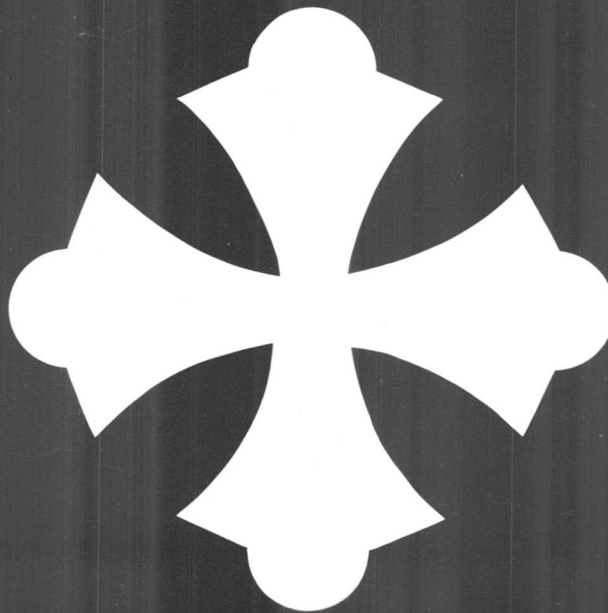


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COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

Volume 9, Number 3 Fall 1988

- *ST. ATHANASIUS THE GREAT REDISCOVERED*
- *ANCIENT COPTIC HYMNS TO THE APOSTLE JOHN*
- *THE HOLY FAMILY IN EGYPT*



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COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

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Volume 9, Number 3 Fall 1988

66 *About This Issue*

68 *St. Athanasius Rediscovered*
Charles Kannengiesser

75 *The Bible and the Aramaeans*
Boulos Ayad

83 *Songs to St. John the Evangelist*
Delbert Burkett

87 *Book Reviews*

- *The Holy Family in Egypt*
- *John of the Cross*
- *Jerome, Chrysostom, and Friends*
- *Principles of the Liturgy*
- *The Eucharist*

94 *Book Notices*

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

We are happy to introduce this issue with the article *St. Athanasius of Alexandria Rediscovered*, written by one of the noted scholars on the subject, *Charles Kannengiesser, S.J.* Father Kannengiesser, a member of the Society of Jesus for forty years and Vice President of the *North American Patristic Society*, has been Professor of Theology at the Catholic University of Paris, France, for twenty years, before becoming a member of the Theology Department of the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. He has three doctorates, from Strasbourg, The Catholic Institute of Paris and the Sorbonne. His main field of research is the Christian Literature and History of the Egyptian Church; he also teaches Christology and Biblical Hermeneutics. He is working now on a new five-volume edition and translation of Athanasius' *Against the Arians*; writing an Intellectual and Spiritual Biography of him, the first biography of the great Church Father to appear in English; as well as preparing for an international conference on Athanasius to be held in the University of Notre Dame in April 1990. For next December and January he is going to give lectures in Cairo and Alexandria at the invitation of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. In this paper, Professor Kannengiesser points to the areas in the life, personality and work of the great Coptic Patriarch in which the recent scholarship has shed new light.

In *Four Sahidic Songs to St. John the Evangelist*, *Delbert Burkett* introduces and offers his English translation of four ancient Coptic hymns taken from manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library of New York. These beautiful songs, which have been lost for the Church and are not presently used in her liturgy, reflect a deep spirituality and a theology that witnesses to the traditional teaching of the Coptic Orthodox Church regarding the saints in general and St. John the Apostle in particular. Mr. Burkett has an M.T.S. degree from Harvard Divinity School and is currently working on a Ph.D. in New Testament Studies at Duke University, specializing in the Gospel of St. John. The translations and the introduction developed out of a course in the Coptic language taught at Duke by Professor Orval Wintermute. This is the sixth translation from Coptic to be published in the Journal. Although the translators have widely different backgrounds, they all share in being students of Professor Wintermute, who deserves our greatest acknowledgement and warmest thanks for his sincere devotion to the Coptic studies.

In *The Bible and the Aramaeans of the Ancient Near East*, Dr. Boulos A. Ayad discusses the history and civilization of the Aramaean states and communities for a

period that lasted between the fourteenth century B.C. and the third century A.D. This paper, written by an authority on the subject, who is also well versed in Scripture, gives an excellent background of the international arena which surrounded the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and provides a great resource for the reader in the study of the Old Testament. Professor Ayad teaches Archaeology at the University of Colorado and is a frequent contributor to the *Journal*.

Among the various books reviewed in this issue, I call the special attention of the readers, who are interested in *the visit of the Holy Family to Egypt*, to Dr. John Watson's review of the recent book on the subject by the famous Coptologist, Dr. Otto Meinardus.

Editor

Cover Picture

The picture of the papyrus on the backcover depicts an Aramaic document written by Mahseiah son of Yedoniah who gave his daughter Mibtahiah a house and land as a dowry in the island of Elephantine, "with full powers to dispose of it. The property is carefully described, and Mibtahiah's rights are elaborately safeguarded. That document is now handed over to Mibtahiah as part of the title-deeds." For the translation of this document, see A. E. Crowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford; At the Clarendon Press, 1923, No. 8: 1-35).

ST. ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA REDISCOVERED: HIS POLITICAL AND PASTORAL ACHIEVEMENT

Charles Kannengiesser, S.J.

The current *rediscovery* of St. Athanasius, to which the title of my presentation is alluding, does not need to be introduced only in the *optative* mode, even if important results in this field are still to come.

At the recent Patristic Conference in Oxford, last August, twice as many papers on Athanasius were delivered, compared with the former conference of 1983. Moreover, a master-theme, running through the whole week of the Conference, was exclusively dedicated to Athanasius. There seems to be a revival of Athanasian studies in the air, directly called for by the lively and fruitful debate on Arianism, which has now lasted for about a decade in the Patristic community overseas and in this country. Athanasius became famous before long in the history of Christian thought because of Arius, and Arius will remain known forever mainly as quoted by Athanasius. Both of them, Arius and Athanasius, antinomic and unparalleled as they are, constitute one of the many paradigmatic couples illustrating the inner tensions of the Christian self-understanding in the ancient Church. I think of Cyril and Nestorius, or of Augustine and Pelagius as among the most recognized.

In the recent past a serious effort has been undertaken in order to retrieve the literary heritage of the Coptic tradition in its earliest stages. The new access, thus provided to the *Pachomian Koinonia*, a title of Armand Veilleux's major publication, opens another promising path for the student of Athanasius. On one of his inspired days Henry Chadwick has suggested that the spectacular discovery in about 1945 of the Gnostic Library of Nag Hammadi could well be due to Athanasius' strict policy forbidding the monks to keep apocryphal literature on the shelves of their cells. This policy appears in his Festal Letter for Easter 367, in which he had published the first complete list of canonical books as transmitted to us. It would then be a just reward in favor of Athanasius of Alexandria rediscovered today, if the broad study of ancient Coptic literature enhanced in many quarters since the Nag Hammadi event, benefitted in particular Athanasian studies. The fact is, a closer encounter with the monastic Egyptians at the time of Athanasius may entail a more balanced evaluation of the latter's personality and pastoral action.

With the anti-Arian stance and the Coptic monastic hinterland, there is a third basic aspect of current scholarship which explains the growing interest of the

historians on the still very controversial figure of Athanasius, namely, the study of the late classical antiquity as such. In this regard the twentieth century has contributed to a deep reformation of that period of Western history which coincided with the growth and the decline - "*Aufstieg und Niedergang*" -- of the Roman Empire. Instead of reinforcing the negative attitudes of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, by which classicists and historians of antiquity saw in that period nothing but decadence and a return to barbarism, scholars, all over Europe and North America, became used to considering it as a time of creative transformations. Decadence was only one side of the coin; the other side was what Peter Brown's series of essays calls "The Transformation of the Classical Heritage." A remarkable amount of critical editions and documentary sources have been made available, to the point that the most prominent figures of that period, like Constantine or Augustine, can be depicted in a new light. Historiography has become increasingly pluridisciplinary. Many apologetic motives from the past have been replaced by a more informed exercise of the historian's critical judgment. The striking result for the study of Athanasius, which such a ground-breaking exploration of late antiquity has produced so far, is quite paradoxical, at least as I see it.

First, a formidable bias of a new kind has been imposed on Athanasian studies by the simple fact that the Alexandrian bishop has been mainly approached during the twentieth century on the level of the general imperial context of his time. Secondly, the move in support of a more positive evaluation of late antiquity in general, as shared since before W.W. II by the experts in all sorts of historical disciplines, has not modified substantially the minds and the hearts in the inner circle of the *church* historians. Negative preconceptions still alienate most of the experts in secular church historiography from the study of the dogmatic and spiritual achievements of the so-called "Church Fathers." Old fashioned apologetics still prevent many clerical patrologists from the urgent task of reinterpreting their patristic data for today and with the hermeneutical accuracy needed today. Such a situation may be the reason why our prestigious Patristic Conference in Oxford, this year again, looked somehow antiquated, and why its body of more than 700 participants seems to be desperately aging.

