

Works of late Deacon

Youssef Habib Youssef

& his brother

Meleka Habib Youssef

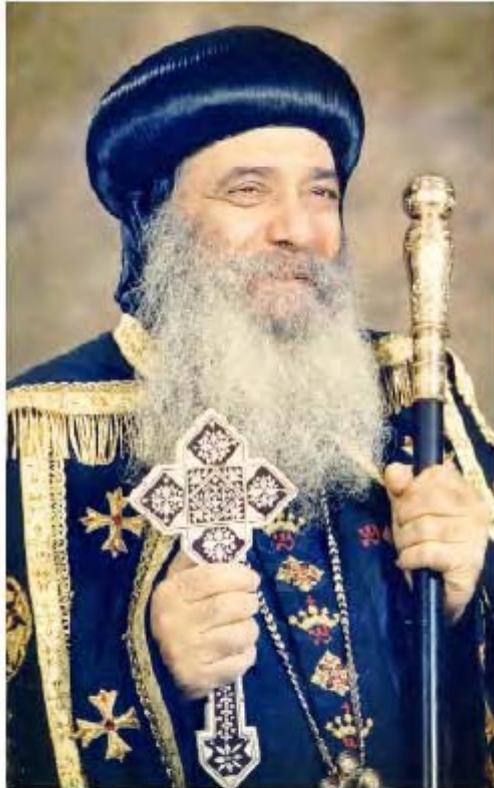
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**Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, King of Kings and
Lord of lords**



**THE BEHOLDER OF GOD
MARK THE EVANGELIST
SAINT AND MARTYR**



*H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark*



**His Grace Bishop Daniel
Bishop of Sydney and Affiliated Regions**



The late Yousef Habib is a great Coptic writer from
St George Sporting Alexandria.
Would recommend all his books

Diocese of Sydney and affiliated Regions
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1 March 2004

SAINT ALEXANDROS
19th Patriarch
of
The Apostolic See of
Alexandria

Translated from "LES SAINTS D'EGYPTE", by R.P. Paul Cheneau

Saint Alexandros succeeded to saint Achillas. He was elected patriarch of Alexandria in 313. If the bloody persecution of Diocletian forgot him, we can rightly consider him as a martyr of two heretics, Melece and Arius, who filled his life with bitterness.

While the governors every day ordered new verdicts of death against the Christians, in the year 304, Melece, bishop of Lycopolis*, separated himself from the Church in a fanfare way. He was accused, and not without evidence, of having sacrificed to the idols in order to save his head, and was displaced by Peter, patriarch of Alexandria. Melece was pretending to follow him in the government of the patriarchal affairs.

** (The word Lycopolis means the city of wolves or jackals. It is the present Assiout. This town which was formerly called Osyout, the capital city of "Superior Iotep", was the primary sanctuary of the god Ouep-ouat, which was represented in the form of a jackal, the wolf of the desert; from which the name of Lycopolis came. It was the starting point of the caravans going to the Lybian desert and the Soudan.*

"Lycopolis was one of the principal stations of the Nile Valley. It had temples where some goddesses which looked rather not fierce, were honored through some rites where dancers and courtesans held the first rank. The vicinity of Lycopolis and Cusae were exhibiting degrading debauchery. Even the cult exercises were rather orgies than devotion. They used to drink more wine in one day, than they did during the whole year. Quite naturally this repelling scene scandalized young Christians. Besides, a Greek was in the eyes of an Egyptian, that impure being toward whom he felt nothing but contempt. People refused to eat with him, and even to use his knife and his plate." (A. Gayet, "Coins d'Egypte ignorés", "Ignored corners of Egypt", p. 139)

Had he not, against the strictest ecclesiastical rules, and by his own authority, excommunicated the bishops who were established by the imprisoned patriarch? Melece did not appeal against his condemnation; but he simply dissociated himself and was contented to spread the poison of his calumny upon the diverse patriarchs who reigned during his life, Peter, Achillas, and Alexandros. When Arius appeared, the adepts of Melece did not follow his blasphemous doctrine, but nevertheless they stood besides him, because of their hatred which they felt for Alexandros.

Alexandros was an exemplary pastor*, who nourished his flock with the purest doctrine of the Gospel.

** He was so reverent that he never read the Gospel while sitting, and without having first lighted a lamp. He was so mortified that in all his life he never cut his fast before sunset.*

Far from being lacking in his task, and having an ordinary intelligence, he spoke eloquently and knew well how to stand against Arianism, the matter that attested a knowledge and a courage which were not common. It is possible not to have the scope and the powerful action of Athanassius, but not to be devoid of merit. The brilliant qualities of the great doctor more or less overshadowed, the more moderate ability of his predecessor: does not the radiant star of the day shade the more feeble light of the stars? Anyhow, the characteristic virtue of Alexandros was his meekness, his pleasantness which he knew how to push to the extreme limits of condescending; but under the silk velvet gloves, there was an iron hand: Arius famously experienced it.

Against the enemies of religion, who untimely disclaim the competence of the clergy and the orthodox writers, impartiality obliges to say that Arius was a very intelligent man; and what can this confession cost anyhow? Did not the Satan, who is damned, keep a thousand privileges from his superior nature? God had gifted the future abnegator of the divinity of His Son, as He did to the patriarch of Ferney*, with a very vivid and a very brilliant spirit; the wrong of both of them was to misuse it.

** (Voltaire was named after the name of this small town of the Swiss frontier in which he lived during twenty years of his life, from 1758 to 1778)*

Arius was born in 280, some say in Cyrenaic*, others say in Alexandria.

** (or Lybia which became a roman province in 65 B.C.),*

It is certain that soon this city knew him and saw him ministering as a priest. He had studied in Antioch*, under the famous Lucien* who was very straightforward in his heart, but much daring in his teachings.

** The famous school of Antioch was founded by the priests Dorotheus and Lucien, who later, both of them suffered martyrdom. Lucien was an old disciple of Origene at the School of Nicomedia. Many of their first disciples turned bad; let us mention among others: Eusebius of Nicomedia, Leonce of Antioch, Theoguide of Nicea, the heretic Arius. But there was a time of success, when some great men were students in that school. Among them let us mention St. John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuete, Theodoret of Cyr, Isidore of Peluse, and Polychronius of Apamee. This school created a whole atmosphere of study, which happily penetrated the numerous monasteries of Syria. The most well-known of*

the students of the last period was Cassien, the future founder of the monastery of Saint Victor at Marseilles (cf. L. Pirot: in the Introduction to his work: "L'œuvre exégétique de Théodore de Mopsuete")

** Lucien (235-312) was a priest and a disciple of Paul of Samosate whose false doctrine he abandoned. He was a marvelous teacher. He suffered martyrdom under the reign of Maximin. St. John Chrysostom spoke out his panegyric in 387.*

The disciple was the pride of his master. He was well informed in the worldly sciences. He had been brilliant in philosophy, and was excellent in dialectics. There was nobody who handled syllogisms like him. His morals were irreproachable. He was tall and thin. He had polite manners, and a pleasant conversation. His superiors, one after the other, were caught in his beautiful outside aspect. Contrarily, he was moving, shrewd, fame greedy, and he nourished high ambitions. He manifested a vivid passion for all new things and he showed an obstinate adherence to his personal ideas. These defects, one must confess, foreordain a man to the most serious divergence, and when this happens, they leave little hope for a sincere transformation. Moreover, such as all the dissatisfied, Arius was the declared enemy of all established power, for the single reason that he did not possess it. He secretly conspired against any authority that he had not in his hands, and he was benevolent towards whoever censured, rebelled, and broke off. Melece had his warm approval more than anyone else; but he was a crafty double-dealer whenever he saw that his ecclesiastic future was at stake.

Arius turned and presented to Peter such an extensive and humble subservience, that the latter ordained him a deacon. Soon after that, he forgot his apology and his promises, and he renewed his relations with the schism of Melece to whom he was attracted by his spirit of contradiction.

History relates that the illustrious patriarch Peter received the visit of Achillas and Alexandros when he was detained in confinement. After having predicted to both of them that they will follow him on the patriarchal throne, he said to them: "Beloved brothers, excommunicate Arius without hesitation, and never let him enter the church." The two visitors had heard and wept. Peter shed his blood for the sake of faith. But Achillas, when he became patriarch, let mercy triumph over justice. He let himself be stirred by the affected tears of the relapsed, and received him to the communion. He pushed his weakness to the point of ordaining him a priest, in spite of the disquieting well known events. In his desire to overcome evil forever by good, and to regain him, he ordained him as the

spiritual chief (in our days we call it "hygoumenos") of the district of Baucalia*.

** This district was by the sea, at the place where St. Mark suffered martyrdom, in the vicinity of El Chatby.*

The expression "Baucalia" comes from the old name of the lands that were in the vicinity of the village of Rhacotis, which, as everyone knows, preceded the name Alexandria, and which was its embryonic place. That land was specially in use by the armed coast-guards. Rhacotis was situated in the part of the present city where there is the district of Kom El Shogafa and the Muslim cemetery. All the lands around were fields, and that is why they were called Baucolia, or pasture, because the shepherds led their herds there.

God did not give time to the very simple and very righteous Achilles, to deplore his extreme forbearance; for he died after a few months on the patriarchal throne.

Alexandros followed him, to the spite of Arius. It is said, that Arius solicited this honor for himself, and in his deception and his ambition, he never forgave Alexandros his acceptance of the crown.

The newly elected patriarch strained to put the comforting balm upon the wound of which he was absolutely not the cause. He treated the pastor of Baucalia with honor and regards, to such a point that many reproached to him his excessive tolerance.

His first act was to write the name of the martyr Peter, his famous predecessor, in the sacred register. On the occasion of this solemnity, he invited all the clergy to his table.

While he quietly waited for the arrival of his guests, he perceived from the windows of his palace which were broadly opened over the sea, upon the golden sand of the beach, a joyful gathering of children, who strained in their innocent play to imitate the pontifical ceremonies. The scene was not casual, and it attracted his attention. He was eagerly interested. He noted scrupulously the gestures that were represented, and attained the serious conviction that they were accomplishing some sacred rite.

He called two or three of the clergy that followed him, and asked them to look to the side of the sea. Having heard their opinion, he gave them strict orders: feigning to see nothing, they would turn around, come back to the beach, talk confidently to the children, and bring them gently to the patriarchal palace. Alexandros received them with his charming kindness, inquired from them about their game, and made them relate to him in detail, without showing astonishment or adversity. On the contrary, he encouraged them in their narrative that was of a childish

ingenuousness. These latter, were first timid, then little by little, they grew bolder, and swiftly became familiar. Then, completely tamed, they babbled, competitively adding details to one another. There was no more the shadow of any doubt: one of them, who was more intelligent and spontaneous than others, but serious and solemn at the convenient time, had imitated the bishop in his sacred function and had baptized many of his comrades who still were catechumens.

For the second time, Alexandros let the precocious administrator relate in detail the diverse phases of the ceremony. He asked questions and he was answered. He remarked that all the ceremonies were in conformity with the rites of the Church. He then sent away the children, giving them his blessings and some sweets. Then he informed his clerical men that they were not obliged to reiterate the Baptism that had been so seriously conferred.

The next day, he summoned to the palace the parents of the brave little folk who had played priests and bishops. He made to them an account of what had happened on the last day, and made them promise that they would give to the Church such sons who had prematurely exercised such holy functions. It is in that way, that Athanassius, who was so eager to serve God, took his place among the clerical people, in the same way that the prophet Samuel was brought up in the temple. He lived there during the years of his youth, and he was destined to wear the pontifical crown in his old years.

It is by this time that St. Alexandros began the construction of a splendid church in the vicinity of the port of Eunostos*.

** Eunostos means "good return". That port, which formerly was the least frequented, is the present great port. They entered it, from the path at the farthest of the east, that one which in the time of Bonaparte was called "the path of the Djermes".*

St. Theonas, the 16th patriarch of Alexandria (282-300), had formerly constructed there an auditorium which had become ruined. (read his life in the 27th of August pages)

The new sanctuary was very wide and very richly decorated. It was dedicated to the Holy Virgin St. Mary and became the cathedral of Alexandria*.

**Nevertheless it kept its old name in the usual language: "the church of Theonas", because it was constructed by St. Alexandros to the honor of St. Theonas. It remained the cathedral during nearly a century. After the Arabic conquest, it became the mosque of the thousand columns. The Franciscan convent in the marine district is constructed on the same spot.*

St. Alexandros also changed the temple which queen Cleopatra had constructed to Saturn, into a church that he dedicated to the Archangel Saint Michael*. He broke down the idol and made a cross out of its debris.

**This is the church that the historians call the church of St. Michael or the church of Alexandros. Its site was at the place of the present Municipality.*

The patriarch St. Alexandros, in his zeal for the good of the souls, parted Alexandria into numerous circumscriptions. He ordained a learned priest to each circumscription, for the sake of the cure of the souls.

The apostolic success of the new prelate filled with joy the priests and the faithful, but it increased the jealousy of the hygoumenos of Baucalia, who could not repress his feelings. He started to examine all the steps and all the actions of his hierarchic chief. But whatever he exerted himself, he could not find in the conduct of the patriarch, anything that could be reprehensible. He had then, to turn to calumny, which is the poisoned weapon of the wicked. Satan had entered his heart, and with him the contemptuous pride that does never submit or surrender: that was his loss. While he wanted to bring new tribulations to Alexandros, he lightened inside the Church a terrible fire that devastated it in the East, and even in the West. He attacked the doctrine of the patriarch, who, according to the Scriptures and to all the tradition, taught that the Son of God is eternal, equal to His Father, and of the same substance. Arius shouted to exaggeration, ignorance, error: he was falling into Sabellianism.*

**The heresy of Sabellius (third century), who denied the Trinity and the distinction of three divine Persons. He sustained that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one same person under different names.*

Arius taught that "to raise in that manner, the second Person of the Trinity, was to annihilate Him by confounding Him with the Father. The Son of God, such as he meant, did not always exist; but He was created like us, poor people, but before us! Moreover He could fall down into sin, like common men. But in spite of everything, as an adornment, He must keep His title of God, and we must render to Him the cult of adoration."

That was completely unsound reasoning: Arius who was blinded by pride, did not teach less than idolatry.

The priest of Baucalia began to instill his poison into particular meetings. His audience who were carefully chosen among the women

who blindly admired him, was prone to acclaim him; did he not make a sensation each time he commented upon the Scriptures from the pulpit? He literally seduced with the inexhaustible resources of his imagination. His well-established reputation remarkably helped to the diffusion of his blasphemous ideas. The number of the attendance increased little by little. They were bewitched by the greasy words of the orator. They cheered his uncontested science, as well as his stirring expressiveness. Moreover, Arius who was cunning and courtly, skillfully arrived at pervading inside the monasteries of virgins. He gathered up to seven hundred people in some predetermined place. Seven priests and twelve deacons whom he had gained to him as disciples, accompanied him. Even some bishops let themselves be seduced. There is no need to say that those meetings were held in the utmost secret.

