Cairo Journal of Theology

Published by the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo

Hagai Sophia, Istanbul, Turkey

Volume 7
2020

CJT 7 (2020)
http://journal.etsc.org

The *Cairo Journal of Theology* (CJT) is an online academic journal published by the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo. The web address of the journal is: http://journal.etsc.org. An Arabic version is published under the title المجلة اللاهوتية المصرية.

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Message from the Editor

Michael Parker

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Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo

This issue of the journal contains six articles on a variety of subjects ranging from ancient Syriac Christianity to the challenges faced by contemporary Christian seminaries. The first two concern history, the second two were addresses given at ETSC, and the final two are submissions by the editors.

The first article was written by Gerald Lauche, a German missionary who works in Aswan and Cairo and teaches as an adjunct professor at ETSC. His article is on the Sudan Pioneer Mission that works among the Nile Nubians of Upper Egypt. Gerald first presented his research at one of ETSC's Scholars' Seminars in the spring of 2019. Since his work was original and on a little-studied subject, we asked him to turn his lecture into an article, which he graciously did.

The second article concerns the history of Syriac Christianity in the Islamic era, from 600 to 1400. This is the second installment of Dr. Heleen Murre-van de Berg's six lectures, which she gave in the January 2019 term at ETSC. Her major interest in this article, originally presented as her second and third topics, is Syriac Christian literature, but she also discusses a number of other things, including the *millet* system of the Ottoman period and Syriac Christianity in India and China.

The next two articles were originally presented as speeches at ETSC. The first of these, given by Dr. George Sabra, was the chief address of the May 2019 commencement ceremonies at ETSC. Sabra, who is the president of the Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon, spoke of five great challenges faced by theological education in our time: adjusting to advancements in information technology, balancing spiritual formation with responsible social action, living into a commitment to ecumenical Christianity, promoting gender equality, and moving beyond "our obsession with survival" in the Middle East to a move active and effective witness to the Christian faith.

While Sabra's speech addressed broad issues that in many respects apply to theological seminaries all over the world, Dr. Kenneth Bailey presented an address that was a specific challenge to ETSC. Bailey, who died in 2016, spoke at the opening of ETSC's Center for Middle Eastern Christianity (CMEC) in June 2004. His words were personal and passionate. He spoke of the vision that God had given him that the Bible should be studied and interpreted by Middle Eastern Christians, and he made an eloquent plea for the CMEC to take up this challenge as it own. Though this speech is now sixteen years old, it is reprinted here so that it will not be lost in a forgotten file drawer or computer file, and so that the CMEC might be reminded of Bailey's inaugural dream.

Of the last two articles, my own modest contributions to this issue, the first introduces the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Egypt. This document was borrowed by the Egyptian church from its Presbyterian sister church in America in 1933. It is printed here because the English version of the text is

not easily obtainable and because it includes a preamble and supporting biblical citations that the Arabic version available in Egypt lacks. The introduction to the text provides a brief historical background to the Presbyterian Church that created this document and explains the controversial points of theology that were debated in the process of its adoption.

The final article is a review of N.T. Wright's newest offering, *Paul: A Biography* (2018). Wright has written a number of books about Paul, the most impressive being the fourth volume of his much-admired series, *Christian Origins*. This fourth volume, at 1,700 pages, is a massive scholarly treatment of Paul entitled *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (2013). Wright's latest book on Paul, at only 480 pages, is intended for a popular audience. It contains many of the same insights as his earlier works but attempts to answer questions uniquely suited to biography. It is reviewed here because of its own special merits but also to help raise awareness about the work of a great contemporary Christian scholar.

The Development of the Sudan Pioneer Mission into a Mission among the Nile-Nubians 1900-1966

By Gerald Lauche

The Sudan Pioneer Mission (SPM) was founded in Aswan in the year 1900 and was renamed the Evangelical Mohammedan Mission in 1928, the Evangelical Mission in Upper Egypt in 1953, and Fellowship of the Gospel in the Middle East (in German, *Evangeliumsgemeinschaft Mittlerer Osten*) in 1990. The Swiss based Mission on the Nile International (MNI), the former Swiss Evangelical Mohammedan Mission, and later the Swiss Evangelical Nile-Land Mission traces back to the SPM, too. In this article, I will use the original name, SPM, as I will primarily describe the first seven decades of its history.

Front side of the SPM compound, old and new.

General Information about the Nile-Nubians

The Nile-Nubians referred to here are those who occupied the Nile Valley between Aswan in southern Egypt and the area south of Khartoum in Northern Sudan since the fourth century A.D. Today, the Nile-Nubians live between Aswan, Egypt, at the First Cataract and al-Debba, Sudan, between the Third and Fourth Cataracts. This differentiation is necessary in order to avoid confusion with the ethnic groups living in the Nuba Mountains, Uganda, and Kenya who are also called Nubians.

The Nile-Nubians essentially divide into two main groups that must be linguistically distinguished. In Egypt, there are the Fadicca-speaking Nobiin and the Kunuuzi-speaking Kunuuzi Nubians. In the context of SPM's historical development, we will therefore speak generally of Nubians, always referring to the Kunuuzi-speaking Nubians who were the main focus of the SPM and whose settlement area was in and south of Aswan.

Prior to the coming of the Nubians into the Nile Valley, the Cushites were adherents of the Meroitic religion. In the fourth century A.D., the Nubians immigrated into the Nile Valley and mixed with the Cushites, who had been defeated by the Axumite Kingdom. In the sixth century A.D., the three Nubian Kingdoms, which had come into existence in the Nile Valley in

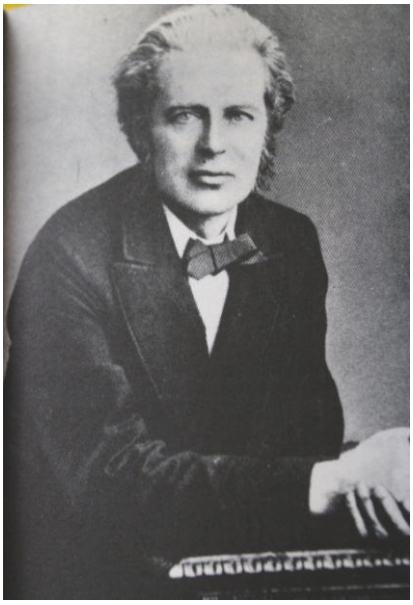
the middle of the fifth century A.D., consecutively accepted Christianity and remained Christians until the process of Islamization began in the fourteenth century.[1] Today, the Nubians are Sunni Muslims and strongly influenced by Sufi Islam.

Map of the Nile Valley

Precursors of the SPM

Before the founding of SPM in the year 1900, several groundbreaking developments took place and several connections between three dedicated, mission-minded, and strategically thinking people were established that were to bring about many positive effects.

The first of these was Henry Grattan Guinness (1835-1910), who had a great vision for the Sudan Belt. Guinness was of Irish origin and worked as a travelling evangelist in Europe and North America. He was spiritually influenced by the Holiness movement in England. Encouraged by Hudson Taylor, Guinness and his wife Fanny founded the East London Training Institute (ELTI) in 1873. This international and interdenominational Bible school trained devout Christians from Europe and Africa of various strata of society for missionary service. Before long, reaching the people groups in the Sudan Belt, unreached at that time, became his highest priority. The Sudan Belt encompassed the geographic sub-Saharan region from Senegal in the West to Ethiopia in the East. Guinness collaborated in launching several missionary initiatives aimed at reaching the Sudan Belt, some of which however failed. After the quelling of the Mahdi uprising in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan in September of 1898, the way seemed open for a Sudan mission, using the Nile as an access route. Guinness was a charismatic and visionary pioneer who set up and supported new initiatives and then delegated responsibilities to others until finally he was able to withdraw from them altogether.[2]



Henry Grattan Guinness

[1]Roland Werner, *Das Christentum in Nubien. Geschichte und Gestalt einer afrikanischen Kirche* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2013), 39-45, 50-65, 136-177.
[2]Cf. *Klaus* Fiedler, *Ganz auf Vertrauen. Geschichte und Kirchenverständnis derGlaubensmissionen* (Gießen,Basel:Brunnen Verlag, 1992), 70-77. Christof Sauer, *Reaching the Unreached Sudan Belt: Guinness, Kumm and the Sudan-Pioneer-Mission* (Nürnberg:Verlag für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft, 2005),43-81.

Another important figure was Herman Karl Wilhelm Kumm (1874-1938), who had a vision for the unreached. Kumm grew up in Osterode, Germany, in the Harz Mountains. Raised in the Lutheran tradition, he had a conversion experience in 1894 and felt called to missionary service in 1895. A year later, he began his missionary training at ELTI, the institution founded and directed by Guinness. In 1898 Kumm became a staff member of the North Africa Mission. Being stationed in Alexandria, he quickly discovered his passion for the Bedouins in the oases of the Libyan Desert. When in 1899 Guinness needed a companion for his travels south, Kumm seemed to be a suitable person for this purpose, having excellent local knowledge. Presumably, Kumm's vision for the Sudan Belt grew during this time, being under Guinness's direction and influence. On this journey, Guinness's daughter Lucy accompanied him, and she and Kumm fell in love and became engaged on January 11, 1900, in Aswan. At this time, Kumm left the North Africa Mission and along with Guinness founded the SPM. Aswan was chosen as starting point of the newly established mission, with the aim of advancing to the Sudan Belt from there.[3]

Herman Karl Wilhelm Kumm

The third key person in the history of the SPM was the Kunuuzi-Nubian Samuel Ali Hiseen (henceforth: SAH) (1863-1927). Born in Northern Nubia in 1863, he came to Europe as a Muslim boy in 1873 after having been invited to accompany the evangelist François-Henri Lavanchy-Clarke to Switzerland when he found the boy living on Cairo's streets. The Christian manufacturer Theodor Necker from Geneva initiated and financed this undertaking. The ten-year-old Nubian boy was trained in a well-known boarding school in Peseux, Neuchatel, and decided to follow Christ during his school days. On August 15, 1875, he was baptized in the Église évangelique libre des Granges de Sante-Croix (canton of Waadt) by the Reverend Otto Stockmeyer. Born Muhammed Ali Hiseen, he assumed the name Samuel at his baptism and experienced during the baptismal act his calling into full-time ministry as an evangelist. In 1879, Necker sent him to Guinness's ELTI. The years at ELTI had a profound impact on SAH. During this time, Guinness wrote an article about SAH's childhood and teenage years that unfortunately has been lost. In 1880, SAH started preparatory courses in

Samuel Ali Hiseen (SAH)

Gerald Lauche, *The Development of the "Sudan Pioneer Mission" into a Mission among the Nile-Nubians (1900-1966)*, unpublished D.Th. dissertation (UNISA, 2015), 117-118.
[3]Ibid., 118-119. Cf. Sauer, *Unreached Sudan Belt*, 82-123.Peter James Spartalis, *Karl Kumm. Last of the Livingstones. Pioneer Missionary Statesman* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1994), 1-19.

Beirut for his intended medical studies. When his sponsor, Necker, suddenly died, SAH's financing came to a halt. Eventually, after spending some time in England and Switzerland, he returned to Cairo in 1884. There, SAH was teaching first in a Protestant and then in a Catholic school. Both jobs turned out to be a disappointing experience for him. Shortly afterwards, his relatives persuaded him to return to his hometown of Ficcikol, Abu Hoor, in northern Nubia, where he was to live for thirteen years as the sole Christian. Both culturally and linguistically he had to undergo a socialization process, having alienated himself from his Nubian people because of the years he had spent abroad. After an initial period of observation and waiting, he became increasingly bold in witnessing for Christ, which almost cost him his life. He barely survived a knife attack and, much to the surprise of all the people attending a public village meeting, offered the perpetrator forgiveness and reconciliation. In those years of quiet testimony, SAH matured significantly and became increasingly confident as a witness to Christ. In 1898, being a translator for an English officer, he took part in the quelling of the Mahdi uprising by the Anglo-Egyptian army. After this conflict, he worked for the Egyptian post office in Aswan and Shellal, where boats traveling between Egypt and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan landed.[4]

The Founding of the Sudan Pioneer Mission

In 1900 Guinness, his daughter Lucy, and Karl Kumm returned to Aswan for the planned formation of a ministry aimed towards the Sudan Belt. As an engagement gift, as it were, Guinness handed the responsibility for the newly founded SPM over to Karl and Lucy. Guinness and Kumm enlisted the aid of a Coptic couple to teach in and run a small primary school, which was intended primarily for Nubian and Beja children. When Guinness, in search of a Nubian co-worker for the ministry, was made aware of SAH working at the post office, he went to meet him and was immediately convinced that SAH was exactly the person needed for the work. His spiritual maturity, Western education, and multilingualism were exactly what the SPM needed. SAH responded positively and without hesitation, perceiving the request as an opportunity to fulfill his life's calling. When SAH joined the ministry, the SPM was poised to begin its mission to the Nubian people. The mission's first step was to reach out to the Nubians and Bejas in the immediate area around Aswan. Then it envisioned work in the South, Kordofan, and Darfur. Its final step would be to advance into the entire region of the Sudan Belt.

The mission would engage, at least initially, in the following activities:

1. Scripture colportage
2. Primary school education
3. Evangelization
4. Translation work
5. Medical work

In October 1900 the SPM was founded in Germany and registered as a society in Eisenach. The Reverend Julius Dammann opened his home in Eisenach to the SPM as its first headquarters, and the Reverend Theodor Ziemendorff of Wiesbaden became its first chairman.[5]

[4]Lauche, *Sudan Pionier Mission*, 163-198. Cf. Samuel Ali Hussein, Aus meinem Leben (Wiesbaden: Verlag der Sudan-Pionier-Mission, 1920).
[5]Ibid., 120-121. Sauer, *Unreached Sudan Belt*, 134-146. 181-198.

SAH's Importance for the Nubian mission

The development of the SPM's orientation into a mission among Nubians is essentially due to SAH. Analyzing the years leading up to the SPM's founding shows that SAH had been prepared for the ministry in a unique manner. Kumm saw his potential, put him in a position of responsibility, and sent him on an exploratory trip to Dongola in 1900 as his first major assignment. During this trip, distributing Bible literature, doing translation work, and collecting geopolitical data were primary tasks. After performing these services, SAH worked steadily as an evangelist, medical assistant, manager of the SPM bookshop, and Arabic and Nubian language teacher for the new missionaries arriving from Switzerland and Germany. From 1915-1924, the years during and after World War I, he also faithfully administered the SPM's property.

SAH's primary contribution was his linguistic work. With the help of German scholars H. Schäfer, H. Junker, D. Westermann, and C. Meinhof, he created literacy materials and produced ethnographic and biblical texts. Supervised by H. Schäfer and H. Junker, he translated the four gospels into Kunuuzi, which were printed in 1912 by the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in Berlin. He also translated some Old Testament passages and nearly all the remaining New Testament books, but these were never published.

From 1900 until his death on March 8, 1927, he worked faithfully for the SPM and proved to be absolutely loyal to it. Though he was often referred to in the SPM's publications as a mere assistant, SAH was in fact the main pillar of the organization's ministry among the Nubians.[6] From a strategic point of view, the calling of SAH to be an evangelist was the most influential decision of the founders. He was uniquely prepared for promoting the vision and taking on a key role in the development of the SPM during the first decades of its existence. His tombstone appropriately says: "Here rests Samuel Ali Hiseen, the first fruit of those who returned to the faith of their forefathers and the faithful evangelist of the German mission …"[7]

The Stakeholders of the Nubian Vision

Significantly, over the first six decades reviewed in this article, the SPM was constantly provided with missionaries who embodied the Nubian vision. The following are the five principal missionaries of this period.

Samuel Jakob Enderlin (1878-1940) was a missionary and lecturer. He and his wife, Elisabeth, were the only SPM workers who observed close up the life of SAH from 1903 until his death in 1927. SAH taught him Kunuuzi Nubian, and through several exploratory journeys southwards, Enderlin opened the first Nubian SPM base in Koshtamne, about 90 km south of Aswan, in 1926. In 1932, the School of Oriental Studies in Cairo appointed Enderlin to be a lecturer for Arabic, Nubian dialects, and Nubian history. Simultaneously, he started a ministry and gathered Nubians for regular meetings in the German-Nubian Club in the capital. He was supported in this by younger SPM missionaries. Unfortunately, it had to be abandoned with the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 and was not continued after the war. However,

[6]Lauche, *Sudan Pionier Mission*, 241-273. Cf. Samuel Ali Hussein, *Der Erstling aus Mohrenland. Samuel Ali Hussein: Ausmeinem Leben* (Wiesbaden: Missionsverlag Wiesbaden, 1932).
[7]Translation of the tombstone (kept by the SPM in Aswan) inscription from Arabic to English by the author.

the ministry south of Aswan in the village of Dakke and later in West Seheel would still be pursued.[8]

Willy Gerson Fröhlich (1880-1957) was a Swiss ophthalmologist who came to Egypt in 1906 to establish the SPM's medical work in Aswan and Daraw (40km north of Aswan). In addition to that, he implemented medical outreaches with an evangelistic focus to surrounding villages. During his visits, SAH acted as a medical assistant and evangelist. SAH taught him Nubian so that he could communicate with his patients. With the outbreak of World War I in July 1914, all German workers were prohibited from continuing their ministries. Fröhlich however, being a Swiss doctor, was allowed to carry on until September 1915 when he, too, was forced to leave Egypt, which ended his ministry with the SPM.[9] It is important to note that the SPM missionaries in Aswan, Daraw, and Edfudid did *not work* exclusively among Nubians. Medical and educational services as well as biblical texts and Christian literature were offered to all people regardless of their social, educational, religious, or ethnic background.[10]

Abbas (Daniel) Samuel Ali (1896-1918) was SAH's son. Though never an official co-worker of the SPM, he developed a spiritual passion to share the gospel with his own people group, the Kunuuzi Nubians. In February 1910, he and his sister Maryam were baptized in the SPM church in Aswan, and he assumed the name *Daniel*. In 1914, at the age of about eighteen, he started to study theology at the theological seminary of the American Mission in Cairo. Due to the involuntary absence of the SPM workers during the years of World War I, Samuel Zwemer became his main promoter and paternal mentor during his studies. In 1912 a first invitation to work among Nubians in Cairo was issued by the Egypt General Mission. In 1915 Abbas succeeded in initiating a promising work among Nubians in the capital. Using the Nubian gospels his father had translated, Abbas gathered Nubian men in groups of up to 250 people around him for Bible discussions. Unfortunately, he died of tuberculosis unexpectedly early in 1918, cutting short the ministry of a potential SPM worker before it could even begin.[11]

The teacher *Gertrud von Massenbach* (1883-1975) joined the SPM ministry in 1909 and, as a student of SAH, worked on the Kunuuzi Nubian language throughout her career with the SPM. She published several text collections, a grammatical sketch with a dictionary, and Bible tracts. In addition to these activities, she focused on sharing the gospel in the SPM center in Aswan and during her numerous visits to villages – often under the most difficult climatic conditions.[12]

Finally, *Elisabeth Herzfeld* (1890-1966) was a medical missionary for the SPM from 1926 to 1966, though her ministry was interrupted several times, especially during and immediately after World War II.[13] Emma Brunner Traut eulogized her on the occasion of her death in 1966: "All human desire Elisabeth Herzfeld sublimated to the one longing, to share the good news with her sisters in Nubia again. To the land that had forgotten the name of Christ …she again carried the biblical stories through words and songs. Not teaching and arguing in

[8]Lauche, *Sudan Pioneer Mission*, 323-332, 361.
[9]Ibid., 320, 361.
[10]Ibid., 368-371.
[11]Ibid., 229-230, 361-362.
[12]Ibid., 332-343, 362.
[13]Ibid., 343-348, 362-363.

theological discussions, but unassumingly and vividly as her audience was able to understand."[14]

In addition to these key figures in the mission, there were a number of other contributors well worthy of mention. The SPM executive board as well as the extremely active team in the SPM headquarters in Wiesbaden, Germany, continuously supported the development of the work among Nubians. Among them, pastor and longstanding SPM chairman Theodor Ziemendorff was particularly important to the work. Special mention is also owed to the Swiss branch of the SPM and to its successor organization, the Swiss Evangelical Nile-Land Mission (the present-day Mission on the Nile International). The Swiss cooperated and provided much support, especially in the crisis years during and after the two World Wars. The continuation of the work would not have been possible without the help of these Swiss friends.

