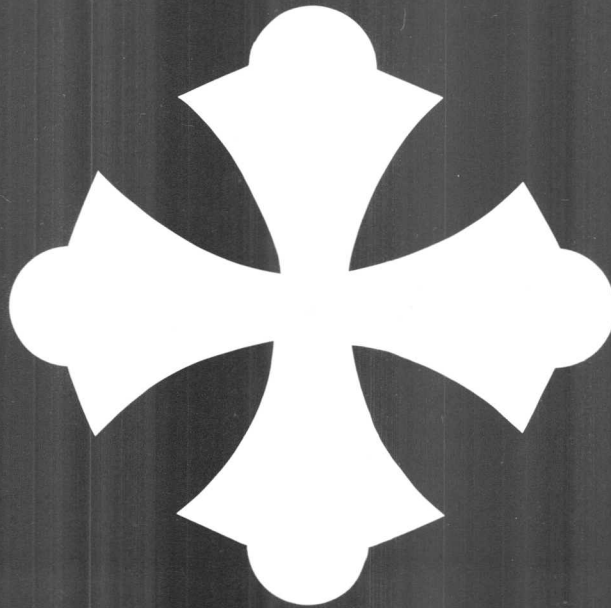


# COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

*Volume 10, Number 4 . . . . . Winter 1989*

- *THE CHURCH: MYSTERY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST*
- *COPTIC PATRIARCHS UNDER ISLAM*
- *FATHER MANASSEH YOUHANNA*



*Society of Coptic Church Studies*

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## ***ABOUT THIS ISSUE***

*The Mystery of the Body of Christ* by His Grace Bishop Isaac of Quesna is translated from his recent book, "Church without a Wrinkle." In this article, Bishop Isaac, who is a member of the Editorial Board of this Journal, discusses the biblical teaching of the Church as Body of Christ. His last article in the Journal (Vol. 9, No. 1, 1988) discussed another biblical image of the Church, *The Church as Visible People of God*.

In this issue *Dr. Raef Marcus* resumes his series '*History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church under the Sword of Islam*' by describing the fierce persecution which the Copts suffered in the middle of the ninth century, during the last years of the rule of the Abbasid Caliphs over Egypt. This is the seventh article in the series which started by the Arab conquest of Egypt in the seventh century. The last article appeared in the summer issue of this year.

*Jack Phillips, M. Min.*, who teaches Theology at College of St. Mary in Omaha, Nebraska, writes '*The Quiet Word*' as a reflection of his recent visit to Egypt.

In *Father Manasseh Youhanna: Priest, Preacher, Author and Historian*, *Dr. Boulos A. Ayad* gives the life and work of a young Coptic priest who was among the pioneers in the Coptic revival earlier in this century and whose books have been repeatedly reprinted and are still read by many Copts.

A separate index of the articles that appeared in *Coptic Church Review* is published with this issue on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the *Journal*. The index is sent with this issue to all US subscribers. Subscribers in Canada and overseas will receive it freely upon their request.

*Editor*

# ***THE MYSTERY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST***

***Bishop Isaac of Quesna***

The existence of the Body of Christ is amazing and bewildering. We need the mystery of piety and righteousness in order to be able to truly absorb it and be a part of it. There is no salvation for man outside this mystic, marvelous Body.

- It is the Word of God who became flesh and dwelt among us.
- It is his humanity that took the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man.
- It is the Body of Jesus that was born from the Virgin, and with which He lived on Earth, ascended to heaven, and will come back once more on the day of judgement.
- It is the Second Adam, the Head of God's creation and the First-born of all creation.
- It is the Church.
- It is the living Temple of God.
- It is the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Body and the Blood on the altar in every liturgy.

## ***The Church: Life with Christ***

The first disciples enjoyed the company of the Lord Jesus "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands" (1 John 1:1) They were with Christ in a life of fellowship and sharing. As for us who are hundreds of years away from his ascension to heaven, how can we enjoy the same fellowship and companionship while we have never met him in the flesh? St. Paul informs us that we have become members in the Body of Christ through Holy Baptism. He who is baptized and has become a member of the Church can enjoy a life with Christ according to his blessed promise, "and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." Rather, our life with Christ within the Church may even be richer and stronger by the grace of the Holy Spirit which is now ours, and through the fact that we are joined together as members of the glorified Body of the Lord. The disciples lacked both privileges.

In our faith we should be aware of the greatness of this gift. The Body of Christ is the strength and confirmation of our faith. The Body of Christ, which is the Church, is the only perfect gift by which we can be saved, attain the new life, and transcend to eternity.

***Total Incompetence of Man to Live With God***

After the fall of man and his separation from God, God never refrained from sending his word to sinners to bring them back to him. He never stopped caring for them. His main goal was to bring the stray mankind back into his fold. He therefore gave them his law and with the law, he gave them his promises. But men refused the light that was given to them, they were absorbed in offering oblations and in performing rituals, which, in their unrepentant state, they thought God will accept in place of their own souls. But God wants nothing from man but man himself. Those offerings and rituals may actually prevent man from living according to the will of God.

***God Becomes Man to Win Back Sinful Man***

At this point the greatest miracle took place, the Son of God became a man like us, the Word was made flesh. He who was from the beginning in the Father's glory became flesh. He by whom everything was created became one with his own creation. He who is the true God has taken our humanity in him.

He took our human nature (1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 8:9 Eph. 1:4; Col. 1:16; John 1:1; Hebrews 1:1). He took the sinful body as the Holy Scripture says. He took human form, born in the likeness of men. (Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:7, 8).

In the Old Testament God tried to draw humanity to him through the words of the prophets. Today God absorbs humanity in the Body of Jesus. God was vanquished by his abundant mercies and thus He sent his Son in the flesh to embody all humankind (*Theotokia of Thursday: 6*) and bring it back to him. God embodies in him all humanity through a body. Man in his pride and enmity to God rejected the invisible unincarnate word of God. This humanity with all its weakness has been brought back in the Body of Jesus in a true and real human form.

***The Body of Christ the Basis of Our Salvation***

When the Fathers meditated on the mystery of Incarnation, they were content with the spiritual feelings, the divine inspiration, and the holy emotions. They said that God took human nature in himself; he did not choose a perfect man and then joined himself to him. This is the depth of our Coptic Orthodox belief, the belief of one nature of the Incarnate God. God has taken all the human *apostat*, with all its weakness, sin and corruption. This does not mean that He took in himself the man Jesus; and if we do not stay away from this concept we will misunderstand the whole message of the Bible. The Body of Jesus Christ in which He took us and all humanity has become now the basis of our salvation.

