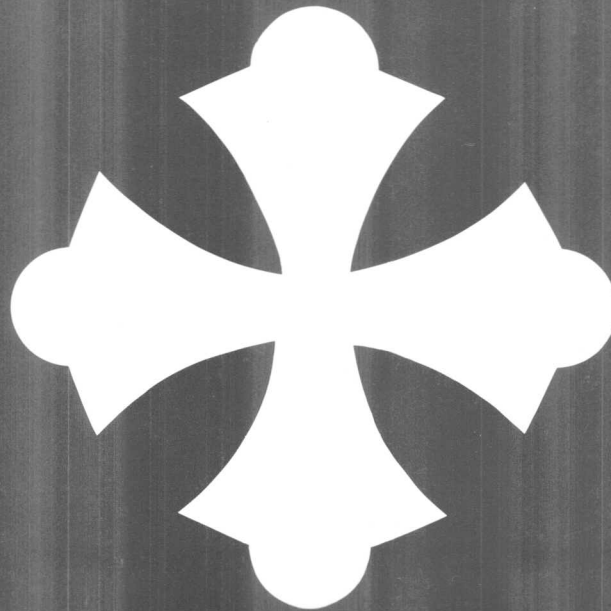


COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

Volume 7, Number 3 Fall 1986

- *SAINT CONSTANTINE OF ASSIUT*
- *SAINTS IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH*
- *THE GOSPEL OF BARNABAS*



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Lebanon, PA

Subscription and Business Address:
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E. Brunswick, NJ 08816

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Post Office Box III3
Lebanon, PA 17042

Subscription Price (1 year)
U.S.A. \$7.00
Canada \$10.00 (Canadian)

Overseas \$10.00

Coptic Church Review is indexed
with abstracts in *Religion Index One:*
Periodicals, American Theological
Library Association, Chicago,
available through BRS (Bibliographic
Retrieval Services), Latham, New
York and DIALOG, Palo Alto,
California.

COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

A Quarterly of Contemporary Patristic Studies
ISSN 0273-3269

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Saint Constantine of Assiut

We are very happy to introduce this issue by the articles: *Saint Constantine of Assiut: Sermons on Saint Athanasius*. The author, *the Rev. James E. Furman*, is well known to the readers through his previous articles on the Nag Hammadi texts and his series on the Cappadocian Fathers. A lot of time and effort by scholars in different places in the world has been spent on the present article. The Rev. Furman says, “In fact, I must say that this was the most demanding article I have ever done and the first that actually introduces something “new”—in this case, restoring a saint to the Church . . . When I read the translations of the sermons of St. Constantine of Assiut, I was thrilled by both his applicability to today and by the fact that I was the first to be in touch with him in a modern language. I believe that this author will be a pleasant discovery for the readers of Coptic Church Review and for many others as well.”

The Rev. Furman tells the fascinating story that led him, through the study of Coptic and its literature, to the discovery of St. Constantine. He then follows with the sketchy information which he could gather about his biography. The body of the article introduces the two sermons on Saint Athanasius which have survived in Sahidic Coptic, and now appear in a living language for the first time.

The picture of one of the codices of the sermons appears on the backcover. It is a 10th century codex from the White Monastery, now preserved in the National Library of Naples (IB8, 396: Cat. zoega n. 217).

The feast day of St. Constantine of Assiut is Amshir 9 (February 16).

Saints in the Orthodox Church

Why do we speak much of saints in the Orthodox Church? Why do we study their lives? What role do they have in the liturgy? Why do their icons fill the churches and homes? Do the saints have power in themselves? Does the veneration of saints have any to share with the adoration and worship due only to God?

These questions are addressed in the article, *Saints in the Orthodox Church*. The answers are given from Scripture, Church Tradition and the writings of the Fathers.

Gospel of Barnabas

Professor Boulos Ayad Ayad discusses the *So-Called Gospel of Barnabas* which was forged by a Moslem around the sixteenth century AD. Dr. Ayad teaches Archaeology and Egyptian Hieroglyphics, Hieratic and Coptic languages at the University of Colorado. He is highly interested in Coptic culture and comparative religion.

Editor

A NEW THEORY AND A NEW COPTIC TRANSLATION
SAINT CONSTANTINE OF ASSIUT:
SERMONS ON SAINT ATHANASIUS

The Rev. James E. Furman

A major academic conference titled “The Roots of Egyptian Christianity” met in Claremont, California, from 19 September to 23 September, 1983. Sponsored by the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, the event brought together scholars from seven countries to consider topics ranging from “The Locus of Earliest Egyptian Christianity” to “New Frontiers in Pachomian Studies.” This was a vigorous sharing of research and reflection in the best tradition of intellectual community.¹

As an observer, I was continually impressed by the capacity of the participants to present theories and to meet challenges with little defensiveness and great openness. This combination of qualities was particularly evident in the case of Dr. Tito Orlandi of the University of Rome. His paper on “The History of Coptic Literature” seemed extremely persuasive yet aroused much debate and disagreement. Orlandi’s responses were unailing in their courtesy and balance.

Motivated by his Claremont lecture, I wrote to Dr. Orlandi in 1985. Would it be possible to discuss his ideas about the nature of Coptic? His reply was “yes” and we had two excellent meetings, one in his office at the Patristic Institute of the Augustinianum, the other at the University of Rome itself. This chapter reflects these conversations as completed by further research.²

Orlandi states his understanding of Coptic clearly and consistently. He does not regard it as the inevitable result toward which the evolution of the language of ancient Egypt moved. Instead, he sees Coptic as the creation of savants, the “intentional result” of a process begun by a group of learned persons seeking a new tool with which to express a cultural and theological choice. As he puts it in the “General Remarks” which introduce his 1983 *Coptic Grammar*, “Coptic was born through the efforts of a circle of sophisticated thinkers who were trying to appropriate something from a culture that was largely foreign.”³

The “something” in question was Christianity as encountered in Greek texts presenting the Aramaic world of Jesus and the rabbinical-evangelical teachings of St. Paul. The new religion came with its literature and Coptic gave this repertoire a “domestic” dimension. Thus it could be said that Coptic was “founded” to give a local voice to an international religion. If so, Coptic was not a “natural” language in its earliest phase.

Orlandi believes that the “createdness” of Coptic is demonstrated by two facts. First, there is no early Coptic literature of “everyday life” although there are many magical texts in which Greek characters transliterate late Egyptian. The groups producing these texts did little more than indicate the workability of a method: they did not give voice to a broadly-based cultural community. Second, the first major corpus in Coptic is Biblical material in which great care is taken to preserve every feature of the original Greek. With regard to indications of breathing and vocal inflection, this is done with such detail that this “Coptic” actually illustrates the Greek pronunciation used in the popular culture of Egypt during the Second and Third Centuries of the Christian Era.

In the course of one discussion, Orlandi commented on Gnostic use of Coptic, a use that came after the pioneer efforts of the Christian community. Orlandi felt that “a special taste for strange tricks” might have led the Gnostics to use the new Christian literary achievement. In this view, the Gnostics liked the idea but were not driven by a stimulus of accuracy in translation that equalled the Christian belief in revelation: their books were the meditations or special teachings of a master, not *vox dei*.

Orlandi referred to the collection of documents found near Nag Hammadi when he wanted to show how the Gnostic method was often at a lower level than the Christian Biblical translation. He pointed to a poor grasp of Greek evidenced in many passages, a confused quality in the Coptic that does not show a sound mastery of its own linguistic rules, and a general mood of mechanical translation rather than one of literary care.

The Nag Hammadi documents were also critiqued from the standpoint of their contents. The Nag Hammadi collection does not represent a “high level” such as might be encountered in the Greek writings of St. Clement of Alexandria: it represents something like a “popular diversion.” As Orlandi put it, Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists were serious threats to the intellectual tradition of the Church; when it was a matter of that which is so abundantly represented at Nag Hammadi, Irenaeus and the others were dealing with something that they could ridicule rather than debate. Of course, it must be recognized that there is a range of presentation at Nag Hammadi: the Sethian material is for a mass audience, while the *Tripartite Tractate*, *The Gospel of Truth*, and *The Gospel of Philip* stand out as works of serious philosophy.