Soon however, the supporters became enough numerous to exercise their proselytism with less circumspection. Especially they recruited common people who have no time to think, and women who understand nothing of the subtle theological matters.

They abruptly said to the Christian women passing by: "Had you a son before engendering?" The negative answer left no doubt. Then they added with a triumphal accent: "Neither God could have a Son before engendering Him; therefore the Son is not eternal like Himself."

This argument which astounded people by means of opposing to them their own words, seemed peremptory; therefore the question of Arius was successful with the old aged women of Alexandria who often were more commendable for their rank rather than for their conduct. Is not corruption in faith a neighbor to light morals?

The priest of Baucalia spoke too much. The rumor of this new infatuation, which firstly was vague, soon became more precise, and pervaded inside many astonished families, who protested. The rumor ended inside the patriarchal palace. The last people to know, often are they not those who would be the most interested from the beginning? Whatever it may be, Arius had exceeded the measure. The proverbially sweet-tempered Patriarch St. Alexandros, then beseeched him to stop a teaching which alarmed the consciences, and which greatly troubled the faith of the loyal people. Arius defended himself by means of odd arguments. Alexandros judged that the moment had come when he should take a stand before the mercenary who wore the shepherd's clothes.

On a feast day, inside the Cathedral which was crowded, the patriarch made a homily about the divinity of Christ. Having the Gospel in his hand, he demonstrated the consubstantiality of the Word with the Father, in order to warn his folk against the error which was circulating. Arius was present. Being without respect neither for the holy place nor for the patriarchal authority, and in an access of a sacrilegious audacity,

he stood up, challenged the patriarch, spoke, and disclosed the errors of his doctrine in all their bluntness. The meeting ended in a great disorder.

Alexandros heeded, may be a little lately, that the time of forbearance had lasted too long. He took the extreme means and convoked all the bishops of Egypt and Lybia in a Council (310). Nearly one hundred primate came to Alexandria. Arius appeared, and obstinately sustained his blasphemies. His pride was the more exalted as much as the opposition was commanding respect. He was condemned together with his sect to degradation. Excommunication was decreed against anyone who followed his heresy.

These salutary punishments of the Church did not at all stop the devilish zeal of the miserable priest who, being more waving than ever, complained injustice. He claimed against the toughness of his patriarch, and especially against a young secretary, a bad head and a haughty spirit, who made the good old man fanatical. He thus called upon the pity of the hearts, and continued to instill the error inside the minds.

However, the rigorous measures brought up their fruits, and if the culprit seemed to defy them, the people, who naturally has the right sense, ranked at the side of the so much sweet authority of his patriarch, and avoided the formerly pastor of Baucalia. He was pursued from every part, and thought it prudent to put the sea between a clergy that refused him and his encumbering person. He embarked towards Palestine. He did not stay idle there. He visited some bishops many times, he wrote several letters, and finished by gaining some of them to his cause.

Although the departure of the heretic was held secret, Alexandros was not late to know the plan of the runaway, and gave all his efforts to outwit it. He warned all the bishops of the region in order to put them on their guards and to denounce the error. It was due time. Many, who were already seduced by the good manners of Arius, had fallen into the trap. They confessed it in their answers to Alexandros.

These are some of them: Eusebius* of Caesarea, Makarius of Jerusalem, Asclepius of Gaza, Longinus of Ascalon, Macrin of Jamnia*, Zenon of Tyr*.

**Pamphile Eusebius was born about the year 268, and he died in 338. He was the bishop of Caesarea of Palestine. He attended the council of Nicea, but made some reserves that had the smell of Arianism. He provoked the exile of St. Athanassius and the calling back of Arius. He was very learned and very eloquent. His work "The Ecclesiastical History" in ten volumes, is the work of a critical and a well advised historian.*

**Jamnia is a Cananean ancient town which belonged to the Philistins, then to the Jews, and finally to the Romans. It is situated on the road between Jaffa and Gaza.*

**Tyr is now Sur. It is a town of Phenicia that was formerly famous for its commerce, its colonies and the industry of purple. It was founded by the Sidonians, and became the most important city of Phenicia. Its temples were very famous. The most well-known of its kings were Hiran who was allied to king David, Ithobal the father of the cruel Jezabel, and Pygmalion the brother of Didon.*

Origene who died in 224, is buried in the ruined cathedral of the city. His bishop Zenon, the bishop of Tyr, was present at the council of Constantinople in 381. It was Zenon who ordained St. John Chrysostom as oghnostos (reader), and was his faithful friend. He died in 384.

One of the most relentless defenders of the error, was Eusebius of Nicomedia.* On the one part he exchanged a dogmatic correspondence with the patriarch of Alexandria, and on the other part he received Arius in the church. That precious sponsor attracted many bishops to his party*.

**Eusebius of Nicomedia was a Greek heretic. He was sometime bishop of Beryte (Beyrouth), and then bishop of Nicomedia. He took the defence of Arius at the council of Nicea. In order not to be dethroned he signed against his will the edict that condemned the heretic. Constantin exiled him in Gaule, then brought him back. He was one of those who persecuted saint Athanassius. It was he who administered baptism to Constantin on the bed where he died. Later on, during the rule of Constance, he made himself be named patriarch of Constantinople.*

**Nicomedia is a city of Bithynia, which for a long time was its metropolis. Diocletian liked to stay in it. It had splendid monuments; and it was destructed by an earthquake on the 24th of August 354. Today it is Ismid by the sea of Marmara.*

**such as for example: Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine, Theodote of Laodicia who was a doctor, Paulin of Tyr, Aetius of Lydda.*

Here the author who is a catholic priest, tries to show that the pope of Rome had a supreme authority in all the Church. Therefore he says that Alexandros had not neglected his duty to inform "the supreme authority".

However Alexandros, before the progress of the revolting heresy, had not neglected to warn and inform St. Sylvester, the pope of Rome, and the patriarch of Constantinople. Some time later, the pope of Rome Libere when writing to the emperor Constantin, mentioned the letter of Alexandros to his famous predecessor. He said: "We have under our eyes the letters of Alexandros to Sylvester, in which he announces that before the ordination of Athanassius, he had excommunicated eleven priests and eleven deacons who were proselytes of the heresy of Arius."

Alexandros wrote also to the unconquerable defenders of the truth in the East: Philigone*, bishop of Antioch, and Eustathius* of Beria (Alep).

**St. Philigone, who formerly was an eloquent lawyer, became bishop of Antioch in 318. During the six years of his bishopric, he did not stop fighting against the heresy. He died in 384 and Eustathius of Beria came after him.*

**Eustathius was born in Side in Pamphilia, not far from Adalia (which is today Eski-Adalia). He was bishop of Beria (Alep), before going to sit on the patriarchal throne of Antioch. He was deposed and exiled by the Arians and died in Thrace.*

Thrace is the European region that is on the North of Greece and the sea Egea (the Archipelago). In the fourth century it was a diocese which included six provinces.

Arius and his band had counted upon the apathy and the weakness of an infirm old man. They saw a tireless athlete coming up before them, who was always ready to fight, and who looked for the least gestures of the enemy, in order to attack him and denounce his cunning and his criminal pursuits.

It is true that the deacon Athanassius followed the old patriarch. He was an incomparable fighter who would not be late to show his measure, and become the great Athanassius who is considered the strongest enemy of Arianism. But for the time being, he was in his twenties, seeming weak, and he perhaps inspired firmness, energy, enthusiasm, while keeping in his place at the second rank. He wrote his letters and treaties where his fiery soul passed.

Here again, the author tries to show that the Pope of Rome had a supreme authority in the Church. Therefore he says that when he received the letter of Alexandros, he advised the emperor to convoke the Council of Nicea.

When they received the letters of the patriarch of Alexandria, they were convinced that the march of the plague must be most rapidly stopped, and that there should be a shield against its terrible effects. That was also the opinion of the emperor who convened the council of Nicea*.

It is written in the Synaxaire of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the day of the 22nd of Baramuda:

"After that, Arius was exiled. He went to the king, the great Constantin, in order to complain from the pope Alexandros. The emperor ordered to convoke the Council of the three hundred and eighteen in Nicea; and it was assembled under the presidency of Alexandros who discussed with Arius, and confounded him, and then excommunicated him and whoever follows him."

The meetings began in June 325. At the center of the meetings, there was the emperor, sitting on a throne of gold:

"He was tall, beautiful, slender, majestic, wearing a purple robe which was sparkling with gold and precious stones" [F.Mourret: Histoire générale de l'Eglise, tome II, p. 41 (General History of the Church, Vol. II, p. 41)].

He had by his side the pope Alexandros, patriarch of Alexandria, and Hosius*, the bishop of Cordova* and friend of Constantin, representing Sylvester of Rome who was too old to go from Rome to Asia, and Eustathius, patriarch of Antioch, and Makarius*, patriarch of Jerusalem. Three hundred and eighteen bishops had come, nearly all of them from the East. The fathers of the Council praised St. Alexandros. He was a universally honored man, as well by the clergy as by the people. They praised his liberality, his eloquence, his justice; he was the friend of God and of men, merciful for the poor, good and meek toward everybody. Some called him our very holy colleague. He was the soul of the Council. He refreshed each one by his presence, and in spite of his age, showed a prodigious activity.

**Nicea is today Isnik, a city of ancient Bythinia, on the shore of lake Ascanius, south of Nicomedia. It was founded by Antigone, the son of Philip about 315 B.C. It was named Antigonía. It was later on named Nicea after the name of the wife of Lysimachus. It was a very important city. It had the privileges of the metropolis without being the capital city. It was the residence of the Roman proconsuls. In memory of the council, Constantin freed it from the jurisdiction of Nicomedia which was its rival city and of which it depended.*

**Hosius or Osius was elevated to the see of Cordova in 295. He suffered the persecution of Maximian. He died at a very old age in 357.*

**Cordova is a city in the south of Spain, on the Guadalquivir. It was the metropolis of the Maures at the time of the dynasty of the Ommayads. Its cathedral, which was an old mosque, has 850 columns.*

**Makarius was the patriarch who was seated at Jerusalem at the time when the queen St. Helen found the Holy Cross. St. Helen was eighty years of age at that time. A double miracle happened through the true Cross, that was distinguished from the two other crosses (326). St. Makarius followed Hermon in 314. Saint Athanassius counted him among the greatest bishops in his century.*

The limits of a modest biography would not possibly include a complete account of the impressive solemnities that happened on the occasion of these meetings. Among those who were sitting in this incomparable assembly, there were some who were wearing the halo of the martyrdom. They had escaped from the last persecution, and had come to avenge and acclaim that true Son of God for whom the blood of their veins had been shed. A special booklet is needed to sum up the works of the meetings, to count the doctrinal articles that were determined, and the disciplinary questions that were settled. On the other part: to describe the sophisms and the stratagems of Arius; and to evoke the tight argumentation of his terrible adversary, the young deacon Athanassius. must be considered outside the scope of this modest biography.

**Those who had escaped the last persecution were:*

Paphnutius, the bishop of Thebaid, who was training a leg whose muscles had been cut, and had a punctured eye.

Paul, the bishop of Neocaesarea on the Euphrate, who had his hand burnt.

Potamon of Heraclia.

Amphion of Ephiphania (Hamah).

Let us hurry simply to say that the Council terminated in a true apotheosis. Constantin was then beginning the twentieth year of his reign. When he saw so much work that was useful to the concord of his subjects in the religious peace, he offered in honor of the fathers a banquet whose magnificence surpassed all that one could imagine. The imperial guard presented their weapons at the passage of the dignitaries. When they saw these nude swords which were drawn toward them as a sign of honor,

many of them wept and remembered the sword of the persecutors, and shouted: "Is that a dream?" Constantin who was a fervent catechumene, could not dissimulate his joy and his pride. He went from guest to guest, embracing them, congratulating them, kissing the wounds of the confessors of the faith, and having for each one the lovely word that filled the soul with warmth and light. Eusebius of Caesarea's speech, (that we would call today: "toast"), went straight to his heart. Constantin answered with exquisite expressions, and, facing the success of that work for which he had so much worked, he very gently proclaimed himself "the bishop from outside". It is regrettable that later, he wanted sometimes to take care of "the inside".

All the fathers unanimously adopted the decrees of the Council. Arius was excommunicated and forbidden to stay in Alexandria. The reading of all his writings was prohibited. The emperor Constantin was excessively mortified by the obstinacy of the heretic and his open revolt against the declarations of the Council. He sentenced him to be exiled and ordered that all his writings should be thrown into fire.

As soon as the Council had ended, Alexandros returned to Alexandria. He was in a hurry to publish the infallible decrees of the Church in the city where evil had started.

When the disciples of Eusebius of Nicomedia, the friend of Arius, heard it, they implored Alexandros to listen to clemency and not to kick Arius out of the Church. But this time, Alexandros was inflexible. As such rigor was not customary for the patriarch, they threw the responsibility over his secretary Athanassius, who had participated in the meetings. Soon they nourished an inextinguishable hatred against him.

The next day of the Council of Nicea, Arius continued his dealings. He desired to come near to Constantin, and to gain him to his teachings. The emperor's sister, the intriguing Constantia*, the widow of Licinus*, had as director, a priest who was very clever, but was a fanatical disciple of Arius. He served as an intermediary. Constantia assumed the role of a lawyer and pleaded to her brother for "those innocent exiled": Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia and others.

**Constantia, a widow, the sister of Constantin, the wife of Licinus, of whom she had a son whom she called also Licinus, was for a long time in bad terms with her imperial brother. After the death of her husband, she tried to come near to him. Eusebius of Nicomedia succeeded in entering into her favor and to make her the protector of Arius. When she was dying, her brother visited her and asked her if she had anything to solicit. "Yes", she said and she commended that Eusebius.*

**Licinus was born in 260 in Dacia from humble peasants. He was the companion of Galerius in the army. He named him Augustus in 307 and gave him the government of Illyria. At the death of Galerius, he reigned in the East together with Maximin Daia, and conquered Greece, Thrace, and Macedonia. In 313, he married the sister of Constantin, and became his partner from then on. He then turned against his former benefactors: Maximin and Galerius, and he killed their families. But soon, he attacked his brother-in-law and contested him. He was vanquished and lost his former conquests. Eight years later, he tried again, but he was defeated and compelled to resign. He was sent to Salonica, and finally he was killed under the disguise of a simulated revolt.*

The emperor, whose soul was embittered, came back upon his verdict. The heretics were called back, and they signed a confession of faith, where cunning triumphed over the straightforwardness of the emperor. They could reenter their country in order to make their vengeance mature there.