***In the Likeness of the Sinful Body but Without Sin***

The Body of Christ incorporates all the body of humanity in itself in spite of the fact that He is without sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15). This wonderful Body bore our sorrows and pains while at the same time was able to heal all the diseases and suffer-

ings of human nature. “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases” (Matt. 8:17). “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5). Along the same lines He bore our sins while He could have forgiven them and abolished their corrupting effect. He took our sinful body in his Body, and because of that Jesus used to accept sinners and draw them near to him (Luke 15:1).

With the coming of Christ the acceptable year of the Lord began (Luke 4:19) and every deed Christ performed was for the benefit of the new humanity which He carried in his body.

### ***Jesus the Second Adam and Head of God's New Creation***

Jesus was called the Second Adam or the Last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45). We were in the first Adam, who was a single person, when he disobeyed God; but he represented the whole humanity. So also in Christ, the Second Adam, humanity is re-created in a state of freedom from Satan and in total obedience to God.

That is why we need the second birth as the Lord Jesus ascertained to Nicodemus, so we can shift our lineage from the first Adam, with all his depravations, to the Second Adam with his purity. We should start at this point if we wish to receive the blessing of fellowship and unity with the Incarnate Lord.

The followers of Jesus have a fellowship and unity with Christ. They live with him, they suffer with him and with him they carry the burden of the cross. With him they all are born, crucified, resurrected, and glorified.

### ***All That Happened to Christ While He Was Incarnate on Earth Happened for our Benefit***

When Christ was incarnate he did not single out one individual to embody, but rather all humanity, all the human essence with its sinful body. Thus all whom He carried in himself were crucified with him, went through death with him and arose with him. All our weaknesses and sins He carried to the cross. In his Crucifixion and Resurrection we are those who were crucified and resurrected. The earthly Body of Christ did undergo real death and was risen as a Body, that is not subject to corruption, a glorified Body. It was the same Body, since the tomb was found empty, which became a new Body not subject to death a second time. Thus Jesus bore mankind within him during his death and went forth with it to the Resurrection. That same human Body which He embodied on earth He also took up to eternity.

### ***How Can We Share the Blessings of the Incarnation***

It is certain that we cannot follow Christ or have fellowship with him except through his Body, who for our sakes endured all those things.

Through this Body we find salvation and acceptance with God, “by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain that is, through his flesh.” (Hebrew 10:20).

Here we go back to answer the question. We can share in the Body of Christ through the Holy Sacraments in the Church especially Baptism and the Lord's Supper. When Christ's side was pierced on the cross - there gushed from it blood and water. John the Apostle intentionally recorded this because both are the elements of the two Sacraments (John 19:34, 35). Paul the Apostle boasts of his knowledge of the mystery of Christ, "how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body" (Eph. 3:6), and by this he stresses the relationship between our membership in the Body of Christ and these two Sacraments. The Sacraments begin and end with the Body of Christ. Only through them can we enjoy the presence, the fellowship and the union with this divine and blessed Body. Words of preaching are not enough to make us members in the Body of Christ; it is necessary to participate often in the Sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper. Partaking from the Lord's table unites us with Christ. He becomes in us and we in him. The real and true understanding of the humanity of Christ is the key that opens all the treasures of the Sacraments of the Church.

### *Christ to the Christian and to all Humanity*

All men are with Christ because of the Incarnation, since Christ bore in himself all our human nature or in the words of the Daily Office, the dough of all humanity. The life, death and resurrection of Christ are all events that are of first degree concern to all men (Romans 5:18; 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:14). But Christians are in Christ in a special sense. For the non-Christian, Christ is his judgment and death; but for a Christian, Christ is the grace of righteousness, redemption and salvation.

A baptized Christian was crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6; Col. 2:20), was buried with him (Romans 6:4; Col. 2:12), was united with him in death (Romans 6:5), and was raised with him (Col. 2:12 & 3:1). All this creates in him an assurance that he will rise with Christ and live forever with him (Romans 6:8; 2 Cor. 7:3; Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:12; 2 Tim. 2:11). We are in Christ because Christ is "Emmanuel" which means God with us. Our knowledge of Christ in this manner leads us to feel that our whole being is in him, and that He is the source of our blessing and the hope of our glory. The baptized Christian who is nourished at the Lord's table is "being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18). Thus the individual is not only a member of the Body of Christ, but also becomes a body similar to the Body of Christ. Christians are in Christ and Christ is in them. They are no longer in the sinful flesh (Romans 7:5; 8:3 & 9; 2 Cor. 10:3), no longer under the old law (Romans 2:12 & 3:19), and no longer in the first Adam (1 Cor. 15:22). From now on they are in Christ in their whole being and life. Whereas the non Christian, by rejecting Christ in spite of all that He did for him, has kept the sinful flesh, and is still subject to the curse of the old law and is still with his whole being in the first Adam who has sold himself to Satan.

***Christ to Me***

All the different expressions that the Apostle Paul used in describing the mystery of the Incarnation can be summarized in one phrase 'Christ for us', not only by words and emotions but by his incarnation and his becoming man. His body occupies the space where we should be before God. He suffered and died in our place, He tasted death for every one (Hebrews 2:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13 & 14; Tit. 2:14; 1 Thes. 5:10).

Christ became incarnate and was hung on the cross for our sake. He makes us members in his lifegiving Body in Baptism as He also gives us his Body in the Holy Eucharist, in the other Sacraments, and in the word of the Bible. His Body has thus become the foundation of all his discipleship. He is our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

***The Church is the Mystic and Visible Body of Christ***

Since the day of the Annunciation the life of Christ on earth has become eternal in the Body of Jesus and then in the Church. The Church is his Body crucified, raised and glorified. The Church is the new humanity which He bore. In the Church, the Body and Blood nourish every member who is baptized into the Body of Christ (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13).

Being a member of the Church actually means you are a member in the Body of Christ. Since the Ascension of Christ, the Body of Jesus occupies the Church as a place for him on earth. The Church is the true presence of Christ, and by understanding this, we will come to know the true meaning of the Church. The Church is not an establishment or a building, it is a person and a being.

***One and Only Church***

The Church is one being or one person. All those baptized are one body in Christ (Romans 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:17). The Church is a human being, a new human being and it is composed of numerous members of people from every tribe, nation and tongue, who join together over the years into one person, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Church the enmity between wolves and lambs is dissolved and they graze together. So it is between the Jews and the gentiles "that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace" (Eph. 2:15). The new man is one and not many. All that is outside the circles and boundaries of the Church, i.e. outside the new man, is divided, scattered and loose.

The Church as a new man is created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24), and "is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Col. 3:10). In these verses we notice the mention of a wonderful observation. The Incarnate Christ is the image of God which the first Adam had lost when he fell. We are now related to a second man who is described as the Last Adam (1 Cor. 15:47) who was created according to the divine image



which He in turn gives back to us through the Church. When we are baptized in the Church we put on Christ (2 Cor. 5:1), that is we return to the image and likeness of God. We are clothed in the image of God and we are grafted in the one Body of the man Jesus Christ, in which there is no difference between African and European, Asian, American or Australian, slave or free, all are one in Christ.

