

Paul de Lagarde and the Coptic New Testament: A Short Note on Archival Material in the Lagarde Papers*

Heike Behlmer, *Macquarie University*

One of the most interesting and controversial biblical scholars in nineteenth century Germany is Paul de Lagarde (1827–1891), professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Göttingen from 1869 until his death.¹

Lagarde considered himself a theologian, and he is known mainly for having initiated the project of a critical edition of the Septuagint. This project found new impetus after his death and flourished under the directorship of one of his last pupils, Alfred Rahlfs. Still today, the *Septuaginta-Unternehmen* is an important project of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences.

In connection with the Septuagint, but also independently of it, Lagarde became a productive editor of Coptic texts. His interest in Coptic was genuine, so genuine that the temptation of editing texts in this language presented a recurring danger to his Septuagint project. Here I wish to draw attention to some aspects of Lagarde's work on the Coptic New Testament, an interest which he developed in his youth before turning his attention to the Septuagint. I hope that the honoree of this *Festschrift*, who himself made a major contribution to the history of the Coptic versions of the New Testament, will find this side of Lagarde's scholarly production of some little interest.

Lagarde studied Coptic with Moritz Gotthilf Schwartze (1802–1848), one of the pioneers of Coptic Studies in Germany.² While a student with Schwartze and influenced by him, Lagarde

* Paul de Lagarde's correspondence, which is at the basis of this article, is kept in the Department 'Handschriften und seltene Drucke' (Manuscripts and Rare Prints) of the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen. I wish to thank Helmut Rohlfing, director of the department, for the permission to study Lagarde's correspondence and his staff, especially Bärbel Mund, for their competent help during my stays in the reading room.

conceived a passion for the Coptic language which would last for the rest of his life. Some of his first works were Coptological, especially the editions of the Acts of the Apostles and of the New Testament letters in the Bohairic dialect.³ The latter work found an excessively critical reviewer in the Egyptologist Heinrich Brugsch (1827–1894).⁴ Brugsch's harsh criticism hurt Lagarde deeply, to the point that he wrote a forty-page refutation not less than twenty-seven years after its publication.⁵ It also led to Lagarde selling the remaining copies of his early Coptological works as waste paper.⁶ In addition, it seems to have prevented Lagarde from turning his attention to the earlier stages of the Egyptian language and laid the foundation for his dislike of Egyptologists in general, especially Brugsch and Richard Lepsius, the first person to hold a chair in Egyptology in Germany. It was only Lagarde's acquaintance with the subsequent generation of German Egyptologists, including Adolf Erman (1854–1937) and Georg Steindorff (1861–1951), which led him to revise his judgment.⁷

Schwartz had planned an edition of the Coptic New Testament, which, however, he could not finish because of his untimely death at the age of forty-six. He left behind only an edition of the Gospels.⁸ After Schwartz's death it became Lagarde's plan to continue and expand his teacher's œuvre and produce an edition of the Greek New Testament on the basis of the Oriental versions.⁹ Lagarde's plan failed, because a British scholar, William Cureton (1808–1864), had older rights to the Syriac manuscripts in London which he had intended to use. The failure of his New Testament project, the controversy with Brugsch, and his personal situation, which forced him to work as a secondary school teacher in Berlin from 1854–1866, caused many years' interruption in his work on Coptic language and philology.

After the abandonment of the New Testament project Lagarde turned to other plans and, in 1861, already during his time as a school teacher, conceived the project of the critical edition of the Septuagint.¹⁰ A three-year grant by Wilhelm I, King of Prussia,¹¹ followed by the appointment to the chair of Oriental Philology at Göttingen in 1869, made it possible for him to work full-time on his research—and also to return to his Coptological interests. Lagarde's publications of the 1860s and 1870s are centered around the Septuagint text and include a number of editions of Coptic texts.¹² In the last decade of his life, he pursued the project of a *Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca* with Coptic text

editions, of which his *Aegyptiaca* of 1883 are a product,¹³ and the edition of New Testament texts, especially the Gospels.

Lagarde, a professor without a personal fortune, carried out his professional projects by making use of a wide net of contacts with other scholars, museum custodians, learned societies, and private collectors. Gifts of publications were used to put the recipient into a benevolent mood, and thus referrals were obtained which might be useful in the pursuit of his scholarly aims.

