

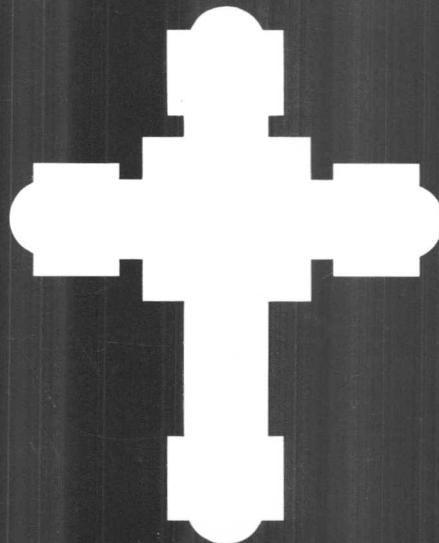
COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

Volume 1

Number 1

Spring 1980

- ★ **Easter in the Writings of St. Athanasius**
- ★ **The Resurrection: by Father Matta El-Meskeen**
- ★ **Saint Clement of Alexandria: by Esmat Gabriel**



Society of Coptic Church Studies

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Society of Coptic Church Studies
New Jersey

Editorial and Business Address:
Post Office Box 1113
Lebanon, PA 17042

Subscription Price (1 year)
U.S.A. \$5.00
Foreign \$7.00

A Quarterly of Contemporary Patristic Studies

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Our first issue appears in spring when “the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.” Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, commenting on these verses from the Song of Solomon says,

“At what season did the Saviour rise? . . . This is the season of the creation of the world . . . Our salvation took place at the same season as the fall: when the flowers appeared, and the pruning was come.”

From the Desert of Scete, *Father Matta El-Meskeen* writes about *The Resurrection*. He does not deal here with the resurrection of Christ, but that of man. After defining and describing this resurrection, he discusses in the longer part of the article the sources which lead us now to a present resurrection with Christ.

This is followed by an article about “*Easter in the writings of St. Athanasius*”. Our society lacks such words from the fourth century Christianity; we have practically lost the scriptural meaning and way to celebrate Easter.

In “*Sons of Pharaohs and Christianity*”, *Father Tadros Malaty* writes about the spiritual soil which Christianity found in first century Egypt. Father Tadros, who is the pastor of St. George Coptic Church, Alexandria, Egypt, has served in many churches in U.S., Canada and Australia, and has published numerous books most of which deal with Coptic liturgy and patristic writings. His recent book “Tradition and Orthodoxy” is reviewed in this issue.

From the dawn of Christianity, theologians of the School of Alexandria led the Christian thought everywhere. Esmat Gabriel M.A., M.S.S. (who teaches psychology at Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, Pa., and is interested in patristic writings about education.) discusses the life and teaching of St. Clement of Alexandria, the second century Church Father.

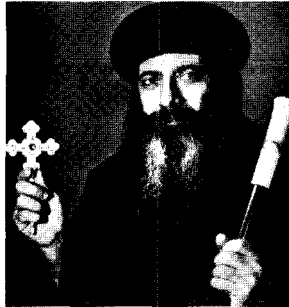
Dr. Fayek Ishak, Chairman and professor of English Literature at Lakehead University, Canada, and a member of the editorial board of “Coptic Church Review”, discusses the problem of translating the liturgy. We hope that his article may stimulate scholars, not only in the English language, but also in Coptic and Greek languages as well as theologians to share in this huge task which confronts the Church of the Present.

A final article addresses itself to a recent and important theme in ecumenism. What does Orthodoxy say about the Chicago Call? In “Common Roots”

Adly Hanna comments on a book by that name written by an Evangelical leader who is calling for a return to a more traditional form of Christianity. Mr. Hanna, though an engineer by profession, spends most of his time serving St. Mary Coptic Church of Harrisburg, PA.

R.Y.

WHY A NEW JOURNAL?



His Holiness, Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope and Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church (St. Mark's See of Alexandria)

“Thus says the Lord:” “Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.” (Jeremiah 6,16)

This Journal has one aim — to help the restless souls of the twentieth century along the ancient path of the Church Fathers. In this century, we have the biblical movement, the liturgical movement, the ecumenical movement, and the charismatic movement. Everybody is “moving” to nowhere, while what one really needs is a true encounter with God. But how can we find Him, unless we “follow in the track of the flock.?”

The Journal has been devised to fill a serious gap in English theological studies and magazines. There is no patristic journal in the English language that can help the serious Christian in his spiritual life. On the contrary, the believer is daily bombarded by religious literature which hardly affects his heart. There is a lot of “spiritual” writings that deal more with psychology than with a real life of prayer. The historical critical method of Bible study has been sanctioned by various churches, while the spiritual exegesis of the Fathers is completely lost. Many monographs, conferences, and retreats deal with spiritual direction, discussing newer and newer methods, while they leave nearly unopened the vast volumes of the Desert Fathers.

The result of all this is that modern man does not find a solution for his problems or any spiritual satisfaction in Christianity. Some try, in vain, to find a substitute in cults, eastern or western.

To all these troubled souls, we are offering in the Journal the Biblical and liturgical spirituality, as lived in the Coptic Church through the centuries since the Apostolic time. After the council of Chalcedon and the Arab conquest of Egypt, the Church of Alexandria was lost to the rest of the Christian world. But she was alive and faithful to her Tradition which she kept under ages of darkness and persecution. She was also alive in the subconscious mind of the Christian west. Because most of the early Coptic Fathers wrote in Greek, they were called “Greek Fathers.” The revivals of

western monasticism in the middle ages by the Carthusians, Cistercians, Franciscans and Dominicans, were in each time influenced by the examples of the Egyptian Desert Fathers.

But this is no more history. We hope to live with the reader in the liturgical life of the Church. Although the Eucharistic liturgy of the Coptic Church has been the basis for the recent Roman Catholic and some Protestant rites, and although it is one of the few examples of a liturgy that started in the Apostolic time, and is still practiced and alive, yet it is not known by many, including scholars. There is a wealth of spiritual insights in the liturgical cycles of hours, feasts, and fasts. These have been meditated upon by the Fathers, and are alive in the prayers of the Church.

Monastic life has been the soul of the Church. At a time when monasticism is declining in most churches, no one knows about the contemporary monastic revival in the Coptic Church, the place which was the cradle of all Christian monasticism. On the pages of the Journal we hope to carry the reader in a spiritual pilgrimage to the monasteries of Saint Antony, Saint Macarius, and monasteries of other Desert Fathers. On the other hand the Journal includes articles written by some of the pioneers of this revival.

But what has all this about Fathers and monks to do with the Christian in the modern world? Actually in spite of different geographical and historical surroundings we are fighting, although under new faces, the same foes as the Fathers. We have to use their weapons and follow their footsteps.

It is to the English speaking Coptic youth, and to the Christians everywhere that we are dedicating this Journal.

Editor

THE RESURRECTION

Father Matta El Meskeen

First: What is the Resurrection? It is the strength of a new life granted to men by Christ's Resurrection and by it we live as the Bible says, "Not for ourselves but for him who for us died and was risen." So the Resurrection is living in Christ and for Christ only.

Second: What are the signs that indicate a person who lives a life filled with Christ's Resurrection?

1—The first sign indicating a person who truly leads a life in Christ's Resurrection is a love for Christ that even death itself cannot end. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:35-39)
2—The second sign is a person's love for his brethren: a love that extends beyond all the possibilities of the limits of death that Satan implants in man's relations with others. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14) And these are not merely words or fantasies, but are from the reality of daily experiences.

3—The third sign is a man who views "all matters as working together towards goodness" because the looking glass through which he sees all matters becomes a heavenly one.

Third: What are the sources or the means of grace that bring us to the Resurrection of Christ?

Three principal sources lead us to the Resurrection of Christ:

1st Source: A confirming absolute faith in the word of Christ. "Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God? I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."

2nd Source: The simple but mystic participation in the death and the Resurrection of Christ through Baptism and the Holy Eucharist; wherein we are buried with him and are risen with him in a mystery that transcends the human mind.

3rd Source: The devout struggle with pain and suffering by carrying the cross and going through death every day with a conscious will. In sharing pain, suffering and death with Christ, we originate our participation in his Resurrection and his glory, as was faithfully and truly promised.

First Source of Resurrection

The Resurrection is fulfilled first by belief in the word of Christ as it is written, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God". (Rom. 10:17) "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (Rom. 10:16 & John 12:38)

Here, the word (i.e. the Gospel) is the first and main source from which we get the power of Christ's Resurrection, and when the word reaches the level of faith—absolute heartfelt faith—then knowledge rises to the level of inspiration. As it is written in the verse "Who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Through inspiration, the Resurrection flows as an inner strength to the soul and to life, because the word of God is in itself strength. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing assunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12) "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63)

We should bear in mind that it was by God's word that the first creation was made and that by Christ and his word the second creation is made through the Resurrection. Here, we should also bear in mind the raising of the daughter of Jairus, and the widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus—all by Christ's word. Jesus stresses the importance of believing his word with an absolute belief so as the Resurrection can be completed. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11: 25-26).

