

# COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

*Volume 25, Number 2 . . . . . Summer 2004*

- *Salvation in the Teaching of the Church Fathers*
- *The Presence of God in the Eucharist*
- *The Revolts of the Copts*



Visit our INTERNET Home Page: <http://home.ptd.net/~yanney/>

*Society of Coptic Church Studies*

ADVISORY BOARD

Bishop Wissa  
(Al-Balyana, Egypt)

Bishop Antonious Markos  
(Coptic Church, African Affairs)

Bishop Isaac  
(Quesna, Egypt)

Bishop Dioscorus  
(Coptic Church, Egypt)

Fr. Tadros Malaty  
(Alexandria, Egypt)

Professor Fayek Ishak  
(Ontario, Canada)

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

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

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

**EDITOR IN CHIEF:**  
*Rodolph Yanney, M.D.*

**EDITOR:**  
*Maged S. A. Mikhail*

CIRCULATION MANAGER  
Ralph Yanney

© *Copyright 2004*  
*by Coptic Church Review*  
*E. Brunswick, NJ*

*Subscription and Business Address:*  
*Society of Coptic Church Studies*  
*P.O. Box 714*  
*E. Brunswick, NJ 08816*  
*email: [Ralphyanney@hotmail.com](mailto:Ralphyanney@hotmail.com)*

*Editorial Address:*  
*Maged S. A. Mikhail*  
*Editor, Coptic Church Review*  
*1744 Oarkridge Cr.*  
*W. Covina, CA 91792*  
*email: [msmikhail@juno.com](mailto:msmikhail@juno.com)*

*Subscription Price (1 Year)*  
*U.S.A. \$10.00*  
*Canada \$12.00 (U.S. dollars)*  
*Overseas \$15.00 (Airmail)*

This periodical is indexed in  
the *ATLA Regional Database*,  
published by the  
American Theological Library Assoc.  
250 S. Wacker Dr., 16th Floor  
Chicago, IL 60606  
E-mail: [atla@atla.com](mailto:atla@atla.com)  
WWW: <http://www/atla.com/>

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

# COPTIC CHURCH REVIEW

*A Quarterly of Contemporary Patristic Studies*  
ISSN 0273-3269

NOW IN ITS 25TH YEAR

*Volume 25, Number 2 . . . . . Summer 2004*

34 *The Sacrifice of the Eucharist:  
Offering of the Church and Her  
Members in the Eucharist*  
Rodolph Yanney

40 *Salvation in the Teaching of the  
Church Fathers*  
Rodolph Yanney

48 *The Revolts of the Copts*  
Boulos Ayad Ayad

54 *Saint Maurice  
and the Theban Legion*

61 *The Presence of God in the  
Eucharist*  
Rodolph Yanney

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

# ***THE SACRIFICE OF THE EUCHARIST: OFFERING OF THE CHURCH AND HER MEMBERS IN THE EUCHARIST***

*Rodolph Yanney*

***“We offer unto thee thine oblations, of thine own, upon every condition,  
for any condition, and in whatever condition.”***

(Liturgy of St. Basil).

***“The teaching about the One and Unique Sacrifice of Christ, and  
about the nature of his priesthood as the only Mediator between  
God and men cannot be separated from that of the teaching of the  
Church as his Body for which He is the Head.”***

(Eph .1:22-23,5:29-32; 1Cor 1:18)

It is a fact that Christ our Lord passed alone in the way of the Cross, Golgotha, and Hades, then the Resurrection and Ascension, and then through the heavens (Heb 4:14) in order to offer his sacrifice in the Heavenly Holy of Holies. In all that, his divinity never parted from his humanity. The union of our humanity (the Church) with the Eternal Word is a lasting unity without separation even “for a moment or a twinkling of an eye.”

Hence it is also a fact that the Church has entered into the heavenly Holy of Holies and is now sitting with her Bridegroom on the right hand of the Father (Eph 2:6). This is a reality that we may understand and spiritually meditate upon now. However, as far as the body is concerned, we are still awaiting the Second Coming of Christ, “for salvation” (Heb 9:28). Jesus has gone as a forerunner into the inner shrine on our behalf (Heb 6:19-20). It was impossible for any human to participate in his work of salvation, but we still have his promise to Peter, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you shall follow me afterward” (John 13:36). In the Eucharist we actually live these spiritual realities, though sacramental as explained by a contemporary Orthodox theologian:

The Son and the sons walk together, as associates in the same enterprise (“partakers of Christ,” Heb 3:14), like a Shepherd and his sheep (Heb 13:20). They form a single group as they march forward. The High Priest's entry into God's presence must therefore be regarded as the entry of a forerunner (Heb 6:20). He traces the path, “he goes ahead to inaugurate and consecrate it” (Heb. 10:19-20). The believers have only to follow him in order to enter heaven themselves also.

Another adds:

The place set aside for the formation of this procession is the Church, the House of God, whose head is the High Priest himself (Heb 10:21 ff.). It is cantered in the Eucharistic Liturgy of the community, which is one with the heavenly offering of Jesus. The Eucharist is a liturgical projection of the heavenly worship presented by Jesus, the High Priest; it is also the commemoration of Christ's sacrifice in history on the Cross.

Now we have to translate this into what happens in the practical daily life of the Church since we do not want to study abstract theology that belongs to the schools of divinity and philosophy. We must understand the role of the Church and of every one of her members in offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice. We are approaching here the most essential, even the center of Orthodox spirituality; that is the Divine Liturgy in which each of us participates every week.

St. Augustine summarizes the Christian doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, its relation to the Cross and the role of the Church in it saying, “Christ is both the Priest, offering himself, and himself the Victim. He willed that the sacramental sign of this should be the daily sacrifice of the Church, who, since the Church is his Body and He the Head, learns to offer herself through him.”

St. Augustine here is not talking about two different sacrifices: one for Christ and another for the Church. It is the same sacrifice, since the Church is the Body of Christ. What role then do our offerings and oblations have after all sacrifices have been completed and fulfilled in the Cross? What can our offerings add to the perfect offering of the Son of God? When man becomes closer to God: “Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering” (Is 40:16). Man with all his offerings is nothing as compared to the sacrifice of the Cross. What is important is that one should be united with this everlasting Sacrifice. Evelyn Underhill explains how this happens and describes what the Church offers in the Eucharist: The Eucharist . . . is first the Church's representation before God of the perfect self-offering of Christ; the threefold oblation of the Upper Room, Gethsemane, and Calvary, in which all the deepest meanings of sacrifice are gathered and declared. Secondly, it is her own self-offering and that of each of her members, in and with Christ her head: since his sacrifice “once for all in fact exter-

nalized on Calvary, is ever real in the inward and heavenly sphere.” To that inward and heavenly sphere the Church by her Eucharistic worship is admitted to join her sacrificial acts to the eternal self-offering of her Lord. These sacrificial acts, this total and loving dedication of life to the purposes of the Eternal--whether expressed in ritual action or not--form the very heart of her liturgical life. For the fullest act of worship, whether of the Church or of the soul, must be the surrender of the created life to the purpose of the continuing Incarnation . . . . “The mystery of the Body of Christ is accomplished when his members are offered in him and with him.”

St. Augustine also explains how the Church offers herself in the Eucharist:

Although this sacrifice is made or offered by man, still the sacrifice is a divine act. The whole redeemed community, the congregation and fellowship of the saints, is offered as a universal sacrifice to God by the great Priest who offered himself in suffering for us in the form of a servant (Phil 2: 7), that we might be the Body of so great a Head. For in this He is mediator, priest, and sacrifice. So the Apostle exhorted us to “present our bodies as a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1) . . . we ourselves are the whole sacrifice . . . This is the sacrifice of Christians, the “many who are one body in Christ” (Rom 12:5). This sacrifice the Church celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, which the faithful know well, where it is shown to her that in this thing, which she offers she herself is offered.

### ***The Offertory: Offering of the Bread and Wine***

In the early Church, the people brought the bread and wine during the offertory and gave them to the deacon who presented them to the bishop. The bishop then offered them, for he alone spoke for the whole Body. Based on his studies of the ancient liturgies, Father Gregory Dix found that the remnants of this ancient Tradition, which disappeared from most churches after the era of the Fathers, still exists in the Egyptian Liturgy of St. Cyril.

