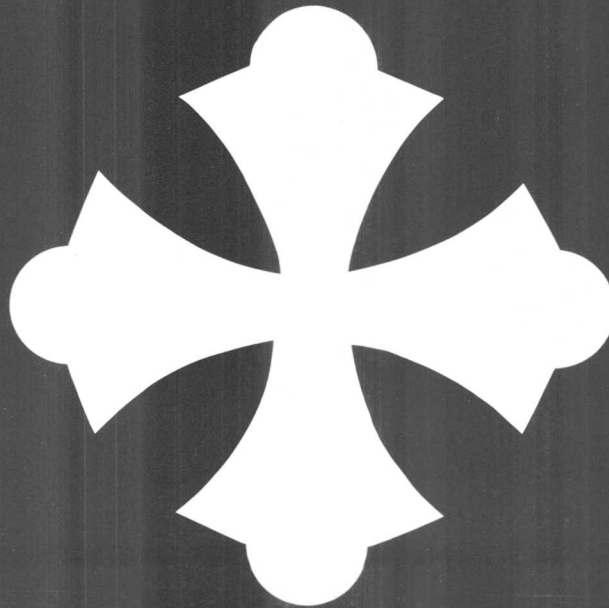


COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

Volume 5, Number 3 Fall 1984

- *ERA OF THE MARTYRS IN THE COPTIC CHURCH*
- *POWER OF THE EUCHARIST*
- *SAINT JOHN THE SHORT*



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

On September 11, the Coptic Church celebrates the *Feast of the Martyrs*, which is the New Year's Day in the Coptic calendar. The feast carries this name after the numberless martyrs who suffered during the severe persecution started by the Roman emperor Diocletian. In this issue we have a vivid description of the *Era of the Martyrs in the Coptic Church* written by the Father of Church history, *Eusebius Bishop of Caesarea* (c. 315-c. 340). The text is adapted from the translation of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. It is during the Era of the Martyrs that *St. Dolagy* and her four sons suffered for their faith in the Upper Egyptian town Isna.

Through the centuries, before and after Diocletian, the annals of the Coptic Church history have been filled with accounts of martyrdoms and persecutions. With the celebration of the feast of the Martyrs this year, the Coptic Church starts its fourth year under the latest Islamic and government-directed persecution. The Coptic Patriarch, H. H. Pope Shenouda III, is still under arrest in the desert Monastery of St. Bishoi, where he has been since September 1981. With the visible head of the Church separated from its body, its educational activities stopped, the clergy intimidated by the government secret service which decides who can serve in his church and who cannot, without ordination of bishops nor of priests, and no building of new churches, and with the Coptic newspapers still banned, with all these atrocities committed against the Church everything in it is now at a standstill. At the same time, with the Coptic youth discriminated against in admission to colleges and in graduation from them, in obtaining jobs and in every aspect of their daily life, together with the terrifying spread of Moslem extremism, the Church is gradually and silently bleeding to death. Tens of thousands of its children are lost every year either by conversion to Islam or through emigration.

In *Power of the Eucharist*, one of a series of articles on the Divine Liturgy, the late *Father Bishoi Kamel* (1931-1979) looks at the Sacrament from its aspect of *anamnesis* (= remembrance). Theologically speaking, this involves the actual representation of the past (death, resurrection and ascension of Christ), and the anticipation of the future (His parousia). However, Father Bishoi does not separate the liturgy from the daily life of the Christian. Thus, he sees in the *anamnesis* the realization in one's own life of the Lord's sacrifice, suffering, death, resurrection and second coming. For him the Holy Eucharist is a journey with Christ from Gethsemane, to Calvary, to the empty tomb, and finally to Bethany where one is

drawn to heaven with His ascension awaiting His return. The article first appeared in Arabic in *St. Mark Monthly Review* (November 1972).

From England, *Father John Watson* writes *On Wisdom*. He searches for the meaning of wisdom in the Scriptures and the Fathers, especially Origen and the Desert Fathers, and he gives examples from the writings of contemporary theologians like Paul Tillich, Thomas Merton and Pope Shenouda III, to show that the contemplation of wisdom is more needed now than at anytime in the past.

In our series of the lives of the Desert Fathers we have in this issue the *Biography and Spirituality of Saint John the Short*. The Coptic Church celebrates his feast day on Baba 20 (October 30). His doxology is chanted in that day in the liturgy, during the *Daily Office* and during the *Raising of the Incense*.

Editor

SAINT DOLAGY AND HER SONS

During the Diocletian persecution, Arrianus the ruler of Antioch visited Isna to carry out the emperor's orders. At his arrival he met four young men (Soros, Herman, Abanopha and Shanas) driving a donkey that was loaded with watermelons. The ruler stopped them and asked them to worship the idols. But the four youth refused, declaring the Christian faith. As Arrianus began to threaten them, their mother Dolagy who hurried to her children's aid encouraged them not to deny the Christian faith in front of the ruler.

Arrianus imprisoned them. During the night, St. Mary appeared to them giving them strength and courage. By the morning the ruler gave orders that the youth be slain on the mother's knees. She sang hymns and psalms, asking God to accept her children. At last she was beheaded and thus she and her children became the first martyrs of Isna. Their relics lie in the church named after them at Isna. Their feast is celebrated on Bashans 6 (May 14).

Father Tadros Malaty

THE ERA OF THE MARTYRS IN THE COPTIC CHURCH

From The Church History of Eusebius

Thousands of Egyptians suffered for their faith during the persecution of Diocletian, especially after AD 305, when Maximin became a Caesar, ruling Egypt and Syria. It is this later persecution which is described here by the contemporary Church historian.

Egyptian Martyrs in Tyre

From Egypt many went to other cities and countries where they became illustrious through martyrdom. Those of them who were conspicuous in Palestine we know, as also those who were at Tyre in Phoenicia. Whoever saw them and was not astonished at the numberless stripes, and at the firmness which these truly wonderful athletes of religion exhibited under them? and at their contest, immediately after the scourging, with bloodthirsty wild beasts, as they were cast before leopards and different kinds of bears and wild boars and bulls goaded with fire and red-hot iron? and at the marvelous endurance of these noble men in the face of all sorts of wild beasts?

We were present ourselves when these things occurred, and have put on record the divine power of our martyred Saviour Jesus Christ, which was present and manifested itself mightily in the martyrs. For a long time the man-devouring beasts did not dare to touch or draw near the bodies of those dear to God, but rushed upon the others who from the outside irritated and urged them on. And they would not in the least touch the holy athletes, as they stood alone and naked and shook their hands at them to draw them toward themselves,—for they were commanded to do this. But whenever they rushed at them, they were restrained as if by some diviner power and retreated again. This continued for a long time, and occasioned no little wonder to the spectators. And as the first wild beast did nothing, a second and a third were let loose against one and the same martyr. One could not but be astonished at the invincible firmness of these holy men, and the enduring and immovable constancy of those whose bodies were young. You could have seen a youth not twenty years of age standing unbound and stretching out his hands in the form of a cross,

with unterrified and untrembling mind, engaged earnestly in prayer to God, and not in the least going back or retreating from the place where he stood, while bears and leopards, breathing rage and death, almost touched his flesh. And yet their mouths were restrained, I know not how, by a divine and incomprehensible power, and they ran back again to their place. Such an one was he.

