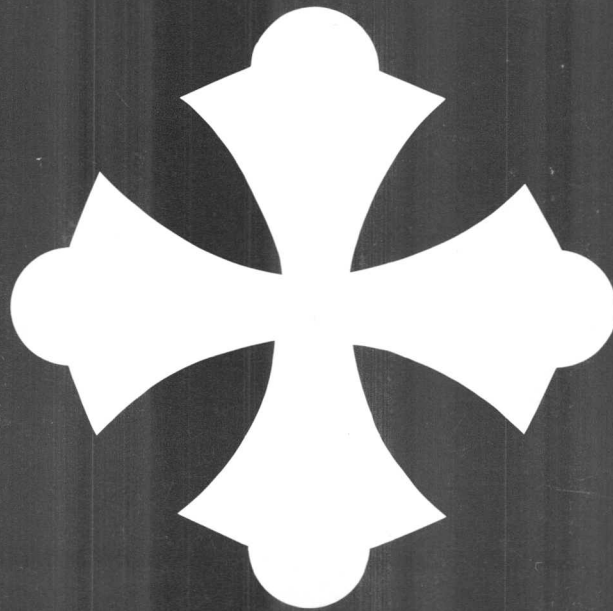


COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

Volume 10, Number 3 Fall 1989

- *SAINT ATHANASIUS AND THE MELETIANS*
- *SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE*
- *ARCHDEACON ISKANDAR HANNA*



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The Sixth Conference of the North American Patristic Society was held in Chicago on May 25-28, 1989. Two of its fourteen sessions dealt with two Fathers from the Church of Alexandria-St. Athanasius the Great and Origen. A paper delivered in each session appears in this issue of the *Journal*. In ***Athanasius and the Meletians at the Synod of Tyre, AD 335***, The Rev. Duane W.H. Arnold sheds new light upon the history of the Coptic Church during the early years of the patriarchate of St. Athanasius. It was the time when the Church suffered, both from the Arian heresy and from the Meletian schism. Both started more than two decades before Athanasius, and although condemned by the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, (AD 325), yet they were apt to cause a great turbulence and havoc in the Church for years to come. Both Arians and Meletians co-operated and succeeded in getting the condemnation, and later exile, of St. Athanasius at the Council of Tyre, ten years after Nicaea. In his paper, Father Arnold answers the modern critics of Athanasius, and shows how Tyre was not a success for the Meletians. Rather, it was their end, Athanasius had already gained the support of the majority of Meletian bishops in the years before the council. Father Arnold serves as the Episcopal Chaplain to Wayne State University, and the Precentor of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Detroit. For his numerous publications and academic activities, he was named a Lambeth Scholar in Theology by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1984. In recognition of his work in mission fields and philanthropic concerns, he was named Officer of the Order of St. John by H.M. Queen Elizabeth in 1987.

How the Bible was interpreted by the Early Church Fathers is discussed in the second article, ***Spiritual Interpretation in the School of Alexandria***. The extensive bibliography of this paper includes many English references on the subject by patristic and by modern authors.

Among the series on the pioneers of the spiritual revival in the Coptic Church, Dr. Boulos Ayad introduces in this issue ***Archdeacon Iskandar Hanna*** (1880-1944), one of the best teachers and renowned preachers of this century.

Editor

ATHANASIUS AND THE MELETIANS AT THE SYNOD OF TYRE, AD 335

Duane W.H. Arnold

The theological and ecclesiastical controversies of the first half of the fourth century have often been the subjects of a modern reductionism that has tended to obscure both the historical record and the motivations of the principal participants. Recently, however, there have been a number of attempts at redressing this unfortunate situation. Through the efforts of numerous scholars, among whom we must name Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh, Rowan Williams, Charles Kannengiesser, Maurice Wiles, and Thomas Kopecek, critical reevaluations have been made concerning the theological intent and influence of Arius and the Neo-Arian systems which arose after his death.¹ From this body of research it has become clear that the traditional, and often overly simplified, approaches to the complex and diverse movement known as Arianism is inadequate and requires much revision.

In a similar manner, the complex relationship between St. Athanasius and the schismatic Meletian community in Egypt during the early years of his episcopate has also been oversimplified to a large degree. Unfortunately, there have been few attempts corresponding to the efforts of the new Arian studies cited above, to undertake similar critical reevaluations of the relationship between Athanasius and the Meletian community. While the Meletian studies of Annik Martin, Leslie Barnard, Henric Nordberg, William Telfer, and Eric Kemp have been helpful, none have focused upon the basic revisioning that has been needed.² A recent study by the late R.P.C. Hanson is suggestive of the current understanding concerning Athanasius' conduct toward the Meletians. Drawing upon a negative evaluation of the character of Athanasius, which has been in vogue since the time of Otto Seeck³ and has more recently been popularized by Timothy Barnes,⁴ Hanson states that,⁵

It seems clear that Athanasius' first efforts at gangsterism in his diocese had nothing to do with difference of opinion about the subject of the Arian Controversy, but were directed against the Meletians. He had not agreed with the arrangement made about the Meletians at Nicaea. They may have tried to elect a Meletian archbishop on Alexander's death. Once he was in the saddle, he determined to suppress them with a strong hand, and was not at all scrupulous about the methods he used. We can now see why, for at least twenty years after 335, no Eastern bishops would communicate with Athanasius. He had been justly convicted of disgraceful behaviour in

his see ... It is not surprising that the Meletians, harried unmercifully by Athanasius and unable at first to obtain help from the emperor, turned to the only help available to them, that of the Eusebians.

It may be noted that Hanson's allegation of 'gangsterism' on the part of Athanasius, along with the similar accusation of Barnes, is based almost completely upon a single line of one papyrus leaf (London Papyrus 1914) edited by Harold I. Bell in 1924. Furthermore, the papyrus is fully capable of a number of variant readings which exonerate, rather than accuse, Athanasius.⁶

In any case, the picture presented is clear. Athanasius is shown to be an unbending hierarch who is intent on discarding the Nicene settlement regarding the position of the Meletians and is engaged in a systematic and ruthless persecution of the schismatic community. As a result of this relentless oppression, the Meletians entered *en masse* into a tactical alliance with the Eusebians, eventually convincing Constantine to call Athanasius to the bar of justice at the Synod of Tyre where he was rightly deposed for his many crimes against the Meletian minority within his see. While such a scenario seems reasonable upon first sight and tends to support the fashionable 'gangster' image of the bishop of Alexandria, there are numerous difficulties attached to the acceptance of this somewhat simplified historical reconstruction.

Following his enthronement in the summer of AD 328, there is little doubt that Athanasius faced an unenviable situation in Egypt. Although Athanasius was elected, we believe, with the support of the majority of the clergy and people gathered in Alexandria, the church in Egypt as a whole seems to have been beset by continuing divisions.⁷ As John Griffiths has observed, 'the Meletians, the Arians, and the Manichees were all attracting support in a divisive sense; and there was always the danger that the monastic movement ... would not fully support the spiritual leadership of Alexandria.'⁸ It is clear that the pattern of schisms and divided loyalties within the Egyptian church at this time was complex and is difficult either to trace or fully comprehend. This is especially true of the Meletians.

The Meletian schism arose in Egypt out of a dispute which broke upon the scene during the Diocletian persecution. During AD 305/306 a group of imprisoned bishops wrote a letter to complain about the actions of Meletius of Lycopolis, a newly appointed bishop who had replaced the apostate Apollonius within his own see. The four imprisoned bishops complained that Meletius had taken liberties in ordaining priests in their dioceses during their absence contrary to the canons and customs. Meletius, however, extended his actions to Alexandria itself and, furthermore, excommunicated certain presbyters in hiding who were loyal to their imprisoned bishop, St. Peter.⁹ Meletius may have been a close associate of Peter at one time. According to Epiphanius, they had even been arrested together and shared the same cell. In a dispute over the treatment of the lapsed, however, (Meletius seems to have been a rigorist in this matter), possibly compounded by an argument over episcopal rights in vacant sees, Peter excommunicated Meletius.¹⁰ As a result of this

action, the Meletians, in a manner similar to the North African Donatists, developed a separate church structure within Egypt which stood alongside that of the catholic community. At the Council of Nicaea an attempt was made at reconciliation and promulgated in a synodal letter sent to the involved parties.¹¹ The Meletians were to be received again into the catholic community. Meletius himself was to 'remain in his own city ... and would have no authority to make appointments or to ordain.'¹² Those who had already 'been appointed by him' would receive 'a more sacred ordination'¹³ and retain their respective rank, but would be under the rule of those appointed and ordained by bishop Alexander in their respective communities. Furthermore, they would be eligible for elevation to the episcopate upon the death of the catholic incumbent, but only in accord with the normal process of election and consecration under the authority of the bishop of Alexandria.

