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- *Notes on New Saints in the Coptic Church*
- *The Priest who Offers the Eucharistic Sacrifice*
- *In Memoriam: Mina Rodolph Yanney*



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NOTES ON NEW SAINTS IN THE COPTIC CHURCH

Otto F.A. Meinardus

I. Preface

Visitors to Coptic churches and monasteries in these days are much surprised about the noticeable increase of the typical octagonal-tube-reliquaries envelope in dark red velvet or silk either in the narthex or at the walls of the sanctuary. This unprecedented numerical expansion of relics reflects a quantitative growth of new saints, a development which certainly changes both the spiritual tenor as well as the substance of the traditional Coptic popular piety.

In this respect the present “hagiological rejuvenation” is reminiscent of the spectacular “spill” of relics and saints which occurred in 1578 when in Rome portions of the Via Salaria collapsed, thereby providing access to the subterranean catacombs with their numerous treasures of relics of the early Roman martyrs. For the Roman Catholic church of the late 16th century, this discovery was one of the most spectacular events which supported the post-tridentine ecclesiastical reforms.

Some Copts feel that the present renaissance of Coptic church life would be significantly spiritually enriched by an enlarged “chorus of saints”, orthodox and non-orthodox, ancient, medieval or modern. To demonstrate the extent of this recent expansion, few illustrations of modern collections of relics will be presented without providing a comprehensive inventory of saints. In the historic 7th century Church of the Holy Virgin al-Mu’allaqah in Old Cairo, there are nowadays fifteen octagonal tube-reliqueries containing the bodily remains of traditional, though lesser known, Coptic saints like Issac of Tiphre, Apa Hor, Apa Fis, Abiskhiron of Qallin, Sama’an the Tanner, Onuphrius, etc. The new Church of St. George and Barbara on the Nile island Dahab opposite of Old Cairo prevents seventeen reliquaries with traditional and recently acquired relics of Sts. Augustine of Hippo, Thomas of Shanshif, Apollo and Apip, the holy Innocents of Bethlehem, the martyrs of Akhmim, Fayyum, Maryut, Antinoë, etc. The Church of St. Mark, Shubra Garden, Cairo, exhibits in the narthex a collection of thirty reliquary-cubes with Biblical, Coptic, Byzantine and Latin saints including the relics of Sts. Mary Magdalene, Lazarus, Peter and Paul, Timothy, Barnabas, the three Byzantine hierarchs, the Yemeni saints of Najran, Augustine and the Crown of Thorns of Christ.

Probably the largest collection of sixty relics reposes in the Church of St. Menas, Fleming, Alexandria. This accumulation of relics includes those of Biblical, Coptic, Ethiopian, Byzantine and Latin saints as well as those of lesser known Coptic patriarchs and even mid-20th century Upper Egyptian bishops. It appears that the collector originated from Manfalut, Abnub or Asyut. At any rate, he had at his disposal exceptional information of present Upper Egyptian dioceses. For this inventory I am indebted to Mrs. Sawsan Hulsman of Cairo who has kindly provided the full inventory!

One wonders about the meaningfulness of presenting relics of 7th century Yemini martyrs like Arethas or early Roman saints like Sebastian, Lucia or Agnes to Coptic believers, unless the intention is to demonstrate the message of a universal, ecumenical witness for Christ.

The Introduction traces the story of the most famous inventories of relics throughout the centuries. The "Beginnings of a Cult" describes the various official translations of relics in the 20th century that inspired an almost competitive eagerness among parishes to assemble as many relics as possible. "The Relics of the Theban Martyrs" were the first European import of hitherto completely unknown saints. The "Archeological Discoveries" of the nineties of the 20th century led to an unprecedented amassing of anonymous relics from the cemeteries east of Akhmim, Naqlun, Antinoë, etc. With the manifold and various gifts of relics of European Roman Catholic churches and monasteries through the good offices of H.E. Metropolitan Marcus of France a Latin chorus of medieval Catholic saints found itself established in many Coptic churches from Alexandria to Aswan.

II. Introduction

Whereas the official cult of the Coptic Orthodox Church is by its very nature unchangeable, the popular piety of the believers constantly adjust itself to numerous unforeseen and unexpected factors. The dogmatic theology of the church is bound to her fundamental traditional doctrines. Therefore, the teachings of the church are essentially static, at least for the past 1600 years. On the other hand, the popular piety responds to the various social, economic or personal needs of the people.

At least from the 4th/5th centuries the cult of the saints in the form of the veneration of their relics has largely determined both content and structure of the piety of the Egyptian Christians. Undoubtedly, the cult of the relics of the saints was historically related to the burial customs of their pharaonic ancestors, who used to embalm their dead to assure their life eternal. In his sermon on the "Resurrection of the Dead" (PL 39, 1599-1611) St. Augustine mentions the ancient Egyptian practice of mummification as a kind of "prefiguration" of the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. The Christians simply provided new meaning to some of the ago-old customs of their ancestors. The preservation of the body was thought to be a necessity for their biblical belief in the resurrection. Therefore, for the 4th century Upper Egyptian sect of the Meletians it was a matter of course to

mummify their dead (Cf. St. Athanasius, 41st Easter epistle). The 22nd Coptic Patriarch Timothy I (378-385) was ceremoniously embalmed, while both Sts. Antony and Pachomius vehemently condemned both the practice of mummification and the veneration of their relics. In this respect it is noteworthy, that the Copts do not claim to possess any relics of the two monastic founders¹.

The relics of a saint, no matter how small, always represent the person *in toto*, just as in the Divine Liturgy the smallest particle of the eucharistic loaf *is* the very body of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, the relics are proof of the restoration to life of the martyr. Martyrdom is regarded not as defeat but rather as victory over death. Therefore, the relics of the martyr are the unquestionable testimony of his victory over his enemy and over death. As a tribute to the martyrs, the veneration of their relics became an integral part of the piety of the Christian community. The fact that in the 5th century every village seemed to have had its saint's shrine was sufficient reason for St. Shenuda's well-known outspoken criticism of his villagers who had even invented saints for bones they assumed to be those of martyrs. Moreover, the identifying of relics was often due to a dream or a vision by some pious monk or priest (Zoega, 188).

Throughout the centuries, the popular piety of the Copts has undergone many mutations and adjustments. For the present context four historical studies of Coptic relics shall be presented. The 11th century "inventory" of relics by the Alexandrian deacon Mawhub, the descriptions by the 13th century *qummu*s and church-historian Abe'l-Makarim, the references by the 14th/16th century Coptic-Arabic *synaxaria* and my "Inventory of Coptic relics" of 1966.

One of the earliest lists of relics which were venerated by the Copts appears in the *vita* of Pope Cyril II (1078-1092) by the Alexandrian deacon Mawhub ibn Mansur ibn Mufarrig al-Iskandari (1025-1100) who was also the coauthor of the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*². By the 11th century, the anigne relics of Jesus Christ which used to repose in the 4th century Monastery of the Metanoia (Penitence), 12 miles east of Alexandria in Canopus (Abu Qir) had disappeared. These were the famous *sudarium* Christi, the towel einteum with which Christ had washed the feet of his disciples (Job 13:4.5) and parts of the True Cross (St. Jerome, PL 23, 62-63)³. Although Mawhub did not see all the relics in Egypt, -he states that "the enumeration of which would be long", -he provided a very significant inventory of relics which were venerated by the Christians in his days. In

- 1 Some relics of St. Antony are said to be taken to Constantinople in 634. They are venerated in the West in Cologne, in Siena and since the 14th century in numerous French churches of the Antonite fathers. The Coptic monks of the Dair Anba Bakhum at Edfu claim the relics of their patron beneath a column in their church.
- 2 HPEC, II, iii, 358-362.
- 3 There are numerous copeis of the kerchief of Veronica (*vera ikon*), the *sudarium* or *mandylion* in European churches. The church in Kornelimünster claims the linteum with which Christ washed the feet of his disciples.

Jerusalem Mawhub saw the head of St. Mark the Evangelist, while his body reposed in Alexandria. In Lydda (Lud) he still saw the relics of St. George. In the Monasteries of the Wadi 'n-Natrun he registered the relics of the three Macarii, the emperor Zeno (474-91) and his son, Sts. John Colobus, Bishoi, John Kame, James the asunier and the finger of St. Severus. In Alexaniria were the relics of the prophets Elisha and Jeremiah and the blood of St. Peter, the last of the martyrs. At Singar he noticed the relics of the apostle Thecla and Philotheus⁴. In Cairo were the relics of Sts. Hor and Manrayil, John of Sanhut and Barbara. In the White Monastery at Sogag there were still the relics of the disciples Bartholomew and Simon the Canaanite. Those of St. Paphnutius reposed in the Monastery of the Beacon⁵. In the region of Asyut he saw among others the relics of Sts. Claudius, Victor, John Colobus, Phoebammon, Theodore and Harufus (at Shuth)⁶. In Kift reposed the relics of St. Amsah in Ansina Colluthus, in Abutig Sts. Bishoi and Bisisah, in Kus St. Pisentius, in Difra St. Issac and in al-Banawanin Apa Kragon.