Instances in the Gospel that inspire faith in the Resurrection:—The Resurrection was the center of the teaching and preaching of the Disciples, Apostles, and preachers of the New Testament. Christ's Resurrection was the

basis over which the Christian faith was built. Belief in Christ means belief in the Resurrection and Jesus is the Son of God because he rose from the dead through his own divine power. "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:" (Rom. 1:4) We see Jesus stressing the importance of belief in his Resurrection when he strongly reproached the two disciples of Emaus for the lack of faith in the Lord's Resurrection when they heard the news. Jesus had expected and still does expect that as soon as we hear the news of his resurrection we instantly believe. He said to them: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:" (Lu. 24:25). Likewise, he reproached his disciples for their disbelief in his Resurrection, "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen". (Mark 16:14).

Jesus reproached his disciples for their lack of belief, not only because he had previously referred to his Resurrection in several instances but because his Resurrection was fitting to his sovereignty and divinity, and to all his previous sayings and deeds. He did not rise from the dead by mere chance or with no previous preparations; his Resurrection was with a power conformed with his previous life. Christ requests us to believe in his Resurrection because first, it is a declaration of his absolute power and sovereignty, and second, it is our new life in Him granted to us on the day he rose from the dead. He had formerly mentioned it in detail and commanded his disciples to await it because "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe". (John 14:29) "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more, but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14:19)

The Gospel firmly testifies to Christ's Resurrection. It records Christ's appearances after his Resurrection ten times in different instances throughout the four Gospels.

In the first Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul the Apostle recorded the Resurrection with a clear confirmation as a participant in it and as an eyewitness, either by seeing the Risen Christ while in full consciousness and awareness in the middle of the day, or by proof of the power and spirit in his new human being through the mysterious work of the Resurrection. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein you stand: By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this

present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles; And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.” (Cor.I-15:1-8)

Paul’s witness to Christ’s Resurrection is the strongest and tops all other witnesses because Paul was a persecutor of Christ, blasphemed against Him, and bore false witness against Him. Because his witness came five years after Christ’s Resurrection, not as a piece of recorded history of an incident; it came as a witness of a man who has drawn power from the Resurrection in his soul, in his mind, and in his body and spirit.

We find that after all that, Paul’s witness and the witness of all the Apostles was supported by their readiness to hold on to it in the face of the fears of the threats of death. They actually suffered, were jailed, and died bitter deaths while they continuously and unceasingly proclaimed witness to the Resurrection of Christ.

Second Source of Resurrection

The Resurrection as an unseen power granted to us through Baptism and the Holy Eucharist:—We do not believe that Christ’s Resurrection is something that concerns Him only but it primarily concerns us too. Christ was risen for our sakes—‘he rose and raised us with him’ as the Apostle Paul says, so in believing in Christ’s Resurrection is included our participation in the Resurrection. Christ died for us in the body so that death may not have any power over us, and may no longer be considered as a punishment for us but as a way and means to the Resurrection and life everlasting. Therefore, Christ’s Resurrection from the dead carries within its power and impression a new life and another birth to all mankind. As the Apostle Peter says: “hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”. (1 Peter 1:1-3). From this verse it is clear that Christ’s resurrection was not Christ’s alone, but it was a Divine act that encompassed all mankind—all those who believe. Christ gave us a second birth by his Resurrection, so we became as the Bible says, ‘children of the Resurrection’ i.e. children over whom death has no sovereignty, “But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.” (Luke 20:35-36). From this it is clear how Jesus became the second Adam by whose death and resurrection from the dead, we were born again to everlasting life.

Baptism gives the concealed power of the Resurrection:—In order to complete the second birth as Jesus promised Nicodemus, Christ has so

decreed that after believing the word, we are reborn spiritually through his living body by water and the Holy Spirit in Baptism. Christ has given this great importance, especially after his Resurrection as we see at the end of every Gospel — because when we are reborn through Christ's living body, we are instantly transformed into children of the living God—Children of the Resurrection—Children of the cross, the blood and the empty grave over whom death will have no power; or as Christ says, 'They cannot die'. Therefore, we receive the strength and power of the Resurrection as we go through burial in the water; but this remains an invisible and unproven power of the Resurrection until its deeds are fulfilled through the spiritual behavior in the course of life. For example: a baby is born with the potential to stand and walk in his human nature but remains unable to use those potentials until he grows and develops.

The Eucharist gives us the Resurrection in a form of mutual confirmation:—In the Eucharist the Resurrection starts taking its clearest form. Here, we eat the invisible body, thus we receive the life that is in it, i.e., we receive the resurrection. The power of this expression is made clear when we know that eating the Eucharist takes place on two levels — a visible living level in the materials of the sacrament — bread & wine; and a spiritual, invisible level when we eat and drink the divine body and blood which are 'true food and true drink'. The truth is 'alithia' something that transcends the senses and human brain, 'Alithia' is here Christ himself, 'I am the truth'. Therefore, in the Eucharist, we eat Christ — the risen Christ in a spiritual body — eaten in spirit as truth is. We eat it and drink it and unite with it, as we eat the bread and drink the blood, which are then transformed within us as strength and energy for the continuation of our bodily life.

In the Eucharist, we receive the Resurrection as a power that flows in our soul giving it spiritual energy, light, holiness, purity and everything necessary for everlasting life and the way to heaven for all the children of the Resurrection. Every time we eat the bread of the Eucharist and drink from the cup we are confirmed in Christ's Resurrection and Christ's Resurrection is confirmed in us day after day so that we may fulfill the will of the Father as children of the Resurrection. Thus, the Eucharist is a nourishment for the Resurrection and an eternal remedy that cures all the ills of the children of death. It is the food of the wedding guests who are invited to eat from the Lamb in eternal bliss.

Third Source of Resurrection

The Resurrection in the Devout Strife:—We are called to carry the cross before we are called to the glory of the Resurrection, not as a weight or

punishment or penance, but as an official way to the Resurrection.

The Resurrection starts in Gethsamane, with the continuous worship, perspiration flowing down with blood, and the depression and fright of the feeling of the closeness of death; and continues from Gethsamane, on to Calvary through Annias and Caiaphas and Pilate with the ridicule and disgrace and then on to death and the grave. Then shines the cross and from the Resurrection comes out the most delicious fruit man ever tasted.

We have previously mentioned in the first source that through belief in the word of God, our intellects are opened to absorb the light of the splendour of the resurrection, thence, intellectual happiness that elevates the mind to eternity and Heaven.

In the second source, we tasted the Resurrection in the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist — as water for life and true food if anyone eats from it he shall never die—A good taste that is renewed for us every day on the altar.

Here, we are called to taste the Resurrection through the reality of the bitterness of pain, sorrow, and oppression: a true taste just as Christ tasted pain, injustice, infidelity, and after the bitterness of death, the delight of the Resurrection and its splendid feeling that cannot be described.

We are called to taste the Resurrection from all the bitterness of pain, oppression and self-denial and the effort on our part for the love of Christ and our brothers.

When Jesus crossed the Garden of Gethsamane towards Calvary, the vision of the daybreak of the third day was always before his eyes, so was the scene of the hill of the Ascension very clear to him because the feeling of the Resurrection never departed from him.

The sense of the Resurrection was with Christ before the suffering; so it made the pain bearable even tasty or delicious, 'The cup that God gave me shall I not drink it?' So Christ also gave us the secret of the Resurrection before the suffering, not only to help us through the pain like him, but so the sense of the Resurrection may grow and multiply, and so we feel its strength through the bitterness of death.

Every suffering we go through implants in us the feeling of the Resurrection in the same ratio as it gives us bitterness, sorrow and oppression. The Resurrection is in fact not manifested in pain and oppression until their pressure is increased and the smell of death rises from them. Thus, the Resurrection of Christ has become the strongest support on which we can lean in times of pain and oppression. Also, pain and oppression have themselves become the strongest practical and actual means through which we ourselves go every day and cross over from death to the Resurrection.

Finally, if belief in the word is considered the first source which introduces us to the reality of the Resurrection; and if the Sacraments of Baptism and

Eucharist are considered the invisible second means over from death to the Resurrection.

Finally, if belief in the word is considered the first source which introduces us to the reality of the Resurrection; and if the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist are considered the invisible second means of accepting the Resurrection as a living act, so suffering will always remain the daily source for the secret of the Resurrection from which the energetic ascetic drinks without fill to the end.

Translated by Lily H. Soliman

Meaning and Celebration of Easter in the Writings of Saint Athanasius

Rodolph Yanney, M.D.

Liturgic Cycle — centered in Easter.

Easter is the “feast of feasts” which commemorates not merely the resurrection of Christ, but the whole Christian mystery. The early Church called it Pascha, as the Jewish Passover was its type. In the Old Testament, Passover was the beginning and center of the Jewish year¹. In due time, the liturgic cycle of the Christian year revolved around Easter. But the dating of Easter was a subject of controversy in the Church, till it was solved in the council of Nicea (325 A.D.). The Alexandrian See was requested to undertake the duty of announcing the correct date to the principal foreign Churches as well as to its own suffragan Sees².