Meletius was ordered to present a list of his clergy to Alexander, along with the individuals themselves. This process does not seem to have been completed until AD 327/328 and may have necessitated a provincial Egyptian synod (often confused with the so-called 'Second Session of Nicaea').¹⁴ At that time Meletius presented twenty-eight bishops, four presbyters, and three deacons; their names being preserved in the *Breviarium Melitii* in Athanasius' *Apologia secunda*.¹⁵ Alexander of Alexandria died on 17 April AD 328, just three days after Easter.¹⁶ Meletius, whom William Telfer incorrectly claims had a prospective right to succeed Alexander died about the same time, making any claim to succession a moot issue.¹⁷ Under the accords of Nicaea, the Meletians would have been disallowed from participation in the election procedure, a provision which, Martin has noted, the catholic community would no doubt have enforced.¹⁸ Some Meletians may have attempted in desperation to field their own candidate, although this is by no means sure.¹⁹ On 8 June AD 328, seven and one-half weeks after the death of Alexander, Athanasius was ordained as bishop of Alexandria, probably a few months short of his thirtieth birthday.²⁰ Martin has pointed out that it was probably this inability to stand and participate as equals with the catholic bishops, not the oppression of the young bishop, which drove the Meletians back into schism within five months of Alexander's death.²¹ In the final analysis, the reconciliation had been strained and temporary at best.

It would, however, be a grave mistake to view the Meletian community as homogenous in the years between Athanasius' election in AD 328 and the Synod of Tyre in AD 335. It was, in fact, a deeply divided community. Some of the schismatics placed themselves under the leadership of John Archaph, possibly the Meletian bishop of Memphis,²² and entered into a series of alliances with not only the Eusebians, but also welcomed certain disaffected Colluthian schismatics into their ranks, such as Ischyra.²³ These formed the main opposition to Athanasius in Egypt through to the Synod of Tyre. Certain papyri, such as London Papyrus 1917, point to other, largely independent, communities of Meletians who, while certainly not Arian (or, indeed, Eusebian) in their theological outlook, also expressed little or no loyalty towards the ecclesiastical establishment in Alexandria or the leadership of

John Archaph.²⁴ Still more surprising, especially if one adheres to the assessment of Hanson, is the large number of Meletian bishops, presbyters and deacons who transferred their full support to Athanasius in the very early years of his episcopate. For example, the presbyter Macarius ('the henchman of Athanasius', according to Barnes)²⁵ who is one of the bishop's representatives at court and is later implicated in the Ischyra incident, appears to be the same individual of that name who is listed in the *Breviarium Melitii*.²⁶ A Meletian bishop, Theon of Nilopolis, also listed in the schedule, is later mentioned by Athanasius as having died in possession of an orthodox see.²⁷ Moreover, of the 47 Egyptian clerics accompanying Athanasius at Tyre, at least 17 had been earlier supporters of Meletius and had been listed in the schedule. Furthermore, all 17 would protest the proceedings at Tyre in a letter to the *comes* Dionysius.²⁸ Certain Meletians, such as Theodoros of Kopto and Pelagius of Oxyrhynchus, also listed in the schedule, would remain loyal to Athanasius throughout his first two exiles, and would die in possession of their sees in AD 347.²⁹ In all, at least two-thirds of those listed in the *Breviarium Melitii*, as well as other Meletians, such as the 'supposedly murdered' Arsenius himself,³⁰ became supporters of Athanasius who, in time, also gained the confidence of the vast majority of the monastic communities.

In the light of this evidence of support from the one time adherents of Meletius, the conclusions and simplified scenarios of a number of recent studies, including those of Hanson and Barnes, must be reevaluated. It is clear that, on the basis of the available documentation, it is difficult, if not impossible, to envision the Meletian community in Egypt by the year AD 335 as the single, well-ordered, or homogeneous movement which some have assumed. It is also difficult to reconcile Athanasius' success in winning for his cause such a large number of schismatic leaders while concurrently engaging in an allegedly brutal policy towards their community; indeed, internal Meletian strife may, in fact, explain many of the alleged Athanasian incidents of violence.³¹ Finally, it is likely that at the Synod of Tyre the pro-Athanasian Meletians, who were excluded with the other Egyptian clerics, and, therefore, were not allowed to present their version of recent events, were the majority party among the former adherents of Meletius. The proceedings, however, were dominated by the Eusebians who used the few Meletian dissidents who were present as a political tool to ensure the ouster of Athanasius. Ironically, it was probably Athanasius' success in reconciling such a large portion of the Meletian community which insured the absolute animosity of their dissident brethren. We may note that the disaffected Meletian community also came to an unhappy end at Tyre, with their erstwhile leader, John Archaph, being disgraced and sent into exile by Constantine. With the eventual removal by Constantine of Athanasius to Trier in the late autumn of the year, it is clear that the Synod of Tyre had only been advantageous to the Eusebians, who had used the bitterness and anger of the dissident Meletians for their own purposes.

References and Notes

- 1 cf. R.C. Gregg and D.E. Groh. *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation*. Philadelphia, 1981; R.D. Williams. *Arius. Heresy and Tradition*. London, 1987; C. Kannengiesser. *Holy Scripture and Hellenistic Hermeneutics in Alexandrian Christology: the Arian Crisis*. (Colloquy 41 of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture) Berkley, 1982; M.F. Wiles. 'In Defence of Arius.' *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 13 (1962), pp. 339-347; and T.A. Kopecek. *A History of Neo-Arianism*. (Patristic Monograph Series, No. 8) Cambridge, Mass., 1979. Also cf. the many fine articles in, R.C. Gregg, ed., *Arianism. Historical and Theological Reassessments. Papers from the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies, September 5-10, 1983. Oxford, England*. (Patristic Monograph Series, no. 11) Philadelphia, 1985.
- 2 Among the numerous studies which have been undertaken in this field, we may cite, A. Martin. 'Athanasie et les Méletiens.' *Politique et Théologie* (ed. C. Kannengiesser). Paris, 1974, pp. 31-61; L.W. Barnard. 'Athanasius and the Meletian Schism in Egypt.' *The Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 59 (1975), pp. 183-189 and 'Some Notes on the Meletian Schism in Egypt.' *Studia Patristica* 12 (TU 115) (1975), pp. 399-405; H. Nordberg, *Athanasius and the Emperor*. (*Commentationes Humanarum Literarum* 30, 3) Helsinki, 1963; W.R. Telfer. 'Meletius of Lycopolis and Episcopal Succession in Egypt.' *Harvard Theological Review* 48 (1955), pp. 227-237; and E.W. Kemp. 'Bishops and Presbyters at Alexandria.' *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 6 (1955), pp. 125-142.
- 3 Otto Seeck accused Athanasius of forging certain documents in 1896. ('Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des nicänischen Konzils.' *ZKG* 17, pp. 1-71, 319-362). Prior to making these charges, Seeck had been involved in research on the *Dossier* of Optatus with reference to the Council of Arles, AD 314, in which he found a number of what he considered to be forged documents which had been attributed to Constantine (a 'discovery' later discounted by Duschene). Following this investigation Seeck turned his attention to the materials which surrounded the Council of Nicaea and made similar charges of forgery against Athanasius. Again, the charges of forgery were concerned with letters which were purported to have come from the hand of Constantine. This theory was later disproved by S. Rogala, *Die Anfänge des arianischen Streits (Forschungen zur christlichen Literatur und Dogmengeschichte, Band VIII, 1)*, Paderborn, 1907; N.H. Baynes, 'Athanasiana' *The Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 2 (1925), pp. 61-65; and R. Seiler, *Athanasius' Apologia contra Arianos. Ihre Entstehung und Datierung*, (Diss., Tuebingen) Düesseldorf, 1932, pp. 39-40. These charges, however, have had a profound impact upon the course of Athanasian studies in regard to the character of the bishop of Alexandria.
- 4 For T.D. Barnes' characterization of Athanasius as a 'gangster', cf. *Constantine and Eusebius*. Cambridge, Mass., 1981, pp. 230-231.
- 5 R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*. Edinburgh, 1988, pp. 254-255.
- 6 H.I. Bell. *Jews and Christians in Egypt*. London, 1924, pp. 39ff; A more complete treatment of Bell's conclusions will be published in the *Studia Patristica* volume for the Tenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford in August 1987, at which the present author presented a paper on 'Harold Idris Bell and Athanasius: A Reconsideration of LP 1914'.
- 7 The election of Athanasius as bishop is held by many to have been a disputed affair, cf. the references in footnote 2 and the analysis of the Philostorgian narratives by W. Rusch. 'A la recherche de l'Athanasie historique.' *Politique et Théologie*, pp. 161-177. Rusch, in the opinion of this author, gives far greater credibility to Philostorgius than is warranted.
- 8 J.G. Griffiths. 'Egyptian Influences on Athanasius.' In *Studien zu Sprache und Religion Aegyptens* (Festschrift W. Westendorf) Band 2. Goettingen, 1984, p. 1023
- 9 This reconstruction of events has been suggested in R. Williams. *Arius*, pp. 32ff
- 10 Epiphanius, *Haer.* 68, 140ff, cf. H. Achelis, 'Meletius von Lycopolis', *PRE* (third edition) Vol. 12, pp. 558-562 concerning the probable use by Epiphanius of Meletian documents in the writing of his account.