Qummus Abu 'l-Makarim, refers to several relics of saints which have since disappeared. He mentioned those of Abu Bagham and the relics of Martha and Mary of Bethany in the Monastery of Nahya, west of Giza. The relics of St. Paphnutius were venerated west of Tammua in the Monastery of the Beacon, those of St. Pisentius at Qamula while the relics of St. George – though without his head – still reposed in the oasis of al-Bahnasa (*oasis parva*). The relics of Sts. Tarnimah and Basmantah at the Upper Egyptian Tumbudha are also lost⁷.

The third medieval source which contributes to our knowledge of relics in the Coptic churches is the Arabic Synaxar. The first recension is attributed to Peter Severus al-Gamil, Bishop of Malig (12th/13th cent.) and the second recension to Michael, Bishop of Atrib and Malig (1243-1247)⁸. On 22 days of the year the Copts commemorate the translations of relics from one site (church or monastery) to another. On seven days they commemorate the invention (discovery) of relics of certain saints. For example, the Copts remember the translation of the relics of St. Theodore to the Upper Egyptian village of Shuth on Hatur 5 (November 14), the translation of St. Mercurius (Abu 's-Saifain) to his church in Old Cairo on Ba'una 9 (June 16) and the translation of the relics of St. George to the Church of St. George in Old Cairo on Abib 16 (July 23). These translations occurred in the Middle Ages, during the days of the Mamluks. The relics of St. George arrived in Old Cairo during the patriarchate of Gabriel V (1409-27), while those of St. Mercurius reached Old Cairo during the days of Pope John XIII (1484-1524). It is noteworthy that relics of the popular Coptic virgin-martyr St. Damiana and her

4 Meinardus, O., "Singar, an historical and geographical study", BSAC XVIII, 1966, 175-179.

5 This used to be a famous monastery west of Tammua, Giza.

6 In 1966 I visited Shuth where the memory of St. Theodore was completely forgotten.

7 Evetts, B.T.A., *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt, etc.*, Oxford 1895.

8 Basset, R., *Le Synaxaire Arabe Jacobite*, Ms A no 256 (16th century) Ms B no 4869-4870 (14th century) *Patr. Orient.* I, III, XI, XVI, XVII

Forty Virgins do not appear in any of the medieval lists or synaxaria. The Dominican father Michael Wansleben (1672) provides one of the first accounts of the cult of St. Damiana in the Delta. In the 18th and 19th century her cult spread very rapidly to Upper and Lower Egypt, where today there are about 30 Coptic churches dedicated to St. Damiana⁹.

In my “Inventory of the Relics of Saints in the Coptic Churches of Egypt”¹⁰ of 1966 I have provided 55 entries for the churches and monasteries. The relics of 11 saints, which I had mentioned, have been lost. This study concentrated mainly upon the Coptic churches of Cairo, the eight active monasteries and some sites in Upper Egypt. Just as Mawhub in the 11th century did not list all relics that were venerated in Egypt, I only mentioned those relics which I had seen, realizing that many more relics reposed in some churches in Upper and Lower Egypt. Relics of St. Damiana I registered in five churches, those of St. George in 15 churches, those of St. Mercurius in six churches and those of St. Theodore in three churches. In the meantime (2003) we can justifiably assume that the numbers of these relics have significantly increased. From my experience, having visited many Coptic churches over the past forty-five years, I propose that today the Copts venerate about 50 relics of St. Damiana, over 300 of St. George, about 70 of St. Mercurius, about 40 of St. Theodore and about 40 of St. Menas to mention only the relics of the most popular traditional Coptic saints.

III. The Beginning of a Cult

The translation of the relics of St. Mark the Evangelist from Venice via Rome to Cairo in June 1968 provided for the Copts not only a new awareness of the importance of relics but also a sense of historic apostolicity. On June 11, 1968 a delegation of Coptic and Ethiopian bishops were met by Pope Paul VI to receive the relics of St. Mark which were a gift of Cardinal Urbani of Venice. Four days later, this relic was ceremoniously placed into a cavity of an Aswan granite-block in the crypt of the newly dedicated Cathedral of St. Mark in Abbasiya, Cairo¹¹. Five years later, on the occasion of the 1600th anniversary of the death of St. Athanasius in May 1973, Pope Paul VI presented Pope Shenuda III a relic of the Alexandrian patriarch and church-father Athanasius. This important relic received its place on the ground floor of the Cathedral of St. Mark in Abbasiya. For the Copts, these two historic events constituted not merely the “return” of their founder St. Mark and their greatest theologian St. Athanasius. These relics served as a visible testimony of their belief in the reality of the *ecclesia triumphans*, a reminder to the *ecclesia*

9 Meinardus, O., “Das Agyptische Jungfräuliche Dreigestirn: Damiana, Katharina, Hypatia”, Kemet 2, 1999.

10 Id., Ostkirchliche Studien XVII, 2/3, 1968, 134-174.

11 For a critical study on the relics of St. Mark, cf. Meinardus, O., “An Examination of the Traditions pertaining to the Relics of St. Mark”, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, Rome, XXXVI, 1970, 348-376.

militans of the continuous witness of the church from the days of the Apostles to the present, a reminder for such virtues as steadfastness, loyalty and sacrifice.

In November 1978 major international news-services reported about the discovery of the relics of St. John the Baptist and those of the Old Testament Prophet Elisha (9th cent. B.C.) in the Church of St. Macarius in the Monastery of St. Macarius of the Wadi 'n-Natrun. This had occurred in Lent 1976 while restoring and extending the Church of St. Macarius. Upon my questions, Pope Shenuda III avoided any form of confirmation of the claims by the monks of the Monastery of St. Macarius¹².

During the past 40 years the popular piety of the Copts has undergone major changes, both in their Mariology on account of the numerous apparitions of the Holy Virgin in Upper and Lower Egypt¹³ but also in their hagiology. Whereas the great majority of the tradition-oriented Copts still adhere to their "wonderworking equestrian saints" like Sts. George, Victor, Menas, Theodore and Mercurius, the recent introduction of relics of so far unknown saints has opened altogether new prospects for their religious life.

IV. The Relics of the Theban Legion

Until the middle of the 20th century the Copts were unaware of the existence of the martyrs of a Theban Legion. Neither the medieval Coptic synaxaria, the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church* nor their theologians and church-historians mention the martyrs of a Theban Legion, and even today (2003) only the names of Sts. Maurice and Verena are generally known among the Copts. The discovery of the Theban Legion by and for the Copts should be attributed to Professor Murad Kamil who had studied at Tübingen University and later taught at Freiburg University. In his essay on "Coptic Piety" he wrote: "some of these martyrs are known to us as saints, I should like to mention St. Maurice and his sister Verena (*sic*). Through the efforts of the Egyptian legion the first Christian mission was carried to the Rhine Valley"¹⁴.

And Aziz Suryal Atiya, Professor at the University At Bonn from 1935-1939, write: "wherever the Roman legions went, they were apparently followed by Christian missionaries. To Switzerland a mission from Thebes, according to local legend or tradition, arrived in 285 with the Theban Legion. It was led by St. Mauritius, who seems to have earned martyrdom for refusing to sacrifices to heathen gods"¹⁵. For the Coptic historians it was not the case of disobedience to the authorities, not the refusal to kill, but the concept of missionary work that became

12 Id. "The Relics of St. John the Baptist and the Prophet Elisha. An Examination of the claims of their recent invention", Coptic Studies presented to Mirrit Butros Ghali, Cairo 1979, 26-63.

13 Id. "Die Marienerscheinungen in Egypten einst und heute", Kemet 4, 1999.

14 Kamil, Murad, "Koptische Frömmigkeit", Koptische Kunst, Christentum am Nil. Essen 1963, 103.

15 Atiya, Aziz S., A History of Eastern Christianity. London 1968, 54.

16 Dupraz, Louis, Les Passions de S. Maurice d'Againe. Fribourg 1961.

the predominant element in the evaluation of the Theban martyrs. However, neither Eucherius, bishop of Lyon (443-450), nor Bishop Theodore of Octodurum refer to the Theban soldiers as having been Christian missionaries¹⁶.

