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- *PENTECOST: THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER*
- *PATRISTIC TEACHING ON SALVATION*



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Two articles in this issue discuss the theme of salvation. In *Pentecost: The Promise of the Father*, Fr. Matta El-Meskeen takes the opportunity of celebrating the feast of Pentecost to discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in completing the salvation started by Christ who restored man's relationship to God through his death, resurrection, and ascension. Relying heavily on the New Testament data, especially St. Paul and St. John, Father Matta shows how the Holy Spirit, the Promise of the Father poured on humanity at Pentecost and in baptism, ensures its fellowship with the Father in eternal relationship, love and adoption. Father Matta is the spiritual father and director of the Monastery of St. Macarius in the old desert of Scete. He is considered one of the early leaders in the monastic revival in the Coptic Church during this century. The present article was originally the Pentecost sermon at St. Macarius' Monastery in 1973; it is reprinted here from its English translation which appeared in *St. Mark Monthly Review*, June 1994.

The other article on salvation, *Resurgence of the Patristic Teaching on Salvation* shows how its basis in biblical and patristic theology was lost for nearly a whole millennium till it was recovered in this century.

In a long Review Article, the *Revd. Dr. John Watson* comments on the recent English translation of the French book, *Sources*, by the eminent Orthodox theologian *Olivier Clément*. He calls it 'a compendium of patristic theology.'

Among the books reviewed in this issue are three recent books on early monasticism *The Monastic Letters of St. Athanasius*; *The Monasteries of Palestine*, which deals with the period between 314 and 631; and *Virgins of God*, which discusses women monasticism in Egypt and Asia Minor in late antiquity.

Editor

Acknowledgement

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PENTECOST:

The Descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Day

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER

Father Matta El-Meskeen

Fulfillment of Redemption

We have already dealt with the Lord's ascension forty days after his resurrection, and how he completed the redemption which he began on the cross. For as He ascended on that day and crossed the barrier which separated us from the Father, entering into the inner shrine behind the curtain as a forerunner on our behalf, He entered with his blood on his hand and appeared before the Father - slain in the flesh because of his love and obedience, the wrath of God on man's transgression was checked forever, for the Son himself became an offering of atonement for the imperfection of humanity. Hence the saying that "Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf...thus securing an eternal redemption."

Therefore, through his ascension and his sitting at the right hand of the Father Christ fulfilled the dispensation which came down from heaven, completing redemption and securing salvation for all who believe in him.

What remains after redemption and salvation is our entry into fellowship with the Father that we may live with him in love as children. For it is one thing to die with Christ, to rise with him and to sit with him in heaven, and another to live with the Father in the fellowship of the children's love. Such was the dispensation fulfilled by the Holy Ghost and formerly described as the "Promise of the Father," for which the date was fixed in the history of mankind. It was predicted by the prophets, mentioned by Christ and realized on Pentecost.

We know that Christ realized the dispensation through the flesh - namely by death, resurrection, ascension and sitting at the right hand of the Father. But on Pentecost day the Father realized the dispensation through the Holy Ghost. For whereas the aim of Christ is salvation by the remission of sin and its penalty, and the restoration of man's relationship to God on the basis of perpetual reconciliation, that of the Father is that we should live with him in the children's love, which is the work following redemption, salvation and reconciliation.

Where the Son's role of salvation and reconciliation ended, the Father's role of love and adoption began. Of this the Lord expressly says: "In that day you will ask in my name; and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father" (Jn 16:26, 27).

Christ's utterance "the Father himself loves you" "In that day" was definitely fulfilled on Pentecost day when the Father sent down the Holy Ghost, his own Spirit, the Spirit of the Fatherly love described as the 'Promise of the Father.' St. Paul explains this in these words: "Because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). This means that the first impression on our minds and hearts on this great day of Pentecost should be the affection of the Father toward us - a feeling of fatherly and fiery love poured on humanity, following the fulfillment by the Son of all the requirements of redemption and salvation, after Christ washed humanity with his blood and purged it thoroughly from her sins, reconciling her to the Father by his cross.

Such is our glorious share in that great day. Such is the treasure of love from which the pious in all time and clime have drawn and which has never been exhausted, the ardent fatherly love which makes us ceaselessly cry: "Abba! Father!" For the Spirit of Pentecost is a fiery Spirit coming fresh from the Father and conveying in its flames his compassion and his great affection which was withheld from man throughout thousands of years.

Spirit of Adoption

I wish we could realize the effectiveness and grandeur of this love for its mystery is so profound. It has proved capable of birth, and it is like a celestial fire capable of transforming our nature just as fire transforms dust into gold. For with the self-same love with which God loved his only begotten Son he chose in this "Divine day" - so to speak - to love us and pour on us his Holy Spirit publicly. He thus turned us from slaves to children and lifted us from earth to heaven, in honor of his Son who came down to our earth and slaughtered himself for our sake.

When Abraham in antiquity obeyed God and was about to slay his son in submission to the voice of God Almighty he received the bounteous grace of God who swore by himself to bless and make him a blessing. But on this Pentecost day with which all our days have been blessed, when Christ had fulfilled the dispensation in the flesh, obeyed his Father even unto death on the cross, ascended and appeared before the Father in his slain body, God did something greater than an oath: his love overflowed on all mankind and He poured on every human his Holy Spirit where all God's grace, affection and goodness are treasured according as Joel the Pentecost prophet predicted. With this fatherly Spirit the whole world has been blessed.

This love took the form of an adoption bond. For as the Holy Father loved his

Son, in the same manner and with the self-same Spirit he loved us and “sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts” (Gal 4:6). Hence the adoption by which we have the full right to call God “Abba! Father!” The Holy Spirit poured on us by the Father is himself that who cries inside us testifying that we are the children of God.

This is the Spirit of adoption which introduced us into the fellowship of the heritage of Christ, that is sonship to God, just as St. Paul says: “But you have received the Spirit of Sonship. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ that is the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:15-17).

Thus the Father’s promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled, and the process of adoption long promised by the Lord and awaited by the disciples was completed after the Son prepared in himself all its prerequisites, and the disciples met in the upper room according to the command expecting the promise and devoting themselves to prayer with one accord.

And the promise was fulfilled with a fiery unction from the Father, transmitting to man the power of an imperishable life in communion with God, the depth of which is inexpressible and which we now live in full manifestation. The essence of this life is a fatherly love which in itself is life-giving, bearing the mystery of birth from above.

Great was the joy of Christ on that day when, sitting at the right hand of the Father, He saw the Holy Spirit stamping with the Father’s seal the whole dispensation which He fulfilled with his sufferings, and witnessed his disciples adopted by the Father as a church entering upon a new era, the era of the Father’s good will, of the eternal love never to be taken away from her.

Christ naturally rejoiced in this because it was the petition he had offered to his Father insistently “that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them” (Jn 17:26). This is the unction of the Father which He poured in accordance with Christ’s request, and in honor of his love, upon the church meeting with one accord on Pentecost Day and still meeting as a catholic church until today to receive this same unction of joy and Fatherly love in the same manner as the unction of the “incarnate” Son on the river Jordan when He received the Spirit coming down upon him with the Father’s voice: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

This equalization between the Father’s love for his Son and his love for the new man represented in the church of the apostles meeting in the upper room surpasses all comprehension. The love poured by the Holy Spirit from the Father on the Son has come to be poured also in the same manner and by the Holy Spirit from the Father in the new humanity on all those who accept redemption and adoption in Christ “that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them.”

Communion of Love and Light in the Holy Trinity

I have already stated that the Spirit poured from the Father with the unction of

love is essentially life in the Father. The Spirit here welds mankind in a communion with the Father, a communion both of love and eternal life, for the love of the Father is the life, and the life in communion with the Father is the ultimate love.

Christ foresaw this wonderful day, the day when the Church would live by the love of the Father, and his soul sensed comfort in the future of his little flock. So he reassured his disciples when the shadow of the cross overwhelmed them with its sorrows, "Because I live you will live also" (Jn 14:19). The source of this life He had already explained by saying: "I live because of the Father." (Jn 6:57), Thus the meaning becomes clear in the combined verses: "I live because of the Father, therefore you will live with me because of the Father."

This is the communion of life with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit which the disciples saw, lived and enjoyed, and which the Apostle John recorded afterwards and told us that it is the same fellowship offered now to us: "The life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us - that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that your joy may be complete" (I Jn 1:2-4).