Again you might have seen others, for they were five in all, cast before a wild bull, who tossed into the air with his horns those who approached from the outside, and mangled them, leaving them to be taken up half dead; but when he rushed with rage and threatening upon the holy martyrs, who were standing alone, he was unable to come near them; but though he stamped with his feet, and pushed in all directions with his horns, and breathed rage and threatening on account of the irritation of the burning irons, he was, nevertheless, held back by the sacred Providence. And as he in nowise harmed them, they let loose other wild beasts upon them. Finally, after these terrible and various attacks upon them, they were all slain with the sword; and instead of being buried in the earth they were committed to the waves of the sea.

Sufferings of the Egyptian Martyrs

Such was the conflict of those Egyptians who contended nobly for religion in Tyre. But we must admire those also who suffered martyrdom in their native land; where thousands of men, women, and children despising the present life for the sake of the teaching of our Saviour, endured various deaths. Some of them, after scrapings and rackings and severest scourgings, and numberless other kinds of tortures, terrible even to hear of, were committed to the flames; some were drowned in the sea; some offered their heads bravely to those who cut them off; some died under their tortures, and others perished with hunger. And yet others were crucified; some according to the method commonly employed for malefactors; others yet more cruelly, being nailed to the cross with their heads downward, and being kept alive until they perished on the cross with hunger.

Persecution in Upper Egypt

It would be impossible to describe the outrages and tortures which the martyrs in Thebais endured. They were scraped over the entire body with shells instead of hooks until they died. Women were bound by one foot and raised aloft in the air by machines, and with their bodies altogether bare and uncovered, presented to all beholders this most shameful, cruel, and inhuman spectacle. Others being bound to the branches and trunks of trees perished. For they drew the stoutest branches together with machines, and bound the limbs of the martyrs to them; and then, allowing the branches to assume their natural position, they tore asunder instantly the limbs of those for whom they contrived this. All these things were done, not for a few days or a short time, but for a long series of years. Sometimes more than ten, at other times above twenty were put to death. Again not less than thirty, then about

sixty, and yet again a hundred men with young children and women, were slain in one day, being condemned to various and diverse torments.

We, also, being on the spot ourselves, have observed large crowds in one day; some suffering decapitation, others torture by fire; so that the murderous sword was blunted, and becoming weak, was broken, and the very executioners grew weary and relieved each other. And we beheld the most wonderful ardor, and the truly divine energy and zeal of those who believed in the Christ of God. For as soon as sentence was pronounced against the first, one after another rushed to the judgment seat, and confessed themselves Christians. And regarding with indifference the terrible things and the multiform tortures, they declared themselves boldly and undauntedly for the religion of the God of the universe. And they received the final sentence of death with joy and laughter and cheerfulness; so that they sang and offered up hymns and thanksgivings to the God of the universe till their very last breath.

Saint Philoromus and Saint Phileas Bishop of Thmuis

These indeed were wonderful; but yet more wonderful were those who, being distinguished for wealth, noble birth, and honor, and for learning and philosophy, held everything secondary to the true religion and to faith in our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ. Such an one was Philoromus, who held a high office under the imperial government at Alexandria, and who administered justice every day, attended by a military guard corresponding to his rank and the Roman dignity. Such also was Phileas, bishop of the church of Thmuis, a man eminent on account of his patriotism and the services rendered by him to his country, and also on account of his philosophical learning. These persons, although a multitude of relatives and other friends besought them, and many in high positions, and even the judge himself entreated them, that they would have compassion on themselves and show mercy to their children and wives, yet were not in the least induced by these things to choose the love of life, and to despise the ordinances of our Saviour concerning confession and denial. But with manly and philosophic minds, or rather with pious and God-loving souls, they persevered against all the threats and insults of the judge; and both of them were beheaded.

Saint Phileas Describes the Persecution

Since we have mentioned Phileas as having a high reputation for secular learning, let him be his own witness in the following extract, in which he shows us who he was, and at the same time describes more accurately than we can the martyrdoms which occurred in his time at Alexandria:

“Having before them all these examples and models and noble tokens which are given us in the Divine and Sacred Scriptures, the blessed martyrs who were with us did not hesitate, but directing the eye of the soul in sincerity toward the God over all,

and having their mind set upon death for religion, they adhered firmly to their calling. For they understood that our Lord Jesus Christ had become man on our account, that he might cut off all sin and furnish us with the means of entrance into eternal life. For He 'did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. . . And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.' (Phil. 2:6-8) Wherefore also being zealous for the greater gifts, the Christ-bearing martyrs endured all trials and all kinds of contrivances for torture; not once only, but some also a second time. And although the guards vied with each other in threatening them in all sorts of ways, not in words only, but in actions, they did not give up their resolution; because 'perfect love casts out fear.' (I John 4:18).

"What words could describe their courage and manliness under every torture? For as liberty to abuse them was given to all that wished, some beat them with clubs, other with rods, others with scourges, yet others with thongs and others with ropes. And the spectacle of the outrages was varied and exhibited great malignity. For some, with their hands bound behind them, were suspended on the stocks, and every member stretched by certain machines. Then the torturers, as commanded, lacerated with instruments their entire bodies; not only their sides, as in the case of murderers, but also their stomachs and knees and cheeks. Others were raised aloft, suspended from the porch by one hand, and endured the most terrible suffering of all, through the distension of their joints and limbs.

"Others were bound face to face to pillars, not resting on their feet, but with the weight of their bodies bearing on their bonds and drawing them tightly. And they endured this, not merely as long as the governor talked with them or was at leisure, but through almost the entire day. For when he passed on to others, he left officers under his authority to watch the first, and observe if any of them, overcome by the tortures, appeared to yield. And he commanded to cast them into chains without mercy, and afterwards when they were at the last gasp to throw them to the ground and drag them away. For he said that they were not to have the least concern for us, but were to think and act as if we no longer existed, our enemies having invented this second mode of torture in addition to the stripes.

"Some, also, after these outrages, were placed on the stocks, and had both their feet stretched over the four holes, so that they were compelled to lie on their backs on the stocks, being unable to keep themselves up on account of the fresh wounds with which their entire bodies were covered as a result of the scourging. Others were thrown on the ground and lay there under the accumulated infliction of tortures, exhibiting to the spectators a more terrible manifestation of severity, as they bore on their bodies the marks of the various and diverse punishments which had been invented.

