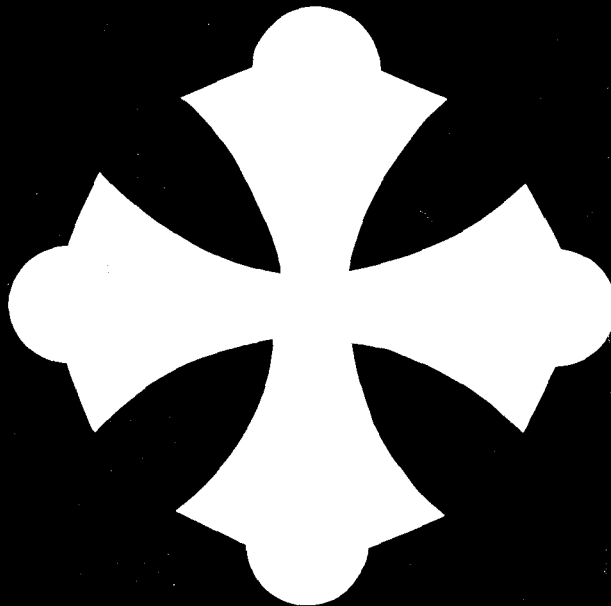


COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

Volume 10, Number 2 Summer 1989

- ***THE STRANGE DEATH OF COPTIC CULTURE***
- ***COPTIC REVOLT IN THE NINTH CENTURY***
- ***ORDINATION OF WOMEN: COPTIC
ORTHODOX VIEW***



Society of Coptic Church Studies

EDITORIAL BOARD

Bishop Wissa
(Al-Balyana, Egypt)

Bishop Antonious Markos
(Coptic Church, African Affairs)

Bishop Isaac
(Quesna, Egypt)

Bishop Dioscorus
(Coptic Church, Egypt)

Fr. Tadros Malaty
(Alexandria, Egypt)

Professor Fayek Ishak
(Ontario, Canada)

Professor Shaker Basilius
(Cairo, Egypt)

William El-Meiry, Ph.D.
(N.J., U.S.A.)

Girgis A. Ibrahim, Ph.D.
(Minnesota, U.S.A.)

Esmat Gabriel, Ed.D.
(PA., U.S.A.)

EDITOR

Rodolph Yanney, M.D.

© Copyright 1989
by Coptic Church Review
Lebanon, PA

Subscription and Business Address:
Post Office Box 714
E. Brunswick, NJ 08816

Editorial Address:
Post Office Box 1113
Lebanon, PA 17042

Subscription Price (1 year)
U.S.A. \$7.00
Canada \$8.00 (U.S. dollars)
Overseas \$10.00

Articles are indexed in *Religion Index One: Periodicals*; book reviews are indexed in *Index to Book Reviews in Religion*. Both indexes are published by the American Theological Library Association, Chicago, available online through BRS Information Technologies (Latham, New York) and DIALOG Information Services (Palo Alto, California).

Abstracts of articles appear in *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, Myerstown, PA 17067.

COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

A Quarterly of Contemporary Patristic Studies

ISSN 0273-3269

Volume 10, Number 2 Summer 1989

34 *About This Issue*

35 *The Strange Death of Coptic Culture*
L.S.B. MacCoull

46 *Lone Revolt: The Ninth Century Copts*
Raef Marcus

50 *Message to Lambeth*
John Watson

53 *The Cross as Tree of Life*
Jack Phillips

55 *Basili Botros*
Boulos A. Ayad

58 *Book Reviews*
• *The Celtic Vision*
• *Patrology*
• *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity*
• *Hermeneutics and Theological Method in Origen*

63 *Book Notices*
Biblical Interpretation-ISBE-Coptologia

64 *Books Received*

Microfilm and microfiche copies of previous issues and articles are available from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

In *'The Strange Death of Coptic Culture'* Dr. Leslie S. B. MacCoull, examining century, follows the gradual decline of the Coptic language till its use in the daily life ceased. This paper was originally delivered at the 'Colloquium on Late Antiquity and Early Islam' held in the University of London in June 1986; the foot-notes have been updated. Dr. MacCoull, a frequent contributor to this *Journal*, is a senior research scholar at the Society for Coptic Archaeology.

A more saddening chapter in the history of the Copts and of the Church of Alexandria is touched upon by Dr. Raef Marcus in his article, *'Lone Revolt: The Ninth Century Copts.'* This is a continuation of his series, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church under the Sword of Islam*. His previous articles appeared in Volume 3, No. 4; volume 4, No. 1 and 4; volume 5, No. 4; and volume 8, No. 4.

In spite of the decline of their culture, the loss of their language, and the centuries of endless persecution and humiliation, the faith of the Copts is still alive and they still witness to the Christian truth by which their ancient fathers lived and for which they died. This is evident from three articles in this issue, written by an Anglican from England, a Presbyterian from the U.S., and a Copt who lives in America. In *'A Coptic Orthodox Message to Lambeth'*, Dr. John Watson discusses the viewpoint of the Coptic Church regarding the ordination of women, as outlined by Bishop Bishoi of Damietta in the Anglican conference at Canterbury last summer. In *'The Cross as Tree of Life in the Coptic Church'*, Jack Phillips illustrates the enormous depth of Coptic Spirituality. He teaches Theology at College of St. Mary in Omaha, Nebraska. He is of Arab Christian heritage and has traveled widely in the Middle East. Professor Boulos A. Ayad gives an account of the life of *Basili Botros* (1882-1921), the lay theologian who founded the Society of the Friends of the Holy Bible in Egypt and thus became one of the pioneers in the spiritual revival in the Coptic Church earlier this century. Dr. Ayad has contributed extensively to this *Journal*.

Editor

THE STRANGE DEATH OF COPTIC CULTURE*

L.S.B. MacCoull, Ph.D.

To the June 1981 neomartyrs of Cairo

as your mother tongue. It is just possible, or was until twelve years ago, to be born in Abyssinia and have some sort of meaningful relationship with Ge'ez. It is of course quite possible to be born in Thessalonica or Erevan, or Boston, Paris, Fresno, California, or Queens, New York, and speak Armenian or Greek. It is not possible to be born in Egypt and understand a single word of Coptic; it has not been possible for eight hundred years. Why is this the case?

The Coptic culture of Christian Egypt, which had flourished in high originality and creativity in the sixth and early seventh centuries, was more thoroughly submerged than was any other of the high cultures of the Christian Orient by the effects of the Arab/Islamic conquest. A particularly troubling and unexplained feature of this cultural extinction is the death of the Coptic language, a degree of death not undergone by any of the other indigenous languages of Oriens Christianus. With frightening rapidity Coptic culture lost touch with a past about which it had long been ambivalent. This ambivalence had much to do with the pervasive anti-intellectual stance of the Coptic ethos, a disposition the roots and causes of which have never been made plain. The consequences of the Coptic devaluation of learning were to be tragic even up to the present day. Coptic culture in effect self-destructed.

It should be plain that I am investigating the phenomenon of cultural death through that of language death, as language, especially in a world that passed from province to *ahl al-dhimmi* to *millet*, has been *par excellence* the carrier of culture and of identity. The cognitive style of the Coptic mind, its ways of classifying and conceptualising, are embedded in the Coptic language. The death of that language is the loss of a whole way of being human; the story of its death needs to be told. As a documentary papyrologist, I am investigating the materials for that story through collecting and tracing the historical context of Coptic/Arabic bilingual documentary papyri. (The subtitle of this paper might be 'From the documentary papyrologist's point of view'.) The persistence of Coptic as a viable and practical *Umgangssprache* can be followed through tax receipts, marriage contracts, requisitions, orders for payment, cadasters, sales, loans, leases, writing exercises, wordlists, and of course

private letters. Such linguistic continuity, and the access it provided to the life of past times even after it had become plain that the Arab domination was there to stay, for a while permitted what Robert Browning has called '...continuity of values and ideals and terms of reference.'¹ When the continuity was broken, it was broken irreparably and for all time. When around 1800 the bishop of Abutig, just south of Assiut, tried to write a letter in Bohairic, he had used an Arabic *scala* in manuscript and was making obvious direct calques from Arabic in his head.² When around 1900 a railway official in Luxor tried to write a letter in Bohairic to impress a French inspector, he had to use Labib's folk dictionary, with extremely comic results.³

The question of the death of Coptic is not exactly the same as the question of the Arabicisation of Egypt or of the imposition and then domination of the Arabic language, although the matters are of course interrelated. In more than one historical situation it has been the case that the language of the political conquerors is used in public life and for upward social mobility, while the language of the conquered is spoken within families and written in private letters. 'Abd-al-Malik decreed by edict the imposition of Arabic by the end of the seventh century; the real shift seems to have occurred in the late eleventh to early twelfth, if not before. Nothing happened overnight. And in studying bilingualism in Copto-Arabic society let me state that, as a documentary papyrologist, I must leave on one side the large and rich sphere of textual bilingualism in Bible and liturgy. That is a whole different field from that of the persistence of Coptic in daily life. We now know that the first translation programme to produce Gospel texts in Arabic was carried out under Melkite auspices in Syria/Palestine in the late eighth to early ninth centuries, both as pastoral purposes to be used in churches in an area where Arabic already dominated, and with a view to carrying religious apologetic into the camp of the conquerors⁴: this is the work of Sidney Griffith of Washington. The question of the first appearance of an Arabic Bible in Egypt, made by and for the use of Non-Chalcedonian Copts in their own regional variety of Arabic and translated from whatever Coptic, Greek, and Hebrew texts may have been at hand, has hardly been investigated at all, let alone provisionally answered.⁵ Then bilingual liturgical codices, with varying degrees of bilinguality, were produced in Egypt gradually over time. This is a field in which I claim no competence; but it will yield rich results for some future qualified social historian of medieval Egypt.