When Alexandros arrived back to Alexandria, with the favor of the emperor, he did not receive Arius. The patriarch was shaking with horror at the mere idea of seeing him again. That energetic process humiliated and irritated the heretic. He appealed to Constantin who wrote to Alexandros a very severe letter. Athanassius also received a letter threatening him of snatching him away from his position. Neither Alexandros nor Athanassius modified their indignant attitude, and the complaints of Arius failed to bring up any fruit.

Alexandros died on the 17th of April 328. He had suffered very much and grew old. Before his death, he predicted to his faithful deacon that he will follow him on the patriarchal throne, and continue his work. He said to him: "You think of retiring into the desert after my death. I foretell you, that will not happen."

Saint Euphrosyne
A virgin in Alexandria

Translated from "Les Saints d'Egypte"
by R. F. Paul Cheneau
Jerusalem, 1923.

In the days of Theodosius [Theodosius II (408-430)], the son of Arcadius, there lived in Alexandria an eminent true godly rich man called Paphnutius. He was married to a young noble and very virtuous person who was deserving of him, but they had no children. That made them sorrowful. Seeing that there would be no heir of his name and riches, he did not cease to make the heavens interested to his desires, by helping the poor, going to churches by day and night, and striving to touch the heart of God by his prayers and his numerous fasts. However Heaven remained deaf toward his wishes. The test continued to be so painful and depressing that some day Paphnutius suddenly decided to go to the abbot of a near monastery to disclose his sorrow to him.

The latter had a well-deserved reputation of holiness. He attentively received the secret of his visitor, and sympathised with his delicate sorrow. He prayed, and made others pray, so much and so well, that he forced the heavens. An exquisite little girl came to fill with joy the home of Paphnutius who was extremely gladdened. On that day, a ray of happiness crossed his life.

At the age of seven, the miraculous child was baptized. She was called Euphrosyne (which in Greek means joy or happiness). She was truly according to the significance of the expression, the joy of God and of her noble parents, by the virtues of her soul and the beauty of her features.

She was twelve years of age, when a cruel sickness took her mother away from her. In order to beguile her loneliness, Paphnutius then gave himself entirely to the education of his child. He made himself her instructor, and taught her literature and worldly sciences. There is no need to say that his young student became his solace and his pride, through her docility and her progress. She soon became well-known, appreciated, and admired by all the inhabitants of the town who were amazed by her knowledge and her humility. Effectively Euphrosyne did not look at all for appreciation; she was the enemy of pretension and conceit; and although she naturally had many qualities of heart and various exterior advantages, she neglected enough the excessive cares of adornment, and she despised embellishment and jewelry. She secretly fasted, and sometimes she wore coarse clothes under her fine silk garments. However she was breathtaking in the saloons of that era where his father took her, and many were ambitious of having a brilliant alliance with her.

A son of a family, whose parents were very rich and well considered in society, had the chance to please her. He was happy enough to obtain

the acquiescence of Paphnutius and the hand of his lovely young daughter: the betrothal was celebrated and previous payments were given: she was just beginning her eighteenth year.

Soon after that, her father took her for a visit to the monastery which he preferred. Since the birth of his daughter, he had remained in close relation with the abbot who had obtained her for him from Heaven; and his sweetest pleasure was to sponsor the needs of the monks with great alms. He presented Euphrosyne to the abbot saying: "my father, here is the fruit of your prayers; I have brought her so that she herself may express her gratefulness to you, and entrust her future to you, because she has to conclude a brilliant marriage." The abbot took both of them to the lodging place, and he commended the young girl to live always in humility, chastity and the fear of the Lord. The visitors remained for three days in the monastery admiring the heavenly life which the brothers lived before them. At the moment of separation, Euphrosyne bowed down to the feet of the abbot and said: "My father, I beg you, ask God to gain my soul altogether".

Soon there was the anniversary of the consecration of the monastery. Paphnutius, being a distinguished benefactor of the house, was invited. A brother was especially sent to Alexandria to invite him. Euphrosyne received him while her father was absent. She seized the opportunity to question him as she wished.

"How many brothers are you in your community?"

"Now, we must be three hundred and fifty two."

"Do they willingly accept the individuals who present themselves in order to become converted?"

"Certainly, and with great joy; did not the Lord say not to send away those who come to Him?"

"Do they all participate in the songs of the mass? do they all fast in the same manner?"

"As a general rule, everybody sing the praise of God in the church, but each one fasts according to his inspiration and his strength."

Thus Euphrosyne satisfied her godly curiosity and obtained all the information for which she cared, from the good brother without suspicion. To close this conversation she said:

"I also I would like to leave the world and live your admirable life; but I am afraid to act contrarily to the will of my father who is absolutely decided to see me in the holy state of marriage."

"O my sister, give yourself rather to God, if this is your fervent desire. You can disguise your departure. Your father will undoubtedly accept the invitation which I come to transmit; take the opportunity of his absence, get yourself religious clothes, and go to a monastery of virgins, and there you will be received with open arms."

Remark: [The means to follow her vocation which that monk indicated to the young girl who was already betrothed, is a shock to our present customs. That was not so at the time of our narration. Moreover there are many examples of strength of spirit which are given by the saints, that are not always imitable in all their details.]

When Paphnutius returned, he promised to honor the feast to which he had been so graciously invited. He quickly made some preparations, and went down the Nile until the door of the monastery, accompanied by the brother. Euphrosyne who was well decided to execute her devout project, waited for nothing but the departure of her father. She accompanied him till the harbor, said farewell to him in a long embrace in which she poured all her filial love that was in her heart; then after the boat had gone far away, she returned home, and called the most faithful of her servants and sent him to the monastery of S. Theodosius, to ask for a monk to come and fetch her. A few hours later, the servant was back bringing with him a dignified old man whom he had met, and who had come to the town to sell the product of the work of his brothers. Euphrosyne, with the tears of joy in her eyes, knelt down and asked him for his blessing, saying:

"Father, I want to be all to God; consecrate me to Him. My mother is no more. My father who is very christian and very rich, adores me; and wants by all means to see me married. As for me, I cannot bear this idea. I have spent all the night sleepless, praying to God to help me; and this morning I have sent my servant to bring a brother to me. Fulfill my desires, O venerable father; consecrate me to God and cut my hair."

The old man stood up, made a long prayer for her, dressed her in a monastic garment, then blessed her saying:

"My daughter, may God, who has delivered his saints from all their difficulties, protect you against every evil!"

After having accomplished this function, the old man went to sell his mats and his baskets, and returned very happily to his monastery.

As for Euphrosyne, she was absorbed in her meditations. She had just done the first step, she must now get herself secure for the future. To enter a nunnery would be an easy matter; but just after she is back home, her father who is looking for her would find her and throw her without mercy in the arms of her betrothed man. There was a unique possible solution to which she ceaselessly thought again and again: that was to imitate some courageous women whose story she had known: she would abandon the clothes of her sex, take a man's wear and go out from her abode by night. She stopped at this scheme. After having put in order her little matters, she took with her five hundred pieces of gold, organised her

departure in order to escape her people, and when everybody in the house were asleep, she cautiously went out to some deserted burying ground where she spent the night. Paphnutius returned the next day, while Euphrosyne who was disguised in man's clothes, daringly knocked the door of the monastery which her father had left the night before.

The abbot said to the visitor who had knelt down while he approached:

"Who are you, my son? What did you come here to look for?" Euphrosyne said in a decided tone:

"I have been an eunuch of the palace, and I have always been ardently willing to become a monk. It is not possible to lead such a life in town. I know the zeal of your community, and with your permission, I shall be very happy if a very isolated cell would be assigned to me in the places which are dependant of the monastery. Thanks to God, I possess considerable riches, and if I find rest here, I shall absolutely not be a burden to you."

"You are welcome, my son, your desires will be fully satisfied. But what is your name?"

"My name is Smaragde".

"You are still young, my son; therefore I cannot leave you to follow solely your inspirations; you need a master who will teach you the principles of the rule and who will lead you in your new life. I shall entrust you to one of the most dignified, the oldest, and holiest brothers."

"Thank you, my father; I shall do according to your wishes."

Then the abbot sent for brother Agapit and entrusted him with Smaragde saying:

"From now on, here is your son and your disciple; I confide him to you, so that one day he will exceed his master." The pseudo Smaragde replied while taking his leave from the abbot:

"God willing, it shall be so!"

Agapit lead his freshman to a cell which was very far from the others, according to his desire, and gave him the order to pray there, to take his simple meal there, and never to go out of it. Euphrosyne was all joyfull in her soul. She gave herself to prayer, fasted every day, kept awake for a long time by night, and served God in such a simplicity of heart that she was the subject of the admiration of all the monks who praised God for the perseverance of that hermit who lives such a rigorous life.

During the edifying beginnings of brother Smaragde, mourning and desolation took place in her wealthy abode. When Paphnutius had returned, he customarily run to his daughter's room. It was deserted; but there was nothing which betrayed the heroic resolution of the escaped girl. Every object had kept its usual place; perfect order reigned in all the

house; the servants who were questioned, had nothing seen nor heard; besides, had they not the last evening done their service to their young mistress?

A thousand conjectures then invaded the mind of the poor father. Had she been kidnapped? but is that possible from the part of the betrothed who is such a virtuous and well-educated young man? They called him, and his arrival made a scene of indescribable grief and despair.

Has she been murdered? but where and why? No door nor window was broken. Moreover, the police had been searching all places in the city, had made an inquiry in the places of bad fame, had explored the obscure surrounding lands, and had visited even the bottom of the ships that were anchored in the harbour, or which were leaving.

Has she run away to the monastery? They had questioned the communities of women in the town and in the surrounding places, and the results of this enquiry, as of all other inquiries, were completely negative. Besides, the worldly exterior of Euphrosyne's life, fought this unlikely idea; was she not betrothed and at the eve of such a well assorted union? Briefly speaking, the disappeared girl seemed to have been dead as a victim of an accident.

In his terrible sorrow, nothing remained to Paphnutius but the very brittle hope to appeal to the prayers of his saint friend the abbot, in order to learn through revelation, what was the hidden mystery of his daughter's disappearance.

When they heard these news, the assembled monks kept praying for a whole week, the monastery fasted to this purpose. Contrary to the custom, Heaven was mute to the fervent supplications of those saints. It must be said that the prayers of Euphrosyne counterbalanced near to God, all the devout entreaties of His servants: she asked nothing but a single grace, which was rigorously not to be recognized.

Nevertheless, the abbot generously gave his most efficient solaces to the unlucky father saying:

"Let not this appalling test take you away from the love of God; He tests only those souls whom He loves; the humble small bird does not die without His permission. I am, as regards myself, convinced that nothing could have happened to your daughter without His holy will. Since He has willed to inform us of nothing about her destiny, be confident that no misadventure had happened to her; if it were not so, He would not have left the prayers of all our people without response. As for me, I have the intimate conviction that you will see her in this life."

While the abbot was speaking, Paphnutius felt an inexpressible quietness pervading him; he came to thanking God for the hard test to

which He submitted him, and swore to give himself more than ever to the deeds of charity and devoutness.

The visits of Paphnutius to the friendly monastery became more and more frequent; it was there only that he found some mellowing of his extensive agony. While he was in the presence of the abbot and his religious persons, an ineffable solace invaded his soul. One day, this latter had a sudden inspiration. He said to him:

"Lord, we have here a true saint, who lives here as a hermit, and who had come to us from the palace of the emperor; perhaps you will find much relief in visiting him? Would you like me to introduce you to him?" The poor Paphnuce did not refuse; he thankfully accepted the offer. Agapit was charged to lead him to brother Smaragde and to introduce to him the distinguished benefactor of the monastery. When Euphrosyne saw her father, she could not hide her emotion, tears filled her eyes; she burst into tears.

Her affected visitors attributed that embarrassment to his compunction and were greatly edified. In fact, Paphnutius had no suspicion; the face of his daughter was so emaciated through the long fasts, the night watches, and the other exercises of repentance, that he did not recognize her; besides Euphrosyne had by simulating decency, covered her face with her cap in order to hide her sight partly. After having made some prayers together, according to the custom, they sat down all the three of them.

Then brother Smaragde began the conversation. He spoke with much sweeping eloquence about the eternal glory and about the means to attain it. He praised humility and chastity, and glorified the powerful virtue of alms and charity. Then he spoke of the little attention which should be done about the world, and about the wrong part of those who loved their children more than God. He had the Holy Bible in his hands, and he demonstrated that God sends trials in order to train our patience, and that this last virtue alone soothes the painful soul. He said to him, while taking care not to reveal his secret:

"Believe me, your great affliction will pass away; God will end it. If the safety or the life of your daughter was in any danger, He would already have manifested it to you. As for me, lord, I have full confidence in God, and I can assure you that you will see again your daughter in this world. Do not leave yourself to excessive grief; why would you haste your death? Thank God who protects your child, and regain hope."

To end this poignant visit, Smaragde deeply saluted his noble visitor and went again to pray in the corner of his cell. This latter who was deeply touched in his heart, had a word of profound thankfulness and rendered the venerable hermit who had given him such a sweet hope in the heart to his perpetual silence.

It had been already sometime since Euphrosyne's health inspired serious fears; she sometimes vomitted blood; her features were altogether distorted; her face was pale as death; she was dying from a cancer in the stomach, probably because of the bad treatment which she enforced on it. By this time, Paphnutius came back to the monastery with his usual grief and asked as a special favour, to see again the saint brother Smaragde who had done so much good to him. Agapit lead him again to the poor cell. The dying person was resting on his mat, having lost much of his blood. The visitor was moved with compassion, and knelt down and started kissing him while weeping and saying to him:

"Brother, where are your beautiful promises? when will be the realisation of your comforting words? You assured me that my eyes will see my beloved daughter, and not only this joy was not given me, but here you who are my last and supreme consolation, are going to leave me. Alas! Who now will maintain my hope? Where shall I go? Where shall I find relief? Thirty-eight years have now passed since I have lost my beloved child! I had never had any news about her, and I weep and I pray day and night! where is a similar pain to mine? how unfortunate I am, brother!"

Smaragde replied with a voice which was more weakened by his vivid emotion:

"Why this trouble and this desperation? Has the arm of the Highest lost his power? Remember how God lead Jacob to his son Joseph that he believed to be dead? Listen to me, please. You will stay here near me these three days."

Paphnutius accepted this offer with an eagerness full of gratefulness, thinking that the devout brother had received some revelation from Heaven. He did not leave him, and prayed with him while he admired his resignation to the will of God, his patience in supporting his horrible sufferings and his serenity in front of death which was quickly coming closer to him. On the third day, at evening, Paphnuce who found himself alone with the dying person, knelt down near him saying:

"Brother, according to your order, I did not leave you during these three days; have you some comforting words to leave for me before returning to God?"

