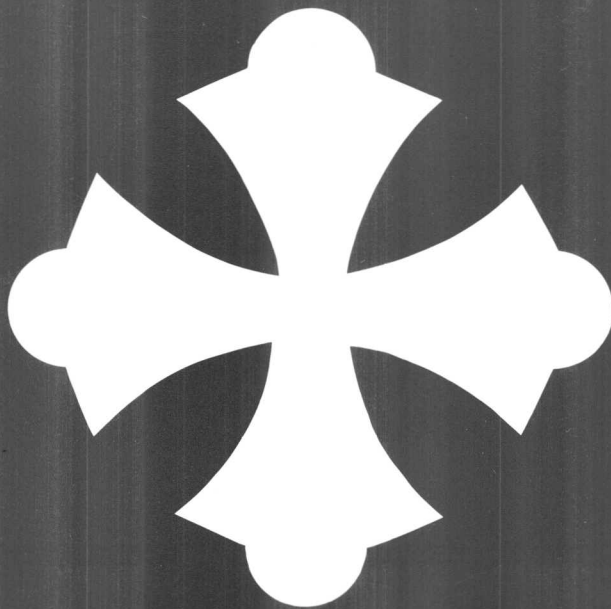


COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

Volume 7, Number 4 Winter 1986

- *SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA*
- *A RUSSIAN ORTHODOX AMONGST
THE COPTS*
- *CHRISTOLOGY OF THE GOSPEL OF
BARNABAS*



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

In this issue *the Rev. James Furman* (now Rector, St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Honolulu, Hawaii) concludes his series on the life and works of the Cappadocian Fathers. "Writing it has not been fun!" he says, "***Saint Gregory of Nyssa*** is far too demanding and subtle for any reaction less than amazement and contemplation. Indeed, his guidance to contemplation and growth in prayer is the most applicable guidance any of us can have in this increasingly troubled days of life in this world." The Coptic Church celebrates the feast day of St. Gregory of Nyssa on Tubah 21 (January 29; January 30 in leap years).

In ***A Russian Orthodox Amongst the Copts***, *Dr. John Watson* gives an account of a very important and long forgotten chapter in the ecumenical relations between the Coptic and Russian Orthodox Churches. Father Watson is well-known for his frequent contributions in this journal and others in Europe and America. He writes mostly about Patristic and Ecumenical issues. He edits *Codex: The Journal of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in Islamic Lands*.

Christ in the So-called Gospel of Barnabas is the second article in a series on this false gospel. The author, *Dr. Boulos Ayad Ayad*, teaches Archaeology and Egyptian Languages at the University of Colorado.

Editor

CLOSING THE CAPPADOCIAN CIRCLE: SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA

The Rev. James E. Furman

The phrase “His Master’s Voice” accompanies a picture of the mythical dog Nipper listening to a record being played on a Victrola phonograph. Something of the imagery of this trademark has long been associated with St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-395), the third of the Cappadocian Fathers. That is, he was valued as one who heard and shared the theology developed by St. Basil the Great, not studied as a creative figure in his own right. In this understanding it was easy to ask: “Why study the successor when the pioneer is the more important?” Moreover, Gregory’s work came to be questioned as too Origenistic by Byzantine orthodoxy and was neglected. Finally, there were practical obstacles: “That none of the treatises of St. Gregory of Nyssa has hitherto been translated into English . . . may be partly due to the imperfections, both in number and quality of the manuscripts . . .”¹ Accordingly, only one of the works of St. Gregory was translated before he was included in the *Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (1892). Even then, a major work was excluded: the *Life of Moses* did not have an English debut until 1961. Today, however, St. Gregory of Nyssa is given steadily larger attention as an important contributor to Christian civilization.

Education

Gregory of Nyssa did not write an autobiography nor did he have a devoted biographer. As a result, we see him in terms of flickering light and persistent shadow; even the exact place and year of his birth are not definitely known. Nonetheless, his early years are not unimportant. His writings frequently insist that the strongest influences on his life came from Basil and Macrina, his brother and sister. Like the other Cappadocian Fathers, Gregory is proud of his province and even preserves a local tradition not mentioned by either Basil or Gregory of Nazianzus: “So too the people of Mesopotamia, though they had among them wealthy satraps, preferred Thomas above them all to the presidency of their church . . . and we Cappadocians, the centurion, who at the Cross acknowledged the Godhead of the Lord . . .”²

Unlike Basil, Gregory did not travel abroad to the major centers of traditional learning. He was educated in Cappadocia. When Basil returned from his studies, Gregory was one of his students (c. 356/357). Gregory makes this point in the course of writing to Libanius (314-394), one of his brother's teachers at Athens: "Basil . . . was your disciple, but my father and teacher . . . Basil was the author of our oratory . . . If our attainments are scanty, so is the water in a jar; still it comes from the Nile."³

Gregory is writing in conventional style: exaggerating to make a point. The range of seasoned mystery in Gregory's writings indicates that Basil provided "polishing" rather than introduction: the local savants had already done fine work with a capable pupil.

Gregory had an excellent grasp of the high culture of his time. He shows himself aware of the best in literature, indicating careful reading of Homer, the Greek poets, and much of Plato (e.g. *The Republic*, *Phaedo*, *Timaeus*, *The Symposium*).⁴ In some of his anti-heretical work it is clear that he combines use of Aristotle's logic with Plato's love of symbolic stories, coordinating precise analysis with colorful imagery. Like other thinkers of his time, he is also indebted to the Stoics for elements of moral understanding and cosmology. Finally, Plotinus (205-270) seems to have shaped his general conception of personal spiritual life as a process of contemplation.

The use of so much pagan material could have made Gregory's teaching only a synthesis of non-Christian influences. However, this is not the case because of both his intellectual independence and his love of Scripture. A passage in *On the Soul and the Resurrection* defines his stance:

If secular philosophy, which treats these subjects technically, were able to reveal the truth to us it would be strange for us to propose a discussion about the soul. For the secular philosopher's speculation about the soul proceeds freely in accordance with what appears to be so, but we do not have this freedom to say whatever we wish about it since we rely on Holy Scripture as a rule of dogma and as law. Therefore, we necessarily accept only what lies within the scope of what is written. Consequently, we disregard the Platonic chariot and the horses yoked to it . . . and all the details with which Plato sets forth symbolically his philosophy of the soul. Nor do we care what the philosopher after him said, the one, who, after technically inquiring into phenomena and the evidence at hand, declared that his investigations proved the soul to be mortal. Rejecting all those before and after him in time, those who have written in prose and poetry, we base our argument on the inspired Scripture which decrees that there is nothing in the soul which does not reflect the divine nature.⁵

