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- *The Impact of Copts on Civilization*
- *The Brotherhood of Ps-Macarius*
- *Ecumenical Desert Monasticism*
- *Priesthood Between St. Gregory
and St. Chrysostom*



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THE IMPACT OF THE COPTS ON CIVILIZATION

*Amin Makram Ebeid, M.D.**

Peroncel Hugoz, a famous French writer and journalist once called the Copts, “the forgotten of history”. One of the reasons for that unfortunate fact is the conscious or unconscious neglect of that history by the educational system of Egypt where history seems to jump from the pharaonic phase all the way to the Islamic age with hardly any mention of a thousand years deemed insignificant.

Teaching history of the Copts in Egypt is important because it could help diffuse tension that may exist between Copts and Muslims since people are less likely to discriminate against a kinfolk they came to know (and respect) better. To illustrate that point, I have found out that I loved Muslims better when I developed a deeper friendship with my Muslim brethren and acquired a deeper understanding of their history and beliefs. Paul Johnson made a similar historical observation in the history of the Jews and noted, for instance, that the anti-Jewish violence of the Crusaders, who traversed Europe en route to the Holy Land rarely, if ever, included the Jews of their own town whom they knew well. Moreover, the French have been at times accused of being anti-Muslim, yet one of the very best apologists of Islam and lovers of Muslim was the very devout Christian: Louis Massignon, who demonstrated that religious and racial toleration that leads to genuine love, is not an innate emotion; it has to be worked upon, and he did just that by seriously studying Islam and writing a masterpiece on the passion of Hallaj (the famous Muslim Sufi). In my own experience, I must credit the insight of Massignon, for a good deal of my love for Muslims and their beliefs. When I asked my distinguished friend for his opinion on the reason for the neglect of Coptic history at the schools and uni-

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versities of Egypt, his shocking answer was “perhaps there is nothing to learn from the Copts except local ecclesiastic history”... The aim of this study is to illustrate the different aspects of Coptic history.

I will try to outline the role of the Copts on civilization, first by recalling the impact of the Copts on Christian civilization and how that affected the evolution of Western culture. I will then address the more purely secular Coptic contributions, whether that was done directly or by offering the necessary cultural milieu. I will also try to illustrate those contentions with some historical support. Finally, I will also try to insert examples to illustrate the need for historical research and hence for St. Mark’s Foundation for Coptic History Studies.

A. CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION

In 1997 I had the privilege to present to St. Mark’s Medical Society a synopsis of Coptic achievements and made the comment that were it not for the Copts and Alexandria, the history of Western civilization would have been totally different. For if Christ founded Christianity in Judea, it was through and by the same Christ that Christian theology was developed in Alexandria and that specifically included the following:

1-The establishment of a church hierarchy and organization which is still followed today by most churches. That Started with Bishop Demetrius, who became patriarch in 199 AD and who is credited with having established for the Universal Church a lasting pattern of church leadership (*Patrick*).

2-Dogmatic differentiation, which explained, codified and crystallized the Christian beliefs that were eventually adopted by the Universal Church throughout the globe. It was the young Athanasius who was influential in producing the most basic document in Church history, namely, the Nicene Creed. Having said that it would be interesting to pause and reflect on the reasons that made Alexandria not only the seat of the first catechetical school that would give Christianity its permanent mold, but also the intellectual furnace that will shape the Mediterranean culture for the eventual benefits of both Europe and the Arabs. These factors are summarized in table (I).

Table I

<i>Causes of the Glory of Alexandria</i>	
I.	<i>Rich port: Connects three continents</i>
II.	<i>Confluence of cultural and scientific heritage</i>
a.	<i>Pharaonic Egypt:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>enormous wealth of empiric data in mathematics, geometry, medicine.</i>
b.	<i>Greek scientific method</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>development of universal principles</i> • <i>philosophy and logic</i>
c.	<i>Semitic:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ethical monotheism</i> • <i>Philo tries to reconcile divine revelation and reason.</i>

It is useful to remember that following the war between Mithridates of Pontus and Rome (89 BC), Athens “witnessed an exodus of philosophers” to Alexandria (*Bowman*), which continued to be the undisputed cultural queen of late antiquity, where the “*Greek genius was deflected*” from Athens (*Bradford*). Alexandria was also the first and most important city of Jewish biblical scholarship of late antiquity. It utilized Greek and produced the first translation of the Hebrew Bible that became known as the Septuagint (because of the 70 Jewish scholars who worked on it).

The stage was thus set for Alexandria to become the leading Mediterranean center of Christian theology and philosophy. As early as 180 AD, Demetrius of Alexandria utilized its catechistic school to counter heretic movements such as Gnosticism, and counterbalance the pagan museum (*Cannuyer, Bourguet*). The role of Alexandria was to become pivotal in the history of Christianity. J.M. Creed (quoted by *Patrick*) authoritatively asserted that “*no city has affected the development of Christian religion more profoundly than has Alexandria*”. It is reasonable to assume that when Christian Egypt was able to shed its pharaonic scales, it became a light to the Christian world, and until 451, leader of the universal church. The year 451 AD is a tragic date that of the council of Chalcedon that deprived the Coptic Church of its universal leadership and restricted it to a national institution increasingly persecuted and marginalized. But we are not yet in Chalcedon and the Copts had over 2-1/2 centuries left from the founding of the catechetical school in 180 AD to the drama of 451. And how well they used those years! Moreover, the influence of Alexandria on the Universal Church started even earlier, and like the Hebrew Bible, that influence was Jewish. I am referring not only to the Jewishness of Christ and his disciples such as St. Peter and St. Mark and Apollo, but also to the very first unnamed Christians of Egypt. For the sake of brevity, I have summarized that influence in the following table:

Table II

<i>Egyptian-Jewish Influence</i>
<i>I. Ethical Monotheism</i>
<i>II. First Converts</i>
<i>III. Translation of the Bible (the Septuagint)</i>
<i>IV. Possible authorship of the letter to the Hebrews (Apollos) (Patrick, Cannuyer)</i>
<i>V. Possible Authorship of the Books of Wisdom and Maccabees 2-3 (Cannuyer)</i>
<i>VI. Philo 25 B.C. – 50 A.D. – reconciles faith and reason</i>

For it is out of this milieu that the first major Coptic achievement occurred, namely the growth of the first theological university in antiquity (c. 180 AD), which became known as the catechetical school of Alexandria (*Atiya*). It is also important to remember that it is that school that was responsible for the indubitable ascendancy of the Coptic Church during the first major ecumenical councils.

3. *The introduction and practice of monasticism*, which was picked up by the West and turned out to be instrumental in saving Western civilization. For when Rome succumbed first to the assault of the Barbarians and then to chaos and deurbanization by the end of the 6th century AD, it plunged into the dark ages. Western civilization seemed about to expire. Yet it survived, and Lord Kenneth Clark explained why in the following manner: -- "Insofar as we are heirs of Greece and Rome, we got through by the skin of our teeth". He then described how that civilization was saved, by reiterating the universally accepted answer that gives most of the credit to Europe's monasteries. Yet that institution may never have appeared in the west were it not for St. Athanasius' biography of St. Antony as well as his visit to Rome (in the 4th century AD) where he was accompanied by two Egyptian monks. Dalrymple asserts that up to the 8th century Athanasius' "Life of St. Antony" was not only the most read, but also the most imitated book in the West after the Bible. A great part of the Hellenic heritage was thus jealously preserved for future generations to utilize, and create the radiance of the Middle Ages that was to flower in the glorious renaissance which eventually evolved into the most advanced civilization the world has ever known. Thus Europe and the West, and indeed the rest of the world that benefited from them owe a great debt of gratitude to the Copts of Egypt. In his scholarly and poetic book: "How the Irish Saved Civilization" Thomas Cahill reaffirmed the thesis previously noted by such authorities as Kenneth Clark, that the Irish preserved civilization for Europe in its monasteries before those institutions gained enough strength on the continent. He also made two important admissions as regard the Copts: First he acknowledged the Egyptian origin of European and Irish monasticism. Secondly he remarked that the

books that kept civilization alive “traveled from the workshops of Egypt and Syria by way of Ireland and Britain and, finally to the continent of Europe”. Another work (that I recommend) is the just-quoted Dalrymple’s book (see bibliography), in which the author gave some example of Coptic influence on Celtic Christianity in both Ireland and Scotland. He illustrated that fact by showing how the Celtic wheel cross is a Coptic invention (p 419) and how the Irish litany of Saints remembers the seven Coptic monks of Desert Uilaig and noted that the life of St. Paul the Hermit is still depicted on a Pictish stone at St. Vigeans near Dundee (in Scotland) (p 420). The role of the Copts was also acknowledged by the famous monk Alcuin (c. 735-804 AD) a disciple of Bede, advisor of Charlemagne and the moving spirit of the Carolinian renaissance, who described the Celtic Culdee (servants of God or monks of Ireland and Scotland) as “*pueri Egyptiaci*”, the children of Egypt (*Dalrymple*, p 418). Nonetheless, for the sake of accuracy, mention should be made of the Roman Senator, Cassiodorus (c. 487 to c. 583) who founded two Italian monasteries, but insisted that a study of liberal arts must *precede* theology so as to optimize its understanding. Thus, great credit is to be given to that powerful Italian statement and the so-called Latin transmitters who followed him, for preserving the Greco-Roman heritage for Europe (*Cantor* 82-83). The fact that Christian civilization was saved for Europe by the Irish and the European monastic institutions, (and hence by the Copts!) was to assume momentous importance in the eight century at Poitier when Islam’s advance was checked by Charles Martel. Cahill again remarked that the same Saracen forces would have encountered little resistance if Europe did not benefit from the cohesiveness of its Christian heritage and its resurrected Greco-Roman culture; both kept alive by unnamed monks copying manuscripts, and preserving all the treasures of civilization they could salvage from the ruins and devastation left by the barbarians. It is thus possible to assert that even though the Copts were defeated by the Arabs in Egypt in 642 AD, they were present in force at Poitier, armed only with books!

4. *By their witnessing* the blood of Copts became the holy seeds of faith in the Mediterranean world and beyond. The age of martyrs necessarily followed the spiritual and intellectual challenge of nascent Christianity made ‘*dangerous*’ by people like Origen (vide infra). Obviously persecution of the Christians started long before Origen since it was Nero (54-68 AD) who initiated the age of martyrs. In Egypt, martyrdom was most severely experienced in the reign of Septimus Severus (193-211 AD) under whose rule Origen’s father was martyred. Caracalla’s reign (211-217 AD) was especially brutal for Egypt especially in Alexandria, where he indiscriminately slaughtered Christians and pagans who offended him by accusing him of murdering his brother Geta (Bowman). Specifically Christian persecution followed with Maximin (235-238 AD) and especially Decius (249-251 AD). The latter is remembered in Coptic martyrology for torturing and killing Copts who refused to blaspheme the name of their Lord. He arrested Pope

Dionysius and prepared his execution. But in a rare example of organized Coptic resistance, the prelate was freed by a Coptic crowd and hidden in the desert “until the fury of the emperor was spent” (*Masri*). Outbursts of massacres were resumed by Valerian (253-259 AD) and Aurelian (253-259 AD). But it was Diocletian (284-305 AD) who initiated what became known as the “Great Persecution” which was so severe that the Coptic Church utilized the first year of Diocletian accession (284 AD) to initiate their calendar (Anno Martyrii). It is interesting, also, to note that Diocletian was the last Roman emperor to visit Egypt. His reign has sometimes been used to mark the transition from Roman to Byzantine periods (Bowman). From the age of martyrs, a living and vibrant faith arose not only in Egypt, but also in the rest of the Roman Empire. That incredible victory of the Christian faith occurred in spite of (and perhaps because of) a death toll that may have reached a million souls, although it is obviously very difficult to substantiate such figures with historical documents (*Basilos*). Martyrdom of the Copts took place not only in Egypt but also in the three continents where Christianity first spread. The stories of the Theban legion and of St. Maurice reminded us that Coptic martyrs who came from the distant land of Egypt made the European Christian soil spiritually fertile.

Indeed the story of the Theban legion is a glorious chapter of Coptic radiance in Europe. It started in 285 AD, a landmark in world history, because it is the date that witnessed the partition of the Roman Empire by Decollation (284-305 AD) into Western and Eastern empires. The latter was Greek-speaking but also included Latin Illyria, from which the emperor came. That division of the realm was carried out for more efficient administrative reasons in which each of the two portions of the empire was ruled by a senior co-emperor called ‘Augustus’ who in turn appointed a kind of viceroy/heir-apparent successor with the title of ‘Caesar’ (Carroll, Durant). Diocletian kept for himself the eastern provinces and was assisted by another Illyrian called Galerius, who acted as his Caesar. Still two other Illyrians; the co-emperor Maximian (acting as Augustus) and the ‘almost gentle’ Constantius as his Caesar (Carroll) ruled the Western half.

