

ISSN 0273-3269

COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

Volume 19, Number 4 Winter 1998

- *Archaeology and Egyptian Monasticism*
- *Ritual Uncleanness and Women
in the Church*



Society of Coptic Church Studies

EDITORIAL BOARD

Bishop Wissa
(Al-Balyana, Egypt)

Bishop Antonious Markos
(Coptic Church, African Affairs)

Bishop Isaac
(Quesna, Egypt)

Bishop Dioscorus
(Coptic Church, Egypt)

Fr. Tadros Malaty
(Alexandria, Egypt)

Professor Fayek Ishak
(Ontario, Canada)

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

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

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

EDITOR

Rodolph Yanney, M.D.

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Ralph Yanney

© Copyright 1998
by Coptic Church Review
E. Brunswick, NJ

Subscription and Business Address:
Society of Coptic Church Studies
P.O. Box 714, E. Brunswick, NJ
08816

Editorial Address:
Coptic Church Review
P.O. Box 1113, Lebanon, PA 17042
email: yanney@postoffice.ptd.net

Subscription Price (1 Year)
U.S.A. \$10.00
Canada \$12.00 (U.S. dollars)
Overseas \$13.00

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

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

COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

A Quarterly of Contemporary Patristic Studies
ISSN 0273-3269

Volume 19, Number 4 . . . Winter 1998

98 *Archaeology and Egyptian Monasticism*
Ewa Wipszycka

110 *Ritual Uncleaness and Women in the Church*
Maria-Fotini Kapsalis

122 *Book Reviews*

- *The Contemplations of Judas Iscariot*
- *God's Unfaithful Wife in Biblical Theology*
- *The World of Early Christians*
- *John Cassian: The Conferences*
- *St. Cyril of Alexandria: On the Unity of Christ*
- *St. Isaac the Syrian*

126 *Book Notices*

127 *Index of Volume xix, 1998*

Back cover
Calendar of Fasts and Feasts

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

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ARCHEOLOGY TO THE HISTORY OF EGYPTIAN MONASTICISM

*Ewa Wipszycka*¹

I will begin by specifying the purpose and the limits of my talk. I do not propose to take up here all the archeological documentation concerning Egyptian monasticism: that would require an overly long talk and competencies greater than those that I believe I possess. My goal is more modest: I will attempt to show first of all to what degree and in what fashion the results of archeological research have changed or obligate us to change the way we look at Egyptian monasticism. This choice is dictated first of all by personal reasons: I have twice had the opportunity to see first hand the excavations at Kellia; furthermore, I have been able to visit many monastic sites in Middle and Upper Egypt; finally, and above all, I have personal experience with excavations, since I was part of a team from the University of Warsaw that, under the direction of an experienced archeologist, Włodzimierz Godlewski, undertook at Naqlun, on the edge of the Fayum, the exploration of the remains of a laura and a monastery. It seems to me that the preliminary results obtained from the excavations of this site, which before now was unknown outside of the world of the faithful Copts who go there on pilgrimage, are sufficiently inter-

1. Translated from "Apports de l'archéologie à l'histoire du monachisme égyptien," in Marek Starowieyski, ed., *The Spirituality of Ancient Monasticism: Acts of the International Colloquium, Cracow-Tyniec, 16-19.11 1994* (Cracow: Tyniec, 1995), 63-78. Notes added by the translators are indicated within square brackets.

Translated by Tim Vivian and Kim Vivian. The Rev. Dr. Tim Vivian is an Episcopal priest and independent scholar living in Bakersfield, CA. His translation of the *Life of Antony* (with Apostolos N. Athanassakis) will be published by Cistercian Publications in 1999. Kim Vivian is Associate Prof. of German at Augustana College (IL). His most recent works include a novel, *In the Company of Angels*, and (with Tim Vivian and Jeffrey Russell) a collaborative translation of and commentary on *The Lives of the Jura Fathers*, to be published by Cistercian Publications.

esting to serve as a basis for some considerations concerning Egyptian monasticism.

Secondly, I am convinced that the archeological sources have played and are going to play an important role in the revival of studies concerning Egyptian monasticism. I do not claim that this role is decisive--but it is nevertheless quite remarkable, as I will demonstrate.

The contribution of archeology in shaping the picture of Egyptian monasticism has been quite modest for some time. It has essentially been restricted to illustrating literary texts, to explicating the realities of the daily life of the monks with the help of objects coming from monastic sites. Such is easily understandable if one thinks of the wealth of texts available to us. There are few aspects of the life of late antiquity that have documentation as abundant and also as complex as monasticism. Confronted with texts of monastic rules, with hagiographic works, with apophthegms, the archeological data seem to have only secondary importance.

Even the excavations undertaken by Winlock in the vicinity of Deir el Bahari, at the hermitage of Epiphanius, and published afterwards by Winlock himself and by Crum-- these excavations that seem to us today to be of primary importance for studying the form that Egyptian monasticism took in the seventh century--have not been understood, for a long time now, as we understand them at present.²

For some time, I should say for some thirty years, things have been going differently. This is due above all to the opening of new excavation sites and--something even more important--to the publication of the results of these new excavations (we should think, by contrast, of the sad fate of the excavations of Wadi Sarga³, only very partially published despite the wealth of results, and of the fate of the excavations at Deir el Balaizah and of still yet others).

I do not intend, of course, to draw up here a catalogue of recent research.⁴ It is sufficient for me to recount briefly the excavations of the richest sites and at the same time those whose results are the most important for my talk.

We mention first of all the excavations undertaken during the last sixty years at Esna by Serge Sauneron and the archeologists of IFAO [L'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale].⁵ They have brought to light, in the desert of Esna (the Greek Latopolis), some fifteen hermitages dug into the earth that were occupied by ascetics, probably during the second half of the sixth and the first thirty years of the seventh century. Each of these hermitages was designed, theoretically, for one or

2. [H.E. Winlock and W.E. Crum, *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes* (2 vols.; 1926, repr. New York: Arno, 1973).]

3. [For a bibliography, see Walters (next note), 246.]

4. I refer to the work of C.C. Walters, *Monastic Archaeology in Egypt* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1974). It may be supplemented by the articles: P. Grossmann, "New Discoveries in the Field of Christian Archaeology in Egypt," *Actes du IVe Congrès Copte* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1992), 143-57; W. Godlewski, *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1993).

5. *Les ermitages chrétiennes du désert d'Esna*, in four volumes, of which the most important for our purposes is volume IV: S. Sauneron and R.-G. Coquin, *Essai d'histoire* (Cairo, 1972).

two ascetics who lived, in some cases, with a disciple. These hermitages constituted spacious dwelling places, conceived in such a way to lessen as much as possible the harshness of life in the desert. The hermitages of Esna formed an average sized center devoid of celebrity, which quickly disappeared. Its present celebrity is due to the exemplary publication of the excavations, accompanied by an "historical essay" in which Serge Sauneron and R.-G. Coquin have provided an interpretation of the results of the excavations while profitably referring to literary texts.

Absolute primacy in monastic archeology belongs to Kellia,⁶ the celebrated center of the Nitrian community, which came into being in 338 and which existed until the end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century. This semi-anchoritic center, which played a very important role in the ascetic movement in the fourth and fifth centuries, has left behind imposing ruins that occupy a surface area of 27 square kilometers. Scattered about this enormous territory are the remains of 1500 hermitages and monasteries. The excavations, begun in 1964 and continued for several years by two teams independent of each other (one Swiss team and one French), have produced very interesting results, above all in the field of architecture and painting.⁷ What the excavators discovered at Kellia are structures built during the last two generations of monks at Kellia; the remains of the most ancient hermitages are difficult to locate.

To these two communities, Esna and Kellia, we wish to add that of Naqlun, a once important monastic center, perhaps the largest in the area making up the Fayum and the part nearest to the Nile valley.⁸ This center is situated in the chain of mountains that separates the Fayum from the valley, twelve kilometers from ancient Arsinoë, today Medinet el Fayoum, and two to four kilometers from the canal that follows the border of the oasis. The mountain (one should put this word in quotation marks since the highest point is 57 meters above sea level) is composed of a conglomerate that easily breaks up; its slope, where people have not intruded, descends quite gently, covered with pebbles of flint and yellow sand, products of the decomposition of the rock. There are no natural caverns; moreover, one does not find tombs carved into the rock as in Middle and Upper Egypt. There is neither water nor vegetation. This mountain attracted the monks at the end of antiquity, and it became the holy mountain of the Fayum; one finds there, running from north to south, three monastic sites: Deir el Banet, Naqlun, and Sidmant.

6. *Kellia 1965: Recherches suisses d'archéologie copte dirigées par R. Kasser. I. Topographie générale* (Geneva, 1977); Kellia III, M. Egloff, *La poterie copte* (Geneva, 1977).

7. [See P. Miquel, et al., *Déserts chrétiens d'Égypte* (Nice: Culture Sud, 1993), which contains, in addition to abundant color photographs, essays by Antoine Guillaumont on the site of Kellia, Philippe Bridel on the excavations at the site, and Marguerite Rassart-Debergh on Coptic and monastic art.]