"Yes, lord. The Almighty has had compassion of your misery and is going to fulfill your desire. As regards me, I have been able to reach the end of my wishes in spite of many impediments, not through my own strength, but through His triumphant help; nothing remains but to get the eternal crown of the elect. You must not worry so much about your daughter Euphrosyne: I am this unhappy person, and you are my father Paphnutius. Now you can say that you have seen her before her death and go back satisfied. However, beloved father, let nobody except you, know

my secret; be the only one to bury my corpse. In my remembrance, do some alms to this monastery which have me so happy and pray for me all the days of your life."

The sobs choked her last words. The father and the daughter, who were united again, were in the arms of one another, and during the holy expression of their joy, the poor brother Smaragde rendered his last, at evening, on January 394.

Paphnutius remained prostrated for a long time before this motionless body whose soul had quitted while he was in his hands, against his heart. Agapit came back to the cell at his customary time, and before this unintelligible sorrow, he thought it good to question the generous host of the monastery who, in his emotion, could not retain his secret. The mystery was manifested and all the brothers were admiring how God had accomplished such marvels of life in a sex that is so weak and so delicate. They rendered to Euphrosyne-Smaragde the funeral honours which were due to her sanctity and to her old situation in the world.

Before burying her, the abbot who was incited by a heavenly inspiration, brought near the coffin, one of his religious men who was blind from long ago. The latter bent down on the corpse and kissed her on the front; at the same moment he completely recovered his sight.

Paphnutius, with a comforted heart, went back to Alexandria, sold all his property to the benefit of the poor and the monasteries, and came to spend the remaining time of his life inside the cell which his daughter had consecrated. He lived there during ten years and he was buried beside her.....and many churches celebrate on the same day the birth in heaven of both father and daughter.

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"BOLLANDISTS"

"Vie de 122 saints" by Simon Metaphraste.

The Saint Martyrs Of Alexandria

**who were killed by the Arians in 372
in the Church of Saint Theonas
and from 372 to 379 in Egypt**

**Translated from
LES SAINTS D'EGYPTE
LECTURES EDIFIANTES, INSTRUCTIVES, AGREABLES
PAR LE
R.P. PAUL CHENEAU D'ORLEANS
DOCTEUR EN DROIT CANONIQUE**

**JERUSALEM
COUVENT DES RR. PP. FRANCISCAINS, CUSTODIE DE TERRE-SAINTE
1923
VOL. I PAGES 587-592**

**TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH
BY MELEKA HABIB YOUSSEF
2002**

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SOCRATE, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, Vol. IV, chapter 21

SOZOMENE, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, Vol. VI, chapter 19

See the details of this persecution in
the life of Saint Melas of Rhinocolure who was one of its victims.

TEXT

The archdeacon Boutros who was the faithful fellow of the labors and perils of Saint Athanassius, was called to become his successor on the See of Alexandria. The great Patriarch had designated him to the choice of his people who acclaimed his name. This election was not to the taste of the prefect Palladius who was a very fanatic heathen. He gathered the people of the same religion as his, together with some Jews, encircled the Church where resided the new patriarch Boutros II, and summoned him that he had to empty the place very quickly, otherwise the emperor would act energetically. The newly elected patriarch yielded face to the tempest. The passions of different kinds which had been constrained in respect by the influence of Saint Athanassius during his life, and which now had become at ease, could freely run their course.

The emperor Valens had sent a secret mandate to his stately representative, the prefect Palladius, that he had to be favorable to all the undertakings of the Arians. Such a mission was well in tune with the sectarian spirit of Palladius who without delay, seized the Patriarch Boutros II and shut him in jail. He enthroned Lucius at his place and ascribed all the churches to the Arians. These outrages against the liberty of worship were the equivalent to a declaration of war; Alexandria was starting to live the worst days of its history.

The emperor had issued decrees to give the buildings to the Arians, but he continued to take them; and nobody doubted that the projected assault was the signal for a bloody persecution and the occasion for customary horrors.

(see, Vie de S. Athanase, page 550 in the same volume; and see also Les Martyrs des Ariens 17, 21 et 26 Mars.)

These horrors surpassed in their wickedness, all that had been seen before.

The first church to be invaded, was the church of Saint Theonas which was the Cathedral then. The scenes of disturbance which happened through the agency of this scandalous team, have been described by the expelled Patriarch Saint Boutros II himself. The author (R.P. Paul Cheneau) will do nothing but to translate his long narrative, shortening some rough descriptions, and mitigating many details which would be in our days, too coarse for a work that respects its readers.

(This letter of the twenty-first patriarch of Alexandria Saint Boutros II has been kept for us by THEODORET DE CYR, 386-457, in his Histoire Ecclésiastique, Vol. IV, chapter 22)

Extract

from the writings of Saint Boutros II, 21st Patriarch of Alexandria.

Therefore our church (the church of Saint Theonas) was besieged by an innumerable troop of heathens and Jews; they smashed the doors and entered, singing blasphemous songs and idolatrous hymns; then there were shoutings and roarings followed by endless applause. They attacked the virgins who were consecrated to the Lord, and made their pure ears hear the most inconvenient language; then, joining acts to words, they snatched their clothes and made them ramble in the most humiliating condition in the streets of the city while the passers-by jeered them. Whoever showed pity or disapproval, was unmercifully beaten on the spot. A great number of these saint girls were subjected to violence, and many died under the sticks with which these frenzied people struck their heads.

(Saint Gregory of Nazianze positively says that some women were literally cut to pieces; and Rufin adds that the persons who had vowed themselves to celibacy (men and women) suffered from such violence as the heathen persecutions do not offer any example.)

But why should I tarry over these details, which are unhappily common to every such upheaval; when I have to describe unheard-of profanations, by which no history was ever polluted until now?

When they absolutely mastered the sacred place, they let an adolescent who was disguised as a woman, mount on the altar. They had painted his eyes with antimony, as they do to idols.

[Egyptian women used to make-up their lips red; their eyes were surrounded with a black strip which extended to the temples, and nearly touched their hair. The powder which they used for this, was a mixture of antimony and of very finely pulverised charcoal, that enhanced the whiteness of the complexion giving brightness to the look, and protected the eyes against ophtalmia.

(“Au temps de Ramsès”, by MASPERO, page 12)].

At the very place where we celebrate the Holy Mysteries, this youngster starts to dance and to jump, affecting the most lascivious postures, and making shameful gestures, while a band of madmen dance frantically around the altar yelling vile songs.

A young man who was known by everybody for his lewdness, climbs on the pulpit completely naked, and starts from there to vomit against the Lord Christ, the most filthy blasphemes. The sweetness of drunkenness and the practice of the least acknowledgeable debaucheries, are exalted at the place where we teach piety, modesty and temperance.

It is perhaps at this moment that Saint Boutros escaped from his prison, and embarked in disguise on a ship to Italy.

The saint continues:

Having withdrawn, I was given a successor. It was a certain Lucius, who was unfaithful to the truth, a chief of thieves, a wolf that entered into the sheepfold, a second Arius. His election was not the result of the vote of the

orthodox bishops, and the clergy, and the faithful, as is required by the sacred laws. He made his official entry, but neither the priests, nor the clerical men, nor the sacred crowd accompanied him. His retinue was not composed of monks singing hymns or psalms, no; there walked besides him the imperial treasurer Count Magnus,

(Count Magnus is the same financial superintendant who had, under the reign of Julian the Renegade, set on fire the church in Beyrouth in October 362), together with Euzoius, who was once a deacon in Alexandria, and a follower of Arius, and afterwards, the plague of the Church of Antioch of which the arian Valens had made him the Patriarch.

(Euzoius was a deacon in Alexandria. He was accepted again into the Church in 335, after having submitted a confession of faith which appeared to be orthodox, to the emperor Constantin. He was promoted Patriarch at the place of Meletius. He baptised the emperor Constantin at his death-bed. When Jovien succeeded on the throne after Julian the Renegade, Euzoius made intrigues to the sovereign in order to make him replace Saint Athanassius by a creature whom he, Euzoius, had chosen, the thing that resulted into the disorders which we know. He did not stay more than one year on the See of Antioch.)

Troops had been mobilised to escort and protect this trio of ungodly men.

The first thing which these satraps did, was to send soldiers to seize nineteen priests and deacons, pretending that they were arrested because of some horrible crime. Some of those who were arrested, were more than eighty years of age. When they arrived, the prefect repeatedly asked them to deny their faith; that was an absolutely indispensable matter in order to conquer the favour of the emperor. And as these worthy ministers of God refused, he shouted saying:

“Abjure, you wretched, abjure; make yourselves arians, God will forgive you this weakness; because it is necessity which compels you to that. Subscribe immediately to the faith of your eloquent bishop Lucius. Honours will be the reward of your obedience; in case of resistance, you will be tortured”.

Without exception, all of them persisted in the true faith, inspite of the multiplied attempts of Palladius in order to bring them to apostasy.

[the authors of the time accumulated upon this Palladius the most disgracing attributes: “he is an ungodly, a scoundrel, a vile corrupted person, a real demon” (Saint Gregory of Nazianze)]

The prefect kept them for a long time in jail, anticipating a moment of weakness from their part. Finally, when he dispaired from bringing them to act according to his aims, he set up a temporary tribunal near the port, so that a greater multitude of lawless people could decry them; then he violently issued a decree of banishment against all of them; they had to leave Alexandria instantly, and go to Hierapolis in Phenicia, which was yet a completely heathen town.

Hierapolis is the ancient Tibekhat and Baalbiqii of the Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions. It was a town dedicated to Baal. The Greeks identified it with Helios, the sun.

“Under the reign of the Roman emperors Antonin le Pieux (138-161), and Caracalla (211-217), an imposing temple was erected inside a sacred enclosure dedicated to three divinities of Heliopolis: Jupiter, Mercurius and Venus; and another temple but a smaller one, was erected very near to that one, and was dedicated to the honour of Bacchus” (Meistermann, “Guide de Terre-Sainte”, page 545). These grandiose ruins are perhaps the most beautiful in the Middle-East.

The generous confessors of the faith went across the few steps which were separating them from some ordinary boat, while the arian and pagan crowd yelled, and the indignant protests of the faithful grievously echoed their shouts. The prefect with his unsheathed sword in his hand, pitilessly presided over their departure; he refused them to carry anything, not even some food for the crossing, unwilling to alleviate in any way the severity of their exile. When the crew who had been previously advised, had made their last arrangements, the prefect himself gave the order to sail and to take off the anchor. At the same moment, when the boat left the port, a frightening thunder-storm stroke, and the sea which was suddenly let loose, started to break enormous waves on the shore. This matter was believed to be a miracle, because there was nothing that made it predictable.

The departure of these innocent victims did not quieten the fanaticism of Palladius. He prohibited any demonstration of sadness; mere tears were considered to be an offence. Twenty-three persons made this costly experience. They were incarcerated; they were beaten and tortured in jail; then they were deported, some of them to the mines Phenon, and some to the quarries of Proconese,

[that is an island of the Protontide (the sea of Marmara). It is today the island of Marmara, which is famous for its marbles].

A Deacon who had carried comforting letters from the Pope Damasus, was joined to them. He was subjected to all the imaginable ill-treatments; he had his hands bound behind his back, he was imprisoned, beaten on his head with stones and daggers made of lead, and finally he was thrown with the others in the boat to the destination of Phenon.

The fury of that tyrant, the new Herod, turned to some young children; he tortured them; then he slaughtered them, and, extending barbarism to the limit, he prohibited anybody, whatever he was, even their parents, to mourn them or to bury them; their bodies were to be the prey of the hyenas and the vultures.

A Byzantine historian named Theophane the Confessor (758-818) says: "most of the faithful Christians, men, women and virgins, were shamefully cut to pieces by flagellation, and many of them died consequently".

All Alexandria was thrust into grief; there was not a single house where death had not caused some mourning; and nevertheless, these appalling sceneries which were daily renewed, could not satisfy the arian rabble, that was thirsty of blood and lewdness.

The persecution reached the provinces and Count Magnus was delegated to recruit his victims there. Eleven of the most venerable bishops were snatched from their sees and were sent to Diocesarea, which was a completely Jewish town.

(Diocesarea is today Sephoris, near Nazareth. The Old Saint Melania, left Jerusalem in order to go to releave these confessors of the faith. She was arrested there and thrown into the shackles. When the emperor Valens knew who she was, he apologized to her, and gave her the permission to practice her charity towards the Christian prisoners. Sephoris is the native land of Saint Joachim, the father of the Holy Virgin).

Round-ups which were organised in the deserts at Nitria and especially at Scethis, brought the detention of more than three thousand hermits. Without resistance, these gave their heads to the executioners, who were operating in all

impunity, while being sheltered from embarrassing protestations, in these solitary and remote regions.

This appalling era of barbarism ended only after the death of the emperor Valens, who was killed near Andrinopolis in 378 during a battle against the Goths.

From the physical point of view, Valens had little advantages: he was short, his complexion was blackish, his eye was covered with a white stain on the cornea, that had the most unpleasant aspect. From the moral point of view, he had neither judgement, nor character; and he was subjected to the most ominous influences. A mere single expression of war expedition, rendered him pale.

In the following year Valentinian and Gratian subdued the arians, and the 21st Patriarch Boutros II returned to his throne. The people who had been disgusted from the excesses of Lucius, shamefully chased him away. Lucius turned to Constantinople to claim for the imperial assistance. But he never obtained it, and that was for due cause.

The Saints Martyrs
SERGIUS & BACCHUS

with a description of their church

Compiled by Meleka Habib Youssef

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*1971 or 1972
(the book has not been printed)*

***In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy
Spirit,
One God, Amen***

The numerous holy martyrs who gave their life for the Christian Faith during the various persecutions which took place in Egypt up to the time of Saint Constantine, Emperor of Constantinople, were from all races, of all ages, from all social ranks and cultural levels.

The most severe and most terrible of these persecutions was that which was inaugurated by the Emperor Diocletian; and for this reason, the Coptic Church adopted the year of the beginning of his reign, 284 AD, as the beginning of the Coptic Era, which is known as the Era of the Martyrs. However, it was only in 303 and 304 AD that Diocletian signed two edicts authorizing the persecution of the Christians. In 305 AD Diocletian abdicated, but his successors and collaborators continued the persecution. Maximin-Daia, Caesar in the Orient, whose capital was at Nicomedia, not far from the present site of Constantinople, was the most ferocious.

Among those martyrs were Saints Sergius and Bacchus, who were officers of high rank in the "Schola Gentilium" which was an equestrian body of men from all races. Sergius was one of the commanding officers of that equestrian body, and Bacchus was his second in command. According to their official functions and to their direct relation with the Emperor whose trust they had gained, these two young officers of high rank enjoyed great influence at the palace, and their prestige was felt in all the Orient, so much so that Antiochus, the commanding officer had been appointed to his post thanks to the influence of Saint Sergius.

