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- *EARLY CHRISTIANS IN NORTH AFRICA:
THE WITNESS OF TERTULLIAN*
- *THE SINS OF SAINT MONICA*



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EARLY CHRISTIANS IN NORTH AFRICA: THE WITNESS OF TERTULLIAN

*Robert Sider**

In late antiquity the Roman rulers of the world looked upon the countries of Africa that lay along the Mediterranean as two distinct regions, comprised of Egypt on the one hand, and ‘Africa’ on the other. Each was regarded as more or less homogenous, and quite distinct from each other — apart from the fact that both, forming together the ‘granary’ of Rome, were essential to its survival. Ancient ‘Africa’ consisted roughly of the northern part of what is now Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Its original peoples, ancestors of the present Berbers, appear to have migrated west from the Levant in pre-historic times. Much later, Phoenicians, from Tyre, established coastal settlements, some of which became magnificent cities, such as Carthage, and with their development, Punic (ie Phoenician) culture infiltrated the original Berber civilization.

Carthage itself was utterly destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC, and a little over a century later, the Emperor Augustus planted a Roman colony on the now barren land of the ancient city, intending to rebuild it. Thus Latin civilization began to overlay that of the Berbers and the Phoenicians. By the early third century AD Carthage had become the largest city of the Roman empire, after Alexandria and Rome. By this time Christianity, no doubt multi-cultural, but primarily Latin-speaking, had been firmly planted in this great city of western Africa, and its most distinguished spokesman was a pagan convert by the name of Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, commonly known in English simply as Tertullian. He remains a figure of immense importance to Christianity today, perhaps chiefly for the detailed witness he provides to the life of early Christians in Africa about AD 200.

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About his life we know with certainty almost nothing. Most probably in AD 197 he appears suddenly on the literary horizon articulating the case for Christianity, both as its defender, in, for example, his famous *Apology*, and as its advocate, in the charming little treatise *On the Witness of the Soul*. From the very beginning he engaged in energetic dialogue with various groups in the church on matters of church discipline and morals. Sometimes he made his point in what are little more than brief journalistic pamphlets (*To the Martyrs, To his Wife, On the Dress of Women*); at other times he wrote a sizeable booklet or a major treatise (*On the Shows, On Idolatry, On Prayer, On Baptism, On Modesty*). Though by instinct and training he was neither a philosopher nor a theologian, he nevertheless undertook, deliberately, it appears, to construct a theological system by addressing, in one treatise after another, the luxurious growth of 'heresies' that afflicted the churches of Africa. The result was the formulation of a Christian theology that would, with little adaptation, become 'orthodox' in the west. Hence we have elaborate statements of his doctrine of God (*Against Hermogenes*), of the Trinity (*Against Praxeas*), of Christ (*On the Flesh of Christ*), of man (*On the Soul*), of the Resurrection and Judgment (*On the Resurrection of the Dead*), and of the Scriptures (*On the Prescription Against Heretics*). In his later years he became a bitter critic of the incipient Catholic church he saw in Carthage, and became devoted to the charismatic and morally rigorous sect of Montanists, though possibly without formally 'leaving' the church in which he had made his first profession. The date of his latest writing is disputed: possibly as early as AD 212, possibly as late as 223.

It may be immediately evident why Tertullian is a witness of the first importance to the practices and the general character of Christianity in North Africa during the approximately two decades of his literary career. In what follows I shall attempt to reconstruct the witness Tertullian makes to just a few facets of early Christian life in North Africa.

I. Christians Living in the World

The pages of Tertullian reflect the enormous difficulties a religious minority might experience surrounded by a society fundamentally opposed, even hostile, to it. Consider first the question of mixed marriages. Who can forestall the passion of love? But if a Christian girl marries a pagan, in what predicaments will she find herself? Tertullian describes her perpetual dilemmas. She is engaged in a fast; her husband has arranged a banquet. It is her Christian duty to visit the streets and the homes of the poor; her husband insists on family business. She celebrates the Easter Vigil throughout the entire night; her husband expects her in his bed. She steals into prison to kiss the chains of a martyr and to offer a loaf of bread; her husband resents the depletion of his cupboard. She who has taken the cup at the Eucharist will be required to take a cup with her husband in the tavern. She who has foresworn idolatry must inhale the smoke arising from the incense on the altars

of the idols in her husband's home (*To his Wife II* 4 and 7). The rhetorical elaboration of the two styles of living not only reveals the inevitable tensions in a mixed marriage, but suggests as well the Christian duties expected of a Christian matron in her everyday life.

But it was, perhaps, in the context of civic life that Christian isolation threatened the pagan community most severely. Societies even today tend to fear the disruptive force of those elements that do not care to be 'integrated.' It is not difficult, therefore, to understand pagan disgust at the Christian refusal to observe the manifest and customary signs of support for national life: Christians would not put a pinch of incense on the altar of the genius of the Caesar as a petition to the gods for his protection; Christians would not throw a coin into the coffers of the state gods, a gift that would ultimately enhance the well being of the state; Christians would not join their neighbors in celebrating national holidays, since the celebrations inevitably entailed in one way or another the recognition of idols. Not even a wreath was to be found on the door of a Christian on the festive occasions of the community, and its absence marked the Christians definitively and dangerously, for the apparent reluctance to celebrate a national holiday seemed to point to the Christians as a disruptive force in society (*Apology* 35 and 42). The writings of Tertullian permit us to surmise what we assuredly know from other sources: before AD 250 it was not the state that generally initiated action against the Christians, but individual pagans whose latent fears originating in the distinctiveness of Christians from the rest of society could easily find occasion to be transformed into the kind of jealousy and anger that led them to prosecute a respected neighbor, even a friend (cf *Apology* 3).

From Tertullian we learn not only how a Christian's abstention from the conventional practices of the community could arouse pagan hostility; his treatises also reveal the difficulties Christians faced in realizing their own professional goals. Christian craftsmen and artists might well find the most lucrative application of their trade in the adornment of pagan temples and idols. As Christians, however, they would have to be satisfied with the lesser income available from employment on purely domestic projects. To an uncompromising Christian the teaching profession was virtually closed: not only must the teacher respectfully inculcate the narratives about the pagan gods into the minds of youths who assumed the stories to be in some sense true; he must also, in the presence of his students observe with appropriate ritual the special days devoted to particular deities. Again, climbing the political ladder would require exceptional agility on the part of the Christian politician, for his office would require his presence, perhaps even his assistance, at sacrifices, or would require that he assign contracts for the care of idols and the adornment of the temples. Military life, too, held snares for Christians, for it presupposed an oath of allegiance taken in the context of a pagan sacrifice (*On Idolatry* 8,10, 17, 19), and in any case killing was forbidden to the Christian (*On the Crown* 11).

Even the popular forms of entertainment by their very nature denied access to Christians. In his treatise *On the Shows* Tertullian describes in detail the four major types of entertainment in which the Roman world indulged — sometimes almost madly: chariot racing in the circus, stage-plays in the theater, boxing and wrestling in the stadium, and gladiatorial combats in the amphitheater. Tertullian argues (probably correctly) that all of these originated as rituals in honor of the pagan gods, and are *ipso facto* idolatrous. But even beyond the idolatrous origin of the rituals, the very character of the entertainment renders it unsuitable for Christians: the raucous, even insane, cheering for the four parties (the Reds, the Whites, the Greens, and the Blues) represented by the charioteers and their horses, the lewdness, nudity and debauchery portrayed on the stage, the gross physical abuse experienced in the ring, and the human slaughter of the amphitheater — all these were utterly foreign to the Christian in whom the Holy Spirit of God dwelt (*On the Shows* 16-19).

Tertullian was both a moral rigorist and a highly rhetorical writer, and he almost certainly accented more sharply than most of his contemporaries the difficulties faced by a Christian living in a non-Christian world. Indeed, he himself frequently reflects debates that surfaced on almost every issue, debates that indicate the attempts at accommodation with their world that many Christians made. Some Christians, possibly even a majority, enjoyed the shows along with their pagan neighbors, and Tertullian reports their chief argument in doing so : nowhere in the Scriptures will you find the shows explicitly condemned (*On the Shows* 3). Some who found their economic growth stunted and their political ambitions curtailed by their Christian profession raised the cry, ‘But how shall we live?’ But the argument to which compromising Christians appealed most frequently, according to Tertullian, was the consideration that by distinguishing themselves sharply from their pagan neighbors they necessarily called attention to the fact that they were Christians, which, in turn, not only invited the anger of the pagans who would consequently ‘curse the name of Christ’ (*On Idolatry* 14) — a theological consideration — but also endangered the security of other Christians by encouraging pagan pogroms against them (*On the Crown* 1) — a practical consideration. In short Christians should keep a low profile!. Thus Tertullian stands as an important witness to the efforts many Christians made to maintain their faith while accommodating their lives to the practical realities of living in an unsympathetic world.

II. Christians Living in Community

In his *Apology* Tertullian gives us one of the most idyllic portraits ever sketched of the Christian community. If he speaks particularly of their assemblies, it is because technically Christians did not constitute a legally permitted society; by implication their existence as a community was forbidden. He explains that ‘Christians are a body knitted together by a common religious profession, unity of discipline and a common hope.’ They assemble to read the Scriptures, to make

exhortations that inculcate good moral living. They also administer rebuke and pass judgment against those of their number whose moral life falls short of the high standards of Christian faith. They possess a money-chest to which each member contributes as he wishes. The money contributed is used to supply the needs of the poor, of orphans and of those banished or imprisoned for their faith. Even the pagans recognize the unaccustomed manifestation of charity by the Christians, for it is the pagans who commonly say, 'Behold, how they love one another!' Their 'love-feasts' are observed with a modest supper, prayers before and after the meal, and the singing of hymns and recitation from Scripture. This, Tertullian concludes, is not a conspiratorial meeting of a dangerous political party, but a sacred gathering of the good and the upright. (*Apology* 39).

