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• *Deification in St. Athanasius*

• *Sources of Authority in the Koinonia*



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# ***A RECONSIDERATION OF THE USE OF THE TERM ‘DEIFICATION’ IN ATHANSIUS***

*Nathan K. K. Ng\**

In 1980, K. E. Norman composed a doctoral thesis emphasising the importance of the deification in the soteriology of Athanasius.<sup>1</sup> Several years later, in an international conference on patristic studies, C. R. Strange supported this view and commended that the Alexandrian bishop had handled this concept properly.<sup>2</sup> Such attitude was followed and the topic was further developed by J. R. Meyer in the early 1990s.<sup>3</sup> However, around the same time, H. Hess argued that deification was not the central issue in Athanasius’ theology.<sup>4</sup> What are the problems behind this controversy? A detailed analysis of these works will show that the key issue is about the use and interpretation of the term ‘deification’ (θεοποίησις).

## ***A. The Historical Background of Deification***

The deification of man is one of the fundamental themes of patristic thought, largely in the Greek Church.<sup>5</sup> Although some use the term ‘divinisation’ (θέωσις), most earlier church fathers use ‘deification’ (θεοποίησις, *deificatio*) to denote the idea that human beings, by grace, become partakers of the

\* Dr. Nathan Ng has Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh and is Assistant Professor at the Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary.

1 Cf. K. E. Norman, ‘Deification: the Content of Athanasian Soteriology,’ Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1980.

2 Cf. C. R. Strange, ‘Athanasius on Divinization,’ *Studia Patristica* 16 (1985): 342-346.

3 Cf. J. R. Meyer, ‘Saint Athanasius on Divinization,’ D.Th. diss., Universidad de Navarra, 1991.

4 Cf. H. Hess, ‘The Place of Divinization in Athanasian Soteriology,’ *Studia Patristica* 26 (1991): 369-374.

5 The doctrine of deification seems to be more important and central for the eastern fathers than the western. As Balás has said, ‘In the west, the terminology and doctrine of *deificatio* were important also from the beginning of Latin theology, though not as central as in the Greek fathers.’ Cf. D. L. Balás, ‘Divinization,’ *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. E. Ferguson, 2nd ed. (New York and London, 1997), vol. 1, pp.338-340.

divine nature in Christ.<sup>6</sup> As B. Studer observed, its relevant vocabulary had undergone a considerable evolution. Θεοποίησις and its various forms appeared only from the time of Clement of Alexandria. Under the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius, θέωσις gradually became more important. The equivalent Latin terms *deificare* and *deificatio* only obtained a rather modest importance in the fifth century. The reality itself was frequently expressed by many other words, both Greek and Latin, like ἀφθαρσία, μέθεξις, κοινωνία, ἕνωσις, ὑψωσις, *glorificatio*, and *profectus ad Deum*.<sup>7</sup>

In parallel with this vocabulary, the idea of deification has also undergone long historical development. In ancient Roman culture, there was a custom of regarding emperors and heroes as gods after their death, which was extended to their lifetime from the time of Domitian.<sup>8</sup> However, this pagan custom, as D. L. Balás has noted, manifested only a terminological similarity without deeper influence on the Christian doctrine. The principal influence here came from the Greek definition of deity as possessing immortality, so that the promise of receiving immortality in Christ was expressed by the idea of deification.<sup>9</sup> In certain extent, the idea of deification (θεοποίησις) may be said to have originated from the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, the first human couple was created in the image and likeness of God.<sup>10</sup> Individuals having an especially intimate relation with God such as Moses, Elijah and Elisha were called 'man of God.'<sup>11</sup> In the New Testament, the divine Λόγος became man in order to save human beings from the terrible consequence of sin. Through His saving works, men by grace might partake in the Spirit,<sup>12</sup> become sons of God,<sup>13</sup> and anticipate the future divine glory.<sup>14</sup> In 2 Peter 1:4, believers are spoken of being able to become 'partakers of the divine nature' (θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως). After quoting Psalm 82:6, Jesus affirmed that those who had received ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ might be called 'gods' (θεοί).<sup>15</sup> All these are important themes constituting the Christian concept of deification.<sup>16</sup>

6 Although pagan religions had similar themes, such as deification of heroes by the attaining of divine status, long ago, it seems that the real sources of the doctrine of deification are found in the Scriptures, such as 2 Pt. 1:4. Cf. Balás, 'Divinization,' p.338.

7 Cf. B. Studer, 'Divinization,' *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. A. D. Berardino, tr. A. Walford (Cambridge, 1992), vol. 1, p.242.

8 The term they often used is ἀποθέωσις. Cf. 'Apotheosis,' *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1997), p.92.

9 Cf. Balás, 'Divinization,' p.338.

10 Cf. Gen. 1:26-27.

11 E.g. Moses (Deut. 33:1; Jos. 14:6), Elijah (2 Kg. 1:9-13), Elisha (2 Kg. 4:1-44), and other servants of God (1 Sam. 9:7-10; 1 Kg. 13:1-34).

12 Cf. Jn. 14:15-31, 16:7-15.

13 Cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5-7.

14 Cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Jn. 3:1-3.

15 Cf. Jn. 10:34-35.

16 For a discussion of the biblical foundation of deification, see P. B. T. Bilanink, 'The Mystery of Theosis or Divinization,' *The Heritage of the Early Church*, ed. D. Neiman and M. Schatkin (Rome, 1973), pp.342-347.

In the early Christian Church, the concept of deification continued to develop in terms of themes like intimate union with God, the divine gift of immortality and participation in the heavenly glory. In his epistle to the Ephesians, Ignatius persuaded the recipients to act together in harmony with the bishop so that God might acknowledge that they were members of his Son and that they might be in perfect unity (ἐν ἀμώμῳ ἐνότητι) with and have a share in God (θεοῦ μετέχητε).<sup>17</sup> Besides, he also pictures the Eucharist as the medicine of immortality (φάρμακον ἀθανασίας), which enables believers to live forever in Jesus Christ.<sup>18</sup> When quoting Psalm 82:6, Justin Martyr asserts that the human race may become children of God (θεοῦ τέκνα).<sup>19</sup> In Theophilus, the idea and terminology of deification were further developed. For him, immortality is a reward for keeping the commandments of God.<sup>20</sup> In his famous dogmatic treatise *Adversus Haereses*, Irenaeus also discussed in detail the concept of Christians' becoming divine by communion with God.<sup>21</sup>

In the Eastern Church, although Clement used the term θεοποίησις repeatedly in a negative sense, such as the making of idols, the positive sense expressing the process of Christian perfection also appeared several times in his writings.<sup>22</sup> He sees deification as a process where man rises from disbelief (ἄπιστία), through faith (πίστις) and knowledge (γνώσις), to love (ἀγάπη).<sup>23</sup> The incarnate Λόγος for Clement has two major functions. On the one hand, He bestows a new life to every believer, which begins the process of deification. On the other hand, He also manifests God on earth such that believers may know through His model how to be deified.<sup>24</sup> The concept of deification gained its greatest development in the theology of Origen. B. Drewery says concerning Origen's use of deification, 'It appears as the crowning term of a number of converging lines of thought.'<sup>25</sup> In addition to Clement's proposal, he also views the Son as the Λόγος of the Father through whom rational creatures may participate in the Trinity (*participio trinitatis*).<sup>26</sup> By means of a series of spiritual jour-

17 Cf. Ignatius, *Epistula ad Ephesios* 4.2 (J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, p.138).

18 Cf. Ignatius, *Epistula ad Ephesios* 20.2 (Lightfoot and Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers*, p.150).

19 Cf. Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Iudaeo* 124 (PTS 47, pp.284-285). [PTS = Patristische Texte und Studien]

20 Cf. Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 2.27 (PTS 44, p.77).

21 Cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 4.1.1-2, 4.20.5, 4.38.3-4, 4.39.2 (PG 7, col. 975-976, 1035-1036, 1107-1109, 1110). [PG = Patrologia Graeca]

22 Cf. Clement, *Cohortatio ad Gentes* 9.87.2, 11.114.4 (GCS 12, p.65, 81); and *Stromata* 6.15.125 (GCS 15, p.495). [GCS = Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller]

23 Cf. Clement, *Stromata* 2.22.136, 7.10.55-59 (GCS 15, p.188; GCS 17, pp.40-43); and *Paedagogus* 1.6.26 (GCS 12, p.105).

24 Cf. Clement, *Stromata* 2.4.5, 4.18.114, 5.12.82 (GCS 15, p.120, 298, 380-381); *Cohortatio ad Gentes* 1.8.1 (GCS 12, p.8).

25 B. Drewery, 'Deification,' *Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Gordon Rupp*, ed. P. Brooks (London, 1975), p.44.

26 Cf. Origen, *De Principiis* 4.4.4-5 (GCS 22, pp.354-356); *Commentarii in Ioannem* 2.3.21-2.3.33 (GCS 10, pp.55-57).

neys, human deification may be achieved through divine contemplation and ascetic practice. For Origen, the entire Scriptures are full of allegories of spiritual journey.<sup>27</sup> Under such background, Athanasius constructed his doctrine of deification.