In the case of Athanasius, the paradoxical result of the diagnosed trends in current historiography is illustrated by the fact that significant essays, recently published, include large sections devoted to a sharp criticism of his historic rôle in the Church of the fourth century, such as the well-documented study of Timothy D. Barnes on *Constantine and Eusebius* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1981), or the painstakingly analytical work of Hanns Christof Brennecke on *Hilarius von Poitiers und die Bischofsopposition gegen Konstantius II* (Walter De Gruyter, 1984). At the same time, however, it must be noted that not one single biography of Athanasius has been produced in this century. I would even dare to claim that in the English speaking world the last attempt to achieve a comprehensive survey of Athanasius' life and thought, based on a thoroughly critical study of his literary heritage, goes back to the days of Henry Newman, which means to 1840-44.

On a smaller scale, let me illustrate once again what I am trying to suggest here by the most recent article of T.D. Barnes, published in the respectable *Journal of*

Theological Studies under the imaginative title "Angel of Light or Mystic Initiate: The Problem of the *Life of Antony*" (*JTS* 37, 1986, 353-369). The title itself does not announce that Barnes, like the cuckoo, deposits his eggs as a publicist in the erudite nest of the late Rene' Draguet from Louvain; but that is secondary. What is significant of a more general state of affairs in current scholarship is that the author of this article can bluntly refuse the Athanasian authenticity of the *Life of Antony* without dedicating one single remark to Athanasius' style and vocabulary as a writer in this and other works attributed to him, without even wondering in how far the work under scrutiny could be linked with Athanasius even if written by someone else. Martin Tetz, only mentioned in a footnote, had offered in the *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* of 1982 an interesting literary analysis of the documentary basis on which the celebrated biography seems to rest, but he is dismissed without any comment. In short, Barnes applies a negative criticism against Athanasius with the purpose to deny the Athanasian authenticity of the *Vita Antonii*, but he does not show the slightest interest in Athanasius himself as a possible author of that *Vita*.

This is only a small incident on the line of Athanasian studies. Unfortunately, it echoes a broader consensus made vocal on different levels in recent times. When Christopher Stead examined Athanasius' understanding of the Nicene *homousios* in his book on *Divine Substance* (Oxford, 1977), or when Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh published *Early Arianism* as "A View of Salvation" at Fortress Press in 1981, they obviously allowed themselves to evaluate the Athanasian position without feeling compelled at all to study that position for its own sake. Already, the paradigmatic giants at the start of our century, named Eduard Schwartz, in Germany, and Louis Duchesne, in France, had produced "Sitzungsberichte" and whole books on Athanasius' career in ecclesiastical politics without giving their readers a single hint about their interest in the Alexandrian bishop as a Christian believer, or even as a pastor in charge of the most numerous and most extended portion of the fourth century Christianity.

There we are precisely located today, facing a fascinating challenge, the challenge of considering at once the political *and* the pastoral achievement of the fourth century Alexandrian bishop. The synthetic view thus developed would be equal to a real rediscovery of Athanasius. In order to sound less pretentious or trivial by such a statement, let me go back to the three contextual references indicated earlier: 1. the Arian crisis, 2. the Coptic hinterland, and 3. the administration of the Roman emperor. In regard to each of these backgrounds, I would decidedly insist on the methodological need for holding closely together a critical view on Athanasius' involvement in church *politics* and a pointed inquiry about his *pastoral* engagement.

1. The Arian Crisis

My own understanding of Athanasius, as dealing with what may be called in rather simplistic terms "the Arian crisis," derives from two basic evidences. First of all, the problem created by Arius in the local community of the Alexandrian church,

and the worldwide consequences, of this problem, with its canonical solution in Alexandria itself and at the synod of Nicaea in 325, were entirely imposed on Athanasius from the day when he was elected a bishop in 328. Which means, in other words, that the young successor of bishop Alexander was burdened by this problem unwillingly. Secondly, I would consider as a basic evidence, having scrutinized Athanasius' anti-Arian pamphlets and treatises for over twenty years, that Athanasius was just not *interested* in the theological initiative of Arius. He was not a man of the *third* century, as Arius was, or bishop Alexander, or Eusebius of Caesarea, or Marcellus of Ancyra, and as were all the other theological celebrities in the church when Athanasius was in his teens. They had received their Christian education and completed their scholarly training long before the Diocletian persecution had broken out. In particular, as intellectual leaders in their communities, they had absorbed the spirit of an Origenian styled academic establishment of theology, with its stress on an independent teaching function in the Church, exercised by generations of *didascaloi* in the form of a learned *diadokeia*. The young Athanasius was probably not yet twenty years old, when the priest Arius in the midst of his fifties was declared a heretic and excommunicated by the Alexandrian synod of 318 or 319. The generation gap in this case includes the terrible decade of the Diocletian and Maximinian persecution in Alexandria before or after each of these two men had become a responsible believer. Athanasius had no correct memory, or no personal memory at all, of the Alexandrian martyrs and of the bloody forms of violence against the Christian communities in Alexandria between 303 and 312, about which Eusebius had so much to say in his *Church History*. He became actively self-conscious as a believer only when the new political situation of the second decade in his century initiated an unprecedented blossoming of the local Christianity, and when the avenues of history opened the path for Constantine's almighty ruling in the eastern provinces of the Empire.

I must refrain here from discussing too many prosopographical peculiarities, but it should be clear that my argument rests on a still insufficiently known source concerning the date of Athanasius' birth. A chronicle of his episcopal ministry was established by his immediate collaborators as soon as he died in early May 373. We are happy enough to possess a faithful copy in Syriac of that invaluable document, mistakenly entitled by Byzantine editors of a later period *Historia Acephala*. "Headless History," because they thought to have inherited only a fragment with a first part missing. Now, this chronicle clearly states that the newly elected bishop Athanasius started to be criticised by his opponents from 328 on because he had not reached the canonical age of thirty years at the time of his election.

Propelled into the highest office of the Alexandrian Church, as it seems according to the expressed will of his predecessor Alexander, Athanasius acted as a man of his generation: he considered it as his first priority to respond to the enormous pastoral needs of a Church still recovering from the so-called "great persecution," and at the same time being a Church engaged in a process of fast inner growth. The ideological battle successfully fought by his elderly predecessor at the synods of Antioch during the winter of 324, and of Nicaea in May 325, against the oriental supporters of his excommunicated priest Arius, was for Athanasius a chapter of church politics closed

by the death of bishop Alexander. He was wrong, of course, and the bitter awareness of a different dynamic of history would poison at least three decades of his episcopal ministry.

Before coming back to the narrative of Athanasius' involvement in the Arian crisis, when I would discuss his position in regard to the imperial administration, *one* point, of a more doctrinal relevance, needs to be stressed, as we are willing to consider Athanasius vs. Arius not only as a Church politician, a hierarch, or as a "Christian pharao," according to the unhappy phrase forged by Eduard Schwartz, -- but also and much more so as a young pastor fully conscious of the new opportunities, around the time of Nicaea, given to his apostolic action in the vast areas linked with his Alexandrian see.

My doctrinal stance here is to claim that Athanasius remained for all his time in office reluctant to engage in polemics with the Arian party. In 1698 the Maurist Benedictine Montfaucon decided that the most popular of Athanasian writings, with the *Life of Antony*, the treatise *On the Incarnation of the Logos*, had been completed by Athanasius before the outbreak of the Arian dispute, which means before 318. The reason for that chronology was the apparent silence of the treatise about Arius. But today an increasing number of critics admit that such a chronology is no more acceptable, and I hope to have shown elsewhere that *On the Incarnation* represents in fact the first elaborate statement made by the young bishop, after about five or six years in office, a statement by which he traces the ideological orientation of the kind of catechesis which he wanted to promote in his church of Alexandria under his ruling. Around 333-335, the emperor Constantine had expressly excluded any public statement against Arius, being eager to calm down clerical passions, seeking greater political recognition and for his imperial patronage under the cover of the theoretical issues concerning Arius. The author of *On the Incarnation* may have complied with such a regulation. But the real content of his essay shows much more obviously that he was trying to reach the audience of the educated people among his parishioners and among the many sympathisers not yet enrolled in the Christian catechumenate, with a view only to sharing with them his own Christological vision. Amazingly enough, the vision proposed focused on the mystery of the divine incarnation in such a way that it opposed directly the principles of the Arian theology without any polemical connotation and without mentioning Arius at all. The priority was obviously given by the young bishop to a pastoral education of the minds of the faithful at large in his local church, far away from the loud opposition of Arius' disciples and supporters outside the boundaries of the Egyptian Christianity.