In describing the offertory, St. Irenaeus applied the words of our Lord about the widow's mite, saying, “That poor widow, the Church, casts in all her life (Lk 16:4) into the treasury of God.” Gregory Dix explains further:

Each communicant from the bishop to the newly confirmed gave himself under the forms of bread and wine to God, as God gives himself to them under the same forms. In the united oblations of all her members, the Body of Christ, the Church, gave herself to become the Body of Christ, the Sacrament, in order that receiving again the symbol of herself, now transformed and hallowed, she might be truly that which by nature she is, the Body of Christ, and each of her members of Christ (Eph 5:31-32).

Since the Church becomes the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, St. Augustine could address the newly baptized in one of his sermons, saying, “You are upon the table. You are inside the chalice.” Despite the difficulty some people may have with such teaching, it is nevertheless reflected in the rites of the Divine Liturgy in all churches. Beside the bread and wine, we also notice the presence of a third substance, water that is mixed with the wine and enters in the structure of the bread. In the Coptic rite, during the Procession of the Lamb, while the priest carries the Eucharistic Bread, two deacons carry the wine and the water. The Bread is then washed with this water. St. Cyprian of Carthage (third century) finds from the Book of Revelation that the water signifies the people: “And he said to me, “The waters that you saw, where the harlot is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues” (Rev. 15: 17). He explains the significance of this in the Eucharist:

For, because Christ, who bore our sins, also bore us all, we see that people are signified in the water; but in the wine the blood of Christ is shown. But when water is mixed with wine in the chalice, the people are united to Christ, and the multitude of the believers is bound and joined to him in whom they believe. This association and mingling of water and wine are so mixed in the chalice of the Lord that the mixture cannot be mutually separated. Whence nothing can separate the Church, that is, the multitude established faithfully and firmly in the Church, persevering in that which it has believed, from Christ as long as it clings and remains in undivided love . . . . Thus, in truth the chalice of the Lord is not water alone, or wine alone; unless both are mixed together, just as flour alone or water alone cannot be the body of the Lord unless both have been united and joined and made solid in the structure of the bread. By this sacrament itself, our people are shown to be united; just as many grains collected in one and united and mixed form one bread, so in Christ, who is the heavenly bread, we may know is one body, in which our number is joined and united.

The Church cannot offer herself except in Christ and with Christ. All the sacrifices of Christians are gathered and sanctified in the sacrifice of Golgotha before the heavenly sanctuary. They are represented by their own offerings (the bread and wine). In the epiclesis, the person who prays the Eucharist asks for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the congregation before it asks for his descent upon the offering: “that thy Holy Spirit may descend upon us and upon these oblations.” As the people present the offerings to be consecrated, they also present themselves for sanctification by the same Holy Spirit who sanctifies the offerings. Eucharist is a call for every believer to carry his cross every day and follow the Lord, as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Rom 12:1).

But one should never think that any of the offerings of the Church with all her members in the Eucharist, whether the material (bread and wine) or what they stand for in spiritual sacrifices (Rom 12: 1), add to the Sacrifice of the Cross. A contemporary theologian explains: Christ gives to his Church not only his body and blood, but with them the whole of his sacrifice in order that she may dispose of it . . . and associate with it all the sacrifices of her children. These sacrifices will add nothing, of course, to the one sacrifice of our Lord; on the contrary, they will receive from it everything of value they can have; but thus enriched they will help in the sacramental application by allowing this saving contact, which cannot be established without the active response of the redeemed to their Redeemer . . . . By accepting these humble gifts, and making of them his body and blood, Christ incorporates into his sacrifice the sacrifices, which these gifts symbolize.

### ***Offering of the Individual in the Eucharist***

St. Paul says about the Church: “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1 Cor 12:27). This places the responsibility of action on each of her members. St. John Chrysostom asserts: “The offering of thanksgiving [Eucharist] is common: for neither does the priest give thanks alone, but also all the people. For having first taken their voices, next when they assent that it is 'meet and right so to do,' then he begins the thanksgiving.”

St. Clement of Rome, in his letter to the Corinthians, which is the earliest writing from the sub-apostolic period (95 AD) says: “Those who present their offerings at the appointed times, are accepted and blessed . . . . For his own peculiar services are assigned to the high priest, and their own proper place is prescribed to the priests, and their own special ministrations devolve on the Levites. The layman is bound by the laws that pertain to laymen.”

Considering these words, what is the role of each of us, the role of the individual, of every believer, of each disciple of Christ when the priest says in the plural, “We offer unto thee thine oblations, of thine own, upon every condition, for any condition, and in whatever condition”? The offering of bread and wine is only a visible token of the sacrifice required from each individual. We have to turn to the Scriptures to know what it is:

- “For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6).
- “The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Ps 51:17).
- “I appeal to you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1).
- “And like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2:5).

Following Christ, the life of each believer should always be a living sacrifice and he himself the priest who offers it. We offer this spiritual sacrifice with and in Christ in the Eucharist. Its object is a life consecrated to Christ, whether in service or contemplation: “As I willingly offered myself to God, my Father, for your sins, even so must you willingly offer yourself to me daily in the Liturgy, as a pure and holy oblation, with all your powers and affections, as intimately as you are able. What do I require more of you, than that you endeavour to resign yourself entirely to me? Whatever you give beside yourself I regard not, for I seek not your gift but yourself.”

We find this same advice in the beautiful spiritual books along history. An example is what is written in *The Cloud of Unknowing*: “You should worship God your Lord with your whole self, offering him yourself and all which is within, in the state in which you are, saying: 'I am before thee as I am either in nature or with the work of grace. All what I possess comes from you, O Lord, and here it is for you.'”

This perfect trust that rises upwards like sweet incense is evident in the sacrifice of the martyrs. It is also demonstrated by each soul consecrated to God, regardless of any earthly worries. A 17th century French monk who was assigned to the kitchen of the monastery for fifteen years describes his feeling, saying, “The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.”



# ***SALVATION IN THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH FATHERS***

*Rodolph Yanney*

The best definition of salvation I have ever found was in the words of one of the Coptic Orthodox contemporary churchmen, the Blessed Father Bishoi Kamel (1931-1979):

“The Christian concept of salvation does not consist merely in commandments, or in teachings, or in promises; it is rather the descent of God and his union with us. The Savior then is God who united with us and walks with us.”

This is the core of the biblical teaching on salvation, which the Fathers have kept in their writings from the early Christian centuries, and which remained till our times. However, the Western Fathers and theologians gradually shifted away from this simple biblical Tradition especially since the Middle Ages. In recent years, thanks to the huge work of many biblical and patristic scholars, there is a growing tendency in many churches to return to the teaching of the early Church on salvation.

Part I of this study is a general historical survey of this issue in which the teaching of the various Fathers is introduced in chronological order in both the East and West. Subsequent chapters deal with Scholastic Theology and how it affected the teaching in most churches till the Middle of the twentieth century, after which there has been a resurgence of the patristic Tradition.

Part II deals with the doctrine of salvation, as we know it from Scripture, Liturgy and Church Fathers. In the light of all these main sources of Tradition, we will see how the problems and questions raised by scholasticism have no real basis and are the wrong questions to ask from the beginning. I do not intend to enter into theological arguments since the study addresses primarily the general reader, with two aims in mind. The first is how does all this relate to our spiritual life, which is, to quote St. Athanasius, a life directed to the Father, in, through and with the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. The other aim is how to bring this patristic Tradition to what we teach in Sunday Schools, how the biblical dynamics of salvation as taught by

the Fathers and lived in the Liturgy can help everyone in 'the road of salvation' (to quote the Coptic Liturgy of St. Basil).

