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- *COPTIC ORTHODOX INCULTURATION IN THE WEST*
- *SAINT ATHANASIUS' CHRISTOLOGY*



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

We have the privilege to introduce this issue by ***'Theological Issues of the Coptic Orthodox Inculturation in the West'***, one of the most serious and up-to-date studies of the religious and social status of the Copts in the Diaspora. The Author, the *Revd. Dr. Otto F. A. Meinardus*, is an internationally known Coptologist and Church historian who has worked closely with Egypt's Christians, both in Egypt and overseas during the last forty years. He considers the Coptic emigration during the second half of the twentieth century as undoubtedly the most significant demographic movement in the history of the Coptic Church, a movement which was precipitated by repressive political and economic measures against them. The comments of Dr. Meinardus need the careful study of those concerned about the future of the Copts in the Diaspora.

The Body As Instrument: A reevaluation of Athanasius' Logos-Sarx Christology, was one of the papers delivered on June 1, 1996 at the *North American Patristic Society Conference* which was held in the Loyola University of Chicago. The author, *Dr. Khaled Anatolios*, refutes the theory of some contemporary patristic scholars that accuses Athanasius of denying the full humanity of Christ. Dr. Anatolios has an MA in theology at the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto, and a Ph.D. at Boston College with a dissertation on St. Athanasius. He is an Assistant Professor of Historical Theology and Patristics at Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, MA. He is a member of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church.

Among the important new books reviewed in this issue, the reader should not miss the scholarly reviews by Mary Forman for Samuel Rubenson's book *Letters of St. Antony*; by Douglas Burton-Christie for Tim Vivian's book on *Antony of Choziba*; and by Tim Vivian for W. H. C. Frend's book *The Archaeology of Early Christianity*.

Editor

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THEOLOGICAL ISSUES OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX INCULTURATION IN WESTERN SOCIETY

Otto F. A. Meinardus, Ph.D.

This study is a modest attempt to point out some of the most striking issues that the Orthodox Copts face in Western society. The problems under discussion do not concern the Coptic tourist or casual visitor in the Western world, but rather those Orthodox Copts who have emigrated and selected a Western country to be their permanent home. On account of the the complexity of the problems I have limited my presentation to six aspects: The concept of inculturation, the Coptic identity in the emigration by name, tattoo, language and cultural belongingness, the ambivalence of Coptic aesthetics in the search for identity, the adherence to Coptic Orthodox doctrine as a means to preserve the communal identity, the Copts and their assessment of theological adiaphora, those matters of “lesser importance,” and some thoughts about the maintenance of the Coptic identity in the emigration.

The Concept of Inculturation

The theological usage of the concept of inculturation pertains to the relationship of the message of the Gospel and the institution of the respective church to the culture of a certain people. In view of the inherent tensions between the institutions of the church and the structures of society, both sides are naturally faced with a variety of reciprocal attitudes ranging from a sense of indifference to more or less acceptance and outright hostility.

Prototypical for the ecclesiastical process of inculturation is the biblical report of the Apostles’ Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15). The messianic Jews of the Jerusalem congregation continued in their traditional Jewish practices and demanded that “it was needful to circumcise them (the Gentiles) and to command them to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). On the other hand, the Roman and Hellenistic new converts to the Christian faith considered the demand for circumcision as a sacrilegious act of self-mutilation, utterly unacceptable to them. Finally it was agreed that the Christian Faith could be practiced within the cultural environment of the believers without adhering to the Mosaic prescriptions of the law as demand-

ed by the “Mother Church”. “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves ye shall do well. Fare ye well” (Acts 15:28, 29; KJV).

The Coptic Identity in the Emigration by Name, Tatoo, Language and Cultural Belongingness

As a minority the Copts are in many ways unique. At certain periods in the early Middle Ages every Egyptian Christian was compelled by the Islamic authorities to identify himself as a believer in Jesus Christ. He was obliged to wear, hanging from his neck, a heavy wooden cross. Today, the Copts carry simpler labels to assure their identity. In Egypt more than in any other Middle Eastern country the name of a person betrays his religious and ethnic identity. Coptic names are inclusive and in addition to the ancient Pharaonic names, the Copts have borrowed and transformed Greek, Latin, Hebrew-Aramaic, Ethiopian, Arabic, Syrian, French and English names. Following the introduction of Christianity in the Nile Valley, Egyptians who had accepted the Christian Faith selected Christian names, i.e., names of Biblical personages, Church Fathers, saints, monks and hermits. Thus many Hebrew-Aramaic, Greek and Latin names were introduced into Egypt. At the same time, many pre-Christian names were preserved, because their bearers, who were martyrs, saints or monks, had been canonized. This is especially true of many Pharaonic names, i.e., Amon, Hor, Sarabamûn, etc. It is amazing, how many names of the Pharaonic period have survived in the personal names of the Copts. During the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine eras, Greek and Latin names were widely adopted by the Copts. After the Arab Conquest, Coptic and Greek names were often translated into Arabic, e.g., Christodoulus into “Abd al-Masîh. During the French and particularly during the British occupation, numerous Copts gave their children Western names, e.g., Cromer, Kitchener, Henry, William, etc. While in Egypt there is a trend towards religiously neutral names, in the emigration, Copts largely follow the name-giving customs of their new environment.¹

With a certain sense of pride many Copts still point to the cross tattooed on the inside of their right wrist. In Western society—for a certain group of people—the usage of tattoos has become a rather widespread fashionable craze, although completely unrelated to any religious significance. On the other hand, for the Copts the tattoo of the cross or any other Christian symbol represents a visible and permanent testimony to their faith in Jesus Christ. Since the custom of the religious tattoo is dependent upon the cultural environment, it is a problem for the Copts in the emigration. It is a question whether Copts in the emigration are prepared to continue

1 Meinardus, O., “Marks of Identification: Tattoo and Name” in *Christian Egypt Faith and Life*. Cairo 1970, 1-14.

this age-old Christian custom. It is much more likely that Copts visiting Egypt will attend one or the other *mîlid* in honor of the Holy Virgin or one of the popular saints. At this occasion they may then resort to a tattooer. Usually he sets up his booth near the church and offers a variety of cross-designs and pictures of the Holy Virgin or one of the equestrian saints. Nowadays the tattoos are applied with an electric needle.

The problem of the Coptic identity according to their language has been an issue ever since the early Middle Ages. There are five Coptic dialects: Sa'îdic, Bohairic, Fayyûmic, Akhmîmic and Subakhmîmic. Of these dialects only Bohairic is in use as the liturgical language of the Coptic Church. Though Sa'îdic was the general Coptic language until the 9th century, the Bohairic replaced the Sa'îdic, partly on account of ecclesiastical influence. Already in the 12th century, Pope Gabriel II (1131) admonished the priests to explain the Lord's Prayer in the vernacular Arabic. In the 13th and 14th century Coptic liturgical books begin to have an Arabic translation side by side with the Coptic. Yet, in Upper Egypt, Coptic seems to have prevailed much longer. Al-Maqrizî (15th cent.) implies that Coptic was still spoken in the monasteries around Asyût. It is generally believed that Coptic ceased to be a spoken language in the 17th century.²

In Egypt Arabic is the accepted means of communication. It is true, in some urban upper class circles ladies used to converse in French, the men in English. In the emigration, however, the Copts are forced to employ the language of their selected country. While the first generation of emigrants may still continue to speak Arabic, their children and grandchildren have adopted the vocabulary of their national environment. In the United States and in Australia (Sydney, Los Angeles and New York), Coptic schools are being established "in order to bring up the new generation of our children in a pure and academic atmosphere, away from any undesirable influences."³ In these institutions, classes in Coptic language, Coptic history and Coptic doctrine are being offered. Regarding the Coptic language, the Coptic emigrants are in a considerably less favorable situation than the Italians, Greeks, Armenians or Spaniards whose language has remained a living vehicle of communication.

Ethnically the Copts feel themselves as the true Egyptians, as the sons and daughters of the pharaohs. Just as the Assyrian Christians in Mesopotamia consider themselves as heirs of Hammurabi and Assur-bani-pal, and the Lebanese Maronites believe that they are the successors of Hiram and Ithobal, so the Copts point with pride to their ancestry beginning with Menes, the founder of the First Dynasty in 2900 B.C.⁴

2 Meinardus, O., *Christian Egypt Ancient and Modern*. Cairo 1965, 107.

3 Shenouda III, "The Policy of the Coptic Church in the Countries of the Emigration," *El Keraza*, IV, 6, 1712/1995, 12, 13.

4 "The genuine Egyptians of today are the Christian Copts who alone trace direct descent from the ancient Egyptians," Shenouda Hanna, *Who are the Copts?*, Cairo 1967, 3.

Whereas from a Biblical point of view the Copts, the Mizraim, were the grandchildren of Noah through Ham (Gen. 10:6), ethnically speaking they are North Africans. The use of the Arabic language identifies them with the pan-Arab world extending from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf. Moreover, they practice certain customs and share numerous values, tastes and habits with the Islamic majority. In times of national crisis situations, the Copts have demonstrated their loyalty to the political aspirations of the government.