And it was precisely for such a silence, motivated by pastoral reasons in *On the Incarnation*, that the Alexandrian bishop was required from the side of the monastic authorities *inside* the Egyptian Christianity, to publish a complementary statement about his anti-Arian form of orthodoxy. Why was the local Church again and again to be put on trail, either by the inner unrest of Arian propaganda, or by synods held in other Churches of the eastern Roman Empire? Athanasius responded to the insistent request by composing what has been transmitted to us as his first and second *Orations against the Arians* dated not, as common opinion (dictated by Montfaucon) thinks, during Athanasius' third exile, which would mean between 356 and 362, but

between 338-340, thus only about five years after *On the Incarnation* when the bishop had returned from his first exile in Gaul and when he was to escape from Egypt in dramatic circumstances for his second exile in Rome which lasted from 339 to 346. I hope to have identified in a so-called *Letter to the Monks* the accompanying letter by which the exiled bishop sent from Rome to a monastic community in Egypt a provisory draft of his treatise *Against the Arians*. The most striking feature of this original treatise, in which Athanasius laid down the basic reasons for his opposition to any sort of Arian stamped self-understanding, is again what I would call a “pastoral” one. The author does not engage in this treatise a theoretical discussion with Arius himself, whom he hardly knew as a theoretician of Christian thought. But he uses the opportunity of a rhetorical rejection of the Arian thesis as heard of by his folks, in order to offer the latter a full program of anti-Arian hermeneutics. He educates once more the monks inside the monastic circles of his Church, mainly preoccupied with giving his own people a chance to read Scripture in the way he does so himself, namely by focusing in the interpretation of Scripture on the incarnational reality of salvation as actualized in the present Church life and in the current experience of the faithful. Athanasius’ motivation in his *Contra Arianos* has nothing in common with the obsessive anti-heretical aggressiveness of a Jerome one generation later, nor with the metaphysical exactness of an anti-Arian theoretician like Marius Victorinus, in his own life-time. He was in *Contra Arianos* and would remain for decades, a *pastoral* opponent of Arianism, obstinately repeating the same basic anti-Arian hermeneutics when necessary, but always animated by a primordial interest for his pastoral service of the Alexandrian Church.

2. *The Coptic Hinterland*

About the second and the third contextual references, in the light of which I see the possibility for a sort of *rediscovery* of Athanasius today, I must limit myself to only one or two remarks.

Second context then: *the Coptic Hinterland*.

It has been observed by many critics that Athanasius’ anti-Arian strategy benefited a great deal from the support which the monastic population of Egypt gave him. Historians, less inclined to consider Athanasius as a pastor acting responsibly in the service of his own Church, and critics evaluating Athanasius’ action only on the scene of the broader imperial politics, assimilated those monks to a kind of Pretorian guard surrounding and protecting the bishop when he was endangered.

In such a view, nothing of the Athanasian achievement in regard to the Coptic hinterland of his see would be acknowledged correctly. When Athanasius was elected a bishop the Christian community of Alexandria acclaimed him as “one of the ascetics” ἕνα τῶν ἀσκητῶν. We may speculate if he himself shared the monastic experience for a while, or if he was educated by the monks as a boy during the troublesome years of his childhood when the persecution devastated the Alexandrian Church. In any case, he never introduced himself as a monk, but he spent

most of his energies and dedicated most of his writings to the monks. He survived the most dangerous years of his episcopal career from 356 to 362 thanks to the refuge he found among the monks.

It seems to me just impossible to engage any valuable discussion about the Athanasian authenticity or non-authenticity of the *Life of Antony*, if one neglects to consider the intimate links entertained by Athanasius with the monks in his life as well as in his writings.

3. *The Imperial Administration*

A rediscovery of Athanasius is on the way thanks to a series of recent studies focusing on the reign of Constantius II: Richard Klein and the already mentioned Brennecke in Germany, Charles Pietri and Yves-Marie Duval in France have tried to elucidate the very obscure years 337-350, from the death of Constantine on to the taking over as sole ruler of the empire by the second of his three sons, Constantius II. Another French essay, published in Strasbourg in 1979 but still unknown in this country, by Chantal Vogler, is entitled: "Constance II et l'administration imperiale." It offers a remarkably concrete and strictly documented inside into Constantius' form of government and even into his very complex personality.

My proposal on the level of the still controverted relationship of Athanasius with Constantius II would insist on the fact that the only really offensive Athanasian writing against this emperor, the *Historia Arianorum ad Monachos* is now considered as pseudo-Athanasian. Nowhere else does Athanasius by himself make use of offensive rhetorics against Constantius, even if he has a few bitter words in an *Apology to Constantius* which he never produced in public.

If condemned again and again by the emperor's episcopal advisors, as a violent and illegitimate usurper of the Alexandrian see, Athanasius remained on the defensive, without an organized theological party of his own, the pastor of his local Church pushed against his will into the intricacies of the religious politics of the emperor.

At Oxford, on last August 27, a young American, Dwayne Arnold, produced a real sensation, when he convincingly demonstrated that the famous Bell papyrus, to which everyone alludes in positioning Athanasius as a violent and intolerant hierarch, has been misread by his distinguished editor, in 1924. With such new insights, a complete revision of Athanasius' dealings with the administrations of five different emperors seems possible and appropriate.

THE BIBLE AND THE ARAMAEANS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Boulos A. Ayad, Ph.D

From the Bible as a great document and from the annals of the Assyrian, Babylonian, Hittite, and Phoenician kings, as well as from many Aramaic documents and inscriptions, historians have deduced the following history and civilization of the Arameans of the Ancient Near East.

A. The History of the Aramaeans in the East

The Aramaeans originally were part of the Semitic race, which descended from groups of nomads. These tribes probably originated on the Arabian Peninsula¹ or in the Syro-Arabian desert² and left that area around the fourteenth century B.C., or later.³ Before relocating, the Aramaeans were scattered throughout the desert, moving “between Nejd in the South and the Syrian borders in the North, and between the Euphrates in the East and the Aqaba Gulf in the West.”⁴

Emil G. Kraeling believes that Aram is not the name of an area, but rather the name of a people, the “people are called Arimi, Aramu, Arumu; the second form is the most frequent and doubtless the original one.”⁵

Aram-Naharaim and Paddan-Aram are the oldest Aramaean territories recorded in history and are located between the Euphrates and its tributary, the Khabur.⁶ According to the Old Testament, the ancestors of the Hebrews and the Aramaeans of Mesopotamia and Paddan Aram were on good terms.⁷ Aram-Naharaim disappeared some time after the ninth century B.C. when the Assyrians virtually annihilated the Aramaeans in this area.⁸

Before migrating to Syria, the Aramaeans lived in Mesopotamia where they formed their own nationality.⁹ They later established the *state of Zobah* in Syria. The names of the kings of Zobah who preceded Hadadezer are unknown. There was considerable hostility between the Aramaean states and the Hebrew kingdom; the Old Testament tells us that Saul (c. 1025 B.C.) fought against the Aramaean states which were located on the borders of Canaan (1 Samuel 14:47). However, 1 Samuel tells us very little else concerning relations between Saul and the Aramaean states. When David became king, after the reign of Saul, the conflict between Zobah's King Hadadezer and David escalated.¹⁰ David was the victor in the war and for a short

time controlled Damascus (2 Samuel 8:6). Following these events, Zobah's importance decreased, and *Damascus* replaced it as a strong Aramaean state.

Following Solomon's death, the Hebrew kingdom was divided into two parts--the kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital and Israel, with Samaria as its capital.

During the reign of King Benhadad I of Damascus, trouble erupted between the Judean king Asa and the Israelite king Baasha. King Asa appealed to Benhadad for help (1 Kings 15:18-19) who listened to him and sent "the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel and conquered Ijon, Dan, Abelbeth-maacah, and all Chin-neroeth, with all the land of Naphtali" (1 Kings 15:20).

Benhadad II followed Benhadad I on the throne, at which time Damascus was controlling Israel. The power of Damascus remained through the early days of King Ahab's rule when war was renewed between Israel and Damascus because King Ahab refused to pay tribute to Benhadad. The war ended with Ahab conquering Benhadad (1 Kings 20:20); however, Ahab did not occupy Damascus, but one year later again renewed the war and conquered Benhadad again, at which time Benhadad fled (1 Kings 20:29-30).

In 853 B.C. King Shalmaneser III of Assyria advanced to Qarqar in Syria, the end result of which was that Damascus united with its neighbors on both the southern and northern borders, forming a strong alliance which included twelve kings headed by Adadidri (Benhadad II) of Damascus.¹¹ Following the battle of Qarqar there was no longer any Assyrian danger to the Aramaeans or the Hebrews.

King Ahab agreed with King Jehoshaphat of Judah that action should be taken against Benhadad because he had not returned Ramoth-Gilead to Ahab, according to a treaty. During this battle an arrow struck Ahab, resulting in his death and the defeat of his army (1 Kings 22:29-37). The hatred of Benhadad II continued after the death of Ahab, when Benhadad II tried to seize Samaria (2 Kings 6:24), but was unsuccessful (2 Kings 7:6-7). Following the death of Benhadad (2 Kings 8:15), Hazael became the king of Damascus.