- 11 The text of the letter is preserved in Socrates, *HE* I, 9; Theodoret, *HE* IX, 7ff; and Gelasius, *HE* II, 33. The above translation are based upon the text in Theodoret, *HE* IX, 7ff (*GCS*, edited by L. Parmentier and F. Schneidweiler, second edition, Berlin, 1954, pp. 39-41).
- 12 I have here followed Everett Ferguson in rendering 'προχεύεσθαι', as 'to make appointments' and 'χευροθετεῖν' as 'to ordain' (E. Ferguson, 'Attitudes to Schism at the Council of Nicaea', *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, Derek Baker, ed., Cambridge, 1972, p. 58).
- 13 μυστηώτερα χευροτονύα ; It seems clear that Ferguson is correct in stating that the 'passage must mean that the Meletian clergy are to receive a new ordination; (Ferguson, loc.cit.).
- 14 Space does not permit a full discussion of the 'second session' debate concerning the Council of Nicaea. It is sufficient to say that the hypothesis was first put forward by Seeck (*ZKG* 17, 1896, pp. 69ff) and was taken up in turn by E. Schwartz (*Gesammelte Schriften* III, pp. 205ff) and H.G. Opitz (*ZNW* 33, 1934, pp. 156-158). According to this hypothesis a second session of the Council of Nicaea was summoned by Constantine in order to reconcile the Arians who had refused to subscribe to the synodal symbol and decrees, such as Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea. The document on which this hypothesis is partly based, however, has been doubted as to its authenticity, even though Opitz included it in his *Urkundensammlung* (Urkunde 31, p. 65) as genuine. For dissenting opinions concerning this document see Rogala, *Anfänge des arianischen Streites*, pp. 78-85, and Baynes, 'Athanasiana', *JEA* 2 (1925), p. 58. In favour of the concept of an Egyptian provincial synod see C. Luibheid's interpretation of Eusebius, *VC* 3, 21, in 'The Alleged Second Session of the Council of Nicaea,' *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34 (1983), 165-174.
- 15 *Apol.* 71, 6 (Opitz, p. 149, 19 - p. 151, 9)
- 16 *Festal Letter Index* for AD 328 (cf. A. Robertson, *LNPF*, Series II, Vol. IV, p. 503)
- 17 cf. Telfer, 'Meletius of Lycopolis', op. cit., p. 235; The statement of Epiphanius that Meletius had died before the Council of Nicaea (*Haer.* 68, 3) may certainly be discounted on the strength of the statement by Athanasius that he presented his clergy to Alexander in person (*Apol.* 72). J.M. Neale reports the conflicting claims as to whether or not Meletius died in schism (*The Patriarchate of Alexandria*, London, 1847, Vol. 1, p. 150, fn. 2).
- 18 Martin, op. cit., p. 43
- 19 cf. Epiphanius, *Haer.* 68, 7
- 20 *Festal Letter Index*, loc. cit.; Concerning Athanasius' age, cf. Martin, op. cit., pp. 32-61; G.F. Hernández, 'El cisma meleciano en la Iglesia egipcia,' *Gerión* 2 (1984), p. 168; and C. Kanengiesser, 'La date de l'apologie d'Athanase "Contre les païens" et "Sur l'Incarnation"', *RSR* 58 (1970) pp. 383-428.
- 21 Martin, loc. cit.
- 22 *Apol.* 71, 6 (Opitz, p. 150, 34)
- 23 *Apol.* 74 (Opitz, pp. 153-154)
- 24 Bell, op. cit., pp. 80-86
- 25 Barnes, op. cit., p. 235
- 26 *Apol.* 71, 6 (Opitz, p. 151, 9 [42])
- 27 *Apol.* 71, 6 (Opitz, p. 150, 14); *Festal Letter* 19
- 28 Twelve of the individuals listed in the *Breviarium Melitii* may be identified with almost absolute certainty owing to the unusual nature of their name, a particular association (as in the case of the Meletian presbyters who are grouped together in the schedule, or Timotheus of Diospolis who appears to have remained with his bishop, Ammonius, when they reappear at Tyre), or other references in the historians (as the identification of the Meletians who accompanied John Archaph to Tyre by Sozomen in *HE* 2, 25, as well as the position of Macarius as a follower of Athanasius). Another five identifications are based upon either the name alone and their location in AD 335

or the mention of their death in possession of an orthodox see in later years (as in the case of Theon of Nilopolis (see footnote above) or Theodoros of Copto and Pelagius of Oxyrhynchus in *Festal Letter* 19. The following chart indicates those Meletians from the schedule who appear to have accompanied Athanasius to Tyre by means of comparing *Apol.* 71, 6 and *Apol.* 78, 7. The listed numbers at each side correspond to those in Opitz for the *Breviarium Melitii* (pp. 149-151) and the brief presented by Athanasius' supporters at Tyre (p. 159).

*Breviarium
Melitii*

Tyre

5	'Αμμώνιος ἐν Διοσπόλει	5
12	Πελάγιος ἐν 'Οξυρύγχῳ	27
13	Πέτρος ἐν 'Ηρακλέους	4
23	'Αρποκρατίων ἐν Βουβάστῳ	10
24	Μωσῆς ἐν Φακουσαῖς	11
32	Κρόνιος ἐν Μετῆλι	41
33	'Αγαθάμμων ('Αλεξανδρέων)	22
35	'Απολλώνιος πρεσβύτερος	15
37	Διόσκορος πρεσβύτερος	37
38	Τυραννος πρεσβύτερος	6
39	Τιμόθεος διάκονος	38
42	Μακάριος πρεσβύτερος	39
9	Θεόδωρος ἐν Κόπτῳ	21 or 32
14	Θέων ἐν Νειλουπόλει	28
16	'Ηρακλείδης ἐν Νικύους	20 or 48
31	Πιπινούθης ἐν Φθενεγύ	29
36	Εἰρηναῖος πρεσβύτερος	33

29 *Festal Letter* 19

30 Arsenius, a Meletian not listed in the schedule, was apparently reconciled to Athanasius before the Synod of Tyre convened, cf. *Apol.* 69, 2-3 (Opitz, p. 147, 17 - p. 148, 3).