The popes of Alexandria used to announce the date in their Easter letters, which were sent a long time before Easter. Saint Athanasius wrote 45 Easter letters, which were sent to all main Sees, but have survived only in the Egyptian monasteries of Scete, till they were discovered by the Western world in 1842. In these letters, St. Athanasius never failed to impress the theological meaning of Easter and how it should be celebrated. For him, the liturgical cycle is a cycle of prayers, fasts and feasts — always pointing to their summit which is a new beginning.

“We duly proceed . . . from feasts to feasts, duly from prayers to prayers, we advance from fasts to fasts, and join holy-days to holy-days. Again the time has arrived which brings to us a new beginning even the announcement of the blessed Passover, in which the Lord was sacrificed³”.

Meaning of Easter

For the Jews, Passover was a recollection of the deliverance from Egypt⁴, and a hope of the coming redemption and expectation of the Messiah⁵. For the early Church, Pascha was a feast of deliverance from the bondage of sin and death and an expectation of the Parousia—the second coming of Christ. Both these aspects were emphasized by St. Athanasius

Saint Athanasius the Great

- ★ Born at Alexandria in 398 A.D.
- ★ A disciple of Pope Alexander and St. Anthony the Great
- ★ Though still a deacon, he was the most influential personality in the council of Nicea (325 A.D.) against Arijus
- ★ Chosen as Pope of Alexandria in 328 A.D.
- ★ Christianity reached Ethiopia in his time
- ★ Exiled several times by the Arian Roman emperors
- ★ He was a pillar of faith when most bishops accepted the Arian heresy.
- ★ Left extensive writings-exegetical, apologetical, dogmatic, disciplinary and moral
- ★ Died in 373. His feast day is May 15
- ★ Described as "The Great", "The Apostolic", "Pillar of the Church", and the "God-given Physician of her wounds".

1. *Feast of deliverance*

"...we break through the furnace of iron and darkness, and pass, unharmed, over that terrible Red Sea. Thus also, ... we shall, with Moses, sing that great song of praise ... Thus, singing praises, and seeing that the sin which is in us has been cast into the sea, we pass over to the wilderness⁶"

Therefore blessed Moses of old times ordained the great feast of the Passover, ... because Pharoah was killed, and the people were delivered from bondage ... Now however, That the devil, that tyrant against the whole world, is slain, we do not approach a temporal feast, my beloved, but an eternal and heavenly⁷."

2. *Feast of the Parousia:*

"Let us keep the feast ... as a symbol of the world to come, in which we here receive a pledge, Then having passed hence, we shall keep a perfect feast with Christ⁸"

Saint Athanasius does not fail to remind us that in the Parousia we do not only meet Christ, but also his saints,

"Let us celebrate it ... with these saints who ... were examples to us ... that having imitated the behaviour of the saints, we may enter into the Joy of our Lord which is heaven⁹."

How to Celebrate the feast

Although St. Athanasius reminds us of the words of St. Paul that Christ is our Passover¹⁰, who in his own exodus brings about the passage of the sinful world, with him, to the Father, yet the saint always stresses the Old Testament

type. By the crossing of the Red Sea, the Israelites did not reach Jerusalem, but the wilderness, "we pass over to the wilderness, and being first purified by prayers, and fastings, and discipline, and good works, we shall be able to eat the holy Passover in Jerusalem¹¹"

Before we can mystically meet our Resurrected Lord, we need the ascetic discipline of Lent.

"Wherefore let us not celebrate the feast after an earthly manner but as keeping festival in heaven with the angels. Let us glorify the Lord, by chastity, by righteousness, and other virtues . . . Let us fast like Daniel¹²"

"But as Israel, when going up to Jerusalem, was first purified in the wilderness, being trained to forget the customs of Egypt, the Word by this typifying to us the holy fast of the forty days . . . In no other manner is it possible to go up to Jerusalem, and to eat the Passover, except by observing the fast of the Forty days¹³."

Prayer is an essential part of the celebration.

"For the feast does not consist in pleasant intercourse at meals, nor splendour of clothing, nor days of leisure, but in the acknowledgement of God, and the offering of thanksgiving and of praise to Him¹⁴"

". . . the day of the feast . . ., above all others, should be devoted to prayer¹⁵"

"For what else is the feast, but the service to the soul? And what is that service, but prolonged prayer to God, and unceasing thanksgiving¹⁶?"

The Jews celebrated the Passover by sacrificing and eating the Passover lamb. The Church celebrates the new feast by the Holy Eucharist:

". . . as we hear the sacred trumpet, no longer slaying a material lamb, but that true Lamb that was slain, even our Lord Jesus Christ¹⁷."

St. Athanasius, together with many of the Church Fathers, teaches that the Eucharist is a fulfillment of Malachi 1:11 "in every place incense and sacrifice" are offered to God and he contrasts it to the old passover that used to be observed only in Jerusalem and concludes by saying,

"The Saviour also, since He was changing the typical for the spiritual, promised them (i.e. his disciples) that they should no longer eat the flesh of a lamb, but His own saying, "Take eat and drink; this is my body and my blood"¹⁸ When we are thus nourished by these things, we also, my beloved, shall truly keep the feast of Passover"¹⁹

According to St. Athanasius, Eucharist, celebrated at Easter, is the sacrament of union of all Christians in one Body of Christ,

“God produces even now from (the cross) the joy of glorious salvation, bringing us to the same assembly and in every place uniting us all in spirit; appointing us common prayers, and a common grace proceeding from the feast. For this is the marvel . . . that He should gather together in the same place those who are at a distance; and make those who appear to be far off in the body, to be near together in unity of spirit²⁰.”

For St. Athanasius, the Eucharist is the heavenly banquet where we partake of the immortal food, and meet our Saviour,

“But let us, brethren, who have received the vineyard from the Saviour, and are invited to the heavenly banquet, in as much as the feast is now drawing nigh, take the branches of the palm trees,²¹ and proving conquerors of sin let us too like those, who on that occasion went to meet the Saviour, make ourselves ready by our conduct, both to meet Him when He comes, and to go with Him and partake of the immortal food, and from thenceforth live eternally in the heavens”²²

But in spite of all the joys of Easter, still we only meet the Lord sacramentally in the Eucharist. Although Passover was a type of Easter, Easter itself is a type of something yet to be fulfilled in reality of Heaven. This St. Athanasius saw approaching at the end of his earthly life.

“Let us . . . enter into the holy place . . . “whither also our forerunner Jesus is entered for us having obtained eternal redemption”²³. . . we have become fellow citizens, with the saints, and are called children of Jerusalem which is above . . . And as old things were a type of the new, so the festival that now is, is a type of the day which is above, to which coming with psalms and spiritual songs, let us begin the fasts”²⁴

These were the last words which Saint Athanasius wrote to us, after which the old bishop—now in his seventy fifth year, passed over with Christ to enjoy the heavenly Easter with psalms and spiritual songs in the Jerusalem which is above.

References:

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5. *J. Jermias in TDNT V p898 & 903*
6. *N& PNF, vol IV Letter III:5*
7. *Ibid - Letter IV:3*
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9. *Ibid Letter II:1,2*
10. *1 Cor. 5:7*
11. *Ibid - Letter III:5*
12. *Ibid - Letter VI:12*
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14. *Ibid - Letter VII:3*
15. *Ibid - Letter III:1*
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17. *Ibid - Letter I:9*
18. *Ibid - Matt. 26: 26-28*
19. *Ibid - Letter IV:4*
20. *Ibid - Letter V:2*
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SONS OF PHARAOHS & CHRISTIANITY

Father Tadros Malaty

Embracing Christianity does not require a certain culture, nor demand a particular language in worshipping God. In fact, it is a revelation of God's love towards the entire world. It urges all nations to enjoy fellowship with God, through unity with the One Christ and be receiving the One life-giving Spirit. Consequently, every individual can worship God with one spirit, one mind and one attitude regardless of culture and language.

In this topic we wish to throw some light on the ancient Egyptian culture and how it reacted towards the new Christian faith.

It is well known that ancient Egyptians have been religiously minded by nature and upbringing since the very early times¹. The famous historian Herodotus states that "The Egyptians are religious to excess, far beyond any other race of men." Their religious curiosity led to revelation of many basic ideas of faith, and prepared their minds for the acceptance of the Christian doctrines without a great deal of difficulty or spiritual anguish.

Let us tabulate some of the major parallelisms between the ancient Egyptian faith and the new Christian faith, which paved the way to a speedy spread of Christianity in Egypt.

1. EGYPTIAN TRIADS

Every major town in ancient Egypt recognized some kind of a triad. The most famous triad of all was: Osiris, Isis and Horus. Osiris married goddess Isis and brought forth Horus.

Although the Egyptian Triads were too alien from Christian 'Holy Trinity', it helped the Egyptian mind to conceive the faith in the Holy Trinity.

2. THE STORY OF ANNUNCIATION

A point of extreme interest is that the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary was not new to the Egyptian mind. They believed in the story of the virgin cow in whom Ptah, god of creation, breathed his holy spirit and gave birth to god Apis, and the story of the last Egyptian Pharaoh, Horemheb, who was conceived by the spirit of God Amon and was born of a virgin.

3. ONENESS OF GODHEAD.

This concept also was not novel to the Egyptian mind, for their philo-

sophers believed in One Supreme Being. The best example is King Ikhnaton (1383-1365 B.C.) who believed in One God and struggled and was born of a virgin.