In approximately 841 B.C. and again in 838 B.C., Hazael was set upon by the Assyrians, but Shalmaneser was not able to capture Damascus.¹² Hazael continued his hostility toward the Israelis through the reigns of Jehu and Jehoahaz. After the death of Hazael, his son, Benhadad III, became king of Damascus (2 Kings 13:24); but the power and strength of Damascus weakened, brought about by the many wars with Assyria and Israel. It is possible that Benhadad died during the siege of Hamath.

Tab'el, about whom very little is known, then became king and he was later succeeded by Rezin. Rezin and Pekah, son of King Remaliah of Israel, then joined forces in the fighting against King Ahaz of Judah, but Ahaz was reluctant to war against Assyria and its allies of Tyre and Sidon and went to Tiglathpileser, King of Assyria, for help (2 Kings 16:7). No help was given at the time of request, which

resulted in Ahaz being captured by the Aramaeans, at which time Tiglathpileser moved to help Ahaz in 733 B.C. Battles ensued between the Aramaeans and the Assyrians, and Rezin retreated to Damascus where he was killed when Tiglathpileser captured Damascus in 732 B.C. (2 Kings 16:9). As a result of this war, the Assyrians added Syria to their empire.

Hamath, an Aramaean state in the middle of Syria, was situated in the middle section of the Orontes River. The conflict between Hamath and Assyria which began in the time of Ashurnasirpal II (884-859 B.C.), continued through the reigns of Shalmaneser III (858-824 B.C.), Tiglathpileser III (745-727 B.C.), and Sargon II (722-705 B.C.). When Hamath turned against Sargon II in 720 B.C., he destroyed it and it became an Assyrian province.¹³

The Shupria territories were founded *north of the Tigris* in Iraq, in the area of Tur Abdin, and the state of Nirdun was located to the south. Bit-Zamani was located in the west near Diyarbeker. Zamua contained mostly Aramaeans. The banks of the Euphrates and its tributaries were home to the district of Sukhu, the small state of Khindan and the County of Laqe, all part of Bit-Khalupe.¹⁴

The Assyrian war against the Aramaeans continued from 858 to 856 B.C., during the reign of Shalmaneser III, when he occupied the state of Bit-Adini whose capital was Til-Barsip.¹⁵

The north of Syria contained many Aramaean states such as Gurgum, whose capital was Margasi (Mar ash); Sam'al, whose capital was Senjirli; Khattina, whose capital was Kunalua; Yakhan, with a capital at Arpad (Tell Erfad); and Khalman (Aleppo). South of Khattina was Hamath with 19 outskirt areas belonging to middle Syria. Because these states obstructed Assyria's free route to the Mediterranean, there were constant battles between these areas and the various kings of Assyria-- Ashurnasirpal II (884-859 B.C.), Shalmaneser II (859-824 B.C.), Shamshi-Adad V (824-810 B.C.), Adadnirari III (810-782 B.C.), Shalmaneser IV (782-772 B.C.), Ashurnirari V (754-745 B.C.), Tiglathpileser III (745-728 B.C.), Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.), and Sargon II (722-705 B.C.).¹⁶

In *Babylon* the Aramaeans were located in unproductive areas east of the Tigris River between Elam and Baylon. Because of the Assyrian hostility, the Aramaeans allied with the Babylonians and eventually revolted against the Assyrians. The Assyrian kings who took part in battles against the Babylonian-Aramaeans were Shamshiadad (824-810 B.C.), Shalmaneser IV (782-772 B.C.), Tiglathpileser III (745-728 B.C.), Sargon II (722-705 B.C.), Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.), Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.), and Ashurbanipal (668-626 B.C.).¹⁷

Aramaean political history ended when Assyria occupied their states in Syria and north of Mesopotamia, including Damascus, in 732 B.C. The Aramaeans then spread out throughout the Middle East, with some settling in Egypt. *Their history in Egypt* is linked with Egyptian dynasties, especially with the 27th Persian dynasty.

The Jews also sought a new life in Egypt, which is referenced in the books of Isaiah¹⁸ and Jeremiah¹⁹ in the Old Testament. Some of the army commanders who

fled with the Jews possibly may have helped them obtain work as mercenaries with the Aramaeans in Egyptian fortresses. It is extremely difficult to distinguish between Jews and Aramaeans who settled in Egypt from the Sixth and Fifth Centuries B.C. until the Third Century B.C. Therefore, for lack of a complete distinction, we shall consider all these communities as Jewish-Aramaean. The Old Testament lists various places where the Jews lived in Egypt, including "Migdol, Tahpanhes, Memphis, and in the land of Pathros." However, there are also Jewish-Aramaean monuments in Alexandria, Memphis, Fayyoun, Sheikh Fadl, El-Kom el Ahmar, Tuna el Gebel, Deir Abu-hennis, Akhmim, Abydos, Qus, Wadi Hammamat, Thebes, Edfu, Wadi Saba Riggaleh, Aswan, Elephantine, Tomas and Denqula ²⁰.

Some members of the Elephantine-Aswan community who had been in the service of the Pharaohs joined the Persian army where they served as mercenaries. Other members were involved in sales, stonecutting, and water transportation.

The members of the Jewish-Aramaean communities left many records of their life in Egypt, both in papyri and inscriptions. These records have given us information concerning their customs and traditions, marriage and divorce laws, measurements and units of weight, and rules concerning land ownership, slavery, and the rights of women. The Jewish-Aramaean worshipped many gods, including Nabu, Banit, Bethel, El, Herembethel, Malkat Shamin (Queen of Heaven), Anathbethel, Anathyahu, Anath and Yahu, who had a temple and priests in Elephantine.

Toward the end of the reign of Darius II, the communities of Elephantine and Aswan were under great repression as the result of an Egyptian revolt. The people were terrified as their numbers were far less than those of the Egyptians, but they managed to continue their life. In 332 B.C. Alexander the Great invaded Egypt, resulting in the influx of many Greeks to Egypt. It is conjectured that the Greeks took over the quarters formerly occupied by the Jewish-Aramaean.²¹ Aramaic papyri from the Hellenistic period have been found, indicating the existence of an Aramaic community in Egypt during that time.²²

At a later period of time, two states emerged--Palmyra in the north and the Nabataean kingdom in the south. Both states did well from the points of view of trade and invulnerability.

Palmyra emerged under the name of Tadmor at the beginning of the second millennium B.C.²³ It was populated by Canaanites²⁴ and later by noble Aramaean nomads.²⁵ During the age of the Roman Empire Palmyra did not enjoy full independence. Rome gradually began interfering until in 273 A.D. Aurelian managed to destroy its independence while it was under the rule of Zenobia,²⁶ wife of Odenathus.²⁷ Consequently, Palmyra soon lost its significance.²⁸

The *Nabataean kingdom* occupied areas previously held since the 13th century B.C. by Edom, Moab, Ammon and Gilead, which were Canaanite and Aramaean kingdoms.²⁹ The Nabateans first appeared as Bedouin tribes in the 6th Century B.C. and remained as such until the 4th Century B.C. They gradually began practicing

agriculture and trade in the 3rd Century B.C. and by the end of the 2nd Century B.C. they had an advanced society³⁰ and claimed Petra as their capital. The most important cities were Bostra, al-Hegr, and Leuke Kome.³¹

By early in the 2nd Century B.C. this state had acquired a special significance in history and was ruled by the following kings: Nathu (Nathan), Aretas, Erotimus, Aretas II, Obadas I, Aretas III, Malchus I, Obodas II, Aretas IV, Abias, Malchus II, and Rabel. As was its custom, Rome began interfering in their affairs and in 106 A.D., the leader Cornelius Palma was responsible for the downfall of this kingdom.³²

B. The Aramaean Civilization in the East

The Aramaeans then spread throughout countries such as Syria and Mesopotamia, causing their culture to be influenced by that of the Hittites, the Assyrians and the Phoenicians. These cultures also influenced the Aramaic art and religion, but the language appeared to continue without influence.

Their Trade

The caravans of neighboring countries passed through Syria, thus permitting the Aramaeans to engage in commerce and act as transit intermediaries. At the same time, the Aramaean caravans reached to all regions of the Fertile Crescent, to the Persian gulf as well as the Phoenician cities, and to some parts of Africa. Their tradesmen dealt in purple, embroideries, linen, jasper, copper, ebony, ivory, and pearls, thus enabling them to become wealthy and gain power and authority, which allowed them to fend off the Hebrews and the Assyrians.

The Aramaean states, especially Damascus, were renowned for certain industries including “graceful pottery, in carving ivory and wood, in polishing gems and in weaving stuffs.”³³ Copper was also mined at Zobah.