Since 1946 there existed a local tradition of the Theban Legion in the Upper Egyptian village of Garagos, 30 km north of the ruins of Karnak and Luxor temples. At that time, the Swiss Jesuits Etienne de Montgolfier and Maurice de Fenoyl were sent to be in charge of the small Coptic Catholic parish in the village. The parish-church received a beautiful iconostasis which included icons of Sts. Verena and Maurice of the Theban Legion¹⁷. In October 1986, the Copts received from the Catholic Church of Zurzach, Switzerland, as a symbol of ecumenical friendship a relic of St. Verena, patron of Zurzach. In March 1989, two Catholic priests of Hamburg presented Pope Shenuda III relics of St. Maurice, the *primicerius* of the Theban Legion, from the Benedictine Abbey of St. Maurice in Tholey, Saar,¹⁸ and in November 1991 I offered Pope Shenuda III several relics of the Theban martyrs Sts. Cassius and Florentius of Bonn¹⁹. In 1998 Bishop Pimen of Naqada and Qamula received an additional relic of St. Verena while on a visit in Switzerland. He maintained that St. Verena originally came from his Upper Egyptian diocese²⁰.

In the meantime, the cult of the Theban martyrs is well incorporated in the Coptic canon of saints. Monks have received the name of Maurice and nuns of Verena, who has also become the patron of the deaconesses of the African Mission. In Anaheim, California, the Coptic church is dedicated to St. Verena. Relics of St. Maurice repose in several Coptic churches, however, the “original” gift is in the Chapel of St. Maurice. BLESS, Dair Anba Ruwais, Abbasiya.

According to a report in the Coptic newspaper, Watani of July 21, 2002

On July 12 – 15, 2002, there appeared at night the Holy Virgin Mary, St. Maurice the Theban leader and Pope Cyril VI over the dome of the Church of the Holy Virgin and St. Maurice in Umrana, Giza, in the diocese of Metropolitan Dumadius.

V. The Archeological Discoveries

During the eighties of the 20th century the Coptic Church received the relics of the Theban martyrs, the first European import. Sts. Maurice and Verena were readily accepted. Local iconography presented St. Maurice not as a Moor as in many European paintings and statues but as a Roman soldier. St. Verena with her attributes of a comb and a pitcher shown as a faithful virgin-martyr.

17 Jalabert, H., *La Vice-Province du Proche-Orient de la Compagnie de Jésus*. Beirut 1960, 46.

18 Meinardus, C., “The Translation of the Relics of St. Maurice from Tholey to Cairo,” *Coptologia* XI, 1990, 44-55.

19 Id., “The Translation of the Relics of Sts. Cassius and Florentius from Bonn to Cairo,” *CCR* XIII, 2, 1992, 49-53.

20 Keraza 39/40, October 16, 1998.

The nineties of the 20th century provided altogether new aspects to Coptic hagiology. Archeological discoveries in Upper Egypt and in Cairo brought to light relics of several new Coptic saints. Hundreds of relics of the Akhmim and Fayyum martyrs were distributed to Coptic dioceses and parishes in Egypt and the Emigration.

The Akhmim Martyrs

In March 1990, Abuna Ghobrial al-Antuni, the resident priest at the Monastery of the Martyrs (Dair ash-Shuhada) – situated on an elevation at the edge of the desert east of al-Hawawish, 6 km north of Akhmim – prepared an olive-yard near the monastery, when he discovered in the proximity of the monastery a large number of skeletons from abandoned tombs.

The monastery is surrounded by one of the largest Upper Egyptian cemeteries with tombs belonging from pharaonic to present times.²¹ The modern history of this vast necropolis begins with the reports of such European travelers as Paul Lucas (1714), Richard Pococke (1740), W.G. Browne (1797), Hippolyte A.N.l'Hôte (1839), etc.

In March 1884 the French archeologist Gaston Charles Maspero and Schiaparelli entrusted the excavations of the necropolis east of Akhmim to the *rais* Ghalib of Qurna. As many as 8,000 – 10,000 mummies were unearthed and subsequently sold to the Egyptian Railway as fuel for the engines, others were purchased by American paper-mills. It is in this context that Mark Twain commented “about the mummies 3,000 years old that were purchased by the ton...for the purpose of fueling the locomotives”, as he advised the engineer for speeding the train to burn a pharaoh rather than these poor plebeians²²! By 1888 the necropolis was thoroughly despoiled. In 1895, R. Forrer described the site: “As far as you can see, there are black holes, cavities, where tombs were opened, mummies were robbed of their textiles, everywhere the necropolis has been systematically plundered.²³ Between 1962-1966 I visited this necropolis several times. The region around the Monastery of the Martyrs appeared like a lunar-landscape, covered with innumerable pockmarks.

Since 1990 many bones and fragments of skeletons, that had escaped being sold as fuel to the Egyptian Railway, found their way as relics of the 8,140 martyrs of Akhmim (according to the Vatican recension of the synaxar of Tuba 1) into the Coptic churches. Few of the Akhmim martyrs are known by name and are commemorated in the Coptic synaxar, Sts. Mercurius and Ephraem on Abib 30, Sts. Dioscor and Asclepius on Tuba 1²⁴, and Ananias and Chuzi on Kihak 16.

21 Qummus Luqa al-Antuni, *The Akhmim Martyrs* (arab.). Mutraniya Beni Suef 1990.

22 Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad or the New Pilgrims Progress*, ch. LVIII.

23 Kuhlmann, Klaus P, *Materialien zur Archäologie und Geschichte des Raumes von Achmim*. Mainz 1983.

24 The relics of Sts. Dioscor and Asclepius are venerated in numerous Coptic churches in Cairo, Lower and Upper Egypt. Meinardus, O., “The Mystery of the Akhmim Martyrs,” *CCR* 21, 4, 2000, 132-138.

Throughout the nineties, many Coptic churches and monasteries from Alexandria to Aswan received from the dioceses of Akhmim and Saqulta (Bishop Bisada) and the Fayyum (Bishop Abra'am) large quantities of relics of "anonymous saints" of Akhmim and the Fayyum.

The Coptic Church of St. Menas, Fleming, Alexandria, claims to possess several relics of the martyrs of Akhmim, including those of the Coptic nun "Esther", St. Mina" and "Apa Nub" of Akhmim as well as an arm of an anonymous female martyr. The identification of anonymous relics with particular names is a common phenomenon. These names are "revealed" in dreams or visions. In the case of one of the Fayyum martyrs, Miriam Mohared of the Church of Sts. George and Sarabamun in Shubra experienced a vision of the young martyr who introduced himself to her as "Girgis" (Kemet 1/1998).

The Fayyum Martyrs

In the summer of 1991, the diocese of the Fayyum, the Egyptian Antiquities Organization (EAO) and the Polish Center of Archeology excavated in the proximity of the Monastery of St. Gabriel (Dair Malak Ghobrial), Naqlun, in the oasis of Fayyum. In the course of the excavations, three caskets with four mummies each were unearthed about 150 m southwest of the monastery. These were transferred to the southern aisle of the Church of St. Gabriel where they were covered with new white linen sheets. On account of obvious marks of torture on the mummies, the church declared them to be martyrs of the Christian faith.

In December 1991 I visited the Monastery of St. Gabriel where I met with Abuna Yoel Anba Bishoi and Abuna Abd al-Masih al-Buli. I received a 10 x 15 cm dark green linen which belonged to one of the mummies and which I submitted for a sindological examination. The result of the carbon-14 test was a date between 1260 and 1385. In a letter of February 10, 1992, Bishop Abra'am of the Fayyum wrote that "the relics of the martyrs were of the 12th century". My own impression and that of the Polish Professor Wlodzimierz Godlewski identified the mummies with villagers who were killed by the marauding and plundering Mamluks between October and November 1798. At that time, the French general Desaix de Veygoux had withdrawn his troops to al-Lahun and later to Seila, Sirsina, etc. east of Sinnuris. Villagers of the region of Ez.Qalamshah had fled to the ruined and deserted monastery where they were massacred by the soldiers of the Mamluks Murad Bey. So far no final agreement about the historical identity and the date of the massacred villagers of Naqlun has been reached. Many of the Coptic priests assign the martyrs of Fayyum (Naqlun) to the period of the great persecution at the beginning of the 4th century. Their relics are found in many Coptic churches throughout the country and also in the churches of the emigration. Modern Coptic iconography has portrayed four adults and one youth with the crown of martyrdom, in the

background the Monastery of St. Gabriel, Naqlun²⁵. Since 1992, the Coptic Church commemorates the martyrs of Fayyum on Masri 26 or September 1, the day of the invention (discovery) of the relics.

St. Bashnuna

Since 1980 the Coptic churches of Old Cairo and especially the historic Church of St. Sergius and Bacchus (Abu Serga) have given the impression of being “a permanent building-plot”. The Egyptian Antiquities Organisation and members of the local clergy have spared no effort to renovate the early medieval sanctuaries, including the Church of St. Sergius. It occurred on April 25, 1991 that workmen digging around the northern column of the nave and the northern base of the ambon discovered several bones “that were protected from putrefaction due to excessive underground waters”. They were removed and there was no doubt for Bishop Mattaus of Old Cairo and Abuna Ghobrial Girgis that they belonged to St. Bashnuna al-Maqari, “since there was no historical mention of any other saint or person in the church²⁶. The vita of Pope John V (1147-1166) provided the necessary background to the martyrdom of the monk Bashnuna. During the caliphate of al-Adid (1160-1171) the Turkoman Ghuzz had killed the wazir Dirgham and chaos reigned in Cairo. It happened in this state of lack of order and confusion that Bashnuna was seized. Because he refused to convert to Islam he was killed and the Christians buried him in the Church of St. Sergius and Bacchus on Bashons 24, 880 A.M. or 1164²⁷.