### ***B. The Importance of the term 'Deification' in Athanasius***

In the extant Athanasian writings preserved in Greek, the words with the same root as θεοποίησις emerge 58 times in total, most of which are in the verbal form θεοποιέω.<sup>28</sup> According to Lampe's *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, the word θεοποιέω means 'make into a god.' The fathers use it mainly in three areas: creature-worship, Christological use, and deification of Christians.<sup>29</sup> Athanasius applies the word mainly in the last two senses. In his apologetic treatises, the bishop expresses repeatedly that 'He [the Word] became man in order that we might be deified' (αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐνῆνθρώπησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοπθεοποιηθῶμεν).<sup>30</sup> Besides using the word directly, as other early fathers, Athanasius has also employed different related vocabulary to express the idea. According to our existing material, he has at least used the word κοινωνία 69 times, ἀφθαρσία 37 times, ἔνωσις 28 times, ἀθανασία 27 times, ἀγιασμός 10 times, and ὑψωσις 8 times.<sup>31</sup> Although the doctrine of deification had undergone a considerable evolution, as K. E. Norman has illustrated, by the fourth century both the terminology and general outlines of the Christian version of deification were well established.<sup>32</sup>

For Athanasius, the incarnation of ὁ Λόγος is the basis of men's deification. In the process, humanity was joined to divinity. However, the divine Word was not impaired by the incarnation, but deified (ἐθεοποίησεν) what He put on. Christ's body was raised to the level of deity in the union.<sup>33</sup> Being bound together in Him through the likeness of the body, Christians might be deified as well.<sup>34</sup> The exaltation (ὑψωσις) of Christ's humanity is the foundation as well as the archetype of our deification.<sup>35</sup> In a doctoral thesis, J. R. Meyer defines clearly Athanasius'

27 Cf. Origen, *Homiliae in Numeros* 27 (PG 12, col. 780-801). See also H. Crouzel, *Origen*, tr. A. S. Worrall (Edinburgh, 1989), pp.130-133.

28 The Greek word θεοποιέω appears 51 times, θεοποιέω: 3 times, θεοποιία 3 times, and θεοποιός 1 time. Cf. G. Müller, ed., *Lexicon Athanasianum* (Berlin, 1952), columns 628-629.

29 Cf. 'θεοποιέω, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Oxford, 1961), pp.630-631.

30 Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 54 (R. W. Thomson, ed. and tr., *Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, p.268). See also his *De Decretis Nicaenae Synodi* 14; *Orationes contra Arianos* 1.39; and *De Synodis Arimini in Italia et Seleucia in Isauria* 51 (PG 25, col. 448; PG 26, col. 92-93, 784-785).

31 Cf. Müller, *Lexicon Athanasianum*, column 765, 182, 498, 24-25, 8, 1516. In addition to the nouns, Athanasius has used the verb ἐγιάζω 59 times, ὑψώω 47 times, and κοινωνέω 44 times; and also the adjective ἀθάνατος 44 times and ἀφθαρτος 30 times. Cf. Müller, *Lexicon Athanasianum*, column 7-8, 1514-1516, 764, 26, 182.

32 Cf. Norman, 'Deification: the Content of Athanasian Soteriology,' chap. 1. See also the discussion in M. D. Nisipel, 'Christian Deification and the Early *Testimonia*,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 53 (1999): 289-304.

33 Cf. Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 1.42 (PG 26, col. 100).

34 Cf. Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 2.70 (PG 26, col. 296).

35 Cf. Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 1.45 (PG 26, col. 105).

use of the term ‘deification.’ The incarnation made Christ the mediator between God and men. Men are saved in Him by being assimilated to the Lord’s body. Deification is the incorporation of man’s being into His body, in the Spirit of the Son.<sup>36</sup> It is because of man’s ‘likeness’ (ὁμοίωσις) to Him that he obtains the divine attributes like immortality and incorruptibility.<sup>37</sup> In view of this, P. Nellas is not groundless when he calls deification ‘Christification.’<sup>38</sup> In the incarnation, humanity was said to be joined to divinity, and divine attributes and divine glory were bestowed on man. Here, we should note that such deification of men and their union with God the Father are through the Son and in the Spirit.<sup>39</sup>

In the past, when talking about the substance of the deification of man, many scholars have equated Athanasius’ deification with physical incorruptibility or immortality. W. R. Inge, for example, suggests that the attribute of divinity which was chiefly in the minds of the Greek fathers when they talked about deification was that of *imperishableness*.<sup>40</sup> While acknowledging that the emphasis of the restoration of man’s incorruptibility in redemption may be found in Irenaeus, H. Rashdall writes that it was Athanasius who developed and systematised the thought.<sup>41</sup> Seeing deification as a principle example of the Hellenisation of Christian doctrine, M. Werner even says explicitly that Athanasius was ‘an effective defender of the new “physical” doctrine of the Redemption.’<sup>42</sup> The analysis of deification as primarily physical incorruptibility or immortality is subscribed to also by such scholars as A. Loisy,<sup>43</sup> J. Rivière,<sup>44</sup> and J. Lawson.<sup>45</sup>

In 1980, K. E. Norman wrote a thesis specifically discussing Athanasius’ doctrine of deification. He points out that immortality is for the bishop not the equivalent of divinity.<sup>46</sup> However important this attribute is to Athanasius, it is only one aspect of his doctrine of deification. The basis of this exaltation is our union with God through participation in Him, not simply the removal of death as a threat to our being.<sup>47</sup> In the thesis, Norman lists eight aspects of Athanasius’ concept of deification. They are i) the renewal of mankind in the

36 Cf. Meyer, ‘Saint Athanasius on Divinization.’

37 Cf. Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 2.74 (PG 26, col. 305). See also *Orationes contra Arianos* 2.61 (PG 26, col. 277).

38 Cf. P. Nellas, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*, tr. N. Russell (New York, 1987), pp.121-139.

39 Athanasius says on this point, ‘It is then in Him [the Spirit] that the Logos glorifies (δοξάζει) creation, and, by deifying (θεοποιῶν) and adopting (υιοποιῶν) it, draws (προσάγει) it to the Father.’ Cf. Athanasius, *Epistulae ad Serapionem* 1.25 (PG 26, col. 589).

40 Cf. W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (London, 1899), p.13.

41 Cf. H. Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* (London, 1919), p.296.

42 M. Werner, *The Formation of Christian Dogma: A Historical Study of its Problem* (London, 1957), p.168.

43 Cf. A. Loisy, *Le Mystères Païens et le Mystère Chrétien* (Paris, 1914), p.348.

44 Cf. J. Rivière, *Le dogme de la Rédemption*, étude théologique (Paris, 1914), pp.86-88.

45 Cf. J. Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus* (London, 1948), p.154.

46 Cf. Norman, ‘Deification: the Content of Athanasian Soteriology,’ p.131.

47 *Ibid.*, p.139.

image of God; ii) the transcendence of human nature; iii) the resurrection of the flesh and immortality of the body; iv) incorruptibility, impassibility and unchangeableness; v) participation in the divine nature and the qualities of godliness; vi) the knowledge of God; vii) the inheritance of divine glory; and viii) the heavenly kingdom.<sup>48</sup> For Athanasius, deification indicates a real advancement and exaltation of our humanity to a divine level of existence. Θεοποίησις is no mere poetic expression or metaphor, it means to be made God or a god, in the sense that we reflect His glory and holiness.<sup>49</sup>

Norman's thesis is minute and detailed, and is correct in general. From the extant writings of Athanasius, it seems that the term deification is closely linked to many aspects. Through the salvific acts of Christ, men's image of God was renewed and their knowledge of God was restored. Such renewals are basic requirements for deification.<sup>50</sup> With the grace of the Triune God, men may transcend their original human nature and move forwards to a divine level of life.<sup>51</sup> From the works of Athanasius, it appears that such deified life has many important attributes of God. They include, for example, immortality,<sup>52</sup> incorruptibility,<sup>53</sup> impassibility,<sup>54</sup> and

48 Ibid., chap. 4.

49 Ibid., p.164.

50 As stated before, for the bishop, the image and the knowledge of God are closely linked together. Concerning their relation with deification, Athanasius says, 'God created Him for our sakes, preparing for Him the created body, as it is written, for us, that in Him we might be capable of being renewed (ἀνακαινισθῆναι) and deified (θεοποιηθῆναι).' Cf. Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 2.47 (PG 26, col. 248). In another passage, he writes, 'Having renewed it [the body] as its framer, He might deify it' (τοῦτο ὡς δημιουργὸς ἀνακαινίσας, ἐν ἑαυτῷ θεοποίησθαι). Cf. Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 2.70 (PG 26, col. 296). It seems that renewal is a necessary step to deification.

51 In more than one instance, Athanasius suggests the superiority of the redeemed state to the created one. Cf. Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 1.44, 2.67 (PG 26, col. 104, 289-292).

52 Athanasius connects the vanquishment of death with deification in his *De Incarnatione*. By the death of Christ, 'immortality (ἡ ἀθανασία) has come to all...For he became a man that we might be deified (θεοποιηθῶμεν).' Cf. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 54 (Thomson, *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, p.268). Here, one should note that death (θάνατος) and corruption (φθορά) are basically two different things. While death means departure of the soul from the body, corruption mutates men back to non-existence.

53 On this point, Athanasius writes that Christ both 'destroyed death and bestowed incorruptibility (ἀφθαρσίαν) on all through the promise of the resurrection.' Cf. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 32 (Thomson, *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, p.212). Because of the incarnation, 'men no longer remain sinners and dead according to their proper affections, but having risen (ἀναστάντες) according to the Word's power, they abide ever immortal (ἀθάνατοι) and incorruptible (ἀφθαρτοι).' Cf. Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 3.33 (PG 26, col. 393).