3. ONENESS OF GODHEAD.

This concept also was not novel to the Egyptian mind, for their philosophers believed in One Supreme Being. The best example is King Ikhnaton (1383-1365 B.C.) who believed in One God and struggled to preach this idea throughout Egypt. Common people on the other hand, believed in multiple gods who receive the divine essence.² These gods may be men, sacred animals, birds . . . etc.

4. THE WORLD TO COME

While the majority of the ancient civilizations were carried away with the earthly life, seeking temporary pleasures, the Egyptian mind was absorbed in the world to come.

They believed in the so-called 'resurrection', that is, it was possible for the dead to live again forever if certain ceremonies were carried out³. For this reason the bodies were well kept in sealed tombs, so that only the soul (ka) could visit the tomb and dwell in it.

No doubt, then, that tombs were provided with all articles used in the daily life, clothes, food and drink vessels, cutlery, chairs . . . etc. Beside the actual furniture, the deceased was supplied with his weapons and carriages. The ornaments of women and the playthings of the children, such as dolls and balls were also placed in the tomb⁴.

For that same purpose, the Pharaohs went to all the trouble of building the Pyramids with hidden catacombs and secret doors, in order that nobody could steal their bodies. Only the (Ka) spirit could enter from time to time and acknowledge her body through the wooden or stone statues, or through the wall paintings of the shape of the body.

The legend of Osiris relates that he was murdered by his brother Seth. His wife Isis performed certain ceremonies by which Osiris rose again and became the god of the world-below, i.e., god of the dead.

This tremendous thirst for resurrection has been ultimately satisfied in Christianity, by the proven resurrection of Jesus Christ. The 'world to come' has become a realization not through pyramids and legends but through unity with the Life-giving God and through practising the angelic life by the Holy Spirit.

We can, therefore, conclude that the Church of Egypt inherited the eschatological attitude from the Pharaohs, with a Christian understanding. This has been quite clearly reflected on the overall character of the Egyptian Church as we can see from the following points:

A. Writings of the Early Egyptian Fathers uncover their overwhelming desire towards the heavenly life and the Lord's last advent (Paroussia).

B. Coptic hymns are lengthy, fastings are excessive (more than half the year), and the Copts incline to ascetism in general. They long to be absorbed in the kingdom of heaven waiting for their spiritual Bridegroom.

C. All Coptic liturgies, i.e., the liturgy of Eucharist, Baptism, Marriage, funeral . . . etc., possess one common attitude: the eschatological attitude. In joy and in grief, the priest and congregation only focus their minds on the heavenly life.

D. No other church outnumbers the martyrs of the Egyptian Church. It was not uncommon that an entire population of a city would hurry joyfully to their persecutors to gain crowns of martyrdom.

E. As soon as the persecution was over, Copts hurried to the deserts, in groups as well as individuals, to live a monastic life, as a pledge of the heavenly one.

4. THE CROSS

Egyptians trended to identify the Cross with their own sign of eternal life 'the Ankh', which was held in the hands of the immortals such as gods and Pharaohs. The 'Ankh' sign took the shape of a cruciform with rounded top, which was readily adopted and used by the Copts from the very early times⁵.

5. ANCIENT EGYPTIAN LITERATURE

The Ancient Egyptian Literature is rich with doctrines and teachings which are similar to those of Christianity.

A. The hymn of King Akhnaton to god Atun is similar to Psalm 104.

B. Many teachings of "Amen-em-ope" are similar to those of the Proverbs⁶. For example he writes:

*"Give your ear and hear what I say,
and apply your heart to apprehend, . . .
Beware of robbing the poor,
and of oppressing the afflicted.
Do not associate with a passionate man,
nor approach him for conversation . . .
do not toil after riches.
If stolen goods are brought to you,
they do not remain over the night with you.
They have made for themselves wings like geese,
and have flown into the heavens.
Do not empty your inmost soul to everyone . . ."*

C. The Egyptians called every god *nutar*, which means 'power'. It has been explained by Brugsch as meaning the 'operative power which engenders and makes things in a regular recurrence, which endows them with new life, and gives back to them their youthful freshness'.

In addition to this the Egyptians seem to have had an idea of the unity of God, His eternity, His infinity as well as His loving-kindness⁷.

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FATHERS OF THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA — “ST. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA”

Esmat Gabriel

Alexandria

Long before Christianity made its appearance, Alexandria was the center of brilliant intellectual life and the birthplace of Hellenism. It was there that the blending of Egyptian and Greek cultures gave birth to a new civilization. There, too, Jewish culture found a congenial soil. At Alexandria, Greek thought exercised its strongest influence on the Hebrew mind. In Alexandria the work that constitutes the beginning of Jewish-Hellenistic literature, the Septuagint was created and in Alexandria lived the writer in whom that literature flourished. Philo was firmly convinced that the teaching of the Old Testament could be combined with Greek speculation. His philosophy of religion embodies such a synthesis.

The School Of Alexandria

When Christianity entered the city at the end of the first century, it came in close contact with all of these elements. As a result, there sprang up that strong interest in problems of an abstract nature that led to the foundation of the sacred science in the history of Christianity. The environment in which it developed gave it a distinctive characteristic: predominate interest in the investigation of the content of the faith, a leaning to the philosophy of Plato, and the allegorical Interpretation of Holy Scripture. It counted among its students and teachers such famous theologians as St. Clement, Origen, St. Dionysius, St. Athanasius, St. Didymus and St. Cyril.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Life and Character—

According to St. Epiphanius, Clement was born either in Athens or Alexandria. He was born of pagan parents about the year 150 A.D. Nothing is known of the circumstances of his conversion, but from what is known of his character, like St. Justin, he was attracted to Christianity by the purity of its moral teaching. In search of masters of Christian thought, he visited Italy,

Syria and Palestine. His journeying brought him in the end to Alexandria. Pantaenus' lectures had such attraction for him that he settled down there and make that city his second home. Of his teacher, Pantaenus, he states:

“When I came upon the last (teacher) he was the first in power—
having tracked him out concealed in Egypt, I found rest. He the
true, the Sicilian bee gathering the spoil of the flowers of the
prophetic and apostolic meadow, engendered in the souls of his
hearers a deathless element of knowledge.”(Stromata I:11, ANF)

He became the pupil and assistant of Pantaenus and finally succeeded him as head of the school of catechumens, most probably about 200 A.D. Two or three years later, the persecution forced him to leave Egypt. He took refuge in Cappadocia with his pupil, Alexander, later bishop of Jerusalem. There he died shortly before or about 215 A.D. without having seen Egypt again.

His writings

For the first time Clement brought Christian philosophy face to face with the ideas and achievements of the time. For this reason he must be called the pioneer of Christian scholarship. He knew very well that the church could not avoid competition with pagan philosophy and literature if she was to fulfill her duty towards mankind. His Hellenistic education enabled him to make of the Christian faith a system of thought with a scientific foundation. Through his writings, he proved that faith and philosophy are not enemies but belong together. Christianity is the crown and glory of all the truths that are found in the various philosophical doctrines. Of his writings, three give reliable information about his theological position and his theological system. They are his *Protrepticus*, his *Paedagogus* and his *Stromata*. These three of Clement's major works survive. Unfortunately, the rest of the twelve books he wrote have almost entirely disappeared.

1. The Exhortation

The first of this writing, the *Exhortation to the Greeks* - is an address aimed at conversion. Its purpose is to convince the worshippers of the gods of the worthlessness of pagan beliefs and to induce them to accept the only true religion, the teaching of the Logos of the world, who after being announced by the prophets, has appeared as Christ. He praises in glowing words the sublimity of the revelation of the Logos and the marvelous gift of divine grace which fulfills all human desire.

2. The Tutor

The *Tutor* which consists of three books presents the immediate continuation of the *Exhortation*. It addresses those who followed the advice given in Clement's first writings and accepted the Christian faith. The Logos comes forward as tutor in order to instruct these converts how to conduct their lives.

The first book discusses the educational task of the divine Logos as

instructor. His aim is to improve the soul, not to teach. With the beginning of the second book, the treatise turns to the problems of daily life. Where as the first deals with the general principles of ethics, the second and the third present a kind of distinction in matters of conduct for all spheres of life: eating, drinking, homes and furniture, music, recreation and amusements, bathing and anointings, behavior and marital life. These chapters give an interesting description of daily life in the city of Alexandria with its luxury. Clement speaks with much frankness and at times is repulsive. He warns against indulging in such a life and gives a moral code of Christian behavior in such surroundings. However, Clement does not demand that the Christian should abstain from all refinements of culture nor does he wish him to take the vow of poverty. The decisive point is the attitude of the soul. As long as the Christian keeps his heart independent and free from attachment to the goods of this world, there is no reason why he should withdraw from his fellows. It is more important that the cultural life of the city should be imbued with the Christian spirit.

3. The Stromata or Carpets

The name, Carpets, is similar to others used at the time such as The Meadow, The Banquets, The Honeycomb. These titles indicate an art favored by philosophers of the day in which they could discuss most varied questions without strict order or plan and pass from one problem to another without systematic treatment—the different topics being woven together like colors in a carpet.

