

Turning Over a New Leaf: Evangelical Missions and the Orthodox Churches of the Middle East

(Third Edition)



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Preface to the 1992 Edition

For several years during the late 1980's workers from several missions explored the possibility for cooperation between evangelical¹ mission organizations and Middle Eastern Orthodox Churches. This, our final report, represents the first broad-based analysis of this issue by field missionaries since Protestant missions entered the region 150 years ago.

We feel the time is ripe to reconsider this question in detail. From one perspective it seems quite inappropriate to try to encourage Protestant mission cooperation with Orthodox Churches. After all, the first attempts to do so in the 1800's resulted in a great deal of bitterness and misunderstanding on both sides as Protestant communions emerged from Orthodox Churches. Since then, over the last 100 years, Protestant mission work has largely avoided associating with these ancient Churches.

But the situation now seems to be changing. In the last few years, evangelical mission agencies have begun to meet with representatives from Orthodox and Catholic Churches to promote understanding and respect for one another, with positive results. With the educational resources they produce, evangelical missions, both denominational and non-denominational, are also showing increased sensitivity to all the Churches of the region. And individuals have actually begun to work successfully and non-threateningly with Orthodox and Catholic servants. Another factor to keep in mind is the mutual understanding that is building amongst the Churches of the Middle East, suggesting a new era of greater inter-Church cooperation. How will evangelical mission agencies respond as the indigenous Protestant Churches develop relationships with the other Middle Eastern Churches?

Another factor also makes this era different from that of a 150 years ago. Today, the Churches of the Middle East are increasingly being touched by a spiritual renewal that has been slowly building for decades. Even the well-known and erudite Orthodox historian Atiya Aziz has acknowledged that this spiritual renewal movement began largely in reaction to the challenge of Protestant missionary work in the last century. Will the evangelical missionary of today be able to recognize, value and relate to this *Orthodox* spiritual renewal movement which their forebears helped to create?

As the Orthodox renewal movement deepens, it may also cause a crisis of identity for Protestants in the Middle East. The Middle Eastern Protestant Church found its identity in the attitudes of the first Protestant missionaries, who emphasized the shortcomings of the Orthodox Churches. Yet, as the Orthodox Churches now are experiencing renewal, Protestant identity can no longer be based as a reaction to the negatives seen in others.

¹ We use the term "evangelical" to refer to Protestants who believe in the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Atonement and who believe in the task of evangelizing others to have faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. This is in contrast to other Protestants who may not necessarily believe in or emphasize these things. In the Middle East, the word "evangelical" often refers to Protestantism in general.

What is needed in the Middle East, and indeed around the world, is for the Protestant Church to build a new self-identity, which is self-confident in itself — not merely reactionary — and which feels that Protestant worship is important and valid even while acknowledging that God can be working within Orthodoxy and Catholicism.

This is not the time for the Protestants of the Middle East to continue to believe that Orthodoxy is wholly evil, nor is it time for them to give way to self-doubt. Rather, it is a time for acknowledging and respecting the renewal that is beginning to come to the Orthodox. It is the responsibility of evangelical mission agencies to recognize where we are in the cycle of renewal and to respond accordingly. Protestant missionaries helped to set the forces of renewal in motion. Accordingly, we suggest that the last stage in the cycle of renewal in the Middle East, begun in the 19th century, will be an increasing cooperation in worship and in mission together amongst the Churches of the region. evangelical mission organizations can play a role in fostering this.

In order for this cooperation to develop, the Christians of the Middle East must deepen their understanding of the processes of spiritual renewal. Evangelicals are largely ignorant of how Orthodox people grow in the faith. Yet, Orthodoxy has several notable renewal leaders, such as St. John Chrysostom and Simeon the New Theologian, who brought genuine spiritual renewal to their generation, but who were not evangelical Protestants. The lack of understanding among evangelicals in how spiritual renewal operates within Orthodox and Catholic Churches limits their ability to cooperate with those circles.

Similarly, the Orthodox reaction can be so strong against Protestants, whom they can regard as being little more than evil sectarians, that they automatically consider anything done by Protestants as "non-orthodox" and therefore to be rejected. This is unfortunate. The evangelical wing of the Protestant Church, in particular, has become an highly effective church renewal and mission movement. Around the world, evangelical missionaries are translating the Bible among tribal peoples, providing sophisticated assistance in development projects, and producing major biblical resources for the church around the world. A vast amount of knowledge and technique has been acquired, which is there to be shared with the Churches of the Middle East.

In writing we could not escape the fact that much of evangelical Protestantism still has forebodings about anything ecumenical. It is our belief that the next major development to take place within the evangelical Protestant movement will be a deepening awareness of God's whole church around the world. We encourage the reader to consider the implications of this in his or her own life.

We are not subtly trying to promote Protestantism within Orthodox Churches, nor to promote Orthodoxy among Protestants. Rather, our concern arises out of a very simple belief that Christ wishes to see his disciples praying for and cooperating with one another in their mission work. Such basic spiritual love and unity has always been one of the most powerful witnesses of the Church to the world (John 17:23).

The task group was composed primarily of members from three evangelical church service organizations: Interserve, Middle East Christian Outreach, and Ministry to Middle Eastern Christians. Those who gave us consultative advice but who did not sit directly on the task group include David Goodenough (Church Mission Society), Joyce Napper (MECO), Rev. Dr. Harold Voglaar (Reformed Church of America) and Rev. Dr. James

Walker (Church of Scotland), among others. Our appreciation is to them. We are especially grateful for the encouragement we received from Douglas Anderson of MECO and from Mike Roemmele and Jim Tebbe of Interserve, which led to the forming of this task group. The Middle East Council of Churches also graciously gave us permission to reproduce several of their articles for this report.

Of course, the views expressed in this report belong only to the authors and do not necessarily represent the thinking or the policies of any of the other people or agencies mentioned.

David Teague, editor
1992

Preface to the 2006 Edition

In the 19th century, the first Protestant missionaries to the Middle East decided to work apart from — and even against — the indigenous, Orthodox Churches of the region. Today, should evangelical mission agencies continue this strategy?

This was the question we raised in 1992. *Turning Over a New Leaf* was the first mission study to explore cooperation between evangelical mission agencies and the Orthodox Churches of the region. At the time, a number of reviewers called the book “historic” for its implications.

Now, some fifteen years later, with a new generation of mission personnel, the issue still remains relevant. *New Leaf* continues to issue a thoughtful challenge for evangelical Protestants to become more sensitive to the whole Christian movement in the region.

Interserve and Middle East Media originally published *New Leaf* in 1992. We are grateful for the opportunity to issue this newly revised edition through *St. Francis Magazine*.

The original writers were Joyce Napper, Hugh Baird, William E. Schwartz, David Teague and Alistair T. Wynne. Joyce retired in the early 1990’s after a lifetime of service in the Middle East. Hugh Baird served the poor in a garbage collector’s village near Cairo under the auspices of a Coptic Orthodox priest. William E. Schwartz was an assistant for the Anglican Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf and he resided in the Middle East for 25 years. David Teague taught in the Coptic Orthodox Seminary in Cairo and produced theological resources. Alistair T. Wynne continues to be the pastor of an international church in Cyprus.

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INTRODUCING MIDDLE EASTERN CHRISTIANITY

- 1. The Evangelical Missionary and Middle Eastern Christianity**
- 2. Who are the Christians of the Middle East?**

1. The Evangelical Missionary and Middle Eastern Christianity

William E. Schwartz, Alistair T. Wynne, David Teague

Many of the missionaries who first come to the Middle East think of the region only in terms of the religion of Islam or the nation of Israel. But surprisingly, fifteen to sixteen million indigenous people in the Middle East call themselves Christian. Although many of these Christians have only a nominal faith, the number includes many true believers. In this introductory chapter we would like to help evangelical mission personnel and supporters to understand some of the concerns of Middle Eastern Christianity, and to suggest ways in which we can cooperate with and strengthen these struggling Christians in their life and witness.

Christianity has three major divisions - Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox. In the Middle East, Christianity is predominantly Orthodox. In fact, 81% of Middle Eastern Christians are Orthodox while another 14% are Catholic. The Protestants number around 3-4%. The Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt alone has a membership of perhaps ten or twelve million, no one knows for sure. A total of 91% of the Christians of Egypt belong to this one Church.

Historically, the Protestant Churches in the Middle East began in the last century with the arrival of Presbyterian, Congregational and Anglican missionaries. This earlier missionary effort has now been largely nationalized. However, today we are seeing a second influx of missionaries, largely from the evangelical wing of the Protestant Church.

This new missionary movement has yet to fully think through its relationship, and its effects upon, the indigenous Christian population. This major omission deeply concerns many indigenous Church leaders and is now in the process of being addressed by some of the evangelical missions.

The Middle Eastern region is also experiencing another major trend. Spiritual renewal has been progressively touching many Middle Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Christians. The first Protestant missionaries prayed and labored for the awakening of the "ancient" Churches of the Middle East, and now this seems to be happening. There is a new hunger for and learning about the Bible, and Christ is real in many lives. But this also leaves us with a problem: western evangelicalism has little previous experience in working with Orthodox and Catholics. We are finding ourselves largely ignorant of and unable to work with a renewal movement which could significantly increase the Christian witness found in the Middle East.

Many evangelicals presume that the ancient Churches of the Middle East are dead and not worth their attention. Yet it is vitally important for mission personnel to begin to carefully listen to the concerns, fears and struggles of the Churches that have been here for centuries and even millenia. There is a great deal happening and a great deal that could happen within these Churches which is of vital importance. To make the most effective contribution, evangelical missionaries must begin to discern and support the needs of the whole Christian witness in the Middle East. We would like to address three

major issues in the Middle East today and their relationship to the evangelical mission worker.

I. COOPERATION

Cooperation may be one of the most important keys for the long-term development of Christian renewal and witness in the Middle East. Evangelical missions, often dismissive of the Orthodox Churches in the region, must remember once again the vast missionary potential within Orthodoxy. After all, it was not Protestant missionaries but the Orthodox Church which confronted and overcame the entrenched paganism of Rome and Egypt and converted many of the peasants of Russia. The present spiritual renewal movement growing within Middle Eastern Christianity may develop into a most significant vehicle for witness.

We should recall that the first Protestant missionaries to the Middle East originally did not seek to set up their own denominations. Instead, they sought to encourage renewal within the Orthodox Churches in a climate of cooperation. Unfortunately, in addition to preaching Christ, many of the early missionaries attacked secondary matters. This was a major reason why separate Protestant Churches were eventually established. But these Churches, as well as the missionaries of today, should still remember the original ideal of cooperation.

Of course, theological differences between evangelical Protestants and Orthodox do exist. But it is also true that Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism have full agreement on the essentials of the Gospel: the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. In fact, many evangelicals recite the Nicene Creed, written by the Orthodox Church. As evangelicals, the writers of this report have personally encountered many genuine, deeply spiritual believers among the Orthodox. We have also learned the importance of focusing on the essentials of the Faith, rather than on secondary matters (Romans 14:1-15:12).

Evangelical mission groups can do much to develop positive relationships with Orthodox Churches in the Middle East.² As a beginning, small-scale projects of cooperative assistance could be explored. There has already been one notable example of cooperation toward renewal. Over the last decade a number of evangelical missionaries from different organizations have quietly assisted an Orthodox priest with a desperately needy flock. With the priest's full permission several workers have helped to conduct a children's camp. Others have set up and cooperated in a vocational training shop. One woman worker trains Sunday school teachers. This cooperative effort has experienced some problems, but for the most part it has worked well and has produced some very encouraging results.

2. THE CONTINUATION OF A CHRISTIAN PRESENCE

Although Christianity has existed in the Middle East since the time of Christ, today several trends are working against the continuation of a Christian presence. Obviously

² Although we briefly mention the different Catholic Churches, our primary focus concerns the relationship between evangelical mission agencies and the region's Orthodox Churches.

this situation will have a direct impact on the long-term capability of the Church to witness in the region.

Emigration is a most pressing problem for Middle Eastern Churches. Difficult economic conditions in some countries, the threat of military conflict in others, and the worry of growing Islamic fundamentalism all combine to encourage the emigrations of a high percentage of Christians. Although emigration began in the latter half of the last century, since 1950 it has reached unprecedented levels. Since only the educated and economically able are qualified to emigrate, this has cut into the economic base of the Christian community and drained the Church of many of her best leaders and thinkers. Needless to say, the total Christian voice in society has become that much more diminished. Some Christian communities have lost virtually their entire flock. We can only imagine what witness the Church in the Middle East might have had today if there had been no emigration.

Not only have large numbers left, but the remaining Christians are struggling to maintain a participatory role in their own national cultures. Their place is threatened by some of the more radical Muslims, who are saying that a truly Arab society can only be Islamic. This is part of the Islamic fundamentalist attempt to restrict the role of Christians in society in general. In practical terms, this may mean limited employment and advancement opportunities, and a markedly reduced chance of making important contributions to society, such as participating in government.

Any process of de-population and de-culturalization, especially one so rapid, has vast implications for the future life and witness of the Church. This is why many church leaders consider the problem of maintaining a Christian presence to be their most important concern. Middle Eastern Christians have no other choice but to continue to strive for a place in their own society. The alternative is isolationism, or "marginalization", as some call it.

We see this whole issue having two major implications for evangelical missionary work.

First, as we serve, what cultural effect are we having on the people we serve? Are we inadvertently encouraging Middle Eastern Christians to identify with foreigners? Does this identification encourage emigration? If we train people in western institutions, do they return to function in their original culture? Do we subtly impose our own values and methods and vision?

Secondly, we must understand the need for Middle Eastern Christians to develop a positive social approach toward their neighbours, including Muslims. We should preserve our concern to promote an evangelical vision, but we should also remember that the Middle Eastern Christian must have a culturally accepted place in his or her own society. A leading Egyptian pastor, a man of keen mission interests, has contributed to an Islamic relief society. Although this may raise some eyebrows, it must be said that he has scores of Muslim friends, and over fifty Muslims, out of their esteem for him, attended his ordination. Again, one indigenous Christian agency has regularly invited Muslims to a breakfast. This helped to defuse a potentially difficult situation because these Muslims had been very jealous of the Western money the agency had been receiving. Can we understand these dynamics?

3. RENEWAL AND WITNESS

Any theology of spiritual renewal must include at least the following emphases: Service, Worship, Fellowship, Education, Salvation and Mission.

Evangelicals tend to understand renewal theology primarily in terms of salvation and mission. But to cooperate with Middle Eastern Churches, a more developed understanding of renewal is needed, one that also involves service, worship, fellowship and education.

Service

The relief of human need for the glory of God is a very important mode of witness for Orthodox Christians, who feel the word of the Gospel must be demonstrated through deeds. In many places in the Middle East, it is the only type of witness possible.

Evangelical mission organizations, as support organizations, have a long history of working in cooperation with the service organizations of Churches around the world. Similarly, evangelicals might work within individual congregations to encourage social service. Care must be taken, however, to foster but never to replace indigenous initiatives.

Worship

Orthodox life and theology centers on worship. Yet, the Orthodox form of worship, complete with incense and chanting, differs greatly from the form to which most evangelicals are accustomed. External differences aside, if evangelicals wish to understand and perhaps encourage the process of renewal, we must begin by looking beyond differences in form to discern the presence of Christ in Orthodox worship. We must use the same cross-cultural skills to understand the Orthodox as we would use to understand any other cultural sub-group. This is the approach we use in the section titled "Understanding Orthodox Worship."