To return to the documentary papyri. We come up against the question of 'register.' In what context, for what purpose, dealing with what subject-matter, by whom to whom, did one use which language, Coptic or Arabic? (Or a juxtaposition of both.) The most immediate and most important area of direct contact between conquerors and conquered was, of course, the running of the local financial administration. The genres of document mentioned earlier give an idea of the areas in which Coptic remained a viable medium of useful communication. Coptic/Arabic bilingual tax registers and tax receipts are found throughout the eighth century and into the early ninth (e.g. *PERF* 609, 595, 628, 690, 686, 707, 709, 633 in the Vienna

collection; Ryl 236, 237, 259, 401, and 116 from the Hermopolite; BM 1050 from the Hermopolite and 565 and 685 from the Fayum). Some exist dated as late as A.D. 942 (CPR IV 13) and 1006/7 (Ryl 464). The two areas of the Fayum and the Hermopolite nome (the area of Ashmunnein) appear to have been Coptic language strongholds until quite late, although this impression is partly dependent on the nature of our sources, the two great papyrus finds of the late 1880s having come from just those two areas. (Minya remained a town of Coptic merchants until forty years ago.)

To what extent did the conquerors learn the language of the conquered? Again we have evidence from those two regions of Coptic linguistic strength, the Hermopolite and the Fayum. From the latter come BM 580 and 584, letters dated by the editor (Crum) to the ninth to tenth century. The confessional identities of writers and recipients are unmistakable from their names: Ali, Ahmed, Mohammed ibn Abdullah, Abd el-Jabbar. These letters are written *in Coptic* by Moslems to Moslems. Along with the Coptic language, the writers have acquired at least some of the forms of epistolary *politesse* that come with it, conveniently including the (possibly) ambivalent opening formula 'In the name of God first'.⁶ Formulas of 'greeting all the brothers' and 'may God forgive me', quite at home already in Christian Coptic, could of course be filled in by Moslem readers with their own content. In BM 580, Ali for one has not learnt Coptic very well: he has mastered the formula 'I greet you with my whole soul', ⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲭⲏ ⲧⲏⲣⲉ, but he keeps making the noun *psyche* and its modifier masculine. This document thus seems likely to be actually from the hand of the Moslem writer/sender, rather than to have been dictated to a Coptophone village scribe, at least one who knew his job. Also cases of apparent Coptic language learning by Arabs are the numerous examples of letters written in Coptic by Moslem officials to their Christian subjects. From the Hermopolite in the later eighth century (ca. A.D. 764-770) we have the archive of Severus son of Bane and his brother Papostolos, from the village of Bousiris: Ryl 117, 214, 346, 378, 383, BM 1167, 1168, 1169. Severus receives letters and orders in Coptic from the officials Yezid ibn Abd-ar-Rahman and Hisham ibn Belal; and one of the signers of a document in his archive acknowledging the discharge of a debt is Najjih, the Arabic interpreter (in Coptic transcription ⲧⲏⲣⲏⲕⲟⲩⲙⲁⲛ: Ryl 214, Pachons 10, 3rd indication = probably A.D. 764). Only from the degree of proficiency of the hands and the linguistic competence can one venture to decide whether these communications were dictated to Coptic chancery employees or were actually penned by the officials themselves.⁷ By the eleventh century, as we shall see shortly, the existence of Coptophone local village scribes employed by the Arab chancery can hardly any longer be credited.

In epistolography too we see the other side of this phenomenon of who was learning whose language. One can watch the progressive infiltration of Coptic letter-writing, and documentary composition in general, by Arabised and even Islamised phraseology. From the 'Peace be with you' -- ⲧⲏⲣⲏⲛⲏ ⲛⲁⲕ -- of the late seventh century (already in the Apollonos Ano Coptic papyri) to the 'your servant, may God

The late Coptic speech of the Hermopolite nome maintained itself nearly as a separate dialect, to which Kasser has given the siglum 'H' for 'Hermopolitan'.¹¹ The main literary witness of this Ashmunein dialect is one of the hands of the still unpublished Pierpont Morgan Library papyrus codex M636, which on the basis of an Arabic protocol on one of the leaves has the *terminus post quem* of A.D. 849-856. The text, amounting to the commonplace-book of a sermon-writer made up of paraphrases of Biblical passages (some perhaps metrical) and indices to the Psalms, must thus have been composed, most likely in a monastic community, in the late ninth century.¹² It has been suggested by Kasser¹³ that this speech was a semi-artificial, 'hothouse-forced' attempt to establish a new 'post-Sahidic' literary medium in the late Abbasid period: but it seems more a question of peculiar orthography.¹⁴ What is necessary to obtain a notion of the kind of Coptic that remained in use in this area until late is to compare the 'H' of the Morgan codex with the language of the Ashmunein documentary papyri so abundant in the Vienna, Rylands, Leiden, and British Library collections. Above all, Coptic communication had to remain intelligible, at least within the Christian community: and the degree of intelligibility can be assessed only by studying the Hermopolite, and the Fayumic, Coptic dossiers as a whole.

The very latest Coptic documents of all are marriage contracts, certainly a matter of importance to the life of the community. They are (perhaps) twelfth to thirteenth century. A paper document from Esna once in the collection of Sir Alan Gardiner¹⁵ was dated by the first editor to Year of the Martyrs 663 = A.D. 946, but the date was corrected six years later¹⁶ to Martyrs 963 = A.D. 1246. The deacon **ⲡⲁⲓⲁⲓⲉⲓⲣ** (?=Abu'l-Kheir, i.e. Agathon) son of Abu'l-Farag (Theophanes) is marrying his first cousin, Sitt al Baha; and there are Arab witnesses (**ⲙⲏⲧⲣⲉ ⲛⲁⲣⲁⲃⲓⲕⲟⲛ**) 'from the **ⲉⲛⲟⲥ** who are set over our land' (ll. 22-23) (this is reminiscent of the eighth-century oath clauses wherein people swear 'by the health, *oujai*, of those who happen to rule over us at the moment, *kata kairos*). In an Ashmunein paper document¹⁷ dated by the editor to Martyrs 925 = A.D. 1209, P.Berol. 11348, we have the marriage contract of Petros son of Pisente (so far so good), who is marrying a girl called Sitt al-Ward ('Rose'), whose father has the name, jarring in this context, of Rashid ibn Abu'l'Badr. (And yet the man had to have been a Christian.) All the witnesses to this contract are Coptic clerics; and lines 51-52 have the proviso 'Christ being king over us' (**ⲉⲣⲉ ⲛⲉⲗⲥ ⲱ ⲛⲉⲛⲣⲣ** **ⲟ ⲉⲣⲁⲓⲁⲓⲉⲓⲣ**) : compare the wistful phrase at the end of the witnesses' signatures in BM 673 of A.D. 987 (Fayum; ll. 10-11): 'May the Lord Jesus Christ be witness for all of us', a phrase which also appears in the Teshlot papyri. (In the Berlin document the two rhos are in a restoration, and I do not yet have a photograph.) The difficulty in dating the Berlin document lies in its giving the name of the reigning patriarch of Alexandria as John, which does not square with A.D. 1209. If the first figure of the three numerals were to be read as a ϕ = 500 (which is quite possible), and the immediately preceding squiggle were to

be a symbol for **Ⲭⲁⲣⲁⲕⲏⲛⲟⲛ** or the like,^{17a} it would yield a Hijra date of = A.D. 1147, when there was indeed a patriarch John. The problems with both documents remain; but they speak eloquently of the social history of the Copts not far from the time when Francis of Assisi himself sat at Damietta trying to convert the Sultan of Egypt.

Finally, in the 'subliterary' realm, we can trace, on papyrus, parchment, and paper, the gradual encroachment of Arabic upon Coptic even in the schools, and the gradual shift in degrees of language familiarity in different subject areas. There are many extant examples of Coptic/Arabic bilingual writing exercises, from individual letter-forms and syllables to epistolary greetings. Then, first come the transcriptions of Arabic texts into Coptic letters, the writing-system they knew, and then at last the Coptic texts, no longer understood, are transcribed into Arabic script,¹⁸ so they can at least be read aloud. How, after all, is a language transmitted? In the home, especially by women, and in the school. At some point or points over time, one generation stopped passing on to the next what it had once known.