One of these scholars, who would later be able to further a Coptological project very dear to Lagarde's heart, was Joseph Barber Lightfoot, Bishop of Durham (1828–1889),¹⁴ the author of many influential works in the fields of New Testament criticism, Earliest Christianity, and the Apostolic Fathers.

The scholarly exchange between Lightfoot and Lagarde, as documented by the Lagarde Papers in the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Prints, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, consists of fifteen letters by Lightfoot and three copies of letters by Lagarde (in his wife's handwriting). It starts in August 1873, after Lagarde had sent Lightfoot copies of some of his works, and ends in 1885. The subject of the correspondence is in part the exchange of publications and that of information concerning Lightfoot's work on the Apostolic Fathers, such as, e.g., Lightfoot asking Lagarde about the order of the Ignatian epistles in the Armenian version.

However, there are two phases of the scholarly exchange which are concerned with Coptic New Testament texts, one at the very beginning and one starting in 1881. The correspondence of 1873 centers around a question posed by Lightfoot about a manuscript which Lagarde had mentioned in the introduction to his 1852 edition of the Acts and Epistles. Lagarde had—erroneously—named one of the manuscripts he had used (BM Or. 8786 from the collection of Robert Curzon, 14th Baron Zouche¹⁵) “Curetonianus,” and Lightfoot asks for help with the identification of this manuscript.

The second exchange relating to New Testament manuscripts begins in 1881—after a hiatus of two years in the correspondence—with an offer by Lightfoot of a copy of some Coptic New Testament fragments. This is the object in the Lagarde Papers to which I wish to draw attention here.

On 1 August 1881, Lightfoot writes:¹⁶

“My dear Professor,

My object in desiring to write to you was to say that in the event of your publishing (as I hope you will) the Borgian Sahidic Fragments of the New Testament, I should have much pleasure in placing in your hands for publication, if you care to have them, transcripts of some important fragments from MSS in the Library of Lord Crawford & Balcarres. An account of them is given in Scriveners *Introduction to the New Testament* p. 350 (Ed. 2), where however I may have assigned to them (tentatively) too high an antiquity. I had intended to publish them myself, but see little probability of doing so now. . .”

Lagarde’s answer (dated 13 August 1881) is mainly concerned with inducing Lightfoot to further another Coptological project: the loan of a manuscript from the collection of Robert Curzon. The manuscript coveted by Lagarde is British Library Or. 8812 (formerly MS Parham 106),¹⁷ an exegetical Catena to the Gospels in Bohairic, the loan of which required lengthy negotiations and the intervention of three famous British scholars, among whom was Lightfoot.¹⁸ At the very end of this letter, though, Lagarde writes: “Your Lordships promised fragments are eagerly expected,” and on or before August 16th, another letter of Lightfoot’s makes clear that the “transcripts” have been sent to Lagarde.

Lightfoot’s copies are transcriptions of four New Testament fragments from the collection of Alexander Lindsay, 25th Earl of Crawford, now in the John Rylands Library Manchester (GB-MR 11-14).¹⁹ They still exist today and are kept in the Lagarde Papers in Göttingen as Cod. MS Lagarde 121. The copies are bound as a quarto booklet, with the title page containing references to the contents and history by Lightfoot and Lagarde.²⁰ In the catalog of the Lagarde Papers the booklet is described as follows:²¹

Lagarde 121 *vacat* 52 Bl. in 4^o *vacat* 1881 *vacat* Bruchstücke der sahidischen Übersetzung des Neuen Testaments, nämlich Marcus 919-1426 (Bl. 1-14), Lucas 38-637 (Bl. 27-15 rückwärts und Bl. 52), und 1718-1930 (Bl. 51-42 rückwärts), Galat. 114-522 (Bl. 40, 41, 39-28 rückwärts). *vacat* Nach den Bemerkungen auf Bl. I hat Joseph Barber Lightfoot, Bischof von Durham, diese Stücke aus Handschriften des Earl of Crawford and Balcarre (*sic*) abgeschrieben und L. geschenkt (August 1881). Speziell das erste Stück entstammt

einer Pergament-Handschrift, die um 950 geschrieben sein soll, und von der 6 Blätter sich im Besitz des Earl of Crawford befanden. *vacat* Um einen Begriff von dem Charakter der Schrift zu geben, sind einige Zeilen aus Lucas 5 durchgezeichnet (Bl. 2).