Clement's Stromata consists of eight books. The most important subject is the relation of the Christian faith to Greek philosophy. In his first book, Clement defends philosophy against the objection that it is of no value to Christians. He answers that it was given by God and was granted to the Greeks by divine providence in the same way as the law to the Jews.

"Philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks. For this was 'a school master' to bring the Hellenic mind, as the law the Hebrews, 'to Christ'. Philosophy, therefore, was a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfect in Christ". (Strom. 1:5, ANF)

Here we find Clement goes far beyond Justin Martyr, who speaks of the need of the Logos to be found in the philosophy of the Greeks. He compares it to the Old Testament in so far as it trained mankind for the coming of Christ. On the other hand, Clement stresses the fact that philosophy can never take the place of divine revelation. It can only prepare for the acceptance of the faith. Thus, in the second book, he defends faith against the philosophers. The other books deal with the reputation of the Gnosis and its false religious and moral principles.

ASPECTS OF CLEMENT'S THEOLOGY

It is no exaggeration to praise Clement as the founder of speculative theology. If we compare him to Irenaeus of Lyons, it is evident that he represents an altogether different type of teacher. Irenaeus was the man of tradition, who derived his doctrine from the apostolic preaching and regarded every influence from the environing culture and philosophy as a danger to the faith. Clement was the courageous and successful pioneer of a school that purposed to protect faith by making use of philosophy. With Irenaeus he fought against the false Gnosis. But Clement did not remain merely negative against the false Gnosis; he set up a true and Christian Gnosis.

The Doctrine of the Logos

Clement attempted to set up a theological system with the idea of the Logos as its beginning and basis. All his thinking and reasoning are dominated by this idea. Thus he stood on the same ground as St. Justin, the philosopher, but advanced far beyond him. Clement's idea of the Logos was more concrete and fertile. He made it into the highest principle for the religious explanation of the world. The Logos is the creator of the universe. He is the one who manifested God in the law of the Old Testament, in the philosophy of the Greeks and finally in the fullness of time in His incarnation. He forms with the Father and the Holy Ghost the Divine Trinity. It is through the Logos that we can recognize God because the Father cannot be named.

“. . . It remains that we understand then the Unknown by divine Grace and by the Word alone that proceeds from him (Strom. 5:12, ANF)”.

The Logos is, as Divine Reason, essentially the teacher of the world and the lawgiver of mankind. But Clement knew Him also as the Saviour of the human race and the founder of a new life which begins with faith, proceeds to knowledge and leads through love and charity to immortality. Christ as the incarnate Logos is God and man, and it is through him that we have risen to divine life.

Thus, the idea of the Logos is the Center of Clement's theological system. However, the supreme idea in Christian thought is not the idea of the Logos but the idea of God. For this reason it is said that Clement failed in his attempt to create a scientific theology.

Also in his Christology, Clement allowed a certain attenuated docetism to intrude; he affirmed that Christ, in His body, was exempt from the natural needs (eating and drinking) and that his soul was free from the movements of the passions. However, he admits a two-fold nature and one person in the Saviour; he calls him the Man-God.

One Universal Church

Clement is firmly convinced that there is only one universal Church as there

is only one God the Father, one divine Word and one Holy Spirit. He calls this Church the Virgin Mother who feeds her children with the milk of the divine word. The hierarchy of the Church, consisting of the three grades, the episcopacy, the priesthood and the diaconate, is according to Clement, an imitation of the hierarchy of the angels. (Strom. 6:13, ANF)

Baptism

Although the teaching of the Logos occupies the center of Clement's theological doctrine, he does not fail to pay attention to the mysterion, to the sacrament. In fact, Logos and mysterion are the two poles around which his christology and ecclesiology move. Baptism to him is a rebirth and a regeneration. Adoption as children of God takes place in the sacrament of regeneration. Clement also uses the terms seal, illumination, bath, perfection and mystery for baptism.

Eucharist

There is a passage in Strom. 7, 3, which indicates that Clement did not believe in sacrifices:

"We rightly do not sacrifice to God, who, needing nothing, supplies all men with all things, but we glorify Him who gave Himself in sacrifice for us, we also sacrificing ourselves . . . for in our salvation alone God delights" (ANF).

However, it would be incorrect to draw the conclusion from these words that Clement does not know the Eucharist as the sacrifice of the Church. He knows such a ceremony very well. He mentions in Strom 1, 19, that there are heretical sects which substitute bread and water. He speaks of a canon of the Church and of a celebration of the Eucharist. He condemns the use of water as being against this canon of the Church, which demands bread and wine, as he himself indicates (Strom 4, 25). Thus he recognizes in the Eucharist a sacrifice, but he sees it also as the food for believers.

Sins and Penance

According to Clement, the sin of Adam consisted in his refusal to be educated by God and has been inherited by all human beings not through generation but through the bad, an example given by the first man (Strom 3, 16). Clement is convinced that only a personal act can stain the soul. Also Clement agrees with Hermas that there should be only one penance in the life of a Christian, that preceding baptism, but that God, out of mercy for human weakness, has granted a second, which can be obtained only once. *He distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary sins which can be forgiven.* Those who commit voluntary sins after baptism must fear the judgment of God. A complete break with God after baptism cannot be forgiven. However, in reality Clement does not exclude any sin for its greatness from the second repentance.

CELEBRATION OF EUCHARIST IN APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

(An Inquiry into the Problem of Translation)

Professor Fayek M. Ishak

We partake of the Mystical Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist when we take communion. This is associated with a profound sense of mystery that is experienced by the devout who are ready to open their hearts for the reception of the holy sacrament. The Pauline idea of union with Christ has become the nucleus of this act of participation in the Divine Presence through the breaking of bread and receiving of wine. Yet, this participation is prophetic in the sense that it purports and anticipates the eternal communion in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The pouring of the wine-cup is also identified with Christ's Death on the Cross and the eating of the bread is an obvious participation in death as an act of sacrifice.

It is also a life-giving sacrament in the sense that this sacrificial death is followed by the resurrection which bears the direct reference to the spiritual recovery and mystical regeneration of His own who are the partakers of His 'true' Body and His 'pure' Blood.

In consequence, it becomes clear that underlying the eucharistic celebration is the redemptive act of love and sacrifice and spiritual re-birth through the Mystical Presence of Christ. It is a union with Him and with one another as we partake of this Eternal Gift.

On the purely eschatological (historically concerned with the Second Coming of our Lord) level the cup is identified with the Blood and the bread with the crucified Body. In point of truth the Blood and the Body derive their sublime meaning from the fact that they have ever drawn AFRESH the community of participants in mystical union with Him and with each other.

No wonder that eucharistic celebration is always associated with the senses of mystery, awe and reverence as a result of Christ's PRESENCE in the sacrament and by virtue of the prophetic meaning and significance of the whole celebration that is commemorating (*anamnesis*) the Death and Sacrifice of Christ our Lord.

The Church in turn and through the wisdom of its great fathers and saints has devised the usage of SOLEMN WORDS as deemed fit in celebrating the Eucharistic Mystery and the redemptive act of LOVE associated with it.

It becomes essential that the translated rite should maintain this sense of awe and mystery and should use the language that provokes an aura of solemnity. In all due respects the modern usages of English have categorically failed to evoke these mostly needed senses that are associated with the implicit meaning and symbolism of this celebration. Noticeable, above all, that the rendition of the biblical text into modern English is associated with a deplorable loss of the above senses either considered separately or collectively.

The modern English version of the Holy Bible that was printed in 1971 and The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha which appeared in 1973 are both written in everyday language. As mentioned in the Preface to The New English Bible "the translators should be free to employ a contemporary idiom rather than reproduce the traditional biblical English (p.v.)."

In point of comparison The King James Version of the Holy Bible which was printed in 1611 has been recognized as the Authorized Version since that date. It has well earned the remarkable fame as "the noblest monument of English prose." In 1881 its revisers, as mentioned in the Preface to the Revised Oxford Standard Version, expressed admiration for "its implicitness, its dignity, its power, its happy turns of expression . . . the music of its cadences, and the felicities of its rhythm" (p.xi). The writer adds that we "owe to it an incalculable debt" (ibid.).

I should mention in all fairness that the modern English version lacks all the aforementioned qualities of the Authorized Version and in translating the liturgy into modern current English, the sense of awe and dignity will certainly be lost too.

Recent departures from Jamesian English whether in biblical or liturgical translations have been accompanied with this loss. Hence, it would be logical to conclude that the task of the translator who wishes to maintain the 'true' flavour of the original text has come to mean a genuine embarkation on *imparting what is felicitous in phrase and what is most appropriate in meaning and expression in order to convey to the reader the subtleties of the original work.*

In the case of the Coptic Orthodox Liturgy the dignity of Jamesian English would suit beautifully the old eucharistic celebration and would undoubtedly heighten the reader's or participant's awareness. It would bring back to mind the early days of worshipping with the whole of one's being.

Mention must be made here of the few attempts in the area of translating the Coptic liturgy into English:

1) The translation which was prepared by the Tewfeek Coptic Society (Cairo, 1963) bearing the title *The Coptic Liturgy* evidently shows total lack

of familiarity with English language usages and proper methods of translation.