His hours of study and the variety of his sources did not make Gregory a Greek philosopher. I believe that it is correct to say that "Gregory is not a philosopher in the sense that he engages with philosophical questions, only in the sense that as a

theologian he draws eclectically from philosophy in order to systematize his theological insights.”⁶

The School of Alexandria is Gregory’s most obvious Christian source. That is, Gregory was shaped by Origen. As William Moore noted, “Gregory saw, where the Church had not spoken, with the same eyes as Origen: he uses the same keys as he did for the problems which Scripture has not solved; he uses the same great weapon of allegory in making the letter of Scripture give up the spiritual treasures. It could not have been otherwise when the whole Christian religion, which Gregory was called upon to defend as a philosophy, had never before been systematically so defended but by Origen; and this task, the same for both, was presented to the same type of mind, in the same intellectual atmosphere.”⁷

Gregory does not follow Origen in all things, however. He rejects and attacks the idea of the pre-existence of the soul. Again, Gregory sees the body not as the consequence of sin but as the necessary tool which the Holy Spirit uses to work in the world. Most importantly, Gregory moves beyond Origen in the area of Trinitarian teaching, resolving earlier tensions of believing in a divine Triad by emphasizing the simultaneous involvement of the living dimensions of God.

Conversion

Gregory was always a scholar; he was not always a saint. There is evidence that he experienced a religious crisis that redirected his life, bringing him to a clearer and more institutional expression of faith. This period of transition is interpreted in different ways and with varying arrangements of causes and effects. My view is conjectural, but I believe that it is coherent and in harmony with an important letter from Gregory of Nazianzus to Gregory of Nyssa.

Some of my suggestions are chronological, others psychological. First, one should not always abbreviate Gregory’s environment by referring to his “devout family.” They were devout but they were also individuals, with degrees and styles of Christianity. Gregory’s father practiced a pagan profession. His mother did not adopt an ascetic style of life until she had been a widow for some time. Again, Basil himself had a spiritual-vocational crisis and not all of the other brothers and sisters became clergy or nuns.

Was Gregory’s studious early life simply “learning for the sake of learning?” Gregory does not seem to have thought so. He treats learning as a utility to be used (Letter XI). In other words, Gregory is not a bookish recluse pulled onto a crowded stage: he is a student who continued his research even when participating in complex political and ecclesiastical intrigue.

I suggest that Gregory of Nyssa followed his father’s model at first, teaching rhetoric until the time of the Emperor Julian’s edict prohibiting Christians from using the pagan classics for the instruction of youth (361). With the old curriculum withdrawn, Gregory would have to face his first major challenge: What and how to teach?

His famous use of Platonic dialogue form in *On the Soul* may not have been his first effort to express Christian faith in Classical idiom. Basil was a friend of Apollinarius of Laodicea (310-390), a man noted for producing "Christian Classics": the Psalter in Homeric hexameter, comedies in the style of Menander, lyrics like those of Pindar but presenting Biblical history, and — most importantly — prose renderings of the gospels and epistles as Platonic dialogues. This type of response to Julian's discrimination could not have been either unparalleled in general or ignored in particular by a gifted man in a similar situation.

Gregory's baptism should be connected with this period, Julian's regulations being the external equivalent of the internal motivation described in *On the Forty Martyrs*. Canon Venables summarized Gregory's narrative and I quote his presentation:

The service in honor of the martyrs was held in his mother's garden, and lasted all through the night. But it had few attractions for the young student, who wearied with his journey, threw himself down in an arbour and fell asleep. His mind, however, was not altogether at ease, and as he slept he seemed to be seeking to enter the garden, the approach to which was barred by the martyrs, who beat him with their rods, and would have excluded him altogether but for the intercession of one of their band. On awaking from his dream, full of remorse for the dishonour he had done to these holy men, he hastened to the urn which enshrined their ashes and bedewed it with bitter tears, beseeching God to be propitious to him, and the sainted soldiers to forgive the slight he had shewn them . . .⁸

This event was a spark that ignited well-prepared kindling. "Pagan work" was put aside and Gregory became a church reader (anagnostes). As such, he was only a lector, not an interpreter or preacher. Some sort of frustration at what had been given up may have been compounded by desire for what was not yet granted by the Church. In any case, the flame lowered, the fire cooled. There was a reaction, a time of Christian retreat in which Gregory returned to rhetoric.

Family and friends criticized his decision. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote a particularly forceful letter. The first section states the problem:

There is one good point in my character, and I will boast myself of one point out of many. I am equally vexed with myself and my friends over a bad plan. Since, then, all are friends and kinsfolk who live according to God, and walk by the same Gospel, why should you not hear from me in plain words what all men are saying in whispers? They do not approve of your inglorious glory . . . and your gradual descent to the lower life, and your ambition, the worst of demons, according to Euripides. For what has happened to you, O wisest of men, and for what do you condemn yourself that you have cast away the sacred and delightful books which you used to read to the people (do not be ashamed to hear this), or have hung them up over the chimney, as men do in winter with rudders and hoes, and have ap-

plied yourself to salt and bitter ones, and preferred to be called a Professor of Rhetoric rather than of Christianity?⁹

The central section of this letter applies best if Gregory of Nyssa were returning to rhetoric rather than practicing it for the first time, “backsliding” rather than creating a new career:

And do not say to me in proud rhetorical style, “What, was I not a Christian when I practised rhetoric? Was I not a believer when I was engaged among the boys?” And perhaps you will call God to witness. No, my friend, not as thoroughly as you ought to have been, even if I grant it to you in part. What of the offence to others given by your present employment—to others who are naturally prone to evil—and of the opportunity afforded them to both think and speak the worst of you? Falsely, I grant, but where was the necessity?

Conversion was soon completed. Gregory of Nyssa entered his brother’s religious community on the Iris River. Thus, it is at the end of a period of great strain and struggle that Gregory wrote his first book, his *On Virginity*. The book is public “atonement” for earlier wavering, a comment on Christian commitment in general as much as a plea for a certain life-style. Gregory’s ascetic works are all intended for members of religious communities and are not “practical guides” for the lay person in the world of secular demands and relationships.

Bishop

It was in the context of Basil’s monastery that Gregory devoted himself to the study of Scripture and to Origen. This period of re-education ended in 372 when he was drawn into Basil’s “power politics” and agreed to become Bishop of Nyssa. Nyssa was a country town some distance northwest of Nazianzus and Gregory found it unpleasant: “. . . be well assured, we have been deeply, deeply distressed by the passions and spite of the people here, and their ways; . . . they are always plotting and inventing something spiteful, and a fresh mischief is congealed on the top of that which has been wrought before . . .”¹⁰

Seasoned as a scholar, Gregory was new to Christian conflict. He was soon blasted by the storm circling Basil and the Nicene Theology. His own orthodoxy alienated the Arians and brought him the potent opposition of the emperor himself (Valens; reigned 364-378).