Lagarde did not make immediate use of the copies, and on 8 January 1883 Lightfoot returns to his gift:

... I heard the other day from the Earl of Crawford & Balcarres that Mons. Amélineau wants to borrow his Sahidic New Testament MSS, of which I sent you transcripts.

I wrote to tell Lord Crawford that transcripts had been placed in your hands & that you intended publishing them & asked him to tell Mons. Amélineau this. It does not however appear to have had any influence on him; for he is still asking for the MSS & says that he is at a stand still for want of them. They will therefore be sent to him by Lord Crawford. I do not know what work he is engaged upon, but I thought you ought to be informed of this fact. . .

The manuscripts so urgently desired by the French Coptologist Emile Amélineau were subsequently published by him.²² Even at a first glance and without inspecting the originals, the copy Lightfoot made differs in a number of aspects from Amélineau's edition. This concerns not only the transcription of individual letters or words or the filling in of lacunae; Lightfoot's copies also give much more information on the physical nature of the fragments. They are made in ink, with corrections and additions in pencil. Comments are added both in ink and in pencil. This seems to indicate that the work was done in two different phases with a second round of corrections after a first transcription. While both Lightfoot's copy and Amélineau's edition indicate sections and titles, as if found in the manuscript, and while both identify the biblical verses, Lightfoot imitates the original layout of the manuscripts in two columns and includes—differently from Amélineau—page numbers and, for the first fragment (GB-MR 11), the number of lines in a column. He also imitates the enlarged initials and gives a more complete rendering of punctuation marks than Amélineau.

Lightfoot's offer to send his copies to Lagarde belongs to a phase in the latter's life in which he pursued an important edition project of

Coptic biblical texts. Together with his Italian colleague Ignazio Guidi he planned the edition of the Sahidic manuscripts of the Bible in the Vatican Library (from the Borgia collection), and it was this plan which had prompted Lightfoot to offer his “transcripts.” Even if Lagarde’s and Guidi’s plan was thwarted by the Vatican entrusting the publication to Agostino Ciasca (1835–1902),²³ Lagarde continued to pursue the project of an edition of the Coptic New Testament. Whereas already in 1866 he had declared the edition of the Greek New Testament to be a project beyond the capacity of a single scholar,²⁴ in 1887 he still thought the edition of the Coptic within his reach.²⁵

A close look at Lagarde’s career reveals his unremitting enthusiasm for the Coptic language which he had felt ever since being a student with Schwartz. At various moments he had to suppress this inclination because it threatened his major project of the Septuagint edition. However, it sprang up again and again and led him to pursue over the decades—among other Coptological projects—his plan of an edition of the Coptic New Testament. The correspondence between Lagarde and Lightfoot is yet another witness to this.

Notes

1. For a biography of Lagarde with a focus on his scholarly life see Alfred Rahlfs, *Paul de Lagarde's wissenschaftliches Lebenswerk, im Rahmen einer Geschichte seines Lebens* (Mitteilungen aus dem Septuaginta-Unternehmen: Göttingen, 1928). More recent biographical sketches are Roman Heiligenthal, “Paul de Lagarde,” in *TRE* 20 (1990), 375–78 and Bruno Steimer, “Lagarde, Paul Anton de,” in *LTK* 6 (1997): 586–87. Besides the project of a critical edition of the Septuagint, Lagarde has been studied for his political writings. In numerous essays Lagarde attacked a state which he saw in the grip of materialism and liberalism. To this state he opposed the idea of a nation understood as a community united by a common historical destiny. Lagarde’s chauvinist and anti-Semitic writings were widely read after the First World War and especially popular during National Socialism. The most influential study of Lagarde’s political writings is still Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, 1961). A new biography of Paul de Lagarde is currently being prepared by Marburg historian Ulrich Sieg.
2. For Moritz Gotthilf Schwartz see Erika Endesfelder, *Die Ägyptologie an der Berliner Universität. Zur Geschichte eines Fachgebietes* (Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 1988), 7–9; Johannes Irmscher, “Berlin und die Koptologie,” in *Religion im Erbe Ägyptens. Beiträge zur spätantiken Religionsgeschichte zu Ehren von Alexander Böhlig*, ed. Manfred Görg (Ägypten und Altes

Testament 14; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), 84f.; Hans Jakob Polotsky, "Egyptology, Coptic Studies and the Egyptian Language," in *Lingua Sapientissima. A seminar in honour of H. J. Polotsky organised by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge and the Faculty of Oriental Studies in 1984*, ed. J. D. Ray (Cambridge, 1987), 5–21 at pp. 10–13.

