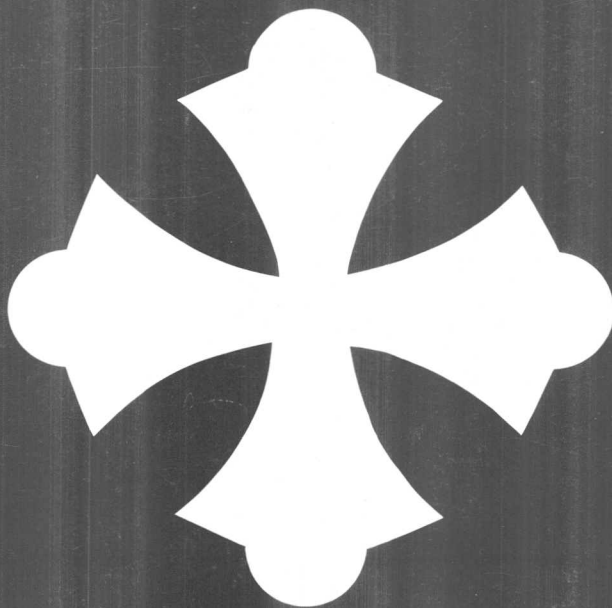


COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

Volume 8, Number 4 Winter 1987

- *LITURGICAL WORSHIP IN THE
COPTIC CHURCH*
- *COPTIC PATRIARCHS UNDER ISLAM*
- *SAINT SARABAMON OF MINUFIAH*



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The latest work about the Coptic Church to appear in English is *Father Tadros Y. Malaty's book, Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church*. We are happy to introduce this issue with an article taken from it, ***The Liturgical Worship in the Coptic Church***. Here Father Malaty shows how the Coptic liturgies (be they liturgies of praise, of sacraments or of the Eucharist), express the life, union, theology and spirituality of the Church. The whole book is also reviewed in this issue.

The Messiah in the So-called Gospel of Barnabas is the fifth in a series of six articles on this false gospel. *Professor Boulos A. Ayad*, the author of the series, has recently wrote a new book in Arabic, ***The Aramaeans in the Ancient Near East***. An abstract of the book appears in the section of *Currents in Coptic Church Studies*.

Dr. Raef Marcus resumes in this issue his series, ***History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church under the Sword of Islam***. Previous articles that dealt with this sad history till the middle of the eighth century appeared in volume 3, No. 4; volume 4, No. 1 and No. 4; and volume 5, No. 4. In this article Dr. Marcus addresses himself to the persecutions which the Church suffered during the patriarchate of Abba Mena I and Abba John IV in the eighth century, and Abba Mark II who presided over the Church in the first part of the ninth century.

In our series on *Modern Coptic Saints* the *Journal* introduces in this issue ***Saint Sarabamon***, the nineteenth century bishop of the province of Minufiah in the Nile Delta.

Editor

LITURGICAL WORSHIP IN THE COPTIC CHURCH

Father Tadros Y. Malaty

The Word “Liturgy”

The word “Liturgy” in classic greek means “a public service undertaken on behalf of the people”. It comes from:

1. “Liow,” meaning “people”.
2. “Ergia”, meaning “work”.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, this word is translated “ministry”, or “worship” (Heb. 8:6; 9:21).

The Church used this term since the apostolic age, to cover all that worship which is officially organized by her, and which is offered by all her members, or on their behalf. In the course of time, this term has come to be particularly applied to the performance of the service of Eucharist, although there are other liturgies as the liturgy of Baptism, liturgy of marriage, etc. . . .

Liturgical Worship and Liturgical Life

Liturgy is not certain hours that the believers spend together — clergymen and laity — to participate in the eucharistic liturgy, vespers, or matins or for baptism or marriage celebrations etc . . . but it is in its essence the true communion with Christ of the members of the community all their daily life. This liturgical life is not lived only when a believer participates in a common worship whatever it is, but it dwells within his heart even when he is alone in his room. In other words “liturgy” is a life that the Church practices, through which she acknowledges her nature and realizes her message and attains her own existence, life and growth in Jesus Christ.

In fact, we use the word “liturgy” for common worship, as the believer participates in this worship among the members of the community. This membership is alive and active and it represents a part of his life. He is a member even when he is alone speaking with God in his own room. The holy community is in the heart of the real believer, and the believer is within the heart of the Church community. In other words, when a believer prays in his room, he realizes that all the Church is within his heart, praying in her name, calling God: “Our Father” and not “My Father Who

art in heaven". At the same time, when the community prays it realizes its members, present and absent, with love.

The Characteristics of the Coptic Liturgies

1. *The Coptic liturgies are not monopolized by clergymen. They are the liturgies of all the Church, laymen and clergymen.* The people participate in the hymns, prayers and responses. Therefore the clergymen should pray in the language of the people, clearly and with a pleasant tone, as the people take their turn in participating. Here the "people" means all the congregation: men, women, and children. The Coptic Church does not exclude the children during the liturgy. This is one of the causes of the Church's strength in Egypt, for even the child feels his positive membership and acknowledges his right in participating in the Church liturgies. The beautiful rites and heavenly hymns encourage the children in worship without feeling bored, in spite of the lengthy services.