Palmyra was an oasis in the Syrian desert between Damascus and the Euphrates River and profited much from its excellent location. The trade routes passed directly through Palmyra and it was a station for caravans from the first century B.C. to 273 A.D.³⁴ The major commodities going through this area were, “wool, purple, silk, glass vessels, perfumes and ointments, olive oil, dried figs, cheese and wines.”³⁵ The Nabateans traded in myrrh, spices, incense, silk textiles, lawsonia, glass vessels, purple, and pearls.³⁶

Their Language

The Aramaeans managed to maintain their language, which was written on papyri and mud bricks, even after the collapse of their states in the East.

The Aramaic language is related to the Semitic languages and is divided into Old Aramaic dialects and dialects which emerged in a later period.³⁷ Old Aramaic dialects were the *dialect* of Senjirli, the international Aramaic used by the Persians in their government administrations, the Aramaic used in Elephantine and that used in the Bible. Later Aramaic dialects which appeared prior to Christianity were remarkably different, especially following the collapse of the Greek Empire, and are divided into Eastern and Western Aramaic.

It is believed by some scholars that the Aramaic-Phoenician alphabet had spread through all west Asian countries and was carried from the Euphrates River to Persia and the borders of India.³⁸ Scholars also went so far as to consider it an international language of its time, with the period of greatest extension being from the 5th Century B.C. to the 7th Century A.D.

The Aramaic language was used in Palmyra, although decrees were inscribed in both Greek and Aramaic and the educated class in Palmyra used Greek as well as Aramaic in their everyday speech.³⁹ The Aramaic language was also used by their Nabataeans "for official correspondence and inscriptions."⁴⁰ Halfway through the First Century B.C., their characters adopted a special form and the Arabic letters were derived from the Nabataean letters.⁴¹

Their Religion

The Aramaeans worshiped the god Hadad. "This deity was originally considered the god of tempest," and it appeared in lightning bolt, storm, and rain.⁴² One of its titles was "Rimmon" or "Ramman," meaning the thundering.⁴³ Hadad's wife's name was Atargatis and she stood for motherhood, with her cult spreading through various parts of Syria and Palestine. Hadad and his consort had a son named Simios.⁴⁴

The Aramaeans also had other gods, such as El, Reshuf, Rakkab-El, Shamash, Saher, Niekal, Baal-Shamen, El Wer, the gods of heaven, the gods of earth, Sin, Shingalla, Sal'm, Ashira (Asherah), and Baal-Semed.⁴⁵ Most of these gods had been brought into Syria and borrowed by the Aramaeans.

The gods worshipped by Palmyrenes included Baal, Baal-Shamen, Shamash, the god of the sun, and the god of the moon Algi-bol, Yarhi-Bol, Malak-Bel, Gad-Taimi, Arsu, Azizu, 'Athar 'attheh, Anonyme as well as the Nabatean deity Shay 'al-Quam.⁴⁶

The Nabataeans worshipped gods such as Dusares or Du-Shara, "Allat, al- 'Uz-za, Manatt, Manuthu, Kaisha, Hobal and 'Ara.⁴⁷

The gods worshipped by the Jewish-Aramaean in Egypt were Nabu, Banit, Bethel, Malkat Shamin (Queen of Heaven), Herembethel, Anathbethel, Anathyahu, Anath, and the God, Yahu.

Their Art

Aramaean art was a mixture of Phoenician, Hurrian, Hittite, and Mesopotamian art. Many art remnants have been found in Tell-Halaf (Guzana), Sam al, Damascus, Arslan-Tash in northern Syria, and Hamath.⁴⁸ From the Sixth to the Third Centuries B.C., Aramaean art in Egypt was different from that in the East where the Aramaean arts were confined to royalty while that in Egypt was popular among the people.

The Palmyrenes left a number of remains which included the Temple of Baal where the forms of veiled women were found and a memorial arch which was built in front of the temple. The Palmyrenes took great interest in building statues, especially busts. Their tombs were constructed to resemble high towers. Some carved decorations were also found in Palmyra and in Dura-Europas which helped to shed light on the development of Palmyran art.⁴⁹

Notes

- 1 Emil G. Kraeling, *Aram and Israel* (New York, 1918), pp. 13, 38.
- 2 A. Dupont-Sommer, *Les Arameens* (Paris, 1949), p. 15; M. F. Unger, *Israel and the Aramaeans of Damascus* (London, 1957), p. 38.
- 3 Loc. cit.
- 4 Murad Kamil, and Mohamed Hamdy El-Bakry, *History of the Syriac Literature from its Beginning to the Islamic Conquest* (Cairo, 1949), p. 3. (Arabic)
- 5 Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 21-22.
- 6 Ibid; pp. 21, 23; Philip Hitti, *History of Syria*, 2nd ed. (London, New York, 1957), p. 164.
- 7 Gen. 24:10; see, R. A. Bowman, "Arameans, Aramaic and the Bible," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 7, (1948), pp. 67-68.
- 8 Kraeling, op. cit., p. 21.
- 9 H. R. Hall, *The Ancient History of the Near East*, 10th ed. (London, 1947), p. 400.
- 10 *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader* (New York, 1964), Vol. 2, p. 95; R. T. O'Callaghan, "Aram Naharaim. A Contribution to the History of Upper Mesopotamia in the Second Millennium B.C., with an Appendix on Indo Aryan Names by P. E. Dumont, Roma, 1948," *Reeditio Photomechanica*, 1961, pp. 128-130.
- 11 Dupont-Sommer, op. cit., pp. 35-36; Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 73-75; Hitti, op. cit., pp. 166-167; D. A. Mackenzie, *Myths of Babylonia and Assyria* (London), p. 407.
- 12 Kraeling, op. cit., p. 79.
- 13 Ibid., pp. 134-135; Dupont-Sommer, op. cit., pp. 68-69.
- 14 Kraeling, op. cit., p. 53.
- 15 Ibid; pp. 60-63; Dupont-Sommer, op. cit., p. 35; S. Moscati, *Histoire et civilisation des peuples semitiques* (Paris, 1955), p. 166; D. G. Hogarth, *The Ancient East* (London, 1945), p. 85.
- 16 Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 101-111.
- 17 Dupont-Sommer, op. cit., pp. 75-76.
- 18 Is. 31:1.
- 19 Jer. 42:13, 14, 15, 16.
- 20 See Boulos Ayad Ayad, *The Aramaeans in the Ancient Near East* (Los Angeles, California: Coptic Orthodox Church of St. Mary and St. Pishoy, 1986), p. 115. (Arabic)
- 21 M. Kamil, "The Aramaic Texts Which Were Discovered Recently in Egypt." Migalt' ahadith al-thulatha Bdar es-salam (Cairo, 1952), pp. 111-127. (Arabic)

- 22 A. E. Crowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, 1923), No. 60, 81, 82.
- 23 Jean Starcky, *Palmyre* (Paris, 1952), p. 27.
- 24 Ahmed Fakhry, *Among the Antiquities of the Arab World* (Cairo, 1958), 53 ff (Arabic); Starcky, op. cit., p. 27.
- 25 Kamil and El-Bakry, op. cit., p. 7.
- 26 Starcky, op. cit., p. 64.
- 27 "Assassinated in 267 A.D.," see G. L. Robinson, *The Sarcophagus of an Ancient Civilization* (New York, 1930), p. 478.
- 28 Hitti, op. cit., pp. 396-399; concerning the Palmyrenes Art, see Starcky, pp. 107-127; cf. Robinson, op. cit., p. 478.
- 29 Hitti, op. cit., p. 375.
- 30 Ibid., pp. 375-376.
- 31 Robinson, p. 375.
- 32 Hitti, op. cit., p. 382; Robinson, op. cit., p. 389.
- 33 Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization* (New York, 1954), Vol. 1, p. 296.
- 34 Kamil and El-Bakry, op. cit., p. 7.
- 35 Hitti, op. cit., p. 389.
- 36 Ibid., pp. 382-383; cf. Robinson, op. cit., p. 379.
- 37 Kamil and El-Bakry, op. cit., pp. 5-16; George Zidan, *Linguistic Philosophy and Arabic Words*, 3rd ed. (Cairo, 1923), pp. 27-32. (Arabic)
- 38 J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Times* (Boston, 1916), p. 146.
- 39 Hitti, op. cit., p. 399.
- 40 Robinson, op. cit., p. 376.
- 41 Hitti, op. cit., p. 384.
- 42 Moscati, op. cit., p. 171.
- 43 A. Fakhry, *Studies in the History of the Ancient East* (Cairo, 1958), pp. 120-121. (Arabic)
- 44 Dupont-Sommer, op. cit., p. 108; Moscati, op. cit., pp. 171-172.
- 45 Y. A. Cooke, *A Text-Book of North Semitic Inscriptions* (Oxford, 1903), No. 61, p. 161; No. 64, p. 186; No. 69, p. 196; Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 92-93, 102-104.
- 46 Hitti, op. cit., pp. 400-401; Starcky, op. cit., pp. 85-101.
- 47 Robinson, op. cit., pp. 406-411; cf. Hitti, op. cit., pp. 384-385.
- 48 Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 128-131.
- 49 Hitti, op. cit., pp. 396-399; concerning the Palmyrenes Art, see Starcky, op. cit., pp. 107-127.