It could be argued that Orlandi’s interpretation of Coptic origins is of great practical importance in the cultural-political sphere. Following the path of Orlandi’s reasoning, one could suggest that Coptic is not a necessary element in an authentically Egyptian Christianity: Arabic could be allowed to replace it without compromising anything other than a classic literary resource. That is, the burden of defending a language would no longer be part of the task of affirming a faith. All the same, it should be noted that Orlandi does agree that Coptic had become the Eryp-

tian language by the Sixth Century and had acquired an entirely new and dominant cultural position within Egypt by the time of the Muslim invasion.

Leaving controversy for other aspects of Orlandi's work, one is struck by his extensive use of modern technology. Those visiting the Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari in search of frayed papyri and crumbling codices will be disappointed. It is a place of crisp efficiency, a well-lighted, gray-painted room where space is defined to a function by masses of desks equipped with viewing monitors and banks of indexed files containing over 30,000 microfiche plates.

A major aspect of Orlandi's work is the production of microfiche editions of both scholarly works and Coptic material from all periods. Thus a scholar need not visit a far-off center to examine a certain item: he can be sent a card for his own projection and viewing.

The University of Rome is of great importance to Orlandi because of its huge computer, one of the largest in Europe. Orlandi affectionately referred to this powerful machine as "our enormous beast." It allows for exchange of electronic tapes between scholars, a most convenient method of sharing large bibliographies as well as transcriptions of ancient literature.

The Rome computer translates Coptic manuscript characters into a standardized script. This allows for more accurate translations and for scholarly discussions based on common texts where handwriting is no longer an insistent part of the task of interpretation. As the material is transcribed, something else is done: a repertoire of recorded usage and document location is developed, creating the basis for a future Coptic concordance. This procedure allows for automatic analysis of word use and changes of associational meaning in large bodies of material from any selected historical range.

Orlandi's scholarly output is large although always characterized by a precise and cautious approach. I was attracted to his edition of two sermons (*encomia*) by a long-forgotten bishop of Assiut (Lycopolis). This response was based on interest in St. Athanasius and the question "What are biographical sources for this hero of orthodoxy?" Clearly, the primary guides are the works of Athanasius himself and the standard histories of Theodoret, Socrates Scholasticus and Sozomen. However, the idea of finding yet another presentation of St. Athanasius was appealing.

Constantine of Assiut is like a figure in an icon: all extraneous detail has disappeared in a humanity transfigured by the divine Presence. The most extended narrative of his life is found in an Arabic translation of the Synaxary used in Upper Egypt.⁴ This Synaxary differs from the one used in Lower Egypt and one of the differences is that Constantine of Assiut is among its commemorations. The modern editor of the text indicates its importance when he writes that "this hagiographic note about St. Constantine of Assiut, unfortunately brief though it is, nonetheless brings the light of day to the life and personality of this Coptic bishop."⁵

The Synaxary tells us nothing about Constantine's birthplace and nationality, and little of his family, noting only that as a youth he entered a monastery where his own

brother (Moses) instructed him in the religious life. Another definite statement in this material is the remark that Constantine was consecrated bishop of Assiut by the Patriarch Damianus (578-607) and was made his “vicar” for Upper Egypt. This reference has helped modern scholarship to propose a probable dating for Constantine: c. 550 - c. 610.

The Synaxary cites Constantine as the author of a great number of sermons and tractates without providing titles or subjects. Nothing is said about Constantine’s training and studies but the Synaxary does associate him with Rufus of Shotep, another bishop remembered for his considerable literary importance (e.g. commentaries on St. Matthew and St. Luke in the allegorical style). Orlandi regards Constantine and Rufus as significant members of a Coptic literary “school” flourishing on the eve of the Muslim invasion.⁶ In any case, Constantine’s modern reputation derives from two encomia on the martyr Claudius, the two encomia on St. Athanasius, and several shorter works surviving only in Arabic.

The Synaxary pictures Constantine as a teaching bishop. It states that he catechized his diocese in opposition to definite influences. He opposed Christian heretics (e.g. the Meletian schism which had its origine in Assiut, c. 307) and fought pagan survivals (e.g. consultation of sorcerers and astrologers — vividly described as “thorns” and “brambles”).

Typically, the Synaxary mentions that Constantine had “many visions” but reports nothing of their content. Its closing indicates that Constantine was buried in his monastery of al-Hanada in the hill country around Assiut.

In the sermons on St. Athanasius, Constantine shows himself to be an author who uses accepted literary formula in a skillful way. Hence, even though “provincial” in one sense, Constantine is cosmopolitan in his style. It is notable that he follows a range of sources with exactitude (e.g. St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Gregory of Nazianzus), indicating relatively wide education within the patristic “canon.”

In his second sermon on the martyr Claudius, Constantine mentions that he and Rufus of Shotep visited a library in Jerusalem in the course of a shared pilgrimage. This brief autobiographical reference is important because it confirms an impression of learning and exposure to the world outside Egypt. It seems reasonable for Orlandi to associate Constantine with the tradition of St. Shenoute and the standards of international (i.e. Greek) patristic culture even though his own writings were probably composed in Coptic.

The sermons on St. Athanasius are transmitted in two Sahidic codices. One codex is in New York’s Pierpont Morgan Library. It is composed of one hundred and forty-eight leaves with an original provenience in the Monastery of St. Michael in the Fayum. It is dated 822/823 in its colophon. The other codex is dismembered, fragments forming part of seven collections ranging from Naples to Ann Arbor. It seems to date from the Tenth Century with an origin in the White Monastery. Both codices are collections of short works centering on ascetic saints and martyrs. Each

collection presents its Biblical material in rather free quotation from the standard Sahidic text.

A comparative "table of contents" clarifies the structure of Constantine's approach. Despite somewhat "folksy" comments about wandering from his subject (e.g. I:19), Constantine has a consistent format.

Sermon I

Prologue: an intellectual challenge to the ignorant

Challenge to congregation (1-11)

Athanasius and Moses as models (12-21)

Three miracles:

Deliverance from a tidal wave (22-28)

Deliverance during persecution (29-36)

A eucharistic experience (37-39)

Excursus: the Times of Athanasius (Council of Nicaea; 40-43)

Conclusion/Literary justification (44-45)

Sermon II

Prologue: a moral challenge to unworthy clergy (1-12)

Three miracles

The woman at the Synod of Tyre (13-15)

Flight from persecutors (16-18)

Arsenius (19-20)

Excursus: Moral applications of the virtues of Athanasius

Pardoning enemies (21-24)

Dishonest merchants (25-27)

Challenge to heretics/Prayers (28-32)

What is a possible time and place for these sermons? Orlandi suggests that they could have been part of an unusually solemn celebration of Egypt's greatest saint, an observance carried out in Assiut c. 590 - c. 600.⁷ A monastic audience might seem probable (especially in the case of the second sermon) but much is said that seems applicable to all classes of believers. I see the sermons as an energetic bishop's morning and evening cathedral preaching on the pattern of St. Basil's *Hexameron*. Regardless of audience, it is clear that Constantine was addressing the "whole person," moving from intellectual problems in the first sermon to moral and social failures in the second. In each case, he shows himself to be an alert pastor, always urging the same theme: "The priesthood of Athanasius can enrich us by its example, if only we can extricate ourselves, each in his own way, from our evil ways" (II:11).

As he develops his first sermon Constantine presents Athanasius as a vital friend, not a "ghost" haunting the memory of Egypt. His point is that there is a duty for all

believers to be able to serve as defenders of the faith. In this call for informed Christian awareness he sounds extremely contemporary:

“Remember those who have been set over you, who have spoken to you the word of God.” Does he say that we should just remember them on their memorial day and simply sing their praises? I think not, for then he would not have added, “Be mindful of how their lives ended,” living yourselves in the same manner. Live in this life, that is, according to their example, when they moved away from earthly pursuits to sojourn in heaven even while they were still in the flesh, despising the flesh and fleshly thoughts, while they yet were of the flesh.