We do not know whether Saints Sergius and Bacchus were born Christians; but it is certain that they were so when they commanded that equestrian body. They had news about the martyrs, and listened to their stories with emotion. They may have seen martyrs being tormented, condemned and put to death; and it is possible that some of these military martyrs were their comrades.

It is certain that there were many jealous fanatic pagans, or weak people paid by the authorities, who were ready to denounce the Christians to their persecutors. The Emperor learned that his devoted friends, these faithful military chiefs, these noble figures so familiar to him, whom he fully trusted, were Christians.

Maximin-Daia ordered all his high officials and his officers to go to the temple of Jupiter, where he offered a sacrifice to the idols, and ate

together with his ministers of the sacrificial offering. Our Saints refused to take part in this solemn ceremony; and when the Emperor demanded an explanation for their absence, they answered that they were Christians, and that no sacrifice should be offered to the images of the evil spirits, to dead idols which have mouths, but speak not, and have ears but hear not; and that they owed to the Emperor the terrestrial service of their bodies in the army, but that their Eternal Emperor was Jesus-Christ, the Son of God.

Maximin-Daia became furious, and ordered that there should be taken off immediately from them the insignia of their dignity as officers of high rank, their golden collars, and their girdles. He dressed them in women's clothes and ordered that they should be mocked by being taken in parade through the whole city in this attire, with heavy iron chains around their necks. They suffered this humiliation joyously, blessing God.

Having failed to convince Saint Sergius and Saint Bacchus by means of threats, or promises, Maximin-Daia sent them to Antiochus who was in command of the region of the Euphrate River (Euphratesia). Saint Sergius had been his chief and had obtained for him his rank of commanding-officer thanks to his influence with the Emperor.

Maximin-Daia intended in this way to avoid personally the unpleasant task of dealing severely with faithful friends. He wished also to humiliate them the more, by forcing them to appear in front of the court of one of their subordinates, the more so, because the latter was known for his cruelty throughout the Empire. He hoped also to shake their firmness by means of the fatigue of the way and by the insults which they would receive on their long journey from Nicomedia to Sura where Antiochus resided.

The total distance which they had to travel was about a thousand kilometers. The way was rugged, the nature was hostile, and often the traveller would meet with wild beasts. We can imagine the clamorous procession of the two officers of that equestrian body, in chains, stripped of their insignia, driven along by soldiers to be judged, bearing patiently all the vicissitudes of their long journey, and blessing God, without paying any heed to all the insults and all the fatigues which they endured joyfully for the love of our Lord Jesus-Christ.

When they arrived, Antiochus threw them at first into prison, then on the following day he made them appear before him. He tried by every means to make them sacrifice to the idols, but they refused categorically. Antiochus then condemned Saint Bacchus to be scourged by four tormentors, and he was so severely scourged that he died from this torment at Sura.

His body was thrown into a cave, and wild beasts miraculously guarded it until some pious persons came and buried it with due veneration. The next night, Bacchus appeared to Sergius in the prison and encouraged him to endure courageously the torments of martyrdom.

The cruel Antiochus invented for Saint Sergius a cruel torture which had never been heard of. He made him wear boots fitted inside, with pointed nails, and forced him to run in front of his chariot for fifteen kilometers as far as Tetrapyrgia.

The military post of Tetrapyrgia was situated mid-way between Sura and Rusafah. It was a platform surrounded by a double wall which was reinforced by a tower at each corner. Tetrapyrgia means "four towers".

The following night, an angel appeared to Saint Sergius and healed all his wounds. Antiochus was surprised, and finding that all his efforts were of no avail, he made him endure the same torture by running from Tetrapyrgia to Rusafah. Then he sentenced him to death by decapitation. The place, where his blood was shed, opened and formed a chasm that still exists.

The inhabitants of Sura wished to take the body of Saint Sergius, but the saintly martyr prevented them from doing so by lighting a fire which alerted the people of Rusafah who came and expelled the intruders.

Rusafah

Rusafah is situated at a distance of about two hundred kilometers east of Alep, on the River Euphrate, in Iraq. It is a very ancient town. It is mentioned in the Old Testament (2 Kings 19:12; Isaiah 37:12) among the towns which fell under the domination of the Assyrians.

A magnificent church was built in the fifth century over the same place where Saint Sergius suffered martyrdom. The relics of his body were preserved there. It was one of the most beautiful churches of all the East.

A great wall, 3 meters large, was built around the town during the 6th century under the rule of the Emperor Justinian of Constantinople, in order to safeguard the churches, the monasteries, and all the riches which they contained, which the pilgrims, becoming more and more numerous, generously offered, in honour of Saints Sergius and Bacchus.

The cisterns which contained water that was carefully collected still exist. They had a capacity of about thirty thousand cubic metres, and made it possible to deliver twenty liters of drinkable water to each of the six thousand inhabitants every day.

Rusafah was an important station on the caravans route along the River Euphrate. It was also the starting-point of a track which led to Palmyra, and which was one hundred and fifty kilometers long. Its name was changed into Sergiopolis in honour of the Saint. Inside its surrounding walls there were five churches and a monastery; it was an animated city, where crowds of pilgrims came from every place, to visit the Saint's tomb.

To-day, one can see at Rusafah or Sergiopolis, nothing but ruins. The surrounding wall is about fifteen meters high, and forms a rectangle five hundred meters long, and four hundred meters wide. At each corner there is a large round tower. On every side, there are twelve square towers built in the wall. There is a path for the guards along the top of the walls. On the north side there is a huge door with three arches.

A few monuments still exist. The large church was almost entirely destroyed during an earthquake in 1068 AD. The tomb of Saint Sergius was then moved into the basilica of the monastery. It was rebuilt out of the materials of the first shrine. What remains of it is a small court surrounded by small white marble walls, with rose porphyry columns. The upper parts of the elegant columns are inscribed with Greek writing. There are some remains of the columns of the apsis; one is decorated with mural-paintings, a cross ornamented with rays. The large icon of the Saint is entirely destroyed; but a very beautiful copy of this still exists in the church of Saint Demetrius at Thessalonica.

The Church of Saints Sergius & Bacchus

This church is probably the oldest of the extant churches in Cairo, marking, as it does, one of the traditional sites of the resting-places of the Holy Family during their stay in Egypt. This hallowed spot is located in a small subterranean chapel beneath the actual church, at a depth of some ten meters below the present street level. This chapel may, perhaps, be assigned to the sixth century, and replaces, most probably, an original shrine which may have been built over this traditional site in the fourth century.

The general structure of this church is basilican, comprising a narthex, nave flanked by aisles, a choir and three sanctuaries, and it measures 27 meters long, 17 meters wide and 15 meters high. A large western door gives access to the narthex, but it is usually closed, and entrance to the church is through a small door at the south-west corner of the church. In the narthex there is a large tank boarded over which was formerly used for the ceremony of the blessing of the water on the Feast of the Epiphany. The twelve monolithic columns round the nave are all, with

the exception of one, of white marble. The exceptional column being of red Aswan granite. These columns have debased Corinthian capitals, and stand on square marble pedestals. They were doubtless taken from some Roman building. Traces of painted figures on these columns can still be dimly distinguished. A continuous wooden architrave originally painted in various colours joins these columns.

The narthex and northern and southern aisles are covered by a continuous gallery. The floor of the church is paved with hard siliceous gray lime-stone, and the sanctuary floor is two steps higher than the floor of the choir. A pointed roof with framed principals covers the nave, but the central part of the choir and the sanctuary have a wagon-vaulted roof, whilst the northern sanctuary is covered with a dome.

In the nave, the marble ambon which rests on ten columns, is a modern copy of the ambon in the Church of Saint Barbara. Remains of the previous ambon of rosewood, inlaid with ebony and ivory, which was seen and described by A.J. Butler in 1881, are now preserved in the Coptic Museum, where they have the exhibit number 878. In the nave there is the Mandatum Tank which is sunk in the floor and now boarded over. This tank was formerly used for the Service of the Foot-washing on Maundy Thursday and on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. Nowadays, a small portable basin is used for this service.

The sanctuary screen which is probably to be assigned to the thirteenth century, is of beautiful workmanship, incrustated with pentagons and other shapes of solid ivory, carved in relief with arabesques. The upper part of the screen contains small panels of ebony set with large crosses of solid ivory, exquisitely chiseled with scrollwork. Above these panels are icons of the Twelve Apostles with the Holy Virgin Mary in the center. This screen is pierced with two square windows on each side of the central door.

On the right side of the southern door, and on the left side of the northern door, are affixed some carved ebony panels which have come from the ruins of a door, and they have been assigned to the eleventh or twelfth century. Those on the right side of the southern door depict three warrior saints, and those on the left of the northern door depict the Nativity and the Last Supper. The sanctuary curtain dated 1735 AD which hung before the central door, when A.J. Butler visited this church, is now preserved in the Coptic Museum, where it is listed under exhibit number 85 (Room 19).

Within the sanctuary which is roofed with a small dome, the altar stands beneath a large and lofty canopy which is borne upon four Saracenic columns. Round the walls of the apse there rises a fine marble tribune consisting of seven steps, three short and straight steps running north and south, and four seats sweeping round the whole curve of the

apse. These steps and seats are faced with vertical stripes of red, black and white marble. In the center of the apse is the Synthronus, the bishop's throne, with a niche behind it. A low vaulted passage blocked in the middle by a partition wall, runs round the sanctuary beneath the steps of the tribune.

The screens of the northern and southern sanctuaries are inlaid with plain ivory, and the latter screen bears the date 1454 AM = 1738 AD.

The southern sanctuary is now no longer in use for services. Its apse which contains a niche, is covered with a low semi-dome, but the rest of the sanctuary is flat-roofed. On the walls of this southern sanctuary there is an icon of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, and many other icons.

On the wall of the southern aisle, from east to west, there is a series of icons in which we have the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, the Baptism, the Marriage at Cana, the transfiguration, the Raising of Lazarus, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the Descent from the Cross, the Descent into Hades, the Appearance to Saint Thomas, the Ascension, and the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. On the pier of the south aisle there is a large icon of the Holy Virgin Mary, together with two small ones of the Holy Virgin Mary. At the narthex there are two large icons representing the archangels Saint Gabriel and Saint Michael.

The northern sanctuary is roofed with a large dome, and in the east wall there is a small tribune of three bow-shaped steps in the center of which is the Synthronus.

At the western end of the northern aisle there is the baptistery. The southern gallery has a sanctuary which is dedicated to the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the northern gallery has a sanctuary which is dedicated to the Archangel Michael.

The Sanctuary of the Holy Family

The crypt in which this sanctuary is situated lies beneath the center of the choir and part of the central sanctuary. It is entered by a stairway which leads down from the southern sanctuary; another stairway also leads down to this crypt from the northern sanctuary. During the inundation of the Nile this crypt is inaccessible for about two months, as the water seeps into it to a depth of about one meter. By its contact with this sacred spot, the water is considered holy, and is much resorted to by the faithful.

This sanctuary measures 6 meters long, 5 meters wide and 2.50 meters high, and two rows of slender columns, five on the south side and four on the north, form a nave and side aisles. One of the columns is twisted and fluted, and it resembles a pair of similar columns which support the

ambon in the church of the Virgin Al-Mu'allaqah. Two short walls, in the line of these columns, project from the east wall and form a sanctuary. In the northern, southern, and eastern wall there is an arched recess. The sanctuary has an altar, but no sanctuary screen. The southern aisle is used as baptistery, and it has at its east end a font in the form of a round stone basin set in solid masonry.

In the 17th and 18th centuries the Franciscan Friars had the right to celebrate the Holy Mass in this sanctuary, and up to the present time they organize a pilgrimage to this holy shrine during Lent. On the 1st of June, the day on which the Coptic Church commemorates the Flight into Egypt, the Divine Liturgy is celebrated in this sanctuary.

SAINT TIMOTHEUS
AGHNOSTOS
&
SAINT MAURE
HIS WIFE

MARTYRS IN THEBAID

TRANSLATED FROM
LES SAINTS D'EGYPTE
LECTURES
EDIFIANTES, INSTRUCTIVES, AGREABLES
PAR LE
RR.P. PAUL CHENEAU, D'ORLEANS
DOCTEUR EN DROIT CANONIQUE

JERUSALEM
COUVENT DES RR. PP. FRANCISCAINS
CUSTODIE DE TERRE-SAINTE
1923

TRANSLATED
By Meleka Habib Youssef
CAIRO

The two distinguished martyrs whose admirable passion you are about to read, are also victims of the famous Arianus, the prefect of Antinoe. The latter was very active, and had given strict orders which were not to be delayed.

The cities and the villages which were under his authority, must be thoroughly searched; and every individual who was suspected to be a Christian, had to offer sacrifice immediately; otherwise the agents of the Authority, who were invested with full powers, would seize him without mercy, and take him without delay to the chief town of the province.

The people of the village of Perape were lucky. (This is probably Rairamoun that is slightly over Antinoe.) They took hold of a very young man named Timotheus, who had the function of Aghnostos in the Church. He was just married some days before.

As soon as he was brought to the court, the inquiry began.

--"Who are you? What is your occupation"?"

--"I am a Christian; and I practice the duties of an aghnostos."

--"Your name"?"

--"Timotheus".

--"Are you then the only one in your village ignoring the decrees of our noble emperors, who have ordered to put to a horrible death anyone who would not sacrifice to the indestructible gods"?"

--"Perhaps! Anyway I have in me the Spirit of God, and certainly I will not sacrifice."

--"Look well at the torturing instruments which are exhibited there under your eyes".

--"Do you not see the angels whom God has sent to support me?"

--"Give me your sacred books so that I may know their strength."

--"Can a father himself deliver his own children to a bloodthirsty enemy?"

--"Beautiful words! All this does not make any progress. Then, you refuse to give me your books and you do not want to sacrifice?"

--"No, a thousand times no; because I am a Christian."

As Arianus was not that day in a mood to discuss, he immediately moved forward to tortures, which are much more eloquent than himself, for taming the rebel convictions. The executioners took sharp daggers, make them red-hot, and thrust them into the ears of the victim. Under the action of the heat, the face became extremely swelled, the cornea of the dried eye cracked and let loose the crystalline lense.

The executioners exclaimed saying:

--"Poor blockhead! Your obstinacy not to sacrifice has made you loose your sight; here you are well advanced now!"

--"You said that rightly; I have lost my eyes, which were used to watch so many repelling scenes, but the Lord Jesus has more than ever, lightened the eyes of my soul."

The torture by the wheel was the answer to this beautiful word.