FOUR SAHIDIC SONGS TO ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

Delbert Burkett, M.T.S.

In the collection of Coptic manuscripts owned by the Peirpont Morgan Library of New York, there is a collection of Sahidic hymns honoring various saints (*Codices Coptici*, vol. 14). The songs are earlier than A.D. 892/93, the date of the manuscript. Among the songs of this collection are four dedicated to “the Evangelist John” (M. 575 f. 42 v, 43, 43v), who is honored in the Coptic Church on 4 Tûbah and 16 Bashuns. A few verses from these hymns are found in other collections of Coptic hymns in the Bohairic dialect. Verses four and five of the first song are equivalent to the corresponding verses of the Difnar (Antiphonarium) hymn for 4 Tûbah, sung in the mode “Adam.”¹ The first four verses of the third song are equivalent to the Difnar hymn for 16 Bashuns, sung in the mode “Batos.”² Its first verse, at least, is also equivalent to the corresponding verse of the “Batos” hymn for 4 Tûbah in the Tûruhât of the Saints.³

Translations of the four Sahidic songs are given below. It may be of interest to notice what the songwriters considered most significant about John. In referring to the songs, two numbers will be used (e. g. 2,9) to indicate the song and the verse.

In the four songs being considered, John is given a number of titles or designations. Some of these are derived from the New Testament, such as his designation as “apostle” (2, 4; 3,1; 4,1) and “son of thunder” (2,8; 3,3; see Mk. 3:17). The designation “beloved of Christ” (2,10; 3, 3-4; cf. 4,1) comes from the traditional identification of John with “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” who reclined on Jesus’ breast at the Last Supper (Jn. 13:23,25; cf. 19:26; 21:7,10). The unusual title “Deposit-keeper” (2,9) is a Greek word not known to occur elsewhere in Greek literature. It refers to the fact that on the cross Jesus committed his mother into the keeping of the disciple whom he loved (Jn. 19:26-7).

The most frequent title given to John in these songs is “Evangelist” (superscription; 1,6; 2,6; 2,11; 3,2; 3,10; 4,1), which refers to his traditional role as the author of the fourth Gospel. In line with this role there are several quotations from the Gospel and one from the first epistle of John. For the most part these are literal quotations from the Coptic New Testament.

Associated with the title “Evangelist” is that of “Theologian” (2,10; 3,2), *i.e.*, one who teaches about God. The church fathers use the term of Moses and the prophets as well as of the evangelists. It is John, however, who is considered the Theologian *par excellence* because of the importance of the Gospel of John in formulating the doctrine of the Trinity. For the same reason John is designated “the preacher of the Trinity” (1,1; cf. 3,8-9) and “holy Mystagogue,” *i.e.* “revealer of mysteries” (2,6; cf. 2,1-2; 4,2-3; also 3,5).

There are also references in the songs to later traditions about John. The tradition that John was a virgin (2,8; 3,1; 3,4; 4,1) is also found in the *Monarchian Prologue*, the *Pistis Sophia* (41,96), and the *Acts of John* (113). In the *Monarchian Prologue* as in these songs, John’s virginity is given as the reason that John was especially beloved by God (or Christ).

Another later tradition is that through prayer (in which he extended his hands) John caused the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus to collapse (2,8). This story is related in the fourth century *Acts of John* (37-45) and is mentioned by Nicephorus (fl. 1320-30) in his *Ecclesiasticae Historiae* (ii,42). The *Cyclopaedia* of M’Clintock and Strong also mentioned its occurrence in Cyril of Alexandria *Orat. de Mar. Virg.*, but I have been unable to trace this work. The tradition apparently arose sometime after the third century when the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus was destroyed by an earthquake.

The first song speaks of the overthrow of “temples” (1,2). This refers to the further tradition, also found in Nicephorus, that after the destruction of the Temple of Artmeis, John was involved in leveling other temples.

In the following translations the superscription and order of the songs is retained from the original manuscript.

The Evangelist John

(1)

- 1 *Saint John the preacher of the Trinity, you became a suppliant for us before the good Father.*
- 2 *You overthrew the temples by extending your hands; you strengthened the Church through your Gospel.*
- 3 *You became a literary shepherd of the fold of Christ, which is why you were entrusted with the true spotless lamb.*
- 4 *You were worthy to hear the voice full of joy say to you, “Man, behold your mother”; “woman, behold your son.”⁴*
- 5 *You took to yourself the throne of God Almighty, which is Mary the holy Virgin.*
- 6 *Remember us before the Lord, O holy Evangelist, that he may have mercy on us, for his is the glory forever.*

(2)

- 1 *O spiritual Plectrum which played on its lyre words not of the earth,*
but of the mysteries of heaven,
- 2 *The things which cannot be seen by human nature you revealed to us*
through your Gospel.
- 3 *The lawgiver Moses in Genesis told us this: "In the beginning God*
created the heaven and the earth,"⁵
- 4 *While the apostle John (said), "In the beginning the Word was with*
God and the Word was God."⁶
- 5 *The hierophant Moses draws a portrait for us in saying God took*
earth from the earth and created man,⁷
- 6 *While you, O Evangelist and holy Mystagogue (said), "And the Word*
became flesh and dwelt among us."⁸
- 7 *The prophet Moses extended his hands and defeated Amalek and*
everyone who fought against him,⁹
- 8 *While the son of thunder, the all-holy virgin, extended his hands and*
overthrew the Temple of Artemis.
- 9 *With whom shall I compare you, O Deposit-keeper, to whom was en-*
trusted the Virgin who bore us Life?
- 10 *For no tongue of flesh can tell of all your virtuous deeds, O great*
Theologian and beloved of Christ.
- 11 *Remember us before the Lord, O holy Evangelist, that He may have*
mercy on us and forgive our sins.

(3)

- 1 *Come today, all you Christ-loving peoples, that we may honor the*
holy virgin and apostle John,
- 2 *Who became a theologian and evangelist whose words have reached*
the ends of the earth.
- 3 *O herald of godliness and beloved of Christ, who is called "son of*
thunder,"¹⁰
- 4 *Who was worthy to recline on Jesus' breast because of the purity of*
his virginity and His love for him;¹¹
- 5 *The one who revealed to us great mysteries in his holy and quite*
marvelous Apocalypse,
- 6 *Through whose mouth the Holy Spirit said, "Let us love one*
another," for God exists in love;¹²
- 7 *The one who enlightened us through his Gospel that we might*
befriend the distressed with Christ's salvation;
- 8 *Who revealed to us his exalted theology, the true philosophical for-*
mulation of the correct dogmas,

- 9 *When you taught us with certainty to see the Trinity, which exists in
an inseparable unity that endures forever;*
- 10 *We ourselves entreat you, O holy Evangelist: represent us before the
Christ whom you loved,*
- 11 *That he may grant us his peace and his mercy and forgive our sins,
for his is the glory forever.*

(4)

- 1 *It was the holy Evangelist, John the Apostle, whom God loved for the
purity of his virginity.*
- 2 *He gave him wisdom, and he understood the mysteries of that single
Godhood of the Holy Trinity, saying,*
- 3 *"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God; He was [in
the beginning] with God."¹³*

Notes

- 1 De Lacy O'Leary, *The Difnar (Antiphonarium) of the Coptic Church*, 3 vols. (London: Luzac & Co., 1926-30), 2:4.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 3:7-8.
- 3 O.H.E. Burmester, "The Turuhut of the Saints," *Bulletin de la Societe d' Archeologie Copte* 5(1939), 115.
- 4 John 19:26-27.
- 5 Genesis 1:1.
- 6 John 1:1.
- 7 Genesis 2:7.
- 8 John 1:14.
- 9 Exodus 17:8-13.
- 10 Mark 3:17.
- 11 John 13:23-25.
- 12 I John 4:7.
- 13 John 1:1-2. The bracketed words have fallen out of the text, but there are indications in the manuscript that they were an original part of the song.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Holy Family in Egypt

*By Otto F.A. Meinardus, The American University in Cairo Press.
Revised Edition, 1986. No price. 69 pp. Illus. George Onsy.*

Otto Meinardus is the doyen of European Coptologists who has produced a number of important books which are loved throughout the English-speaking world. The present volume, with a brief fifty-one pages of text, is a welcome addition to libraries of books on the Coptic Orthodox Church. The book is pleasant to handle and has a clear typeface, marking an improvement on some of the earlier volumes from the American University Press. It is a pity that the text is marred by some ugly English; a fault of the editor rather than the author.