The report of the burial of St. Bashnuna in the Church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus appears to be very unlikely. Apparently, there was a widespread custom to use churches as burial-places. In view of the strict prohibition of this practice issued by Pope Gabriel II ibn Turaikh (1131-1145) it is improbable that only a few years later this papal order would be disregarded (Copt.synaxar, Baramuda 10, P.O. XVI, 300).

However, according to the testimony of medieval visitors also several occidental pilgrims were buried in the Church of St. Sergius. Sultan Muhammad ibn Qala'un an-Nasir (1310-1314) had transferred certain rights and privileges in this church to the Franciscans which they retained for several centuries. Greffin Affagart (1533/34) refers to the “bon seigneur de la Rivière” who was buried in this church²⁸. Brocardi mentioned in a letter dated October 16, 1556 that in this church is the tomb of the Venetian merchant Alfonso Basula²⁹ and Sieur Paul Lucas

25 Cf. the reliquary in the Church of the Virgin, Rod al-Farag, Cairo.

26 Yuhanna, Bishop, St. Bashnuna the monk and martyr. Cairo 1997, 6.

27 HPEC III, 1968, 88; and the Coptic synaxar of Bashons 25, June 1.

28 Affagart, G., Relation de Terre Sainte, Paris 1902, 168.

29 De Villard, Monneret, “Ricerche,” BSRGE XII, 1923, 225.

(1714/1717) knew “that many Franks had been buried there”³⁰. Nevertheless, for the Copts the relics were those of St. Bashnuna which were placed in a wooden tube and placed in a specially constructed shrine at the side-entrance of the church. Some relics were given to Abuna Abd al-Masih Girgis of the Church of St. George, Fum al-Khalig.

St. Simeon (Sama’an) the Pious Tanner

Between the years 1989 and 1991 extensive renovations at the subterranean Church of the Holy Virgin of Babylon ad-Darag in Old Cairo were carried out by the Coptic Church and the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation. In the course of this work it happened on Sunday, August 14, 1991, that relics of St. Simeon the Tanner were discovered 1 m below the surface in the church. The official text of the discovery reads:

The skeleton belongs to a person who died in his late forties or in his early fifties. He is short of stature, small in size, of brilliant and beautiful features. The miraculous wonder is that the hair of his head remained intact and did not disintegrate because of the high humidity of the place. This indicated that his person had a bald head in the front, but had very thick hair in the back of his head that reached down to the back of his neck³¹.

A 19th century icon showing Pope Abraham ibn Zar‘ah the Syrian in the Church of the Holy Virgin al-Mu‘allaqah in Old Cairo includes the bald-headed Tanner carrying two water-jars. The icon depicts some of the characteristics of the discovered skeleton³². Moreover, outside the nearby Church of Sts. Cyrus and John “a clay pot more than one thousand years old was discovered”. It is believed that this vessel belonged to the Tanner Sama’an with which he used to provide water for the needy and destitute. As a relic, this jar is now kept in the new Church of St. Sama’an, Muqattam, Cairo.

In view of the discovery of the relics of this saint, Pope Shenuda III ordered that the body should be divided between three churches only, namely the Church of the Holy Virgin of Babylon ad-Darag, the Church of the Holy Virgin al-Mu‘allaqah, and the Church of St. Sama’an the Tanner, Muqattam, Cairo. On July 9, 1992, Bishop Mattaus of Old Cairo deposited the relics of the saint in the Church of the Holy Virgin of Babylon, two days later they were presented to the other two churches.

30 Lucas, Paul, Voyage I, Paris 1704, 225.

31 Anon., The Biography of Saint Sama’an the Shoemaker “the Tanner,” Cairo 1994, 98.

32 Lambelet, Ed., The Escape to Egypt. Cairo 1993, 40 A.

St. Simeon the Tanner reached fame because of his faith in the omnipotence of God. In the course of a religious dispute, the caliph al-Mu'izz (972-975) asked the patriarch Abraham ibn Zar'ah (975-978) about the truth of the gospel. He asked him: "If one hath faith as a grain of mustard-seed, and he sayest to the mountain: 'Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done'" (Mt 17:20; Mk 11:23). The patriarch agreed that this is the gospel whereupon the caliph demanded to witness this miracle to be performed by his hands otherwise he would destroy the patriarch with his sword. The patriarch requested a delay of three days in which he turned to the Holy Virgin. She advised him to proceed to a one-eyed tanner carrying a jar with water, since at his hands the miracle would be manifested. The patriarch followed the advice of the Holy Virgin and met the tanner. He told the patriarch to prostrate himself three times and make the sign of the cross which the patriarch did. Thereupon the mountain was lifted three times from the ground thus transporting it to the Muqattam hills³³.

Since the 10th century the Copts fast three days prior to the 40 days pre-Christmas fast in commemoration of the miracle of the transfer of the hills to the Muqattam. The pre-Christmas fasting season extends over 43 days beginning on November 25.

St. Bane

Ever since 1987 an international team of archeologists under Professor Helmut Buschhausen (Vienna) excavated the site of Dair Abu Fana, 30 km south of Minya at the edge of the desert near Qasr Hor. While the *vita* of the famous Upper Egyptian saint was known, only the paleopathological examinations could confirm the strange ascetic practices of Apa Bane³⁴. A late 4th/5th cent. ascetic, Apa Bane originated from the village of Abusir near al-Ashmunain (Hermopolia magna). For 18 years he had lived in absolute darkness in a cave. While eating and sleeping he rested his body on a wall because of his *morbis bachterew (spondylitis ankylosans)*. This condition gave him the name Bane or Palm. After the death of Apa Bane a large community of monks emerged. In the 13th century the monastery enjoyed much prestige: two hundred years later, however, only two monks resided there³⁵. Bishop Demetrius of Mallawi translated the relics of Apa Bane from his church at Dair Abu Fana to the Cathedral of Mallawi.

33 HPEC II, ii, 1948, 140-144. Abu'l-Makarim (13th century) places the miracles of the transfer of the mountain to the Muqattam into the reign of al-Aziz bi'allah (975-996). Evetts, B.T.A., op. cit. 117.

34 Gabra, G., "Zur Vita des Bane, eines Heiligen des 4/5. JHS.", BSAC XXIX, 1990, 27-41.

35 Buschhausen, H., "Das Mönchswesen in Abu Fano", Ägypten, Schätze aus dem Wüstensand, etc. Wiesbaden 1996, 65-67.

Yusi, a relative of Jesus Christ

During the restoration of the historic Church of the Holy Virgin in the Upper Egyptian Monastery of al-Muharraq at al-Qusia workmen discovered on October 12, 2000 the tomb of Yusi (sometimes also known as Musa) underneath the threshold of the entrance to the sanctuary. According to the 8th century "Vision of the Patriarch Theophilus" (384-412) Yusi was a blood relative of Joseph, the spouse of the Holy Virgin Mary. An angel had instructed him to proceed from Jerusalem to Upper Egypt to warn the Holy Family of the designs of King Herod. While at the site of the present monastery Yusi died³⁶. On the Feast of the Holy Cross on Tut 17 (September 27) the monks of the Monastery of the Holy Virgin al-Muharraq commemorate the blessings of Yusi.

Coptic Popes and Patriarchs

Seventy-four of the 116 Coptic popes are included as saints in the Coptic synaxar. Until the transfer of the Coptic patriarchate from Alexandria to Cairo in the 12th century most patriarchs were buried in Alexandria either in Bucolia, the Church of the Cave, the Dominicium or the Church of St. Mark, later in the Monastery of St. Macarius, Wadi 'n-Natrun. From the 11th century onwards they were buried in one of the Cairene churches.

Together with the relics of the three Macarii (Sts. Macarius the Great, Macarius the Alexandrian and Macarius of Tkoou) and St. John the Short, ten Coptic patriarchs repose in the choir of the Monastery of St. Macarius in the Wadi 'n-Natrun. They are: Kha'il II (849-51), Kha'il III (880-907), Gabriel I (910-20), Cosmas III (920-32), Macarius I (932-52), Christodoulos (1047-77), Cyril II (1078-92), John V (1147-66), Mark III (1166-89) and John XV (1619-29).