31 This may be a partial explanation of the events which are described in London Papyrus 1914 (Bell, op. cit., pp. 53-71).

SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE IN THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA

Rodolph Yanney, M.D.

During the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth, it was customary to speak of two main schools of biblical exegesis in the Early Church, the Alexandrian and the Antiochene. The former used the allegorical method, taken from Hellenism and first used to interpret Scripture by Philo.¹ This method was described as doing away with the literal sense and making Scripture say something else than what it really meant, and thus used to read in the Scripture arguments in favor of one's own theories.² The School of Antioch on the other hand paid more attention to the study of the literal meaning of the text. These views have now been overturned, thanks to the modern Patristic scholars, many of whom have spent years of tedious research in the original sources especially in the writings of Origen and of St. Didymus of Alexandria. Names of such figures as Danielou, de Lubac, Hanson, Van Balthasar, Gogler, Gruber and Tigcheler have revolutionized our understanding of the hermeneutic principles used by the Alexandrians.³

Alexandrian Christians and the Bible

Theologians of the School of Alexandria were not serious Bible students for the sake of achieving scholarship in it. Rather, they looked at it as an essential part in their spiritual life and in the life of the Church. It was stated that no other life has been so entirely devoted to Scripture as Origen's.⁴ He studied it during the night; during the day he either delivered his homilies or dictated his commentaries on the Word. For St. Didymus, study of Scripture was combined with his experience of worship, rather than philosophical theory, as the foundation for his faith.

Alexandria laid the basis for scientific Bible study, and this is true in all three areas of textual criticism, literal exegesis, and spiritual interpretation.

Textual Criticism

The work of Origen on biblical criticism was only surpassed in modern years. His *Hexapla* was the first piece of critical work ever undertaken on the Old Testament. Before him, the Septuagint was the only version the Church knew. He searched for all available versions and was not satisfied with the Greek but studied Hebrew in

order to compare them to the Hebrew text. He assembled the whole material in six columns (*Hexapla*) for the whole OT, and eight columns (*Octapla*) for the Psalms.

The work on the texts of the Bible went beyond the Greek and Hebrew, because it was in the School of Alexandria that the Bible was translated into Coptic. A longstanding tradition in the Coptic Church attributes this to the work of Pantaeus and Clement.

Origen gave his opinion about the canon of the OT, acknowledging all the books accepted by most churches now. The NT canon was the fruit of the work in the School of Alexandria, and it was not without significance that the 27 acknowledged books of the NT were first sanctioned by St. Athanasius in his Paschal letter for AD 367. Some of the books that took centuries to be accepted by other churches like the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Apocalypse were stated to be canonical more than a century earlier by Origen.

Literal Exegesis

Nothing is more unhistorical than to say that the literal sense of the Bible played a minor role in Alexandria. Origen's commentaries and homilies show how he uses his utmost skills in philology, etymology and grammar to explain key words in each verse. Every word is sacred for him, it is a medium for the incarnation of the divine Logos, and hence it is worthy of reverence and close study. He advises to treat the word of Scripture in the same way the Body of Christ is treated in the Eucharist, as he says,

“You know how carefully you receive the Body of the Lord and reverently make sure that no particle drops to the ground, lest any of the consecrated gifts be lost....But if you exercise such concern in taking care of his body -- and indeed with every right-- how can you think it a lesser crime to neglect the Word of God than his Body?”⁵

St. Didymus, no less than Origen, gives respect to the biblical text. Before discussing its spiritual meaning, he first examines what it says, its logic and structure, then he enquires into its historical or factual reference in the outside world. He does this before he proceeds to discuss any figurative meaning.⁶

Spiritual Interpretation

Alexandrian interpretation of Scripture is characterized by its fidelity to tradition. Jean Danielou insists that the method they use, which he calls ‘*typology*’ a term which has a sense different from that of the confusing word ‘*allegory*’. It is the same method used by the NT and by the earlier Fathers--Hippolytus, Justin, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria. Danielou gives an example from one of the homilies on Josua (2:1) on the death of Moses and adds, “Here Origen is summarizing and systematizing the whole body of traditional teaching then existing in the Church. Examples could be quoted from Paul (1 Cor. 10:4, 11; Heb. 8:5; Col. 2:16-17), Bar-

nabas, Justin and Irenaeus for every one of his symbols. It is typology at its most traditional, with its full dogmatic value, typology as an essential part of the Church's deposit."⁷

Another significant characteristic of the Alexandrian system is its consistency. Although allegory in the strict sense was occasionally used, yet the Bible was always looked at as a whole. Events and even words were followed and compared in different places of Scripture in order to form single doctrinal units. Whether in the OT or NT, words have the same theological meaning. To give one example from Origen, water always refers to Scripture. In the Homilies on Genesis, Scripture is the 'living water' which the angel showed to Agar (Gen 21:19). To its wells Rebecca came daily.⁸ Actually the brides of the Patriarchs Isaac, Jacob and Moses encountered their husbands for the first time at wells (Gen. 24:62, & 29:17; Ex. 2:15). Origen finds in this the union of the soul with Christ which can only occur through instruction in Scripture.⁹ The wells dug by Abraham and Isaac refer to the books of the OT and NT (Gen 26:18-22).¹⁰ In the Homilies on Exodus, bitter waters of Marah stand for the Law in its literal understanding; it became sweet through the mystery of the Cross. The springs of Elim refer to the NT;¹¹ the same is true of the water coming from the rock.¹² In the commentary on John, Origen says that 'the well of Jacob is the whole Scripture'.¹³

This sense of scriptural unity is felt more in the writings of St. Didymus, who follows different texts, which may seem unconnected, with one guiding principle-how each points to Christ.¹⁴

Different Spiritual Senses

Origen made one unit of the various spiritual senses known before him. For him all Scripture, whether the OT or NT, is Christ, the incarnated Word. The ultimate spiritual meaning of every text is Christ. This Christological interpretation carries at least four interconnected levels of meaning, as many as there are aspects in Christ, the Word:

- 1 The preexistent, eternal, divine *Logos*.
- 2 *Christ* as the incarnate Son of God, who suffered, died, rose and ascended to the Father where He intercedes for us till He appears again at the end of the world when He reigns in glory
- 3 The eternal word as appearing, or *incarnate* as Origen says, *in the words of Scripture*, both OT and NT.
- 4 The *mystical Christ* in the whole Church, his Body, living in her Sacraments, or dwelling in and espoused to each separate member.¹⁵

All these levels of spiritual interpretation were used in Alexandria, as well as in the NT. But clearly dominating was the mystical sense, especially in the relation of

Christ to the individual soul. This is frequent in Clement, Origen and Didymus. With Origen, this meaning includes all the others. For him, and this is evident even in his homilies, we encounter the real eternal Christ in Scripture which is a true Sacrament that unites us to him.

Origen inherited and frequently reported Philo's idea that there are three meanings in Scripture—the literal, moral and spiritual, corresponding to the three divisions of the human person—body (soma), soul (psyche) and spirit (pneuma). In practice, he only used the basic letter-spirit schema.¹⁶

In a recent monograph on Origen's method of exegesis it was shown, by examples from his writings, how he leads the hearer to an encounter with Christ, the real Teacher; Christ is actually made present through his teaching. In each verse, the hearer is carried vertically from the grammatical-historical sense, to the spiritual sense in general and to the life of today in particular. Simultaneously, while the hearer or reader moves from verse to verse, he progresses in a horizontal movement in the spiritual sense itself. This ascending movement corresponds to the stages of progress of the soul in the spiritual life under the tutelage of the Logos.¹⁷

After Origen, different, and rather confusing, terms were used for the various spiritual senses. These were carried to the West through John Cassian who, quoting the Egyptian monk Abba Nestor the Great, has three spiritual senses:

- 1 The *allegorical* or Christological
- 2 The *tropological* or moral or anthropological
- 3 The *anagogical* or eschatological

The example supplied by Cassian is 'Jerusalem' which in the literal sense is a historical city; allegorically it refers to the Church of Christ; (Ps. 46:4,5) tropologically it stands for the human soul (Ps. 147:1,2,12); anagogically it stands for the heavenly city of God (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 13:14).¹⁸

Role of Spiritual Interpretation

The early Church resorted to spiritual exegesis for an apologetic reason against three classes of people who took the OT only in its literal sense. These were mentioned in detail by Origen in his fourth book of *De Principiis* which is considered a systematic statement of his hermeneutic principles.