## *Part I*

### *A Historical Overview Elements of the Patristic Teaching on Salvation*

Christians throughout the centuries have confessed the Lord Jesus as Savior, but what does this really mean? In both the Old and New Testaments, God is the Savior; salvation is a result of his saving act (Ex. 3:8, 5:23; & 12:27; Ps. 44:3,4; Is 43:11, 60:16, 61:10; Habakkuk. 3:13 & 18; Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:47, 68 & 2:11; Heb. 3:16, 18; 2 Pet 1:1). This has been an essential teaching of Christianity since the very beginning. Christians quoted the biblical verses and data without raising the theological question of how does God save us. The Church still uses the same OT psalms and great hymns that recall the salvation of God. The four songs, known as the 'Hosses', that start the Daily Office in the Coptic Church illustrate this. The Nicene Creed, acknowledged by all Christians, says that the Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten son of God, 'for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was made flesh...and became man' From the beginning of Christianity, the Incarnation has been an essential doctrine, essential for our salvation. The New Testament starts with it. It has its place in every Creed and every baptismal formula since the apostolic times. But why did God become man? The Church Fathers did not leave for us a sophisticated system or an elaborate theology of salvation. Unlike the doctrines of Trinity and Christology where controversy forced the Church to have exact definitions, redemption did not become a battle-ground for rival schools till the 12th century. The christological teaching of the Fathers and their defense of Christ's full divinity (against Arianism), and His full humanity (Against Appollinarianism), and of the union of the two natures into one (against Nestorians and Chalcedonians) always included a stereological basis. The definitions they reached in those areas were worked out in close connection with a quite definite view of Christ's redemptive work. That no soteriological pronouncements came from the myriad of Councils held during the patristic age is testimony, not to a lack of interest in the 'doctrine' of salvation, but to the fact that 'Jesus Christ is Savior' was the one doctrine, which served as the irreducible platform for all other doctrines.

The early Fathers in the first two centuries looked at the role of Christ in our salvation from different aspects , all taken from Scripture:

- 1 - As a 'Teacher', Christ enlightens our minds and opens our eyes to the true knowledge both by his words and by the example of his life.
- 2 - By 'Recapitulation' redeemed humanity has Christ and not Adam as its Head (Rom.5: 12-19, 1 Cor. 15: 22 & 45-50).

- 3 - From a third aspect, Christ has been looked at as 'Victor' since He conquered Death, Sin and Satan, together with all the powers of darkness (Rom. 7:4 Phil. 2:10. Col. 2:15).
- 4 - The concept of salvation as proceeding from the 'Sacrifice' of Christ on the Cross-is a central teaching of the New Testament and of all Church Fathers. In both we find a dualistic description of God's redemption of man. God in Christ combats and prevails over the tyrants who hold mankind in bondage (i.e. death, sin and the Devil; see Heb.2: 14). On the other hand God becomes reconciled with the world, the enmity is taken away, and a new relation is established with mankind. The deliverance of man from the power of death and the devil is at the same time his deliverance from God's judgment. God is not only the Reconciler but also the Reconciled. This double-sidedness appears in most of the aspects and images used by the Church Fathers to describe Christ's death:
- 5 - Death of Christ as a Sacrifice and the Image of the Ransom-Price. Till the second half of the fourth century, the death of Christ as a ransom (Matt.20: 28; Mark 10: 45) together with Origen's absurd 'theory of the deception of the Devil' was prevalent. People believed that human beings rightfully belonged to Satan because of their sin and that he had the right to receive their souls on their death. According to this theory, the death of Christ was the 'ransom' paid by the Father to the devil in order to redeem the captive humanity. Origen says:

To whom did He give his soul as a ransom for many? Surely not to God. Could it, then, be to the Evil One? For he had us in his power, until the ransom for us should be given to him, even the life (or soul) of Jesus, since he (the Evil One) has been deceived, and led to suppose that he was capable of mastering that soul, and he did not see that to hold Him involved a trial of strength greater than he was equal to. Therefore also death, though he thought he had prevailed against him, no longer lords it over him. Christ having become free among the dead and stronger than the power of death, and so much stronger than death that all who will amongst those who are mastered by death may also follow him, death no longer prevailing against them.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus refutes this theory saying:

...I ask to whom was this (Sacrifice of Christ) offered, and to what cause? If to the Evil One, fie upon the outrage! If the robber receives ransom, not only from God, but a ransom, which consists of God Himself... But if to the Father, I ask first, how? For it was not by Him that we were being oppressed; and next: On what principle did the Blood of His Only Begotten Son delight the father, who would not even receive Isaac when offered by his father? Is it not evident that the Father accepts him, but nei-

ther asked him nor demanded him; but on account of the Incarnation, and because humanity must be sanctified by the humanity of God, that He might deliver us himself, and overcome the tyrant, and draw us to himself by the mediation of his Son, who also arranges this to the honor of the Father.

- 6 - The Image of Debt. St. Athanasius says, “The Word of God naturally by offering His own temple and corporeal instrument for the life of all satisfied the debt by His death.” Athanasius also connects this with the idea of sacrifice, “By offering unto death the body He Himself had taken, as an offering and sacrifice free from any stain, straightway He put away death from all His peers by the offering of an equivalent.”

## ***Part II***

### ***Fall and Redemption Between East and West in the Early Church***

#### ***A - The Eastern Christian Tradition***

Since the third century, the teaching on man, his fall and redemption started to differ between East and West. The eastern Fathers believed that man, being created in the image of God, was a rational creature and had a free will. However, in Paradise Adam and Eve were not perfect, mentally, morally nor spiritually. They were still like children when Satan tempted them. St. Athanasius emphasizes that man, being created in God's image, has a special relation to Him that makes him the object of God's pity and responsibility when he falls. Athanasius, quoting Wisdom 2:23 and 24, says, “God made man for incorruption, and as an image of his own eternity; but by the envy of the devil death came into the world”

Eastern Fathers do not teach that the fall deprived man entirely of God's Grace, nor of the free will. In the words of Athanasius, the image of God in man was damaged, or became faint, but never destroyed by sin. He says:

For as, when the likeness painted on a panel has been effaced by stains from without, he whose likeness it is must needs come once more to enable the portrait to be renewed on the same wood: for, for the sake of his picture, even the mere wood on which it is painted is not thrown away, but the outline is renewed upon it.

Athanasius keeps repeating that sin resulted in two major consequences: the change of human nature and the fall of man into the grasp of death. Any salvation, in order to be true of its name has to take care of both problems.

Although we inherited the changed human nature, with a weakened will and more inclination to sin, yet the Eastern Fathers never taught that we inherited Adam's guilt or that the unapprised children are doomed.

After its sin, God treated the fallen humanity with love and took upon himself the responsibility of saving it from a condition people would have never been able to change, that is their subjection to sin and death. St. Irenaeus says, "He became what we are in order to enable us to become what He is". St. Athanasius elaborates more, saying that God, because of his goodness had to take the initiative to save man.

For it were not worthy of God's goodness that the things He had made should waste away, because of the deceit practiced on men by the devil. Especially it was unseemly to the last degree that God's handicraft among men should be done away, either because of their own carelessness, or because of the deceitfulness of evil spirits... And where were the profit of their having been made, to begin with? For better were they not made, than once made, left to neglect and ruin. For neglect reveals weakness, and not goodness on God's part--if, that is, He allows His own work to be ruined when once He had made it--more so than if He had never made man at all.

The early Church Fathers looked at salvation from different aspects since it is a divine action which no human theory or human word can define or limit. From the biblical data they saw Christ as the New Adam, the Teacher, the Victor and the Victim. In all the pictures they used, they were careful to avoid philosophical routes and theories that have no biblical theological basis.

The picture of a loving and redeeming God was basic in the teaching of the Eastern Fathers about salvation and is still very evident in the eastern liturgies that have reached us from the patristic period. The Coptic liturgy of St. Gregory the Theologian can illustrate this better than many monographs:

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. 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.

The Eastern Church Fathers stressed the role of the Sacraments in salvation. St. Ephrem the Syria says: "Again we would say 'If Adam died because of sin, He who removed sin had to take away death too.' But just as Adam was told 'The day you eat of the forbidden tree, you shall die,' but in fact he did not die; but rather he

received a pledge of his death in the form of being stripped naked of the glory and his expulsion from Paradise, after which he was daily pondering on death. It is exactly the same with life in Christ: we have eaten His Body in place of the fruit of the Tree, and His altar has taken the place of the Garden of Eden for us; the curse has been washed away by His innocent blood, and in the hope of resurrection we await the life that is to come, and indeed we already walk in the new life, in that we already have a pledge of it.”

## ***B - The Early Western Church Fathers and Salvation***

### ***(1) Tertullian***

When we come to the West we find ourselves in a totally different world. We cannot avoid studying it because since the Middle Ages and till the middle of the twentieth century, the teaching on salvation in all churches, East and West, whether Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant, has been dominated by Western thinking. In the early centuries, Western thought on redemption conformed broadly to its pattern in the East, except for putting a greater emphasis on the Lord's death as a sacrifice. The West looked at salvation mainly from its legal or judicial aspect. Although this view became an elaborate system only in the 12th century, it appeared as early as Tertullian in the third century. Tertullian, an African lawyer, introduced legal terms in theology and his views sealed the whole western theology till modern times. He is considered the most important Western theologian in the early Church before Augustine. Tertullian was the first to coin the term 'satisfaction' to describe Christ's work, though not in the exclusive way in which it was used in the Middle Ages. His teaching about Penance centered on the satisfaction made by man and the merits he acquires. Satisfaction is the compensation that a man makes for his faults. He says:

How absurd it is to leave the penance unperformed, and yet expect forgiveness of sins! What is it but to fail to pay the price, and, nevertheless, to stretch the hand for the benefit? The Lord has ordained that forgiveness is to be granted for this price: He wills that the remission of the penalty is to be purchased for the payment which penance makes.

