Revue des études augustiniennes* 38, 261-70), Ambrose used the *Gnomes* in writing *On Virgins*, then the *Gnomes* must be dated earlier than 377.

¹⁶⁶ Text of *Gnomes*: Eugène Revillout, “Le Concile de Nicée, d’après les textes coptes”, *Journal asiatique*, ser. 7, 1 (1873) 210-88. References are to page(s) and line number(s) in this edition.

¹⁶⁷ *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 78.5-7).

(2) Mary chosen to be Christ's mother

Who can speak of the beauty of the mother of (our) Lord, whom God loved on account of her works? Therefore, he made his beloved Son to sojourn with her. ... For the Lord looked in his entire creation and saw no one who was like Mary. Hence, he chose her to be his mother (Revillout 241.16-242.2; 244.4-7).

Let her who wishes to be a virgin look to her (Mary), for on account of things like this (Mary's behavior) the Word chose her so that he might receive this flesh through her and become human for our sake (CSCO 150, 80.20-24).

Here both works agree that Mary was chosen to be the mother of Christ because of her good character and conduct. It is interesting that in each case it is the Son of God ("the Lord", "the Word") who makes the choice of his own mother. In the case of the *Letter*, however, the language ("the Word chose her so that he might receive this flesh through her") is distinctly Athanasian¹⁶⁸.

(3) Mary's unfamiliarity with men

Mary never saw the male face [...] (the) voice of Gabriel the angel (Revillout 242.10-12).

And as for her being familiar with a male servant or with any other male, it is superfluous to speak, for she was a stranger to them in this way, so that she did not endure their voice. And they were distant from her and did not become acquainted with her, [except for her form]. And it is the gospel that bears witness to this saying: for when the archangel Gabriel was sent to her — and it was as a man that he came to her because he had assumed human nature — he spoke

¹⁶⁸ Cf., e.g., *Ep. Epict.* 8: the flesh derived from Mary" (PG 26, 1064A).

with her, saying: "Greetings, Mary, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28) And the girl, when she heard that she was being addressed by a male voice, immediately became very disturbed because she was not familiar with the male voice (CSCO 150, 80.3-13).

Due to the fragmentary nature of the text, we can only guess as to the exact meaning of the *Gnomes* on this point, but the *Letter* emphasizes the male voice, without mentioning the male face. For Athanasius, virgins' conversation with men was particularly dangerous: speaking and hearing had particular theological and political implications in Athanasius's situation that made the regulation of these activities among virgins crucial for the bishop¹⁶⁹.

(4) Mary's moderation in eating

She does not eat as if nourishing a body; rather, she eats on account of her soul's necessity, lest it die (Re-villout 242.12-15).

The desire of the belly did not overcome her, only up to the measure of the body's necessity. For she ate and drank, not luxuriously, but so that she might not neglect her body and it die contrary to its time (CSCO 150, 79.5-9).

Here the only common element in the two works is the idea that the virgin should eat only enough to avoid dying. The *Gnomes*, however, portray Mary eating for the sake of the *soul*, while the *Letter* emphasizes Mary's desire not to kill her *body*. The latter attitude compares well with the healthy condition of Antony's body when he emerges from the tomb in the *Life of Antony*¹⁷⁰.

¹⁶⁹ Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*, chapter 1.

¹⁷⁰ *V. Ant.* 14 (PG 26, 864C-65A).

(5) Mary's moderation in sleeping

Moreover, she would lie down only as was necessary for sleeping and not to refresh her body (Revillout 243.11-13).

Moreover, she did not sleep beyond measure, but so that the body alone might rest, and afterwards she would be awake for her work and the Scriptures (CSCO 150, 79.9-11).

Again, the *Gnomes* urge a neglect of the body; the *Letter*, care for the body. On the issue of dependence, it is significant that in the *Letter* the sentences on sleeping immediately follow those on eating, while in the *Gnomes* they are separated by a page of manuscript text¹⁷¹.

(6) Mary at home with her parents

For she withdrew into her own house, being served by her own mother. Whenever she (the mother) was about to go to her, she could not speak any word to her except her business only. For she (Mary) made her swear not to inform her of any news of this world (Revillout 242.18-243.4)

Nor did she have an eagerness to leave her house, nor was she at all acquainted with the streets; rather, she remained in her house being calm, imitating the fly in honey (CSCO 150, 78.13-16).

Although each work portrays Mary as staying in her own house as much as possible, the *Letter* contains no reference to Mary's mother serving her. Instead, the *Letter*, in contrast to the *Gnomes*, several times mentions both of Mary's parents: they accompany Mary to worship services, observe her praying, give thanks to God for her, and so forth¹⁷².

¹⁷¹ Duval notes in general how "disordered" the portrait found in the *Gnomes* appears in comparison to the "much better constructed" one in the *Letter* (*Muséon* 88, 416 n. 44).

¹⁷² *Ep. virg.* 1 (CSCO 150, 79.19, 26-27; 79.31-80.3).

(7) Mary at prayer

She would always sit with her face looking east because she prayed without ceasing (Revillout 243.4-6).

And she would pray to God privately, taking care about these two things: that she not let evil thoughts dwell in her heart, and also that she not acquire curiosity or learn hardness of heart. ... When she prayed, her parents and the other women with her were amazed at her. For they did not hear her voice, but from the movement of her lips they saw her continuing and perceived that they were movements of holy inner thoughts (CSCO 150, 78.19-23; 79.27-31).

Other than being about prayer, these passages have nothing in common.

In general, these seven parallels are not at all impressive and give little support to the hypothesis that these two texts are connected in any direct, genetic fashion (although probably both draw on ideas about Mary popular in fourth-century Egypt). Numerous central elements in the *Letter's* portrait of Mary find no analogues in the *Gnomes*: the idea that Jesus' divinity is proved by his being the only child of the Virgin's womb; the proof of Mary's continued virginity by John's "adopting" of her at the crucifixion; the emphasis on Mary's thoughts, their stability and purity, her internal as opposed to external perceptions; the description of Mary's participation in the church's corporate worship life; the theme of Mary as the image of Virginity itself; the notion that Paul learned about virginity not from Jesus or the Septuagint, but from Mary's example. On the other hand, it is significant that the *Gnomes* — and not the *Letter* — defends the doctrine that Mary's virginity was maintained during Christ's birth (the so-called virginity *in partu*): the Lord "was not lessened because Mary bore him, nor did she destroy her virginity when she gave birth to our Saviour; rather, he preserved her as a precious treasure" (Revillout 242.6-10). This issue, which became a matter of controversy in the late fourth century, seems to have been unknown to Athanasius, who never mentions it¹⁷³.

¹⁷³ The possibility of Mary's virginity *in partu* (found in the *Protevangelium of James*) surfaces briefly in the writings of Tertullian and Origen, both of whom rejected the idea, but it became a matter of vigorous debate in the 380s when Ambrose of Milan's endorsement of the no-

Moreover, the differences between the texts, especially in their attitudes toward the body, are strong enough to preclude their having the same author: Athanasius did not write the *Gnomes*¹⁷⁴.

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tion was criticized by Jovinian (David G. Hunter, "Helvidius, Jovinian, and the Virginité of Mary in Late Fourth-Century Rome", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 [1993] 47-71).

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Duval, *Muséon* 88, 416 n. 44; Achelis, *Journal of Theological Studies* 2, 129.