St. Paul the Apostle describes Christ as “the head of the body” (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18 & 2:19). Hence, as the body without a head is a dead corpse, so is the Church without Christ, it is no church at all. It is imperative that Christ, his teachings and principles, and his Holy Spirit be the protector of the whole Church. Christ is to govern the Church: He is the one to guide it, manage it, rear it, nourish it, defend it, and safeguard it.

As for the Holy Spirit of God in the Church, He is what the nerve and the blood are for the body: the Holy Spirit carries Christ to all the members no matter how different they are (Eph. 3:17; 1 Cor. 12:3) The Holy Spirit builds the Church, (Eph. 2:22 & 4:12; Col. 2:2). He brings the hearts of the individuals together in unity, and makes every individual aware of the spiritual and physical needs of his brother, and makes all the churches aware of one another. He distributes the talents and the services for the sake of building the Church (2 Cor. 13:14; Rom. 15:30 & 5:5; Col. 1:8; Eph. 4:3) The Holy Spirit stimulates the hearts of the non-believers as they hear the word of the Gospel (Acts 2:37) He also works in the Holy Sacraments (2 Cor. 3:17) to bring the blessed presence of Christ to all the members of the Church.

In the Church, Christ becomes our life. We are in Christ, we do not live our own lives, but Christ lives in us. The life of a Christian in the Church is in fact the life of Christ in him (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 John 4:15).

### ***Many Members in One Body***

Although the Church is considered one body whose head is Christ, it is composed of a group of members (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12). The Church is a body made up of many parts. The members of the Church are not all similar or identical units, but every individual may have different characteristics, talents, and interests. However, they all come in harmony and complement one another. Any attempt to cast the Church in a certain mold would be an attempt to take the Church out of a life of energy and growth into a life of stagnation and suppression. It is impossible for a body to be all eyes or all ears. Moreover, it is impossible for one single member of the body to go beyond its personal individuality, a hand cannot replace an eye and an ear cannot take the place of a foot. Every member has its own individual role and all the members are indispensable to one another.

On the other hand, every member keeps his individual qualities and role as long as they are used to serve the needs of the one body as a whole. The unity of the Church is what makes every individual what he is and the congregation what it is. The body of Christ is what makes the Church a Church.

*The Body of Christ and the Temple*

In order to get a complete picture of the body of Christ, we should review our understanding of the temple and why Jesus referred to his Body as the temple of God, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19, 21).

Through the spirit of prophecy, David felt that he wished to build a temple for God. When he consulted Nathan the prophet, the temple plans that God had in mind were revealed to him, “Would you build me a house to dwell in?...The Lord will make you a house” (2 Sam. 7:5 & 11). God alone is capable of building a temple for himself.

After that David was promised that his offspring would build the house and that his throne would be forever, “I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (2 Sam. 7:12, 13, 14), and all this was symbolic. Solomon, David’s son, claimed that this promise applied to him, that Solomon was the “son of peace,” that is God’s peace with the house of David. So he did build the temple and the Lord accepted his action. But with this acceptance the complete fulfillment of the promise did not come. That house was built by human hands and that is why it was destined for destruction. The Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed more than once, a sign that it was not the core of God’s promise. Where then is the real temple? The prophecy was yet to be fulfilled and God’s people were still looking forward to a temple to be built by a son of David whose kingdom would last for ever.

The Lord Jesus Christ himself has proclaimed the fulfillment of this prophecy when he applied it to his Body, “But he spoke of the temple of his body” (John 2:21). The Body of Christ is the true temple of God (1 Cor. 3:17; Heb. 10:1 & 8:5). He knew that the Jews would destroy that temple but that it would be raised again a new and eternal temple that is his resurrected glorified Body.

This is the house (Body of Christ) that God builds for his Son and at the same time it is the house that the Son builds for the Father. In this house God really and truly dwells, and through it God dwells in the new creation, the redeemed humanity, the Holy Church of Jesus Christ.

The Incarnate Christ is the fulfillment of God’s promise to build himself a temple in the midst of the people where He would come down and be with them. The book of Revelation speaks about the new Jerusalem saying that there is no Temple in it “for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.” (Rev. 21:22).

The temple is the place where the glorious divine presence of God makes a house in which to dwell among the people, and it is the place where God meets his people. These two points were fulfilled only in the person of the Lord Jesus. Here is the Incarnate God. Here is the true presence of God in bodily form. And here too is the new humanity, because Christ took this humanity in him, in his own Body.

In conclusion, we come out with the fact that the Body of Christ is the place of acceptance with God, the place of atonement, the place of reconciliation and peace between God and man. God sees man in the Body of Christ, and man finds himself accepted by God in this same Body.

The Body of Christ is the spiritual body built of living stones (1 Peter 2:5) and Christ is its only foundation and its corner stone (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11) and at the same time it is the whole temple (Eph. 2:21) where the Holy Spirit of God dwells to purify and sanctify the hearts of the faithful (1 Cor. 3:16 & 6:19).

The Temple of God is the holy people in the Lord Jesus Christ. To him be the glory.

*Translated from Arabic  
by Lily Soliman*

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

***Raef Marcus, D.M.D.***

It was the year 847 AD, the Abbasid Caliph, Al-Mutawekkil was ruling from Baghdad an empire which started to show the signs of decline, and an administration in which corruption and injustice prevailed.

In an effort to save his ailing empire, the Caliph adopted the Muslim technique to encourage the revival of Islam, to give more concessions to Muslim clergy and Muslim fundamentalists. These concessions had to go along with an escalated persecution for the Copts, who by that time had been weakened by two centuries of oppression and have been outnumbered by an increase in Muslim population.

The Coptic Patriarch as we mentioned in the previous sections had been quelled and his authority had been undermined. So after two centuries of oppression to the Patriarch it was now the turn of the Copts, the inhabitants of the land of Egypt.

In this issue we will describe the status of the Copts during the last thirty years of the Abbasid rule of Egypt. Three Patriarchs succeeded on the throne of St. Mark during that period.

## ***Abba Khayal (AD 849-851)***

Abba Khayal, the fifty third Patriarch of Alexandria was a frail pious monk from the monastery of Abu Yuhannis.

During the first year of his patriarchate, a series of new regulations of the Caliph Al-Mutawekkil was promulgated throughout the provinces of Egypt in 850. The Christians were ordered to wear dark-colored clothes, with distinguishing patches; use wooden stirrups and set up wooden images of the devil or an ape or dog over their doors; the girdle, the symbol of femininity, was forbidden to women and ordered to be worn by men; crosses could not be shown nor processional lights carried in the streets; and their graves had to be indistinguishable from the earth around. They were also forbidden to ride horses.