A charge of irregular ordination to the episcopate was followed by accusations of embezzlement. Basil attempted to protect his brother but in the end Gregory was deposed and banished from Cappadocia. Years followed in which Gregory moved from monastery to monastery, followed by malice, accompanied by ill health.

Writings and final years

Some of Gregory’s major dogmatic works come from this time. They include an important letter to *Ablabius*, a younger bishop (375). In this work, Gregory gives

classic expression to the Christian understanding of God as three Persons and one Substance. He writes that:

. . . the nature is one, united in itself, a unit completely indivisible, which is neither increased by addition nor diminished by subtraction, being and remaining essentially one, inseparable even when appearing in plurality, continuous and entire, and not divided by the individuals who share in it.¹¹
. . . the significance attaching to divine names lies either in their forbidding wrong conceptions of the divine nature or in their teaching right ones. We perceive, then, the varied operations of the transcendent power, and fit our way of speaking of him to each of the operations known to us . . . every operation which extends from God to creation and is designated according to our differing conceptions of it have its origin in the Father, proceed through the Son, and reach its completion by the Holy Spirit . . . there is one motion and disposition of the good will which proceeds from the Father, through the Son, to the Spirit. For we do not call those who produce a single life three life-givers . . . the principle of the overseeing and beholding power is a unity in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It issues from the Father, as from a spring. It is actualized by the Son, and its grace is perfected by the power of the Holy Spirit. No activity is distinguished among the Persons, as if it were brought to completion individually by each of them or separately apart from their joint supervision. Rather is all providence, care and direction of everything, whether in the sensible creation or of heavenly nature, one and not three. The preservation of what exists, the rectifying of what is amiss, the instruction of what is set right, is directed by the Holy Trinity.¹²

Gregory's achievement was momentous: he gave authoritative voice to a description of how there is Tri-unity rather than tri-deity.

After the emperor's death in battle, the new ruler (Gratian; reigned 378-383) allowed all displaced orthodox bishops to return to their dioceses. Gregory seems to have been amazed by the warm welcome that he received at Nyssa:

. . . all the road was full of people, some coming to meet us, and others escorting us, mingling tears in abundance with their joy. Now there was a little drizzle, not unpleasant, just enough to moisten the air; but a little way before we got home the cloud that overhung us was condensed into a more violent shower, so that our entrance was quite quiet, as no one was aware beforehand of our coming. But just as we got inside our portico, as the sound of our carriage wheels along the dry hard ground was heard, the people turned up in shoals, as though by some mechanical contrivance . . . flocking round us so closely that it was not easy to get down from our conveyance, for there was not a foot of clear space.¹³

Following the death of Basil in 379 (January), Gregory became the leader of the Nicene party. At the same time, he had to deal with another important personal loss. Some months after Basil's death, Gregory went to visit Macrina at her convent (September). He found her dying. Later, Gregory wrote Macrina's biography, doing for her what Gregory of Nazianzus had done for Basil.

The Life of St. Macrina and *On the Soul and the Resurrection* form a set whether or not they were actually planned as companion pieces. They both center on Gregory and his sister and both offer many reflections on ascetic themes. In both, Gregory's tone is calmly practical.

The Life of St. Macrina has much of the flavor and form of a chronicle. It is far from being a modern "biography." That is, it is not interpretive: motivations are not explored, feelings are not analyzed. The value of this *Life* is that it illustrates concepts of asceticism. The joy and love glimpsed in *The Life of St. Macrina* are, therefore, very important because it shows that the "next world" sustained her and renewed her strength, allowing her—even requiring her—to reach out in compassion and service to others.

On the Soul is a work with a mood apart from that of precise theology. Gregory does not so much create a tight argument as he constructs a plot, stringing together allusions and asides in the style of an author providing clues leading to a resolution. The work ends so abruptly that there is an impression of incompleteness. I doubt that *On the Soul* proves anything: it testifies to Christian faith and provides an outline which can be contrasted with other positions.

The Council of Constantinople (second ecumenical) was summoned into session by the emperor Theodosius (reigned 379-395) in 381. Gregory delivered the inaugural address for the synod and is said to have written the explanatory clauses added by the council to the Nicene Creed. Gregory brought along the unfinished manuscript of his *Against Eunomius*, taking time to discuss the book with Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Jerome.¹⁴

Against Eunomius is Gregory's longest and most academic work. His opponent urged strict application of Aristotle's logic to the Christian faith, permitting nothing that did not conform to intellectual canons. Hence, Gregory fought on ground already chosen.

The main point at issue arose from the philosophic tradition that to make a verbal distinction is to recognize a level of being: to differentiate is to accept "disconnection." When applied to the Christian understanding of God, Eunomian theory saw only separation between the Ungenerate and the Generate, the Father and the Son. Gregory responded with a strong presentation of the doctrine of eternal generation, pointing again and again to errors in what Eunomius claimed to be a tightly constructed series of logical arguments.

While in Constantinople, Gregory preached at the funeral of Meletius, the original president of the Council. He also preached at the enthronement of Gregory of Nazianzus as Patriarch. His involvement at the highest level of imperial life con-

tinued: in 383 he was preacher at both the funeral of the Empress Flacilla and the Princess Pulcheria. Soon afterwards, he produced his *Great Catechism*, a model of instruction for the use of bishops.

The *Great Catechism* offers the same emphasis on logic found in *Against Eunomius* but the tone is rich and varied. It is worthwhile to see how Gregory relates to his "competitors" in the course of this work: "The teaching of the Jew is invalidated by the acceptance of the Word and by belief in the Spirit; while the polytheistic error of the Greeks is done away, since the unity of the nature cancels the notion of plurality. Yet again, the unity of the nature must be retained from the Jewish conception, while the distinctions of Persons, and that only, from the Greek."¹⁵

Gregory discusses human nature in his remarks on the Incarnation:

There is nothing in man's constitution which is opposed to the principle of virtue. Neither his capacity for reason or thought or understanding nor any similar attribute peculiar to his nature stands opposed to the principle of virtue . . . If birth in itself is not weakness, one cannot call life weakness. It is the sensual pleasure which precedes human birth that is weakness, and it is the impulse to evil in living things that is the sickness of our nature.

The coming of Christ modified human chemistry. In the Incarnation, God:

was united with both elements in man's make-up — I mean the sensible and intelligible elements . . . In this way man's primal grace was restored and we retrieved once more eternal life . . . Thus he becomes the meeting point of both, of death and of life. In himself he restores the nature which death has disrupted, and becomes himself the principle whereby the separated parts are reunited.