Merits are acquired by acts, which go beyond what is obligatory. According to Tertullian, they include such acts as fasting, celibacy and martyrdom. This teaching was the seed for the ideas of satisfaction and merit that plagued the West in future ages.

### ***(2) Cyprian***

St. Cyprian built further upon the ideas started by his master Tertullian. He adds that superfluous merit can be transferred from one person to another, and applied this principle to the surplus of merits earned by Christ's passion. Cyprian also stressed the idea that, 'God must act according to justice'. In other words

Cyprian stressed two points in his teaching: (1) A legal relationship between God and man, and (2) In speaking of Christ's work, the emphasis is laid on that which is done by Christ as man in relation to God. These points emphasized by Cyprian are different from the previous Tradition. They became the basis for further elaboration in the Middle Ages. The Swedish theologian Gustaf Aulen in 1930 offered the theory that these changes were based on the Latin penitential system which started at the time of Cyprian. However, during this period it never became the dominant view in the West, but was combined with the prevailing biblical patristic Tradition.

### ***(3) Ambrose***

Ambrose, together with other Western Fathers in the fourth century, emphasized the solidarity of all mankind with Adam in his sin and accepted Origen's theory of the transaction with Satan, with his rights to have a price for surrendering mankind. But he also spoke about Christ's death as a sacrifice as the main purpose of the Incarnation. In this he combined the idea of recapitulation with that of substitution.

### ***(4) Pelagianism***

Pelagius, a British monk who taught in Rome in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, did not share with other Western Fathers especially Augustine their pessimistic picture of fallen humanity. He taught that man after the fall has a genuine free will and is able to choose to do right or wrong equally. Thus he has a genuine role in shaping his life and destiny without the aid of a special grace from God other than that which all have in Scripture. Pelagius believed in the merits of good works.

Pelagianism was condemned by the Council of Carthage (in 411), and the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (in 431). Its long-lasting effect on the Church lies in two things: First, it is the only heresy in patristic time that is concerned with salvation, and hence we have a lot of writings on the issue in the 5th and 6th centuries. Second, in the less extreme form as Semi-Pelagianism, which is a whole spectrum rather than a single entity, it infiltrated in some of the monastic writings. St. John Cassian, through whom we received the teaching of many of the Egyptian Desert Fathers, was stamped as Semi-Pelagian by the Western churches.

### ***(5) Augustine***

Augustine is considered the greatest of the Church Fathers. Although he died before any of the major Church divisions, yet he is not considered a saint in any Orthodox Church; he is not mentioned in the Synaxarion, his name is not cited during the liturgy in the diptychs, nor does he have a feast day in any of them. The reason was his last four treatises which he wrote before his death, 'Against the Pelagians', which dealt with the role of Grace and human agency for salvation. In

these treatises, there appeared a disruption of the traditional teaching of the Eastern Church Fathers of co-operation between Grace and human free will that results in merit and reward at the last judgment, and which was carried by monasticism to the West. According to Augustine, those who are predestined by God as 'elect' are given a special grace that helps them to turn their will to him and persist with him till their entrance into beatitude. With the doctrine of predestination, free will and final judgment ceased to have any reality.

Other key issues in Augustine's System about salvation deal with the fall and original sin. He attributes original rightness and perfection to the first man. He was in a state of justification, illumination and beatitude. His will was good and devoted to carrying out God's commands. From this high state, higher than the Eastern Fathers imagined, the first man fell to a much deeper abyss than what they have drawn. The result was the ruin of the entire race, which became in Augustine's words '*mssa damnata*' (a lump of perdition), sinful itself and propagating sinners. Augustine taught that all sinned in Adam (original guilt) and thus unapprised infants are damned. Also as a result of the fall human nature became terribly scarred and vitiated. Although we still have a free will, yet we can only use it to do wrong; we cannot avoid sin or do good without a special grace given only to the elect.

In spite of his mistakes we cannot ignore the value of Augustine in summing up the Western theology and delivering it to the Middle Ages. Regarding the work of Christ in salvation, Augustine stressed three elements

- 1 - Christ is the one true Mediator, who reconciled us to God, by the Sacrifice, in which He is both the offerer and the offering. In the passion of Christ lies the essence of redemption, to which all the OT sacrifices prefigured.
- 2 - Humanity is reconciled to God through its Head (recapitulation). Christ became Head of the Church by the Incarnation. He participated in our mortality so that we might participate in his immortality.
- 3 - Christ is our Teacher. Through his Person and his actions, He demonstrated God's love for us.



# ***THE REVOLTS OF THE COPTS***

*Boulos Ayad Ayad\**

The Muslim Arabs under their general, 'Amr ibn al-'As, invaded Egypt in 640 A.D. Gradually, Islam spread among Egyptians. At the beginning of the Arab invasion, a number of Copts adopted Islam voluntarily or because of the persecution by the Muslim rulers, especially after the rule of 'Amr ibn al-'As. The benefit of conversion to avoid persecution was the reason that many adopted Islam through the following centuries. Islam became the religion of the majority, and the Coptic Christians became the minority. Today, when one speaks of the Egyptian Muslims, they are simply called Egyptians; however, when the Egyptian Christians are mentioned, they are considered the Copts of Egypt. The word Copt, originally from an Ancient Egyptian root, means Egyptian.

There were various reasons that led to the revolts of the Copts, especially during the Umayyad and the Abbasid Dynasties. These included (1) the heavy taxes the Copts paid; (2) the Christian faith that the Muslim governors could not understand (although the Qur'an contains much of the materials in the Bible); (3) interference by Muslim rulers in Coptic affairs, especially the freedom of the Patriarchs; (4) lack of political and economic stability under Arab rule with conflicts internally and between the Egyptian rulers and the Caliphs. There were other causes as well. The Muslim governors were changed erratically, not systematically, often having only a short tenure in Egypt. Weather remained a factor that could not be controlled; if the level of the Nile fell below average, crop failures and famine could result. Nonetheless, taxes would be collected from the populace.

Coming from outside Egypt and with often short terms in power, the governors of Egypt had little interest in trying to improve or develop the country. The system of taxation was harsh, with extra taxes levied on the Copts; the wealth was transferred in large measure to the Caliph, although the governor and other Muslim officials would enrich themselves.

---

\*Boulos Ayad Ayad is Professor Emeritus at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

The Bashmur People (the Coptic people, or Graeco-Coptic people) did offer a power base because of a degree of wealth and having had a sufficient level of military training.

And while the Qur'an forbids forcible conversion of the "People of the Book," there was still pressure on the Copts to accept Islam.

### ***The Location of al-Bashmur and its Boundaries***

The exact boundaries of al-Bashmur are uncertain. From the different point of views of the classical writers, we can say that the area of al-Bashmur was changeable through time. The *History of the Patriarchs* says that "...the area was most accessible from Tida and Shubra. This statement would place al-Bashmur in the northern Delta, just south of Lake Burullus."<sup>1</sup> But the Armenian Abu Salih mentioned that "in a later period of at least the inhabitants of al-Bashmur and the inhabitants of al-Bashrud were the same people...but it appears to have been northwest of Sakha." An Arab writer, Ibn Hawqal, cites that, "the lake in Nastaruh was also called Buhayrat al-Bashmur, ...suggesting that the region of the Bashmurites was near Nastaruh, that is, north of the cities known today as Disuq and Kafr al-Shaykh." Another Arab writer located al-Bashmur "between the Dumyat arm of the Nile and Ashmun Tanah."<sup>2</sup> Randall Stewart gives his opinion concerning al-Bashmur in the following statement:

Perhaps from the mid-eighth to the mid-ninth century, al Bashmur encompassed the entire marsh region northeast of Fuwwah extending as far to the east as just north of Dikirnis. Later it may have been limited to the eastern part of this area. The name al-Bashmur survives in this region as the name of a Nile canal that breaks off about 4.5 miles (7 km) east of al-Mansurah by al-Salamun and runs through the area between the Damietta arm of the Nile and Dikirnis before emptying into the al-Sirw canal some 3.5 miles (5.5 km) south of Daqahlah.<sup>3</sup>

Mounir Megally, who follows the opinion of the Arab geographers, believes that given the inconsistent delineation of the borders of al-Bashmur, "it appears that the Bashmurites lived in the marshy regions that were near the Mediterranean Coast in the northern part of the Delta between the Rosetta and Damietta branches of the Nile close to the lake of Idku."<sup>4</sup>

---

1 Randall Stewart, "Bashmur, al-," in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, Aziz S. Atiya, ed., (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991), 2: 349. Probably the word Bashmur came originally from the Ancient Egyptian Pa-sh-mr meaning, 'those who are belonging to the lake of the sea.'