This highly idealized picture may suggest a greater unanimity among Christians than in fact was the case. From the treatise *On the Crown* we may gather, it is true, that by AD 210 some customs were already felt to be ancient and universal — such as tasting a mixture of milk and honey after baptism, standing during the liturgy on Sunday and on every day from Easter to Pentecost, and making the sign of the cross on a multitude of occasions (*On the Crown* 3). Other treatises, however, show that Christians accepted — or endured — significant differences in practice. Tertullian criticizes the customs some people observed in prayer: washing the hands before prayer even when hands are clean, taking off one's coat before prayer, sitting after prayer (*On the Prayer* 13-16). While Tertullian wants to see virgins veiled during the liturgy, he recognizes that such has not been the universal custom of the church (*On the Veiling of Virgins* 2-3). While he himself insists on undeniable modesty in women's clothes, he recognizes that many Christian women appear with all the ornamentation and make-up of pagan women (*On the Dress of Women* II 1, 5, 6).

Not only did differences of custom and practice mark the early church in Africa; these early Christians likewise accepted idiosyncrasies in the manifestation of spiritual experience. Tertullian witnesses particularly to the success of a charismatic Christian experience in the African church, ultimately deriving from a Christian prophet Montanus, who appeared in Asia-Minor about thirty years before our author's conversion. As we have seen, Tertullian himself eventually identified with the Montanists, and he was ready therefore to record not only some of the sayings of the Montanist prophets, but also some of the charismatic experiences of his own contemporaries. He describes in some detail the experience of one 'sister.' During the Divine Liturgy on Sunday she would receive ecstatic visions; she conversed with angels, sometimes 'even with the Lord.' She was given a special insight into the 'hearts' of some people, and was even given remedies for those who needed them. Following the Liturgy, and after the people had been dismissed, she would stay to explain to sympathizers what she had seen during the sermon. On one occasion she reported seeing a 'soul:' it had the shape of a body, was soft and transparent, and its color was a sort of heavenly blue! (*On the Soul* 9).

If certain differences in practice and experience were tolerated in the church, it would be entirely wrong to assume that the early African Christians were in any sense of the modern term 'inclusive.' In the first place a sharp distinction was made between Christians 'in good standing' and those who had lapsed. Tertullian gives us one of the fullest descriptions we possess by any Latin writer of the custom of 'exomologesis' — a Greek term referring to the confession of sin to be made by an erring Christian. Such a Christian was in every way to be distinguished from his fellow Christians. He was to fast, to dress in clothes befitting a mourner, to prostrate himself, to roll before the presbyters, and to enjoin all the brothers to pray for him (*On Repentance* 9). It was a difficult and no doubt embarrassing penance that set the sinners over against, as it were, the righteous in God's church.

Perhaps nowhere, however, is the church's struggle for exclusivity more marked than in Tertullian's treatises against heretics and heresies. It is in the treatise *On the Prescription Against Heretics* that Tertullian lays down his fundamental rule: only those people belong to the church of Christ who belong to the churches founded by the apostles, or belong to churches in close communion with the churches founded by apostles. For the apostles handed down a 'Rule of Faith' which has been transmitted without change by the succession of bishops reaching back to the apostles. Only those churches, therefore, that acknowledge the Rule of Faith — a Rule more or less equivalent to the statements of faith contained in the 'Apostles Creed' — are included in the universal and authentic Christian church. All others are excluded (*On the Prescription Against Heretics* 20-30). Indeed, Tertullian carries the exclusion so far that he denies to the excluded even the right to argue their case from Scripture, since the Scriptures do not belong to them (*On the Prescription Against Heretics* 15-19).

I mentioned above that in his arguments with the heretics Tertullian in effect constructed something like a coherent theological system. The exposition of his theological system would require greater amplitude than is appropriate for this essay, but I should like to conclude by pointing briefly to Tertullian's treatise *On the Flesh of Christ*. The treatise itself is an attempt to insist against all comers that the Son of God assumed flesh that was truly human, hence neither phantasmic nor of some non-earthly origin. But the work interests us here especially because in it is found the statement by which Tertullian has been chiefly, and indeed widely, known in the West. The statement is usually quoted as, 'I believe because it is absurd' (*credo quia absurdum est*). The statement has been used by Christians to justify the irrationality of belief, and by non-Christians to ridicule the same. In fact the statement thus cited is a misquotation, and being misquoted, Tertullian's words are inevitably misunderstood. Tertullian in fact said, *credo quia ineptum est*, 'I believe because the story does not fit.' Tertullian most probably meant that belief in the Incarnation of God in Jesus is justified, not because the belief is irrational, but, quite the contrary, because the belief can be based on a fundamental principle of

rational conjecture, namely, that the story of the Incarnation is so far outside our human experience that no one is likely to have made it up. Its very improbability becomes the compelling reason to believe! Thus, Tertullian emerges as the champion of faith based on reason.

Postscript: On Reading Tertullian

Tertullian's Latin is notoriously difficult — St Jerome, himself a Latin-speaker, complained that the Carthaginian was difficult to understand! Even in English translation Tertullian is not an easy author to comprehend, for the literary structure of his treatises is highly complex, based on an intricate and sophisticated system of rhetorical rules, and his material is richly allusive with references that only learned notes can clarify. Indeed, to overcome these difficulties a new abbreviated edition that simplifies the structure and both minimizes and clarifies the allusions in a selection of Tertullian's works in translation is now in preparation by the Catholic University Press, and when it becomes available it should make some important works of Tertullian readily accessible to all. Meanwhile, even the non-specialist can profitably peruse some of the writings of Tertullian. I recommend, in particular, three treatises: the *Apology*, *On the Shows*, and *On the Crown*. Each of these is rewarding for its fascinating narrative, its powerful expression of profound conviction, and its representation of the fundamental character of Tertullian's thought. The satisfaction gained in reading these will be well worth the undeniable effort required.

For Further Reading

1 - Translations:

Translations of the complete writings of Tertullian can be found in the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Edinburgh: T & T Clark 1870- 1872. An American reprint of the Edinburgh edition revised and chronologically arranged with brief prefaces and occasional notes by A. Cleveland Coxe was originally published by the Christian Literature Publishing Co, Buffalo, NY 1887, and reissued by W.B.Eerdmans, Grand Rapids MI 1950-.

A selection of Tertullian's writings is available in '*The Fathers of the Church*' series (vols 10 and 40), translated by Rudolph Arbesmann OSA, Sister Emily Joseph Daly CSJ, and Edwin A Quain SJ, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press 1950, 1959.

The *Apology* and *On the Shows* has been translated by T.R.Glover in the Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1984.

2. Studies:

Perhaps the best study, partly biographical, available in English is that of Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian. A Historical and Literary Study*. Reissued with corrections and postscript, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1985.

A recent and highly recommended study of aspects of Tertullian's theology has been made by David Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995.

My own monograph, *Ancient Rhetoric and the Art of Tertullian*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1971 offers a literary analysis of Tertullian's writings.

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ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL: AN ANCIENT COPTIC HOMILY

*Tina Shepardson**

In 1910, a cache of Coptic manuscripts was discovered at the Monastery of St. Michael, near Hamuli, Egypt. This present homily, from a codex of writings about St. Michael the Archangel, was among the manuscripts found in 1910,¹ which currently belong to the Pierpont Morgan Library. While this codex itself dates from the ninth or tenth century,² no one has yet determined the origin of this individual homily. Tracing the homily's history is impeded by the fact that although the majority of this codex is intact, the beginning of this particular homily is missing. Consequently, we do not know to whom the homily was attributed, nor its original title. Nonetheless, based on the content of the remaining text, the occasion for this homily appears to have been St. Michael's feast day. The beginning half of the extant text, however, is a digression from praising St. Michael into questions of ritual purity where the author enjoined his hearers to right action and belief. It is only on folio 45vA³ that the author returned to St. Michael, and it is the part of the homily that follows this digression that is translated here.

The language of the text is mostly the Sahidic dialect, although there are several instances of Bohairic, a few of Fayyumic, and a large number of Greek loan words. Before the birth of Jesus, the Old Testament had been translated into Greek, a translation known as the Septuagint. The Septuagint was widely used in Hellenized areas of the ancient world where Greek became a common language among Jews, and later among Christians as well. For these Jews and early Christians, the Greek Septuagint was their Bible, supplemented for later Christians

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1 This homily is from M592, folios 41r-50r.

2 Depuydt, p. 230.

3 This designates folio 45, verso, column A.

by the Pauline and deutero-Pauline epistles as well as by the four canonical gospels. By the third century, the Septuagint had also been translated into Coptic and was used by Christian churches in Upper Egypt.⁴ It is clear that the author of this homily to St. Michael used the Septuagint as his Old Testament,⁵ as several of his biblical citations are from passages found exclusively in the Septuagint, not in the original Hebrew text.⁶

Within this homily, there are a large number of biblical quotes, often used to support the author's view. The majority of the references to both the Old Testament and the New Testament texts are not merely paraphrases, but are verbatim quotes.⁷ There are, however, places where the author conflated gospel traditions in order to relate various gospel elements in a single coherent story, much as modern Christmas pageants or sermons might contain both shepherds (from Luke's gospel) and wise men (from Matthew's gospel). Other places in the homily, the author referred to traditions that are not recorded in the Bible.⁸ At one point he even appears to have quoted⁹ from the extra-biblical text of the Assumption of Moses.¹⁰ On folio 46vB, the author introduced a story about Satan and Michael fighting over the body of Moses, the same story scholars have reconstructed as the lost ending of the Assumption of Moses. While the story in this homily shares some information with Jude 9, the homily also includes greater detail than Jude. As the story recorded here is consistent with scholars' reconstruction of the end of the Assumption of Moses and uses the familiar quoting formula ("Listen! He says. . ."), this homily may contain a quote from the otherwise-unattested end of that extra-biblical text.

The conclusion of this homily preaches against the heresy of docetism, the belief that Jesus was fully divine, but not fully human. There were different docetic heresies, but they all believed that while Jesus took a human form, he did not suffer as humans suffer. It appears that the author of this homily was concerned not only with heresy in general, but with a particular docetic heresy that he felt threatened his community of listeners. Hence, he warned his congregation, "Be vigilant, then, against this evil snare of the polluted and godless heretics. Do not mix with them in anything" (49rA). The docetic nature of this heresy later becomes clear: "I curse

4 Peters, p. 1095.

5 It is unclear whether this homily was originally composed in Coptic or in Greek. The large number of Greek loan words and idioms suggests that it may have originally been Greek. Regardless, the author's use of the Septuagint, whether in Greek or Coptic, is clear.

6 See, for example, his use of Psalm 151 on folio 48vA.

7 Studying Horner's editions of ancient Coptic New Testaments revealed that this manuscript parallels the southern (Sahidic) New Testament texts much more closely than the northern (Bohairic) texts.