How late did the production of writings in Coptic go on? This is the usual question asked by historians. Scriptoria went on, as we know from the White Monastery in the ninth century and the Wadi Natrun in the eleventh (see now Fr. Ugo Zanetti's catalogue of the St Macarius MSS.); metaphrasis from Sahidic into Bohairic went on; hagiography and homiletic went on, at first originally composed, then copied. Professor Tito Orlandi has recently made a case for the idea that, at least through the ninth century, Coptic literature continued as a kind of 'underground literature', putting in concealed protests against the Islamic government disguised as Scriptural parables or the like.¹⁹ I shall return to this when I touch on Coptic apocalyptic literature. As to who was the last original Coptic author, the extant sources are still far from being completely explored, and the answer probably lies somewhere in Graf's 'schriftlose Zeit' between the letters of Patriarch Mark III in the early ninth century and the first translation projects of the twelfth (e.g. the early canonists). What exercises the cultural historian is the shift in the whole value structure, the ideological framework if you will, that came about in Egypt when it became apparent that the Islamic domination was there to stay. To quote from a Byzantinist, '...values and attitudes which had previously been contextually impossible now come to dominate and to determine the appearance of the culture.'²⁰ For Greeks under first Roman and then Turkish rule it can be said that '...only when this fact has penetrated' [i.e. that all political hope is gone] '...that the cultural archaizing really gets under way. If the present is unsatisfactory, it is tempting to rummage around in the past to see what you can find to preserve self-respect.'²¹ Exactly the opposite happened in the case of Coptic Egypt. As opposed to what happened in other subject communities of the Near East, for whom monasteries and schools functioned to emphasize awareness of their own learned tradition, Coptic monasteries never became centers of resistance, identity, or self-image, and schools were painfully neglected. Only when Gaston Maspero pointed out in the 1890s that they should do so did any

latter-day Copts -- who of course did not know Coptic -- try to 'rummage around in their past.'

In what areas, then, did creative production in the Coptic language persist at all? Quite early in Umayyad times, first of all, we encounter Coptic apocalyptic, that (perhaps) descendant of the demotic oracles blended with a dash of Syriac scripturalism that has recently been so well studied by Javier Martinez.²² In the pseudo-Athanasius we find the ravages of the Islamic rulers attributed, as in John of Nikiu, to human sinfulness on the part of the Coptic community, especially to lax standards among monks and clergy (from simony to fornication). In the Apocalypse of pseudo-Samuel of Qalamun, dated by Martinez to the first half of the eighth century and preserved by a painfully ironic fate only in Arabic, we have an eloquent outcry against the swamping of the Coptic language by Arabic. As: 'They have abandoned the beautiful Coptic language in which the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouths of our fathers...Woe to every Christian who teaches his son from childhood the language of the *hijra*, making him forget the language of his ancestors...Whoever shall dare to speak the language of the *hijra* inside a church shall be cut off from the laws of the holy fathers.'²³ This appendix, probably written somewhat later than the main text, already eloquently articulates the principle dear to Herder and Romanticism that a people's identity resides in its language.²⁴

Writing of a high literary quality in early mediaeval Coptic is to be found in the hymnography and folk poetry, the funerary laments preserved in tombstone inscriptions, and the odd bits of liturgical 'creative writing' found in Coptic prayer-books. The *floruit* of much of surviving Coptic poetry, from scriptural paraphrases and hymns in praise of saints to the Ballad of Archellites, has been placed in the tenth century.²⁵ The art of the quatrain as it is wrought in Sahidic Coptic is surprisingly affecting in its simplicity, recalling the 'Ambrosian stanza' or Prudentius: an unheard Schubert or Brahms (or Hugo Wolf) setting comes to the ear of the reader of 'A crown of pure gold is on the head of Queen Mary, / A crown of precious stones is on the head of Mary Queen' or 'Four teachers, four wise men are ours: Athanasius and Cyril the Great, Pachomius and Apa Shenoute.' It would be a worthwhile study to investigate the Coptic cultural milieu that gave rise to these *Lieder*, in which we hear the authentic singing voice of a people. The vision of death as an unbridgeable gulf of human separation calls to us from the eighth- and ninth-century grave inscriptions: 'O voyage from which there is no return, O cutting apart for which there is no coming together.'²⁶ Not the Greek garden of *refrigerium* is in these poetic laments, but a one-way trip to *Amente*. And occasionally in liturgical MSS. one encounters eloquently worded references to the oppressive social situation. In an eleventh-century codex in Prague²⁷ we find a prayer in Sahidic to be delivered 'from all plots of the evil kings, who have risen up against us...and from the hidden and the open enemy', and intercessions 'for prisoners and captives and those in disgrace (ⲙⲏⲧⲉⲗ ⲓⲱ) and those who detain them in sour bitterness (ⲙⲉⲧⲉⲧⲉ ⲉⲙⲉⲗ)'.²⁸ Al-Hakim had left scars.

Coptic continued as the vehicle for other kinds of writing as well. The White Monastery scriptorium (being reconstructed by Professor Orlandi), in the ninth century, copied and passed on the Alexander Romance as well as all those sermons. And we have a fair amount in Coptic of what is called 'alchemy'²⁹ -- actually mostly recipes for making dyes, pigments, and paste stones for ornament, important for the textile industry and the jewellery craft that has always been the province of minorities. Though full of Arabic words for substances, the Coptic alchemical texts pass on great helpings of Coptic *Kulturgut*: 'the master says,' they repeat over and over: 'the teacher (ⲡⲕⲁⲛⲁ) says,' even 'the master Hermes says.' These texts are deeply rooted in what Helen Waddell called the leaf-mould of antiquity. What does not appear in Coptic, and when it does appear does so only in Arabic, is apologetic, anti-Moslem defences of Christian faith and life. The concept that the Christian faith ought to be spoken for, in expository prose at any rate, in a language that is in and of itself a carrier of that faith, did not come to birth among Non-Chalcedonian Christian Egyptians, except for fragments of the *Questions of Theodore* (ca. A.D. 680-690) and anti-*ethnos* fables in the Coptic *Physiologus*.^{29a} There was to be no Coptic Abdisho, no communal regrouping, no Coptophone historiography: nothing.³⁰

At the time of the thirteenth-century encyclopaedists and compilers of *scalae* and so-called 'Introductions to Coptic', the language was dead, and the issue was a dead letter. From John of Samanoud on, the *scala* writers were fighting a battle that was already lost.³¹ And by the Ottoman period even the bare copying of Coptic script has degenerated in the MSS. into the mere drawing of shapes: the words are not understood. There is much anthropological writing on the phenomenon of language death, but none of the theories I have ever encountered seems to fit what happened to Coptic: dialectal unintelligibility; restriction to a purely practical and rote-memorised monastic sphere of use; simple laziness (to quote Barry Lopez: '...ignorance, poverty of spirit, indolence, and the threat of anonymity and destitution':³² perhaps that comes closest). What did happen was that, for reasons which remain both unclear and unexplored, learning never became a holy act in Coptic culture. Learning for its own sake never became a thing of positive value. The comparison with Syriac or Armenian is sad. No Roman Vishniac with a camera and a time-machine could ever capture images of rows of Coptic schoolboys swaying back and forth over their texts. The historical roots of this Coptic devaluation of learning are still to be sought: its consequences have been disastrous.

'Language,' it has been said, 'lasts longer than stone or law.'³³ The Coptic language reflects and embodies a millennial and intimate interaction with a particular Mediterranean and Valley landscape, with all that implies about a particular set of perceptions and rhythm of life. And yet: we are for the dark. In Egypt it is an offence punishable by imprisonment to teach, study, or promote the Coptic language in any form, even the debased rote memorisation of the few words of liturgy that remain, garbled into street-Cairene-Arabic pronunciation. Elsewhere in the Near East

it has been shown that an ancient, primarily liturgical language can come to new life and operate with success in a modern nation. The example will not be heeded. The techniques of awareness have been thrown away. **ⲁⲣⲉⲩⲏ**, 'excellence', has never become a Coptic loanword.³⁴ It is the parable of the talents: what you have been given, you must use. 'So full of sleep are they when they leave the way.'