8. Preliminary reports published in: Nubica 1-2 (1990); 3-4 (1994); J. Dobrowski, "Monastic Complex of Naqlun: Topography of the Site," in *Orbis Aethiopicus: Studia in honorem Stanislaus Chojecki* (Albstadt, 1992), 309-25; W. Godlewski, "Naqlun 1988-1992," in *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies* (Rome, 1993), 183-96.

The monastic center of Naqlun never entirely disappeared: a church constructed beside the old site and partly with materials taken from the ruins became, at some unknown time, the nucleus of a small monastery that still survives today. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this monastery was surrounded by houses reserved for the pilgrims who went there during the weekend and for the feast of the patron of the place, the archangel Michael.

Behind the church today one finds a vast *kôm*⁹ that occupies about three hectares [7.5 acres] of land. On the mountain close by are the remains of a large collection of hermitages carved into the rock.

The written documentation for this center is relatively rich. It is described in a *Life of Samuel of Kalamun*, a celebrated monk of the seventh century, founder of a monastery in Kalamun.¹⁰ Certain documentary texts of the Arab era deal with Naqlun. But what has caused us to concern ourselves with Naqlun was a discovery I made while perusing the section relating to Saint Antony in volume forty of Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*: I noticed that a monastic rule attributed to Saint Antony, preserved in Arabic and translated into Latin by the Maronite scholar Abraham Ecchellensis, must have originated in the monastic center of Naqlun. In effect, it carries, after the Latin translation, the following title: *Regulae at praecepta sanctissimi patris nostri Antonii ad filios suos monachos petentes hoc ipsum ab eo in monasterio Nacalon*.¹¹

"Nacalon" is evidently identical with Arabic "Naqlun" and Coptic "Neklone." The Rule deserves attention, and it is strange that it has not been the subject of thorough study on the part of historians of monasticism. The Rule has nothing to do with Saint Antony. Evidently in order to confer greater authority on the Rule it was attributed to this saint. With regard to its contents, it is clear that it was written for a semi-anchoretic community, a *laura*, and not for a monastery. It is the only Egyptian Rule of this kind that has come to our attention.¹²

In part of the manuscript tradition, a part composed of ascetic counsels has been added to the original text of the Rule; these have been borrowed from writings attributed to Isaiah of Gaza, and specifically from a text entitled *Precepts for Novices*.¹³ This fact seems to me to constitute proof of the existence of contacts between the monastic center of Naqlun and the centers of monastic intellectuals at Scetis. The Rule originating in Naqlun was read in Scetis and embellished with the

9. [Literally, a mound, usually indicating archeological remains beneath.]

10. *The Life of Samuel of Kalamun by Isaac the Presbyter*, ed. and trans. A. Alcock (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1983), chap. 8.

11. [Rules and Precepts of our Most Holy Father Antony to His Fellow Monks who Requested this from Him in the Monastery Nacalon.]

12. Ewa Wipszycka, "Une nouvelle règle monastique égyptienne," in Acts of the Third International Congress of Coptic Studies (Warsaw, 1990), 499-503.

13. J.-M. Sauge, "La double recension arabe des Préceptes aux novices de l'abbé Isaïe de Scété," in *Mélanges Tisserant III* (Rome, 1964), 300-307.

aid of texts that express in a particularly clear manner the theory of the ascetic life of the sixth or perhaps of the seventh century.

The original "Naqlunian" part of the Rule gives us a living picture of a semi-anchoritic community. While undertaking the excavations at Naqlun, we were able to count on the possibility of doing a sophisticated study, one that would compare the archeological data with the written documentation relating to the monastic center, and especially with the Rule.

To conclude these considerations concerning recent research, it is indispensable to remark that the expansion of archeological knowledge has been in part the work of scholars who are not archeologists. Jean Doresse and Father Maurice Martin have demonstrated, better than anyone else, what can be revealed by detailed and competent observation of the remains of ancient monastic installations that are still visible above ground. The publication of the laura of Deir al Dik (near Antinoë) by Father Martin constitutes a model of this kind of work, accomplished without the aid of excavations.¹⁴

Let us now return to the question that I posed at the beginning of my talk: how has the progress of archeological research changed or how ought it change our picture of Egyptian monasticism? These changes can be grouped under four points.

First, it is thanks to the work on the ground that we can today obtain a clear idea that a great variety of forms characterize not only the beginnings of the monastic movement in Egypt, but also its later history, at least up to the great crisis of the Coptic community after the insurrections of the eighth century. The ascetic centers followed their own courses, which depended on the particularities of terrain, of tradition, of the personal inclinations of their leaders, etc. The tendency towards unanimity, which was so strong in eastern monasticism, was non-existent in Egypt. Furthermore, we can ascertain that anchoritism--or, rather, its mitigated form, semi-anchoritism--continued to attract ascetics just as much as, or even more than, the cenobitic forms.

The excavations of Winlock at Deir el Bahari, as well as his descriptions of the remains of the surrounding monastic installations, also demonstrated previously the existence of this phenomenon in the vicinity of Thebes;¹⁵ but his conclusions have had difficulty influencing the general picture of monastic life: the opinion that anchoritism had been a less evolved form in comparison with cenobitism, and had been condemned to disappear after the diffusion of the latter, continues to be pre-

14. J. Doresse, "Monastères coptes aux environs d'Arment en Thebaïde," *Analecta Bollandiana* 67 (1949): 327-349; Doresse, "Monastères de Moyenne Egypte," *Bulletin de la Société Française d'Égyptologie* 589 (1970): 7-29. M. Martin, "Laures et ermitages du désert d'Égypte," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint Joseph, Beyrouth* 42 (1966): 181-98; Martin, "Abou Darag dans la Montagne de St. Antoine," *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale au Caire* 70 (1970): 173-89; Martin, *La laure de Der al Dik à Antinoë* (Cairo, 1971).

15. Winlock and Crum, *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes*, vol. 1.

sent in the minds of many researchers. It sometimes hinders a correct interpretation of what is found on the ground just as it hinders information furnished by the texts. One striking example of this tendency is the judgement that has been put forth concerning the monastic center of Wadi Sarga: it has been declared that it was a cenobium, whereas, judging by the description, it was most certainly a laura.

Our excavations at Naqlun have shown that hermitages connected with each other by quite loose bonds were able to coexist with a monastery of the cenobitic type. The hypothesis formulated by Father Martin that the monastic centers in Egypt had begun their existence as lauras in the mountain and descended afterwards and formed into monasteries at the feet of the *gabal*¹⁶ can not be applied to the center at Naqlun. It is possible that the case of Naqlun is not isolated--perhaps the same situation will be established for other sites.

The historians of Egyptian monasticism know well, thanks to the texts, that the monasteries had eremitical appendages, designed for particularly zealous monks. At Naqlun, however, we have to reckon with a laura and a monastery that coexisted on equal terms, which is quite a different matter.

The excavations at Kellia have clearly shown that this monastic center preserved up to the end of its existence--despite all the transformations that led to the enlarging of the hermitages--its original character as a laura.

At the same time, I wonder whether the cenobitic style of life did not undergo changes under the influence of eremitical forms. While at Bawit, I had the opportunity to see the buildings of this monastery uncovered by Egyptian archeologists during the past few years. These buildings were not very different from the hermitages that one finds in other monastic centers. The results of the excavations undertaken at Bawit at the beginning of the twentieth century seem themselves also to suggest that this monastery of the cenobitic type was a collection of eremitic dwellings connected with one another.¹⁷ A group of Coptic documents coming from Bawit and dating to the eighth century reinforces this opinion: in effect, these documents show that the monks were the owners of their dwellings and that they could sell them; it was only at their deaths that the property passed to the community.¹⁸

What were the factors that determined the options of ascetics in favor of one or the other of the diverse forms of monastic life? Can one recognize, behind the different choices, differences in mental attitude and in kinds of piety? These questions have never been made the object of study and, as for myself, if I formulate them (which others have not done), I am not ready to answer them.

16. ["Gabal" (or "gebel") is Egyptian Arabic for "mountain" (Arabic: *jabal*).]

17. J. Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouit* (Cairo, 1904-16) and J. Maspero and E. Drioton, *Fouilles exécutées à Baouit* (Cairo, 1932-43).

18. Published by M. Krause, *Das Apa Apollo Kloster zu Bawit* (Leipzig, 1958). See also *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), s.v.

The second findings that we owe to archeology concern the abundant means that those who constructed the hermitages and lived there had at their disposal.

The construction of the dwellings of the *lauras* of Kellia, of Esna, and of Naqlun required without any doubt the employment of professional teams, made up probably of numerous workers. Naqlun demonstrates an interesting phenomenon: in the sixth century there already existed a type of eremitic installation well established and universally accepted, and it became established there even if the terrain allowed it only with difficulty. I wonder if the installations in the Pharaonic tombs or in the quarries, such as we see in the *gabal* of Middle and Upper Egypt, had not themselves been made with the aid of masons and stonecutters, and if the impression of primitivism that they offer us does not result from the degraded circumstances where the *lauras* of the *gabal* are found.