Relics of the following popes and patriarchs are today venerated in several of the Coptic churches in Cairo and Alexandria. Anianas (d. 83) was consecrated by the Evangelist St. Mark. Peter I, (d. 310) was the last of the early martyrs of the church. Athanasius the Great (328-43) served as the most important theologian of the Alexandrian church. Theophilus (384-412) closed all pre-Christian temples (Canopus, etc.), libraries (Museion) and persecuted the pagans (Hypatia). Zacharias (1004-32) suffered during the violent persecutions of the Caliph al-Hakim. John VI. (1189-1216) ascended the pontifical throne as a layman. During his papacy the Copts remember Michael of Damietta and St. Tarfa, an outstanding woman, who built a convent of Abu Nofer (Onuphrius). Michael IV. (1477-78) originally of Samalut, served only for one year and three days. John XII. (1480-83) was one of two patriarchs from the Upper Egyptian Monastery of the Holy Virgin al-Muharraq. His office lasted three years and four months.

36 Mingana, Alphonse, "The Vision of Theophilus, or the Book of the Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt," Bull. John Rylands Library Manchester, 13, 2, 1929, 383-425.

While the popes Anianas, Athanasius and Theophilus were buried in Alexandria; Zacharies, John VI., Michael IV., and John XII were buried in the Church of the Holy Virgin by the Steps of Babylon in Old Cairo, where major excavations were carried out in 1990 and 1991. It is reasonable to assume that in the course of these works relics of the popes were unearthed and transferred to the Church of St. Menas, Fleming, Alexandria.

Coptic “new” Saints

The memory of Coptic “new” martyrs and saints increases with each and every violent outbreak of persecution by fanatic Muslims. Therefore, it is no coincidence that in these days the memory of these witnesses are brought to the attention of the believers. Their relics are venerated in several churches and monasteries. The names are: George al-Muzahim (Ba’una 19, June 26); Michael of Damietta of the Monastery of St. John Kame (1167-1200); Michael at-Tukhi (d. 1837); Sidhom Bishai (1804-44) (Baramhat 17, March 26); Salib or Stauros of Hor (Kihak 3, December 12). The martyrdoms of these men are a reminder of the large number of Copts who have witnessed for their faith from the 7th century to the present day³⁷.

The veneration of the relics of Abuna ‘Abd al-Masih al-Maqari al-Manahra (1892-1963) in the Church of the Holy Virgin at Manshra, those of Abuna Yustus al-Antuni (1910-1976) in the Monastery of St. Antony in the Red Sea Desert and those of Abuna Murqus al-Askiti (1942-1983) in California, USA, should still be seen in terms of a *cultus immemorabilis*, as a kind of popular silent recognition which might be comparable to a *beatificatio aequipollens*.

VI. Foreign Imports

Since the nineties of the 20th century, relics, often symbols of friendly ecumenical relations, were presented by Western donors to Coptic dioceses and parishes. In almost all instances, these relics had either reposed in Roman Catholic churches or monasteries or belonged to collections in Germany, France or Italy.

Many relics of Western saints originated in Venice where since 1204 numerous Christian treasures of Constantinople were collected. After having ascended the imperial throne of the Lombards in Milan on May 26, 1805, Napoleon confiscated the gold, silver and precious stones from the medieval reliquaries. Most of the relics were saved and stored in boxes. Almost all of the relics of Western saints which the Copts acquired during the past 40 years originated from Catholic collections.

With the decisions of the Second Vatican Council several important changes in the valuation of once honored sacred treasures led to generous gifts and transfers to orthodox churches. The head of St. Andrew was translated to Patras (Sept. 26,

37 Meinardus, O., Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity. Cairo 1999, 311-322.

1964), St. Sabas was returned to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem (November 12, 1965), the head of St. Titus was translated from Venice to Crete (May 15, 1966) and relics of St. Mark the Evangelist were presented to the Coptic Church (June 24, 1968).

Biblical Saints

In view of the biblical renaissance in the latter part of the 20th century in may Coptic parishes, Coptic churches have acquired relics of New Testament personages, disciples and apostles. These include those of St. Anne, the mother of the Holy Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, spouse of the Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist St. Stephen the first martyr, Sts. Mary, Martha and Lazarus of Bethany, the Apostles James Zebedaeus, James Alphaeus, Thomas, Bartholomew, Timothy, John, Mark, Luke, Barnabas, Peter and Paul. While the persons are historical, their relics should be assigned to medieval or modern identifications.

The Holy Innocents of Bethlehem

Altogether new in many Coptic churches in Cairo Alexandria and in Upper Egypt are since 2001 small tubes, covered with precious velvet and silk, containing the relics of the holy Innocents of Bethlehem. For many Copts these highly esteemed relics are testimonies of the biblical events that led to the flight of the Holy Family to Lower and Upper Egypt.

For medieval European Christians the veneration of the holy Innocents of Bethlehem (Mt 2:8-18) was always one of their important devotions. Relics of the holy Innocents are found in almost all Catholic centers in Rome (S. Paolo ex m., S. Maria Magg.); Padua (S. Giustina); Bologna (Franciscan Ch.); Au nr.Einsiedeln; Cologne (Franciscan Ch.); Vienna (St. Stephen); Lissabon (Cathedral); Milano (Cathedral) and in innumerable reliquaries throughout Germany, Austria, Italy, France, etc.

In the 6th century, relics of the children reposed in the basilica of David outside of Bethlehem. Later they were moved to the Milk-Grotto on the road to Beth Sahur. during the crusader-period the relics found a permanent place in some of the caves beneath the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem³⁸. In orthodox traditions, the number of the holy Innocents of Bethlehem varies between 14,000 (Greek and Russian) and 144,000 children according to the Coptic synaxar of Tuba 3 or January 11. The prophet Micah had clearly described Bethlehem as “little among the clans of Judah” (5:2) and John called Bethlehem a village (7:42), which means that Bethlehem and the immediate environment (Mt 2:16) had considerably less than 1000 inhabitants!

For the European pilgrims of the 14th – 17th century to the Holy Land a visit to Bethlehem was considered an absolute requirement. There the nobles had a

38 Kopp, C., Die heiligen Stätten der Evangelien. Regensburg 1959, 74-85.

chance to poke about in the dust by candlelight hoping to find at least a portion of one of those many thousand bodies of the holy Innocents which were believed to be of special spiritual value³⁹. One of the German knights, so Frater Felix Fabri (1483), approached the Calinus (chief dragoman) with an offer of 100 ducats for an entire body. However, after the pilgrims had learned that the sultan Qáit Bey had reserved for himself the monopoly of the holy Innocents, the nobles decided to acquire a child in Cairo. There the dead bodies of young or stillborn children were procured where Saracens and Mamluks slash them with knives, embalm their bodies and sold them to Christian princes and wealthy people⁴⁰. Thus many of the relics of the Bethlehem children were presented to churches and monasteries north of the Alps while others were stored in Venice. In 1980 the Coptic Church instituted a Coptic Orthodox Cultural Center in Venice. From Catholic friends in Venice the Coptic Metropolitan Marcos of the Coptic Church in France received many relics which he subsequently presented to Coptic churches and dioceses in Egypt⁴¹.

The Martyrs of Najran

For most Copts, the 7th century martyrs of Najran, Southern Arabia (Yéman), are totally unfamiliar, since they were either Nestorians or Byzantine Christians (dyophysites). Today relics of the Najran martyrs repose in the Church of the Holy Virgin in the Monastery of al-Baramus (Wadi 'n-Natron) and in several Coptic churches in Cairo and Alexandria. Arethas and 400 nobles of the martyropolis of Najran were decapitated around 620 by the Jewist Himyarite king Dhu-Nuwas 42). The Greek Orthodox Church commemorates the martyrs of Nejran on October 24 and some of their relics repose in Greek Orthodox Monasteries in Cyprus, on Mount Athos and in several monasteries in Kalavrita, Aigialia, etc.⁴³.

Byzantine Church-fathers

The relics of the four Byzantine church-fathers, Sts. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostomus are foreign imports, although they are included as saints in the Coptic synaxar. The relics of St. Modestus of Jerusalem are venerated in several Coptic churches. It is noteworthy that the relics of the theologian Clement of Alexandria (2nd.cent.) are venerated in the Church of St. Menas, Fleming, Alexandria, although he is not a Coptic saint!

39 The wanderings of Falix Fabri (Fr. A. Stewart), PPTS VIII, 1892-97, 565.

40 Ibid., 566.

41 Letter from H.E. Metropolitan Marcos of June 4, 2002 from Centre Culturel Copte Orthodoxe, 6548 Castello, 30122 Venezia.

42 Shahid, I., The Martyrs of Najran. New Documents. Brussels 1971. Papatanssiou, Athanassios N., "Christian Missions in Pre-Islamic South Arabia," Theologia, Athens, A, 1994, 133-140.

43 Meinardus, O., "A study of the Relics of the Greek Orthodox Church", Oriens Christianus 54, 1970, 145.

Latin Saints

The relics of all Latin martyrs and saints were gifts from various Roman Catholic churches to Coptic parishes or monasteries during the past forty years. They include those of St. Augustine and his mother St. Monica and the saints Sebastian, Agatha, Agnes and Lucia.