2) The version of F.E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (Oxford, 1896) is limited to the Anaphora of St. Cyril. However, this book has been for a long time out of print.

3) The version of the writer of these lines, *A Complete Translation of the Coptic Orthodox Mass and the Liturgy of St. Basil* (Hong Kong: Toppan Printing Co., Ltd., First Edition 1974.)

Eminent liturgists in North America like the Rev. Fr. Roland Palmer and Dr. Carmino de Catanzaro have made it sufficiently clear that the language suited for the translation of the Coptic Orthodox rite is the traditional liturgical English (i.e., of King James' Version).

At any rate, having settled this problem concerning the appropriate language for translating the Coptic Orthodox Liturgy which in effect what we might call "liturgical language", I hasten to voice my concern about the claim for simplicity which means the loss of the subtle meanings of the original text. It is true that some difficulties in construction are bound to appear, but these are the unavoidable results of conformity to the SHADES OF MEANING to which one had to refer in order to keep the translation as closely as possible to the original work.

However, such difficulties will be substantially reduced in the reprinted version of my translation of the Basilian liturgy in addition to my prospective engagement in translating the Gregorian and Cyrillian liturgies by:

- a) supplementing the translated text with explanations and footnotes; and by
- b) printing the Arabic, Coptic and English texts on opposite pages.

Wisely considered to that effect such work would be of enduring value not only to our younger generation of immigrants but to the future congregations in different parts of the world.

COMMON ROOTS

Adly Hanna

Common Roots is an interesting and thought provoking book by Robert E. Webber, Th.D., Associate Professor of Theology at Wheaton College, calling for a recovery of historic Christianity. Subtitled "A Call to Evangelical Maturity," it is written by an evangelical to evangelicals. As suggested in the preface, the book has a two-fold purpose:

1. To search for the roots of evangelical Christianity; and
2. To take a critical look at those beliefs and practices of contemporary evangelicalism.

To achieve this purpose, Webber has taken a threefold approach consisting of (1) a statement of the problem, (2) on investigation of the beliefs and practices of the Church of the first five centuries, (The undivided church before Chalcedon), and a (3) suggested agenda for Evangelical Christianity to recover this era of the Church, and to restore the Apostolic convictions, expressions of early Christian Theology, and examples of Church practice which grew out of Apostolic teaching. Webber focuses this threefold approach upon the areas of Worship, Theology, Mission, and Spirituality.

The author was also chairman of the "Chicago Call," a document conceived by a significant group of forty-five representatives of evangelical denominations, who gathered together in May of 1977 in Chicago to issue a call for evangelicalism to return to early Christianity. The contents of this call were published in *The Orthodox Evangelicals*, edited by Webber and Bloesch. An agenda was established by the contributing representatives which was to be accomplished in the remaining two decades of this century. Among many insights, the Callers recognized that popular Contemporary Evangelicalism is not only a movement away from the Reformational heritage, but even more a digression from the historic Christian Faith. They suggested that a chastening and renewing process was necessary to purge modernity and pave the way for a return to Christianity in its historic form¹. Donald Bloesch, co-editor of *The Orthodox Evangelicals*, spoke for all the representatives when he admitted that "the hope certainly does not lie in new strategies, programs, and techniques, but in a rediscovery of the roots of The Faith,"² once delivered to the Saints. The Call also questions the strange silence of Contemporary Evangelicals towards the ancient church, with the

exception of an occasional reference to St. Augustine, and shows the faults of tracing their origin to no earlier than the Sixteenth Century Protestant Reformation.³ The Call members also made a significant insight when they recognized that “modern Evangelicalism is a phenomenon of the last four centuries, and that Contemporary Twentieth Century Evangelicalism is a reflection of modern culture, shaped by the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Romantic Era, the Industrial Age, and Modern Technology.”⁴

Evangelical scholarship agrees that the intellectual and technical revolutions of the last half of the Nineteenth Century deeply influenced western thought and action, and led to a variety of efforts to reconstruct the Christian message. These efforts had the inevitable effect of shaping popular Evangelicalism into an expression of Christ different from the shape of historic Christianity⁵. As the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics shifted the perception of the world from a dualistic and mechanistic conception to a more dynamic and fluid understanding, the traditional theology of the Ancient Church became relevant once again. As Torrance observes in *Theology in Reconciliation*, page 12, “the Classical ‘Greek Theology’ expounded by Athanasius and Cyril in Alexandria appears most relevant to the modern scene due to this new orientation in the field of science⁶.” “This ancient theology was forged through a basic rejection of dualist structures of thought⁷. (One should note that this “Greek Theology” is actually “Coptic Theology” as it was expounded by St. Athanasius and St. Cyril of Alexandria, the number 20 & 24 Popes of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt.)” The very relevance of that classical Theology for our scientific world reinforces its claim to constitute the ground upon which ancient and modern thought should seek to rethink and reformulate the essential dogmas of the Christian Church in the mode and idiom of our modern day while maintaining the basic continuity with the foundations of theology in the ancient undivided Church of the first five centuries before Chalcedon.

As modern day Evangelicals began to interpret The Faith through modern categories of thought which were neither reformational nor historic, but modern, they caused a break from the historic Christian substance⁸. Consequently, a return to the historic church, to the great fathers of the first five centuries and to evangelical foundations is strongly urged. Webber admits that, “Without a knowledge of these fathers, evangelicals are bound to spend years working through problems the fathers worked through, and perhaps not as well⁹.”

THE CHURCH

Webber also expresses the recognition by evangelical leaders that they have failed to be THE CHURCH. He calls the major focus of the evangelical church to be “promotional and pragmatic,” while the focus of the “early

Church was theological.” “Because popular evangelicalism has lost its past it has become exclusivistic¹⁰.” The Biblical image of the Church as the new creation challenges an overemphasis on the Church as “invisible,” and forces it to come to grips with the Biblical emphasis on the Church as a visible entity within history. “This misplaced emphasis has created an anti-institutional bias, and a schismatic mentality that is weakening and even destroying evangelical institutions¹¹.” The Biblical image of the Church as a fellowship in faith emphasizes the fabric of human relationships which characterizes the people of God: His new creation sharing a corporate life together. Webber speaks out against this individualistic form of Christianity which emphasizes the subjective and personal dimension of salvation to the exclusion of the Community of believers¹². Webber quotes from Dave Jackson who calls this practice “Free-Lance Christianity,” in his book, *Living Together in a World Falling Apart*. Revivalism has been guilty of neglecting the corporate experience in the “Body of Christ,” by emphasizing personal experience as well. This supports the ‘Christ Is In; The Church is Out’ syndrome.¹³ Webber clarifies this priority when he states that “Christianity is not my personal experience with Christ, as important as that might be, but Christianity is the objective event of God incarnate in space and time, in Jesus Christ who died and was resurrected to establish a new humanity, the Church.”¹⁴ The Church, in addition, is not just a local Community, and Evangelicals must face the implications of their relationship to the global community in Faith, as well as to their relationship to the Church throughout history¹⁵, and the departed Saints who are now with the Head of the Church in a better city.

The Callers in Chicago concluded along with Webber that evangelicalism is suffering from two basic failures. The first failure is an insufficient recognition of the implications of the Incarnation, resulting in a kind of gnostic rejection of creation. They fail to affirm the “Visible” as good and as a means by which God communicates Himself in saving grace to mankind. “This View is manifested in the low view which evangelicals have of the Church, worship, sacraments, rituals, liturgy, and authority. They recognize the need to return to an incarnational View of theology.”¹⁶ The second example is a failure to recognize their continuity with the Church in history. This neglect is manifested by the lack of regard given to Church history and to the traditions of the Church. The failure to recognize the Church as the Body of Christ in an incarnational sense, the visible extension of the physical presence of the life of our Lord on earth, has caused the evangelical church to see the Church as “a social institution, a psychiatrist’s couch, an evangelist’s tent, or a lecture hall.”¹⁷ Webber notes that the current attempt to bring renewal by putting chairs in a circle and playing the guitar, may be less the beginning of renewal than the last gasp before death¹⁸. Evangelical Churches have been unknowingly shaped by social, political, and economic forces. Democracy and capi-

talism have given rise to rugged individualism and independence as expressed in the fierce concern for independence in the so called "autonomous churches."¹⁹

THE CHURCH IS *ONE*.