Gifts of the Spirit

As monks we can only feel this fellowship in our depths, the fellowship of love and life with the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit which was poured on Pentecost Day and which settled in the Church and dwelt in our temples with great meekness and humility.

It is true that the Spirit of Pentecost was tangible and visible as flames of fire. Nevertheless this Spirit has never cooled or died down. His fire is latent in the hearts that know how to enkindle it with prayer, humility and love. The fire of the Holy Spirit is alive and needs only to be blown into. It awaits the oil of grace to inflame the charisms and enhance the unction. Blessed is the man who gathers every day even one drop of this oil, for he shall see how the Spirit burns and how the fragrant smell of Christ spreads abroad. Just as the busy bee gathers her honey from the nectar of flowers, we gather oil through vigil, self-sacrifice, and genuine meekness, through sweet poverty and joyful fasting, through ceaseless supplication, through honoring every man and giving thanks for everything through a tongue which blesses every name. Flowers are plenty in the paradise of the monks, and the hidden nectar can be discovered only by a clever bee.

The Holy Spirit is by nature meek and calm; his voice is never heard and his form never seen except by them that meet with one accord in the intimacy of love awaiting the promise of the Lord, them that open their hearts and lift their eyes to where Christ sits, demanding the right of children and seeking the face of the Father.

To these the Spirit manifests himself as a light for the inner eye and a fire that

fills the heart so that every mouth overflows with the praise of God. The young shall see the “Light of the world” in their visions and the old realize him in their dreams.

But let us not forget that through the descent of the Spirit on Pentecost which has shone on the Church since that day and still fills us with life, light and love, we have acquired a share with the saints enduring forever, for He is the Spirit of genuine fellowship extending from the apostles themselves without interruption since that day. We need only hold fast to this Spirit in accordance with the promise, for He is the Spirit of the promise, holy and ever-living. We should hold him with our hearts and never let go, breathe him with our spirits and court him with all affection so that we may attain our full share in him with the saints and with Christ himself. Just as St. Paul says “Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the Kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col 1:12). This is the utmost wish that Christ persistently implored the Father for: “Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am” (Jn 17:24).

The Holy Spirit in Easter and in Pentecost

Some of you have inquired about the relation of Christ’s breathing of the Holy Spirit on his disciples after the Resurrection to the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. On this St. Athanasius says “Having breathed on the face of his disciples He gave them the Holy Spirit from himself, and in this manner the Father poured him ‘upon all flesh’ as is written” (St. Athanasius’ Epistle on the Holy Spirit, NPNF, vol. IV, p. 96). That is to say that Christ gave him to the disciples, and the Father gave him to all mankind, which means that the Father completed the work of the Son on the same level or “in this manner.”

I have also consulted St. Gregory the Theologian who states: “And next in the Disciples of Christ (for I omit to mention Christ Himself, in Whom He dwelt, not as energizing; but as accompanying His Equal), and that in three ways, as they were able to receive Him, and on three occasions; before Christ was glorified by the Passion, and after He was glorified by the Resurrection; and after His Ascension, or Restoration, or whatever we ought to call it, to Heaven. Now the first of these manifests Him—the healing of the sick and casting out of evil spirits, which could not be apart from the Spirit; and so does that breathing upon them after the Resurrection, which was clearly a divine inspiration; and so too the present distribution of the fiery tongues, which we are now commemorating. But the first manifested Him indistinctly, the second more expressly, this present one more perfectly, since He is no longer present only in energy, but as we may say, substantially, associating with us, and dwelling in us” (Homily on Pentecost, NPNF, vol. VII, p. 383).

From the above we conclude that the work of the Holy Spirit through the breathing of Christ after the resurrection was a divine act, undefined by St. Gregory, while his descent on Pentecost was a personal existence. Here again St. Gregory did not define the nature of his work.

But it seems that the relationship between the breathing of Christ on his disciples after resurrection, and the descent of the Spirit on Pentecost, is exceedingly strong, and that the one complemented the other. The work of the Son which He fulfilled by incarnation and redemption ends at the new creation: "We have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet 1:3). On this creation born after his image, He breathed from his Holy Spirit that it might live, in his capacity as the creator Son and the Second Adam, the life-giving Spirit. But as the perfection of this creation had to be accomplished by the work of the Father, Christ commanded his disciples, even after this breathing, not to leave their place but to await also the "Promise of the Father," so that after they attained the "Promise of the Son" they waited to attain the "Promise of the Father." The promise of the Son is in fact a fellowship with Christ because of the Holy Spirit. Christ breathed the Holy Spirit on them after the resurrection that they might have full communion in his death and resurrection as a new creation, for without the Holy Spirit it was impossible for them to obtain a fellowship with Christ. Equally the promise of the Father is a fellowship with the Father because of the Holy Spirit through the acceptance of adoption. It is evident then that the Son's breathing on his disciples after his resurrection, and the descent of the Holy Spirit from the Father as an unction on Pentecost, both complement one action in man though they are two mystical and separate works like baptism and unction. Each of them is a sacrament of the work of the Holy Spirit (in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost). "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matt 3:11).

By baptism and unction we now receive these two acts accomplished by the Son (through the breathing of the Holy Spirit after his resurrection) and by the Father (through the fulfillment of his holy promise to the disciples on Pentecost) so that we can obtain what the disciples obtained after resurrection and on Pentecost, that is the new birth to a new creation, as a living church, as the body of Christ.

Relation of Pentecost to Ascension

The Lord's saying suggests that the sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost transmitting the unction of the Father by love and adoption in the fellowship of an eternal life with him, depended on the return of the Son to the Father, conveying in himself the completion of his mission - a new redeemed and perfected humanity - placing her in the position of reconciliation with the Father through the honorable place which He provided us at the right hand of glory in the highest.

Having thus fulfilled his mission, meeting all the will of the Father toward us, removing all obstacles in the way of our living with the Father without blemish, Christ consequently obtained for us the promise of the Father through his sitting at his right hand as an intercessor in favor of the humanity exiled on earth. Hence the words of St. Peter on Pentecost Day: "Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has

poured out this which you see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

From this we gather that the fellowship with the Father obtained for us by Christ through his incarnation, when He completed it by sitting at the right hand of the Father, was the pledge, the firstfruits, or the perfect pattern which, in Christ's economy, was to be the foundation for the fellowship of the life of mankind with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Hence Christ's work did not end with his ascension and sitting at the right hand of glory in the highest, for it was not possible that Christ should be content - or that "his joy might be complete" - unless his economy were fulfilled by seeing humanity acquiring a fellowship with the Father, an eternal relationship, love and adoption equal to what He procured for us in the body of his humanity. This was the theme of a specific petition by Christ to the Father before his crucifixion: "But now I am coming to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (Jn 17:13).

When the hour was at hand Christ felt that humanity was in dire need of the Spirit of the Father's fatherhood so that man would no longer live an orphan with the sense of a fatherless child. Christ had gratified this need, being the Son coming down from heaven, from the Father's bosom, bearing the image and compassion of the Father. Now that He was leaving them how could they survive without the care and love of God's fatherhood? Hence He promised his disciples that on his ascension He would ask the Father to send them the Comforter, the Spirit of consolation from the Father, bringing to all humanity the affection and compassion of fatherhood as a fellowship of a life enduring for ever with God the Father. Hence his words to his disciples: "I will not leave you comfortless." The Spirit of Pentecost is in fact the Spirit of the compassion of fatherhood for comforting man that he may live as a son in the house of God forever.

On Pentecost Day the Father introduced us into a fellowship with him which is - to some extent - of the sort existing between him and his beloved Son. So much so that the Holy Spirit has come to transmit to us the Father's private talk with his Son, the talk of pure divine love: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come...He will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine": (Jn 16:13-15). Thus the Holy Spirit initiated us into the secret of the Father's fellowship with the Son. Isn't that what St. Paul could understand and explain: "For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God," "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him, God has revealed to us through the Spirit," "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God" (1 Cor 2:9-12)?

Such is the Holy Spirit which the Father poured out on Pentecost in accordance with the holy promise, to acquaint us with what no heart of man conceived, to initi-

ate us into the mystery of the Father with his Son, and to impart to us the fatherly love in recompense of the obedience shown by the Son toward the Father on the cross and his sufferings even unto death, then to bestow on us all the blessings of the secrets of the fellowship between the Father and the Son, just as the Son, through his ascension in the body of our humanity could seat us with him in heaven at the right hand of the Father. For as Christ once seated humanity in his person at the right hand of the Father through his ascension and his own sitting at the right hand of the Father, so did He intercede with the Father that He might send the Holy Spirit on Pentecost to perfect for good and all man's fellowship with the Father at the level of children.