The SPM is also indebted to a number of its missionaries who provided information about the mission's work to supporters and the general public through the organization's various journals and news outlets. Further, SAH with the encouragement and help of his German colleagues produced a two-volume autobiography. Also, Gertrud von Massenbach and Elisabeth Herzfeld produced several Nubia-focused monographs. Finally, the SPM had the privilege of obtaining competent support from leading Egyptologists, Africanists, and linguists such as H. Schäfer, H. Junker, D. Westermann, and C. Meinhof. At times some of these scholars were even SPM board members, setting an impressive example for a fruitful symbiosis between science and mission.

Concluding Thoughts

The SPM was the *only* mission to be focused on reaching the Kunuuzi Nubians. This niche was accepted and valued by various mission organizations. This was true even of the American Mission, which was predominant in Egypt and tended to consider the whole country to be *its field*. Yet implementing the SPM's Nubian vision was not easy.

Though there were a number of factors that had a negative effect on the work among Nubians, two stand out. First, the SPM was never able to move beyond its base among the Nubians in, around, and south of Aswan. Various SPM co-workers undertook several exploratory journeys to Sudanese Nubia during the first six decades of the mission, yet they did not succeeded in expanding into these areas because the British government, for political reasons, forbade it from doing so. Second, despite efforts at negotiation with the American Mission, the two mission organizations were never able to agree on a comity agreement that would have allowed the work to be pursued more effectively. Consequently, the ministry was consolidated in Aswan and in the surrounding areas and limited its efforts to work among Upper-Egyptians, Nubians, and Bejas.

In the years following World War II, returning missionaries succeeded in reestablishing the ministry in Old Nubia. Yet an increasing institutionalization of the ministry in Aswan and Daraw can be observed, and the original vision for an expansive work among Nubians became secondary after 1966. Still, in the 1970s and '80s, the work among the Nubians came to life

[14]Elisabeth Brunner-Traut, in *Elisabeth Herzfeld, Das Kreuz am Rande der Wüste*(Wiesbaden: Verlag der Evangelischen Mission in Oberägypten,1966), 13-14.Translation from German to English by Andrew Craston.

again, both in Northern Sudan and Upper Egypt, causing many to look hopefully to the future.[15]

The SPM, admittedly, has not yet succeeded in planting churches among its target groups. Yet the missionaries' humble, faithful, and sacrificial lifestyle and their decades-long perseverance in medical, social, educational, and evangelistic ministries have led to long-lasting and deeply rooted relationships of trust in the local community. These may yet lead to individual and collective fruit, by God's grace and in His time.

Dr. (UNISA) Gerald Lauche

Born in 1956 in Giessen, Germany, he studied Theology, Islamics, and Linguistics in Adelshofen, Gießen, Aberdeen, and Pretoria. Since 1985 he has been a member of the Evangeliumsgemeinschaft Mittlerer Osten, based in Wiesbaden, and since 1987, he ministers as a theologian in Aswan and Cairo. He is also a part-time lecturer in missiology at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo.

[15]Lauche, *Sudan Pioneer Mission*, 363-367.

A History of Syriac Christianity, Part II

By Heleen Murre-van den Berg

Dr. Murre-van den Berg presented a series of six lectures at ETSC during the period January 16-19, 2019. Below are lectures two and three in this series, which have been edited for conciseness and clarity. She is professor of Eastern Christianity and director of the Institute of Eastern Christian Studies at Radboud University Nijmegen.

Lecture 2

The Syriac Churches in the Islamic Period 600-1400

Today we will study the Syriac churches in the Islamic period from 600 to 1400.The Umayyad Caliphate (661-750) was the second caliphate after the death of Muhammad, which became very important for the Syriac Christians. After the initial shock of the Muslim conquest, Christians started to realize that in the new Islamic Caliphate they might be freer than they had been under the suzerainty of the Byzantine Empire. The Muslim rulers did not care what the denomination of their Christian subjects was, be it Chalcedonian or Miaphysite or Nestorian, and thus life became easier for those not belonging to the Chalcedonian Byzantine majority, whether East or West Syriac. It was only later that they realized that Islam would present new challenges for Christians.

Though some Christians converted to Islam, most Syriac Christians remained true to the faith. However, they, like other Christians, had to find new ways to relate to the state. With the Islamic conquest, the old boundary between the Persian and the Byzantine empires had disappeared. In this new geopolitical environment, the churches were no longer confined either to the Persian or Byzantine empires. The Syriac Orthodox Church, for example, started to take advantage of this new situation and expanded into north Iraq even though this region previously was mostly dominated by the Church of the East. At the same time, however, the Church of the East had also started to expand; its movement was eastward as well, but into Central and East Asia. In the seventh century it reached as far east as China. Roughly in the same period, the third Syriac group, the Maronite Church, moved westward where it began to rival the Syriac Orthodox Church, with which it had much in common, but from which it also wanted to distinguish itself. In this period, the Maronite patriarchate settled in the Qadisha Valley in Lebanon.

In this period all three churches further developed their liturgies. *Qadisha* is a very important Syriac word meaning "holy." If you listen to the Syriac liturgies, this may be one of the first words that you learn. One thing that can be dated to this particular period is that these three churches developed their own liturgies. They may in fact have developed them much earlier, but this is the first period in which we have them in written form.

A sixth century Syriac manuscript with a canon table that tells the reader what to read from the gospels.
Insert 1

There were three Syriac rites: West Syriac, East Syriac, and Maronite. Each had its own set of hymns, prayers, lectionaries, and Eucharistic prayers. What we find is that the West Syriacs, which is the Syrian Orthodox, are the closest to the Byzantine liturgy. The Church of the East, which we call East Syriac, until today has retained much of its original form, with elements that are found in none of the other churches. The East Syriac liturgy, for example, lacks the institution narrative as it was constructed from the texts in the Gospels and in 1 Corinthians. Earlier it was thought that the East Syriac Church "lost" this particular narrative part that is common to all other liturgies in East and West. Currently, however, scholars tend to think that in fact the East Syriac form is older and that other Christians added this particular passage at a later point. The East Syriac liturgy "of Addai and Mari" first refers to Christ's suffering, death and resurrection and then invokes the Holy Spirit to "rest upon this offering."

In this period, liturgy books become more common. The bulk of the manuscripts that have survived until today are from a later period, but we have at least one manuscript from the sixth century—and in fact it may even be older than this (see insert 1). It tells you which part of the gospels you have to read, and how they relate to each other. For example, it shows how the stories in Luke correspond to those in Mark and Matthew. Note the fruit depicted on the page; this is an important part of the imagery the churches employed.

Syriac Literature of Islam, 600 to 1400

In the early Islamic period, Syriac Christians started to write apocalyptic literature. Though they did not necessarily see Islam as a threat to their religion as such, the quick succession of rulers and the violence that came with them made many Syriac Christians think that they were living in the End of Times. Some of their authors connected the threat posed by the Islamic conquests with what they learned from the Book of Daniel—that is, the world would see a succession of kingdoms, inaugurating the end times. Some indeed thought that the Islamic caliphate would be the last kingdom. After

Monastic text from the fifteenth century
Insert 2

some decades of living within the Islamic empire, they realized that Islam had succeeded in creating a stable empire and that, after the shock of the conquest, hoped that things would return to normal. Gradually, the interest in apocalyptics disappeared.

Let me now mention a number of important authors of the Syriac Churches. First, there is the polymath Jacob of Edessa (d. 708), who wrote about exegesis, hymns, and history. It is important to study him in order to gain an understanding of the Syriac Orthodox Church. Isaac of Nineveh (seventh century) was from the Church of the East. He was one of the first to write monastic, mystical treatises. In in this period, monasticism, which includes both monks living in monastic communities and those living nearby as hermits, became increasingly important. In this milieu, Isaac became a very popular author not only within the Church of the East but also among the West-Syriac and Byzantine monastics. It is in these two traditions that he is mostly remembered and valued today, while the Church of the East has mostly forgotten about him (although the Church of the East is in the process of rediscovering him now). Another important East Syriac writer of the seventh century is Gabriel of Qatar. He wrote a very important commentary on the liturgy of the Church of the East, and he is one of best sources for understanding liturgical developments in this period. Finally, I want to mention Bawai the Great (d. 627/8). He was one of the most famous patriarchs of the Church of the East, and he is important for giving the church visibility in this period and, as a theologian, synthesizing Church-of-the-East theology.

Popular texts from this period include the *Lives of the Saints*, starting with Mat Maryam (St. Mary), Mat Shmuni, Mar Mari, and Mar Thomas ("Mar" means "Lord" but also "Saint," while Mat used for female saints). There are also the lives of the saints specific to the Syriac tradition, such as Mar Benham and Mat Sarah, Mar Augin, Mar Zayʿa, and Rabban Hormizd. We also find popular dialogue poems, which built upon the earlier models of Ephrem and Narsai. In these poems there is a very lively going back and forth between two main characters that speak with each other in alternating verses. Because these are written from a first person perspective, the poems can be used to enact plays in which the two parts are presented by different actors. For example, the dialogues between Jesus and Mary or between Jesus and the robber on the cross are often staged on Easter Monday. These were all popular poems intended to help ordinary people understand the stories of the Bible. And like the lives of the saints, they were read, copied, and translated from this period until today.

Some of the names in these stories are familiar and venerated all over the Christian world, but others are more particular to the Syriac tradition, for example the name Shmuni. According to the Syriac tradition, this was the name of the mother of the seven brothers of the Maccabees. They were killed gruesomely by the soldiers of King Antiochus (usually identified with Antiochus IV Epiphanes, ca. 215-164 BCE). Shmuni is a very popular saint especially because she was a mother who suffered intensely because her sons were killed before her eyes. Together with Mary, she became the image of the suffering mother in difficult times. Other popular saints were Mar Behnam, Mat Sarah, Mar Augin, and Mar Zayʿa from North Iraq. According to tradition, Behnam and Sarah converted to Christianity and were killed because of it, whereas Mar Augin and Mar Zayʿa were monks who were important in establishing monasticism in this region. Another is Rabban Hormizd who founded the famous monastery near present-day Alqosh, Iraq, which until today bears his name.

The names of the saints also appear in the so-called "magic bowls" that were used as protective objects in the Aramaic traditions (Christian, Jewish, and Mandaic) of the region. Some of the formulas that the groups used were similar to one another, as were the things these for which inscribed bowls were supposed to provide protection: illnesses, infertility, the loss of houses and spouses, and whatever other terrible things could happen. The bowls differed from each other in script (using the script that was used in a particular community) and in the use of particular saints – Christians saints in the Christian bowls and others in those of other religions. The bowls, which may have origins in the region long before the rise of Christianity, at some point ceased to be used, but much of what they were supposed to do was later assigned to amulets. These also invokes the saints in protective formulas. One saint in particular stands out, St. George/Gergis (Mar Giwargis in Syriac), who is often portrayed as fighting the devil on protective amulets.

These amulets remind us that in reviewing the history of the Syriac churches, there is always both the official religion and popular or "vernacular" religion, the religion of the liturgy and the nicely written manuscripts, and a less complicated religion that was often transmitted by the priests who emerged from the common people. In fact, it was these priests who often wrote the protective verses on the amulets.

Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258)

In the Abbasid period the period during the Umayyad Caliphate, the Church of the East suddenly found itself in the center of things. Previously, the Church of the East had been on the periphery of the powers that be. However, the Abbasids moved the center of their empire to the newly built city of Baghdad, which was very close to Seleucia Ctesiphon where the Church of the East had long had its center. The patriarchate was then moved to Baghdad, and the patriarch of the East soon became the most important Christian cleric at the court.

It was here that a period of great intellectual and scientific flowering emerged, to which the learned men of the Church of the East, and to a lesser extent also of the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Church, contributed significantly. They were included in fundamental discussions over theology, language, philosophy, medicine, and science because they were at home in a long tradition of learning and because many of them read Greek, the most important language of science until that time. This Greek tradition of learning became very important in the further development of both Christian and Islamic theology. Syriac Christians contributed by making translations from Greek into Syriac, and then from Syriac into Arabic. It was easier for them to translate from Syriac to Arabic than from Greek directly into Arabic because they were already used to translating from Greek into Syriac. Also, translation from Syriac into Arabic was relatively easy because the languages are so similar. One name to remember is Ḥunain ibn Isḥaq (809-873), the head of Dayr al-Ḥikma (House of Wisdom), an institution that was central in translation work. But Christians were influential not just because of their learning. Christian leaders like Patriarch Timothy I, who headed the church from the 780s to the 820s, was regularly invited to the court of the Caliph as one as the advisors to the court and as a discussant over theological issues. His letters give us some idea of the importance of his position. In other places, Timothy writes about the expansion of the Church of the East into India, Central Asia, and China.

Though it was especially the Church of the East that benefitted from this period, the Syriac Orthodox Church also profited from the intellectual engagements. Towards the end of the Abbasid period, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Syriac Orthodox produced a high quality of visual art than the Church of the East, with manuscripts and also with metal work such as the beautiful jar in Insert 3. The art of the time, as one can see, makes use of all the elements of what is usually called "Islamic art," but which perhaps is less "Islamic" than Mesopotamian or, even broadly, the Middle East. As one can see, upon a closer look, the jar has a beautiful image of an enthroned Mary with Jesus on her lap.

Medieval Syriac metal work from the twelfth or thirteenth centuries.

Insert 3

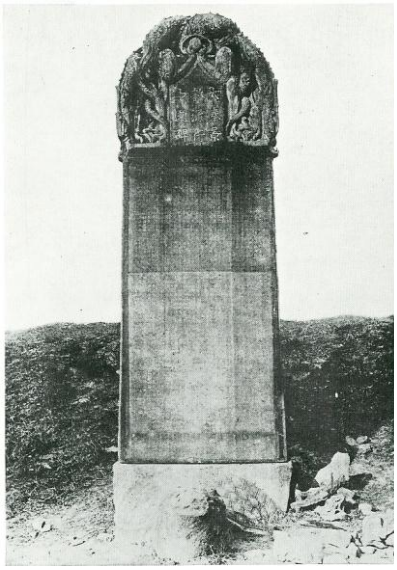
As noted above, this is also the period when the Church of the East expanded further into Asia. In the 1620s Jesuit missionaries in China found a stele (a stone pillar) called the Xi'an Stele (also known as the "Nestorian Stele"), which dates back to 781 (see insert 4). Most of the inscription on the stele is written in Chinese, but at the bottom there are names in Syriac. The stele records that there was a missionary called Alopen who came to China laden with books and successfully converted some Chinese to Christianity. About a hundred years after Alopen, this stele was erected to commemorate his work and praise the then government for its protection of Christians.

When the stele was found in the seventeenth century, few really believed that it was authentic—it was seen as a way for the Jesuits to support their work in China.

However, when this find was connected to the letters of Timothy (referred to above), and when later similar steles and a number of texts (also found in later manuscripts) were discovered that confirmed the presence of the Church of the East in China, more and more scholars became convinced that it was actually genuine. It is now widely accepted that there was a Christian community in this region from the seventh century until about the year 1000. At that point, the political context in China became increasingly difficult for Christians. However, when in the thirteenth century the Mongols conquered most of China, the Church of the East once again was able to flourish in this region.

Let me add a few notes on the Mongol period in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. During this time, the center of the Church of the East moved from Baghdad steadily northward towards the centers of the Mongol power—areas where there were already many Christian communities. One of their important cities was Maragha, now in the Azerbaijan province of Iran.

In general, in this period Syriac churches were found all along the northern arc of the Fertile Crescent, and there were also Christian communities in Iran, Central Asia, China, and India. Towards the end of the Mongol period, however, things became very difficult for the Syriac Christians of Central and East Asia, and they increasingly became concentrated in the northern areas of present-day Northwest Iran, North Iraq, and Eastern Turkey. The Syriac Orthodox Church, to be found also in North Iraq and Eastern Turkey, maintained some of its presence in large parts of Anatolia and Syria, including areas of present-day Lebanon and Palestine.



The Xi'an Stele, discovered in 1625 near Xian, China.
Insert 4

The long period of this Caliphate, from 750 to the fall of Baghdad in 1258, also includes the era of the Crusades. For the Syriac churches, this was the first time that they had direct and intensive contact with the Roman Catholic Church, something I will return to later.

Syriac Gospel lectionary (Mardin, ninth century) (https://www.vhmml.org/readingRoom/)

Insert 5

Syriac Literature of the Abbasid Period

The literature from the Abbasid period saw several cultural developments not seen in the earlier period. One thing that becomes very important is grammars and dictionaries. This is the first period—more than in the earlier Greek period—that the Arabic and Syriac languages were used alongside each other in many of the Syriac churches. Consequently, scholars needed grammars and dictionaries in order to be able to teach and to make translations between languages. During this time, many of the learned Syriac Christians wrote in both Arabic and Syriac, and they probably also spoke both Arabic and Syriac (or at least some form of each of these languages). This does not necessarily mean that the church was composed of different ethnic groups ("Arabs" and "Syriacs"), although it is likely that some Syriac-speakers already switched to Arabic in this era. Moreover, people often used different languages for different purposes, and it might well be that texts in Syriac were meant for different audiences than the

texts in Arabic. The latter may have been intended for the educated lay people while the former was for the clergy.

One of the most important authors of this period is Hasan Bar Bahlul, a tenth-century bishop in Baghdad who wrote a Syriac-Arabic dictionary. Thomas of Maragha, a monk and patriarch of the Church of the East from 837 to 850, gave us an important historical source, the *Book of Governors*. This was about the leaders of the monasteries, and so gave a monastic history. Insert 5 shows a manuscript from this period. This beautiful gospel text is called a lectionary in which the Gospel readings for each Sunday are collected.