8 See, for example, the tradition that Michael cast Satan into a pool of fire.

9 Every other instance in this text of **ϮϮϮ ϮϮϮϮ ϮϮ** ("Listen! He said. . .") introduces a direct quote from the Bible. I would argue that the author used this phrase consistently in introducing direct textual quotes.

10 The majority of this text exists in a Latin translation, and earlier fragments exist in Greek. There is no surviving text, however, of the end of the story. References from ancient authors allow scholars to reconstruct the general outline of the end of the Assumption of Moses, but we do not have the actual text.

the one who divides the flesh of the Logos from him, saying, 'The divinity did not share with his humanity in the burdens he suffered for us.' He is accursed" (49vB). While its origin still lies shrouded in uncertainty, this ancient Coptic homily offers an opaque glimpse into the life and history of the early Coptic Church.

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Horner, G. *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect*. Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1969.

Peters, Melvin K. H. "Septuagint." In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, ed. in chief David Noel Freedman, 1093-1104. NY: Doubleday, 1992.

Homily on St. Michael the Archangel: Pierpont Morgan M592, Folios 45v-50r

(45vA) So let us arise, O my beloved ones, and let us call upon God with an upright heart. Let us call upon the archangel Michael, into whose martyrion we are going and for whom we are keeping festival. Let him see the intention of each one of us. He will entreat Christ for us, and [Christ] will forgive us our sins.

Listen! He said,² "He is merciful."³ He will obtain grace for us before the Lord so that he will forgive us, because he is merciful. Further, Michael is the great archangel who is at the right hand of God, entreating him always for the salvation of all the world, the people and the beasts.

(45vB) But if anyone hears me say that the archangel Michael prays for us in the presence of the Lord, do not let that one continue enduring in his sins,⁴ and his fornications, and his thievery, and his slanders, and his false oaths, and

1 I would like to recognize and thank Dr. Orval Wintermute for his patience and his assistance with this translation. I give acknowledgement to Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, who owns the original manuscript, for allowing me to publish this translation.

2 The pronoun here could refer either to scripture, or, because it is from a psalm of David, to David himself.

3 Compare, for example, Ps 103:8.

4 Literally this sentence is "But do not let one hear me saying that the archangel Michael prays for us in the presence of the Lord, and so that he [that one] still continue in his sins."

[his]⁵ compounding interest,⁶ and all these other sins that I said. But if you do all the things that are good, and if you reveal that you are good, he will entreat Christ for us so that he will forgive us our sins that we did before, when you call upon him saying, “O, great archangel Michael, surely you will pray for us before Christ so that he will forgive us. I will not sin again!”

Also, you will not say, “Michael forgives me my (46rA) sins.” For Michael is not a god, but an archangel who prays for the salvation of all the world. Michael also is the one who prays to God for the coming forth of the fruits of the field and the dew of the sky and of the firmament.⁷ He also prays concerning the water of the Nile⁸ until God brings it down upon the earth. Truly if people knew the prayer of Michael the holy archangel, the hour when the water will come down upon the earth,⁹ they would not have sinned. Since he is in contact with the angels and all the saints, they bow and worship; and they do not cease bowing before the throne of God until His mercy reaches us and until He sends down to us the water (46rB) upon the earth.

If he sees that our repentance appeared, he will entreat Christ for us, and he will pity us, entreating Christ for us. How are we burdened with the load of our sins? It is with the fornication, and the false oaths, and the witness who scoffs that the Liar¹⁰ works in us. These arrogances and partialities and these covetousnesses and the remainder of all the sins which I did not say, if he sees these in us, how will he entreat Christ for us? But if we reveal that we are those of the holy archangel Michael, he will purify us from our sins. For the angels are flames of fire. If they see us doing (46vA) these little sins, they are like coals of fire in us. And Michael the archangel entreats¹¹ [the sins] because he is very merciful. He entreats them, “Why are you unmerciful toward [the people]? For

5 It is possible the text is missing a letter here, which would make **NE** into the parallel construction **NEC**.

6 This literally says “the taking interest of interest.” I would argue it has the sense of the Greek **τόκοι τόκων**, to “compound interest.”

7 This last phrase literally says “and the steadfastness of the air” (**ΜΗΠΕΣΤΕΡΕΦΩΜΑ ΜΠΑΗΡ**). This phrase appears to parallel the Greek **τὸν τῶν οὐρανίων στερέωμα** (“the steadfastness of the heavens”), which Liddell claims means “firmament” and is used in the Septuagint (Liddell, p. 1640). Further, Lampe adds that **ἀήρ** was “often equated in scripture with **οὐρανός**” (p. 41). This suggests that the Coptic phrase is a translation from the Septuagint and means “firmament”.

8 The text literally says “the water of the river”, but it is likely that the reference to “the river” in Egypt is a specific reference to the Nile River.

9 While this could be a reference to the story of Noah, it could also refer to the yearly cycle of the water coming back to the Nile, a season which was of the utmost importance for life in near the Nile River.

10 This is a common name for Satan.

11 The Coptic word here (**CACTWA**) generally means “to console” (Crum, p. 332). Crum notes, however, that the word is often a translation of the Greek word **παρακαλέω** (Crum, p. 332). Given the many uses of Greek words and Greek meanings in this homily, I suggest that this word has more the Greek meaning of “to entreat” than the Coptic “to console.”

it is the devil who is unmerciful, misleading [the people].” Thereupon [the sins] turn themselves back.¹²

You knew, O my beloved ones, that the great holy archangel Michael made war with the devil always, until he takes humankind from him through the command of the divine, the Creator. Come into our midst today, O holy apostle Jude, since you said in your catholic epistle, **(46vB)** “When Michael the archangel spoke with the devil, when he judged him about the body of Moses, he did not undertake to bring even one judgment upon him, but he said, ‘The lord will condemn you’.”¹³ What is this judgment that you contend with him against the devil? Who then is the one who judges for you over him except the Creator of everything. He created him and He cast him to the furnace of fire.

Listen! He said,¹⁴ “It is with [the devil] I went to court about the body of Moses, because the hour [Moses] came from within the body, the devil came and he seized [the body] on account of the Egyptian whom [Moses] slew. And [the devil] did not know that [Moses] spoke with God many times, and [God] said to [Moses], ‘You found **(47rA)** favor before me, more than everyone’.”¹⁵ Thereupon, the archangel Michael brought the judgment upon [the devil]. He said, “It is the Lord who condemns you. That is, it is not I who created you, and I do not curse you. But the one who created you, it is he who will condemn you.”

Listen to him in the Apocalypse of John, the beloved of God, when he says, “A war occurred up in the heaven, Michael with his angels and the dragon with his angels, fighting. They did not prevail, nor did they find a place up in the heaven. Michael,” [John] said, “prevailed over the dragon, the ancient serpent, the one called Devil and Satan.”¹⁶ **(47rB)** He bound him in a chain, and all his angels with him, and he cast them down to the lake full of fire.

Listen again to the holy psalmist David when he said, “The angel of the Lord surrounds those who fear the Lord, and he saves them.”¹⁷ Behold the three saints who were cast into the furnace which was full of fire.¹⁸ God sent you and you helped them.

Michael the archangel is the one who seized Habbakuk by the hair of his head, and the breakfast which was in his hand; and he brought it to the pit of

12 This paragraph has many third-person plural pronouns without clear referents. I have tried to make the meaning clear.

13 Jude 9

14 This is the possible quote from the Assumption of Moses.

15 Compare Ex 33:17.

16 Rev 12:7

17 Ps 34:7

18 Dan 3

lions and he gave it to Daniel. He said to him, "Receive this, and eat, and rejoice." And he lifted up Habbakuk to his place again.¹⁹ Michael the archangel (47vA) is the one who went to the shepherds who were in the field and he gave them the good news. He said to them, "Rejoice, because Christ the Lord is born to you today in the city of David."²⁰ Michael the archangel is the one who rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb of the Savior when he arose from the dead.

O archangel Michael, I wish to see you when the women saw your face which was filled with glory, and you consoled them, saying, "Do not fear, for I know that you seek Jesus, the one whom they crucified. He is not in this place, for he arose according to the way which he told you."²¹

O [you] of the mouth²² that pours forth joy, holy (47vB) archangel Michael. You preached the resurrection of the Lord in saying to the women that he arose from the dead. Michael the great archangel is the one who appeared to Cornelius,²³ saying to him, "Your prayers and your charity went up, making a remembrance of you in the presence of God."²⁴ Michael the archangel is the one who appeared to Paul in the voyage. [Paul] said, "An angel of my God whom I serve appeared to me in this evening. He said to me, 'Do not fear, Paul, for it is necessary that you be set before the king. For God granted you everyone who is on the voyage with you'."²⁵ Michael is the one who saved Manoah and (48rA) his wife on account of Samson, until he made them whole.²⁶ Michael the great archangel is the one who opened the doors of the prison in the night and he brought Peter out.²⁷

But it is Gabriel who is the one who appeared to Daniel, teaching him the visions as it is written, "Gabriel, teach this man the vision."²⁸ "And again he came to me, the man Gabriel, and he gave me strength."²⁹ Gabriel is the one who went to Mary and he gave her the good news saying, "Behold, you will conceive and you will bear a child, and you will call his name³⁰ 'Emmanuel',

19 Bel and the Dragon 33-39. While Bel and the Dragon is not part of the Hebrew Old Testament, it is part of the Septuagint. This passage implies that the author of this homily was using a copy of the Septuagint.

20 Lk 2:10-11

21 Mt 28

22 This literally says "O one of the mouth" (Ϡ ΠΑΤΤΑΠΡΟ). I have interpreted it to refer to Michael.

23 Acts 10:3

24 Acts 10:4

25 Acts 27:23-24

26 Judges 13

27 Acts 12

28 Dan 8:16

29 Compare Dan 10:18.

30 Lk 1

that is, as it is interpreted, ‘God is with us’.³¹ Gabriel again is the one who went to Zechariah in the Temple,³² and he proclaimed to him the birth of John.³³

But Michael (**48rB**) the archangel is the one who went to Abraham under the tree of Mamre.³⁴ Michael is the protector of all the Christians. Michael is the one who is with the anchorites until they complete their life in peace. Michael also is the one who is with the virgins until they give their virginity to the Lord. He again is the one who is with the priests in the house of God. He also is the one who is the father of orphans. He also is the one who is with the martyrs in the court of judgment until they die and receive their crowns. He prays concerning the fruit; he prays concerning the salvation of people; he prays on account of those being harmed, until God gives their judgment. (**48vA**) In sum, he is the one who bows at the feet of the Father always for the salvation of all the world.