In 285 AD Maximian (Augustus) requested from his now Co-emperor Diocletian (Augustus) to send him the valor-known Theban legion in order to quell a rebellion of Germanic barbarians in what is now Switzerland. The heroic story of the Theban legion is a well-documented one (*Girgis*) and gives details such as the number of Christian soldiers (6,600 souls) recruited from the Thebaid in Southern Egypt, which is also known as Upper Egypt. We also know names such as those of the commander (or Primecerius): Mauritius, the instructor: Exuperius, and the military Senator: Candidus.

At Agaunum (the Roman name of St. Maurice-en-Valais) on the eve of the campaign against the Bagaudae, Maximian gave two orders; his Christian Egyptian legion could not obey:

1. Pay homage to his gods and
2. Kill innocent (Germanic) Christians.

Upon the unanimous refusal of the Copts to obey him, Maximian ordered them decimated (that is, execution of every tenth soldier). The heroic resistance of the Theban legion should become a lesson to all ages: Military orders should not be obeyed if they conflict with the absolute duty to follow the command of a higher authority. Hitler's "S.S." seemed never to have considered that aspect of transcendent loyalty. Yet 17 centuries earlier, Mauritius, encouraged by his friends, Exuperius and Candidus, sent a memorable letter to the emperor signed by all the legion's members to assert their loyalty to Augustus: "Great Caesar, we are your soldiers, but at the same time we are God's slaves. From you we receive our daily wages, from Him our eternal reward.... We cannot take up arms to strike pious men, civilians... yet; we are not rebels, if we were, we would defend ourselves, for we have our weapons. But we prefer to die upright than to live stained with the blood of innocence" (*Masri, Girgis, Agliaro*). Thus the Coptic legion followed both the Pauline injunction of loyalty to secular authorities (Rom. 13:1-2), as well as the Biblical command to "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). For almost two millennia the Copts never deviated from those Biblical principles.

Back in Agaunum, as a result of the legionnaire's letter, the enraged Maximian ordered a second decimation, and finally commanded all Christian troops to be martyred. However, the documented number of legionaries actually executed in Agaunum seems to have been one battalion that did not exceed 520 men (*Girgis*). As for the other cohorts of the legion, large numbers were "progressively and methodically massacred in Switzerland, Germany and Italy" (*Girgis*).

Today when you travel to Europe, please don't forget the martyrs of the Theban legion. Unfortunately, it is a little known fact that Europe is rich with Coptic heritage that could still be found in monasteries scattered throughout its various countries, and which have given names to cities such as St. Maurice-en-Valais and St. Moritz in the Engondine. In a recent visit to Switzerland, I was deeply moved to find echoes of Coptic radiance in Europe when I visited the crypt of the Egyptian St. Verena in Zurzach in the Aargu, and noted a persistent and living devotion to St. Maurice.

Other names associated with the Swiss cantons include:

- Sts. Exuperius, Candidus, Innocentius and Vitalis, in the Valais
- Felix and Regula: in Zurich
- Ursus, Victor and sixty-six companions: at Solothurn
- Verena, at Zurzach (*Girgis*).

Thus, if Tertullian, a North African Church Father (d. -c.225 AD) is correct in asserting that the "blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" (*Cantor*), then indeed the Copts scattered their holy seeds across Europe; moreover, the Theban martyrs were not confined to Switzerland.

Girgis lists 20 major Saints, plus many lesser ones in Italy alone. Many Saints are also found in Germany (e.g., St. Mallosus in Xanten and St. Cassius in Bonn). Western Europe (especially France and Switzerland) has adopted the Theban

legion commander's name, St. Maurice, which is found in more than 650 places (*Girgis*).

In reading about the Theban legion, I could not help recall Thermopylae (480 BC), in which King Leonides and his 300 Spartans chose death on the battlefield rather than surrender to the Persian armies (*Carroll*), and thus contributed to the eventual victory of democracy and Western civilization over Oriental despotism. The Persian rulers could not help but admire the Spartan loyalty to the Greek idea of freedom. The Persians must have realized that they have won a battle, but eventually will lose the war against such a dedicated and courageous foe. Similarly the heroic martyrdom of the Theban legion was proof to the Romans that "Christianity was either to be destroyed in a mighty holocaust, or else it should become the bond that reunites the disintegrating empire" (*Johnson, Carroll*). The main difference between the Spartan and the Coptic soldiers is that not a drop of enemy blood stained the hands of the Christian martyrs. The battle of Thermopylae would usher the era of secular individual freedom, while the Theban legion will help initiate the age of faith that will provide the West with its very soul. Unknown to the heroes of both ages and separated by 700 years, both military 'defeats' will assist at the convergence and eventual marriage of Hellenic ideas with the spiritual light of Christianity to produce the most glorious civilization in universal history.

This very brief aperçu on the Theban legion cannot be complete without returning to St. Verena, who was inexplicably spared by Maximian. A native of Garagoss (near Thebes in Upper Egypt), Verena, seems to have accompanied the Theban legion as a nurse. She lived the rest of her life in Zurzach (in present day Switzerland) and was a kind of fourth century Florence Nightingale, who taught the Alemanni, the principle of hygiene and spent the rest of her long life educating the people of what is now the Canton of Aargau (*Masri, Girgis*), she spent her time ministering to the poor and caring for the lepers. She is represented today on the coat of arms of the city of Stäfa (in the Canton of Zurich), where she is depicted holding a water jug in one hand and a comb in the other (*Masri, Girgis*). When I visited her crypt at Zurzach with my family, and prayed for her blessings and intercessions, I discovered that Zurzach is a famous Swiss spa saturated with St. Verena and one could witness the emblems of sanitation (the comb and the water jug) that she brought to the primitive Germans, proudly carved on stone or on wood above shops, in the streets, and obviously in the Verena-Munster where her crypt is situated. I've also found that a church is named after her in the small town of Wollerau in the Canton of Schwiz. That came as a total surprise to me because I spent almost two dozen vacations in Wollerau and thought that my family members were the first Egyptians ever seen in that little town. There is also a delightful little town named after her on the shores of Lake Como, which I hope to visit one day. St. Verena (probably Coptic for Berenice) is credited with many miracles of healing, including that of the Roman Governor who spared her life. Her tomb that I just mentioned is found in the first cloister of the Canton of Aargau. She is venerat-

ed in many European cities, and was one of the main patron Saints of the Hapsburg dynasty (*Girgis*). Verena represents what is best in Christianity: a virgin Saint, living among barbarians and soldiers. She exemplified feminism at its most sublime level. By teaching hygiene and caring for the sick, and as a result of her educational zeal, she introduced the Alemanni barbarians to the elements of Mediterranean civilization. But her crowning achievement was that she contributed greatly to the spread of Christianity among the Alemanni.

The mighty Muslim armies were able to transplant their superior culture and ideas all the way to Southern France. But I believe that the Copts left a more lasting tree of civilization that grew from the heroic seeds scattered in Europe all the way to the Rhine Valley by a few hundred ambassadors for Christ coming from the deepest provinces of Egypt and known for posterity as soldiers of the Theban legion.

5. *Missionary Role* Finally we should not forget the missionary role of the early Coptic Church because its impact on universal civilization turned out to have a great and lasting impact. The extent of the Coptic evangelization was pretty vast. The first populations that benefited from Egyptian Christianity were those in the lands immediately adjacent to the Nile Valley, such as the five cities of Libya (the Pentapolis) which extended to just east of Carthage (a city that remained in the Roman sphere of influence). In the south, the Copts of Egypt evangelized Nubia, Sudan and Ethiopia. In Asia, documents of Coptic evangelization were found in Arabia Felix (Yemen), India and even Ceylon (*Atyia*). Coptic presence was also found beyond the confines of continental Europe all the way to Ireland, where seven Egyptian monks were found buried at Desert Uldith (*Patrick, Cahill, and Dalrymple*).

B: SECULAR CONTRIBUTIONS

From the standpoint of secular contributions, whether direct or indirect, the Coptic impact on both Western and Islamic civilization has been vital.

Indirect Contributions

Alexandria was the center for an *intellectual framework* that *permitted* the development in various scientific fields.

a - Alexandrian mathematics was founded in great part on the Egyptian experience, whose people were advanced enough to calculate such numbers as that of the π more correctly than any other people in antiquity and who also were such superb geometricians that Kline called geometry the gift of The Nile. Alexandrian mathematics reached its peak with the work of Euclid, but it also included the first work on Algebra. Herbert Butterfield (in *The Origin of Modern Science*) goes so far as to assert that “because the Middle Ages lacked the necessary mathematics,

the world had to wait until ancient, and specifically Alexandrian mathematics became available for modern science to develop”.

b - The astronomic discovery of Eratothernes (c. 275 - 195 BC), who calculated the circumference of the earth and came only 5,000 miles short of the true value, and whose work was based on empiric data collected by Egypt's Coptic ancestors and by the help of Coptic surveyors. Similarly, the great Ptolemy (c. 120-180 AD) could not have formalized the mathematics and techniques of astronomy such as astronomic trigonometry in an intellectual vacuum. Again, it must have been the Copts who transmitted their ancestors' astronomic observation and empiric mathematical knowledge that helped flower the Alexandrian Hellenic genius.

c - The medical school also developed because the Copts kept their medical genius alive and offered the right milieu that witnessed the growth of Herophilus and Erasistratus (see *N. Mahfouz* and *Ebeid*). The influence of the Copts on Islamic medicine was also significant. As an example I would like to quote my maternal grandfather, Dr. Naguib Mahfouz, who was very interested in Arabic and Islamic medicine, and also on the impact of the Copts on Arabic medicine. I remember, for instance, attending one of his lectures at Dar El-Hikma on the subject of Ibn El-Nafis, who discovered the secrets of pulmonary circulation 300 years before it was found out by the Spaniard, Michael Servatus. And I still remember today (more than 35 years after that lecture was delivered), his comments that it was a Coptic physician who trained the great Ibn El-Nafis. Another example of his interest on Coptic influence in the development of Arabic medicine was presented in his acceptance speech the day President Nasser conferred on him the First Class Order of Merit and the State Prize of Distinction in Science in 1960. After thanking the president, he offered less than a page summary on the medical achievements of Egyptian Alexandrian and Arabic medicine, in which he did not fail to mention that Ibn-Abi Ossayeba credited Bishop John the Grammarian (*Yahya El-Nahawy*) as offering the first and richest source of medical knowledge to the Arabs (*Simaika*). Bat Ye'or also noted that the very first scientific work written in Arabic was a medical treatise initially written in Greek by an Alexandrian Christian priest named Ahrun, which was then translated to Syriac and then to Arabic in 683 AD (p. 276).

Indeed Egyptian Christian medicine, whether Coptic or Melkite was significant both before and after the Arab invasion. (See *Sidarus*, *Khalil*, *Kolta*). Few examples might be interesting; medical Coptic manuscripts from the fourth century onwards have been found in monastic libraries (*Kolta*). And even though the diagnosis and treatment of various eye diseases and skin ailments are recorded in greater details than other clinical conditions, little is neglected of the rest of the body (*Kolte*). Unlike their ancestors in pharaonic Egypt, the Copts did not specialize in individual diseases, but there was a hierarchy of physicians that ranged from senior physician to master, to teaching doctors and simple medical practitioners. That did not preclude doctors from acquiring additional expertise such as chiropractic skills that rendered many Coptic practitioners famous Coptic physicians

until our present era. Surgery and surgical instruments are not mentioned as extensively as in the time of the pharaohs, yet one may still admire the various kinds of surgical tools in the permanent exhibition of the Coptic museum (*Kolta*). In his very commendable overview of Coptic medicine in the Coptic encyclopedia, Kolta mentioned the early development of nursing, which seems to have started, or at least was practiced, in monasteries and is even included in the Pachomius monastic rules. Finally, Kolta remarked that ancient Egyptian medical literature did not come to an abrupt end, but did re-appear in the Coptic language in the form of prescriptions and descriptive essays.