Regarding their political opinions, the Copts in the emigration are naturally inclined to reflect the political and social atmosphere of their national environment, the same pertains to the Copts in their homeland.

As Arabic-speaking Christians, the Copts share their faith in Jesus Christ and in many religious values with the other arabophone Christians of the Middle East, be they Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant. Their active participation in the Middle East Council of Churches confirms this ecumenical endeavor.

The Ambivalence of Coptic Aesthetics in the Search for Identity

The use of icons and devotional prints in Coptic churches, homes and offices is certainly not limited to Egypt. In fact, Coptic churches and homes in the emigration are easily recognized by the typically Coptic devotional pictures. The Coptic publishing houses, for example Mahaba Bookshop in Shubra, provide a wide variety of Christian devotional material and artwork which is obtainable in the kiosks of most Coptic churches.⁵

Ever since the middle of the fifties of this century a new school of Coptic iconographic art emerged at the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies in Abbasiyah. Under the leadership of Professor Isaac Fanûs, a student of Léonide Ouspensky in Paris, a neo-Coptic style of Christian art was created, altogether different from the traditional Western and Byzantine art. He and his students embellished many parish and monastic churches in Egypt, in Europe, the United States and in Australia. Today, the foremost Coptic iconographers are Mansur Farag, Yusuf Girgis Ayad, Kamilia Shawky, Bidor Latif, Youssef Nassif and the Reverend Fathers Maksimus and Bishoi of Dair Anba Antûnûs, Yusâb and Samwîl of Dair as-Surîân, Elias of Dair al-Barâmûs and Arsanus of Dair Anbâ Bûlâ. It has been pointed out that while Italian images of the Virgin's garments are portrayed in bright, light blue, Coptic art prefers to show her in brown and indigo, since these colours were used by the ancient Coptic painters. Coptic figures are heavily outlined and give an almost severe impression, typically Coptic faces are round with large eyes and thick eyebrows.

In the Coptic churches and homes in the emigration, this neo-Coptic art has been widely accepted, in spite of the fact that traditional Catholic and Byzantine

5 Copts use religious pictures not only at home, but in wallets, in books, glued as small stickers to all kinds of objects.

objects of art have been everywhere readily available. It is of interest, that in the emigration neo-Coptic icons have shown miraculous manifestations. Thus for example, Professor Fayek Ishaq reported about the apparition of Christ on Friday evening, September 23, 1988 in the Coptic Orthodox Church of St. Mark, Agincourt, Ontario. Five Coptic maidens witnessed that the icon of "Christ seated in His Throne of Glory" by Bidor Latif and Youssef Nassif "was gradually transfigured and bathed in a dazzling flood of divine light. the whole scene looked three dimensional and the Lord's right hand moved upwards and downwards . . ." ⁶ In May and again in August 1990 two neo-Coptic icons by Yussef Bishara (1979) in the Coptic Orthodox Church of St. Mark, Seven Hills, Cleveland, Ohio, issued oil. On May 15th, 20th, 22nd and June 4th and again on August 24th and 26th, the icon of the Holy Virgin with Christchild showed stains of oil on the neck. In case of the icon of Jesus Christ the oil also appeared on the neck of Christ. Anbâ Tadros, Bishop of Port Said, who happened to be visiting Cleveland testified to the miraculous issuance of oil. ⁷ These are noteworthy cases of inculturation. Faith in miraculous icons of Christ or the Holy Virgin is deeply entrenched in the Coptic consciousness. In the days of Patriarch Quzmân (851-855) the icons in the monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn began to weep because of the unjust walis and kadis. The same occurred in the days of Patriarch Christodoulus (1047-1077), though this time because of the sins of the Christians! This belief accompanied the emigrants to their new environment thereby testifying to their ancient religious and cultural heritage in the "New World."

An interesting case of inculturation occurred on Monday, November 11, 1991 when the 12-year-old Isaac Ayoub of Houston, Texas, suffering from leukemia, saw that the eyes of Jesus in the famous Sallman "Head of Christ" began moving and shedding an oily liquid like tears. On the same day, Fr. Ishaq Soliman, the Coptic priest of St. Mark's Coptic Church in Houston, testified to the miracles. On the following day, Dr. Atef Rizkalla, the family physician, examined the youth and certified that there were no traces of leukemia. Sallman's "Head of Christ" was exhibited in the Coptic Church and more than 50,000 people visited the church. Two Coptic bishops, Anbâ Tadros of Port Said and Anbâ Yuhanna of Cairo verified the story. In this case, it was neither a Coptic icon nor a neo-Coptic print that served as a vehicle of the healing grace of God. The famous "Head of Christ" by the Protestant artist Warner E. Sallman (1892-1968) is by far the most popular Jesus picture in the United States with more than 500 million prints. ⁸

While the modern Coptic artists have diligently decorated numerous churches in Egypt and offered their art work in form of prints at the various church-kiosks,

6 Ishaq, F. M., "The Miraculous Appearance of the Lord," *Coptologia* 10, 1989, 15, 16.

7 "Les Icônes Miraculeuses: un exemple récent," *Le Monde Copte* 19, 1991, 107-110.

8 "Weeping Jesus goes on display in Bellaire," *The Houston Post*, Jan. 7, 1992. "Jesus wept," *Houston Chronicle*, Jan. 11, 1992. Cf. also Morgan David, "Sallmans' Head of Christ, the history of an image," *Christian Century*, Oct. 7, 1992, 868-870.

authentic studies have revealed that “the neo-Coptic images are not particularly popular. Their style creates a barrier . . . the stylized figures and postures, the lack of facial expression, the economy of details can be found artificial . . . there is a tendency to apprehend the popular images as being more beautiful than the neo-Coptic ones While the large group of users prefer the European and Byzantinesque images, artists of the neo-Coptic style regard many of the popularly preferred images as banal, gaudy and cheap.⁹ These testimonies about the devotional art of the Copts reflects a rather interesting ambiguity as to the aesthetic norms of the Egyptian Christians. I have shown that the popular iconography of the mariophanies of Zeitûn in spring 1968 and of Ard Babadeblu, Shubra, in spring 1986 relied exclusively on a 19th century Roman Catholic model, namely on the “Immaculata of the miraculous Medallion”. In July, November and December 1830 the Holy Virgin appeared to Cath rine Labour . Her vision of the Holy Virgin determined the Coptic iconography of the mariophanies of Cairo.¹⁰

Today, the two most popular devotional prints which are distributed by the Copts from Alexandria to Asw n are the “Mater Dolorosa” by the Florentine master Carlo Dolci (1616-1686) and Guido Reni’s “Ecce Homo” (1575-1642). Copies of these medieval Italian masterpieces are found in many Coptic churches and monasteries. Carlo Dolci’s “Mater Dolorosa” has even become a Coptic cult image. According to Coptic tradition, on May 17th 1989, a poster of the “Mater Dolorosa” (85 x 55 cm) in the new Church of St. George in the village of W dfi ‘n-Natr n showed signs of “tears of blood”. Traces of this flow from her right eye over her cheek have remained visible on the picture.¹¹ In fact, the assertion of this “miracle” demonstrates a significant socio-political indication! Only a few years after the glorious mariophanies of Zeit n (1968) and Ard Babadeblu (1986) with the image of the Immaculata, Coptic aesthetic taste reflected the new domestic situation for them and turned to a Holy Virgin of suffering and pain. Even the high relief decorating the episcopal throne in the new Cathedral of the Holy Virgin of Zeit n in Sharia Tumambey shows Carlo Dolci’s “Mater Dolorosa”. And whatever has been said about the message of the “Mater Dolorosa” is also applicable to Guido Reni’s “Ecce Homo” or “Man of Sorrows”!¹²

Modern Coptic aesthetics in Egypt and in the emigration are dependent upon several factors. As we have seen the socio-political climate in Egypt determines unwillingly the spiritual needs of the Christian minority. These are subsequently reflected in the collective aesthetics of the people. This also explains their attach-

9 Finnestad, Ragnhild Bjerre, “Images as Messengers of Coptic Identity,” in *Dance, Music, Art and Religion Symposium*, Abo, Finland, August 16/18, 1994, Stockholm, 101.

10 Meinardus, O., “Von der Mariophanie zum Gnadenbild. Zur ikonographischen Entwicklung der Gnadenbilder von Zeit n und Ard Babadeblu,” *Ostkirchliche Studien* 39, 4, 1990, 289-299.

11 Meinardus, O., “Carlo Dolci’s ‘Mater Dolorosa’ in der koptischen Mariologie,” *Orientalia Suecana* 41/42, 1992/1993, 155-165.