Lecture 3

The Ottoman Empire

Today we will talk about the Ottoman period. Among other things, we will discuss the *millet* system; the relationship with the Roman Catholics who were for the first time very much present in the Middle East; and civil law for Christians. We will also pay special attention to the Church of the East, the Chaldeans, and India.

Let me first say a few things about Ottoman studies. Over the last ten to twenty years Ottoman studies has become a very active field. This is because the Ottoman archives have become more accessible and more material has been digitized, which has allowed scholars from all over the world to understand better how the Ottoman Empire ruled its subjects. They were very bureaucratic and so they recorded everything. Towards the end of the class we will read one of the letters in the correspondence of the Ottoman Empire to show you how it worked. I will also pay attention to the manuscripts that were found in the libraries of the Syriac churches, which were the basis of my research. These manuscripts all have colophon (inscriptions at the final pages indicating the author, the place of writing, the clergy in charge, and, sometimes, those who contributed to the costs).These colophons are an important source for understanding the ecclesial dynamics of the period.

A merchant's home in Damascus.
Insert 6

Starting from all the very interesting research that is going on, what we need now is more integration. Individual scholars tend to assume a single perspective: the Ottoman, Armenian, Coptic, Syriac, or some other perspective. What needs to be done now is to combine these perspectives into a single picture in order to gain a better understanding of what the Ottoman period meant for all its subgroups. This is very complicated because you need people who know many different languages, including Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, Greek, Syriac, Persian, and others. Therefore, scholars in the field (most of whom know only a few of these) have to read each other's work and try to understand where we are now. And then we have, as I said in

the first lecture, the difference between historians and theologians. Theologians so far have not been very interested in the Ottoman period. I would argue that they should be interested because the Ottoman period is a crucial step towards the modern period. Put simply, to understand the contemporary situation and theologies of the Eastern and Oriental churches, one also needs to study the Ottoman period.

In the early sixteenth century, the Ottomans expanded their rule to cover the Arab provinces, which were the areas where most of the Syriac Christians found themselves. These include what we today call Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and also the Eastern part of Anatolia and the Hakkari mountains. After the initial difficult years of fighting and regime change, things soon became more stable, and the Ottomans established a fairly strong central rule in Istanbul. They made sure that the provincial governors remained connected to the center because they were regularly changed. Sometimes you had local dynasties, but there was always control from the center. The Ottomans were not interested in converting people to Islam; they were mostly interested in peace and stability. What is more, the income of the *jizya* tax from the Christians made a welcome addition to the Sultanate's income, which also contributed to a certain stability for all groups in the empire.

This stability also included increasing trade with the West as well as with Iran and India. Western traders often made use of Ottoman Christians and Jews to help them navigate the local rules, language, and culture. In turn, these Christians and Jews profited from better tax regimes than those who did not work for westerners. Overall, this meant there was more money in the Christian and Jewish communities than formerly. Compared to the fourteenth century, the fifteenth century brought the Christians stability, a bit more wealth, and not as much local oppression as there had been earlier.

Despite these generally favorable circumstances, there remained a fundamental difference between Muslims and non-Muslims. The rules governing non-Muslims are often referred to as the *millet* system, about which we will speak in a minute. However, we should know that the Ottomans made another distinction that is of importance for our discussion, the distinction between *raya* (flock) and *ashiret* (semi-independent tribes). The *raya* were the people, mostly Christians, which in the *millet* system were the subjects treated as *dhimmi* (the "protected people" of the book). The term *ashiret* referred to the independent tribes, which included the Kurds but also Christians. They lived in areas that were mostly outside direct Ottoman control and that were governed by local rulers who paid tribute to the Ottomans. This was also true in the Kurdish areas, where Kurdish Agha's ruled over the Kurdish tribes. Most of the Christians in this region were also considered as tribes and were part of the Kurdish tribal federations. Like the Kurds, they were allowed to carry weapons (something forbidden to Christians under *millet* regulations) and could fight alongside the Kurds if needed. Overall, despite the fact that the Kurds were generally in charge, the Hakkari Christians of the Church of the East were allowed more independence than their co-religionists elsewhere in the Ottoman or Persian Empire. Note that to some extent this worked the same way for the Maronites in the Lebanon Mountains and for some of the Christian Bedouins in Jordan.

The Three *Millets* and Their *Millet Bashi* ("head of the *millet*")

The *millet* system is something that the Ottomans built on the older *dhimmi* system.

They divided the non-Muslims into three big groups. First, there were Jews, which included those in Istanbul—who had been expelled from Spain and Portugal in 1492—and elsewhere. The second group is that of Eastern Orthodoxy. The "Greek" Orthodox patriarch in Istanbul became the ruler of the all the Eastern Orthodox churches, including those under the patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. Third were the Armenians, whose patriarch became the head of all Oriental (Miaphysite) Orthodox Christians. The leaders of these three groups were considered to represent all non-Muslims in the empire.

The Syriac Christians, therefore, were not directly represented at the court. The Syriac Orthodox Christians were considered to be part of the Armenian group. The Church of the East was not really part of any of these groups, and in fact because most of them were in the Hakkari Mountains and were dealing more with the Kurds, they also were never really part of the Greek Orthodox group. However, although the *millet* system looks like a very neat and organized system, in practice it worked fairly pragmatically. In fact, many religious leaders just came to Istanbul to put their complaints and plead their causes to the Sultan. Sometimes the Syriac patriarchates would use the offices of the Armenian Patriarch; but if they were engaged in a quarrel with the Armenian Patriarch, then they would just go directly to the Sultan. The Ottoman system had very clear rules, but there were many ways to follow the rules. During the course of the Ottoman Empire, corruption and bribery became increasingly important. If you had a lot of money, it was always possible to arrange something that worked to your benefit. For example, if you wanted a new patriarch (who always needed approval from the High Porte in Istanbul), you might use your influence to have your candidate approved. Of course, there are lots of downsides to a system like this because you never knew if the right person would be in the right position. But, at the same time, it also allowed Christians quite a bit of negotiating space to organize their communities without being ruled directly by the Ottomans.

Hagia Sophia, Istanbul
Insert 7

Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
Istanbul
Insert 8

A note about the pictures (inserts 7-9). The first is of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (insert 7), which became a mosque when the Ottomans conquered Istanbul (and later the Turkish Republic changed it into a museum). The Blue Mosque, the main mosque of Istanbul which was built soon after Constantinople was captured by the Ottomans, was built after the model of Hagia Sophia. In turn, the Blue Mosque became a model for Turkish mosques all over the world.

Insert 8 and 9 are of the current center of the Greek Orthodox Church, which remains in Istanbul, being also the residence of patriarch Bartholomew. It includes the patriarchal church, which is small but beautifully decked in gold.

Religion, Community & (Civil) Law

You are all no doubt aware that in the pre-Ottoman system, one's community defined one's civil status. So if you were a Christian, you were subject to the rules of the Christian community, especially regarding weddings, custody, divorce, and inheritance. It was the same in the Ottoman period, so basically it was the Christian clergy that decided many issues of civil law. However, what people are not always aware of is that in the Ottoman period the *shari'a* law courts were also visited by Christians, especially when they did not get the outcome from their bishops that they wanted. This was especially so in cases of divorce, which in the Christian communities were almost never granted. A person who failed to secure a divorce from his bishop would go to the *qadi* (*shari'a*) court judge to get a divorce. Christians did not have to convert to Islam for this; they remained Christians. So the *qadi* courts functioned as general courts for the entire community. The *qadi* courts were also used when there was a conflict between litigants from two different churches. So the legal system was more flexible than people tend to think.

Greek Orthodox Church

Insert 9

My last point concerns how this system functioned in the Ottoman period. This was a communal system with an important position for the clerical leaders. However, secular leaders played distinct roles, because they were the ones to back—financially and politically—these clerical leaders. This made for a complicated interaction between the religious and secular domains in leading the Christian communities. In the nineteenth century, following the reforms, the Ottomans stipulated that the Christian communities should have a "Lay Council" that ruled their communities in cooperation with the bishops and the patriarch. In the cities and in the rural countryside, lay leaders were mostly the local merchants and nobles from a given area, while among tribal Christians, the leaders were the tribal leaders who were the counterparts of the bishops and patriarchs.

Graves of the Church of the East patriarchs of Rabban Hormizd

Insert 10

Here you see (see image 10) the gravestones of the patriarchs of the Church of the East in Hakkari. These are from the Ottoman period up to the seventeenth century. The monastery where they now exist is the monastery of Rabban Hormizd near Alqosh, now part of the Chaldean (Roman Catholic) Church.

The Ottomans & the West

During the Ottoman period, the West became increasingly important in the region. Some people have said that from the seventeenth century onwards, the Ottoman Empire was in decline because of this Western influence. Or, to put this the other way around, because the Ottomans were so weak, the West was able to advance quickly into the East. However, I think that things were more interesting and complicated than that. First, it is clear that the Ottomans benefited from the exchange between East and West. Second, the word *decline* is a difficult term to use in a scholarly context because you then have to be very precise as to what aspects exactly were at their top and then later declined. However, one can say that the Ottomans became weaker militarily and diplomatically mostly in the nineteenth century, and not in this earlier period—that is, the seventeenth century. In the early period that we are talking about here, Catholic missionaries, diplomats, and various kinds of merchants entered the region. The Ottomans decided to include the Westerners (at this time the French) in the communal system as their own "Frank" group. This group, however, received special privileges compared to other Christians**.** This meant that the French would have a higher status than the native Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Most important, they were not required to pay the *jizya* taxes. This was a way to encourage trade between the West and the Ottoman Empire. One of the things that happened was that local Christians and Jews started working for Western companies and were often allowed the same tax breaks as the Westerners. This made it very advantageous for these Christians to become involved with the Westerners.

Syriac Catholic church, Damascus
Insert 11

Let me make a small linguistic point: these people were called *dragoman*, which means "translator." Notably this word originates in Aramaic from the root word *targem* (cf. also "targum"—from the Jewish Aramaic Bible translation) that via Arabic had ended up in Turkish. These translators, which in many respects became intermediaries between two cultures, had to know Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and European languages.

Through these contacts, some of these dragomans and their families decided to become Catholics. Some people have said that they became Catholics because of the money, which in some cases was true, but quite a few other Christians who were not directly involved with foreign diplomats or merchants also converted. Thus, I think that the economic aspects do not explain all the attraction that Catholicism held for Middle Eastern Christians. One thing was that Catholic missionaries paid more attention to in their preaching and writing at the time than the Orthodox was women. Also, local Christians liked the way the Catholics venerated Mary, including the use of the rosary and the beautiful images. Notably, some of the learned people, such as priests and bishops, converted to Catholicism. There is no doubt that they understood what Catholicism had to offer to the Orthodox Church.

Rome & the Middle East

Gradually, the increasing power of Westerners in the Ottoman Empire led to their involvement in Ottoman politics, especially regarding the Christian and Jewish communities. Along larger geopolitical lines, the different European countries started to "protect" different groups in the Empire. The French protected the Catholics; the British protected the Jews, Druzes, and later the Protestants; and the Russians protected the Orthodox. Thus, conflicts between these groups and between any one group and the Ottoman government was no longer a local issue; now religious conflicts could be seen as part of a large geopolitical context because there were many nations involved. For example, the French consul in Aleppo was involved when there were conflicts concerning Catholics; and when there were boundary disputes in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the French and the Russians consuls would be involved. In the nineteenth century that becomes a real problem.

The Catholic missionaries had a very clear aim when they came to the Middle East. From their perspective all the Christians in the Middle East were schismatics and heretics, and they thought that the only way to save them from their heresies was to bring them into the mother church, that is, the Roman Catholic Church. They tried, therefore, to convert not just individual people but whole communities of another denomination, and they expected bishops and patriarchs to submit to the pope as the head of the true church. Often they succeeded in converting a whole church or part of a church. At the same time, however, the Catholic missionaries were fairly flexible in the pursuit of their goals. They allowed new Catholic communities to keep most of their rites and the use of their liturgical language. Married priests were accepted into the fold, and all kinds of other things that were specific to these churches were also permitted as long as they did not contradict Catholic teachings. Consequently, many of the ordinary people would hardly notice if a local church had become Catholic because the changes were quite small. But of course they were big because in the end this church and community would belong to another group; they would be separated from the Orthodox Church; and inevitably there would be all kinds of money and power struggles. It is understandable, then, that the Orthodox community became very angry about these mission activities and started to push back. Notably, the Russians began to support the Orthodox in the region with education and money to help them resist the Catholics.

Good Friday procession at the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem
Insert 12

Another reason for the Catholic Church to be very active in the Middle East was the Holy Places. For this reason it was very important for the Catholics to be present in the Middle East, especially in Palestine. They sought to make space for Catholic pilgrimages at all the holy places. However, because the holy places were also very important for the Orthodox churches, this became an important point of contention during the Ottoman period.

One final reason for the extensive missionary work of the Catholics in the Middle East was because of the wars of

religion in Europe, which made the Catholics lose ground. The Reformation split Christianity in Europe, which stimulated the Catholic Church to engage in missions in the Middle East as well as in America, the Philippines, China, and India.

"Syriac" Catholic Churches

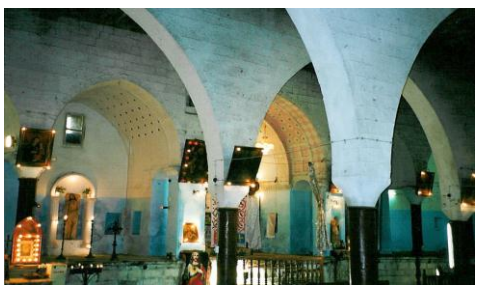
Here is a list (insert 13) of the Syriac Catholic Churches: the Chaldean Church, the Syriac Catholic Church, the Maronite Church, and the Syro-Malabar Church (in India). These are four Catholic Churches that emerged from Catholic mission work. The most successful one was the Maronite Church because among the Maronites no separate church remained outside the Catholic Church: all of the Maronites became part of the Catholic Church. The move of the Maronites to the Roman Catholic Church had already started during the Crusader period, but it was in the eighteenth century that this connection was confirmed and strengthened.

- Chaldean Church
  - 1552: Yohannan Sulaqa
  - 1681: Yosep I
  - 1830: Yohannan Hormizd - Alqosh
- Syriac Catholic Church
  - 1551: Ignatius Abdallah
  - 1662: Adreas Akhijan
  - 1783: Michael Jarweh
- Maronite Church
  - 1736: Synod of Mount Lebanon
- Syro-Malabar Church (1599 Synod of Diamper)

Insert 13

The second most successful Catholic effort was with the Chaldean Church, even though its beginnings were rather complicated. The first attempt at a union was in the sixteenth century, but at that time the protagonist from the Church of the East did not understand exactly what was involved in becoming part of the Catholic Church. After about thirty years, the effects of this first attempt disappeared, and the patriarch and bishops were back in the Church of the East. In the seventeenth century, there was a second attempt. Although this attempt was very small and local, Bishop Yosep who became the new Chaldean Church's first patriarch really understood what was happening theologically, and he and his successors actively published in order to further the local understanding of Catholic theology. In 1830, Patriarch Yohannan Hormizd-Alqosh took a large part of the Church of the East and brought it into the Catholic Chaldean Church, and from that time the Catholic Chaldean Church was almost as big as the Church of the East.

This never happened to the Syrian Catholic Church, which emerged from the Syriac Orthodox Church: until today it is much smaller than its Orthodox counterpart. There were three important leaders who tried to make part of the Syrian Orthodox Church a Syriac Catholic Church. These individuals were Ignatius Abdallah (1551), Andreas Akhijan (1662), and Michael Jarweh (1783). Each of them succeeded in a small way, so that by the eighteenth century you had a stable Syriac Catholic Church, though quite small. It was concentrated in Lebanon



Chaldean church in Diyarbakir

Insert 14

and Northern Iraq rather than Eastern Turkey and Northern Syria.

There were two French scholars, Youssef Courbages and Philippe Fargues, who suggested that because of the stability of the Ottoman period Christians actually grew in number faster than other communities—both in absolute numbers and relative to others. It is indeed interesting to see that the Christians were doing relatively well, but after this was published, many scholars started to wonder if this was correct. Their interpretation was based on Ottoman records, and these records only counted people in certain areas. What we now think is that most of the increase of numbers of Christians in certain areas can be accounted for by Christians migrating from the countryside to the cities. It seems that while they were in the countryside, they were not counted at all, but when they moved into the cities they were counted. This suggests that the number went up, but in reality it was internal migration rather than real growth. The issue has not been completely resolved, but most scholars now agree that Christians were doing relatively well but not as well as Courbage and Fargues had thought. Their figures, however, clearly show that Christians were moving into the cities more than in earlier periods. During the Ottoman period, the movement of people to the cities accounts for the fact that today most Christians in the Middle East live in cities. The exception to this is Egypt where there are still a considerable number of Christian communities in the countryside. But in other places, such as Syria, there was a slow movement in the Ottoman period that continued into the twentieth century that resulted in the vast majority of Christians living in cities. Because they lived in cities, Christians often tended to be professionals; and when Western missionaries began to enter the region, they encountered local Christians in the cities in which they chose to reside. Later, when the missionaries opened schools, Christians had easy access to these schools and at higher percentages than other communities. Finally, because Christians lived in cities, they generally tended to enjoy a higher level of prosperity in this period than they had in previous ages.

This is a house (see insert 15) of a rich merchant in Aleppo that today is in Berlin. Nearly the whole house was moved to Berlin. We see here an Islamic style of decoration, but some of the images are very clearly Christian.

Interior decoration in house of Christian from Aleppo (now in Berlin)
Insert 15

India is very important for the development of Catholicism in the Middle East. It was in India that the Portuguese encountered the Syriac Christians. When they started exploring around 1500, they also ended up on the west coast of India where they encountered Syriac Christians. They reported back to Portugal about these large groups of Christians. At the same time, these Christians wrote letters to Iraq to report about the Portuguese, observing that the Portuguese were a powerful Western people who were very positive towards the Christians and were supporting the Christians vis-à-vis other groups. There were several exchange of letters between 1500 and 1550 that all contributed to a positive image of the Portuguese and the Catholics. So when the first monk from the Church

of the East and went to Rome to become the first Chaldean Patriarch, I think it was because he knew about these letters. This is supported by the fact that he went to meet the Portuguese ambassador in Rome and later sent one of his metropolitans to India. From this time onward, more or less at the same time as their co-religionists in Iraq, the Syriac Christians in India became closely connected to Catholics.