Gregory offers a colorful description of the Incarnation as a process in which God reveals His goodness, wisdom, and power:

It belongs to the nature of fire to shoot upwards; and no one would think it wonderful for a flame to act naturally. But if he saw a flame with a downward motion like that of heavy bodies, he would take it for a marvel, wondering how it could remain a flame and yet contravene its nature by its downward motion. So it is with the Incarnation. God's transcendent power is not so much displayed in the vastness of the heavens, or the luster of the stars, or the orderly arrangement of the universe or his perpetual oversight of it, as in his condescension to our weak nature. We marvel at the way the sublime entered a state of lowliness, and, while actually seen in it, did not leave the heights. We marvel at the way the Godhead was entwined in human nature and, while becoming man, did not cease to be God.

When the *Great Catechism* turns to the sacraments, Gregory's method implies that they are incomprehensible apart from the larger, foundational mysteries of Trinity and Incarnation. When Christ is seen as cosmic Mediator, then one can begin to understand some of His ways of bridging the gulf between Being and being,

between eternity and time. Gregory makes this point in a passage that is both direct and evocative. "The eyes of all creation are set on Him and He is its center, and it finds its harmony in Him. Through Him the things above are united with those below, and the things at one extremity with those at the other."

His discussion of baptism blends Greek tradition with Scripture:

Those who learn military rhythms by observing others acquire their skill in arms from men versed in such disciplines; and if they fail to do what is shown to them, they remain lacking in such skill. In the same way those who have an equal zeal for the good must thoroughly imitate and follow the Pioneer of our salvation, and must put into practice what He has shown them. For the same goal cannot be reached unless similar paths are followed. People who get lost in labyrinths, if they fall in with an experienced person, extricate themselves from the various misleading passages by following from behind. And they could not, indeed, get out if they did not follow in their guide's footsteps. In the same way I bid you think of this life as a labyrinth which human nature cannot thread, unless a man takes the same course as He did who entered it and yet extricated Himself from its confines.

Baptism establishes a "break in the continuity of evil." Gregory sees God's action in baptism as a process that is both gracious and natural:

Now the salvation of those in need is characteristic of God's activity; and this is effected through purification by water. He who is purified will share in purity, and that which is truly pure is the Godhead itself. You observe how small a thing it is to begin with and how easily accomplished — just faith and water: faith which is a matter of our own choice, and water which is natural to man's life. But what a blessing springs from these things — no less than kinship with God Himself!

Baptism is not "magic" for this realistic theologian who knew so well the sins and passions of actual church-goers. He insists that we must complete baptism by cultivating the seed planted through the sacramental mystery: "If, then, you have received God and become his child, let your way of life testify to the God within you; make it clear who your Father is!"

Eucharist is our appropriation of the deathlessness of Christ. It provides "natural" assimilation of "life-giving power," allowing us to become immortal through participation in immortality. This sharing has its pattern in the Incarnation: "The reason, moreover, that God, when He revealed Himself, united Himself with our mortal nature was to deify humanity by this close relationship with Deity. In consequence, by means of His flesh, which is constituted by bread and wine, He implants Himself in all believers, following out the plan of grace."

At some point during his Constantinople period, Gregory became a friend of St. Olympias (368-c. 415), an immensely wealthy member of the aristocracy who

devoted her fortune to religious purposes. Destined for later persecution as a loyal supporter of St. John Chrysostom, Olympias was at this time little more than a teenager. She had been adopted spiritually by Gregory of Nazianzus who called her "his own" and enjoyed being called "father" in return (Letter LVII). Inspired by her personality and piety, Gregory of Nyssa dedicated a commentary on the Song of Songs to Olympias.

Gregory's *Commentary on the Song of Songs* is a "mystical" study, a reflective and interpretive approach that allows us to share something of his personal theology. The work highlights his doctrine of infinite progress (epectasis):

. . . though the new grace we may obtain is greater than what we had before, it does not put a limit on our final goal; rather, for those who are rising in perfection, the limit of the good that is attained becomes the beginning of the discovery of higher goods. Thus they never stop rising, moving from one new beginning to the next, and the beginning of ever greater graces is never limited of itself.¹⁶

Christ is the object of Gregory's loving contemplation in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. This focus is beautifully expressed in his interpretation of Song of Songs 6:2:

I to my beloved, says the bride, and my beloved to me. This is the norm and limit of all perfection. By these words we are taught that the purified soul must possess nothing but God alone, and must look to nothing outside of Him. Hence it must so cleanse itself of every material thought and deed, that it may be completely transformed into something spiritual and immaterial, and thus make of itself a most radiant image of that archetypal Beauty. Take the example of a man who looks at a painting on a canvas that has been very closely modeled on its archetype. He declares that the same exists in both, that the beauty of the model is in the likeness and the archetype is clearly visible in its imitation. In the same way the bride, in saying I to my beloved and my beloved to me, declares that she has modelled herself on Christ, thus recovering her own proper loveliness, that blessed state which our human nature had in the beginning, for now her beauty has developed in the image and likeness of that sole true Beauty which is the prototype.

Gregory seems to have died just after the Council of Constantinople in 394. Where he lived and what he did in his final years is not easily determined. It is clear, however, that he continued to write. The hidden quality of this time underlines the fact that he was more and more centered on spiritual and ascetic themes.

The *Commentary on the Song of Songs* was followed by Gregory's *Life of Moses*. This is a remarkably rich meditation on Scripture in which Moses is first presented as the historical figure of Exodus, then as a symbol of spiritual journeying. Like the

Commentary, the *Life of Moses* gives prominence to Gregory's teaching on growth in virtue and contemplation:

. . . whoever pursues the true virtue participates in nothing other than God, because he is himself absolute virtue. Since, then, those who know what is good by nature desire participation in it, and since this good has no limit, the participant's desire itself necessarily has no stopping place but stretches out with the limitless.¹⁷

Every episode in *The Life of Moses* is a doorway for God. Gregory's comments on the episode of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-6) exemplify his approach:

It is upon us who continue in this quiet and peaceful course of life that the truth will shine, illuminating the eyes of our soul with its own rays. This truth, which was then manifested by the ineffable and mysterious illumination which came to Moses, is God. And if the flame by which the soul of the prophet was illuminated was kindled from a thorny bush, even this fact will not be useless for our inquiry. For if truth is God and truth is light . . . such guidance of virtue leads us to know that light which has reached down even to human nature. Lest one think that the radiance did not come from a material substance, this light did not shine from some luminary among the stars but came from an earthly bush and surpassed the heavenly luminaries in brilliance. From this we learn also the mystery of the Virgin: the light of divinity which through birth shone from her into human life did not consume the burning bush, even as the flower of her virginity was not withered by giving birth.