Fellowship

When renewal occurs, it causes communion to take place between Christians from diverse backgrounds. Evangelical Protestants tend to think of this fellowship as something involving individuals alone, not Churches. However, in the Middle East, where most Churches have a bishopric form of government, fellowship between heads of Churches is very important. Evangelical missionaries in the Middle East must be aware of the positive dimensions of the inter-communal Christian fellowship occurring. Those of us who wish to seriously understand and aid Middle Eastern Christianity must see a place for formal ecumenical activities.

Education

Christian education, in the sense of the discipling of others, is another important tool for renewal in Middle Eastern Churches. Orthodox Sunday School and Bible Study movements are vivifying the faith of many. To assist in this process of renewal through education, evangelicals have already been producing literature and videos. But these resources increasingly need to be developed and distributed in a way that would be acceptable and useful to the Orthodox Churches of the region. Increasingly, this appears to be happening.

Salvation and Mission

Many evangelicals think that a witness is either a personal testimony based on a personal experience of God or a presentation in which evidence is presented about Christ. In the Middle East, this type of witnessing is often difficult to do, especially in areas dominated by radicals.

Furthermore, many evangelicals conceive of witness as something primarily done by the individual. But in the Middle East, witness is often considered to be a communal function. Evangelical mission personnel must come to understand how such a communal witness works. Instead of asking, "Why are not these Churches doing what we're doing?" we must ask, "How can we help these Churches to deepen the witness they already have?"

The Orthodox Churches have a rich history of a discipleship witness, which occurs when one's personal conviction becomes known through the life one leads - either in deeds of mercy, or in suffering unjustly for the Kingdom. For example, many Copts in Egypt refuse to renounce their Christianity even though it could bring them financial benefits and even personal safety.

Cooperating with a communal mission includes acknowledging the value and power of a discipleship witness, even while lovingly encouraging individuals about the power of a verbal witness.

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Middle East Council of Churches

The Four "Church Families" in the Middle East Today

Today the Churches of the Middle East can be grouped into four families of Churches representing about 15 -16 million Christians. (Millions more have emigrated to Europe, North America and Australia). The concept of a "family of Churches" has been, since 1974, the basis of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) membership. The term is used to indicate those Churches in the region which have a common ecclesiastical tradition and are in communion with one another.

The first, and largest, of these families is the Oriental Orthodox Churches, composed of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt, the Armenian Apostolic Church of Cilicia, whose faithful live in various Middle Eastern countries, and the Syrian Orthodox Church. Each of these Churches is in communion with each other and they are also *autocephalous*, a word which means that they govern themselves fully.

The second family of Churches is the Eastern Orthodox Churches, often referred to as Greek Orthodox. They constitute four self-governing, autocephalous Churches, united in faith, liturgy and canon law. They are, therefore, in full communion with each other and with other Churches belonging to the same family, such as the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul (the first among equals), Russia and other countries of Eastern Europe.

The third family comprises the Catholic Churches of the Middle East. These Churches all accept the supreme ecclesiastical authority of the Pope and the doctrine of the Catholic Church. But only a small percentage of them are Roman, or Latin-Catholic. Most of them can be grouped together as the Eastern-rite Catholic Churches - the word "rite" denoting their forms of liturgy and canon law, which differ from the western Latin rite of the Roman Catholics. The largest of these Churches is the Maronite Church in Lebanon.

The fourth family comprises the Anglican and Protestant Churches. Like the Eastern-rite Catholic Churches (except the Maronite Church), these Churches came into being as a result of western missionary activity in the Middle East. Whereas the Eastern-rite Catholic Churches mostly go back several centuries, this family of Churches dates in the Middle East from as recently as the 19th century.

An old Church, not belonging to any of the four families, is the Assyrian Church of the East, sometimes identified by its historical tradition as the Church of the "East Syrians" or the Church of Persia. It exists in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon and could also be considered a fifth "family," although it is composed of only one Church.

These 12-14 million Christians constitute a minority of the total population of the Middle East (about 10%), the great majority of whom are Muslim. But the quality of their living

traditions is not to be measured in terms of their numbers, nor is their significance to be belittled.

I. THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES (non- Chalcedonian)

The greatest number of Christians in the Middle East belong to the Churches of the Oriental Orthodox family. The largest of these is the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt. The others are: The Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicosate of Cilicia, seated in the Lebanese coastal town of Antelias, north of Beirut, and the Syrian Orthodox Church, seated in Damascus.

Ethnically and culturally these three Churches are in many ways different. The Armenian Church traces its origins to the missionary Apostles Thaddaeus and Bartholomew. It has since remained in the heart of the Armenian national identity.

The Copts trace their descent from the Pharoanic Egyptians. Their conversion to Christianity began with the North African preaching of St. Mark, whom they recognize as the first Patriarch of Alexandria. But it took three centuries of persecution before the Coptic Church established itself in Egypt. Desert monasticism, following the rules of St. Anthony and St. Pachomeus, attracted many other Christians to visit Egypt. Their missionary activity in Africa led to the Christianization of much of Nubia, the Sudan and Ethiopia.

The Syrian Orthodox Christians were for some time called "Western Syrians" and thus differentiated from the Assyrians. Under Arab rule, especially in Abassaid times, they played a significant role in the cultural and scientific progress.

Notwithstanding such differences, however, these three Oriental Orthodox Churches have in the early centuries struggled to uphold their communities' interest against the imperial presence of the Byzantine and the Persian Empires. With the rise of the Islamic Empire in the seventh century A.D. they fell under a new form of religio-political power. The Muslim rulers treated the Christians as a single group, irrespective of the doctrinal differences between the Assyrian, Oriental and Byzantine Orthodox Churches (Eastern Orthodox). The state also benefited from their knowledge and professional skills.

This situation was imperiled, however, by the intrusion of the Western Christian Crusaders from the 11th to the 13th centuries and led to periodic persecution and social marginalization of all the Eastern Christians as the Mongol dynasties seized control of the Caliphate. From the 14th to the early 20th centuries, therefore, the Eastern Churches lived as "closed communities", isolated within Islamic society and cut off from the Church in the West.

The breach between these Churches and the Byzantine family of Churches occurred in 451 A.D. at the Council of Chalcedon, and thus they accept the authority of only the first three ecumenical councils.

For many centuries the non-Chalcedonian Churches lived more or less in isolation from the rest of Christendom and, for political and geographical reasons, even from one another. However, for the first time since the sixth century they held a conference of the Heads of Oriental Orthodox Churches in Addis Adaba in 1965. Since then they have

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drawn closer together in fellowship and joint planning and achieved a formal reconciliation with the "Chalcedonian" Eastern Orthodox family of Churches. These Churches are also active members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC).

The Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia

The Armenian Apostolic Church, known also as the Armenian Orthodox Church, has an ethnic, cultural and historical background distinct from the Churches referred to in this chapter.

Diaspora has been a permanent aspect of Armenian history. Since the dawn of their history, the Armenians, for one reason or another, have emigrated. However, forced and massive emigration began only in the tenth century, with the successive occupation of Armenia by Byzantines, Seljuk Turks, Persians, Ottomans and Russians. Deportation and migration continued in succeeding centuries. But none of the mass deportations of earlier years equalled those that took place in the period 1915-1922. Over one and a half million Armenians were massacred in Turkey and the rest deported to the Syrian deserts. At present they are about two million in number and can be found almost anywhere on the globe, mostly in Middle Eastern countries, the USA and Canada, South America, southern and western Europe and Australia.

The Church in diaspora has three centers: (1) The Catholicosate of Cilicia, re-established and reorganized in Antelias, Lebanon in 1930. With its diocesan administrative organizations, theological seminary and world-wide ecumenical relations, it is the *de facto* spiritual center of the Armenian diaspora. It also plays a significant role in the cultural, social and political life of the nation. Its jurisdiction now covers Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Greece and half of the Armenian communities in North America. (2) The Patriarchate of Constantinople; and, (3), the Patriarchate of Jerusalem are related to the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin, in the Republic of Armenia.

Today the Armenian Church in diaspora finds itself in a very different context and thus faces various problems and challenges. It is truly a scattered Church. Nevertheless, neither resistance nor struggle for survival have been the only or most salient exteriorization of their faith. Rather it is creative activity and constant dynamism that have been its hallmark. This creativity has given birth to outstanding architectural expressions, to beautiful miniatures in the thousands of manuscripts which have marked almost the entire literary inheritance of the classical language from the fifth to the ninth centuries, to ecclesiastical ceremonies and sacred music of impressive and elevating impact on the human soul.

All over the world, sign of renewal have been emerging in the Armenian Church. Translation and dissemination of the Bible, Christian education through courses for the youth and adults, and popular publications, emphasis on local leadership, both clerical and lay, care of children of broken families, homes for the aged, and housing projects for the needy - all those figure among the concerns and activities of the Church.

The Armenian Apostolic Church in Lebanon is a strong community of over 150,000 members who are now fully integrated into the Lebanese society. The school of theology

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at Bikfaya, founded in 1930, provides new clergy and also furnishes priests to serve the diaspora communities falling under its jurisdiction.

The Armenian Orthodox are the third largest Christian community in Syria, after the Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches.

The Armenian Apostolic Church is the largest Christian community in Iran.

The Armenian Church has around 3,500 members in Cyprus. Armenians have lived in the island since the eleventh century. The Armenian Apostolic Church in Kuwait and the Emirates has about 12,000 members. Large communities of Armenians live in Europe (in France there are over 350,000 members), in the USA and Canada with over 600,000.

Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, Antelias, Lebanon
H.H. Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia
<http://www.cathcil.org/>

The Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople

The Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople with its See at Istanbul, Turkey, is dependent on the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin. The faithful (around 80,000) are concentrated in Istanbul, where 35 of the Patriarchate's parishes are located. The Patriarchate was recognized in 1461 by the Ottoman authorities as the sole legal representative of all Armenians in the Empire including those within the jurisdiction of the Cilician Catholicosate.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople
H. B. Mesrob II, Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul and All Turkey
<http://www.lraper.org/main.aspx>

The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem

This Church is the largest among the four Oriental Orthodox Churches in Palestine: Armenian, Coptic, Syrian, Ethiopian. Spiritually, the patriarchate depends on the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin. A very good relationship exists with the Catholicosate of Cilicia. The Patriarchate occupies the entire summit of Mt. Zion. Between 1950 and 1973 almost 90% of the members of this Church emigrated, leaving less than 1,500 today. The related Church in Amman, Jordan, has 1,500 members.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem
H.B. Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem
<http://www.armenian-patriarchate.org/>

The Coptic Orthodox Church

The Copts are the native Christians of Egypt and the direct descendants of the ancient Egyptians. Eusebius (died c. 359) records the tradition that the Church in Egypt was founded by St. Mark in A.D. 50 and Alexandria ranked with Antioch as one of the chief sees of the early Church.

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One of the contributions of this Church have been the monastic orders. The early and fertile ground of the outreach of Christianity in Egypt also produced great theologians. There the Holy Scriptures - clad in Hebrew through divine revelation - merged with human intellectual wisdom imbued with Greek philosophy and categories of thought. Egypt, as already mentioned, became the first and foremost center of monastic life. Monastic life blossomed and up to this day continues to play an important role in Coptic life. All bishops are former monks. The laity is influenced by monasticism too.

The Coptic Church is the largest Christian community in the Middle East, where it numbers around 9 million faithful. There are some 45 dioceses in Egypt, Africa, Middle East, Europe and the USA; 42 of these dioceses are in Egypt. In addition Coptic churches exist in Kuwait, Jordan, Jerusalem, Lebanon and Iraq. Jerusalem has an archdiocese (established in the 9th century) with two congregations in Jaffa and Nazareth. The churches in the other countries are under the direct jurisdiction of the Patriarchate. More than 60 congregations in the USA and in Canada are formed mainly from Egyptian emigrates. Other parishes were founded in London, Paris, Vienna, Geneva and Frankfurt.

The Coptic Church has begun many new educational programs. Since the mid 19th century primary, secondary and technical schools have been established, some by the Patriarchate and others by diocesan bishops. Church schools are offering courses in catechism, while the Coptic Orthodox seminary in Abbasiya, Cairo, opened its doors in 1893. Other seminaries were founded during the last ten years, and there are now several branches in Minia, Assiut, Tanta and Manufiyah with several hundred students. In 1972, Pope Shenouda III (enthroned in 1971) reestablished a branch of the theological seminary in Alexandria. The Institute of Higher Coptic Studies was founded in 1954 and has become an important center for the study of Coptic language, literature, art and liturgy.

Copts actively participate in the life of the Church. Parish church councils and benevolent societies, under diocesan authorities, meet the pastoral and social needs of the community. The Patriarchate has also created a Bishopric of Social Services. Other bishoprics, such as that of Youth, initiate and/or coordinate various aspects of the expanding pastoral and educational activity. The dynamism of church life embraces also the family which is impregnated with intense spirituality.

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria

H.H. Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch.

<http://www.copticpope.org/>

The Syrian Orthodox Church

This Church has its center in the Patriarchate of Antioch (at present in Damascus, Syria) and counts about 160,000 believers. It is a Church which has contributed much to the blossoming of early Christian literature and to the treasure of theological thinking, spreading Christianity from the Byzantine Empire to the regions of the Far East.

During and after the Mongol invasions of the 14th century, the Church suffered greatly. At the end of the 18th century its strength was further reduced due to the establishment of a separate Uniate Syrian Patriarchate (Syrian Catholics). At the turn of the present century (1915-1920) the Church was affected by Turkish and Kurdish persecutions and

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in the 1970's by mass emigrations. The see of the Patriarchate, after many moves over the centuries, was finally established in Damascus, Syria, in 1954.

With its capacity to endure difficulties and persecutions, today the Syrian Orthodox Church in Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Turkey shows signs of new vitality. New schools have been opened, churches built, homes for the elderly founded. Renaissance is specially obvious in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. In Sunday Schools, the Syriac language is taught. It is also the liturgical language.

In Damascus, Syria, there is a theological seminary which is developing steadily, after having been in Lebanon for several years. The monasteries form an integral part of the Church's spiritual heritage. In Iraq, the oldest Christian monastery is Mar Matta, near Mosul. In Turkey, the monastery of Mar Gabriel is a community center for residents of Tur Abdeen, and the surrounding 48 villages.

The Syrian Orthodox Catholicosate of the East is part of the wider Souryani community, based in Kerala State, India. They are also called Malabars and number more than one million faithful. A major schism occurred in this Church in the 19th century when the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar broke off. It has a membership of 350,000 faithful. The Syrian Orthodox Catholicosate of the East was reestablished in 1964, after being vacant for centuries. Twelve dioceses are under its jurisdiction. In the 1970's a jurisdictional division occurred in the Church. One branch continues to recognize the spiritual supremacy of the Patriarch of Ann'och in Damascus and another branch installed its independent Catholicos.

There are now twelve dioceses related directly to the Patriarchate, four in Syria, two in Iraq, two in Turkey, two in Lebanon, and one in Jordan. Syrian Orthodox dioceses are found today in Europe (Holland, Sweden), the USA and Canada, and two patriarchal vicarates are in Brazil and Argentina.

Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East
H.H. Mar Ignatius Zacca I Iwas, Patriarch
<http://sor.cua.edu/>

II. THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCHES (Byzantine, or Chalcedonian)

The Eastern Orthodox Patriarchates of Constantinople (now Istanbul), Alexandria, Antioch (now centered in Damascus) and Jerusalem belong to the Byzantine tradition of Orthodoxy which also includes eleven other autocephalous or self-governing Churches: Russia, Romania, Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Georgia, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Albania and Sinai. The names of most of the Eastern Orthodox Churches in the Middle East begin with the nomenclature "Greek Orthodox" because of reasons dating back to Ottoman times. The great majority of these people, with the exception of those in Cyprus, are Arab or Arabized.

To distinguish them from the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Eastern Orthodox are also called Byzantine Orthodox, by reference to their use of the Byzantine-rite of St. John Chrysostom; or Chalcedonian Orthodox, by reference to the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451. Eastern Orthodox Churches recognize the Patriarch of

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Constantinople as Ecumenical Patriarch. This is largely an honorary primacy of "first among equals" and quite different from the Roman Catholic concept of papal authority, because each of the Churches in this group is entirely self-governing (autocephalous).

Eastern Orthodox Churches recognize the authority of seven ecumenical councils: Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (553), Constantinople III (680), and Nicea II (787). The term "ecumenical" in its root meaning refers to "the inhabited world." As used with reference to those councils, the word denotes the Christian world of the fourth to the eighth centuries.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

The Patriarch counts in *Egypt* about 10,000 believers of Greek and Syro-Lebanese extraction divided into 4 dioceses (Alexandria, Tanta, Cairo and Port Said). There is also one in Sudan (Nubia), one in Ethiopia (Axum) and one in North Africa (including Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco). The Patriarchate has received new impetus from the establishment of new congregations in East and Central Africa. The faithful are, in the majority, black African, such as in East Africa. Dioceses (called also "Archbishopric of the Mission of the Patriarchate") have been organized in Johannesburg and Cape Town (South Africa) with 40,000 members, Harare (Zimbabwe) 10,000 members, Kinshasa (Zaire) 20,000 members, Nairobi (Kenya) 40,000 members.

The Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381) ranked the Patriarchate of Alexandria immediately after that of Constantinople.

In Alexandria, we find the Greek Orthodox Library, renowned for its 30,000 volumes and manuscripts, the oldest of which go back to the 9th century. It is considered one of the most important libraries for ecumenical studies and research.

Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa
H.B. Theodorus II, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa
<http://www.greekorthodox-alexandria.org/main.htm>

The Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch and All the East

The Patriarchate saw its birth in the town in which the believers were called, for the first time, "Christians." Antioch witnessed wars and political changes until the see was transferred to Damascus, when the Church witnessed a renaissance. The Church was affected by divisions occurring in the 18th century when the Greek-Melkite Church was founded.

For liturgy and prayers, the Antiochian Church uses the language of the land: Arabic. It counts the largest number of faithful rooted in the Arabic culture, although it does not fully overlap with the Arab World in its entirety.

Today it counts more than one million in the Middle East. Syria has six organized dioceses (Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Latakia, Houran) with a total of 800,000 faithful. Lebanon also has six dioceses (Beirut, Tripoli and Koura, Akkar, Zahle and Baalbeck, Tyre and Sidon) with a total of about 300,000 members. The dioceses of Iraq and Kuwait numbers 30,000 members. The Patriarchate extends to the Arab-speaking

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Orthodox who live in the USA, Canada, Latin America (Mexico, Chile, Brazil and Argentina), Australia, New Zealand and Western Europe.

The St. John of Damascus Theological Institute in Balamand, Lebanon, presently incorporated into the Church-sponsored Balamand University, is one of the main schools of theology in the Middle Eastern for the Eastern Orthodox.

In 1942 the Orthodox Youth Movement was founded. It injected new dynamism into the Church. From its ranks important lay and religious leaders have emerged.

This Patriarchate endeavors to regenerate the original unity of Middle Eastern Christianity. It is committed to Christian witness in the Arab world, through education, social services and the production of Christian literature in Arabic. A number of specialized institutions have been created recently to mobilize efforts and organize a variety of initiatives at local and diocesan levels.

Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
H.B. Ignatius IV, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
<http://www.antiochpat.org/>

Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem

The Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451) granted this Church the status of "independent Church" and ranked it fourth after Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch. It became known as the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. It has jurisdiction over Palestine and Jordan and counts some 250,000 Arab believers. Church services are held in Arabic and partly in Greek.

One of the most important concerns of this Patriarchate is the custodianship and care of the Holy Places since the early centuries, when a monastic brotherhood, "Spoudioi" was created whose main task was the guardianship of the Holy Places. In the middle ages after the Seljuk invasions, the Crusaders conquered Jerusalem, expelled the Greek Orthodox Patriarch and established a Latin Patriarchate. In 1177 ownership and control were returned to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.

The priests are educated in the seminary of the Patriarchate. It runs 36 elementary and secondary schools. There are three dioceses: Nazareth, Acco, Jordan and 3 exarchates: Athens, Cyprus and Istanbul.

Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem
H.B. Theofilos III, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Palestine
<http://www.jerusalem-patriarchate.org/en/home/homefr.htm>

Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus

"Those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch" (Acts 11:19). That was in 37 A.D. In 45 A.D., Paul and Barnabas, bringing Mark with them, landed at Salamis and crossed the island to Paphos where they converted the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus. Barnabas later became the first Bishop of Cyprus.

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The Church grew rapidly, and Bishops from Salamis, Paphos and Tremithus were present at the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325). The Church of Cyprus received autocephalous (self-governing) status at the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.) along with the Orthodox Patriarchates of Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Jerusalem.

During the Byzantine era, the Church suffered occasionally as a result of Arab raids. Then, during the period of the Crusades, while the island was under Frankish rulers, and later, under the Venetians, the Orthodox archbishop and bishops were replaced by Latin clergy. In 1571, Turkish rule began on the island and in 1572 the Turks expelled the Latin hierarchy and reinstated the Orthodox leadership in recognition of their help in the war against Venice.

While the situation of the Church of Cyprus improved somewhat, it continued to face difficulties under the Turks. In 1821, Archbishop Kyprianos, the bishops and 486 priests and lay Christians were executed in an act of reprisal against mainland Greek revolutionaries.

During the British period, Archbishop Makarios III was exiled to the Seychelles islands. Later, released from exile, he was still banned from Cyprus.

Approximately 80% or more of the Cypriot population is Byzantine Orthodox, and there is virtually no aspect of the island's history and society that have not been touched by the Church of Cyprus. For centuries it acted as a kind of department for social welfare, ministry of justice and ministry of education.

Following the 1974 invasion of Cyprus by Turkey, nearly 200,000 Greek Cypriots were forced to leave their homes in the occupied areas and become refugees. Their fate constitutes a primary concern of the Church. Two of its bishoprics, Kyrenia and Morphou, as well as Nicosia, seat of the Archbishop, are partially or wholly within the occupied territory.

Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus

H.B. Archbishop Chrysostomos, Archbishop of New Justiniana and all Cyprus
<http://www.churchofcyprus.org.cy/>

III. THE CATHOLIC CHURCHES

The Catholic Church of the Middle East is divided into seven branches of different ethnic and cultural origins. About one half of its faithful live in the Middle East and the rest in emigration.

Most Westerners use the term "Catholics" and "Roman Catholics" as synonyms, the first being no more than a quicker form of the second. But this is an incorrect usage, and from the point of view of Catholics in the Middle East it is misleading. "Catholic" is a comprehensive term for all Christians who accept the primacy of the Pope as head of the Church. "Roman Catholic" refers to those members of the Catholic Church who follow the "rite" - that is, the form of liturgy and canon law - of the Church of Rome. This is known as the Latin rite.

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But the Latin rite is not the only rite of the Catholic Church, which includes the Byzantine (or Melkite) rite, the Armenian rite, the Syriac rite, and the Coptic rite. These are the Eastern-Catholic rites of that family of Middle Eastern Churches which recognizes the sovereignty of the Pope and accept Catholic doctrine.

The oldest and largest of the Catholic group is the Maronite Patriarchate which affirms having preserved its union with Rome since the age of the ancient undivided Church. Certainly there is no Orthodox counterpart of the Maronites whereas the other five Eastern Catholic Churches all broke away from the Assyrian or the Oriental and Byzantine Orthodox Churches under the influence of Roman Catholic missions.

The earliest were the Chaldean Catholics who broke away from the Assyrian Patriarchate in 1522, to establish their own Catholic Patriarchate of Babylon in Baghdad. In 1622 the Syrian Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch emerged, with its center originally in Turkey, now in Beirut.

Then, in 1724, a similar break-away took place within the Greek Orthodox Patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria, resulting in the creation of the Greek (or Melkite) Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East, Alexandria and Jerusalem.

Later in that century, in 1773, the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate was created, with its center also in the Lebanon.

Lastly came the creation of the Coptic Catholic Patriarchate in Alexandria in 1824.

These Churches are in communion with the Church of Rome and are related to the Vatican through the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches. This is why sometimes they are called Uniate Churches.

The spirituality of the Catholic Churches is rooted, on the one hand, in the tradition of Eastern Christianity, yet they have acquired a Latinized character. These Churches, therefore, are a symbiosis of Oriental and Western traditions. At least since Vatican II many Eastern Catholic Churches see themselves as interpreters of the Oriental tradition in the Western world.

The number of theological and catechetical study centers for lay people within the Uniate Catholic Churches is increasing. Youth movements which, at the outset, responded to Western impulses but which at present have become integrated into the local churches, are an additional source of spirituality in the life of these Churches. There exist also in the region four Catholic universities, open also for students of other confessions: the University of St. Joseph in Beirut (Jesuit fathers, founded in 1875), the University of the Holy Spirit of Kaslik (Lebanese Maronite Order, founded in 1952) and Notre Dame University, all three located in Lebanon, and the University of Bethlehem in the West Bank.

Important signs of renewal can be observed in these Churches since some twenty years ago in the liturgical, pastoral and diaconical activities.

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The Maronite Patriarchate of Antioch

Maronites in Lebanon and Syria are more than 1,000,000. Those who have emigrated from the Middle East exceed 500,000. There are 12 dioceses in the Middle East (Aleppo, Latakia, Tripoli, Sarba, Kesrouan, Antelias, Beirut, Sidon, Tyre, Zahle, Cairo and Cyprus) and 4 patriarchal vicarates (Damascus, Jebel, Byblos and Batroun).

There are four minor seminaries in the Lebanon (Batroun, Ghazir, Ain Saade and Tripoli) and a Faculty of Theology at the University of the Holy Spirit at Kaslik, which is run by the Maronite Monastic Order. The Maronite liturgy is in Syriac and Arabic.

Maronite Patriarchate of Antioch
H.B. Patriarch Mar Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir
<http://www.bkerke.org.lb/>

The Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate of Babylon

Today the Chaldeans number 250,000 mainly living in Iraq, where they form the largest Christian community. They are organized in 10 dioceses in Iraq, Iran (15,000 members), Syria (7,000 members), and smaller communities in Egypt and the Lebanon.

The Chaldean liturgy is celebrated in the ancient Syriac language.

Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate of Babylon
H.B. Emmanuel III Delly , Patriarch of Babylon for the Chaldeans
<http://www.cnewa.org/ecc-bodypg.aspx?eccpageID=59&IndexView=toc>
<http://www.kaldu.org/index.htm>

The Syrian Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch

The Syrian Catholics have four dioceses in Syria and two in Iraq. Patriarchal vicarates are in Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and Turkey. There is a widely scattered diaspora in the Americas and elsewhere.

Liturgy is celebrated in the Syriac language with increasing use of Arabic in certain parts of the service. Syriac is still a spoken language, particularly in some solidly Christian villages and towns of eastern Syria and northern Iraq.

Syrian Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch
H.B. Patriarch Pierre VIII Abdel-Ahad

The Greek (Melkite) Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem

The members are Arabic speaking and the liturgy is celebrated in Arabic. The membership of the Greek Catholic Church is concentrated in the Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. There is a smaller community in Egypt and a few parishes are found in Turkey, Iraq and northern Sudan. Those who have emigrated (mainly to the Americas) have outnumbered the faithful presently living in the Middle East.

Greek Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem
H.B. Patriarch Gregory III
<http://www.pgc-lb.org/english/index.shtml> <http://www.melkite.org/>

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www.stfrancismagazine.info - www.interserve.org - www.arabvision.org

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The Armenian Catholic Patriarchate of Cilicia

In Syria, the Armenian Catholics form a strong minority of 12,000 members. Small Armenian Catholic communities exist in Turkey, Iraq, Egypt, Jerusalem, Jordan, Europe, North and South Americas.

Armenian Catholic Patriarchate of Cilicia
H.B. Nerses Bedros XIX

http://www.armeniancatholic.org/inside.php?lang=en&page_id=21

The Coptic Catholic Patriarchate of Alexandria

This Church now has some 200,000 members, by far the largest Catholic community in present-day Egypt. It also has a total of four dioceses: Alexandria, Minia, Assiut and Thebes (Luxor), more than 100 Coptic Catholic schools in both upper and lower Egypt, a hospital in Assiut, a number of medical dispensaries and clinics, and several orphanages.

Coptic Catholic Patriarchate of Alexandria
H.B. Antonios Naguib

The Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem

Latin-rite Catholics number about 100,000 with major centers in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beirut, Cairo, Aleppo, Haifa and Nazareth.

Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem
H.B. Michel Sabbah, Patriarch

<http://www.lpi.org/>

IV. THE EPISCOPAL AND PROTESTANT CHURCHES

The most recently established Churches in the Middle East come from the Western Protestant traditions and reflect a variety of denominations. Protestant (mainly Presbyterian and Reformed) and Episcopal Churches are now established in the region.

The 16th century reformation movement, which fragmented the Catholic Church in the West, did not have any significant impact upon the Eastern Churches before the early 19th century when Anglican, Presbyterian and other Protestant missionary societies began to be active in the region. These contributed much in the areas of education and social services but they appeared to have difficulty in appreciating and understanding the equally authentic traditions of the indigenous Churches. Consequently there was some transfer of members from the Assyrian, Oriental and Eastern Churches and to some degree from the Eastern-rite Catholic Churches.

Today the Protestant and Episcopal Churches represent some 3-4 % of the Christians in the Middle East. These Churches are characterized by diversity related to their varying cultural backgrounds, theological traditions, and historical reactions to their missionary agencies.

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The largest Protestant group comprises the Evangelical and Reformed Churches which grew up amongst the Armenians, Copts and Syrians and organized themselves in national synods. Most of the Baptist Churches are linked to the Southern Baptist Convention of the USA. The Anglicans come under the Episcopal Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. The main Lutheran Church is in Jordan. The process of independence from missionary societies, has been difficult for some of these Churches.

Within the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) the Protestant Churches are the fourth family of Churches, being present as founding members since MECC was established in 1974. Both within the ecumenical movement in the Middle East, as well as world-wide, the Protestant and Episcopal Churches have played a pioneering role.