Notes

- * A first version of this paper was delivered at the Colloquium on Late Antiquity and Early Islam, University of London, June 1986.
- I am grateful to Professors Averil Cameron and John Matthews for inviting me to participate in the Colloquium. I should also like to thank Sebastian and Helen Brock and Cyril and Marlia Mango, without whose hospitality in Oxford I could not have written this paper; and the Griffith Institute and the Oriental Reading Room of the British Library, whose resources made the research possible. Thanks also to Georgina Robinson, Monica Blanchard, Sidney Griffith, and Stephen Morse for fruitful discussion. And, as always, to Mirrit Boutros Ghali, in the hope that **ⲁⲣⲉⲩⲏ** will be perceived while there is still time.
- 1 In *Greece old and new* (New York 1983) p. 111.
- 2 Ryl 461, a fascinating document.
- 3 G. Legrain, *Une famille copte de Haute-Egypte* (Brussels 1945) 122-123, with Vergote's comments, 124-126.
- 4 S.H. Griffith, 'The Gospel in Arabic: an inquiry into its appearance in the first Abbasid century,' *OrChr* 69 (1985) 126-167; and see now, for a slightly earlier colophon, Y. Mimarīs, *Catalogue of the new Arabic MSS. of St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai* (in Modern Greek) (Athens 1985) no. 16, p. 27, photos 19, 20, 21 (A.D. 859).
- 5 J.F. Rhode, *The Arabic versions of the Pentateuch in the church of Egypt* (St Louis 1921); K. Samir, in *OCA* 218 (1980) 104-105, and *idem*, 'Arabic sources for early Egyptian Christianity,' in B.A. Pearson/J.E. Goehring, ed., *The roots of Egyptian Christianity* (Philadelphia 1986) 86-89. Cf. the work of R.-G. Coquin on the Canons of Hippolytus in Egyptian Arabic, in *PO* 31.2 (Paris 1966) 297-301, cf. 433-437.
- 6 See L.S.B. MacCoull, 'Coptic documentary papyri as a historical source for Egyptian Christianity,' in Pearson/Goehring, *Roots* (above n. 5) 42-50.
- 7 Further examples, all from the Fayum, are BM 598, Suleiman to Ali; 634, from Qasim; 638, from Daoud ibn Abd-al-Jabbar; 662, to Abu al-Leith; and 664, to Ayoub ibn Mohammed from Yusuf. Clearly Ryl 324 (8th to 8th c.), in which Mohammed writes in Coptic to Victor appointing him tax-collector to work for the government, was for its part processed through a Coptic chancery scribe. In Arabic cf. the *baqt al-Qibt* attested at Hermopolis in A. Grohmann, 'Ein arabischer Steuerpapyrus...', *In memoriam Carl Schmidt* (Berlin 1939) 52-53 (=Wien Ar. 330.2). More bilinguals are *BKU* III 403; 436 (A.D. 880); 478, written by one Sa'id to a Christian recipient in Coptic.
- 8 K. Reinhardt, 'Eine arabisch-koptische Kirchenbann-Urkunde,' *Festschrift G. Ebers* (Leipzig 1897) 89-91. The Coptic document in Berlin is published by G. Steindorff, 'Eine koptische Bannbulle...', *ZÄS* 30 (1892) 37-41. Cf. BM 633, from the Fayum.
- 8a For bilingual magic see Bilabel/Grohmann *Kopt.u.arab. Texte* (Heidelberg 1934) 123 (PSR inv. 500/1): to be dated later than 700.
- 9 M. Green, 'A private archive of Coptic letters and documents from Teshlot,' *OMRO* 64 (1983) 61-122. I am grateful to Dr. Jürgen Horn of Göttingen for discussing these documents with me at the International Congress of Papyrology at Athens in May 1986. See now L.S.B. MacCoull, 'The Teshlot papyri and the survival of documentary Sahidic in the eleventh century,' forthcoming in *OCP*.

- 10 We need some sort of quantitative study on the interrelation between language predominance and conversion, especially mass conversion. There is very little evidence for individual converts in the documents between the seventh and the eleventh centuries: probably Abu-Jabbar son of Markos in BM 707; perhaps Qasim son of Abla (Apollon?) in BM 666; probably not Hale son of Pegosh in BM 1036, thought by Crum to be = Ali. Cf. *PERF* 1181 of 8.vii.1036 A.D.
- 11 R. Kasser in *ZAS* 92 (1966) 106-115; in *BIFAO* 73 (1973) 85-86; in *Muséon* 93 (1980) 68, cf. 59; in *OLP* 6/7 (1975/76) 285-294.
- 12 I am grateful to Monica Blanchard of the Institute of Christian Oriental Research, Catholic University, for making available to me the late Fr T.C. Petersen's photostats of Morgan MS. M636, together with his transcriptions and copies of Grohmann's letter with the dating information and of a letter for Sir Herbert Thomson with his opinion of the contents. I have formed the impression that some of the biblical paraphrases are metrical, i.e., are actually hymns. We shall return to Coptic hymnography below.
- 13 R. Kasser in *ZAS* 92 (1966) 106-115 (above n. 11).
- 14 See W. -P. Funk in E.Ch. Welskopf, ed., *Soziale Typenbegriffe im alten Griechenland* 7 (Berlin/DDR 1982) 283-320, esp. 284.
- 15 H. Thomson, 'A Coptic marriage contract,' *PSBA* 34 (1912) 173-179.
- 16 See next note.
- 17 G. Möller, 'Ein koptischer Ehevertrag,' *ZAS* 55 (1918) 67-74. I failed to take account of the dating problems in my article on the early Morgan marriage contract in *Actes XV^e Congr. intl. papyrol.* 2 (Brussels 1979) 116-123.
- 17a Not in K.A. Worp, 'Hegira years in Greek, Greek-Coptic and Greek-Arabic papyri,' *Aegyptus* 65 (1985) 107-115. Usually, but not always, a *hijra* date used in a Christian text without the explicit designation 'of the Saracens/Arabs' is flagged by a phrase like *tirompe tai*, 'this year.' Professor Worp's and my joint study, 'The Era of the Martyrs,' will appear in *Miscellanea Papyrologica* (Florence 1989). In gravestones it is found late 8th c.; in colophons 9th c.
- 18 See L.S.B. MacCoull, 'Three cultures under Arab rule: the fate of Coptic,' *BSAC* 27 (1985) 61-70. For writing exercises cf. e.g. *PERF* 185, 199, 202, 204.
- 19 T. Orlandi, 'Testo copto sulla dominazione araba in Egitto,' *Acts II Intl. Congr.Copt.Stud.* (Rome 1985) 76-84, and in Pearson/Goehring, *Roots* (above n. 5) 78-81; J. Martinez, *Pseudo-Athanasius* (below, n. 22) II.267-274.
- 20 J. Haldon, 'Some considerations on Byzantine society and economy in the seventh century,' *Byz-Forsch* 10 (1985) 76.
- 21 B.P. Reardon, 'The Second Sophistic,' in W. Treadgold, ed., *Renaissances before the Renaissance* (Stanford 1984) 39-40.
- 22 J. Martinez, *Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Athanasius: Eastern Christian apocalyptic in the early Muslim period.* (2 vols.; Diss. Catholic University 1985). The Coptic text of ps. -Athanasius will appear, with translation and notes, in the *CSCO*.
- 23 From J. Ziadeh's text and translation in *ROC* 20 (1915-17) 394. By the fourteenth century Athanasius of Qus was to lament, 'For the people of this time in this land, their language has become forgotten...Others have not abandoned their language as we have ours.' -- G. Bauer, ed., *Qiladat at-tahrir fi 'ilm at-tafsir* (Freiburg 1972) 245, 305.
- 24 I cannot date the first appearance of the popular tradition that, because of the Flight into Egypt, the infant Christ learned to speak Coptic (i.e. Egyptian).
- 25 H. Junker, *Koptische Poesie des X. Jhdts.* (Berlin 1908-1911); A. Erman, *Bruchstücke d.kopt. Volksliteratur* (Berlin 1897). We need re-editions with commentaries.
- 26 M. Cramer, *Die Totenklage bei den Kopten* (Vienna/Leipzig 1941).
- 27 V. Hazmuková, 'Miscellaneous Coptic prayers,' *ArchOr* 8 (1936) 318-333 and 9 (1937) 107-145. I quote from the text as paragraphed by Hazmuková, 2.16-3.2 and 5.11-13.

- 28 Compare P. Strassb. Copt. inv. 171, 'May Christ give you the **ⲡⲁⲣⲣⲏⲥⲓⲁ** to speak out before the archons and the **ⲉⲃⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ** and the sultan who has desired to seize our church' (transcription in Crum's Notebook 108 in the Griffith Institute, Oxford).
- 29 See L. Stern, 'Fragment eines koptischen Traktates über Alchimie,' *ZAS* 23 (1885) 102-119. The Bodleian papyri MS.Copt. a.2. (P) and a.3. (P) are still unpublished, and I should like to thank the authorities of the Bodleian Library Oriental Reading Room for permission to study and publish them. See now L.S.B. MacCoull, 'Coptic alchemy and craft technology in early Islamic Egypt: the papyrological evidence,' in *The Medieval Mediterranean* (Minneapolis 1988)
- 29a A. van Lantschoot, ed., *Les "Questions de Théodore"* (Studi e Testi 192; Vatican City 1957); idem, 'A propos du *Physiologus*,' in *Coptic studies in honor of W.E. Crum* (Boston 1950) 339-363, esp. 343-344: 'if they say: "There is no Son of God, God has not taken a wife or begotten a son" ' (obviously the old Moslem argument): the Christian is to counter with the example of the parthenogenetic bee. Also 351-352: the enemies of the Christians are the **ⲉⲃⲁⲛⲟⲥ** the wolves
- 31 MacCoull, 'The fate of Coptic' (above n. 18).
- 32 B. Lopez, *Arctic dreams* (New York 1986) 310.
- 33 P. Howard, *The state of the language* (New York 1985) 139.
- 34 M. Drew-Bear, *Le nome Hermopolite* (Missoula 1979) p. 69.

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

***LONE REVOLT: THE NINTH CENTURY
COPTS***

Raef Marcus, D.D.S.

By the middle of the ninth century, Egypt had been under the Muslim yoke for almost two centuries. The Arab Muslim Empire was at the height of its portentous power, ruled from Baghdad by the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mamun, son of Harun Al-Rashid.

By this time, the Coptic Patriarch had nearly been quelled, after two centuries of Islamic tyranny and humiliation aimed at undermining his office and authority. The limits to his rule, apparent in the history of his predecessors, were understood. His power gradually declined as he became a mere instrument in the hands of obdurate Muslim rulers. His sole objective, in time, was to live in peace as an employee of the Arab administration, demonstrating no fervor for his people. He was ordered not to expand his church, but to on occasion collect taxes, to soften Coptic grievances--to suppress national unrest and discontent.