12 Meinardus, O., “Guido Reni’s ‘Ecce Homo’ in der koptischen Fr mmigkeit,” *KEMET* 4, 2, 1995, 43/44.

ment to the traditional pictures, be they Western or Byzantine. The situation in the emigration is altogether different. Here, the neo-Coptic art serves as a meaningful historical and existential bridge to the Coptic heritage on the banks of the Nile. As icons, sacred images contain the presence of the holy person portrayed, irrespective of the origin of the artist!

The Adherence to Coptic Doctrine as Means to Preserve the Communal Identity

From a religious point of view the Orthodox Copts are oriental Christians like the Ethiopians, Syrians (Jacobites), Indians (Jacobites) and Armenians. They adhere to the famous christological formula of St. Cyril of Alexandria "*Mia physis tou Theou Lógou sesarkoméne*". In October 1991 more than 120 Roman Catholic and non-Chalcedonian (oriental) theologians had gathered at Dair Anbâ Bishoî to clarify and to end the historic and popular polemic which for centuries had mistakenly accused the Copts for denying the human nature of Jesus Christ. Agreement was reached that the christological mystery was expressed in different words and in different traditions, though adhering to the same fundamental faith. From May 4-10, 1973 Pope Shenûdah III accompanied by eight Egyptian and two Ethiopian metropolitans visited the Vatican where they were graciously received by Pope Paul VI. At this occasion the two pontiffs signed the document of agreement pertaining to the meaning of the christological formula of St. Cyril of Alexandria, the "*mia physis*". "Jesus Christ is perfect God with respect to His Divinity, perfect Man with respect to His Humanity. In Him His Divinity is united with His Humanity in a real perfect union without mingling, without separation and without division. In Him are preserved all the properties of His Divinity and all the properties of His Humanity together in a real perfect indivisible Union".

Although the christological differences which separated the Copts from the Western Christians have been solved, there still remain a number of theological differences. The Copts do not accept the supremacy and infallibility of the Roman pontiff in matters of faith and morals. They reject the teachings of purgatory, the *Immaculata*, the *filioque*, and the procession of the Holy Spirit also from the Son Jesus Christ.

Theologically the Copts are Biblical fundamentalists adhering to the doctrine of the verbal infallibility of the Holy Scriptures. They accept the teachings of the first three ecumenical councils of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431) and those of the pre-Chalcedonian Fathers, Sts. Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Ephraem Syrus, Cyprian and the three Cappadocian Fathers. They also accept the teachings of the Egyptian and Syrian post-Chalcedonian Fathers, like Severus of Antioch, James of Sarûg and the pontifical Alexandrian-Antiochene synodica of the 9th to the 11th century. The Copts also hold to the canons of the seven 4th and 5th century synods of Ancrya, Neocaesarea, Gangra, Antioch, Laodicea, Sardica and Carthage. For their liturgical

and disciplinary life they follow the 31 canons of Gabriel ibn Turaik (1131/1145) and the complete Canon Law by Cyril III ibn Laqlaq (1235/1243). With respect to their strict adherence to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, the Copts show certain affinities to some of the conservative evangelical churches, although the Coptic emphasis upon the Holy Virgin, the saints and the tradition in general as well as their hierarchical structure finds them more closely related to some of the Byzantine churches. In view of the plurality of churches in the countries of the emigration it is imperative that the Coptic Church provides regular seminars for the clergy and the laity. These should be under the auspices of the “Office of Emigration Affairs” at the pontifical residence in Abbasiya.

The Copts and Their Assessment of Theological Adiaphora

In theory, all the canons of the ecumenical councils and synods are accepted as binding, except those prescribing ecclesiastical penalties which under the present circumstances cannot be enforced. At the same time, some of the canons were written in response to particular historical situations, and, therefore, are not applicable for all times. An exception are, of course, the canons of Cyril II which form the basis of the Personal Status Laws.

The following few excerpts from the canons show that at least some of them must be regarded nowadays as adiaphora. According to the 95 canons of the Synod of Neocaesarea (350) priests should not be ordained until they have reached the age of thirty. The canons of Laodicea (343) prohibit that Orthodox marry non-Orthodox or heretics, that members of the clergy should enter taverns and that beds should be set up in churches (probably for the sake of incubation). Moreover, they prohibit that men and women bathe together. The 137 canons of Carthage (419) prohibit usury (interest-taking) by priests and laymen. Those who communicate with the excommunicated are ipso facto excommunicated. The last canons also prohibit the practice of rebaptism!

Whereas the 34 canons of Cyril II demand that circumcision of boys be practiced prior to baptism, the Copts in the emigration—especially in Europe where this custom is quite uncommon—consider circumcision as an adiaphoron. Some of the Coptic fasting practices fall into the category of the adiaphora. There are some Copts who fast during the stipulated periods from sunrise to sunset, others only until 3 p.m., while others again consider fasting as abstinence from animal products, with the exception of fish. Most Copts adhere to the Lenten-Fast (55 days) and the Fast of the Holy Virgin (15 days), although in both cases not necessarily for the full period. For the Copts in the emigration the Christmas-Fast of 43 days is extremely difficult because of the opulent Advent entertainments and festivities in Western society.

For the first time the Orthodox Copts live in a religiously pluralistic society which demands a profound sense of understanding also of the democratic values of the individual. This pertains, for example, to the celebration of the Sacrament of

Holy Matrimony of an Orthodox Copt with a non-orthodox Coptic Christian, a Protestant or a Roman Catholic, a situation which undoubtedly occurs quite often. According to present orthodox teaching and practice the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony according to the Coptic rite can only be celebrated if both partners are Orthodox Copts. This means that the non-orthodox Coptic Christian must be baptized and anointed before receiving the Holy Eucharist and subsequently be married.¹³ In some communities a possible compromise has been reached by anointing the non-orthodox Coptic Christian instead of rebaptism, which is difficult to administer because of lack of suitable adult-baptisteries. At any rate, the Anabaptist practice of the Orthodox Copts has caused serious problems with both the Catholic and Protestant churches in the emigration. After all, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism performed with water and in the name of the Holy Trinity used to be considered as the one ecumenical means of grace.

On account of the new situation in Western society, theological and disciplinary prescriptions (not canons!) have been set forth by Coptic churchmen in the emigration. The theological threats of 4th and 5th century Arianism, Nestorianism or Donatism are no longer the pressing problem, but rather such movements as the Rosicrucians, Freemasons, Scientology, Baghwan, Jehovah Witnesses, Children of God, etc. Association with them should be avoided. Orthodox Copts also warn about such social and moral evils as there are gambling, rock music, fortune telling astrology, smoking and dancing.¹⁴ In an open society such ecclesiastical demands must be regarded as *adiaphora*.

About the Maintenance of the Coptic Identity in the Emigration

The Coptic emigration during the second half of the 20th century is undoubtedly the most significant demographic movement in the history of the Coptic Church. The exodus began already in the late fifties, then in the sixties, the seventies, eighties and nineties on account of repressive political and economic measures. Already in 1963 Edward Wakin wrote: "The attachment of the Copts to their Egyptian homeland is dramatized in the small-scale diaspora of the young, the educated and the qualified who have begun to leave Egypt. They leave with reluctance, talking not of greener pastures elsewhere but of closed doors at home. Feeling deprived of the traditional Coptic right to market their skills at a reasonably high price, they turn to the last resort of departure and dispersion. Yet the trappings of the Coptic identity are not suited to long journeys. Its symbols and ceremonies need the church and clergy which are left behind, while departure breaks the closed circle of community life".¹⁵ Wakin describes then the situation of the emigrant Copt in the late fifties: "Copts, already Westernized, become invisible in a Western coun-

13 Gregorius, "The Recognition of the Sacraments of other Churches by the Coptic Orthodox Church," *Coptologia* XI, 1990, 57 f.

14 *St. George Youth Magazine*, NSW, Australia, vols. 11 ff 1992 ff.

15 Wakin, Edward, *A Lonely Minority. The Modern Story of Egypt's Copts*. New York 1963, 160.

try. In another Middle East country, they blend into the mosaic of Arab Christian minorities. If the Copt continues to attend church abroad, he will go to a Greek Orthodox Church or an Eastern Catholic Church. Sometimes he chooses a Protestant church".¹⁶

Wakin's description of the situation of the Copts in the emigration predates the establishment of the first Coptic congregation in the United States in 1968.¹⁷ In the meantime more than thirty years have passed by and numerous Coptic churches have been founded to respond to the needs of the emigrant Copts. Professor Fayek Ishak has provided a very honest evaluation of the relationship of the emigrant Copt to his church: "It is regrettable that quite a number of Coptic families living abroad have left their church and joined non-Orthodox denominations. Others have given up the church altogether after the irritation and distraction caused by the stubborn accommodation of the elderly generation of churchgoers. No doubt we are responsible for bringing up groups of atheists who know nothing about the heritage of their ancestors and the spiritual heights they reached! No doubt, too, if the process of alienation from the church is accelerated, Orthodox congregations will be eliminated and will deplorably be diluted in the vast melting pot!"¹⁸

In the meantime, the Coptic Church has responded to the fact that hundred thousands of her faithful people have left the banks of the Nile. Hundreds of Coptic churches have been founded in the Western world with the intent to provide a spiritual home for the emigrants. The Coptic Church has clearly decided to preserve at least her theological identity in the emigration even if the ethnic identity may somehow evaporate over the years. In this respect Egyptians are different from emigrant Jews and Armenians. Their records show a very "pure" ethnic identity in spite of—or because of—severe persecution and rejection over centuries. Even in the 19th century many upper-class Egyptians have married non-Egyptians, the Muslims Turkish women, the Copts Europeans.