I have often heard people who are afraid of this teaching say, “I? How am I to imitate the faith of the great Athanasius? Am I a Bishop? Is it my place to establish the teachings of the faith? Such a mission has not been entrusted to me! Why I can barely understand the simplest of doctrines even when they have been explained to me time and time again.” This is what I would say to such people.

Their arguments are excuses, not explanations. They do not hold water and we should have no truck with them. In the first place, it is the responsibility of every Christian person to understand how and why he should believe the tenets of the faith. “The Light came into the world,” that we might not remain forever in the night of ignorance. (I:6 - 8a)

Listening to Constantine, one hears much more than the sad rustle of codex leaves: one hears birds chirping in palms, voices loud and happy in street and home, music insistent at feasts and in liturgies — life echoes in the bishop’s phrases, the life that once filled Constantine’s basilica with a congregation in need of both challenge and guidance:

So let them come and listen, all those, who cannot stand wise instruction and talk back to their teachers, I mean the type that go their own immoral way without fear. If a wise brother, mindful of his own end, sees one of those who are without fear and neglect their own salvation and God’s love moves him gently to warn, “Brother, this is no way to conduct yourself. Have you no fear of God . . . Remember what is written, that God is an all-consuming fire. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God, as Scripture says. Do you not know that God will examine our whole lives and demand the reason of every act, every word spoken, every hidden thought? Let go of it, my child, this is not right.”

Then will he pour out his bile in angry and harsh words like these, or perhaps worse, “Just who do you think you are to tell me how I ought to live? I don’t need any of your lessons. Mind your own business, fix your own wagon, preach at somebody else. I am quite happy, thank you. Who

needs you?" It is a wonder he doesn't shudder when in his madness he adds, "I just hope I don't find your type in Hell."

His brother, who was only trying to warn him out of love as best he could, has little he can say except, "At least you know where you're headed, brother. Pardon me for breathing. It's your life." But the other is even colder than before, "It's mine all right," he says, "twenty thousand times over."

I have told you this little story as a warning. Whoever behaves this way and uses abusive language is brother and ally of the one who shoved aside the great Moses and said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us?" He will be under the same charge and get the same punishment, unless he does penance. I will say no more and leave in silence all the complaints and charges we tend to make against those who are concerned for our salvation, how badly we behave towards them, not able even to bear the sight of them. (I:15-18))

Both sermons present miracle stories. Some of these are well-known incidents given new and heightened color, others are unfamiliar. In each case, they are interesting: sometimes for their theology, sometimes for their social implications, always for their indication of world-view and development of Christian tradition.

One of the miracle sections of the first sermon presents Athanasius in Biblical terms that join elements of the stories of Noah and Moses with references to cosmological psalms (e.g. 89:9-10; 93:3-4) and Jeremiah (5:22). The material in this narrative is clearly unfamiliar to the Assiut congregation because of the way that Constantine is obliged to note its liturgical dating and history: this is Alexandrian "exotica."

But after this mighty salvation had been accomplished beyond all expectation, Athanasius returned to his church with all the people. He celebrated a great convocation, since the whole people were with him and the entire city had come together, all praising God for His miraculous salvation. This convocation the Alexandrians used to celebrate every year on that particular day, as a witness to the greatness of God. Athanasius established its observance as a law for all future generations. They continue to observe this day even now in Alexandria; they all come together to make their oblations. They call this convocation "The Day of Terror." For it is a terrible thing indeed for them to hear of the great danger, especially those who saw it with their own eyes. This fear and that great miracle happened on the twenty-seventh day of the month Epip. which is when they have this annual convocation, as I said. (I:27)

The third miracle in the first sermon includes Constantine's only quotation from Tobit (12:7): "It is good to guard the secret of a king, but gloriously to reveal the

works of God.” This story is interesting for its picture of eucharistic piety and liturgical practice:

It happened once, when Athanasius was a fugitive in the desert as a result of the persecutions that the impious Arians repeatedly instigated against him, that he took refuge in a small and very old church, built in the desert, where he intended to say mass and partake of the sacraments. He began in the usual manner of the sacrament by raising the bread above the chalice and pouring the wine into the cup. Then he began to say the customary prayers of the priest. He reached the point where the priest, full of dread, usually bows his head over the altar praying and invoking the Holy Spirit to come upon the bread and cause the wine to become blood, in accordance with the divine commandment. When he had finished that prayer so full of awe and mystery, he started the holy sacrifice itself in the customary manner. Athanasius the priest of God stretched out his holy hands and made the sign over the bread, which became the body. And when he placed his finger on the cup and marked it as the holy blood, his finger was stained with that very hallowed and lifegiving blood. (I:38)

As Orlandi notes, Constantine presents a story about the Council of Nicaea that is typical of Coptic tradition in general although Constantine’s specific version is unique at this point.⁸ The presentation illustrates a fascinating tendency to make spiritual realities quite tangible. It also demonstrates the way in which Coptic tradition had begun to “nationalize” events in general Church history, seeing earlier events through an Egyptian filter:

I would like to add this report also for the praise of our Apostolic saint. This is what happened after the synod of the three hundred eighteen holy fathers and bishops who met at Nicaea, then capital of Bithynia, to combat the insane blasphemies of Arius. Those who were there all agreed in saying, “Again and again we have counted by finger and eye every member of the synod, all those who signed the teaching and the creed; and each time we have their sum to be three hundred nineteen.” The discrepancy came about because each one was persuaded of the presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst, sitting in human form and subscribing to that wonderful creed, which nowadays is sometimes also called a “teaching.”

Among those at Nicaea was Alexander, archbishop of Alexandria, whom Saint Athanasius succeeded in that see, in accordance with heavenly decree. Alexander was in fact the president of that holy Synod. When he had corrected the orthodox faith and returned to Alexandria, he left Athanasius, who was still a deacon, in Asia to receive the signatures of the bishops in confirmation of that holy creed and teaching. (I:40-41)

The second sermon is shorter than the first and tarter. It also covers a different body of Scripture, offering fewer citations (36-49), emphasizing the Psalms and Isaiah where the first sermon took particular interest in Exodus, St. Matthew and Hebrews. Nonetheless, it harmonizes well with the first sermon, adding social application to the earlier call for doctrinal awareness.

The introductory material of this sermon speaks to the clergy; its summation applies to the community in general. Church life is discussed in language that seems to imply that Constantine did not believe that sacramental acts are unaffected by the character of the officiant:

Athanasius was truly a priest of God, clothed in righteousness, as Scripture says, "Your priests shall be clothed in righteousness." Indeed, he who is not clothed, as it is written, in righteousness, is not really priest of the most high God, even if he prides himself in the name of bishop or presbyter or deacon or any of the other orders for that matter. As the holy prophet has said, "Let no one praise me for title or office; these are empty things." Our father Athanasius was clothed in righteousness as his priestly vestment. The clerics of our age, I am compelled to say, clothe themselves in drunkenness and wear a garment of filth. (II:7)

In related passages Constantine is both a shrewd student of behavior and a wounded conscience forced to cry out by what he sees. It is appropriate that this material includes a quotation from the prophet Jeremiah (3:11):

Believe me when I tell you that a faithful man once came to me sadly and said, "If perchance one of us laymen should fall into human error, the clergy, instead of admonishing and correcting him in the words of Scripture and for the sake of other men, rather than strengthen his sin and Cheat the poor man with words like these, 'God is merciful' for it is written, 'Our God is merciful and compassionate.' 'God,' they say, 'will never be harsh towards men.' This they say for no other reason than because of their own notorious greed, although it is their duty, as the Apostle says, to reprove them in all urgency. Thus they tend to confirm him in his troubles, instead of trying to teach him and heal him for what he has done."