- 1 *The Jews*: Those refused to accept Christ as the Messiah because they were expecting the literal fulfilment of their prophecies. Also, they insisted that Christians should follow the OT rites if they consider it their book.
- 2 *The Gnostics*: Those refused to believe in the divine origin of the OT that attributes to God some anthropological passions like anger (Deut 32:22), jealousy (Exod. 20:5), and evil deeds (Is. 45:7; Amos 3:6; 1 Samuel 18:10).

- 3 *The 'simpler members of the Church'*: Those believed in the divinity of Scripture, but they accepted literally every word that described God.

While accepting every word of Scripture as inspired, Origen explained how the OT events were shadows of the New, while the NT events were shadows of the Kingdom that is to come. The Law was a preparation for the Gospel. Persons, things and events in the OT were types or figures of Christ, his Church or the human soul. Prophets were lamps that fade before Christ, the Sun of righteousness. Sacrifices ceased when the true Lamb came and offered himself.¹⁹

The Spiritual Interpreter

However, the main reason for the spiritual interpretation frequently stated by Origen was not an apologetic one. He was always hastening to go beyond the letter, and even beyond the lower spiritual meaning, in search for food for his soul and for his hearers. The central theme of his homilies was the soul's attainment of unity with God.²⁰ Origen's work was the single most significant influence in shifting the concern of biblical interpretation, not only in Alexandria but in the Church as a whole, toward becoming a way for the individual soul to attain the knowledge of God. By spiritual interpretation the soul participates in the divine pedagogy, a process that purifies, instructs and transforms it.²¹

The Alexandrian Fathers did not separate their study of Scripture from their whole spiritual life. Henry Chadwick says of Origen, "In his capacity for combining as a unity in himself intellectual passion with warm personal devotion to God in Christ and the practical virtues of a Christian, Origen is perhaps unique among the Fathers."²² However, this statement ignores the other Fathers of the same school.

Palladius described St. Didymus as leading the life of an ascetic in his cell inside Alexandria.²³ He is still described as a pious monk who did not base his faith on philosophical theory, but on his study of Scripture and his experience in worship.²⁴

This life of worship was essential for the Alexandrian Fathers in order to receive the grace needed for understanding Scripture. St. Gregory the Wonderworker describes the way Origen handled Scripture, "I have never known or heard of one who had meditated as he had on the pure and luminous words and had become so expert in fathoming their meaning and teaching them to others. I do not think he could have done that unless he had had the Spirit of God in him." In his homilies, Origen frequently asked for God's help and for the prayers of his hearers in order that the Holy Spirit may open difficult texts for him. In the homilies on Genesis (7:6), he says, "We must take care, for we are often beside the wells of running water-God's Scriptures-and yet we fail to recognize them for what they are...We must be always weeping and begging the Lord to open our eyes. The blind men sitting by the roadside at Jericho (Matt. 20:30) would not have had their eyes opened unless they had shouted at the Lord."²⁵

The Antiochene Reaction

By the fourth century, spiritual exegesis was securely established in the Church. In the last decades of the fourth century and during the fifth century a vigorous reaction against allegorism was led by theologians in Antioch, mainly Diodore of Tarsus (d.c. 390), Chrysostom, (d. 407), Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428) and Theodoret of Cyrrhus (d.c. 466). However, closer study by modern patristic scholars has shown that the different approaches of the Alexandrian and Antiochene Schools are complimentary rather than conflicting.²⁶ Jean Danielou concludes,

“Both (schools) were equally typological. The difference between them was not, as has been said, that one was literal and the other allegorical. The exegesis of both was typological and the one was as Christological as the other; but at Antioch theologians concentrated on the catechetical tradition and laid particular stress on the part of it relating to the sacraments while the Alexandrians concentrated on what Tradition had to say about the spiritual life and put the stress on the mystical side. Both were equally rooted in Tradition.”²⁷

Against *allegoria*, the Antiochenes used the word *theoria* (=contemplation or insight.), a term found in Didymus of Alexandria²⁸ and for all practical purposes is a close equivalent of the Alexandrian *allegoria*.

The Antiochene Fathers were not, however, unanimous in rejecting allegorism. In fact, only Theodore did that. He accepted only four psalms as referring directly to Christ. He refused to acknowledge many of the OT prophecies and types which have Christological interpretations, and considered the Song of Songs a human love-song. Theodoret was actually nearer to the Alexandrian school than his master Theodore. While opposed in Christology to his contemporary St. Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret differed from him surprisingly very little in his exegesis.²⁹ As a pastor oriented toward finding spiritual benefits for his flock, as well as a bishop engaged in apologetic argumentations against the jews, Theodoret often rejects the literalist confines of Theodore’s interpretations. In many OT places he finds a direct prophecy of Christ or the Church (e.g. Amos 9:11, Zech 9:10, Micah 4:1 ff, Micah 5:2).³⁰

Spiritual Interpretation in the History of Exegesis

Spiritual exegesis dominated in the whole Church, both east and west and was adopted by such Fathers as Sts. Gregory of Nyssa, Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory the Great. Antiochene exegesis had little lasting influence. With the condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret in the 553 AD Council of Constantinople, the Antiochene heritage was looked on with suspicion. With few exceptions, spiritual interpretation was the rule during the Middle Age, and was used extensively by both Protestants and Catholics after the Reformation.³¹

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have seen the triumph of literal exegesis in the form of the historical critical method which deals with the human authorship of Scripture. This method succeeded in exploding our knowledge about the Bible. However, modern biblical scholars have found it spiritually barren and have called for *more-than-literal exegesis*, which deals with Scripture as the word of God and what it means to man today. Some scholars, like De Lubac, Danielou and Hanson have called for the return to the spiritual exegesis as practiced by the Fathers. Others preferred to use new terms like *Biblical Theology*, the *New Hermeneutic*, *Christian Interpretation of the OT*, the *Sensus Plenior*, and the *Typical Sense*.³² In one way or the other, each treats Scripture using one of the different Spiritual senses described in Alexandria more than seventeen centuries ago.

References and Notes:

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- 3 Trojesen KJ: *Hermeneutic Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1986: 5-12
- 4 Danielou J: *Origen*. Translated by Mitchell W. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955: 131.
- 5 *Exodus Homilies* 13, 3. In *Spirit and Fire*, by von Balthasar HU, Tr. by Daly-RJ, Cath. Univ. of America; Washington, 1984; 263
- 6 Young F: *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983:88
- 7 Danielou J, *op. cit.*, 147, 148.
- 8 Origen: *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, 7:6 & 10:2 Tr. by Heine RE. Washington: The Cath. Univ. of America, 1982:134, 160
- 9 Ibid. 10:5 (P. 166).
- 10 Ibid. 13:2,3 (P. 186-192).
- 11 Ibid. *Exod. Hom.* 7:1,2 & 3 (P. 300-305)
- 12 Ibid. 11:2 (P. 356, 357)
- 13 Origen: *Jo Co* 13:5. Tr. in *Spirit and Fire*, *op. cit.*: 112
- 14 Young, *op. cit.*: 87.
- 15 Danielou, *op. cit.*: 161, 162. *Spirit and Fire*, *op. cit.*: XIV
- 16 Danielou, *op. cit.* 161. *Spirit and Fire*, *op. cit.*: XVI
- 17 Trojesen, *op. cit.*: 133, 135.
- 18 Cassian: *Conferences*, 14:8. In *NPNF*, second series, Vol. XI; 437-38. Brown RE: *Hermeneutics*. In *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Englewood, NJ, 1968, 71:41.
- 19 Details of this are given by Danielous (*op. cit.*, 144-173), with reference to many of Origen's works particularly his commentaries on Matthew, John and Song of Songs, and his homilies on Exodus, Leviticus and Josua. Danielou concludes that the Law prefigures the Gospel in Origen's exegesis. However, this view has been recently challenged by Trojesen (*op. cit.*, 6) who finds that Origen really says that these OT passages figure the coming of Christ, not the NT.
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- 23 Palladius: *Lausaic History*, 4. Translated by Meyer RT. Maryland: Newman Press, 1965: 35.
- 24 Young, *op. cit.*: 91.
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- 26 Trigg: *Biblical Interpretation*, *op. cit.*: 31.
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ARCHDEACON ISKANDAR HANNA 1880-1944

Boulos A. Ayad, Ph.D.