St. Paul reveals to us the essential relationship between Christ's ascension and his sitting at the right of the Father, and the completion of the filling of humanity with the Holy Spirit for entry into the very fellowship completed by Christ in heaven. "He ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph 4:10). The words "that he might" show that Christ's ascension was the beginning, the main and perpetual cause for perfecting the filling of humanity in fellowship with God. This is also elucidated by the verse quoted above: "Entered as a forerunner on our behalf" (Heb 6:2).

Conclusion*

Therefore my beloved, I could not write to you about ascension without writing about Pentecost. The connection between them is intimate and essential in the economy of salvation which Christ is still fulfilling by his session as the Mediator at the right hand of the Majesty on high!

Therefore, I bring also your attention to our blessed share in Christ sitting on high, in order not to cease from looking at him through a heart responding to the call of love; for 'our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior' (Phil. 3:20)...When we keep looking above us to where the Sacrifice is, the Father's heart moves towards us to kindle his Holy Spirit in us, in order to finish his work in us to the fullness of the humanity of Christ who sits in his fatherly bosom.

*This was not a part of the original sermon, but was added to it when it was published in Arabic. We translate it here from the two-volume work by Father Matta El-Meskeen, *'The Holy Spirit'* (Monastery of St. Macarius Press, Wadi Natrun, Egypt, 1981).

SOURCES: A REVIEW ARTICLE

John Watson

The Roots of Christian Mysticism: Text and Commentary

By Olivier Clement (Translated by Theodore Berkeley OCSO and revised by Jeremy Hummerstone). New City, London 1993 pp. 380. Sterling Fourteen pounds ninety-five pence. ISBN 0 904287 440.

Reviewing books is a hazardous business, often inviting the writer to assume an omniscience and ubiquity which can hardly be justified. Book reviews, I was taught, should be objective and written as far as possible without actual reference to the reviewer. I have generally kept to that rule over my years of writing in this journal, but now, as you see, I have abandoned the principle of reserve, and the personal pronoun will occur everywhere. The book under review has made a visceral impression upon the reviewer which few books make.

For three decades, colleagues and enquirers have often asked me the question, ‘Which single volume can you recommend to enable me to enter the world of Orthodoxy?’ My answer has always been the same: ‘“The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church” by Vladimir Lossky’ (English translation 1957). That book offered, and offers, an exceptionally helpful combination of spirituality and Orthodox dogmatic tradition. It is irresistible. Lossky produced a work which understood the problems of secularism and the rise of modern thought. Lossky’s book was ‘ecumenical,’ recognizing that the cleavage between East and West dates only from the middle of the eleventh century, so that all that is prior to this date constitutes a common and indivisible treasure for both parts of divided Christianity. “The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church” placed the reader firmly in a sacred Tradition which the author, a Russian Orthodox Christian, experienced from the inside. Lossky wrote about an experience of knowing God through the Theology of the Orthodox Christian Church. I find it difficult, even today, to exaggerate the importance of that book.

I have not changed my mind about Lossky but I am at the moment recommending the work of Olivier Clément, one of Vladimir Lossky’s pupils, as an alter-

native to the older master. The book I now advocate is 'The Roots of Christian Mysticism.' If I am not mistaken, this is a composition of great importance. As far as I know, there is nothing else even remotely like it in English. The publication first appeared in French ten years ago with the title 'Sources.' Titles are important. The French title is to be preferred to the long and misleading English title. This is a volume of sources. It is a compendium of patristic theology. This is 'theology' as the Fathers themselves understood it: theology as a discipline leading into the mystical contemplation of the Divine Mystery through prayer. I was constantly reminded of some words in the *Philokalia* attributed to Evagrius of Pontus (born c. 345): "If you are a theologian, you will pray truly. And if you pray truly, you are a theologian." These words indicate the ethos of the book under review. The English editor gives Clément's composition the subtitle 'Text and Commentary' but 'Texts' is more accurate, and that is what the French has. Clément has woven his generally delightful running-commentary around a carefully selected collection of passages from the Fathers of the undivided Church.

The reviewer does not have the competence to comment upon the quality of the translation. Certainly, the book reads so easily in English that the reader forgets that it is a translation. The translator is a Trappist priest-monk, Fr. Theodore Berkeley. He deserves our gratitude.

There are so many good things to say about this book that I will get my one serious complaint out of the way here: I have had three copies of this book, one a review copy, another a gift for a friend and the third which I had already purchased before the review copy arrived. All of them are lying around in bits and pieces. The glue does not hold and there is no stitching or, if there is, it does not help these three miserable copies. I do like the cover illustration of *The Resurrection* by Arcabas from the Church of St. Hugues of Chartreuse. It is eloquent and meditative, traditional and modern; illustrative of the contents.

Before examining some aspects of the text, it must be noted that this book is entirely contemporary: it could have been written in no time but our own and its range of reference reveals a mind at home with seminal thinkers of this century. It is a great pity that such an important book has no index, but a short list of some artists and writers who are cited by Clément, and whose names return readily to the reviewer's mind, will give some notion of the catholic mind at work here: Teilhard de Chardin, Vincent Van Gogh, Albert Camus, Dumitru Staniloae, John Henry Newman, Rilke, Scriabin, Simone Weil, Graham Greene, the Mahatma Gandhi and Thomas Merton. Dostoyevsky is quoted to good effect at several points. Auschwitz, Hiroshima and the Gulag Archipelago do not escape the passing searchlight of the author's intelligence.

Olivier Clément teaches at the Institute of St. Sergius in Paris and is a member of the Ecumenical Institute founded by L'Institut Catholique. On the evidence of this book alone, he is probably the foremost European Orthodox lay theologian. We benefit from the fact that he was converted from atheism to Christian Orthodoxy. In general, his world is not parochial or bigoted, but he knows clearly from where and to where he is leading us. Of all the books I have read which might be described as 'Orthodox' this is the most revolutionary and that is because it is the most theological, authentic and traditional. Clément's style is often striking even startling, when he again and again juxtaposes some secular insight or experience with an important citation from the Fathers. So, for example, he recommends a little spiritual exercise: "by means of the humblest of sensations - of breathing, of rejoicing under the blue sky, of touching a stone, or the bark of a tree, of gazing, as Claudel or Heidegger would say, at the majesty of a tree - I try to reach the transcendence of a thing. The object is visible and at the same time invisible; I must seek its inner self, let myself be led by it." This is Clément's way towards an excerpt from Clément of Alexandria:

"We may gain some inkling of what God is if we attempt by means of every sensation to reach the reality of each creature, not giving up until we are alive to what transcends it..."

I admit that this book has seen me through many sermons to students, monks, nuns and parishes since I first read it over a year ago. It addresses the modern reader in his place and in his time. With apparent ease and felicity, Clément makes the Fathers our contemporaries.

The Preface reminds us, at the outset, that Christianity is in the first place an oriental and mystical religion. The failure to understand this has led to a departure from the Church of some of its most thoughtful children: "Whose fault is it that so many have to resort to Tao or Zen in order to rediscover truths which are actually part of the Christian heritage right from the beginning?" We are perhaps reminded of Fr. Seraphim Rose (cf. CCR Vol. 14, No. 4, Winter 1993, pp. 119-120) another pilgrim to Orthodoxy from the eclectic world of modern mystical searchers after truth. I have the impression that Olivier Clément has a profound understanding of Eastern religion. He has visited Japan and this has left its mark upon him. It may be that this appreciation of the allurements of Eastern religion deepens his exegesis and enables him to find a pathway to the heart of patristic Christianity. Fr. Seraphim had a similar programme himself but in my opinion failed to articulate it positively.

It is, of course, true that an Orthodox Christian response to Eastern or modern modes of life and thought must at some point be negative. There is an unavoidable confrontation between Clément's 'sources' and the nihilism of our time. Some of

the 'Fathers' called to give evidence for Christian existence, and against meaninglessness and emptiness, were martyrs; others were monks in isolated mountains, lonely deserts and abandoned caves. It is a central conviction of Orthodoxy that the greatest and seminal minds of the Church were illuminated in those days by the light of the Spirit. Their proclamation of the Incarnation was comprehensive and thus became part of the permanent, normative framework of reference for all Christians. This is certainly an Orthodox perception, but Clément is surely right when he says that his book is intended "not so much to popularize its subject as to make it known in the first place." In allowing the chief witnesses of the undivided Church to speak for themselves, to make audible the voice of the Sacred Tradition, from which all the Churches spring, Clément is recalling Orthodox as much as Western Christians to the real 'sources' of Christian Theology and Prayer. The book has something of the character of certain forms of catechism, so that it will take the searcher and catechumen further towards the heart of Mystery whilst all enduring believers will find it a great deal of sustenance for their Christian reflection and existence.