54 As Athanasius says, 'And He [the Saviour] Himself, being impassible by nature (ἀπαθῆς τὴν φύσιν), remains as He is, not harmed by these affections, but rather obliterating and destroying them. And men, as their passions are changed and abolished in the Impassible, henceforth become themselves impassible (ἀπαθείς) and free from them forever.' Cf. Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 3.34 (PG 26, col. 396-397). Here, as Norman observes, for the bishop, impassibility (ἀπάθεια) implies not only immunity from suffering, but independence of normal bodily needs, such as food and drink, and the sinful desires of the flesh. Cf. Norman, 'Deification: the Content of Athanasian Soteriology,' p.154.



unchangeability.<sup>55</sup> Besides, deification may also involve the exaltation of men, and hence the inheritance of divine glory and the heavenly kingdom. When discussing the exaltation of Christ's human nature, Athanasius even says directly, 'exaltation was its being deified' (ὑψώσις ἦν τὸ θεοποιεῖσθαι αὐτόν).<sup>56</sup> Such exaltation of man is a result of his relationship with Christ's humanity. Men are not by nature worthy for such glory. It is through their participation in the Son that men are exalted.<sup>57</sup> In view of this multiple significance of deification, Norman is not unreasonable in concluding that, 'Rather than being a mere euphemism for physical immortality, θεοποίησις was perhaps the only apt word to describe the richness and sublime content of the soteriology of Athanasius.'<sup>58</sup>

### C. The Problems of using the term 'Deification'

If the doctrine of deification is so important for Athanasius, why do many scholars not use this term to describe his soteriological substance? Here, we should note that, although deification is a key doctrine for the eastern fathers, it is not a good term for the comprehension of modern western readers. It is too easy to be misinterpreted. Concerning its actual meaning, as C. R. Strange observes, Athanasius did not regard deification simply as a becoming god, but as a change in man brought about by his relationship with the humanity of Christ. That manhood was transformed first of all, thereby becoming the immediate source of a share in the divine nature for the rest of mankind.<sup>59</sup> Athanasius applies the term 'deification' only in a very relative way to men living on earth. They acquire the divine attributes not by nature, but by grace and by participation only. Besides, as P. B. T. Bilaniuk points out, in the process of deification the human person is divinised, and by no means de-humanised or bereft of its human qualities. On the contrary, concomitant to deification is the process of true humanisation, because man comes closer to God, the ground of being and perfection.<sup>60</sup> However, according to lexicon, deification means 'make into a

55 Biological mortality implies changeability through decay. As God is unchangeable and free from any possibility of corruption, deification must include the characteristics of incorruptibility and unchangeableness. On this point, Athanasius declares clearly that men might be stabilised and might escape from the consequences of their corruptible nature by the grace of the participation of the Word (χάριτι τῆς τοῦ Λόγου μετουσίᾳ). Cf. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* 5 (Thomson, *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, 144).

56 Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 1.45 (PG 26, col. 105).

57 Athanasius says on this point, 'We were exalted (ὑψώθημεν) because the Highest Lord is in us (ἐν ἡμῖν)'. Cf. Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 1.43 (PG 26, col. 101).

58 Cf. Norman, 'Deification: the Content of Athanasian Soteriology,' p.171.

59 Cf. R. Strange, 'Newman and Athanasius on Divinization,' *Christliche Heiligkeit als Lehre und Praxis nach John Henry Newman*, ed. G. Biemer and H. Fries (Sigmaringendorf, 1988), p.47; and 'Athanasius on Divinization,' p.343. See also Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 1.43 (PG 26, col. 100).

60 Cf. Bilaniuk, 'The Mystery of *Theosis* or Divinization,' p.352. For Athanasius' teachings about the reliance of men's existence on their relationship with God, see Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 2 (Thomson, *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, p.6).

god.'<sup>61</sup> Instead of the above intent, it literally implies the transformation of humanity to divinity, and the exaltation of man onto the position of god. For this reason, its use was and is objected by many western Christians. B. Drewery even criticises that the true pedigree of deification is to be sought, not in the biblical revelation, but in Greek philosophy. Participation in the divine nature can hardly be 'a legitimate ideal for those who worship the one God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.'<sup>62</sup>

Even worse, until now, we still do not possess a single clear theological definition of deification. Concerning the patristic use of the concept, G. M. Schurr observes that by about 200 Hippolytus and Clement of Alexandria were already using the term 'deification,' without apology or explanation, to specify the hope of the Christian. In the fourth century, Athanasius continued the tradition of looking towards the deification of the Christian, using θεοποιέω as if they were 'common Christian coin.'<sup>63</sup> Despite the centrality of deification for the soteriology of the Greek fathers, as Jules Gross observes, none of them has given a precise definition for the term θέωσις or its equivalents which they used.<sup>64</sup> According to our existing materials, none of the early fathers had written a single separate treatise on deification. They invariably treated it as an unutterable mystery. Such tradition had at least extended to the Middle Ages. When talking about the doctrine of deification of Gregory Palamas, one of the greatest Orthodox theologians of the later Byzantine period, G. I. Mantzaridis writes, 'The deification of man is a mystical event which takes place within him through God's supranatural power, and as such is essentially unutterable. Palamas himself avoided speaking of it, because he reckoned it impossible to express in words or logical forms.'<sup>65</sup> For this reason, interpretation and misinterpretation of the term continue without end.

Even if we focus our attention solely on the use of 'deification' in Athanasius' own writings, there are still many problems. First of all, as other fathers, Athanasius has not provided any clear definition of the term. He has not written any treatise on systematic theology like modern theologians. All his works are composed for particular purposes, either apologetic or pastoral. In other words, it is not obligatory for him to give a minute description of his concept of deification. In fact, although having used the term many times, he seldom discusses it in detail. Usually, it is mentioned only when there is real practical need. The most problematic thing is that Athanasius himself has not used the term coherently. For example, in his *Orationes contra Arianos*, he writes, 'For therefore did He [the Word] assume the body originate and human, that

61 Cf. 'θεοποιέω,' *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, pp.630-631.

62 Drewery, 'Deification,' pp.54-55.

63 Cf. G. M. Schurr, 'On the Logic of Ante-Nicene Affirmation of the "Deification" of the Christian,' *Anglican Theological Review* 51 (1969): 97.

64 Cf. J. Gross, *La Divinisation du Chrétien d'après les pères grecs* (Paris, 1938), p.349.

65 G. I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: St. Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*, tr. L. Sherrard (New York, 1984), p.127.

having renewed it as its farmer, He might deify it in Himself (ἐν ἑαυτῷ θεοποιήσῃ), and thus might introduce us all into the kingdom of heaven after His likeness (καὶ οὕτως εἰς βασιλείαν οὐρανῶν εἰσαγάγῃ πάντας ἡμᾶς καθ' ὁμοιότητα ἐκείνου). For man had not been deified (ἐθεοποιήθη) if joined (συναφθείς) to a creature, or unless the Son were very God.<sup>66</sup> In this passage, it is clear that deification refers to the union of humanity with divinity. It does not include the exaltation into heaven, but is its prerequisite only. However, in another passage of the same treatise, Athanasius suggests that deification is a synonym of exaltation (ὑψώσις).<sup>67</sup> He seems to be inconsistent in the use of this term.

### **D. Conclusion**

According to our extant Athanasian writings, it seems that there are two different scopes for the term 'deification.' While the narrow one primarily means the partaking of divine nature by grace, the broad one includes almost everything a Christian may obtain on the way to God. Athanasius himself uses it loosely. When H. Hess said that deification was not central, he was actually talking about deification in a narrow sense.<sup>68</sup> In contrast, when K. E. Norman emphasised the importance of deification in the bishop's soteriological system, he was interpreting the term in the broad sense.<sup>69</sup> The modern scholarly debate about the position of deification in Athanasius' soteriology is indeed a result of different interpretation of the term.

'Deification' is an important theological term, especially for the eastern fathers, but is also a confusing term for many modern western scholars. Because of misinterpretation, it has caused many unhappy controversies between the Catholic and the Orthodox Church. If Athanasius has other vocabularies, such as perfection and exaltation, which can express the same ideas, is it better not to use it? If the use of this term is unavoidable, I think a clear definition is essential.

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66 Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 2.70 (PG 26, col. 296).

67 Cf. Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 1.45 (PG 26, col. 105). According to the previous passage, it is certain that such exaltation involves the ascension into heaven. Cf. Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 1.43 (PG 26, col. 101).

68 Cf. Hess, 'The Place of Divinization in Athanasian Soteriology,' pp.371-372. Hess treats deification, renewal, union to God, adoption as sons, exaltation, sanctification, and perfection as different things.

69 Cf. Norman, 'Deification: the Content of Athanasian Soteriology,' chap. 4.

# ***SOURCES OF AUTHORITY IN THE KOINONIA***

*Alex Rolfe\**

Bishop Ammon, in his *Letter Concerning the Conduct and Life of Pachomius and Theodore*, relates what he saw during his three years at Pabau, a Pachomian monastery. In the process, he gives a vivid depiction of Theodore's authority. In fact, the authority that the superior had over the monks is a theme that dominates the letter. From the first, Theodore's "ability to read hearts" is strikingly affirmed.<sup>1</sup> More common than his prophecies and healings were his divinations of the secret sins of the monks.<sup>2</sup> Theodore followed up each discovery of sin with discipline, sometimes even expulsion; violence is used twice.<sup>3</sup> One wonders how he was able to wield such control. From the *Letter*, it is difficult to identify the sources of this authority. Ammon writes, "whenever I heard the voice of the holy Theodore even from afar, I was filled with either joy, or grief, or fear"; was it then simply a matter of Theodore's charisma or personal attributes?<sup>4</sup> The *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* presents a fuller picture, and it becomes clear that the main source of Pachomius and Theodore's authority was not their charisma, nor even Pachomius's status as founder. The greatest sources of their authority over their fellow monks were their *ascesis*, scriptural teaching, and care for the monks' souls.