2. The Coptic liturgies not only characterize the Church unity, clergy and laity, young and old, men and women, but also *aim at revealing the heavenly life* as near and realizable to us. All the Coptic liturgies have eschatological (heavenly) attitude. In the liturgies, the Church participates in the hymns of the heavenly creatures, its thoughts are attracted to acknowledge the hidden mysteries of heaven. For example, the liturgy of marriage attracts our thoughts to the heavenly marriage of our souls to Christ and also to the crowns of the saints.

3. *The Coptic liturgies are correlated to the Church dogmas and doctrines.* The rites and texts instruct in simple ways even the children about the Church faith, her concepts and dogmas concerning: God; our relation with Him; our relation with the heavenly hosts and saints; our holy view towards the world and our bodies; our struggle against the devil and his angels etc . . . The liturgy is the school of the people which opens its doors to the children through its simplicity and to the theologians through its depth.

The Coptic liturgies reveal the Church dogmas without the need of any theological discussions. At the same time, the dogmas fill the liturgies with genuine theological concepts during our worship.

4. *The Coptic liturgies are correlated to the ascetic Church life.* Asceticism has its effect on our liturgies as it appears in the long duration of the services and frequent kneelings during them. Liturgies soothe and delight the ascetic person. For example, in the service of the Holy Week and Good Friday, although the believers fast for long periods and abstain from many kinds of food yet they feel true consolation, which they rarely attain in other occasions during the year. The daily eucharistic liturgies in the Lent season grant the believers spiritual delight of particular character.

5. *The Coptic liturgies are biblical,* every liturgy declares the word of God and the experience of the evangelic life. They contain readings from the Holy Bible, the Old and New Testaments, especially the book of Psalms, Epistles of St. Paul, the

Catholic Epistles and the Gospels. They also present the prayers and hymns quoted from the Bible and carry evangelic thoughts. Thus we can say that the liturgies are totally presented in the spirit of the Bible.

6. *The Coptic liturgies touch the believers' daily life* and also their family life, for they are the "dynamic energy" which move their lives, there is no separation between the common worship and actual life. In other words, the believers practice the common worship as a part of their lives as a whole.

To explain the correlation between the liturgical life of the common worship and the daily life for the Copts, we here give some examples:

a. The priest and the laity acknowledge the liturgy of the Eucharist as a meeting around the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as an entrance to Golgotha, so that they all may sit under the shadow of the Cross (Cant. 2:3). The priest puts his hand on the "Lamb" (Holy Bread) and prays for his family, his spiritual children and for all the people. He prays for the repentance of those who stray away, for the solution of Church problems and family disputes, and for those who are in trouble that God may intervene by His Divine grace. He also prays for those who are traveling, for the sick and for those who have departed in the Lord.

The Coptic people have used to ask the priest to remember them and their problems on the altar of the Lord and they themselves participate with him in asking God. Thus, the Copts find their comfort in the liturgy of the Eucharist, as they find the precious Blood of Jesus Christ as the expiation for their sins (1 John 4:10), and a source of their inner peace.

b. Through the various liturgies believers acknowledge the motherhood of the Church and the fatherhood of the priest as a figure and shadow of God's Fatherhood. Therefore, the Copts flee to the Church as their own refuge in the important and trifling things, in their sad and in their happy circumstances, because of their trust in her and their love of her. For example, when God grants a family a baby, the Church prays a special "liturgy" for washing the babe in the eighth day of his birth. The priest, deacons, family and friends participate in giving thanks and praise to God, asking Him to act in the baby that he may grow in the grace of God as a saintly member of the Church. When a person succeeds in any work usually he asks for giving thanks to God by praying a special doxology through or after the eucharistic liturgy. When a person falls ill he asks for praying the liturgy of the unction. When a person dies the Church prays the funeral service and on the third day prays a common prayer at his house to declare God's consolation through the resurrection of Christ in the third day, and in every memorial the priest mentions the name of the dead person in the eucharistic liturgy (the diptychs).

Thus, the Church does not interfere in the lives of her children but through love participates in all their occasions, that they may feel her motherhood and her sharing in their feelings.

THE MESSIAH IN THE SO-CALLED GOSPEL OF BARNABAS

Boulos Ayad Ayad, Ph.D.

Introduction

The name “Messiah” is equivalent to the name “Christ” and is derived from the verb of the Hebrew root “ma.shahh,” meaning “to smear, and so to anoint.” Messiah means anointed or anointed one; its equivalent in Greek is Khristos, or Christ.¹ The names “Christ” and “Messiah” are used in the Koran on different occasions, but they never refer to the Prophet of Islam, Mohammed, as the so-called Gospel of Barnabas did.

The author of the Gospel of Barnabas removed all titles and divine epithets of Jesus and used some of them to refer to the Prophet of Islam even though the Koran and the Muslims did not use the name of “Christ” or “Messiah” to refer to their prophet.

The Book of Barnabas claims that Jesus spoke of Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam, as one who would come after him and would be the Messiah. At the same time, this book states that Jesus denied he was the Messiah. The Koran states the following in reference to Mohammed: “Mohammed is not the father of any one of your men, but the Messenger of God, and the Seal of the Prophets.”² Another portion states: “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.’ ”³ These statements prove that the so-called Gospel of Barnabas is a Muslim book, not a Christian one. Christ gave no such prophecy according to His words in the Four Gospels.