Iskandar Hanna, born to religious parents in Alexandria in 1880, was one of the pioneers in preaching in the Coptic Orthodox Church as were Habib Girgis¹, Ayad Ayad, Father Marcos (Hafez) Daoud², Father Ibrahim Luka³, and a few others.

Early in this century the Coptic Orthodox Church faced some educational problems⁴. The priests did not have theological education, having inherited their positions from their fathers. Those chosen to be bishops and monastery heads lacked good education, and the persons recommending them for these positions were not necessarily pious persons with the best interests of the Church in mind. Most of the population of Egypt, including the Copts, were not highly educated, although some of the Copts living in the cities had attended the university. It was not until the 1940s that the youth and young men began to study the Bible, and to attend prayer services and sermons. Prior to that time, Coptic church activities were extremely limited. There was some preaching in churches, but it was generally neglected in the small villages.

For all of the above reasons, it is clear that when an excellent preacher appeared in the latter part of the last century or the early part of the present century, he would be remembered for the aid which he gave to the Church in Egypt. Iskandar Hanna was an official in the Egyptian government, in the Department of Ports, working in Alexandria, Suez, and Port Said, till he received the title Bek⁵. He began preaching in the cities in which he was working and then extended his services to the nearby towns and villages. Later he visited other areas in Lower Egypt, including Damanhur, al-Mahalla al-Kubra, Tanta and Cairo. From Cairo he traveled south, visiting the major cities in Upper Egypt--Beni Sewaif, el-Minya, Asyut, Sohag, and Luxor. When Hanna arrived at Asyut, Bishop Macarius welcomed him and permitted him to preach in the Church of the Patriarchate. The Bishop appreciated his preaching and his deep love for the Church, and on June 26, 1932, he ordained him as an *Archdeacon*. There were few Archdeacons in those days, and those who held the position received it in return for their great dedication to the Church.

In the early part of this century, the majority of the Coptic people were ignorant of the Coptic Church traditions, so Iskandar Hanna wrote a book on *Illustrations of Sincerity on the Way to Redemption*.

Hanna remained single throughout his life for he wanted to be free to dedicate his life to the service of the Lord. Although he reached a high position in the government, he took early retirement in order that he might continue serving the Lord. He never turned down an invitation to preach in any place, and because the people liked to listen to him, he received many requests. Often he was asked to stay for three or four days to continue preaching, which he did.

Archdeacon Iskandar Hanna was an excellent preacher, never boring his audience, and always delivering sermons pertinent to the needs of the people. His sermons were long, approximately two hours, but the people never complained about the length; in fact, they wanted him to preach longer. They believed he was not speaking from his own knowledge but that it was the Holy Spirit speaking through him, especially since he usually touched on the needs of the parishioners. Some people said, "He knew our daily problems, was he a prophet?"

Through prayer and preaching, Archdeacon Iskander Hanna encouraged the listeners to contribute toward building new churches, and because of his service, numerous churches were built throughout Egypt.

Hanna was a student of the Bible, he read it through several times. Before preaching, he always prayed that the Lord would help him in delivering his sermon. His sermons have been printed in several religious bulletins; they should now be classified and published in one volume. These sermons contain biblical interpretations, history, spiritual teaching, Orthodox Church doctrine, and many simple but pertinent stories.

In 1944 Archdeacon Hanna was ill for several months, and during this time he had many visitors, to whom he said, "God who loved me should be glorified in my sickness as well as in my health." Although he suffered considerably during his sickness, he was always offering thanks to God, which he did even when his sister passed away. On December 30, 1944, Iskandar (Bek) Hanna died at the age of 64. After forty days, in February 1945, there was a service in the Church of Saint Girgis in Gaziret Badran. Pope Anba Macarius led the service and spoke about the deeds of Iskandar Hanna. Father Girgis Botros said about Iskander Hanna: "We imagine him while he preached in the middle of thousands of listeners and affected their feelings, and as a clever hunter attracted by his calm voice the hearts of his listeners, raising them to the glory of the Lord. His words came out of his heart to the other hearts, not from the mouth to the ears. . . . We imagine him while he sat, talking to his beloved listeners with words of grace and answering their questions in wisdom not from this world, or while he sat at his desk writing a message of sympathy or giving advice to a person who was far from God . . . He was like a bee which was working all the time. When some of his friends advised him to take some rest, he said, "It is much better for us to die because of overwork than to rust because of too little work."

Archdeacon Hanna expressed this desire of living work to his brother before his death, saying, "How I hoped sincerely to deliver my spirit to the Creator while I was in his service rather than die while I was sick in bed."⁶

Notes

- 1 Coptic Church Review, 1984; 5:47-52.
- 2 Coptic Church Review, 1989; 10:2-31.
- 3 Coptic Church Review, 1988; 9:115-118.
- 4 Most of these problems have been solved since the middle of this century. Now the Pope of Alexandria, the bishops, the priests with the cooperation of the Coptic people, have become very active in different spiritual fields which have reached to many places in the world.
- 5 Before 1952 there were different titles, including "Bek," given by the Kings and by the Egyptian government to those who offered valuable services to the country. The use of these titles was discontinued in 1952 after the Egyptian revolution.
- 6 See, Dr. Soliman Nessim, "Archdeacon Iskandar Hanna:" (Arabic), *The Bulletin of al-Kiraza*, No. 4, April 1965, pp. 40-41; See also, Iris Habib al-Masry, *The Story of the Coptic Church* (Arabic), Vol. 6 (A) (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabet al Mahaba, 1985), pp. 189-191.

CURRENTS IN COPTIC CHURCH STUDIES

The Civilization of Egypt in the Coptic Period

By Dr. Murad Kamel. The Press of Dar al Alam al Arabi, Cairo, Egypt, 1968. 238 pp.

For the first time in the history of Egypt an author has written two books in Arabic which both contain "The Coptic Period" as part of the title.

Dr. Kamel was a professor and a chairman of the Department of Semitic Languages at Cairo University and he published about 170 books, monographs, and papers. He was a member of international societies and a member of the International Nobel Committee for Peace. Dr. Kamel traveled widely, visiting many countries throughout the world and left a huge library of approximately 30,000 books to the Coptic Patriarchate. He was born on 5 July, 1907 and passed away on 16 January, 1975.

The Civilization of Egypt in the Coptic Period is divided into five chapters: (1) Political Life, (2) Language, (3) Intellectual Life, (4) Art, and (5) Social Life.

In Chapter 1, the author writes about the political situation of Egypt from the time of Diocletian until Heraclius. This is followed by a discussion of the system of administration and financial organization, the army, and the general economic situation during the Byzantine period. The introduction of Christianity into Egypt is then explored, along with the struggle between Christianity and the Roman rulers, which continued from the 1st Century A.D. until the Arab invasion of Egypt in 642 A.D. This struggle began with the pagan emperors and then transferred to the emperors who supported heresies, finally continuing against the emperors who supported the Chalcedonian Faith. At the end of this chapter, Dr. Kamel summarizes the ten persecutions which befell the Copts of Egypt.

In the chapter on languages, the author gives a history of the ancient Egyptian language from which the Coptic language was derived and which was divided into different dialects. Dr. Kamel then points out the influence the Coptic language has had on other languages.

The intellectual life is covered in Chapter 3 where the author discusses intellectual activity and philosophy, the Catechetical School in Alexandria and its cultural influence, scientific and literary activities, the popular culture of the times, and the writings of the Fathers. This chapter makes very clear the legacy left by the Copts

from the ancient to the modern world, and how deeply the world is indebted to them.