Who could say of them that they are colleagues of Athanasius? — these people of whom it is written, "The priest is bemused with wine," and "They have drunk wine in the house of the Lord," and "The priests have scorned my commandments and polluted my holy places," and "The priests have not said, 'where is the Lord?' The keepers of the law have neglected me, the shepherds have lied against me." Have their lips served truth? Can the law be sought on their tongues?

These are painful things to have to say. How long will this drunkenness go on? Is there no end to their sacrilege? We have become the scandal of the people, a nest of birds in a high place. We, to whom the salvation of

others has been entrusted, have become a source of gossip among the laity; they talk against us at their banquets and dinners. They seem righteous in comparison to us, 'though their own ways are worse; as it is written, "Israel has justified herself, because of the faithlessness of Judah." We act this way unmindful of that time when we will be required to give account of ourselves as priests, not as laymen; for it is written, "From those to whom much has been entrusted, more will be demanded." We have no fear of that judgment, which "will begin with the house of God." What will we do, where will we flee in that hour when the judgment of those fearful words over-takes us, "the sharp sword of his tongue?" What will those words be? On that day God will strip them of their vestments; He will tear off their cloak of honor. The Lord of Hosts has planned it, to uncloak the dishonor of the the proud, to ridicule every earthly nobility. If all our wealth will be useless on that day, of what use, Sir, do you think those vestments of yours will be? (II:8-10)

In his first sermon Constantine promised to "leave in silence the attack of the Emperor Constantine . . . I will not mention that disgusting hand of a dead man by which he was libelled, nor the other scurrilous lies brought against that great man" (I:20). However, the second sermon offers these episodes. The stories are found in the classic sources: Constantine does no more than re-tell them in conformity with his habit of making the symbolic become historical. Thus, when Sozomen and Socrates discuss the Council of Tyre, one notes the general working of "a divine influence" and the other refers to "the special providence of God." Constantine is more visual and less conceptual:

Those familiar with the situation reported that when the conspirators asked Arsenius why he had failed them and made an appearance when he did, Arsenius swore to them, "I do not know how I got here; I did not will it. It was as if others had lifted me up and hurled me into the middle of the assembly. They grabbed me by both hands and brought me against my will." Thus even the enemies of truth believed that they must have been angels sent by God to vindicate the truth for Athanasius. So it was that he destroyed his accusers and sang the psalm, "My enemies have been clothed in dishonor, since they gloried over me, and I escaped to righteousness." Such were the things they contrived against the athlete of truth and defender of holiness, Athanasius. (II:20)

The second sermon reflects the tradition that Athanasius was unusually mild and gentle. ". . . he worked for the good of those very people who had threatened him with such mortal dangers! He was a true disciple of Him who commanded, 'Love your enemies; pray for those who persecute you' " (II:21).

Athanasius is evoked as an Egyptian who knew how to be a Christian, a national model for personal holiness. In choosing this approach, as well as by what he says, Constantine shows himself to be aware of his congregation's interests:

We tend to think it enough simply to tolerate an ill word from our brother. It amazes me that we are used to bearing great physical pain — fasting, ascetic denial, abstinence, sleeping on the ground, not bathing — yet we have not the strength to suffer one another's words, a matter that entails no pain at all. Trust me; what I say is true. He can stand strong before God who endures the words of his neighbor, who does not fight with him, or become his enemy, much more than someone who has simply gone for six days without food or water on account of God. For God did not make it a law that we should fast for three days or four, but commanded "Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; pray for those who persecute you; bless those who curse you, to him who strikes your right cheek turn also your left." Are we not in fact doing what pleases us and neglecting God entirely?

I do not deny that bodily deprivations are an important discipline for achieving purity of body. But I tell you this. Unless a humble heart, gentleness, patience, and mutual tolerance cover us — like the goatskins that covered the gold, silver, violet, copper, purple, twice dipped, precious linen, and rams' skins dyed red as blood — then I know well that spiritual fire will burn and consume us and make us a sport for the winds. (II:22-23)

Constantine is quite definite that the eye of the all-seeing Master of the Universe knows the corners and crannies of Assiut as well as it does the far reaches of the cosmos.

God knows every single person who cheats his neighbor, right down to the last penny. The grocer, the wholesaler, the distributor, the public contractor, the banker, the merchant — whoever knowingly cheats his neighbor, however small the amount — whatever good he may have done God will consider of no account; God will strip him of everything and display him naked and of no account.

Will you ask if God is not able perhaps to spare him in the hour of necessity? It is the cheater the prophet had in mind when he cried out to the Lord, "Pick them out like sheep for the slaughter, set them apart for the day of their destruction." As I have said many times, even if he has done some good thing, but has also cheated his neighbor in any way, then that good is lost to him because of the evil he has done his neighbor and he will come before God on the day of his slaughter naked and without mercy. "Strip him of the good he has done, and let him walk naked before thee on the day of slaughter." I have told you before who are guilty of this kind of

wrongdoing. Let him who is prepared to accept the teaching do so. Whoever does not wish to hear it may reject it. He is presumably prepared for the slaughter. (II:26-27)

The second sermon ends with a long and richly-phrased prayer which celebrates Athanasius as one who has given the Egyptian Church a powerful gift: “. . . whatever crop has sprouted from every heresy we have hewn down with the scythe of your divinely inspired teachings.” (II:32) Constantine’s catalogue of heresiarchs is presented as an earlier part of this prayer and ranges from figures long dead (e.g. Arius) to near contemporaries (e.g. Julianus of Halicarnassus, died c. 519). Constantine offers a witness as to what were seen as threats in his time. It is not important to debate whether or not he was “fair” to his opponents in presenting their views: he is significant in that he shows us what were understood to be the issues:

That holy and consubstantial Trinity you never deserted. Until the last breath you fought for it so that even now the mouth of Arian blasphemy is shut in the councils of the church. Unholy indeed are the Arians, who separate God the Word from the substance of His Father, He who is both God and very Son of God, the Only Begotten Word, the Wisdom and Power and Image of God, invisible, yet light of His Glory and Vision of His Strength. Furthermore, the Arians are not the only ones whose mouths we can shut with your words. There have been other transgressors of the Faith, such as those who met at the Council of Chalcedon and dissolved the unity of the whole world when they dared to split the indivisible Word of God, who took on flesh for our salvation by making Him two natures after the union. There are also those who mouth the follies of Mani, Valentinus, Marcion, Apollinarius, and Eutychius, not to mention the perversities of the old man Julianus, which amount to nothing but Manichean fantasies. (II:31)

Constantine of Assiut does not, in the end, present what I looked for when I began to study his sermons on St. Athanasius. He tells us nothing new about the great Archbishop, the apostolic teacher. He does, however, do something important: he introduces us to himself, sharing concerns and methods that are lively and vigorous. Tito Orlandi’s gift, then, is not simply a theory or a set of texts: he has restored a saint to the Church.

FOOTNOTES

1. Seventeen of the twenty-three papers presented at the Claremont Conference have now been published: *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, ed. J. E. Goehring, B.A. Pearson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).
2. My research was aided by the generous cooperation of many: the religious and staff of the Foyer Unitas (Rome); James Goehring and Clayton Jefford of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity; Frank Long (University of California at

San Diego); and Jon Rinnander. The translation of Constantine's sermons is based on Orlandi's Latin version and was prepared especially by Alden Mosshammer of the University of California at San Diego.

3. Tito Orlandi, *Elementi di Grammatica Copto-Saidica* (Rome: C.I.M., 1983), p. 2.
4. Rene-Georges Coquin, "Saint Constantin, Eveque d'Asyut," *Collectanea* (SOC Vol. 16; Cairo: Centro francescano di studi orientali cristiani, 1981) pp. 151-170. The basic introduction to Constantine remains "Constantin, Eveque d'Assiout," Gerard Garitte, in *Coptic Studies in Honor of W. E. Crum* (Boston: Byzantine Institute, 1950), pp. 287-304.
5. Coquin, p. 169
6. Tito Orlandi, "Coptic Literature," *Roots*, pp. 76-77. "Bolletino d' Informazione N. 5" of the Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari (Rome, February, 1984) notes that the Rev. Mark Sheridan is preparing an edition of texts by Rufus of Shotep (p. 18).
7. Tito Orlandi, "Introduzione," *Constantini . . . Encomia in Athanasium Duo* (Louvain: C.S.O., 1974), Vol. II, p. xvii.
8. Orlandi, "Introduzione," Vol. II, p. xviii.