Throughout the ages, the name of Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam, was never mentioned in any of the books of the Jewish people, such as The Old Testament, the Talmud, the Mishnah, the Gemarah, the Midrash, the Kabbalah, the Zohar and the Siddur (liturgy),⁴ or the books of the Christians such as: The New Testament, the Apocrypha, the books of the traditional churches such as the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt, the Syriac Orthodox Church of Syria, the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church of Rome, and the Chris-

tian Protestant churches. For this reason the Christians do not believe in Islam.

The following paragraphs come from the Book of Barnabas.

From the So-Called Gospel of Barnabas

The Messenger of God is the Messiah:

“Then said Jesus: ‘And the messenger of God when he shall come, of what lineage will he be?’

The disciples answered: ‘Of David.’

Whereupon Jesus said: If the messenger of God whom ye call Messiah were son of David, how should David call him lord? Believe me for verily I say to you, that the promise was made in Ishmael, not in Isaac.”⁵

The coming of the Messiah after Jesus:

Jesus answered: “I am indeed sent to the house of Israel as a prophet of salvation, but after me shall come the Messiah, sent of God to all the world; for whom God hath made the world. And then through all the world will God be worshipped, and mercy received, insomuch that the year of jubilee, which now cometh every hundred years, shall by the Messiah be reduced to every year in every place.”⁶

The time of the Messiah:

“After the prayer of midnight the disciples came near unto Jesus, and he said to them: ‘This night shall be in the time of the Messiah, messenger of God, the jubilee every year - that now cometh every hundred years.’”⁷

Jesus is not the Messiah:

The priest said: “In the book of Moses it is written that our God must send us the Messiah, who shall come to announce to us that which God willeth, and shall bring to the world the mercy of God.”

Then Jesus answered: ‘It is true that God hath so promised, but indeed I am not he, for he is made before me, and shall come after me.’ ”⁸

The coming of the Messiah from the South:

“ . . . Jesus answered whereupon God will have mercy upon the world, and will send his messenger for whom he hath made all things; who shall come from the south with power, and shall destroy the idols with the idolaters.”⁹

The consolation of Jesus:

“Then said Jesus: ‘With your words I am not consoled, because where ye hope for light darkness shall come; but my consolation is in the coming of the messenger, who shall destroy every false opinion of me, and his faith shall spread and shall take hold of the whole world.’ ”¹⁰

The name of the Messiah:

"Then said the priest: 'How shall the Messiah be called, and what sign shall reveal his coming?'"

Jesus answered: "The name of the Messiah is admirable, for God himself gave him the name when he had created his soul, and placed it in a celestial splendour. God said: "Wait Mohammed; for thy sake I will to create paradise, the world, and a great multitude of creatures."'¹¹

Conclusion

In the four gospels Christ warns the people of the world to beware of false prophets and not to believe anyone claiming to be a prophet from God. "And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. But he who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."¹²

In another place He says: "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Lo, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, 'Lo, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out, if they say, 'Lo, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it."¹³

Before Christ there were many Jewish prophets who brought messages from God and advised the people by stating morals and principles which they should follow. They told the people there is only one God. "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god,"¹⁴ or "I am God, and there is no other"¹⁵ were typical of the messages delivered from God by the prophets. A description of God is given in the Old Testament, and such description has been accepted by the Christians throughout the ages.

The Koran describes the coming of Jesus as "The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that he committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him."¹⁶ Whereas it is stated in the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."¹⁷ "God was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."¹⁸

Notes

1. William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (New York: Pillar Books, second printing, 1976), pp. 287, 400.
2. A. J. Arberry, trans. *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), Vol. 2, Chapter 33; *The Confederates*: 40.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, Chapter 61, *The Ranks*: 6.
4. Harry Gersh, *The Sacred Books of the Jews* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972).

5. *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), Chapter 45.
6. *Ibid.*, Chapter 82.
7. *Ibid.*, Chapter 83.
8. *Ibid.*, Chapter 96.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, Chapter 97.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *The Holy Bible* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1952), Mt. 24:11-14.
13. *Ibid.*, Mt. 24:24-26.
14. *Ibid.*, Isaiah 44:6.
15. *Ibid.*, Isaiah 45:22; see also *ibid.*, Is. 45:44, 45, 46, 48.
16. *The Koran Interpreted*, op. cit., Vol. 1, Chapter 4, The Women: 69.
17. *The Holy Bible*, op. cit., Jn. 1:1-2.
18. *Ibid.*, I Tim. 3:16.

HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS OF THE COPTIC CHURCH UNDER THE SWORD OF ISLAM

Raef Marcus, D.M.D.

With the eighth century coming to a close, the “Abbassids” were in the peak of their power ruling from Baghdad a vast empire that extended from the Asian steppe to the French-Spanish border. Egypt, being part of that Muslim Empire, was administered by an Arab governor. Under the “Abbassid” rule, the tenure of the governor was more precarious, to the extent that during the reign of Haroun El-Rashid (786-809), the governor of Egypt was changed 21 times.

The Christian population of Egypt started to decline. The power and wealth of the native Copts declined sharply too, partly due to Arab immigration and to the intermittent periods of persecution and the continuous oppression imposed upon them.