An Inventory of the new Coptic Saints

This list includes the relics of those Coptic saints that did not appear in my inventory of 1966. (Following abbreviations are used: A = Alexandria; C = Cairo; OC = Old Cairo; BVM = Blessed Virgin Mary; G = George; M = Mark; Mn = Menas; Mr = Hercurius)

Agathon Stylites (Tut 14, Sept. 24)

As an ascetic, he spent ten years in Scetis and fifty years on a column in Sakha (7th cent.).

BVM, Sakha.

Abra'am of the Fayyum (Ba'una 3, June 10)

Popular bishop (1829-1914) of the Fayyum, Mausoleum, Dair al-Azab, Fayyum.

Akhmim Martyrs (Tuba 1, January 9)

Said to be martyrs of the 4th century. Their relics are widely distributed in many dioceses and parishes throught Egypt.

Anianus (Hatur 20, November 29)

Second patriarch of Alexandria, consecrated by St. Mark. Mn, A; Cyrus and John, Abukir; M, Shubra, C; Mn, A; etc.

Antinoë Martyrs (Mihak 28, January 6)

Martyrs of the 4th century, 150 men, 24 women. John, Abu Hinnis; BVM Damshiriya, C.

Apa Bane the Ascetic (Amshir 6, February 4)

Founder of Dair Abu Fana West of Minya, 4th cent. Cathedral, Minya.

Apa Fis (Only in the Psalmodia)

BVM, Mu'allaqa, OC.

Apa Hor the Ascetic (Mihak 2, December 11)

BVM Mu'allaqa, OC; Mn, A.

Apa Klog the Ascetic (Colluthus) (Ba'una 20, June 17)

Unmercenary physician, martyr, 4th century.

Apa Klog, al-Fant, south of Bani Suef.

Apa Nub of Nahisa (Abib 24, July 31)

A youth who suffered martyrdom. Apa Nub, Sauaquad, , Sharqiya, Mn, A.

Apip and Apollo (Baba 25, November 4)

Ascetic and martyrs, 4th cent. Mn, A; George & Barbara, OC; Dair Samwil, Qulamun.

Athanasius, 20th Patriarch (328-73) Bashans 7, May 15)

Fourth cent. theologian and church-father.

M, Abbasiya, C; Menas and Raphael, C; BVM Damshiriya, C; Abraham, Shubra, C; BVM and Bishoi, Attaba, C; BVM, Massara, C; George, OC; Mn, A; Athanasius, Damanhur, etc.

Barnabas the Apostle (Kihak 21, December 30)

He went to Cyprus where he suffered martyrdom (Acts 14:6-15; 15:39).

M, Shubra, C.

Barsum the Naked (Nasi 5, September 10)

He lived for many years in the crypt of the Church of St. Mercurius, OC, later on a heap of dust and ashes at Ma'sara, he died 1317.

Cathedral Ma'sara.

Bartholomew the Apostle (Tut 1, September 11)

He preached in Mesopotamia, Arabia, India, later in al-Kharga Oasis.

Mr, OC.

Bashnuna (Bashans 24, June 1)

As monk of the Monastery of St. Macarius he suffered martyrdom in 1164. Sts. Sergius and Bacchus, OC.

Basil the Great (Tut 13, September 23)

One of the Byzantine doctors of the Church.

M, Shubra, C; "Patmos", C; Mn, A.

Besa (Misra 6, August 12)

Successor of St. Shenuda in the White Monastery, Sohag.

St. Shenuda, OC.

Bisada (Tuba 24, February 1)

Martyr of the 4th cent. St. Bisada, al-Abaiwn Sharq, Sohag; St. Misail, Dair Samwil, Qalamun.

Claudius (Ba'una 11, June 18)

He was one of the equestrian warrior-saints of the Basilides cycle, who suffered martyrdom in the 4th century.

Mn, A.

Cosmas and Damian (Hatur 22, December 1)

They were popular unmercenary physicians who suffered martyrdom in the 4th century.

Cosmas and Damian, Manyal Shiha, Giza; BVM Mu'allaqa, C; Mr, OC; M, Shubra, C; BVM Damshiriya, OC; Mn, Fum al-Khalig, C; Mn, A.

Demetrius (Baba 29, November 8)

Demetrius of Thesalonica suffered martyrdom in the 4th century.

Mn, A.

Dioscorus and Asclepius of Akhmim (Tuba 1, January 9)

Shenuda, OC; BVM Umraniyam Giza; Mn, A.

Elisha, 9th cent. B.C. Prophet (Ba'una 20, June 27)

Monastery of St. Macarius, Wadi 'n-Natrun.

Epiphanius (Bifam), Bashana 17, May 25)

Served as bishop of Cyprus.

BVM Mu'allaqa, OC; Mn, A.

Esther of Akhmim

One of the Akhmim martyrs.

Mn, A.

Euphrosyne

G, Harat Zuwaila, C; Mn, A.

Fayyum Martyrs (Misra 26, September 1)

The relics were discovered in the fall of 1991 and widely distributed in many dioceses and parishes throughout Egypt.

George of Alexandria (Hatur 7, November 17)

Martyr of the 4th century persecutions.

BVM Umraniya, Giza; Mn, A

George al-Muzahim (Ba'una 19, June 26)

He was beheaded in Damira 959.

Apā Nub, Samannud; Dair Sitt Damiana, Bilqas; Mn, A.

Gregory of Nazianzus (Hatur 21, November 30)

He is one of the doctors of the Byzantine church.

“Patmos” Church, C.

Gregory of Nyssa (Baba 17, October 27)

He is one of the doctors of the Byzantine church.

M, Shubra, C.

Helena, Queen (Bashans 9, May 17)

As pilgrim to the Middle East she is believed to have built many churches in Egypt.

Dair Sitt Damiana, Bilqas.

Heraclides

Before his martyrdom in the 4th century, he blessed Julius of Aqfahs.

Cathedral Mallawi.

Innocents of Bethlehem (Tuba 3, January 11)

In the Coptic tradition they are the 144,000 who “have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste” (Rev. 14:4).

Shenuda, OC; BVM Damshiriya, OC; George and Barbara, Dahab, OC; Abraham, C; BVM and Bishoi, Attaba, C; BVM Daqadus; G Ishnin an-Nasara; Mn, A.

Issac of Tiphre (Bashans 6, May 14)

A thaumaturgus and martyr during the 4th century persecutions.

BVM Mu‘allaqa, OC.

Isidore (Ba'una 24, July 21)

As presbyter he took Moses the Black to St. Macarius.

Dair al-Baramus, Wadi ‘n-Natrun.

Iskhiron of Qallin (Ba'una 7, June 14)

Together with Alphanus, Armanius, Arcias, Peter and Cyriacos Iskhiron suffered martyrdom in Antinöe during the Diocletian persecution.

BVM Mu'allaqa, OC; BVM Harat ar-Rum, C; Mn, A; Dair Samwil, Qalamun.

James Alphaeus (Amshir 10, February 12)

He was killed during the reign of Claudius, who ordered him to be stoned to death. M, Shubra, C.

James Zebedaeus (Baramuda 17, April 25)

Brother of the Evangelist and Apostle John, was decapitated by Herod Agrippa in 44 (Acts 12:2). Since 820 his relics are venerated in Compostela, Spain.

Mr, OC.

James the Sawn-Asunder (Hatur 27, December 6)

As member of the royal guard he witnessed to King Sapur of Persia and was subsequently cut into 32 pieces.

Mr, OC; Mn, A; Dair as-Surian, Wadi 'n-Natrun.

John the Baptist (Tut 2, September 12)

The precursor of Christ was decapitated by Herod Antipas (Mt 14:1-12). Dair Abu Maqar, Wadi 'n-Natrun; Abraham, Shubra, C.

John Chrysostomus (Bashans 12, May 20)

One of the four 4th century doctors of the church.

BVM Damshiriya, OC: Abraham, Shubra, C; Mn, A.

John the Evangelist (Bashans 16, May 24)

According to Coptic tradition, he wrote the Gospel, the three letters and the Apocalypse.

BVM Damshiriya, OC: BVM Massara, Shubra, C; Abraham, Shubra, C.

John of Heraclea

Christian officer suffered martyrdom in the 4th century.

BVM Mu'allaqa, OC: BVM Damshiriya, OC; BVM Umraniya, Giza; Mn, A.

Joseph, Spouse of the Holy Virgin (Abib 26, August 2)

Joseph the Just died at the age of 111.

Mr, OC.

Julius of Aqfahs (Tut 22, Octobe 2)

Officer and author of many martyrologies, killed at Samannud in the 4th century.

Shenuda, OC: BVM, Umraniya, C: Mn, A.