Abba Khayal, being weak in his body could not bear these trials on his people. So it happened one day that he was weeping with bitter tears, praying to God to have mercy upon him and save him from this difficult time, since he had no power to bear these trials.

The biographer of Abba Khayal stated that the Lover of mankind heard his prayer, and while he was celebrating Easter at the Monastery of St. Macarius he fell ill and departed this life. It was the shortest time an Egyptian Patriarch presided over the Church. The length of his occupation of the throne of St. Mark was one year and five months, and he was the first Alexandrian Patriarch to be buried in the Monastery of St. Macarius.

***Abba Kuzma (AD 851-858)***

Abba Kuzma, formerly a Deacon of the Church of St. Macarius, was consecrated on the 14th of the month of Abib. On the 15th of Hatur of the same year on the feast of St. Mena, that is four months later, the Patriarch was arrested by the order of Ahmad Ibn Dinar, the Muslim ruler of Alexandria. The Patriarch was tortured in prison until he was able to collect a huge fine to buy his freedom. Still he was ordered not to depart from Alexandria. Later, he was allowed to stay in a town in the eastern part of Egypt known as Damirah. Al-Mutawekkil further ordered that all the churches in the land of Egypt be demolished. Christians were forbidden from praying in any place, even from celebrating the liturgies; they were also forbidden from praying over those who had died. They were dismissed from government employment, forcing many to embrace Islam.

Grief and affliction befell the Copts, many people could not endure these trials, and the Church being weak could not give them support. So people denied the faith of their Fathers. The historian Sawiris states that: Love and patience were diminished in the hearts of many so that they denied the Lord Christ; some of them denied him on account of the worldly positions which they loved, and others on account of the poverty they suffered.

The intensity of the persecution increased steadily and in 852 the monks of the Monastery of Abu Makar, (St. Macarius) observed the icon of the Lord Christ in the Church of Saint Sawiris, how its side opened and blood came forth from it. In that year also the eyes of all the icons at the Monastery of Abu Makar gushed with tears.

In 855 the Romans invaded Damietta and pillaged it, they also invaded Tinnis and Alexandria. The Nubians in the meantime invaded Upper Egypt as far north as Edfu. On account of that, the governor ordered the building of ships for the fleet, for which he forced the Christians to work in the shipyard for free, adding more to their sufferings. Many Copts were driven away from Egypt to Nubia and Ethiopia.

Throughout all these, the Patriarch Kuzma was dwelling in the city of Damirah in quietude and peace probably unaware of what was happening all over Egypt. Two *Archons* (or Coptic chiefs), Ibrahim and Makarah, were taking charge of his affairs in Misr and Alexandria and bearing his burden.

The Patriarch went to his rest after presiding by name only over the Church of Alexandria for seven years. He was buried in the city of Dinusir in the Diocese of Sakha.

*Shenouti I (AD 858-880): "A Champion in A Dark Age"*

The 55th Patriarch of Alexandria was a monk from the Monastery of Abu Makar known for his virtues, his humility and his love to the Church of God. The name of Christ was in his mouth and he uttered it at all times.

As soon as he was ordained he made his mind to unite the shattered Church. Before he sat on his throne in Alexandria, he visited every Diocese in Egypt, and the monasteries of Wadi Habib and of Upper Egypt. He reached out to all those who were troubled because of the persecution, and those who gave up their faith. Everyone marvelled at the humility and spirituality of the blessed Shenouti. He always said he believed not in anything save in the name of the Savior Jesus Christ.

After all his travels all over the land of Egypt, Abba Shenouti arrived at the city of Alexandria, where he occupied himself with the welfare of those who were impoverished by the persecution. Thousands had taken shelter after losing their properties in a great quarter in Alexandria named Kasturium which lacked fresh water and sanitary conditions. The Patriarch dug a canal to bring fresh water to the quarter. He introduced a sewage system and water fountains for the elderly. He also involved himself in the reconstruction of Maryut.

Besides this, Shenouti did not give up his care in writing festal letters which were full of grace and spiritual teaching. He made a revival for the Christian teaching that had been neglected. He did not cease to put under obedience those clergy who lacked understanding of the Word of God and neglected the correct way of reading the Holy Scriptures.

Shenouti did not waste any time in warring Satan and destroying his strength by uprooting the root of the thorns which Satan had planted in the hearts of many disobedient bishops and priests who were filled with deceit and corruption and were greedy and desirous of the worldly materials. Scantiness of the Word of God was manifest in those days between the clergy. Shenouti was troubled and was solicitous for them with great anxiety that he might set aright the flock of the Lord in the land of Egypt. He wrote letters full of wisdom and teaching to the clergy and manifested in them the teaching of the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church. When these letters reached the bishops and priests, they came to the Patriarch, acknowledged their error and besought forgiveness.

The Patriarch Shenouti performed a firm deed in order that it might serve as a censure on the bishops and clergy, in that he asked them to stand up in the midst of the congregation in the Church of Abu Makar and they made an obeisance to the congregation and asked them to pardon them and pray for them.

In 856, the last Arab governor of Egypt, Anbasa, was recalled and a series of Turkish governors misruled the country. The first of them Yezid who arrived to Egypt accompanied by an evil associate as his finance minister, Ahmad Ibn-Mudebbir who was described as a violent man who performed injustice to the Copts which none had done before him.

His first act was to double the Giziah (Taxes), soon it was tripled. The people could not afford it, so prisons were filled in every province.

He resorted to make an accurate census of all the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the monks in their monasteries and demanded the Patriarch to pay a lump sum for all of those. He sought to arrest the Patriarch until he paid him these taxes.

The Patriarch fled, wandering from place to place by water, by land, by ships, and sometimes went on foot dressed like a monk. Bishops and priests were arrested, churches were closed again.

For six months, the Patriarch was a fugitive and wanderer from one place to another. The Eucharist was forbidden except for one church in Misr and another in Alexandria. Then Shenouti decided to deliver himself for the sake of the Church. He was then asked to pay a fine of seven thousand dinars, which was paid by installments. The Copts were impoverished on account of the taxes.

This was the beginning of the trials under the Turkish rule and in the middle of that the Patriarch, even though in great distress, stood beside his people, like a good shepherd. He journeyed to the country, to the *Said* (Upper Egypt). He travelled along a difficult and perilous way, and he did not spare himself to save others who had gone astray.

Going back to national events in 861, El-Mutawekkil, was murdered by his son El-Muntasir. For five years there was war and fighting between him and his two brothers until in 866 one of them El-Motezz took possession of the Royal Palace and took command of the Empire.

In the meantime the leading Copts decided to appoint two delegates from among them to go to Baghdad and plead for the plight of the Copts.