Abba Mena I (AD 768-774)

When the blessed Father Abba Michael went to his rest in glory in 768 AD, the assembly met together with the bishops and elected Mena, a monk from the Monastery of St. Macarius. His biographer describes him as a man who excited general admiration by his conduct and spirituality. As soon as he was ordained to the patriarchal dignity, he imparted the spiritual doctrine, so that everyone marvelled at his admirable teaching, and the Church increased and flourished in peace for a while.

A Church in Egypt, in peace and increase and administered by a popular and energetic Patriarch, is totally unacceptable to the Muslim ruler in all ages. So El-Mansur Abu-Jafar (754-774) decided to depose Abba Mena and replace him by one of his puppets. It was not uneasy to find a traitor, and an Egyptian monk by the name Peter provided the alternative to the Caliph, who issued a decree addressed to the governor of Egypt, Abdullah ibn Ahd El-Rahman (769-772), directing him to enforce appointing that Peter to replace the Patriarch Abba Mena. The latter was imprisoned together with a few of his closest associates and some bishops.

The Caliph’s appointee, Peter, was unable to claim his authority, nor was he able to enter any Egyptian church. He also failed to assemble the bishops under his

jurisdiction. He was met with unanimous opposition from the bishops and the people. The governor, in revenge, imprisoned all the bishops of Egypt and kept them in jail with irons upon their necks and feet.

The Patriarch Mena and the bishops were compelled to work in the arsenal and build ships for the fleet, pitching the ships and doing other manual labor. For three years, they worked among ash heaps in Fustat, and at the end of every day they were taken back to the prison. Relief only came when the governor was replaced by Musa El-Lakhmi, from the Lakhmi tribe, who had political ambitions and had in mind to use the popular Patriarch in his ambitions.

In the meantime Peter denounced the Christian faith and adopted Islam, changing his name to Abu-El-Kheir and was given a prominent position in the administration.

After these events, Abba Mena went to his rest and departed this life in peace.

Abba John IV (AD 775-799)

In 798, the governor of Egypt Ismail ibn Issa, with instructions from the Abbassid Caliph Haroun El-Rashid, took upon himself to demolish all the churches in Egypt. He pulled down nearly every church in the land of Egypt and put on fire the icons and holy books. He bore heavily on the Copts, forbade them to wear the same bur-nous like Muslims, introduced a system of badges to be worn by monks and a new era of fierce persecution continued for almost a year. It came to an end with the violent death of Ismail ibn Issa, and his successor El-Laith ibn El-Fadl was more tolerant. He gave permission to the Copts to open their demolished churches and clean out the ashes from those which his predecessor had began to pull down, but he did not bid them rebuild those churches. We can read in history books that the last liturgy celebrated by the Patriarch John in 28th of Kihak, which was Christmas eve, was in a church without a roof.

Abba Mark II (AD 799-819)

After the death of the Patriarch John, Abba Michael bishop of Misr summoned all the chiefmen at Misr and went to the governor El-Laith ibn El-Fadl. He asked them, "What is your business?" Abba Michael replied, "We like to inform you that our father is dead." Then the governor asked, "What then do you desire?" They answered, "There are heavy taxes upon the Church and therefore we desire to appoint a successor to him to administer the affairs of the Church." Then the governor inquired, "And what is his name?" They said that it was Mark. So he ordered that Mark's name should be written in the Diwan and gave them permission to appoint him. And that was the only way to seat a Patriarch on the Apostolic throne of St. Mark since then and up to the present time in the twentieth century Egypt.

Now with the turn of the century it should be mentioned that during the last years of the eighth century, the government of Egypt under the Abbassids was disturbed by frequent insurrections. There was already growing schism in Islam, the bitter enmity between the Shi-a and the Sonnis, already divided the Muslims. The Arab

tribes which have been imported early in the eighth century were continually in a state of rebellion. The tribes of Khargis, the Arab tribes at Hawf and the tribes at Barka were gaining power and strength.

A new source of trouble came by the arrival in Alexandria in 798 AD of over 25,000 Andalusian refugees, banished from Spain by the Ommiads who ruled there. They landed in Alexandria and had been a factor in the political unrest since they allied themselves with the powerful Arab tribes of Lakhm and Malajite. With the death of Haroun El-Rashid in 809 the allied insurgents of Andalusians and Lakhmites and Malajites rose against the government of Egypt, and seized Alexandria in 819 AD.

During the fighting the Arabs plundered the desert of Scete, the site of the great Egyptian monasteries, all of which were demolished, all of its churches burned down, thousands of monks were killed or taken captives, and the holy elders were scattered in the desert. The beautiful Scete which was like the Garden of Eden, the Holy of Holies of Egypt, became a ruin and a dwelling of wild beasts. The places of our blessed Fathers who passed their nights in prayer, became the resorts of owls and the dens of cruel foxes, namely the foul tribes of Khargis and Lakhmites.

With these trials and griefs which Abba Mark was enduring, this holy man did not cease to weep night and day for the distress and grief which had come to the holy monasteries and their inhabitants. Finally, the Patriarch was attacked by a fever, and in a few days he departed the treachery of the Muslim conquerors after celebrating the Easter Liturgy in 819 AD.

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MODERN COPTIC SAINTS

SAINT SARABAMON

BISHOP OF MINUFIAH

Rodolph Yanney, M.D.