Michael is the one who went to Jeremiah the prophet in the pit of mud.³⁵ Michael is the one who went to King David. For it is written in the psalter, “He sent his angel, and he lifted me up from the sheep of my father.”³⁶ But in another place again, “The angel of the Lord surrounds those who fear him, and he saves them.”³⁷ O blessed David the prophet, truly you glorified the great archangel. And again Michael is the one who went to Joseph, and he saved him from the perdition of the Egyptian woman.³⁸ And he filled him with every wisdom. Michael is the one who went to the Ethiopian eunuch of the Candace, (**48vB**) the Queen of the Ethiopians.³⁹ Michael again was with David, saving him from all his afflictions.

O my beloved children, I did not keep from telling you the word of God. And I told you about the salvation of your souls according to those things that the Holy Spirit put in my mouth. And again I told you about the mercy of God and the honor of the great holy archangel Michael, that he is the one who prays and entreats for us before God always.

Be vigilant then, of this evil snare of the Devil. Do not cease praying⁴⁰ day after day, month after month, year after year so that our life will not cease from us and they will not carry off from us the things of heaven, and so that we will

31 Mt 2:23. This sentence is an example of the author conflating the details of the various gospels into a single story.

32 Lk 1:11

33 Lk 1:13

34 Gen 18:1

35 Compare Jer 38:6. It is worth noting that there is no angel in the Jeremiah text. The stories attributed to Michael usually contain an anonymous messenger in the biblical text, which then becomes Michael in the story.

36 Ps 151:4. This psalm is unique to the Septuagint.

37 Ps 34:7

38 Gen 39

39 Acts 8:27

40 Literally, this word means “casting.” I believe this is another instance of Greek influence, and is a translation of *βάλλω*, which Lampe says can refer to “prostration in prayer” (p. 283).

draw near to the platform of Christ.⁴¹ They judge (**49rA**) for us whether we do to them good or evil.

O woe to the one who will die polluted in his sins! O woe to the one who will come from a poverty to another poverty! O woe to the one who will come from a small distress to a great unending distress!

Be vigilant, then, against this evil snare of the polluted and godless heretics. Do not mix with them in anything. If one mixes with them in ignorance, let him withdraw from them. Remember the word the wise man Paul said: "A heretical person, after you teach him once or twice and he does not withdraw himself from his evil things, the synod cuts him off from Christianity."⁴²

(**49rB**) The one who will dare to say from his mouth,⁴³ "The divinity of the Lord did not share with his humanity in the manger in which he was laid, and the wrapping of the rags, and his crawling, and his going to the bridal chamber, and his baptism which was complete, and the blows they struck upon his divine face, and when they bound him by his hands, and when Pilate judged him in the tribune, and when they scourged him, and when they scorned him, saying, 'He did these things through Beelzebub,'⁴⁴ and the hour when these godless ones took him away while the cross was raised for him, and the hour he said upon the cross, 'I thirst'⁴⁵ while the burning heat (**49vA**) of the sun burned him, the hour he said to the thief, 'Today you will be with me in paradise,'⁴⁶ and the hour when he opened his mouth and gave up the spirit, and the hour when they nailed a nail to his divine hands and his feet, and the hour he died when a spear pierced him in his divine rib,⁴⁷ and the hour they put him in the tomb, and all the remainder until he arose from the dead after three days."

The one who does not confess that the divinity shared in all these things, or that it becomes distant to the measure of a blink of the eye, becomes accursed to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in this age and the one to come. The one who will summon ones (**49vB**) of this sort, or the one who will share with them, they are strangers to the kingdom of the heavens. I am this least one, and miserable. I curse those who do not confess with us how much all these burdens happened to him. His divinity does share with his humanity. I curse the one who divides the flesh of the Logos from him, saying, "The divinity did not share with his humanity in the burdens he suffered for us." He is accursed.

41 The text here is difficult to read. I am indebted to Dr. Wintermute for the translation of much of this sentence.

42 Compare Titus 3:10.

43 This is the beginning of the polemic against docetism.

44 Mt 12; Lk 11

45 Jn 19:28

46 Lk 23:43

47 Jn 19:34

Through the prayers that the archangel Michael makes for us and prays to Christ Jesus, our Lord and our God and our King, so that he bears these burdens and distresses which rose up against the church, and guards **(50rA)** all this crowd which is gathered in this holy place today, and gives to us all our request, all at one time, we finish our lifetime in orthodoxy and we pass a lifetime that is tranquil, through the grace and **(50rB)** the kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. He is the one through whose hand every glory will be fitting for you, with him and the Holy Spirit, creator and consubstantial, now and forever and ever. Amen.

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THE SINS OF SAINT MONICA*

Rodolph Yanney

Successive generations of Christians have invoked St. Monica and venerated her as patroness of married women and a pattern for Christian mothers.¹ She gained her sanctity and fame because of St. Augustine whom she gave to the world and with whom she always appears in her pictures and icons. Not only did she give physical birth to the greatest Church Father and theologian, but she has always been credited for being 'God's principal instrument in bringing about his spiritual birth by Grace'.¹ St. Augustine says plainly in his *Confessions*,

"And thou didst *send thy hand from on high*, and thou drawest my soul out of that profound darkness, when my Mother, thy faithful servant, did weep for me in thy presence more bitterly than mothers are used to bewail the corporal death of their children... Thou didst hearken to her and didst not despise her tears which, flowing down, did water the earth in all the places where she prayed."²



Without trying to challenge Monica's role in the conversion of Augustine, a question can be raised: how much was Monica herself directly or indirectly responsible for Augustine's fall into 'that profound darkness' where God found him? Despite the fact that Augustine idolized the figure of Monica in *The Confessions*,

* This paper was delivered at the Eleventh North American Patristic Society Conference at the Loyola University, Chicago, in May 1996.

1 Thurston H & Attwater D: *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, Volume II, London, 1956:226.

2 Hudleston DR: *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, in the translation of Sir Tobie Matthew. London, 1923, 3:11.

still we can find several major events in her life which were not consistent with a devout Christian life, and which adversely affected the moral and spiritual development of the young Augustine.

Marriage to a Pagan

In the first centuries of Christianity marriage was regulated by the civil laws. Although marriage was arranged by the parents, the Roman law allowed those who were old enough to give their own consent.³ As early as c. AD 110 St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote, "It is proper for men and women who wish to marry to be united with the consent of the bishop."⁴ But there is no indication that this became a widespread practice in the early centuries. Tertullian wrote in the beginning of the third century,

"Where are we to find words enough fully to describe the happiness of that marriage which the Church cements, and the oblation confirms, and the benediction signs and seals; which angels carry back the news of to heaven, and which the Father ratifies?"⁵

In the same treatise Tertullian described the ideal of a Christian couple and pointed to the difficulties of mixed unions. Still that ideal was frequently ignored even in the fourth century when the Empire became Christian. It was only in AD 1150 that marriage was considered one of the seven Church sacraments in the West.⁶ Augustine was the first Church Father to use the term in describing marriage, but he did not use it in the same sense he used for Baptism and Eucharist. There was no liturgical marriage celebration in the fourth century, only the traditional family ceremony, often without any special church blessing or union.⁷ What was described earlier by Tertullian may have been a church wedding, but it is more

Chronological Table	
Birth of Monica	c. 332
Marriage to Patricius	349
Birth of Augustine	354
Baptism of Patricius	370
Death of Patricius	371
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Birth of Adeodatus	372
Augustine Reads Hortensius	373
Augustine in Carthage	376-383
Augustine in Milan	384-387
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Baptism of Augustine	Easter 387
Death of Monica	387
Augustine Returns to Africa	388
Death of Adeodatus	c. 390
Augustine ordained priest in Hippo	391
Co-episcopos at Hippo	395
Bishop of Hippo	396
Death of Augustine	430

3 Martos J: *Doors to the Sacred*. New York: Doubleday, 1966:407.

4 *Letter To Polycarp*, 5:1.

5 Tertullian: *To My Wife*, 2:8. The translation is adapted from The Ante-Nicene Fathers.

6 Osborne KB: *Sacramental Guidelines*. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1995:28.

7 *Doors to the Sacred*, op. cit. pp 409, 413 & 414.

likely that he is referring to the blessing in the weekly eucharistic liturgy.⁸ Church and Civil laws to prohibit mixed marriages began to appear in the fourth century, but they were ignored very frequently. Canon 15 of the Synod of Elvira (c. AD 306) states,

"Christian virgins are not to be given in marriage to pagans because of a surplus of girls, so that their youthful age, as it swells into a blossom, does not result in the soul's adultery."⁹

Although no penalty is stated in this canon, yet both canon 16 (condemning marriage to heretics or Jews) and canon 17 (concerning marriage to idol priests) excommunicate the parents.⁹ Apparently those laws considered the role of the bride totally passive (and hence no penalty), or saw her already lost to the faith of the groom. Anyhow they were practically ignored in most areas in the first half of the fourth century, as a result of women outnumbering men in conversion to Christianity.¹⁰ Things did not change when the empire became Christian. In the West men from the upper classes felt that it was disreputable and un-Roman to convert to the new religion. Likewise the intellectuals of the Greek East kept attached to their past.¹¹ As a result, the influence of Christian women on the religious life of the time was very considerable¹² Monica is only one example. She was born in a pious Christian family and at the age of 18 she was given in marriage to Patricius who was a pagan. He was a full Roman citizen and a member of the municipal council of Thagaste, near Carthage. The marriage was arranged by the parents as was still the custom in rural areas. It was a rough marriage for Monica, but nothing was unexpected. Could she have refused to marry? She used to attend church regularly and no doubt she had knowledge of the numerous tales of the virgin martyrs who chose to die rather than marry a pagan ruler. During the same period St. Macrina had no problem objecting to her father's advice to marry after the death of her betrothed.