In the Middle Ages, the impact of the Copts in the realm of science and specifically in medicine was felt to be insignificant until the research of Samir Khalil and Sidarus uncovered evidence of appreciable Coptic production such as the example of *El-Mufaddal Ibn Majed El-Kateb*, whose treatise on “*how to quench thirst for medical knowledge*” included practical didactic medical texts enriched by definitions, therapies and toxicology. Yet the work remained unedited until the modern era. Moreover, the author was felt initially to be Jewish until six manuscripts definitively proved that the author was indeed a Copt (*Khalil & Sidarus*). Nonetheless, during the Middle Ages, Coptic physicians, unlike Melkite Christians or Jewish ones, tended to be more practical, and thus less involved in medical research (*Sidarus*). On the other hand, such impressions may need correction by more research and the availability of more original documents. This, parenthetically, is still another example of the need for an international body like the Coptic History Society, with access to vast electronic library and index systems.

d - In the field of science, it is worth remembering that Alexandria offered the world *the first steam engine*, which was one of the many discoveries of a man of genius called Hero. Again, the ever-inventive practical and empiric influence of the Copts must not have been very far away. After all, the pharaonic-Christian Egyptian continuum is indubitable. The builders of the pyramids and temples had to invent new machines to help them in their mammoth enterprises and they could enlist, for instance, the help of metal workers whose expertise and organization can still be witnessed in the bas relief depiction of a metal working shop in King Teti passage of Sakkara (*Geddes & Grosset*) They even had access to chemical laboratories. Indeed it seems that the word chemistry had its origin in the pharaonic word *khemet*, which describes the black land of Egypt (*Geddes & Grosset*).

Direct Contributions

The Copts also had a more direct contribution to universal civilization, which is very clear in various realms:

a - Philosophy

In that all-embracing discipline, the uniqueness of Origen has been an intellectual light not only for the church but also for the way the Mediterranean mind

evolved. In ‘*Science and Creation*’, Stanley Jaki, a Jesuit priest and physicist, advanced the very convincing thesis that the cyclic cosmogonies of the Far East, pharaonic Egypt and even Greece were the major reasons for stifling the intellectual development of antiquity. But in Coptic Egypt, Origen, following in the footsteps of Clement of Alexandria and preceding Augustine of Hippo insisted that reality is the intellectual highway to knowledge, and that can only be reached by breaking through the cycle of eternal recurrences and pantheism, and transforming history into an evolving linear progression that demands a *meliorative* culture. Most authorities agree that no one did more to ensure the spiritual and intellectual victory of Mediterranean Christianity and culture than did Origen (*P. Johnson, Patrick, and Cantor*). It could also be argued that the intellectual maturity of Christianity thus achieved elevated the followers of Jesus from a mere sect into a cohesive social religious force that was soon felt to be a threat to the Roman Empire. In other words, the Church became “*a universalistic alternative*” to the empire itself and actually “*a far more dynamic and better organized alternative*”, and thus it “*had to be exterminated or accepted*” (*Johnson*). That climate was to usher the age of martyrs.

To better understand the Coptic philosophic contribution to the Mediterranean culture, it is important to realize that Egyptian Christianity managed to preserve what was best in its pharaonic inheritance, and at the same time shed its archaic superstition and its sterile concepts. This was nicely summarized by Stanley Jaki, who brought up more factors that stifled the intellectual life in Pharaonic Egypt, namely, the philosophic frame of mind that arose from the religious beliefs of that people and which included:

- i *An unshakable espousal of the cyclical nature of the cosmos*, in which life was seen simply as an “expression of the unchanging aspect of the universe” (*Jaki*). That mentality must have arisen in Egypt because of the obvious phenomenon of cyclical flooding of the Nile, and a clear sky in which celestial objects were observed to follow unchanging recurring cycles. Thus, Osiris became the symbol of the cyclical death and renewal of nature.
- ii *An animistic cosmogony* (which survived even the religious revolution brought about by Akhneton). An example of animism is found in the text of the Pyramids that depicts Atun as a bisexual god who created the first creatures by masturbation. Many centuries later, Akhneton, sensing the need for a creator “who made himself by himself” could not escape millennia of animism and called Atun, god sun and the “Great Falcon, brilliantly plumaged, brought forth to rise himself on high by himself” (*Jaki*).
- iii *A pantheistic understanding of the cosmos*, which rendered the universe unchanging and unchangeable.

The Egyptian mind was thus trapped in animism with a cyclical character that rendered the natural universe basically unalterable. From an experiential, practical and innovative beginning, when the inhabitants of the Nile Valley learned to control their life-giving river by various devices such as canals, the Egyptians of the new kingdom, especially after the failed Akhneton revolution, gave in to cosmological fatalism. Jaki asserts that at about that time, “the intellectual curiosity of ancient Egyptians came to a baffling standstill”. Thus, the brilliant observations made in geometry stagnated in what Jaki calls ‘protoscience’ and did not seek support by proofs or by unifying theories. Religious beliefs went so far as to interfere in such practical considerations as the adjustment of the three calendars, namely two lunar and one civil (p. 71). Thus, Pharaoh had to make an oath barring “any attempt at calendar reform”. In a cyclical animistic world, no place is left for the search of a common denominator, or universal theory that would attempt to link and explain accumulated empiric observations. The same stifling effect of pantheistic cyclical theology on the development of science was observed in India and China. In that context, Paul Johnson (in modern times) contrasts the progress of Japan with the stagnation of China and noted that Japan “was almost western in its consciousness of linear development” unlike the Chinese, who “saw life in terms of repetitive cycles”. Also, Japan had a concept of time that he considers “unique in non-western cultures” (p. 178). It thus seems that the proper understanding of time is essential for the perfection of culture and tends to be severely inhibited by cyclic cosmogonies. Even Greece suffered the espousal of pantheistic beliefs by some of its thinkers, and that could explain the arrest of Greek scientific progress after a glorious beginning. Moreover, many authorities, such as Jaki and Haffner ascribe the stillbirth phenomenon of Greek science to a failure to understand time, which is essential in order to comprehend concepts such as motion, or the development of infinitesimal calculus, which can only be conceived “as an uninterrupted one-dimensional flow of events” (*Haffner*, p. 36). [Other more conventional explanations to understand the arrest of Greco-Roman science include the negative effect of the institution of slavery (*Durant*) and the Marxian view that socioeconomic exploitation is the main reason of backwardness.]

Effect of Christianity

But help was on its way. It came from the Roman province of Judea, where tales of a resurrected man who claimed to be God and Savior of the world, circulated along the length and width of the Roman Empire. When Egypt was christianized, its people started to experience the liberating changes promised by the God-Man called Jesus. Salvation was accepted with loving gratitude to the Crucified One by the Christians of Egypt who offered more martyrs than any other nation in the world (*Patrick*). Christianity also brought the people of that ancient land some liberation from mummified pharaonism.

It is worth remembering at this juncture an often forgotten, yet very rich, windfall profit brought about by a religion that aims at salvation of the soul only.

Christianity, as forcefully presented by the great Origen and then by St. Augustine, could not accept the cyclical view of history so pervasive in the ancient world, and insisted that the incarnation was a unique historical event. That led Cantor to comment that "belief in an inevitable, repetitive cycle must produce indifference to contemporary circumstances, but belief in uniqueness - the confidence that history is advancing to the singular triumph of the Kingdom of God - produces a different attitude. Not only are men inspired to collect and record as many unique events as possible (i.e. writing more and ultimately better history), but also they are bound to adopt a meliorative philosophy. The primordial western cast of mind sees men marching towards a glorious future through the dregs of the present; belief in progress is at the very heart of western thought". (*Cantor*, p. 77).

The new religion did not bring material prosperity or national pride to the people of Egypt, nor was christianized Egypt ever to shine again as an independent power. Yet the Copts were about to offer the world spiritual and cultural treasures that I believe carry more glory than many world empires. It is such a pity, as expressed by Peroncel-Hugoz that the Copts became the "forgotten of history". Because that is like losing essential pages of a great book, along with part of its meaning. And yet, the Copts, as represented by the towering figure of Origen, prefiguring the Muslim philosophers-theologians, such as Averoes (Ibn Rushd) were responsible in shaping the mind of future civilizations by marrying spiritual concepts to the rational mind to which all possible questions demand an answer. That inquisitiveness was made possible by the unique intellectual climate of Alexandria that made it the undisputed cultural capital of late antiquity, because it succeeded in synthesizing into a harmonious whole the three cultures it inherited (see Table I). Like the Jewish philosopher, Philo, the early Copts were able to draw on the Hellenic philosophic heritage in order to insist on the necessity of the rational mind that can be transcended but never abolished. It is that curiosity of the uninhibited mind that the West eventually inherited, and which the East seems to have left dormant.

After the Islamic conquest, the Copts, (along with the Levantine Christians) will have a pivotal role in shaping the glorious Arab civilization. Thus, they will transmit philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and architecture (see d.) to the Muslim world (see *Durant* and also *Hourani* e.g. P 77-79)

Coptic philosophic contribution survived the Arab victories and flowered under some of the more tolerant Fatimid and Ayoubid rulers, where religious debate was not only permitted but also encouraged. Such a climate permitted the systemization of theological philosophy with the famous Abu Ishak Ibn El-Assal, as well as with Abu Shaker Ibn El-Rahib and Abu El-Barakat Ibn Kabar who produced three different Copt-Arabic summas, where non-religious aspects of philosophy were also clearly addressed, such as the treatment of psychologic and cosmologic concerns. In the same study that documented and expounded on the findings noted above, Fr. Adel Sidarus also asserted that the world of pure philosophy was enriched by a study on logic by Ibn El-Assal (in the *Majmu*), as well as by an apol-

ogy of science authored by El-Sadamenti in his “Treatise on Hermeneutics”. The last author gained such fame as a philosopher that he was asked by a Muslim Imam to write a book on “*definitions*” which appeared in a collection of *Dicta philosophorum*, as well as an essay on ethics entitled “*Tahdhib El-Nafs*” (*Sidarus*).

b - Coptic Music

Coptic music has been considered by some musicologists to be the foundation of Gregorian chants and hence of Western music. (*Newlandsmith E, Atiya A., Fr. T Malaty*). Malaty also asserted that scientific research has shown that the Coptic Church has preserved the most ancient surviving ecclesiastic music in existence, a feat attributed to the very conservative nature of the Egyptian Church. Moreover, it seems to be the prolongation of pharaonic music, which was transmitted orally and thus salvaged exclusively in the Coptic liturgy, and remained purely Egyptian and thus minimally influenced by Arabic tunes (*Albert*). That aspect of Coptic music was very important to the Egyptologist, Dr. Drioton, who made the following statement: “The key to the mystery of pharaonic music will be found in a good edition of Coptic ecclesiastic music in use in our days.” (Quoted by *Malaty*).

Professor Ayad explained how old Egyptian music survived by noting the depiction of blind harpists in pharaonic paintings. Blindness was a serious endemic problem in Egypt until recent times, but that disability seems to enhance other senses such as that of hearing and memory, and may thus be credited for the preservation of Egyptian musical heritage through the Coptic Church vehicle where cantors also have frequently been blind.

That musical heritage was not insignificant and has been called by the famous Oxford and London musicologist, Newlandsmith, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The same authority also believed that “some of the Coptic themes should be an inspiration for a great oratorio that might help rekindle the fire of spirituality” in a church whose love has grown cold. The great Egyptian composer, Muhammad Abd-El-Wahab once confided to my father that he got some of his musical inspiration by attending the Coptic liturgy. That is very interesting because Newlandsmith also believed that Coptic liturgical music should be a “bridge between east and west and would place a new idiom at the disposal of western musicians.”

c - Literature

The Copts were prolific writers, first in the Greek language, then in the various Coptic dialects and then in Arabic. It also seems that the Copts were the inventors of the Codex, which was the precursor of modern books (*Albert*).