Early Life

Very little is known about the early years of Saint Sarabamon except that he was born in the Province of Sharqiyah in lower Egypt and he was given the name Salib, the Arabic word for cross, on his birth. He had very little education and he grew up to become an oil-vendor in Cairo. Carrying his oil vessels on a donkey, he used to go from street to street calling upon his merchandise. For years he led a very simple and monotonous life, working all day and spending his nights by himself where he dwelled alone in one of the slums of Cairo. His spiritual life was limited to the prayers he remembered from his childhood and which he practiced every day.

Then a strange incident interrupted his daily routine and dramatically changed his life in a new direction. One day, during his daily rounds, a woman threw her dead illicit child at the feet of his donkey and quickly disappeared in the crowd. The people thought that the donkey trod on the infant and killed it. Salib was arrested and accused of its death. He denied the charge and wept, but had nothing to say against the eye witnesses. He would have been jailed had not the truth been miraculously discovered. He was released, but the world was not the same for him. He could not tolerate its sins and sufferings any more. He left everything, which was not much, and went to the Eastern Desert, to the Monastery of Saint Antony the Great.

His name was changed from Salib the oil-vendor to Salib of St. Antony. Otherwise his years in the monastery brought no outstanding events for his biographer to record. Finally his hidden life, known only to God, came to an end, probably in the early years of the nineteenth century, when he was chosen and ordained as bishop of Minufiah and Buhayrah and given the name Anba Sarabamon.

The Bishop

Beside his responsibility to his diocese Anba Sarabamon became the assistant to the Patriarch Pope Peter VII (1809-1852). As a bishop, he did not change his

monastic life of poverty, humility and worship. His food consisted mostly of powdered rice which he used to eat on a wooden plate. Once a rich family in Cairo sent to him in his cell at the Patriarchate a dish of fried chickens, but he left it untouched for three days till his servant had to throw it away. Wherever he stayed he spent the greater part of the night in prayer, then he lay on the floor, using his shoes as a pillow.

Anba Sarabamon loved the poor and served them by himself. He used to carry flour and food to the families which were in need but were too shy to ask. A servant of the Patriarchate saw him one night carrying a heavy basket on his shoulder. He did not recognize him because his dress was unremarkable and his face was covered except for his eyes. Thinking he was a thief he followed him till he saw him stop by a door at which he knocked and delivered the basket without uttering a word. The servant then tried to catch him and was startled to find that he was his master, Anba Sarabamon.

The bishop himself was poor and did not carry money. Once he got six hundred dollars and decided to buy with it a property for the Patriarchate; so he gave the money to his servant. After a few days the servant came to the bishop in tears, because the money was stolen. The bishop tried to comfort him and said, "Have faith in God, my son; He is able to restore the money for us." Meanwhile the thief could not stand the reproaches of his conscience and hurried to the bishop with the money sack, falling before him in repentance. It was reported that the thief had kept the money in a safe box, but every time he went to get something to spend he saw a vision of Anba Sarabamon beside the box and he had to run away. The bishop not only forgave the man, but also gave him a part of the money and advised him to come back for help if he became in need.

Anba Sarabamon knew how to care for his flock. He used to go in an annual tour visiting all the churches in his diocese. He came to the people in their homes and solved their familial and marital problems. During all his long episcopate he never allowed a single divorce. When a case came to him which he could not solve peacefully he used to say to the innocent partner, "Come to me next year, God willing, and I will have you married." It often happened that before the appointed time the guilty spouse died and the other married.

Once a man came to him in a state of great anger asking to divorce his wife who had left him and even was seen in a brothel. The bishop spoke quietly to him and said, "Maybe it was another woman that was seen in that place." He asked the man to wait one day during which he would investigate the matter. The investigation showed the truth of the charge against the wife. The bishop then called her and kept reproaching her till she repented. He then kept her in the house of a priest asking him to come the next day to discuss her problem in front of the husband as if she had come to take refuge in his house because of the cruelty of her spouse. The priest came in time and met the bishop and husband and spoke as he had been told adding

that he could not support the woman any more. The bishop asked him to bring her and he did. The husband saw that she was his wife and thought she was all the time at the priest's house. The cause of their quarrels was discussed and they made peace with one another before the bishop. The husband took his wife home and they led together a peaceful life afterwards.

The Wonder Worker

It was not strange that this simple and humble bishop would be given spiritual gifts, especially the powers for exorcism, healing and clairvoyance. Soon the Patriarchate was filled with people from all the country who were sick or possessed. The history of the Coptic Patriarchs mentions under Pope Peter VII the story of the healing of Zohra, the daughter of Mohammed Ali Pasha the Ruler of Egypt. After all physicians had failed to treat her, the Moslem Ruler was advised to get the help of the Patriarch. Knowing the gift of Anba Sarabamon, the Patriarch asked him to go to the palace where she lived. This was a big place filled with soldiers and other people. The bishop was well received and admitted at once to see the princess. As soon as he started prayer, she had a fit and fell screaming to the floor. The bishop was frightened and said in a sad voice, "How great is your sin, Salib!", and he tearfully cried to the Lord, "O Jesus, glorify Your right hand and give triumph to Your church." Finishing his prayer he drew the sign of the Cross over a glass of water which he then sprinkled upon the face of the princess. She instantly recovered. There was great rejoicing in the palace and her father quickly came and tried to compensate the Bishop by offering him a sack of gold pieces which was reported to total four thousand pounds. But the Bishop did not touch it saying, "I have no right to gain, through the gifts of God, what He does not make me in need of. My dress, as you see, is a coat of red wool, and my meals consist of bread and cooked lentils." He asked the Ruler instead to re-instate the Christian government employees whom he had previously dismissed. The Ruler consented, but at his insistence, the Bishop took a few coins which he later distributed among the soldiers and servants as he was leaving the palace.