The central text is divided into three parts. The clear and helpful divisions of the three parts into chapters with subheadings are a substitute for an index. *The first part*, entitled "*Understanding the Mystery*," is an ecumenical exposition of the mystery of the Trinity, and of the Incarnation. The purpose of the Incarnation of the Logos "is to establish full communion between God and humanity." Clément's phrases are often memorable: *of the resurrection*, "the world is breached by an enclave of non-death"; *of the crucifixion*, "the cross is truly the tree of life, the axis of the world brought back into line and giving a new stability to creation"; and *the work of Christ* was "to bring alive and deify the depths of human nature, of the universe, of being." We are presented with a moving Jewish-Christian text of the second century which provides a poetic gloss on the 'kenotic' Christology of Philipians. In the beautiful words of *The Odes of Solomon*:

"His love for me brought low his greatness.
He made himself like me so that I might receive him.
He made himself like me so that I might be clothed in him.
I had no fear when I saw him,
for he is mercy for me.
He took my nature so that I might understand Him,
my face so that I should not turn away from Him."

The 'kenosis' of the Son, Clément remarks, "reveals the mystery of God who is Love."

The second part, "Initiation for Warfare," is about the Church, the Scriptures, the Sacraments and the ascetic life. It becomes obvious that this is not a soothing, sentimental book: "The purpose of asceticism is to divest oneself of surplus weight, of spiritual fat: (Olivier Clément). "Spiritual fat is the obtuseness with which evil cloaks the intelligence" (Evagrius of Pontus). The comment on 'the three giants; of forgetfulness, spiritual insensitivity and ignorance is even less comforting: "We forget that God exists, that we can receive him at every moment: we ignore our neighbors; we lose the capacity for wonder, and we end by living like sleep-walkers." To take images from a source outside religious discourse, Clément's ascetic theology is both prophylactic and emetic. Perhaps the Churches of God have come too far for this ancient, patristic message to be anything but the latter. There are two sides to the Church, "on the one hand, its sacramental depth, the centre of which is the Eucharist, by which it (the Church) is the mystery of the Risen Christ, and the vehicle of the resurrection; and on the other hand, its human side, where people exercise their freedom in laziness or misbehaviour or rebellion."

Clément's twenty-three pages on the Church (Ecclesia) as a place for rebirth are urgent and essential reading. They are also the least balanced part of the book. Clément tells us that the reunion 'in depth' of all Christians today largely depends on the ability of the Church of Rome "to recover her vocation to exercise the kenosis of charity and service in the service of the sister Churches." This is disingenuous in the extreme. It is not untypical of the author. In 1984 he told *'Le Nouvel Observateur'* that he feared the danger of the continuing 'spiritual dictatorship' in modern Roman Catholicism. In fact, as we all know, Orthodoxy is also hypnotised by the power of ecclesial appearance over patristic Christian reality. Some patriarchs are treated with a veneration which makes Roman attitudes to John Paul the Second seem extremely modest. Orthodoxy, Chalcedonian or Oriental, has little to teach Rome about 'kenosis.' Ecclesial fundamentalism, power structures and institutional terrorism are common to all churches. For example, on the one hand, not all converts in the Antiochian Orthodox Mission, canonically received into Orthodoxy, have been embraced by their fellow Orthodox; and, on the other hand, ecclesiastical cosmetics are elsewhere considered to be adequate criteria for the granting of the label 'Orthodox,' as recent events in the Coptic Orthodox Church have shown. It is a tragedy of our times that the astringent Orthodoxy of Olivier Clément exists largely on paper: if it were otherwise there would be a home for legions of Christians who are essentially Orthodox but who believe that the 'Fathers' too would recognize that disillusion is not a reason to become Orthodox. To quote Clément in another connection: "The bitter rind is the letter that kills and that has to be rejected." Clément is, of course, well aware of the problem: "The Bride of Christ, the Church, in its human, all too human aspect, can be unfaithful to him. But he never ceases to give himself to her."

The third part of the book 'Approaches to Contemplation,' which is about a hundred pages long, explores the life of prayer with many references to the Desert Fathers, Isaac the Syrian, John Climacus and various others. Virtually every page calls out for quotation. There is a compelling presentation of *Deification*, the doctrine usually summed up in the celebrated formula: 'God became man in order that man might become God.' In these pages there is nothing less than an eloquent, evangelical invitation to become saints, in the New Testament sense, and saints, says Clément, "are seeds of resurrection." Only they "can steer the blind sufferings of history towards resurrection."

In what is arguably the finest chapter in the book, entitled "*The Difficult Love*," Clément writes movingly about our tragic sense of finiteness in which the other person is always the enemy because we need him to be so. The true miracle of life is the recovery of love, but the price of that recovery is indicated by Clément's approving quotation of Pascal: 'Christ will be in agony until the end of the world.' To love humanity is in the last resort to be ready to renounce one's own salvation. 'The difficult love' constantly calls for action in the world. The radical nature of this commitment is conveyed in an unforgettable passage from St. Gregory Nazianzen:

"Human beings have accumulated in their coffers gold and silver, clothes more sumptuous than useful, diamonds and other such objects that are evidence of war and tyranny; then a foolish arrogance hardens their hearts; for their brothers in distress no pity. What utter blindness!

Be like gods for the poor, imitating God's mercy. Humanity has nothing so much in common with God as the ability to do good....

You who are Christ's servants....help Christ, feed Christ, clothe Christ, welcome Christ, honor Christ..."

The volume ends with a series of appendices totalling nearly another hundred pages of text. The first appendix contains a series of biographical outlines, each with a bibliography and some references to passages cited in the main text. These useful commentaries are followed by three detached theological notes on Arianism, Early monasticism and Monophysitism. The first two are unexceptional. The final article is extremely harsh. If Clément has understood Monophysitism then he has not understood how careful one ought to be in discussing it in the light of the possible reunion of the Oriental Orthodox with the Orthodox of Chalcedonian tradition. Of course, there are dangers in Coptic spirituality which give some authority to his outburst: "Monophysitism is irresponsible, quietistic, almost magical, interested only in transfiguration, and that immediately. History is done away with or disqual-

ified." But this is seriously to overstate the case. It is a warning to the Oriental Orthodox when such a distinguished representative of mainstream Orthodoxy shows no awareness of the years invested in dialogue on this very issue. In defense of Clément it must be said that equally extreme statements can often be heard from well-known Copts. Oriental Orthodox representatives at meetings for dialogue are no longer of the calibre of Pope Shenouda or Dr. George Bebawi.

The two rather negative and uncomprehending pages on Monophysitism are outweighed by the rest of the volume. Although no one reviewer could possibly indicate the full richness of this book, I hope that enough has been said to testify that this is a simply wonderful work, the kind of book that changes our way of seeing things, the type of publication that redirects our footsteps. I expect to read and re-read this book until I die.

The overruling theme of this work is the resurrection. It is viewed as the fulcrum of human history. Resurrection begins here and now. Resurrection is life in its fullness. It is able to absorb, reverse and pass beyond death. Clément reminds us of Boris Pasternak's great twentieth-century novel, "Doctor Zhivago." The hero of that novel replies to the question, 'Are there things in the world that claim our fidelity?' His response is, 'Very few. We ought, I think, to be faithful to immortality, which is another name, a richer name, for life. We should be faithful to immortality, faithful to Christ.' This insight is the novelist's echo of the Easter Liturgy in both the Byzantine and Coptic Rites:

*"Christ is risen from the dead,
Trampling down death by death,
And upon those in the tombs bestowing life."*

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RESURGENCE OF THE PATRISTIC TEACHING ON SALVATION: A HISTORICAL SURVEY

Rodolph Yanney, M.D.