The prefect exclaimed:

"Sacrify, sacrifice; then I shall put an end to this torture."

--"It is useless to insist so much; I am not suffering; the Lord Jesus is protecting me."

--"Executioners, take him off the wheel. You will bind his hands behind his back, and attach him to a pole by the feet, so that he will be suspended very high, with

his head downwards; then you will put a gag in his mouth and fasten a stone around his neck.”

The horror and the cruelty of the torture made those who were present exclaim, but their cry was promptly choked; would not the violence of the torture, snatch an expression of regret, a word of apostasy? Facing the distressful silence of the crowd, Timotheus lifted up his bleeding eyelids as if permitting to his faint eyes to look up at the heavens, and he said with a loud voice:

“In front of all of you, I proclaim the God of heavens and earth, who will certainly deliver me from this appalling torture.”

Those who were surrounding the prefect, suggested in the name of humanity, a nearly unerring way to defeat the obstinacy of this young man; that way was very friendly:

“This is a boy who has just been married; let us bring to him his bride; he will not be able to resist her supplication, her tears, and especially her charm.”

The prefect favourably welcomed this idea and sent to summon Maura the wife of the Christian. Being anxious about what had become to her husband, she came in a hurry. The prefect said:

“I am greatly touched with commiseration at your bad luck, my child; because I fear that a great mishap will occur to you; the obstinacy of Timotheus will cost him his death; to become a widow at the age of fifteen, is not that an appalling matter!? You must absolutely do everything to save his life. Go back home then; put on your most beautiful dress, submerge your hair in the most savory perfume; then go to your husband in all the brightness of your beauty, and conquer his obstinacy; in a word, make him sacrifice to the gods.”

The young woman who hoped to release her husband, without any hesitation obeyed to the suggestions of the prefect; and after a while she came back like a queen, and started to play the role of the alluring Eve. They took off the gag that made it impossible for Timotheus to speak. Maura came very near to him. The tortured man said:

---“Where is my father, the priest Bassilius?”

The priest said:

---“My dear son, what thing do you desire that would be agreeable to you?”

---“My father, only one thing; for goodness sake, wrap my head with a linen cloth, so that I may not anymore breath the infected odor of these perfumes.”

Then Maura started to talk:

---“Timotheus, my brother, my beloved husband, why do you insult me in this way? In what thing could I hurt your feelings? Has not yet even twenty days passed since you have married me; what is it that you blame me for? I am groaning for your fate; because finally what is the reason of your condemnation? Is it for some debts that you suffer this horrible torture; if this is the case, I shall sell all my jewelry in order to liberate you.”

Timotheus let her express this great affliction without interrupting her. After having relieved her heart, Maura, who was broken by emotion, fell down, soaked in her tears. Timotheus said:

“Maura, my dear sister, my tenderly beloved spouse, just now I have seen you going out of our home, and a demon beside you who was leading you astray towards the things of this perishable world; I have now given up all the trifles that entertain the spirit.”

---“But, my brother, you have not given up the matters that pertain to God. Who then will read our sacred Books on Saturdays and Sundays?”

---“My sister, let us say goodbye to the fleeting things of this life; come to fight with me the beautiful battle of the martyrdom which will make us obtain the immortal crown. If we sustain it courageously, God will, without any doubt, forgive us all our sins.”

---“What a joy it is to accompany you, oh my beloved husband! It was my dream to suffer thus with you; but I used to find myself so unworthy of it! Your heavenly words have brought the strength of God to my soul; while you were speaking, the Spirit of God came down on my soul; it is done, I also prefer the celestial goods to all the treasures of that world.”

---If verily this is what you think, my dear Maura, go to the prefect; who is anyway impatiently waiting, and curious to know the result of our conversation; and reprimand him boldly for his barbarism.”

---“I shall do that willingly; but I am quivering lest I lack courage in the midst of torture! I am so young, and so weak!”

---“Put all your trust in the Christ; completely abandon yourself to Him without any mental reservation; then, all the torture which human maliciousness would inflict on your members, will be to you like the oil which is poured upon a wound; your body will be in a certain manner, insensibilised by the grace of our Lord Jesus.”

Then the saint martyr concentrated on a passionate prayer. He called aloud:

“Oh God! You who have made tolerable, the suffering of many of your servants; You who have made deliciously fresh, the flaming furnace, in which the three young men were cast down in Babylon, look favourably on your servant Maura. You who have blessed from on high in heaven the vows of our marriage, do not permit that we be separated during the eternity; on the contrary, condescend to unite us forever in the purple choir of your saint martyrs.”

He said this, and suddenly Maura stood up, entered into the court and showed herself to Arianus, as if she were animated, and said to him:

“Perfidious man, were you not ashamed to tempt me with the lure of riches; you have made gold and silver to be offered to me as a price of an apostasy; thus willing to lead the souls of my husband and me, to eternal death. No, I do not let myself be taken by this vulgar bait; I do not dread you in any way, because Jesus-Christ has clothed me with his unbeatable armour.”

Arianus addressed himself to those who were surrounding him, in a determined tone saying:

“Did not I verily tell you that Timotheus is a magician? Here is now his enchanted wife. She is all under the influence of the magic fascination. So, you Maura, you prefer death to life? Rightly compare the unknown suffering, the unheard-of torture, and the frightful agony, against the sweet things, the pleasures, the possessions, the vivid enjoyment of existence. If your husband wants to leave this world, in his abnormal excitement, and in his criminal obstinacy, why then suffer such a great grief for that? Is he not a fool? Console yourself, I shall give you the hand of one of my centurions, you will not be a loser in that change; because you will have a husband who is much more noble than Timotheus.”

The young righteously angry woman objected saying:

---“For that, no; Timotheus is preferable to all the centurions and better than them all. He is neither mad, nor obstinate, nor a magician, he is very simply protected by the Christ, as I am myself also; that is why, he is scornful of all your instruments of torture, and so am I.”

Facing this quiet firmness, fury seized Arianus. He made a sign, and the executioners showed up themselves:

“Unfasten the ribbons that hold up the hair of this woman, and pitilessly snatch her hair.”

The barbarous order having been executed, Maura stood in front of her judge, motionless; her head was bleeding. Arianus challenged her, while he showed her the tarnished with blood locks of her hair, lying on the ground, and said:

---“Here is what made the beauty of your head; note that this torture is nothing but the beginning; for, I swear by all the gods! I keep for you much more.”

---“By snatching this hair which I had ornamented and perfumed according to your command, in order to lead my husband to apostasy, you made me expiate an error which I had thoughtlessly committed; my hair will no more be able to harm anybody.”

This unexpected reply upset the prefect:

---“Cut all her fingers”.

She said:

---“Thanks! They are themselves which had worked to adorn myself in order to satisfy my vanity; without knowing, you are making me expiate another sin.”

The priest Basilius, who was disguised among the first row of the audience, let go these words:

“Maura, courageous and honest girl, how much you must be suffering!”

She turned her head towards his side saying:

“I do not absolutely feel any pain.”

Arianus was confounded. He then ordered that a huge boiler be warmed. When the water became boiling, they plunged the victim in it. She stood inside in the middle, without feeling any pain.

“Prefect, again I thank you. You have ordered me to have a good bath; I am finishing my complete purification here; in that way I shall arrive before God, without the shadow of a blemish. I only ask you to boil your water some more, because this bath is cold; and I do not feel any suffering in it, neither did I in the previous tortures.”

Facing this prodigy, Arianus suspected his troop of servants, to have an agreement with the victim. Although that was not appropriate, he thought that they had poured cold water inside the boiler that was warmed from the outside, in order to deliver her; she is rich, and they expect a large compensation. He left his chair to go and examine things from near. He said:

“Maura, throw a little water in my hand, so that I can judge myself its temperature.”

---“It is cold, I repeat to you. If you have no more wood to warm the boiler, fetch some at my father; he is a carpenter and can give you a cargo; but please activate your fire some more, I am catching cold in this bath.”

All this was said while joking, with a smile on her lips; the thing that did not a little stress the bad humour of the prefect.

“I have already asked you to put some of this water in my hand.”

She obeyed; she got her arm out of the hot boiler, and spread the little quantity of boiling water which she could take in the cavity of her hand, on the fingers of her judge. Arianus was severely burnt. He did not contest the miracle any more; he even had a first movement that was a lightning of faith and admiration. He cried out:

“Verily blessed, verily blessed be the God of Maura!”

Having said that, he ordered to release her.

One could have believed that the cult of the immortal gods was shaken inside the spirit of the prefect of Antioch. Unhappily, the passions, the interest, and above all the ambition, protested against the scream of the vanquished sense, and strangled it. Later on, his beautiful movement was depicted to him, as being a disgraceful weakness, and they demanded an apology which he made largely.

Maura was fetched again at her dwelling place, and was brought back to the court. Arianus, who was a rather annoyed to have changed his decision, said to her:

“I had given you back your liberty, but I hope that the future of your life, will not make me regret this favour. Naturally, leave aside your crucified Christ, and sacrifice to the immortal gods.”

---**“If it is for this reason that you have called me back, you are losing your time. You know my convictions; I will never sacrifice to your gods; I scorn your torture; because my God is with me and protects me, anyhow you know something about that.”**

---**“If you decline to offer a sacrifice, I shall fill your mouth with flaming charcoals .”**

---**“Bravo! she said; I shall then expiate the sins of my tongue. If in former times God had purified his prophet Isaie from his errors by means of a single flaming charcoal which was presented to him by a cherubim, think of the joy which I feel to suffer this trial, and how much I desire that you place these charcoals, not only inside my mouth, but also over all the parts of my body; still better than this, I beseech you, cover me completely, so that I may be purified of all my trespasses.”**

The prefect who was thus challenged, did not pursue his threat. He varied the torture, and ordered to bring a lamp that had been filled with sulfur and pitch, whose excessively heated long flame, would be activated by the gazes which came out of these smelted materials. This sophistication of torture angered those who were present. Shouts, objections, and even threats were heard; people were revolted to see a very young woman, tormented in such a manner. The curiosity of the first moment quickly changed into pity and sympathy; the shouts extended, and the demands became domineering after having been bashful, because every one was encouraged by the boldness of his neighbour.

Arianus had stood up, trying to master the agitation and to subdue the spirits. It was Maura who obtained their silence and made the noisy demonstrations cease with a single movement of her hand. The saint martyr feared lest the prefect yields to the threats of the crowd. As for her, it was the crown of martyrdom which she would lose; having been engaged so courageously into the struggle, and being very near to finish her fight, she was seeing her victory escaping, and the triumph of paradise with it. Therefore she severely addressed those who were present saying:

“Let everybody here, mind his own business! Leave manly works to men; let women be occupied with the works of their sex! I do not need your sponsorship

in any way. God, in whom I have placed all my trust, covers me with his protection; and that is enough for me. Illustrious prefect, I am at your orders.”

The executioner came near, having the lamp in his hand. With a satanic cleverness, he slowly projected its flame over all the parts of the body, while the saint kept continuing her discourse to the prefect as if nothing had happened.

“You are still thinking that this lamp will frighten me. Verily, think it over; was not the boiler more burning than it? This flame which is licking my flesh, seems to me like the refreshing morning dew, that makes the flowers and the fruits sprout.”

The prefect finally understood then, that in all kinds of torture, he will be conquered by this superior strength that made Maura’s body senseless; so, being confounded by his multiple failures, he decided to put an end to it quickly: Timotheus and his wife were condemned to the torture of the cross.

While they were leading them away to the place of their execution, Maura’s mother run to meet her daughter and cried while sobbing:

“Oh my child! Oh my daughter, it is thus that you abandon your mother? When you disappear, my child, what will remain for me in the world? Think of all the things which you will leave here, of your jewelry, your adornments.”

“Beloved mother, riches are passing away, mites attack clothes, beauty passes away and becomes faded with time and the life span; but the crown and the riches of the heavens never perish.”

Having said this, she embraced her mother, and gave her a last kiss, bidding here a supreme farewell, then vividly escaping from her hands, she joined her husband on the road to the calvary. They were both crucified facing each other, and were kept alive, by a new miracle, during nine days, consoling and encouraging one another.

By the end of the ninth day, a radiant angel came down from heaven to fetch their souls. Then Maura bade farewell to the touched assembly, who most of them were secret disciples of Christ, and had not ceased to assist them during their long agony. She said:

“Brothers, the moment has come for us to receive our reward. Always do the will of the Lord Jesus, and, like us, you will later on go to Paradise.”

After these last words, the two married Timotheus and Maura, being clothed with glory and immortality, went together to take their place, up there, in the eternal wedding of the Lamb.

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The Great
SAINT SHESHOY

Abbot of the Monastery of
Saint Anthony, Red Sea

Translated from the reference book:
"Les Saints d'Egypte",
by R.P. Paul Cheneau, Vol. II, Jerusalem 1923

Saint Sheshoy is one of the most pleasant figures of eremitic life. He lived in Scethe, in St. Anthony's mountain, and in Clysma*.

**Clysma was situated in the surroundings of Arsinoe, near the present Suez.*

He came to the desert when he was still very young, and definitely gave himself to God. He went through all the different grades of monastic life, vanquishing the devil, under the management of the abbot Hor. When he reached the summit of humility, he received the gift of operating miracles, dismissed demons, healed the sick, commanded nature like a master, and even resuscitated the dead. The opinions which he determined to write for the sake of his brothers' comfort, are all marked with kindness, meekness and forbearance. He was famous for bringing back the delinquents to their duties. This was his specific characteristic. He left to God the care of judging people, and never sentenced anybody, while always being ready to find excuses. Therefore he attracted to himself all the desert, and bestowed counsels and revitalizing words, with an untiring zeal.

A monk was violently treated by one of his brothers who had insulted him. He went to Saint Sheshoy to complain, in the hope that he would convince him to share his quarrel:

The monk: "Father, I was seriously insulted; I want to avenge myself; it seems to me that I am right."

Saint Sheshoy: "No, my son, leave this to God."

The monk: "My father, I am sorry not to follow your advice in that; but I shall have no rest till I avenge myself."

Saint Sheshoy simply said: "Good, let us leave that and pray together."

Both of them kneeled down. Then, raising his eyes to heaven, the saint loudly shouted: "Lord, excuse my liberty of language: we have no more need of your care for us; because we ourselves intend to execute the punishments for the offenses which we encounter."

The vindictive brother exclaimed: "My father, please stop, and excuse me, I promise you that I shall not revenge."

One of his preferred disciples, the monk Abraham, had seen some brothers profiting of the weekly meetings of Saturday and Sunday, to

offer themselves some small refreshments. These deeds had at least astonished him, and he said to his master:

"Father, if on a Saturday or a Sunday, at the weekly meeting, there is some brother who drinks three glasses of wine, would you not find this as something excessive?"