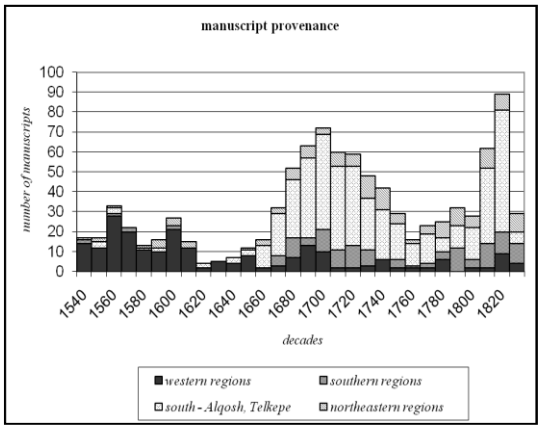
The Portuguese missionaries in India were less subtle and less careful than the missionaries in the Middle East. Later in the sixteenth century, they started to put pressure on the Syriac Christians to follow closely the Latin rites rather than their Syriac rites. By the end of the sixteenth century, the missionaries forced the Indian Christians to burn many of their Syriac books to make the church completely Roman Catholic. This led to a fierce conflict, and a portion of Syriac Christians in India left the Catholic Church to start their own church.

An Indian church that originated from the Church of the East

Insert 16

This complicated matters for the history of the Syriac Christians because some of them became part of the Syriac Orthodox Church rather than return to the Church of the East where they came from. The result was that today there is a large variety of Syriac churches in India that all derive from the Church of the East: the Chaldeans (the Syro-Malabar), the Church of the East, the Syriac Orthodox, and the Syriac Catholics. Later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, other groups split off from these churches. Some of them became Protestant and others remained independent. So today you have almost ten different Syriac churches in India. Note that India has a large population, which means that there are many Syriac Christians. So, for example, the Syriac Orthodox Christians in India are larger in number than the Syriac Orthodox Christians in the Middle East.

In this picture (insert 16) you see one of these Indian churches with a cross before it. This is the type of cross they had in India before the Catholics arrived. If you look closely at its base you will see that it looks Indian, with elephants and lotus flowers. Also, on the church building itself, there is a decoration of animals that you would not find on Syriac churches in the Middle East.



Insert 17

Let us return to the Church of the East and Iraq. One of the reasons for me to start researching this period was the huge number of manuscripts that were produced in this time. Before 1500 there were very few manuscripts, but the number increased in the sixteenth century and increased even more in the seventeenth century and more still in the nineteenth century. (See insert 17.) The fifteenth century was a difficult century and probably the cost of producing manuscripts in the fifteenth century was very high. In

addition, many manuscripts from this period were destroyed during wars. From the late fifteenth century onwards, the situation started to improve and people had money to replace the manuscripts that were lost, restocking their churches and monasteries. In the earliest period, the scribes who produced the manuscripts were mostly monks, but later they were mostly married priests who made a family business out of manuscript production. Scholars today have identified family trees that include as many as thirty people over three or four generations who were all scribes. So apparently there was a great demand for their labors. All kinds of people contributed money to produce these manuscripts: sometimes individual people, sometimes groups of people, sometimes a mother and her daughter, sometimes two couples, or sometimes a bishop. So there were all kinds of different people who contributed the money needed to produce these manuscripts. Many of these manuscripts are very modest, but this Gospel Lectionary (see insert 18) is one of the most beautiful manuscripts of this period. The manuscripts they produced employed the beautiful eastern script and were nicely illustrated and decorated. About half of these manuscripts are about the liturgy, which was the most important thing for people to write and to copy and to invest their money in. The other half of the manuscripts include commentaries, grammars, and so forth.

Gospel Lectionary, Alqosh 1679 (Ms Jer. Syr 1, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate).

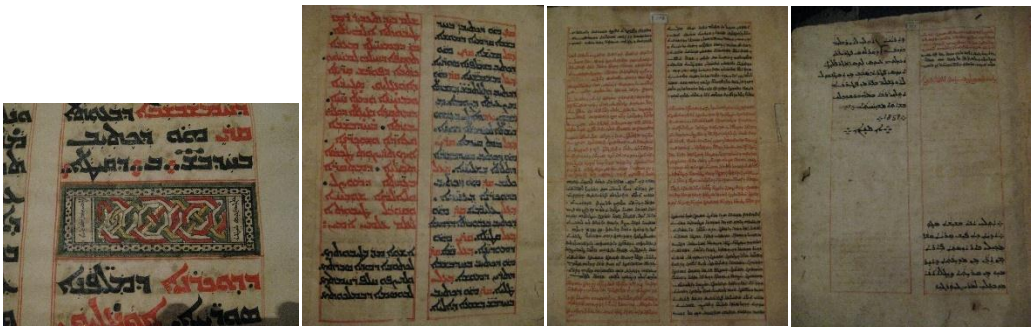
Insert 18

Many people think that the Church of the East does not allow images. This is true to some extent. For example, they do not have icons in their churches like most other Orthodox churches. But they do have images in their manuscripts. Scholars think that they used icons in their churches in earlier periods, but at some point decided no longer to use them. In the Ottoman period, it was mostly the simple cross that was used as the focus point of veneration during the liturgy, often in combination with the Gospel lectionary that would be put out on a stand before the altar.

Texts & Colophons

For our understanding of this period and culture, colophons are very important. Colophons of manuscripts (whether in the Middle East or in Latin Europe) are brief or sometimes long notes of the scribes in which they tell the reader about the production of the manuscript and often add other information. The set-up of colophons differs from one manuscript tradition to another. Scribes of the Church of the East would state that the manuscript was finished at a particular date, in a particular place, under the reign of this or that patriarch and bishop. Usually his own name and family pedigree and the name(s) of the sponsor(s) of the manuscripts would be added to it.

Scribes used forms of the Syriac term for "blessed" *brīkha* (cf. Arabic *baraka* [blessing]) for clergy, for places, for dates ("in the blessed month Iyar"). We thus learn from these colophons that the writings themselves were considered a *Baraka* for the people, and paying money for manuscripts to be written was considered a *baraka*. The colophon shown in insert 19 is so long that it extends over several pages, and the scribe used smaller letters to produce it. In this particular manuscript, there are also some later notes, which often occurred when there were empty pages at the end of a manuscript. In the colophons of this period, a manuscript that was important and had



Colophons
Insert 19

been produced by a noted scribe included colophons that were long and elaborate in their praises of God, the patriarch, and the place where the manuscript was produced. Altogether, colophons of this period give us a sense of what people then thought was important and beautiful.

Sometimes visitors to a church or monastery would add their own notes to a manuscript, and people who looked at the manuscripts might add something to them as well. The manuscript shown in insert 19 was produced to be brought to Jerusalem. Later, when pilgrims from Iraq would come to Jerusalem, they would see this manuscript and write a few notes in it. This underlines how important the pilgrimage to Jerusalem was thought to be.

Another colophon (Cambridge Add, Alqosh 1729) begins: "Completed is, with the help of the venerated and the praiseworthy Trinity […], this book of the teacher Khamis with many other hymns besides. Praise be to the Father [etc.]." In the first sentence of the colophon, the scribe would always mention the title of the book. Then he would say when it was completed: "This book was finished and completed on Thursday, on the 18th of the blessed month First Kanun, of the year two thousand and forty-one of the blessed Greeks, Amen." Until the nineteenth century, the dating system used by Syriac Christians was the Greek Byzantine system. The scribe notes that "It was written in the days of the father of fathers and the head of the pastors, Mar Eliya Catholicos Patriarch of the East [etc.]." It was written "in the blessed and blissful village, strong in the Christian faith, Alqosh, village of Nahum the prophet, which is situated near the very holiest of monasteries of Rabban Hormizd the Persian [etc.]." Many of these manuscripts were written in the village of Alqosh, a name that appears in the Bible. Most scholars think that the Alqosh mentioned in the Bible is located in Palestine, but these Iraqi Christians believe that it is located in Iraq. A

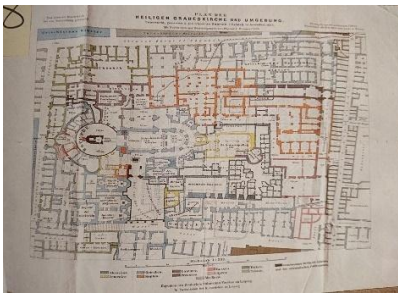
similar claim is made for the village of the prophet Nahum. This suggests that the scribe was attempting to establish a link between the Church of the East and the people and history of the Bible. Then the scribe mentions a holy place near his village, writing that it "is situated near the very holiest monasteries of Rabban Hormized the Persian, [etc]." This is a practice we see in many colophons.

Finally, the scribe would mention his name. The scribe would present himself as very humble, writing that he is a corrupt and sinful man who sullied this book. This is interesting because in Western manuscripts scribes would often leave out their names. But in these manuscripts and indeed in a lot of the Middle East manuscripts, they would mention themselves and their family line: "Q. Yosep, son of Q. Giwargis, son of the deceased Q. Israel, son of Q. Hormizd of Alqosh [etc.]."

Some of the manuscripts will also tell you who paid for the work. Here is an example:

> He then commissioned and heeded to the writing of this book of Khamis, the upright believer [etc.] [In this case he is a deacon] **Sh. Yosep, son of Sh. Maroge**. He had it written from what is his, for the holy church and wonderful shrine of **Mat Maryam**, mother of Christ, which is in the blessed and blissful village, strong in the Christian faith, **Dergani** [etc.].

The deacon who wrote this came from another village and went to Alqosh because there were many scribes there. Perhaps he had this book written for the church in his village. It is a book of hymns that were probably intended for congregational use.



Floor plan of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher
Insert 20

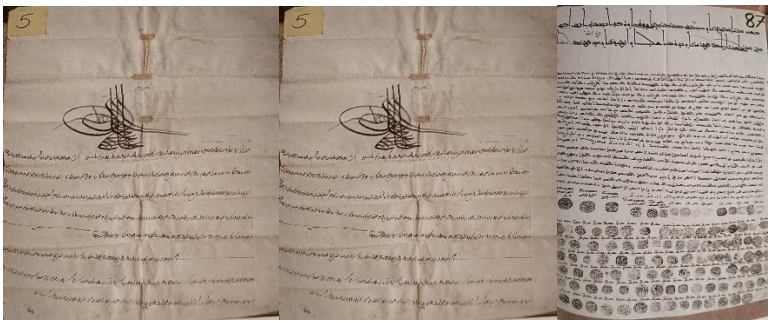
Practicing the pact – church buildings and ritual practice

Much of the correspondence from the Syriac churches with the Ottoman rulers was about holy places or about the restoration of churches. One of the issues among the Syrian Orthodox was about the little chapel in the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, opposite the Coptic chapel, which the Armenians thought was theirs. The conflict between the two churches over the chapel probably started in the Ottoman period, but the quarrel continues today. (See inserts 20 and 21.)

Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem
Insert 21

Here are some examples of Ottoman texts (see insert 22). On the left you see the *tughra*, a calligraphic monogram that was used by the Ottoman government. On the right you see how the Christians signed their important documents. In the middle you see a document that was important in a dispute between the church and the government. This looks like a map of a church and a road, perhaps to illustrate the situation, so that the legal details might be clear. So here

we have a text whose date is uncertain. It probably was in the nineteenth century because it talks about the Syriac *millet*, which was only established in the nineteenth century.



Various documents from (Syriac Orthodox) church archive in Mardin (present-day Turkey) (Akyuz, text 5-1737, 57 and 87)

Insert 22

This letter (the middle document in insert 22) was written by Es-Seyyid Mustafa, the Muslim governor of the town of Karzan. He writes to the Ottomans in Istanbul on behalf of a Christian community, beginning with a nice phrase: "We hope for the continued existence of the life of the exalted state." The governor continues,

> Our request is the continued existence of the life of the exalted state.
>
> **Priest Hanna** together with others from the people **of Syriac Millet** subject to the Gatzan Village linked to the city of **Diyarbekir** came to the **Sharia council** and narrated the following motion: The stones of the [West]-side wall and the outside of the old church known as Zira Zirek, which was in the mentioned town since the times of the conquest, have been falling for two years. It is about to be ruined and derelict. If it stays like this for two more years, it will completely slant to the ground. It is evident that it will **not be possible to perform Christian rituals** and recite the **incorrect Bible** inside. The mentioned wall needs to be repaired immediately.
>
> They insisted and demanded by presenting and submitting to the gracious Governorship of Diyarbekir a request for the permission to repair and restore the mentioned wall to its previous state **without [building] anything in excess to its former condition**. After examination, it has been observed and inspected that the said wall of the aforementioned church is **in need of repair**. And, through the information about its old state by a **few trustworthy persons from the Muslims**, the previously stated is the case. By your leave, this has been presented and submitted to your accomplished and enlightened presence. Everlastingly, on this matter, the final issue belongs to your Excellency.
>
> The subject whose prayer is for the continued existence of the life of the exalted state.
>
> Es-Seyyid Mustafa, the governor of the town of Karzan. [Tekst Akyuz 157, undated]

We can see some interesting points here. One is that the governor put the request of the Christians before the High Porte in Istanbul, which suggests that he is convinced that they have a case. He supports this by asserting that Muslims have testified that they have a case, and he affirms that this church has been there from the conquest. Under the Pact of Umar (see insert 23), Christians therefore had a right to this church. Yet he must also make clear that he was a Muslim and not a Christian. So he includes a sentence about the Bible being inaccurate. In the Ottoman government, if government officials spoke about Christians and Christian rituals, they would always make sure to identify themselves as Muslims and that they were only representing the case of Christians. The letter makes it clear that the governor does not believe in the Christian Scriptures but that, nonetheless, he is convinced that they have a case that should be put forward. This is a very interesting presentation, one that acknowledges rights and subjection and negotiation.

A late version of the Pact of Umar

Insert 23

Theological Education and Contemporary Challenges

By Dr. George Sabra

Dr. Sabra is the president of the Near East School of Theology (NEST), in Beirut, Lebanon. This article was given as a speech at the graduation ceremony of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (ETSC) on May 31, 2019.

At the outset I want to express my gratitude to ETSC, especially its president, my dear friend and colleague the Reverend Dr. Atef Mehanny, for giving me the honor of being the speaker at this commencement ceremony. Permit me now to convey to you the greetings of the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut, its board, faculty, and students. Our two institutions have a long history of cooperation and communication that began almost half a century ago and continues until now. I also want to express heartfelt congratulations on behalf of NEST, and in my own name, to the graduates for their great achievement in earning the degrees they deserve after years of study and hard work.

The title of my talk is "Theological Education and Contemporary Challenges." It is definitely assumed that we address this subject in the light of our existence and work in the Middle East. But this does not imply that some of the challenges that I will mention and tackle are not also faced by theological education wherever it exists, though in different ways.

I see five challenges to theological education at this time in our Middle Eastern and Arab world.

1.I will begin with the challenge presented in the area of means and tools before I tackle challenges more related to method and content, namely the huge technological advances in the world. Theological education in our region has to develop technically in order to keep pace with the rapid advancement in techniques for collecting, preserving, and benefiting from information. We live in an electronic and digital world. The computer has replaced the pen and paper; the screen has replaced the black board; and digital books and magazines are available to us by thousands and tens of thousands—in fact, full libraries are digitized and stored in small devices. The ease and speed of getting information, books, and magazines is amazing. Communication and the sharing of information between institutions and individuals is boundless. Distance learning and learning through electronic communication has changed the traditional form of education based on geographical and physical existence in one place and one room. And the list goes on. The world is in the midst of a real revolution in the area of information technology.

Theological education cannot avoid the massive progress and change in the field of technology, and it should adapt and adjust to it and benefit from it as much as possible. This is a great challenge facing theological education in the twenty-first century, not only in the Middle East but in the world at large. But we have to be aware

that this challenge—that is, keeping pace with progress and change in the area of information technology—involves a hazard of another sort that is equally important: this is the tendency to become impressed and obsessed by large numbers, speed, technology, images, and information—and drowning in them. The danger in today's education, and not only in theological education, is becoming unduly impressed by and concerned with electronic *means* as if they were the *ends*. Alister McGrath, a contemporary theologian, says, "We feel engulfed by a tsunami of facts, in which we can find no meaning."[1] In the midst of the tremendous advancement in information technology, we have to remember and realize, especially in theology, that information, however abundant and varied, is not an alternative to meaning; that knowledge, however broad, is not wisdom; and that all technological advancements and changes in techniques do not really or actually affect how we think of ourselves, how we perceive ourselves, and how we relate to others and God. These fundamental matters, which have been faced by thinkers and theologians before us, have not altered with the change and development of new technologies. All of us in the field of theological education, in the face of these fundamental matters, still encounter the same questions: "How do we read a text, think critically, write thoughtfully."[2]

2.The second challenge is both old and new—that is, how are we to develop a theological education that combines prayer, intellect, and praxis? What I mean by prayer is what we call the spiritual formation of the student of theology. An Eastern patristic writer, Evagrius Pontus, defines a theologian in this way: "A theologian is someone who prays."[3] Studying theology is basically unlike any other study because it assumes and necessarily involves a personal relationship between the student and the subject of study, between the knowledge seeker and the subject of knowledge—that is, between the student and God, the subject of theology. The subject of the study of theology is God and all that is related to God.

At the same time, the subject of our study is also the object of our love and worship. The subject of the study of theology is a being whom we are interacting with and relating to through prayer, love, and faith. For example, can you imagine physics students—those who study the physical universe of matter, energy, atoms, neutrons, and electrons—allocating time in their weekly or daily programs to gathering with others to worship and pray to matter? Or law students, who are studying legal codes, ending or beginning their day by singing to law? Or medical students meeting regularly to praise the human body for its immune system's ability to overcome diseases? Theology students are the only students who necessarily relate to their subject of study with a personal relationship because their subject of study is not just a subject but also a living being who cannot be truly known without our interaction with him through love, worship, and obedience.

Consistent with this understanding, the Evangelical heritage, rather the Christian heritage, does not lack the element of prayer in the area of theological studies. But the challenge here is dual: combining prayer with thought, on the one side, and praxis, on the other. Our Evangelical churches in the Middle East are the fruit of the

[1] See A. McGrath, Surprised by Meaning. Science, Faith and How We Make Sense of Things. (Louisville: WJK, 2011), 3.
[2]See Brayton Polka, Podcast Interview. Published October 26, 2015. Face2Face. Davidpecklive.com.
[3] A desert father from the fourth century.

activity of missionary movements, and it is well known that missionary movements do not give priority to study, theory, and intellectual and doctrinal matters in their activities. Instead, they concentrate mainly on the experience of personal conversion and spiritual renewal while being faithful to a Bible-based spirituality. However, authentic Evangelical spirituality and identity are not limited to a conversion experience or personal piety; it produced and is still producing profound and wide-ranging theological thought, which has addressed faith-questions and also dialogued with philosophy and the human, social and natural sciences.

Theological education should not neglect the academic and intellectual tasks that it practiced in the past and still practices. Our commitment to the subject of our study in love and prayer does not mean that we can allow ourselves to be slack in our seriousness, keenness, and scholarly professionalism. We should be no less critical than any other researcher or knowledge seeker in any of the other academic disciplines. We aspire for a theological education that is not afraid to confront perplexing and dangerous questions and that does not isolate itself in order to evade dialogue with the latest developments in educational, historical, and social theories or ideas. At the same time, theological education should not be relegated only to prayer and knowledge; it should be committed to praxis, i.e., it should be socially responsible.