To retain a Coptic theological identity requires an unusually competent, well-trained and highly motivated clergy. It is a real question whether the Coptic Church facing nowadays global responsibilities is in the position to muster the required manpower of parish priests, youth-workers, administrators, scholars and bishops for this task. There is no doubt that the academic curricula of the Theological Schools in Egypt offer more than adequate information and guidance for the local requirements, be they urban or rural. However, it is an altogether different matter for the Coptic parish clergy overseas! Just as Egyptian engineers, scientists, businessmen, etc. have chosen to attend graduate schools to equip themselves for a suc-

16 *Ibid.*

17 In 1970 Fr. Ghobrial Amin was sent to Jersey City, Fr. Bishoi Kamel came to Los Angeles in 1969.

18 Ishak, F. M., "Immigrant Copts Striking Roots in the Lands of the Diaspora," *Coptologia X*, 1989, 33.

cessful and enterprising life in the emigration, Coptic priests as parish-leaders require the kind of technical “know-how” that Theological Graduate Schools provide. There, Coptic priests will be confronted with the whole spectrum of Western theology, sociology, pastoral psychology, church administration and ecumenics. This is the kind of “survival training” nowadays necessary for “managing” the complexities of modern parish leadership. In fact, it is hoped that either Coptic Church in Egypt or the local parishes will invest in the priests—provided they stay for any length of time—for meaningful graduate studies. In addition to his role in the local ecumenical church council, the Coptic priest should participate in talk-shows and attend the various local benevolent society meetings. In fact, as an “exotic” clergyman he will attract many people who are eager to learn about the roots of the Christian faith, in a society in which the study of “roots” happens to be “envogue”. The chances for the Coptic Church in the emigration are limitless, and by the grace of God, He will send the right kind of leaders into his vineyard.

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“THE BODY AS INSTRUMENT”: A REEVALUATION OF ATHANASIUS’ LOGOS-SARX CHRISTOLOGY¹

Khaled Anatolios, Ph.D.

Ever since Aloys Grillmeier’s magisterial work on Patristic christology, Athanasius has been typically regarded as a classic exponent of the Alexandrian “Logos-sarx” christology. While we may readily acknowledge our indebtedness to the comprehensive and brilliant scholarship of Grillmeier, the very weight of his enormous influence calls for a careful and critical scrutiny of his interpretations. In particular, his distinction between “Logos-sarx” and “Logos-anthropos” christologies, and his analysis of these, constitute an interpretive paradigm which has become influential to the point of pre-determining people’s reading of the texts. However, I would like to suggest in this paper that Grillmeier’s interpretation of Athanasius’s christology, and in particular his analysis of the Alexandrian’s notion of Christ’s body as an instrument, sometimes distort rather than illuminate Athanasius’s texts. I will begin by presenting Grillmeier’s interpretation and the reasons why I think it is problematic. Then, I will present my own interpretation of the notion of Christ’s body as an instrument in Athanasius; and, finally, I will try to show how a correct interpretation of Athanasius’s “Logos-sarx” framework can shed some light on his lack of acknowledgement of Christ’s human soul.

For Grillmeier, Athanasius’s motif of the body of Christ as “an instrument” is central to the “Logos-sarx” model which he sees as constitutive of Athanasius’s christology. According to Grillmeier, this model is both christological and cosmological. Beginning with the cosmological perspective, he points out that Athanasius’s Logos is a transcendent being who is nevertheless actively involved in the world, as its “life-giving principle.”¹ Because of its transcendence, Grillmeier concludes that this principle should not be identified with the Stoic world-soul.² He then goes on to say that Athanasius has taken over the Stoic concept of the world as

1 Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, tr. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 311.

2 *Ibid*

body, as **σῶμα**, and “has admitted the Logos, which unlike the Stoa he understands as personal, as it were in the place of the soul.”³ So, from a cosmological perspective, Grillmeier apparently understands Athanasius as operating out of a model which is constituted by: 1) a transcendent, personal Logos which should not be identified with the Stoic world-soul; 2) a conception of the universe as a body, which should be identified with the Stoic conception; and 3) (what is most crucial to his argument) the positing of the Logos in the place of the Stoic world-soul.

Moving from what he considers to be Athanasius's cosmological “Logos-sarx” framework, Grillmeier's next crucial move is to assert a strict correlation between this cosmological model and Athanasius's christology: “These basic ideas of Logos and world, soul and body, and especially the affinity between Logos and soul, must be kept in mind if we are able to form a true verdict on the relationship between the Logos and the humanity of Christ.”⁴ This verdict turns out to be that, in Athanasius's Christ, the Logos takes the place of the human soul: “Athanasius's view might be put in these words: where the original itself appears with all its power, the copy, with its secondary and derived power, must at least surrender its function, even if it does not give place altogether.”⁵ In this way, Grillmeier understands that the Logos becomes the “life-giving” principle in relation to the body of Christ, just as He is the life-giving principle in relation to the body of the cosmos. Departing from this observation, Grillmeier then seeks to determine whether besides being the “active principle” in Jesus Christ, the Logos is also “the unique [active] principle.” He concludes that this is in fact the case: “There can be no doubt that the Logos is not merely the personal subject of Christ's bodily life, but also the real, physical source of all the action of his life.”⁶ Invoking the inference that Athanasius's Logos supplants the human soul, Grillmeier insists repeatedly that the Logos is the only motivating principle, and the only physical subject of all Christ's life. On the other hand, the relation of Jesus's body to the Logos is summed up for Grillmeier in the motif of the body as instrument, **ὄργανον**. He says, “In the word **ὄργανον**, Athanasius sums up the whole significance of the Logos-sarx relationship. Here his deep insight into the conjunction of the divine Word with the flesh becomes particularly clear.”⁷ According to Grillmeier, Athanasius understands this conjunction such that “the flesh becomes an instrument moved directly and physically by the Logos.”⁸ Thus, Athanasius's Logos-sarx christology can be described in terms of the Logos as the unique motivating principle and active agent, the body as moved instrument, and the relation between the motivating Logos and the moved

3 *Ibid*

4 *Ibid*

5 *Ibid*

6 *Ibid*, 312

7 *Ibid*, 317

8 *Ibid*

body as direct, physical, and immediate — thus precluding the human soul as intermediate motivating principle.

Now, before we go on to examine Athanasius's notion of the body as instrument in its native contact, I think it would be useful to point out some of the methodological problems embodied in Grillmeier's interpretation. Essentially, these problems amount to forcing Athanasius's statements into a framework that is foreign to them, with the result that these statements are interpreted in the wrong key, and by a hermeneutic that tends to be self-referential. To begin with, while we can grant that Athanasius understands the Logos as a life-giving principle in relation to the world, and is willing to speak of the world as a body, it is problematic to say that Athanasius "has admitted the Logos...in the place of the [Stoic world-] soul."⁹ Grillmeier himself concedes that Athanasius's Logos is to be differentiated from the Stoic world-soul. Exactly what, then, is the intelligible value of saying that Athanasius's Logos "takes the place of" the Stoic world-soul? After all, by the same logic, any understanding of the Logos as active principle in relation to the world would posit the Logos "in the place" of the Stoic world-soul. But if Athanasius's framework is different from the Stoics, why make the difference into a mere substitution within the Stoic paradigm? The reason seems to be not logical but rhetorical; saying that Athanasius's Logos "takes the place" of the Stoic world-soul fulfills Grillmeier's own analogy, the other side of which is that the Logos "takes the place" of Christ's human soul. The problem of course is that the first substitution is simply created by Grillmeier by inserting Athanasius's own framework within that of the Stoics.