Moses teaches Gregory that to be human, to be in pilgrimage, is to be unsatisfied — to cease to desire God would be to cease to be truly alive. For us to see “the back” of God means that we are ever following after, ever in the company of the eternal Leader. As Gregory puts it near the close of this powerful work, “What then are we taught through what has been said? To have but one purpose in life: to be called servants of God by virtue of the lives we live.”

Gregory requires *kenosis* of the believer, an “emptying” that parallels the Incarnation itself. This personal *kenosis* is a purging of unworthy and distracting emotions and attitudes. He finds Moses to be a pattern of such a process, one who indicates the richness of its results:

. . . the great Moses, as he was becoming ever greater, at no time stopped in his ascent, nor did he set a limit for himself in his upward course . . . He shone with glory. And although lifted up through such lofty experiences, he is still unsatisfied in his desire for more. He still thirsts for that with which he constantly filled himself to capacity, and he asks to attain as if he had never partaken, beseeching God to appear to him, not according to his capacity to partake, but according to God's true being. Such an experience seems to me to belong to the soul which loves that which is beautiful. Hope

always draws the soul from the beauty which is seen to what is beyond, always kindles the desire for the hidden through what is constantly perceived.

Gregory of Nyssa produced his own "library," writing more than either of the other Cappadocian Fathers. This literature represents more than speculation or polemic. It scales heights of Christian spirituality and invites its readers to a promised land of discovery and exploration.

Footnotes

1. William Moore, "Preface," Vol. 5, *Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1979), p. vii.
2. Gregory of Nyssa, Letter XIII, Vol. V, *LNPNE*, p. 536.
3. Gregory of Nyssa, Letter X, Vol. V, *LNPNE*, p. 533.
4. The sources of Gregory's theology are noted with great thoroughness by Mariette Canevet, "St. Gregoire de Nysse," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1965), Vol. VI, pp. 971-1011.
5. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul in Ascetical Works* trans. V. W. Callahan (Washington: Catholic University, 1967), p. 216.
6. Frances Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 116 (as a paraphrase of G.C. Stead).
7. William Moore, "Prolegomena," Vol. 5, *LNPNE*, p. 15.
8. Edmund Venables, "Gregorius Nyssenus," *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, Vol. II (London: John Murray, 1880), p. 762.
9. Gregory of Nazianzus, Letter I, Vol. VII, *LNPNE*, p. 459.
10. Gregory of Nyssa, Letter IX, Vol. V, *LNPNE*, p. 532.
11. Gregory of Nyssa, *To Ablabius*, Vol. III, *Library of Christian Classics*, trans. C. C. Richardson (London: S. C. M. Press, 1954), p. 258.
12. Gregory of Nyssa, *To Ablabius*, p. 259.
13. Gregory of Nyssa, Letter III, Vol. V, *LNPNE*, p. 529.
14. Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men* (#128), Vol. III, *LNPNE*, p. 382.
15. Gregory of Nyssa, *Great Catechism* (Translated as *An Address on Religious Instruction* by C. C. Richardson), Vol. III, *LCC*, pp. 268-325. Quotations are taken from the entire work.
16. Gregory of Nyssa, quoted in *From Glory to Glory*, edited by Jean Danielou, translated by Herbert Musurillo (London: John Murray, 1961), pp. 281-282.
17. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, edited and translated by A. J. Malherbe, E. Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). The quotations represent sections 7, 19-21, 227, 230-231 and 315 of this translation.

***A RUSSIAN ORTHODOX AMONGST THE COPTS:
BISHOP PORFIRIY USPENSKY OF
CHIGRIN***

John Watson

This contribution has no pretensions to originality of scholarship. It will serve its purpose if the reader is interested in the Bibliography. The present writer has abandoned the normal scholarly apparatus for the sake of brevity.

Recent writers have shown that great “ecumenists” worked along before Edinburgh 1910, Lausanne 1927 or Amsterdam 1948. A leading early ecumenist was the Russian Orthodox Bishop Uspensky who lived for some years in the Middle East where he devoted himself to the study of three Ancient Oriental (non-Chalcedonian) Churches: Armenian, Coptic and Ethiopian. Uspensky died in 1885. We are indebted to Archimandrite Avgustin, a teacher of the Leningrad Theological Academy in the USSR, whose 1985 article for the centenary of Bishop Porfiriý’s death is the basis of this notice. The only additions are from well-known Coptologists read by the English speaking writer.

In 1841, whilst Rector of the Odessa Theological Academy, Uspensky reported on eight years discussion with Armenian hierarchs and scholars. He early adopted the view that the origins of schism lay in poor linguistics. In 1843 he went to Jerusalem for his first three years in the Middle East. He visited Egypt. After a year on Mount Athos, Fr. Porfiriý was appointed Head of the Russian Mission in Jerusalem (1847-1854). He returned to Russia at the end of this tour and, because of the Crimean War, was unable to return before 1858. In Russia he devoted himself to his collections of documents. He published works on Armenian and Coptic theology and liturgy.

On December 28, 1860 Fr. Porfiriý held an important meeting with an Armenian bishop in Cairo. The Russian confirmed that his Church did not “consider you heretics”. Porfiriý drew attention to his book “Doctrine, Liturgy and Canons of the Egyptian Christians (Copts)” which was approved by the Russian Holy Synod when published in St. Petersburg in 1856. It was Uspensky’s view that “the entire Russian Church has recognized” the Ancient Oriental Orthodox “as our elder brothers in the Lord.”

Fr. Porfiry's personal contacts with the Coptic Orthodox Church included study-visits to the Monastery of St. Anthony (Deir Anba Antonii) by the Red Sea and the nearby Monastery of St. Paul the Theban (Deir Anba Bula). These visits began in 1850. He also cultivated a genuine personal friendship with Abba David (Daoud) who was elected the 110th Patriarch of Alexandria and Coptic Pope in 1854 taking the name Abba Kyrillos IVth. They were to have an important meeting on December 26, 1860 and on the following day the Russian priest attended the Coptic Liturgy at which two new bishops of the Coptic Orthodox Church were consecrated. As an expression of goodwill, the Pope gave Uspensky a Gospel and Epistle in Coptic with Arabic translations; the book had been printed in London!

His study of 'Comparative Theology', and especially of the Christological Definition of Chalcedon and the teaching of the Copt St. Cyril of Alexandria, led Porfiry Uspensky to demonstrate that "the Definition of Chalcedon was expressed in the words of St. Cyril." It followed that "if the doctrine of this Church Father (St. Cyril of Alexandria) is recognized as true, then the Definition should also be recognized as such, the more so as the early creeds of the Coptic saints also agree with it. For they teach us to confess Christ as perfect God and perfect Man and as One Person; divinity and humanity united without confusion or change of their properties."* A century later, we cannot fail to be impressed by the eirenical theology of this Russian. Coptic theologians, including Pope Shenouda, are convinced that the Chalcedonian definition is not Nestorian in any sense. Russian Orthodox theologians clearly understand that the Coptic profession of Faith is not Eutychian.