We, the Evangelical people in this Middle East, as I mentioned above, are a product of a western missionary movement that came to this area in the nineteenth century. It was the aim of that movement to foster spiritual renewal through calling for repentance and spiritual rebirth. The missionaries focused on changing individuals by helping them to develop a heart-based piety; the main thing was the act of a living personal faith that expressed itself in bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit. What mattered was rebirth, renewal, and conversion of personal lives through committing their wills and hearts to the Lord Jesus.

While proclaiming that the message of salvation was primary, involvement in social work through educational and medical ministries was justified as a means of evangelizing people who could not be reached through worship services or Bible studies. The salvation of souls was the only measure of success. In the logic of subjective Evangelical piety, there was a clear distinction between spiritual and secular matters. Believers were to seek to be good citizens and submit to proper authority because "it has been established by God" and because "whoever rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted" (Romans 13: 1-2). Yet, the believer was not concerned much with the secular world because heaven is his homeland and eternal life his goal.

These were the basic ideas that our traditional Evangelical education was founded upon on in the Middle East, but we have come to realize that this conception of Evangelical faith and understanding of what it means to be Evangelical was not a sufficient and complete expression of authentic Evangelical identity. At its outset, the Evangelical Reformation was not limited to a narrow sense of personal piety. The gospel is not just the preaching of the forgiveness of sin and the liberation of people from guilt; rather, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ produced a life, ministry, death, and resurrection that resulted in the offer of salvation for all people as well as for the entire creation from all dimensions of bondage to sin and evil. Sin is not only personal corruption and the committing of individual sins, for sin is active and dominant in the general systems and structures of the world. The narrow definition of sin, which

defines it as a private human act that is limited to individual human agents, is an incomplete definition for the grievous depth of sin. The Bible testifies to the power of sin and evil, as well as to their negative effects, which have authority over all aspects of life and affect every human being. There are sinful systems; sinful political, economic, and social human plans; and sinful politics. Our Christian faith calls us to oppose and fight them, but sometimes it also calls us to liberate them from sin. For example, any racist regime is not just a sinful and oppressive system because it is a work of individual human beings who have sinful hearts and who need conversion. Rather, the system itself is a sin! Sin is individual, communal, and social; consequently, liberation from sin has social as well as personal dimensions.

The kingdom of God that the Lord Jesus preached is not primarily for the afterlife; rather, it is the reign of God and his dynamic dominion, which extends over the whole creation. The kingdom of God, in confronting the corruption of sin that affects creation, means the regeneration of all and the transformation of history and creation to reveal the sovereign will of God. Perhaps the best expression for the project of the kingdom of God is the song of Mary, which describes the kingdom this way: "He is scattering those who are proud in their inmost thoughts"; he is bringing down "rulers from their thrones"; he is lifting up "the humble" (Luke 1:51-52). Jesus establishes the kingdom by proclaiming good news to the poor and downtrodden, binding up the brokenhearted, offering freedom to prisoners, and setting free the oppressed (Luke 4: 18). The kingdom of God is widely inclusive in that it encompasses both heaven and earth, for it is in harmony with the revelation of John, who said, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21: 1). Indeed, it is "a new earth," not just a new heaven.

The Church is not just a group of the elect or a collection of saved people, which keeps to itself and opposes the world with its temptations and sins. It is also the first fruits of the new humanity. God did not create human beings only to save a select group of people from among them; rather, God the savior came into the world in order to regenerate it and lead those he created to his desired end for the creation. The Church is the light of the world and the salt of earth. Light does not enlighten the world if it is put in a closed room, and salt does not flavor food if it stays in its box. For us to be a church and the body of Christ means that we have to give ourselves to the world as Jesus did by offering himself up for the sake of the world. In the same way, we have to be open to engagement with the world and with the issues of people in this world. To this end we have to be willing to go into the world and take risks in the confidence that God wants to regenerate the world through the agency of his church.

To act responsibly for God's ends, theological education must consciously seek to renew itself. In other words, it should renew itself on the basis that social responsibility is part and parcel of our faith identity. Therefore, it is not enough that theological education should include prayer and scholarship. It must also seek to be socially responsible. This is the great challenge that faces theological education. It must combine prayer, thought, and praxis, and this requires continually rethinking and re-evaluating our curriculums so that we do not inadvertently slip into extremism or give in to the tendency to emphasize one of these components at the expense of others.

3. The third challenge that confronts us as Evangelical theological seminaries in the Middle East is our involvement in the ecumenical movement, which is composed of those who are convinced of and committed to the legitimacy and necessity of mutual

rapprochement, openness, and fellowship among the various churches and Christian traditions. After almost 1,500 years of church schisms and controversies, which began in the fifth century, a new era dawned in the twentieth century through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and this era culminated in the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948. Thus, the ecumenical movement was launched and gradually spread all over the world. Our Evangelical churches and seminaries in this region of the world have not only affiliated with that movement; they are actually its first founders in this region of the world. What does commitment to ecumenism entail in the field of theological education?

Genuine ecumenism is respect, openness, and acceptance of diversity and variety without undermining the integrity of our faith tradition. The difficulty we face in the Middle East is that, though committed to ecumenism, we must live, apply, and teach it in a very traditional and conservative society—that is, in a society whose general tendency is to reject those who are different. How can theological education be ecumenical in a diverse cultural context in which people tend to think monolithically? If ecumenical commitment has any meaning, it will include a confession of the fundamental truth of the legitimacy of other churches. Practically speaking, this means that churches should refrain from evangelizing Christians in other faith traditions and that we should stop defining ourselves against one another and so abandon an apologetic and polemical theological approach.

How do we teach Evangelical theology in the light of the recognition that other Christian traditions are legitimate and genuine expressions of the faith? After decades of the ecumenical movement, we still struggle with this question because not all people are ecumenical in the same way and to the same degree, and not all people understand the essence of ecumenism and accept it, though all churches at least pay lip-service to it.

Despite all of these difficulties and the ecumenical immaturity of some people, it is not possible or permissible to reverse course on the issues of openness and rapprochement between different churches and Christian traditions. Ongoing self-review, which should accompany the development of the curriculum in theological education, is inevitable. There have been important achievements as a result of local and global ecumenical dialogue and understanding. How can we infuse these achievements into the curriculum of theological education and its practice? How can we focus on the merits of others and the common ground that we share so that we are enriched by contact with others instead of feeling the need to raise contested points and focus on critique, criticism, and how we differ from one another? That is the ecumenical challenge ahead of us today.

4. The fourth challenge consists of developing a theological education that does not discriminate between men and women. Our Evangelical church played a pioneering role in the education of women in the Middle East. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the first Evangelical missionaries and our national Evangelical fathers defied social habits and customs when they opened schools for girls' education. At that time, Arab and Middle Eastern society generally considered sending girls to school after the age of eight years to be shameful. When Evangelicals opened their schools for girls, many people from different religions and communities embraced this innovation, so that not sending girls to school became shameful. The Evangelical world was a pioneer in the education of women and in giving them positions in church and society.

This was not simply a matter of staying in step with the advance of social progress in human civilization. It also emerged out of the Evangelicals', nay the Christians', deep immersion in the knowledge of the Bible, the teachings of Jesus, and the essential message of the apostles on this subject, which is summarized in Paul's words: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3: 28).

How can we develop a theological education that responds to the work of the Holy Spirit in history, that Spirit of truth that the Lord Jesus promised us saying that, when he came, would guide us into all truth (John 16:13), in the matter of the ministry of women in the church and their equal role to men in society? That is the challenge ahead of us today in the Middle East.

In viewing the situation in our region, we see an escalation of religious extremism, rigid thinking, cultural reactionarism, social close-mindedness, terrorism, oppression, injustice, the trampling of human rights, and the stifling of freedom—especially the rights and liberties of women. Churches and institutions of theological education, in particular, should confront these conditions with the armor and ideals of God's word, teaching that women can serve the world every bit as well as men and that they can be an example to all in their cultural context.[4]

5. The fifth and the final challenge is to develop a theological education that overcomes our obsession with survival and self-preservation and moves on, in cooperation with our non-Christian partners, to an active witness in our homelands. The condition of Christians in Middle Eastern countries is, without doubt, disturbing and uncomfortable. Our numbers are constantly decreasing, immigration is worsening, anxiety about the future is intensifying, and there appears to be no positive change on the horizon. In such an atmosphere, worry about self-preservation—that is, maintaining our very existence—seems to overwhelm every other concern. We have become completely preoccupied with what I like to call "an obsession with survival." Perhaps this is natural for any human group that is bound by special ties. The survival instinct is one of the most basic of all human instincts. Christians, however, are not like any other human group for whom survival and physical continuity are supreme goals. We are the church of the God who so loved the world that he became incarnated in it and gave himself for it. Mere survival is not a Christian virtue, and preservation of existence is not the goal of the gospel. Being a church and being Christians mean that we are witnesses to the truth before God and for the sake of others, serving God and seeing the face of our Lord Jesus Christ in the faces of other people, not just in the faces of believers who happen to look like us. And we are to see him especially in the faces of the hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick, and imprisoned. Our obsession should be about giving a genuine testimony to our loving God and generous father, who gives life and does not take it away, conquers death and does not glorify it, and gives himself for the sake of others. Our obsession should not be about survival for the sake of survival, but survival for the sake of the pursuit of truth, love, righteousness, and cooperation with all people of good will (whether they are Christians or non-Christian), so that we may live together peacefully and in dignity. Our obsession should be about developing theological education that seeks truth, wherever it exists, and confesses it and rejoices in it, wherever it is achieved. The great theologian Thomas Aquinas stated an amazing

[4]George Sabra, "A Day that the Lord Has Made, " a sermon given at the ordination service for Najla Kassab as a minister, Rabiyeh Evangelical church, March 27, 2017, at 5:00 P.M.

and profound principle when he wrote, "Every truth—whoever may utter it—is from the Holy Spirit." And I would add this: Every truth—whoever does it—is from the Holy Spirit. Establishing our theological thought and our theological education on this principle would allow us to renew our views of other Christian communities, as well as other religions; and it would allow us to develop our views in openness, dialogue, and partnership with others. At the same time, we should also work to build a political and social life that is worthy of the human being as a human being, namely, as created by God and loved by Him.

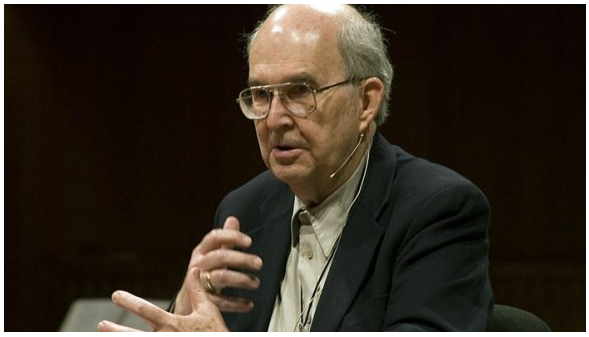
In my view, these are among the most significant challenges that confront theological education in our time and in this region of the world.

Dear graduates, theological education is not behind you. We congratulate you on your great achievement, but we hope you are aware that the process of learning theology, which begins at home and continues in Sunday school and in the church, does not come to an end when one has earned a degree in theology. It lasts a lifetime. Today, your theological education has not come to an end; rather, you are simply turning a page. May our almighty God, who "made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ," (2 Cor. 4:6) make you strong and shine his light into your hearts and minds as you confront all the difficult challenges ahead. Congratulations!

George Sabra
President of NEST

Kenneth Bailey's Inaugural Lecture At the Opening of the CMEC

Kenneth Bailey (1930-2016) was the son of Presbyterian missionaries and spent his early youth in Egypt, where he learned to speak Arabic fluently. After earning his B.A. and M.Div. in America, he returned to Egypt in the early 1960s to teach in ETSC's pre-theological program in Assuit. In the 1970s he obtained a Ph.D. from Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, and spent the bulk of his academic career as a New Testament scholar at the Near East School of Theology, in Beirut, Lebanon. Bailey wrote a dozen books on the New Testament, including the *Cross & the Prodigal, Luke 15 Through the Eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants*, and *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*. Much of Bailey's academic work and writings emphasized the need to interpret the Bible in terms of Middle Eastern culture. It was Bailey's approach that, in part, inspired ETSC's Center for Middle Eastern Christianity (CMEC). When ETSC's president, Atef Gendy, visited Bailey in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 2003 in order to discuss his plans for a Middle Eastern study center at the seminary, Bailey was immediately taken with the idea and promised to donate his personal library to the center. Construction on the center began in 2004, and the following year Bailey arrived to give the inaugural lecture, which is presented in full below. When the center celebrated its grand opening in April 2013, Bailey once again made the trip to Egypt for the occasion and presented another address. His 2005 lecture at the opening of the CMEC was a plea for continuing scholarship in the area of biblical studies from the perspective of Middle Eastern culture and history. Since Bailey's passion became the guiding vision of CMEC, it is fitting that his eloquent address be reprinted in ETSC's academic journal.



The Rev. Dr. Kenneth E. Bailey

A Vision and a Journey

Dr. Kenneth Bailey
June 1, 2005

In the name of The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.

President Atef Mehanny, members of the board of the seminary, faculty and students, distinguished guests, pastors and elders of the Evangelical Church, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor for me to be able to address you on this special occasion. My parents, Dr. Ewing and Mrs. Annette Bailey, spent forty-one years together serving

the Lord here in Egypt. Ethel and I completed another forty years of service in Egypt and in Lebanon. Our daughter Sara has now served fifteen years in the Middle East. Added together, three generations of the Bailey family have served the Lord here in the Middle East for 177 years. I am especially overjoyed to be here this month because in June of 1955, exactly 50 years ago, I was ordained for the ministry with the Evangelical Churches of the Middle East. Therefore, it is an added delight to be present on the momentous occasion of the inauguration of the Center for the Study of Middle Eastern Christianity and to reflect on a part of its declared task.

If I may be allowed to rephrase the speech of Simeon I can say,

> Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace
> for mine eyes have seen the inauguration of an institute
> that includes in its vision a study of the person and
> teachings of Jesus from a Middle Eastern cultural perspective.

A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. But that one step must be in the right direction or the traveler will lose his way and waste his energies. Worldwide, the church needs a new discipline in the field of the New Testament. It can be called "Middle Eastern New Testament Studies." There is no university, seminary, or theological college anywhere in the world, known to me, that has a department or offers a degree with this title. It is my dream that the center we today inaugurate will give birth to some form of this new field in New Testament studies.

For decades, learned specialists have dipped into this area of New Testament studies. But to my knowledge it has never been given a name and has never been recognized for what it is. It can happen here in Cairo, and it can be a blessing for the church around the entire world. Yes, the journey may extend for a thousand miles, but allow me briefly to suggest a direction for that crucial first step. To do this I would like to reflect with you briefly on my personal starting point for this journey and then turn to three topics:

1. The reasons for the journey
2. The often neglected resources available for the journey
3. Some reflections on the potential benefits that can flow from such a journey

Initially, when and where did my own personal journey begin? In 1957, after two years of full-time Arabic study, Ethel and I were privileged to serve with the late Reverend Samuel Habib in what was then called "The committee for fighting illiteracy." My assignment was to lead a staff of gifted young Egyptians as we organized and trained village leaders in how to conduct home Bible studies using their newly acquired ability to read Arabic. This was a "follow up" after a full year of literacy in the village. To carry out this task, we were resident in a village for nine months or longer. One of the first villages in which we served was Deir Abu Hennis across the river from Mellawi. The

pastor of the Evangelical church then was Reverend Adib Qaldis, who preached to his people using an eloquent colloquial Arabic in a conversational style.

On one unforgettable Sunday morning, Reverend Adib was preaching on the story of the woman at the well in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John. At that time the women of Deir Abu Hennis carried all their household water from the river in large jars on their heads. Naturally, in the church that Sunday morning, following village custom, the women were seated on one side and the men on the other. In his sermon, Reverend Adib turned to the women and said, "This woman went to the well at noon. Do any of you women go to bring water at noon?" The women together replied, "No." "Why don't you go to bring water at noon?" asked Rev. Adib. "It's too hot," came the answer. "When do you go to the well?" he asked again. "First thing in the morning and the last thing at night," they replied.

Rev. Adib continued, "This women went to the well alone! Do any of you women go to the river alone?" "No," came a chorus of voices. "Why don't you go to the river alone?" "It wouldn't be proper," was the joint reply. "What do you think of this woman who went to the well at noon, alone?" asked Rev. Adib. "She's a bad woman!" was the unanimous conclusion.

Seated on the platform of the church, I was totally astounded. I knew that these insights into the story, which were obvious to these simple village women, were not available in any commentary in the West. Pastor Adib was evoking out of these women what they already knew and brilliantly applying that information to the story.

That sermon changed my life. After much reflection, my studied conclusion was that there is a layer of meaning in the stories from and about Jesus that can only be unlocked by a more precise awareness of the Middle Eastern culture that informs the text. That awareness, I sensed, had been blurred and at times lost to the modern Church, both in the East and in the West! In the West it is lost because Middle Eastern culture is unknown. In the East it is blurred because of the centuries-old assumption that the Greek-speaking early fathers have completed the task of biblical interpretation for us, and our task is simply to repeat what they have said.

Reverend Adib turned on a light in my mind. I had no idea how I was going to proceed, but a vision was given to me and I knew that I must follow that vision wherever it might lead. I have now spent forty-five years trying to be faithful to that "heavenly vision." Thus, I am deeply grateful that Cairo Seminary shares that same vision.

We turn now to the three topics mentioned above.

I. The First is the Problem

How is it that the cultural cradle for the stories from and about Jesus has been inadequately understood? During the Cold War Winston Churchill described an iron curtain that had fallen across Eastern Europe. As we look across the centuries, it appears

to me that in New Testament studies we are dealing with not one but four curtains. These are as follows:

First, the first is the council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). That influential council debated important theological doctrines. But those doctrines are not the curtain to which I am referring. As is well known, the aftermath of that council was a division of the Church that left the Greek and Latin traditions on the one side and the Semitic churches of the East on the other side. From that point in history onward, the centers of biblical studies in the West had almost no contact with Middle Eastern Christians and their perceptions of the Bible. Middle Eastern New Testament scholars had no voice in the Western discussion.

Second, in the early seventh century an "Islamic curtain" fell, and it was physically almost impossible for Christians, East and West, to interact.

Three, there developed a linguistic curtain, which few New Testament scholars have braved to part. In the last 1,400 years, who in New Testament studies in the West has chosen to learn Arabic or Syriac or Coptic? In the seventeenth century, John Lightfoot opened a new door by mastering Hebrew and Aramaic and using its sources for New Testament studies. In the twentieth century, T. W. Manson of England, Joachim Jeremias of Germany, Matthew Black of Scotland, and Joseph Fitzmyer of America are the exceptions that prove the rule. However, these brilliant men lived in the West and read documents. Sitting in London and reading ancient Chinese documents is not the same as living in Beijing, speaking Cantonese, and reading the same documents with the Chinese.