In an article on 'Christian Unity' by Fr. Matta-El-Meskeen, the Abbot of the Coptic Monastery of St. Makarios in Egypt, it was suggested that unity between churches should not be a serious attempt to discover a common language which may be used for the mutual understanding of the 'men of Babel' so as to undertake once more the erection of a tower leading to heaven. The "Me" is the source of divisions, but when the Lord is truly present, all existence of the "Self" should vanish, and Christ becomes the "Me of All." In this way man will not make any concessions to his brother; they will all surrender to God, just as everything must be necessarily subjected to Him at the end of time. (1 Cor. 15:28) Union is not an emotional surrender, but rather an ascent free from self considerations—a magnetic pull (John 6:44) rather than an effort to encounter one another. The road to union with God leads to union with man. Unity is the fusion of the one into the other in order to put an end to the many; therefore, in outward appearance unity is associated with weakness, and not with power. Behind the "escort" of Christian unity suggested by modern evangelicals lurks a danger which threatens the 'weakness' of the Church, which is its most precious possession—its glory and its strength. As St. Paul states "The weakness of God is stronger than the strength of man! (1 Cor. 1:25)

THE CHURCH IS HOLY

The majority of Christians agree that the Church is holy, but do not concur on the specific content and meaning of her holiness. The Church on earth may be regarded as both holy and unholy, both divine and human. Webber points to two problems which prevent evangelicals from practicing the holiness of the Church as it came to be understood in the second century. First, some are characterized by a moral rigorism which demands too much of the Church and personal holiness, causing an attitude of inflexibility of contemporary rigorists who, having set high standards for church members, act with intolerance and lack of love toward those who fail to meet these standards. This rigorism is a failure to recognize in humility the human in the Church—the Community of repenting believers working out their salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12).²⁰ "The second problem is that the same group which demands moral holiness often is characterized by a lax attitude towards the sinfulness of division in the Body of Christ. This contradiction in practice is often expressed by an attitude of self-righteousness which views others in the Body as Apostates."²¹

THE CHURCH IS CATHOLIC

“Another problem inherent in popular evangelical Christianity is her failure to understand what it means to participate in the full catholicity of the church.”²² St. Ignatius in his epistle to the Smyrnaeans used the word “catholic” for the first time when he wrote “Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.” By this designation he pointed to the fullness of truth, i.e., the Church that is catholic has all the truth. It has Jesus Christ.”²³

St. Cyril of Jerusalem provided a more definitive insight in his Catechetical lectures (XVIII, 23) by stating that “The Church is called catholic because it extends over all the world, . . . and because it teaches universally and completely one and all the doctrines which ought to come to men’s knowledge, concerning things both visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly; and because it brings into subjection to godliness the whole race of mankind, . . . ; and because it universally treats and heals the whole class of sins, which are committed by soul and body and possesses in itself every form of virtue which is named, both in deeds and works, and every kind of spiritual gifts.”²⁴

Bela Vassady, a modern protestant, in an attempt to come to grips with the full meaning of the word catholic defines it by such words as “universal,” “identical,” “orthodox,” “continuous,” and “wholeness or fullness.” Consequently, Vassady confirms, that to identify with catholicity is to believe in the CONTINUITY of Christ’s work in history and to affirm the whole faith.²⁵ This Faith was preserved and passed on through the centuries from the Fathers of the first five centuries of the undivided Church, and remains today without additions, subtractions, or alterations.

THE CHURCH IS APOSTOLIC

A major concern of evangelical Christianity is to remain true to the apostles. Apostolicity means being physically *Connected* with the apostles via the mystical sacrament of the laying on of hands to convey and impart authority in the Church. It points to the Church built “upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets,” (Eph., 2:20) and in this way affirms a view of continuity from one generation to the next. The Apostles constitute a norm for the Church. Apostolic precedent is the device by which the Church is tested—the historically unbroken chain of succession from the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops, whose main function is to receive, keep and pass on THE FAITH. Apostolicity is not just the recognition of apostolic doctrine and practice under private individual claims as *Common Roots* suggests. This view violates the principle of incarnation which governs everything in the Church, and indicates the continuing evangelical error of overemphasizing the invisible to the elimination of the visible. Every christian should join the ongoing apostolic tradition, not try to make an apostolic-like tradition.

WORSHIP

The Evangelicals of the 'Call' and Webber in *Common Roots* recognized the need to recover Worship and identified two problems of evangelical worship as "man-centeredness and lack of content."²⁶ An overemphasis on the intellectual side of worship is committed when the thrust of worship is educational."²⁷ The sermon becomes central, resulting in a one-way communication, which is a denial of true worship.²⁸ On the other hand the emotional aspect of worship is emphasized when the goal of the service is to elicit an emotional response. "The invitation is made central. The music, the testimonies, and the sermon are all designed to lead to the climax of the service in the invitation. People are asked to respond by accepting Christ. When the entire service is geared toward the response of the Congregation, the essence of true worship is missed."²⁹

"The second problem, a lack of content, is closely related to the problem of man-centeredness."³⁰ A man-centered approach to worship often occurs as a result of the failure to understand WHY content is necessary in worship, what that content should include, and how the content should be put together."³¹ "The historic Christian approach to worship has been replaced in some Churches by a man-made promotional program with a stage and an audience."³² Worship in the early Church is two fold: WORD and SACRAMENT; PULPIT and ALTAR. The climax of worship is the Eucharist. Worship is a celebration, not only of the spoken word, but also of the Word which has come in the flesh. Liturgical action was shaped to reenact the partaking of the Body and the Blood of our Lord. In addition Worship is not something done in front of the Congregation, but involves total participation of the entire Church—celebrant, deacon, and people. Each individual must be nourished and strengthened by feeding on Christ in both word and Mystical Sacrament. The emphasis on the invitation or the Sermon as chief Communal acts has drastically altered the religion of the New Testament and Christian tradition, as recognized by Daniel Stevick in *Beyond Fundamentalism*. Communion must be the central act in Sunday worship, and within the worship the word is given in its authoritative place.

Webber, in his desire to recover the Worship of the early Church, recognizes an additional need to restore the Christian concept of time—the Church calendar with its observances of fasts and feasts. Webber notes that "the secularization of worship is perhaps most obvious in the typical evangelical church calendar."³³ "Generally the evangelical church calendar follows the secular year beginning with New Year's Day and ending with New Year's Eve. In between, the Calendar is full of events revolving around Mother's Day, Father's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, and even Boy and Girl Scout Day. This strange mixture of patriotic, sentimental, and even promotional events indicates how far the evangelical church has strayed from a

Christian conception of time. Even the celebration of Christmas and Easter as observed by some lacks real meaning and content because they are approached with haste, and sometimes take commercial or promotional shape."³⁴

The Christian concept of time takes its starting point in the Eucharist; "an enactment before God of the historical process of redemption, and of the historical events of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ by which redemption has been achieved."³⁵ From a Christian point of view the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ are at the center of time, and from this event we look both backward to creation, the fall, the Covenants, and God's working in history to bring redemption; and we look forward to the fulfillment of history in the second coming of Christ".³⁶ As Oscar Cullman notices in his book *Christ and Time*, "time is rendered meaningful by the Christian concept of eschatology, for the Christian believes that history is moving toward a fulfillment, not an ending."³⁷ The Old Testament was fulfilled in His first advent in the New Testament. The end of this age will likewise fulfill and complete the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord, which anticipates the future consummation of all things. For this reason the Christian Liturgical Calendar is based on the events of the life of Our Lord which shapes the proper understanding of time throughout the year. Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Pascha, Easter, and Pentecost, all have their unique observances, disciplines, and celebrations with liturgical acts and rituals. As a result of these observances, worshippers are sensitized to a Christian concept of time, thus consecrating time and breaking the unhealthy dichotomy between the sacred and the secular.

SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

The inability of evangelical Christianity to understand the historic relationship of Scripture, tradition, and authority is a final problem recognized by Webber in *Common Roots*. Contemporary protestants confuse their own private theology with the Word of God as taught by The Church. Individual interpretations which differ from the Scripture's intended message is causing confusion among evangelicals and is directly responsible for the hundreds of denominations in modern protestantism. An unbalanced approach to theology without respect to historical perspective is disastrous. Protestants must realize that the New Testament came out of Christian tradition; therefore, the Bible cannot be examined in isolation from historical Christian tradition. Faith has never been the result of working reason over a written text. The ongoing life of the Church produced the Bible. Although Scripture is the central inspired written heart of the Holy Christian Tradition, it does not include everything in the life of the Church, but focuses on the sublime principles which were already in existence in the life of the Church. These

Scriptures were compiled by the authority in the Church and declared canonical in the Fourth century A.D. by St. Athanasius of the Church of Alexandria in Egypt. Webber warns against the danger of a private and individualistic interpretation of the Bible by reminding us that heresy in the Church has always been a result of that type of approach to and analysis of Scripture.³⁸ For this reason it is simply inadequate to assert certain doctrines because they can be 'proven' from Scripture. Bruce Shelley, a leading Evangelical theologian and historian, recognizes this fact in his book *By What Authority* where he denounces "the fallacy of the simplistic approach to the Bible." He asks, "Is the evangelical committed to an unqualified Biblicalism? Is there no place for tradition in any sense? . . . Must the evangelical be a rebel against the communion of saints and two thousand years of spiritual history?"³⁹ The Church throughout history is called to be a witness of truth, not to change it, but to receive it, preserve it, and pass it on. That is what tradition is all about. Consequently, the modern private interpretation of Scripture should give way to the authority of what the Church has always believed, taught, practiced, and passed on down in history.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Western Asceticism - edited by Owen Chadwick. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press - Ichthus edition. PP 368 \$7.95

The wealth of the material in this volume of the Library of Christian Classics can hardly be over emphasized. As Church history, it gives the original "Sayings" of the Desert Fathers and writings by eye-witnesses of early monasticism. If you are seeking good spiritual reading, you may find here what can enrich your life for years to come.