SAINTS IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

Rodolph Yanney, M.D.

There is no text-book or manual of theology in an Orthodox Church, because Orthodoxy is a way of life rather than a doctrine to be studied. Orthodox piety cannot be described in words, but appears in living people. We ‘feel’ the Orthodox life when we enter the church and participate in the liturgy. We get the same feeling when we remember the saints, meditate upon their lives, visit their shrines, embrace their relics or venerate their icons. The same feeling, whether we are among living or departed members, reflects the belief in *One Church*, which is stated in the *creed*. The Western division of the Church into *church militant* and *church triumphant* or into visible and invisible churches, is not taught by the Orthodox. Death does not separate the members of the *One Body*. The unity of all believers, living and departed, is called the *Communion of Saints*. Each time the holy Eucharist is celebrated this communion is reaffirmed and renewed. Not only do we remember the saints, but they also share with us the same Eucharist when the Lord comes with his holy myriads (Jude 14). Theologically speaking, the One Body of Christ is realized in every Eucharist. However, this article of faith has been seen by the carnal eyes of some holy men and women and by the spiritual eyes of many more.

Saints As Examples For Us

Saint Augustine says in his commentary on Psalm 17,

“Why do you fear the hard ways of sufferings and tribulations? Christ Himself passes by. But perhaps you answer, ‘That is He’. The Apostles pass by. But perhaps you answer, ‘They are Apostles.’ I grant it. But answer this now: Many more men pass by. Have you entered into your passion as an old man, fear not death. Are you still young? The young men also pass by who had their lives stretched out before them. Mere boys pass by. There pass also the little girls. How can that way still be rough which has been trodden down by the feet of so many?”

Scriptures teach us to imitate the saints and remember their deeds, whether living or departed,

“Truly, I say to you wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her” (Matt. 26:13).

“Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us” (Phil. 3:17).

“What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me do . . .” (Phil. 4:9).

“ . . . to give you in our conduct an example to imitate” (2 Thess. 3:9).

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith” (Heb. 13:7).

Saints Near Us

We do not take the lives of the saints as dead history which we may read and meditate upon, or hear with wonder and respect. But we believe that they are totally alive and can be present with us in our daily life. This is also a biblical fact.

“He is not God of the dead; but of the living” (Matt. 22:32)

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses . . . let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1).

“But you have come to Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly (*eklesia*) of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:22, 23).

The recently canonized Russian saint, St. John of Kronstadt describes the saints as “lamps and torches burning in God and before God, full of love to their earthly brethren”; and he says, “God’s saints are near to the believing hearts . . . We have not to send for nor wait long for spiritual helpers: the faith of him who prays can place them close to his heart in a moment.” Saint Basil the Great says in the Eulogy of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste,

“How much have you labored in order to find even one person beseeching the Lord? And here there are forty in one voice offering up supplications . . . O choir of saints! O holy order! O steadfast alliance! O sentinels of the generation of men, gracious partakers in our cares, most powerful intercessors! . . .”

For the spiritual eye, the icon of a saint is a window through which it can behold heaven. It is not a picture of the saint during his earthly life, but a reflection of his heavenly life. The Coptic icon does not figure the torments of the saints at the time of their death, nor the methods of their martyrdom, because it demonstrates the life beyond that.

Power of the Saints

The saints do not share in the function of Christ as the One Mediator between God and man. But they are our friends who pray for us and help us while we run our race. God accepted the prayers of Moses, Samuel and Job for others (Ex. 14:1 & 32:11; I Sam. 7:8-10; Job 42:8). Saint Paul asked others to pray for him (1 Thes.

5:25; Heb. 13:15). Besides their prayers, the saints can use the power bestowed on them by God, “He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the nations” (Rev. 2:26). Saint Gregory the Great says, “Since we read in St. John that ‘to all who received him who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God’ (John 1:12), why should we be surprised if those who are the children of God use this power to work signs and wonders? . . . If St. Peter could restore to life by prayer and deprive of life by rebuke, is there any reason to doubt that the saints can perform miracles by their power as well as through their prayers?” Saint John of Damascus asks, “If the shadows, aprons and handkerchiefs of the Apostles healed the sick and drove out evil spirits why cannot we venerate and glorify the icons of the saints?”

Saints in the Liturgy

Almost every day of the year is devoted to the memory of a saint or several saints. However, this is not the memory of one who is dead, because the liturgy will bring the saint alive to us. From the earliest centuries, the Eucharist has been celebrated on the tombs of the martyrs. Many churches have been built on the site of these same tombs.

Commemoration of a saint starts on the evening of his anniversary by special songs in the *Daily Office* and in the *Prayers of Incense*; actually the story of his whole life is chanted in verse form from the book of *antiphonarium*. Except for Sundays, the Scripture readings in the Liturgy of the Word are related to the saint of the day. His biography is read from the Synaxarion before the reading of the Gospel. The Church asks for his prayer before the beginning of the Eucharistic Liturgy. In the *Diptychs* the names of all saints are recited. However, the saint of the day is not mentioned in particular since the Church in the Eucharist does not live anymore on earth, subject to time and space, but in the moment of eternity, with Christ and all His Saints.

The Saints and Christ

A letter from the Church of Smyrna after the martyrdom of St. Polycarp, its Bishop (c. AD 166) addresses itself to the question raised by the Jews of the time who requested the governor to prevent the Christians from obtaining the body of the Saint ‘lest they should abandon the Crucified and worship this fellow.’ The Letter Says,

“ . . . we can never forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of those who are being saved in the entire world, or worship anyone else. For to him, as the Son of God, we offer adoration, but to the martyrs, as disciples and imitators of the Lord, we give the love that they deserve for their unsurpassable devotion to their own King and Teacher. May it be our privilege to be their fellow-members and fellow-disciples.”

The saints have no special merit of their own. St. John of Kronstadt says, “The saints are holy through the Holy Spirit, Who sanctifies them and eternally dwells in them.” According to the Letter to the Hebrews ‘since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses’, we are urged to ‘look to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.’ (Heb. 12:1, 2). The departed saints point toward Christ by their holy life. Their righteousness glorifies Him because they can only ‘become the righteousness of God’ (2 Cor. 5:21). The Russian thinker Sergius Bulgakov says, “This cloud of witnesses does not separate us from Christ, but brings us nearer and unites us to Him.”

However, we do not have to remember the saints and their veneration is not an essential doctrine for salvation. Every simple believer has ‘confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus.’ (Heb. 12:19). But if he ignores the saints, he deprives himself of one means of grace, he loses a great part of the Church heritage, both in doctrine and in spirituality, he denies the work of the Holy Spirit through the centuries, and, as Bulgakov puts it “traverses the way of salvation all alone, . . . without looking for examples and without knowing communion with others.

THE SO-CALLED GOSPEL OF BARNABAS

Boulos Ayad Ayad, Ph.D.

It is obvious that Barnabas, one of the seventy Apostles of Christ, did not write the so-called *Gospel of Barnabas*, although the Muslim author of the book attributed it to Barnabas. This book is considered a Muslim gospel and was written by a Muslim or a Jew who converted to Islam in the fifteenth or sixteenth century A.D.¹ The manuscript was compiled from the four Gospels, the sacred books of the Jews such as the Talmud, Meshna, and Islamic thoughts.

This manuscript prophesied not only about the Prophet of Islam but also offered much of the Islamic teaching. In addition, some sentences are identical to ones in the Koran as well as many interpretations of some chapters of the Koran, which would make it impossible for it to have been written by Barnabas, the Disciple of Christ. We know that the teaching of Islam followed the beginning of Christianity by about six hundred years.