The second problem has to do with Grillmeier's concern to determine whether the Logos is the "only" motivating principle in Christ. Granted that Athanasius typically characterizes the relation between the Logos and the human body of Christ in terms of an active-passive framework, what does Grillmeier have in mind when he pursues the question of whether the Logos is the only active principle in Christ? Of course, what he has in mind is the question of whether there is in Athanasius's Christ a human active principle—which is to say, a human soul. But in order to apply this question of Christ's human soul to Athanasius's general framework of the Creator as active and creation as passive, Grillmeier is forced to invoke a distinction that is quite foreign to Athanasius. This is the scholastic distinction between natural and supernatural agency. Not surprisingly, Athanasius is found wanting in a clear appreciation of this distinction: "There is not always a clear distinction between the mediation of natural and supernatural life—as little as, say, in Origen, in the relationship between the natural and supernatural view of the Logos."¹⁰ It needs to be said, first of all, that not only is there not always a clear dis-

9 *Ibid.*, 311

10 *Ibid.*, 312

tion but, rather, there is always not a clear distinction between the mediation of natural and supernatural life in Athanasius. And, secondly, in failing to make this Western scholastic distinction, Athanasius has more Patristic company than just Origen. Now it is quite legitimate nevertheless to say that Athanasius does not make a very useful distinction, but it is much more problematic to interpret the absence of a distinction as a positive assertion of one of the alternatives within that same distinction. Grillmeier's mistake in this regard results in statements and emphases that would have been quite unintelligible to Athanasius, and the intrinsic intelligibility of which is also questionable. What does it mean, after all, to insist that the Logos is the "physical source," the "physical subject," and the "physical principle" of all Christ's actions, as Grillmeier does, in various places? Certainly, Athanasius would not have spoken of the Logos as "physical" in any way. What, then, is the value of these statements? The answer has to be that they rhetorically underscore Grillmeier's concern that Athanasius does not distinguish between natural and supernatural mediation, a legitimate observation which Grillmeier then extends illegitimately into the interpretation that the natural mediation of life is positively ascribed by Athanasius to the Logos.

But, ultimately, perhaps, it is not so much this or that point in Grillmeier's interpretation that misses the mark, but his general orientation. Grillmeier's interpretive framework is that of what could be called an analytical christology; he is concerned with the internal composition or structure of the God-man, which is to say—the relation of the divine and human elements within the personal unity of Jesus Christ. It goes without saying that this is a distinctly post-Chalcedonian perspective. More specifically, Grillmeier's focus is on the human soul of Christ as a vital mediating link within the internal structure of Christ, mediating between the supernatural and natural agency of the Word-made-flesh. So he reviews the development of christological doctrine with a view to finding this link or pointing out its absence. Departing from this analytical framework, with its predilection for discerning the mode of connection (*die Verbindung*) between constitution parts of a whole, Grillmeier confronts Athanasius's conception of Christ's body as "instrument" with the question of *how* this instrument is connected to the Logos as agent. He then answers that it is connected to the Logos "directly and physically," which is to say without the benefit of the natural mediating agency of a human soul. It is within this interpretive framework that Grillmeier considers the notion of the body as instrument in Athanasius to be one that sums up "the whole significance of the Logos-sarx relationship."

The problem, however, is that this whole approach is foreign to Athanasius. His "christology" is simply not analytical in that way. When Athanasius speaks of the body as instrument, for example, he is simply not concerned with the question of how and by what mode it is connected to the agency of the Word—much less with the question of whether there is a natural as well as a supernatural agency

within that connection. Athanasius's framework for such a statement is not the analytical one of the relation between the constituent parts of Christ, but the more directly soteriological perspective of how the being of the Word Incarnate represents a renewed relation between God and the world. It is in fact the relation between God and the world embodied in Christ, rather than the relation between the divinity and humanity within the unity of Christ that is most central to Athanasius's thinking. Our task now is to clarify the significance of Athanasius's notion of the body as instrument within this native context.

The primary layer of this context, I suggest, is Athanasius's doctrine of God, and specifically his emphasis on the convergence of divine transcendence and immanence. A typical way of conceiving this convergence, for Athanasius, is to emphasize that God is invisible by nature but makes himself known through his works: **ἐκ γὰρ τῶν ἔργων ὁ δημιουργὸς γινώσκειται.**¹¹ This leads us to a second layer of context, which is Athanasius's cosmology, whereby the whole cosmos is conceived as providing a manifestation of God, and thus as being a medium for divine self-revelation. It is in this sense of being a medium for divine self-disclosure, on the one side, and a vehicle for human access to knowledge of God, on the other, that the whole universe, for Athanasius, is an instrument, **ὄργανον**. Therefore, the concept of "instrument" is primarily an epistemological one for Athanasius. This is a crucial point to make because when we hear Athanasius speak of Christ's body as an instrument, we naturally tend to understand the notion of "instrument" within a practically utilitarian perspective, as some kind of tool, extrinsic and separate from the agent, and used by the agent to effect some act.¹² But these are not the connotations evoked by Athanasius's texts. Rather, by "instrument", Athanasius means something very much like a manifestation or "epiphany", **ἐπιφάνεια**, which is actually a term he uses in parallel fashion to speak of the Word's coming in a body.

The notion of "instrument" is thus primarily used by Athanasius with reference to the category of revelation; it refers to the revelation of God *ad extra*, rather than to the internal constitution of the person of Christ. He says, for example, in *DI* 42: "The Word used as instrument for his revelation (**πρὸς φανέρωσιν ὡς ὄργανον**) the body in which he was."¹³ It is within this epistemological context that the correlation is made by Athanasius between the cosmos and the body of Christ: both are instruments precisely of divine self-disclosure and human knowledge of God. So he argues, in *DI* 41: "If the part (i.e., the body) is not suitable to be in his instru-

11 *Contra Gentes* (CG) 7; 35

12 Thus, for R.P.C. Hanson, Athanasius's conception of Christ's body as "instrument" indicates a "space-suit Christology," Christ having the same extrinsic relation to his humanity as an astronaut to his space-suit. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 447-448.

13 Athanasius. *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*. Edited and translated by R. W. Thompson (Oxford Early Christian Texts) Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971; 238-239.

ment wherewith to make known his divinity (ὄργανον αὐτοῦ.. πρὸς τὴν τῆς θεότητος γνῶσιν) it would be most unfitting that he should be known through the whole universe."¹⁴ The positive version of this argument is given a little later, in *DI* 45: "So then it was suitable that the Word of God took a body and used a human instrument, in order to give life to the body and in order that, just as he is known in creation through his works, so also he might act in a man and reveal himself everywhere, without leaving anything deprived of his divinity and knowledge."¹⁵

From these examples, we can see that when Athanasius speaks of the body as instrument, he does not have in mind the mode of connection between the Logos and the body, which is Grillmeier's overriding perspective. He is not thinking of the directness and immediacy, not to mention physicality, by which the Logos moves the body. The whole context is epistemological, the reference is to knowledge rather than locomotion and animation. Speaking of the body as instrument, for Athanasius, means speaking of Christ's body as the privileged medium for the self-disclosure of the invisible God in human form. It also means speaking of Christ's body as the locus of a renewed manifestation of the convergence between divine transcendence and immanence, where the transcendent God is revealed precisely through the works of Christ's body: "ὁ ἄσώματος ὢν τὴν φύσιν καὶ δι' ἡμᾶς σώματι φανείς."¹⁶

The motif of the "works" of the body is closely tied to that of the body as instrument. Again, it is important to stress that the context is epistemological: "he was known by his body through his works".¹⁷ This epistemological function of the "works of the body" is also soteriological for Athanasius; it is in fact one of the two main reasons given in response to the question of why the Word became incarnate: "For in two ways our Saviour had compassion through the incarnation: he both rid us of death and renewed us; and also, although he is invisible and indiscernible, yet by his works he revealed and made himself known to be the Son of God and the Word of the Father, leader and king of the universe."¹⁸ We see here how the dialectic between God and creation—and, specifically, between the transcendent invisible nature of God and the concrete visible materiality of creation—is a central paradigm in Athanasius's presentation of the person of Christ. This is a paradigm that focuses spontaneously on the extremes brought together in Christ, rather than on the mode of connection between these extremes. And it is precisely in terms of this focus on extremes that we can explain the intrinsic logic of Athanasius's Logos-sarx framework. In line with his Origenian heritage, Athanasius understands the body as located on the extreme human side of the divine-human relation. *Nous* and *psyche* are conceived more as mediating categories, or organs of spiritual *ekstasis*,

14 Thompson, 236-237

15 Thompson, 246-247

16 *De Incarnatione* (DI) 38

17 *DI* 17; Thompson, 175

18 *DI* 16; Thompson, 172-173

whereas the body is conceived as “what is closer” to ourselves.¹⁹ Thus, the Logos-sarx framework, understood within its proper epistemological context, refers to the extremity of divine self-disclosure whereby the revelation of God condescends to the nethermost realm of the sensible: “For since human reason had descended to sensible things, the Word submitted to being revealed through a body, in order that he might bring humanity to himself as a human being and turn their senses to himself, and that henceforth, although they saw him as a human being, he might persuade them through the works he did that he was not merely a human but God, and the Word and Wisdom of the true God.”²⁰

We can see from this passage how the body can be a more crucial category than the soul within the epistemological and dialectical framework of Athanasius. That is because the soul itself has sunk to the level of the sensible, and could only be raised up if the Word also condescended to make himself knowable on that level. The bodiliness of the incarnate Word thus represents the extreme terminus of the Word’s revelatory descent: “For the Word spread himself everywhere, above and below and in the depth and in the breadth: above, in creation; below, in the incarnation; in the depth, in hell; in breadth, in the world.”²¹ It is the body of Christ and its works which renders the invisible God visible and knowable; the notion of Christ’s human soul does not immediately lend itself to this framework in Athanasius.