There is nothing new in this book except that it combined three important documents of the early Christian Church, in a modern translation.

I The Sayings of the Fathers.

The first part of the book is a translation of the Latin "Verba Seniorum". Thomas Merton defined the "Verba" as "the plain, unpretentious reports that went from mouth to mouth in the Coptic tradition before being committed to writing in Syriac, Greek and Latin¹." Here we have the raw material of history about the rise of monasticism. We have authentic sayings of the Egyptian Fathers of the fourth century, and summaries of their edifying incidents. Merton adds, "The Coptic hermits who left the world as though escaping from a wreck, did not merely intend to save themselves . . . Then they had not only the power, but even the obligation to pull the whole world to safety after them."²

The Sayings here are grouped according to subject. They deal mostly with the Christian virtues and perfection; quiet, self control, chastity, patience, obedience, humility, charity and prayer. I have to bring here a few random examples of these collections, lest the reader should think that we are dealing with fourth century spirituality which is not relevant for modern man.

— A brother sinned, and the presbyter ordered him to go out of the church. But Abba Bessarion rose up and went out with him, saying: "I too am a sinner."

— Abba Agatho said: "If an angry man raises the dead, God is still displeased with his anger."

— An old man said: "If you lose gold or silver, you can find something as good as you lost. But the man who loses time can never make up what he has lost."

II The Conferences of Cassian

The foundation of monasticism in Egypt was not a local phenomenon. As the most sublime spiritual movement since the apostolic time, like a magnet, it drew people from all the Christian world. St. John Cassian wrote in Latin to the Christian west about his experience. Cassian was probably born in what is now Rumania. He went to Egypt to study the monastic life. He remained, with his friend Germanus, under the guidance of the Desert Fathers of Scete for some uncertain number of years (between seven or twelve). He left Egypt for Constantinople about 400 AD where he was ordained a priest by St. John Chrysostom. He spent the last part of his life in France where he founded two monasteries.

At the request of Castor, a French bishop, St. Cassian wrote his first book about Egyptian monastic life, the "Institutes" about 425 AD. This was an ABC of monastic life, and was followed by the "Conferences". He described his life in the Egyptian desert and gave us the dialogues he made with the abbots.

Of the 24 Conferences given by Cassian, we have only seven translated in this book. Although we miss the other conferences, we regret that conferences 13 and 14 in particular were not included. Conference 13 with Abbot Chae-remon is the best patristic review of the Orthodox doctrine dealing with synergism, the co-operation of Divine grace and human free will. Conference 14 with Abbot Nesteros deals with the way to understand and interpret Scripture.

Yet, we are very thankful for these seven conferences which contain a lot of information, meditations and spiritual insights. St. Cassian actually succeeded in carrying his reader to fourth century Egyptian desert which was described by St. Chrysostom as "better than any paradise"³ We share his experience when he visited the Fathers in their cells, lived with them in their life of prayer both liturgic and private, followed them in their manual labor, fasts and feasts, and spent hours after hours discussing deep spiritual matters. Although he witnessed miracles performed by the Fathers, he says,

"But them, I must omit, if I am to keep to the proper plan of this book. I did not promise to write about God's miracles, but about the discipline and rules of the holy men as far as I can remember them. My intention is to show people how to lead the good life, not to give the reader idle stories which are useless for reforming his character." (Conference 18)

From the Conferences we learn that the monastic life was not a 4th century innovation. Abbot Piamun says,

"The system of the coenobites arose at the time when the apostles were preaching. The crowd of believers in Jerusalem was of this sort, as it is described in the Acts of the Apostles . . . The whole Church, I assert, lived then

as the coenobites live. . . " (Conference 18.)

In his writing Cassian always mentioned his intention for visiting Egypt,

"I therefore resolved to go to Egypt at once, and travel through it to the furthest fastnesses of the Thebaid, with the object of visiting the many holy people whose fame had resounded through the earth. If I could not imitate them, I might at least learn from them." (Conference 11)

In the same conference, he tells us how he was led to some of the Desert Fathers, by a saintly bishop, Archebius, who described them saying,

"They are crippled with age, but you have only to look at them to see that they are holy men and even to learn a great deal from them. A Saintly life is more educative than a sermon: and by their lives you can learn the lesson which, I am sorry to say, I can no longer teach you because I have lost it. If I cannot produce for you the pearl of great price, I can at least show you where you may best find it . . . " (Conference 11)

The conferences are not sermons, but living dialogues. Many Biblical and spiritual themes were discussed, but they were mainly in answer to questions raised by St. Cassian, or his friend Germanus about problems that really faced them. The reader is able to live with them and if he ever visits the desert of Scete he can imagine himself sitting with those two pilgrims on the desert sand around one of the Fathers. During his reading he will find that even the questions raised in his mind by his reading is asked by Cassian or his friend. They were not discussing philosophical or merely dogmatic questions, but the problems of spiritual life which everyone meets daily. The sincere reader will be more than rewarded to find a solution for one of his spiritual problems, in an age like ours where it is not an easy thing to find a good spiritual director.

III The Rule of Saint Benedict

If Cassian, carried honestly the message of the Desert Fathers to the west, it was St. Benedict who utilized the "Sayings", the "Conferences" and the "Rule of St. Pachomius" of the Egyptian Thebaid to form a rule adapted to the European way of life. Here we have a modern translation of that rule which dominated western monasticism till the 12th century. But it is a well known fact that its basis is eastern and not western; some say that he even copied freely from the rule of St. Pachomius.⁴ St. Benedict prescribed the "Conferences" as one of the books to be read aloud to his monks during meals.⁵

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It is very encouraging to find a book dealing with "Western Asceticism" that discusses mainly the teaching of the Coptic Fathers. This should not be surprising because monasticism started with them, and the spiritual heights they reached have always been the ideal towards which most western monastic orders tried to aspire. History has proved the prophetic saying of St. Cassian about the Coptic Fathers of the Desert, "If I could not imitate them, I might at least learn from them."

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- (1) *Thomas Merton: The Wisdom of the Desert. Sheldon Press, London, 1974. Page 12.*
- (2) *Ibid. Page 23.*
- (3) *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, 1st series, Vol. X. Page 53*
- (4) *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of the Christian Church, Oxford University Press, 1977. Page 342.*
- (5) *H. Chadwick: The Early Church, Penguin Books, 1967. Page 183.*

BOOK NOTICES

TRADITION & ORTHODOXY

by Father Tadros Y. Malaty, St. George Coptic Church, Alexandria, Egypt,
1979 Pp 54

In this small book Father Tadros Malaty explains what is meant by Holy Tradition, how it started in the Apostolic age and especially its relation with the Scripture. Then he gives a systematic account on how Tradition was viewed by the Fathers, mainly Papias, St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Cyprian, the Capadocean Fathers and St. Augustine. There is a chapter about Jewish Tradition, and its relation to Christianity. The book is concluded by a chapter on "Tradition and Church Ecumenical Movement", in which the writer says that the church of Alexandria "must not close herself to a local community or language but must bear an ecumenical responsibility."

In the epilogue he summarized what he dealt with saying, "Tradition is the core of the Church, and without Tradition, the Church can't exist, can't practice her apostolic life, her continual renewal, her unity, nor live with her genuine characteristics."

THE LIFE OF PACHOMIUS

Translated by Apostas N. Athanassakis, Scholars Press, Missoula, Montana,
1975, Pp 201+xi

The importance of this book appears from its introduction. "In view of the importance of St. Pachomius in the history of Christian monasticism it is remarkable that no one seems to have published an English translation of his Life—until now . . . here is an important testimony to fourth century monastic life, and to the character and activities of the man who has been characterised as the Father of coenobitic monasticism." The book gives the Greek text on one page and the English translation on the opposite page. St. Pachomius was born in Upper Egypt of pagan parents. He received Christianity in his youth and became a disciple of an Egyptian hermit, St. Palemon. After seven years he established the first monastery in the world, where monks lived together in a common life. The "Rule of St. Pachomius" became the basis for later monastic rules.

By publishing both the Greek original and the English translation, Scholars Press has done a great service towards monastic studies. Many manuals and articles on monasticism used to ignore this chapter in its early history. They mention as founders of the monastic community life either St. Basil, who learned monastic life in Pachomian monasteries in Egypt, or even St. Benedict who came two centuries later.

In the Next Issue

★ ***Spiritual Insights into the Divine Office***, by Father Matta El-Meskeen

A commentary on the daily office of 'Mattins' in the Coptic Church, by one of the leading spiritual fathers in the world today.

★ ***The Transfiguration of Christ in the writings of the Church Fathers***

In the Transfiguration, the Fathers saw Christ in the glory of His resurrection and His parousia, and the Church, His luminous bride.

★ ***Origen***, by Father Tadros Malaty.

Life and writings of this controversial character who has been considered the greatest teacher in the early Church after the Apostles and the first Biblical scholar.

★ ***Review of Origen's Commentary on the Song of Songs***, by Fikry Meleka, M.D.

St. Jerome said that while in his other works Origen far surpassed all other authors, in his Commentary on the Song of Songs he surpassed even himself.