There is no doubt that the costs of construction and maintenance of the hermitages were covered by those concerned. It may be that pious persons aided the ascetics in having a hermitage constructed, but the Church certainly did not do it. What we know of ecclesiastical finances allows us to exclude this possibility. Besides, the *lauras*, being loose arrangements, did not have at their disposal the necessary means to construct dwellings. It is necessary, therefore, to admit that the monks of the *lauras* came from well-to-do social classes of the Egyptian population and availed themselves of their possessions. Let us recall here a well-established truth: the monks, in Egypt, did not normally abandon their goods; nor did they hand them over to the community in which they entered. To be sure, the monks of Pachomius and Shenute were obligated to renounce their goods; but this rule was not valid for the other monastic milieus.

While studying the data of Esna, Geneviève Husson came to the conclusion, certainly justified, that the inhabitants of these hermitages came from well-to-do groups of the population.¹⁹ The hermitages of Kellia are sometimes still more luxurious than those of Esna.

The impression given by the architecture of the hermitages is strengthened by the objects one finds at the sites. With regard to this matter, I will limit myself to data from the monastic center of Naqlun, which has supplied more abundant furnishings than those of Kellia and Esna. The monks living in the *laura* of Naqlun used ceramics of good quality, for the most part imported from North Africa, perhaps also from Cyprus. In the course of the excavations we found plates and painted vases, as well as fine quality *terra sigillata*.²⁰ (I recall that during a voyage in the eastern Delta, Father Maurice Martin pointed out to me that the *kôms* making up the ruins of monasteries were covered with high quality ceramic sherds. This is the

19. G. Husson, "L'habitat monastique en Egypte," in *Hommages à S. Sauneron*, (Cairo, 1979), vol. 2, 197-207.

20. [Terra sigillata is a type of Roman pottery that is light red and usually dates to the early and late Roman periods.]

same type of ceramic that we find at Naqlun.) The quantity of glass objects at Naqlun is impressive. It includes large-sized plates at the same time as quality drinking glasses.

Among the remains of textiles that we found in the hermitages of Naqlun are some textiles of very high quality: for example, extremely delicate fabrics, almost transparent, or braided fabrics of great delicacy.²¹

The numerous small fragments of literary *codices* in parchment or in papyrus also constitute an indication of the social level of the inhabitants of the laura of Naqlun.

The cells of Kellia demonstrate that the hermits not only wanted to live in spacious and comfortable dwellings, but also intended to decorate them in order to make them more beautiful. Here is what Marguerite Rassart-Debergh has written in this regard:

One thing is very clear after the discoveries of the campaigns of 1981-1982: the majority of the buildings were painted. The floor is often adorned with a solid coating of rose-tinted mortar, on which is sometimes painted a "carpet" of very deep red. With regard to the walls, there is no place that does not have decoration. The simplest examples show a *dado* in Pompeian red, surmounted by a darker or white band, or again by a frieze of triangles or a purple braid. The corners of rooms, the frameworks of niches, doors, windows, are sometimes likewise emphasized by bolts or braids of extremely varied types. Besides, the painting also tries to imitate relief or costly stone. The black and yellow zigzags on a white and beige background painted on enormous panels recall veins of marble, while the vertical and oblique lines and the nuclei painted on columns or on pillars evoke the fluting or the supporting bands in marble, in porphyry, or in granite. The plants are numerous, diversified, sometimes fantastical: elegant scrolls of acanthus leaves and of vine branches intertwine with watermelons, pomegranates, and varieties of "cacti" and succulents. Fauna are well-represented, real or purely imaginary animals: horses, camels, giraffes, lions, chimeras (?), monsters; birds of all kinds, especially peacocks and doves (symbols, it is necessary to remember, of resurrection and of renewal primarily, of the Holy Spirit and of the simple and peaceful life secondarily), parakeets and partridges too, and, of course, the symbolic fish.²²

21. [For fine color photographs of Coptic textiles, see Miquel, et al., 178-90.]

22. Marguerite Rassart-Debergh, "Des sables d'Égypte remain un art chrétien," *Connaissances des arts* 382 (1983), 65. [See also Rassart-Debergh, "L'art des 'Fils des Pharaons,'" in Miquel, et al., 67-194, with numerous color plates.]

What has impressed me most at Kellia are not the figurative paintings but the geometric or floral decoration devoid of religious significance--decoration that is present in the oratories as well as in the reception halls. Such decoration testifies to the existence of very powerful esthetic requirements.

The presence of persons possessing at least moderate wealth in the ascetic environment is a fact known by papyrologists who have pointed out numerous times that the Greek documents testify to this fact. But this truth clashes with a deeply engrained opinion that Egyptian asceticism was a phenomenon of popular piety and that the desert was populated by the sons of poor and illiterate peasants. I do not wish to deny that the peasants were fascinated by the ascetic life in the desert: this is a well-attested fact. But it is necessary to insist that asceticism equally attracted men coming from other social classes.²³ Behind the cliché of the desert populated with the sons of peasants lacking culture lurks another cliché, likewise completely false: the idea that social cleavage corresponded with ethnic cleavage. According to this widespread opinion, the elite were exclusively Greek; until the Arab conquest, there was not a Copt elite. In reality there existed a Greek elite and a Copt elite.

If the lauras were constructed and occupied by people who came from well-to-do families, it is necessary to ask what poor people did who wanted to become monks. Did they enter cenobitic communities? Did they accept an inferior position with those who owned hermitages, becoming disciples for the rest of their lives without any chance of attaining autonomy, so esteemed in the monastic world? One may suppose that when a hermit died without indicating a successor, his hermitage could be assigned by the elders of the laura who exercised a more or less formal authority over the entire community. But was such a situation frequent? And how were the poor monks able to repair the hermitages they received if repairs were required? These questions can not be answered with certainty.

The third point: the study of architecture, of decoration, and of the furnishings of the hermitages requires us to admit not only that the ascetics of the sixth to eighth centuries availed themselves of the goods they possessed in the world, but also--an even more significant fact--that they encountered no obstacles in displaying their wealth. I think that keeping this display of wealth in mind allows one to explain not only the décor and rich furnishings, but also the enlarging of hermitages that one confirms occurred at Kellia towards the end of the existence of this monastic center.

Those who had hermitages constructed provided a large amount of space for their companions, who could be not only disciples, but also servants (moreover, the difference between the two categories was sometimes not sharp). They had besides

23. I exhaustively treat this problem in my article, "La monachisme égyptien et les villes," *Travaux et Mémoires du Centre de recherches d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance* 12 (1994), 39-44.

a tendency to exaggerate the dimensions of places designed for communal life: the dimensions corresponded less to real needs than to the pretensions of the owners.

This phenomenon must surprise those who know the texts that come from the ascetic environment of the fourth and fifth centuries. These texts present us with a completely different portrait of the monk: the monk is a person who has completely broken his ties with the world, who possesses nothing more than is strictly necessary, who practices ascetic exercises marked by a strong hatred for his own body. Even if we bear in mind that these texts reflect the program of the monastic milieu and can not be treated as a faithful depiction of reality, it is evident that the ascetic world changed enormously from the fifth to the sixth and seventh centuries.

What is the nature of this change? What are the deepest reasons for it? Is it a matter of a crisis, of the degradation of the ascetic ideal by the wear and tear of time, by the pressure exerted by reality, of a period where the original enthusiasm weakened considerably? Or is it indeed a matter of a change in monastic mentality, of the appearance of another model of monastic behavior? I am convinced that the second interpretation is the better one. Monasticism was far from being in crisis; it continued to be a very important phenomenon, to attract crowds of people, and to enjoy an immense prestige among the faithful. Nothing indicates a degradation of the institution.

The change of monastic mentality that I have just indicated seems to me to be the result of the defeat of the Origenists between the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century. "Gnostic" monasticism (to employ the usual term, imprecise but convenient) was beating a retreat. Its aggressiveness against the body, understood as the principal obstacle that impedes the ascetic from contemplating divine realities, lost its theological foundation and was noticeably attenuated.

The effects of the defeat of Origenism were not felt immediately. It would require two or three generations of ascetics for a new model of monastic behavior to be worked out. This delay is quite understandable, since we are dealing with a very traditional milieu, where the authority of the great founding fathers of the movement was enormous. Moreover, it is necessary to bear in mind the fact that the attack against Origenism was not waged directly against its ascetic teaching.²⁴

The break with the old conception of ascetic sensibility was not complete. The works of Evagrius Ponticus, that compendium of the experience of the desert and of its theory, continued to be read and copied. The apophthegms were purged of the most compromising texts, but they preserved everything that was not overtly

24. [The most recent study of Origenism is Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992).]

Origenist.²⁵ The monks believed themselves to be the direct descendents of the great fathers of the fourth century and believed that they were faithfully following (but perhaps not with as much zeal) the rules instituted by them. The new model was not very coherent. The realm of food and eating, which had been treated exhaustively in the apophthegms and the ascetic writings, certainly preserved much of its ancient rigor. But the fathers of monasticism had said nothing on the subject of dwelling places, nor on permissible or impermissible decoration. In this realm, the new model could allow the ascetics to employ their material means in order to make the desert more livable. (It is necessary to say, moreover, that even with these amenities, life in the desert remained very difficult to endure.) Besides, while being free to have comfortable and fine hermitages constructed with their own means, the ascetics continued to work, in conformity with a principal received from the ancient fathers. At Naqlun, in an almost luxurious hermitage in which the owner made use of glass and very fine fabrics, we found very clear traces of basket making.