Saint Sheshoy replied:

"If it was not the devil that incited him to it, certainly that would not be excessive."

During his residence at the mountain of Saint Anthony, he remained for ten consecutive months without seeing any human face.*

**He used to submit himself to some punishments that were unheard of: Once, for the sake of conquering slumber, he suspended himself by the hands to a rock that was over a precipice? An angel came and disengaged him, severely forbidding him never to do it again. This strange refined procedure was then customary in some eremitic places.*

Finally, one day when he was walking in the mountain, he met was a hunter of wild beasts who dwelt in Pharan*.

**Pharan, today Ouadi Faran, is a desert of the peninsula of Sinai, where the Jews stayed after their exodus from Egypt (Numbers 10:12). At the time of the persecutions, the lonely places of Pharan were inhabited by numerous hermits, who created everywhere fertile gardens, that produced vegetables and fruits.*

He said to this stranger:

"Where do you come from, traveller?"

"From Pharan."

"And since when do you hunt in these mountains?"

"I have been on this mountains since eleven months, and you are the first human being whom I meet here."

When Saint Sheshoy heard these words, he asked his interlocutor the permission to leave, and when he was back in his place, he started to beat his chest saying to himself with a loud voice: "So! Poor Sheshoy, you thought that you had done something, and here you are surpassed by a simple secular man!"

A young monk curiously questioned him during a visit, in order to know if the devil was as keen against the old people in the monastic life, as against the new comers. The saint replied saying to him:

"Much more, because the hour of death is nearer for them."

Father Abraham, whom we mentioned upwards, had the experience of that. One day, in the presence of his master, he was so much violently attacked by Satan, that he fell down on the ground. Without waiting, Saint Sheshoy knelt down, raised his eyes towards heaven, and exclaimed:

"O Lord, I shall bother you with my prayers till he will be delivered."

At the same moment, Fr. Abraham stood up; the temptation had vanished.

The saint Abbot was himself very often bothered by the infernal visitor.

It is narrated that at the time of his stay in Clysma, he fell ill. He then had to stay in his cell where his faithful disciple cared for him. Suddenly, there was violent knocking of the door, and at the same time there were frightful noises. The dying man was not moved, and very quietly said to Fr. Abraham to shout at these foul noisy people:

"What do you want? It is Sheshoy who is in this cell, it is Sheshoy who is on this mat. Come in, if you have enough courage."

Fr. Abraham had not finished his words, when the diabolic group left away without waiting anymore.

A poor brother groaned saying:

"I have had the weakness of falling, what must I do? "

"Raise up confidently again, my son."

"But, father, this is a relapse."

"Oh! My son, raise up again once more."

"But if I fall down, till when must I raise up again?"

"Till the end, whether good or bad, which will be yours: for at that moment man enters into the way where death finds him."

Another questioned him while he was very embarrassed, saying:

"If the barbarians attack me during one of their incursions in the desert, and I resist them, is it lawful to kill them?"

"No, my son, but leave your destiny to God. When a trial, whatever it is, comes to us, we must say: It is because of our sins." When on the contrary, we receive some good thing, we must refer all the merit to God."

The abbot Saint Ammon* came from Raithu* to visit him at the cloister of Clysma.

**The abbot Saint Ammon is called Saint Ammon of El Tor, because he was born near this place.*

**Raithu today is called El Tor, a small port of the peninsula of Sinai. It is the place that is called in the Scriptures "Elim". There were the twelve wells of water which are mentioned in the Holy Bible (Exodus 15:27).*

He found him very sorry that he had quitted the desert for the sake of communal life. He said to him:

"Why this complaint, abbot. At your age, what could you have done in the desert?"

Saint Sheshoy looked mournfully at him and said:

"What are you saying to me, Ammon? In the desert would it not be sufficient for me to possess the freedom of the spirit?"

Some hermits wanted to know the feelings of the saint about the efficiency of penitence. Therefore they said to him:

"Father, let us suppose that some brother has committed a great error, must he make penitence for a year?"

Saint Sheshoy replied: "A year? I find this too severe."

"For six months then?"

"That is also too long."

"Let us say, during a lent."

"Forty days, that is too much, I think."

"Then, father, if some brother commits a sin, and it happens that the holy Liturgy is celebrated, do you think that he can participate in the Holy Communion right away?"

"As regards that, no; but it is enough for him to get ready for some days. I am confident in God and I firmly believe with all my soul that his sin will be entirely forgiven after three days of repentance."

We can say that the opinion of the saint was rather a little different from the general trend of the maxims of the desert fathers who expiated the errors of their youth by terribly mortifying themselves. In this, the language of the holy abbot was that of a predecessor.

Once, he saw among the innumerable visitors who besieged his place of recluse, three very old aged monks. Extraordinarily, the three of them were terrified by the apprehension of the other world. They had come to the mountain of Saint Anthony, in order to consult him as a seer. The first one said to him:

"Father, how then can I avoid that inextinguishable fire which I constantly have before my eyes?"

Saint Sheshoy kept silent. The second said:

"How is it possible to escape from that gnawing worm that does not die, and the gnashing of the teeth in the place of damnation?"

The saint did not answer by a single word. Then the third one said:

"I have always in mind the horror of that external darkness which nothing will dissipate; my soul is all tortured by these thoughts."

The abbot replied:

"As for me, I think of nothing from that kind, because God who is firstly merciful toward the sinner, will have, I think, mercy upon me."

Being thus driven away from their questions, the three good old men went out very sadly; but after a moment, the saint abbot recalled them and said:

"You are lucky, and I greatly envy your happiness, because if you always have the thought of the torture of hell in your mind, certainly you will never sin. How miserable I am! A heart that is harder than rock! I never have these salubrious ideas, therefore I am a very great sinner."

These thoughts greatly comforted the three veterans of the eremitic life who returned with joyful hearts.

The proverbial kindness of the saint abbot did not hinder him from sometimes submitting to frightful trials the souls who came to place themselves under his direction. An inhabitant of Thebes (Luxor) gives a famous example.

He came to the mount of Saint Anthony with the intention of following the monastic life. Saint Sheshoy questioned him:

"Did you possess any good in the world?"

"Father, I have absolutely nothing; my only good is a son whom I love with all my soul."

"Well! go back home then, throw your son in the river, and then return to become a monk."

That poor father, that new Father Abraham, went away, and was decided to obey the word of such a great servant of God. The latter left him till he was a little far away, in order to leave to him all the merit of obedience; then he sent to him one of his disciples who said to him:

"What are you going to do?"

"To throw my son in the water."

"But why?"

"The saint abbot ordered me to do that."

"Now, he orders you to do the contrary; I have run after you to tell you that."

The man from Thebes turned and came back toward Saint Sheshoy and had the joy of being admitted among the number of his disciples because of his perfect obedience.

Among the numerous miracles that had made him famous, the biographers of the Saint have preserved for us the miracle of the resurrection of a young man who had accompanied his father to the mount of Saint Anthony. The poor man had died on the way. With a faith that can stand any test, the brave man did not hesitate; he placed the corpse on his shoulders and ascended the mountain. He knocked at the door of the hermitage of the saint, placed the funereal burden on the ground and knelt down to receive the blessing of the man of God. Then he raised up and stepped aside without pronouncing a single word, leaving the soulless body of his son on the ground. The abbot, who ignored that he had a corpse before him, believed to be in the presence of a visitor who was thus prostrated out of respect. He then took his kindest tone and said to him:

"My son, raise up and go your way."

Immediately, the dead person, as compliant as a lamb, stood up and walked. The father of the young man, who was watching for the deeds and gestures of the Saint, when he saw the prodigy, stayed fixed in his place, out of stupor. Then he rushed into the hermitage, narrated his voyage in every small detail: the falling of his son, his death, and the confidence which God had placed in his heart that he will bring him back resuscitated. This narration saddened the humility of the happy abbot, who would not accomplish such a resounding miracle; but before the accomplished fact, he reconciled his profound modesty with the divine intervention, while beseeching his two visitors not to reveal anything about it before his own death.

He often inspired the esteem of his disciples with this beautiful virtue of humility. One of them who believed to have reached the ultimate degree of perfection, said to him one day:

"Father, I consider myself to be always in the holy presence of God."

The Saint replied:

"That is not enough, my son; it would be much more advantageous for you to consider yourself as being under all the creatures."

At the end of his life, he was compelled to retire to Clysma. Friendly visits comforted his last days. Saint Ammon of El Tor, Saint Pistus and other anchorites came to share his modest hermitage. It was there that he fell ill. One day while he was on bed, he heard some knocking on the door. Thinking well that it was the infernal enemy, he once more charged his disciple Father Abraham to go and shout to this diabolic visitor saying:

"On the mountain, or on a bed at Clysma, I am always Sheshoy, and I mock you."

Father Abraham ran to the door, and he found nobody.

Nevertheless, the hour of deliverance was coming to this good servant. He was weakened by all kinds of austerity. He was lying on a mat, and surrounded by a great number of brothers. Suddenly, his face lightened and became shining. Raising up himself a little, he exclaimed:

"Here comes the abbot Saint Anthony!"

Later on, the same splendor radiated his features, and he said:

"Here is the chorus of the prophets! Here are the apostles!" And he seemed to talk to splendid visions. Those who were surrounding him, questioned him saying:

"Father, with whom then are you talking?"

"With the angels; they have come to fetch me and I have asked them to leave me still on earth in order to repent."

"But, father, you need no more to repent."

"Truly saying, my children, it seems to me that I have not yet begun."

His face then became so dazzling that those who were present could not support the brilliancy. He said:

"Here is the Lord! He says to his ministers:

" Bring me the chosen receptacle of the desert."

While pronouncing these words, he gently fell back on the mat that he used as a bed, and rendered his last. He was 72 years old. It was the 4th of July 429.

Immediately after his death, a most sweet perfume filled all the place of his hermitage.

Saint Martyr Moritz (Maurice)

**Commander
of the Theban Legion of the Roman Army
of Emperor Maximian Herculius**

**Translated
By
Meleka Habib Youssef**

from
LES SAINTS D'EGYPTE

**Lectures édifiantes, instructives, agréables
Par Le R.P. Père Paul Cheneau, d'Orléans
Docteur en Droit canonique**

**Jerusalem
Couvent des RR.PP. Franciscains
Custodie de Terre-Sainte
1923**

Under the fair rule of the meek Constance-Chlore who was emperor for a year from 305 to 306, the Valais, which is today a Swiss canton in the upper valley of the river Rhone, was a dependency of the Gauls.

The region of the Gauls was the most important region of the Roman Empire. France, Belgium, Switzerland, and a part of Germany, are today in the lands of the ancient Gauls.

That region had nearly remained sheltered from the persecutive measures which were then taken against the Christians; with the exception of some old decrees which could have been re-established through the tyranny of the chief of a certain village, or the excessive zeal of a subordinate.

Diocletian was born in the year 245 in Dalmatia, near Salona, of an obscure family. He had accessed to the throne in the year 284, and thought it advisable on the third year of his reign, to join to himself his old colleague in the army, Maximian Herculus.

Maximian Herculus was the son of a peasant from the ancient region of Europe called Sirmium, which today is Hungary. He had been so much distinguished in the army by his courage, that having attracted the attention of the emperor Diocletian, the latter associated him to the empire, giving him the West, with Milan as residence.

He made him Caesar and sent him to the Gauls in order to fight against Amandus who had proclaimed himself emperor together with his colleague Aelianus in theyear 285. These two were behind the insurrection of the rebellious peasants that were named the Bagaudes.

The prefects who were mandated by Diocletian, exceeded in their barbarism all that could be imagined. The executioners teared the bodies of the victims with pieces of broken glass until every trace of skin had disappeared. Women were exposed, completely nude, being suspended by one foot in the air, having their heads down, during a whole day. Two trees that were distant apart, were forcibly brought near one another, then the victim was tied by one foot to each tree, and then the trees were left to return to their natural position; and the body would be divided and the entrails spread on the ground.

Maximian spent some months in the north of Italy in order to gather his troops, and then he crossed the Alps and set up his camp in Valais. A troop of numerous Egyptian soldiers, horsemen and infantrymen reinforced his army. These were valiant, hardened, and untiring men who were all originated from Egypt from the Thebaïd province of which they were the frontier guards. All of them were Christians, having fiery faith. They were firmly and in all loyalty, ready to serve the emperor, but they also were firmly decided not to sacrifice any of their beliefs. While they were in the army, they knew how to render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God.

So the troops were camping in the open country, in the valleys between the mountains. Some were in Octodure, an ancient capital city in Helevetia, which is today called Martigny; and the others at Agaune, which is today St. Maurice (St. Moritz) in Valais, Switzerland, four miles far from the lake Lemman, (or lake of Geneve). But the way was narrow and tough; because the river Rhone that runs like a fool amidst the steep rocks, hardly respected the small edge of the path that was followed by the traveller. Once this pass is crossed, the country opens wide enough amidst the dominating summits. There Agaune was established, and the soldiers set up their camp very near to the place.

Before the confrontation with the enemy, and according to a spread custom, Maximian ordered a general sacrifice in order to obtain for his troops the protection of the guardian gods, and also perhaps in order to get sure of the faithfulness of his men by making them take oaths. The Christian conscience could not oppose taking oaths, were it not for the accompanying idolatric prayers. Sacrificing to the idols is absolutely reprehensible by the Christian conscience.

Having the choice between Caesar's command and God's law, the Thebans did not hesitate for a moment, and refused to take part in a ceremony that hurt their conscience. In fact, this was counted as committing a serious transgression of discipline; it was immediately reported to the emperor, who became terribly angry; and swore to make the Theban regiment respect his decrees. To this end, he resorted to a punishment which the military Roman code had always provided, although it was exceptionally practised, that was decimation. So the Theban soldiers appeared before all the troops that have come for the occasion from Octodure (Martigny) and from others places. After balloting on their names, the tenth soldier was first beaten with sticks, and then beheaded.

Far from being terrorised by this bloody show, those who survived did not stop praying and exhort themselves to the great sacrifice. Their chiefs went from rank to rank in order to encourage those whom they considered as their children: Moritz (or Maurice) the chief commander, Exuper the instructor of the troops, and Candide the senator did not cease to excite them to confess their faith without fear, and to die, till the last one if that was needed, following the example of their comrades who had suffered martyrdom.

Being inspired by their leaders, they signed a letter, written by their commanders to the emperor; that was altogether a very clear, very firm and very courteous declaration of faith which admirably expressed the feelings of their souls. Here is nearly its content:

"Illustrious caesar, we sincerely declare that we are your soldiers, but we are at the same time the servants of God. We owe to you the service of the army; and to Him, the innocence of our hearts. We receive from you our daily salary, He will recompense us at the end of our lives. Illustrious emperor, we cannot obey any orders that are opposed to the cult which is solely due to God, our Creator, our master and your master too, whether you are willing or not. So long as your commands will not be contradictory to His law, we shall obey them in all faithfulness, as we have done till the present time. In the contrary case, we shall obey God rather than you. Do not be offended by that; because we have first been sworn to the King of heaven, before anything else. We are not rebelling; we have weapons and could have used them to sell our lives very expensively; we prefer to die while being innocent, rather than to live while being guilty. We are ready to endure whatever sufferings you order, we are Christians and we highly confess it."