It was a great tragedy for the Copts and for the Russians when Abba Kyrillos was poisoned on January 30th 1861. Iris Habib el Masri has written: "The Patriarchate of Abba Kyrillow IVth lasted for just seven years and eight months, but his achievements and the calibre of his intellect and character were such that he will forever remain one of the outstanding Patriarchs in the chain of St. Mark's notable successors." Bishop Porfiry Uspensky wrote in his diary of January 1861: "the sad news of his death has shaken me. It is hard to lose gold, diamonds or a rosary (sic), but incomparably harder is it to lose a friend, with whose help the Nile and the Neva (A Russian river. JW) could have been united."

The Copts did not recover from the murder of their Pope for nearly two years and the theological rapprochement with the Moscow Patriarchate came to an end.

This important ecumenical activity in Russo-Coptic relations was commented upon by Uspensky: "I was destined to renew contacts with the Copts, but not fated to reunite them with our Church. I trust, however, that this important work will be continued . . . through other enlightened and zealous religious figures."

In our time, the dialogue has been taken up by conferences in Pantelli, Athens, Addis Ababa, Lebanon and not least by the visit of H. H. Pope Shenouda III to Moscow. It is the present writer's view that American Copts will find Bishop Porfiry's work a useful starting point for their discussion with the O.C.A. who are heirs

of the Russian Orthodox tradition, with other traditions. It is noticeable that Metropolitan Theodosius and the Synod of the O.C.A. published an open letter during Abba Shenouda's imprisonment and went to meet him soon after his release. Some churches have claimed a lot, as Dr. Karas has shown in his recent book on the Copts, but the O.C.A. acted. Copts have much in common with the O.C.A., including a Patristic history and the remarkable story of Bishop Porfiry and Abba Kyrillos.

Bibliography:

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Archimandrite Agafangel: *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* (English) May 1975.
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Travels in Egypt by Bp. Porfiry St. Petersburg 1856.
Copts by Bp. Porfiry St. Petersburg 1856.
Ethiopian Liturgy, Kiev TKTA 1869 by Bp. Porfiry.

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Iris Habib el Masri, *The Story of the Copts*, MECC 1978.
Christian Egypt Ancient and Modern by Otto Meinardus, Am. Univ. Cairo, 1977.
What in the World is the WCC? Geneva 1978.

*For a full and accurate account of the christological teaching of the Coptic Orthodox Church and her relation to the Council of Chalcedon we refer the reader to the recent article published in the *Journal, Christology in the Coptic Church* by Fr. Tadros Malaty, Volume 7, Number 1, Spring 1986.

Editor

CHRIST IN THE SO-CALLED GOSPEL OF BARNABAS AS A MAN AND A PROPHET ONLY

Boulos Ayad Ayad, Ph.D.

Introduction

The so-called Gospel of Barnabas considers Jesus Christ as a man and prophet only and not the Son of God, or God, as the Christians believe, according to the New Testament. This idea agrees with the belief of the Muslim Koran. Following are some sentences from the Koran offered to confirm that it describes Jesus as just a man:

“This we recite to thee of signs and wise remembrance. Truly, the likeness of Jesus, in God’s sight, is as Adam’s likeness; He created him of dust, then said He unto him, ‘Be,’ and he was.”¹

It is mentioned in the Koran as well as in the so-called Gospel of Barnabas that Jesus was the Messenger of God. The Koran shows this as follows:

“And when Jesus son of Mary said, ‘Children of Israel, I am indeed the Messenger of God to you, confirming the Torah that is before me, and giving good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.’ ”²

The Koran considers Jesus as a prophet; this opinion was borrowed from the Koran by the writer of the so-called Gospel of Barnabas. Below is a sentence from the Koran in which Jesus is referred to as a prophet:

“Say: ‘We believe in God, and that which has been sent down on us, and sent down on Abraham and Ishamel, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes, and in that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and the Prophets, of their Lord; we make no division between any of them, and to Him we surrender.’ ”³

The following sentences are from the so-called Gospel of Barnabas:

A. Jesus as a Man

Jesus states he is only a man:

“Jesus descending from the mountain to come into Jerusalem, met a leper, who by divine inspiration knew Jesus to be a prophet. Therefore with tears he prayed to him,

saying: 'Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.' Jesus answered 'What wilt thou, brother, that I should do unto thee?'

The leper answered: 'Lord, give me health.'

Jesus reproved him, saying: 'Thou art foolish; pray to God who created thee, and he will give thee health; for I am a man, as thou art.' The leper answered: 'I know that thou, Lord, art a man, but an holy one of the Lord. Wherefore pray thou to God, and he will give me health.' Then Jesus, sighing said: 'Lord God Almighty, for the love of the holy prophets give health to this sick man.' Then, having said this, he said, touching the sick man with his hands in the name of God: 'O brother, receive thy health!' And when he had said this the leprosy was cleansed, insomuch that the flesh of the leper was left unto him like that of a child.'"⁴

Another sentence is as follows:

"Jesus said again: 'I confess before heaven, and call to witness everything that dwelleth upon the earth, that I am a stranger to all that men have said of me, to wit, that I am more than man. For I am a man, born of a woman, subject to the judgement of God; that live here like as other men, subject to the common miseries.'"⁵

This also stresses Jesus mortality:

"Then Jesus, having lifted up his hands, said: '... For that I am a visible man and a morsel of clay that walketh upon the earth, mortal as are other men. And I have had a beginning, and shall have an end, and [am] such that I cannot create a fly over again.'"⁶

Another statement follows:

"Jesus answered: 'I am Jesus, son of Mary, of the seed of David, a man that is mortal and feareth God, and I seek that to God be given honour and glory.'"⁷

Jesus talked about himself as just a man:

"Accordingly, brethren, I, a man, dust and clay, that walk upon the earth, say unto you: Do penance and know your sins. I say, brethren, that Satan, by means of the Roman soldiery, deceived you when ye said that I was God. Wherefore, beware that ye believe them not, seeing they are fallen under the curse of God, serving the false and lying gods.'"⁸

B. Jesus as Prophet

The angel called Jesus a prophet:

1. When he talked to the Virgin Mary

"The virgin was affrightened at the appearance of the angel; but the angel comforted her, saying: 'Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God, who hath chosen thee to be mother of a prophet, whom he will send to the people of Israel in order that they may walk in his laws with truth of heart.' The virgin answered: 'Now

how shall I bring forth sons, seeing I know not a man?" The angel answered: 'O Mary, God who made man without a man is able to generate in thee man without a man, because with him nothing is impossible.' Mary answered: 'I know that God is almighty, therefore, his will be done.' The angel answered: 'Now be conceived in thee the prophet, who thou shalt name Jesus: and thou shalt keep him from wine and from strong drink and from every unclean meat, because the child is an holy one of God.' ”⁹