Fourth, finally comes the centuries old assumption that parables and stories are simply illustrations to help the slow of mind to understand real theology, which, we are told, is carried out in abstractions. Illustrations become the sugar coating on the theological pill, not the pill itself. In the process, Jesus remains the Son of God and savior of the world but disappears as the major theologian of the New Testament.

In general, these four curtains have hindered New Testament studies in general from understanding important aspects of Middle Eastern culture that inform the gospels. To this can be added the fact that contemporary Western Liberal New Testament scholarship is largely confident that Hellenism was sufficiently diffused in the Eastern Mediterranean that Greco-Roman culture is all one needs to understand the New Testament. They insist that no Semitic Middle Eastern culture underlies the Greek text of the New Testament and thereby there is nothing to investigate.

Looking at this same problem from another angle, I recall a very important lecture delivered by Fr. Haddad to the Near East School of Theology in Beirut in the early 1970s. Fr. Haddad was then the librarian of the Greek Catholic monastery of Deir al-Mukhallis, near Sidon. The weight of his lecture was to point out that Eastern Christianity in the early centuries had already hammered out its answers to the major questions that the classical world of Greece and Rome was asking. The Church in the Middle East was then

overrun from behind, as it were, by a new community. That community brought a new sacred book, a new Semitic language, and a new set of theological questions. The Church, Fr. Haddad told us, had to turn around, face those challenges, and discover new ways to answer new questions. It did so over the next five centuries with great integrity and insight. But its efforts remain largely unknown and unpublished. Its heroes remain unhonored and unsung, including Dr. Mark Swanson's groundbreaking dissertation, "Foolishness to the Hunāfa',"[1] which has yet to be published and given the weight it deserves. Father Haddad confessed that his monastery alone had 2,500 unread Arabic Christian manuscripts.

Many scholars today are aware of the Islamic learning that flourished during the ninth through the thirteenth centuries. Almost no one, however, knows of the parallel Christian scholarship in Arabic that took place during that same period of time. A significant part of that Arabic Christian scholarship focused on the New Testament and those scholars, such as Hibatallah ibn al Assal, Dionesius ibn Salibi, Abdallah ibn al-Tayyib, Musa ibn al-Hajari, Bashir ibn al-Siri, and others, remain unknown, unpublished, unhonored, and unsung.

Arabic speaking Christianity began at Pentecost where some of those present heard the preaching of Peter in Arabic (Acts 2:1-21). To my knowledge there were no English, French, or German speakers in the room. Changing to a biblical image, we can say that you here in the Middle East do not need to go out and buy the field in which the treasure lies (Matt. 13:44). You already own the field! All that is required is that you dig it up and put its gold coins back into circulation.

II. Resources for the task

So much for the problem; let us now turn to the resources available for its solution.

First, there are the translations of the New Testament into Syriac, Coptic, and Arabic. Among these three, the Arabic translations play a special role because Arabic became the lake into which all streams flowed. Furthermore, translation is always interpretation. No Church tradition anywhere else in the world has the deep, rich heritage of translations of the New Testament that is available to the Arabic-speaking Churches here in the Middle East.

Textual specialists are not particularly interested in the Arabic translations because they often have brief comments added to the text. But if one is looking for how the text was understood by the church of a particular place and time, such additional comments are diamonds already cut, glistening in the sun waiting to be gathered along the path of interpretation. Having collected paper copies of all the translations into Arabic from 1592 to the present and having myself examined and acquired selected films

[1] Published as "The Cross of Christ in the Earliest Arabic Melkite Apologies," in Samir Khalil Samir and Jørgen S. Nielsen, eds., *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 115-45.

of Arabic gospels from Cambridge, Oxford, London, Berlin, and Rome, my own study has been greatly enriched by many such diamonds. Many more await discovery and exposure. It is impossible to over emphasize the importance of this unique interpretive biblical heritage.

Second, there are the commentaries. In these days, a new collection of the comments of the early Greek, Latin, and two Syriac Fathers on the New Testament are being published. That great work collates the reflections of the Fathers of the church from the late first century to A.D. 750. But what about Middle Eastern commentators from the eighth century to the present? Musa ibn Hajari's commentary on Luke was not included even though he wrote within the time span selected. Why? Probably because he is unknown in the West and only in the last three years has his commentary been translated from Syriac into Arabic—and even that text remains unpublished. Yes, Abdallah ibn al-Tayyis's commentary on the four gospels was published in Arabic over a hundred years ago, but it was not a critical edition and it has been out of print for decades. Hibatallah ibn al-Assal's collation of the Arabic versions from Greek, Coptic, and Syriac has been a center of interest for me for thirty years. It was completed here in Egypt in 1252. A team of scholars that I managed to put together has transcribed this work and translated it into English. Yet it remains unpublished! It is a gold mine into which I dip almost every day. I dream of the day the gold of that mine will be available also to all of you. Our own Ibrahim Said's commentary on Luke deserves to be translated into English and made available to the entire Christian world. Who is to care for these things?

Third, there is a Middle Eastern reading of the early Judaica. These works include the Mishna, the two Talmuds, the Tosephta, the early Midrashīm, and the Targumīd, some ninety volumes in all! These early works have been read and sifted for New Testament comparisons by the Germans, and for this we are grateful. But what about a Middle Eastern New Testament reading of these texts? Middle Easterners will inevitably see these early texts with different perceptions and note quite different connections with the stories of the gospels.

Finally comes conservative traditional Middle Eastern village life and its interpretation of the gospel story. Reverend Adib, mentioned above, made connections between village life and the text of the gospels. I think he knew he was handling gold coins. I am not sure he understood that these coins were unknown to the rest of the Christian world. How many more insights await us?

The Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo and the Evangelical churches that it serves are rooted in Middle Eastern culture. The most critical language for the task ahead is Arabic because most of the important texts are in that language. Only a church and a seminary deeply rooted in the Bible will care enough about its message to undertake such a task. In short, this treasure is buried in the garden around your house. It is on your property. If you do not dig it up, who is going to do so?

III. The Need for this Journey

Finally, looking to the future, why is this journey important?

First, there are the blessings that can come to the Evangelical community itself. For five decades I have seen the Evangelical churches in the Middle East select and translate biblical studies from the West, and that is good. I honor the Western scholars whose works you have found meaningful for your own life and witness. I also honor those who have translated and published these works. At the same time, Jerusalem, Damascus, and Antioch are the cities where our faith was born and where it first grew. These famous New Testament cities are Middle Eastern cities. To them we can naturally add Alexandria. Your own Evangelical tradition has already published biblical commentaries written by Ghobrial Rizkallah, Fahim Aziz, and Ebrahim Said, and because of his exegetical sermons, we can add the name of Labib Mishriqi. It is my prayer that this generation will also produce thoughtful commentators on the scripture and that this center will foster their theological pilgrimage for the upbuilding of the Evangelical church all across the Middle East.

Second, beyond our own Evangelical tradition are the Orthodox and Catholic churches of the Middle East. Quality biblical commentaries that draw on the Arabic Christian heritage of the past will, I am convinced, be used widely by those traditions and such works can help bring us together.

The third potential field for ministry for such efforts is the Global South. It is well known that 60 percent of the Christians in the world now reside in Africa, Asia, and South America. Research has shown that in those countries there are two million active pastors who have received less than six weeks of theological education. Who is going to write the commentaries for these pastors? Here in Cairo you are in Africa and yet your historical roots go back to St. Mark, and all that has happened in the name of Christ in Egypt over the last two thousand years is a part of who you are.

You understand the world of the sophisticated, highly educated businessmen and professionals that live in your cities. You also understand the world of village people who preserve the traditions of the past and are not connected to the internet. Your potential contribution to the emerging churches of the two-thirds world is enormous and cannot be calculated. Middle Eastern Christianity has deeper roots than any Christian community anywhere in the world. Your church is a suffering church, and this gives you a voice that you can raise with integrity among other branches of the suffering church. I am convinced that your unique Arabic Christian voice can give birth to a new renaissance in churches all over the world in ways and places that are yet unknown to us.

Finally there is the reality of what is called the "Post-Christian West." Jahu Henceles from Sierra Leone has eloquently described the contribution the Christians of the Global South are already making to the old and tired churches of places like Holland and England, where more than 3,000 new African churches have been built in the last twenty years. In biblical studies the sense of the sacredness of the Bible in many circles

in the West is fading. Growing out of the rock-like commitments that you have to the witness of Scripture, your voice is needed among us. We in the West have once again become the man from Macedonia calling out, "Come over into Macedonia and help us."

To summarize: I have dreamed to see this day. Now I see it and am glad. For thirty years people in the West have asked me, "Who will continue along the path that you have opened?" My answer has always been that the Spirit blows where it wills, and I have never assumed that the vision given to me is valid for anyone else or that its value is related to how long it lasts. What matters is that I am faithful to it, not that I pass it on to anyone else. So this new center must be shaped by how you are guided by the Holy Spirit and by how you are obedient to your own calling. At the same time, I see a great unfinished task of interpreting the life and teachings of Jesus more precisely in the light of Middle Eastern culture.

One of the finest compliments I have ever received in my life was when the late Reverend Samuel Habib chose the title for a translation into Arabic of one of my books on the parables of Jesus. He called it *Amthāl al-Sayyid al-Masīh Ru'ya Sharkīyya, b'qalam al-Qiss, al-Doktor* Kenneth Bailey (*Parables of Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*). You mean that r*u'ya sharkīyya* (Middle Eastern Eyes) is available from the mind and heart of this man with the Scottish name of Bailey? I was deeply moved when I first handled a copy of that book. But if r*u'ya sharkīyya* is possible for an interpreter by the name of Bailey, how much more do we expect an even better *ru'ya sharkīyya* from the minds and hearts of people with names like Fāhim, Hanna, Abd al-Masīh, Atef, and Emile?

The Father is sovereign and sits upon His throne. The Lord is risen and among us. The Spirit is moving in our midst. You have demonstrated your faithfulness in the past through wars and rumors of wars. As a church of saints and martyrs I pray God's special blessing on you as you venture as a church and as a seminary into this new endeavor, and to His Holy Name be all glory, and honor now and forever more. Amen.

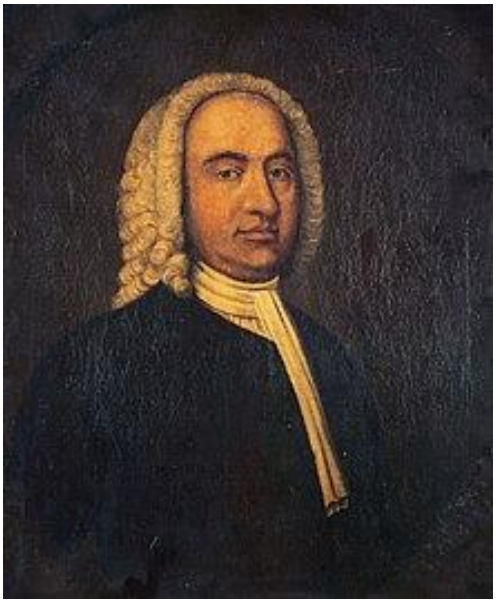
Kenneth E. Bailey, Th. D.
Author and Lecturer in Middle Eastern New Testament Studies

Confession of Faith of the United Presbyterian Church of North America and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt

By Michael Parker

In 1933 the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt (EPCE) borrowed the Confession of Faith of the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA), which it adopted in 1925. Though a beautifully written and, in many ways, timeless statement of Reformed theology, it was also the product of a very specific set of historical circumstances in Scotland, England, and the United States. This article will sketch the background of the UPCNA and then present the context in which the Confession of 1925 was drafted, revised, and finally adopted. Following this introduction is the full text of the confession, whose formal title is "The Confessional Statement of the United Presbyterian Church of North America."

The UPCNA had an institutional life of only one hundred years, from 1858 to 1958. It was established by the merger of two Scottish churches, some of whose members had migrated to British North America in the mid-eighteenth century and eventually settled in western Pennsylvania, Ohio, and surrounding areas. These churches were the Reformed Presbyterian Church and Associate Presbyterian Church. Both were dissenters from the Church of Scotland, the established church in Scotland.



Ebenezer Erskine, National Galleries Scotland

The Reformed Presbyterian Church was the remnant of the Scottish Covenanters, those who had broken with English King Charles I in 1638 in forming "The Solemn League and Covenant." Though this group was prohibited at the time of the Restoration in 1660, a small group of Covenanters continued, determined to retain pure Reformation principles. Following the Glorious Revolution in 1688, the Covenanters remained a dissenter church but now they enjoyed official toleration. Nevertheless, because of ongoing persecution as well as economic hardship, many migrated to Northern Ireland and eventually to the American colonies to make better lives for themselves. It was in their new American home that, in 1752, they established the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

The Associate Presbyterian Church was a Seceder church. It emerged in the 1730s under the leadership of Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754), a clergyman in the Church of Scotland who was suspended from the ministry because of a sermon he gave in 1733 that attacked lay patronage. Earlier in 1722 he had been admonished by his presbytery for endorsing Edwin Fisher's *The*

Marrow of Modern Divinity (1645), a book that opposed legalism and antinomianism in favor of a doctrine of atonement based on God's unconditional offer of grace. Though a Calvinist, Erskine took an evangelical view of the gospels. After undergoing a conversion (or recommitment) experience following his wife's recovery from a critical illness, his preaching became increasingly heartfelt and compelling as he attempted to share the gospel with renewed vitality. He and two other suspended ministers seceded from the established church to form the Associate Presbytery. The Church of Scotland deposed the Seceder clergymen in 1740, and in the same year many Scots chose to join the new church. Like the Covenanters, the Seceders were a persecuted minority who were also hard pressed economically. They too emigrated to Northern Ireland and later North America. In 1753 in the American colonies they formed the Associate Presbyterian Church.

These transplanted Covenanters and Seceders eventually came to see that the issues that had led to their formation were no longer relevant in the American context. Moreover, as products of the Scottish Reformation and adherents of the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), they had much in common. In 1858 they agreed to merge, becoming the United Presbyterian Church of North America. Their confession of faith would be a modified Westminster Confession. In general, they believed that the Westminster Confession was a faithful summary of the doctrines of the Bible as expounded by John Calvin, but they also believed that in the context of nineteenth-century America it would have to be updated. The specific problem was Chapter XIII of the confession, which required that the church be subject to the civil authorities. Written by Puritans who were attempting to create an established church in England, the Westminster Confession on this point no longer made sense to Americans who had revolted from British authority and had later established a new government that enshrined the principle of separation of church and state. The UPCNA rewrote Chapter XXIII to conform to American notions of church-state relations.

In addition to this revision, the UPCNA also added eighteen "Declarations," later called the Testament of 1858, that were meant to supplement, not amend, the confession by addressing concerns and issues that were not prevalent in the 1640s. For example, the first declaration averred that the Scriptures "are in every part the inspired Word of God, and that this inspiration extends to the language as well as to the sentiments which they express."[1] Though the Westminster Confession had affirmed the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, the first declaration clarified that this included both the "language" and "sentiments" of the biblical writers. This was intended as a response to nineteenth-century Higher Criticism, which undercut traditional interpretations of the Bible.

While the first thirteen of the Directives were typical affirmations of nineteenth-century conservative Evangelicals, the last five were considered the denomination's "distinctives." Article XIV condemned slavery as sin and denied church membership to slaveholders. Article XV banned members from joining secret societies. This was no doubt a response to groups such as the Masons, an organization that was popular in nineteenth-century America but also criticized for embracing Deist ideas and semi-religious rituals that were in conflict with Christianity. Article XVI established that the church would practice closed communion as it wanted to limit communion to those under its discipline. Article XVII enjoined church members to practice public social covenanting. As Moses had called the ancient Israelites to publicly embrace the covenant with God (Deut. 19:10-13) and as their Scottish forebears had embraced the Solemn League and

[1]Thomas Matthew Gilliland, Jr., *Truth and Love: The United Presbyterian Church of North America, A Fifty Year Retrospective* (U.S.A.: Booklocker.com, Inc., 2008, 26.

Covenant to uphold Reformation principles in the face of the threat posed by Charles I (1638), so these mid-nineteenth-century American Presbyterians were to join publicly with others in committing to a covenant with God. Lastly, article XVIII limited singing in worship services to the Psalms. Over a century before the Assembly of 1858, nonconformist theologian and hymnist Isaac Watts (1674-1748) helped to lead the British nation to embrace the use of hymns in worship. Other poets, such as Methodist Charles Wesley, famously followed his example, leading to the popular acceptance of the practice. The UPCNA, however, chose to follow the older tradition.

Seal of the UPCNA

UPCNA members have been described as "hardheaded," and as the descendants of the Scottish Covenanters and Seceders who had suffered persecution for their convictions, they were known to be stubbornly committed to their set of beliefs.[2] Yet when the Assembly of 1858 agreed upon the Westminster Confession of Faith and the eighteen directives as the doctrinal standards of their new united church, the assembly further resolved "that the forbearance in love which is required by the law of God, will be exercised toward any brethren who may not be able fully to subscribe to the standards of the United Church, while they do not determinedly oppose them, but follow the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another." They also adopted the motto, "The Truth of God, Forbearance in Love."[3] This irenic attitude may in part have been due to the homogeneity of the new church. Having experienced little dissent among themselves, they could afford to be tolerant. This was not to be the case with the larger Presbyterian churches in the United States, who experienced much conflict and division over doctrinal disagreements.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the members of the UPCNA recognized that new cultural developments called for a fresh presentation and possible revision of their doctrinal standards. The period from about 1870 to 1920 saw the rise of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy in the United States, and the 1920s saw this conflict move to center-stage in the country when in 1922 pastor Harry Emerson Fosdick threw down the gauntlet with his bullish sermon "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" Three years later, Fundamentalists and Modernists clashed over the issue of teaching Darwin's theory of evolution in public schools, resulting in the Scopes "Monkey" Trial of 1925. The Presbyterian Church U.S.A., whose professors at Princeton Seminary had pioneered the central ideas of Fundamentalism in the nineteenth century, divided in the 1920s between Modernists and Fundamentalists. This led, in 1929, to Princeton's New Testament professor J. Gresham Machen withdrawing from the seminary in order to found Westminster Seminary and, in 1936, to help organize the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The UPCNA made aborted attempts to update its doctrinal standards in 1881, 1914, and 1917. Finally, in 1919, the General Assembly established a committee of nine members to revise

[2]Gilliland, 43.
[3]Wallace N. Jamison, *The United Presbyterian Story: A Centennial Study, 1858-1958* (Pittsburgh, PA.: The Geneva Press, 1958), 131.

its statement of faith that would include a preamble that specifically showed the points of continuity and discontinuity with the Westminster Confession. The committee was chaired by Dr. John McNaughter (1857-1947), a professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis at Pittsburgh-Xenia Seminary and also, from 1909 to 1943, the seminary's president. In 1923, after four years of effort, the committee submitted for the General Assembly's consideration a revised Confession of Faith. At the same time, it separately submitted the confession's preamble, which affirmed the Westminster Confession of Faith as well as the Larger and Shorter Catechisms and the Testimony of 1858. It asserted that the new confession "embodies the substance" and "takes the place of the former fourfold Declaration" but would retain the Shorter Catechism.[4]

The changes in the confession were mostly apparent in its omissions rather than its direct assertions. Four of the five "distinctives" of the church were dropped without comment. Presumably the directives on slavery, secret societies, and public social covenants could be silently omitted because they were simply no longer part of the life of the church. The omission of closed communion, however, allowed the church to practice a Holy Communion that was open to all believers. The church's fifth distinctive, article 28 concerning the singing of Psalms, was handled differently. Debate in the General Assembly focused almost exclusively on article 28, which held that the Psalms and "other portions of Scripture properly versified" were to be used in congregational singing. An alternative article would allow for the singing of both Psalms and "also other songs or hymns, true to the spirit and teaching of Scriptures, may be employed."[5] The assembly voted 185 to 28 to allow the presbyteries to decide between the two alternatives. The new statement of faith was then sent to the presbyteries as an overture.