The Koran was proclaimed by the prophet of Islam, Mohammed and the teaching in it applied only to Islam; it had nothing to do with Barnabas or any other human being, Muslim or Christian. It is impossible that the teaching of Islam, which occurs in this book, appeared during the time of Christ and was carried by Barnabas the Apostle. If that had occurred, many scholars would be interested in the importance of the Koran and the message of the prophet of Islam (Mohammed). In all of the Apocryphal or Pseudoapocryphal writings we have found nothing which agrees with the so-called Gospel of Barnabas.²

It is exceedingly clear that many of the paragraphs in the Book of Barnabas are a literal translation of the Koran, or have the same meaning. This bears out our belief that the writer was a Muslim who was familiar with the Koran and the Hadieth of the prophet of Islam, the Islamic tradition and teaching, and the interpretation and commentary on the Koran. Dr. Khalil Sa'adah gives several examples of this in his introduction to the book *Gospel of Barnabas*, which he translated into Arabic in 1908,³ such as the speech of Ibrahim with his father⁴ and the fact that the fall of Satan took place because he did not kneel to Adam. We find this in the book of Barnabas and the Koran in the Chapter of Cos⁵ and the Chapter of El-Hijr.⁶

Some writers believe that the author of this book had a greater familiarity with the Christian books than the Islamic ones,⁷ but this writer does not believe this to be true. I believe the author of this book was very familiar with three religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—and his knowledge of Islam was very extensive. One can tell that this text was written by a Muslim who specialized in Islam religion and who was living in his native country of Italy or Spain.

Barnabas, the Apostle of Christ, wrote one Epistle⁸ and a Gospel,⁹ which are considered apocryphal. His Epistle has the same teaching as that of the New Testament,¹⁰ even though it is treated by the Fathers of the Church as non-canonical. The Gospel of Barnabas has been lost for many years, although it was mentioned by writers in the first four centuries of Christ;¹¹ however, there is no doubt that its teaching was the same as that of the Epistle, which agrees with the Christian creed. In the Epistle Barnabas talked about Jesus the God and the Son of God as well as the death of Christ on the cross and his resurrection from death. It is obvious from the Epistle of Barnabas the Apostle that it is totally different from the so-called Gospel of Barnabas which was written a long time after the appearance of Islam, in the fifteenth century A.D.

The so-called Gospel of Barnabas was not found among the many thousands of copies of the Gospels which were written originally in the classical languages such as Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, Persian, Gothic, Georgian, Nubian, and Arabic.¹² There is no record of any mention of this book by early Christian writers of the East or the West. They did not borrow sentences from it nor did they refer to its contents, especially concerning the prophet of Islam. The Islamic thoughts, which are widespread throughout this book, are never mentioned in any of the Christian or Jewish books, canonical or apocryphal.

The so-called Gospel of Barnabas was written originally in the Italian language in the fifteenth or sixteenth century A.D., or possibly one century earlier, and given the title *The Gospel of Barnabas*. Early in the eighteenth century A.D., a Spanish manuscript bearing the same title was discovered. Its introduction stated that it was translated from the Italian manuscript. It refers to Fra-Marino, the Catholic Monk who found the Italian Gospel of Barnabas in the library of Pope Sixtus V (1585-1590) and stole it while the Pope was napping. After Fra-Marino read this Italian manuscript, he adopted the Islamic religion.¹³

There were very few differences between the Italian and Spanish copies. The Spanish copy, which was in very poor condition and had been lost many years ago, was divided into two hundred and twenty-two chapters and contained four hundred and twenty pages.¹⁴

Concerning the Italian manuscript of the so-called Gospel of Barnabas, this version was found in 1709 by "J. E. Cramer [who] presented the manuscript to the famous connoisseur of Books, Prince Eugene of Savoy. In 1738, along with the library of the Prince, it found its way into Hofbibliothek in Vienna. There it rests."¹⁵

There are many comments written in Arabic in the margins of the Italian manuscripts. Some were strong in their structure and others were very weak, indicating that more than one writer was involved.¹⁶ The Italian manuscript contains two hundred and twenty-two chapters, with each chapter containing some unnumbered sentences. There is a brief summary for some chapters which is used as a heading from Chapters 1 to 27; the rest of the chapters are without any heading.

This book includes some parts of the four Christian Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—but they do not appear in the same order as in the Bible. The author of this book changes the material to agree with the Islamic faith.

The idea of the four Gospels in one book is well known to Christians. The author of the so-called Gospel of Barnabas borrowed it from the Diatessaron which Tatian gathered from the Four Gospels in the second century A.D. Later, in the eleventh century A.D., the book was translated from the Syriac language into Arabic by the great scholar and physician, Abu el-Farag Abdullah Ibn El-Taiyeb.

The Diatessaron includes fifty-five chapters, all exactly as they appeared in the Four Gospels, and totally agreeing with the Gospels. This would indicate that the Four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—which we now have are the same books, unchanged from those read by our ancestors two thousand years ago, in the second century, and by Ibn El-Taiyeb in the eleventh century.

The philologists believed that the Diatessaron was first written in the Syriac language, according to the Syriac Gospels, and then translated into the Greek language in early times.¹⁷

There was no original Arabic manuscript for the Italian text, and no Arab writers or scholars until early in the twentieth century A.D. made allusion to that Book.¹⁸ There is no doubt that the Italian text is the original of the so-called Gospel of Barnabas. Some Muslim writers who stated that this Bible was copied from another Greek or Latin copy¹⁹ simply are not telling the truth. In the times of early Christianity there were no Latin or Greek copies written that spoke about the Prophet of Islam and his teaching.

Others have mentioned that this Bible was translated from Latin into English: “The Latin text was translated into English by Mr. and Mrs. Ragg and was printed at the Clarendon Press in Oxford. It was published by the Oxford University Press in 1907. This English translation mysteriously disappeared from the market. Two copies of this translation are known to exist, one in the British Museum and the other in the Library of the Congress, Washington. The first edition was from a micro-film copy of the book in the Library of the Congress, Washington, which was received through the courtesy of a friend in U.S.A.”²⁰

The above statements are not true for the following reasons:

A. Mr. Lonsdale and Laura Ragg did not translate the text from Latin but from the Modern Italian manuscript into Modern English.

B. There are many copies of this English translation in every country, owned by many thousands of people.

C. This text was translated by Dr. Khalil Sa'adah from the English text into Arabic and was published in 1908 and again in 1958 in Cairo. Thousands of copies in Arabic are available in the libraries of Egypt and are owned by many Egyptians. I also own a copy of the Arabic translations.

The Muslims now have begun to believe that the so-called Gospel of Barnabas is the true Gospel of the Christians. They have quoted different parts of this book in their writings,²¹ used it in their teaching, preaching and discussions, especially in the Middle East, India, and the Asian countries.

Articles pertaining to the so-called Gospel of Barnabas will be published in this bulletin.

References and Notes

1. The Gospel of Barnabas, translated from the English language into Arabic by Dr. Khalil Sa'adah, Cairo, 1908, republished 1958, pp. ya' and kaf.
2. See, *The Lost Books of the Bible and the Forgotten Books of Eden* (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 1-269; *The Other Bible*, ed. Willis Barnstone (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), pp. 1-742.
3. Khalil Sa'adah, *ibid.*, pp. ta' and ya'.
4. *The Koran Interpreted*, trans. A. J. Arberry (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), Chapter 21, The Prophets: 51.
5. *Ibid.*, Chapter 2, The Cow: 33.
6. *Ibid.*, Chapter 15, El-Hijr: 27-32.
7. Khalil Sa'adah, *Ibid.* p. ta'.
8. *The Lost Books of the Bible*, *ibid.*, pp. 145-165.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 287.
10. In the Epistle of Barnabas, Jesus the Son of God is mentioned as follows: "In this therefore brethren, God has manifested his foreknowledge and love for us; because the people which he has purchased to his beloved Son were to believe in sincerity; and therefore he has shown these things to all of us, that we should not run as proselytes to the Jewish law," see *The Lost Books of the Bible*, *ibid.*, Chapter 2:20. Another sentence states: "Wherefore let us give heed unto the last times. For all the time past of our life, and our faith will profit us nothing; unless we continue to hate what is evil, and to withstand the future temptations. So the Son of God tells us; let us resist all iniquity and hate it." *Ibid.*, Chapter 3:10. Other statements mention the Resurrection; note the following example: "But he, that he might abolish death, and make known the resurrection from the dead, was content, as it was necessary, to appear in the flesh." *Ibid.*, Chapter 4:10. Another sentence mentions the Crucifixion: "And why was that which was accursed crowned? Because they shall see Christ in that day having a scarlet gar-

ment about his body; and shall say: Is not this he whom we crucified; having despised him, pierced him, mocked him? Certainly, this is he, who then said, that he was the Son of God.” Ibid., Chapter 6:11. The cross appears in this sentence: “And why was the wool put upon a stick? Because the kingdom of Jesus was founded upon the cross; and therefore they that put their trust in him, shall live for ever.” Ibid., Chapter 7:7.