When Tertullian discussed the problems encountered in a mixed marriage he said nothing about its effect on the children. In a treatise written by Chrysostom on the right way to bring up children he put the primary responsibility on the father.¹³ Patricius sacrificed much to give his son a classical education. Other than that the role of the father is either negative or absent in *The Confessions*. Augustine states that he was believing in Christ since his childhood, '... and so did my mother with her whole house, excepting only my father...' ¹⁴ Augustine did not have the father who could teach him the faith, tell him the Bible stories, and lead him by the hand

8 Ibid. p. 407.

9 Hunter DG: *Marriage in the Early Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress press, 1992:142.

10 Volz CA: *Faith and Practice in the Early Church*. Minneapolis:Augsburg, 1983:187.

11 Henry Chadwick: *The Early Church*. England:Pinguin Books, 1967: 161.

12 Frend WHC: *The Rise of Christianity*. Fortress Press, 1984:561, 562.

13 Volz, op. cit. p. 184.

14 *Confessions*, op. cit. 1:11.

when going to church as Chrysostom advised. On the negative side Augustine compared the virtuous character of his Christian mother to Patricius' choleric temper and unfaithfulness to her.

Delaying the Baptism of Augustine

The role of Baptism in salvation and its importance as a sacrament of initiation into the Church made infant Baptism a practice since the Apostolic time.¹⁵ The belief in the importance of Baptism led to two opposing views, one insisting on baptizing infants, the other postponing it to a later period in life. In Africa, early in the third century Tertullian wrote against baptizing infants, "Let them come when they are growing up, when they are of an age to be instructed... Why should innocent infants hurry to the remission of sins?" He also advised postponing Baptism for the unmarried 'for temptation lies on wait for them'.¹⁶ Cyprian later in the same century in a council with the African bishops, argued that infants should be baptized anytime, even in the second or third day after birth and that 'the mercy and grace of God ought to be denied to no man born'¹⁷

Delaying the Baptism of Augustine had nothing to do with his father who had no objection to having Christian children; Augustine was signed with the sign of the cross and seasoned with God's salt, as a sign of initiation as a catechumen, at the time of his birth. But the delay was a decision of his Christian mother. In this she had a great company, that included Emperor Constantine who was baptized on his deathbed, the Church Fathers Gregory of Nazianzus (baptized when he was about 30 years of age), Ambrose of Milan and Nectarius of Constantinople -- both baptized on the day they were ordained, and a lot of others. St. Augustine condemned the custom, but it took more than one century after him to die out.

Later in his childhood Augustine had a fever and was about to die. He desired to be baptized and Monica hastily arranged for the Sacrament. But his sudden recovery stopped everything. This was a mistake as Augustine says in *The Confessions*,

"How much better had it been if I had been quickly cured...that my soul, its health assured, might have been safe in thy custody who didst create it"¹⁸

As if it was not enough for the young Augustine to be deprived of the training of a Christian Father, he also was not admitted to the liturgical life of the Church his mother. St. Monica, Augustine tells us, assisted at the holy Altar without inter-

15 Origen: *Commentaries on Romans*, 5:9.

16 Tertullian: *On Baptism*, 18.

17 Cyprian: *Letters*, 64:2. In: Jurgens WA: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Vol. I. Liturgical Press, 1970:233.

18 *Confessions*, 1:11.

mission of one day... and she tied herself fast by the bond of faith. But *The Confessions* do not say whether Augustine ever accompanied her. We know that when he was studying at Carthage he occasionally went to church but not for prayer, although he loved to attend the Easter vigils.¹⁹

When was Augustine Introduced to Scripture?

No doubt the young Augustine had some biblical knowledge. As a boy he knew that Baptism is essential for salvation. He knew about Christ and about heaven and hell. He learned some moral standards from Monica. But she never introduced him to Scripture or taught him to pray.

The first religious experience Augustine had was at the age of 19 when he was in Carthage. It came while he was reading Cicero's²⁰ book *Hortensius*. Augustine had been living with a concubine for two years, and still had thirteen more years to spend along crooked paths both morally and intellectually before his conversion. But through the medium of this pagan book, God who has his own ways kindled his spark which would never be extinguished,

"And this book altered my affection and made me address prayers to thee, O Lord, giving me other desires and purposes than I had before. All empty hopes did instantly grow base in mine eyes, and with incredible heat of heart did I aspire toward the immortality of wisdom, for now I had begun to rise that I might return to thee... How was I kindled then, O my God, how was I kindled with a desire to fly from earthly things towards thee!..."²¹

Augustine knew that something was missing from the book, "I found not the name of Christ therein; for this name, O Lord, through thy mercy, this name of my Saviour, thy Son, my infant heart had, even in the very milk of my mother, drunk in and carefully retained."²¹

It was at this time that Augustine turned to study the Bible. But for him it was a great disappointment as compared to Cicero in style and content. Augustine was repulsed by the poor Latin translation available at the time, by the earthy and immoral OT stories and by the long and contradictory genealogies that introduced the life of Christ.²²

Augustine was then ready to fall into the heresy of Manichaeism which offered the type of pseudo-philosophical faith that would appeal to him. The OT was totally rejected as the work of the Prince of Darkness. Even Augustine's illicit

19 *Confessions*, op. cit., 3:3. Peter Brown: *Augustine of Hippo*. London: Faber & Faber, 1967:41.

20 Rome's greatest orator. He was also a writer, poet, philosopher and politician. Died in 43 BC.

21 *Confessions*, 3:4.

22 *Augustine of Hippo*, op. cit., p. 42.

sexual acts were not his responsibility because they were not done by his real self, but by the evil within. For nine years Augustine remained a Manichaeian. Had Augustine, like Paul's disciple Timothy, been taught the Bible by his mother since childhood (2 Tim 1:5 & 3:15) we could have had a different story!

Price of Worldly Ambition

Although Patricius and Monica differed much in several areas of their married life, yet in one thing there was total agreement, that was their plans for Augustine. He had to get the best education they could afford after which he could marry from the upper-class circles. Monica apparently did not think much about his moral or spiritual development. Was she sure that the faith which Augustine had sucked with her milk as an infant was going to survive those plans? She had to discover the answer later through many sufferings; "and by those torments," in the words of Augustine, "was she proved to be one of the children of Eve, with sorrow seeking that which with sorrow she had brought forth"²³

Augustine was educated to become a master of the spoken and written word. He studied the Latin literary works, all by Pagan authors. His education carried him from his home town Thagaste to Carthage. At the age of fifteen he spent a whole year at home till his father had saved enough money for his studies. Among wicked company Augustine 'went up and down the streets of Babylon, and weltered in the mire.'²⁴ It was the year he reached adolescence. Young people used to marry at that age, but Monica did not like the idea 'lest the clog of a wife might have hindered her hopes of me, not those hopes of the other world, but the hope of fame through learning which both my parents did extremely desire that I might attain'²⁴

The only thing that Monica did repeatedly during this period was to advise Augustine that he should keep himself pure from all women, and especially from any man's wife. This double standard was accepted by the fourth century society. Anyhow the advice was not taken seriously by the young Augustine who preferred to follow the way of his companions.

After this year at home, Augustine went to Carthage for four years to finish his studies. In his first year he was attached to a concubine with whom he lived for 15 years and who gave him his son Adeodatus. This relationship was tolerated by Monica as a second class marriage, a situation that was common everywhere in the Roman empire.

²³ *Confessions*, 5:8.

²⁴ *Confessions*, 2:3.

Thirteen years later a marriage was arranged for Augustine, at least in part by Monica, to a rich heiress²⁵ from one of the best families in Milan.²⁶ Both Augustine and Monica waited in vain for God to reveal to her by a vision the future of this marriage!²⁵ The bride had to wait for two years to become of age. But what would happen to Augustine's concubine? The moral standard of the day had no scruples about casting her off. It was even encouraged in Christian circles. In a sermon on Abraham, Ambrose of Milan said that the OT Patriarch had been wise to cast off his low born concubine. The bishop then asked his hearers: did they want marriage beneath their class, children to whom they could not pass on their land, or their noble wives snubbed by serving maids?²⁷ Pope Leo, in the following century in Rome, would say that to abandon one's concubine, in order to take a wife in legitimate matrimony was 'not bigamy, but a sign of moral improvement.'²⁸

This does not mean that there was no other alternative. In the same century, Libanius of Antioch, a pagan rhetorician and writer, remained with his concubine till his death. The fourth century Church had no problem accepting the marriage of Augustine to his concubine. As early as the third century Bishop Callistus of Rome permitted marriage between men and women of different social status.²⁹ The canons of Elvira and of Basil permitted the marriage of couples who had previous sexual relations, but a period of penance was required.³⁰

However, because of ambition and regardless of its morality, the decision was taken to send the woman back to Africa. Augustine's only chance of success and getting a prominent place in Milan was an alliance with one of its great families.³¹ Both Augustine and Monica were responsible for the decision that pierced the hearts of Augustine, the unnamed concubine and their twelve year old son. Augustine describes the consequences,

"In the meantime my sins were multiplied, and that mistress of mine, who was wont to be my bedfellow, being torn from my side as an impediment to my marriage, my heart that cleaved to her was broken and wounded until it bled. To Africa then returned she, vowing to thee that she would never know man more, and leaving with me the son whom I had begotten of her. But I, miserable man, unable to imitate the woman, and being impatient of the two years' delay after which I should receive her whom I desired, and being less a lover of marriage than a slave to

25 *Confessions*, 6:13.

26 Smith WT: *Augustine*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980:46.

27 Ambrose: *de Abraham*, I: 3 & 4. Cited by Brown, op. cit., p. 89.

28 Leo: *Epistle* 167, cited by Brown, op. cit., p. 89.

29 *Faith and Practice in the Early Church*, op. cit., p. 187.