Below are included only the names of the Churches who are members of the Middle East Council of Churches. In addition to the Churches listed there are a number of others which are not members of the Middle East Council of Churches:

- Evangelical Church of Egypt (Synod of the Nile)
- Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East
 - Diocese of Egypt
 - Diocese of Jerusalem
 - Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf
 - Diocese of Iran
 - Episcopal Church in the Sudan
- Evangelical Church in Sudan
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan
 - <http://www.holyland-lutherans.org/>
- Synod of the Evangelical Church in Iran
- National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon
- National Evangelical Union of Lebanon
- Presbyterian Church in the Sudan
- Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East
 - <http://www.uaecne.org/>
- Protestant Church in Algeria
- Eglise Reformee de France en Tunisie
- National Evangelical Church in Kuwait

V. THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST

A separate mention needs to be made concerning the Assyrian Church of the East which remains outside all the other families of Churches.

The Assyrian Church is one of the oldest Churches of the East. It has been a missionary Church as early as the first generation of Christianity in Mesopotamia.

The message of the Assyrian Church went as far as India, China, Tibet and Mongolia. Its presence linked the Mediterranean Sea to the West and India to the East and due to its location east of the Roman Empire, it was called "Eastern Church", besides having been known by many other surnames, among which are the "Church of Fares" (Persia). The Assyrian Eastern Church was one of the first Churches to be established. It has given

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many a martyr of faith, and also has given many thinkers and scientists who greatly contributed to Arab culture. This makes it more regrettable that the fate of these people today is one of poverty.

Since its very inception, the Assyrian Church has never been able to settle in one specific country. Because of persecution and massacres, its believers were forced to emigrate every hundred years.

This Church today suffers from many problems, including the difficulty of establishing schools, convents and churches and the absence of theological schools in its various bishoprics. However, lately, schools have been established in Baghdad (Iraq) and Chicago (USA), after a decision taken by the Synod in 1984.

The Assyrian Church of the East is spread over many parts of the world. It exists in the east and in the west, in the USA, India, Australia and Europe.

It counts about 250,000 members with bishoprics in Iraq (82,000), Syria (30,000), Iran (20,000), the Lebanon (5,000), India (15,000), Australia (15,000), the USA and Canada (80,000), Europe (the European bishopric includes the U.K., Germany and Sweden with 4,500 members).

Holy Apostolic and Catholic Assyrian Church of the East
H.H. Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos Patriarch
<http://www.assyrianchurchnews.com/>

*This article has been condensed and updated from a survey produced by
the Documentation Center of the Middle East Council of Churches.
The statistics in the article are the most accurate possible,
but no completely verifiable numerical information is possible.
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UNDERSTANDING ORTHODOX WORSHIP

- 3. Smells and Bells: The Sensory Experience of Worship
in the Middle East**
- 4. The Divine Liturgy: The Heart of Worship
in the Orthodox Church**
- 5. “They Worship Icons, You Know”**

3. Smells and Bells: Sensory Experience in Middle Eastern Worship

William E. Schwartz

I have learned a lot since my first contacts with Orthodox Christianity. Everything at first had seemed so alien.

I'll never forget my first visit to a Coptic Orthodox church. Even though the service had finished hours before, the smell of incense was almost overpowering. The first time our group attended the Coptic liturgy I felt like I was watching some kind of pageant. I couldn't help but wonder if so much ceremony was relevant and if the people in the congregation even cared — they certainly seemed uninterested. Even though my American friends with me were not practising Christians they were almost offended that these people thought that all the liturgical smells and bells amounted to worshiping God. We were all certain that God was unimpressed with such an impersonal conglomeration of rituals that seemed equally meaningless to the participating congregation.

The robes, cymbals, incense, icons and candles were totally outside my evangelical heritage. Kissing icons, buying candles, mystical chanting, kissing the priest's hand while taking communion: all seem contrary to the attitudes of worship I was taught in Sunday School and Bible Study group. I couldn't figure out why the priest and his assistants kept going behind the wall to hide from the people. (Since the service is so long I wondered if they were taking a coffee break!) It seemed that the congregation who paid attention were so totally preoccupied with sin and remorse that I wondered if they knew what worship is all about.

It was very easy for me to find things to criticize about the Orthodox Church. Like most of us, I was perceiving them through my own filter of criteria, which was meaningful to me but almost unknown to them. At that time I had not realized that every part of the ceremony symbolises something in the Bible or in the practices of the early Church and that much of the liturgy is specifically patterned after the temple worship of the Lord's time. I had grown so accustomed to worship as a cerebral experience that I had no room in my spirituality for posture, form or symbolism.

Yet, as I have learned many things from my Orthodox friends over the years my understanding of and my experience with God has been enriched. I appreciate the fact that the ceremony, the icons, the symbols have all helped preserve truths of heritage and the Gospel through ages of ignorance, illiteracy and oppression. I have learned that my evangelical familiarity with God needed to be tempered by a contrasting awareness of His inestimable awesome holiness. My Orthodox friends have shown me that the Holy Spirit can reveal Jesus through symbols and ceremonies that speak directly to my heart (and afterwards to my brain). I have learned how important it is to realize that the cultural, doctrinal and liturgical presuppositions I bring to the Bible when I study it have often been a barrier to a deeper comprehension of God's character and His love for His children.

As evangelical Protestants we just have to confess that worship can take on many cultural expressions. If we want to communicate on a spiritual level with our Orthodox brethren, we must have the same cross-cultural openness with them that we exercise in contacts with the other religious expressions that are different from our own culture. Dr. Martha Roy of Cairo reminds us that wherever Christians worship God, "the place on which you stand is holy ground." Orthodox worship is most definitely "holy ground" for millions of Orthodox believers. We can choose simply to criticize what we do not understand, or to seek to sense the awe and joy of God through the eyes of the Orthodox believer.

Most of all we must preserve our humility. We have all come with a call to share and teach the love and words of Jesus Christ. Such a call should not be a reason for arrogance, but rather should be the cause for an openness of heart and mind. We cannot forget that no matter how much we have learned before we came, there is much to learn here before we can hope to be the servants and witnesses our Father wants us to be.

4. The Divine Liturgy: The Heart of Orthodox Worship

Joyce Napper

“The Orthodox approach to religion is fundamentally a liturgical approach which understands doctrine in the context of divine worship. ... We are most truly ourselves when we glorify God ... and find self-fulfillment in worship.” (Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*).

Of all the regular services of the Orthodox Churches, the most important, indeed the essential one, is called the Divine Liturgy. In Greek it is “*Theia Leitourgia*.” In Arabic either the Greek is transliterated or “*Al-Taq̄s Al-Taquus*” is used. It is also referred to as the “Eucharist” (thanksgiving) or the “Anaphora” (offering). The Coptic Orthodox Church often uses the term Anaphora, a Greek word meaning literally a carrying forward or upward. Copts like to link it with the idea of the people’s prayers being lifted up to Christ, ascended and interceding for us.

The celebration of the Divine Liturgy is the center of the life of the Church. In it Orthodox Christians celebrate the presence of the Crucified and Risen Christ amongst them, and all the great acts of redemption that have brought God’s Church into being.

AN OUTLINE OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

A choice of several liturgies can be used, depending on the Church, the Church Season, or whether it is a special feast. The most usual in the Byzantine Churches is the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. Orthodox Churches overseas have now made English translations for their congregations, and these are fairly obtainable in the Middle East.

Different liturgies all have the same general pattern, which falls into one preliminary and two main parts:

THE PATTERN OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

Preliminary

Preparation of the Gifts (bread and wine)

Part 1 — The Preparation

The Little Entrance
The Great Entrance
The Confession of Faith

Part 2 — The Sacred Mystery

The Consecration
The Communion
The Dismissal

The Preliminary

This part of the Liturgy is often done by the priest during an earlier service. The people do not need to be present, but may be.

The priest prays, puts on his vestments, and prepares the Elements for consecration. Circular loaves of leavened bread often baked by one family from the congregation are used. The central part of the upper surface is marked with a special pattern, and from this the priest cuts out pieces of prescribed shapes and sizes, reciting Bible verses, mainly from Isaiah 53; these pieces are arranged on a Paten, or small tray. He pours wine and water into the Chalice, or cup, and covers both Paten and Chalice with special cloths. This service includes prayers and ends with a series of doxologies. It represents the early hidden life of the Lord Jesus, which was the preparation for His public ministry. (Notice how the service, like the church building, can be an "audio-visual" teaching tool for the isolated and illiterate).

After this, the Divine Liturgy proper begins.

Part One . . .

celebrates the Public Ministry of our Lord. It begins with prayers and intercessions, and leads up to ...

The Little Entrance

With ceremony and processional hymns the Gospel (the Scripture) is carried from the side door of the Sanctuary. This is the coming of Christ to the world. Candles are carried because He is the Light of the World. The set portions for the day are read; first from the Epistles or Acts, then, with suitable "framing" the Gospel portion. This expresses Christ's teaching work, and may be followed by a sermon.

The Great Entrance

The Great Entrance is the carrying in of the bread and wine. The priest prays for himself, and for all present, that they may worship God and take part in the Holy Mysteries in fear and love, and "not unto condemnation." In great solemnity the elements are carried from the side table of the Sanctuary, where they were prepared, into the church and back through the central door into the Sanctuary of the Holy Table. While this is going on the chanters sing the soaring words of the Hymn of the Cherubim. It is as if we are taking part in the funeral of the Lord and awaiting His resurrection. There are supplications in which the people pray for themselves and each other. The Elements are covered with a cloth to represent Christ's burial.

The Confession of Faith

The Nicene Creed is introduced with the exhortation, "Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess." For without love how else can Christians bear united witness? During the Creed the priest takes the covering off the Paten and Chalice, symbolizing the resurrection and the open tomb.

Part Two . . .

is the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, itself.

Consecration

The service moves through Benediction and responses to a prayer that includes the New Testament words of the Institution of the Supper. Then comes the *Epidesis*, the

prayer that the Holy Spirit will come down upon the Gifts "and make the bread the Precious Body of Your Christ ... and what is in the cup the Precious Blood of Your Christ." This is the high point of the service. It is followed by prayers of intercession and praise.

Communion

The priest breaks the cut-out portions of bread, puts them in the Chalice, partakes himself, and invites the faithful to partake. Those who communicate do so standing, receiving the bread and wine together from a spoon. In many services each communicant is announced by name; "the servant of God ... partakes of the most precious Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

There are prayers of thanksgiving, a final benediction and the prayer of the Dismissal.

The Antidoron (literally, "instead of the Gift")

The remainder of the loaves, which were cut in pieces but not consecrated, are distributed after the service to all who did not communicate. Most Orthodox actually receive Communion only a few times a year. Non-Orthodox visitors may take a piece of the *antidoron* if they wish.

FURTHER COMMENTS

The Liturgy as a Drama

Essentially, the Liturgy is a kind of drama, or journey. It is a re-tracing, with the Lord Jesus Christ, of His whole earthly life from birth to resurrection. It is not just a remembering, but a re-living with our Lord of what He has done for us. The congregation takes part in this drama. For example, when the Gospel is announced they express their gratitude for God's Word before and after it is read, "Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee." When the bread and wine are brought in, remembering that Christ willingly suffered and died for our sins, they stand with heads bowed in awe, make the sign of the Cross, and pray, "Lord, remember me in Thy Kingdom."

The Length of the Liturgy

It is a truly Eastern rite, unhurried, lengthy, up to two and a half hours long, with no Western clock-watching. There is meant to be time to relax, for receiving God's love. Some of the reasons for this length are:

- As in Middle Eastern daily life all greetings and statements must be given their correct response. So there is an exchange between leader and people.
- The rite is more like a cycle, or ascending spiral, than a linear movement. So a later section may repeat an earlier one, with some variation, especially in the Intercessions.
- Phrases or sentences are longer than in, for example, the Roman Catholic Mass. If in times past it was considered appropriate to give the Emperor lofty titles of honor, how much more the King of Kings. Hymns therefore include ascriptions of deep reverence: "for Thou art the Source of Light for our souls, O Christ our God, and to Thee we ascribe glory, together with Thy Eternal Father and Thine All-Holy, Good and Life-Giving Spirit, now and forever, from all ages to ages."

- Since the whole Church is one, present worshippers are in the unseen company of the Fathers, Martyrs, and all the believing dead. Some of these must be commemorated by name each day.
- Each important event in the Liturgy is "framed." That is, before and after it there is a call to attention, a response, and then a sung verse or prayer. Sometimes the prayer can be fairly lengthy.

Simultaneous Activities

The priest may be praying silently while the choir is singing. Or the deacon or priest may be reading while the other is censuring part of the building or people.

Hymns and Music

The Orthodox Liturgy is always sung or chanted, not spoken. Eastern Church music is a whole study in itself, with its own scales, rhythms and notations.

It is worth reading some of the hymns used in the liturgies, partly because they can be a jumping-off point for discussion, especially of a Feast Day. You will notice that they are necessarily in a poetic form, and that they are usually wonderfully robust theological statements. Coming from times of theological controversy, they speak about God's person, nature and kingdom, or about Christ's work for us. They are objective rather than subjective. Although they lift the worshippers emotions, they do not talk about these emotions, as some Protestant hymns do. Here are some examples:

On Palm Sunday the Orthodox sing:
Sitting on your throne in heaven,
carried on a foal on earth,
O Christ God!
Accept the praise of angels
and songs of children who sing
Blessed is He who comes to recall Adam.

On Good Friday:
Today is hanged on the tree
He who hanged the earth in the midst of the waters
A crown of thorns crowns Him
Who is king of the angels.
He who wraps the heavens in clouds
is wrapped about with the purple of mockery...
On His cheek He receives blows
from hands which He formed ...

The Easter Anthem:
Christ is risen from the dead.
By death He has trodden down death.
To those in the tomb He has given life.

Except among the Armenians, singing is not usually accompanied by melodic instruments. The Copts, Syrian Orthodox and some others, use cymbals, triangles or tambourines, especially after the Communion itself, giving the singing a delightful joyous ring.

The Priest

Only an ordained priest can celebrate the Liturgy. He is helped by a Deacon and some people must be present. In some churches someone must intend to receive Communion. However, the priest is not above the people in holiness. In his prayers he includes himself using phrases like, "accept from the mouth of us sinners ..." and "upon me Your sinful and unworthy servant." At one point he asks forgiveness if he has wronged anyone.

Silent Prayers

The priest prays some prayers inaudibly. This tradition is more prevalent in the Byzantine than other Oriental communions. There is today a strong move, especially among the Orthodox in Western countries, to make these prayers audible.

The Sanctuary

In a church building the large space where the people sit or stand is called the Nave. At the eastern end most churches have a screen called the Iconostasion or Iconostasis, on which the icons are arranged in a specific order.

The Iconostasis has three doorways; a large central one and two side doors. These lead into the Sanctuary ("Haikal" in Arabic) in which there are the Holy Table and other furnishings used in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. The older custom was to close the central "Royal Doors" during the Liturgy, but many churches now keep them open so that the congregation can see.

5. “They Worship Icons, You Know”

David Teague

Many evangelicals from the West react strongly when they first encounter icons in Orthodox and Catholic Churches. A typical evangelical response to such a sight would be: “this violates the Second Commandment!” Other evangelicals theorize that icons must have originated in paganism. Many openly wonder if the use of icons has not actually hindered such ardent monotheists as the Muslims and the Jews from understanding and accepting the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

To more fully understand and respond to these concerns we must dip into the annals of history since these questions were once fiercely debated by the Orthodox Churches - in the eighth century.