So, as far as Christ’s human soul is concerned, we are bound after all to concur with Grillmeier that it was not a theological factor in Athanasius’s presentation of Christ. But we have tried to show that the search for the human soul of Christ does not justify forcing Athanasius’s christology into a mold for which it is simply not fitted. By interpreting Athanasius’s notion of Christ’s body as instrument within its native epistemological reference rather than imposing on it an analytical framework, we not only avoid such hermeneutical conundrums as speaking of a “physical Logos” in Athanasius, but we may actually be able to better understand why it was the body of Christ rather than his human soul that was the primary focus in Athanasius’s christology.

19 Cf. *CG* 3

20 *DI* 16; Thompson, 172-173

21 *Ibid*

BOOK REVIEWS

The Letters of St. Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint
By Samuel Rubenson. *Studies in Antiquity & Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. pp. 260, ISBN 0-8006-2910-8. \$20 (paper).

The portrayal of Antony in Rubenson's book presents important scholarly considerations which compare and contrast the Antony, revealed in the *Vita* as the model for emulation by monks reading Athanasius' text, with the Antony, who is a highly gifted teacher of *gnosis* of the Platonic tradition and transmitter of the Origenist tradition on creation, the Fall, salvation of humankind and the interpretation of scripture. By means of careful textual and historico-critical analyses, Rubenson builds his case for an Antony who is literate, educated and possessed of "a fairly good knowledge about contemporary philosophical ideas and a fair acquaintance with Origenist tradition and exegesis" (141). Moreover, the fact that the Antony of the Letters emphasizes self-knowledge and makes no reference to authoritative writings or ecclesiastical leaders suggests "that he was a charismatic teacher of spiritual *gnosis*" (141).

By contrast the Antony of the *Vita* is presented as an illiterate monk not knowing Greek, by means of emphasis on his being a "simple" man, who had not studied letters and who stood in need of an interpreter when debating with Greek philosophers (VA 72, 77). Rubenson reconciles the differences between these two portrayals by elaborating on the *topos* "unlettered," which served to highlight that Antony was taught by God, in keeping with John 7:15, i.e., as a contrast between pagan philosophical learning and Christian faith—the source of true knowledge.

Between the time the letters were written in the Coptic language and Athanasius' Greek *vita* of Antony, there occurred a transformation in the image of this leader of Egyptian monasticism, a transformation governed by three main tendencies. First, the Arian controversy over the divinity of Christ had colored the very thought and writing of Athanasius, a principal actor in the Orthodox-Arian debates. Second, the *Vita* presupposes that Christianity has conquered pagan philosophy, thus the need to reveal Antony as taught by God alone, and not a monk readily able to incorporate Greek philosophical ideas into his theology. Third, the *Vita* served a political purpose of emulation of a simple monk whose orthodoxy had overcome pagans and heretics, whose belief in the victory of the cross gained power over the demons, and whose "*gnosis* by faith" overcame "*gnosis* by education" (187).

The value of this work lies not only in its deepening the understanding of early Egyptian monasticism, but also in its fine summaries of scholarship on various writings from its fourth century milieu, i.e., the status of arguments regarding historicity of the apophthegmata; the witness to Antony from contemporary writings like the letter from Serapion of Thmuis, and the Pachomian literature; the histories of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret; the works of Rufinus and Jerome; and reports on Egyptian monasticism: the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* and Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca*. Comprehensive footnotes trace the various strands of scholarly debates about all these works. In addition, the author provides twenty pages of bibliography. Non-academics ought not to be daunted by the opening two chapters, which give the technical manuscript data and historical setting of the seven letters.

Although *The Letters of St. Antony* is the result of a scholarly thesis, being a revised edition of his earlier one (Sweden: Lund University Press, 1990) and thus would be of prime interest to scholars and historians, nevertheless the work would also be a valuable addition to any monastic library or house of formation. A key advantage of the later edition over the earlier one is the translation of all seven letters. *Sacred Heart Monastery, Richardton, ND* *Mary Forman, OSB*

Antony of Choziba: The Life of Saint George of Choziba and the Miracles of the Most Holy Mother of God at Choziba

Translated by Tim Vivian and Apostolos N. Athanassakis. Introduction by Tim Vivian. San Francisco/London: International Scholars Publications: 1994. \$29.95 (paper).

Perhaps the primary value of this translation of two hagiographical works from seventh century Palestinian monasticism is the insight it provides into the evolution of early Christian monasticism. The term "desert fathers" has often been used to suggest a continuous and largely unbroken tradition of monasticism inclusive of Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor and Palestine and stretching from the fourth century into the seventh century and beyond. A visit to the monasteries of present day Mount Athos Egypt reminds one of why the term has been used this way: the early monastic impulse has in fact retained much of its vitality and meaning across many centuries and diverse geographical locales. At the same time, there are important discontinuities among various expressions of monasticism, rooted in distinct historical, cultural and linguistic realities; if we are to avoid homogenizing this widely diverse movement, these differences need to be acknowledged and understood. Thus, it is useful indeed to have available in English translation these seventh century Palestinian documents pertaining to George of Choziba. For they reveal not only the enduring traces of early monastic expressions and piety (not the least of which is the form of the *Vita*), but also the distinct character of a particular monas-

tic community rooted in the Judean desert at a time of crucial change. Especially significant for early seventh century Palestinian monks were the changes wrought by the political and social forces (particularly the invading Persians) and the gradual movement into the world of Byzantine piety and theology.

The introduction, by co-translator Tim Vivian, provides a useful survey of the history of the monastery of Choziba, a description of its characteristic features (its cliff setting, its courtyard, its church, its burial places), a description of the footpaths and cells nearby the monastery, an account of daily life and spirituality of the monastic community, an analysis of the hagiographical theology informing the *vita* (with particular attention to the role of signs and wonders and the function of miracle stories within the life of the monastic community), and a brief critical discussion of significant textual and linguistic issues. Throughout the introduction Vivian makes excellent use of recent studies of Palestinian monasticism by scholars such as Hirschfeld, Patrich, Binns and others, correlating them with the two works in question in an attempt to bring the world of the monastery of George of Choziba into clearer focus. The text of the translation itself contains well over two hundred footnotes, mostly pertaining to lexical questions or biblical allusions. The high level of scholarship evident in the introduction, notes and translation makes this a significant and useful addition to our understanding of seventh century Palestinian monasticism.

But if the work represents an important critical step forward in our understanding of Palestinian monasticism, one wishes it could have been more critical still, especially on the question of how to read such a complex hagiographical source. Vivian at one point describes *The Life of St. George* as “subdued hagiography (27),” by which he means that this text ought to be placed in a different category than some of those which Peter Brown has drawn attention to as celebrating the “cult of the holy man.” Unlike those holy men, the hero of *The Life of St. George* stands in the shadow of Mary, the mother of God; although George possesses miraculous powers, it is clearly Mary who acts as the primary mediator of the miraculous. This is a significant feature of the *Life*, which, Vivian notes, distinguishes it from many earlier *Vitae*. Still, the introduction provides us with little help in understanding why or how this particular shift occurred or how to situate it within the particular circumstances (social, ecclesial, theological) of seventh century Palestinian monasticism.

A similar lack of critical perspective evident in Vivian’s comment that “we can learn a great deal about the spirituality of these ancient monks from their daily life—both from what Antony considered important, and from what he took for granted and mentions only in passing.” (20) The assumption seems to be that the document is fundamentally reliable, even transparent, not only regarding the details of the monastic community, but even its spirituality. No doubt we can learn a good deal about the life—even the spirituality—of the monks of St. George’s monastery from the *Life of St. George*. But this will require us to attend carefully to the kind

of critical literary questions Patricia Cox Miller and others have addressed in relation to ancient biography. Such attention could go a long way toward illuminating some of the interesting facets of the *Life*, such as: its great emphasis on ascetical strength and endurance, its particular aversion to the sin or arrogance, its attention to the mediating power of the Virgin Mary, its inclusion of a long, highly sophisticated philosophical interpolation against contemplation.

It is perhaps unfair to expect such complex questions to be addressed in the space of a brief introduction. But Vivian so skillfully engages such a wide range of issues pertaining to the world of these texts, that one comes to hope for even more. What he has done (along with his co-translator Athanassakis) is help shed new light on a relatively obscure but significant moment in the history of ancient Palestinian monasticism when all that had been accomplished during the preceding three hundred years was under threat. Perhaps the fine work that has been done here in translating and introducing these texts will inspire others to pursue the interpretive task further.

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Douglas Burton-Christie

St. Augustine's Dilemma: Grace and Eternal Law in the Major Works of Augustine of Hippo

By Dennis R. Creswell. *Studies in Church History* 5. New York: Peter Lang, 1997. xiv + 159 pp. \$39.95 (cloth).