When Pachomius began his pursuit of holiness, ascetic practices were the hallmark of the life of a monk. God's first words to him were "Struggle and settle down here," which he immediately did.<sup>5</sup> His *ascesis* began in earnest, however, when he apprenticed himself to the old anchorite Palamon a few years later. Palamon's life consisted of self-denial and tests of endurance; he aptly concluded his description of the monastic life to Pachomius with "it is by doing violence to

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1 *Letter*, 3, 16.

2 *Letter*, 3, 17, 19-24.

3 *Letter*, 20, 24.

4 *Letter*, 8.

yourself that you shall enter the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>6</sup> Palamon’s violence consisted of fasting, staying awake, avoiding comfort, ignoring sickness, and performing manual labor. Even the extended bouts of prayer were conceived of as a means of doing violence to the body; Palamon received Pachomius “to try him with prayers, vigils, and fasting.”<sup>7</sup> The violence the two men did to themselves was impressive. Certainly it impressed the author of the *Life*, for the passage covering Pachomius’s life with Palamon revolves around their asceticism. It impressed Pachomius too. Not only did he pass the same ascetic practices on to his monks, and continue to perform them himself, but he never forgot what he had learned from Palamon.

Pachomius continued to exercise himself as an “athlete of Christ,” with all the competition implied by that phrase.<sup>8</sup> The *Life* abounds with instances of his outstanding asceticism, not all of which can be considered here. From the first, Pachomius held himself to a higher standard than his followers, and he enjoined those he placed in charge of others to do the same.<sup>9</sup> One occasion is a particularly good illustration of Pachomius’s customary superiority in *ascesis*: on a visit to Thmousons, Pachomius showed himself capable of staying awake half the night and then rowing to Thmousons the next day, which neither of the monks accompanying him could accomplish without falling asleep. Upon their arrival, Apa Cornelios chided the monks for having let the older Pachomius outdo them. That night Pachomius, who was already exhausted, proved to Cornelios that “a feeble old man” (one sensitive about his age, perhaps) could outdo him as well.<sup>10</sup> If Apa Cornelios and the other fathers in charge of monasteries were greater ascetics than the monks in their care, Pachomius was a greater ascetic than them all.

Pachomius and Theodore’s authority also stemmed from their teaching and explanation of scripture. Pachomius’s monastic routine heavily emphasized scripture. “When...Pachomius assembled the brothers for the instruction, he spoke to them first on the Scriptures, because they are the main thing and the breath of God.”<sup>11</sup> The monks recited scripture constantly, Pachomius gave three instructions a week to the community, after which the monks of each house discussed his words among themselves, and in addition housemasters were invited to preach to their houses twice a week.<sup>12</sup>

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5 *Bohairic Life (SBo)* 8.

6 *SBo* 10.

7 *SBo* 10.

8 *GI*, 22,84.

9 *SBo* 23, 90.

10 *SBo*, 59.

11 *SBo*, 88; does this have anything to do with Pachomius dispelling a demon with his breath (*SBo* 113)?

12 *SBo*, 26,

It was Pachomius's scriptural insight that attracted Theodore. After hearing Pachomius's explanation of the Tabernacle through a visiting monk, Theodore "had a heart kindled as if with fire by what he had heard."<sup>13</sup> After he became head of Tabennesi, Theodore made a daily trip to Phbow to hear Pachomius, returning each night to repeat what he heard to the monks of Tabennesi, and "he did so for a very long time."<sup>14</sup>

The prominence of Pachomius's scriptural exegesis in the *Life* also argues for its importance. The author not only refers to it, but often repeats it. The sermon that so affected Theodore is summarized, and the teachings of Theodore and Pachomius and even Horsiesios are given at length.<sup>15</sup>

The fact that visions are more frequent in the *Life* than healings also reflects the greater importance placed on understanding scripture. Healing is important, but it does not dominate the *Life of Pachomius* as it does the *Life of Hilarion*. It was not uncommon for Pachomius to fail at healing, an unusual admission in hagiography; untroubled by it, he taught his monks that the spiritual gift of "seeing plainly" was a much greater healing.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, Pachomius and Theodore had a great number of visions, and they often resulted in their teaching the monks what they had learned.<sup>17</sup> In explanation of Pachomius's choosing Petronios as his successor, the author writes, "Indeed, because of his purity of heart, [Petronios] used to have revelations often and was qualified in every respect."<sup>18</sup> At one point an angel even appeared to Theodore and questioned him about a verse in Micah, apparently to impress on him the need to understand scripture literally as well as figuratively; perhaps in their enthusiasm for explaining scripture, the superiors' interpretations were getting a little out of control.<sup>19</sup>

The most important source of Pachomius and Theodore's authority, however, was their intense and obvious concern for the souls of their monks. The monks were there precisely for this care, and sought it out, asking their superior at the end of each day how they had been at fault.<sup>20</sup> Any monk who did not care sufficiently about his own soul could expect expulsion. Pachomius explained to a monk who was critical of his rigorous screening of new monks that he would not admit those whom he could not correct.<sup>21</sup> He told another monk that no amount of *asceticism* would rid him of his demon, if he continued to lack faith in Pachomius's words, and in spite of heavy fasting the demon stayed with him until the day he died.<sup>22</sup> Pachomius would expend any amount of prayer and effort on a struggling sinner, but a negligent monk was hopeless.<sup>23</sup>

13 *SBo*, 29.

14 *SBo*, 73.

15 *SBo*, 29, 105-107, 141-142, 186-187, 209.

16 *SBo*, 45, 111.

17 *SBo*, 82, 103, 106.

18 *SBo*, 121.

19 *SBo*, 155.

20 *SBo*, 87.

21 *SBo*, 107.

22 *SBo*, 102.

23 *SBo*, 103.

Pachomius, and Theodore after him, cared about each individual monk, and agonized over when to be harsh and when to be merciful. In dealing with one sinful monk, Pachomius had to resort to asking God directly for guidance; an angel appeared and ordered that the monk be expelled.<sup>24</sup> Such severity was not uncommon. In a year in which the whole community contained three hundred and sixty monks, Pachomius had expelled a hundred monks.<sup>25</sup> On one occasion he refused psalmody to a monk who had died.<sup>26</sup> It did not always take so much to be severe. Theodore once rebuked a monk for eating too many leeks, and immediately feared that he had been too harsh. When he saw that the monk never touched a leek again, he ceased eating them as well, lest God “condemn him for not having himself abstained from a thing he had made the subject of reproach to another.”<sup>27</sup>

Although the superior proved his care for souls by his severity, and was sometimes criticized for being too lenient, he also proved it by his mercy.<sup>28</sup> If severity set the tone of Bishop Ammon’s letter, mercy set the tone for the *Life*, especially in the case of Theodore. The *Life* often describes the superiors taking care of the monks “as a nurse comforts her children,” and they pray for their monks heroically.<sup>29</sup> Pachomius forgave a monk caught stealing with no more than a kind word, he rebuked those who refused to give a sick brother meat, even though no monk was to eat meat, and he reserved his harshest words for those who accused him of taking excessive pains with bad monks instead of simply driving them out.<sup>30</sup> Theodore drew criticism from Pachomius for not being strict enough with the monks in his bakery, but on the whole Pachomius had the highest regard for Theodore’s skill with souls.<sup>31</sup> Soon after his arrival, Theodore “became the comforter of many, raising up by his soothing words whoever had fallen,” and “Pachomius would tell [the monks] to go and find [Theodore] and to get from him consolation in their temptations and tribulations.”<sup>32</sup> It is small wonder that the monks asked Pachomius to name Theodore as his successor.<sup>33</sup>

Although Pachomius preferred mercy to severity, each was merely a means to an end, as he made clear to Theodore in his parable of extracting a thorn from the foot. The important thing is to remove the thorn: that is, bring the sinner to repentance and to the reform of his soul.<sup>34</sup> It is therefore not surprising to find Theodore resorting to deceit, with Pachomius’s approval, to reform troubled monks. Theodore promised to run away with a monk who was feeling persecuted by too-

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24 *SBo*, 108.

25 *SBo*, 107.

26 *SBo*, 93.

27 *SBo*, 79.

28 *SBo*, 102.

29 *SBo*, 58, 89, 91, 118.

30 *SBo*, 68, 48, 102.

31 *SBo*, 74, 77.

32 *SBo*, 32, see also 191.

33 *SBo*, 94.

34 *SBo*, 90.

frequent correction, unless Pachomius should apologize. Pachomius, apprized of the plan, did so, thereby winning the brother back.<sup>35</sup> To save a monk who was too attached to his family, Theodore accompanied him home, ate with him there in violation of the monastic rule, and finally staged his own departure from Tabennesi, ostensibly because the monk did not take the gospel injunction against loving family seriously. This scheme had the desired effect.<sup>36</sup>

Pachomius's willingness to back down is an even stronger indication of his great desire to keep the monks on the path to salvation. One monk who wanted a certain rank was denied it. His superior pretended he did so on the basis of Pachomius's report. The furious monk marched up to the unsuspecting Pachomius and denounced him in the harshest terms. Pachomius calmed him by saying "I have sinned, forgive me," and then won him back to goodness by appointing him to the position he wanted.<sup>37</sup> Such an incident gives credence to his claim on his deathbed that he "never corrected any one of [the monks]...except for the sake of his soul's salvation."<sup>38</sup>

Pachomius and Theodore's concern for the souls under their care was obvious to their monks, as was their heroic *ascesis* and their superior ability to interpret scripture. In this sense Pachomius could claim his authority was of God, for it was by fulfilling his vocation to "struggle" in *ascesis*, recite scripture, and "minister to the race of men and unite them to [God]" that he attained his authority.<sup>39</sup>

35 *SBo*, 62.