Though the assembly had not debated the substance of the new confession, the individual presbyteries considered the statement more carefully. The debate unfolded in the summer and fall of 1923 in a series of articles in the *United Presbyterian*, the church's official journal. Writing in the July 19 and 26 issues, James H. Grier, professor of Old Testament at Pittsburgh Seminary, argued that the preamble clearly states that the new statement of faith would replace the church's current fourfold standard (the Westminster Confession, the longer and shorter Westminster Catechisms, and the Testimony of 1858). If the new confession were meant merely to summarize the Westminster Confession, he would find no objection. But if the new statement was meant to replace the Westminster Confession, he would find it inadequate because it leaves out too much; it is too brief to do justice to the subject. Moreover, the new confession in some places is either vague or veers from true Calvinism. "The new Confessional Statement," he averred, "is somewhat Calvinistic, but it is not pure Calvinism." He objected specifically to articles four and ten that deal with the doctrine of election. Because they do not include the words "from all eternity," they leave open the possibility that election is "subordinate to and contingent upon the covenant of grace." Articles ten and fourteen, he objected, teach an unlimited atonement, and article ten teaches "the universal salvation of children dying in infancy." It supports the latter doctrine with an inappropriate verse—"Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14)—that does not teach this doctrine. In contrast, he observed that the Westminster Confession did not deny this doctrine but cautiously "left the final judgment

[4] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of North America,* Vol. 15 no.4 (1923), 867-868.
[5] Ibid., 876.

with the Judge [God]."[6]

W.I. Wishard, professor of theology at Pittsburgh Seminary, responded to Dr. Grier's article in August. He argued that it was time to update the language and theology of the Westminster Confession so that it reflected the modern world. For him, the new confession did not go far enough. "While the new statement is, as it seems to me, almost reactionary in its Calvinism and fails to modify it at points where I think it should be modified, yet it marks a great gain over the Confession as a clear statement of Calvinism for the twentieth century."[7] In his follow-up article, his arguments and comments were more acute. There are ideas in the Westminster Confession that modern Presbyterians no longer believe. One glaring example, Wishart observed, is the Westminster Confession's depiction of the Roman Catholic Pope as "the man of sin, the son of perdition, the anti-Christ," a position that most Presbyterians no longer hold. Equally important were its omissions. The Westminster Confession, unlike the new confession, "has no adequate statement of the office and work of the Holy Spirit." Moreover, the new confession was an improvement on the old in a number of areas, including its articles entitled "Of Angels," "Of the Holy Spirit," "Of the Study of God's Word." "Of Sabbath Observance," "Of the Family," "Of Civil Government," "Of the Social Order," and "Of Christian Service and the Final Triumph." Wishart also objected to some of Grier's interpretations of the document. While Grier wrote that the new confession taught an unlimited atonement, Wishart argued that the last line of article 14 clearly suggests a limited atonement. Finally, he asserted that the salvation of infants "is not only the teaching of Scripture, but it is also good Calvinism."[8]

When the UPCNA General Assembly meet again in 1924, it was reported that the presbyteries had affirmed the new confession except for the preamble and Article 28 on congregational singing. The preamble had been rejected, while the vote on Article 28 was uncertain. Because the voting procedures were unclear, presbyteries returned a majority vote for both alternatives. The assembly drafted a revised preamble and a new version of Article 28 and sent them as new overtures to the presbyteries. The new preamble affirmed the Westminster Confession and its Longer and Shorter Catechisms but also affirmed "the right and duty of a living Church to restate its faith from time to time so as to display any additional attainments in truth it may have made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." The new confession, it declared, was a brief summary of the "substance of the Westminster symbols," yet it also included "certain present-day convictions of the United Presbyterian Church." It was replacing only the Testimony of 1858, "and wherever it deviates from the Westminster Standards its declarations are to prevail." Article 28 was revised to affirm that the "Psalms of the Bible … are accredited for permanent use, together with meritorious evangelical hymns in which are expressed the experiences, privileges, and duties of the Christian life." The presbyteries passed both measures by a vote of two to one, and the General Assembly of 1925 adopted the Confessional Statement in full.

While the new confession was attacked at the time for its brevity and omissions that, it was argued, did not allow for a full development of Calvinist thought, this is true only as far as it goes. Since silence is not the same as denial and the preamble specifically affirms the Westminster Confession, the doctrinal omissions in the 1925 Confession of Faith might more charitably be attributed to the desire for brevity and simplicity for the sake of lay people. They might also be

[6] James H. Grier, "Shall We Abandon the Westminster Confession," *The United Presbyterian,* 81, no. 30 July 26, 1923, 16.
[7] W.I., Wishard, "The New Statement and the Westminster Confession," Aug 23, p. 9
[8] W.I., Wishard, "The Theology of the New Statement," August 30, p. 12-13

attributed to the inevitable tension that must arise between a simple declaration of evangelical faith and a full expression of the Calvinist system of theology, which to be understood must be seen as a whole. Understanding that Calvinist doctrines, like that of election, are not well understood by lay people and are easily misinterpreted when seen in their separate provisions, the committee chose simplicity and omission over doctrinal rigor.[9] Those who prefer greater precision in a confession of faith may have recourse to the Westminster Confession, which the 1925 confession was arguably meant to summarize and, at least in some areas, update. One might conclude, then, that the 1925 confession is a reasonable, though brief and incomplete, summary of the Westminster Confession and the Reformed faith as they were understood by conservative Presbyterians in the 1920s.

When the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt (EPCE) adopted the UPCNA's 1925 Confession of Faith, it made four clear departures from the original text. Two of these occur in Articles 28 and 29 where the music to be used by the Synod for Sabbath Day observances has been adapted to the Egyptian context. These changes to the original UPCNA text have been put in italics. Finally, the EPCE's confession does not include the preamble or the supporting biblical texts, which have been added here.

It is not clear if the Confession of Faith is widely used in the EPCE. Though it is the church's official statement of faith, it may be "more honored in the breach than the observance." If this is accurate, it may be time for the church to write a fresh statement of its beliefs, one that will display any new "attainments in truth" as well as address contemporary concerns – gender equality, homosexuality, divorce, and other matters—using language that is relevant in the Egyptian context. On the other hand, the Confession of Faith is written in clear, simple language that is understandable to a lay audience, and it is a worthy summary of the timeless truths of the Reformed faith. Admittedly, it does not address all the controversial aspects of Calvinism, but neither does it make affirmations that any in the broad middle range of the church would find objectionable. As a general statement of faith for a conservative Reformed church at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it may be all that is needed or wanted.

Though the confession as such may be acceptable, the Arabic translation that the EPCE is using is another matter. It accurately conveys this English-language confession's general sense, but its diction and grammar are sometimes imprecise, awkward, or incorrect. For example, Article 1 contains the Arabic word for God, written as الله (*alah*) when it should be إله (*illāh*). In addition to problematic words, there are also entire phrases that should be revised for greater accuracy. For example, Article 13's rendition of the phrase "inspired all writers of the Holy Scripture to record infallibly" translates the adverb infallibly as a verb. But the translation in Arabic should be "ليدونوا فكر الله وإرادته بطريقة معصومة عن الخطأ." In addition to diction errors, the punctuation in the Arabic version of the confession is also at times a concern. Sometimes the punctuation is inaccurate or simply omitted, which makes the language difficult to understand. For example, in Article 16, there is a long sentence without any punctuation at all, making the translation very difficult to understand. There are also some linguistic problems such as the use of the definite article where no article is required. This is often the case with the prefix *in* as with *in*effective. In Arabic this prefix is often الغير (al-*ghair*), but in many cases it is better to use غير (*ghair*). Finally, there are some words in the English version of the confession that are omitted in the Arabic version. For example, in Article 44 the word *power*, قوة (*quwwa*), is dropped. Conversely, some words in the

[9] These points are well argued in Gilliland, 35-36.

Arabic text do not appear in the English version and seem to have been added for theological reasons. For example, in Article 30, which concerns baptism, the Arabic version has added the words "or by immersing him,"أو بتغطيسه (*aw bitaghtīsihi)*. This seems to have been inserted in order to make the Evangelical practice of baptism resemble the Coptic Orthodox rite, which only acknowledges baptism by immersion as valid. The examples given here are only a small fraction of the large number of disputable translations that could have been mentioned. Clearly, the translation should be revised for accuracy and for the better comprehension of contemporary Arabic-speakers in Egypt. In fact, there are at least four other Arabic versions of the confession available that could be consulted should the church decide that it needs a new translation.[10]

What I have written here should be considered only the barest introduction to the confession. For those interested in exploring the subject more deeply, I suggest beginning with a study of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which the 1925 Confession of Faith purportedly summarizes. To study the Confession of Faith itself, one might begin with two sets of primary documents: *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of North America* for the years 1919-1925; and *The United Presbyterian,* the denomination's journal, for the year 1923 when the Confession was debated. There are numerous secondary sources to be consulted, but I found two books to be particularly useful in writing this introduction: Wallace N. Jamison, *The United Presbyterian Story: A Centennial Study, 1858-1958* (Pittsburgh, PA: The Geneva Press, 1958), 128-143; and Thomas Matthew Gilliland Jr., *Truth and Love: The United Presbyterian Church of North America, A Fifty Year Retrospective* (U.S.A.: Booklocker.com, Inc., 2008), 1-45. A copy of the 1925 Confession is difficult to find as it is not available online. The copy of the Confession reproduced here can be found in Kenneth L. Cuthbertson, *The Last Presbyterian? Remembering the Faith of My Forebears* (Eugene, Oregon: Resource Publications, 2013), Appendix 1, 149-170. Cuthbertson moved the biblical citations to endnotes, but I have placed them in the text following each article as they were originally arranged. For the eighteen declarations of the UPCNA in 1858, see *The Testimony of the United Presbyterian Church of North America* (Pittsburgh: Kerr, M'Lean & Ferguson, 1858).

The Confession of Faith

PREAMBLE

The United Presbyterian Church of North America declares afresh its adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechism, Larger and Shorter, as setting forth the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures, which are the only infallible and final rule of faith and practice. Along with this it affirms the right and duty of a living Church to restate its faith from time to time

[10] This paragraph is the work of Mofreh Abd El-Maseeh, an MDiv student at ETSC. He observes that the changes he recommends are included in an Arabic-language book on the constitution of the Evangelical Church in Egypt: *The Constitution of the Evangelical Church in the Arab United Republic and Its General Polity* (Cairo: Dar el-Thaqafa el-Masihia , 1970). (1970 ,(القاهرة: دار الثقافة المسيحية) **دستور الكنيسة الإنجيلية بالجمهورية العربية المتحدة ونظامها الأساسي** . The three other Arabic versions of the confession are found in the following books:
دستور الكنيسة الإنجيلية بالجمهورية العربية المتحدة (القاهرة: دار الثقافة المسيحية، 1967)، **دستور الكنيسة الإنجيلية بمصر** (القاهرة: دار الثقافة، 1985)، **دستور الكنيسة الإنجيلية بمصر** (القاهرة: دار الثقافة، 2011).

so as to display any additional attainments in truth it may have made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, by constitutional action consummated June 2, 1925, it adopted the following Confessional Statement. This Statement contains the substance of the Westminster symbols, together with certain present-day convictions of the United Presbyterian Church. It takes the place of the Testimony of 1858, and wherever it deviates from the Westminster Standards its declarations are to prevail.

Subscription to the foregoing Subordinate Standards is subject to the principle maintained by our fathers, that the forbearance in love which is required by the law of God is to be exercised toward any brethren who may not be able fully to subscribe to the Standards of the Church while they do not determinedly oppose them, but follow the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another.

In keeping with its creedal declaration of truth, the United Presbyterian Church believes that among the evangelical communions of the world there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and therefore, shunning sectarian temper, it cherishes brotherly love toward all branches of the Church Universal seeks to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

ARTICLE I, OF GOD

We believe that there is one living and true God, a self-existent, personal Spirit, eternal and unchangeable, the creator, upholder, and ruler of the universe, a God of infinite love, mercy, holiness, righteousness, justice, truth, wisdom, and might. We believe that the one God exists as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that these three Persons are the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

Gen. 1:1, 26, 27; Gen. 17:1; Exod. 3:14; Exod. 34:6; Deut. 6:4; Deut. 32:4; Deut. 33:27; Neh. 9:6; Psa. 9:8; Psa. 62:11; Psa. 90:2; Psa. 103:19; Psa. 108:4; Psa. 145:8,9; Isa. 6:3; Isa. 40: 26, 28; Isa. 45:21, 22; Isa. 57:15; Isa. 65:16; Jer. 10:10; Jer. 31:3: Mal. 3:6; Matt. 28:19; Mark 12:29; John 4:24; John 5:19,26; John 10:30, 38; John 17:3, 5; Acts 17:28; Rom. 2:5; Rom. 5:8; Rom. 11:33; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 1:11, 19; Eph. 2:4; Phil. 2:6; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 Tim. 1:17; Jas. 1:17; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 John 4:8; Rev. 4:11.[11]

ARTICLE II, OF DIVINE REVELATION

We believe that the works of nature, the mind and heart of man, and the history of nations are sources of knowledge concerning God and His will, though insufficient for human need; that a clearer revelation came through men who spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit; and that in the fullness of the time God perfectly revealed Himself in Jesus the Christ, the Word made flesh.

Gen. 1:27; Deut. 32:8; Psa. 19:1-6; Psa. 119:105; Luke 1:70; John 1:1, 10, 14, 18; John 5:39; John

[11] All biblical citations in this document were inserted here from the original English-language confession by me with the help of Rita Bahig, International Relations Officer for the Synod of the Niles Schools.

10:30; John 14:9; Acts 3:21; Acts 14:17; Acts 17:26, 27, 30; Rom. 1:18-21; Rom. 2:14, 15; 1 Cor. 1:21; Gal. 1:12; Heb. 1:1-3; 2 Pet. 1:21.

ARTICLE III, OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God and are inspired throughout, in language as well as thought; that their writers, though moved by the Holy Spirit, wrought in accordance with the laws of the human mind; that they faithfully record God's gracious revelation of Himself and bear witness of Christ; and that they are an infallible rule of faith and practice and the supreme source of authority in spiritual truth.

Deut. 18:15; Psa. 19:7-11; Psa. 119:160; Isa. 8:20; Isa. 11:1,2; Matt. 4:4; Luke 16:29; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; John 10:35; John 16:13; Acts 1:16; Acts 3:18; Acts 8:35; Acts 10:43; Rom. 1:1-4; Rom. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:13; Gal. 3:16; Eph. 3:3-5; 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 3:7; 1 Pet. 1:10, 11; 2Pet. 1:21.

ARTICLE IV, OF THE DIVINE PURPOSE

We believe that all things which have come to pass, or are yet to come to pass, lie within the eternal and sovereign purpose of God, either positively or permissively, and are ordained for the manifestation of His glory; yet is God not the author of sin, nor is the free agency of moral beings taken away.

Gen. 45:7,8; Gen. 50:20; Job 1:12; Job 2:6; Psa. 33:11; Prov. 16:33; Isa. 46:9-11; Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; Acts 4:27,28; Acts 13:29; Rom. 8:28; Rom. 11:36; Eph. 1:4-6, 11, 12; Phil. 2:12,13; Jas. 1:13,14.

ARTICLE V, OF CREATION

We believe that God, for His own wise ends, was pleased in the beginning to create by His infinite power the universe of the worlds, and that all intelligent beings, human and superhuman, are the product of His will; that through progressive states he fashioned and ordered this world in which we dwell, giving life to every creature; and that He created man with a material body and with an immortal spirit made in His own image, and intelligence, feeling, and will, possessed of holiness and happiness, capable of fellowship with him, free and able to choose between good and evil, and therefore morally responsible.

Gen. 1:1-31; Gen. 2:7, 16, 17; Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15; Psa. 33:6; Isa. 40:26; Jer. 27:5; Acts 17:24, 25; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:9; Col. 3:10; Heb. 11:3; Heb. 12:9; 1 John 1:3; Rev. 4:11.

ARTICLE VI, OF PROVIDENCE

We believe that God is above all His works and in them all; that He upholds all things by His own supreme will and energy, providing for and preserving His creatures according to the laws of their being; and that He directs and governs all events to the praise of His glory. We believe that, while

in relation to the eternal purpose of God, the First Cause, all things are fixed immutably, they are accomplished through the operation of second causes, although as an extraordinary proof of His presence, God may dispense with natural means and instrumentalities.

Exod. 15:18; Josh. 24:17; Neh. 9:6; Psa. 22:28; Psa. 47:7; Psa. 77:13-15; Psa. 93:1; Psa. 103:19; Psa. 135:6; Psa. 145:9, 15; Isa. 40:26; Ezek. 21:27; Dan. 4:25; Zech. 14:9; Matt. 5:45; Matt. 6:26; Acts 2:23; Acts 17:25, 28; Acts 27:24, 31; Rom. 11:36; Jas. 1:17; 1 Pet. 5:7.

ARTICLE VII, OF ANGELS

We believe God created a superhuman order of intelligent and immortal beings, mighty in strength, to be the servants of His will; that these are of various ranks; that, having been placed under probation, some kept their original holiness and were confirmed therein, while some fell into sin, and remain fallen; that holy angels are the ministers of God's providence in the interests of His kingdom and the human race; and that the apostate angels, led by Satan, their personal head, are seeking to establish a dominion of evil by the temptation and corruption of men.

Gen. 19:1; Psa. 91:11; Psa. 103:20-21; Matt. 4:3; Matt. 13:41; Matt. 24:31; John 8:44; Acts 7:53; Acts 12:7-11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 1:21; Eph. 6:11, 12; 1 Tim. 5:21; Heb. 1:14; 1 Pet. 3:22; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 20:1-3.

ARTICLE VIII, OF THE SIN OF MAN

We believe that our first father Adam was created sinless and that there was held out to him a promise of eternal life dependent on perfect obedience for a season, while the penalty of disobedience was to be death, bodily and spiritual; that Adam, as the common ancestor of the race, was constituted the representative head of the human family; that he broke the Divine command through temptation of the devil, by which transgression he fell from his original state of holiness and communion with God and came into bondage to sin; that in consequence all men descending from him by ordinary generation have come under condemnation and are born with a sinful nature which is alienated from God and from which proceed all actual transgressions; and that out of this condition of guilt and depravity none are able to deliver themselves.