I have just made *my last point*. The excavators of Kellia have established, in the hermitages constructed towards the end of the existence of the center (that is, towards the end of the seventh century), a multiplication of places designed for eucharistic worship, often joined to already existing complexes. This phenomenon can not correspond to increasing pastoral needs. The chapels are too large for the inhabitants of a hermitage, even if one supposes that there were four or five persons. I do not think that the chapels were constructed for pilgrims: to accept this explanation it would be necessary to admit that the number of pilgrims abruptly and very appreciably increased in the second half of the seventh century, which to me does not seem possible. It is evident that the multiplication of chapels reflects an important change in the ascetic community. I think that it corresponds to the increasing clericalization of the monastic world—a phenomenon that we have been able to observe in the documentary texts. The percentage of monks who desired and obtained ecclesiastical orders was clearly higher than in the first centuries of the monastic movement.

Moreover, the increase in the number of the members of the clergy is a fact that we observe in the seventh to eighth centuries in the whole of Egyptian society. If one recalls that those who decided to abandon the world were often aged, one will have to suppose that many of the monastic clergy were able to obtain their

25. [On this subject, contested by scholars, see Graham Gould, "The Influence of Origen on Fourth-Century Monasticism: Some Further Remarks," in Gilles Dorival and Alain le Bouilleuc, eds., *Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible/Origen and the Bible* (Leuven: university Press, 1995), 591-98, and Jan Polok, "The Present State of Studies on the Apophthegmata Patrum: An Outline of Samuel Rubenson's and Graham Gould's Perspectives," in Marek Starowieyski, ed., *The Spirituality of Ancient Monasticism: Acts of the International Colloquium, Cracow-Tyniec, 16-19.11 1994* (Cracow: Tyniec, 1995), 79-89.]

ecclesiastical order before they entered the monastic state. The priests who were owners of hermitages were not content to play a secondary role vis à-vis the arch-priests of the churches that were reserved for everybody. They aspired to have a place where they could officiate and which would emphasize their place in the Church and provide proof of their piety. We therefore would have to deal with a tendency similar to that which compelled the hermits to the ostentatious display of their means in architecture, decoration, and the furnishings of their dwellings.

One will wonder what happened to the churches of Kellia during the period when the chapels were multiplying. In opposition to R.-G. Coquin, I do not think that they could have been abandoned. I think rather that their functions changed and their importance clearly waned.

If, at the end of this talk, I think of the number of questions I have raised, it is necessary for me to admit that only a portion of them can be answered thanks to information provided by archeology. But archeology has in this way the merit of permitting us to pose these questions.

--Translated by Tim Vivian and Kim Vivian²⁶

26. The translators wish to thank Dar Brooks-Hedstrom for help with some technical vocabulary.

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

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



THE CANONS OF RITUAL UNCLEANNES AND WOMEN IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

*Maria-Fotini Polidoulis Kapsalis**

For the majority of girls born and raised in the Orthodox tradition, puberty marks the time when our mothers not only set us down to discuss with us the facts of life, the changes that God intended our bodies to experience, and the hope of someday becoming mothers, but also marks the time when our mothers expose us to the tradition of "Ritual Impurity" and the teachings of "Uncleanness".

Pious Orthodox mothers all explain to their young impressionable daughters that while they are experiencing the blood of life, they are in a period of uncleanness, and therefore, must never *touch* anything at all related to the worship of God. This, mothers inform their daughters, includes reading the Sacred Scriptures, venerating icons, lighting candles or lanterns, baking the bread of offering, kissing the hand of a priest, and especially not participating in any Sacrament, most importantly that of Holy Communion.

For some girls, this is calmly accepted as a fact of womanhood. For most, it becomes an obstacle to spiritual growth, causing disdain for church practices which to the present day educated woman do not make sense. If God created women to experience the flow of blood at puberty in order to make their bodies capable of bringing forth life, and thus working with God in synergy in His creative energy, why would God then banish women from all forms of worship and piety while experiencing their "blood of life"?

*Maria-Fotini Polidoulis Kapsalis obtained her undergraduate degree from Victoria College at the University of Toronto in 1988. She then attended Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Mass. where she graduated in 1990 with a Master of Theological Studies degree. Returning to Toronto, she attended the University of Toronto's Faculty of Education and in 1991 graduated with a Bachelor of Education Degree, and obtained Ontario Teacher's Certification. Presently, she is working part-time for the Scarborough Board of Education as an Occasional Teacher and is also enrolled as a full time Doctoral student at the Toronto School of Theology, at St. Michael's College. Fotini Kapsalis lives in Toronto, Ontario, with her husband John, and their baby girl Evangeline.

The Old Testament Laws

The Ritual Impurity Laws were first written in the Book of Leviticus, the third book of Moses, found in the Old Testament Canon. The first law dealing with the purification of women of childbirth is found in Leviticus 12.

One immediately notices three things about this particular law composing a whole chapter in the book of Leviticus. First, there is a preference to male offspring as a mother is unclean with a male child for the first seven days, and then for thirty-three days following his circumcision, rendering her unclean for a total of forty days. For a female child, she will be unclean for fourteen days plus an additional sixty-six days, for a total of eighty days. Thus, those women bearing a female offspring are to be unclean for twice as long as those bearing a male. Second, women during their period of uncleanness are not allowed to enter the holy tent, the place of worship. They must bring their offering to the door, and meet the priest there. Lastly, being unclean is considered to be equivalent to sin, as she needs to bring in addition to the sacrificial offering, a sin offering. Thus, according to this Old Testament Law of Moses, women who bring forth children are considered sinful, until after they have been cleansed from their blood flow.

The second Old Testament law dealing with Ceremonial Uncleanness is found in Leviticus 15: 16-33. This Law deals with uncleanness in *both men and women*. There are a few interesting points here, which must be mentioned. First, and most importantly, men are not exempt from the laws of ritual impurity. Any man who has a discharge of semen whether from intercourse or a nocturnal emission is unclean until the following sunset (evening). Also if any man is in contact with a woman who is experiencing her monthlies, or anything that she has touched, whether it be her seat or bed, he is to be unclean again until evening. If a man lies with a woman during her monthlies, and comes into contact with her blood, he is to be unclean for seven days, like a menstruating woman, and every thing that he then comes into contact with will be unclean until evening. However, if he not only lies but also has intercourse with a woman during her monthlies, he is to be cut off from his people (Leviticus 20:18).

The next point to note is that a woman during her regular monthly period is unclean for seven days, and everything and everyone that comes into contact with her is unclean until evening (sunset). A woman, however, who is experiencing a flow of blood which exceeds the seven days allotted for her regular monthly period or who experiences a haemorrhage which is not a monthly period, or at a time when she does not expect her period (i.e. any anomaly to her cycle) is not considered clean until seven additional days have passed. On the eighth day after her affliction she is required to take two turtle doves or two young pigeons, and bring them to the priest, (like a woman after delivery) to the door of the tent of meeting. The priest will offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, as a woman having an issue of blood greater than her regular cycle is considered to be

ill and thus sinful, in need of atonement. Thus, we note, in the Old Testament, there is a strong connection between physical uncleanness, sickness and sin.

The Canons of the Early Church Fathers

These Jewish practices later crept into the New Testament world, and can be found in the Canons of the early Church Fathers. It seems almost incredible that Old Testament Leviticus laws would infiltrate the Church of Christ, especially after the Lord's strong teaching against viewing the letter of the Law as a means to salvation rather than the spirit of the Law,¹ and after St. Paul's strong exhortation against Judaizing Christians.² Yet, for reasons of practicality, the Church has in its wisdom comprised canons to help in its proclamation of the truth, and in its governing practices. The Canons of the Early Church Fathers can be found in various collections and texts, however I have chosen to use the most recent collection of canons of the Orthodox Church known as *The Rudder*,³ compiled and edited by Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain in the late 17th Century, in order to examine these early Patristic writings. There are several canons dealing with the issue of ritual impurity in this collection, and we will examine them in order.

The first canon dealing with our topic is the Second Canon of St. Dionysius, the thirteenth Archbishop of Alexandria, who lived, in the mid-third Century. He states:

Concerning menstuous women, whether they ought to enter the temple of God while in such a state, I think it superfluous even to put the question. For I opine, not even they themselves, being faithful and pious, would dare when in this state either to approach the Holy Table or to touch the body and blood of Christ. For not even the woman with a twelve years' issue would come into actual contact with Him, but only with the edge of His garment, to be cured. There is no objection to one's praying no matter how he may be or to one's remembering the Lord at any time and in any state whatever, and petitioning to receive help; but if one is not wholly clean both in soul and in body, he shall be prevented from coming up to the Holies of Holies. (Letter, Canon #2)⁴

St. Dionysius declares that not even women, themselves would dare to approach the Chalice while experiencing their "monthlies". However, no explanation as to why is given. Two questions thus arise from this statement: first, did the women of this period hesitate to attend Services and approach the Chalice when

1. See Matthew 23:13,15,23,25,27; Mark 7:6; Luke 11:46,52; and John 5:8-10, 7:19.

2. See Romans 6:14-15; Galatians 2:14-21, 3:3-29, 5:4.

3. D. Cummings (trans.). *The Rudder of the Orthodox Catholic Church*. Chicago, Illinois: the Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 718.

experiencing their "monthlies" because of the poor hygiene of their times? Or were these women greatly influenced by the Judaizers of whom Paul had written, who desired to keep the Law? Though Paul argued strongly against this by addressing Circumcision of the male body, still, many women may have been told of these female impurity laws in private, (as my mother had told me,) and thus were passed in this manner into New Testament times. I propose that as poor hygiene practices made women uncomfortable in entering Church buildings and receiving the Sacraments, a canon was written not so much to ban women, but more so to excuse them from not receiving, as Christians in those days received at every Liturgy.