30 Elvira #72, Basil #26. In: *Marriage in the Early Church*, op. cit., pp. 142 & 146.

31 Augustine: *Soliloquies*, 1:10, 11. Referred to by Brown, op. cit., p. 63.

lust, did procure yet another -- through not a wife -- by whom that disease of my soul, as strong or even stronger than before, might be sustained... Yet neither was that wound cured which had been made in me by cutting off my former love...¹¹³²

Conclusion

It was scarcely two years before (AD 383) that St. Monica spent a whole night in the church of St. Cyprian at Carthage weeping and begging of God to hinder Augustine's departure to Italy. In that same night he secretly departed. For so many years she had been praying for his salvation, that he might quit his errors and sins for which she was partially to blame. Meanwhile Augustine's life became a mess; Monica spent miserable years. But God has his own ways to transform the mess and misery into blessings. Within three years of that night Augustine would convert in Italy, and Monica would die in peace. Without the long years of error and sin, we could not have St. Augustine, his theology or writings as we know them now. As for St. Monica, the years of tearful prayers that she made for her son, which watered the earth in all places before God, and made her a patron saint for mothers might have been as well her own prayers of repentance. She had been a living example through which Augustine could always see the light of Christ, a light which he was unable to grasp because of the secular life she was planning for him, for 'when you have regard for creation, the sight of the Creator is withdrawn from you.'¹³³ With the sudden conversion of Augustine in the Garden of Milan in 386, God shattered all Monica's plans. Both mother and son surrendered to his cruel but merciful hand that was shaping the two saints. Augustine abandoned his marriage, hopes for public position, financial security and social prestige. As for Monica, "now she saw that thou hast given her more in my regard than she was wont to beg of thee in all her sad and tearful lamentations. For thou didst so convert me to thyself, as that I did no more desire a wife nor any other ambition of this world... Thus didst thou turn her mourning into joy, more plentiful than she had dared to wish for, and far more clear and purer than she could have found in the offspring of my flesh."¹³⁴

32 *Confessions*, 6:15.

33 Thomas A Kempis: *The Imitation of Christ*, 3:42:2.

34 *Confessions*, 8:12.

THE REDISCOVERY OF FOUR COPTIC SAINTS: STS. BANE, SAMA'AN, BASHNÛNA AND JULIUS

Otto F. A. Meinardus

In these days Coptic hagiology experiences an unprecedented revival. Several contemporary factors have contributed to this revived awareness and appreciation of the Coptic hagiological heritage. Since the middle of this century the general renaissance of the Church has produced an indigenous church-historical scholarship which is concerned with the study of the roots of the Coptic faith and its traditions. Secondly, the numerous translations of Coptic relics from the West to Egypt have indirectly promoted the study of saints.¹ Thirdly, the inventions of holy relics² and the translations of the same from one site to another³ have done their part in producing a collective consciousness of the significance and importance of the *ecclesia triumphans*. The various neo-Coptic schools of Christian art have specialized in portraying the “athletes of God” and the treasures of Coptic church-history in their typically Egyptian environment. These factors as well as the deliberate reflection of the glories of the past have been instrumental in the determined search and study of the confessors and martyrs of the Coptic Church.

The general trend to accept and value the piety, faith and asceticism of certain “holy men” has been a typical characteristic of many modern Coptic men and women. In the light of this observation there are numerous “saints” of the 20th century whose reputation for holiness has been well attested. Some of them might even be considered “venerable.”⁴ This presentation, however, shall not focus its

1 St. Mark (1968), St. Athanasius (1973), St. Verena (1986), St. Maurice (1989), Sts. Cassius and Florentius (1991).

2 E.g. the relics of the Old Testament Prophet Elisha and St. John the Baptist in the Monastery of St. Macarius (Nov. 1978), those of Anbâ Yūsâb ibn il-Abahh of Girga and Akhmîm in the Monastery of St. Antony (1989) or those of the Twelve Martyrs of Naqlûn at the Monastery of St. Gabriel, Fayyûm (1991).

3 E.g. the transfer of Quammus Mikhâil al-Bukhârî (1847-1929) to the new feretory in the Church of St. George, Dair al-Muharraq (Feb. 1991) or the transfer of Anbâ Abra'am of the Fayyûm to his mausoleum at Dair al-Azab (May 1987).

4 Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh al-Maqârî al-Manahrî (1892-1963), Abûnâ Andarâûs as-Samwîlî (1887-1988), Abûnâ Bishoî Kamel (1931-1979), Abûnâ Yustus al-Antûnî (1910-1976), Quammus Ghobrîâl Anbâ Bishoî (d. 1995), Abûnâ Ishaq al-Bardanûhî al-Bûlî (d. 1898), etc.

attention upon the present “saints” but rather upon those men whose identity has been recently established through the invention of their holy relics.

Apa Bane, a case of “Morbus Bechterew”

The discovery of the mummy of the 4th century Apa Bane (Abú Fâna) in 1992 by the international archeological team under Prof. Helmut Buschhausen (Vienna) represents the most significant find in the realm of Coptic hagiology. The saint was embalmed and bandaged in precious linen and rested on a layer of incense in a shaft-tomb. Ever since 1987 this team representing archeologists of seven European universities has excavated the site of Dair Abú Fâna, 30 km south of Minya at the edge of the desert near Qasr Hor. While the *vita* of this famous upper Egyptian saint was known,⁵ only the recent paleopathological examinations and analyses of the skeletal structure could confirm some of the strange ascetic practices of Apa Bane.⁶

Both the saidic version of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* and the 5th century *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* provide information about this saint. He left his native village of Abûsîr near Hermopolis magna (al-Ashmunain) in order to liver for eighteen years in the the absolute darkness of a cave. This was near a spring. He never laid down to rest. Even while eating and sleeping he stood up resting his body upon a wall. The soles of his feet were described being like leather and those of an elephant. He was known to be able to fast three days less than 40 days.⁷ People entrusted him with their money which he distributed to



Official icon of Abu Fana

5 For a bibliography of the mass. of the *vita* of Bane, cf. Gabra, Gawdat, “Zur Vita des Bane, eines Heiligen des 4./5. Jahrhunderts,” *Bull. de la Soc. d’Arch. Cope XXIX*, 1990, 27-41.

6 The results of the paleopathological examination are presented in Buschhausen, Helmut, “Das Mödchswesen in Abu Fano: “Agypten, Schätze aus dem Wüstensand. Kunst und Kultur der Christen am Nil. Weisbaden 1996, 65-67.

7 A typical manifestation of ascetic modesty in view of Matthew 4:2.

the needy, poor and destitute. Some time prior to the year 395 Apa Bane prognosticated the death of the emperor Theodosius I (379-395).

The examination of his skeleton revealed that Apa Bane may have lived for forty years. Already at the age of 22 he may have suffered from *spondylitis hyperostotica* and *spondylitis ankylosans* or *morbis bechterew*. This condition gave him also the name "Bane" or "Palm" in the Upper Egyptian dialect. This means that Apa Bane may have been born around 355 and that he may have died shortly after the death of the emperor Theodosius in 395.

After his death a large monastic community emerged.⁸ The memorial church of Apa Bane (late 5th century) was in many way comparable to the Church of the Metamorphosis at St. Catherine's in Sinai. In the 12th and 13th century the monastery must have enjoyed some prestige. At this time the church was adorned with frescoes.⁹ Moreover, Theodosius II (1294-1300), the 19th successor on the throne of St. Mark, had once served as monk at Dair Abû Fâna. The 15th century historian al-Maqrizi listed the Monastery of Bû Fâna as the 36th. "...it is built of stone and of fine architecture. It belongs to the district of al-Minya, and formerly there were a thousand monks here, but now only two; it lies on the dam below the mountain."¹⁰ The site was rediscovered in 1706 by the Jesuit-father Claude Sicard.¹¹

On the 4th of February (25th of Amshîr) 1992 the Copts of the vicinity in the diocese of Mallawi gathered for a service in the memorial church.¹² However, in 1993 the church was seriously damaged through the earthquake. Two years later the church was desecrated and the liturgical vessels were stolen. His Grace Bishop Demetrius ordered an iconographical presentation of Apa Bane which shows the stiff and bent posture of the saint on account of his suffering from *morbis bechterew*.

Apa Sam'an, the Pious Tanner

From 1989 to 1991 Coptic clergymen and archeologists searched for the relics of the 10th century Tanner Sama'an. According to the testimony of the medieval Coptic synaxaria he was believed to be buried in the cemetery of al-Habash in Old Cairo. The reading of the synaxarion for the 19th of Abîb (26th of July) commemorates the life and death of Pope John X (1363-1369) who was buried next to Sam'an the Tanner. The same source also refers to the ministry and death of Pope

8 Meinardus, O., *Christian Egypt Ancient and Modern*. Cairo 1977, 364-366. I was mistaken with the identification of Abû Fana with St. Epiphanius!

9 Leroy, L., "Les peintures des couvents du désert d'Esna. La peinture murale chez les Coptes I", *IFAO 94*, Cairo 1975, Pl. II.

10 Al-Maqrizi, *Khitat* in Evetts, B.T.A., *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt, etc.* Oxford 1895, 314.

11 Sicard, C., *Nouveaux Mémoires deus Missions de lay Colmpagnie de Jésus dans le Levant II*. Paris 1717, 256-260.

12 Apa Bane is not included in the Coptic Syn axaria.

Gabriel IV (1370-1378) who died on the 3rd of Bashons (11th of May). He was also buried in al-Habash next to Sama'an the Tanner.

It occurred that in the course of the restorations of the ancient Church of the Holy Virgin in Babylon ad-Darag in Old Cairo¹³ the relics of the saint were discovered on Sunday, August 4, 1991, where they rested about 1 m below the surface of the church. The official text of the discovery reads as follows:

“The skeleton belongs to a person who died in his late forties, or in his early fifties. He is short of stature, small in size, of brilliant and beautiful features. The miraculous wonder is that the hair of his head remained intact and did not disintegrate because of the high humidity of the place. This indicated that this person had a bald head in the front, but had very thick hair in the back of his head that reached down to the back of his neck.”¹⁴

Indeed, a 19th century icon of the Pope Anbâ Abraham ibn Za'rah the Syrian in the Church of the Holy Virgin al-Mu'allaqah includes also the bald-headed Tanner carrying two water jars. This picture depicts some of the characteristics of the discovered skeleton.¹⁵

Moreover, outside the nearby Church of Sts. Cyrus and John (Qasr ash-Sham')¹⁶ “a clay pot more than one thousand years old was discovered.” It is believed that this vessel belonged to the Tanner Sama'an with which he used to provide water for the needy and destitute. As a relic, this jar is now kept in the new Church of St. Sama'an, Muqattam, Cairo.