Christians throughout the centuries have confessed the Lord Jesus as Saviour, but what does this really mean? In both the Old and New Testaments, God is the Saviour; salvation is a result of his saving act (Ex. 3:8, 5:23; & 12:27; Ps. 44:3,4; Is 43:11, 60:16, 61:10; Hab. 3:13 & 18; Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:47, 68 & 2:11; Heb. 3:16, 18; 2 Pet 1:1). This has been an essential teaching of Christianity since the very beginning. Christians quoted the biblical verses and data without raising the theological question of how does God save us.

Salvation Teaching in the West through the Centuries.

Till the middle of the twentieth century the teaching on salvation in all churches, East and West, whether Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant, was dominated by the Western thinking which looked at salvation from its legal or judicial aspect. Although this view appeared as early as Tertullian in the third century, it only became an elaborate system in the 12th century.

Scholasticism

In his treatise, 'Why did God become man, St. Anselm of Canterbury, the first scholastic theologian, established the doctrine of *satisfaction*, the recompense that Christ paid to God because his honor had been violated.¹ This theory was the climax in the western thinking which was mainly preoccupied with the problem of sinful humanity.² Christ was seen as a substitute for humanity; his death on the Cross was the basis if not the sole act of salvation. As an atoning sacrifice, the

1. John Wesley later changed the same theory by saying that Christ died to satisfy God's wrath. (cf. Rom. 5:9)
2. Bebawi GH: *St. Athanasius the Apostolic in Confrontation with Unorthodox Tradition* (in Arabic), Cairo: 1985: 21, 38-42.

death of Christ was a vicarious satisfaction to the Father for the sins of all humanity. He has paid to the Father the ransom for mankind (cf. Matt. 20:28, Mark 10:45; 1 Tim 2:6), and our sins were forgiven (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19). When Christ cried on the Cross, 'It is finished,' it meant (according to this theory) that the debt has been paid and salvation had been won and accomplished once and for all (cf. Heb. 9:12 & 10:14).

The idea of satisfaction locked all subsequent generations of theologians around the Crucifixion, ignoring other aspects of the incarnation and ignoring any role for the Holy Spirit. Once salvation was finished on the Cross, any teaching about the Church Sacraments, the eucharistic Sacrifice or the role of the individual to accomplish his salvation (Phil. 2:12) has become meaningless.

Council of Trent

In trying to find a role for the Sacraments and for good works, the 16th century Council of Trent said that '*Justification* is not a bare remission of sins, but also *sanctification* and renewal of the inner man through the voluntary reception of grace and of gifts.' Here we have the role of the Sacraments and of the works. Sanctification is preserved by obeying the commandments and by good works which also increase it. In case sanctification is lost, and it can be lost by *mortal* sin, it can be regained by the Sacrament of Penance.³

In this Council, the Roman Catholic Church officially accepted the doctrine of 'merit for good works.'

The Protestant Reaction

The Protestants reacted by introducing the idea of salvation by faith alone, faith without work and without the need for the Church Sacraments. In their teaching about salvation, they made a distinction between two biblical terms, *justification* and *sanctification*. For them, justification, which is a forensic act, is the work of Grace alone. Its means or condition is faith (cf. John 3:14 -16; Rom. 3:22-28; Gal. 3:11; 1 Pet. 1:9) which also rests upon the pure Grace of God and is therefore his gift (Eph. 2:8). The object of this faith is Jesus. (Rom. 5:17, 1 Pet. 2:4). Neither baptism nor good works have any role in Justification.³ Good works are the fruit and sign of salvation. On the other hand, sanctification (leading a holy life) is also the work of Grace alone. Sanctification is a result of salvation.⁴ In the Protestant teaching while justification occurs in one moment, sanctification is a prolonged process that continues till the time of death. This teaching can be illustrated by a

3. Faulkner JA, Murray J & Bromiley GW: *Justification*. In: *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*, Vol. 2; 1982: 1168-74.

4. Later, John Wesley taught that while justification is the work of Christ, sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit.

few quotes from the popular 19th century Commentary on Exodus by Charles Mackintosh (1820-1896):

The Lord Jesus Christ having shed His precious blood, as a perfect atonement for sin, has taken it into the presence of God, and sprinkled it there and God's testimony assures the believing sinner that everything is settled on his behalf...There must either be a sufficient ground for peace in the blood *alone*, or we can never have peace. To mix up our estimate with it, is to upset the entire fabric of Christianity, just as effectually as if we were to conduct the sinner to the foot of Mount Sinai, and put him under a covenant of works. Either Christ's atoning sacrifice is sufficient or it is not. If it is sufficient, why those doubts and fears?...Every one who doubts his full and everlasting forgiveness, denies, so far as he is concerned, the completeness of the sacrifice of Christ...

It is the blood of Christ who gives peace, imparts perfect justification divine righteousness, purges the conscience, brings us into the holiest of all...and constitutes our title to all the joys, the dignities, and the glories of heaven. (See Rom. 3:24-26; 5:9; Eph. 2:13-18; Col. 1:20-22; Heb. 9:11; 10:19; 1 Peter 1:19; 2:24; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 7:14-17)...

The work of the Spirit is not the ground of peace; for, if it were, we could not have settled peace until Christ's coming, inasmuch as the work of the Spirit, in the Church, will not, properly speaking, be complete till then. He still carries on His work in the believer. "He maketh intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8). He labors to bring us up to the predestinated standard, namely, perfect conformity, in all things, to the image of "the Son." He is the sole Author of every right desire, every holy aspiration, every pure affection, every divine experience, every sound conviction; but, clearly, His work *in* us will not be complete until we have left this present scene and taken our place with Christ in the glory. Just as, in the case of Abraham's servant, his work was not complete, in the matter of Rebecca, until he had presented her to Issac.

Not so the work of Christ *for* us. That is absolutely and eternally complete. He could say, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4). And, again, "It is finished" (John 19:30)...(*Chapter 12*).

God is alone in redemption, and as for us, we have but to stand still, and see the salvation of God. The very fact of its being God's salvation proves that man has naught to do in it...Salvation is a thing wrought out and revealed by God, to be seen and enjoyed by us. It is not a thing made up partly of God's doing and partly of man's. Were it so, it could not be called *God's* salvation. (*Chapter 14*).⁵

5. *Notes on the Book of Exodus*, first published in 1881. Chapters 12 & 14.

Critique and Development of Medieval Theologies

In the Middle Ages, both Protestants and Catholics were arguing from a legal standpoint which they shared in common. But both were wrong since the idea of works or of merit is just as erroneous as the other extreme, according to which man has no part in the realization of his salvation, under the pretext that the latter is already accomplished for us by God and it is sufficient to learn this by an act of faith.⁶ The Protestants' teaching on salvation is limited to *what God has done for us*, rather than *what He does in us*.

The Reformers' doctrine of salvation by faith alone was not their invention. They followed in it the teaching of Western Church Fathers since Augustine. In his conflict with Pelagius, the Roman monk who taught that the freedom of the human will to do the good works was necessary for salvation, Augustine went to the extreme of denying any role for the human will, which, according to him, has been completely corrupted by sin.

St. Augustine (5th century), followed by St. Bernard (12th century) taught that salvation is the work of God alone. With the advent of scholasticism, Peter Lombard (died 1160) defined sanctifying grace as the indwelling of the Spirit in the souls of the righteous. Sanctifying grace is the entirely supernatural ground for justification.⁷ It should be observed that those western Fathers did not share the Protestants' separation of justification (forgiveness of sins) from sanctification (infusion of grace).

Where is the Orthodox Teaching?

The Orthodox Churches were not a part of these arguments between Protestants and Roman Catholics. However, the teaching of the scholastic theologians and some of the decisions of the Council of Trent have infiltrated into all Orthodox Churches through Catholic missionaries. It is also true that they were also affected by Protestant missions. But these teachings were always alien to the Orthodox Tradition they inherited from the Fathers. Theologians in most Orthodox Churches during the 20th century have called for freeing Orthodox Theology from '*the Western Captivity*' by returning to the Fathers, a call which has been also shared by many Catholic Theologians later in the century. The Catholic Church in Vatican II (1962-1965) has gone a further step by giving an official status to this return, and has since then implemented many practices from the early Church into her liturgy.

6. Sergius Bulgakov: *The Orthodox Church*, New York; 1935: 127.

7. Muller RA: *Sanctification*. In *ISBE*, Vol. 4; 1988:326.

Outline of the Patristic Teaching on Salvation:

The early Church Fathers looked at salvation from different aspects since it is a divine action which no human theory or human word can define or limit. From the biblical data they saw Christ as the New Adam, the Teacher, the Victor and the Victim.⁸ Whatever picture they used, they were careful to avoid philosophical routes and theories that have no biblical theological basis. Looking retrospectively, with the mistakes to which scholasticism has led the Christian world during the last millennium in mind, we can now stress the main points in the soteriology of the Fathers.