36 *SBo*, 63.

37 *SBo*, 42.

38 *SBo*, 118.

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# ***SALVATION IN THE COPTIC LITURGY OF ST. GREGORY THE NAZIANZEN\****

*Rodolph Yanney*

## ***Abstract***

The Liturgy ascribed to Gregory the Theologian is extant only in Coptic and is still used by the Coptic Orthodox Church. Scholars put the origin of this liturgy as either Syria or Egypt from the fact that it is one of the few ancient liturgies, which are addressed to the Son. This paper, traces the theme of salvation throughout the stages of the Liturgy:

1. *Introductory Prayer of Reconciliation.*
2. ***Thanksgiving:*** After thanking God for his creation, the liturgy quickly moves to his work in salvation starting by the Old Testament. The loving God is described in various pictures—the Good Shepherd, the Good Father, and the Physician who uses ‘remedies which conduce to life’. He sends the Prophets and gives the Law to help man.
3. ***Anamnesis:*** Gregory stresses the Eastern Fathers’ doctrine of ‘*Salvation by Incarnation*’. He applies the earlier patristic pictures in describing Christ as Savior: Teacher, Victor and Victim (Sacrifice).
4. ***Prayer of the Fraction:*** This is a characteristic feature of Coptic liturgies, as an introduction to the Lord’s Prayer. In a prayer still directed to the Son the liturgy refers to Baptism and Eucharist, the two Sacraments essential for salvation, as having their types in the water and blood that issued from the side of Christ on the Cross.

The liturgy ascribed to St. Gregory the Theologian is still used by the Coptic Orthodox Church. It is one of the few extant ancient liturgies that are addressed to the Son. Gregory Dix pointed out in his *Shape of the Liturgy* that liturgies directed to the Son were not unknown in the ancient world. There was a strong tradition on this in Syria, including the Liturgy of SS. Addai and Mari and the many liturgies derived from it. He counted three Ethiopic liturgies and another ancient Egyptian liturgy as addressed to the Son. He also found evidence that such liturgies were also found in the West.<sup>1</sup> The Liturgy of St. Gregory has been preserved in Coptic, although Arabic, English and possibly other modern translations are in common use. Fragments of a 14th century Greek manuscript have been discovered early in the twentieth century in the Monastery of St. Macarius at Wadi-Natrun, denoting

\* This was a paper delivered at the 13th Annual Conference of the North American Patristic Society, held at the Loyola University in Chicago in May 28-30, 1998.

1 Dix G: *Shape of the Liturgy*. London: Black, 1945: 180.

that it was celebrated in this language at least in certain occasions in the monastery at that time.<sup>2</sup>

Some scholars have dated the origin of this liturgy to the pre-Nicene period, with changes throughout the later centuries.<sup>3</sup> Others insist that it reflect the theological teachings of Gregory the Nazianzen. It is a witness to the teaching of the third and fourth century Eastern Fathers on salvation. Every Eucharist is an *anamnesis* of the salvation history wrought by Christ. However, in no other liturgy is this theological doctrine demonstrated so vividly as it does in this Liturgy. The title 'Liturgy of the Savior' was a name suggested for it.<sup>4</sup> This paper traces the theme of salvation in the stages of the Liturgy, and shows how much similarity it has to the teaching of The Eastern Fathers in general and St. Gregory in particular.

### ***(1) Prayer of Reconciliation***

One of the features of Coptic liturgies is an introductory prayer which is called the 'Prayer of Reconciliation'. In this prayer, so early in the Liturgy of St. Gregory, we see an essential teaching of the early Eastern Fathers on Salvation, that of God coming in the flesh, which is given the term 'Salvation by Incarnation':

“Thou who dost exist, who didst pre-exist, who abidest forever,  
The everlasting, of the same substance and throne and joint-creator with the Father,  
Who of thy goodness alone didst create man out of nothing,  
And didst place him in the Paradise of delight,  
And when he fell from thence by the deceit of the enemy and through disobedience  
to thy holy commands,  
Didst will to renew him and to replace him in his former dignity,  
Entrusting no Angel or Archangel, or Patriarch or Prophet with our salvation,  
But, unchangeable, didst assume flesh and becomest man,  
Being made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted-  
Didst become our Mediator with the Father,  
And didst take away the middle wall of partition,  
Didst destroy the ancient enmity,  
Didst reconcile things on earth to things in heaven,  
And madest of twain one,  
Didst fulfil the dispensation in the flesh. . . .”<sup>5</sup>

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2 Evelyn White HE: *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'N Natrun*. Part I: New Coptic Texts from the Monastery of Saint Macarius. New York, 1926: 200- 213

3 Furman JE: *The Coptic Liturgy of Saint Gregory*. In: *Coptic Church Review*, 1987:16.

4 Ibid, 17.

5 *The Liturgies of St. Basil, St. Gregory, and St. Cyril* (translated from a Coptic Manuscript of the 13th century), London: Rivingtons, 1870: 2.

## **(2) Thanksgiving**

The first part of the Eucharistic Liturgy, which the liturgical scholars referred to earlier in this century as the *Preface*, is an integral part of the Prayer from which it has taken its name *Eucharistia* since the earliest centuries. After thanking God for his creation, the Liturgy of St. Gregory quickly moves to his work in salvation starting by the Old Testament. The loving God is described in various biblical pictures, as the Good Shepherd, the Good Father, and the Physician who uses 'remedies which conduce to life'. He sends the Prophets and gives the Law to help man:

"Thou, my Lord, didst convert my punishment into Salvation;  
Like a Good Shepherd didst hasten to seek that which had gone astray;  
Like a Good Father didst labor with me who had fallen;  
Didst bind me up with all remedies which conduce to life.  
Thou it is who didst send forth the Prophets on behalf of me who was sick;  
Didst give the law for my help."<sup>6</sup>

All these OT methods which God tried in order to help the fallen and corrupted humanity proved to be a failure. The Liturgy continues without interruption:

"It is Thou who didst minister Salvation to me, though I had transgressed thy law;  
Didst arise, as the true light, upon me who had erred and was in ignorance."<sup>7</sup>

Here the Liturgy resumes the theme of 'Salvation by Incarnation' which has been started in the 'Prayer of Reconciliation'.

## **Salvation by Incarnation**

This teaching, a cornerstone of the Soteriology of the Eastern Fathers, is found as early as Irenaeus, and also in Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria and others.

There was no other way to save man, as St. Athanasius explains:

"What then was God to do? Or what was to be done save the renewing of that which was in God's image, so that by it men might once more be able to know Him? But how could this have come to pass save by the presence of the very Image of God, our Lord Jesus Christ? The Word of God came in His own person, that, as He was the Image of the Father, He might be able to create afresh the man after the image. ...."<sup>8</sup> He took a mortal body in order to conquer death and corruption in it.<sup>9</sup>

6 *Ibid.* 3.

7 *Ibid.*

8 Athanasius: *Incarnation of the Word (Inc.)*, 13: 7. (NPNF, second series, vol. 4).

9 *Inc.* 13: 7, 8 (NPNF, op. cit. 43).

Gregory elaborates more on the theme in his Oration on Theophany, using nearly the same words of the liturgy. It is highly significant that he brings the theme of salvation in the feast of Epiphany, which at that time included the whole cycle of the Coming of Christ:

“(Man,) having been first chastened by many means, ... by word, by law, by prophets, by benefits, by threats, by plagues... at last he needed a stronger remedy, for his diseases were growing worse... As these required a greater aid, so also they obtained a greater. And that was that the Word of God Himself-Who is before all worlds, the Invisible, the Incomprehensible, the Bodiless, Beginning of Beginning, the Light of Light, the Source of Life and Immortality...the unchangeable Image, the Father’s Definition and Word, came to His own Image, and took on Him flesh for the sake of our flesh, and mingled Himself with an intelligent soul for my soul’s sake, purifying like by like; and in all points except sin was made man.”<sup>10</sup>

This connection between Incarnation and Salvation which has been a cardinal feature of the patristic teaching was not emphasized by the Western Fathers who as early as Tertullian were more interested in the forensic aspect of the atonement. The connection was completely lost in the Middle Ages with Anselm’s doctrine of ‘Satisfaction’. Because of Anselm’s basic assumption that the required satisfaction must be done by man, he taught a human work of satisfaction, accomplished by Christ. The Sacrifice of Christ, which He accomplishes as man, is an offering made to God from man’s side, from below, a human work of satisfaction. This is totally in contrast to the teaching of the Fathers who speak of God who becomes incarnate and enters the world of sin and death in order to overcome the enemies that hold mankind in bondage, and Himself accomplishes the redemptive work.<sup>11</sup>

The obsession in the West with satisfaction by man, since the justice of God has to be satisfied, left no other alternative for curing a sinful humanity except a laxity and lack of justice by God. According to this theory it is an indispensable necessity that God shall receive the satisfaction which alone can save forgiveness from being laxity; and this need is met by Christ’s death. To the patristic idea, on the other hand, it is essential that the work of atonement that God accomplishes in Christ reflect a Divine order, which is wholly different from a legal order. The Atonement is not accomplished by strict fulfillment of the demands of justice, but it transcends them. The problem of humanity was not how to satisfy an angry Father, but rather how to abolish Sin and Death.<sup>12</sup>