3. *Acta Apostolorum coptice* (Halle: Lippert, 1852); *Epistulae Novi Testamenti coptice edidit Paulus Boetticher* (Halle, 1852; repr. Osnabrück, 1966). For the manuscripts at the basis of Lagarde's editions and a short evaluation of his work see G. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect Otherwise Called Memphitic and Bohairic, Vol. III: The Epistles of S. Paul Edited from MS. Oriental 424 in the British Museum*, Reprint of the Edition 1898–1905 (Osnabrück: Zeller, 1969), viif.

4. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 7 (1853): 115–121.

5. *Aus dem Deutschen Gelehrtenleben* (Göttingen: Dieterichsche verlagsbuchhandlung, 1880), 25–65. Lagarde had given a short refutation of Brugsch's criticism immediately on its appearance: "Erwiderung auf den aufsatz des herrn Brugsch in diesem jahrgange der zeitschrift seite 115 folg.," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 7 (1853): 456 (repr. *Aus dem Deutschen Gelehrtenleben*, 63).

6. *Aus dem Deutschen Gelehrtenleben*, 64.

7. For Lagarde's relationship with Adolf Erman see my "Ein neo-koptischer Brief Adolf Ermans an Paul de Lagarde—Zeugnis für eine wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Wende in der Erforschung des Koptischen," *LingAeg* 11 (2003): 1–12.

8. Moritz Gotthilf Schwartz, *Quatuor Evangelia in dialecto linguae copticae memphitica perscripta ad codd. ms. copticorum in Regia bibliotheca berolinensi adseruatorum nec non libri a Wilkinsio emissi fidem edidit, emendavit adnotationibus criticis et grammaticis variantibus atque textu coptico cum graeco comparato instruxit*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Barthii, 1846–47). A list of Schwartz's Coptological works can be found in Martin Krause, "Die Disziplin Koptologie," in *The Future of Coptic Studies*. Coptic Studies vol. 1, ed. R. McL. Wilson (Leiden, 1978) 1–22 at p. 2. For Schwartz's work on the collection of the Coptologist Henry Tattam (1789–1868) see Stephen Emmel, "The Coptic Manuscript Collection of Alexander Lindsay, 25th Earl of Crawford," in *Coptology: Past, Present and Future. Studies in Honour of Rodolphe Kasser*, ed. S. Giversen, M. Krause, P. Nagel, (OLA 61; Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 317–25.

9. Rahlfs, *Paul de Lagardes Lebenswerk*, 42f. The Prussian ambassador in London, Christian Karl Josias von Bunsen (1791–1860), himself the author of a five-volume history of Egypt (*Aegyptens stelle in der weltgeschichte*. 5 vols., Hamburg, 1844–1857) had obtained a grant for Lagarde to spend a year in London in 1852–53 to work on this project.

10. Rahlfs, *Paul de Lagardes Lebenswerk*, 44–58.

11. *Ibid.*, 53.

12. *Der Pentateuch koptisch*, hg. von Paul de Lagarde (Leipzig: Teubner, 1867; repr. Osnabrück: Zeller, 1967); *Psalterii Versio Memphitica e recognitione Pauli de Lagarde. Accedunt Psalterii thebani fragmenta Parhamiana, Proverbium memphiticorum fragmenta Berolinensia* (Göttingen, 1875) (re-edited as *Psalterii Versio Memphitica e recognitione Pauli de Lagarde. Réédition avec le texte copte en caractères coptes par Oswald H. E. Burmester et Eugène Dévaud* [Louvain: Istas, 1925]); *Psalterium Job Proverbia arabice* (Göttingen: Kaestner, 1876; containing a Coptic version of Job); “Bruchstücke der koptischen Übersetzung des Alten Testaments,” in *Abhandlungen der Göttinger Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften* 24 (1879): 63–104 (= Lagarde, *Orientalia* I [Göttingen: Dieterich, 1879–1880], 63–96).

13. Paul de Lagarde, *Aegyptiaca* (Göttingen: Hoyer, 1883). As late as 1885 Lagarde entertained the plan to go to Naples to edit the Shenoute manuscripts in the Borgia collection, see my “Schenute, Besa und Lagarde—eine unbekannte Episode der Forschungsgeschichte,” *JCoptS* 5 (2003): 55–66.