Images have been used in Christian education from very early times: the catacombs and other early places of worship contain paintings depicting the Eucharist, baptism, and various biblical episodes. Even today almost all Protestant Churches use drawings of Christ in their Sunday School curriculums, yet we never think of ourselves as breaking the Second Commandment. The problem, it seems, is not the images themselves, but rather the use of them.

The trouble seems to have started the adoption of Christianity as the official state religion in the Roman Empire, beginning approximately 310 A.D. The common people swelled the churches, but they lacked the depth found in previous disciples. In fact, many of these newly converted pagans still thought in terms of paganism and so they began to regard the images as objects of worship. This is when several leading bishops of the time began preaching, not against the images themselves, but against their misuse as objects of worship. The problem was not in the images, which were intended to spiritually minister to people, but in the misuse of the images.

As abuses continued, however, debate over the role of icons increased. The “iconoclasts” (literally, the “idol-smashers”), as they came to be called, wished the destruction of all icons, while people like John of Damascus reaffirmed the original intent for icons. He wrote:

To depict God in a shape would be the peak of madness and impiety...
But since God ... became truly human ... the Fathers, seeing that not all can read nor have the time for it, approved the descriptions of these facts in images, that they might serve as brief commentaries. (On the Orthodox Faith 4.16)

The debate continued for a long time until it was formally settled by the Seventh Ecumenical Council, in 787 A.D. The Council decided that it was acceptable to use icons for Christian education, but icons should not be treated like idols.

Icons have an accepted place in Orthodoxy because Orthodox worship is highly symbolic. Orthodox Christians understand their church sanctuary to represent heaven

itself. No other church meeting except a worship service is allowed in an Orthodox sanctuary, and myriad aspects of the sanctuary, as well as of the liturgy celebrated there, symbolically point to eternity.

Within the Orthodox tradition, icons and religious art have played a very important part in reminding worshipers about the eternal world. Indeed, as one prays in an Orthodox Church, the presence of religious art can increase the sense of eternity. Roman martyrs might peer down from the wall on you as you worship, while on the ceiling above might be a massive painting of Christ on his heavenly throne. This is why the Orthodox consider such paintings to be "windows into eternity." True, an Orthodox might kiss an icon, but this is meant to be much like a lover might kiss a photo of someone loved. Properly understood, there is only innocence in this. And when - among the ignorant - there is sometimes more than innocence, but a return to the old condemned ways, the Church knows it must correct such.

During the debate of the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787 A.D., what tipped the balance in favor of allowing the use of icons was the understanding that Christ Himself came as a living icon of God. In Colossians 1:15, Paul calls Christ "the image of the invisible God." In this verse, the word "image" is the Greek word *eikon*, from which we get "icon." The members of the Council considered the Incarnation itself to be our "window into eternity," through whom we have come to know God. They concluded that just as the invisible God has appeared in human flesh, so also eternity can be represented through a material painting. Icons are consistent with the truth of the Incarnation.

Keep in mind that Islam had already risen by this time. The same concern we may have about how icons might affect the spread of the Gospel was also an issue in the Council. Yet, the bishops felt it more important to be consistent with all the logical consequences of the Incarnation than to deny those consequences for pragmatic reasons. Furthermore, they would not have understood the Protestant desire that the church sanctuary should be anything other than a symbolic representation of heaven, a sacred place in which believers are reminded of eternity - since they felt this is how believers are best strengthened for their struggles on earth.

Yesterday I passed a mosque and glanced through the door. Nothing could be seen except for a bare room with green mats placed on the floor. In contrast, up the street, a Coptic Orthodox Church had icons of the Apostles and of Christ in every corner. Both places of worship said something. The mosque was saying that God really is unknowable since God is completely above all human thinking and entirely unlike anything material. We can worship God, but not know God. Even to say that God is just, or merciful, is only partially true, since we understand these concepts only in a human way and we have no means of knowing what they are like with God. Because God is so totally different from the world, Islam affirms that it is impossible for God ever to have become human. There could be no Christ who came as the "image of God." Mosques must remain barren of all images.

On the other hand, the Coptic church is saying that although God is totally different from us, God is still knowable, precisely because of the Incarnation. The icons symbolically represent this fact; eternity is indeed able to come down to earth, even into the very presence of the community of worship. God can be known through Christ. This difference in symbolism reflects the main difference between Christianity and Islam.

The bishops in 787 A.D. were not concerned with developing a pragmatic mission strategy, only with believing without apology. They did not try to hide the fact of the Incarnation in an attempt to make it more palatable. Today, Coptic Orthodox priests wear the cross even when they know that they will be openly spat upon, day after day. They could cease to do so, to be less offensive, but they do not. As for myself, having lived in the Middle East, I have become far less concerned about numbers and strategy and far more concerned about the power of God found through quiet endurance and faith.

The use of icons is not a reason to avoid cooperation with Orthodox Churches. Properly understood, their use of icons is meant to affirm the Incarnation.

We as evangelical Protestants also have many shortcomings before God, yet God still loves us and remains faithful to us. If this is the way with God, should it also not be the way with us in how we approached other Christians?

DEEPENING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

6. A Kinder, Gentler Understanding

7. The Language of Spiritual Awakening

8. The Renewal of the Church in the Middle East

6. A Gentler, Kinder Understanding

David Teague

Historically, evangelical Protestants have had minimal contact with the Orthodox tradition. Part of the reason for this is that Orthodox Churches are largely ethnic churches, and thereby isolated from the cultural sub-groups belonging to evangelical Protestantism. Another reason is that the centers of Protestantism have been located historically in Europe and America, while Orthodoxy finds its home in the Middle East, Greece and Russia.

In recent times, contact has been increasing. As a result, evangelical Protestants and Orthodox Christians are realizing the close affinity they have in the essentials of the faith. They share a common belief in the Incarnation, the Holy Trinity, the Resurrection and the Atonement.

During the important Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra, in February, 1991, this commonality openly emerged. The evangelicals in attendance at the conference produced a statement titled *Evangelical Perspectives from Canberra*, which openly said: "We recognized many common theological commitments and encounters between evangelicals and the Orthodox ... we strongly urge that conversations and encounters between evangelicals and the Orthodox be fostered as soon as possible to explore common ground and address differences."

This chapter records my own personal experience of trying to "explore common ground and address differences."

I first encountered Orthodox Christianity when I began studying Coptic language and history with the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt. Eventually, I taught English and biblical Greek to Copts under the authority of one of their bishops. I found my experience with the Copts to be deeply enriching.

Since I was trained as a missionary, I approached the Copts cross-culturally, just as I would do for any people group or culture. That is, I tried to understand them for who they were. These are the principles that guided me:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. I relied on an inductive method of research, rather than an analytical method. In other words, instead of contrasting the Orthodox with my own system of belief, I tried to step out of my own system into theirs, to let it speak on its own.
2. I sought to find the resemblances rather than emphasize the differences. Since I knew I was dealing with a Christian Church, I sought to see God's presence in this Church.
3. I tried to acknowledge the evidence of God's grace at work among the Copts, even when I theologically did not understand everything. Acts 11:18 and 15:12

give the precedent, when Peter and the Jerusalem elders acknowledged that the Spirit had been outpoured on Cornelius and the Gentiles, even though Peter did not fully understand everything.

4. I affirmed that God is not a "tame lion," as C.S. Lewis implied. God can act in ways among the Orthodox I never would have expected. Classes of miracles may very well differ between Churches. The Copts will relate how light emanated from an icon, to the spiritual strengthening of the observers. Evangelicals will relate how exact amounts of money arrived just in time for needy projects.
5. I came to realize that theological thinking can be affected by emotions. Many Protestants are shocked at first by the Orthodox way of worship. It takes time for us to get beyond our emotional reactions in order to properly understand what is going on.
6. I acknowledged that the Orthodox have a separate relationship with God that it is not my own. As Paul wrote, "Who are you to judge someone else's servant?" (Rom. 14:4a).
7. I emphasized eternity as a means to create new theological understanding. This is seen especially in the material dealing with the Eucharist.

COMMON PREJUDICES

Building on these seven approaches, as I started to know the Copts, I found myself processing my prejudicial reactions:

1. There were prejudices based on different sensory impressions. The Coptic Orthodox use incense, chants in non-Western scales, religious paintings, and cymbals. At the end of the service, the priest throws water on you! But Protestants rely on a mostly verbal presentation of the Gospel. Because of these differences in sensory impressions we might find our emotions and attitudes affected when we visit an Orthodox Church.
2. There were prejudices over different symbols. For instance, it took me many months before I crossed myself (that is, made the sign of the cross over the heart). Emotionally, I could not do it until I understood that it is merely intended to represent the symbol of redemption – Christ dying on the cross.
3. I had a prejudice against liturgical worship. Yet, I came to understand its value by realizing that:
 - liturgical worship is especially suitable for a "what" culture — a culture that is more concerned with tradition and re-creation than with innovation. In contrast, Evangelicalism mostly comes from a "why" culture — a culture in which things tend to be done, not because our forebears did it that way, but because we have found a reason for it ourselves.
 - the Orthodox liturgy preserves the apostolic tradition. Orthodox worship always centers on our redemption through the Atonement. In Protestant worship, this may or may not be the case, depending on the pastor.

- the Orthodox liturgy is intensely worshipful. Non-liturgical worship can also be worshipful, but there is sometimes a tendency to replace worship with other elements.

4. I found I had to overcome certain historical prejudices common to evangelical Protestants. We tend to be weak in our understanding of church history before the Reformation. Sometimes we have the simplistic notion that the Church turned corrupt immediately after the Apostles. Sociology has observed that many social groups tend to look to the time of their founding in an idealistic way. How many times has "New Testament Christianity" been presented as the Golden Age? Yet, the fact is that NT Christians had a lot of problems too.

A more mature approach is to understand that the good and the bad have always been present. Understood in this light, Orthodoxy is not the perverter of apostolic Christianity. Instead, it becomes the worthy daughter. It might surprise some Protestants that at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., many of the bishops assembled there reportedly were miracle-workers, including one who had raised the dead. Such evidence of spiritual power, reminiscent of New Testament days, can be found in many episodes in the history of the Orthodox Church.

5. Another historical prejudice was to think of Orthodoxy in terms of Luther's experience with the Roman Church of the sixteenth century. There are vast differences.

THE DEEPER THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

My cross-cultural approach enabled me to overcome common prejudices. But still, there were deeper theological issues to examine. What common ground, if any, could I find?

1. The Works / Faith Controversy

Eastern and Western Christianity developed different ways of theologically understanding sin and salvation, which resulted in a difference of perspective concerning the issue of works and faith. A close examination reveals, however, that both approaches deeply emphasize the importance of the grace of God. It is this emphasis on Grace that provides common ground.

Augustine had a great influence on the Protestant theology of sin and salvation. Following the example of Paul he explained justification in terms of the courtroom. He interpreted sin as being an offence, and justification as being the result of paying for the penalty for this offence.

But, while a Protestant understanding of salvation is based upon the image of the court room, Orthodox Christianity borrowed a different metaphor from Plato: the belief that each object on earth has a perfect heavenly counterpart. (This is not to imply that Eastern Christianity is unbiblical; it has only used a platonic analogy to help it in its theological understanding.)

Using this platonic analogy, the Eastern Church came to understand our earthly existence as less than the heavenly ideal to which we were called. Sin came to be understood as a falling short of the glory of God rather than a legal offense (Rom.3:23). Christ came from Heaven as the Perfect One, and through Him we can have the taint

removed from within. He is thus the icon of God (Col.1:15), the perfect representative of what we can become, the Gospel in Person, through whom we can know God.

Building on this analogy, we are to become icons of God, living Gospels, shining the light. The famous Orthodox statement which summarizes this perspective is "God became human in order that humanity might become divine." In Orthodox theology this process of progressive sanctification by grace is called *theosis* in Greek. While the use of the courtroom image caused the doctrine of justification to be emphasized in Protestant theology, in the Orthodox Church salvation became understood in terms of this process of progressive sanctification.

Because of these two perspectives, evangelical Protestants frequently emphasize that salvation is an event at one point of time ("we have been saved"). This would be expected, since in the court room one is declared innocent at a definite point in time. The Orthodox, on the other hand, emphasize salvation as a process ("we are being saved").

How does this all apply to the faith/works debate? The court room metaphor emphasizes the eternal side of our salvation, while the Orthodox formulation lays stress on our struggle on earth. As a result, Orthodox theology feels that the Protestant view leads to a cheapening of discipleship, in which salvation can be easily claimed but not lived.

In contrast, Orthodox theology teaches that salvation is not at work in a life unless that person is striving toward the holiness and perfection of Christ. Works, then, are seen as depending on faith, and they indicate salvation. But they definitely are not seen as a means to salvation. In Orthodox theology it is very clear that our works are not our attempt to earn credit with God, but rather they are deeds of love for God done through His grace. The Protestant view, however, commonly misinterprets this perspective out of a concern to be true to its own analogy of the courtroom. We are really talking about the same thing, however. It's just that we are using two different analogies.

Although there are these differences in perspectives, both evangelical Protestantism and Orthodoxy deeply emphasize grace. Repeated many times in an Orthodox liturgy are the words "Lord, have mercy" - echoing the cries that came to the Lord's ears from the needy crowds which surrounded Him. Protestants have to respond to the reality of the permeating place of grace in official Orthodox theology.

Besides grace, another important word to emphasize in seeking to understand Orthodox thinking regarding faith and works is *repentance*. Evangelical Protestants, again, tend to understand repentance in terms of a punctiliar, or one-time event: "so-and-so repented." Orthodox theology, however, views repentance as entailing not only the initial turning to, but also the continued seeking of God. In other words, the sinner, once having turned from the state of rebellion, then should have entered a state of repentance. All of life should now be repentance, just as everything before had been rebellion.

This is why the Old Testament prophets frequently talked about repentance in terms of deeds. For example, Ezekiel 33:19 reads: "And if a wicked person turns away from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he will live by doing so." In other words, both the Old Testament prophets and the Orthodox tend to understand repentance in terms of a person's whole change in attitude and behavior.

2. The Eucharist

The Orthodox Church asserts that the true body and the true blood of Christ are present in the sanctified bread and the wine of the Eucharist. In contrast, many evangelicals understand the Eucharist as a memorial only. The two views are not easily reconciled, yet it is helpful to understand the reasons behind the Orthodox view.

First, we need to understand that there are two ways to remember an event — through a memorial and through a re-enactment. For instance, famous battles are often remembered by erecting a memorial stone, but sometime they are remembered by having costumed soldiers stage a re-enactment of the battle.

The Orthodox Eucharist is a re-enactment. It is their way of remembering the Incarnation and the Atonement. “But,” you may ask, “why do the Orthodox insist that the bread and the wine become the actual body and the blood of Christ? That seems to go beyond re-enactment.”

True, but understand things historically. The early Church first earnestly began to express that the bread and wine were the body and blood of Christ in reaction to the teaching of Docetism. This heresy said that the Lord Jesus did not physically come into the world in the flesh but that He only came in a spiritual sense. The Docetics denied that Christ physically died on the Cross.

Since the early Church Fathers understood the Eucharist as a re-enactment, a symbolic portrayal of the Gospel message, if they said that the consecrated bread and wine were anything but the body and the blood of the Lord, they would have been affirming the Docetic view and denying the Incarnation. Just as Christ truly came into the world, so they affirmed that the bread and the wine truly indicate the body and blood of the Lord. Much of this early thinking has been forgotten today, resulting in misunderstanding among Christians who both believe in and are trying to affirm the same truth of the Incarnation.