In this book Otto Meinardus has reconstructed the route of the Holy Family from Palestine to Dair al-Muharraq in Upper Egypt. He has been able to use an enormous number of sources from Eastern and Western churches. Few scholars can have such a command of so many traditions; Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Greek and Latin. Meinardus comes as close as we can expect in presenting a picture of life in first century Egypt. In addition to the obvious academic research undertaken, Dr. Meinardus visited the places in Egypt which were hallowed by the visit of the Holy Family. His list of acknowledgements includes ten priests of the Coptic Orthodox Church who assisted him on his pilgrimage to the holy places.

The journey is traced from the Magharat as-Saiyidah in Bethlehem to the West down the Mediterranean coast. Taking a route which runs parallel to the shore of the Great Sea, the Holy Family crossed the Wadi al- 'Arish and came to the city of Pelusium (Farama). In Egypt, Meinardus follows the clues across the Nile Delta and down the Nile Valley. His text abounds with marvellous and apt quotations from apocryphal literature. On one occasion the Holy Family glimpsed the distant desert of Scetis, the Wadi 'n-Natrun, and Jesus blessed it and said to His Mother: "...in this desert there shall live many monks, ascetics and spiritual fighters, and they shall serve God like angels." Meinardus locates this incident at Terranah, site of the ancient bishopric of Terenouti, and notes that in 1986 there were about 320 monks in the monasteries of the Wadi 'n-Natrun. The long journey south is followed through the Nile Valley by camel, donkey and boat to Upper Egypt. An attractive feature of

the book is the use of some Qur'anic traditions of the Flight of the Holy Family. The Western reader will be impressed by the substantial number of Coptic fairs or festivals (mulid) which annually celebrate visits of the Holy Family to various parts of Egypt.

Meinardus is not entirely uncritical of tradition and rejects the notion that the visit of the Holy Family to Lycopolis can be verified. He concedes that hundreds of Copts with Amba Mikhail of Assiut claim that the Church of the Blessed Virgin at Dair al-Adhra was built to indicate the most southern point visited by the Holy Family in Egypt; but Meinardus can only admit a local, oral tradition. From Dair al-Muharraaq (the site of a terrible tragedy amongst pilgrims in June 1988), Meinardus outlines the return of the Holy Family to Palestine including a visit to Cairo. The Church of Abu Sargah, Babylon, Old Cairo, marks the spot.

Meinardus has presented a stimulating guide; a summons to pilgrimage. Readers of this Review will know that the American University in Cairo Press is continually producing works of importance for Coptic scholarship. The reviewer hopes that their project will be supported.

I am sorry that I cannot commend the illustrations in this book. It is true that they are better than the dreadful Western Catholic kitsch we see in too many Coptic publications. But the pointille, black and white, pseudo-icons are sentimental and fussy. They add nothing to the text. I was delighted to see, in contrast, that the cover illustration is from a modern Coptic icon by Professor Isaac Fanous the internationally famous teacher of Coptic art at the Institute of Coptic Studies in Cairo. Many Christians owe a lot to Isaac Fanous and his school when we pray before the holy icons. In the book under review, Otto Meinardus makes an important point which church illustrators everywhere might attend to: "To depict the holy Family as clad in the Arab dress of recent times. . . is just as incorrect as to clothe them in the garments of the medieval painters. The clothes which the Holy Family would have worn would have been those in fashion at the time in the whole Graeco-Roman world." These are identified as the linea, tunica and casula; the same for men and women. These three garments ultimately became the ecclesiastical vestments known as the alb, the tunicle and the chasuble. The icon painted by Isaac Fanous is a model for those looking for authentic and modern Coptic illustrations; the six illustrations to the text are less happy choices.

In the renaissance of Coptic studies of which there are already considerable signs in the West, Dr. Otto F. A. Meinardus will surely have an honoured place.

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John Watson

John of the Cross: Selected Writings

Edited with an introduction by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987. Pp. 336. \$16.95 (Cloth), \$12.95 (Paper).

Several spiritual classics have crossed the barriers between churches and are read by the faithful everywhere. Among the examples are *Imitation of Christ* (Catholic), *Way of a Pilgrim* (Orthodox) and *Pilgrim's Progress* (Protestant). However, the writings of St. John of the Cross, which are strictly biblical and based upon sound Christian Tradition, are hardly known outside Roman Catholic circles. In fact, till fairly recently, they were little read outside the Carmelite circles. The reasons for this, as given by a Roman Catholic theologian, are that "he wrote primarily for souls already advanced to a high degree of perfection; his teaching on detachment is too demanding for many Christians; the language is often too subtle to be readily understood by modern readers."¹

What Kieran Kavanaugh does in this new book is a trial to overcome some of these difficulties, that repel many from St. John of the Cross.

There are few works on the spiritual life that can match those of the sixteenth-century Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross (1542-1591). His writings were the fruit of the most severe interior and exterior trials and of years of service as a spiritual director. The nucleus of his major works was three poems which he wrote in 1578 while he was imprisoned at Toledo for the sake of the Carmelite reformation. For about nine months he suffered in darkness and fasting on bread and water alone while he was subjected to daily flogging. Actually his whole life was one of suffering till he died in exile after a three months' illness in which he had several operations for a serious leg infection and during which an investigation was conducted against him in order to expel him from the order.

St. John of the Cross wrote his four major writings during the last ten years of his life, at the request of his friends and disciples, as commentaries on his three poems. *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night* concentrate on the purification needed for a deeper spiritual life. *The Spiritual Canticle* emphasizes the loving exchange between Christ and the soul. *The Living Flame of Love* describes the trinitarian nature of the life of full union with God.

The selections in this volume amount to one third of the whole works of St. John of the Cross. In his choice of the selections, the editor sought those texts that concentrate on the core message of the individual work. Thus it is both useful for beginners and for those who already know St. John. However, many useful parts and a lot of scriptural comments have been omitted. This is acknowledged by Kavanaugh who says, "No choice of selections should mean that what is not included is unimportant,

and readers may have favorite passages that they regret are absent from these pages; let them know I share this regret.”

With the general introduction that includes the biography and theology of John, the particular introductions to the texts and the numerous notes that reflect the recent scholarship, the reader has in his hand an excellent spiritual classic that needs years to meditate upon.

Note

1 Jordan Auman, O.P. In. *Christian Spirituality, East & West* Chicago: Priory Press, 1968.

Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends

By Elizabeth Clark, Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1979. Pp. 254, hardcover. List price \$49.95; series subscription price \$39.95.

This is volume 2 of *Studies in Women and Religion*. It includes two essays, and four translations from the Greek. In the first two parts Professor Clark concludes, from more than five hundred references, most of them patristic writings, that “the oft-repeated theory that early Christianity exalted women’s status in general is not borne out by the evidence presented in this book.” She sticks to her theory that the Fathers were ambivalent in their attitude towards women and sexuality. *Part one* seeks to acquaint the reader with the views held by St. John Chrysostom. On the one hand, he acknowledges that in the Apostolic age Christian women had enjoyed more freedom in the service of the church; they prophesied, were even called disciples, and were regarded as equal to men (Gal. 3:28). Yet, on the other hand, in most of his writings, he considers woman as subordinate to man and is subjected to his authority. The only two conditions in which he finds women able to attain equality with men are celibacy and martyrdom. *Part two* surveys the female friends of Chrysostom and of St. Jerome, his Latin contemporary. These women were not treated in an inferior status in the letters of the two Fathers to them, or about them. Professor Clark proposes the theory that they were “excluded from the class of femaleness” because of three factors: their renunciation of wealth, property, family life and even of their feminine sexuality; their high social status which they sacrificed for the sake of the Church; and their high education.

Part three consists of the first English translation of the accounts of the life of Chrysostom’s friend, *St. Olympias the deaconess*, and of the transfer of her relics in the seventh century.

Part four gives the translations (again, the first in English) of two treatises on the *Subintroductae*, the practice of “spiritual marriage” or co-habitation between men and women ascetics. Chrysostom condemns this practice which was still prevalent

in his time, although it had been forbidden by the Council of Nicaea early in the fourth century.

Although the views of the author may not be uniformly accepted by all readers, yet she should be congratulated for providing in the book the excellent translations and the ample historical material which throws more light on the role of women in the early Church.

The Church at Prayer, Volume I: Principles of the Liturgy

By Irene'e Henri Dalmais, Pierre Marie Gy, Pierre Journal, and Aime' Georges Martimort. Translated by Matthew O'Connell. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987. Pp. 301. \$14.95 (Paper). Price of the four-volume set \$54.95.

This is the first volume of *The Church At Prayer*, a four-volume set recently translated from French. Titles of the other volumes are: *The Eucharist*, *The Sacraments*, and *The Liturgy and Time*. Only the first two volumes are reviewed in this issue.