Since Elaine Pagel's broadside against St. Augustine in Adam, Eve, and the Serpent (1988), the bishop of Hippo would seem to be one of the least politically correct of the Church fathers today (for his views on original sin, predestination, Eve, and the "just war" theory), yet he may still be the one most written about. The author of this short study, a Lutheran pastor, justifies yet another study amid the "torrent" of words on Augustine (p. 1) by focusing on works that, he says, are largely ignored by scholars: the bishop's last, "anti-Pelagian," period from 415-430. Creswell asks the still-pertinent question: "Why did Augustine come to the position of double predestination in his final works?" (p. 2).

Given Augustine's massive literary output, Creswell focuses on the works that Augustine himself singled out in his *Retractiones* as being most important, while acknowledging that this choice leaves out some major writings and virtually all of the bishop's correspondence. Creswell organizes this study in historical theology by proceeding chronologically through five periods of Augustine's life that in turn focus on three conflicts: with the Manichaens, Donatists, and Pelagians.

The author rightly wonders whether readers will want a book on the "damnable doctrine of double predestination" (p. 6), but clear, sensible, and straightforward presentations in historical theology are always welcome, and

this volume has those welcome virtues. Creswell concisely traces the development of Augustine's thinking on grace and free will, from his Neo-platonic presuppositions to his final Pauline conclusions. The conflict, as the author sees it, and hence Augustine's "dilemma," lay in the bishop's attempt to reconcile his Neo-platonic understanding with the absoluteness of God's grace.

Augustine, through St. Paul, came to see that the will is unable "to choose what is good as a result of original sin" (p. 105); given his Platonic understanding of God's immutability and unchanging law, Augustine came to believe that people's good and bad wills must be "determined before the foundation of the world" (p. 82). Thus, "human beings are able to choose to do what is right because God has changed their evil wills, with which they were born, into good wills God chooses from before the foundation of the world, by God's just and eternal predestinating decrees, which wills are going to be changed to the good" (p. 105).

And, of course, which aren't. Creswell notes that, at least for Augustine, this understanding "destroys" the Neo-platonic understanding "of the free choice of the will as an attribute of what it means to be human" (p. 129). If so, that makes me a Neo-platonist. Creswell concludes that Augustine's final theology raises "very grave concerns" (p. 140). He wonders, quite rightly, how the crucifixion, resurrection, and atonement (and, I would add, incarnation) matter in a doubly predestined cosmos. Creswell, one senses, favors Augustine; he most certainly does not have a high opinion of recent attempts to rehabilitate the Pelagians (p. 107)! Yet on the whole, he presents a balanced and clear introduction to Augustine's thinking on grace and free will. As the ancient reaction against Augustine (Cassian, Julian of Eclanum) demonstrates, renewed by the recent backlash against the "Doctor of Grace," St. Augustine by no means "won." This book, appropriate reading for seminary, undergraduate, and graduate courses, will allow the interested reader to make up his or her own mind.

Bakersfield, California

Tim Vivian

The Archaeology of Early Christianity: A History

By William H. C. Frend. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996. xix + 412 pp. \$39 (cloth).

I remember standing not long ago on top of the walls, now entirely covered by sand, of the ancient monastery of Saint John the Little in Egypt and looking out at the desert expanse of the Wadi Natrun. Scattered around the monastery were about a hundred kôms or slight mounds of darker-colored sand, each the site of an ancient monastic habitation, now buried by the desert. What historical treasures lay under all that sand? What could those mounds, properly excavated, tell us about the history of early monasticism?

W. H. C. Frend, the eminent historian of the early Church, has been standing on such mounds for almost sixty years; now, in this fascinating book, drawing on his experience both as a historian and as an archeologist, Frend sets out to write, for the first time in English, the history of Christian archaeology, from its “curious beginnings in 326 with Saint Helena’s search for the true cross “to the avalanche of discoveries” today (p. 384). He records the very slow evolution of archeology from its captivity to antiquarianism (“the spirit of the collector”), “pious fraud,” and “genteel pillage” (pp. 24-25) to that of an international, ecumenical, and interdisciplinary science. Along the way he shows how archeology (and scholarship in general) has been the child of its times, tied up with social, religious, political, and intellectual movements. Prior to World War I, for example, “since Napoleon’s time archaeology overseas had been regarded as the handmaid of colonial foreign policy” (p. 110).

The most interesting parts of the book are the many chapters on the 19th and 20th centuries. Frend is particularly adept at interweaving stories of discovery with accounts of how those discoveries have affected our understanding of early Christianity. The story of the first discoveries at the famous site of Dura-Europos reads like something out of Indiana Jones. Prior to the late 19th century, histories of early Christianity relied almost exclusively on literary evidence; the great achievement of modern archeology has been to show “how archaeological evidence and literary evidence were [both] needed to provide a convincing picture of early-Christian life and the cross-currents of its thought” (p. 214).

Frend believes that archeology has made two major contributions: (1) it has elucidated major transitions in the Church, from paganism to Christianity in the late 3rd century, from Late Antiquity to the Byzantine era in the late 5th century, and from Byzantium to Islam in the 7th. (2) It has “enabled the non-orthodox traditions to speak for themselves” (p. 385): “The chief gain” just prior to World War I “had been in the new knowledge of the Christian dissenting movements . . . Donatists, Montanists, Manichaeans and Coptic and Nubian Monophysites at last could begin to speak for themselves through inscriptions, papyri and the steady accumulation of material evidence” (p. 168).

As good as the book is, there are some problems: Frend rightly laments the “deplorable lack of method” (p. 73) of many early archeologists, but such criticism would have more context, especially for non-specialists, if Frend gave more thorough discussions of the state of methodology during various periods. More importantly, one of the book’s great strengths unfortunately leads to one of its weaknesses. Frend’s personal accounts of his own archeological work in Nubia and North Africa make for fascinating reading (one hopes that he will write his memoirs), but they also lead to a glaring omission: Frend does not give Egypt the attention it deserves. He devotes almost all his space on Egypt to Nubia and Nag Hammadi, and omits the enormous historical wealth coming from new discoveries in monastic archeology. He makes only one passing reference to Evelyn-White’s monumen-

tal work *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'N Natrun*, and completely overlooks Winlock and Crum's *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes* and Walters' *Monastic Archaeology*, as well as the important discoveries of Saint Menas, Bawit, Saqqara and, most inexplicably, Kellia (Cells).

To his credit, Frend does point out how the Copts—those “méchants Copts,” according to the French (p. 145)—have been discriminated against even in the field of archeology. However, he continues the “orthodox” bias against the Coptic Church by referring to it as “dissident” and its beliefs as “divergent” and he numbers the “Monophysites” with the Manichaeans (p. 385)! Readers of this journal will undoubtedly find these views unfortunate.

My complaints are, however, the grumblings of a Coptologist. This book should be read by everyone interested in early Church history, and especially those interested in archeology. Packed with detail, it is both engaging and enlightening, the product of years of study and labor in the field.

Bakersfield, California

Tim Vivian

Handmaids of the Lord: Contemporary Descriptions of Feminine Asceticism in the First Six Christian Centuries

Translated and Edited by Joan M. Petersen. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1996. Pp. 441. \$49.95 (hardcover), \$24.95 (Paperback). ISBN: 0:87907 543 0.

This book is an anthology of the life stories of prominent female monastic figures in the early centuries, each written by a contemporary writer. Chapter I is a historical introduction to the whole book. There is also a scholarly introduction for each ancient text, commenting on its setting, literary form and value. The first to be discussed is *The Life of St. Macrina*, written by her brother, St. Gregory of Nyssa. The next chapter, which takes about half the book, deals with ascetic women in the Roman empire in the letters of St. Jerome. They include Marcella, the first woman to establish a domestic monastery in Rome; St. Paula the Elder who established the monastery of women at Bethlehem; her daughter St. Eustochium, and St. Paula the Younger, her daughter-in-law. Chapter four translates the lives of Melania the Elder and her grand-daughter Melania the Younger, the Roman matrons who founded monasteries in the Mount of Olives. The last chapter contains three texts that discuss the story of St. Radegunde, the six-century Queen of France, who fled from the throne and founded a convent outside Poitiers.

A serious deficiency of this great book is its lack of information about the early female monastic leaders in Egypt, the *Ammas*. In less than two pages the book mentions the little that came about them in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. It is sad that there is still a vacuum in the English language concerning the role of women in what is considered to be the cradle of monasticism. One would have

expected the book to start with the *Life of St. Syncretica*, who founded the first convent in Alexandria..

However this should not diminish the value of the book and the effort spent by the author who did not live to see it in print. Although she mentions in her *Preface* that she intends it for those readers interested in early Church history or those who are concerned with the position of women in the Church and society, yet the ordinary reader will find in it a wealth of interesting material which is difficult to find elsewhere. It is the first time we have in one volume the original stories of Macrina, Marcella, Paula, and the Melanias.