After the Islamic conquest, Coptic literary activities flourished again under the more tolerant reigns of some of the Fatimids and Ayoubid rulers, at which time systematic work on Coptic linguistics not only enriched the study of pharaonic and Hellenic impact on the “Coptic tongue”, but also introduced Arabic genre in Coptic

education with rhymed vocabulary and didactic poems authored by literary giants such as El-Assal and El-Rahib (*Sidarus*) who have remained witnesses to a vibrant Coptic cultural life that has always surfaced under tolerant regimes. Adel Sidarus also reported on El-Safi Abu El-Fadaïl (c. 1205-65) who was known for his brilliant spirit of synthesis based on solid concern for accurate information, and quoted the great scholar S. Khalil who considered that author one of the greatest apologists of the Arab language, as well as one of the greatest thinkers of medieval Christianity. It is indeed interesting to note that with the benefit of tolerant rule, the Copts of the XIIth and XIIIth century finally met the challenge created by the conquest, by Arabising much of their literary work and initiating a golden age of Coptic-Arabic literature that will hibernate under the harsh Mamluk and Ottoman rules but resurface in modern Egypt with the likes of Salameh Mussa (1887-1958) and Makram Ebeid (1889-1961).

d - Coptic Art and Architecture

The Copts (along with Sassanid Persians) also helped shape Byzantine art and architecture and introduced arched domes and vaults (*Durant*, p. 128) which will be adopted with glorious effect in both the Islamic East and the Christian West. Laurence Albert affirms that Coptic architecture “seems to have influenced both the construction and decoration of the earliest mosques both of which relied on Coptic know-how. She also believes that the introduction of the *mihrab* has to be credited to the Copts. It is thus not surprising to learn that Coptic craftsmen (along with Greeks sent by the Byzantine Emperor) were called in by Caliph Walid II (743-744 AD) to rebuild in splendor the Mosque of Medina to the extent that the Muslims complained that the “Prophet’s mosque was being built by Christian infidels” (*Durant* p. 228). In later Islamic periods, the Copts will design the most beautiful Muslim monuments, such as the 9th century Ibn Toulon mosque (*I. Masri* p 88 and following, and *Valognes* p 251) and that of Sultan Hassan in the 14th century (*Valognes* p 251).

e - Naval Skills

At this point I would like to insert a little note on Coptic naval skills. I recently called Dr. Estefanous, head of the Historic Society to discuss its progress, and he told me that he has just finished reading a fascinating book on the Fatimids by an Egyptian Muslim scholar who credited the Copts for building their victorious Arab fleet. That is not too surprising since “the Copts” inherited ship building from their ancestors expertise (*Bradford*), and were always known to be skilled craftsmen. In a fascinating book on Arab Seafaring, G.F. Hourani reported that soon after the Muslim conquest, the Arabs utilized the Copts for shipbuilding in Alexandria, which at the time was an impressive naval base. That jewel of the Mediterranean sea also had capacious and very adequate shipyards for the Egyptian Christians to construct an entire Arab fleet after the Greeks took all their ships away (p. 57). The

Copts continued to build ships for their Muslim conquerors at least until the middle of the ninth century. Interestingly the Copts were uncharacteristically drafted in the Muslim navy possibly because the Arabs initially felt it beneath their dignity to work as sailors, but more importantly because of Coptic naval skills. During the actual battles, the Copts were used for their expertise as sailors. But it also seems that the Muslim navy benefited from Coptic lieutenants, although the admiralty was obviously Muslim (*Hourani, G.*) In 715 the Arabs won a victory against the Byzantine fleet that landed them on the Lycian coast. In that context, G. Hourani, quoting Tabari and other Muslim historians, affirmed that “the battle was won by a combination Coptic seamanship and Arab swordplay with a minimum of admiralty” (p. 59).

f - Lesser Arts

Coptic impact is still visible today in the so-called ‘lesser arts’. For instance, Egyptian Christians were the first to have perfected manuscript illumination, which they inherited from pharaonic Egypt, and which no doubt influenced that art in the Islamic East as well as in the Christian West (*Durant* p 135). Durant (p 287) also noted that the Muslims of Egypt learned from their Coptic subjects the technique of wood Marquette and the art of decorating boxes with ivory and bone inlay. Indeed, Laurence Albert asserted that “woodwork and sculpture remained a Coptic specialty even under the Arabs”.

g - Textiles

Another fascinating Coptic contribution resided in the perfection of textiles, which was universally considered to be superb (*Valognes, Durant, Albert* and others). In fact, Durant favorably compared its earliest productions at the dawn of the Christian era to that of the Goblin factories more than a millennium and a half later. Laurence Albert also affirmed that weaving was a “Coptic invention” since the ancient Egyptians were ignorant of the technique of weaving patterns or designs and used to either paint or embroider their fabrics. The Christians of Egypt continued to innovate and developed the technique of stamping print patterns on textile with wooden blocks during the reign of the Fatimids (969 - 1276 AD). That concept is believed by Durant to have been carried from Islamic Egypt to Europe by the Crusaders and may have shared in the development of printing. With such a background I was not at all surprised to note with some pride that the Coptic influence on the glory of the Fatimids was acknowledged recently in a magnificent exposition in Paris (April - August ‘98) entitled “*Tresors Fatimides du Caire*” in which the impact of both Jews and Copts was not forgotten (*Oleg Grabar et al.*).

In this all-too-compact and selective overview on the Coptic contribution to universal culture, I am sure that I have not given proper justice to that great people. Their influence, though pervasive, is sometimes difficult to discern because during the better part of two millennia, they were either a subject people or a so-called protected minority. It is up to us, the modern inheritors of the “forgotten of histo-

ry”, to resurrect the submerged glory of our ancestors. It has been said that a people without a history is not a people at all. As Diaspora Copts we risk to lose our identity. Such an eventuality would be a great tragedy, not only for the Copts, but also for Western and Arab civilizations that were significantly shaped by the Copts. And yet the call for Revival of Coptic history has been compelling throughout the 20th century. Dr. Fawzy Estaphanous, President of St. Mark Foundation for Coptic History, reminded us that the idea is almost 100 years old with the call of Archdeacon Habib Guirguis to found a Society for Coptic History Studies which that great Copt published in *El-karma* Magazine in 1906. Moreover, it must be a source of great pride for the Copts to recall that of the three major Egyptian museums, the only one founded by a native son of that great country is the Coptic museum that Murqus Pasha Simaika (1864 to 1944) founded in 1908. In the obituary that he wrote on Murqus (Marcos) Pasha, Merit Ghali noted how the museum was systematically developed from a room next to the Muallakah Church in Old Cairo to its present grand location next to it, thanks to the untiring efforts of its founder. He also reminded us of his other significant achievement, namely the painstaking recording and cataloging of Coptic and Christian Arabic manuscripts with the collaboration of the museum’s librarian, Yassa Abd El-Massih. To highlight the vital importance of that search for documents, I remember a story that his grandson, my maternal cousin, Dr. Samir Mahfouz Simaika, once told me in which Marcos Pasha retrieved priceless manuscripts from a monastery where they were about to be used as fuel during a winter. It is such a pity that his memoirs remain unpublished, not only because the history of people of that caliber are always a source of inspiration, but also because we would certainly benefit from his wisdom and experience in order to resurrect our dormant heritage. Dr. Merit Boutros Ghali gave us a glimpse of what his memoirs might contain by noting how Marcos Simaika’s fervor for Coptology was stimulated by reading the works of the great scholar, Alfred Butler, whom he eventually befriended.

Conclusion

Before preparing this monograph, I felt I should read one more time the history of the Jews, since no other people in the world have experienced such agony but also such glory in spite of being scattered on every continent. I used Paul Johnson’s book and learned four principles from that great people:

1. They have always been a theocentric people, whom I hope, will defeat the powerful challenge of atheistic modernism.
2. No other people had such an acute sense of history. This started in the Bible and continued through the Talmudic age all the way to our present time.
3. They have always maintained a great respect for scholars. Paul Johnson noticed, for instance, that the Jews would differentiate a town from a village in that the former had at least 10 scholars totally supported by the community (so as to obviate the need to make a living by working in a specific trade or profession). At

the time of Maimonedes (12th - 13th century AD), Fustat had 29 such scholars. Our call today is for the support of only a couple by the whole Coptic nation.

4. They insisted on excellence. Minorities cannot afford to take menial jobs, but must make themselves indispensable, which is probably the best human protection against persecution.

A study of history may very well be our salvation:

a. History will establish our identity and make us a people with a *civilizing mission* in a decaying world especially in the Diaspora. Moreover, we need to remind ourselves that we are not a nation of migrants, but rather a people called to be the light of the world (Matt. 5:14). Unfortunately that call will die with us if we do not transmit our heritage to the new generations that will one day bury our decaying bodies. Otherwise, our descendants will have little or no reason to belong to a community without history.

b. History will also become the impetus to support *scholarship* and imitate the successful Jewish recipe. Scholarship calls for *excellence* which in turns calls for *discipline* and for the acceptance of *sacrifice* in order to produce a community of achievers which will result in a greater recognition of a people who, by becoming the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13), have rendered themselves indispensable whether in the Diaspora or in their ancient and sacred land.

c. It is by our *awareness* as a *unique* people that we will see to it that our people reach the *perfection* and excellence reserved for those endowed with an ancestry like ours, especially when linked to the promise revealed in Isaiah 19 which affirms that God has blessed "Egypt His people". I believe that the blessing is inclusive of all its sons, but like all nations of the world that are blessed through Abraham (Gen. 12:3, Gal. 3:8), Egypt is blessed through the real presence of Christ in His people.

No Radical Politics.

No Rebellion.

No Violence.

No Slogans.

But only a response to the gospel call to be as perfect as our Father in heaven. (Matthew 5: 48) and an answer to our Savior Himself who asked us to be not only the light of the world (Matthew 5:14), but also its salt (Matthew 5:13), which should benefit all, irrespective of race or faith affiliation.

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THE BROTHERHOOD OF PS-MACARIUS

*Stuart Burns, Ph.D.**

Pseudo-Macarius, who was active c385-430A.D., was once held to have been the Egyptian desert Father Macarius. However, identification with Macarius of Egypt is unlikely and it is now assumed that Ps-Macarius lived in and around Syria and Cappadocia. The large corpus of writings that go under his name are for all intents and purposes anonymous works, however they have enjoyed something of a resurgence in popularity of late. An English translation of his 'Fifty Spiritual Homilies' was included in the 'Classics of Western Spirituality' series, and an excellent consideration of the Messalian connection with Ps-Macarius has been produced by Columba Stewart.¹ The Messalians were a heretical movement that were held to emphasise prayer to the detriment of other activity. They were condemned in 431 A.D. The connections between the Messalian movement and Ps-Macarius have been known since 1920² but of late consideration has been given to other formative influences upon the author, and in particular the influence of the Cappadocian Circle upon the Macarian communities. Ps-Macarius was writing at the end of the fourth century, and a collection of his writings was condemned at the Council of Ephesus

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1. The writings of Ps-Macarius are contained in three collections. Collection I : Bertold H. '*Reden und briefe. Die Sammlung I des Vaticanus Graecus 694B*' GCS Berlin 1973; Collection II: Dörries H. Klostermann E. Kroeger M (edd) '*Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*' Berlin 1961; Collection III: Klostermann E. Berthold H. '*Neue Homilien des Makarios / Symeon*' Berlin 1961. (Hereafter cited as Collection, followed by Homily and paragraph number) Collection II is translated into English, in Maloney G (tr) '*Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*' CWS Paulist Press 1992. See also Stewart C. '*Working the Earth of the Heart: the Messalian Controversy in History, Texts and Language to AD 431*'. Clarendon Press. Oxford 1991.
2. The connections were first brought to light by L. Villecourt. See Gribomont *Le Dossier des Origines du Messalianisme*, in *Epektasis Melange Patristique offerts au Cardinal Jean Danielou*' ed J. Fontaine, C. Kassinger. Beauchene 1972.

in 431AD, as the Messalian Asceticism. His writings have influenced not only Eastern Spirituality, but also Pietism and Methodism to name but a few.

Within his writings Ps-Macarius gives brief and somewhat tantalising instructions and hints as to the way his community should be run, and as to the priorities of brotherhood members. This article will consider some of these instructions, and examine the qualifications for leadership within the Macarian brotherhoods. For Ps-Macarius, there is only the life of being a follower of Christ, under the control of the Holy Spirit, imbued by his power, and gazing directly at God the Father. The theological understanding of both Ps-Macarius and his brotherhoods are formed by direct experience.

One of the main criteria for a teaching or leadership position within the Macarian brotherhoods is that of spiritual experience and one of the main images of this experience within the writings of Ps-Macarius is intoxication. I will briefly survey the use of 'Intoxication' in the writings of Ps-Macarius, together with the formative meanings behind the term, before examining the way in which Ps-Macarius portrays a goal of communal intoxication within his brotherhoods, and the way spiritual experience crystallizes authority.