In another story a man possessed by an evil spirit was brought by his family to the Patriarch. He asked them to wait till Anba Sarabamon is called. At this time Abram, bishop of Jerusalem, who happened to be with the Patriarch, spoke to him, "We obtain the gifts through you. Why don't you pray for the sick man without waiting for the Bishop?" The Pope answered humbly, "Brother, everyone of us has his gift." Still the Bishop was not convinced and finally the Patriarch had to tell him, "You are a bishop as well as he is. Go ahead and pray for the sick man." The Bishop rose and prayed over the sick man, with no result. He had to admit his failure. Later Bishop Sarabamon came and was asked by the Pope to lead the prayer for the sick man. He tried to be excused but he finally agreed to pray on condition that he should use the cross of the Pope to bless the man with, and that the Pope should help him with his prayer while he is in his room. Anba Sarabamon then went downstairs and as soon

as he started praying over the man, the evil spirit left him crying. "You are tormenting me. How can I tolerate both you and the one upstairs?"

People had many stories to tell about the miracles and wonders which they attributed to the man of God; paralysed brought back to their feet, infants taken by their mothers alive from their deathbed, barren women giving birth to children.

Stories were also told about the punishment brought by God against those who tried to harm the Bishop. A highwayman was stricken with palsy when he tried to attack him, while he was travelling with his disciple. At another time, when he was walking in a Cairo street, he was held by a prostitute who tried to annoy him, but she soon cried from pain in the hand that touched him and was relieved only when he prayed for her.

When a cholera epidemic came to Egypt, no one was stricken by it in any of the houses he visited. Sometimes he knew of events that happened in far-away places. At the time Bishop Macarius of Assuit died and again when Bishop Yusab of Fayum died, Anba Sarabamon told the Patriarch that he saw them at the time they gave up the spirit.

Such a life that glorified God could not be left alone. When Abbas Pasha, the new Ruler of Egypt, ordered the magicians and astrologers to be killed, some people gave him the name of the Saint as one of the magicians. Their proof was the healing of Princess Zohra. The Bishop was called to the palace. It was Good Friday when he met the Ruler. He asked him in contempt, "Are you a magician?" He answered, "I am a poor man." The ruler again asked, "Aren't you the one who cured Lady Zohra?" The angry Bishop instantly screamed in his face saying, "This is the power of God" The ruler was frightened and trembly cried, "Peace, Father." The Saint was then treated with great kindness and respect.

But the man of God had greater trouble from the spirit of pride. Two of his priests once heard him rebuking himself using very cruel words, "Salib, do you think that you have been given the gift of healing? Do you see how sinful and filthy you are? Salib, can you expell away the devils or cure the sick? . . . Brother, this is the power of God with which you conquer the devils. This is the power of God!"

Last Days

Saint Sarabamon lived to an old age. His vision became poor and when he stood in church to read the gospel in Coptic he was heard calling 'the Mother of Light' to assist him. Through all his life the Holy Virgin had been his helper and always came to his rescue.

He lived till AD 1853, the first year of the martyr Pope Kyrillos IV. When he died he was buried in the tomb of the Patriarchs in the cathedral of St. Mark in Cairo, together with the Patriarchs Mark VIII and Peter VII.

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- (2) Kamel S. Nakhla: *History of the Popes Patriarchs of Alexandria, Series V*: 165-175 (in Arabic).
- (3) TawfiQ Iskaros: *Biographies of Illustrious and Famous Copts in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. 1*: 131-156; *Vol. 2*: 309-10; 380-1 (in Arabic).

CURRENTS IN COPTIC CHURCH STUDIES

THE ARAMAEANS IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

The book *Aramaeans in the Ancient Near East* by Boulos Ayad Ayad is written in the Arabic language and published by the Coptic Orthodox Church of Saint Mary and Saint Pishoy, Los Angeles, California, 1986. Dr. Ayad is a professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Colorado, has studied the ancient Middle East for many years, and is well versed on the subject of the Aramaeans.

The book, which contains 26 chapters in addition to references and two maps, begins with the origin of the Aramaeans and how they established themselves in various countries, starting from the Arabian Peninsula and later emigrating to Mesopotamia. The first states which they established in Mesopotamia were Aram Nahirm and Fadden Aram in the north. In Mesopotamia they established their nationality and from there emigrated to different places in Syria. Zobah was the first state which they established in Syria. Later, Damascus replaced Zobah in importance and became the strongest state in Syria until Assyria occupied it and put an end to its power in 732 B.C. This same fate befell most of the Aramaean states in Mesopotamia following heavy fighting between the Aramaeans and the Assyrians.

Following the fall of the Assyrian empire, the second Babylonian empire fought the Aramaeans in the lower part of Mesopotamia until they were eliminated.

Between the sixth century B.C. and the second century B.C. the Aramaeans and the Israelites made their way to Egypt where they mingled with each other, working as mercenaries in the Persian garrisons, one of which was Elephantine and Aswan.