11. Below is a list of the Apocryphal Pieces mentioned by the early writers in the first four centuries of Christ: The Acts of Andrew; Books under the name of Andrew; The Gospel of Andrew; a Gospel under the name of Apelles; The Gospel According to the Twelve Apostles; The Gospel of Barnabas; The Writings of Bartholomew the Apostle; The Gospel of Bartholomew; The Gospel of Basilides; The Gospel of Cerinthus; The Revelation of Cerinthus; An Epistle of Christ to Peter and Paul; Some other books under the name of Christ; An Epistle of Christ; A Hymn which Christ taught his disciples; The Gospel according to the Egyptians; The Acts of the Apostles, made use of by the Ebionites; The Gospel of the Ebionites; The Gospel of the Encratites; The Gospel of Eve, The Gospel according to the Hebrews, The Book of the Helkesaites; The False Gospel of Hesychius; The Book of James; Books forged and published under the name of James; The Acts of John; Books under the name of John; A Gospel under the name of Jude; A Gospel under the name of Judas Iscariot; The Acts of the Apostles by Leucius; The Acts of the Apostles by Lentitus; The Books of Lentitus; The Acts under the Apostles’ name by Leontius; The Acts of the Apostles by Leuthon; The False Gospels, published by Lucianus; The Acts of the Apostles used by the Manichees; The Gospel of Marcion; Books under the name of Matthew; The Gospel of Matthias; The Traditions of Matthias; A Book under the name of Matthias; The Gospel of Merinthus; The Gospel according to the Nazarenes; The Acts of Paul and Thecla; The Acts of Paul; The Preaching of Paul (and Peter); A Book under the name of Paul; The Revelation of Paul; The Gospel of Perfection; The Acts of Peter; The Doctrine of Peter; The Gospel of Peter; The Judgment of Peter; The Preaching of Peter; The Revelation of Peter; Books under the name of Peter, The Acts of Philip; The Gospel of Philip; The Gospel of Scythianus; The Acts of the Apostles by Seleucus; The Revelation of Stephen; The Gospel of Titan; The Gospel of Thaddaeus; The Catholic Epistle of Themison the Montanist; The Acts of Thomas; The Gospel of Thomas; Books under the name of Thomas; The Gospel of Truth made use of by the Valentinians; The Gospel of Valentinus. See, *The Lost Books of the Bible*, ibid., pp. 287-290.
12. Bruce Manning Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 67-68
13. Khalil Sa’adah, ibid., pp. dal and ha’.
14. Ibid., p. dal.

15. *The Gospel of Barnabas*, ed. and trans. from the Italian manuscript in the Imperial Library at Vienna by Lonsdale and Laura Ragg (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1907; republished by Begum Aisha Bawany Waqf, eighth edition (Pakistan, 1980), p. 274.
16. Khalil Sa'adah, *ibid.*, p. waw.
17. See the Introduction in *The Diatessaron*, the gospel which Tatian compiled from the Four Gospels in the Second Century A.D. and which was then translated from the Syriac language into Arabic by the Arab scholar Dr. Abu El-Farag Abdullah Ibn El-Taiyeb in the eleventh century A.D.
18. Khalil Sa'adah, *ibid.*, p. ta'.
19. *Ibid.*, p. mim.
20. Lonsdale and Laura Ragg. *ibid.*, p. 275.
21. Mahmoud El-Sharqawi, *The Prophets in the Glory Koran* (Arabic) (Cairo, 1970), pp. 257-273.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Spirituality of the Christian East

By Tomas Spidlik, S.J. Translated by Anthony P. Gythiel. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1986. Pp. xii + 473. \$48.95 (hardcover). \$17.95 (paperback).

Father Spidlik, who teaches at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, writes in his introduction, "Up till now all attempts to write a handbook on Eastern spirituality have ended in failure." Yet, he accepted the challenge and wrote this magnificent, though small, book.

The first six chapters deal with the theological topics which form the basis for the study of spiritual life - God, man, world and society.

The next five chapters deal with *praxis*, which has been defined as the practical life for cleansing the affective part of the soul. Starting with *Negative Praxis* (purification from sins, repentance, compunction), he passes through the flight from the world, renunciation of the flesh, spiritual warfare and purification of the passions, and ends in *Positive Praxis* which is the path of virtue.

The last part of the book deals with *theoria*, the other side of the spiritual life, with a chapter on prayer and another on contemplation.

The author follows each subject in its background in Judaism (with emphasis on Philo of Alexandria), Greek philosophy and Scripture, and then in the writings of the Eastern Fathers. Quotations are very frequent, but rather short. The author says in his introduction, "As a prisoner, so to speak, of our constant desire to condense we have too often had to put aside some of the loveliest texts . . ."

Father Spidlik has done a great work and presented to the Eastern churches a real gift in this book. But did he actually succeed where all others have failed? He does not hesitate to give the answer, "If a treatise on spirituality is to be a treatise on the Holy Spirit, any pretense of offering an exhaustive study would manifest nothing less than heresy."

A major deficiency of the book is the limitation of its sources; it depended mainly on the writings of the Fathers. When it comes to spirituality of the Orthodox Church, liturgical life is more important than any writings. The present book has hardly anything to say about the rich eucharistic liturgies of the Christian East, the sacramental liturgies, the prayers of the Daily Office, the liturgical cycle or the

Communion of Saints. These are the elements which constitutes the spiritual life of the whole People of God. The writings of the great masters have not been easily available during centuries of poverty, ignorance and persecution—the lot of most Orthodox churches. Father Spidlik points at this fact in his conclusion.

“By the richness of their ceremonies and chants, Eastern liturgies seek to unveil to human gaze the presence of God within creation. They invite us to enter their churches with their magnificent icons to see ‘heaven on earth.’ ”

However, the book definitely fills a vacuum in the study of Orthodox ascetic and mystical spirituality and in the study of Eastern Church Fathers. By itself it is a fruitful spiritual reading, and it opens the door to long-forgotten horizons in the spiritual life.

The Roots of Egyptian Christianity

Edited by Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. Pp 319. \$39.95 (hardcover)

This is the first volume in a new series, *Studies in Antiquity and Christianity*, planned by the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, in Claremont, California. The seventeen chapters of the book have their basis in papers delivered at a conference in Claremont in September 1983 on Egyptian Christianity.

Part I of the book includes articles about the sources of our knowledge of early Christianity in Egypt (Greek, Coptic and Arabic.) Part II and Part III deal with its historical aspects, including socio-economic and religious backgrounds. Part IV has articles dealing with theological speculation and debate, including Platonism, Arianism and Chalcedonian polemics. Part V deals with monasticism and stresses the new research in Pachomian studies and in St. Shenoute of Atripe.

Most of the articles are scholarly, with a lot of theories and speculations. As an example, the two articles on Pachomian monasticism reach different conclusions regarding its relation to the Nag Hammadi library. The book is not intended for the ordinary reader who wants solid historical facts and traditional material. Every page gives witness to the fact that more work is needed in the field of early Egyptian Christianity, or in the words of the prominent Papyrologist Colin Roberts with which one of the papers are introduced,

“The obscurity that veils the early history of the Church in Egypt and that does not lift until the beginning of the third century constitutes a conspicuous challenge to the historian of primitive Christianity.”