"As this went on, some died under the tortures, shaming the adversary by their constancy. Others half dead were shut up in prison, and suffering with their agonies,

they died in a few days; but the rest, recovering under the care which they received, gained confidence by time and their long detention in prison. When therefore they were ordered to choose whether they would be released from molestation by touching the polluted sacrifice, and would receive from them the accursed freedom, or refusing to sacrifice, should be condemned to death, they did not hesitate, but went to death cheerfully. For they knew what had been declared before by the Sacred Scriptures. For it is said, 'Whoever sacrifices to any god, save to the Lord only shall be utterly destroyed,' (Ex. 22:20) and, 'You shall have no other gods before me.' (Ex. 20:3)"

Such are the words of the truly philosophical and God-loving martyr, which, before the final sentence, while yet in prison, he addressed to the brethren in his parish, showing them his own circumstances, and at the same time exhorting them to hold fast, even after his approaching death, to the religion of Christ.

Martyrdom of the Patriarch, Bishops and Priests

Of those who suffered through Egypt and Thebais, Peter, bishop of Alexandria, one of the most excellent teachers of Christianity, should first be mentioned; and of the presbyters with him Faustus, Dius and Ammonius, perfect martyrs of Christ; also Hesychius, Pachymius and Theodorus, bishops of Egyptian churches, and beside them many other distinguished persons who are commemorated by the parishes of their country and region.

POWER OF THE EUCHARIST

Blessed Father Bishoi Kamel

'For everytime you eat of this Bread and drink of this cup, you preach my death and confess my resurrection and remember me until I come'¹

What is on the altar is the broken Body of the Lord, and we who are present are invited to partake of this slain and suffering Body when we say, 'As we too commemorate His Holy Passion . . . we offer Thee Thy oblations'¹

The death of the Lord is a power because the word of the 'Cross' to us is the power of God. The slain Body carries within it spiritual powers which are very vital to our lives as believers. That is why everytime we partake of the Body of the Lord, we should believe firmly in the divine power contained in this slain Body.

1 — Power of the Death of the Lord Jesus

This divine power that we have previously received in Baptism, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death . . ." (Rom. 6:4), is renewed everyday in our lives first by repentance and confession, then by partaking of the Body of Jesus that was slain for our sins. Thus, we should always proceed in faith to obtain *the power of the Lord's death* in our bodies, "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies." (2 Cor. 4:10). As for the world, we carry in our lives the slain Body so the world is crucified to us, and we to the world. (Gal. 6:14). This is the first goal of taking Communion, so I obtain from the slain Body of the Lord *the mystery of the power of death*, death to the self and its pride, to people's praises and condemnations, to the sin of judging others, to the weakening of love, to the desires of the flesh, to the world . . . ; then I cry with strength and joy, with all the Church saying, "Amen, Amen, Amen. We preach, O Lord, Thy death . . . "¹

The mystery of the power of dying with Christ differs totally from repression and deprivation. The former is a divine power, the latter is an inner struggle. Repression is accompanied by distress and by a feeling of weakness but *the power of dying with Christ*, is accompanied by strength, victory and joy. Repression is a strife that ends with the destruction of man, but *death with Christ* is the beginning of the life of Christ in us, as one of the contemporary fathers says, "The moment of offering the

Divine Mystery is a marvelous mysterious moment, it is a moment when death and life meet, or when life comes out of death, or when life absorbs death; it is our whole life. The Christian is a person who lives by *the law of the grain of wheat that dies* (John 12:24), according to Christ not according to the world."

My gain from the power of Christ's death depends on acknowledging *the death and corruption that is in all members of my body*. It depends on knowing where my place is during the Divine Liturgy. It depends on discovering that my place in church is in the midst of my fellow men, the adulterers, the sinners and the thieves . . . In reality it is the beginning of finding the slain Christ on the altar and subsequently the beginning of the work of the Sacrament of Communion within me. "I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . ; for when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor. 12:9, 10)

The saints are human to the utmost degree, even more than all other men they are aware of their weakness, abasement, and uselessness as human beings. The marvel comes from the fact that they do not despair because of this, but rather they offer all this to Christ so they may live through Him. It is clear that the saints discovered the death that works in their nature, and turned to God, united with His broken Body, shared in the Lord's death, and realized with Him the power of the death to the world.

2 — Sharing with Christ in the Sacrifice of One's Will

In the Liturgy of St. Gregory, the priest says about the Lord Jesus, "Thou camest as a lamb to the slaughter even to the cross,"; then continues to say for himself, "*I offer to Thee my Lord my free will and record my acts according to Thy words.*" This commune between the priest and the Lord Jesus in the Liturgy reveals to us how to participate in the Liturgy with Christ. The priest here offers himself, his freedom and his actions, to follow Christ Who is led to the slaughter like an obedient lamb, in submission to the will of the Father. Participation with Christ who is led to the slaughter comes with resigning one's freedom to Christ and registering one's actions according to the Gospel's commandments,

"I offer to Thee my free will = Crucifixion of self"

"Record my acts according to Thy words = Following the teachings of the Gospel unto death."

Partaking of the slain Body of Christ on the altar, is communion with the Lord in Gethsemane, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:46). The second power I gain from the Eucharist is the power of sacrificing my own will with Christ Who was led to the slaughter on the altar.

3 — Sharing in Christ's Suffering for Others

When I have been assured that the sacrifice on the altar is offered on behalf of sinners, on behalf of all the world, on behalf of those far away from God Who loved them unto death, on behalf of those who denied Him on the eve of His passion, on

behalf of those who blasphemed against Him, crucified Him, pierced His side while He prayed to the Father to forgive them finding excuses for them saying, "they know not what they do", and on behalf of those who doubted Him, *when I realize that Christ in the body is slain on the altar for the sake of all these, how can I partake of this Body without sharing the Lord's feelings towards them?!*

Oh God, from now on I shall train myself to share with you the feelings towards all those, *so I can partake worthily of Your Body*. Also I shall answer your call to me in Gethsemane, "Watch with me." Lord Jesus, we shall take Your Body and after Supper we shall watch with You at Gethsemane on behalf of the whole world, in the Church, at work, in College, on the train, in places of sin . . . , we shall look and see everyone through your tearful eyes, O Jesus, and through Your Body which was wounded on behalf of all . . . !

Lord, he who partakes of Your Body which was broken for the sake of the world, must share with You the burden of the sufferings of the world.

4 — We Preach the Death of the Lord for Us

This means that the Liturgy is the offering of the Lamb Who died for us. In its final confession, the priest says, ". . . Offered for *salvation and remission of sins*, and eternal life to those who partake of it"¹ We strongly desire to drink of the Blood of Christ in order to be cleansed from our sins. For this we proclaim His death. The Church is the place where the sinners meet the slain Christ to gain forgiveness, so they come out proclaiming the death of the Lord for them saying, "Thou art Christ Who was pierced in the side with the spear on Calvary in Jerusalem for our sake. Thou art the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world. Forgive us our debts, remit our sins, place us at thy right hand."² They also say, "As you have purified the lips of Thy servant the prophet Isaiah when one of the Seraphim took a burning coal with tongs from the altar, put it in his mouth and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven. . .', so also, O Lord, grant us this true burning coal that gives life to the soul, the body, and the spirit (which is the Holy Body and Honored Blood). . ."³ In this sense then do we attend the liturgy to obtain the fiery purification through the burning coal of the Divine Body slain for us.