2. When he talked to Joseph:

“The angel said to Joseph: ‘The virgin shall bring forth a son, who thou shall call by the name Jesus; whom thou shalt keep from wine and strong drink from every unclean meat, because he is an holy one of God from his mother’s womb. He is a prophet of God sent unto the people of Israel.’ ”¹⁰

3. When he talked to the shepherds:

“The shepherds were filled with fear by reason of the sudden light and the appearance of the angel; whereupon the angel of the Lord comforted them, saying: ‘Behold, I announce to you a great joy, for there is born in the city of David a child who is a prophet of the Lord.’ ”¹¹

Jesus started his mission as a prophet:

“Jesus, having received his vision, and knowing that he was a prophet sent to the house of Israel, revealed all to Mary his mother, telling her that he needs must suffer great persecution for the honour of God, and that he could not any longer abide with her to serve her. Whereupon, having heard this, Mary answered: ‘Son, ere thou wast born all was announced to me; wherefore blessed be the holy name of God.’ Jesus departed therefore that day from his mother to attend to his prophetic office.”¹²

The following indicates that Jesus was only a prophet:

“The discord of Nain was such that some said: “He is our God who hath visited us,’ others said: ‘God is invisible, so that none hath seen him, not even Moses, his servant; therefore it is not God, but rather his son.’ Others said: “He is not God, nor son of God, for God hath not a body to beget withal: but he is a great prophet of God.’ ” ”¹³

We can notice the same idea as the following:

“They departed therefore, all of them save him who writeth, with James and John, and they went through all Judea, preaching penitence even as Jesus had told them, healing every sort of sickness, insomuch that in Israel were confirmed the words of Jesus that God is one and Jesus is prophet of God, when they saw such multitude do that which Jesus did concerning the healing of the sick.”¹⁴

The following section says the same as the above:

“Then said Jesus: ‘Now what saith Israel, having seen God do by the hands of so many men that which God hath done by my hands?’

“The disciples answered: ‘They say that there is one God alone and that thou art God’s prophet.’

“Jesus answered with joyful countenance: ‘Blessed be the holy name of God, who hath not despised the desire of me his servant!’ And when he had said this they retired to rest.”¹⁵

Conclusion

On many occasions in the Bible, Jesus talked about himself as a Man or Son of Man.¹⁶ In some instances the people called him a prophet.¹⁷ On the other hand, the Bible declared that He was the Son of God or God.¹⁸ This fact was denied by the Koran and, following it, by the so-called gospel of Barnabas.

Notes

1. A. J. Arberry, trans., *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), Chapter 3, The House of Imran: 51.
2. Ibid., Chapter 61, The Ranks: 6-7.
3. Ibid., Chapter 3, The House of Imran: 78.
4. See, *The Gospel of Barnabas*, ed. and trans. by Lonsdale and Laura Ragg, from the Italian manuscript in the Imperial Library in Vienna (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1907); republished by Begum Aisha Bawany Waqf, 8th ed. (Pakistan, 1980), Chapter 11.
5. Ibid., Chapter 94.
6. Ibid., Chapter 95.
7. Ibid., Chapter 96.
8. Ibid., Chapter 128.
9. Ibid., Chapter 1.
10. Ibid., Chapter 2.
11. Ibid., Chapter 4.
12. Ibid., Chapter 10.
13. Ibid., Chapter 48.
14. Ibid., Chapter 126.
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16. *The Holy Bible* (Revised Standard Version) (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1952), Mt. 24:35-40; 25:31-40; Mk. 2:9; 8:31; 10:33; 14:17-21; Lk. 9:56; 9:58; 19:10; 22:48.
17. Mt. 21:1-11; 21:45-46; Jn. 4:19.
18. Jn. 9:38; 10:30 & 33; 14:9; 20:28; Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:8.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We thank all readers who send their comments. Letters selected in this section are based on the general interest of their topic, and are subject to editing or shortening, if necessary.

A NEW THEORY AND A NEW COPTIC TRANSLATION

To the Editor,

I am extremely surprised at the appearance of the misrepresentation of the scholarly work of Professor Tito Orlandi by J. E. Furman in *Coptic Church Review* 7 (1986) 68-80, esp. 68-69. It is simply not the case that 'there is no early Coptic literature of everyday life'. Orlandi is a competent scholar and has stated no such thing. There do in fact exist hundreds of thousands of Coptic documents of everyday life, including letters, tax receipts, legal proceedings, contracts, loans, bills, wills, and so on, from every period from the fourth century to the twelfth. Most preserved documents are sixth to ninth century, owing to the chance conditions of finds; but to continue to misrepresent Coptic writing as being exclusively 100% ecclesiastical, is simply wrong. Second, to give any support to a notion that the Coptic language is not integrally central to 'authentically Egyptian Christianity' and that Arabic, in itself the carrier of totally alien values, might be substituted for Coptic with no betrayal, is extremely dangerous. In Egypt at present it is a crime punishable by imprisonment or worse to teach, learn, or use the Coptic language in any way. Publishing these views could do a great deal of harm.

Dr. Leslie S. B. MacCoull

U.S. Representative

Society for Coptic Archaeology

The above letter was sent to the Rev. James Furman who offers the following reply:

To the Editor:

My article in the Fall, 1986 *Coptic Church Review* was intended to be two things. First, it offered an appreciation of a scholar with a very generous willingness to share the results of his studies. This portion of the article was journalism, a reporting on the substance of conversations. Dr. Orlandi commented on my notes while

they were being taken and offered corrections at the time, corrections which were included as a matter of course.

Second, the article presented a figure from Christian history. This aspect of the article reflected the point of Christian study: contact with a witness for the faith who illuminates some aspect of Christianity in a particular time and place.

If I have been inaccurate in recording Orlandi's ideas, I offer him and the readers of *Coptic Church Review* a very sincere apology. I am deeply distressed if this is the case.

Dr. L.S.B. MacCoull criticizes my article in a way that suggests either hasty reading or tendentious interpretation. For example, I do not suggest that "Coptic writing" is 100% "ecclesiastical." I do, however, feel that she has ignored the point that what was being discussed dates from "the earliest period," the 1st through 3rd Centuries. This is the period of the "Old Coptic Magical Texts" and this is the period to which Orlandi was referring. It seemed clear that the discussion in the article was aimed to this "earliest phase" in the paragraph in question (p. 68). I do agree that this could have been stated more directly but p. 69 seems clearly integrated with p. 68 if one is not hunting for something to debate. That is, Coptic certainly does have a rich and varied "literature of everyday life"—just not in the period being mentioned.