Women living in that historical period were bound to their bed or seat until their periods were over. Their hygiene practices were to stay in one place for seven days to avoid physically defiling areas with which they would come into contact. Had it not been for modern hygiene practices, I am sure women of today would also hesitate to attend Church services or exit their homes like the women in the third century. Lack of sanitary hygiene would seem to be the most probable reason for women in any society hesitating to approach the Chalice. Women today are most fortunate, being able to come and go as they please while their "monthlies" remain undetected. If Dionysius' reasoning is due to hygiene practices, then his reasoning in today's society would no longer be valid, and the Church would need to re-examine its position dealing with ritual impurity. If, however, his reasoning is due to the Leviticus Law, then the Church has to seriously examine the theological implications this canon puts on the Orthodox teaching of Salvation by Grace. The Church must seriously examine to see if Dionysius' interpretations with regards to ritual impurity is in harmony with the Church's teaching on Creation, and Redemption, not to mention its Sacramental theology, especially dealing with Holy Communion.

Dionysius' argument based on the haemorrhaging woman touching the garment of Christ, and not His actual person is unfounded, as women at the time of Christ were not even allowed to speak to men in public, let alone touch their flesh. It must be remembered that this woman was bound to the Old Law, and everything she touched became unclean. Even though she touched only Christ's garment, that in itself was more than enough to render the Rabbi, "ritually impure" until evening (Lev. 15:19-30). St. Chrysostom's homily about the haemorrhaging woman mentions that in Luke 8:46, Jesus states that He knew He was touched as power went out from Him. His body was definitely affected, and according to the Law, he must have known that as a man he was "impure". Yet, Christ didn't hide this event. He brought it forward, and then proceeded to go to raise the ruler's daughter from the dead (Matt. 9:18-25). Could a ritually impure person do such a deed? No. But then Dionysius would probably say, that Christ was not simply a man, but also

fully God, and nothing can defile God. True. Why then should women not approach the Chalice, if they cannot defile God? The Chalice holding within it the great mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ can only heal and purify.

Chrysostom's words are so beautiful here, and so loving. He says in his 31st Homily on the Gospel of St. Matthew, about the haemorrhaging woman:

For though she was bound by her affliction, yet her faith had given her wings. And mark how He comforts her, saying, *Thy faith hath saved thee*. Now surely, had He drawn her forward for display, He would not have added this; but He said this, partly teaching the ruler of the synagogue to believe, partly proclaiming the woman's praise, and affording her by these words delight and advantage equal to her bodily health.... For this cause He brought her forward, and proclaimed her praise, and cast out her fear, (*for she came*, it is said, even trembling); and He caused her to be of good courage, and together with health of body, He gave her also other provisions for her journey, in that He said, *Go in peace*.

Christ was not defiled, nor did He send this woman away scolding her for not upholding the purification laws. She was accepted as "Daughter." Also, of great interest is that Jesus made no mention of her condition being sinful? He made no comment to her to go and provide atonement for her sin to the priests, as the Leviticus law prescribes. When healing lepers He does send them to the priests. Why then the omission in the case of the woman?

The other question, which is perplexing, is the state in which Dionysius believed one should approach the Chalice of Communion. He said that no one who is not wholly clean in *both* soul and body should approach and receive. Who then could receive? Is not the Body and Blood of Christ intended to cleanse those who are sinful? If only pious, virtuous and perfect people can approach the Holies of Holies, then why do they need to approach at all? They are already clean, are they not? Yet we know that no one save Christ was wholly clean, therefore, according to Dionysius, no one should dare approach the Chalice. I am sure this is not what St. Dionysius is proclaiming, and that he intends those who approach to be fighting the good fight, and approach the Chalice with the "fear (awe) of God", however, why should one's natural functions affect one's spiritual growth, and reverence for God?

Reading the Prolegomena of the Canons of St. Dionysius, one will discover that he was a pupil of Origen. This is quite interesting, as Origen was condemned due to his unorthodox views of the human body, and sexuality. Nevertheless, this Canon, inspired and written by one man was "indefinitely confirmed by c. I of the 4th, and definitely by c. II of the Sixth Ecum. C.; and by virtue of this confirmation it acquired what amounts in a way to ecumenical force."⁵

5. *Ibid.*

Timothy, Archbishop of Alexandria, in the latter part of the fourth century, wrote 18 Canons, also known as "The Questions and Answers". Question 7 asks: "If a woman finds herself in the plight peculiar to her sex, ought she to come to the Mysteries on that day, or not?" Timothy's answer was very short, "She ought not to do so, until she has been purified."

The editor Nicodemus interprets and says that this Canon is in agreement with Dionysius. However, what do these Canon writers mean by "purified"? There is no purification practice for a woman undergoing a normal menstrual period in the Leviticus Law. Purification practices as we have read above, existed only for a woman with unusual flows (Lev. 15:30). Did Timothy view her purification to be that of having simply finished her "monthlies", or did he like the Old Testament prophets view her as needing a rite of purification from *sin*? Did the Fathers view this natural body experience as sinful? The last Canons which deal with the issue of ritual impurity in The Rudder are by St. John the Faster, who lived in the late sixth century. St. John also makes mention of ritual impurity for men experiencing nocturnal emissions. Canon 6 states:

Anyone, who has been polluted in sleep by reason of an emission of semen, shall be denied communion for one day; but after chanting the fiftieth Psalm and making forty-nine metanies, it is believed that he will thus be purified.⁶

Thus, according to the Canons of the Early Church Fathers, men also have periods of ritual impurity, and unlike women have a purification rite. Interestingly enough though, unlike most young girls who are told of the "uncleanness law" at puberty, most boys reaching puberty are not told anything⁷ Canon 17 of St. John dealing with women's ritual impurity is based on Dionysius' Canon, but with an interesting twist. It states:

As for women occupying a separate seat, let them not touch holy things for as many as seven days, the second Canon of St. Dionysius, but in particular the seventh canon of Timothy bids. This is also what the old Law ordered but neither did it permit them to have any sexual intercourse with men; for it happens on this account that the seeds sown become weak and

6. *Ibid.*, p. 935.

7. In 1989 while attending Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology I surveyed the male students living on Campus if they were told at puberty of this canon and if they followed it. To my surprise none of the men had been told such a thing by their fathers. Those who even knew of the canon, were told about it years later. Some had just heard of it when they started Seminary. I was shocked to discover that Canons dealing with male ritual impurity were not strictly followed, even by the most devoted of the Orthodox males, while those Canons dealing with female ritual impurity were kept alive through mothers quietly passing it down to their daughters.

evanescent. Hence it was that divine Moses ordered the father of a defective to be stoned to death, on the ground that on account of his intemperance he failed to await the purification of his wife. But as for a woman, who has been so scornful of the same uncleanness during this period and has touched the divine Mysteries, they bid her to be excommunicated for forty days.⁸

Where men may purify themselves by chanting the fiftieth Psalm and make forty-nine metanies, and then possibly receive Communion, women who dare to receive while on their periods are to be given penance by being excommunicated for forty days. Interestingly enough this is the same penance given for masturbation, and other such sins of physical immorality. It is shocking and perplexing to read that partaking of the divine Mysteries, while experiencing this natural God given function could be equated with physical immorality, which according to Eph. 5:5 and 1 Cor. 6:9-10 deprives one of ever seeing the Kingdom of God. There is obvious misunderstanding on the part of the canon writers on the nature of women's menses, its God given purpose, and the way it affects the spiritual and psychological state of women. This is the time when women need God most of all, as this is the time when they experience pre-menstrual syndrome, physical pain, panic attacks, crying spells, and other hormonal anomalies. This is the time when the soul needs to be doctored by the healing powers of Christ. To punish a woman in need of spiritual healing and nourishment at the time when she needs it most for daring to approach or to touch Christ by banishing her from him for an additional forty days, is not only an act devoid of any Christian compassion, but goes contrary to the very teachings of Christ, Himself.⁹

Can the Canons of the Fathers then be refuted? The Church of Christ only follows the teaching of the Fathers when they are all found to be in agreement. Interestingly enough, there are Fathers of the Church, such as St. John Chrysostom, who championed strongly against superstition and impurity laws (see below).