Archaeologists on the island of Elephantine have discovered over 2,000 papyri written in Aramaic, but none written in Hebrew. From these papyri we have been able to learn about the social life of these people, some aspects of their religion, including their holy days, their marriage and divorce rules, the rights of women, and the fact that some women adopted slaves. We also know there was a temple to the god Yehu erected in Elephantine. These papyri also included information concerning loans, loan contracts, and contracts for houses and land.

In 404 B.C. when the Egyptians revolted against the Persians, the Jewish Aramaeans underwent considerable persecution. The community of Elephantine and Aswan continued until its total disappearance in the second century B.C.

In later periods the two kingdoms of the Nabateans and Palmyra appeared in the Middle East. Both of these kingdoms used the Aramaic language and remained active until the Romans interfered and occupied Palmyra in the third century A.D. and the Nabateans in the second century A.D.

There is no doubt that the Aramaeans played a great role in the civilization of the ancient Middle East. They had their religion and deity, their art, and their own language, which became an international language in the fifth century B.C. Their alphabet and dialects were widely used throughout the Middle East.

The Aramaeans in the Ancient Near East gives full details of the lives of the Aramaeans and discusses their relationship with the Israelites, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Egyptians as well as the Greeks and Romans. This book is considered to be the first published in Arabic on this topic and is valuable for study for those who specialize in the area of the ancient Middle East or the student of ancient history, archaeology, or the Aramaic language. It is written clearly, well organized and is highly recommended by many scholars.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Eucharist. "Message of the Fathers of the Church,7"

By Daniel J. Sheerin. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1986. Pp. 395. \$19.95 (Cloth); \$15.95 (Paperback).

The *Journal* has already reviewed three volumes from this new series on the Church Fathers, and is planning for more. Each book is written by a patristic scholar who can handle the Fathers in their original languages and who is specialized in the subject he deals with. The quotations from the Fathers are in modern English and the comments are written in a language that the serious reader can follow.

There are many good books in English about the Eucharist, and some of them contain collections of patristic writings. However, this reviewer has never seen such a massive anthology; some of the writings are translated for the first time. The book is divided into five sections. Each deals with the Eucharist from a different aspect.

Section I, The Testimony of the Apologists, discusses the responses of the early Fathers to pagan accusations. It tells the reader, in the words of the Fathers, what the early Church taught about the Eucharist as a Sacrifice.

Section II, Eucharistic Instructions, is devoted to the Church teaching within its community and it includes catechesis for the newly baptized, early liturgical commentaries, sermons for Holy Thursday (which was an annual opportunity for eucharistic instruction), and the earliest synthesis of patristic thinking on the Eucharist.

Section III, Scriptural Exegesis and the Eucharist, gives examples of the patristic homilies and commentaries on OT passages dealing with types and prophecies of the Eucharist, and on NT eucharistic texts.

Section IV, The Eucharist and the Christian Community, includes two main topics. The first is the role of the Eucharist as a rule of faith in the refutation of heretical teachings and as a test of unity. The second is concerned with instructions for participation in the Eucharist, frequency of communion and the behavior at the eucharistic assembly.

Section V, Eucharistic Prayers and Chants, contains selections of ancient eucharistic prayers, fraction and communion chants, and hymns for Holy Thursday.

There is a general introduction for each section of the book, and each patristic text is introduced by a short-comment on its author, and its historical occasion. Both the scholarly comments and the rich selections make the book a valuable reference indispensable for both the scholar and the general reader.

Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church.

By Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty. Ontario, Canada: St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church (P.O. Box 6970, Station J, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada), 1987. Pp. 244. No Price.

The reader who is searching for one book that summarizes the history, belief and spirituality of the Coptic Church will not find better than this volume which is written by a prominent Coptic theologian. Father Malaty is a member of the editorial board of this journal and has served in various Coptic churches in Egypt, Australia, Canada and the United States. He has represented the Coptic Church in many ecumenical meetings.

The greater part of the book presents a survey of the history of the Coptic Church from the first century till the present day. Each era is concluded by a comment on the work of its important Coptic personalities. The reader will pass by the Fathers of the School of Alexandria from the second to the fourth centuries, the martyrs of the Roman era, the founders and leaders of monasticism in the fourth and fifth centuries, and the Coptic Patriarchs, martyrs, lay theologians and saints who witnessed for their faith and led their people under the long Islamic rule.

The chapter on worship highlights the spirituality of worship in the Coptic Church as manifested in its relation to the Bible, the combination of both liturgy and private worship, the spiritual rites and the role of fasting. The Chapter on Dogmas includes separate sections on God, man and redemption, the Church, the saints, the Sacraments and the Tradition. An important chapter deals with the role of the people, with sections on the role of women and the full participation of children in all the liturgies and sacraments of the Church. The chapter on ecumenical life is rather deficient because it gives an idea of the ecumenical activity of the Copts in the early Church without any comment on their role in the present ecumenical movement. The last chapter, describes the Coptic art and music.

The book is meant to be an introduction to the Coptic Church, not a reference or an encyclopedia. It serves to introduce the Church to a wider circle, but those interested in details have to search for books dealing with specific issues, some of which are written by Father Malaty himself.

Backgrounds of Early Christianity

By Everett Ferguson. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987. Pp. 515. \$24.95 (Paper).