Two Coptic leaders, namely Sawiris and Ibrahim, with the support, blessing and approval of Abba Shenouti departed to Baghdad to submit to the Caliph El-Motezz a petition pleading for relief from the tyranny and injustice of the finance minister Ibn-Mudebbir. This seems to have been granted, Ibn-Mudebbir was removed from his office, the Caliph signed a decree authorizing them to rebuild the demolished churches and to return to the Copts all the properties that had been confiscated.

Peace prevailed for a while!!!

Now it came to happen that for the ten year administration of Ibn Mudebbir he followed a policy of importing Arab tribes from the Arab Peninsula to settle them in Egypt to replace its original inhabitants. They came by thousands, on camels and on feet, and for a while they dwelled in the hills and deserts. From time to time they made raids on villages and towns, killing and burning whole towns. They caused ruin primarily in Upper Egypt ( *Said* ). Among all the places they pillaged between 856 and 866 were the Monastery of Abu Shenouti, the Monastery of El-Kalamun, and the Monastery of Abu Pachum. They killed a multitude of monks and nuns with the sword.

In 867 these Arab tribes came down from the *Said* to the land of Lower Egypt (the delta). They pillaged all the monasteries of Wadi Habib, they burnt many towns and

killed many people. Likewise they pillaged the Church of the Martyr Abu Mena at Maryut, which was the delight of all the people of Egypt. The entire city was burnt and became desert. (The Church was rebuilt a quarter of a century ago by the blessed Pope Kyrillos VI).

The beautiful Cathedral of the Virgin Mary at Athrib was destroyed and burnt. Almost every church in the land of Egypt was either destroyed, pillaged or burnt.

The Patriarch could not enter Alexandria or Fustat Misr, so he settled in the city of Mahalah Al Kabirah in the North of Egypt. Tribulations were on the rise again and people were in severe distress and fear. Abba Shenouti had an abundance of mourning and tears for the destruction of the monasteries of Wadi Habib, (known at the time as the Holy Desert of Abu Makar), which became the dwelling place of murderers and Satan worshippers. The saints who were in the desert were either killed or had sought refuge in all places.

During the following years, a series of Turkish governors ruled Egypt until a Turk named Ibn Tulun was appointed in 868 who was able to establish tranquility and peace and to control the Arab tribes and put an end to their destructive powers.

For a year or so, there was peace to the Church. The Patriarch was able to rebuild the Church of Abu Makar. He also built a wall around the monastery.

After that, trouble came from within the Church itself. A monk from the monastery of El-Hanatun (situated nine miles from Alexandria) went to the governor and gave calumnious reports to him against the Patriarch. Shenouti was arrested and thrown into a narrow dark prison in spite of the fact that he was suffering from gout at the time and was unable to walk. No one was allowed to see him except one of his disciples to bring him food and water once every third day. The Patriarch suffered a lot of anguish and pain in that prison in which he was left for forty days. He was liberated after promising to pay a huge fine of ten thousand dinars.

In the last two years of his life, Shenouti suffered from the wickedness and treachery of some priests who always antagonized him, gave calumnious reports to the Wali or governor. Shenouti was arrested three times in the last year of his life, in spite of his old age and physical disability.

The best end of the biography of Abba Shenouti is to quote what his disciple Mena wrote in AD 880:

“After our Father Shenouti the Patriarch, a champion during all his days, and blessed in his acceptable service to God, had been perfected and had accomplished his course and his good fight amidst all adversities and trials, and what befell him from the rulers and tyrants, and the suffering of the difficult times, the Lord translated him to the place of honor and rest. He became sick and died on the 24th of Barmuda, after administering the affairs of the Church for 21 years and three months.”



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## ***THE QUIET WORD***

*Jack Phillips, M.Min.*

It has been quite a journey for me, born in the Midwest into a mainstream Protestant world, and finding myself in the middle of a mob clamoring to see the Pope. From a distance and with a measure of objectivity, what has happened in my odyssey through Christianity is an impulse toward the mystical - heading East to discover the breadth of this faith into which I was born and raised. It has been and continues to be a process of self discovery that has taken me to Egypt on several occasions. For Western Christianity to claim sole authenticity is not only absurd, but impractical. The tree of life has its roots in the East.

In a tradition which has made the Gospel theologically complicated, the images of the Nile and the desert, and the icons both hanging and living among us, speak boldly. The creative word of God is both clear and powerful. It is not vague, but it is often hard to hear.

Egypt is a very long way from Nebraska. The deep silence of the desert rests in stark contrast with the roar of Cairo, as the fertile Nile paints a green stripe on the scorched sand. The intensity of this contrast is overwhelming. The congestion of the city and the emptiness of the desert are equally forbidding.

The Coptic Church stands, as it always has, in the midst of these contrasts. In many ways it defies them. The monasteries erupt from the smooth and lifeless sand, as the quiet churches of Old Cairo interrupt the noisy city. As the Spirit of God moves over the face of the deep, the Christian community lives in the face of hostility.

During my most recent visit to Egypt, I wanted to see His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. This was not easy. In addition to heavy security, his public appearances always drew huge crowds. His regular Wednesday night address was no exception. The courtyard outside St. Mark's Cathedral was so packed that the Pope had to cross the short distance to his residence by car. My Coptic friends and I were able to gain entrance to the residence, though I'm not sure how. We had visited with Pope Shenouda privately in the past, but this time it was impossible.

Pope Shenouda was enveloped by the waiting crowd as he entered. They pressed toward him to touch his robes, like a scene from the Gospel. It surprised me that in the midst of this chaos, he listened and spoke quietly with each person that managed to reach him, including me.

In an increasingly complicated world, what can we do but seek the quiet? Cairo is noisy because life is noisy. We would have liked to stay in the secluded churches of Old Cairo, but we were anxious to see the city. Maybe our time would have been better spent seeking silent places, and one who speaks the quiet word.

# ***FATHER MANASSEH YOUHANNA: PRIEST, PREACHER, AUTHOR AND HISTORIAN***

***Boulos Ayad Ayad, Ph.D***

## ***Early Days and Education***

Father Youhanna was born in August 1899 to pious Christian parents in the village of Hoor, near the city of Mallawi. His parents had both come from clerical families with outstanding Christian backgrounds. During his boyhood his father passed away, and his mother took care of him under the loving eyes of his venerable grandfather. Because his mother was pious, full of wisdom, generous in spirit, generous to the poor, and merciful to the widows and orphans, and to those who were suffering, Youhanna appreciated her qualities and tried to emulate them. In addition, he was very intelligent, a clear thinker, and had a keen mind.