The Rudder's Footnote

The footnote in *The Rudder*, which seems to have been written by the collection's compiler and editor Nicodemus, attempts to explain why these canons dealing with ritual uncleanness exist. It begins by defining the term "menstruous,"¹⁰ (Also see Lev. 15:19 and Lev. 15:25) and then addresses the question, "Why did God call this natural function which he himself created for woman unclean? The Hand of God created woman, with all her bodily functions, good in the Garden of

8. *The Rudder*, p. 941.

9. See Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And John 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."

10. *The Rudder*, pp. 718-720.

Eden and thus no part of a woman's physical composition can be considered either as sin or as uncleanness. St Chrysostom, (p. 1059 of vol. I of the series), and Theodore, or Diodorus, (ibid. 1032) both agree with the Apostolic Injunctions (Book VI, Ch. 26) which assert that only impiety and unlawful acts can separate one from the Holy Spirit (in Book VI, Ch. 26). Why then the attitude among the Fathers that Menses is unclean?

As mentioned above, Leviticus 15 describes male and female bodily impurities. Verses 1 to 15 describe how *unnatural* bodily discharges defile the male. According to numerous modern Commentaries, and St. Chrysostom, these unnatural male discharges were a result of Venereal Diseases or Gonorrhoea. In order to be cleansed, seven days had to pass, and an atonement of two pigeons had to be given. The same applied for the case of menstruous women. Thus, these *unnatural* bodily discharge caused by wilful promiscuity are equated with a *natural* involuntary bodily discharge whose function is to bring forth life.

Further reading reveals that the Fathers probably intended to prevent men from having intercourse with their wives during their monthlies. It was believed that children conceived during a woman's flow were thought to be sickly, or worse carriers of diseases, more specifically, of leprosy.

Accordingly, He made it a law that lepers should be chased out of cities and kept away from all association with human beings, as Isidore says, in order that He might prevent parents from having intercourse at such a time, on account of the uncleanness and the leprosy and the ostracism of their children to be born thereafter. ... Proceeding further forward, God even commands that men who sleep with their wives when the latter are having the menses shall be put to death and exterminated.... (Lev. 20:18).... (Ezek. 18:6). So for all these reasons, wishing to instill reverence and fear not only unto women, but much more into *the impetuous vehemence of the natural instinct of men*,¹¹ both of old and now again through His saints, God has prohibited these women from coming into the temple proper and partaking of the divine Mysteries...

At this point, it must be stated that medically speaking leprosy is not a genetic illness that is acquired by one's parents engaging in intercourse during the woman's "monthlies." Even those who were conceived "properly" were still susceptible to catching the leprosy bacterium. Dionysius' argument has no medical foundation,

11. My Italics.

as leprosy is an infectious disease caused by the organism "Mycobacterium leprae" and has no connection whatsoever with the method of conception.

Secondly, it is amazing to note how restrictions are put on one gender, to solve problems supposedly caused by the other. It is illogical to put the blame on women for this supposed male lack of control, by labelling women unclean during the time when they experience the blood of life.

Thirdly, the phrase "impetuous vehemence of the natural instinct of men" is very harsh not to mention groundless when referring to the male sex. It excuses, condones and labels as normal violent sexual behaviour, which is sinful, rather than promoting virtuous behaviour as found in men who have accepted Christ and have control over themselves.

Theodoret may view this canon as honouring women, as protecting them from the approaches of their uncontrollable husbands, yet in truth, such men are more monsters than husbands are. By expecting all men to be "impetuously vehement" where is the call to love and respect one's spouse which St. Paul writes about in Eph. 5:25-28? Women are not honoured here, but rather, this explanation has made them the scapegoats for certain men, who are ruled by their passions. This explanation may satisfy Nicodemus; however, this cannot be the real reason behind the writing of this canon, for it contradicts basic biblical teachings. The comment made next in the Footnote by Nicodemus holds within it what I feel to be the real reason behind these canons: i.e. the issue of hygiene.

In agreement with these divine Canons Novel 17 of Leo the Wise also makes a decree providing that women in childbirth as well as those in menstruation, if unbaptized, shall not be baptized; and if baptized, they shall not participate in communion unless they first be cleansed and purified, except only in case they should incur a deadly disease.

What is meant here by "women in childbirth" are women who have just given birth and are discarding the blood, which nurtured their babies for the past nine months. This canon obviously is based on Leviticus 12 mentioned above.

It is interesting how the Church is willing to make a concession to baptize and Commune a menstruous woman who has been labelled in different places as being "sinful", "dirty" and "unclean", when on her deathbed out of love and compassion. And rightfully so, however, if baptism and Communion is permitted on a woman's deathbed out of compassion, it should also be permitted during life out of compassion. The Sacrament of Holy Communion is needed for us in this life. It was meant to heal us spiritually in this life.

If, however, the issue is that of hygiene, then logically as in the case for Communion, a woman experiencing her flow should wait until her flow stops, same as a person with bladder control problems, or one suffering from incontinence of stool, should wait until they are again in control of their body functions,

before entering the baptismal font.

Not found in *The Rudder*, is another second century Canon which is accepted as an authentic, authoritative document by our Orthodox Christian Church, the Canon of the Holy Apostles, which pre-dates any of the above mentioned Canons, and it states as follows:

For if thou think, O woman, that in the seven days of thy flux thou art void of the Holy Spirit; if thou die in those days, thou wilt depart empty and without hope. But if the Holy Spirit is always in thee, without just impediment dost thou keep thyself from prayer and from the Scriptures and from the Eucharist? For if the Holy Spirit is in thee, why dost thou keep thyself from approaching the works of the Holy Spirit? Wherefore, beloved, flee and avoid such observances: for you have received release, that you should no more bind yourselves; and do not load yourselves again with that which our Lord and Saviour has lifted from you. And do not observe these things, nor think them uncleanness; and do not refrain yourselves on their account, nor seek after sprinklings, or baptisms, or purifications for these things.¹²

This Canon understands that the only way one can make women feel full of the Spirit is to allow them to participate fully in the New Life of Christ, including participation in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Naturally, women when continuously told that they are unclean during their monthlies, and are categorised among the unrighteous, would not want to pray, or read a divine book, or practice any aspect of their faith because they have been told that they are unclean and thus unworthy to approach God, and even if they dared to reach out to Him at that time, would not be accepted. Thus, women's behaviour through antiquity has become that of the spiritually wounded. The Church needs to re-examine the effects such canons have on the spiritual growth of women, and Spiritual Fathers/Father Confessors must use their God given gift of discernment when dealing with their female spiritual children. The author of the above Syrian Canon realized the spiritual damage being done, and made a conscious effort to heal these wounds. In this canon one also finds the answer to the question of a purification rite for women. As women are not made unclean from their monthlies, it tells them not to seek purification for these things, and thus does not provide a purification rite for this situation.

Interestingly enough, Nicodemus' Footnote to Dionysius Canon, addresses the second century Syrian Canon which was mentioned above, and agrees with it only

12. *Didascalia Apostolorum* ("The Teachings of the Apostles") in Deborah Belonick, *Feminism in Christianity: An Orthodox Christian Response* (Syosset, New York: Department of Religious Education Orthodox Church in America, 1983), pp. 45-46.

in part, refuting its permission to women to receive Communion stating that it was a later addition.

Notice that the divine Apostles permit such women only to pray and to remember God, just as this Canon of Dionysius also contains these two permissions *verbatim*. They do not, however, permit them also to participate in communion or to go to church. For what is written on the side in the margin (in other manuscripts it says, "partake of the Eucharist") has very little if any force, as not being found in the text proper of the Injunctions.

This position, however, raises numerous contradictions. First, all Fathers are in agreement that women who have their "monthlies" are not devoid of the Holy Spirit. All affirm that woman was created by God and must not cease to pray to her Maker. This is in agreement with what was mentioned above, that which God created cannot be unclean. Yet, the writer of this Footnote turns and contradicts himself by stating that even though women are still full of the Spirit during their monthlies, entrance into the Church proper and participation in the Mysteries are forbidden. In other words, the Spirit which dwells within these women is forbidden to enter its own house in which the Spirit moves and guides, and is forbidden to grace the woman within whom the Spirit dwells with its gift of Communion. Yet the Spirit we believe cannot be limited, the Spirit moves where it will, and is free to bring all to Salvation. If the Spirit is present within these women, then the Spirit will move them to a full life in Christ, and that includes participation in Holy Communion.

As for that unfortunate insertion in the margin of the original second century Canon of the Holy Apostles, the writer is assuming it is a later insertion. I claim that the possibility exists that it was an original statement which was later removed for unfounded reasons, and again inserted in the margin by someone who realized that the Spirit wherever present moves one to a *full* life in Christ.

It is amazing how the next section of the Footnote attempts to eliminate any question or argument to this "banning" position, which Dionysius' Canon has taken. It states:

2) We reply to them with this true and surer answer that we have but one obligation, to obey and follow the Canons with implicit obedience, and not to sit as judges and examiners of what has been commanded by the Holy Spirit, and to keep saying why this? And why that? Lest we incur the exceedingly horrible penalties imposed upon those transgressing the Canons.