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 350.

From all such studies we can guess that the word al-Bashmur represents an area of land called al-Bashmur that was inhabited by the Coptic people many centuries ago. The meaning of the name of Bashmur is still vague, was the name originally an ancient Egyptian, or Greek, Coptic or Arabic? None of the writers tried to give an interpretation for the name or its origin. However, the Bashmuriyyin (Bashmurites) were mixed from the Copts and Greek people and their land was in Lower Egypt, south of the Lake of Burullus, between Damietta and Rosetta the two branches of the Nile River. We do not know the limit of their land.

### ***The Copts and the Umayyad Dynasty***

The revolts of the Copts, especially against the rule of the Umayyad and Abbasid Dynasties, lasted about 150 years, from the early 8th century A.D. up to the middle of the 9th century A.D.

In 724-727 A.D., the Copts revolted against the governor of al-Hur, son of Yusuf, during the rule of the Umayyad Caliph Hisham the son of Abd al-Malik, because of the many taxes they were forced to pay to the government. This revolution took place in the area located east of the Demiat branch of the Nile River and the desert. The revolt failed; all of the Copts were slain.<sup>5</sup> Hanzala, son of Safwan (737-742), imposed many taxes and treated all the Egyptians severely, especially the Copts who attacked the tax collectors. The governor of Egypt fought back and killed many of the Copts.<sup>6</sup> Under Abd al-Malik, son of Musa, the governor of Egypt who was appointed by Marwan, son of Muhammad, the Umayyads asked the Copts and their Patriarch to pay very heavy taxes. Khaal (744-768 A.D.), the Patriarch, could not pay. Because of this the Christian Nubian King Cyriacus marched against Egypt until he reached to al-Fustat, the capital of Egypt. However, Abd al-Malik asked the Patriarch to interfere between himself and the Nubian King. The Pope agreed and the Nubian King withdrew to Nubia.<sup>7</sup>

Abd al-Malik, son of Marwan, the son of Muhammad, the last Umayyad Caliph, fled from Damascus to Egypt because Abu al-Abbas, the Commander of the Khurasan army in the East, was marching toward Damascus to besiege it. When Marwan arrived in Egypt, he found the country was in serious economic difficulty. At the same time, the Copts of Bashmur revolted against the Umayyad Dynasty in Egypt and chose Mina, son of Buqira, to be the leader of the army. They also killed the tax collector and refused to obey the Muslim ruler. Because of this, the Copts, along with their Patriarch, Khaal, and their bishops, suffered great persecution. The two armies of the Umayyad and Copts met in battle; the Umayyad force was defeated. Later, Marwan increased the number of his army and again went to fight the Copts. He was unable to occupy their fortifications or enter their

---

5 Bishop Youannis, *Tarikh al-Kanisah al-Qibtiah ba'd Magma' Khalqidoniah* (Staten Island, New York: Coptic Orthodox Church of Archangel Michael and St. Mena, 1989), p. 44.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

7 *Ibid.*

land because they were on the opposite side of the Nile River. Finally, Marwan requested the Patriarch of the Coptic Church to use his influence in stopping the revolution, but the Copts of the Bashmur did not listen to their Pope and continued fighting. In this situation, Marwan thought wrongly that the Patriarch, instead of asking the Copts to stop fighting, was encouraging them. Thus, Marwan arrested the Patriarch along with some of the Coptic bishops and priests.<sup>8</sup>

### ***The Copts and the Abbasid Dynasty***

At the beginning of the rule of the Abbasids, the Copts were treated reasonably, but in the third year of their rule, very heavy taxes were imposed. The persecution continued, especially during the rule of Abu Ja'ffar al-Mansur al-Abbasi when his governor of Egypt, Yazid, son of Hatim son of al-Muhalib son of Abu Sufra, discriminated against the Patriarch Mina the First. Accordingly, the Copts revolted and defeated the army of the governor. Ultimately, the Copts were defeated and Yazid had his revenge.<sup>9</sup>

When al-Layth son of al-Afdal (799-803 A.D.) ruled Egypt, he caused some problems to the Egyptians during the measuring of their land. The natives of al-Hawf complained but the governor did not listen to them. The people revolted and defeated his army. The governor continued his fighting until he won the battle and punished the Copts, especially those of Sakha and Rosetta.<sup>10</sup>

### ***The Last Revolution of the Copts of Bashmur***

This began a new phase in the history of Islamic Egypt. At the beginning of their rule, the Abbasids gave full freedom to the Coptic Patriarch and the bishops of the Coptic Church, releasing the other prisoners as well. Stability finally came to Egypt, but for a short period. The Abbasids started to impose heavy taxes on the Copts. Such a policy caused five of the revolts that occurred from 739 A.D. to 773 A.D. But the strongest revolution took place in 831 A.D.

The Egyptians, both Muslims and Christian, revolted against the Abbasid rulers because of the harsh treatment and the heavy taxes imposed upon them, especially during the time of al-Ma'mun, the Abbasid Caliph. At the same time, Abdullah, son of al-Tahir, son of al-Hussayn, hoped to occupy his father's position as commander of the army upon the death of his father. The Caliph refused to give him this position, so Abdullah went to Egypt in 818, where a number of Egyptians became his followers and supported him to be Caliph. When enough people joined him, he marched against the Abbasid ruler Abdullah, son of Sarri, whom he dis-

---

8 Ya'qub Nakhlah Rofilah, *Kitab Tarikh al-Umah al-Qibtiah*, 2nd ed. (The Press of Metrobool, 2000), pp.76-77.

9 Bishop Youannis, op. cit., pp. 46-47.

10 Ibid., p. 47.

missed from office and appointed instead al-‘Ubadan, son of Ibrahim. He also appointed to the treasury Isa, son of Jludi, who imposed heavy taxes on the Coptic Patriarch that he could not pay. For these reasons, the Copts of Bashmur revolted and dismissed the tax collector and killed some of the Arab soldiers, starting the revolution.<sup>11</sup>

Al-Mu’tasim, the brother of Abdullah, the son of Tahir, was the ruler of Egypt and was sent by al-Ma’mun to fight with his army in Miniat Matar (Mataria), defeating them in some battles.<sup>12</sup> In 823, al-Ma’mun appointed al-Afshin as ruler of Egypt. The Muslims and Christians of Lower Egypt dismissed the tax collector and revolted against the Abbasid rulers. Al-Afshin fought them, but those rebellions killed many of the soldiers and defeated the army sent by al-Afshin.<sup>13</sup>

In 824, al-Ma’mun came to Egypt with his army and put an end to such revolts. At the same time he tried to stop the rebellion of the Coptic people of Bashmur. Al-Ma’mun asked the Patriarch Yusab I of the Coptic Church and the Patriarch Dionysios of Antioch, who was in Egypt during that time, to convince the Coptic people of Bashmur to end the revolution. Both patriarchs wrote to the Coptic people. But the revolting people ignored the requests and continued their war, defeating the army of al-Ma’mun in more than one battle. Finally, al-Ma’mun personally led his army, fighting until he was victorious. He then entered the districts of the enemy, seeking revenge by burning their cities, killing their children, taking their women as booty and destroying their churches. Many of the Copts of Bashmur left Egypt, with a number of them moving to Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasids.<sup>14</sup>

Never again did the Copts of Bashmur appear in the history of Egypt. The revolts of the Copts of Bashmur were the last in the long history of Islamic Egypt.