Intoxication

Ps-Macarius' teaching on intoxication reveals an emphasis upon the life of the individual within the communal setting. The phrase 'Sober intoxication' is an oxymoron that is based upon the distinction between the state of intoxication brought on by wine, with that state of christian perfection available through grace³. It is this concept of sober intoxication that underlies Ps-Macarius' more general use of the term 'intoxication'. The two formative influences behind the use of the term are Philo and Plato, both of whom use the term 'drunkenness' to describe a state of ecstasy. Philo specifically speaks of a place where the soul reaches communion with God, where 'he is permeated by fire in giving thanks to God, and is drunk with a sober drunkenness'.⁴ Philo interprets sober intoxication as a transient state, primarily for the reception of prophecy and revelation of the divine mysteries, that are revealed through the mystical union with the divine. Plato is more concerned with the divine union, via a process of purification, which involves the way of the negatives, that is, the ceasing of all knowledge. Philo instills within the hellenic concept of intoxication a Judaic monotheism and understanding which was central to his basic convictions, and it is this interpretation, that gave inspiration to the later Christian Fathers use of the term.

3. H. Lewy *'Sobrias Ebrietas. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik.'* BZW Beihefte 9. Geissen 1929; H.J.Sieben - A.Solignac s.v *'Ivresse Spirituelle'* Dictionnaire de Spiritualité 7 (DSp) 2312-2337; Leclercq J. *'Jour d'Ivresse'* Vie Spirituelle 76 (1947) 574-591; Meloni P. s.v *'Drunkenness'* Encyclopedia of Early Christianity (EEC) p255.

4. Philo *Leg. All.* I,82-84; Louth *'Origins'* p34; Goodenough. E.R. *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* vol 6:202. New York 1956. Lewy *'Sobrias Ebrietas'* p10-12.

Ps-Macarius uses the idea of spiritual intoxication within his explanations of the lifestyle of the Christian. The force behind the word, that of drunkenness and excess, is given an additional explanatory characteristic, emphasising that the divine nature is the source of this intoxication. As such, intoxication in Ps-Macarius is an illustration not only of a spiritual characteristic of the life of the Christian, but also an illustration of the Macarian understanding of salvation as progressive co-operation with the Holy Spirit. There is one occurrence of ‘intoxication’ within the Macarian collections which best illustrates his concept of ‘spiritual intoxication’, as opposed to intoxication with wine, and which reveals the force behind the concept of being ‘intoxicated with God’. Collection I Homily 63.6 speaks of,

“deep sober intoxication, caused by the spirit just as the body is said to be intoxicated by wine.”

Whilst there is only this solitary mention of ‘sober intoxication’ within the homilies, the more profuse occurrences of ‘intoxication’ show a clear underlying influence of the phrase⁵. These occurrences are generally of a revelatory nature, in that visions can be received in the intoxicated state, and also of a progressive nature, as the major context is of one of the progression of the Christian, the role of free will in the life of a believer, and of the journey towards the ultimate union with the Divine.

In Collection II Homily 8 Ps-Macarius speaks of the twelve steps of progression to perfection that the believer has to travel, and intoxication, with the resultant communication from the Godhead that is revealed within such a state, is the highest level.

“So it is with the lamp of grace. It is always burning and giving off light, but when it is especially trimmed, it burns more brilliantly as though intoxicated by the love of God.” “In a manner of speaking, there are twelve steps a person has to pass to reach perfection. At times one may have reached the stage of perfection. But again grace may recede somewhat and he descends to the next lower level, now standing on the eleventh step”.(II.8.2,3)

From Homily 8 it can be seen that reaching a visionary experience, becoming intoxicated with the spirit, is the highest level (step 12) that can be attained. The ‘perfect degree of grace’ being the experience of communion with God, which Ps-Macarius can only describe as a state of ‘intoxication’.

5. Intoxication references include I.5.2; I.6.4; I.45.3; I.45.3; I.52.2; I.63.6; II.8.2; II.8.4; II.15.39; II.18.7; II.15.39; II.27.9; II.50.4; III.22.3.

Intoxication with the Spirit is caused by the workings of grace upon the heart of man. Man has the free will to co-operate with this working, but also has the opportunity to turn away from it.⁶ Coupled to the operation of the Spirit in grace upon the heart is the recognition that God, for his own purposes and reasons, may withdraw to a measure, the ‘burning of the lamp of grace’⁷ that the soul may progress further in terms of citizenship of the heavenly kingdom, only later to ‘specially trim the lamp’ to kindle up the soul with intoxication⁸. There is the possibility of being intoxicated with badness (collection I Homily.6.4), the source of which is evil, rather than with grace, and it is this dual potential that causes the free will of the individual to be of such vital importance. The response of the will of man causes the fluctuating state of the Christians in their spiritual progression. Ps-Macarius recognises that being intoxicated with God is in the first instance, an individual state, a precondition of which is a desire of the believer to progress in his journey through the steps toward participation in the Godhead. Participation in Ps-Macarius (metousia), is essentially participation in the Holy Spirit, which will lead to participation in eternal life, through the fullness of grace⁹ and the advance of spiritual perfection is dependent in part upon the thirst for grace that is evident within the heart of the believer. As such participation in Ps-Macarius is characterised by change. It is continuous growth, with the possibility of retreat, that is drawn by the divine, and enabled by grace. Ps-Macarius focuses upon the role of the Holy Spirit, and of observance of the commandments, in the progressive participation of the Christian¹⁰. He speaks of the reaching out of the mind of the believer towards God in Collection I.31.6 countenancing against complacency, and instructing his audience to keep in mind the ‘perfect goal of liberty and freedom from the passions’.

Ps-Macarius writes from the perspective of a believer participating in the Godhead through the experience of the Holy Spirit. His experience colours and forms his theology. When speaking of the Trinity he does so in terms of personal relationship. In a passage which effectively summarises his Trinitarian perspective Ps-Macarius speaks of the fall of Adam, the resultant loss of divine fellowship, and the Godhead:

‘So when Adam transgressed the commandment and fell from his former glory, and came under the power of the spirit of the world, and the veil of darkness fell upon his soul, from his time and until the last Adam, the Lord, they saw not the true Father in heaven, or the good, kind Mother, the grace of the Spirit, or the sweet and desired Brother, the Lord, or the friends and kindred, the holy angels, with whom He rejoiced, making merry and keeping festival.’ (II.28.4)

6. I.45.3

7. II.8.2

8. I.52.2

9. References include, I.18.3; I.36.3 (II.37.7); I.41; I.43. I.48 (II.5.1-12); III 26.1; 27.4,7;

10. III.27.7

Within this passage Macarius reveals his perception of the Spirit as Mother, and the Father in heaven, with Christ, not fulfilling the role of Son as may have been supposed, but of Brother. God is viewed as the Trinity of father, mother and brother of the believer. His is a functional trinitarian viewpoint, led, not by the love of the Father but by the activity of the Holy Spirit, to whom he refers as Mother. The Trinity is viewed from the believers experiential perspective and the Holy Spirit as mediator of the experience is the lens by which the Trinity is brought into focus. The passage quoted above also gives an insight into the position of the community in Macarian thought. The angels, who were initially with Adam, rejoicing, making merry and keeping festival, are engaged in the activity to which Adam was called. Believers, who are now occupying the position of the new Adam are to be aware that part of their ultimate calling is one of celebration.

Communal Intoxication and the Brotherhood

Intoxication, the experience of grace upon the heart within the progression of the Christian, for Ps-Macarius is a transient experience, and it is not expected that permanent intoxication is available in the present time. Indeed Ps-Macarius casts doubt upon the desirability of such an event, and it is here that Ps-Macarius' stress on the communal aspect of Intoxication emerges, and the movement from the solitary to the communal can be seen.

“If such a man [in a state of intoxication] were constantly experiencing those marvellous things and they were always experientially present to him, he would not be able to preach the word or take on any work....he would only sit in a corner lifted up and intoxicated. As a result the perfect degree of grace is not given him so that he may be concerned with the care of his brethren and in ministering the word.” (II.8.4).

This teaching emphasises the need for community duties and an awareness of the detrimental result of the neglect of such duties. Intoxication is an event experienced by the individual, but which causes the community to grow and develop, in that the teaching of the leaders of the community stems from the individual visions received whilst in an ecstatic state. Ps-Macarius stresses the need for the one teaching to have personal experience of that which they are teaching about. This delineation of experience gives an insight into the leadership structure of Macarian brotherhoods, as,

Those who are in a teaching position must be those who have experienced more than those who are being taught. It is one thing to lecture with a certain intellectual knowledge and ideas, and another thing in substance and reality, in full faith and in the inner man and in the consciousness to have the treasure and the grace and the taste and the working of the Holy Spirit. (II.27.12)

Experience then becomes a qualifying entity. The more a community member has experienced, the more he is able to teach. The longer a member has spent in an ecstatic state, the more honour he is to be given by other members of that community. The more they have spent in an ecstatic state, the more they have experienced the Spirit and thus experienced the Godhead.

Ps-Macarius, in the course of Collection II Homily 8, reaffirms his position within the community. In II.8.6 the question is asked of him, as to what stage of spiritual development he has reached. This may be a rhetorical device to affirm his community standing, or it may be a legitimate question from a disciple. Either way, Ps-Macarius uses the opportunity to affirm his spiritual experience, his position within the community, and his qualification to teach. If, as has been suggested by Dörries¹¹, Ps-Macarius was attempting to ‘reform’ the Messalian movement from within, then such frequent repetition of his spiritual experience and thus his authority would have been necessary. However, an examination of the rhetorical structure of the Macarian Homilies reveals two formative intentions. On the one hand there is an apologetic impetus to the corpus, revealing a desire for others to understand a certain ascetic lifestyle, and on the other hand there is a teaching element, clearly designed to further the progress of a distinct group of dedicated ascetics within the Church.

Whilst individual intoxication is deemed to bring an individual closer to the Godhead, and into the level of perfect grace, communal intoxication is a foretaste of the communal communion which will finally be encountered in Paradise. Communal intoxication relies upon individual allegiance to the working of grace within the heart, within all those that make up the community, together with an awareness of the future position of that community. Macarian communities were centered upon a principle of the common good based upon the life of the angels. Collection II Homily 3 gives guidelines for communal living, stressing the need for sincerity, mutual love, peace, and charity toward others, emphasizing that the intention of the community is to ‘live on earth as in heaven’, stating that

“as the angels in heaven live together in accord with each other in the greatest unanimity, in peace and love, and there is no pride or envy there, but they communicate in mutual love and sincerity, so in the same way the brethren should be among themselves (II.3.1)”

When this passage is read in the light of Collection II Homily 28.4 (see above) it can be said that the brotherhood is to be a community of unanimous celebration, brought about by individual members of the brotherhood seeking divine experience for the common good. Such an allegiance to the common good is also echoed in

11. Dörries H. ‘*Symeon von Mesopotamien*’ 1941 p6-8. See also Desprez s.v. *Ps-Macaire (Symeon)* DSP 10, col 27.

the common benefit that Ps-Macarius says an individual's time spent praying and working gives to the community.

'He who reads should regard the one praying with love and joy with the thought 'For me he is praying'. And let him who prays consider that what the one working is doing, is done for the common good.'" (II.3.2)

The assertion of Ps-Macarius that an individual member of the community's prayer life benefits the whole of the community is at variance with some of the Messalian characteristics with which Ps-Macarius is often portrayed. John of Damascus (before 749AD) and Timothy of Constantinople (c600) both accuse the Messalians of being lazy, and avoiding work, going so far as to accuse them of being devoted to sleep under the guise of prayer¹². Yet, Ps-Macarius not only shows that Macarian Communities partake of work, but also affirms that such work done within the community is done for the common good, rather than individual necessity. Furthermore, prayer and the reception of visions, (the achievement of intoxication), is an individual activity practiced for the benefit of the community as well as the individual. Intoxication that is caused by the Spirit¹³ benefits the community through the mysteries and visions that are revealed whilst in the intoxicated state, and which may be passed on during the 'preaching of the word'¹⁴. However, it also benefits the community by strengthening communal values. The entry into an intoxicated state is not just for the edification of the individual, but for the building up of the community.

The Messalian heresy which, has been described by Jean Gribomont as 'ephemeral'¹⁵, is difficult to precisely define. So too, it is difficult to locate the role of Ps-Macarius within the movement with any degree of certainty. Anomalies exist between the perceived Messalian position, and the Macarian Community. The attitude to work and prayer being a prime example. Ps-Macarius must not be discounted as a 'Messalian', nor 'Messalianism' in its fourth century characterisation be understood merely by the extant heresiological criteria of later centuries. That there was something within Messalianism that was unacceptable to the Bishops of the late fourth and early fifth centuries is not in doubt. That Ps-Macarius is typical in his representation of the Messalian movement is less certain. Ps-Macarius' eclectic theology has Messalian elements, but also reveals traits of Hellenic thought, and is attuned to Cappadocian Christianity as portrayed by Gregory of Nyssa and Basil of Caesarea.