It is obvious, that even in its time, there was controversy surrounding this

Canon. Otherwise, the author of the footnote would not try to argue against those who were saying "why this? And why that?" His final appeal is to the authority of the Holy Spirit. Yet, if it were truly by the Holy Spirit that this Canon was written, then it would not have so many contradictions, which would prohibit the freedom of the same Spirit. Are not Christians told to test the Spirit to ensure that it is genuinely from God? (1 John 4:1) And how can any one who truly understands these things equate the emissions of men caused by what the Fathers believed to be lascivious dreams, from a spirit full of desire, with the God given blood of life of women.

It is also of interest to note, that he who judged the earlier second century Syrian canon and attempted to refute its validity, would then turn around and state that we must not "sit as judges and examiners..." What if the earlier Canon, written within a hundred years after Christ, expresses a more accurate teaching of our Lord and Saviour? We are not called to follow human opinion. We are called to seek the Truth, and to discern from among the teachings of the Fathers, that which is human and that which is by the Holy Spirit.

We must revere the Fathers of our Church, and hold them in high regard. However, we must also remember that they were fallible men who were products of their times, times in which I believe sanitary hygiene played an important role. As the only logical reason for not permitting women to enter a Church building and participate in the Sacraments was to prevent them from physically making the house of the Lord dirty, and for no other apparent theological reason, and as these issues of hygiene are no longer relevant in this particular day and age, these canons need to be re-examined by the Church. We must understand that these canons were practical for their time period, however, for our society, whose understanding of the body is more advanced, and whose hygiene practices allow women to come and go "clean", the usefulness of these Canons fall under question. It is time that we as a Church put the spiritual needs of women experiencing the blood of life in the forefront. It is time for our Clergy and Spiritual Fathers to use discernment in interpreting these as well as other Canons and to put the spiritual health of all their spiritual children in the fore. Forbidding Communion is a serious and grave thing, which causes not only spiritual, but also psychological and emotional harm. If their spiritual children have cleansed themselves on the inside, repenting and confessing their sins, and if they truly thirst for Christ, then Spiritual Fathers should show mercy and compassion by allowing them "with faith, love and the fear of God, to draw near" to our Saviour's divine mystery.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Contemplations of Judas Iscariot

By Touma Al-Khoury. Oakwood Publications (3827 Bluff Street, Torrance, California 90505), 1995. Pp. 335. \$10.95 (paperback). ISBN 1-879038-24-2

There have been numerous lives of Christ and the stories about him are beyond count. Also there are many apologetic works written to prove his divinity. But to have a work that combines all three together in such a majestic style you need one like Touma Al-Khoury. A teacher by profession, he is at the same time one of the most eminent Lebanese writers, a theologian and a Syriac scholar. Since he lived most of his life in the biblical lands he moves from scene to scene in such an artful style that makes the life of Christ vivid to the reader. The book is written in the first person, Judas is the one talking. He directs his silent contemplation to the Lord as he walks with him in his three years of public ministry. The result is this attractive story of Christ from the eyes of the Betrayer. Whether the reader is knowledgeable in the Bible or one who is reading about Christ for the first time, he will be captivated as he follows him in his miracles, discourses and teaching when He laid the foundation of his kingdom.

Whoredom: God's Unfaithful Wife in Biblical Theology

By Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996. Pp. 200. \$ 18.00 (paperback). ISBN 0-8028-4285-2.

On discussing the theme of spiritual adultery, or *whoredom*, this book emphasizes the symbolic significance of human marriage as the mystery of union of God and his Church, and illustrates God's love and tender care for his unfaithful and fallen spouse. The author follows the theme of whoredom in both the Old and New

Testaments from Genesis to Revelation. He comments on long passages from the prophets, especially Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel which describe the violation of God's covenant as harlotry and prophesy the destruction of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. In the New Testament the same metaphor comes in the words of Christ and in the Epistles of Paul and James. The OT expectation of the marriage of Yahweh with his people is restored by the redeeming work of Christ. Finally the book of Revelation describes the fall of Babylon, the "great harlot", the human society fully given to the lust of the flesh and pride of life. The Bride of the Lamb becomes ready for her marriage celebration. The author has shown his depth of exegesis of difficult areas in Scripture and provided his book with ample footnotes as well as extensive bibliography and Scripture references.

The World of Early Christians

By Joseph F. Kelly. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997, Pp. 231. \$ 22.95 (paperback). ISBN 0-8146-5313-8.

This is the first volume of the patristic series *Message of the Fathers of the Church*, although it was the last one published. While each volume in the series deals with the writings of the Fathers on a certain topic (e.g. Church, Ministry, Scripture, Baptism, Eucharist, Women, War, etc.), this volume introduces the whole set by providing an overview of the world of the Early Christians from its religious, intellectual, cultural, and social aspects. The book answers questions about the daily life of early Christians, their relation to Jews, pagans and heretics, and their views concerning such issues as war, women, slavery and poverty. The last chapter provides in 40 pages a brief history of the first six Christian centuries. The book is a useful introduction both to the general reader and specialist. We commend Professor Kelly for his valuable contribution and lively style, and the publisher for the whole series that no church or personal library can do without.

John Cassian: The Conferences

Trans. by Boniface Ramsey, O.P. Ancient Christian Writers No. 57 (New York: Paulist, 1997), pp. xv + 886, ISBN 0-8091-0484-9 (cloth), \$39.95.

Last summer, on my way to the airport in Nice after two weeks of touring Romanesque churches and abbeys in southern France, I saw a freeway sign for "Lac Saint Cassien." Since Cassian's monastic home had been Marseilles, this prophet had at least been honored in his own country, if not the wider Church. (Cassian got into the ecclesiastical doghouse for his opposition to Saint Augustine's views on grace and predestination.) Except for Saint Benedict, Cassian (360-435) is arguably the most important western monastic figure before Saint Bernard. His

two great works, *The Conferences and The Institutes*, constitute, in Adalbert de Vogüé's words, "a doctrinal compendium without parallel in all of Latin monastic literature. Cassian's work, therefore, embraces all of monastic life under its two forms: cenobitic and eremitic." Boniface Ramsey's excellent translation of *The Conferences* now makes available the first complete English rendering, and a welcome addition it is to the canon of ancient monastic literature available in English.

Cassian divided *The Conferences* into three long books that purportedly give transcriptions of talks made at the end of the fourth century by the famous ascetics of Egypt whom Cassian had visited. "This vast work," as Ramsey summarizes, "is about obtaining purity of heart through the exercise of discretion, all for the sake of preparing oneself for the kingdom of heaven" (p. 20). Ramsey is clearly an admirer of Cassian, calling him "a master of the inner life" (p. 24) with a "fine understanding of human psychology" (p. 430); he is not, however, obsequious or uncritical, calling attention to Cassian's occasional illogical reasoning or murky theology. The translation reads very fluently, with only rare *latinate* passages (e.g., 1.1, which may intentionally capture Cassian's baroque opening sentence).

Ramsey is an excellent guide to Cassian's thought. He provides a good brief introduction (twenty pages), with an introduction of three to four pages for each of the twenty-four conferences; thus he supplies the reader with about a hundred pages of introductory material. In addition, he concludes each conference with a list of "Textual References" and copious "Notes to the Text" that provide good bibliographical references to both patristic and modern scholarly sources. The book concludes with twenty-five pages of indexes of scriptural and non-scriptural citations and allusions, non-scriptural persons, and places. Many readers will welcome the helpful glossary of terms at the beginning of the book.

Since this edition of Cassian's *Conferences* is so welcome and since Ramsey has done such a fine job with it, it may seem uncharitable to criticize it, but the volume does have flaws. Ramsey occasionally uses terms (Anthropomorphites, non-Pachomian) without defining them or he defines them later, so some readers may be at a loss. Greek terms are not transliterated, are without accent or breathing marks, and lack final sigmas. One idiosyncrasy is that "desserts," as in "just desserts," is misspelled "deserts" throughout (pp. 53, 55, 94, 218). Much more important, and serious, is the fact that the volume contains no final bibliography or subject index. These two deficiencies are serious defects for anyone using Ramsey's translation for scholarly work. Since this edition is bound to become the standard work in English, such a lack is even more unfortunate. Perhaps future printings can correct these shortcomings.

Nevertheless, *John Cassian: The Conferences* will take its place in the forefront of English translations of early Christian literature. Due to publishing problems, the volume was long delayed; now that it is here, we can all rejoice.

Tim Vivian

Bakersfield, CA

St. Cyril of Alexandria: On the Unity of Christ

Translated with an introduction by John A. McGuckin. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995. Pp.152. \$8.95 (paperback). ISBN 0-88141-133-7.

St Cyril of Alexandria (d.444) is the most important patristic theologian ever to deal with the issue of Christology. This book is the last of his theological writings against the Nestorians and the Antiochene theologians. He wrote it sometime after the 431 Council of Ephesus. It contains his most mature teaching on a subject that has baffled the theologians since the fourth century. It is on the basis of this teaching that the different Christian Churches are now seeking union. The book is in the form of a dialogue that explains the hypostatic union in Christ, arguing against any mixture or external association only. "We say that there is one Son and that he has one nature even when he is considered as having assumed flesh endowed with a rational soul." (p. 77). Relying on different areas from Scripture Cyril refutes all theories offered by Nestorians, Appollinarians or other heretics concerning the nature of Christ. Father McGuckin is to be commended for translating this book in a modern and lucid language. In addition he introduced it with a 23 page 'Life of St. Cyril' and 'A Synopsis of his Christological Doctrines' in 17 pages. The book is an essential reading for theologians, Church historians, patristic scholars as well as the general reader who is seeking an in-depth knowledge of his faith.