In heaven, I am sure we will all understand everything fully. But eternity might also help us to achieve a greater understanding right now. The Eucharist is a memorial, because it remembers an event in time; yet, in some dimension, it also has to be more than this because it deals with an event of eternity.

A very simple illustration is found in a common light socket. If you touch it, you find an immediate contact with the electric power plant far away. In the same way, in the Eucharist in some way we have a direct contact with Christ's own death, which touches all of time. In the same way, any time a person comes to repentance, what happened on the Cross has become personally real to them.

3. Assurance of Salvation

Can a Christian be assured that he or she will go to heaven? The issue is especially important to many Arminian and Calvinist Protestants who have been arguing over this question for centuries. What is the Orthodox view?

Because the Orthodox talk about the believer as being saved, rather than as having been saved, they say that the final outcome of a life cannot be known until it is finished. A Christian can fall away or persist in faith - for this reason the Orthodox have no Arminian/Calvinist debate over this issue.

But does this imply that the faithful in an Orthodox Church live in daily foreboding over their eternal destiny? The answer in Orthodoxy is related to the character of God, who is not seen as capricious in His will, but sincere and loving. If one sincerely loves and seeks God, one will dwell with God forever.

So, within Orthodoxy, there is an individual and personal assurance, born of the trustworthiness of God. But at the same time there is also a dynamic which works against nominalism, which I define as belief without discipleship. In Orthodox theology, all must fear God. One cannot merely trust in a family connection to be saved.

Because of its theology of baptism, Orthodox churches are inclusive. Orthodox churches are parishes, seeking to enfold the many. Priests are well aware that both the committed and the nominal will be included in the ranks of the baptised. Yet, this inclusivity enables Orthodoxy to maintain links with generations of a family. And it permits individuals to find renewal, even if a family has been nominally Christian for centuries. This is precisely what I witnessed happening in Egypt.

Many evangelicals are unfamiliar with how spiritual renewal works in parishes. Our churches tend to be exclusive, designed for committed disciples. Some evangelical churches are now adopting a more inclusive model, and this is increasing our understanding of how spiritual renewal works under the parish model. Then again, evangelicals who belong to paedobaptist denominations are far more aware of these renewal dynamics than would be those from baptistic denominations. Richard Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor* is the classic understanding of how spiritual renewal works within a Protestant parish.

4. The Communion of Saints and St. Mary

These are particularly thorny issues because of the great respect the Orthodox have for Mary and the saints, and because many Protestants feel that such respect borders on being idolatrous. Furthermore, many Protestants do not understand why God would allow people to have visions of Mary or of one of the saints since they feel this would just remove the focus from Christ. The distance between Protestants and Orthodox over these issues may be too great to bridge for many people, but there are several things that could be said.

Both Protestants and Orthodox recite the same phrase from the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in the Communion of Saints." Indeed we do, but in two different ways. The Orthodox say that our communion with true Christians of the past is not interrupted by time. We had communion, or fellowship, with them when they were alive and will continue to have fellowship with them after we die ourselves. In the meantime, we lack their presence. Yet, because they have entered eternity, and eternity is within our hearts by the Spirit, in certain mystical ways we can continue to have a real communion with them.

This is why an Orthodox believer feels free to appeal to a Christian in eternity to request prayer, just as we might ask prayer from a fellow Christian living next door. If a saint were to appear in a vision to an Orthodox, this also would be consistent with their understanding of the Communion of Saints.

This sense of connection with the Eternal Community is much less present in Protestantism. Protestants believe that there is the *Church Militant* (on earth right now) and the *Church Triumphant* (in heaven), but Protestants generally see no connection between the two.

Yet, sometimes we hear stories that might suggest otherwise. For instance, in his book [Ring of Truth: A Translator's Testimony](#) (Hodder and Stoughton, 1967), J.B. Phillips writes how he had two visions of C.S. Lewis shortly after Lewis' death!

A number of my Orthodox friends have told me of fascinating visions they have had of different saints. I have become more open to their reports, especially since I have personally witnessed a physical manifestation of unexplained light in an Orthodox church. But I have also learned to receive reports with a fair amount of skepticism. I have observed instances of wish-fulfillment and even mass-hysteria. Uneducated Orthodox, in particular, have a tendency toward credulity. For reasons like this, the bishops who are assigned to investigate spectacular manifestations tend toward caution in their assessment.

Evangelical Protestants tend to discount the validity of the entire Orthodox doctrine of the Communion of the Saints because of the offensive way some Orthodox relate to the saints.

There *are* abuses. Logically, however, we have to ask, "Does the abuse of something deny its validity?" After all, the Law was good, but it was misused. If saints are, indeed, appearing to Orthodox believers, we should expect the existence of unhealthy imbalances, just as the Apostle John himself felt the temptation to worship the angel who appeared to him (Rev. 19:10). While the abuse of the Orthodox doctrine of the Communion of Saints is troubling, this does not logically deny its validity.

In official Orthodox theology, the respect shown to Mary and the saints is always Christo-centric and enhances devotion to Christ rather than replaces it. Furthermore, within official Orthodoxy, Mary is given great respect, not because she is regarded as a female god, but because she is honored as the first Christian disciple. In this role, she is considered to be a symbol of the Church, the community of all believers.

5. Spiritual Rebirth

Orthodox Churches understand spiritual rebirth differently from most evangelical Protestants. For Orthodoxy, spiritual rebirth takes place through baptism - a baptism which we have to realize is usually infant baptism. For evangelicals, spiritual rebirth happens when there is saving faith. It is anathema for an evangelical to think that a ceremony performed on a baby will result in spiritual rebirth. Equally, for Orthodox Churches, the evangelical doctrines of spiritual re-birth are viewed with alarm.

This is a lot of misunderstanding over this issue.

While Orthodox theology may teach that spiritual rebirth occurs through the sacrament of baptism, it does not teach that salvation occurs through baptism. The Orthodox still assert that true faith and discipleship is needed for salvation.

In Orthodoxy, baptism is only the entrance to the Church and its spiritual life, and for this reason it is considered to be the point of a spiritual rebirth. But it is only the beginning. One must grow and persevere in the Christian faith to be saved.

As one Orthodox theologian described it to me, evangelicals emphasize salvation as the Door, while the Orthodox emphasize it as the Way. This is the metaphorical description for those two contrasting views on salvation - salvation as a process ("I am being saved") and salvation as an event ("I was saved yesterday").

Because Protestants tend to read the Protestant understanding of salvation as an event into the Orthodox understanding, they can easily misinterpret the intention behind Orthodox expressions concerning a baptized infant. A priest may say that a baptized baby "is now a Christian." What is really meant is that the baby has now begun to become a Christian.

It is precisely because the Church does not believe in salvation by baptism that renewal movements are possible. You just have to open a Church history text to see St. John Chrysostom, Origen, or St. Basil thundering out the need for personal repentance and discipleship to nominal Orthodox Christians. Today, many people are being brought to a real encounter with the living Christ as they go through confirmation and spiritual direction, discipleship education and retreats.

To encourage spiritual renewal within Orthodox settings, it is completely possible and appropriate to talk about personal dedication to Christ, living as a true disciple and walking in personal repentance. We can counsel people to seek Christ and encourage them to personally experience God through Bible studies. It is inappropriate, however, for an evangelical Protestant to tell a baptised Orthodox person, "you need to be born again." That would be misunderstood and would only be counter-productive.

Orthodoxy will not change its theology of the sacrament of baptism for evangelicals. Neither should evangelicals have to talk about being born again in order to help nominal Orthodox believers to experience renewal. The important thing is that we focus on renewal without using language or categories of thinking that are foreign to Orthodoxy and can only serve to provoke a needless reaction. For a more in-depth study of this important issue, please see the next chapter, "The Language of Spiritual Awakening."

The danger for evangelicals is to assume that true faith is next to impossible to find in a Church that treats salvation as a process, or that has an inclusive ecclesiology. Orthodoxy is concerned over its problem of nominalism, and it is seeking ways to rectify this. One strength of Evangelicalism is that we are very good at helping nominal believers come to true faith. We have much to offer the Orthodox Churches, but we have to respect and work within their own theology of spiritual renewal instead of imposing our own.

Conclusion

As an evangelical Protestant, I have come to understand that both Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism are much closer than I had originally thought. Achieving this understanding, however, required sensitivity, a cross-cultural approach and a historical understanding of the reasons behind different doctrinal formulations.

In the end, evangelical Protestants have to decide if enough disagreement exists in the secondary issues to prevent cooperation, or if we have enough commonality — especially in the essential apostolic doctrines of the Incarnation, the Holy Trinity and the Atonement — to find a basis for cooperation.

7. The Language of Spiritual Awakening

Hugh Baird

The writings of two leading renewal figures in Egypt: H.H. Shenouda III and Fr. Matta al Meskeen illustrate just how much personal renewal is a concern of the Orthodox Church, but also an examination of these writings will show how the language and thinking used to describe spiritual renewal can differ so much between evangelicals and Orthodox.

The Wrong Question!

H. H. Shenouda III: "A young man asked me what he should answer if someone asked him 'Have you been saved or not?'" Here is Pope Shenouda's reply:

First of all, you must realize that the person who asked you this is in no way Orthodox - period. He would certainly be from the Protestant denomination, or at least a Protestant in his environment and culture. For whoever ignores your baptism, and what you have received through the holy sacraments, and makes you doubt your own faith, and calls you now to faith and salvation, as though you had previously been a pagan - such a person cannot possibly be Orthodox, for his language betrays him! (from H.H. Pope Shenouda III in his book Salvation in Orthodox Thinking, pg. 71.)

This is a brief extract from Pope Shenouda's book on salvation, and it reveals how the wrong question can ruin the opportunity to relate to someone from an Orthodox background. So what questions could evangelical Protestants ask if they encounter an Orthodox Christian who is a nominal believer? What kind of language can be used that is clear and yet acceptable? The purpose of this chapter is to seek to answer this question and to provide some linguistic helps for evangelicals who meet Orthodox Christians.

A Different Perspective

Why is "Are you saved?" the wrong question?

The essential reason is that it is based on a different perspective of salvation. Evangelicals tend to see salvation as a present possession. The Orthodox see salvation more as a future inheritance. Both have biblical support, and therefore must be held together. Yet the emphasis that I give to one or the other will depend largely on how I was brought up and entered the faith. Furthermore, as the previous chapter has mentioned, the Orthodox Church understands spiritual rebirth differently than most evangelical Protestants. In Orthodoxy, spiritual rebirth occurs at baptism. Since most Copts were baptized as babies, they believe they were spiritually reborn then. For evangelicals, spiritual rebirth happens when there is saving faith. The problem comes if we begin telling a nominal Copt he needs to become a Christian, or needs to experience the new birth. This only results in confusion and may end a relationship entirely.

If we seek to cooperate with the Orthodox, we must seek to unclot our minds from their evangelical attire, and put on the cloak of Orthodox thinking. Yet through all this, we must remain true to ourselves in how we understand the Scripture.

It is important to keep in mind that there is much Orthodox teaching that causes no difficulty for evangelicals. Pope Shenouda begins his book on salvation by stressing that there is no salvation except through the blood of Christ. The cross is therefore at the very centre of their understanding of salvation. The reason for this is as follows: "Sin is against the infinite God, and therefore sin itself, and atonement for sin must also be infinite. The only solution is therefore that the infinite God becomes one of us and dies, and in his death there is limitless atonement, that satisfies the limitless justice of God" Salvation in Orthodox Thinking, pg. 18).

Faith in itself, or good works in themselves are powerless to save. "For salvation, as we all believe, is by means of the great redemption which was completed on the cross" (H.H. Pope Shenouda III, Salvation (and Heresy), pg. 53). "We see that we have life in the cross. For we were under the sentence of death. But truly, the great redeemer died for us, so that he might grant us life by his death, raising us from death" (from a message by Pope Shenouda delivered on 3 March 1989). The Pope also makes a point of quoting Rom.3:12,19,23-26; 2 Tim.1:11; Tit.3:4,5; Eph.2:8; Rom.11:6 - verses which stress that we are saved by grace, not works (Salvation in Orthodox Thinking, pg. 18).

Pope Shenouda has also written a book against the doctrine of purgatory. The concept that the 'merits' of saints can be a means of salvation is far from Orthodox thought.

However, having stressed that salvation is based only on the blood of Christ, H.H. Pope Shenouda asks the question "How does someone receive the gift of salvation that is through the blood of Christ?" Before we answer, it is important to summarize two of the differences in how salvation is viewed by the Orthodox:

1. Salvation is a process which God begins at baptism, which continues through faith and repentance, and receiving the necessary sacraments of the church, is only complete at death. Full salvation is only received when we are fully raised - body, mind, and soul from this world of corruption into the perfection of the presence of Christ.
2. As a result of this, there is no clear distinction in Orthodox thinking between justification, sanctification, and glorification. This causes the Orthodox easily to misunderstand the Protestant teaching on justification.

Thus, as Protestants, we must not only seek to understand how the Orthodox view salvation, but also how they comprehend the Protestant view. We must always be careful not to use language in a way that gives them a false view of what we think.

How, then, does someone receive the gift of salvation that is through the blood of Christ? Although faith is the basic condition, it is not understood as the only condition for final salvation. A person must be baptized because he must share with Christ in his death and raised to life as his child, being cleansed from original sin. He or she must also receive the Holy Spirit as, without the gift of the Spirit, no one is unable to live as God's child. He must receive Christ through the Holy Communion, to cleanse him from daily sin. And he must live a life of repentance and good works which issue from his faith.

An evangelical might not phrase these as conditions for salvation but rather as necessary parts of the Christian life. And seeing salvation both as a process - with its past, present, and future - we can see how all these things must be present if someone is to grow in Christ and see Christ at the last.

These two questions, "What is the concept of salvation?" and "How is salvation received and when?" were the subject of a conference between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Coptic Evangelical Church (the largest Protestant Church in Egypt). This meeting, which really was the first time these two Churches ever formally met together to discuss their theological differences, occurred on 16 January 1989. The participants agreed on the following ten points, which shows the progress being made in the joint Protestant/Orthodox understanding of salvation:

1. Salvation is the story of the whole lifetime, and it cannot be limited to an experience that occurs in a moment.
2. Salvation is built on the foundation of the blood and perfect work of Christ our Lord.
3. God's grace and our striving must be bound together in the life of the believer, and are a means to a life of holiness.
4. Living faith must (certainly) be active in love in the life of the believer.
5. The church holds an important place in the plan of God for our salvation.
6. It is agreed that the essence of the concept of baptism is death and resurrection with Christ.
7. It is agreed that it is necessary that an infant is baptised on the basis of the faith of the parents.
8. The idea of faith has a wide range of meanings.
9. Faith precedes baptism, and as regards adults, there must be a personal confession of faith before baptism.
10. The Holy Spirit is the one who is at work in the Holy Sacraments.

Spiritual Awakening

"The life of repentance is the starting point of a relationship with God. And the spiritual awakening is the starting point of the life of repentance." So starts H.H. Pope Shenouda in his introduction to his book [The Spiritual Awakening](#).

What is the meaning of awakening? First, Pope Shenouda likens the sinner who is far away from God, but baptized as a Christian, to a person asleep who does not realize that he is asleep. More than this, he is not just asleep, but dead in his sins. He quotes Paul's words, "Awake O sleeper, and rise from dead, and Christ will shine on you."