5 — We Confess Thy Resurrection

To every soul that has experienced the power of death with Christ, God will grant the power of resurrection with life in Christ, "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies." (2 Cor. 4:10). The broken Body on the altar carries within it *the power of resurrection*. No one will taste the power of resurrection except those who have shared the death of the Lord and have received the power of death to the world, "I have been crucified, with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." (Gal. 2:20) *The power of death carries within its folds the power of resurrection. Death to the world,*

is the beginning of our resurrection with Christ. It is impossible for a Christian to proclaim the joy and splendor of resurrection, before proclaiming the power of death with Christ. This is the essence of what we gain in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The mystery of all mysteries in Christ is the meeting of death and life in the Sacraments of Baptism and Repentance, and in the Communion of the slain and resurrected Body of Christ.

6 — Lastly, Remembering the Lord Until He Comes

We think of the coming of Christ, not in words, but by eating His Body and drinking His Blood. The Church lives by Christ, and with Christ, all the time until His coming. With this divine mystery, the Church transcends the limits of time and place. Sustained by the Body of Christ, it lives the same way as it shall live at the time of His second coming. Thus, Communion of the Body of Christ is considered a pledge of eternal life with Him. This is the meaning of the Church waiting through Christ, with Christ, until the coming of the Lord.

My Life's Journey with Christ Through The Holy Eucharist

1 - *To Gethsemane*: where I share with the Lord His sufferings for the world and for my sinful brethren, and where I watch Him for an hour while He is sorrowful even to death, and where I eat His Body and drink His blood and share with Him the cup of my fellow brothers of the human race.

2 - *On the way carrying the cross*: where I am led to the slaughter like a silent lamb and thus offer to Him my free will and share His Body and Blood thus obtaining the strength of sacrificing my will and guiding my actions according to His words.

3 - *To Calvary*: where I gain the power of death on the Cross, and partake of His crucified Body and witness to its power by saying, "I have been crucified with Christ", and witness to the power of the Cross through which "the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal. 6:14)

4 - *I see His Pierced side*: where I drink the Blood which washes me from my sins and cleanses me of all my iniquities and heals my spiritual and bodily ailments.

5 - *I go to the sepulcher*: which I find empty and I preach the power of resurrection whenever I eat of His living and resurrected Body, then the life of Christ will be manifested in my dead body.

6 - *Finally I go out to Bethany*: where I see Him ascending on the clouds, so I eat His Body and live in that scene with my heart drawn to heaven till He comes and takes me with Him on the clouds. Amen.

Translated by Lily Soliman

Notes

1. The Liturgy of St. Basil.
2. The Syrian Prayer of the Fraction in the Coptic Liturgy.
3. Prayer of the Fraction, Liturgy of St. Cyril.

ON WISDOM

John Watson

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.” (Proverbs 9:10) Assertions of this kind are fundamental to the Old Testament teaching about human wisdom (cf. Psalm 111:10 and Proverbs 1:7). At one level it is clear that the Bible uses the term ‘wisdom’ in the common sense of the Concise Oxford Dictionary: “Being wise; possession of experience and knowledge together with the power of applying them critically or practically.”¹ The so-called ‘Wisdom Literature’ of the Bible, which is generally reckoned to include Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus, is partly speculative and complex but perhaps largely similar to other Wisdom Literature in the Ancient World. Amongst the mass of such literature it is appropriate to recall Ancient Egyptian Wisdom which embody traditions and practical morality “intended to assist well-to-do young men to progress in society. Preserved in schoolboy copies, the earliest works are of Ptah-hotep (c. 2400 B.C.), for Kagemni (c. 2400 B.C.) and Marikere (c. 2200 B.C.)”² The principles of virtuous living outlined in Old Testament Wisdom literature is not always distinguishable from the Wisdom of Pharaonic Egypt. It is true that the situation is complex and at times ‘Wisdom’ is a Divine hypostasis (cf. Proverbs 8 and Wisdom 7) which perhaps leads to the use of ‘Wisdom’ as a synonym for the Incarnate Logos though for others ‘Wisdom’ is to be equated with the Third Person of the Holy Trinity (St. Theophilus of Antioch - 2nd Century - “Apology”)³. The present writer intends to refer to experience, insight, knowledge recognizing that these are related to Wisdom and are often part of it. But Wisdom is immeasurably greater than these. It is my intention to convey the greatness of Wisdom.

We may turn first to Origen (c. 185 - c. 254), the great Alexandrian Biblical, spiritual writer, for a gloss on the words which head this note on Wisdom: “No mind that is created has the ability to understand completely by any manner of means, but as it finds some small part of the answers that are sought, it sees other questions to be asked. And if it arrives at those answers, it will again see beyond them to many more questions that they imply must be asked. This is why that wisest Solomon in his contemplation of nature by wisdom said, “I said, ‘I will be wise,’ but wisdom itself was far from me, further than it was. Who will find its profound

depth?" (Ecclesiastes 7:24-25 Septuagint).⁴ Thus we find the Psalmist, Solomon and Origen in his commentary drawing us towards the essential attitude of the seeker after wisdom. It is one of humility. In authentic Christian Theology the intellect abases itself before God and the ineffable mysteries of His Wisdom. The pride of the intellect gives way to humility, and intellectual modesty replaces arrogant human intellectual presumption.

Wisdom prefers those who come through humility and simplicity. The point is well made in *The Life of Antony* by St. Athanasius:

"Antony was also extremely wise. It was a marvel that although he had not learned letters, he was a shrewd and intelligent man. For example, once two Greek philosophers visited him, thinking they would be able to put him to the test. He was in the outer mountain at the time, and knowing what the men were from their appearance, he went out to them and said through an interpreter, 'Why did you go to so much trouble, you philosophers, to visit a foolish man?' When they responded that he was not foolish, but quite wise, he said to them, 'If you came to a foolish man, your toil is superfluous, but if you consider me wise become as I am, for we must imitate what is good. If I had come to you I would have imitated you; but since you came to me, become as I am; for I am a Christian.' Later, others like them encountered him in the outer mountain, thinking they would subject him to ridicule because he had not learned letters. To them Antony said: 'What do you say? Which is first mind or letters? And which is the cause of which - the mind of the letters, or the letters of the mind?' After their reply that the mind is first, and an inventor of the letters, Antony said: 'Now you see that in the person whose mind is sound there is no need for the letters.' This amazed them. They went away marvelling because they had seen such understanding in an untrained man, for he did not have the wild demeanour of someone reared on a mountain and growing old there. Instead he was gracious and civil, and his speech was seasoned with divine salt, so that no one resented him - on the contrary, all who came to him rejoiced over him."⁵