In view of the discovery of the relics of this saint, Pope Shenudah III ordered “that the body should be divided between three churches only, namely the Church of the Holy Virgin in Babylon ad-Darag, the Church of the Holy Virgin al-Mu'allaqah and the Church of St. Sama'an the Tanner, Muqattam, Cairo. On July 9th, 1992, Anbâ Mattaoes, General Bishop for Old Cairo, deposited relics of the saint in the Church of the Holy Virgin in Babylon ad-Darag. Two days later they were presented to the Church of St. Sama'an, Muqattam.”¹⁷



Icon of Abba Sama'an the Tanner

13 Meinardus, O., *The Historic Coptic Churches of Cairo*. Cairo 1994, 53.

14 Anon., *The Biography of Saint Samaan the Shoemaker "the Tanner"*. Cairo 1994, 98.

15 Lambelet, Ed., *The Escape to Egypt*. Cairo 1993, 40 A.

16 Meinardus, O., 55-56.

17 Anon., 97.

The significance of the faith of the Tanner Sama'an lies in his trust in the omnipotence of God by which even the mountain could be moved to the Muqattam.¹⁸ It happened during the reign of the caliph al-Mu'izz (972-975) that a certain Jew named Moses disputed with the patriarch Anbâ Abraham ibn Za'rah (975-978) in the presence of the caliph about the truth of the Gospel. He asked him about the following statement: "If one hath faith as a grain of mustard-seed, and he saith to the mountain: 'Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done'" (Mt. 17:20; Mk 11:23). Thereupon the caliph asked the patriarch: "What sayest thou concerning this word? Is it in your Gospel or not?" Anbâ Abraham answered: "Yes, it is in it." The caliph demanded to witness this miracle to be performed by his hands otherwise he would destroy the patriarch with his sword. Anbâ Abraham requested a delay of three days so as to beseech the Lord. He brought together the monks, priests, elders and all the Orthodox people and imposed upon them a penance to stay for three days in the church.

In the morning of the third day while praying in the Church of the Holy Virgin al-Mu'allaqah the patriarch saw the Holy Virgin who advised him to proceed to the Great Market.¹⁹ "There thou wilt find a one-eyed man carrying on his shoulder a jar full of water, seize him, for he it is at whose hands this miracle shall be manifested." The patriarch followed the advice of the Holy Virgin and he met the man, a tanner, who had plucked out his eye on account of the commandment of the Lord²⁰ and who carried the water to the poor people who had no money to buy it from the water-carrier.

The tanner told the patriarch: "Go out with thy priests and all thy people to the mountain in the presence of the caliph and all his soldiers. Then cry aloud: 'O Lord, have mercy' three times and each time thou shalt prostrate thyself and make the sign of the cross over the mountain." The patriarch followed the words of the tanner and the mountain was lifted from the ground...and the mountain came down to its base. The caliph said: "O patriarch, I have recognized the correctness of thy faith...."²¹

Apa Bashnuna (Shanufa) the New Martyr

In the course of some of the major repairs of the ancient Church of St. Sergius and Bacchus in Old Cairo between 1980 and 1993 - executed by Abûnâ Ghobrîâl Girgis, the parish priest, under the supervision of the Egyptian Antiquities Authority - an important discovery was made. As the workmen dug around the

18 Atiya, A.S., 'Abd al-Masîh, Y., Burmester, O.H. E. Khs-, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church (HPEC)*, II, ii, Cairo 1948, 140-144.

19 For the Great Market, cf. A.J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*. Oxford 1902, 240-242.

20 Matthew 18:9.

21 Abû I-Makarim (13th cent.) places the miracle of the transfer of the mountain to the Maqattam hills through the faith of the tanner into the reign of the caliph al-Aziz bi'llah (975-996). Moreover, the site of the dispute is not the Church of the Holy Virgin al-Mu'allaqah but the Church of St. Mercurius (Abû 's-Saifan). Evetts, B.T.A., *op. cit.*, fol 35a, p. 117.

northeastern column of the nave and the northern base of the ambon they discovered several bones “surrounded by bricks to form a sort of wall to shield the bones from damage. It was God’s infinite care that protected the bones from putrefaction due to the excessive underground waters. The relics were removed with special care on the 25th of April 1991, the 17th of Barmudah 1707”.²² Apparently, there was no doubt that the relics belonged to a Copt, since “there was no historical mention of any other saint or person in St. Sergius Church other than St. Bashuna, which convinced us that these relics belonged to him.”²³

The Coptic historical sources provided the clergymen consisting of Anbâ Mattaas, the General Bishop for Old Cairo, and Abûnâ Ghobrîâl Girgis with the identity of the bodily remains. The vita of Pope John V (1147-1166)²⁴ in *the History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church* provides the necessary background to the martyrdom of the monk Bashnuna. During the caliphate of al-Adid (1160-1171) the Turkoman Ghuzz had killed the wazîr Dirgham and chaos reigned in Cairo.

“And the hands of the Ghuzz were stretched out against the inhabitants of Cairo from among the Christians, the Sudanis and the Armenians and the Turks of the Cairenes. And



22 Bishop Yohanna, *St. Bashnouna, the monk and martyr*. Cairo 1997, 6.

23 According to the testimony of medieval visitors also occidental pilgrims were buried in the church. Sultan Muhammad ibn Qala'un an-Nasir (1310-1314) had transferred certain rights and privileges in this church to the Franciscans which they retained for several centuries. Greffin Affagart (1533/34), *Relation de Terre Sainte*, Paris 1902, 168, refers to “le bon seigneur de la Rivière” who was buried in this church. Brocardi mentioned in a letter dated October 16, 1556 that in this church is the tomb of the Venetian merchant Alfonso Basalu (Monneret de Villard, “Ricerche,” *BSRGE XII*, 1923, 225) and Seior Paul Lucas knew “that many Franks had been buried there.” *Voyage I*, 1704, 225.

24 Meinardus, O., “Das verschollene St. Johannes Colobuskloster entdeckt,” *KEMET*, 6, 3, 1997.

they used to kill them and to sell them, if they found some one to buy from them; if not, they killed that person; and they robbed their possessions and they took their women folk. And they used to cry for sale a Christian: "Who will buy an infidel?, and a Turk of Cairo: Who will buy a dissolute Turk who spent the night in the bitter cold?"....And they used to sell them at a vile price, a Christian for twenty dirhams, and ten dirhams a Turk, and five Dirhams a negro. And a monk was martyred at their hands. His name was Shanufa from the Monastery of Abba Macarius. They seized him and placed before him (the choice) of al-Islâm, but he refused it, and they killed him, and they intended to burn his body, but it did not burn, and the Christians took it, and they buried it in the Church of Abba Sergius in Cairo on the 24th day of Bashons."²⁵

The Coptic Synaxar (13th century) confirmed this report, namely that "on the 25th of Bashons (1st of June) - on the day when the Lord Jesus Christ and His family entered Egypt...and when on their return they stopped in the cave of the Church of Abu Serga in Old Cairo - the holy Bashuna suffered martyrdom. This was in the year 880 A.M. or 1164 A.D. The faithful came and gathered the remains of the body of St. Bashnuna and they transferred them to the Church of Abu Serga in Old Cairo where they buried him."²⁶

Following the discovery of the relics in April 1991 these were placed in a specially manufactured wooden tube. Some of the relics were given to the late Abûnâ 'Abd al-Masîh Girgis, parish priest of the Coptic Church of St. George, Fûm al-Khalîg. He placed them also in a special wooden tube and anointed them with scents and perfumes. Several miracles of healing through the intercession of St. Bashnuna are reported.²⁷

Julius of Aqfahs, Biographer and Writer (22 Tût)

During the recent restoration in the Church of St. Shenudah in Dair Abû 's-Saifain of Old Cairo workmen have discovered beneath the floor of the narthex between the two Roman columns several bones of nameless persons. This occurred in 1994. A Coptic monk of the Monastery of Abû Mînâ in Maryût is said to have experienced a vision of the saint, thereby identifying the bones as those belonging to St. Julius of Aqfahs. It is a noteworthy coincidence that in 1993 the Coptic scholar Yuhanna Nessim Yussef had submitted his doctoral dissertation on "*Recherches sur Jules d'Akfahs*" to the University of Montpellier in France! Though this study mentions the funerary stele of the saint²⁸ it makes no reference to his relics. A copy of the well-known icon of St. Julius by Ibrahim an-Nasikh (1471

25 Khater, A., Burmester, O.H.E. Khs-, *HPEC III*. Cairo 1968, 88.

26 For some reason Bishop Yohanna did not refer to the *HPEC*.

27 Bishop Yohanna, *op. cit.* 34-42.

28 Coptic Museum, Old Cairo, No. 9964 (40 x 30 cm) Middle Egypt?

A.M., 1755A.D.), in the Church of St. Mercurius was made on July 14, 1995 and adorns the shrine of St. Julius in the narthex of the Church of St. Shenudah²⁹ next to the recently discovered relics of the Akhmim Martyrs, Sts. Dioscorus and Aesculapius. St. Julius served as Roman officer whose sympathy was given to the martyrs. He is credited for preserving many relics and composing a special cycle of martyrdoms which he witnessed. Towards the end of the Diocletain persecution he sought martyrdom and made a public confession of faith. The governor of Samannûd executed him. Over 1,500 witnesses were converted.

At no other time in the recent history of the Coptic Church have so many inventions of relics occurred as in the past fifteen years. In fact, today there is hardly a church without relics which were recently unearthed. Visits to diocesan cathedrals and simple village churches confirm this observation.³⁰ Indeed, one is reminded of the severe admonitions of St. Shenudah the abbot who criticised this development very adversely (Zoega clxxxviii).

29 See Backcover.

30 In Shentana al-Hagar where the Holy Virgin appeared in 1997, 1998 repose the relics of the Fayyûm Martyrs and those of St. Salib. In Manyal Shihet where St. Mohrael the Virgin-Martyr, is venerated, repose Sts. Cosmas and Damian. The Cathedral of St. Mark in Alexandria has the relics of St. Anianus, the 2nd Patriarch, and some of the relics of the 8142 martyrs of Akhmim!

BOOK REVIEWS

Encyclopedia of Early Christianity

Second Edition. Edited by Everett Ferguson. New York: Garland Publishing, 1997. 2 volumes, pp. xvii+ 1213. \$ 150 (hardcover). ISBN 0-8153-1663-1

This finely printed encyclopedia surveys the first seven centuries of Christianity in 1245 entries written by 167 patristic scholars and Church historians, with numerous pictures, maps and illustrations. While it addresses the general readers by avoiding technical language, it is indispensable for the scholar for its concise and accurate information as well as the basic and updated bibliography for every entry. Entries cover persons (saints, emperors, Church leaders, philosophers and modern scholars), places, doctrines, social history, art, practices and liturgy. We commend the editor, contributors and publisher for this major achievement and valuable reference on the early Church.

Egypt in Late Antiquity.