Youhanna loved his church, and from the time he was about twelve years old he took an active part in it, and listened carefully to the sermons, taking their messages to heart. His zealous feelings for Christianity moved him to dedicate his life to the service of his church where he was ordained a deacon. He joined the Theological School in Cairo at the age of sixteen, in 1915. The head of the college, Youssef (Bek) Mankarios, hesitated to accept him because of his young age, fearing that the course of study would be too difficult for him.

After Youhanna had been in the school for a few months, the dean and the professors admired greatly his brilliance. He continued at the top of the class throughout his studies and was an excellent example to his colleagues, in character, wisdom and deep thinking. He found that his studies in the classroom were insufficient to satisfy his desire to learn. So he read all the books he could find about the Coptic Church, as well as books written by great theologians and historians. He studied all these books with great care. After five years he graduated from the School of Theology.

## ***Preacher***

In the last year of his study, he was called to preach in the Cathedral of Saint Mark in Cairo. The people listened carefully to him and admired his method of preaching, even though he was young.

When he graduated from the theological school, he was appointed a preacher in the Coptic Church of Mallawi. The people in this church were unaccustomed to hear a 20-year-old man. After a few months they found him a very deep thinker, a pious preacher and a great teacher as well as an honest leader. Thus, all the people loved him deeply.

When the people of Mallawi read in the newspapers that the Bishop of El-Minya decided to move Youhanna from his church to the church at Samalut, they became exceedingly upset and rejected the move. They chose representatives to meet with the Bishop and advise him of their feelings. The Bishop quieted their fears and promised that he would not move him. He stated that the reason for the proposed move was that when Youhanna preached at the Samalut church, at the invitation of the people, they liked him and his preaching and requested that he be appointed to serve their church. However, the Bishop did not grant their request for he knew that the people of Mallawi wanted Youhanna to stay with them.

Because of his noted preaching abilities, two other Coptic bishops independently tried to interest Youhanna in leaving Mallawi and coming to their churches with the promise of a much higher salary. He did not accept these offers, preferring to remain in Mallawi because of the sincerity and love of the people, ignoring the promise of a high salary.

During that time he wrote a huge volume on the history of the Coptic Church which was published for the first time in the Press of el-Yaqzah in Cairo in 1924.

### ***Priest***

On the 25th of January 1925 Youhanna was ordained a priest in the Coptic Orthodox Church of Mallawi on the total recommendation of the people of the church. The day of his ordination was one of celebration among the various denominations in Mallawi, all of them congratulating each other.

The life of Father Manasseh was a continuous struggle with many responsibilities in the service of his church and his pastoral calls, teaching and preaching. In addition, he also was involved in reading, writing and publishing. In the last nine years of his life he published 15 volumes, among them *'The History of the Coptic Church.'* He also published many spiritual and literary articles in newspapers and bulletins and served as editor and publisher of the Bulletin *'Paradise.'*

During the national movements in 1919, Father Manasseh spoke frequently in favor of unity and brotherhood and of struggle for the progress of the nation. He was an eloquent speaker.

Father Manasseh convinced the people of Mallawi to celebrate funerals for three days only rather than their custom of celebrating for one or two weeks. He also held conferences for his colleagues, the priests and preachers of neighboring towns, to improve the service within their churches.

During his short life he sustained various trials, enduring them with patience. None of his sons lived beyond infancy. He also suffered ill health. On December 2, 1928, his mother, whom he loved greatly, passed away. This caused him considerable sorrow. However, all this did not stop him from continuing his services to the Church till he became bed-ridden.

On Friday, May 16, 1930, he mentioned to his visitors that he was going to die that night and he asked that they would pray over his body in Mallawi and that he would be buried in Hoor. The morning of May 17, 1930 the people learned that he had passed away, as he had foretold. They went to his house with heavy hearts, awaiting the funeral. When they saw the coffin they were moved to tears, and the Moslems requested to carry the coffin, saying to the Christians, "Let us do our duty toward him because he was faithful to us during his life as he was faithful to you, and he served us as he served you. Our sadness is not less than yours." The funeral procession continued until it reached the Coptic Orthodox Church where they prayed over his body. A number of speakers eulogized him praising his virtues. The coffin was then taken from the church in Mallawi to the town of Hoor.

Finally Father Manasseh Youhanna who had served the priesthood for five years, struggling hard like the early Fathers of the Coptic Church, was laid to rest in the hands of God.

#### **Author and Historian**

Even though he lived for only 31 years, he was the author of the following published books, all in Arabic:

*The Way to Heaven; The Crucified Jesus*<sup>(1)</sup>; *The Sun of Righteousness; The Shining Light: A Guide to the Holy Book; The Vial of Precious Perfume; The Complete Evidence for the True Faith by St. Athanasius the Apostolic; The Solution of the Problems of the Holy Bible; The Life of Adam; History of the Coptic Church; Saint John Chrysostom or the Preacher of the Two Cities; The Correct Evidence on the Influence of Christianity; History of the Spread of Christianity; Father Manasseh Youhanna's Rebuttal to the Criticism of Father Lewis Shikhu of his Book on Church History.*

Father Manasseh was a well-known religious author whose writings were theologically sound with deep meditation. His command of the modern Arabic language, which he used in his books and articles, was very strong and well organized. His writings attracted the older generation as well as the young. His book, *The History of the Coptic Church*, covered the history of this church from the time of the coming of Christ to Egypt in the First Century up to the Twentieth Century, followed by the history of the Popes of Alexandria through all the periods, encompassing about 2,000 years. The book also includes the relation of the different governments with the Coptic Church through the centuries, the most famed martyrs, the heresies, the establishment of monasticism, the monastic Fathers and the most important peo-

ple of the Church, the persecutions, the Arab conquest of Egypt, Islamic rule in Egypt, relation between the Moslem rulers and the Coptic Church, and the relationship between the Catholic and the Protestant missions and the Coptic Church. *The History of the Coptic Church* is considered one of the best books written on the subject by an Egyptian in modern times. It gives an excellent and detailed representation of the struggle of the Coptic people and their church against the Romans, the Byzantine emperors, and the Moslem rulers up to modern times.<sup>(2)</sup>

### Notes

- 1 A summary of this book appeared in *Coptic Church Review* 1982; 3:1:34.
- 2 This article is a free translation from "A Word About the Author" in the book by Father Manasseh Youhanna, *The History of the Coptic Church* (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabet el Mahabba, 1983), pp. 1-3; and from *The Story of the Coptic Church* by Professor Iris Habib el Masri, (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabet el Mahabba, 1984), Vol. V. pp. 96-97.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### ***Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works***

*Translation by Colm Luibheid. Foreword, notes, collaboration in translation, and bibliography by Paul Rorem; Preface by Rene Roques; Introductions by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq, Karlfried Froehlich. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1987. Pp. 312. \$15.95 (Cloth), \$12.95 (Paper).*

Probably none of the patristic writings was as enigmatic or as influential on Christian spirituality from the Middle Ages till the present day, both in the East and in the West, as the work that has been carried under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, the disciple of St. Paul (Acts 17:34). Written by an unknown author who probably lived in Syria toward the end of the fifth century, the *Dionysian Corpus* was quickly accepted first in the East, and then later when it was translated into Latin, by the West. Its assumed subapostolic origin ensured its acceptance by famous Byzantine and Catholic Theologians like St. Gregory the Great, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Bernard and St. Thomas Aquinas, despite its evident anti-Chalcedonian theology. The interest in the Dionysian writings was not lessened, even after its early authorship was denied. The practice of writing under another name was not uncommon in the early Church. Important books have reached us under the names of *St. Athanasius*, *St. Macarius the Egyptian*, *St. Augustine* and other Fathers, which modern scholarship has proven to belong to other writers, mostly unknown.