"Every person is subject to falling asleep in his spiritual life. Times of slumber have passed with all, the only difference being the kind and the degree ... Here we want to ask

“What are the causes that lead to spiritual slumber and drowsiness? What are the factors that force me awake” (The Spiritual Awakening, pg. 23)? He gives five causes of sleepiness:

1. **Busyness.** We become busy with the concerns of this world which fill our time and our mind. Rather, we need to be convinced of the importance of the spiritual, and then we will make time for prayer and the reading of the Scriptures.
2. **Emotions.** We allow controlling feelings to rule our hearts and minds. Rather, our hearts must be released from all that binds them to become bound to only one, who is God.
3. **Surroundings.** We are led astray by a corrupting environment, which controls our wills. Rather, we must flee from such surroundings.
4. **Intellect.** Our intellect deceives us, and becomes a device for carrying out our own desires, controlling our thoughts. It prefers to be spiritually asleep, and its problem is not that it cannot awaken from its dreams, but that it does not want to.
5. **Pleasure.** Pleasure controls our senses, and comes to rule everything. It paralyzes us, so that we do not want to awaken. The spiritual person, however, has only one Pleasure - God.

In view of all this, how can the sleeper waken? In his reply H.H. Pope Shenouda first says that God has not totally abandoned us to our slumbers, for God desires all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. While we may be careless about our own salvation, God is not. The Almighty strives by many means to awaken such persons from slumber.

Pope Shenouda lists ten factors that the Lord uses to awaken the sleeper:

1. **The Love of God.** Despite the fact that they have left God and forgotten him, many have found that the love of God besieges them, his compassion for them grows stronger and stronger, and his hand keeps knocking at their door. They begin to feel embarrassed over the love of God which they have forgotten, and they return. His love shakes their soul and their conscience awakes.
2. **Rejection by God.**
3. **Rejection by the Church, or its separation of the sinner.**
4. **Trials and troubles.**
5. **Despair, humiliation, and the gloating of the Enemy.**
6. **The prayers of the saints.**
7. **Memories of the early days of a "first love" for Christ.**

8. The effects of the means of grace (such as the Scriptures, or a spiritual book, a sermon, Holy Communion, or a spiritual meeting). The majority of sinners who have awoken from sleep, have awoken through these means.
9. The effect of the death of others.
10. Falling into intolerable sin. "As for you, my brother, do not wait for God to send you two angels like Lot, to bring you out of Sodom, but wake yourself from within. Rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you ... Leave this book now and sit by yourself. And say - 'I must be reconciled with God ... now.' Raise up the prayer that God may help you, and he will give you strength to return to him" (The Spiritual Awakening, pg. 64).

What then are the feelings that accompany spiritual awakening according to H.H. Pope Shenouda? He mentions the following:

1. Feelings of shame and disgrace - first outwardly, before God, and then inwardly before himself. Sadly, some flee from this shame, and we must say that they are not yet truly spiritually awake.
2. Tears of regret and sadness, for tears are a fixed element in every story of repentance. Indeed the heart that has not experienced weeping is a hard heart.
3. War against despair and the envy of demons. Satan takes advantage of the bitter regrets which fill the heart of the repentant person, to cause him to fall into despair, as though his sins were beyond forgiveness.
4. Spiritual zeal accompanies a spiritual awakening.
5. There is a restoration of what has passed.
6. And there is joy in finding God and knowing that in Him there can be salvation from sin.

All these thoughts and categories of language lends itself to use in the personal contact between evangelical Protestants and Orthodox.

H.H. Pope Shenouda is not the only one who writes and preaches on the subject of new life in Christ. The following is a list of phrases that I have picked up among other Orthodox preachers:

1. "Beginning with Christ": The preacher who uses this phrase frequently asks people to write down the day that they began with Christ.
2. "Repentance with tears": This is known also as an initial repentance.
3. "To experience a change in your heart and life."
4. "To have been set free by Christ from the bonds of Satan."
5. "Being filled with the Holy Spirit."

What is Repentance?

Following on from H.H. Pope Shenouda, that a spiritual awakening is the beginning of the life of repentance, it is worth exploring more fully how the Orthodox see repentance.

One popular writer has been the monk, Father Matta al Meskeen, sometimes known in the West as "Matthew the Poor." In his book on repentance he starts by focusing on the sinfulness of sin, and says that the "essence of repentance is the conviction of sin, a cry from the pangs of iniquity, a realization of being in the absence of any light (Fr. Matta al Meskeen, Repentance, pg. 9).

Faith is essentially trust in the God who justifies the shameless adulterer. "The justification of the adulterer / the 'ungodly' is one of the divine secrets of many in the deep and wonderful economy (plan) of the certainty of salvation, so that it is sufficient for a man only to believe that God is able to justify the 'ungodly', and his faith in its very self, will be reckoned to him as righteousness" (pg. 4).

It is at the moment of faith and repentance that sin is wiped away. "Sin has no more right to remain or dwell in the new nature, for it has become like a stain on a cloak which is taken off in less than the twinkling of an eye, at the moment when the sinner repents and seeks the face of God" (pg 8).

"For is not repentance falling into the hands of God, casting oneself at his feet in helplessness of will, with a wounded heart bleeding in regret, with limbs crushed by sin, having no strength to raise themselves up except through the mercy of God" (pg 10)? Fr. Matta then likens the repentant to the traveller who fell among thieves (i.e. Satan), and is rescued by the Samaritan (Christ). This interpretation of the parable is apparently well known among the Orthodox through the teachings of the early Fathers. Although strange to Western ears, it stresses the initiative of God's grace, and our inability to save ourselves.

Fr. Matta then stresses the point that humanity is not simply weak in sin, but actually dead in it. "But Christ has seized sin from the heart of man, and rescued us from certain death. And instead of sin, Christ has entered into our deepest being and been formed in our souls, and has renewed our form..." (pg. 12).

"What, then, is necessary for a sinner to come to faith in Christ, and to receive life and salvation? Nothing! Only he must not harden his heart to the inner voice, and not resist the call. 'For truly, truly I say to you that the time is coming and now is, when the dead (in sins) will hear the voice of the Son of God, and hearing, will live' (John 5:25)" (pg. 25).

How then will the repentant be kept from falling back into sin? "When the spiritual ears respond profitably to this voice, the Spirit pours into the soul a new spiritually-created heart, made by God, which immediately begins to pulse with faith and loyalty to the one who redeemed it from death and saved it. And then man receives the power to move towards God, power to strive to please him, and persevere in his love ... Here a new life begins for the sinner, a life towards the God who called him, and drew him from the death of sin and redeemed him, and purified him from his uncleanness and brought him to life through the blood of Jesus and the power of his resurrection, from the dead; here the sinner becomes accountable - after he has tasted the shame of death and the

wonder of the glory of life - not to return with his feet to walk in the path of death! For he hates the deceiving paths that lead him to destruction! And he hates doing wrong!

"Rather the sinner who has been purified in the divine blood has become in the very depths of his life, one who delights in, and rejoices in, and proclaims the excellence of him who has called him from darkness into his marvellous light.

"For if hatred of murderous sin was at the bottom of his act of regret and repentance, then there is joy in the righteousness of Christ, and the work of his blood which wipes away transgressions and sins. This joy is the light of his repentance and the delight which keeps the sinner from looking back, and safeguards him from the delusive desires of death" (pg-27).

This book may not be representative of all Orthodox thinking but Fr. Matta is held in wide respect among many Copts as a spiritual teacher. This book, and other of his writings, have been translated into English, and provide a treasure house of contemporary Orthodox theology. Much of this language is already known to the Orthodox, and can therefore be used with ease.

Discipleship is for All

"The Christian life is a life of discipleship", wrote Pope Shenouda, "and all who have believed in Christ are called to be his disciples" (H.H. Pope Shenouda, Discipleship. pg. 7).

For Pope Shenouda, discipleship is a matter of living, not merely an intellectual matter of doctrine. It thus has conditions which must be fulfilled in our daily lives, applying the word of God to life. The sources of our discipleship are not only the Scriptures and spiritual books, but the natural world around us, and also our confessor. And the practise of confession in the Orthodox church is something that evangelical Protestants have much to learn from. The Orthodox teach that everyone should have a spiritual counsellor or guide. This pattern of discipleship has many advantages in that it helps each believer to grow step-by-step in his/her Christian life. More than this, for many who are still "asleep in sin," the act of confession to a priest has been the turning point that has caused them to wake up.

Therefore another question we can often ask is: "When did you last make your confession to Fr. ___?" By working with this pattern of Orthodox discipleship and encouraging it, we can bring many to true repentance, and help many others grow in their walk with Christ.

Conclusion

The language of spiritual sleeping and awakening belongs both to the Bible and the Orthodox tradition. Orthodox renewal theology also always encourages the need for an internal change of heart through the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Cross is the focus of this renewal and the teaching of Scripture is always encouraged. Within these broad boundaries there is great opportunity for encouraging the spiritual renewal of nominal believers within the Orthodox community.

8. The Renewal of the Church in the Middle East

Middle East Council of Churches

The following is from a working paper on church renewal which was finalized by three theologians: Bishop Mousa, of the Coptic Orthodox Church; Canon Nairn Ateek, from the Episcopal Church; Jerusalem, and Ms. Maud Nahas, from the Orthodox Church of Antioch. The document reveals how many Middle Eastern church leaders understand church renewal.

Christian Newness

The churches do not have to invent a renewal: they have simply to receive the event of the newness of Christ, our Lord and Saviour, in all the dimensions of its mystery.

The Renewal of the Churches: the Quest

Renewal is the typical quest of local churches because they live in a situation of "eschatological tension": on the one hand each church is already holy, reflecting the holiness of the Church, the newness of the Spirit and the gift of the Trinitarian Communion to those in Christ's Body. But on the other hand, the members of that Church, inasmuch as they are not yet fully living the mystery of the Church, are still accomplices to the world whence they come and in which they live.

In order properly to pursue the quest of renewal for each local church it is necessary, on the one hand, to root its members more deeply in the newness of the mystery of the Church and, on the other, to find out, in the light of the Spirit of Christ, what is incompatible with and unfaithful to this great gift of newness and heal such wounds, remedy them, and bring about the repentance of the members and of the communities which are gathered together in the local church.

In this respect, the most relevant texts of the New Testament are 1 Corinthians, parts of Hebrews and the "letters to the seven Churches of Asia" (Rev. 2 and 3). It is noteworthy that these texts are all pastoral. It is in this context that the quest of renewal is situated. As such, the texts of the New Testament concerning newness are related to the mystery of the Church. It is thus the growth of the newness of the Church which incessantly calls the local churches to renewal.

The Causes of Obsolescence in the Heart of Christians

Obsolescence (Greek *palaiotis*) is a word of which only one use is recorded in the New Testament (Romans 7:6) but its semantic and thematic presence runs throughout the gospel and the inspired apostolic writings. *Palaiotis* is the very contradiction of the newness which is Christ.

It is important to detect the causes of obsolescence, since renewal seeks to overcome them and to make them vanish. God's word reveals to us the oppressive chain of the causes of obsolescence: Satan, temptation, sin, and lastly, death - the fruit of sin, and the state of separation and of forgetfulness, in which God's image is plunged into darkness.

Since it is concerning temptation that the choice between obsolescence and newness occurs, it would seem appropriate to recall the various forms that obsolescence takes on to seduce the Christians already "reborn" in the newness of their Saviour:

1. A return to the justification by the Law, a regression to the Old Testament.
2. An attachment to the letter, in particular by the "literal" reading of the Holy Scripture separated from the Spirit of the Church.
3. The bondage of the flesh, in the Paulinian sense of the term, through which the powers of Life, wounded by death, are deviated from Him who is Life because He is the Way and the Truth.
4. Lastly, the modern form of the ancient gnosis, the pride of the spirit which brings mystery into line with reason.

Criteria of Renewal in the Life of Local Churches

If one wishes to summarize, from the New Testament witness of the Apostolic Church, the criteria for renewal in the life of local churches, the following could be stated:

1. Being rooted in the sacramental realism of the mystery of Christ, church renewal stems from that newness.
2. Church renewal produces an unity of communion, be that of the members of the local church or that of one Church with the other Churches of Christ in the world. Renewal is not narcissistic but involves the spread of *koinonia*, fellowship, at all levels. *Koinonia*, at all the levels of its manifestation, is indivisible.
3. This unity of communion is for the mission of the local church, which itself is in communion with other churches, especially within the same region. Indeed the mission of the Spirit is for the salvation of all and not just of the baptized.
4. The salvation of all persons, through the communion of churches, is for the glory of the Holy Trinity, from Whom salvation stems.
5. Therefore, to remedy the causes of obsolescence in the hearts of Christians as well as its manifestations in the practice of the Church, it is necessary to become aware of the interplay of the criteria of renewal mentioned: newness, unity, mission and worship.

Forms of Renewal in the Life of the Local Churches

How, practically speaking, can the constant renewal of the local churches manifest and realize itself? The answer to that question concerns itself less with various manifestations of renewal, which can vary according to the Churches and their historical and social particularities, than with those elements of renewal which, by right, are common to all the Churches. Indeed, these elements directly proceed from the four main criteria mentioned in the previous paragraph (newness, unity, mission and worship).

It has been said that the goal of all renewal is to actualize the newness of the mystery of Christ in combat against the causes and the manifestations of obsolescence. It does not, however, consist of a change in forms ("re-forms"), but in a new, renewed experience of

the newness of the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, the prime element of renewal is spiritual. Changes in structure, in organization, in texts and cultural accents, are of the letter and will only have some fecundity through the Spirit that animates them.

It is therefore clear that education is basic to renewal, because Christian education is precisely the transmission of a breath, the living tradition of the Spirit of the Church. There can be no Christian education without such tradition; but, also, there can be no living tradition without such education.

Because all renewal causes communion to flow forth where obsolescence has caused death, it takes the form of a resurrection: the members of the local churches regain life because they are restored into communion with each other. The church communion is manifested as a charismatic community (1 Cor 12). Each member has a function to fulfill in the Body. The recurrent crises in the churches often originate from this: members are reduced to sclerosis, whereas others take over all the functions, with the result that the whole Body becomes paralyzed. And what applies to the communion of the members within a parish, is also true of the parishes within a patriarchate - and of the Churches within the same region. Any division of the Church is a manifestation of obsolescence, and if not a sin, then at least a state of death. In the present situation of the Middle Eastern Churches it may not be necessary to look further for the reason why renewal efforts are either non-existent or stillborn or blocked in their growth.

Because all renewal is oriented by the Holy Spirit towards the mission of the Church, of which He is the vivifying breath, all forms of renewal free the local church from its narcissistic temptation of becoming a community wrapped up in itself. It also frees its members from falling back on their individual selfishness. What is in issue in the combat against obsolescence and in the quest for newness is nothing less than God's plan of salvation for humanity. "For us, persons, and for our salvation ..." is the axis of the life-giving cross where Jesus draws all persons to the Father. Away from this axis, any renewal effort is distorted. The Lord's saying, "whoever seeks to save his life will lose it" also applies to ecclesial communities.