12. See Stewart C. 'Working the Earth of the Heart' Oxford 1991 p63; John of Damascus *De haeresibus* 80 (ed Kotter pp42-6) 'Yet they shun the work of the hands as not fit for Christians'; Timothy of Constantinople *De iis qui ad ecclesiam ab hereticis accedunt* (PG 86, cols 45-52) 'They say that the work of the hands is to be shunned as loathsome'.

13. I.63.4.6

14. II.8.3

15. Gribomont *Le Dossier des Origines du Messalianisme*, 1972. p611

Conclusion

For Ps-Macarius the transfiguration of the body, through the twelve stages, is a communal goal, and communal living assists in the advance towards this goal, by instilling the angelic virtues as mentioned previously into each individual. Ps-Macarius asserts that one who has experienced the ‘intoxicated state’ is still capable of turning to evil, and is open to pride and arrogance¹⁶. He insists that the ‘Intoxication with God’, of attaining the twelfth step, is a communal ideal. It is the reason for the community activities and lifestyle, yet such a goal, however unattainable in the individual life outside of the angelic community on earth, is only attainable by individual appropriation of grace, and by the supernatural trimming of the lamps that takes place by the will of God¹⁷. Thus, the paradox of Ps-Macarius is that the individual is unable to progress without the community, but it is only as an individual that one can progress onto the uppermost step.

The community that Ps-Macarius seeks to create is a pure Church, a community of believers that are wholehearted in their response to God, and who receive communications from God when in receipt of an abundance of divine grace, and who acknowledge the transient nature of their position on the journey. Thus his goal is for his community to achieve the highest step, for his community to achieve communal intoxication. Ps-Macarius’ brotherhoods are

‘communities of those who partake of the divine’¹⁸, and ‘participators of the secrets of the heavenly King’¹⁹.

The experience of grace that results in being ‘Intoxicated with God’ does not bring the Christian into perfection, and Ps-Macarius is at pains to emphasise this. The Macarian community is a community of potential perfection rather than achieved perfection. Ps-Macarius recognises the danger of not allowing the spirit to work upon the heart because of a lack of discipline and asceticism, but he also counsels against those who having experienced divine grace, and living a life of self-control, assume that they are free from sin²⁰.

The Macarian corpus portrays community values in association with individual responsibility and asceticism. Ps-Macarius emphasises the role of the individual within the community. As such he could be said to emphasise ‘solitude for community’. The best example of this is his teaching on the importance of prayer alongside the value and necessity of work. By emphasising that the one working is working for his brother, and the one praying is also praying for his brother, he shows an awareness of the needs and benefits of community life.

16. I.33.2 (II.15.36f)

17. II.8.2

18. II.17.2

19. II.17.2

20. II.17.6

The Macarian community is a community of potential perfection rather than achieved perfection, which is based around an ascetic lifestyle. The spiritual experience of the Early Church as seen through the writings of Ps-Macarius is often couched in a language and form that is difficult to penetrate with any precision. However, this language is often poetically beautiful and reveals spiritual guidance to those willing to penetrate both the language and the often paradoxical statements contained within it. The teaching on intoxication emphasises the need for discipline in body, desire in heart, and the provision of divine grace for the soul to enter into the presence of God. The communal aspect of Macarian thought emphasises the necessity for communal discipline and a common goal : that of participation in the divine.

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ABOUT THE MULTICULTURAL, ECUMENICAL DESERT- MONASTICISM

*Otto F.A. Meinardus, Ph.D.**

Towards the end of the second millennium Egyptian Christians are faced with a multiplicity of issues pertaining to their religious identity. This is particularly true in the Coptic diaspora communities. Ecumenicity can provide help in times of social and economic needs, at the same time, however, it can also lead towards a religious syncretism that is pernicious to the ecclesiastical identity. At the first assembly meeting in 1948 in Amsterdam the Coptic Church had joined the World Council of Churches (WCC). In 1954, three Coptic representatives took part in the deliberations of the second assembly in Evanston, Ill.¹ On the occasion of the 7th assembly in Canberra, Australia, in 1991, Pope Shenudaa III was elected to be one of the seven presidents of the WCC. The Coptic Church is ecumenically involved.

The purpose of this essay is to throw some light upon certain ecumenical encounters which are widely unknown even in ecclesiastical circles. The participants happen to be monks belonging to sundry ethnic communities, yet at the same time adhering to the same christological miaphysitic position as stated by St. Cyril of Alexandria, namely, “the one nature of the Incarnate Word.” Their theological unanimity was based upon their repudiation of the decisions of the 4th Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451 and their rejection of the legislations of the Roman Pope Leo I.

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1. Dr. Aziz Suryal Atiya, Abûnâ Makârî as-Surîânî, Abûnâ Salîb Surial.



Sts. Maximus and Domitius
Painted by Yusuf Girgis Ayad

Five different periods of multicultural, ecumenical relations shall be presented: The emergence of multicultural monasticism in Egypt, the Antiochene-Alexandrian connections, the expansion of multicultural monasticism in the desert of Scetis, testimonies of multicultural-ecumenical religious services and the period of the ecumenical dispersion.

The Emergence of Multicultural Monasticism in Egypt

It is noteworthy that certain places of solitude have often attracted men of prayer belonging to different ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds. This is true regarding the multicultural monastic life of the Greeks, Russians, Bulgarians and Rumanians on Mount Athos, it is also the

case of the first monastic settlements in the desert of Scetis, the Wādī ‘n-Natrûn between Cairo and Alexandria. Among the first monks were Maximus and Domitius, sons of the West-Roman Emperor Valentinian (364-375) who were instructed in the ascetic life by St. Macarius the Great. Bishop Palladius of Helenopolis (4th cent.) mentioned in his *Historia Lausiaca* the Ethiopian robber Moses the Black, who had joined St. Isidore in the Cell of the Romans (*al-Barâmûs*) and who had suffered martyrdom during the Berber-raid in 407. Other foreigners in the desert of Scetis were the Roman aristocrat Arsenius (376-449), the Roman historian John Cassianus (360-430) and his friend Germanus. Evagrius of Pontus (345-400) was a personal friend of St. Macarius. He had spent two years in Nitria and fourteen more years in the Cells (Cellia). According to Coptic tradition, also St. Ephraim the Syrian visited St. Bishoi in the desert of Scetis.

In fact, the ecumenical and multicultural character of the ascetic life in the Western Desert had inspired several European ladies of distinction to assume the monastic apparel and join the desert fathers. Among the best known were Hilaria, the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Zeno (479-491); Eugenia, the daughter of the Alexandrian Prefect Philippus; Apollonia, the daughter of the Roman Emperor Anthemius (467-472) and the noble ladies Euphrosyne, Theodora and Anastasia. This practice of the so-called women-monks led the Church-Fathers to issue the following canon at the Council of Gangra (4th cent.): “If a woman, under the pretense of asceticism shall change her apparel and, instead of a woman’s accustomed clothing, shall put on that of a man, let her be anathema.”

Other early foreigners who visited the desert fathers were the Aquileian histo-

rian Rufinus (345-410) who was accompanied by the Roman Lady Melania. Also St. Jerome (348-420), after having settled in Bethlehem in 386, visited the Egyptian Desert Fathers. The fame of the elders of Scetis spread to distant lands and called forth many pilgrims, even from Ireland and Spain. An Irish guidebook for travellers to the Holy Land of Scetis is still preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.²

Although the Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431 had condemned the Nestorians for their christological heresy, Nestorian monks continued to visit the Egyptian Desert Fathers. St. Eugenius, the father of Nestorian-Mesopotamian monasticism together with his disciples visited the Scetis. Other Nestorian monks like Rabban Sari, Abraham of Kashkar (492-586), Rabban Bar 'Idta and Rabban Haia of Kashkar learned their ascetic practices from the Egyptian fathers. The example of the Coptic ascetes inspired such well-known Nestorian Church-Fathers as Rabban Yunan of Anbar and Mar Yuhannan of Qanqal.³

The Antiochene-Alexandrian Connections

The traditional theological consensus between the miaphysitic patriarchates of Antioch and Alexandria is well documented on the famous 10th century sanctuary-doors of the old Church of the Holy Virgin in the Monastery of the Syrians in the Wādî 'n-Natrûn. Among the Church-Fathers of the upper row of the panels are equally presented the Alexandrian Saints Mark and Dioscorous and the Antiochene Saints Ignatius and Severus I. The balance of these Church-Fathers demonstrates the intimate relationship of the two miaphysitic patriarchates. The wall-paintings of the semi-domes of the choir in the Church of the Holy Virgin, the Annunciation and the Nativity of Christ as well as the Dormition of the Holy Virgin were the work of 10th century Syrian artists, a period in which Moses of Nisibis served as abbot of the Monastery of the Syrians.

Already during the 7th century a Syrian colony of monks had settled at the Ennaton Monastery, seven miles west of Alexandria where Thomas of Harkel and Paul of Tella had revised Syrian biblical texts. Two centuries later, towards the 9th century, Matthew and Abraham of Tekrit occupied the Theotokos Monastery of St. Bishoi, which Marutha ibn Habib, a Syrian businessman residing in Cairo had acquired for the Syrian monks.⁴ The influence of the Syrians in the life of the Coptic Church during the 10th century is undoubtedly best illustrated by the nomination, election and consecration of the Syrian businessman Abraham ibn Zar'ah (975-978) as 62nd successor to the Evangelist St. Mark, an event that was celebrated in the historic Coptic church of the Syrian saints Sergius and Bacchus in Old

2. O'Leary, de Lacy, *The Saints of Egypt*. London 1937, 27.

3. Meinardus, O., "The Nestorians in Egypt," *Oriens Christianus* 51, 1967, 122.

4. Meinardus, *Monks and Monasteries of the Egyptian Deserts*. Cairo 1961, 241 f.

Cairo. At least until the 14th century, Syrian monks used to play an important role in the desert of Scetis, where more than 60 monks inhabited the Syrian monastery.

The Expansion of Multicultural Monasticism in Scetis

During the era of the Fatimid-dynasty (10.-12. cent.) Syrians and Armenians settled in Egypt. St. Manâkis, wearer of a hairshirt, was the first Armenian monk who had moved to the desert of Scetis in the 10th century. Other Armenians followed him. At least until the 14th century an Armenian monastery existed in the Western desert which was situated between the Monastery of St. Bishoi and that of St. John Colobus. According to al-Maqrîzî, by the 15th century the Armenian monastery had fallen in ruin.

In the latter part of the 11th century, the Armenian Catholicus St. Vahran, known as St. Gregory II, had visited the monks in the desert of Scetis. In honor of the visit of the Armenian hierarch, Coptic, Ethiopian, Nubian, Syrian and Armenian monks had gathered for an ecumenical service, thereby testifying to the multicultural composition of the desert monasticism in the Scetis.

Apart from the Ethiopian robber St. Moses the Black (4th cent.) who had settled in the Cell of the Romans, by the 9th Century other Ethiopian monks had joined the Egyptian desert fathers. The Ethiopian Synaxar (Hamlé 19) mentions the Abbot Andrew who had received the monastic habit from St. John Kame of the Monastery of the Syrians (9th century). By the 11th century, Ethiopian monks had settled in the Cell of Pehout in the laura of the Monastery of St. John Colobus near the Monastery of St. Bishoi. Undoubtedly, this cell used to serve as nucleus for the Ethiopian Monastery of St. Elias. Both, the *vita* of St. Takla Haymanot and the Ethiopian Synaxar (Nahassé 14) record the presence of St. Takla Haymanot (13th cent.), the national saint of Ethiopia, in the desert of Scetis. On the occasion of the visit of Pope Benjamin II (1327-1339) to the Desert Fathers of Scetis, the Ethiopians had joined the Copts in the liturgical celebrations in the Monastery of St. John Colobus. The 14th century German pilgrim Ludolph of Suchem mentions in his travel-account the Syrian, Ethiopian and Nubian monks who follow the monastic rules of Sts. Antony and Macarius. A biblical text of the beginning of the 15th century clearly states that the Ethiopians still inhabited the Monastery of St. Elias. However, a few years later they were forced to abandon their monastery which had fallen victim to ants. Thus they moved first to the smaller Theotokos Monastery of St. John Colobus.