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10 Oration 38. *On the Theophany*: 13 (NPNF, second series, vol. 7:348-9)

11 Gustaf Aulen: *Christus Victor*. London: S. P. C. K., 1961: 103, 104.

12 Ibid. 105- 119.

## ***Kenosis***

Although the work of Christ in salvation involves many stages, yet his mere self-emptying (*kenosis*) in taking human flesh was a saving blessing by itself, and which the Liturgy illustrates:

“Thou didst not think it robbery to be equal with God,  
But didst empty thyself and take on thee the form of a servant,  
Didst bless my nature in thyself....”<sup>13</sup>

In the sermon on Epiphany, Gregory comes to the same theme of Phil 2: 7:

“He that is full empties Himself, for He empties Himself of His glory for a short while, that I may have a share in His Fullness. What is the riches of His Goodness? What is this mystery that is around me? I had a share in the image; I did not keep it; He partakes of my flesh that He may both save the image and make the flesh immortal.”<sup>14</sup>

Athanasius illustrates by a metaphor how the Incarnation by itself blessed the whole humanity, “And like as when a great king has entered into some large city and taken up his abode in one of the houses there, such city is at all events held worthy of high honor”<sup>15</sup>

## ***What Does Salvation by Incarnation Imply?***

In the teaching of the Eastern Fathers we find that the life of Christ as a whole brings salvation; from his place in the bosom of the Father, to his Birth, **B**aptism, Teaching, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension and Second Coming.<sup>16</sup> While Gregory moves over the work of Christ on earth, he applies the earlier patristic pictures in describing him as Savior-Teacher, Victor and Victim (Sacrifice). The liturgy of St. Gregory makes of these dogmas themes of meditation and it continues thanking and blessing God for his work in salvation, the work that has its climax in the Paschal Mystery. In this, using the words of the Prophet Isaiah in the Songs of the Servant it follows the teaching particular to the Eastern Fathers, that Christ acted as the representative of humanity, not its substitute:

“Thou enduredst the injuries of the wicked,  
Yieldedst thy back to the stripes,  
Didst give thy cheek to blows,  
For my sake, O my Lord, Thou didst not turn away thy face from the shame of the spitting

13 *The Liturgies of St. Basil, St. Gregory, and St. Cyril*, op. cit., 3 & 4.

14 *On the Theophany 13*, op. cit.

15 *Inc.* op. cit. 9:3.

16 Bebawi G: *St. Athanasios: The Dynamics of Salvation*. In *Sobornost*, London, 1986: 8: 2: 29.

“Thou didst go forth like a sheep to the Cross,  
Didst manifest thy solicitude for me,  
Didst slay my sin in thy sepulchre,  
Didst take my firstfruits up into heaven,  
Didst reveal to me thy Second Advent...”<sup>17</sup>

### **(3) *Anamnesis***

The liturgy passes implicitly from the Thanksgiving to the Consecration and the *Anamnesis*. There is no limit for what the Church recalls and lives in the Eucharist. Finally, just before the *Epiclesis*, the priest enumerates the whole saving actions of Christ:

“Thus, therefore, also, O our Lord, we make the Commemoration of Thy Coming down upon the earth, and of thy life-giving Death, and of thy three days’ burial,  
and of thy Resurrection from the dead,  
and of thy Ascent into Heaven, and of thy Session at the right hand of thy Father,  
and of thy Second Coming from the Heavens, tremendous and full of glory.”

In the anamnesis the Church lives the whole history of salvation from the incarnation till the Second Coming. This is totally different from the Scholastics’ teaching which limits the problem of humanity to its legal aspect of paying the debt of sin and reconciling an angry God, **and thus have Christ’s work of salvation completed on the Cross** when he said his last words, “it is finished” (John 19:30). In the biblical and Patristic teaching, Christ, as our ‘Representative’ and ‘High Priest’, offered himself on our behalf, conquered Satan and destroyed Sin and Death. As the Pioneer of our Salvation, He ascended to heaven, sat with our humanity on the throne of God, and will come again to take those waiting for him. This is what the words of the liturgy say in the anamnesis.

### **(4) *The Fraction Prayer***

The *Anamnesis* and *Epiclesis* are followed by ‘The Intercessions’, and then just before the ‘Lord’s Prayer’ comes the ‘Fraction Prayer’, which is peculiar to all Coptic liturgies. It serves as a preparation for communion. In the Liturgy of St. Gregory this prayer is directed to Christ, calling him ‘the Savior of the Church’. It refers to the Sacraments involved in appropriating the salvation wrought by Christ to individual Christians. Baptism and Eucharist are stated to flow directly from the Incarnation and the Cross:

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17 *The Liturgies of St. Basil, St. Gregory, and St. Cyril*, op. cit., 4.

“Blessed art Thou, O Christ, God omnipotent, Saviour of Thy Church!  
 O intelligible Word and visible man, who through Thy incomprehensible  
 Incarnation,  
 Hast prepared for us the Bread of Heaven, this Thy Holy Body in a mystery, and  
 every way holy.  
 Didst mingle for us a chalice from the true vine which is Thy divine and immacu-  
 late side,  
 Whence, after Thou hadst given up the Spirit, Thou didst give to us the water and  
 the Blood which are for the purification of the whole world...  
 Thou of thine abundant goodness hast made us all worthy of adoption through  
 Holy Baptism...”<sup>18</sup>

Through Baptism and the Eucharist we become God’s sons and the *theosis* which was our created destiny becomes our recreated destiny. Actually Baptism is seen by St. Gregory the Theologian as the primary individual means by which the Holy Spirit appropriates the ‘deifying’ work of Christ to mankind. He says, “If the Spirit is not worshipped as God, how can He deify me through Baptism?” And he says also, “Baptism in the Spirit is the perfect Baptism. How then is the Spirit not God - if I may be a little presumptuous - if it is by him that you are made God?”<sup>19</sup>

St. Gregory of Nyssa explains how the Eucharist wipes away the corruption that entered into man through sin and becomes a means of deifying humanity:

“The God who was manifested mingled himself with the nature that was doomed to death, in order that by communion with divinity human nature may be deified together with him. It is for this purpose that by the divine economy of his grace He plants himself in the believers by means of that flesh, composed of bread and wine, blending himself with the bodies of believers so that man also may share in the immortality by union with the Immortal.”<sup>20</sup>

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18 Ibid, 8.

19 Winslow, op. cit., 133. The quotations are from Gregory, *Orations* 31: 8, and 40: 42 respectively.

20 *Or. cat.* 37. Translated in *The Later Christian Fathers* by H. Bettenson. London: Oxford University Press, 1970: 163

# ***FROM THE CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA***

## ***THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST DURING HIS CHILDHOOD AND THE CHILDHOOD OF JOHN THE BAPTIST***

*Boulos Ayad Ayad, Ph.D.\**

It is difficult for a Christian to believe that Christ lived his life without evidence of miracles until he reached the age of thirty. Jesus, the Son of God and God according to the belief of many Christians, performed miracles throughout all of his earthly life and that St. John in his Gospel writes about such miracles as follows: “But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written. I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” (Jn 21:25). The majority of the Christians hold the deep faith that Jesus continues to perform miracles to this day. The following study concentrates on the miracles of Jesus during his childhood and boyhood as written in documents outside the Bible. There was no mention of his miracles during his early years in the New Testament.

### ***1. Historical Introduction***

According to the majority of the historians, Christ was born in the village of Bethlehem about 4 B.C., in the last years of the reign of Herod the Great.<sup>1</sup> There are few chapters about the birth and childhood of Jesus in the New Testament (Lk 2:1-40). The Bible is silent about the boyhood of Jesus; however, when he was twelve years old his family found him in the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem “sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who

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i Otto F. A. Meinardus, *The Holy Family in Egypt* (Cairo: The American University Press, 1986), pp. 15-17; *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, edited by Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 356; Peter Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 1996), p. 296.



heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, ‘Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously.’ And he said to them, ‘How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’...And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man” (Lk 2:46-52). It is clear from the last two sentences that there were many miracles about the life of Jesus and that “his mother Mary kept all these things in her heart.”

After the twelfth to thirtieth years of his life, the New Testament does not give any description about the daily life of Jesus. However, from thirty onwards Jesus performed miracles and preached the new faith until 33\_ years of age. (Mt 27:45-54, 28:1-20, Lk 24:11-53, Jn 19:1-42, 20:1:31, 21:1-25).

## **2. Did Jesus Christ Travel to India?**

Some books have been published on the idea that Jesus Christ traveled to India. The reader of such books will not find any direct evidence that Jesus Christ went to India to study or learn the wisdom there. At the same time, the authors of these volumes claimed that Jesus stayed with the Indian monks in their temples, but they did not write of the daily life of Jesus in such situations. There has not been a full translation published of the Indian documents which supposedly include the name of Jesus. Such books are not credible, lacking historical and archaeological evidence.<sup>ii</sup> The classical historians do not mention that Jesus went to India.<sup>iii</sup> Thus, his teaching and proverbs came from Palestine and Ancient Israel’s environment and not from India. The teachings of Jesus are very different from Hinduism nor can any Indian cultural influence be discerned.<sup>iv</sup>

Rather, Jesus referred to the Wisdom of Solomon (Mt 6:29), offering many parables (Mt 13:1-53, 21:33, 22:1); he talked about the Patriarchs (Mt 8:11), the kings of Israel (Mt: 13-1), the Israelite prophets and their prophecies (Mt 12:17-21, 24:15-16), the culture and the laws of the Israelites (Mt 12:1-5). In different chapters of the New Testament, the Apostles wrote about the culture of the Israelites. Moreover, the church fathers do not cite in any of their writings through the centuries that Jesus went to India.