In the election of a Patriarch, the decision was undeniably made by the prevailing Muslim governor; such was prescriptive in the event of a former Patriarch's death. Typically, a large sum of money, as payment, was required. The election of the Coptic Patriarch Yusab I in the year 830 A.D. was no exception. At his appointment as the fifty-second Patriarch of Alexandria, a total of one thousand dinars was paid to the governor Abd Allah, son of Yezid.

The vast majority of Egypt was comprised of the Christian Copts, subjected as they were to incessant oppression. According to Muslim theory, Egypt was a conquered country whose inhabitants bore no rights, could not own land, were liable (and too often subjected) to confiscation. Ruthlessly, the governor compelled the Christians to wear special dress and to use Arabic rather than Coptic. Records hereafter indicate exactions, arbitrary fines, vexatious passports. Monasteries were sacked, churches destroyed. In response to these persecutions, there were uprisings of Copts, approximately five million strong, in such cities as Bilbeys and Damietta. The Muslim historian Makrizi emphasizes the magnitude of these atrocities. It is remarkable that in spite of such intermittent oppression and a position of marked inferiority, the Copts most often remained steadfast in their faith. This was true even

in light of the fact that payment of the poll tax could be avoided by simply yielding to Islamic conversion.

The treasurer, Obeydallah, realizing that Islam was having virtually no impact, imported thousands of Arabs, settling them Northeast of Fustat. Most governors entered Egypt escorted by an Arab army estimated at ten to twenty thousand. Many settled in Egyptian villages, where, at the expense of the Christians, they were favored by the government. Inevitably, the Arab tribes weakened the stronghold of the Copts.

The persecutions were cruelly amplified. The Copts revolted at Semennud in the Delta and in 767 at Sakha--driving out Arab agents and defeating the government. Under resultant suppression, the poll tax was raised. Death itself could not release them from such obligation; surviving relatives were held responsible for uncollected tax. Revolts ensued in the cities of Tennadeui, Karbit, Trabia, Sinbat and Belhib between 739-773. Still worse bloodshed occurred in 831. In total, there were five such revolts between the years of 739-831.

Ahmad, son of Al-Asbat and Ibrahim, son of Tamim, Arab overseers of taxes, persisted relentlessly in their demands. Widespread trouble arose in all towns owing to extortion practices. What could not be paid was required of the farmers, who were already plagued by drought. Many died of starvation. The entire population suffered from the severity of the famine. Christians were harshly chastised. In order to pay the poll tax, they were inhumanely subjected to the sale of their own children. The Arab agent, Ghaith, tied Copts to the mills, beating them, working them like cattle. Weary, death alone provided their solace.

The Bashmurites, Copts who inhabited Northern Egypt and had a greater warring spirit than those in the South, rebelled in 831, during the rule of Al-Mamun. The revolt spread to the Delta, Upper Egypt and Alexandria. Etienne Quatremere describes the uprising, attributing its inception to the leader Mina, son of Abakeir, in the village Shubra Sinbat. The governor's attempts to arrest the revolt were futile. Even the Caliph's great army, together with the Arab navy, could not penetrate the barracks. For a period of over thirty years, the Bashmurites remained defeated by none.

Meanwhile, to assist the Copts in battle, Spanish vessels arrived in Egypt. Al-Mamun, fearing a Spaniard alliance with the Copts led by the Bashmurites, journeyed for the first time in history from Syria to Egypt. He was accompanied by an army of 30,000 led by the Turk, Al-Afshin, and was accompanied by Mar Dionysius, Patriarch of Antioch. The historian, Michael the Syrian, in the ninth century, records the account of Mar Dionysius:

We arrived at Pharma, Egypt, and Al-Mamun asked me to accompany some bishops from Egypt, to meet the leaders of the rebellion and ask them to surrender. I asked the Caliph to agree to letting the leaders settle for any peace treaty. He refused and requested that they leave the country...We went to the leaders...We blamed them for what had happened.

They told us that the overseer of taxes had subjected them to amounts far beyond what they could take...When we carried the message to the Caliph he shrugged his shoulders and said, "I am not responsible for my government's action."

Abba Sawiris, writing still later in the twelfth century, describes the event. Accordingly, Al-Mamun, accompanied by Dionysius, arrived in Egypt with an army under the command of Al-Afshin. Many prominent Christians were killed in Alexandria and throughout Egypt--guilty and innocent alike. The Bashmurites continued to resist intervention by mediators. Abba Yusab was summoned to the Court of the Caliph at Al-Fustat. By order of the Caliph, he wrote a letter to the leader of the revolt, expressing his fears. Although its contents were unacceptable, he continued to write on a daily basis. He quoted passages of the Scriptures which asserted that those who resisted the power resisted the ordinances of God. Bishops, sent to be persuasive, were assaulted and treated with ignominy.

At the Court, Al-Mamun, addressing both the Patriarch of Egypt and of Syria, spoke: "Behold, I command you and your colleague, the Patriarch of Antioch, to visit the rebellious people and lay your prohibitions against them, as you are bound to do according to your laws in order that they may submit to my rule." The historian Abba Sawiris writes with sorrow of how the Patriarchs obeyed the command of the Caliph, journeyed to the Bashmurites, ordering them to cease from their deeds. The insurgents, outraged by such commands and the paucity of loyalty displayed by the Patriarchs, continued to rebel. Abba Yusab, determined to undermine the authority of their leader by using his own ecclesiastical and religious power. Failing to convince the Bashmurites, however, he persuaded neighboring villagers to assist the Arabs in their invasion of Northern Egypt. With swords they were slain; their cities were plundered and burned, their churches demolished. Prisoners were carried to Baghdad--men and women unscrupulously sold in the slave market.

Mar Dionysius was to receive his reward in fewer than two weeks after the war. He was banished from Egypt by Al-Mamun, while Ibrahim, the Caliph's brother, sought to kill him. More for Abba Yusab, Al-Afshin was assigned to the task of arresting and executing him. After beating him on the head, he also slashed his vestments when the hand bearing his sword slipped. His body was dragged to the commander.

Muhammed, son of Bashir, Judge of Alexandria, ordered the Patriarch to be beaten on the neck and head. He was imprisoned and tortured until a fine of one thousand dinars was paid. Seven days after payment of the fine, the Patriarch, having had no medical attention, fell feverishly ill. On the 23rd of Baba 849 A.D., he went to his rest.

Such stern repression broke the spirit of the Coptic people. No longer would accounts of such momentous national movement be heard. Instead, this date marks the numerical preponderance of the Muslims over the Christians in Egypt, a devastation in the Coptic plight.

References

- 1 Stanley Lane - Poole: *History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*. London, 1901.
- 2 Abu Salih: *Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*. Edited by B. Evetts. Oxford, 1895.
- 3 El-Makrizi: *Khitat*. Bulak 1853.
- 4 Sawiris Ibn Al-Mukaffa: *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church*, Edited by B. Evetts. Paris 1904.
- 5 Jacque Tager: *Copts and Muslims since the Arab Conquest*. Cairo, 1951.
- 6 Elias Elayubi: *History of Egypt Since the Arab Conquest, Vol I*. Cairo, 1932.
- 7 Quatremere, Etienne: *Memoires geographiques et historiques sur L'Egypte*, Paris, 1811.
- 8 *History of Mikhail El Sourî*. Paris 1905.
- 9 Al-Kindy: *History of the Governors and Judges of Egypt*. Edited by R. Gisset. 1912.

A COPTIC ORTHODOX MESSAGE TO LAMBETH: AN ECUMENICAL NOTE

John Watson

In the summer of 1988 the Lambeth Conference, the ten-yearly gathering of the bishops of the Anglican Communion, met at Canterbury. The question of the ordination of women to the episcopate was recognized by the media as the most important issue before the bishops. For some bishops it was too late to discuss the ordination of women priests. Women priests were normative. Other Anglicans, in provinces where women have not been ordained, believed that the theological issues were still begging to be discussed. The Episcopal Church in the USA, which sets no store by tradition and is contemptuous of the ecumenical process, had many ordained women and seemed determined to press on with the consecration of a woman to the episcopate no matter what the ecumenical cost.

Some bishops and observers were pleased when Bishop Bishoi of Damietta, representing the Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Holy Synod, issued an open message from His Holiness Pope Shenouda III outlining the viewpoint of the Coptic Orthodox Church regarding the Ordination of Women. The present writer was given his copy on Thursday 28th July during a consultation with Coptic Orthodox observers at the Conference. It is a six page document in twelve headed sections with a total of thirty paragraphs. In spite of signs that it was obviously too hastily prepared, it is of interest to students of Anglican-Coptic Orthodox relations. It states clearly some Orthodox objections to the ordination of women. Many familiar arguments are rehearsed: the Holy Scriptures and Tradition know nothing of female ordinations: the social conditions of the time did not effect Christian teaching: women did not participate in the formative ecumenical councils: the Pauline teaching about 'headship' must be taken seriously: the place of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the scheme of Salvation and in the Church is of primary importance in this debate. In these areas this short statement will repay study. In sum, it regards the ordination of women as an unnecessary novelty.