After this reading, Maximian turned pale with anger; he considered this calm and loyal letter as an insult; he felt all the instincts of the human beast surging from the depth of his soul, and instantly commanded a second decimation of the Theban troops. The soldiers who were named, without boasting, fearlessly went forward towards the executioners, got rid of their weapons, threw their casks and their breastplates down on the ground; and then offered their backs to the sticks and their heads to the sword.

When the troops were assembled, while they were still under the spell of unspeakable emotion, and had already been diminished, they were again asked to sacrifice victims in honour of the protective gods during war. Not a single man went forward; and because of their unanimous rejection, Maximian, whose cruelty regarding the troops was legendary, ordered to execute them till the last one.

It was then an immense slaughter, a foolish hecatomb, a real butchery; corpses littered the valley of Agaune (St. Moritz) that was bathed in their blood.

After having finished their sinistral task, the executioners shared the belongings of the victims. That was a gratification which Rome granted to the executioners in order to keep their zeal and loyalty always awake. It is according to this law that the executioners at the Calvary, shared the clothes of our Lord Christ, and casted lots on his tunic. During the massacre of Agaune, it is well believable that the emperor and the superior officers had shut their eyes and left to the executioners all the equipment and the personal belongings of their victims. One can think of the joy of these human brutes, who were partly intoxicated by killing, when they saw the unhoped for fortune that had come to them. Therefore, they assembled to concert and finish that memorable day with an unprecedented carousing.

It is then that a veteran named Victor, who was travelling in the country, passed nearby them. As they were excited through drinking and good food, they invited him

The Saint Martyrs
PHILIP governor of Alexandria
&
EUGENIA his daughter
&
her comrades

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By
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from
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Philip was the governor of Alexandria at the time of the persecution of the Roman Emperor Gallus who was proclaimed emperor after the death of Decius in 251

AD. He was distinguished by his righteousness and the correctness of his manners. When he became convinced of the Christian religion, he resigned from his high magistracy and entered into the private life, in order to be able to abandon himself to the Christian practices, without compromising the dignity with which he was honoured. He had a blessed child called Eugenia, who was the ornament of his home, and later greatly illustrated his noble family.

Terentius was mandated from Rome to inherit the responsibilities of Philip. As he could not understand the reasons that motivated the resignation of his predecessor, (the position being so much elevated and advantageous!) he undertook a thorough enquiry, and observed the outgoings and incomings of the previous governor, noted his frequentations, spied upon the manner of his life, and soon acquired the conviction that he was one of the odious sect of the Christians, who were the cause of the misfortune that was then decimating the human race: at that time, a most deadly pestilence that had never happened in history, was raging; far from stopping the persecution, it stirred it up; because the pestilence was imputed to the Christians.

Terentius had several talks with Philip who, far from denying his conversion, made it a subject of glory and honour, and spoke so well and so loud, that his successor had the regret of reminding him of the terrible edicts of Decius that were still enforced. Now Philip knew what to reckon, it was either apostasy or martyrdom.

A person of such an elevated character as Philip, is not a two-faced man: he had given himself to Christ by baptism, and will remain faithful until death. In order to avoid any turmoil in the city, Terentius ordered that his throat be pierced with the sword, while he was praying in his own house in the district of Iseum, that corresponds to the northern part of the Nebi Daniel street; where he was buried. A beautiful church was built later at this place.

Eugenia was the daughter of the martyr Philip and Claudia. She accompanied her parents when they came to Egypt, as her father had been mandated from Rome to be the governor of Alexandria. They came with a numerous retinue, among whom there were two Egyptian young eunuch slaves, called Protus and Hyacinthus. These were distinguished by their spirit and their good manners. Their names and their beneficent roles will be mentioned many times in this story.

Eugenia took the advantage of her sojourn in Alexandria in order to frequent the famous Schools, as was then the fashion amidst young distinguished people. She was always accompanied by the two intelligent slaves. She honoured them by her trust, and they returned it by their tireless devotion.

All the three of them greatly profited by their studies, and were particularly attracted toward philosophy. In the light of this torch, the two young men quickly concluded at the unity of God and the vanity of the idolatric cult: that was their first step toward conversion; the society of good comrades made the rest.

Little by little the Christian truths filtered inside their spirits; and they reached the point of desiring baptism. The shrewd look of Eugenia did not fail to notice the happy change that was operated inside them. She pressed them with questions, and finally knew the motive. The respectful familiarity with which Protus and Hyacinthus dealt with her, urged them to confidence, and they told her about their saint desires. Eugenia whose spirit was opened to serious matters, let them expose the Christian mysteries to her, and soon she became stimulating them in their practice of virtues and in the thirst for the sacred baptism.

About this time, a son of a consul came to ask for her hand. As she was already a Christian in her heart, she felt herself ready to vow her virginity to God; and so she rejected this noble match.

At that time the conversion of a young girl of such a rank to Christianity represented many great difficulties; because one had to act in the utmost secret the violation of which exposed to terrible inconvenience: quarrels and discord inside the family, jail and death if the agents of the governor ever knew of the matter. In the case of Eugenia, the governor was her own father, who had a large spirit, was tolerant and honest, but in any case he was subject to the changing commands of the emperor.

They discussed at length the conduct they would follow inside this small group of young souls who were ready for everything. Nevertheless they wanted to avoid scandal at all price, and to this end, they had to be very careful not to arouse suspicion. They planned for an escape and convened with a saint priest who was leading a retired life in the company of some men who had given themselves entirely to God. Protus and Hyacinthus brought to Eugenia men clothes, and were decided to keep the matter secret. The daughter of the governor, under the masculine name of Eugene, bade farewell to the fatherly home and escaped together with the two slaves, who were her comrades in the studies and who were stimulated by her faith. The priest Helenus, greatly joyful, welcomed them, and prepared them to the favour which they solicited, and then he baptised them and admitted them to the service of God inside his small community.

Firstly, the parents did not worry very much about the absence of their child, considering the freedom which the young girls in the Roman world enjoyed at that time. But soon, they suspected some accident, and dreaded some catastrophe, and they alerted all their police in order to find out the mystery of this unaccountable disappearance. The search brought no result, as one would think. Nothing remained but to consult the oracles in the hope that the gods would answer. Philip sought for the most illustrious of the foretellers, and exposed to him his case, beseeching him to reveal to him the whereabouts of his daughter and the two eunuchs. The inspired man thought for a moment,

and then, with a radiant face, he exclaimed: "Your daughter and your slaves are counted in the number of gods."

Philip took this oracle as being an article of faith, and made them paint the image of the fugitives, in order to render to them his family cult.

After some time, a great lady of Alexandria felt a vivid affection in her heart for the young religious man who was so kind and whose face was so fresh. She entertained in herself a budding passion, and finally she became unrestrained to such a degree that she declared her love to him. Eugene rebuffed this unseemly matron, as was due. She was vividly hurt by the disdainful refusal of the pseudo young man; and the wretched woman reversed the roles, and, playing the role of Putiphar, went to the governor to complain against the incongruous man, of an immoral attempt upon her venerable person. Eugenia was summoned to appear before the court. She took with herself Protus and Hyacinthus and went to the tribunal where her own father was seated. The latter, who was not suspecting with whom he was dealing, reviled, blamed and threatened his disguised daughter. She bent under the thunderstorm, and let him discharge his heart and detonate, as it pleased him, against the pretended misdemeanour. When he finished his recriminations, she quietly opened her tunic in order to show her breast and reveal her sex; then while throwing her name to her bewildered father, she fell down at his knees which she kissed with tears, asking for his forgiveness for the pain which her escape could have caused to him, and said that she would explain the motives later.

Philip loved and respected his daughter too much to let himself indulge into scenes of reproach. The joy of seeing all his family being reconstituted, prevailed over all the other feelings. Protus and Hyacinthus found again the esteem and the trust with which they were surrounded a little time ago.

Nevertheless, Eugenia did not lose time after the first outpourings of her filial love. Her zeal made her esteem it too precious to be lost. She had to acknowledge to her father who was so good, the real motive of her departure, gently, cautiously, probing, and little by little. She graciously and eloquently did it with such regards, and with such a touching accent, that not even the least blaming word came out of the lips of her parents. They only asked her questions that gave evidence of the interest which they had in religious discussion. Soon, it was sympathy for the sect that had been till then abhorred, then admiration, then inclination, then formal desire, then the will to become Christians. Philip, his wife and all the house together received the grace of holy Baptism.

The governor of Alexandria quickly understood the difficulty of blending certain duties of his office with his new convictions; so, with a delicacy that honours him, and also in order to recover his entire freedom, he gave up his high office.

His resignation was accepted, and his successor soon took charge of the business.

This newly come, sniffing some queer motive for the retirement of his predecessor, the thing that was unheard of in the empire, discovered the proof of his christianity. Philip generously paid his head for his faithfulness to Christ.

The head of the family having disappeared, the sojourn in Egypt became unbearable to Claudia and her daughter; Alexandria reminded them of the horrible scene of the sufferings of their martyrdom. Who could then detain them there while their parents and friends seemed to call them to Rome, in order to comfort them and to sympathize with them in their great misfortune? So they put in order their business, and embarked together with their slaves towards the capital of the world.

When they arrived there, the town was in a peculiar excessive excitation. The emperor Valerian had just published his second edict against the Christians, in the year 258, still more aggravating the edict of the previous year, and replacing exile by the penalty of death, and taking off the freedom of gatherings and graveyards. The noble family that had just arrived on the day before, could have left the turmoil to pass, and quietly wait for better days, were it not for the active zeal which Eugenia and her servants could not restrain. Their outgoings and incomings became suspect; many conversions were ascribed to them; and soon the chief commissioner ordered their arrest. The fate of many saint martyrs awaited them.

Among those martyrs were:

S. Sixtus, pope of Rome from 257 to 258, who was arrested during the celebration of mass, while he was preaching, sitting on his chair; he was condemned to be beheaded on his own chair on the 6th of August 258.

S. Laurent, his deacon, who died while being roasted on a grill on weak fire.

S. doctor Hippolytus, who was very old. He died while he was tied to horses that tore him to pieces in their furious course, on the 13th of August 258.

The judge submitted the young girl to a long cross examination, trying by every possible means to snatch from her lips a word of retraction. Eugenia was unflinching in face of flattery and during torture. She was condemned to be thrown in the river Tiber with a stone tied to her neck. God assisted her: she miraculously floated on the water. When she was brought again before the tribunal, the judge locked her up inside a burning oven; she was preserved there without suffering the slightest discomfort. For the sake of peace, they left her to die of hunger; but after ten days of absolute fasting in a stinking dark jail, she reappeared shining with health. The tyrant ordered to cut off her head. She was executed, probably on the 25th of December 258. Her body was buried on the Latine road, in the graveyard of Apronian.

Protus and Hyacinthus shared her glorious fate; they were first cruelly flagellated; then they were burnt alive. They were buried in the graveyard of S. Hermes on the ancient Salaria road.

Authors to be consulted:

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to share their riot. The traveller simply turned away their invitation, either because he was in a hurry to arrive at the end of his voyage, or that the exalted condition of the soldiers left a bad impression on him. Briefly these people considered his refusal as an insult, laughed at his reasons, and took hold of him as they wanted to force him to revelry. Victor objected. As they could not understand his refusal to share their feast, and having nothing in mind but the Christians, they supposed that this individual was himself too one of the damned sect. They questioned him sharply. They had rightly guessed, Victor was a Christian; he admitted it, affirmed it, and highly confessed it amidst the whooping and the howling voices of the drunk soldiers. They hurled themselves upon him and killed him like a vulgar Theban. This veteran of the army of the empire shared the destiny of his comrades in the active service, and entered with them to the triumphant legions of paradise.

The greatest part of the corpses were thrown in the Rhone river and were taken away in its rapid course. The relics of saint Moritz were deposited by the Rhone on the shore at Vienna where they were honoured in great pomp.

Saint Makarius of Alexandria
 The Great Saint Makarius
 Saint Marina the Nun
 Saint Martyr Abba Ary Elshatanoufy
 Saint Martyr Bishop Bissora
 Saint Martyr Dydimus
 Saint Martyr Epeema
 Saint Martyr Eudocia
 Saint Martyr Makarius
 Saint martyr Sarabamun
 Saint Matta el Maskin
 Egyptian Saint Mariam & the Priest Abba Zossima
 Penitant Saint Mariam
 Four Saints Gregorius
 Late Deacon Youssef Habib
 Late Father Bishoy Kamel
 Saint Penitant Amba Yaacoub
 Saint Repentant Women
 Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite
 Extracts from Sermons of Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite
 Saint Simeon the Stylist
 Saint Takla Haymanout
 Saint Theodora of Alexandria (Abuna Tadros)
 Saint Wissa
 Saint Zenon
 Saints Martyrs Pirouo & Athum
 Saints Martyrs Abadir & Irai his Sister
 Saints Martyrs Abakir & Youhanna
 Saints Martyrs Barbara & Juliana
 Saints Bishoy & Boula Eltamouhy
 Saints Martyrs Philemon & the Governor Arianus
 Saints Martyrs Cosman & Demian
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 Saints Petronius & Horsissius
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 The Hidden Treasure
 The Holy Family in Egypt
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 Preparation to Communion
 On Confession

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 Letter to the emperor
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 H.H. Amba Shenouda, master
 Saint Arsenius
 Saint Amun
 Saint Bemuah, the Priest of Nitria
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 Saint Theodora
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 The Teachings of Saint Abba Daniel
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 Farewell O Abba Kirillos
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Saint Severus, patriarch of Antioch
 The Tears of Repentance, by the Syrian Saint Ephrem
 The Psalm of Repentance

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The Risen Christ
 The Healing of the lame
 Fasting
 The Holy Virgin Saint Mary
 Saint Martyr Barlaha
 The Baptistery
 The Two Dirhem tax
 Who is Greater
 The Sinner Woman
 Saints Sergius & Bacchus
 Saint Drosis
 The Nativity
 The Scribes & Pharisees
 Saint Tekla, 1st Martyr
 Entertainment Places
 The Ascension
 The Good Samaritan
 Give to Caesar
 Saint Athanassius
 Cana of Galilea
 Enthronement Day
 Blessed are the Merciful
 Saints Bassilius & Gregorius
 Behold! ... My Elect One
 Lent
 Catechism