Jesus Christ lived in Ancient Israel most of his life except for few years spent during his childhood in classical Egypt.

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ii Elizabeth Clare Propher, *The Last Years of Jesus* (Livingston, MT: Summit University Press, 1984); Holger Kersten, *Jesus Lived in India* (Longmead, Shaftsbury, Dorset, England, Element Books Ltd., 1986).

iii R. Joseph Hoffman, *Jesus Outside the Gospels* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1984).

iv Michael Edwardes, *Indian Temples and Palaces* (London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited 1969), pp. 9-187; Harry Miller “The Cobra, India’s “Good Snake”,” *National Geographic*, September 1970, pp. 393-408; Alistair Shearer, *Travel Key to Northern India* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), pp. 4-39, 259-269.

### **3. Jesus Christ and His Miracles in Egypt**

Jesus was born in the last year (years) of Herod the king. Because of what Herod heard from the wise men of the East, he wanted to kill Jesus and his family. Then “an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him’.” Then Joseph took Jesus and his mother Mary during night and fled to Egypt and they stayed in Egypt until the death of Herod. (Mt 2:14).

During the time Jesus and his family were in Egypt, many miracles are attributed to his presence at all the sites he visited from northeast of the Nile Delta to the province of Assiut in southern part of the country. Many references outside the New Testament mention the various miracles of Jesus during his childhood. One can summarize them as follows: creating wells, giving life to the dead, eyesight regained, curing the lepers, hearing for the deaf, the paralyzed healed, and the devil exorcised. It is also widely believed that trees bent in front of Jesus as a sign of worshipping him. Jesus and his family took rest under the shade of some trees; these trees still grow and have an abnormal shape. Many trees, idols, and temples were inhabited by the demons which fled when they saw Jesus. The water of the wells used by Jesus and the Holy Family were blessed and still considered so to the present with healing powers attached to them. Those who had mental problems became normal when they met Jesus. The child Jesus and his family met many families; those who welcomed them were blessed but not those who treated them badly. And those who asked him for support received it. When Jesus was bathed, the same water when used in bathing sick children made them healthy. Certain places and caves were blessed by Jesus and according to such blessing, churches and monasteries were built later in these places.<sup>v</sup>

### **4. Some of the Miracles of Jesus in Ancient Israel<sup>vi</sup>**

**Miracle No. 1** When Jesus was five years old he liked to play in the water. One Sabbath, while making pools of the swift-flowing water at a ford of a stream and by talking to the water He was able to make it pure. He then took some soft clay and created twelve clay sparrows, showing them to the other children playing with him. A Jew saw what he was doing and immediately went to Joseph to tell him

v *The Lost Books of the Bible* (New York: Bell Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 41-42; *The Other Bible*, edited by Willis Barnstone (New York: Harper and row, Publishers, 1984), pp. 395-397; see, the 24 of Pachons, in the *Coptic Orthodox Synaxarium*, vol. 2 (Cairo: republished by the Mahabah Library [Bookstore], 1979); Otto F. A. Meinardus, *The Holy Family in Egypt*, pp. 7-66; Bishop Anba Gregorios, *The Monastery of El-Muharreq*, pp. 37-91 (in Arabic); Murad Kamil, *Coptic Egypt* (Cairo: Le Scribe Egyptian, 1968), pp. 9-18; Bishop Anba Dimetrios, *The Trip of the Holly Family in Mallawi* (Mallawi, Egypt: The Press of the Mallawi Bishopric, 1999), pp. 7-95; Youhanna Nessim Youssef, “*The Holy Family in Egypt*”, *Coptic Church Review*, vol. 20, no 2, (summer 1999), pp. 49-55.

vi *The Lost Books of the Bible*, pp. 52-62; *The Other Bible*, pp. 395-397, 399-402, 407-408; R. Joseph Hoffman, *Jesus Outside the Gospels*, pp. 117-125.

that Jesus was breaking the Sabbath. Joseph went to where Jesus was playing and asked why he had done this on the Sabbath. Jesus then clapped his hands and bade the sparrows fly away, which they did. When the Jews saw this, they were astounded.

**Miracle No. 2** A boy who stood there, the son of Annas the scribe, took a willow branch and ran it through the water which Jesus had arranged. Jesus then became angry and condemned him to be withered and unable to father children. Immediately the child was withered and was taken away by his parents who were saddened at what had happened. They took him to Joseph's house to let him see what had happened to their child. "Then Jesus at the request of all who were present did heal him, leaving only some small member to remain withered, so that they might take warning."

**Miracle No. 3** One time while Jesus was in the village, a running child accidentally hit his shoulder, which angered Jesus who said, "You shall go no further" and the child dropped down dead. People who saw this incident wondered about him because everything he said came to pass. The dead boy's parents then went to Joseph and told him he could not live in their community with a child such as Jesus.

**Miracle No. 4** Joseph then asked Jesus why he did these things and told him that they were being persecuted because of his acts. Jesus then promised to say no more because of his respect for Joseph, but he did say these people would be punished. As soon as he said that, his accusers were struck blind and people who saw this were frightened. They said that everything the child said was a miracle, either good or bad. Following this last act, Joseph took Jesus by the ear and pulled hard. Jesus was angry and told Joseph that he was acting very imprudently and warned him not to do anything else to anger him.

**Miracle No. 5** Zaccheus, a teacher, observed the above and went to Joseph, telling him that he had an extremely intelligent child and that he, Zaccheus, would be willing to teach Jesus to read and write and to honor his elders. Joseph agreed and Zaccheus worked with Jesus teaching him the alphabet. However, one day Jesus became angered and accused Zaccheus of not knowing enough about the alphabet, asking that before he teach about the beta that he know all there was to be known about the alpha.

Zaccheus was puzzled by Jesus' knowledge and shamed by the child's superior knowledge; he asked Joseph to take Jesus away. He theorized that Jesus was not born of the earth but had been begotten before the creation of the world. Zaccheus said that he had worked hard to have a disciple with himself as the teacher. He then begged Joseph to take Jesus home, saying that he was either a god or an angel but he obviously did not want to deal with him.

The Jews began comforting Zaccheus for they could see he was very upset. Then Jesus laughed and told them that he was from above, sent to curse them because the one who sent him had ordered it. When the child stopped talking, all who had been cursed by him were healed. But never again did anyone dare to make him angry, for fear Jesus would bring a curse upon them.

**Miracle No. 6** Sometime later, Jesus was playing with some children in the upstairs of a house and one of the children fell and died. All of the children except Jesus ran away. When the dead child's parents came, they accused Jesus of throwing him down. Jesus replied that he had not thrown the boy down. "Then Jesus leaped down from the roof and stood by the body," crying in a loud voice, "Zenon! Rise up and tell me did I throw you down?" The child rose and said, "No, Lord, you did not throw me down, but you raised me." All who saw this were amazed, and the child's parents glorified God and thereafter worshipped Jesus.

**Miracle No. 7** Soon after this, a man was cutting wood when the axe slipped and penetrated his foot. He was bleeding heavily and no one was able to stop it. Jesus ran there, pushed through the crowd, and seized the injured foot. Immediately the man was healed. Jesus said to him, "Get up, split your wood, and remember me." The people then began to worship Jesus, saying that the Spirit of God lived in him.

**Miracle No. 8** When Jesus was six, his mother gave him a pitcher and asked him to bring some water to the house. Somehow he broke the pitcher, but he still brought water to her by spreading out his garment and filling it with water. When his mother saw the miracle she kissed him, but kept to herself any of the miracles that she saw him perform.

**Miracle No. 9** During planting time, when Jesus was eight years old, he was helping Joseph in the field. "Jesus planted one grain of wheat" that, when "he had reaped and threshed it," gave "one hundred measures." Jesus asked the poor to come and he gave it all to them.

**Miracle No. 10** Joseph earned his living as a carpenter by making plows and yokes for the oxen. One day a wealthy man asked him to make a bed. Somehow, through an error in measurement, one side was longer than the other. Jesus told him to lay the wood side by side, having them even at one end. Jesus then took the shorter side and stretched it until it matched the longer side. Joseph was happy and considered himself blessed because God had given Jesus to him.

**Miracle No. 11** When Joseph saw that Jesus was growing up, he took him to another teacher so he could learn the letters. However, the teacher said he would first teach him Greek and then Hebrew, because he knew of Jesus' intelligence and

was afraid of him. For many hours the teacher wrote the alphabet and taught, but Jesus said nothing. Then Jesus said much the same to him as he had to Zaccheus, asking that he first explain the power of alpha and then Jesus would tell him of beta. This angered the teacher who struck Jesus on the head. Jesus was hurt and cursed the man, who fell to the ground in a faint. When the child went home and related the story to his family, Joseph ordered Mary not to let Jesus out of the house because anyone who angered him died.

**Miracle No. 12** Sometime later a good friend of Joseph who was a teacher asked him to bring Jesus to school, thinking that perhaps he could teach him by flattery. Joseph reluctantly took him, but there was no problem for Jesus who was happy to go. When Jesus arrived at the school he took a book and proceeded to lecture to the class, not from the book, but from the Holy Spirit within him. A large crowd gathered and were amazed at his teaching and the manner in which he spoke. Joseph learned of this and hurried to the school not knowing what to expect. The teacher, however, told him that the child was full of wisdom and grace, but begged Joseph to take him home. Jesus smiled and said, "Since you spoke correctly and witnessed correctly, on account of you the one who was stricken shall be healed." And immediately the other teacher was healed.