In Chapter 4, Dr. Kamel discusses the gender and features of Coptic art, giving many examples of architecture, paintings, carvings on stone and wood and textiles, all of which the author considers the main art of the Copts. Their subsidiary art included cosmetic adornment, drawings, paleography, and bookbinding. Dr. Kamel shows how ancient Egyptian art played an important role in the Coptic life during various periods of time. Chapter 4 ends with the a discussion on Coptic music and hymns.

Chapter 5 tells of the social life of the era and the position of Coptic women in this life. The Coptic family was a strongly knit group held together by their high principles and close relationship with the Coptic church, its customs and traditions.

Dr. Kamel then discusses the origin of the Coptic calendar and Coptic months. Following this he describes monachism in Egypt and gives some history concerning its development. The book ends with a list of the names of the emperors and rulers of Egypt and a list of the Popes of Alexandria from the Diocletian period until the Arab conquest.

The Civilization of Egypt in the Coptic Period is a book which should be required reading by all who are interested in Coptic history. The book includes many accurate facts concerning the Coptic lifestyle and is written in an easy-to-understand manner. The reviewer suggests that this book be reprinted as a reference guide and translated into different languages.

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Holy Pascha

Pp. 504. \$16.00

Published in 1988 by Holy Virgin Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, 4900 Cleland Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90042

This is the liturgical book of the Holy Week in the Coptic Orthodox Church, in three languages-Coptic, English and Arabic. During the first three centuries the Church had one day to celebrate *Pascha* (or Passover), the feast of feasts that commemorates the suffering, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. During the fourth century the different events of the Paschal mystery came to be celebrated on different days. The liturgy of the *Passion Week*, as the Holy Week is called in the Coptic Church, still carries the ancient term *Pascha*. Its tradition is extremely rich in Scriptural readings that reflect the keen theological insights of the Fathers who have chosen them, and in liturgical litanies and songs that breathe with their deep spirituality. It is the most sacred week of the whole year and its solemn tunes are so dear to every Coptic Christian that many take leave from their worldly activities in order to participate fully in its liturgy which is nothing less than following Christ in his last week on earth, hour by hour. The Church has ten prayers of *Pascha* for each day, five for the night (the day starts from the preceding evening) and five for the day. The whole atmosphere is one of grief: the altar door is covered with black curtains; the church pillars carry black crosses; readings, responses and litanies are recited in a mournful tone. But, throughout the whole week one never feels, even for a moment, the hopeless sorrow for the dying Christ. Rather, it is the joyful sorrow in which the rays of his resurrection illuminate the whole liturgy. This is very clear in the *Doxology of the Pascha*, the one song which the Church sings twelve times each hour (instead of the twelve psalms in the prayers of the hours), day after day during the Passion week:

“Thine is the power, the glory, the blessings and the majesty forever. Amen;
O Emmanuel our God and our King.

“Thine is the power, the glory, the blessings, and the majesty forever. Amen;
O my Lord Jesus Christ, my good Saviour...”

The message of the song is very clear. The Church is not here worshipping a helpless Christ, but she is beholding on the cross the all-powerful, glorious, trium-

phant God, and she is worshipping him in company with, and using the same words as the whole heavenly host (Rev. 4:11; 5:12&13).

Before the *Doxology*, the liturgy of each hour starts with several readings from the Prophets or other OT books related to the hour. The *Doxology* is followed by the singing of a verse from the Psalms and the Gospel of the hour. This is followed by a small commentary, and occasionally a homily. After a litany which is slowly recited in tune by the priest and a hymn which all the Church chants antiphonically, the hour is concluded by the Lord's Prayer.

The Gospel reading is the central event of every hour, and it is chanted by the reader while all the church is standing. The main Bible themes for Holy Monday are the cursing of the Fig Tree and the cleansing of the Temple; both events foretell the end of the old covenant. The Gospels for Holy Tuesday deal with the different confrontations between Christ and the Jews ending in their great condemnation (Matt. 23), prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming of Christ. The Gospels for Holy Wednesday contrast the faithfulness of Mary in pouring the precious ointment on Christ's head at Bethany, and the betrayal of Judas. Holy Thursday carries us, through the Bible and Liturgy, to the mystery of Christ's Sacrifice. In the morning, He gives us his Body and Blood to partake of them as a *Peace Offering*. At night the Church tries to watch with him at Gethsemane as He offers himself totally as a *Burnt Offering* to the Father. The liturgy of Good Friday commemorates his suffering and death as a *Sin Offering*.

After a few hours of rest, the Church starts a whole night vigil for Holy Saturday in which the liturgical tunes reflect a strange mixture of the anguish of Passion together with the joy of Resurrection. The Church sings or recites the songs and prayers recorded in the OT, starting with the Song of Moses (Exodus 15) and ending with the prayer of Simeon (Luke 2). The whole Book of Revelation is read on candlelight and the Vigil is concluded by the Divine Liturgy. Celebration of the Holy Eucharist on Saturday, which is called by the Copts '*The Saturday of Joy*', reflects the ancient belief of the Church that Christ was not limited to his dead Body in the tomb, but He descended into Hades to deliver the Souls of those waiting for salvation. (1 Peter 3:19).

The book we are reviewing here is a liturgical book; it simply contains all the liturgical prayers and Scriptural readings. It starts after the celebration of Palm Sunday and ends by the last hour of Good Friday. A second volume is expected for the liturgy of Holy Saturday. Except for the short liturgical commentaries, the book does not explain the rites or the readings, nor does it reflect upon their deep theological significance. Massive work is needed for this; and it is a great challenge for our theologians for years to come. Those who toiled hard to produce the present volume are to be commended because they put the foundation on which all scholarship can be built. The book has been intended essentially for the use in church; but we recommend it highly to those interested in studying the rich Coptic liturgy.

The Gospel & Its Proclamation

By Robert D. Sider. Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1983. Pp. 236. \$15.95 (cloth); \$9.95 (paperback).

How was the Christian message proclaimed to the world, Christian and non-Christian, after the Apostolic period? This is the broad question which Robert Sider tries to answer in this book, using the writings of early Fathers who lived in the first four centuries. In Chapter One, which serves as an introduction to the whole book, Professor Sider describes *The Dynamics of Personal Encounter*. After the first century there was little missionary activity. Christianity was spread by the silent witness of the life, and even of the death, of individual Christians. In this chapter we have texts from St. Justin, Tertullian, St. Gregory the Wonder Worker and St. Augustine. Texts from the acts of the early martyrs show how this Christian witness occurred inside the family, by artisans and merchants in their every day business, by teachers in the classroom, and by the deeds of the martyrs whose blood became the seed of the Church.

The Message to the Jews is discussed in Chapter Two. Here the early Christians followed the New Testament tradition in using the personal dialogue and debate in order to 'open the Scripture' to the Jews and proclaim Christ as the Messiah (Luke 24:13-25; Acts 2:14-40 & 13:16-41).

In the next three chapters, *The Message to the Pagans* is elaborated upon by selections from the early Christian Apologists (Justin, Tatian, Tertullian, Theophilus and Minucius Felix) as well as from greater works like Origen's *Against Celsus*, Lactantius' *Divine Institutes* and Augustine's *City of God*. In all these writings we observe a uniformity rooted in the Christian tradition and belief. At the same time, there are variations, each author has his personality and he speaks to a different audience.

The next chapter describes *The Message to the Learners*; how the new converts were instructed in the basic Christian doctrine before and after their baptism. The last chapter discusses *The Message to the Faithful*. From the myriad of forms and from the vast store of literature left by the early Church on the subject, the author samples three ways in which the message reached the faithful. These are the prophetic vision, the episcopal letter and the scholarly treatise. Although the homily was the most important of these ways, the present book did not touch upon it because an entire volume in the same series, *Message of the Fathers of the Church*, is devoted to it.

It is not easy to give the reader an overview of this book which contains hundreds of patristic selections. However, the author is to be commended for not leaving his readers alone with them. The Fathers speak for themselves in his fine modern translations of their selections from Greek and Latin. But it the author who speaks to the readers, introducing and commenting on each selection, and following one continuous theme in the whole book.