New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff

Edited by Bradley Nassif. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996. Pp.xx+379. \$25.00 (Paper). ISBN:0-8028-0704-6.

John Meyendorff (1926-1992) was one of the greatest Church historians in the twentieth century. This collection of essays in his honor carries forward his conviction of the presence of an uninterrupted and continuous holy tradition of faith held by the Church throughout the centuries.. The book is written by a team of internationally distinguished scholars from various denominations. Each examines the historical theology of the tradition from a different angle. After an introductory section on the life and thought of Meyendorff, his relation to the Russian religious renaissance and his role in the patristic revival, the book is then divided into four major fields of studies: history, theology, spirituality and liturgy, and scripture. Some of the issues discussed are: Bosnia: History and Religion; Evangelical Orthodoxy and the Search for the Original Church; Spiritual exegesis and the School of Antioch.

The Social Origins of Christian Architecture.

Volume I: Building God's House in the Roman World: Architectural Adaptation among Pagans, Jews, and Christians.

Volume II: Texts and Monuments for the Christian Domus Ecclesiae and its Environment.

By L. Michael White. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1990 (vol. 1), 1997 (vol. 2). xi+211 pp. (vol. 1) xi+524 pp. (vol. 2); \$30 each (Paper).

When teaching the history or theology of early Christianity, I ask students to imagine themselves as Christians walking through the forum of any Roman city in the third century: imagine the monumental buildings, the temples dedicated to Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Syrian gods, the baths, the theaters, the statues. Now

imagine how dwarfed, how outnumbered, the Christians must have felt, architecturally, and probably psychologically, psychically. Now, with such books as these two impressive volumes by L. Michael White, we can more securely imagine the Christians of the late Roman Empire at home in their churches, their own sacred spaces.

These two volumes, “more than fifteen years in the making” (2.ix), grew out of the author’s Ph.D. dissertation at Yale. Volume one is a study of “the development of the place of assembly and church building” of the early Christians which, the author believes, offers “one of the best ways to see the historical development of Christianity” (1.4). Volume two provides a “collection of texts, architectural sites, inscriptions, and papyri” (2.x) that supports the study in volume 1. The two volumes together offer “a more comprehensive analysis of the beginnings of Christian development in church building -- the progression from house church meetings to basilical architecture” (1.9). To White’s credit, his study in volume one is not narrowly architectural but is, rather, “a social history that depends on the most careful reconstruction possible of the evidence (both archaeological and literary) in its historical context” (1.9).

Prospective readers should take seriously the subtitle of volume one: after a chapter examining the history of the subject (ch. 2), the author provides a chapter (ch. 3) on how groups “adapted private domestic structures for public religious or collegial use” (1.44), and a chapter on “Synagogues in the Graeco-Roman Diaspora” (ch. 4). The writing, though always clear, will sometimes be overly technical for the general reader; a glossary would have been of great help. Readers of this journal will probably be most interested in chapter five, “From House Church to Church Building.” Here White weaves together the history of early Christian architecture with social and liturgical considerations, along with development in other hellenistic religions, primarily Judaism and Mithraism.

The author posits four stages in the development of the early church building: (1) the “house church: of the Pauline communities, with “no distinguishing features since there was no move toward spatial articulation or architectural adaption” (1.105). (2) The *domus ecclesiae*or “house of the church,” with its adaptation and renovation of the house church, from the mid-third century; Dura-Europos is the prime example. The shift to the *domus ecclesiae* came at the end of the second century, probably for two reasons: the growth of the Christian community, and the separation of the eucharist from the agape meal, which then required different liturgical functions and different space (a hall rather than a dining room). By the end of the third century and the beginning of the fourth, church buildings were recognizable landmarks, though they were not yet monumental. (3) The *aula ecclesiae*, or “church hall,” “larger, more regular halls of assembly” which had “a direct continuity with the *domus ecclesiae*, from which it evolved” (1.128). Finally, (4) the monumental basilica, which came into being after Constantine’s accession and the “peace of the Church” early in the fourth century.

I have just one (Christmas stocking) wish: that the author create a CD-ROM version that vividly presents the isometric drawings that he offers here and, even further, color recreations of the churches he discusses. It would open an even livelier and more exciting doorway for Christians today to enter into the sacred spaces of their ancestors in the faith.

Bakersfield, California

Tim Vivian

Bibliothèque Copte De Nag Hammadi': Concordance Des Textes De Nag Hammadi Codex VI

By Pierre Cherix. Cité Universitaire, Québec, Canada: Les Presses de L'Université Laval, 1993. Pp. 495, hardcover.

This book has been an effort of a joint project between L' Université Laval de Québec and La Faculté de Theologie de L' Université de Genève. It was funded by the Swiss Fund for Scientific Research. It is divided into three main sections:

- (1) An Analytical Index (Concordance), which is also subdivided into four sub divisions: Coptic; Greco-Coptic; Names; and Abbreviations.
- (2) The Codex, edited page by page.
- (3) Alphabetical Index.

Langhorne, Pennsylvania

Raef Marcus

Bibliothèque Copte De Nag Hammadi: La Sagesse De Jesus-Christ

By Catherine Barry. Québec, Canada: Presses De L' Université Laval, 1993. Pp. 324. \$ 45.00 (Paper).

In translation, the author, using Crum's Dictionary, compares three manuscripts; The Berlin papyrus 8502, Nag Hammadi Codex 3, and the Oxyrhynchus papyrus. The text is in the form of a dialogue between the Savior and the Apostles Philip, Matthew, Thomas, and Bartholomew and Mary Magdalene. The book also includes an 84 page commentary.

Langhorne, Pennsylvania

Raef Marcus

The Priestly Office: A Theological Reflection

By Avery Dulles, S.J. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997. Pp. 81. \$ 7.95 (paper). ISBN: 0-8091-3716-X

To clarify what appears to be an ambiguity surrounding the role and identity of the priest in modern Catholicism, Avery Dulles puts the teachings of Vatican II

in the context of the New testament and Church Tradition. In Chapter I, he discusses the New Testament teaching on the Priesthood of Christ, and on common and ministerial priesthood. In the following three chapters he then examines the three forms of ministries of a priest: teaching the word of God (prophetic function), worship (sacramental function), and his role as a shepherd (pastoral care). The last chapter discusses the fundamental duty of the priest, as a disciple of Christ, which is a requirement of every Christian. Based on the NT teaching and the ordination prayers, the author reaches two conclusions. "first, that the priest, by reason of ordination, receives the graces needed to achieve the holiness required by his office, and second, that the required holiness cannot be achieved without personal effort (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6)....Without personal holiness it will be possible to hold the office of a priest, and to minister the sacraments validly, but the fruitfulness of the ministry will be compromised."

Introduction to Bioethics

By Thomas A. Shannon. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997. Pp. 189. \$14.95 (Paper). ISBN: 0-8091-3694-5.

The explosive technological advances in medicine, the life sciences, biotechnology and genetics have brought with them new ethical problems and dilemmas. Many have to face crucial decisions in several aspects of their daily lives. This book is an attempt to introduce a vast and complicated subject to the general reader. Part I of the book is a general introduction in which the author defines bioethics, discusses technology, its nature and responsibility; and explains the ethical theories and basic concepts. In Part II., Birth Technologies, he discusses abortion, artificial reproduction, surrogate motherhood and prenatal diagnosis. Part III, Death and Dying, deals with the changing definition of death, continuing and withdrawing treatment, euthanasia, and physician assisted suicide. Part IV deals with specific problems concerning genetic engineering (plants, animals and human beings), organ transplantation and patients' rights.

BOOK NOTICES

The Man who Created Narnia: The Story of C. S. Lewis

By Michael Coren. Grand rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996. Pp. 140. \$ 20.00 (hardcover). ISBN:0-8028-3822-7

The life story of C. S. Lewis (1898-1963) , the finest writer of children's stories (including the famous *Chronicles of Narnia*) and the most popular author of Christian books earlier in this century. Illustrated by 64 photographs of Lewis' world.

Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Theological Style

By Angelo Scola. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995. Pp.xii+111. \$13.00 (Paper). ISBN: 0-8028-0894-8

An Introduction to the vast writings of Balthasar (1905-1988), the eminent Swiss Catholic theologian, through a study of the bases of his theological approach.

Our Hearts' True Home

Edited by Virginia Nieuwsma. Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1996. Pp.178. \$12.95 (Paper). ISBN: 1-888212-02-0.

Fourteen inspiring stories of women from a variety of backgrounds who describe how they reached the Orthodox faith.

Preserve Them, O Lord: A Guide for Orthodox Couples in Developing Marital Unity

By Father John Mack. Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1996. Pp. 214. \$12.95 (Paper). ISBN:1-88212-01-2

A resource book for married couples, pastors and counselors, with quotes from Scripture, liturgy and Church Fathers illuminating the Christian teaching on love, sex and marriage.

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