Although the Nubians had retained their ecclesiastical identity in the desert of Scetis, it is likely that they lived together with the Ethiopians since there is no mention of a distinct Nubian monastery. On the occasion of the visit of the Armenian Catholicus St. Vahran in 1088 they are mentioned as a separate group. This fact is also supported by the Nubian marble-tray (72 cm in diameter) which is kept in the museum of the Monastery of the Syrians. The long Nubian inscription on the floor of the tray includes intercessions for the Nubian King George who ruled from



The Nubian marble-tray with intercessions for the Nubian King George (1130-1158).

1130-1158).⁵ As the Ethiopian monks migrated to the Monastery of the Syrians between 1419 and 1449 they must have taken the marble-tray along with them.

Although the Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad had regarded the Nestorians as being the “only true Christians,” the medieval Copts had condemned them on account of their christological heresies and had scorned them as being “the new Jews.” They were not represented in the Western desert. Their monastery was

situated in al-Adawiya in the Nile Valley south of Cairo.

Nevertheless, during some 300 years, from the 12th to the 15th century the multicultural composition of the Desert Fathers in the Scetis must be seen as a most remarkable event in the history of the ecumenical movement. Although they all shared the same mia-physitic christology based upon the confession of St. Cyril of Alexandria, their ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences were extraordinary. There were the indo-germanic Armenians of the Caucasus regions. The southernmost representatives were the Ethiopians belonging to the kushitic or nilotic tribes speaking Tegrēññe or the south-Ethiopian Amharic. The nilosaharic Nubians using their Shari-languages were the spiritual heirs of the legendary King Melchior. The Syrian monks speaking their West-aramaic dialect considered themselves culturally and linguistically related to the biblical traditions, to the language and culture of Christ and the Apostles. Finally, there were the Copts, sons of the Pharaohs and great-grandchildren of Noah (Gen 10, 6). Since the 11th century the Coptic-Bohairic dialect had become the official liturgical language. For their daily communications, Arabic would have served as their *lingua franca*. In their ecumenical services, the reading of the Holy Scriptures, the Desert Fathers would have used the Greek language, since this was the language in which the New Testament was originally written. The 14th century Coptic-Arabic-Greek Holy Week Lectionary of the Monastery of St. Macarius testifies to the use of the Greek text for multicultural Divine Services.⁶

5. Meinardus, O., “Die christlichen Königreiche Nubiens”, *Kemet* 4, 1996.

6. Burmester, O.H.E., Khs-, “A Coptic-Greek=Arabic Holy Week Lectionary,” *BSAC* 16, 1961-62, 83ff.

About Multicultural services in the Scetis

During the 14th century, the multicultural, ecumenical life in the desert of Scetis had reached its climax as well as the beginning of its regrettable decline. In addition to the Ethiopians, Nubians, Armenians and Syrians, the Copts still inhabit-

ed six monasteries. The terrible persecutions of the Christians by the Bahri-Mamelukes, especially under Sultan al-Malik an-Nasir Muhammad (1320-21) and the Black Death, the plague during 1340 and 1348, led the desert fathers of the various communities to “move together.” Therefore, the multicultural ecumenicity should also be seen as a response to their needs for survival. A significant document of this “ecumenical togetherness” is the 14th century Polyglot-Psalter of the Monastery of St. Macarius in which the Psalms appear in five languages from left to right in Ge’ez, Syriac, Bohairic, Arabic and Armenian. The marginal notes were written in Syriac which indicates that the “project” may have originated among the Syrian monks.⁷ There is no doubt, that since the 11th century Syrian monks also



Codex Barberianus Orientalis Polyglot Psalter, 14th Century

resided in the Monastery of St. Macarius. On account of the threatening situations in the monasteries, Pope Benjamin II visited the desert of Scetis in 1330. It is most likely, that the 14th century tri-lingual Holy Week Lectionary as well as the Greek-Arabic Euchologion – mentioning even Pope Benjamin - were used for the multicultural Divine Services at the Monastery of St. Macarius and that of St. John Colobus.

The Period of the Ecumenical Dispersion

The dissolution of the southern Christian Kingdom of Alodia (Nubia) in the beginning of



Coptic-Greek-Arabic Holy Week Lectionary, 14th Century

7. This psalter (235 fols.) was acquired 1635 in the Monastery of St. Macarius by the Capuchin monk Agathangelus de Vendôme for Nicolas C.F. Peiresc of Paris. Twice during the transport the Ms. got lost. Finally, Giovanni Lascaris saved the precious document and presented it to Francesco Cardinal Barberini. It is now in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome.

the 16th century led to the collapse of the Nubian monastic community in the Scetis. During the final years of the 15th century also the Armenian monastery had fallen into ruin. Only the Ethiopians and Syrians continued to reside within the remaining four Coptic monasteries. For the Syrian monks, the 15th century had turned out to be "the golden age", Syrian writers like Dâûd ibn Butrus, Habîb and Garîr of Tekrît had significantly enriched the Syrian theological literature. In the beginning of the 16th century, Pope Gabriel VII (1526-1569) could still commission monks from the Syrian Monastery to assist in the reconstruction of the two devastated Red Sea Monasteries of St. Antony and St. Paul the Theban. yet, the decline could not be stopped. In 1634, the Evangelical Lutheran lay-missionary Peter Heyling of Lubec was the last person to record the presence of Syrian monks in the Monastery of the Syrians. On the other hand, Ethiopian monks continued to reside in Coptic monasteries. In the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century, a significant Ethiopian community existed in the Monastery of St. Antony. Throughout the Middle Ages until the 20th century larger and smaller groups of Ethiopian monks resided in the Monastery of the Holy Virgin al-Muharraq in the Nile Valley. During the first half of the 19th century a significant Ethiopian group of monks had separate rooms in the Monastery of the Syrians. Individual Ethiopian monks have also continued to live as itinerants or hermits in the Nile Valley or in the desert monasteries.

Today, the patriarchal Monastery of St. Bishoi serves as ecumenical center of the Coptic Church thereby continuing the ecclesiastical tradition of the Desert Fathers which had its zenith in the 14th century.

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PRIESTHOOD BETWEEN ST. GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN AND ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Rodolph Yanney, M.D.

The earliest patristic treatises on priesthood were written by two young priests who wrote in defense of an earlier flight from a call they much admired, and much dreaded. Both were destined to become Archbishops of Constantinople, and later to be forced out of their office by a general Church Council.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN

Saint Gregory was 32 years old when in 362 CE he was forced by his father, Gregory the Elder, to accept an ordination as a presbyter in Nazianzus. Feeling uncomfortable in his new responsibility, combined with an attraction to the Mountain, an attraction that never left him throughout his life, the young Gregory fled to Pontus, where he had previously enjoyed the life of solitude in the monastery started by his long time friend and colleague, St. Basil. However, through remorse of conscience, two months later Gregory took his way back to Nazianzus to face the congregation that he had previously deserted.¹ The Oration which he gave in defense of his flight to Pontus became the first patristic monograph on priesthood, and the model on which later Fathers developed their teaching on the subject, especially St. John Chrysostom (in 390/391). and St. Gregory the Great.²

Like other essential Christian doctrines, the role, status and responsibility of priests, though based upon biblical and apostolic teaching, yet they were not defined before the fourth century. Gregory did not intend to write a comprehensive monograph, and he had no model to follow. His short treatise was based on his hastily prepared sermon. Of the three functions a priest is responsible for, prophetic, pastoral and priestly, Gregory spoke only of the first two. Gregory was well

1 Winslow: *The Dynamics of Salvation*, 1979: 7, 8.

2 Quasten: *Patrology*, volume 3; 1960: 243, 244.

aware of the liturgical responsibility of the priest, whether bishop or presbyter, which had been already established in the Church and he had occasions to discuss it elsewhere in his writings. But here his main concern was to stress the personal relation and responsibility of a priest toward his flock, regardless of any formal or official function.

For Gregory the first duty of a priest is his prophetic function as a teacher of God's word; it is a task that requires no little spiritual power. (Oration 2:35). For this a priest needs:

(1) *To be a student of the Word*, "There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, a man wise in his own eyes (Eccles.10: 5; Prov.26: 12); and a still greater evil is to charge with the instruction of others a man who is not even aware of his own ignorance" (Oration 2:50).³

(2) *A virtuous life*, "Granted that a man is free from vice, and has reached the greatest heights of virtue, I do not see which knowledge or power would justify him in venturing upon this office." (Oration 2:16)

In discussing the pastoral responsibility of the priest (John 21:16), Gregory did not tire from repeatedly stressing that it is a one to one ministry in which he should be a healer of souls that differ in their personality, and their spiritual, psychological and social status:

"We, upon whose efforts is staked the salvation of a soul, a being blessed and immortal, and destined for undying chastisement or praise, for its vice or virtue, what a struggle ought ours to be, and how great skill do we require to treat, or get men treated properly, and to change their life...For men and women, young and old, rich and poor, the sanguine and despondent, the sick and whole, rulers and ruled, the wise and ignorant, the cowardly and courageous, the wrathful and meek, the successful and failing, do not require the same instruction and encouragement....Some are benefited by praise, others by blame, both being applied in season.; while if out of season, or unreasonable, they are injurious; some are set right by encouragement, others by rebuke; some, when taken to task in public, others, when privately corrected..." (Oration 2:28 & 31).

Gregory followed closely the theme of priesthood and of ministry in general, with examples from the lives and teaching of the prophets, teachers, apostles in both the Old and New Testaments. Alarmed by Christ's reproaches of the Scribes and Pharisees, he found it beyond his powers to consider the position of a prelate or to guide others, and he added saying,

3 Gregory Nazianzen: *Oration 2, In Defense of His Flight to Pontus*. Slightly adapted from the translation of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, volume 7, pages 204-226.

“A man must himself be cleansed, before cleansing others; himself become wise, that he may make others wise; become light and then give light, draw near to God, and so bring others near; be hallowed, then hallow them; be possessed of hands to lead others by the hand, of wisdom to give wisdom (Oration 2:71).

Gregory concluded the biblical examples by the story of Jonah who, like Gregory, tried in vain to flee from the service of God. Ironically, it was to Jonah again that Gregory related himself, when 19 years later, in order to spare the Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council a great division, he addressed them saying:

“I will be a second Jonah. I will give myself for the salvation of our ship (the church), though I am innocent of the storm. Let the lot fall upon me, and cast me into the sea. A hospitable fish of the deep will receive me. This shall be the beginning of your harmony. I reluctantly ascended the episcopal chair, and gladly I now come down...”⁴

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Less than three decades later, John Chrysostom sat down in Antioch to write his six books on ‘*Priesthood*’ (390/91 CE).⁵ He was highly influenced by Gregory, and he built upon his ideas about the function of the priest as teacher and shepherd, describing in more detail the difficulties, perils and temptations he encounters in his service. But he also added new themes that were not touched in Gregory’s treatise. In discussing the responsibility of the priest for the souls of his flock and his liturgical and sacramental functions, Chrysostom found in them a reason to ascribe to him an awesome dignity, a high honor, and even a character which is different from human:

“When one is required to preside over the Church, and to be entrusted with the care of so many souls, the whole female sex must retire before the magnitude of the task, and the majority of men also; and we must bring forward those who to a large extent surpass all others, and soar as much above them in excellence of spirit as Saul overtopped the whole Hebrew nation in bodily stature: or rather far more. For in this case let me not take the height of shoulders as the standard of inquiry; but let the distinction between the pastor and his charge be as great as that between rational man and irrational creatures, not to say even greater, in as much as the risk is concerned with things of far greater importance.” (Book 2:2)⁶

‘For the priestly office is indeed discharged on earth, but it ranks amongst heavenly ordinances; and very naturally so: for neither man, nor angel, nor

4 Philip Schaaff: *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 3, 1910, p. 919.

5 Kelly JND: *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom*. NY: Cornell University Press, 1995:83.

6 John Chrysostom: *Treatise on the Priesthood, Books 1-6*. Adapted from the translation of the NPNF, first series, volume 9, pages 33-83.

archangel, nor any other created power, but the Paraclete Himself, instituted this vocation, and persuaded men while still abiding in the flesh to represent the ministry of angels. Wherefore the consecrated priest ought to be as pure as if he were standing in the heavens themselves in the midst of those powers.” (Book 3:4)

Chrysostom sees that the role of priests in the sacraments of reconciliation, baptism and Eucharist makes our salvation dependent upon them!