Lazarus (Bashans 27, June 4)

Brother of Mary and Martha of Bethany, bishop of Larnaca, Cyprus.
BVM and Bishoi, Attaba, C; M, Shubra, C.

Lucas I, Bishop of Manfalut and Abnub, 1932

Mn, A.

Lucas II, Bishop of Manfalut and Abnub, 1965

Mn, A.

Lucia of Syracuse

Martyr of the Diocletian persecution in Syracuse, Sicily.
Diar Mari Girgis, OC.

Luke the Evangelist (Baba 22, November 1)

He was one of the 70, author of the Gospel. He suffered martyrdom under Nero.
Mn, A.

Martha of Egypt (Ba'una 3, June 10)

Formerly a prostitute, she became an ascetic and lived for 25 years in the wilderness.
BVM and Bishoi, Attaba, C.

Mary the Armenian (Misra 27, September 2)

She suffered martyrdom during the persecutions of Baybars, 15th cent.
Mn, A.

Maryut Martyrs

George and Barbara, Dahab, OC; Mn, A.

Maurice (Tut 12, September 22)

Commander of the Theban Legion, killed in the 4th century at Agaunum (St. Noritz), Switzerland.
BLESS, Dair Anba Ruwais, C; BV Rod al-Farag, C; M, Shubra, C; BVM Damshiriya, OC; Mn, A.

Mikhail al-Bukhari (Amshir 16, February 23)

One of the most popular Upper Egyptian saints of Dair al-Muharraq, 1847-1923.
Dair al-Muharraq; G, Ishnin an-Masara; Cyril, Nag' Hammadi; BVM, Harat Zuwaila, C; Shenuda, OC; M, Maryut; Dair al-Azab, Fayyum; BVM Damshiriya, OC; George and Bishoi, Dahab, OC; BVM Umraniya, Giza; Mn, A.

Mikhail at-Tukhi (Kihak 30, January 8)

Suffered martyrdom on January 8, 1837.

BVM Nunnery, Harat Zuwaila, C.

Modestus of Jerusalem

Byzantine patriarch of Jerusalem d. 637

M, Shubra, C.

Moses the Black (Ba'una 24, July 1)

Once a robber, he was converted and joined the monks under Isidore in the Wadi 'n-Natrun.

Dair as-Surian; Dair al-Baramus, Wadi 'n-Natrun; Apa Nub, Samannud.

Najran Martyrs

Seventh century martyrs of Southern Arabia, Yemen.

BVM Damshiriya, OC; M, Shubra, C; Dair al-Baramus, Wadi 'n-Natrun; Mn, A

Onuphrius (Hatur 16, November 25)

Fourth century ascetic of the inner desert, discovered by Paphnutius.

BVM Mu'allaqa, OC; , Dair Amir Tadrus, Harat ar-Rum, C.

Peter and Paul, Apostles (Abib 5, July 12)

Cathedral, Tanta; M, Heliopolis, C; Abraham, Shubra, C; Michael, Daher, C; ,

BVM and Bishoi, Attaba, C; M, Shubra, C.

Paul the Simple (Amshir 2, February 9)

A disciple of Antony the Great.

Mn, A

Peter the Last Martyr (Hatur 29, December 8)

Known as the "Seal of the martyrs", he was the 17th patriarch.

Apa Nub, Samannud; M, Shubra, C; BVM Damshiriya, OC; George and Barbara,

Dahab, OC; Mn, A

Phoebammon (Ba'una 1, June 8)

A 4th century soldier, killed in Asyut.

BVM Damshiriya, OC; G, Harat Zuwaila, C; Dair al-Baramus, Wadi 'n-Natrun;

BVM, Umraniya, Giza; Mn, A

Rebecca and her sons (Tut 7, September 17)

Natives of Mamuniya near Qus, they suffered martyrdom in Lower Egypt.

Dair Mari Girgis, OC; Dair Mari Girgis, Harat Zuwaila, C; Rebecca, Sunbat;

Mn, A.

Salib (Stauros) (Kihak 3, December 12)

A new martyr killed during the Islamic period.

BVM Shentana al-Hagar; BVM Harat Zuwaila, C; BVM Damshiriya, OC; BVM Ezbet al-Aziz, Minufiya; G, Shubra al-Khema, C; George and Barbara, Dahab, OC; Dair al-Baramus, Wadi 'n-Natrun; Mn, A

Sama'an the Tanner (Abib 28, August 4)

He advised Pope Abraham the Syrian (10th century) to pray for the moving of the mountain to the Muqattam (Mt 17:20).

BVM Mu'allaqa, OC; BVM Steps of Babylon, OC; Simeon, Muqattam, C; BVM Umraniya, Giza; George and Bishoi, Dahab, OC.

Severus of Antioch (Amshir 14, February 21)

As leading opponent of the Council of Chalcedon (451) he found refuge in Egypt. In Constantinople, he was protected by the empress Theodora. He died in 539. He was a Syrian Orthodox patriarch.

BVM Sakha; Dair as-Surian, Wadi 'n-Natrun.

Simeon the Armenian (Baramuda 19, April 27)

As bishop of Persia he was beheaded by Shapur. He died at the age of 127.

Mr OC; Mn A.

Simeon Stylites (Misra 3, August 9)

A stylite who spent 15 years on a column in northern Syria.

Mn, A.

Stephen the first martyr (Tuba 1, January 9)

Archdeacon who suffered martyrdom through stoning (Acts 6 and 7)

Mn, A.

Takla Haymanot (Misra 24, August 20)

Medieval Ethiopian national saint.

Barbara OC; M. Shubra, C; Mr OC; BVM Rod al-Farag, C; Mn, A.

Theban Martyrs

They belongs to the Theban Legion that suffered martyrdom in the Rhine Valley in Switzerland and Germany.

M. Shubra, C.

Theophilus (Baba 18, October 28)

The 23rd Patriarch, major theologian and apologist, condemned the heresies of Origen.

M. Shubra, C.

Thomas the Apostle (Bashans 26, June 3)

Patron saint of the Syrian Orthodox, received the girdle of the BVM at her assumption.

BVM and Bishoi, Attaba, C.

Thomas of Shanshif (Bashans 27, July 24)

Ascetic east of Akhmim, contemporary with Shenuda the archimandrite.

Shenuda OC; BVM Rod al-Farag, C; M Shubra, C; George and Barbara, Dahab, OC; BVM Ezbet al-Asig, Minufiya; Dair Mari Girgis OC; Mn A.

Timothy (Tuba 23, January 31)

He was one of the 70 disciples and received two letters from Paul.

M Shubra, C.

Verena (Misra 26, Sept 1)

Member of the Theban Legion, she was killed in Zurzach, Switzerland.

BVM Damshirya, OC; Pontifical Chapel, Anba Ruwais, C.

Zacharias (Amshir 21, February 28)

Seventh century bishop of Sakha for 30 years

BVM Sakha.

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THE PRIEST WHO OFFERS THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE*

Rodolph Yanney

- *For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified (Heb 10:14).*
- *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1Tim 2:5).*
- *The inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 6:19, 20).*
- *Melchizedek offered bread and wine, the consecrated food, as a type of the Eucharist (St. Clement of Alexandria, Stromata 4:25).*

If the Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Cross are one and the same sacrifice, then the priest has to be the same. No human priest can offer the Lord's Body as a Sacrifice; "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (Jn 10:17, 18). The sole Priest who has the authority to do that is our Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly High Priest. None of the Fathers in the early Church taught otherwise. After reading all the available teachings of the Fathers before the Council of Nicaea (AD 325), with the exception of a few sermons by Origen, Gregory Dix wrote: There is no pre-Nicene author Eastern or Western whose Eucharistic doctrine is at all fully stated, who does not regard the offering and consecration of the Eucharist as the present action of our Lord himself, the Second Person of the Trinity. And in the overwhelming majority of writers it is made clear that their whole conception revolves around the figure of the High priest in the altar in heaven.¹

**This article is taken from a chapter from a book on the Eucharist, that is under print by the same author.*

1 Dix G: Shape of the Liturgy, Op Cit, 252.253

As a witness to this doctrine, Dix gave many examples from patristic writings² and the earliest liturgies including the Egyptian liturgy of St. Serapion. St. Clement of Rome in the first century describes Christ as “the High Priest of our offering.”³

But the Church, the Body of Christ, is not separate from him when He offers the Eucharist, as Dix explains further, “The “action” of the earthly Church in the Eucharist only manifests within time the eternal act of Christ as the heavenly High priest at the altar before the throne of God, perpetually pleading his accomplished and perpetual sacrifice.”⁴

The same teaching prevails in the Golden Age of the Fathers in the fourth and fifth centuries. In the Homilies on Hebrews, St. John Chrysostom asserts, “We have our Victim in heaven, our Priest in heaven, and our Sacrifice in heaven.”⁵ Also, in his Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew, he insists that the Lord Jesus is the Maker of every Eucharist: “This table is the same as that, and has nothing less. For it is not so that Christ wrought that, and man this, but He does this too. This is that upper chamber, where they were then; and hence they went forth unto the Mount of Olives.”⁶