1. ***The Fathers do not limit salvation to the Crucifixion.*** It is the work of Christ before and after the Cross. In St. Athanasius' works we find that the life of Christ as a whole brings salvation, from his place in the bosom of the father, to his birth, baptism, Crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and second coming.⁹

2. ***The Fathers do not limit salvation to the work of Christ,*** it is also the work of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. Our salvation is the will of the heavenly Father which Christ came to fulfill (John 4:34, 5:30 & 6:38; Heb. 1:1, 3:1-6, 5:4, 8:2 & 10:5-7). The Father also has an active role in its fulfillment (Luke 23:46; Acts 3:26; Heb. 13:20). The work of the Son is to come down from heaven in order to return united with humanity, a role that is finished only when God becomes 'everything to every one' (1 Cor. 15:28). The Holy Spirit stays with the believer to sanctify him and help him grow in his relation to God till he is united with him. Sanctification is inseparable from salvation which can only be attained through the redemptive work of the Son. The Holy Spirit 'rested' on humanity only after the Ascension of Christ - 'for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you' (John 16:7). St. Athanasius, in his *Discourse Against the Arians* elaborates on this interaction between the roles of the Son and the Spirit saying, "The Logos took flesh so that we may receive the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who completes the redemptive work of Christ, and makes communion with the Divinity available to everyone."¹⁰

3. ***The Fathers saw in salvation more than its forensic aspect, the 'forgiveness of sins.'*** It is also a new creation, which they gave the term *theosis* (*deification*) that reaches the original goal of creation. Rather than focus on human guilt, they look forward to human potential, 'We are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be.' (1 John 3:3).¹⁰ St. Athanasius repeats in his writings that sin resulted in two major consequences: the change of human nature and the fall of man into the grasp of death. Salvation has to take care of both problems; mere repentance will not solve either. God has to share our humanity in order to change its nature, to recreate it, and to make it incorruptible.⁸

8. Yanney R: *Salvation in St. Athanasius' Incarnation of the Word*, CCR, 1990; 11:2:44-54.

9. Bebawi GH: *St. Athanasios: the Dynamics of Salvation. Sobornost*, 1986; 8:2:29.

10. Volz CA: *Faith and Practice in the Early Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg; 1983:78.

4. From another aspect, the Fathers addressed the question of *the actual appropriation of salvation to the individual*. How can every human person appropriate in his life the general salvation available to all through the action of God in the Incarnation? While St. Augustine, followed by the Reformers, insisted on salvation by Grace alone through faith, the Roman Catholics added the teaching about the Sacraments as means of Grace and the doctrine of merit for good works to the justification which is a gift of God (Rom. 3:24). Insisting upon the free gift of Grace and the free will of man who is an image of God, Fathers of the Orthodox East since the second century have spoken about synergy¹¹ (co-operation) between both.

St. Gregory the theologian says that if the incarnate Son of God is the agent of redemption of mankind in general, the Spirit is the agent of providing for us, individually, the means whereby we can appropriate that redemption. What Christ has accomplished universally, the Holy Spirit perfects particularly.¹² The work of the Spirit in the individual can be studied under two broad subjects. The Holy Spirit works first through the Sacraments, mainly Baptism (which includes Myron in the Patristic literature) and Eucharist. In Baptism we are recreated, and incorporated into the Body of Christ, the New Adam (1 Cor. 12:12, Ephes 4:3-5, Gal. 3:27, Rom. 6:3). In the Eucharist the believer participates in the salvation wrought by Christ through his incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming (1 Cor. 11:26). It is 'the marriage supper of the Lamb' in which the Church, including each of her members, unites with her heavenly Bridegroom. The second way in which the Holy Spirit works in the individual soul is by *synergy*, to guide her through her life in Christ. However, synergy does not mean that man becomes his own co-redeemer and co-saviour with Christ. His activity in the appropriation of his salvation is limited to offering his will, opening the door (Rev. 3:20), raising the stone. "The Orthodox Church rejects any doctrine of Grace that might seem to infringe upon man's freedom."¹³ Man as well as God contribute to the same work, although what God does is of immeasurably greater proportion. "The incorporation of man into Christ requires the co-operation of two unequal, but equally necessary forces: divine Grace and human will."¹⁴ Both are essential for the ascetic life, the mystic life of contemplation and the life of service.

The final aim of salvation is not to have man return to the state of Adam in paradise. Through the incarnation of Christ our new head is no more the first Adam but the Second (1 Cor. 15:22 & 45-50). Salvation of men is, then, the deification of human nature (*theosis*). This is a biblical concept (2 Peter 1:4) which was used fre-

11. In St. Paul's words, 'We are God's fellow workers (Greek *Synergoi*)' (1 Cor. 3:9).

12. This is a conclusion from his teaching which appears in detail in a study of his works. *The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus*, by D. F. Winslow (Cambridge, MA: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979. P. 129) This valuable study is still available at Mercer's University Press at a very modest price.

13. Ware T: *The Orthodox Church*. Pinguin Books; 1963: 226.

14. Lev Gillet: *Orthodox Spirituality*. London: S.P.C.K.; 1968:23.

quently by the early Church Fathers. St. Athanasius says concerning Christ, “For He was made man that we might be made God.”¹⁵ He defines *theosis* as the state of receiving the Father and becoming immortal as God. St. Gregory the Theologian describes it as a work of Grace in man that starts at baptism and consists in the gradual growth in his relation to God, coming closer to him, knowing him better, and getting progressively united to him.¹⁶

We can thus see salvation as a golden string that runs through the whole Scripture and unites it to the liturgical life of the Church and to our life in the world. Salvation became a reality in the Incarnation of our Lord. Its seed is implanted in each individual with Baptism where he receives the Gift of the Holy Spirit ‘who helps us in our weakness (Rom. 8:26). Our flesh receives the power of incorruption when it is nourished by the Lord’s Body and Blood in the Eucharist,¹⁷ awaiting for the day when He “will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to *save* those who are eagerly waiting for him.” (Heb. 9:28) This salvation and this Second Coming we already experience in the Holy Eucharist when we, the Church, together with the Spirit address the Son and the whole world, “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come’ And let him who hears says, ‘Come.’ And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.....Amen, *Maranatha* (Come, Lord) Jesus! (Rev. 22:17,20).”

15. Athanasius: *Incarnation of the Word*, 54:3.

16. Winslow: *Gregory of Nazianzus*, op. cit., See also Ware: *The Orthodox Church*, op. cit., p. 236-242; and Sergius Bulgakov, op. cit., p. 126, 127.

17. Irenaeus: *Against Heresies*, 4:18.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Monastic Letters of Saint Athanasius the Great

Translated with an introduction by Leslie W. Barnard, SLG Press, Fairacres, Oxford OX4 1TB. Oxford 1994. pp. XXx, 17. Price Sterling: £2.00. ISBN 0 7283 0138 5

Leslie W. Barnard was Senior Lecturer in Theology at the University of Leeds from 1968 to 1986. His chief area of study is fourth century patristic literature.

Barnard believes that Athanasius's contribution to the monastic life has been greatly undervalued because of the concentration upon his great theological works, the obvious historical importance of his stormy career as a religious leader, his experience of the Great Persecution of Diocletian (303-312) and the seventeen significant years of exile from his See. R.P.C. Hanson's monumental "The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God" exemplifies this tendency. There is no entry under 'monasticism' in Hanson's index.

The present volume contains six letters addressed to monks and reveal a loving spiritual director who is concerned with both the orthodoxy and the welfare of monks in equal measure. Barnard's presentation here is clear and correct. It is also beautiful to read. The permanent significance of this little book lies in its demonstration of Athanasius as a writer on Coptic monasticism, of wisdom, moderation and balance. Barnard's exceptional introductions to each letter are indispensable. His twenty page introductory essay includes a bibliography and footnotes.

The second letter is the longest and is addressed to Dracontius who rejected his episcopal office and the grace of episcopacy in favor of a quiet monastic existence. Athanasius suggests that monasticism and episcopacy can be complementary. Duty is involved: "Lay people expect you to bring them food." Asceticism is for all and is not confined to the monastic life. It is clear that this letter is of permanent value. Otto Meinardus has suggested that some young men in the twentieth century become monks solely to attain the episcopacy. Athanasius tells Dracontius, the reluctant bishop, that Jonah also fled: prophet and bishop have a responsibility before God. "The Lord knows our situation better than we do, and he knows to whom he is entrusting his Churches."