The book reviewed here is the first complete English translation of all the Pseudo-Dionysius' works which include *The Divine Names*, *The Mystical Theology*, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and ten letters. *The Divine Names* uses the various biblical names for God as a starting point for meditation on and philosophical discussion of the divine attributes. It discusses such doctrines as unity of God, Trinity and union of divinity and humanity in Christ. *The Mystical Theology* provides a summary of the whole Dionysian spirituality, especially its use of negative theology. In it, the author borrows much from St. Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*. *The Celestial Hierarchy* meditates on the different angelic beings described in Scripture. *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* presents the main Sacraments and other practices of the Church. Its detailed description of the rites in fifth century Syria and its deep theological insight are invaluable for the study of the history of liturgy. The author gives a vivid and deeply spiritual account of how the early Church believed in the efficacy of the Sacraments.



***Early Christian Spirituality***

*Edited by Charles Kannengiesser, S. J. Translated by Pamela Bright, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986. Pp. 119. \$8.95 (Paper).*

This book describes some essential trends in the spiritual life of the early Church as expressed in nine freshly translated texts of different authors from the second to the seventh centuries. These include texts from the Acts of Martyrs, letters, homilies and liturgical hymns. Although each text reflects the personal experience of the author as well as the circumstances of its writings, all share a common basic element: the spirituality they offer is rooted in Scripture. Professor Kannengiesser stresses this fact in his introduction to every text; we here mention some examples.

On St. Clement's *Exhortation to the Greeks*, he writes: "Could Christian spirituality ever renovate itself without initiating new attitudes in reading the Scripture?... From one end of Scripture to the other you read 'letters which make sacred and make divine'; you cannot read them and *remain unaffected*; they are going to transform your being."

On St. Athanasius' *Interpretation of the Psalms*, Father Kannengiesser comments, "The basic evidence of Athanasian spirituality claims that the divine revelation, communicated by Scripture, is given to all the faithful in common and at once, and is mediated for them by the church itself by its rites, its sacraments, and its true openness to the gospel message." And he adds, "Such a piece of spiritual hermeneutics, rich in christological overtones but in an immediate reference to the practices of spiritual life, is a unique treasure unparalleled in the literature of the patristic era."

In introducing *Concerning Virgins* by St. Ambrose of Milan, he says that spirituality for Ambrose meant firstly a deeply personal endeavor of assimilating Scripture.

With the fine and modern translation of the texts and the lengthy introduction which gives a short account of the author of each text and analyses its content, the book is valuable for the study of the early Church as well as for spiritual reading.

***A Cloud of Witnesses: An Introduction to the Development of Christian Doctrine.***

*By David N. Bell. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1989. Pp. 312. \$32.95 (Hardcover), \$14.95 (Paperback).*

The Christian faith which most believers take for granted has not reached us from the Apostles and the New Testament writers in a smooth fashion. Essential teachings such as the divinity of Christ, the Incarnation, the Trinity, the Church and the last

things were the fields of heated discussions in the first five centuries of Christianity. Council after council with hundreds of bishops from all over the Christian world had to meet in order to define the faith, sometimes through a strait pass which is threatened by heresies from either side. The Patristic period left for us volumes of writings, whether by Fathers or by heretics. These have been studied by scholars; and during the last decades several excellent books dealing with the development of Christian doctrine have been written. The best examples are J.N.D. Kelly's *Early Christian Doctrines*, Jaroslav Pelikan's *The Christian Tradition*, J. Quasten's *Patrology*, and Frances Young's *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*. However, the average Church-goer who wants to know his faith, the young people seeking to study the roots of Christianity, and the Sunday School teacher who wants an easy reference from which he may prepare his lessons, have neither the time nor the experience to handle the semi-scholarly material in these volumes. Bell's book answers all these needs. Writing from a scholarly background, with an ecumenical awareness, and in a style that explains theological terms with simple and sometimes even colloquial words, this book is easy to read. Its use of analogies from our modern everyday life and an added sense of humor render a subject which is monotonous to the non-specialist, into an attractive story. In spite of this, the author is very serious and the book contains a wealth of information. The basic Christian doctrines are adequately explained for the average reader.

However, there are few historical inaccuracies which the Coptic Orthodox Christian will take against the book. One is the statements that Alexandrian theology had too great emphasis on the divinity of Christ at the expense of his humanity (p. 104). Also, its criticism of the 449 Council of Ephesus (p. 119) ignores the official Acts of this council; and its description of the non-Chalcedonian Christians as *monophysites* (p. 131) confuses them with the Eutychians.

Despite these drawbacks we highly recommend this book to anyone interested in learning Church history or doctrine especially the young people and their teachers.

### ***The Doctrine of Sanctification in St. Athanasius' Paschal Letters.***

*By Fr. Mathias F. Wahba. Published by St. Mary and St. Mena Coptic Orthodox Church of Rhode Island, 8 Pendleton St., Cranston, RI 02920. 1988, Pp. 191. \$5.90 (Paper)*

Since the Middle Ages scholastic theologians have limited the work of salvation of man to what Christ has accomplished on the Cross. They looked at Salvation from its legal aspect of paying the penalty in order to release man from the bondage of sin. It is unfortunate that this teaching, which has dominated the whole world of Christianity East and West for nearly a millenium, ignores a lot of biblical statements, which the early Church Fathers have commented upon in detail. But the

Latin West did not read the Fathers who wrote mostly in Greek. Had St. Anslem, the 11th Century Archbishop of Canterbury, read St. Athanasius' *Incarnation of the Word*, his book *Why Did God Become Man* would have been totally different.

Things have changed now thanks to the Patristic Revival. Since the last century, the works of the Fathers have started to be translated into modern languages, and they are now studied by scholars everywhere. However, until very recently these studies have been selective and limited to the scholarly journals. A theological student may obtain his degree while he knows practically nothing about such Fathers as Athanasius of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, or Cyril of Alexandria. Actually there is no English book about St. Athanasius in print, except for the translations of his writings. This is why the present book fills a serious gap in the English library. It is the M.A. thesis of a Coptic Orthodox priest who is now studying for his doctorate on St. Athanasius.