Again in his homilies on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Chrysostom asks, “But how says [the apostle], that “he received it from the Lord” since certainly he was not present then but was one of the persecutors? That you may know that the first table had no advantage above that which cometh after it. For even to-day also it is He who does all, and delivers it even as then.”⁷ He also says in his Homilies on Hebrews:

“By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant.” He lays down two points of difference, that it has no end as the [covenant] of the Law had and this he proves from [its being] Christ who exercises [the priesthood]; for he says “according to the power of an endless life.” And he proves it also from the oath, because “He swore,” and from the fact; for if the other was cast out, because it was weak, this stands firm, because it is powerful. He proves it also from the priest. How? Because He is One [only]; and there would not have been One [only], unless He had been immortal. For as there were many priests, because they were mortal, so [here is] The One, because He is immortal. “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant,” inasmuch as He swore to Him that He should always be [Priest]; which He would not have done, if He were not living.”⁸

2 From the West, Letter of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (36, 61), Justin (Dialogue with Trypho 117,118), Irenaeus (Against Heresies 4:18) Tertullian (Against Marcion 4:9). And from the Eastern Fathers he mentioned Clement of Alexandria (Stromata 4: 25), Polycarp (Letter to the Philippians: 12).

3 1 Clement 36:1

4 Dix C, Op Cit, 251

5 Heb. Homilies 17:3 (quoted from Dix, op. cit., 252).

6 NPNF, Series I, vol. 10, Hom. 82: 5.

7 Ibid., vol. 12, Hom. 27:5

8 Chrysostom: Hebrew Homilies: 13: 5). NPNF, second series, vol 14: 429.

St. Augustine says in his exposition of Psalm 133:2:

Like ointment on the head, which ran down upon the beard of that Aaron' By the Priest Aaron, that Priest is indicated who alone fulfils the Sacrament of the true High Priest, not with a victim of another kind, but in the oblation of his own body and blood: same Priest, same Victim, Propitiator and Propitiation . . . Who died, was buried, and rose again. He ascended into heaven, exalting human nature above every other name; and sending the Holy Spirit, whose unction would penetrate every Church.⁹

In its introduction to the “Prayer of the Fraction,” the Coptic Liturgy of St. Gregory the Theologian speaks within the same ancient tradition when it addresses Christ as the sole Priest in the whole Eucharistic Action:

Thou who didst then bless, bless also now.

Thou who didst then sanctify, sanctify also now.

Thou who didst then break, break also now.

Thou who didst then give to thy holy disciples and pure Apostles,

Give now, O our Lord, the Almighty Lord our God, to us also, and to all thy people.

Role of the Clergy in the Mystery

If Christ our Lord is the Priest who offers the Eucharist, then what is the role of the earthly priest, the bishop or the presbyter, who leads the Liturgy?

From the *Didache* (The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles) and the Letter of St. Clement of Rome in the first century and the writings of St. Justin Martyr in the second century, we know that there is a “president” or “presider” who leads the prayers of the Eucharist. Early in the second century, St. Ignatius of Antioch insists that no Eucharist can be done without the presence of the bishop. The consecration of bishops and presbyters is an apostolic tradition that comes in several places of the New Testament, and their presiding over the Eucharistic Prayer is evident in the ancient liturgies.

⁹ Translated in Jurgrns WA: *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vol. 3: 194. The Liturgical Press.

The earthly priest is the visible icon of Christ who leads the Church in the liturgy, and whom we know no more in the flesh (2 Cor 5:16). While on the one hand the priest says the words of consecration that the Lord said in the Last Supper, on the other hand he leads the Church in her prayers before God. In the Orthodox Church, the priest cannot serve the Liturgy or offer the Eucharist alone, without a congregation. His words in the liturgy are always in the plural.¹⁰ The Orthodox theologian Father Nicholai Athnasiouf clarifies this, and affirms that the earthly priest does not replace Christ:

Eucharist is the Lord's Banquet. Thus, beside the president, there must be those over whom he presides. While the president, i. e. bishop or presbyter, takes the place of Christ at the Last Supper, yet he does not replace Christ for no one can really take the place of Christ. No man is able to fill the place or the service of the Son of God. He is always present "at his table with his friends."¹¹

Yet some later Fathers and theologians, especially in the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages, have gradually used statements that are not theologically accurate to reflect that the human priest consecrates or offers the Eucharist by himself. Such teachings have not been restricted to theological works, but were common even in spiritual books.¹² Even some have infiltrated into works by authors in Orthodox churches.

Liturgical scholars in most churches now acknowledge the teaching that our Lord is the true Priest in the Eucharist as it had been evident to the Church Fathers in the early centuries. Even the Roman Catholic Church herself has returned to the ancient tradition that says, "The Eucharistic sacrifice is the same as the unique sacrifice of Jesus. In both Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the true priest and the victim The ordained priest is only a sacrament of the one, true priest."¹³

10 When the singular is used at times in the Liturgy of St. Gregory, it does not refer to the person of the priest but to all humankind

11 Nicholai Athnasiouf: *The Table of the Lord*, p. 75-76 of the Arabic Translation (Lebanon).

12 An example is *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, one of the best and very useful classics of Western spirituality. Book 4 deals only with the Eucharist and contains inspiring meditations and prayers that are of great benefit. The reader can benefit much from such books if he is alert and careful to avoid unorthodox doctrines in them.

13 Kenan Osborne, O.F.M.: *Sacramental Guidelines*, Paulist Press, 1995, p. 85.

MINA RODOLPH YANNEY

Born in Assiut, Egypt, 18 October 1963; came with family to America in 1968; departed 11 February 2004

POETRY

By George Bebawi

Now Mina is drinking the cup of life

My friend, I have never seen your temporary face
It is like all those we see every day
Under it is hidden that new face
that was seen by God before the creation of the world
illness and time peel it out
fear and longing to preserve what we have
hide that eternal face.

Like a boat, which disappears in the far horizon!!
taking away years and dreams,
saying goodbye to all
it is time to travel alone.

He has gone but his traces are in us,
he left his face and long standing memory,
to encourage us
to do the same, the same.

Death can not fight love
Love can fight all
Our love and his love is more free
Now we all own his life
Now he is free from time,
Death even let go of him.

Tears are our constant baptism
water comes from the divine spring
the same one that was promised by Jesus
the same one which He had
it flowered the grave of Lazarus
the fading rose came back to life.
From the tears of Jesus
comes the spring of life
till all wash away their mortality
Jesus will shed His tears.

continued on next page

Jesus weeps whenever any of His friends sleep
 He wanted to see him or her complete
 Love without a body is incomplete
 It lacks hands, lips and feet
 Without a body, love is not incarnate
 Without the incarnation, love is not divine
 It lacks the longing and the erotic waiting
 the watching of roads and time
 the looking into hiding places
 the hug that quench the dry lips
 See wise ones how His love is also human
 ask why did Jesus give His body?
 Why Jesus put his blood in the Cup?
 Tell me if you have ever loved
 Union is not just by words.

Now Mina is drinking the cup of life
 this Cup has no interval of time
 The true fragrance of Paradise fills your chest
 Yes, your chest is now your understanding
 Until you get a new one,
 that one that can receive the Breath of Life
 your heart did not stop
 for our true heart is our faith
 your pulse is now heavenly praise
 your hands are your free will
 you have been established in Christ
 this is where your feet belong.

In this life, we measure things
 We think we know it all
 We even say who will go to hell
 Who will inherit the kingdom
 We think that judgment makes us gods
 But the throne of the true God is love.

Dr. George Bebawi is Director of Studies, Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, Cambridge, UK. He wrote this poem in sympathy for the untimely departure of Mina, son of Dr. Rodolph and Mrs. Marie Yanney, Pennsylvania. With grace and courage, Mina struggled with intestinal lymphoma, a rare type of cancer, for four years.

2004 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, 8 - *CHRISTMAS*

**January 15 - *Circumcision of Our Lord*

****January 19 - *Paramoni (1)*

*January 20 - *EPIPHANY*

**January 22 - *First Miracle of Our Lord at Cana*

***January 30 - *Dormition of Virgin Mary*

****February 2 - *Fast of Nineveh (3)*

**February 16 - *Entrance of Our Lord into the Temple*

****February 16 - *Great Lent (55)*

March 19 - *Feast of the Cross*

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

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

*April 7 - *ANNUNCIATION (Not celebrated in the
holy week)*

**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 11 - *Coptic New Year's Day
(Feast of the Martyrs)*

September 27 - *Feast of Appearance of the Cross*

****November 25 - *Christmas Fast (43)*

***December 12 - *Presentation of Virgin Mary into the
Temple*