**Miracle No. 13** One day Joseph sent his son James to bring wood to the house. Jesus went with him and "while James was gathering the sticks, a snake bit James's hand." Jesus breathed on the bite and James was healed from what would have been certain death and the snake died.

**Miracle No. 14** In Joseph's neighborhood a child became ill and died. When Jesus heard the mourning of the child's mother, he ran to the house and touched the child's breast, saying, "Live and be with your mother." "Immediately the child looked up and laughed," the child completely healed. Jesus told the woman to pick up the child, give him milk, and to remember what Jesus had done.

**Miracle No. 15** Some men were building a new house in the neighborhood when one of the men died. Jesus went to see what the excitement was about, and when he found the man dead, he commanded him to arise and go to work. The man rose immediately. The crowd, as usual, was astonished and proclaimed Jesus to be a child from heaven for he had saved so many from death.

**Miracle No. 16** When Jesus was twelve, following the ancient Israelite custom, his family traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover. On the way home, they suddenly missed Jesus after they had traveled a day's journey. They looked among the other members of the caravan, but he was not there. So they retraced their steps to Jerusalem and after three days found him in the Temple, with the teachers, "listen-

ing and questioning them.” Mary, his mother, went to Jesus and admonished him for causing them such worry. Jesus then asked why they had looked for him since it was time that he must be in his Father’s house (temple). The scribes and Pharisees told Mary that she was blessed to have a son such as Jesus. “We have never before seen or heard such glory or such excellence and wisdom.” Jesus then went home with his family and remained obedient to them as he grew in stature and grace.

**Miracle No. 17** Once upon a time, the Lord Jesus saw some children get together to play in a street. When these children saw Jesus, they hid themselves. Jesus talked to women standing close to the door of a house about these children and their location. The women claimed that they did not know where these children had gone. The Lord Jesus asked them, “Who are those whom you see in the furnace?” The women answered him saying, “They are three-year-old goats.” Then Jesus said “Come out to your shepherd you goats.” The children who became goats obeyed Jesus and went to meet him. The women became afraid and begged Jesus to change these goats to their previous state. The Lord Jesus said, “Come, children, let us go and play.” “And immediately in the presence of these women the goats were changed into children.”

**Miracle No. 18** After the birth of Jesus, his mother put him in a manger where “an ox and donkey worshipped him.” That happened according to Isaiah the prophet who said, “The ox knows his owner and the donkey his lord’s manger,” and Habbakuk had mentioned “you will be known between the two animals.”

**Miracle No. 19** When Jesus was with his family in Ancient Israel, they stayed in a cave with some other children. Suddenly, “many dragons came out of the cave.” The children became very afraid. Then Jesus stood in front of the dragons; “they however, worshiped him” and retreated. Jesus said to his family, “Do not be afraid, nor consider me a child, I always have been a perfect man and am so now; it is necessary that all the wild beasts of forest be tame before me.”

**Miracle No. 20** Other animals such as lions and leopards worshipped Jesus as well as many other animals. Wherever the family traveled from one place to another in Judea, some animals traveled with them (lions, oxen, donkeys, sheep, rams, and wolves). “There was no harm to the one from the other” as it was said by the prophet “Wolves shall be pastured with lambs, the lion and the ox shall eat fodder together.”

**Miracle No. 21** On the third day after the family left the area, St. Mary was very tired and when she saw a palm tree, she wanted to rest underneath it and hoped to have some of its fruits. Then Jesus addressed the tree saying: “Bend down, tree,

and refresh my mother with your fruit.” At once, “the palm bent down its head to the feet of Mary, and they gathered fruit from it by which all were refreshed.” After this, Jesus ordered the tree to raise up, and the “palm raised itself at once and fountains of water, very clear and cold and sweet, began to pour out through the roots.” The family “and the beasts of burden were all satisfied, and they gave thanks to God.”

**Miracle No. 22** Through the journey of Jesus and his family, Jesus directed his speech to the palm and said...“that one of your branches be carried by my angels and planted in my Father’s paradise.” And that happened. Then Jesus addressed his family and the others saying “that this palm, which I have had carried into Paradise, will be ready for all the saints in the place of delight, just as it was ready for you in this desert place.” All who heard such a saying became very glad.

**Miracle No. 23** During the travel of the Holy Family, the weather was very hot. Joseph said to Jesus, “if it pleases you, let us go by the sea, so that we can travel, resting in the coastal towns.” Jesus answered him saying, “I will shorten your journey, so that what you were going to travel across in the space of thirty days, you will finish in one day.” And according to Jesus, saying, “they began to see the mountains and cities of Egypt.”

### ***5. The Childhood of John the Baptist***

King Herod believed that the wise men were mocking him and because of this he became angry and ordered his men to go throughout Bethlehem and kill all children the age of two or younger. When Mary heard about this edict, she feared for the life of her baby and wrapped him in swaddling clothes. She then laid him in a manger because there was no room in the inn.

Elizabeth, hearing of the command to kill the children two and under and afraid for her son John, took him and went to the mountains trying to find a place to hide. Then she moaned and said, “Oh mountain of the Lord, receive the mother with the child” as she was unable to climb up the mountain. At that moment the mountain was split in half and they went in where they found an angel of the Lord waiting to protect them.

Herod began searching for John and sent his men to Zacharias, who was serving at the altar. They asked where he had hid his son John. He replied that he was a minister of God and serving the altar, how should he be expected to know where his son is. Herod’s men returned to him with the news that the boy John could not be found. This enraged Herod who believed that John was to become the king of Israel. So, again, he sent his men to Zacharias, telling him that if he did not tell the truth, his life would be at stake. Zacharias replied that he would be willing to be a martyr for God, who would receive his soul if Herod killed him. In addition, he warned they would be shedding innocent blood. Herod’s men ignored the pleas of

Zacharias and murdered him “in the entrance of the temple and altar.”

When the priests went to the temple at the appointed time, Zacharias did not meet them and, after waiting some time, one priest went to the holy place and found dried blood on the ground. Then a voice from heaven said, “Zacharias is murdered, and his blood shall not be wiped away, until the revenger of his blood come.” The frightened priest immediately went out to the other priests and related what he had seen and heard. They all went in and saw the blood. At this point, the roofs of the temple groaned and creaked and were torn apart. The body of Zacharias could not be found; the only evidence they had of the murder was the dried blood on the ground. The priests then left the temple and told the people what had happened. All the tribes of Israel heard of the murder and mourned the death of Zacharias for three days. After the mourning period, the priests came together to choose a successor for Zacharias. The priests cast their lots and chose Simeon, who had been assured by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen Christ in the flesh.<sup>vii</sup>

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vii *The Lost Books of the Bible*, pp. 35-37; *The Other Bible*, pp. 391-392; R. Joseph Hoffman, *Jesus Outside the Gospels*, pp. 115-116.



## BOOK REVIEWS

### ***A Life Pleasing to God: The Spirituality of the Rules of St. Basil***

By Augustine Holmes, OSB. Kalamazoo, Michigan: - Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 2000. Pp. 294, \$18.95. (Paperback). ISBN 0-87907-689-5

In his short life (330-379), St. Basil the Great proved to be one of the most important figures in Christian history. As a theologian, Basil shared with the other Cappadocian Fathers, after the death of St. Athanasius, in the defense of faith against the Aryan heretics who denied the divinity of Christ. Later he defended the divinity of the Holy Spirit against the Macedonian heresy. In addition he was a spiritual teacher of ecumenical significance. Yet it is strange that little attention has been given to Basilian spirituality. *A Life Pleasing to God* tells the story of Basil's own spiritual development in the theologically turbulent fourth-century.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I, *the backgrounds of the Rules*, deals with the major points in the life of Basil that helped to produce the *Asceticon*. The next two parts are commentaries on the *Asceticon*, wrongly translated as 'Rule'. *Part II* (first seven rules) deals with the main ideas of the Basilian spirituality. *Part III* is a commentary on eleven rules dealing with Christian Community. These rules were not monastic rules in the strict sense, but were the answers of Basil to questions raised by the monks.

This is the first major study of St. Basil in the English language, and it fills a gap that is much needed by both scholars and general readers.

### ***The Pilgrim's Tale***

Edited and introduced by Aleksei Pentokovsky. Translated by T. Allan Smith. Preface by Jaroslav Pelikan. New York, Mahwah (NJ): Paulist Press, 1999. \$28.95 (Hardcover), \$19.95 (paperback). ISBN: 0-8091-0486-5

In this volume of *The Classics of Western Spirituality* is the translation of the Optina redaction of one of the most famous examples of Russian spiritual literature, which deals with various aspects of the Jesus Prayer. A redaction of this text is thought to have been written no earlier than 1859. The story describes the experience of the *Jesus Prayer* in the life of a Russian pilgrim during his journey toward Jerusalem. The use of the Jesus Prayer in order to reach the unceasing prayer has been a tradition from the time of the fourth century Desert Fathers in Egypt. It spread to the West since the Middle Ages and was propagated by saints like Bernard of Clairvaux (12th century) and Bernardino of Siena (14th century). The publication of the Pilgrim's tale in the 19th century has initiated a revival of the Jesus prayer, and with it the life of unceasing prayer that is not limited to Russia nor to the Orthodox Churches. Many Catholics, Anglicans and Protestants have found great spiritual benefits from its practice.

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