MacCoull misrepresents what I have written on the basis of strong emotions that are hers. The material dealing with the relationship between Coptic and Egyptian Christianity was written in subjunctive. I was noting implications, not pushing for a course of action or affirming a position that should be taken. This material is not intended to "support" anything. MacCoull is importing a "straw man" and fighting it well but she is not dealing with what I wrote.

Orlandi did not see Coptic as "the inevitable result toward which the language of ancient Egypt moved" (p. 68). To me, this was most interesting and MacCoull does not challenge this idea. Orlandi does view Coptic as the product of sophisticated and learned "savants" (a term that was left undefined in both the interviews and the article). Again, this point is not challenged in terms of being an accurate citation of Orlandi's understanding. Therefore, one is left with the feeling that what MacCoull is confronting is something "read into" the article rather than something which it actually contains.

MacCoull is an eminent scholar whose life bears eloquent witness to her dedication to Coptic and the life of the Egyptian Christian community. Hence, it is awkward to be forced to say that she is attacking out of instinct, not in response to something intended or presented in fact. In short, I feel that my article has been misread in a surprising way.

James Furman

BOOK REVIEWS

The Coptic Orthodox Church As an Ascetic Church

By Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty. Published by: Holy Virgin Mary Coptic Orthodox Church (4900 Cleland Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90042), 1986. Pp. 174 (English & Arabic). No price.

The author of this book, Father Tadros Malaty is well known to the readers of this Journal through his articles, being a member of its editorial board. He served in Coptic churches in Egypt, Australia, Europe, Canada and the US. He is a proficient writer and publishes several books every year, both in Arabic and in English. The latter include his major works *Christ in the Eucharist*, *St. Mary in the Orthodox Concept* and *The Church: House of God*.

This is a handbook of Coptic monasticism, both ancient and modern. The author writes from a scholarly background (Fr. Malaty has taught patristics for years and published several biographies of the Church Fathers), but with the young Coptic generation in mind.

The book includes the detailed history and spirituality of six early monastic Fathers (Sts. Paul of Thebes, Antony, Pachomius, Amoun, Macarius and Shenouti) and three female hermits (Sts. Sarah, Hilaria and Mary of Egypt). An introductory chapter deals with the idea of monasticism, its literature and its early forms. Two concluding chapters discuss the effect of Egyptian monasticism on the Christian world and the monastic movement in the Coptic Church today.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Studia Patristica XVIII: Papers of the 1983 Oxford Patristics Conference. Vol. I.

Edited by Elizabeth A. Livingstone. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1985. Pp. 358. \$40.00 (Paperback)

48 papers from the Oxford conference arranged in historical, theological, gnostic and biblical themes.

Maximus Confessor - Selected Writings

Translation and Notes by George C. Berthold. New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985. Pp. 240. \$12.95 (Cloth), \$9.95 (Paper)

Includes four major works of the seventh century Byzantine monk: The Four Hundred Chapters on Love; Commentary on the Lord's Prayer; Chapters on Knowledge; and The Church's Mystagogy.

Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Volume V

Edited by Botterweck and Ringgren. Translated by David E. Green. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1986. Pp. 521. \$27.50 (Cloth).

The fifth in a projected set of twelve volumes that discusses key Hebrew and Aramaic words of the OT and is intended to be a companion to Kittel in the NT.

Evangelism on the Cutting Edge

Edited by Dr. Robert E. Coleman. Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1986. Pp. 156

A biblical response to the modern tendency of diluting the Christian message through religious pluralism, liberation theology and secular psychology.

The World of the Bible

Edited by A. S. van der Woude. Translated by Seird Woudstra. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986. Pp. 400. \$34.95 (Cloth)

A reference work for biblical languages and geography, archaeology, history and social aspects of the ancient Middle East.

A Dazzling Darkness: An Anthology of Western Mysticism.

By Patrick Grant. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985. Pp. 366. \$9.95 (paper)

More than 900 excerpts of Western and few Eastern spiritual writers, arranged topically with an introduction to each topic.

Worship in the Coptic Orthodox Church

Published by St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church of Washington, D.C. (9201 Leesburg Pike, Vienna, Virginia 22180), 1986. Pp. 28. No price.

An introduction to the worship in the Coptic Church, with emphasis on its rites and external aspect; beautifully illustrated.

Coptic Primer (Bohairic)

By Hany N. Takla. Los Angeles, California: St. Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society (1800 So. Robertson Blvd. Bldg #6, Suite #222, LA, CA 90035), 1986. Pp. 42. \$2.00 (Paper)

A ten-week course in the modern Coptic dialect intended for those who have little or no prior knowledge of the language.

Fathers Talking

By Aelred Squire, OSB. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1986. Pp. 76 \$16.95 (hardcover), \$6.95 (paperback).

Twenty two selections from the Church Fathers (with comments and biographical notes) describing the ideals and aspirations of the Christian life by reflection on biblical words and events.

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1987 CALENDAR OF FASTS AND FEASTS

* *THE SEVEN MAJOR FEASTS OF OUR LORD*

** *The Seven Minor Feasts of Our Lord*

*** Feasts of Virgin Mary

**** Fasts

* January 7 - **CHRISTMAS**

** January 14 - *Circumcision of Our Lord*

**** January 16-18 - Paramoni (3)

* January 19 - **EPIPHANY**

** January 21 - *First Miracle of Our Lord at Cana*

*** January 29 - Dormition of Virgin Mary

**** February 9 - Fast of Nineveh (3)

** February 15 - *Entrance of Our Lord into the Temple*

**** February 23 - Great Lent (55)

March 19 - Feast of the Cross

*** April 2 - Apparition of the Virgin at Zeitoun in 1968

* April 7 - **ANNUNCIATION**

* April 12 - **ENTRANCE OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM**
(PALM SUNDAY)

** April 16 - *Holy Thursday*

* April 19 - **EASTER**

** April 26 - *St. Thomas' Sunday*

*** May 9 - Birth of Virgin Mary

* May 28 - **ASCENSION**

** June 1 - *Entrance of Our Lord into Egypt*

* June 7 - **PENTECOST**

**** June 8 - Apostles' Fast (34)

July 12 - Martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul

**** August 7 - Fast of the Virgin (15)

** August 19 - *Transfiguration of Our Lord*

*** August 22 - Assumption of the Body of Virgin Mary

September 12 - New Year's Day (Feast of the Martyrs)

September 28 - Feast of the Cross

**** November 26 - Christmas Fast (42)

*** December 13 - Presentation of Virgin Mary into the Temple