### ***The Results of These Revolts***

As a result of the Coptic revolts described earlier, the Caliphs ruling the Islamic World after the Prophet of Islam Muhammad sent orders to the governors of Egypt to remove the Christians of Egypt from important positions or not to appoint Copts as high officials in the governments. Some of these governors did not listen to these orders; others would obey for a short time. However, most governors would use the Christians in government and administration because of their training and a reputation for honesty.

Other results attracted the attention of the modern Copts, the importance of the Popes of the See of Alexandria. Without these Popes, probably Christianity would have disappeared from Egypt because of the many persecutions conducted against the Copts. The popes took care of the unity of the Coptic Church, supporting the

11 Anba Isidores, *Al-Kharida al-Nafisah fi Tarikh al-Kanisah*, 2nd ed. (The Press of Qased Khair, Fagalah, 1964), p. 200.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., pp. 200-201.

14 Ibid., pp. 201-202.

monks, the bishops and the Christian families in working together. Usually the popes were responsible for their relationship with the ruling dynasties of Egypt and tried to solve the many problems with these dynasties, especially in the matter of taxes and religious freedom.

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

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



*From the History of the Coptic Martyrs:*

## ***SAINT MAURICE AND THE THEBAN LEGION***

A traveler on the highway that leads from Geneva to Rome, will notice a small and a very old Swiss town called “Saint Maurice”. This town was known in the Roman times as “Aganum”, an important communication center. It was there that a Coptic officer named Maurice and 6600 of his fellow soldiers died for the sake of Christ at the hands of the impious Emperor Maximian (285-305 AD).

The story of these martyrs, commonly known as the Theban Legion (Alkateeba alTeebia or Alkateeba al-sa’eedia) has been preserved for us by Saint Eucher, the bishop of Lyons, who died in 494 AD. The bishop starts the account of the martyrdom of these valiant soldiers by the following introduction:

Here is the story of the passion of the holy Martyrs who have made Aganum illustrious with their blood. It is in honour of this heroic martyrdom that we narrate with our pen the order of events as it came to our ears. We often hear, do we not, a particular locality or city is held in high honour because of one single martyr who died there, and quite rightly, because in each case the saint gave his precious soul to the most high God. How much more should this sacred place, Aganum, be revered, where so many thousands of martyrs have been slain, with the sword, for the sake of Christ.

Under “Maximian”, who was an Emperor of the Roman Commonwealth (Empire) with Diocletian as his colleague, an uprising of the Gauls known as “Bagaude” forced Maximian to march against them with an army of which one unit was the Thebian Legion composed of 6600 men. This unit had been recruited from upper Egypt and consisted entirely of Christians. They were good men and soldiers who, even under arms, did not forget to render to God the things of God, and to Caesar the things of Caesar.

After the revolt was quelled, the Emperor Maximian issued an order that the whole army should join offering sacrifices for the Roman gods for the success of their mission. The order included killing Christians (probably as a sacrifice to the Roman gods). Only the Theban Legion dared to refuse to comply with the orders. The legion withdrew itself, encamped near Aguanum and refused to take part in these rites.

Maximian was then resting in a near-by place called Octudurum. When these news came to him, he repeatedly commanded them to obey his rules and orders, and upon their constant and unanimous refusal, he ordered that the legion should be “decimated”. Accordingly, every tenth man was put to death. A second “decimation” was ordered unless the men obeyed the order given but their was a great shout through the legion camp: they all declared that they would never allow themselves to carry out such a sacrilegious order. They had always the horror of idolatry, they had been brought up as Christians and were instructed in the One Eternal God and were ready to suffer extreme penalties rather than do any thing contrary to their religion.

When Maximian heard these news, he got angrier than ever. Like a savage beast, he ordered the second decimation to be carried out, intending that the remainder should be compelled to do what they hitherto refused. Yet they still maintained their resolve. After the second decimation, Maximian warned the remainder of the Theban legion that it was of no use for them to trust in their number, for if they persisted in their disobedience, not a man among them would be able to escape death.

The greatest mainstay of their faith in this crisis was undoubtedly their captain Maurice, with his lieutenants Candid, the first commanding officer, and “Exuperius” the “Compidactor”. He fired the hearts of the soldiers with the fervor by his encouragement. Maurice, calling attention to the example of their faithful fellow soldiers, already martyrs, persuaded them all be be ready to die in their turn for the sake of their baptismal vow (The promise one makes at his baptismal to renounce satan and his abominable service and to worship only God). He reminded them of their comrades who had gone to heaven before them. At his words, a glorious eagerness for martyrdom burned in the hearts of those most blessed men.

Fired thus by the lead of their officers, the Theban legion sent to Maximian (who was still enraged) a reply as loyal as it is brave:

Emperor, we are your soldiers but also the soldiers of the true God. We owe you military service and obedience, but we cannot renounce Him who is our Creator and Master, and also yours even though you reject Him. In all things which are not against His law, we most willingly obey you, as we have done hitherto. We readily oppose your enemies whoever they are, but we cannot stain our hands with the blood of inno-



cent people (Christians). We have taken an oath to God before we took one to you, you cannot place any confidence in our second oath if we violate the other (the first). You commanded us to execute Christians, behold we are such. We confess God the Father the creator of all things and His Son Jesus Christ, God. We have seen our comrades slain with the sword, we do not weep for them but rather rejoice at their honour. Neither this, nor any other provocation have tempted us to revolt. Behold, we have arms in our hands, but we do not resist, because we would rather die innocent than live by any sin.'

When Maximian heard this, he realized that these men were obstinately determined to remain in their Christian faith, and he despaired of being able to turn them from their constancy. He therefore decreed, in a final sentence, that they should be rounded up, and the slaughter completed. The troops sent to execute this order came to the blessed legion and drew their swords upon those holy men who, for love of life, did not refuse to die. They were all slain with the sword. They never resisted in any way. Putting aside their weapons, they offered their necks to the executioners. Neither their numbers nor the strength of arms tempted them to uphold the justice of their cause by force.

They kept just one thing in their minds, that they were bearing witness to him who was lead to death without protest, and who, like a lamb, opened not his mouth; but that now, they them selves, sheep in the Lord's flock, were to be massacred as it by ravaging wolves. Thus, by the savage cruelty of this tyrant, that fellowship of the saints was perfected. For they despised things present in hope of things to come. So was slain that truly angelic legion of men who, we trust, now praise the Lord God of Hosts, together with the legions of Angels, in heaven forever.

Not all the members of the legion were at Aguanum at the time of the massacre. Others were posted along the military highway linking Switzerland with Germany and Italy. These were progressively and methodically martyred wherever they were found. Some of the most celebrated saints who were martyred are:

### ***In Switzerland***

The following five Saints were martyred at Aguanum place (also this city is known now as Saint Maurice en Valais), along with the rest of their cohort.

- Saint Maurice
- Saint Exuperius
- Saint Candid
- Saint Innocent
- Saint Vitalis

The following two Saints were found at Solothurn along with 66 others:

- Saint Ursus
- Saint Victor

In Zurich, the following Saints were martyred:

- Saint Felix
- Saint Regula
- Saint Exuperantius

***In Zurzach:***

- Saint Verena of Zurzach.

***In Italy:***

The following saint was martyred in Bergamo:

- Saint Alexander

The following saints were martyred in Turino:

- Saint Octavious
- Saint Adventor
- Saint Sotutor

The following saint was martyred in Piacenza:

- Saint Antonius of Piacenza

The following saints were martyred in the Cottian Alps:

- Saint Constantius
- Saint Alverius
- Saint Sabastianus
- Saint Magius.

The following saints were martyred in Pinerolo:

- Saint Maurelius
- Saint Georgius
- Saint Tiberius

The following saints were martyred in Milano:

- Saint Maximius
- Saint Cassius
- Saint Secundus
- Saint Severinus
- Saint Licinius

The following saint was martyred in Ventimilia among many others:

- Saint Secundus of Ventimilia

### ***In Germany***

The following saints were martyred in Terier along with many others of their comrades:

- Saint Tyrsus
- Saint Palmatius
- Saint Bonifatius

The following two saints were martyred in Bonn among many others in their cohort:

- Saint Cassius
- Saint Florentius

The following saint was martyred along with 318 others in Cologne:

- Saint Gereon

The following two saints were martyred along with 330 others in Xanten:

- Saint Victor
- Saint Mallosius

During their martyrdom, numerous miracles happened, which undoubtedly largely contributed to the massive conversion of the inhabitants of these regions to Christianity. In Zurich for instance, the three beheaded saints Felix, Regula and Exuperantius miraculously rose, carried their heads on their own hands, walked to the top of a hill, where they knelt, prayed and at last lay down. On the same spot, a large cathedral was later erected. The three saints carrying their heads on their hands appear on the coat of arms and seal of Zurich until today.