The difference between the wisdom of the worldly wise and the wisdom of Antony, the Father of monks, is expressed in the vivid words of Robert Gregg's translation "his speech was seasoned with divine salt." St. Antony the Great is of course the prototype of the Christian eremetical sage whose spiritual quest is high, the *consortium Divinae naturae*, 'a participation in the Divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4). As Athanasius so beautifully puts it: "Neither from writings, nor from pagan wisdom, nor from some craft was Antony acclaimed, but on account of religion alone."⁶ It is important to acknowledge the role of the Twentieth Coptic Pope, Athanasius himself, in spreading the story of those who had gained 'the heavenly wisdom' by seeking the life of the 'angels' in the desert. We do not impugn the integrity and authenticity of the portrait given by Athanasius if we agree with the many scholars who have shown that "*The Life of Antony*" is similar to other biographies of antiquity whose readers would have recognized the profile of the *sophos* or wise man and

would have noticed the dramatic change of the Ancient Greek ideal of self-sufficiency into the God-possessed sage in Athanasius's protrait.

A modern English scholar, referring to the *Vita Antonii*, has marked that "by 400 Antony was already a hero of the past."⁷ Professor Chadwick is indicating that within a matter of thirty years Athanasius's work was known, not only amongst the Greek-speaking Christian community and the literate Hellenic world but was equally popular amongst Latin Christians in Italy and modern France. The image of the man of wisdom had been set. The image was not simply one of early Christian piety and the imitation of Christ but it was also an image of Coptic Christian Wisdom. This point is far from being made for nationalist reasons since the present writer is not an Egyptian. But Jacques Lacarriere,⁸ in a book which is in other ways quite out of touch, makes a valuable point when he points out that most of the texts we are accustomed to work with are Greek or Latin: The Greek-text *Life of Antony* and the *Historia Lausiaca* of Palladius with the *History of the Monks of Egypt* by Rufinus of Aquileia, both in Greek. The next two important texts, Jerome's *Life of Paul of Thebes* and John Cassian's *Conversations* were written in Latin. The subjects of this work, with their unique desert mentality and wisdom, were most emphatically not the Greek-thinking or Latin-thinking men but Egyptian: Antony, Pachomius, Macarius the Elder, Poemen, Pierius, Serapion, Horus, Paphnutius, Onuphrio, Shenute, Pisentios, and all the great names of early Coptic Christianity were born in Egypt of Egyptian parents. They spoke no Latin and perhaps no Greek, but certainly Coptic, the demotic form of Egyptian traditional language. Their contact with Greeks and Romans was through constant revolt! They belonged to the peasant class of the *fellahin* and their forms of worship and mentality are closer to that of the Galilean fishermen. Copts in 1984 who are lured by the folly of Western pseudo-sophistication ought to return to their authentic roots and its Wisdom. If we were asked to put into one sentence what aspect of Wisdom is present in the wise men listed above, or if we were asked to say what we mean by the Coptic wisdom touched on above, we might say something like this: "The *sophos* portrayed by Athanasius in his life of Antony is wise because he has accepted his finitude." Unlike modern man, the desert monk knows that he is not God! This is why wisdom comes to simple men and not only to those who are educated. Wisdom exists amongst the humble and simple when they accept in a creative way their limitations and their finitude. Thomas Merton,⁹ in his *Wisdom of the Desert Fathers* is making a closely related point when he says that we seek any convenient excuse to break off and give up the difficult task but we read that Abba Ammonas spent fourteen years praying to overcome anger, or rather, more significantly, to be delivered from his anger. We hear also of Abba Serapion, selling his last book, a copy of the Gospels, thus selling "the very words which told him to sell all and give to the poor." This is the folly of authentic wisdom; you will never find wisdom in those who always avoid radical decisions and adjust themselves to the ways of the world. The conformists who have decided to accept the received opinions of society are not wise and to the

extent that the Church, at any time and in any place, conforms to the wisdom of this world it dies. "We need only look at the great figures in whom men of all periods and cultures recognized wisdom, the men who gave new laws to their nations, the teachers of new ways of life for continents, the men who withdrew to the deserts of nature and the deserts of the soul to return with abundance. None of them kept to the middle of the road; they had to find new roads in the wilderness."¹⁰

Wisdom points to an uncomfortable element in Christianity: the continuous tension between our life in the world and the life of the world to come. St. Isaac of Nineveh (c. 700), who was for a short time the Nestorian Bishop of that great city, defines knowledge in the form of a dialogue:

"Question: What is knowledge?

Answer: The perception of eternal life.

Question: And what is eternal life?

Answer: To perceive all things in God. For love comes through understanding, and the knowledge of God is ruler over all desires. To the heart that receives this knowledge every delight that exists on earth is superfluous, for there is nothing that can compare with the delight of the knowledge of God."¹¹

Viewed as victory over death, what St. Isaac calls 'knowledge' is intimately related to our subject of Wisdom. Holy Scripture abounds with examples of the 'saving' character of knowledge or Wisdom:

"The Lord is exalted . . . and he will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is his treasure."

Isaiah 33:5-6

"And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

John 17:3

"So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."

Psalms 90:12

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ . . ."

Ephesians 1:7-9

A cursory examination of a concordance reveals innumerable gobbets pointing to the salvific nature of true Christian insight, knowledge and wisdom. Holy Scripture indicates that the aspiration to Wisdom, or the despising of it, is a matter of spiritual life or death. If we believe truly in the forgiveness of sins, the Resurrection and eternal life, the world will certainly consider us unreasonable and irrelevant. A world full of incredible folly and of lies called 'logic' or 'philosophy' insists that Christians are foolish. Yet the Resurrection convinces us of God's wisdom:

"And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son has not life. I write this to

you who believe in the name of the Son of God, *that you may know* that you have eternal life.”

I John 5:11-13

We know through the experience of faith and through the shared experience of orthodox believers through many centuries, and this knowledge remains our shared experience, particularly in the Holy Mysteries, to this day. But the community of believers, the Church, is on a wonderful journey to Wisdom. There is such wideness and depth to the Wisdom of God that many lives are not enough for it. One of the great Desert Fathers of fourth century Egypt, St. Serapion of the Nile Delta, went on a pilgrimage to Rome where he was told about a famous anchorite, a woman who lived in one room which she never left. St. Serapion, who was a great traveller, was sceptical about her life and went to see her. He asked, “Why are you sitting here?” To this she replied: “I am not sitting, I am on a journey.”¹² In the search for spiritual wisdom we are all nomads. Indeed, it is the present writer’s view, after forty years of hectic and worldwide travel, that travel is spiritually damaging for many modern people and accounts for the superficiality of ecumenical encounters which last for a few days or weeks. In any case, we are on a journey through the inward space of the soul.