14. A short biography and discussion of his œuvre can be found in Mark E. Glasswell, “Lightfoot, Joseph Barber (1828–1889),” in *TRE* 21 (1991): 196–99. Before accepting the see of Durham, Lightfoot had been a canon of St. Paul’s (appointed in 1871) and Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge (since 1875).

15. Bentley Layton, *Catalogue of Coptic Literary Manuscripts in the British Library Acquired since the Year 1906* (London, 1987), no. 206 at p. 320.

16. This letter (and any other referred to in the following) is kept in the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Prints, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, Lagarde Papers, and quoted by permission.

17. For the history of the manuscript see Layton, *Catalogue* (cf. note 15) no. 249; Stephen Emmel, “Robert Curzon’s Acquisition of White Monastery Manuscripts,” in Marguerite Rassart-Debergh and Julien Ries, eds., *Actes du IV^e Congrès Copte, Louvain-la-Neuve, 5–10 septembre 1988*, vol. 2 (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1992) 224–31, esp. 226–28. Curzon’s collection was bequeathed to the British Museum in 1917 by his daughter Darea, but had already been deposited there in the spring of 1876, most probably on April 19, by his son, see Stephen Emmel, *Shenoute’s Literary Corpus* (Ph.D. Diss., Yale University, 1993), 86 n. 104. Lagarde’s edition appeared as *Catenae in Evangelia aegyptiaca quae supersunt Pauli de Lagarde studio et sumptibus edita* (Göttingen: Dieterichianis, 1886).

18. On this episode see my “. . . As safe as the British Museum—Paul de Lagarde and his borrowing of manuscripts from the collection of Robert Curzon,” *JEA* 89 (2003): 231–38.

19. W.E. Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the Collection of the John Rylands Library Manchester* (Manchester and London: University Press, 1909), 3–4. On the collection see Emmel, “The Coptic Manuscript Collection of Alexander Lindsay, 25th Earl of Crawford” (cf. note 8 above). Emmel argues convincingly that all Coptic parchment manuscripts in Lindsay’s collection were formerly in Henry Tattam’s possession and acquired when the latter’s collection was sold at Sotheby’s after his death in 1868.

20. In Lightfoot’s hand there is a copy of the original label of the bound volume in Lindsay’s collection, which refers only to the first fragment (GB–MR 11), and a short description of this manuscript. In pencil, two short notes for Lagarde’s use are added. Lagarde notes the name of the sender and the date and nature of the gift.

21. *Verzeichnis der Handschriften im Preussischen Staate I. Hannover 3. Göttingen 3* (Die Handschriften in Göttingen 3: Universitäts-Bibliothek, Nachlässe von Gelehrten, Orientalische Handschriften, Handschriften im Besitz von Instituten und Behörden, Register zu Band 1–3), 133–53 at p. 150. A copy of this entry is pasted into the front cover of the booklet itself.

22. As “Fragments coptes du Nouveau Testament dans le dialecte thébain,” *Recueil de Travaux* 5 (1884) 105–39.

23. In his “Nachtrag zur Vorrede der Librorum veteris testamenti pars prior graece Pauli de Lagarde studio et sumptibus edita,” in *Mittheilungen*, 4 vols. (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1884–1891) 1.200–5 at pp. 200–2 Lagarde explains why he cannot provide the edition of the “fragmenta biblicorum aegyptiacorum borgiana” which he had previously announced. According to a letter by Guidi to Lagarde (also in the Lagarde Papers) of 30 January 1884 Ciasca had been willing to renounce but this had not been permitted by the institution in charge of the manuscripts, the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide.

24. *Gesammelte Abhandlungen, II. De novo testamento ad versionum orientalium fidem edendo* (Leipzig, 1866), 85–119 at p. 119 n. 1: “ich bin seit 1857 sehr davon überzeugt worden dass selbst in den von mir gezogenen engen schranken eine kritische ausgabe des NT’s für eines menschen kraft zu viel arbeit ist, man wird schlichtweg einen text aus den ältesten griechischen hdss geben können und müssen, den man nicht mit allen schreibfehlern jener mskk zu behängen nöthig haben wird: versionen und kirchenväter fordern meines erachtens noch eine geraume zeit hindurch einzeluntersuchungen und ich beschränke mich willig auf die koptische übersetzung, natürlich nach beendigung meiner ausgabe der LXX.”

25. Lagarde, *Mittheilungen* II (1887), 374.