Pope Shenouda's message also alludes to the effect of female ordinations to the episcopate and priesthood upon issues of Fundamental Theology. These relate directly to the Theology of Liturgy and Spirituality. The question of female ordination is often presented as a human rights issue. The real questions are obscured. The alleged inferiority of women is not the issue here. Such an allegation is unChristian and perhaps even unreal. If women are exercising their rights to liberation in secular

society that is right. Women have no inferior status in the Church. If ecclesiastical power structures ever assert power over service they become unChristian; even the Bishop of Rome, who is perhaps the most powerful ecclesiastic in the world, is called the servant of the servants of God. The most important question is: "What will happen to God?" The purpose of this brief notice is, therefore, to draw attention to the orthodox doctrine of God as it relates to the Ordination of Women. This aspect of the problem is thinly treated in the only major Orthodox treatment: "Women and the Priesthood" (ed. Thomas Hopko SVS Press New York, 1983.) In a fuller examination, I would have to develop my reasons for rejecting Professor Hopko's view that the issue of the sacramental priesthood for women, lies in the area of dogma and not *kerygmata*. If the doctrine of God is at stake then it necessarily is. Pope Shenouda notes that we are accustomed to seeing "the overzealous rushing towards innovations and tendencies in which the female pronoun is to be introduced when referring to the deity whilst the term Heavenly Father is suppressed" (p. 4 para. 10). The Patriarch concludes that "this will seriously endanger the doctrines of the Church" (Ibid). The doctrine of the Holy Trinity cannot remain unaffected; the relationship within the Godhead will become different if the gender used from Apostolic times is changed.

Scripture presents us with God's preferred way of speaking about Himself. Experience shows that this can only be unfavourably compared with a novel used of the female gender. Behind the movement for the ordination of women there is the intention to revert to polytheistic modes of speech concerning a female deity and this is clearly seen in inclusivist versions of Scripture and Liturgy. The testimony of Holy Scripture requires a most rigorous re-examination in this debate. To take only one example: when St. John represents Jesus as calling upon God the Father more than one hundred times, he is not importing "something alien into the mind and message of Jesus; he is bringing out something which was absolutely basic to it" (A.M. Hunter p. 95 "According to John" SCM London 1968). The feminist theology which seeks to replace this image cannot pass unchallenged if a Biblical faith is to survive.

Father Matta Al-Maskin supports the teaching of Pope Shenouda's message when the former says: "Issuing a Bible in which there is no reference to any masculine gender mainly to please the female sex is an antecedent to a general revolt. This would not be a revolt against the male sex or against the Holy bible or priesthood only; it would be a revolt against divinity." (Coptologia Vol 9:p.37, Toronto, Canada 1988). The emasculation of Scripture is part of the programme of the feminist reconstruction of the Christian religion which asks also for women priests.

If the movement for the ordination of women realises that major doctrinal changes are a necessary consequence of the ordination of women then it will become an heretical movement. Language about the Fatherhood of God may be an analogy or a metaphor but it is not the language of mere analogy or mere metaphor. It is the analogy and metaphor preferred by God in Scripture and Tradition and to

change it involves a definite loss of meaning.² The holy icons are venerated, not worshipped, images. Their imagery is at once concrete and transparent; pictures in this world, windows into a world which exists alongside the physical world. Icons are images. The mind has its images. To disturb the image of Our Father and His Son disturbs faith itself. When the focus of prayer is changed so is the spiritual life of the believer. To destroy the icons of the mind is to destroy faith.

Notes

- 1 *"What will happen to God"* is the title of an important book by the Anglican theologian Fr. William Oddie in which he exposes the real effects of the Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Belief. (SPCK London 1986).
- 2 C.S. Lewis in *"Priestesses in the Church"* (London 1948) argues that image and apprehension are in an organic unity and that religions with priestesses are religions in which goddesses are worshipped.

THE CROSS AS TREE OF LIFE IN THE COPTIC CHURCH

Jack Phillips, M.Min.

While visiting the monasteries of the Wadi Natrun a few years ago, my companions and I were the guests of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. He presented to us each a gift of a cross. This cross was like no other I'd seen, except for those worn by the monks and His Holiness himself. This cross was more than a cross, it was also a tree.

By this gift, His Holiness conveyed to us a sacred truth that is basic to Christianity yet often lost: the cross of death is the tree of life.

Historians and phenomenologists of religions speak of symbolic archetypes that are found in various ancient religions. A prominent symbol is that of the cosmic tree or Tree of Life, which is wide ranging and central to the belief systems in which it is found.

The Tree image in ancient contexts reflects the belief in a threefold cosmos consisting of heaven, earth, and underworld. The Tree is imaged as the axis that connects the three realms, therefore signifying the possibility and means of participating in sacred life.

The ancient Near East is rich with Tree imagery. Numerous artifacts and burials depicting various deities with sacred tree figures have been found at ancient Assyrian sites, for example. Most notably we find the Tree symbol in ancient Egyptian culture.

The Tree of Life image in ancient Egypt is well documented. The great Earth Mother, goddess of the Tree, is the source of life in some mythological systems. The dead receive life from the sap of the Tree, which is featured in numerous tombs, such as the tomb of Panehsy in Thebes and that of Thoutmosis III.

The vegetation god, Osiris, is the lord of death and life, represented by a tree-pillar, which is his resurrected body. The temple of Ramses I (1315-1292) contains a relief of Isis worshipping this Tree, holding an Ankh. In this relief is found a repetition of symbols; the Tree itself, and the Ankh, which is thought by many to belong to this archetype.¹

In ancient Egypt, the Ankh (the cross or key of life) meant life and afterlife. It is common in hieroglyphics, temple and burial reliefs, and as an amulet. The Ankh became the Ansate Cross of Coptic Christianity. The Ankh is often found in the

hand of the deity so as to impart life to the pharaoh. Although the origin of the Ankh is unknown and highly theorized, it is a symbol of divine life and was incorporated into Christianity for this reason.

Examples of the Christianized Ankh are manifold. Numerous Christian motifs include the Ankh, sometimes with the Greek Alpha and Omega. The Coptic Museum in Old Cairo contains reliefs and stelae containing the cross in Ankh form or circumscribed therein.²

The Christian Cross as the Tree of Life is rooted in the Bible, found in Genesis at the center of the garden (the center of the earth) and in Revelation beside the water of life. Israelites considered Jerusalem to be the center of the earth, and the Cross and Garden.

One of the most striking examples of this theme is an Alexandrian Throne of St. Mark (now in Venice). The throne is engraved with the Cross, directly above the Tree of Life with the Lamb of God as the source of the four rivers of paradise.

We have in Coptic Christianity a confluence of symbols. The thematic continuity of ancient and universal symbols with the Cross shows both the enormous depth of Coptic spirituality and the universal significance of the Christian Cross. The Cross of death is the Tree of Life. This is the mystery of faith.

Notes:

- 1 Cook, Roger. *The Tree of Life: Image for the Cosmos*. Thames and Hudson, New York, 1988. Figures 10-12.
- 2 Kamil, Jill. *Coptic Egypt: History and Guide*. The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 1987. Page 107.
- 3 Cook, page 103.

BASIL BOTROS

Founder of the Society of the Friends of the Holy Bible

Boulos Ayad Ayad, Ph.D.

Early Days

Basili Botros¹ was born in 1882 in the town of Abnub in Upper Egypt. He completed elementary studies and then enrolled at the Theological School in Cairo, which had recently been opened, and was one of its early graduates.

Basili Botros was born into a very religious family, some of whose members I know. They are very pious and have a strong faith in the Coptic Orthodox Church.

After graduation, Basili Botros was appointed a preacher for the Copts in Tanta, in Lower Egypt. In 1905 he was selected as a teacher in one of the Tanta schools. He held this position for two years and then resigned to become a teacher of religion at the school of *Al-Aqbat Al-Qubra* in Cairo in 1907.

From the time Botros was a young man his heart overflowed with the love of God. His devotion to God prompted him to continuously read the Holy Bible, studying it carefully. His preaching and teaching, as well as his personal life style, were greatly influenced by biblical principles and morals. He soon began preaching, attracting many people, especially those of the younger generation who were influenced by the word of God. Basili Botros was deeply spiritual and when he prayed, everyone who heard him believed that the man was praying from his heart, and was deeply moved. He never married, preferring to dedicate his life to the Lord and serving in different churches as well as the Society.

During that time the Coptic Orthodox Church had very limited activities and served people only within the churches. Since there was no outreach program, it was rare to find any of the churches tending to the spiritual needs of the young men or children. There were no spiritual activities, Bible study, or prayer meetings for the youths. Education of the priests was limited; most of them had graduated from elementary or high school but rarely had any of them attended the university. Because of this, their religious activities were extremely limited and a good number of them did not preach in the churches or even encourage others to read the Bible.

Basili Botros believed that his church did not fulfill the necessary spiritual needs of the young people.² Thus, he dedicated his life to serving the Lord in other spiritual fields by taking care of the new generation, the youth, and his students.

Basili Botros and the Society of the Friends of the Holy Bible

Basili Botros found his Coptic Church missing a lot of its activities and thus he established the Society of the Friends of the Holy Bible in 1908. Because he was working as a teacher of Christian religion, he encouraged the young students and the Christian high school students to study the Bible, adopting the principles mentioned therein. He held weekly spiritual meetings in the Center of the Society for his students and other young men in which they prayed, studied the Bible, and sang religious songs. He established a summer camp in 1912 and student housing in 1915 after his return from England. Thus, through these meetings and activities, the Society was formed. In those days this was the only Society which took care of the new generation in Cairo.