By Roger Bagnall. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993, pp.370. \$17.95 (paperback). ISBN 0-691-0 1096-X

This book describes the society, economy and culture of Egypt in the fourth century and first half of the fifth century, with extensive documentation by recent archaeological and papyrological evidence. The book has separate chapters on environment, cities, villages, family life, slavery, use of Greek and Coptic languages, and religion. It is provided with numerous footnotes, an extensive alphabetical bibliography (21 pages) and a general index. This authoritative work will be the standard reference on Egypt during the Coptic period, a period usually ignored inside Egypt, and described by Western scholars as the Byzantine or late Roman period.

The Letters of St. Cyril of Alexandria: Letters 51-110. The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 77

Translated by John I. McEnerney. Washington, D.C. The Catholic University of America. pp. xiii + 204. \$31.95 (hardcover) ISBN 0-8132-0077-6

After a long time waiting for the English texts of the works of St. Cyril of Alexandria, the second collection of the letters appeared to fill in the gap. The

English style is modern and very clear. It is important to provide the reader with a translation which can be used in our times specially for the laity.

Three important remarks must be noted: First is to thank and congratulate the translator. Second is the absence of the various readings of some of the letters where the translator referred the reader to the Greek text published by Schwartz. This does not belittle the excellent rendering of the letters but the readers must be alerted to the fact that some MSS give us different words.

Thirdly the translator should have alerted the readers that the Coptic fragments of the letters were not translated from Coptic but from German and French or at least followed the European style. This is obvious for those who know Coptic.

George Bebawi

BA MA Ph.D. Cantab

Rufus of Shotep: Homilies on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Introduction, Text, and Commentary

J. Mark Sheridan, ed. and trans., Rome: C.I.M., 1998. ISBN 88-85354-05-X. 360 pp. 70,000 Italian lire (\$70).

Most readers of this journal, myself included, had probably not heard of Rufus of Shotep, who does not even have an entry in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*. This volume, edited and translated by J. Mark Sheridan, O.S.B., now restores an important Coptic figure.

Not surprisingly for someone who had vanished from history, very little is known about Rufus. During the last quarter of the sixth century he was the bishop of Shotep (Hypsele), which lies seven km. southeast of Lycopolis (now known as Assiut) in the Thebaid. The eighteen or nineteen Coptic homilies edited and translated here for the first time, part of an "originally prodigious output," come from manuscripts originally in the White Monastery. Unfortunately, the homilies have suffered the same fate as Saint Shenoute's works: not one of them has survived intact, although two are nearly complete. These homilies, Sheridan believes, were not "closet" homilies; they were really preached, at both weekday and weekend (Saturday and Sunday) services, and were apparently taken down by scribes who were present.

Homilies imagine an audience, which raises historical and liturgical questions that point beyond the homilies themselves. Sheridan demonstrates that Rufus "belongs to the Alexandrian exegetical tradition" and is particularly close to Origen. In a period (the late sixth century) when Byzantine exegesis was already producing catenae (collections) rather than original works, Rufus was delivering homilies on the scale of Chrysostom and Origen. "No one else," Sheridan observes, "seems to have been engaging in this kind of activity, as far as we know, either in the Coptic speaking world or in the Greek speaking society of his time."

How representative was Rufus? Does he represent a hitherto unknown level of education in Coptic Egypt? He is evidence "that it was still possible to acquire a good Greek education in Upper Egypt in this period." Even if Rufus was an exception, "an exception must get his education somewhere," Sheridan correctly concludes. And his audience must have been able to understand "something of his complex exegesis." The homilies of his exact contemporaries, John of Shmūñn (Hermopolis Magna, El Ashmunein) and Pisentius of Coptos (Qift or Keft), along with Rufus' work, must cause us to reassess the state of Coptic homiletics, indeed, of Coptic education and life, at the end of the sixth century.

As befits such a work of recovery, *Rufus of Shotep* is a scholarly volume, although one might still wish for translations instead of quotations from Latin and German. Sheridan's introduction is mostly concerned with textual matters. Following the introduction are the Coptic texts and translations. The book concludes with two thirty-page excurses: "Rufus and the Alexandrian Exegetical Tradition" and "The Homilies and the Earlier Exegetical Tradition." This last part has two purposes: "to know what material Rufus might have had at his disposal" and "to discover what portion" of his work "has survived." Sheridan's research is both exhaustive and impressive; he supplies very full notes to the English translations, with references to Origen and others, the Coptic scriptures, and scholarly sources. The book concludes with a full bibliography and indexes of proper names and Greek words.

This volume will be of great interest to historians, philologists, and liturgists. Barring future discoveries of manuscripts, Sheridan's painstaking work to recover Rufus' homilies will remain the standard edition for years to come. This book is a model of scholarship as resurrection: the next edition of *The Coptic Encyclopedia* will have an entry on Rufus. More importantly, thanks to Sheridan's fine work, we now know a bit more about the Coptic world of late antiquity, a world that continues to surprise and teach us.

Tim Vivian

Bakersfield, CA

Art, Modernity and Faith: Restoring the Image

By George Pattison SCM Press Ltd. 9-17 St. Albans Place London N1 0NX, 1998 pb pp, xiii x 208 Stirling £12.95

This book was available as a Macmillan hardback in 1991 but now makes a welcome appearance as an SCM paperback, with a new concluding chapter and extra illustrations. Here we meet, in the person of George Pattison the Dean of Kings College Cambridge, a theologian who is equally at home in the history of art. Dr. Pattison has many valuable things to say, especially in those areas where Christian Orthodoxy probably disagrees with him. A debate with this book is likely to be more valuable than a period of art-catechism in church.

Chapter seven is entitled the Icons of Glory, and, in only fifteen pages, gives an accomplished account of Orthodox iconography. Orthodoxy is seen as a tradition that affirms, in the correct use of the iconographer's paint, wood, egg and pigment, "the theophanous potentialities of matter." The robust Eastern - "highly theological" - defence of the visual image is treated fairly. But Pattison's complaint that the world of the icon is merely a sacred world, turned away from the concerns of secular life, seems ill-judged in the face of the ugly, brutal, vicious work paraded in the world's art galleries at the time of writing. He is aware that there has been a growing interest in icons though he accounts for this as a retreat from modern confusion and flux into the abstract clarity of a heavenly order. This seems equally confusing. The experience of many is that of being 'addressed' by the icons: the icons have a revelatory quality. The icon is experienced as a challenge and invitation to holiness. It affirms our humanity not only as we are but also in what we may become.

Pattison does not finally help us to distinguish with sufficient intellectual rigour between what may be aesthetically compelling in a gallery and what is devotionally befitting in a church. Pattison is probably far too casual in his acceptance of some 'modern' art and at the same time too censorious of its detractors.

This is a book to start an important internal debate in the reader. For the present writer: the lamentable truth is not that the churches are too indulgent with art, but that too many churches have no use for their own often highly-developed iconography. How many Copts are aware of the truly orthodox revival achieved by Isaac Fanous Yussef? How far off is the time when it will be recognised that he is one of the greatest theologians in the Coptic Orthodox Church of the twentieth century? His work, and the work of his School, attributes to the icon the same dogmatic, liturgical and educational significance as it does to the Holy Scriptures. This has always been the Orthodox position. In Pattison's fine sentence summarising the authentic Orthodox declaration: "Iconography, then, is visual theology, revelation in visual form."

John Watson

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BOOK NOTICES

Conciliar Press (P. O.Box 76, Ben Lomond, California 95005):

- **Divine Energy: The Orthodox Path to Christian Victory.** By Fr. Jon Braun. pp. 162. \$9.95 (paper). How can the basic Christian Doctrines help to attain a full spiritual life.
- **Ultimate Things: An Orthodox Christian Perspective on the End Times.** By Dennis Engleman. pp. 296. \$ 14.95 (paper). The biblical teaching on the

last days as explained by Orthodox Church Fathers along the centuries

- ***Missing From Action.*** By Weldon Hardenbrook. pp.316. \$14.95 (paper). A pioneering examination of the crisis in many American homes where the fathers are either physically absent through divorce, drugs or overwork; or, though physically present, they have lost their emotional and spiritual contact with their families.
- ***Prayer in the Unseen Warfare.*** By Jack Sparks. pp.147. \$9.95 (paper) The third in a series from the spiritual classic 'Unseen Warfare' adapted by St. Theophan the Recluse; dealing with the various forms of prayer with emphasis on 'prayer of the heart' or ceaseless prayer.

St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church (1600 S Robertson Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90035).

- ***The Orthodox Creed.*** By His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. Translated by Sobhy Mena, Fr. Markos Hanna. pp. 60. \$2.00 (paper). Explanation of the Nicene Creed with many biblical and historical references.
- ***The Holy Sacraments.*** By Fr. Markos Hanna. pp.98. \$4.00 (paper). A summary of the Coptic Orthodox belief in the seven Sacraments, based on the work of two leading Coptic theologians earlier in this century, Fr.. Marcos Daoud and Archdeacon Habib Girgis.
- ***The Chosen Twelve.*** By Fr. Markos Hanna. pp. 60. \$2.00 (paper). Life of the Disciples of Christ, taken from 15 references.
- ***What Coptic Orthodox Christians Believe.*** By Fr. Markos Hanna. pp. 44. \$2.50 (paper). A summary of the essential doctrines of the Coptic Orthodox Church with their biblical references.
- ***The Church and Contemporary Moral Issues.*** By Fr. Markos Hanna. pp. 47. \$3.00 (paper). 20 contemporary issues discussed alphabetically, including abortion, divorce, drugs, evolution, premarital sex and smoking.

Copts in Chicago (to be reached at 773 728 2867).

- ***Coptic Language Analysis of St. Gregory and St. Cyril Liturgies.*** By Monir Barsoum Raphael. pp. 336. \$20.00 (paper). Parts 4 and 5 of this valuable aid for studying the Coptic liturgy and Bohairic Coptic; with the complete text of the liturgies in Coptic, English and Arabic, and a word analysis of every Coptic and Greek word used.

Oakwood Publications (3827 Bluff Street, Torrance, CA 90505)

- ***Psalm Verses of the Orthodox Liturgy.*** Compiled by Michael Farrow. pp.189 (large size). \$19.95 (paper). Hymn verses of the Divine Liturgy in the Eastern Orthodox Church with their biblical citations, covering the whole liturgical year and the various special services.

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