Saints Victor, Orsus and their comrades were barbarously tortured by Hirtacus, the Roman governor of Solothurn. During this torture, several miracles occurred, e.g. the shackles suddenly broke open, the fire was instantaneously extinguished, etc. The lookers-on were thus filled with wonder and began to admire the Theban legionnaires, upon which the furious Hirtacus ordered their immediate beheading. Without the slightest resistance they offered the executors their necks. The bodies of the beheaded Saints then shown in glaring brightness. The bodies of the Saints which were thrown in the river Aar, advanced the bank, stepped out, walked heads on hands, then knelt and prayed at the spot where the Basilica of St. Peter later arose.

The bodies of the martyrs of Aganum were discovered and identified by Saint Theodore the Bishop of Octodurum, who was in office at 350 AD. He built a Basilica in their honour at Aganum, the remains of which are visible until now. This later became the center of a monastery built about the year 515 AD on the land donated by King Sigismund of Burgundy.

Saint Eucher mentions that in his time (he died 494 AD), many came from diverse provinces of the empire devoutly to honour these Saints, and to offer presents of gold, silver and other things. He mentions that many miracles were performed at their shrine such as casting out of devils and other kinds of healing "which the might of the Lord works there everyday through the intercession of His saints."

In the Middle Ages Saint Maurice was the patron saint of several of the Roman dynasties of Europe, and later on of the Holy Roman Emperors. In 926, Henry I (919-936 AD), even ceded the present Swiss Canton (province) of Aargau in return for the lance of the saints. Some emperors were also anointed before the Altar of Saint Maurice in Saint Peter's Cathedral in Rome. The sword of Saint Maurice, was last used in the coronation of the Austrian Emperor Charles as King of Hungary in 1916. Kings, noblemen, and church leaders vied to obtain small portions of the relics of the saints in order to build churches in their honour. The famous King Charlemagne offered the monastery one of the treasured thorns that came from the crown of thorns of our Savior in return for a small portion of the sacred relics. He later built a church in honour of the martyrs inside the court of his palace.

Saint Maurice has always been one of the most popular saints in Western Europe, with over 650 foundations in his name in France alone. Five cathedrals, innumerable churches, chapels and altars are consecrated in his name all over Europe. Aganum (Saint Maurice en Valais) has always remained the main focus of veneration of the Thebans and a significant pilgrimage resort. In the monastery that bears his name there, the monks perform a special devotion to the saints every day, and celebrate their feast on September 22 of each year. An all night vigil, on the night before the feast is attended by nearly 1000 people. On the feast day, they carry in procession the relics of the martyrs in the ancient silver caskets. Over seventy towns bear the name of Saint Maurice.

In the Monastery carrying his name in Switzerland, the vigil “Tasbeha” has been chanted continuously (24 hours a day) without stopping for more than 500 years now.

### ***Saint Maurice and the Theban Legion in the Coptic Tradition:***

There is no entry in the Coptic Synxarion for these saints, neither is their any Coptic Church concecrated in their names. As of the writing of this article (September 1992), the only altar concecrated in the name of saint Maurice is found in the Church of the Virgin Mary and Saint Athanasius in Mississauga, Canada. There is an icon depicting the martyrdom of saint Maurice and Saint Mary’s Coptic Orthodox church in Cambridge, Canada.

In 1991, The Christian world celebrated the seventeenth centennial of the martyrdom of these saints. H.H. Pope Shenouda delegated His Grace Bishop Serapion to represent the Coptic Church in these celebrations. On that occasion parts of the relics of Saint Maurice, St. Cassius and St. Florentius were returned to the Coptic Church.

### ***References:***

- 1) Samir F. Girgis, PhD, “The Theban Legion in Switzerland”.
- 2) Samir F. Girgis, PhD, “The significant contribution of the Copts to the early evangelization of Switzerland”.
- 3) Samir F. Girgis, PhD, “A short introduction to the Coptic orthodox Church of Alexandria.
- 4) J.R.Fox: “The treasure at Saint Maurice of Aguanum”.
- 5) L’Abbaye Saint Muarice en Valais: A place called Saint Maurice.
- 6) Thurston & Attwater: Butler’s lives of the Saints.

This article is one of many more articles about the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Christian Apostolic Church of Egypt. These articles can be obtained electronically from Copt-Net Repository, using anonymous FTPCOP|NET from pharos.bu.edu:CN. Please mail inquiries to CN-request@cs.bu.edu.

# ***THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE EUCHARIST***

## ***EUCHARIST A TRINITARIAN ACTION***

*Rodolph Yanney*

- “*And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.*” (Matt. 28: 20)
- “*Surely I am coming soon.*” Amen. *Come, Lord Jesus!*” (Rev.. 22: 20)

### ***The Holy Trinity and the Eucharist***

The phrase ‘Presence of God in the Eucharist’ is usually taken to express the real presence of the Second Person of the Trinity with his humanity in the Sacrament. Eucharist is the Sacrifice of Christ. It is his heavenly marriage feast (Rev. 19:9) in which the Church (with all her members) comes out of his side (Gen. 2: 21- 23; John 19: 34) and unites with him to become one body (John 6: 56, Epées. 5: 29: 30) in which the unity of all her members is attained (1 Cor. 10: 17). However, one should not ignore the fact that the Eucharist is an essential part of Gods economy for salvation. Although this is centered in the role of the Son, and is sometimes called ‘the economy of the Son’, yet the Son is one hypostasis of the Triune God. The Father and the Holy Spirit have their roles in all the stages of salvation from the beginning, even before the creation and the fall (Ephes.1; 5) till the end of time when God “may be everything to every one” (1 Cor. 15: 28).

Without the action of the Father and the Holy Spirit there can be no Eucharist. There is no presence of the Son or communion with him, without the presence and communion of the Father and the Spirit. The Eucharistic Liturgy itself, like any other act of Christian worship is a trinitarian service that is always offered to the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.

The Church, in union with Christ her Head, addresses God the Father in the Eucharist when she offers her thanksgiving and glorification. In the midst of the congregation Christ praises the Father (Heb. 2: 12). In the anamnesis of his work for our salvation, the Church sacramentally follows her forerunner (Heb. 6: 20) to the abode of the Heavenly Father (John 14: 1-3, 7, 9-10, 23), where we “will appear with him in glory” (Col. 3: 4).

It is the Father who receives and accepts the sacrifice of Christ that He offers in union with the Church. The sign of his acceptance of the offering is his sending of the Holy Spirit.

The fourteenth century Byzantine theologian Nicholas Casabilas describes the role of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist “The Church received the Holy Spirit after our Lord’s ascension; now she receives the gift of the Holy Spirit after the offerings have been accepted at the heavenly altar.”<sup>1</sup> The *Epiclesis* (invocation of the Holy Spirit) has been an integral part of all ancient Eucharistic Prayers and has been restored back in most western liturgies in the recent years.

Not only does the Holy Spirit change the elements into the Body and Blood of our Lord, but He also changes the faithful. St. Basil calls this change ‘communion of the Holy Spirit’ (2 Cor. 13:14). He describes it as a real sharing of the very life of God; by communion with him the Holy Spirit makes us spiritual, reestablishes us in Paradise, opens the Kingdom of God and admits us to filial adoption, gives us confidence to call God our Father (Rom.: 8:14-17, 26), and allows us to participate in the grace of Christ, to be called children of light and to share in eternal glory.<sup>2</sup> In this sense ‘the Eucharist is a perpetual Pentecost’.<sup>3</sup> The Holy Spirit then speaks to us in every prayer, “the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (Rom. 8: 26). In the Eucharist the Holy Spirit shares with the Church calling the Lord Jesus, Maranatha, “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come’.... Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22: 17, 20).

This integral relation between the action of the Holy Spirit and action of the Son in the Eucharistic Prayer is described by a contemporary theologian who says, “It is the Holy Spirit who actualizes the economy of salvation in the Eucharist, who transforms the gifts and integrates the faithful in the Body of Christ.”<sup>4</sup> St. Athanasius stresses that ‘the Holy Spirit completes the redemptive work of Christ, and makes the divine communion available to every person’. This is a real communion that the Holy Spirit accomplishes in the Eucharist by transforming the oblation to Christ’s Body; thus the faithful may be able to abide in him (John 6:56).