Botros wanted to do something new for his Society so he sold his house in Abnub and used the money from the sale to travel to England in 1910. While in England he visited various religious societies and churches and learned a new method which he was able to use later in serving the Society of the Friends of the Holy Bible.

Because of the sincerity of Basili Botros, many of the new generation of students and non-students highly respected him and were greatly influenced by him. Among these were ten young men who wanted to dedicate themselves to serving the Lord and the Church, although only a few succeeded. Among the group who succeeded were two who became priests—Father Ibrahim Luka³ and Father Marcos (Hafez) Daoud.⁴ The remainder of the young men continued their service to the Church in addition to holding their own jobs.

Basili Botros began a bulletin, "*al Fata al Qibty*" for Coptic youth while he was in Tanta. Then he wrote some books about the Holy Bible and the teaching of the Coptic Orthodox Church, to be read by members of the Society. He also published a monthly pamphlet in which he included two chapters from the Holy Bible, one to be read in the morning, with accompanying spiritual commentary, and one to be read in the evening.

In addition to Botros' religious spirituality, he was very broad-minded, keen, intelligent, a clear thinker, friend to all, and very cooperative in relations with others, encouraging youth to succeed in their studies and urging them to follow the steps of the Lord throughout their lives. He was an honest man, above reproach in his character, and extremely active in doing his best to serve others and to offer them sincere advice.

Basili Botros passed away in April 1921 at the age of 39 after having been ill for approximately two years with lung problems. It was a sad day for the young men as well as other members of this Society and Christians of the Coptic Church. However, it is a great tribute to Basili Botros that the activities within the Society have continued to grow after his death. It is now one of the largest Christian Coptic Societies in all of Egypt.

Notes

- 1 I obtained most of the information in this paper from talking with Father Marcos Daoud and from a book by Professor Dr. Soliman Nessim, *A Trip to Their Hearts* (Arabic) (Cairo, Egypt, 1973, pp. 65-67).
- 2 The situation now is totally different and all the Coptic churches in Egypt are greatly concerned with the children and the young people, as well as the older ones, offering many services to all generations.
- 3 See a short account of his life, *The Struggle of a Priest*, in: *Coptic Church Review*, 1988; 9:115-118.
- 4 *Father Marcos Daoud: A Pioneer in the Coptic Church Revival in the Twentieth Century*: In: *Coptic Church Review*, 1989; 10:2-31.

**This publication
is available
in microform
from University
Microfilms
International.**

Call toll-free 800-521-3044. In Michigan,
Alaska and Hawaii call collect 313-761-4700. Or
mail inquiry to: University Microfilms International,
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.



BOOK REVIEWS

The Celtic Vision: Prayers and Blessings from the Outer Hebrides

Edited by Esther de Waal. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1989.

(UK price six pounds ninety-five pence, USA agents Templegate), 263 pp.

A number of historians distinguished in the field of Coptic studies, including Stanley Lane-Poole and Aziz Atiya, have emphasised the relationship which may have existed in the early Christian centuries between the Church in Egypt and the new Church on the cold, western, off-shore islands of Europe, notably the Church in Ireland. Recent scholarship has linked the Coptic missionary enterprise in Ireland with that to the Western Isles in general. It is, therefore, appropriate to review this beautiful volume of Hebridean prayers in a Coptic journal in the West. The present writer has reviewed many books for the Coptic Church Review; few of them have been so immediately attractive and exciting as this wonderful treasury of Celtic Spirituality.

The Celtic Vision is an evocation of the life of prayer in an isolated island community living on the Atlantic seaboard in a rugged landscape of barren, treeless, and rocky terrain; scenery never forgotten by anyone fortunate enough to have seen it. The great Celtic scholar Alexander Carmichael devoted his life to the collection of prayers and religious poetry in these islands and produced the important six-volume Carmina Gadelica to conserve Celtic spirituality. Esther de Waal has compiled a one-volume anthology from the Carmina Gadelica. It is a welcome piece of scholarship and devotion.

The spiritual life of the lonely Hebridean islanders suggests to us the life of the Coptic desert fathers in Egypt. Carmichael suggested that the ultimate origins of these hymns and prayers lay in the monastic cells of Derry and Iona. It may not be possible to establish that connection at this stage of historical research but if it has any truth then a further step back to Egypt through a study of the early missionary outreach described in Atiya's History of Eastern Christianity is not impossible. Physically far apart, the traditions of the Celtic Vision and of the Desert are spiritually recognisably close together. In the Scetis of the Fathers and in the Outer Isles, as they are described here, religion permeates everything the Christian undertakes. Monks and islanders lived quite naturally in a state of prayer in which God was the most immediate reality. There is also a level of profound theological

understanding which infuses both spiritual traditions. This is a book of Orthodox Spirituality in the sense that God as Trinity is experienced as a constant presence.

I am bending my knee
In the eye of the Father who created me,
In the eye of the Son who purchased me,
In the eye of the Spirit who cleansed me,
In friendship and affection.

It is the triune God of Christian Orthodoxy who is claimed in affection. We learn that Hebridean life started with a commitment to the Trinity. Immediately after birth, before baptism, the child was sprinkled by the midwife with three drops of water on the forehead:

The blessing of the Holy Three
Little love, be dower to thee,
Wisdom, Peace and Purity.

Invocations for guidance and protection are endlessly addressed to the Holy Trinity:

The Three Who are over me,
The Three Who are below me,.....
The Three who are in the great pouring sea.

This has many affinities with the liturgical expressions of Ancient Oriental Christianity and with this book an Egyptian or Syrian Christian of any age would find himself at home. The environment is often harsh and relentlessly demanding in the Hebrides as it can be in the Middle East but the inner life is renewed with a vision of peace.

A further emphasis which would find a sure echo in Coptic Orthodox Spirituality is seen in those devotions directed towards the Mother of the Lord. Carmichael often heard the interjections 'Mary Mother' or 'O Mary of grace' indicating the sense of Our Lady's presence. A Protestant woman was heard to tell her grandchildren; 'Be still, children, be quiet, you would cause the mild Mary of grace to sin!' This intimacy is probably rare in the West and its presence in this collection is consequently striking.

May the blessed Virgin Mary
And the promised Branch of glory dwell,
Oh! in my heart and soul always,
May the blessed Virgin Mary,
and the fragrant Branch of glory dwell.

Such devotion is not strange in Coptic tradition.

The Celtic Vision is a marvellous book, superbly printed, beautifully illustrated and full of haunting poetry. It is certainly a suitable gift but more than that it may prove a stairway to Heaven for any reader.

Sutton Valence School, Kent, England.

John Watson.

Patrology, Volume IV: The Golden Age of Latin Patristic Literature.

Edited by Angelo DiBerardino. Translated by Placid Solari, O.S.B. Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1986. Pp. 667. \$48.00 (Cloth), \$39.95 (Paperback).

Quasten's Patrology has been the standard work in the field since 1950 when its first volume appeared. The prolonged sickness of the late Professor Johannes Quasten has prevented him from completing the series. A team of eight scholars of the Patristic institute, the Augustinianum, in Rome have prepared this volume: the book deals with the period from the Council of Nicea to the Council of Chalcedon (AD 325-451). It follows the same methodology and outline of earlier volumes, with more emphasis on the political and social context of the Fathers. While more space is given to the major orthodox Fathers, Sts. Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine, more than 90 other Fathers, heretics and lay theologians are included. In a concise introductory chapter, Adalbert Hamman discusses the political, geographical, social and doctrinal framework of the fourth and fifth centuries in the West. Every patristic writer is introduced by an account of his life; then his writings are described. In the case of the great Fathers, these are topically classified, then a summary of the theology of each is given. The extensive bibliography which has been updated by the translator includes critical texts, translations, and important studies dealing with the writer and his works.

Like the previous volumes of *Patrology*, this volume is indispensable for the study of the Church Fathers.

Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen.

By Jon Dechow. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988. Pp. xii + 584. \$25.00 (hardcover).

This volume bears the number 13 of the *Patristic Monograph Series* which had been previously published by the *Philadelphia Patristic Foundation* and now is carried out by a joint effort of the *North American Patristic Society* and *Mercer University Press*. The idea of the series is to have scholarly studies published at reasonable prices and this book is no exception. It is a great contribution to the history and thought of Origen, of whom Henri Crouzel, S.J. says in the Preface, "In ancient Christian literature Origen is actually one of the authors studied most. By the greatness of his genius and the extent of his influence he may be compared only to Augustine." Others have called him the greatest of all the early Christian writers.

Origen (185-254AD.) has been dead a century and a half before being condemned in Egypt, Cyprus and Rome; and three centuries before being anathematized by the Second Council of Constantinople (553 AD.). However, his influence on subsequent Christianity has always been strong. Most of the Church Fathers after Origen, even among his opponents, owed some aspect of their theology, methodology, or system of biblical interpretation to him.