These notes on Wisdom, which should be continued, may be concluded by referring to the important observations about Wisdom in the invaluable book “*Release of the Spirit*” by His Holiness Pope Shenouda. Whilst affirming the limitations of human wisdom with God’s affirmation of true wisdom, Pope Shenouda emphasizes the place of faith in the life of Christian Wisdom:¹³

“Once a man with a withered hand came to Jesus Christ, asking to be healed. The Master ordered him to stretch out his hand and at once it became well . . . this man became ignorant in order to be wise. So he ignored human wisdom which does not believe in stretching out the withered hand, or the mountain moving from its place, or in the ability to walk over the water, or in not thinking about tomorrow.

“It is human wisdom that made people put God under the microscope: He, His abilities and His teachings! It is the same wisdom that made some people accept - of the Bible and of the Church laws - what they think is true, and refuse what is not acceptable to their mental logic.

“But God’s children take everything simply and without complications. Lord, do you want us to walk in the Red Sea? We shall walk because you God, must make us a road in it, and so we shall not be drowned. There is a fable that says that the Red Sea did not split when Moses struck it with his stick, but it was split when the first man put his foot into its water. It is just fable, but it has a superior spiritual meaning.”

The contemplation of the divine Wisdom is perhaps more needed in American or European cities than the deserts of the Middle East.

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SAINT JOHN THE SHORT

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Among the many monastic settlements that were established in fourth century Egypt we find three in the area of the western desert south of the lake Mareotis and west of the Nile delta. They are *Nitria*, *Cellia* (the Cells) and *Scete*. Although all three are famous for the monastic spiritual literature that was written about them, only *Scete* has survived to this day. A Coptic tradition says that the area was visited by our Lord during the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt. It entered the history of monasticism when Saint Macarius of Egypt came to it about AD 340. Before his death in 390, there were four congregations of monks in *Scete*, which had by then extended to more than ten miles in each direction. One of these had for its father Saint John the Short who was called the priest of *Sheheet* (the Coptic word for *Scete*).

St. John was born about AD 339 in a town of Upper Egypt. Nothing is known about his early years except that he had an older brother who advised him against going to the desert early in his life in order to pursue a life of ceaseless prayer like the angels. Still John went away, only to return after one week and hear the reproach of his brother.

The character of John must have changed quickly because when he was eighteen he went to *Scete* and he became the disciple of St. Ammoe who proved to be one of the sternest men of the desert.

Life in Scete in the Fourth Century

Life of the monks in *Scete* was then a life of solitude where each monk lived alone in his cell, except during the weekend when he had to participate in the liturgical prayers with all the brethren. Cells were far from each other, sometimes they were several miles apart. There was no community life in *Scete* before the ninth century; nor were there written rules for the monks to follow. This is completely different from the *Pachomian Koinonia* in Upper Egypt, which had walled monasteries and a rigid *Rule* early in the fourth century. This does not mean that the new monk in *Scete* led an easy or a less disciplined life. Training meant long years of discipleship, during which the monk lived in close contact with a spiritual father, who may happen to have only one or two, or as many as several hundred disciples. The disciple loved his father and dreaded him at the same time. Strict obedience was the rule.

For the sake of devoting the whole heart and the whole life to God and to His worship, the first generations of monks had to sacrifice all worldly hope, all desire and all pleasure, however innocent and harmless. The first and most important step for a monk is to leave the world. This means cutting all family ties and owning nothing. In monasticism a life of poverty is superior to a life of good works.

During the weekdays the monk of Scete was not advised to leave his cell. Visiting other monks was prohibited, but a young monk might see his spiritual director when it was necessary. Cells in Scete were either dug inside the rock, or partially built by stone or clay and covered with palm branches. Each had a door, a small window and several shelves. Furniture was simple enough: a mat, both for sleeping and for sitting, sometimes with a sheepskin and a coarse lotus pillow; plaiting instruments and a lot of palm leaves, ropes and strings; few earthen vessels, wooden spoons and a small table; a fireplace and blocks of wood; an oil lamp and an oil vessel.

The monk started his day shortly after midnight. He prayed the office of *matins* till dawn, at which time he began to work in his cell. The commonest work advised was plaiting mats and baskets. While working the monk used to meditate on the psalms or portions of Scripture. For this a bookrack was put in front of him and his eyes followed the Scripture or psalter as he worked with his hands. Few monks spent their time copying books, writing or gardening; the latter was considered a hindrance to meditation and the first two as sources of pride. Work was finished at noon (the sixth hour), when the monk was allowed to have some rest till the ninth hour when he took his meal, the only meal for the day. This consisted of dry bread, moistened with water, and a little salt. The monk never had more than two loaves, half a pound each. Oil was rarely used and cooked meals were eaten only during the *agape* in the weekend. When a gift of fruit or vegetables came to the monastery, it was distributed among the brethren, each received his share in his cell. Sometimes it was given only to the elderly and the sick. The day of the monk ended after singing *verses* in his cell. He was allowed to sleep till midnight, although some preferred to stay awake for meditation.

Other than on Saturdays and Sundays, this daily schedule was not followed during the harvest season which in Egypt usually starts after Easter and remains for most of the *Pentecost*, when the monks went to the country and hired themselves to work in the fields. Some worked without pay, others gave what they got to the poor, but as a whole most returned to the monastery with the new produce of wheat, barley, beans and onions which the monastery kept for the whole year.

The weekend meeting in the church was mandatory upon all monks, unless they were sick. They participated in the daily office and heard the teaching of the father or priest of the monastery. They had the Eucharist on both Saturdays and Sundays followed by an *agape* meal, the only cooked meal and the only meal they shared together. After the Sunday *agape* all the brethren returned quickly and quietly to their cells, each carrying his bread and water for the whole week.

With Saint Ammoe in Scete

The young John arrived at Scete about AD 357, where he became the disciple of St. Ammoe. Ammoe must have been a great saintly figure who knew how to lead his spiritual children through the narrow gate and the strait path. He was the guide for both St. John the Short and St. Bishoi. Most of the incidents mentioned about him in the *Apophthegnata Patrum* reflect the harsh treatment he gave to his disciples. He did not allow them to walk beside him on their way to the church lest they should have irrelevant conversation instead of meditation. For the same reason he did not allow his disciples to stay with him any longer after he gave them the answer to their thoughts. Once he dismissed John, advising him to go to another place. But the young monk remained outside the door of the cell for seven days after which St. Ammoe discovered the sanctity of his disciple.

One of the first jobs given to John was when his master planted a stick in the ground and ordered him to water it daily. He did this for years without any questioning, although he had to carry the water for two miles. After three years the dry stick came to life and even blossomed and bore fruit. The old man carried some of the fruit to the brethren in the church saying, "Take and eat the fruit of obedience." That tree was described as early as AD 402 by Sulpicius Severus, and has been seen by many European pilgrims between 1657 and 1921. The monks called it "the tree of obedience" and Paul Cheneau says in his gigantic work, "Les Saints D' Egypte" (1923) that its trunk had a circumference of about three meters.