The Wisdom of St. Isaac the Syrian

Introduced and Translated by Sebastian Brock. Fairacres, Oxford, OX4 1TB: SLG Press, 1997. Pp.20. 3.00 pounds (paperback). ISBN 0307-1405

In this small book, after a valuable introduction on the life and work of St. Isaac the seventh century Syrian ascetic, the renowned Syriac scholar Dr. Sebastian Brock translates 153 of his sayings. Many of these are from the second part of St. Isaac's writings that have never been translated into Greek and hence were previously unknown in the West. They discuss faith, repentance, prayer, silence, Christian virtues and other topics related to the spiritual life. Each of these short sayings, like other writings by St. Isaac, speaks to the heart better than many sermons. The book has a subject index for the sayings, and a list of the main English translations of St. Isaac.

BOOK NOTICES

Eerdmans Publishing Company (Grand Rapids, MI)

- ***Ethics after Christendom.*** By Vigen Guroian, 1994. Pp. x+ 206. 12.99 (paperback). ISBN 0-8028-0128-5. An Oriental Orthodox Christian offers the liturgical experience of the East as an antidote to the present secularization that is reflected on political ethics, family ethics and medical ethics.

Paulist Press (Mahwah, NJ)

- ***What Are They Saying About Scripture And Ethics.*** By William C. Spohn, 1995. Pp.144. \$ 8.95 (paperback). ISBN 0-8091-3609-0. The book brings the richness of Scripture studies to Christian ethics. It addresses hermeneutics, spirituality, liberation theologies and character ethics.
- ***The Resurrection of Jesus.*** By Kenan B. Osborne, O.F.M, 1997. Pp. 194, \$ 14.95 (paperback). ISBN 0-8091-3703-8. A study in the belief of the Resurrection of Christ based on a thorough examination of all its NT texts with an awareness of their theological and Christological implications, as well as its relation to our salvation and hope for our own resurrection.
- ***Aging in the Lord.*** By Mary Valentine, SSND, 1994. Pp. 133. \$ 7.95 (paperback). ISBN 0-8091-3486-1 Grace and hope-filled advice during a fragile period of diminishing strength and health, retirement and limitations by pain and poor eyesight or hearing; with emphasis on the spiritual dimension that gives a meaning to this period of life.

SLG Press (Fairacres, Oxford, United Kingdom)

- ***At the Lighting of the Lamps.*** Introduction and translation by John A. Mc Guckin. Pp. 102+ xvi. 5.75 pounds (paperback). ISBN 07283 0139 3. Translation of the best known hymns in the ancient Church together with their Greek and Latin texts. They are from the New Testament and from the Church Fathers between the second and ninth centuries.

St Herman Press (P.O.Box 70, Platina, CA 96076)

- ***The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia.*** By I. M. Kontzevitch, 1996. Pp. 368. \$20.00 (paperback). ISBN 0-938635-26-3. An introduction to Orthodox Spirituality based on the teaching of the ancient monastic fathers and as experienced by the author through his contact with the last elders of Optina Monastery in Russia.

INDEX OF VOLUME XIX, 1998

*No. 1 & 2: 1-56. No. 3: 57-96. No. 4: 97-128.

***Boldface Page Numbers Indicate Main Articles.**

A

Abu Fana, *see under* Bane
Adam and Christ, 36- 38
Angels, *See under* Gabriel and Michael
Archaeology of Monasticism, **98**
Athanasius, 31
Augustine, 41, *see also under* Monica

B

Bane, Apa (Abu Fana), **84**
Baptism in the Early Church, **78**
Bashnuna, St., New Martyr, **87**

Book Reviews

Al-Khoury T: *The Contemplations of Judas Iscariot*, **122**
Bagnall R: *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, **91**
Brock S: *St. Isaac the Syrian*, **125**
Ferguson E: *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, **91**
Guroian V: *Ethics after Christendom*, **126**
Kelly JF: *The World of Early Christians*, **123**
Kontzevitch IM: *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit*, **126**
McENEREY JI: *Letters of St. Cyril of Alexandria*, **91**
McGuchin JA: *Cyril of Alexandria; Unity of Christ*, **124**
Mc Guckin JA: *Hymns of the Ancient Church*, **126**
Ortlund RC: *Whoredom*, **122**
Osborne BO: *The Resurrection of Jesus*, **126**
Pattison G: *Art, Modernity and Faith*, **93**
Ramsey B: *John Cassian: The Conferences*, **123**

Sheridan JM: *Rufus of Shotep: Homilies on Matthew and Luke*, **92**

C

Calendar of Fasts and Feasts, # **4**
Backcover
Cassian: *The Conferences*, **123**
Christians and Jews, **18**
Christology
Christological Controversy, **24**
Resurrection, **126**
Saint Cyril's Christological Doctrine, **42**
Chrysostom, John, 23, 24
Church Fathers
See under Athanasius, Chrysostom, Cyril, Tertullian *and under* Desert Fathers *and* Patristics
Church Life and History
Egypt in Late Antiquity, **91**
Fifth Century Egypt, **4**
Third Century Africa, *see under* Tertullian
World of Early Christians, **123**
See also under Coptic, *and* Council of Ephesus I, **26- 28**
Cyril of Alexandria, St:
Biblical Expositor, **30**
Christology of, **42, 125**
Icons of, **56 & #1 backcover**
Letters of, **91**
Life and Work, **17**
Popular Piety of, **52**
Special Issue, **1-56**
Writings of, **28**

D

Desert Fathers
See under monasticism

Dionysius, Pope, 112, 113
 Docetism, 67

E

Encyclopedia of Early Christianity, **91**

G

Gabriel the Archangel, 71,72

H

Heresy,

Tertullian's Treatises Against, 63

See also under Docetism *and under* Nestor

Hypatia, **21**

I

Isaac the Syrian, **125**

J

John, *see under* Chrysostom

Judas Iscariot, **122**

Julius of Aqfahs, St. **89**, # **3 backcover**

L

Liturgical Cycle

Calendar, # **4 Cover**

Feast of Michael the Archangel, **66**

M

Marriage in the Early Church, **76**

Martyrs, *see under* Bashnuna *and* Julius

Michael the Archangel, Homily on, **66**

Monasticism, **8**, **98**. *See also under* Cassian *and under* Isaac.

Monica, St., Sins of, **75**

Montanism, 59

N

Nestor (Nestorius), 24-26

P

Pagans and Christians in Fifth Century Egypt, **4**

Patristics

See under Athanasius, Cyril, Encyclopedia *and under* Church Fathers

Persecution, *See under* Martyrs

Popes of Alexandria (The number is that of the succession from St. Mark, who is counted as # 1). For reference *see under* the name of each:

Athanasius (20)

Cyril I (24)

Dionysius (14)

Theophilus (23)

Timothy (22)

R

Redemption, 37, 38

Rediscovery of Four Coptic Saints, **83**

Ritual Uncleaness and Women, **110**

S

Sacraments, *See under* Baptism, and Marriage.

Saints

See under Bane, Bashnuna, Church Fathers, Desert Fathers, Julius, Martyrs, and Sam'an

Sam'an the Tanner, St., **85**

Scripture, *see under* Adam, Cyril and Judas.

Spiritual Life

See under Cassian, *and under* Isaac

T

Tertullian, **58**

Theology,

See under Christology, Theotokos

Theophilus, Pope, 17

Theotokos, 24, 25

Timothy, Pope, 115

1999 CALENDAR OF FASTS AND FEASTS

* *THE SEVEN MAJOR FEASTS OF OUR LORD*

** *The Seven Minor Feasts of Our Lord*

*** *Feasts of Virgin Mary*

**** *Fasts*

*January 7 - *CHRISTMAS*

**January 14 - *Circumcision of Our Lord*

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

*January 19 - *EPIPHANY*

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

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

****February 1 - *Fast of Nineveh (3)*

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

****February 15 - *Great Lent (55)*

March 19 - *Feast of the Cross*

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

*April 4 - *ENTRANCE OF OUR LORD INTO
JERUSALEM (PALM SUNDAY)*

**April 8 - *Holy Thursday*

*April 11 - *EASTER*

**April 18 - *St. Thomas' Sunday*

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

*May 20 - *ASCENSION*

*May 30 - *PENTECOST*

****May 31 - *Apostles' Fast (42)*

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

July 12 - *Martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul*

****August 7 - *Fast of the Virgin (15)*

**August 19 - *Transfiguration of Our Lord*

***August 22 - *Assumption of the Body of Virgin Mary*

September 12 - *Feast of the Martyrs: New Year's Day, Coptic
Year 1716*

September 28 - *Feast of the Cross*

****November 26 - *Christmas Fast (42)*

***December 13 - *Presentation of Virgin Mary into the Temple*