“For if any one will consider how great a thing it is for one, being a man, and compassed with flesh and blood, to be enabled to draw near to that blessed and pure nature, he will then clearly see what great honor the grace of the Spirit has vouchsafed to priests; since by their agency these rites are celebrated, and others nowise inferior to these both in respect of our dignity and our salvation. For they who inhabit the earth and make their abode there are entrusted with the administration of things which are in Heaven, and have received an authority that God has not given to angels or archangels. For it has not been said to them, “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.”.... this binding lays hold of the soul and penetrates the heavens; and what priests do here below God ratifies above, and the Master confirms the sentence of his servants. For indeed what is it but all manner of heavenly authority which He has given them when He says, “Whose sins you remit they are remitted, and whose sins you retain they are retained?” What authority could be greater than this? “The Father has committed all judgment to the Son?” But I see it all put into the hands of these men by the Son. For they have been conducted to this dignity as if they were already translated to Heaven, and had transcended human nature, and were released from the passions to which we are liable.”(Book 3:5)

“For transparent madness it is to despise so great a dignity, without which it is not possible to obtain either our own salvation, or the good things which have been promised to us. For if no one can enter into the kingdom of Heaven except he be regenerate through water and the Spirit, and he who does not eat the flesh of the Lord and drink His blood is excluded from eternal life, and if all these things are accomplished only by means of those holy hands, I mean the hands of the priest, how will any one, without these, be able to escape the fire of hell, or to win those crowns which are reserved for the victorious?”(Book 3:5)

John Chrysostom reaches the conclusion that the authority of the priests over the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, and Anointing is a reason for them to be more feared and honored than kings and Jewish priests and to be more loved than parents:

“These verily are they who are entrusted with the pangs of spiritual travail and the birth which comes through baptism: by their means we put on Christ, and are buried with the Son of God, and become members of that blessed Head. Wherefore they might not only be more justly feared by us than rulers and kings, but also be more honored than parents; since these begat us of blood and the will of the flesh, but the others are the authors of our birth from God, even that blessed regeneration which is the true freedom and the sonship according to grace. The Jewish priests had authority to release the body from leprosy, or, rather, not to release it but only to examine those who were already released, and you know how much the office of priest was contended for at that time. But our priests have received authority to deal, not with bodily leprosy, but spiritual uncleanness--not to pronounce it removed after examination, but actually and absolutely to take it away. Wherefore they who despise these priests would be far more accursed than Dathan and his company, and deserve more severe punishment. ...God has bestowed a power on priests greater than that of our natural parents... For our natural parents generate us unto this life only, but the others unto that which is to come. And the former would not be able to avert death from their offspring, or to repel the assaults of disease; but these others have often saved a sick soul, or one which was on the point of perishing, For not only at the time of regeneration, but afterwards also, they have authority to forgive sins. “Is any sick among you?” it is said, “let him call for the elders of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up: and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him.” Again: our natural parents, should their children come into conflict with any men of high rank and great power in the world, are unable to profit them: but priests have reconciled, not rulers and kings, but God Himself when His wrath has often been provoked against them.”(Book 3: 6)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Only three decades separate the two earliest patristic treatises on priesthood; yet they speak in two different languages, express two different attitudes, and even use two different theologies. We can explain this only in part by the enthusiasm of Chrysostom early in his career as a priest in the great city of Antioch. A casual look at the Christian literature of the time shows that some of his description of the glamor, dignity and authority of the clerical office was commonplace. In his farewell address to his congregation at Constantinople in 381, St. Gregory Nazianzen says,

“Perhaps we may be reproached, as we have been before, with the exquisite character of our table, the splendor of our apparel, the officers who precede us, our haughtiness to those who meet us. I was not aware that we ought to rival the consuls, the governors, the most illustrious generals, who have no opportunity of lav-

ishing their incomes; or that our belly ought to hunger for the enjoyment of the goods of the poor, and to expend their necessaries on superfluities, and belch forth over the altars. I did not know that we ought to ride on splendid horses, and drive in magnificent carriages, and be preceded by a procession and surrounded by applause, and have everyone make way for us, as if we were wild beasts, and open out a passage so that our approach might be seen afar. If these sufferings have been endured, they have now passed away: Forgive me this wrong. Elect another who will please the majority: and give me my desert, my country life, and my God.”⁷

St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his sermon on Epiphany in 383, illustrates how the ordaining words of the bishop can transform the character of the priest since they represent the same divine Word which changes the water of Baptism, the bread of the Eucharist and the stones when consecrating an altar,

“The power of that divine word bestows a special dignity on the priest, and the blessing separates him from the ranks of the people. Yesterday he was but one of the crowd, but now he has been appointed to govern and preside, heal and instruct. Outwardly he looks like he did before, but inwardly he is transformed by an invisible power and Grace.”⁸

It appears that the great triumphs that Christianity enjoyed over the Pagans and the Aryan heretics by the ascent of Theodosius to the throne in 378 have bolstered the power, influence and honor of its leaders. This does not only appear in the tone of the patristic writings of the period, but also in the actions of the Church leaders. History gives us several examples. In 390, St. Ambrose of Milan excommunicated Theodosius after his massacre of thousands of Thessalonians when they had killed an army commander. The Emperor, stripped of the ensigns of royalty, had to appear in the midst of the church of Milan, and humbly solicit, with sighs and tears, the pardon of his sins. Theodosius was restored to communion after a delay of eight months.⁹ The great temple of Serapis at Alexandria was destroyed in 391 under the direction of its Archbishop St. Theophilus.¹⁰

In a few decades, St. Isidore of Peluse would lament the loss of the ancient values of priesthood. He writes to a bishop, “It is not long since the Church had splendid teachers and approved disciples, and it would be so again if bishops would lay aside their tyranny and show a fatherly interest in their people...” Writing to an ambitious deacon, he says, “The episcopate is a work not a relaxation; a solitude not a luxury; a responsible ministration not an irresponsible dominion; a fatherly supervision not a tyrannical autocracy.”¹¹

7 Gregory Nazianzen: *Oration 42*

8 Gregory Nyssa: *On the Baptism of Christ*, quoted in *Doors to the Sacred*, by Joseph Martos, New York, Doubleday, 1966:479,480.

9 Edward Gibbon: *Decline and Fall of the Roman empire*, Chapter 27, abridged edition, New York, 1960:399,400. Chadwick H: *The Early Church*, 1967:167-68.

10 Ibid. Gibbon, chapter 28, pp. 415-18; Chadwick, *The Early Church*, p. 168.

11 Wace H & Piercy WC: *A Dictionary of Christian Biography*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994: 545.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of the teaching of the early Church on Priesthood between Gregory and Chrysostom can be attributed to a combination of factors, a change of times and the enthusiasm of a young priest. Although it may have been a basis for further abuse of power by the clergy of the Middle Ages in the West, and of the Scholastics' definition of a priest as one who has the power to celebrate the Eucharist and forgive sins, Chrysostom is not the one to blame. His teaching must be taken as a whole, and more weight should be given to his later writings. Two years after writing *Priesthood* (c.393), he says in his homily on Second Corinthians:

“But there are occasions in which there is no difference at all between the priest and those under him; for instance, when we are to partake of the awful mysteries; for we are all alike counted worthy of the same things: not as under the Old Testament [when] the priest ate some things and those under him others, and it was not lawful for the people to partake of those things whereof the priest partook. But not so now, but before all one body is set and one cup. And in the prayers also, one may observe the people contributing much. For in behalf of the possessed, in behalf of those under penance, the prayers are made in common both by the priest and by them; and all say one prayer.¹²... Again when we exclude from the holy precincts those who are unable to partake of the holy table, it behoveth that another prayer be offered, and we all alike fall upon the ground, and all alike rise up.¹³ Again, in the most awful mysteries themselves, the priest prays for the people and the people also pray for the priest; for the words, “with thy spirit,” are nothing else than this. The offering of thanksgiving¹⁴ again is common: for neither doth he give thanks alone, but also all the people. For Having first taken their voices, next when they assent that it is “meet and right so to do,” then he begins the thanksgiving.¹⁵ ...The Apostles frequently admitted the laity to share in their decisions. For when they ordained the seven, and Matthias they first communicated with the people, both men and women. (Acts 1: 15 & Acts 6: 2, 3.). Here is no pride of rulers nor slavishness in the ruled; but a spiritual rule ... For so ought the Church to dwell as one house; as one body so to be all disposed; just as therefore there is one Baptism, and one table, and one fountain, and one creation, and one Father. Why then are we divided, when so great things unite us; why are we torn asunder? For in this way will he that is greater be able to gain even from him that is less. For if Moses learnt from his father-in-law somewhat expedient which himself had not perceived (Exod. 18: 14- 27), much more in the Church may this happen.”¹⁶

12 Prayer of absolution after public penance in the early church

13 The rite of excommunication in the early Church.

14 i.e.Eucharist

15 The Divine Liturgy

16 Chrysostom: *Homilies on Second Corinthians*: 18 (on 2 Cor. 8: 24); *NPNE*, first series, volume 12: 355-66.

BOOK REVIEWS

Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions

By Roland de Vaux. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997. 616 pp. \$30.00 (paperback). ISBN 0-8028-4278-X.

This modern classic deals with the social history of Israel from the time of Abraham till the era of the Maccabees. It covers every aspect of Israel's way of life, with a wealth of material from the Old Testament, as well as from archaeological evidence and information gathered from the historical study of Israel's neighbors. In the introduction, the author describes the early nomadic life of the Patriarchs and how it survived after settling in Canaan as manifested in the tribal organization and in the austere life of the Rekabites and some of the prophets. Part I, *Family Institutions*, has separate chapters dealing with the family, marriage, women, children, inheritance, death and funeral rites. Part II, *Civil Institutions*, deals with the populations and its divisions, slaves and state, with separate chapters on the king, his household and officials, and aspects of administrative and economic life. Part III, *Military Institutions*, has chapters on the army, fortified cities, armaments, war, and holy war. In Part IV, *Religious Institutions*, the longest part in the book, the author discusses the early sanctuaries of Israel and of its Semitic neighbors, the Temple of Jerusalem and its rituals, priesthood, liturgical calendar and feasts.

Halfway To Heaven: The Hidden Life of the Carthusians

By Robin Bruce Lockhart ISBN 0-232-52321-5, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999. Sterling £8.95 pp. xx X 171.

The author of this volume traces the spiritual origins of the Carthusian order, the most completely enclosed religious order in the Roman Catholic Church, back to the Coptic Orthodox Desert Fathers of the early Christian centuries in Egypt. A Copt reading this book will find many similarities between the Carthusians and the modern monks of Coptic Egypt. Carthusian ascetic Theology is described as the attempt to communicate 'the direct secret and incommunicable knowledge of God received in contemplation', and is clearly close to those Coptic traditions associated with Abba Kyrillos the Sixth, Abouna Abd al-Masih al-Habashi and Abouna Matta el-Miskin. In sum, this is a fine piece of work with significant ecumenical value for Coptic Orthodox Christians reflecting upon their own monastic tradition, which is second to none in the twentieth century.

John Watson

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- ** *The Seven Minor Feasts of Our Lord*
- *** **Feasts of Virgin Mary**
- **** **Fasts**

- ***January 7** - *CHRISTMAS*
- ****January 15** - *Circumcision of Our Lord*
- ******January 19** - **Paramoni (1)**
- ***January 20** - *EPIPHANY*
- ****January 22** - *First Miracle of Our Lord at Cana*
- *****January 30** - **Dormition of Virgin Mary**
- ****February 16** - *Entrance of Our Lord into the Temple*
- ******February 21** - **Fast of Nineveh (3)**
- ******March 6** - **Great Lent (55)**
- March 19** - **Feast of the Cross**
- *****April 2** - **Apparition of the Virgin at Zeitoun in 1968**
- ***April 7** - *ANNUNCIATION*
- ***April 23** - *ENTRANCE OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM (PALM SUNDAY)*
- ****April 27** - *Holy Thursday*
- ***April 30** - *EASTER*
- ****May 7** - *St. Thomas' Sunday*
- *****May 9** - **Birth of Virgin Mary**
- ****June 1** - *Entrance of Our Lord into Egypt*
- ***June 8** - *ASCENSION*
- ***June 18** - *PENTECOST*
- ******June 19** - **Apostles' Fast (23)**
- July 12** - **Martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul**
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- ****August 19** - *Transfiguration of Our Lord*
- *****August 22** - **Assumption of the Body of Virgin Mary**
- September 11** - **New Year's Day (Feast of the Martyrs)**
- September 27** - **Feast of the Cross**
- ******November 25** - **Christmas Fast (43)**
- *****Decmeber 12** - **Presentation of Virgin Mary into the Temple**