Sharing the Eucharistic Bread

By Xavier Léon-Dufour, S.J. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connel. New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987. Pp. 391 \$12.95 (paper).

This book was originally written in French in 1982 and has since been translated into German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. The author is considered by many to be the premier Catholic NT scholar in Europe. The book is a comprehensive and in-depth study of the NT texts concerning the Eucharist. In his rigorous exegetical inquiry, the author starts by examining the eucharistic assemblies of the Early Church as recorded in the Book of Acts and in the early Christian writings. Then he studies the texts of the Last Supper in the three Synoptic Gospels and in the Pauline Epistles (1 Cor. II: 23-26 & 10:16). Here he uses the methods of literary criticism, and gets texts from the OT, as he tries to interpret Christ's words on remembrance, and his words over the bread and over the cup, as well as his actions and those of the disciples during the Supper. Then the author proceeds to examine the Testament Tradition found in St. Luke (22: 14-18 & 21-38) and in St. John (chapters 13-16), and other teachings in the latter Gospel about the Eucharist. By responding to critics of the traditional teaching, the book offers a sharper vision of the Eucharist, especially in the ecumenical forum, and clarifies certain delicate notions like the real presence, sacrifice, memory, the verb 'to be' (This is...), and explains the meanings of such words as covenant and symbol.

This book is a great contribution to both biblical and liturgical studies. It gives the patient reader a chance to enrich his liturgical and spiritual life, to enlighten and strengthen his faith, and to stimulate his interest in serving others as an integral part of sharing the eucharistic bread.

The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life

Introduced and translated by Sebastian Brock. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1987. Pp. xliii + 381. \$50.00 (hardcover), \$19.95 (paperback)

Cut from the rest of the Christian world after the Council of Chalcedon in 451, and the Arab conquest in the seventh centuries, the Syriac and the Coptic Christians developed closer ties and interactions which had a great impact on their spirituality as well as on their liturgies and church life. The Fathers of both churches suffered the same fate under the Byzantines, and under the Arabs. Although their earlier Fathers wrote in Greek they wrote in their national languages, Syriac and Coptic, between the fourth and the eighth centuries, after which Arabic started to take over.

It is time for Western publishers to discover that Greek and Latin are not the only languages in which the writings of the Fathers have reached us. Although scholarly

papers are not lacking, yet complete translations from Coptic or Syriac Fathers into the English language have been exceptional till very recently. Cistercian Publications should be commended for offering to the English-speaking reader during the last decade some ten volumes translated from the Syriac and Coptic, some of them have been completely unavailable in any Western language.

In this book the Oxford Scholar Sebastian Brock translates texts that deal with prayer and mystical spirituality from fifteen Syriac writers who lived between the fourth and eighth centuries. In a general introduction, Brock comments on the forgotten tradition of Oriental Christianity and on the Syriac Churches, Syriac literature and Syriac spirituality. The excerpts from each Father are introduced by a short account on his life and work, and are concluded by bibliography and notes.

The Coptic reader will feel familiar with the Fathers whose writings appear in the book. Many of their writings have been translated to Arabic after the Arab invasion and have been treasured by Coptic monks as a part of their spiritual tradition. The former Coptic Patriarch, Pops Kyrillos VI copied with his hand the whole works of St. Isaac the Syrian several times when he was a monk. The same Father has been a favorite of H.H. Pope Shenouda III. He quotes him frequently in his writings and sermons. When he was a monk, he edited the writings of Mar Isaac on the virtue of silence.¹ During the revival in the Coptic Church earlier this century, the first patristic books on spirituality to appear were those of the Syriac Fathers, St. Philoxenus of Mabbug (in 1951), St. John Saba (in 1952) and St. John the Solitary (in 1952), long before the publication of any of the Coptic Fathers. Father Matta El-Meskeen's classic, *'Orthodox Prayer Life'*, which appeared in 1952 and was a milestone in the spiritual revival, included numerous excerpts from St. Isaac the Syrian, St. John Saba and St. Ephrem.

Note

- 1 *'Life of Silence in St. Isaac of Nineveh'* was published as a series of articles in *Al-Kiraza* in 1966 and 1967. An abridged translation appeared in *Coptic Church Review*, 1982; 3:117-120.

The Liturgy and Time

By A.G. Martimort, J.H. Dalmais and P. Jounel. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1986. Pp. 304. \$14.95 (paper).

This is volume IV of *The Church at Prayer*. Following the other volumes in the set (reviewed in *CCR*, vol 9: No. 3 & 4, 1988) which deal with the principles of the Liturgy, the Eucharist and the Sacraments, this book provides historical backgrounds, theological analysis and spiritual values of the liturgy. The three sections of the book discuss the three liturgical cycles: the weekly cycle centered on Sunday; the yearly cycle centered on Easter, but also includes the Christmas season

and the veneration of St. Mary and other saints; and 'The Liturgy of the hours', a term used in preference to 'Divine Office' for the daily cycle. These cycles are shared by most churches and the fact that the book gives numerous patristic references from the early Church as well as a summary of the variabilities in the liturgical celebration in different churches throughout the centuries makes the book of particular interest beyond Roman Catholic circles.

School of Prayer

By Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1989. (UK price two pounds seventy-five pence. USA agents Templegate) pp xxii + 70.

This is a new format edition of a great book on prayer by one of Orthodoxy's most significant spokesmen in the West.

Metropolitan Anthony is responsible for the Russian Orthodox Patriarchal Church in Great Britain and Ireland and has written many highly praised books including the modern classic "Living Prayer." His teaching summons us to the most radical response to God: "Very often we do not find faith, because our despair is not deep enough. We want God in addition to so many things.....If our despair comes from sufficient depth, if what we ask for, cry for, is so essential that it sums up all the needs of our life, then we find words of prayer and we will be able to reach the core of the prayer, the meeting with God."

After several readings, it can be said that this book never fails to yield some further, richer seam of modern and traditional spirituality.

Sutton Valence School, Kent, England.

John Watson.

The Selfless Self

By Laurence Freeman. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1989. (UK price six pounds ninety-five pence, USA agents Templegate) pp.xi + 162.

Fr. Laurence Freeman is a monk of the Order of St. Benedict working in Montreal, Canada in a priory founded by the English monk John Main and devoted to the maintenance of a network of meditation groups.

The book outlines, in the clearest and simplest language, how to be silent; how to be spiritually still; and how to be intellectually simple, in the best possible sense. A book about silence is, as Father Laurence says, inherently contradictory but he seems to have succeeded where others have failed. In thirty-four short chapters he shows how meditation transforms the individual and consequently our relationships because it leads us out of the level of egoism. Meditation may be a path to God because it leads to the level of the spirit which is the level of the true self.

Fr. Laurence uses a series of analogies and images to convey his central message and these are often useful and helpful though it is clear to this reviewer that the style will not appeal to many readers. An example may be quoted from his exposition of the Music of Being:

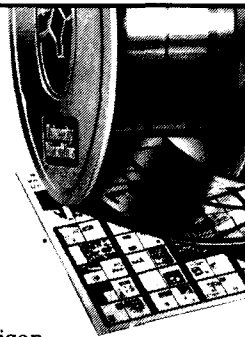
“Musicians are always striving towards excellence in their playing. That is what we, as spiritual musicians, do when we meditate, and why we meditate every day regardless of whether we feel good or bad. By such discipline we avoid mediocrity...we release...the music God plays in Christ.”

This book is relevant to the Coptic Orthodox Church as it attempts to express its own significant insights into silence and contemplation in the language of the New World. The kind of approach used by Fr. Laurence Freeman has already proved helpful to many Christians in a stressful world.

Sutton Valence School, Kent, England.

John Watson

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The 'Hanging Church' (Al-Mu'allakah)



This Church which was built in the fifth century is one of the oldest churches in Egypt. It got its name from the fact that it was built on two bastions of the old Roman fortress of Babylon. It was rebuilt in the tenth century, and became the headquarters for the Patriarch of Alexandria, after Cairo had become the capital of Egypt, from the eleventh till the fourteenth centuries. The picture is taken from *'Coptic Egypt'* (Barcelona, 1986).