Five years after John had come to the desert, St. Ammoe started to suffer from a bad lung disease and he became bed ridden for twelve years. By then he had full confidence in his faithful spiritual son and left for him the care of his cell. He even referred some of his visitors to John to answer their questions. John sat beside the bed of his ailing master for prolonged periods when he had paroxysms of coughing, and not infrequently the sputum fell on John. He endured patiently and silently, without hearing one kind word from his master. Only when he was about to die, he took his hand and committed him to the other elders saying, "This is an angel, and not a man."

Priest of Scete

Before his death (c. AD 374) St. Ammoe addressed John, "My son, when I leave this world, go and stay in the place where you planted the tree, because this tree which has taken root because of your care is a mystery of the souls that will be saved because of you in that place, and it is a constant remembrance of you before God."

After the death of Ammoe, John did not hesitate to follow his will. He made a small cave beside the tree where he embarked upon strict asceticism. His dress was made of palm leaf. He dug an underground room inside the cave in which he spent the whole week fasting and absorbed in ceaseless prayer. Such an angelic life could not pass unnoticed and soon many people loved him and built their caves near his,

trying to imitate him. The wilderness became a city of Christ. Water was far, so they dug a well. Later they built a church, and a new monastery was born.

At some time after 385, St. John was ordained priest, and when St. Paphnutius died, he became the common father of all four congregations of Scete. St. Paphnutius had received the leadership from St. Macarius himself before his death in 390, and he was the head of the four monasteries when St. Cassian visited Egypt.

As the priest of Scete, St. John had great authority. He accepted the new monks, judged and condemned irresponsible monks, put rules and regulations, ordered private fasts, and gave the teaching in the church. He used to sit outside the church and there the monks came to “consult him about their thoughts.” When Arsenius came to Scete (AD 394), he was placed under the guidance of Abba John. It took years to guide Arsenius, the tutor of emperors, in the way of the desert. But John the Short had only one day to reclaim the young Paesia and lead her to a perfect repentance that was for her a shining path to heaven.

During the Divine Liturgy St. John used to behold vividly the consecration of the gifts and their change to the Body and Blood of Christ. The Coptic Synaxarion mentions that he knew the state of the recipients of the Sacrament, as if their hearts were open before his spiritual eye.

Spirituality of John the Short

Abba John likened the saints of God to different trees; each bears its special fruit although all are watered from the same source. Saints differ in their practices, but the same Spirit works in all.

Humility and Meekness

The one virtue for which John the Short was famous was his humility. It was the basis for all his asceticism and his spiritual life. Among his sayings,

“A monk should feel that he is the least of all creation.”

“Humility and the fear of God are above all virtues.”

“Humble yourself to everyone. Do not get angry toward that who thinks he is better than you, for it is from ignorance that a brother raises himself above his brother.”

“Humility is the door which leads into the kingdom.”

An easy exercise he describes for humility is self-accusation; while self-justification is a heavy burden on the soul. Once a brother got angry with him. John asked his forgiveness for Christ’s sake. But the brother refused to forgive him and continued his quarrel. The saint went quietly back to his cell, and because of this incident he fasted three days every week for a whole year during which he was often heard praying in tears with these words, “Lord, forgive me my sins, for I have wounded one of your children.”

St. John would quickly forget any insult, as if it never happened. Once during his early years, some of the elders tried to test him. While he was entering the church

one of them hit him with his fist saying, "Is this the time to come to church, you unclean dwarf. Get out of here." Three of the elders, including St. Ammoe, followed him to his cell. John was sitting there praising God, and his face was shining like that of an angel of the Lord. They tried to apologize for what had happened and offered to accompany him to settle the matter with the elder. John remained silent, and when stressed by his spiritual father he said, "Forgive me, my holy father, because I know nothing about what you say. If something of this sort did really happen, then it must have been arranged by God for the sake of my salvation through the hands of his saints." The amazed elders returned to the church and one of them said, "John has risen above all of us. By his true humility he has all Scete hanging from his little finger." The brethren used to say, "As the earth cannot fall, so it is impossible for Abba John to fall."

Later in his life when he became the spiritual guide for many brethren, he was envied by some of the elders. Seeing him one day sitting surrounded by a number of monks, an elder said, "John, you are like a courtesan who shows her beauty to attract more lovers." Abba John was not moved at all and he kissed the elder saying, "You are quite right, Father." Another time he was sitting in front of the church and the brethren were consulting him about their spiritual problems. One of the jealous elders trying to disparage him said, "John, your vessel is full of poison." "This is very true, Father", replied the man of God, "but what would you say were you also able to see the inside?"

John fled from all occasions of anger. Once he left the harvest and returned to Scete when he heard a brother talking angrily to another. At another time, he left his load of baskets which was carried on a camel, when the camel driver started telling some worldly jokes. Because anger may lead to other sins he said, "Live among your brethren like a dead man who is free of all anger."

John was very patient and kind in his relation to weak monks. An old man came to him several times in one day asking the same question. Every time he forgot the answer; and finally he gave up for fear of overburdening the saint. When John knew this, he said to the old man, "Never hesitate to come to me anytime you want me. If all Scete comes to see me, they will not separate me from the love of Christ." On another occasion he advised a weak brother to stay in his cell and weep for his sins, instead of working as was the rule.

Other Ascetic Disciplines

John the Short was very strict in his asceticism. He used to make long vigils, and when he slept, it was on rocky ground. He never ate or drank to his fill. He said, "Fasting conquers the flesh, more than any other discipline." He also said, "If a king wanted to capture his enemy's city, he would start by cutting off the water and the food. Thus the distressed city would submit. It is the same with the passions of the flesh; they are weakened and controlled by hunger and thirst."

He kept for himself nothing from the wages he had for his work in the harvest. But while other monks gave them to the poor, John brought them back to Scete, saying, "My widows and my orphans are in Scete."

Solitude and Prayer

St. John believed that the work of the monk is to seek the constant presence of God, and in order to reach this he has to keep silence in his cell. He says, "Watching means sitting in the cell and thinking always of God." "Spiritual life," he says, "begins by leaving one's beloved, friends and relatives. This is followed by a life of poverty and deprivation of all things that disturb the mind, not only the worldly goods, but also avoiding all sensory activities such as seeing, hearing and speaking. The senses are the bonds as well as the life of the inner man. Silence is better than all works. Its constant practice quiets the mind, abolishes the will, cuts the remembrance of vain things, and weakens all carnal and spiritual passions. Nothing is better than solitude and silence without which man cannot know himself. Persistence in silence gathers the mind to itself so it awakes to the reception of the light of the Lord, and is able to see its Creator and to know God."

In a busy and noisy world, keeping silence is not an easy art. When Abba John returned from the harvest or after meeting with a brother, he gave himself to prayer, meditation and psalmody till his thoughts got in order. One day there was an argument between the brethren in the church, so he returned to his cell. Before entering it he went around it three times. Later he told some brethren who wondered why he had done this, "I wanted first to drive the sound of that argument out of my ears in order to enter the cell with my mind at rest."