The authors of the *The Church at Prayer* are to be commended for making the recent research on the liturgy available in a readable manner, concise format and well arranged topics. This book, largely rewritten after the reform of the Roman Catholic liturgies ordered by Vatican II has been completely implemented, reflects the modern attitude of the Catholic Church towards liturgy. This attitude which stresses the spiritual and the pastoral aspects of the liturgy rather than the rubrics of old, has been the fruit of the intense historical and theological studies of the liturgy during the twentieth century, as stressed by Aime' Martimort, the general editor, in the preface,

"Scholars have been devoting their efforts especially to the prehistory of the Christian liturgy and to its beginnings and its relation to Jewish prayer. In addition, the comparative method initially developed by Baumstark has given a splendid impulse to the study of the Eastern and Western liturgies. It is no longer possible to reconstruct the history of the Roman liturgy without locating it in this broader framework. That same larger perspective is indispensable especially for answering doctrinal questions about the sacraments and for resolving the sensitive problem of adaptation to local Churches, as well as for inspiring the creative responses that adaptation calls for. The controversies to which the liturgical reform has given rise in various places are to be explained by an ignorance of the tradition and of the diversity it allows."

Although this work is aimed at Roman Catholic audience, it is indispensable for other readers because the valuable historical and theological material it contains sheds great light on the true meaning of the Tradition shared by all churches.

The first volume introduces the whole work. It starts by defining the liturgy as the priestly office of Christ, that includes the whole public worship performed by the Church, His body. This definition stresses the place of the liturgy in the economy of salvation and the role of the people, whose baptism authorizes them to take an active part in it. The three main sections of the book discuss the history of the liturgy, its structure, and its theology respectively. *Section I* outlines the complex history and development of liturgical practices, both in the East and in the West. *Section II* analyzes the structure and laws of the liturgical celebration. This includes the role of each member in the Church, the different types of prayers and readings and the explanation of the liturgical signs. *Section III* deals with the theology of liturgical celebration, and for this purpose, shows how it is a mystery of salvation as well as one of the main deposits of Christian faith by which this faith is expressed and taught to the people.

The Church at Prayer, Volume 2: The Eucharist

By Robert Cabie'. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1986. Pp. 270. \$14.95 (Paper).

This book utilizes the latest scholarship in describing the development of the Eucharistic celebration throughout the Christian history; a whole section of the book deals with each historical period.

The first section gives a view of the Eucharist in the first three centuries, before the liturgical books were written. It describes the earliest Eucharistic prayers and their origin, both in the New Testament account of the Last Supper and in the Jewish blessings.

Section II describes the organization of the Divine Liturgy between the fourth and eighth centuries in the different traditions, whether Western (mainly Roman, Gallic and Spanish churches) or Eastern (mainly Syrian, Coptic and Byzantine churches). It describes the various parts of both the liturgy of the Word, and the liturgy of the Eucharist as shown in the ancient Eucharistic Prayers.

Section III reviews the change and adaptation in the Eucharistic prayers, rites and practices in the Roman Catholic Church after the eighth century till the middle of the twentieth century. Toward the end of the eighth century, the Creed, which had been used in the East since the fifth century, was introduced in the West, after adding the word *filioque*. The use of the unleavened bread started in the West in the eleventh century. Different factors during this period exerted a deleterious influence on public liturgies and on the participation of the faithful. "Private masses" became frequent. The word of God was proclaimed in a language that became foreign for the congregation. The ancient practice of the people who traditionally brought the Eucharistic gifts stopped. The kiss of peace became restricted to the clergy. Cantors

or choirs replaced the congregations in the liturgical responses. Silent prayers were resorted to in the ninth century. It became prohibited for laymen and women to receive the Eucharist in their hands, their participation from the chalice was abandoned and finally they rarely received Communion. The people have become merely onlookers and passive, the liturgical books even no longer mentioned their presence. Alternative Eucharistic devotions outside the liturgy were developed and flourished in the Middle Ages. The theological significance of the Eucharist changed with the advent in the seventh century of allegorical and extrinsic interpretations of the liturgy in which various parts were made to signify episodes in the life and passion of Christ that had no real connection with the actualization of salvation in the liturgy.

Section IV deals with the celebration of the Eucharist after Vatican II. The Council ordered a liturgical reform, one which had been called for since the liturgical movement early in this century. The result was a new liturgy, published in 1970, that intended to achieve the devout and active participation of the faithful and to restore the prayers to the vigor they had in the Tradition of the Fathers, and in which most of the alterations that had occurred in the Middle Ages returned to their older forms.

BOOK NOTICES

Paulist Press (Mahwah, New Jersey)

Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina. By Thelma Hall, R.C., 1988. Pp. 110, \$4.95 (Paper)

A guide to an ancient and fruitful way of prayer in which one passes from reading and listening to the Word of God, *Lectio Divina*, to reflection and meditation on it, then to the *prayer of the heart* where our hearts are opened and touched by Christ, and finally to the silence of *contemplation*.

A Glimpse of Glory. By Gonville Ffrnech-Beytagh, 1986. Pp. 114. \$7.95 (Paper).

Practical counsel on different types of prayer constructed out of a number of talks, sermons and retreat addresses, delivered by an Anglican priest who suffered persecution in South Africa.

The Laity Today and Tomorrow. By Edmund Flood, O.S.B., 1987. Pp. 112. \$4.95 (Paper).

An account of the recent changes in the Roman Catholic Church, guided by New Testament examples, where lay people, both men and women, are asked to be partners in the Church service and worship, rather than just helpers or spectators.

Henry Alline: Selected Writings. Edited by George A. Rawlyk, 1987. Pp. 344. \$19.95 (hardcover).

This eighth's volume of the *Sources of American Spirituality* series gives the biography, journal and selections from the writings and sermons of the farmer-tanner who managed to lead a spiritual awakening in eighteenth century Canada and before his death at the age of thirty five was the most significant religious figure in that country.

Wm. B. Eerdmans (Grand Rapids, Michigan)

The Bear's Hug. By Gerald Buss, 1987. Pp. 223. \$8.95 (Paper).

A well documented historical account of the state of Christianity in Russia following the 1917 revolution till 1986, including oppressive laws against

believers, ways of harassment and punishment, numerous reports of confessors and martyrs, and how the Christian faith survived under these circumstances.

St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Ottawa (P.O. Box 6970, Station J, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2A 3Y6)

The Nature of Christ. By H. H. Pope Shenouda III, 1987. Pp. 24. No Price.

The belief of the non-Chalcedonian churches in the nature of Christ, its explanation from Scripture and liturgy and its importance for the doctrine of redemption.

The Coptic Orthodox Church and the Dogmas-2: Man and Redemption. By Father Tadros Y. Malaty, 1987. Pp. 30. No Price.

The teaching of the early Alexandrian Fathers (mainly St. Clement, Origen and St. Athanasius) on the nature of man, free will, the fall and the role of God's grace and man's free will in salvation.

The Coptic Orthodox Church and the Dogmas-3: The Church. By Father Tadros Y. Malaty, 1987. Pp. 20. No Price.

How the early Alexandrian Fathers spoke of the Church as the *People of God*, *Mother of Believers*, *Body of Christ*, *New Creation*, *Bride of Christ*, *Christ's Building* and *House of Salvation*.

The Coptic Orthodox Church and the Dogmas-4: The Divine Providence. By Father Tadros Y. Malaty, 1987. Pp. 39. No Price.

Quotations from the writings of the early Coptic Fathers about God's care for His creation, and for man in particular; and about the problem of the existence of suffering and evil in the world.

The Coptic Orthodox Church and the Dogmas-5: The Divine Grace. By Fr. Tadros Malaty, 1987. Pp. 45. No Price.

Modern scholarship on the teaching of the NT and the Alexandrian Fathers about grace - as the love of God revealed in Christ and given to man for his renewal; not just a dogma to be learned, but a dwelling of Christ in the soul and its reflection in the daily life of the Christian.

St. Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society (1800 S. Robertson Blvd. Bldg. #6, Suite #222, Los Angeles, CA 90035)

St. Shenouda the Archimandrite: His Life and Times. By H. N. Takla, 1987. Pp. 36. No Price.

The work of the fifth century monastic Father, with a stress on his system, his role as a national leader and defender of the oppressed, and his writings; followed by a detailed description of the White Monastery and its library which has been one of the greatest in Coptic Egypt.

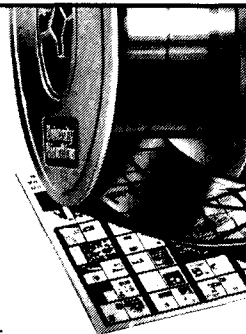
Pope Kyrillos VI Publications (P.O. Box 15380, Fox Chase Station, PA 19111)

The Miracles of Pope Kyrillos (Cyril) VI. Pp. 112. No Price.

A collection of personal testimonies and eye-witness accounts of miracles, predictions, incidents of clairvoyance and spiritual counsels attributed to the late Coptic Patriarch (1959-1971), who is venerated as a saint by many people.

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