In this book Dr. Dechow discusses in depth the history of the Origen controversy, with extensive references both to ancient sources and to recent scholarship. The controversy started with St. Epiphanius of Cyprus in chapter 64 of his 80-chapter opus against all heresies, the *Panarion*, in which he declared that Origen is the epitome and exemplar of all heresis. In Part I, The Formation of a Dogmatist, Jon Dechow shows how the *Panarion* was formed as well as the extent of Origenism in Orthodox monasticism of fourth century Egypt. In Part II, the seven charges that Epiphanius brought against Origen are evaluated according to the works of the great Alexandrian Scholar himself. The final chapters of the book deal with the bitter fruit born by *Panarion* 64. Epiphanius lived to see his charges picked up and built upon by St. Theophilus of Alexandria and St. Jerome. Origen and Origenists were condemned in 400 AD; many of his monastic followers were labelled as heretics and expelled from Egypt. In 543 Emperor Justinian wrote his ten anathemas against Origen, which were the basis of the fifteen anathemas associated with the 553 Council of Constantinople.

This book is a great contribution to the Origen studies. It provides the serious student with the historical and patristic data of a conflict that has shaped Christian theology and spirituality, since both Origen and Epiphanius are pillars of our Christian heritage.

Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis

By Karen Jo Trojesen. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986. Pp. xi+183. Cloth, \$35.50.

This is a very important contribution in the English language to the studies of Origen and of the Alexandrian method of biblical interpretation in general. This method of interpretation which emphasizes the spiritual sense of Scripture has been criticized by modern biblical scholars since Luther on the grounds of its use of allegory. They rather emphasize the historical and grammatical sense.

Dr. Trojesen utilizes her talents in mastering both Greek and Latin, as well as French and German to examine the primary and secondary sources, in order to understand how Origen was doing exegesis. In the first three chapters of her book,

she describes Origen's exegetical method. For this she studies selections from his writings, both homilies and commentaries on different and representative parts of Scripture-Psalms, Jeremiah, Numbers, Song of Songs, Luke and Matthew. The fourth chapter deals with the theological foundation of Origen's theological exegesis.

The aim of Origen in biblical interpretation is the benefit of the reader or hearer. He believes that Christ, the Logos, is present in Scripture. He is its origin, and He is active in it and uses it in the contemporary situation in order to help the reader in working out his salvation. For Origen, the presence of Christ in Scripture is as real as the Incarnation itself. In the Incarnation, Christ speaks with his own voice. In Scripture, He speaks through the mouths of the prophets and apostles. Not only does Scripture contain the teaching of Christ, but also Christ is the one who teaches. The goal of the interpretation of any biblical text is an encounter within it between the hearer and Christ, who through his teachings completes the work of redemption in each individual soul.

In the many examples Dr. Trojesen gives, she shows how Origen places the hearer within the text in order to be simultaneously carried in a vertical movement in each verse, and a horizontal movement from the first verse to the last in the text. The vertical movement is an ascension from the grammatical-historical (or literal) sense to the contemporary spiritual sense. In order to reach this, Origen's exegesis of a biblical passage follows a pattern of four steps:

1. What is the grammatical sense of the text?
2. What is the concrete and historical reality to which this sense refers?
3. What is the Logos teaching through this reality? (*Universal spiritual meaning*).
4. And finally, how can this teaching be applied to the hearer today? (*Contemporary spiritual meaning*).

As the reader passes from verse to verse in the biblical text, following the four steps in each, he progresses in a horizontal movement that mirrors the stages of the progress of the soul in the spiritual life: purification from sin; contemplative knowledge and illumination; and finally union and perfection.

The author should be commended, in this study of the great Alexandrian Father, for focusing on his writings and for making available in English the fruits of recent German and French scholarship.

BOOK NOTICES

Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church

Translated and Edited by Karlfried Froehlich. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984. Pp. 135. \$7.95 (Paper).

This short volume discusses the development of the principles and rules for interpreting Scripture in the early Church. A comprehensive introduction summarizes these principles and rules in Judaism, New Testament, Gnostic writings, Schools of Alexandria and of Antioch, and the Latin West. This is followed by a new scholarly translation of eight important selections from the first four centuries of the Christian era that illustrate how patristic hermeneutics developed.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Volume IV

Edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988. Pp. 1211. \$39.95 (Cloth). Complete four-volume set, \$159.95.

With this volume, the new edition of *ISBE* (originally published in 1915), is now complete. It includes articles, sometimes of considerable length, on every person, place and theological term mentioned in the Bible. There are comprehensive introductions to all the biblical books, as well as a wealth of archaeological and historical data. Like its predecessors, this volume, is well illustrated by many photographs and maps. The Orthodox reader will appreciate its scholarly and conservative approach to the Bible, and will find it an invaluable and up-to-date reference for his daily use in the study of God's word. However, most of the contributors are of Evangelical background, and the Protestant views are put primarily in focus when it comes to doctrinal issues like sacraments and worship.

Coptologia:

Research Publication in the Sources and Meaning of the Coptic Tradition, Volume IX

Edited by F.M. Ishak, Ph. D. (P.O. Box 235 Don Mills Postal Station, Don Mills, Ontario, Canada, M3C 2S2), 1988, Pp. 161. \$8.50 (US), \$10.00 (Canada).

The highlights of the 1988 volume of *Coptologia* are two interviews with Bishop Gregorios (Bishop for High Theological Studies) and Fr. Matta al-Maskin; life of St. Macarius the Great; other articles on mystic spirituality, Eucharist and Coptic iconography; and the obituary of two Coptic scholars-Aziz Suryal Atiya and Ragaei el-Mallakh.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Paulist Press (Mahwah, New Jersey)

Prayer as a Personal Relationship. By William A. Barry, S.J., 1987, Pp. 83. \$4.95 (Paper).

The Way to Contemplation: Encountering God Today. By Willigis Jager. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell, 1987, Pp. 144. \$7.95 (Paper).

Kything: The Art of Spiritual Presence. By Louis M. Savary and Patricia H. Berne, 1988, Pp. 208. \$9.95 (Paper).

Encounter with God. By Morton Kelsey, 1987 (Reprint), Pp. 282. \$8.95 (Paper).

Stumbling Blocks or Stepping Stones: Spiritual Answers to Psychological Questions. By Benidict J. Groeschel, Capuchin, 1987, Pp. 169. \$8.95 (Paper).

The Way of Paradox: Spiritual Life as Taught by Meister Eckhart. By Cyprian Smith, OSB, 1987, Pp. 133. \$7.95 (Paper).

Women at Prayer. By Mary Collins, 1987, Pp. 51. \$2.95 (Paper).

Women and Teaching. By Maria Harris, 1988, Pp. 108. \$3.95 (Paper).

The Art of Passingover: An Invitation to Living Creatively. By Francis Dorff, O. Praem, 1988, Pp. 204. \$8.95 (Paper).

When You are Angry with God. By Pat McCloskey, O.F.M., 1987, Pp. 119. \$4.95 (Paper).

Dreams and the Search for Meaning. By Peter O'Connor, 1986, Pp. 247. \$8.95 (Paper).

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (Grand Rapids, Michigan).

The Beloved Disciple: His Name. His Story. His Thought. By Vernard Eller, 1987, Pp. 124. \$8.95 (Paper).

The Cross of Jesus. By Leon Morris, 1988, Pp. 118. \$7.95 (Paper).

St. Mary and St. Mena Coptic Orthodox Church of Rhode Island

(8 Pendleton St., Cranston, RI 02920).

The Doctrine of Sanctification in St. Athanasius' Paschal Letters. By Fr. Matthias F. Wahba, 1988, Pp. 191. \$5.90 (Paper).

St. Athanasius' Theology: Articles for Today-The Sacrifice of the Cross. By Fr. Matthias Wahba, 1988, Pp. 80 (English and Arabic). No Price.

St. Athanasius' Theology: Articles for Today-Easter Festival. By Fr. Matthias Wahba, 1988, Pp. 64. (English and Arabic). No Price.

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Articles: The Journal invites submission of articles on biblical, liturgical, patristic or spiritual topics.

Special Issues: We are planning for special issues on:

The Coptic Orthodox Church
Saint Cyril of Alexandria

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

Special Sections: Contributors to the sections of *Book Reviews* and *Currents in Coptic Church Studies* are advised to contact the editor before submitting their articles. Of the extensive new literature, we only choose for review books of lasting spiritual benefit for the reader.

Manuscripts are preferred to be typed double spaced (including references and footnotes).

All authors are expected to hear from us within one month of the receipt of their articles. Unpublished material is returned only if requested.

INFORMATION FOR SUBSCRIBERS

Subscription Price: U.S.: \$7.00. Canada: \$8.00 (U.S. Dollars). Other countries: \$10.00 a year.

Subscription is for one year (four issues). Unless otherwise stated, it starts from the current issue. However, new subscribers are advised to start by the spring issue to get the full benefit of the annual index which appears at the end of the year.

Previous Issues: \$2.00 per copy (while a supply lasts).

Renewals: Early renewal is appreciated, you do not have to wait for an expiration notice. Notices are sent after you receive your last issue. Failure or delay of renewal will result in interruption or delay of the subsequent issue.

Change of address requires six weeks notice.

SUBSCRIPTION AND BUSINESS ADDRESS: EDITORIAL ADDRESS:

Society of Coptic Church Studies
P.O. Box 714
E. Brunswick, NJ 08816

Coptic Church Review
P.O. Box III3
Lebanon, PA 17042