The Moral World of the First Christians

By Wayne A. Meeks. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1986. Pp. 182. \$18.95 (Hardcover).

Although both books deal with one common topic, the backgrounds against which the early Church lived, yet they differ in their approach, content and type of readers they speak to.

Professor Ferguson writes a textbook for the Bible student with little knowledge in Greek and Roman classics and in post-biblical Judaism, and who needs a comprehensive introduction for the historical setting of the New Testament. On the other hand, Professor Meeks limits his book to the question of ethics, giving a historical description of the moral teachings prevalent in the world of early Christianity.

Backgrounds of Early Christianity starts by a short account of the political history of the period. Then it describes in more detail all the aspects of Roman society, including military, social classes, slavery, citizenship, law, marriage, women, children, economic life, entertainment, education and literature. The three major chapters of the book deal with the three existing traditions—Hellenistic-Roman Religions, Philosophies, and Judaism. The different varieties, teachers and sects in these traditions are discussed in a concise yet informative manner, making the book a valuable reference for a confusing subject.

The Moral World of the First Christians is one volume of the series “*Library of Early Christianity*” which is now complete in eight volumes. Other volumes in the series discuss the historical, religious, social, literary and even moral environments. Relying on the latest scholarship, Wayne Meeks succeeds in the present book in bringing to life the social, the cultural and the moral horizons in which the early Christians lived. To reach this he had to introduce his readers to some representative voices from the Greek and Roman philosophers, the Jewish writers of the period, and the Christian writers of the first two centuries. Although it is not a comprehensive textbook yet it gives the reader new insights into the moral and ethical teachings of the New Testament books and of its surrounding world.

PATRISTIC CENTRE CAIRO

The writings of the Fathers play an extremely important role in the life of the *Coptic Orthodox Church* and in its teachings. However, most of the texts of these writings are not available in the Arabic language. In view of the great need of the Church in Egypt and in the Arab countries for these writings, the *Centre of Patristic Studies* was founded in Cairo in 1982.

The Centre is designed:

- To translate the writings of the Fathers from their original languages into Arabic.
- To study these writings in order to benefit from the teachings of the Fathers.
- To pursue their thinking in order to have a basis for comparison to the life of the modern-day Church.

In order to realize these aims, the Centre has developed a plan in two phases:

I. Short term phase:

Which has already started. The Centre has translated some of the writings of the Fathers from English and others from Greek and has published them.

- *Texts translated from English:*
 1. The fifty sermons of Saint Macarius the Egyptian.
 2. Letters of Saint Antony the Great.
 3. Writings on the Holy Spirit of Saint Ambrose (3 Volumes).
- *Texts translated from Greek:*
 1. The book *Against the Arians* by Saint Anthanasius (Vol. I, II).
 2. Three letters by Saint Athanasius.
 - a) to Sarapion.
 - b) to Adelphos.
 - c) to Apectius.

II. Long term phase:

The Centre has undertaken to send graduated people with a scholarship from the Greek Ministry of foreign affairs (Dep. of churches) to study theology at the univer-

sities of Athens and Salonica. Those receiving such scholarships are active members of the Church.

These people are also intended to study ancient Greek and specialize in Patrology in order to fulfill the Centre's requirements.

At present, there are ten such people in various stages of their studies. Four of them have already completed their theological studies in Athens and Salonica and are now continuing their studies in Patrology at the University of Athens and others in Universities of W. Germany and France supported by various church bodies.

The Centre which has been newly established needs your contribution and support in the following areas:

1. Either to cover the financial needs of the students or to offer new scholarships.
2. To establish an extensive academic Library specifically for the writings of the Fathers. The Centre is in need of reference books containing the texts in their original languages, and also those containing recent studies about texts, as well as dictionaries and other reference books.
3. To supply equipments such as typewriters, copiers, to facilitate the work of the Centre in accomplishing its aims.
4. To share in the expenses of publishing these books (due to limited finances of the readers the Centre distributes its publications at cost price).

Thank you in advance for your support of this Mission and for your appreciation of the Centre's needs.

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Special Issues: We are planning for special issues on:

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Saint Cyril of Alexandria

We welcome scholarly and general articles on these or related subjects, as well as translations from the original languages.

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*THE SEVEN MAJOR FEASTS OF OUR LORD

** *The Seven Minor Feasts of Our Lord*

*** Feasts of Virgin Mary

**** Fasts

* January 7 - **CHRISTMAS**

** January 15 - *Circumcision of Our Lord*

**** January 19 - Paramoni (1)

* January 20 - **EPIPHANY**

** January 22 - *First Miracle of Our Lord at Cana*

*** January 30 - Dormition of Virgin Mary

**** February 1 - Fast of Nineveh (3)

**** February 15 - Great Lent (55)

** February 16 - *Entrance of Our Lord into the Temple*

March 19 - Feast of the Cross

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

* April 3 - **ENTRANCE OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM
(PALM SUNDAY)**

** April 7 - *Holy Thursday*

* April 10 - **EASTER**

** April 17 - *St. Thomas' Sunday*

*** May 9 - Birth of Virgin Mary

* May 19 - **ASCENSION**

* May 29 - **PENTECOST**

**** May 30 - Apostles' Fast (43)

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

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

September 27 - Feast of the Cross

**** November 25 - Christmas Fast (43)

*** December 12 - Presentation of Virgin Mary into the Temple