Because any renewal produces a new flourishing of the gifts of communion, it is by itself the glorification of the Father by the Son in the Holy Spirit. For any renewal effort to truly manifest in worship of the Holy Trinity, it needs to be rooted in the event of the newness. That is why the foremost and ultimate element of renewal is its living relationship to the liturgy of the local church. Indeed, it is there that the Holy Spirit inspires the movement of repentance, (Greek *metanoia*) of the celebrating community and gives it the "shape" of the Body of Christ and of His vivifying blood "shed for you and for the multitude." Again, it is when the Eucharist is celebrated in communion that the local church is most deeply "educated" by the Holy Spirit.

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of the Middle East Council of Churches.
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THE POSSIBILITY OF COOPERATION

9. Key Issues and Practical Advice

10. Our Conclusion

9. Key Issues and Practical Advice

David Teague

The previous articles have explored some of the more important historical and theological issues that affect the relationship of Protestant and Orthodox believers in the Middle East. On the personal level, however, when Protestants and Orthodox mingle they are likely to encounter further differences in attitude that can further drive a wedge between them. How should an evangelical Protestant react in such situations in order to build trust?

1. Conflicting Authority Claims

The Orthodox Church, which followed on the heels of the Apostolic Age, historically has claimed to be the only true Church of Christ founded on Scripture. It is this claim of authority and uniqueness that leads to the fairly common Orthodox opinion that Protestant Churches are only "half-Churches," which have lost much of the truth and spirituality of the Apostles.

Although these attitudes are becoming less rigid today, we should be aware that any anti-Protestantism we encounter likely has its roots in this issue. We should also be aware that, for this same reason, evangelical Protestant cooperative involvement with the Orthodox, as important as it may be for the future, should develop in a paced and sensitive fashion, with the initial goal being primarily the building of understanding and trust.

Evangelical Protestants must also realize that we have our own authority claim. While the Orthodox think that their Church is the *faithful* Church, we tend to say our Church is the *pure* Church, free from non-biblical accretions. This belief historically has caused us to hesitate about having contact or involvement with Catholic and Orthodox Christians. It also has caused us to over-emphasize secondary theological differences with them.

To work with the Orthodox we do not have to seek for organizational union. Nor do we have to cease being Protestants. What we have to do is understand our own authority claim in such a way that we can also recognize the apostolic basis and culturally authentic witness of other Trinitarian Churches.

How should you respond when you meet someone who claims that only Orthodoxy is valid? We have found it best to avoid arguments and, instead, to adopt the attitude of a learner. There is a great deal we can learn from the Orthodox and most Orthodox are gracious toward those who sincerely want to learn about their Church. An attitude of humility and graciousness can build trust and affect future evangelical relations with the Orthodox. We each can play our role in building Christian fellowship and mission.

2. Apostolic Succession

Evangelical Protestants may find problems concerning the Orthodox doctrine of apostolic succession. Evangelical Churches lie outside the line of apostolic succession, even though we may be apostolic in our doctrine.

It is important to understand why apostolic succession is so important to the Orthodox. In the days immediately after the time of the Apostles, the Church faced a major challenge from different heresies, especially Gnosticism. Gnosticism claimed to possess the true apostolic tradition. To counter this threat, the Church had to demonstrate that it alone descended from the Apostles.

As part of the defense of the Church against Gnosticism, the function of the bishop became very important. A quick glance through the Christian literature of the second century shows that, in general, all teachers had to be authorized by the bishop, while unauthorized teachers became suspect, regardless of the spiritual benefit of their teaching. This check-and-balance system on spiritual teachers has shaped the Orthodox Church to the present day.

In Egypt we have known of a Coptic renewal leader who had his ministry restricted, perhaps because he seemed too "Protestant." Such news generally causes evangelical missionaries to harden their attitudes toward the Orthodox Churches and to doubt their true spiritual intentions.

In reality, we know that the Coptic Orthodox Church is not against renewal, but is earnestly interested in promoting it through official channels. Church leaders, however, tend to be cautious toward more independent figures. The history of the Coptic Church bears many examples of people with a message who gained a following, only to create a new schism in the Church. Church officials are well aware how leadership functions in the Egyptian culture, and the real danger of schisms, while many Westerners are naive about this. And then there is the question of doctrine. At least one of the more recent renewal leaders seems to have taught some doctrines that seem to be questionable or unfounded. All of these factors can cause the ministries of the more independent leaders to be restricted. For the Orthodox, a concern to guarantee the continuity of an apostolic purity in the teaching ministry of the Church is even more important to them than renewal itself.

Similarly, if we wish to see a long-term relationship develop between evangelical missions and Orthodox Churches, we must be careful to develop a trusting relationship with Orthodox bishops. Communication and openness about what we are doing with the immediate bishopric authority under whom we serve is crucial. As trust is gradually built, so will opportunities for cooperative service increase.

3. A Corporate Witness Requires A Group Structure

The strong sense of individualism found in evangelical Protestantism, for all its shortcomings, does have its value. It has caused us to stress the importance of a personal relationship with Christ, personal prayer, personal piety, and personal discipleship. It has also given countless evangelicals a personal burden to live out the Great Commission. Such individualism is the chief reason why Evangelicalism is effective as a renewal movement. Yet, it also is an important reason why we misunderstand Middle Eastern Christians.

Evangelical Protestants generally understand witness as something largely done by individuals in personal evangelism. But in the Middle East, where people tend to live and act in groups, Christian witness is often conceived as being a function of the Church as a whole. It is very possible to train individuals to do personal evangelism in the region, but many spiritual people simply have never thought of it.

Middle Eastern Christians naturally conceive of witness as something the Church does as a whole, led by the Church leaders. While we may accuse individual Middle Eastern Christians of not being interested in a Christian witness, under the surface they may be very interested indeed. Given the right group situation and the right leader this concern can become evident.

For instance, when miracles were taking place in a Coptic church in Shobra in 1986, I witnessed scores of Coptic young people singing and praying openly in the streets together for hours. Obviously, such an example will always be the exception, given the social realities that exist. But the important thing to note is that people did something in a group situation they would never do alone. In the Middle East, the willingness of individuals to witness in some way or another depends a great deal upon the group opportunities that exist.

Although Middle Easterners often conceive of witness as something that happens through their Church as a whole, the truth is that most parishes do not focus very much energy on witness. The church leaders are usually too absorbed by the needs of the parish to dedicate much time for mission. Those who long for their parish to become a mission center are often frustrated to see it remain mostly a nurture-center. This is also a phenomenon observed in many different Church communions around the world.

What sometimes happens is that those with deeper aspirations, either toward worship or ministry, form themselves into a separate, committed community. Within the Middle East these additional structures historically have taken on many forms - ranging from a contemplative monastery to a special group in a parish dedicated to mission and service. When these other structures exist, a tangible witness often develops.

These structures function *alongside* the local church. They are a part of the greater Church since they were formed *from* the Church, they exist *for* the Church and their ministries of worship and service touch the congregations *within* the local church.

It is frequently said that the Orthodox concept of missions is Church-centered, meaning that mission activity is done by the Church, through the Church, and for the spread of the Church. Unfortunately, the word "church" for most Orthodox refers only to the nurture-center, a body usually too much in need of care and spiritual development to carry on much community witness. But as alternative structures for ministry develop as part of a parish so there will also be an increase in mission activity from the Churches of the Middle East. By understanding the role which such groups can play in Middle Eastern society, we can further encourage indigenous expressions of witness.

4. Some matters of protocol

Protestants who mingle with the Orthodox will sometimes feel awkward and embarrassed over the right protocol to follow. For example, in the Coptic Orthodox Church, should a Protestant kiss the bishop's hand like everyone else? Can you receive Communion from an Orthodox priest? Here are suggestions concerning three of the most common matters of protocol encountered:

Kissing hands

Reportedly, Egyptians in the past would sometimes kiss the hands of their fathers as a sign of respect. The custom remained in the Coptic Orthodox Church as a way of

showing love and respect to a priest. Kissing the hand of a priest or bishop is not an act of popery. Many priests will have you kiss a cross or even withdraw their hand. No one requires you to follow the custom, and no one would object if you did not.

Communion

Communion is open only to Orthodox communicants. The bread distributed freely down the aisles in a mass is not strictly part of the Lord's Supper, but is given in love to all in the Church. Very rarely, individual priests may sometimes permit you to take Communion if you are distantly removed from your own church. If you are allowed Communion, you are expected to follow any preparatory rules that exist.

Relationships between Men and Women

The Middle Eastern Orthodox Church is very conservative in its social customs. Normally, extended conversations and relationships are with people from the same sex. Unfortunately, many Orthodox may have the impression that Western Christians are generally immoral. Accordingly, your own actions and dress should be tasteful.

The Importance Of A Right Attitude

Much of our ability to relate successfully with Orthodox believers depends upon our own attitude and personality. There may be things we encounter that will upset us. But if we look beyond our individual world to discern the whole picture, the little we do, if we do it well, can help influence the direction of Christian cooperation in the Middle Eastern Church. If we go around "smashing icons", we could close doors for another hundred years. We need to be honest with ourselves: if we do not have the right attitude, perhaps we should not attempt to have personal involvement with the Orthodox.

10. Our Conclusion

We have written a brief visionary report that has tried to point out a direction to follow. Admittedly, we have not dealt with all the pitfalls on the way - the practical problems and misunderstandings that are sure to arise whenever there is a new initiative. But we still feel that the direction is the right one to follow, with several guideposts marking the path as we travel toward the future.

1. The first is the firm belief that Protestantism has a most valued role to play in the Middle East. We are not trying to promote a feeling among the Protestant Churches of the Middle East that their birth was some kind of mistake. The Protestant Churches of the Middle East have much in their record of which they can be proud. They have led the way in promoting biblical knowledge in the region. Their concern for personal discipleship has also had an influence on all the Churches of the region. Protestants, for their small numbers, have made enormous intellectual and social service contributions to Middle Eastern society. Lastly, Protestant worship continues to minister deeply to many people who are not open to the Orthodox style of worship. The Protestant Churches of the region should have self-confidence in who they are and what they have accomplished.
2. As evangelical Protestants we also affirm that the Orthodoxy has a vital role to play in God's mission to the region. Instead of working against these Churches, Protestants should find new ways to cooperate with them. Those Protestant Churches of the Middle East which were founded out of a belief that Orthodoxy was "that wicked system" — as one of the early missionaries to Egypt called it — should develop a new reason for existence and a new vision of their place within the whole Middle Eastern Christian community. This is especially true as the spiritual renewal among the Orthodox continues to develop.
3. Protestant mission cooperation with Orthodox Churches should only develop in a sensitive and paced manner. We do not believe there should be an abandonment of Middle Eastern Protestant Churches by mission agencies not a radical re-deployment of personnel. Both Orthodoxy and evangelical Protestantism are just in the first stages of developing an ecumenical awareness, which makes a more hasty involvement risky. We should also be cautious lest we cause an unconscious westernization of these Eastern Churches.
4. We feel that the evangelical missionary movement in the Middle East has much to gain and to contribute by being willing to be ecumenically involved with all the Churches of the Middle East. If we seal ourselves off from the majority of Middle Eastern Christians, we could create misunderstanding, distrust and counter-reaction. If we decide to develop and support projects of cooperation, we will become increasingly accepted and trusted and effective.
5. Many Orthodox leaders view evangelical mission agencies with suspicion because we are independent, parachurch organizations who represent

individuals rather than Churches. We simply do not fit into their ecumenical understanding. To be effective, we must find ways of becoming formally and officially involved with the member Churches of the Middle East Council of Churches.

One way this can happen is for those evangelical agencies that are interested in cooperation to officially appoint someone to represent their agencies to the MECC and its member Churches.

ADDENDUM

A Glossary of Religious Terms in Middle Eastern Orthodoxy

A Simplified Glossary of Religious Terms in Middle Eastern Orthodoxy

I. General Religious Vocabulary

Absolution	Tahlil
Abstinence	Imtin'a
Altar	Madhbah
Ascension	So'ouud
Asceticism	Tawssok, Ta'abbod
Atonement	Kaffarah
Attributes	Sifaat, Sajaayaa
Baptistry	Ma'muudiyya
Benediction	Barakeh, mon'amiah
Censer	Shuuriah
Chalice	Ka'as
Communicants	Mutanaweliin
Communion	Tanaawel
Creed	Qanuun al-emaan
Crossing oneself	Yarshim
Cymbals	Daff
Eucharistic Loaf	Qurbaanet al-hamal
Excommunication	Hirmaan
Godhead	Lahuut
Godliness	Taqwaa
Goodness	Salaah
Holy Synod	al-Majma' al-Muqaddas
Hymn	Tartilah, Tasbihah
Icon	Iquunah
Incarnation	Tajassud
Lord's Supper	al-'Ashaa' al-Rabbaani
Oblation	Qurbaan
Ordination	Rasm
Psalm	Mazmuur
Pulpit	Manbar

Reconciliation	Tassaloh, Musaalahah
Redemption	Fida'
Renunciation	Zuhd
Rite	Taqs
Sacrament	Sirr Muqaddas
Sacrifice	Zabiihah
Salvation	Xhalaas
Sanctification	Taqdiis, Takriis
Sanctity	Qadaasah
Sanctuary	Haikal
Schism	Inshiqaaq
Temptation	Tajribah
Trinity	al-Aqaniim al-Thalaathah
Veneration	Ikraam

II. Religious Vocabulary Common to the Coptic Orthodox Church

TITLES

Archdeacon	Ra'is al-shamamisah
Archpriest	Qummas
Bishop	Mutran Usquf (pl. asaaqifa)
Deacon 'Devoted one'	Shamaas Mukarris (m), Mukarrisa (f) <i>Generally, a layperson dedicated to Christian work but not formally a priest or monk.</i>
Monk	Rahab
Nun	Rahaba Tasooni
The Pope (Coptic)	Qadaset ul-Baba ('His Holiness the Pope') Sayiddna (literally, 'our master') <i>This title can also be used for a bishop.</i>
Priest	'Asiis Abuuna (literally, 'our father')

PLACES

Bishopric	Matraniyya (home of a provincial bishop) Usquifiyya (used for bishopric departments)
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Cathedral	Kathedraiyya
Monastery	Deir
Parish	Abroshiyya (the area of a provincial bishop)

THE COPTIC CALENDAR

Ascension	Eid as-Sa'uud
Christmas	Eid al-milaad (7 January)
Coptic New Year	Ra'as is-sena
Easter	Eid al-Qiyama
Fast of the Apostles	Sawm ir-Rusul (23 days after Pentecost)
Fast before Christmas	Sawm al-Milaad (lasting 43 days)
Fast of Nineveh	Sawm Niniweh (lasting 3 days)
Fast of the Virgin Mary	Sawm al-Adra (8 days)
Feast of Christ's Baptism	Eid al-Ghattaas (19 January)
Feast of the Circumcision	Eid al-Khittaam (14 January)
Feast of the Martyrdom	Eid al-Istishhaad al-Rusulayn
Feast of Peter and Paul	Eid al-Rusul
Feast of the Virgin	Eid al-Adra
"Fifty Days"	Al-Khamsin (50 days of no fasting before Pentecost)
Good Friday	Juma'a al-'Athiim
Great Fast	Sawm al-Kabiir (50 days before Easter)
Maundy Thursday	Khamiis al-Ahad
Palm Sunday	Eid as-sha'aaniin
Passion Week	Usbuu' al-Alaam
Pentecost	Eid Huluul ir-Ruuh il-Qudus
Saturday of Light	Sabt in-Noor