St. Athanasius' teaching on salvation and sanctification is elaborated upon in his theological works, especially *Incarnation of the Word* and *Against the Arians*. However, Fr. Wahba rarely refers to these books and limits his study to the *Paschal Letters*. These were pastoral letters which Athanasius used to send to his flock on the occasion of Easter every year. Fr. Wahba has clearly shown that for Athanasius there is no separation between theology and daily life. The doctrines for which he fought and for which he was exiled five times from his see were taught to the people to live with, to meditate upon and to get through them the benefit of the Church seasons, especially Lent and Easter, in order to grow in their spiritual life.

In the Paschal Letters as well as in his other writings, St. Athanasius insists that the life of Christ as a whole brings salvation; from his incarnation to his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and second coming. Christ does not work in separation from the Father and the Holy Spirit; salvation is the act of the Holy Trinity.

On the individual level, man is only sanctified when he 'partakes of the Word.' This happens in the Sacraments. In Baptism we are incorporated into the resurrected Body of Christ, and in the Eucharist 'we draw near to the Divine Lamb, and touch the heavenly food.'

St. Athanasius affirms the free will of man. Salvation is achieved by the relation with Christ in the Holy Spirit through the Sacraments and man's co-operation. Man has to respond to God's grace, and be constantly thirsty and faithful to it, and to cling to the Lord in order to maintain his purity.

In addition to discussing the teaching of St. Athanasius on salvation, this book serves as a general introduction to the Paschal Letters. The forward is written by His Grace Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia who concludes by saying,

"Along with St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Athanasius is part of the shared Patristic inheritance that belongs to all of us, whether non-Chalcedonians or Chalcedonians. Reading St. Athanasius and St. Cyril, we rediscover our unity. At a time when Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox are draw-

ing closer to each other in mutual dialogue, Fr. Matthias' scholarly study has thus a practical ecumenical value. Through his original research he has made St. Athanasius better known to us, and we are deeply grateful to him."

***Bibliothèque Copte De Nag Hammadi***

- (17) ***La Première Apocalypse de Jacques. La Seconde Apocalypse de Jacques.***

*By Armand Veilleux, 1986. Pp. 199. \$22.00*

- (18) ***L'Épître Apocryphe de Jacques. L'Acte de Pierre***

*By Donald Rouleau and Louise Roy, 1987. Pp. 236. \$22.00*

- (19) ***Le Traité Tripartite***

*By Einar Thomassen and Lois Painchaud, 1989.*

*Pp. 535. \$60.00*

*Published by Les Presses De L'Université Laval, Cité Universitaire, Québec, Canada, GIK 7R4*

In December 1945, two Moslem peasants were digging in a cemetery near Nag Hammadi, a town in Upper Egypt, when they came upon a jar. When they broke it open, they found papyrus books which they carried home. This was one of the most significant archaeological discoveries of the century. The books turned to be 13 codices that contained 49 Gnostic treatises; all but two were previously unknown. The books passed to different people who had no idea about their value. One of the codices was partially burned, possibly assuming it to be a cause of bad luck. It took about 10 months till one of them reached the Coptic Museum of Old Cairo, which now keeps the whole collection. The books are written in Coptic and date from the fourth century. They have been translated from Greek; the original is thought to date from the second century or earlier.

Before this discovery, Gnosticism was assumed to be a Christian heresy, and it was known only through the writings of second and third century Fathers who attacked it. Now it is known that it is a syncretic religious movement which has its pagan, Jewish and Christian forms. Christian gnostics claimed to have received a special knowledge (*gnosis*) through a secret tradition from the Apostles. They taught that the creator-god was different from the Supreme God. Although they believed in the coming of Christ, they denied him having a human body or being crucified. At least two of their famous gnostic teachers, Basilides and Valentinus were from Egypt. This, in addition to the fact that volumes of gnostic literature were quickly translated into Coptic and reached the southern part of Upper Egypt, shows how deep Gnosticism dug itself into the heart of the early Egyptian Church. However, the tremendous work of refuting Gnosticism was successfully undertaken by Fathers of the School of Alexandria, notably St. Clement and Origen.

Since 1977 the collection of *Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi* has reached 19 volumes, containing some 22 treatises. For each treatise, there is a long introduction presenting its history and language, analysing its content and discussing its doctrine. This is followed by the full Coptic text and its French translation. A detailed commentary follows. For each treatise there are separate indexes for Greek words, for proper nouns and for Coptic words.

*The Apocalypses of James the Just*, the Lord's Brother (Gal. 1:19), come from Jewish-Christian circles who had some gnostic tendencies. They consist of dialogues which James supposedly had with Christ. The first has its basis the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, and the second deals with the martyrdom of James which happened about 62 AD.

*The Apocryphal Epistle of James* refers to a secret book (*apocryphon* in Greek) which the Apostles James and Peter allegedly received from Christ. Its major section relates a dialogue between the two apostles and Christ after his resurrection.

*The Acts of Peter* is not part of the Nag Hammadi Library, but it is a gnostic Coptic tractate of the Berlin Codex. It deals with the healing ministry of Peter and a fictitious story of his paralysed daughter whom he would not heal for her benefit.

*The Tripartite Tractate* discusses the main Christian theological themes, God, man and redemption from the Gnostic point of view.

*Bibliothèque Copte De Nag Hammadi* is a great scholarly endeavor intended for the use of Coptologists, Church historians and theologians who read French.

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## 1990 CALENDAR OF FASTS AND FEASTS

### \*THE SEVEN MAJOR FEASTS OF OUR LORD

\*\**The Seven Minor Feasts of Our Lord*

\*\*\*Feasts of Virgin Mary

\*\*\*\*Fasts

\*January 7 - *CHRISTMAS*

\*\*January 14 - *Circumcision of Our Lord*

\*\*\*January 18 - *Paramoni (1)*

\*January 19 - *EPIPHANY*

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

\*\*\*January 29 - *Dormition of Virgin Mary*

\*\*\*\*February 5 - *Fast of Nineveh (3)*

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

\*\*\*February 19 - *Great Lent (55)*

*March 19 - Feast of the Cross*

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

\*April 7 - *ANNUNCIATION*

\*April 8 - *ENTRANCE OF OUR LORD INTO  
JERUSALEM (PALM SUNDAY)*

\*\*April 12 - *Holy Thursday*

\*April 15 - *EASTER*

\*\*April 22 - *St. Thomas' Sunday*

\*\*\*May 9 - *Birth of Virgin Mary*

\*May 24 - *ASCENSION*

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

\*June 3 - *PENTECOST*

\*\*\*June 4 - *Apostles' Fast (38)*

*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*