The first letter is also long and is addressed to Amoun, whom Athanasius calls 'father.' Amoun was a Coptic ascetic and spiritual director. He was evidently

responsible for some monks with a Manichaean cast of mind who espoused an extreme encratism. Athanasius says that there is no uncleanness in what is expelled from the body, even in the case of nocturnal emissions. God created the body: "Everything created by God is good and pure, for the Word of God has created nothing useless or unclean."

Letters three and four are addressed to monks. The first presupposes a degree of theological reflection in its exposition of the *'via negativa'* - a demonstration consistent with known Patristic tradition - and in its firm scriptural resistance to Arianism. These translations are of the Greek in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* Volumes 25-26 and we may recall that research has shown that these Coptic monks were often bilingual and well educated. The fourth letter contains the only known reference to Athanasius dictating his work and, in the heading, one of the earliest references to Athanasius as 'Archbishop of Alexandria.' The letter is a firm commendation of the solitary life in which the Coptic monks "preserve a pure and sincere faith."

The fifth and sixth letters are of marginal interest, the first alluding to historical events in 362/3 and the latter a moving Eulogy on the death of Theodore: "Let no one weep when he remembers him, but rather remember his life. For no one should grieve over one who has departed to the place where there is no grief."

This fascinating volume, which should be read by anyone claiming any serious interest in Athanasius, reveals a man of discretion, championing a moderate form of asceticism for all Christians and rejecting the excessive scrupulosity of the body-denying heresies. Thomas Merton expressed what Athanasius stood for when the twentieth century Trappist wrote:

"The monk searches not only his own heart: he plunges deep into the heart of that world of which he remains a part although he seems to have left it. In reality he abandons the world only in order to listen more intently to the voices that proceed from its inmost depth."

Sutton Valence School, Kent

John Watson

Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ: The Monasteries of Palestine

By John Binns. Oxford: Clarendon, 1994, pp. 276 + vi, cloth, \$55, ISBN 0-19-826465-8.

The temporal boundaries for this study of early palestinian monasticism are the accession of Macarius as Patriarch of Jerusalem in 314 and the publication of the *Life of Saint George of Choziba*. Macarius consecrated the church at Pharan, the first monastery in Palestine, and in 631 Haraclius restored the True Cross to Jerusalem; these events show how closely tied palestinian monasticism was to the ecclesiastical and political events of its time.

The subtitle is a bit constricting; *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ* should not be confused with Yizhar Hirschfeld's recent work, *The Judean Desert*

Monasteries in the Byzantine Period (Yale 1992); Binns' book is about the monasteries, but it also, importantly, covers much more. Binns divides the book into three sections: Sources, Environment, Themes; in doing so, he successfully integrates the history of palestinian monasticism into the large histories of Church and Empire.

The first section, Sources, focuses on Cyril of Scythopolis, whose *Lives of the Monks of Palestine* (ET: Cistercian, 1991) is our primary source of early byzantine monasticism in Palestine. Binns does a good job of showing how deeply involved Cyril was in the subject he was writing about, the interplay of biography, history, and sources. Binns' laudable intent, in analyzing Cyril and his sources, is "to glimpse the interior world of the monastic culture in which Cyril moved." Since so much of that interior world is now hidden from our view, Binns' efforts are especially praiseworthy.

Part II, Environment, emphasizes the importance of Jerusalem, "a city of monks," and how the judean monasteries were the "monastic suburbs" of Jerusalem: "the monk," Binns observes, "lived between Desert and City." This book and Robert L. Wilkens' *The Land Called Holy* (Yale, 1992; not cited by Binns) forcefully remind us of the physical and imaginative pull of the Holy Land in late antique Christianity.

In Part III, Themes, Binns addresses a wide variety of topics: the success of the Chalcedonian party, Origenism (although he doesn't cite Elizabeth Clark's *The Origenist Controversy* [Princeton, 1992]), miracles, and the great monks of judean desert monasticism, among other subjects.

I have only two complaints regarding this fine study, both minor, both editorial in nature: (1) the book has the odd tendency to translate quotations from German while keeping those from French in the original. Can one assume any longer a general knowledge of French? And I see no good reason, even in a scholarly book, for quoting Ammianus Marcellinus in Latin when the footnote gives the page number of the Loeb edition (p. 88). (2) There is a distressing number of typographical errors, especially in quotations from Greek. As one who has struggled -- even in this age of word processing -- to see Greek accurately into print, I can sympathize. But one expects better workmanship from Oxford, especially in a scholarly book.

Nevertheless, all students of early Christianity, monasticism, Church history, and early christian spirituality should be grateful for this work.

Bakersfield, California

Tim Vivian

Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity

By Susanna Elm, Oxford: Clarendon, 1994, pp. 444+ xvii, cloth, \$65, ISBN 0-19-8149204-4.

An impressive number of very good books on early monasticism have

appeared in the last five years (to name just a few books, in English): *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period* by Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The World in the Desert* by Douglas Burton-Christie, and *The Letters of Saint Antony* by Samuel Rubenson. To this list we can now gratefully add Susanna Elm's monograph, *Virgins of God*. This book, like the ones listed above, perhaps even more than those, will require us to reassess some of our commonly held beliefs about asceticism and monasticism in late antiquity.

Elm sets out to critique, no less, "the historiography of monasticism" which has been, to her mind, "overwhelmingly concerned with its founding figures and their normative writings." In other words, women, since they have been neither "founding figures" nor "normative," have been largely let out of the history. Someone here might think, mistakenly, that Elm has fallen victim to political correctness, but her concerns are larger than proclaiming a rightful role for female ascetics (though that is certainly a central and laudable part of her efforts): she wishes us to better understand what *happened* in the development of monasticism in the crucial fourth century; what forces were at work; what changes occurred, and why; who prevailed, and who (seemingly) disappeared from the record?

This is a large book, both intricate and sweeping; it divides into two parts: Asia Minor and Egypt. Elm does indeed pay close attention to the "founding figures," the Cappadocians, especially Saint Basil, and, in Egypt, Saints Athanasius, Pachomius, and Shenoute. But, importantly, she also brings to life other, more marginal (marginalized) figures, such as Eustathius of Sebaste, Saint Macrina, the Melitians, and the numerous widows and virgins of the fourth-century Church.

Although there were certainly differences between Asia Minor and Egypt, the similarities that Elm adduces are striking; the ascetic movement before Athanasius and the Cappadocians "originated primarily in urban centres on their direct vicinity, and was characterized by the symbiosis of men and women." Ascetic life in both Egypt and Asia Minor "was characterized by an extraordinary degree of variety and, consequently, fluidity." This variety and fluidity, Elm argues, along with the "symbiosis" between men and women, disappeared; or, one might more strongly assert, it was lost, or suppressed - and with it, the strong witness of female asceticism. This is not of merely antiquarian interest; Elm asks a very pertinent question for the Church at all times: "Are institutions used to exclude deviations" -- and "deviants"? How do institutions, "by definition designed for continuity, react and adapt themselves to the fluid, rapidly and constantly changing notions of 'heresy'?"

Virgins of God is -- dare I say it? -- an *exciting* book to read; it should be read by anyone interested in early Church history and the role of women in the early Church, and is especially pertinent for monastics. It belongs in every monastic library. It is scholarly, but the scholarship is sensible, and almost always fascinating. The book is also very well written, and that is a gift in itself.

Wide As God's Love: Commemorative Edition of the Fairacres Chronicle

Ed. by Jane Osborn and Sister Christine SLG. New City, London 1994 pp. 176 n.p. ISBN 0 904287 491.

The Sisters of the Love of God is a community of contemplative nuns at Fairacres, Oxford. It is not too much to say that the community is one of the glories of the Anglican Communion. This book is a commemorative edition for the silver jubilee of the Fairacres Chronicle which the SLG began to publish in 1967. The volume contains just a few of the finest pieces from a quarter of a century of excellence.

The Convent of the Incarnation at Fairacres is just one of the international network of religious houses throughout the world which has a special relationship with the Coptic Orthodox Monastery of St. Macarius in the Wadi El-Natroun. The teaching of Abouna Matta El Meskin is honored at Oxford.