How does the monk spend his time in the cell? In answer St. John says, "Your day should be divided between reading, prayer and work, so that your prayer may be illuminated by reading . . . Give more time to reading than to any other work, for reading gathers the mind when it wanders during prayer." By reading St. John means the meditation on the Scriptures, both the Old and the New Testaments, because the OT teaches, "the glory of God, His works, His justice and His power," and the NT teaches, "the mercy of Christ, His goodness and His grace."

John the Short was so absorbed in the things of God that he sometimes became absent-minded and forgot what he was doing. Once he plaited into one basket the material which he prepared to make two. A brother came to him one night and he was in a great hurry to depart. But so ardent and sweet was their conversation on spiritual things that they continued it till morning. John then accompanied his visitor to bid him farewell, but again they kept talking till midday. Then John took him again to the cell to eat, and finally they really parted.

One day a brother went to get some baskets from the cell of St. John. He knocked several times and each time Abba John came out and heard his request but he forgot all about the brother when he was inside the cell, his mind being fixed on God. Finally, John took him by the hand to where the baskets were and said, "If you want baskets, take what you need, because I am busy now."

Last Days

In AD 407 the Berbers attacked Scete. Those were desert tribes, that originally came from Mauretania, in North Africa, and stationed themselves on the Libyan-Egyptian border, from where they started their attacks on the western Delta, including three raids on Scete between 407 and 444, in which they destroyed all four churches and most cells, and killed a number of monks. Together with many elders and brothers, St. John left Scete just in time before its first devastation. He said he crossed the desert to a place called Scete, a mountainous region because of him. He rock, about one day's travel from the place where St. Antony the Great had lived. A laymen used to visit him every week to attend to his needs. St. John went periodically to an adjacent village to preach the word of God. After two years in that place he became sick. A vivid description of his departure from this world is given by Abba Zachary, the seventh century bishop of Sacha, in his panegyric for the saint:

"As he was lying down at night, unable to sleep because of the severity of his illness, St. Antony, St. Macarius and St. Ammoe, his spiritual father, came to him. They comforted him with the hope of eternal life now ready for him. They said, 'Have strength in the Lord. Be cheerful and prepare yourself for we will come to you on the dawn of Sunday and take you with us to the eternal life, as ordered by God.' Saying this, the saints blessed him and departed.

"On Friday, he sent the God-loving servant to the city on a certain errand; apparently to avoid his presence at the time of the departure of his soul. On holy Sunday, at cock-crow hosts of angels and rows of saints came to take their comrade. Our holy father behold the brilliance of their glory, and their meekness, all filled with spiritual joy and smiles for him; emanating from them was the fragrance of sweet heavenly odors, an earnest of the eternal blessings. Then, in glory and light, appeared the Lord of all. The saint fell upon his face in love and praise. At this hour, on Baba 20, he gave up his spirit in the peace of the Lord, at the age of seventy.

"When the God-loving servant was outside the village, returning to the cave, to our father, he heard the praising of the saints before him. He looked up and he saw the soul of our father in great and wonderful glory among the crowd of saints. He saw amidst them one who was much taller, and shining like the sun; he was followed by many. He longed to know who was this great personality who was leading all that crowd. At this hour, an angel came to him, as ordered by God, and he said to him, 'Those whom you see are the angels and the saints whom God has sent to his servant John in order to assist him in leaving the prison of this toilsome world to have rest in the Paradise of Delight. The great man, luminous with glory, who leads them all is the great Saint Antony . . .'

"When the God-loving servant entered the cave, he found the blessed saint on his knees and face on the ground as if he was worshipping the Lord. A fragrance

as if of perfume emanated from his holy body. The servant knelt upon the holy body, sighed and sobbed . . .

“With the news of the saint’s death spreading, all the villagers gathered in love and complete faithfulness, man and child, and they hurried to the mountain. In bitter tears, they carried him like a kind father and entered with him, to the village. They prepared him for burial while they sang and praised. After the Divine Liturgy and the Offering, they put him in a coffin and buried him close to three other saints: Shoshai, Athanasius the martyr and Jima. His body was a source of healing and salvation for whoever came to him . . .”

The relics of St. John the Short are now kept with those of the three holy Macarii in the Monastery of St. Macarius the Great at Scete.

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DOXOLOGY OF ST. JOHN THE SHORT

You have become a shining star on earth, O my blessed and pure master Abba John.

So that through your humility and your angelic life you had all Scete hanging from your finger like a drop of water.

You disciplined your body with austere ascetic measures, till you came without trouble to the day of judgement.

You became a harbor for salvation. You raised the dead. You cast out the devils. And the sick you healed.

Also you have been worthy to sit down with the Apostles and judge your generation, O my master and father Abba John.

Ask the Lord on our behalf, O my master and father Abba John Kolob, that He may forgive us our sins.

BOOK NOTICES

Coptologia

An International Journal in Coptology and Egyptology, Volume 5.

Edited by F. M. Ishak, Ph. D. Thunder Bay, Ontario: The Society for Coptic and Ancient Egyptian Studies. (Correspondence should be addressed to: Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada P7B 5E1. Attn. Prof. Ishak.) 1984. Pp. 102. \$4.50 (US), \$5.00 (Can.)

The 1984 volume of *Coptologia* includes three articles on St. Cyril of Alexandria: his life and works; his theology; and his spirituality. Other articles deal with Christian origins in Egypt in the first century; Egyptian philosophy and Christianity; the problems of microfilming of Coptic and Arabic manuscripts in Egypt; and the modern Coptic hymnody. Books reviewed are *Les Actes des Martyrs de l'Eglise Copte* by Amélineau; *Desert Pilgrimage* by Wellard; *Copts in Jerusalem* by Meinardus; and *Late Egyptian and Coptic Art* by Cooney.

Antioch and Rome

By Raymond E. Brown, S. S. and John P. Meier. Ramsey, New York: Paulist Press. 1983. Pp. 242. Paper, \$4.95.

Two distinguished Roman Catholic New Testament scholars write about the Christian origins in two of the largest cities of the Roman empire. Neither the church of Antioch nor that of Rome was founded by an apostle, but strangely Peter and Paul played a significant role in both, and the two apostles whose theological ways had parted at Antioch were joined in their final witness to Christ in Rome. Not only does this book shed new light upon the history and the life of the first-century church, but it also gives a new insight into the circumstances of writing the Gospel of St. Matthew, the epistles to the Romans, Hebrews and I Peter and other NT and sub-apostolic writings.

The Orthodox reader may not digest the critical language of the book, nor can he accept the teaching of Peter's authority over the Church as a whole, nor agree with the authors who find elements of 'papal primacy' as early as the first century. Though he may not agree with some of their conclusions, yet there is much he can gain from the rich information they present after many years of ceaseless research.

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