This close interaction between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of Christ is seen in all the salvation history. It is the Holy Spirit who ‘spoke in the prophets’ who announced the Incarnation. Our Lord was ‘incarnated from the Holy Spirit’. In all his life on earth, He was led by the Spirit. Before his ascension, “He breathed on them (his disciples), and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (John 20:22). The Holy Spirit delivers to the faithful the fountains of salvation that came out once on Calvary (John 19:34-37), thus fulfilling the words of Christ that ‘He will take what is mine and declare it to you’ (John 16:14).

### ***Presence of Christ in the Eucharist***

The last promise of Christ to his disciples before the ascension was, “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Although this verse refers to the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, yet it also includes his presence with his

1 Casabilas *N A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*. London: S. P. C. K. , 1966: 91.

2 Ernest Luissier, SSS: *Getting to Know the Eucharist*. New York: Alba House, 1974: 98.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid, p. 106.

disciples in all the aspects of their daily life. He is present in the poor, the needy, the strangers, the sick and the prisoners (Matt. 25:40). He is present in any Christian meeting according to his promise, ‘where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them’ (Matt. 18:20). He teaches every faithful soul that meditates on Scripture in her closet, or in a Bible Study group. He is especially present in the Liturgy of the Word where He blesses those who see and hear him in it. “Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear” (Matt. 13:16) “Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear” (Rev. 1:3). In the Coptic rite, these verses are always echoed in the *Litany of the Gospel* that is always recited by the priest before the gospel is read.

Christ is really present in all these daily experiences. Devout souls may even experience him and feel his work in them. Any negligence in these acts or lack of discerning the Lord in them may even result in the collapse of the whole Eucharistic action with grave consequences (Proverbs 21:13; Matt. 25:45; 1 Cor. 11:20; Didache 14). However, the Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist is on a different level. This is not due to the fact that the Eucharist is the summit and center of all the Church worship, the most important of her Sacraments and of the means of sanctification in her, nor in its essential role in our salvation. More important is the person of Jesus our Lord himself who is in fact really and totally present in it. This should not mean that his presence in the other actions mentioned above is less real. Christ is really present in all of them, but it is only in the Eucharist that He is personally present in his Divinity and humanity, his holy Body and precious Blood. In all the other aspects of his Presence, as well as the other Church Sacraments, one receives a special grace from him, or beholds a particular aspect of his Presence. In the Eucharist, we have Christ himself who is present before us with all his acts of salvation, the risen and glorified Christ.

### ***Christ our High Priest***

In the Eucharist one has to differentiate between the sacramental presence of Christ in the changed elements and his invisible presence as High Priest from the beginning of the liturgy. Liturgical scholars and other visitors to Coptic churches have been bewildered by the profound awe and reverence manifested by the people even during the *Offertory*, before the *Liturgy of the Word*. Even in that part of the service (paralleled by the *Great Entrance* in St. John Chrysostom’s Liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox churches), while the priest and deacons carry the unconsecrated bread and wine and perform a circuit around the altar, all the people stand with their heads bowed down. Then they sing the words of the psalm, “This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we beseech thee; O Lord! O Lord, we beseech thee, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord.” (Ps. 118: 24-26). It is significant that this psalm is a part of the *hillil* psalms that the Jews used to sing in the Temple, while they carried palm branches, during the Feast of Tabernacles. They used it also to welcome their triumphant kings. (1 Maccabees 13:51). It is



also the same psalm used by the children of Jerusalem before Christ on Palm Sunday. The verse, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' is also chanted in the liturgy before reading the gospel and several times during the Eucharistic Prayer.

One can understand the use of this psalm by the Church to address her Lord during the reading of the Gospel or after the consecration of the elements in the Eucharistic Liturgy. The problem that has faced theologians is how to explain the real Presence of Christ that is manifested in the Church during the Offertory while the elements are still unconsecrated. Liturgists offered several theories to explain this. Some were evidently wrong; others meditated on the rite while neglecting its original meaning. Receiving no detailed commentary on the Divine Liturgy from the Fathers, Coptic theologians who commented on the liturgy in the early part of the twentieth century copied some of the conflicting theories that were used by the Byzantine theologians to explain the rite as an allegory<sup>5</sup>. The Offertory has been explained as a symbolic action that expresses either the birth of Christ and putting him in the manger, or his death and laying his dead Body in the tomb.<sup>6</sup> However, the spiritual truth that liturgical scholars have failed to comprehend was revealed by an author, who even did not belong to an Orthodox Church, but used to study and participate in Orthodox services in her last years. She says:

This rather clumsy theory does not seem to take into account the whole temper of this part of the service, the intensity of its spiritual realism; the fact that the congregation is gathered up to share an eternal experience, the ceaseless self-offering in heavenly places of Christ in and with his Church. 'We have been in heaven!' said the envoys of St. Vladimir when they returned from Constantinople to Russia after their first experience of the Byzantine Eucharist. It is from this point of view that we should understand the heightened tone of awe and joy, which follows the Great Entrance, and the remembrance, which is now made of the entrance of the risen Lord into the Upper Room. From this time onwards Christ is present: it is He, Priest<sup>7</sup> no less than Victim, who celebrates his mysterious supper within the screen.<sup>78</sup>

5 See *Eucharist between Reality and Allegory* (the second chapter in this book).

6 It is ironic that Theodore, bishop of Mopsuestia, who did not believe in allegory in explaining the Bible, started this last theory. He believed that it is the real dead body of Christ that is present on the altar at this moment in the liturgy, to be later resurrected by the descent of the Holy Spirit. After his death, some of the theological writings of Theodore were condemned in the second council of Ephesus (449 AD). Father Gregory Dix has translated his homily on the first part of the Divine Liturgy (Shape of the Liturgy, pp. 282- 284).

7 See the earlier chapter '*Priest that Offers the Eucharist*'.

8 Evelyn Underhill: *Worship*, 154. It is evident that Underhill is describing here the Orthodox Byzantine liturgy. In the Coptic rite, the door of the sanctuary is always open during the whole Divine Liturgy. Although the Copts took the idea of the screen (iconostasis) from the Byzantine around the ninth century, yet, there is no barrier that separates the sanctuary from the people who are active participants during the whole service.

# ***INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS***

**Articles:** The Journal invites submission of articles on biblical, liturgical, patristic or spiritual topics.

We welcome scholarly and general articles on these or related subjects, as well as translations from the original languages.

**Special Sections:** Contributors to the sections of *Book Reviews* and *Currents in Coptic Church Studies* are advised to contact the editor before submitting their articles. Of the extensive new literature, we only choose for review books of lasting spiritual benefit for the reader.

**Manuscripts** are preferred to be typed double spaced (except for references and footnotes). If possible, send us an MS Word document on a computer disc or by e-mail. Authors should hear from us within one month of the receipt of their articles. Unpublished material is returned only if requested.

# ***INFORMATION FOR SUBSCRIBERS***

**Subscription Price:** U.S.: \$10.00. Canada: \$12.00 (US dollars). Other countries: (Airmail) \$15.00 a year. Half price for full-time students.

**Subscription** is for one year (four issues). Unless otherwise stated, it starts from the current issue. However, new subscribers are advised to start by the spring issue to get the full benefit of the annual index which appears at the end of the year.

## **Previous Issues:**

\$2.50 per copy (1-4 copies any selection).

\$2.00 per copy (for orders of 5-10 copies).

\$1.50 per copy (11-20 copies).

\$1.25 per copy (above 20 copies).

\*A double-issue is considered 2 copies.

Price includes postage (by surface mail outside the US).

**Renewals:** Early renewal is appreciated, you do not have to wait for an expiration notice. Notices are sent after you receive your last issue. Failure or delay of renewal will result in interruption or delay of the subsequent issue.

**Change of address** requires six weeks notice.

## ***SUBSCRIPTION AND BUSINESS ADDRESS:***

Society of Coptic Church Studies  
P.O. Box 714  
E. Brunswick, NJ 08816  
e-mail: Ralphyanney@hotmail.com

## ***EDITORIAL ADDRESS:***

Maged S. A. Mikhail  
Editor, Coptic Church Review  
1744 Oakridge Cr.  
W. Covina, CA 91792  
e-mail: msmikhail@juno.com

**Website:** <http://home.ptd.net/~yanney/>