The volume under review contains an excellent essay by a monk of the Egyptian monastery which, in only twelve pages, gives a masterly summary of the monastic revival led in St. Macarius by Abouna Matta. The account is full of good Theology and appreciates the monastic life as the best means, for the monks of St. Macarius, of realizing union with Christ in the new creation which gathers people of every nation and race, people and language into unity of heart and spirit.

Other contributions include exceptional pieces by Donald Allchin on Transfiguration in St. Seraphim of Sarov and St. Francis of Assisi, a study of the mystery of Love in Solzhenitsyn by Sister Edna Monica and an essay on Spiritual Reading by Sister Edmee.

Sutton Valence School, Kent

John Watson

Basil of Caesarea: The Transformation of the Classical Heritage

By Philip Rousseau, Berkeley; California: University of California Press, 1994. pp. xix + 412, n.p., ISBN 0-520-08238-9.

How many of the fathers (and mothers) of the early Church do we know as *people*, as we know, say, Thomas Merton or Dorothy Day, and not merely as holy caricatures, theological names, polemical casualties, or, worse, pale ghosts hovering behind list of fragmentary and lost works? Of the mothers, none. Not one. Of the fathers, only a few: Augustine, Jerome, Athanasius (perhaps). And Basil, thanks in part to his voluminous writings, especially the letters, and to the writings about him. Thanks now also to Philip Rousseau's fine new biography of Basil which offers the modern reader not just Basil the churchman or theologian or ascetic (although these are all here) but Basil the person, replete with eccentricities,

foibles, and failures.

Rousseau concentrates on Basil the individual rather than Basil vis-à-vis his fellow Cappadocians Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. He offers a close, sometimes painstaking, reading of Basil's chief works: the *Hexaemeron* (chapter IX), *De spiritu sancto* (ch. VII), the *Ascetic Writings* (ch. VI), and *Contra Eunomium* (ch. IV), as well as the *Letters*, not with the view of explicating Basil's theology but in order to offer us Basil *in his world*, as student, bishop, ascetic, friend ("a man dependent at all times on the affection of others, deeply hurt when they failed to match his expectations and demands, and frequently unaware of the pain he inflicted himself through indifference or conceit").

A central theme of *Basil of Caesarea*, one with which, as Rousseau notes, every chapter of the book is concerned, is "the interplay between individual and community," and thus this book should be of interest to all of us living in ecclesiastical community, whether in monasteries or parishes.

This is a scholarly book, with plentiful citations from the Greek (almost always translated or paraphrased); one should not come to it expecting "Classics Illustrated" or "Cliff Notes" patristics. It requires a knowledge of the period, a grasp of post-Nicene theology, and patience with close and steady argumentation (no sound bites here). *Basil of Caesarea* will, however, reward the dedicated reader. Rousseau has done a commendable job, as he did with Egyptian monasticism in *Pachomius*, of reminding us that monastic deserts and episcopal chairs were occupied by people, not hagiographical stock figures taken from central church casting; real people, in other words, a lot like us.

Bakersfield, CA

Tim Vivian

The Historic Coptic Churches of Catro

By Dr. Otto F.A. Meinardus. Philopatron Publishing House, Cairo, Egypt. 1994. 90 pages; 40 b/w plates.

There is now a complete up to date and very useful pocket size guide to "*The Historic Coptic Churches of Cairo*." Thanks to Dr. Otto Meinardus and the Philopatron Translation and Publishing House of Cairo, the guide is now available. This guide book gives a brief introduction about the Coptic Orthodox Church. It then presents the Coptic Churches of Cairo in five sections as follows: 1. The Churches within the Qasr ash-Sham; 2. The Churches in Old Cairo; 3. The Churches south of Old Cairo; 4. The Churches in Cairo; and 5. The Churches in the Suburbs of Cairo. There is also a Glossary and Bibliography.

This book covers the most familiar churches such as "The Church of the Holy Virgin" (*Al-Mu 'allaqa*) and the "*Mari Girgis*" but it goes on to include the various churches in Old Cairo such as the "Cloister of St. Mercurius" and the "Church of St. Shenute (*Anba Shenudah*)." It further includes "The Churches South of Old

Cairo” such as “The Church of the Holy Virgin ‘By Babylon of the Steps’” and the “Church of St. Theodore the Oriental.” “The Churches of Cairo” are covered very well including of course the “Cathedral of St. Mark at *Isbikiyah*” as well as the “Cathedral of St. Mark at *Abbassiya*” and “The Church of the Holy Virgin in *Zamalik*.” Finally, Meinardus covers the “Churches in the Suburbs of Cairo” such as “The Church of the Holy Virgin at *Zaitun*” which has become a pilgrimage site for many Egyptian Christians of all denominations since the Holy Virgin appeared over the domes of that Church for the first time on April 2, 1968. He introduces us to “The Cathedral of the Apparition of the Holy Virgin” at *Zaitun*. This is the Cathedral whose foundation stone was laid by Pope Shenoudah III soon after his 1971 enthronement.

The author presents full information about each church. In doing this he discusses the following points concerning each individual church: Location; Patron Saint; History; Description; Iconography; and Relics. In many instances a diagram or floor plan of the church is included.

This book is a fine publication with a full color cover, a text that is accurately written and carefully proof-read prior to being published. I would highly recommend it for everyone interested in the Coptic Churches of Cairo, especially for travelers and tourists. Likewise it will be of great interest to “armchair travelers.” The small size of the book makes it easy for travelers to take along with them when they visit the churches presented and enjoy a self-guided tour. We again are deeply indebted to Dr. Otto Meinardus for his painstaking detail and careful scholarship in giving us “*The Historic Coptic Churches of Cairo*.” It deserves a wide readership.

Christ Lutheran Church, Compton Rd., Cincinnati, Ohio

Rev. Lyle H. Rasch

Great Christian Thinkers

By Hans Kung (Translated by John Bowden). SCM Press, London 1994, pp. 235. Sterling: Nine pounds ninety-five pence. ISBN 0 334 02558 3.

John Bowden and the SCM Press have once again placed us in their debt with a translation that is easy to read, a volume that is a pleasure to handle and an invaluable academic text. The reviewer’s reading of Kung’s work goes back over three decades. He always stimulates and sends us off in new directions of enquiry.

Kung has selected seven key thinkers and provides first-class introductions to the theology, biography and historical weight of each: the seven range across the centuries from Origen to Karl Barth. Kung’s assessments are thoroughly trustworthy and nicely posed in the cautious historical reconstructions he attempts.

The student may be happy to find the presentation of key points in bold type. It is an aid to revision. Other readers, like the reviewer, may find it irritating. Kung’s reliance upon the incomprehensible “paradigm shifts” of the philosopher

Thomas Kuhn merely baffled this reader. Kung finds the philosophy enlightening when applied to the history of Theology, but many must find it totally confusing. The changes in type and the extensive references to “paradigm shifts” were the only problems presented by this volume.

At a reasonable price, the publishers are offering a book that amounts to an introduction to all Western Theology. From an Orthodox viewpoint, it can be said that few of the seven theologians presented by Kung “think with the Church.” This is not the Theology of Evagrius of Pontus, beginning and ending on its knees, but perhaps it will lead some readers there and, in any case, Kung has many perceptive insights. Kung has a grasp on development and change in theology which is rare. He is more often right than wrong.

Sutton Valence School, Kent

John Watson

Coptologia: An International Journal of Coptology and Egyptology, Volume XIV

Edited by F.M. Ishak, Ph.D. (P.O. Box 235, Don Mills Postal Station, Don Mills, Ontario, Canada, M3C 2S2), 1994. Pp. 143. \$8.50 (US), \$10 (Canada), \$12.00 (other countries), \$16 Libraries, plus postage.

The 1994 volume of *Coptologia* contains 13 papers by eminent scholars. Among the Coptic-Plaraonic studies there are articles on the ***Ancient Egyptian and Coptic language*** by Emile Maher Ishaq, ***iconography*** by Otto Meinardus, and ***Coptic Manuscripts*** by Labib Habachi. In Coptic theology we have a study on ***Tradition*** by Bishop Gregorius, and a review of Fr. Tadros Malaty’s book ***The Coptic Orthodox Church and the Dogma***. History papers deal with the Life of ***St. Mary of Egypt***, ***The White and the Red Monasteries***, ***The Copts in Cyprus and Rhodes***, and ***The Relation between the Egyptian and Ethiopian Churches***.

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