Saint Gregory Nazianzen: Selected Poems

Translated with an Introduction by Fr. John McGuckin CP. SLG PRESS (Convent of

the Incarnation, Fairacres, Oxford OX4 1TB England) \$2.00 including postage and packing. pp. 24 paper.

A distinguished English theologian, now retired, once taught me how to read some Patristic Texts. He stopped suddenly one day, removed his spectacles and sat deadly still. I was quite worried. Then he said, "I wish that I had lived then, when all this really mattered." He was a man of great Evangelical piety and devotion but he had captured the emptiness, meaninglessness and despair which must overtake every theologian today. I meet many young people, and many older people, for whom the utterances of religion have no meaning whatever.

Fr. McGuckin, a priest of the Passionist Congregation, tells us in his Introduction that even the great Coptic saint Athanasius the Apostolic complained that the Alexandrian dockers were walking about singing theological propaganda - Arian, of course - and that a contemporary of Gregory Nazianzen, St. Gregory of Nyssa, recounts a sour elaboration of the same subject: "Ask for a shilling and you will be told that the Father differs from the Son since he is unoriginate. Ask the price of a loaf and they will tell you the Father is greater and the Son subject to him. Ask if your bath is ready and they reply the Son is made out of nothing!" It is all a far cry from London or Chicago - or Cairo for that matter! Who cares? Modern Theology has given its readers a theological hernia in the attempt to lift what cannot be lifted; a mass of words about words about words.

Saint Gregory Nazianzen lived in a time when Theology was of interest but even this most prolific theologian found that the poetic expression of Theology was an invaluable form of instruction. He also showed that Christians were as cultured and creative as the Greek pagans. There is no complete critical edition of St. Gregory's poetry. This selection of twenty poems is, oddly enough, one of the largest in the English language. It is of great interest to anyone who wishes to relive the formative years of Orthodoxy and, indeed, wishes to be a conservationist of authentic Christianity.

The poems clash with the Arian and Apollinarian heresies and only the most naive reader will think that these heresies are dead; if they are dead in America come to England!

The great dogmatic poems may be the most important in this collection. But for this reader, at the end of another tiring day in this sad and often evil world, there is nothing better to go to bed with than the exquisite little evening poem from one of the greatest theologians of the whole of Salvation's History:

"I deceived you, Word of God, and very truth,
when I consecrated this day to you.
Now night comes upon me
and my own light is not undimmed.

This I prayed over and foresaw
but in part my feet have stumbled,
and on me darkness fell,
that hater of salvation.
Rekindle my light, O Christ,
and shine on me again."

This is the vision of one of the Fathers as a humble, old man of prayer. As Fr. McGuckin writes in another connection it is "like a window momentarily opened on a lost and distant world." It is most devoutly to be wished that this little volume will find its way into the hands of many Christians in our time for here is the heart of a world which must not be lost and is as close as breath itself.

Many readers will be grateful to Fr. McGuckin for the Select Bibliography given at the end of the text, the 57 notes on the poems and the excellent Introduction which places the poetry in the historical context of theological controversies which are still of importance to Coptic Orthodox Christians. This spirited, cultured defence of Nicene Orthodoxy has not faded with the passing of the centuries and it is a tribute to the SLG Press, a small enclosed press run by Anglicanism's finest enclosed religious house, that we have another invaluable text in our hands, linking us with the Faithful of another age and calling us to the Orthodox Faith of Nicaea in these unbelieving and heretical times.

*Upper Walmer
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John Watson

Jesus Through the Centuries

By Jaroslav Pelikan. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press. Pp. 258.

' "Jesus of Nazareth", Prof. Pelikan begins his book, "has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for twenty centuries." With this idea "Jesus Through the Centuries" embarks on a difficult task to trace the influence of Christ in the world. To give the author credit, this is not the simplest of goals; the idea of Christ to the secular world alone could fill many volumes. Prof. Pelikan must be given a lot of credit for trying to summarize the historical influence of Jesus in two-hundred and fifty-eight pages.

The first chapter, entitled "The Rabbi" discusses how Christ related to the Hebrew people under the domination of the Roman empire. Unfortunately, the Old Testament references (such as Isaiah) to the promise of the Messiah are hardly touched upon. In later chapters, he mentions the Christianization of the Roman empire, although the three ecumenical councils are fleetingly discussed. In another chapter ("The True Image"), Prof. Pelikan covers the role of the Byzantine empire

and how it portrayed Christ in art. Here, the iconoclastic controversy of the eighth century assumes a central role.

As he moves in the middle ages of Europe, the author reaches familiar ground. Christian mysticism and Francis of Assisi receive treatment in this section.

The most profound part of the book deals with the renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Western Europe. This chapter ("The Universal Man") refutes the common scholastic idea that the renaissance was "a naturalistic revolt against . . . traditional and medieval ideas of Christ . . ." Instead, Prof. Pelikan points out how this time was dominated by the pursuit of "Sacred Philology", an attempt by many theologians to recover the beauty of the gospel by tracing it back to its original source. Thus emerged the publication of Erasmus' Greek New Testament which would serve as the basis for Luther's German translation and the King James Bible.

Toward the close of the book, Prof. Pelikan examines both the rationalism of the eighteenth century and the romantic views of Christ in the nineteenth century. Rationalism gave birth to Edward Gibbon's armchair attitudes toward historic Christianity. The best romanticism could offer was Ralph Waldo Emerson." "The rationalism of the Enlightenment had dethroned superstition only to enthrone banality." Although romanticism attempted to champion Jesus as "the poet of the spirit," it also distorted the central elements of Christian tradition.

Prof. Pelikan shows many of the strengths and weaknesses of Christian Churches today. On one hand, "Christ the Liberator" was the driving force behind both Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mohatmas Ghandi. Yet, "The Man who Belongs to the World" chapter shows the danger of too much cooperation between Christians and non-christians which threatens to compromise the central teaching of the Church. He quotes from a 1932 report on missionaries by the Laity of "seven major protestant denominations" which recommends that the aim of Christian missionaries should no longer be evangelization. Why then bother sending any missionaries at all?

"*Jesus Through The Centuries*" is a concise, but interesting look at the influence of the Messiah in the world. However, the book assumes a secular approach which is its major weakness.

St. Louis, Missouri

Tim Mayer

The Copts Since The Arab Invasion: Strangers In Their Land.

By Shawky F. Karas Jersey City, NJ: The American Coptic Association (P.O. Box 9119 GLS, Jersey City, NJ 07304). 1985, Pp. 285. Paperback, \$10.00

This is the first book to be written by an immigrant Copt about the plight of Egyptian Christians. The author has a firsthand knowledge of the subject he is dealing with. In his early years he lived in Upper Egypt where there is a high concentration

of Copts and he served as a vice president of a Coptic youth organization. He noticed the agony, frustration and sometimes threats of annihilation to his people. He is the co-founder of the American Coptic Association in 1974 and has been its president since that date.

The book is composed of two parts. Part I is the smaller part and it deals with *History, Traditions and Beliefs of the Coptic Church*. It surveys, in brief, its history since the Apostolic time, its liturgy and its sacraments. A long chapter deals with the contribution of the Coptic Church to universal Christianity in theology, doctrine, spirituality, mission and art.

Part II which is the main part of the book deals with the history of the Copts in the twentieth century, with emphasis on their present conditions and the religious suppression, injustice and discrimination under which they live. The rich and well-documented material about the state of the Copts before the 1952 military revolution and their state during the reigns of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak is difficult to find elsewhere. Many of the readers will be shocked by the racist policies of different Egyptian rulers toward the Copts, while at the same time they appear to the world as champions of freedom, peace and justice.

The book is definitely a bargain at this price and no one who studies the modern history of Egypt or of the Coptic Church can afford to miss reading it.

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