Gen. 2:16, 17; Gen. 3:19; Hos. 6:7; John 6:44; John 8:34; Rom. 3:19, 20; Rom. 5:12, 14, 17; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 2:14; 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 11:3.

ARTICLE IX, OF SALVATION

We believe that God, Who is rich in mercy, out of His infinite love for the world, entered from all eternity into a covenant of grace with His Only-begotten Son, wherein the Son, standing as the representative of sinners and their mediator with God, freely consented to secure for them at full salvation by taking their humanity and through a life of obedience and a vicarious death satisfying the Divine law and providing a perfect righteousness for all who believe on Him; that because of this covenant there was held forth from the first, immediately after the Fall, a promise of

redemption, in fulfillment of which, when the time of preparation was ended, Christ Jesus came into the world and wrought out a salvation sufficient for all and adapted to all; and that they who accept this salvation, being born anew, are restored to the fellowship of God, given a desire to forsake sin and live unto righteousness, and made heirs of eternal life.

Gen. 3:15; Psa. 40:7,8; Isa. 42:21; Isa. 53:4-6; Isa. 55:1; Jer. 31:3; John 1:12; John 3:16; John 5:24; John 10:29; John 17:1-26; Acts 5:31; Rom. 3:22; Rom. 5:1-11; Rom. 8:5, 30; Rom. 10:4; Rom 12:1; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 4:4,5; Eph. 1:7; Eph. 2:4,5; Eph. 4:20-24; 1 Tim. 2:5; Tit. 1:2,3; Heb. 7:22, 25; Heb. 8:6; Heb. 9:12, 15, 28; Heb. 12: 24; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:24; John 4:10; 1 John 5:11, 12; Rev. 22:17.

ARTICLE X, OF ELECTION

We believe that the Eternal Father, before the foundation of the world, in His own good pleasure gave to His Son a people, an innumerable multitude, chosen in Christ unto salvation, holiness, and service; that all of these who come to years of discretion receive this salvation through faith and repentance; and that all who die in infancy, and all others who are given by the Father to the Son and are beyond the reach of the outward means of grace, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Holy Spirit, Who works when and where and how He pleases.

Mark 10:14, 15; Luke 18:16; John 6:37,39; John 17:6, 9; Acts 10:3; Acts 13:48; Acts 17:27; Rom. 8:29, 30; Eph. 1:4; Eph. 2:10; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2; Rev. 5:9; Rev. 7:9.

ARTICLE XI, OF GOD THE FATHER

We believe that within the Godhead the Father is the First Person in the order of office and operation; that in some inconceivable manner, by eternal generation, He is the Father of the Only-begotten Son; that from Him and from the Son the Holy Spirit proceeds; that with the Son and the Holy Spirit He abides in mutual union and fellowship; and that He is the originating source in creation and redemption. We believe that He is the Father of all men as His rational and moral creatures, made after His likeness; that, beyond His universal benevolence He so loved the world of humanity as to provide a common salvation at the cost of immeasurable self-sacrifice; and that, though men as sinners have lost the privileges of sonship and denied its obligations, they still retain traces of their heavenly Father's image and share in His providential care and bounty. We believe in the fatherhood of God in a pre-eminent sense with reference to those who become His children by regeneration and adoption, and who yield a filial response to His love; that in His parental relationship with these He attains t the satisfaction of His desires for men; that He welcomes them into communion with Himself, makes them partakers of His holiness, and works out for them His gracious purpose in all that pertain to their present and eternal well-being.

Gen. 1:26, 27; Gen. 6:2; Num. 16:22; Psa. 2:7; Isa. 63:16; Mal. 2:10; Matt. 3:17; Matt. 5:45; Matt. 6:9; Matt. 17:5, Luke 3:38; Luke 15:11-32; John 1:14, 18; John 3:16; John 5:20, 26; John 10:29; John 16:28; Acts 2:33; Acts 17:26-29; Rom. 8:11, 14, 15, 28; 1 Cor. 8:6; Gal. 3:26; Ga. 4:6; Eph. 3:14, 15; Heb. 1:2,3,5; Heb. 12:9, 10; Jas. 3:9; 1 Pet. 1:3, 11, 17; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 4:7, 9.

ARTICLE XII, OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God, having a Sonship that is natural and necessary, inhering in the very constitution of the Godhead; that, freely laying aside His Divine glory and majesty, He became man by taking to Himself a true body and soul, yet without sin, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary; that thus He is very God and very man, two whole and distinct natures, the Divine and the human, being joined together in His one Person, never to be divided; and that He, the God-man is the sole mediator between God and men, by Whom alone we must be saved. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit to be our perfect and eternal prophet, priest, and king; that He has revealed the will and counsel of God; that for our redemption He fulfilled all righteousness by His holy obedience and His propitiatory sacrifice for the sin of the world; that, having died upon the cross and been buried, He rose from the dead by a physical resurrection and ascended into heaven, where as their advocate He makes continual intercession for His people; that He abides in believers as an indwelling presence, communicating newness of life and power, and making them sharers of what He has and is; that He sits at the right hand of God as the Head of His Church and Kingdom, with dominion over all created persons and things; and that He will come again in glory for the vanquishing of evil and the restoration of all things.

Matt. 1:20; Matt. 3:15; Matt. 28:16-20; Luke 1:30-35; Luke 3:21,22; Luke 4:18; John 1:1, 14, 18, 33; John 3:13, 16; John 10:36; John 14:6; John 15:5; John 17:5; John 20:19-29; Acts 1:9-11; Acts 2:33; Acts 3:21; Acts 4:12; Acts 10:38; Rom. 3:24, 25; Rom. 8:3, 17, 32, 34; Rom. 9:5; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 25; Gal. 1:12; Gal. 4:4,5; Eph. 1:20-23; Eph. 3:17; Phil. 2:6-11; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 1 Tim. 1:15; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 1:5, 8, 13; Heb. 2:14; Heb. 7:25, 26; Heb. 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:7, 13; 1 Pet. 3:22; 1 John 1:5; 1 John 2:1, 2; 1 John 4:2; Rev. 1:5, 6.

ARTICLE XIII, OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a real personality, the Third Person within the Divine Being, proceeding from the Father and the Son, and together with the Father and the Son is to be believed in, loved, obeyed and worshiped; that He shared in the work of creation, and is the Lord and Giver of all life; that He is everywhere present with men, inclining them unto good and restraining them from evil; that He spoke by the prophets and apostles and inspired all writers of the Holy Scriptures to record infallibly the mind and will of God; that He had peculiar relations with the Lord Jesus Christ, enabling the Son of God to assume our nature without being defiled by sin, and guiding, animating, and supporting the Saviour in His mediatorial work; that the dispensation of the gospel is especially committed to Him, in that He accompanies it with His persuasive power and urges its message upon the reason and conscience of men, so that they who refuse its merciful offer are without excuse. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the only efficient agent in the application of redemption, convicting men of sin, enlightening them in the knowledge of spiritual realities, moving them to heed the call of the gospel, uniting them to Christ, and dwelling in them as the source of faith, of the power, of holiness, of comfort, and of love; that He abides in the Church as a living Presence, giving efficacy to its ordinances, imparting various gifts and graces to its

members, calling and anointing its ministers for their holy service and qualifying all other officers for their special work; and that by Him the Church will be preserved, edified, extended throughout the world, and at last be glorified in the heavenly places with Christ.

Gen. 1:2; 2 Sam. 23:2; Job 26:13; Psa. 139:7; Zech. 4:6; Matt. 1:18-25; Matt. 4:1; Matt. 12:28; Matt. 28:19; Luke 1:35; Luke 4:14; John 14:16, 26; John 15:26; John 16:7-14; Acts 1:2,8; Acts 2:1- 4, 38; Acts 7:51; Acts 8:17; Acts 10:38; Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9, 11, 13, 16, 26; 1 Cor. 2:4, 10-13; 1 Cor. 12:4; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 4:6; Gal. 5:16-23, 25; Eph. 2:18; Eph. 3:16; Eph. 4:30; Phil. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:5; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:11; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 John 2:20.

ARTICLE XIV, OF THE ATONEMENT

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ, by the appointment of the Father, and by His own gracious and voluntary act, gave Himself a ransom for all; that as a substitute for sinful man His death was a propitiatory sacrifice of infinite value, satisfying Divine justice and holiness, and giving free access to God for pardon and restoration; and that this atonement, though made for the sin of the world, becomes efficacious to those only who are led by the Holy Spirit to believe in Christ as their Savior.

Psa. 40:7, 8; Psa. 139:7; Matt. 20:28; John 1:29; John 3:16; John 10:18; Rom. 3:25; Rom. 8:3,4; 1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 2:20; Gal. 3:13; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; 1 Tim 4:10; Heb. 10:5-10, 14, 19; 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10.

ARTICLE XV, OF THE GOSPEL CALL

We believe that the gospel is a revelation of grace to sinners as such, and that it contains a free and unconditional offer of salvation through Christ to all who hear it, whatever may be their character or condition; that the offer is in itself a proper motive to obedience and that nothing but a sinful unwillingness prevents its acceptance.

Isa. 55:1; Matt. 9:13; Matt. 11:28; John 3:16; John 6:37; Rom. 1:16, 17; Rom. 10:8-10; Eph. 1:13, 14; Heb. 4:7; Rev. 22:17.

ARTICLE XVI, OF REGENERATION

We believe in the necessity of regeneration, whereby we who by nature are spiritually dead are made new creatures, established in union with Christ, released from bondage to sin, and made alive unto God; that this is the immediate act of the Holy Spirit, who changes the governing disposition of the soul by a secret and direct operation of His power; and that ordinarily, where years of understanding have been reached, regeneration is wrought in connection with the use of Divine truth as a means.

Ezek. 11:19; John 3:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 4:5-7; Eph. 2:1, 5; Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5, 6; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23.

ARTICLE XVII, OF SAVING FAITH

We believe that saving faith is the gift of God; that in it there is not merely an assent to the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of sinners, but also a cordial acceptance and appropriation of Him, and a fixed reliance upon Him, as our Saviour; that this faith, which involves the conviction of the mind, the trust of the heart, and the obedience of the will, rests solely upon the free and unlimited offer of Christ made in the gospel to sinners of mankind; and that such faith is the necessary and all-sufficient condition and channel for the communication of every spiritual gift and the progressive realization of salvation.

Mark 1:15; John 1:12; John 3:16; John 20:27, 28; Acts 10:43; Acts 15:9; Rom. 10:17; Rom. 13:14; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 5:6; Eph. 2:8; Col. 2:6; 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 3:15; Heb. 11:6; Jas. 2:14-26; 1 Pet. 1:21; 1 John 5:4, 10.

ARTICLE XVIII, OF REPENTENTANCE

We believe that saving faith issues in repentance, which is essentially a turning away from sin unto God, accompanied not only with sorrow over sin, but with hatred of sin and with an earnest desire and sincere purpose to obey God's righteous law; that, while repentance is produced in the believing sinner by the Holy Spirit, it springs from a sense of sin as involving guilt and defilement and from an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ; that it is not to be rested in as any satisfaction for sin, or any ground of the pardon thereof, and yet it is of such necessity that none are saved without it; and that it is evidenced by humble confession of sin before God and by reparation for wrongs done to men.

Isa. 6:5; Matt. 3:2, 8; Luke 3:3,8; Luke 5:32; Luke 13:5; Luke 15:18; Luke 24:47; John 16:8; Acts 2:38; Acts 15:9; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:20; Rom. 2:4; Rom. 7:24; 2 Cor. 7:10,11; 1 Thess. 1:9; 2 Pet. 3:9.

ARTICLE XIX, JUSTIFICATION

We believe that justification is a judicial act of God by which in His free grace He places sinners in a new relation to Himself and His law, so that henceforth they are forgiven and accepted as righteous in His sight; that the procuring cause or ground of this is not anything wrought in them, or done by them, but only the perfect righteousness of Christ, embracing all that He did in the way of obedience and all that He suffered in their stead while on earth, a righteousness imputed to them, and received by faith alone; and that the evidence of justification is holy living.

Isa. 53:11; Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:22-26; Rom. 4:25; Rom. 4:1, 9, 16, 18; Rom. 6:22; Rom. 8:1, 30, 33; 1 Cor. 6:11; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; Phil. 3:9; Tit. 3:7; Jas. 2:18.

ARTICLE XX, OF ADOPTION

We believe that adoption is an act of the free grace of God whereby those that are justified are received into the number of His saved children, have His Name put upon them, have the Spirit of His Son given them, are the objects of His fatherly care and discipline, are admitted to the liberties and privileges of the family of God, and are made heirs of all the promises and fellow-heirs with Christ in Glory.

John 1:12; Roman 8:15-17, 23; 2 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 3:26; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 1:5; Tit. 3:7; Heb. 12:7, 8; 1 John 3:1; Rev. 3:12.

ARTICLE XXI, OF SANCTIFICATION

We believe that sanctification is the carrying on to completion of the great change effected in regeneration, being a progressive deliverance from the dominion and defilement of sin and a corresponding growth in holy character; that it is wrought by the power of the indwelling Spirit, whereby union with Christ is maintained and holy dispositions are fostered; that in sanctification believers are fellow-workers with the Holy Spirit, being called to faith and repentance, to true obedience in motive and act, to dedication of themselves to the will of God, and to a diligent use of the outward means of grace; and that, while, because of defective faith and human frailty, perfection never can be reached in the present life, it is nevertheless the duty of believers to aim at entire conformity to the will of God, to which, with advancing experience and fuller appropriation of Christ, they may increasingly approach.

Psa. 19: 12, 13; Ezek. 36:25-27; Matt. 5:48; John 17:17; Acts 15:9; Acts 29:32; Rom. 6:1-6, 12, 14; Rom. 7:18, 23; Rom. 8:13; Rom. 13:14; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 2:20; Gal. 5:16, 17, 24; Eph. 1:4; Eph. 3:16-19: Eph. 4:11, 12, 15, 16, 23, 24; Eph. 5:26; Eph. 6:10; Phil. 2:12, 13; Phil. 3:12-14; Phil. 4:13; Col. 1:10, 11; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:21; Heb. 12:1, 14; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Pet. 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 1:5-10; 1 John 3:6, 9; 1 John 5:4.

ARTICLE XXII, OF UNION WITH CHRIST

We believe that all who receive Christ by saving faith are made one with Him in a mystical union through the Holy Spirit; that thereby they become vitally related to Him as the Sin-bearer and the Life-giver, insuring their acceptance with God, their renewal of nature, and their growth in holiness and fruitfulness; and that believers thus joined to Christ as their Head, and nourished by His life communicated to them, are bound together in one spiritual organism, which is called the body of Christ.

John 14:19; John 15:1-5; John 17:21-23; Rom. 6:3-5; Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Cor. 12: 12, 13, 27; 2 Cor. 4:10, 11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:23; Eph. 5:30; Col. 2:10, 19.

ARTICLE XXIII, OF THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS

We believe that, because of the original purpose, the unchanging love, and the constant operation of God, all who are brought into vital union with Christ, and are members of His mystical body,

abide permanently in a state of grace and finally are made perfect in glory; that, while such fall into sin, and some under God's fatherly displeasure, until they humble themselves and make confession, they never become utterly apostate; and that this continuance on the part of believers is accomplished by the Holy Spirit in harmony with their rational nature, the warnings, cautions, and exhortation of Scripture addressed to them being used to foster self-examination, watching, prayer, and the faithful observance of all sacred ordinances.

Psa. 51:1-7; Psa. 73:23; Jer. 31:3; Jer. 32:40; Matt. 24:24; Matt. 26:69-74; Luke 22:31, 32; John 8:31; John 10:28, 29; John 17:2, 3, 11, 24; Rom. 8:31-39; 1 Cor. 8:8, 9; 1 Cor. 9:27; Eph. 4:30; Phil. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:19; Heb. 3:12; Heb. 4:1, 7; Heb. 6:4-6, 9, 10; Heb. 7:25; Heb. 10:10, 14; Heb. 13:20, 21; 1 Pet. 1:5, 8, 9; 2 Pet. 1:10; 1 John 2:17, 19, 27; 1 John 3:9; Jude 20, 21, 24.

ARTICLE XXIV, OF ASSURANCE

We believe that from the first the believer has a persuasion, proportioned to the strength of his faith, that he is saved, this initial confidence resting on the promise and power and faithfulness of God; that, in addition, there is the assurance of sense or feeling, to which he attains through his conscious possession of the graces of the children of God and through the inner witness of the Holy Spirit; and that it is the privilege and duty of every believer to give diligence to attain this conscious assurance of salvation whereby he may live in joy and peace, may be moved the more by love and thanksgiving to God, and may be led to a fuller obedience and service.

Psa. 23:1-6; Psa. 73:23-26; Rom. 5:2, 5; Rom. 8:16, 38, 39; Rom. 15:13; 2 Cor. 1:21, 22; Eph. 1:13, 14; Eph. 4:30; Col. 2:2; 2 Tim. 1:12; Tit. 2:11-14; Heb. 6:11, 17-19; Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:4, 10, 11; 1 John 2:3; 1 John 3: 2, 3, 14,19, 21, 24; 1 John 4: 13, 16; 1 John 5:13.

ARTICLE XXV, OF THE LAW OF GOD

We believe that the moral law of God summarized in the Ten Commandments, proclaimed by the prophets, and unfolded in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, is of perpetual obligation; that it demands not only right acts and words, but also right dispositions and states of mind; that it is of use to all men in setting before them the inflexible holy will of God, in discovering to them sin in its true light, and in preparing the way for the gospel of grace; and that although believers, because of their justification, are not subject to it as a condition of salvation, they are required to obey it as a rule of action and standard of character.

Psa. 19:7, 8, 11; Psa. 119:4: Jer. 31:33; Matt. 5:17-19, 21- 48; Matt. 6:1-34; Matt. 22:37- 40; Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:20, 31; Rom. 6:14; Rom. 7:4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 14, 22, 25; Rom. 8:4; Rom. 10:4; Rom. 13:8; 1 Cor. 7:19; 1 Cor. 9:20, 21; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:13, 21, 24; Gal. 4:4, 5; Gal. 5:14; Eph. 6:2; 1 Tim. 1:8; Heb. 8:10; Jas. 1:25; Jas. 2:8, 9, 12; 1 John 2:3, 4, 7, 8.

ARTICLE XXVI, OF THE STUDY OF GOD'S WORD

We believe that Holy Scripture, as God's written Word, is adapted to the spiritual needs of man, containing whatever doctrine is necessary to salvation and all things that pertain to life and godliness; that, therefore, it deserves and demands our reverent attention and our deepest thought; and that the reading and study of the Word, when entered upon with a mind illumined by the Holy Spirit and with prayerful reflection, will always prove an efficacious means of grace, transforming life and character.

Psa. 1:1-3; Psa. 19:7; Psa. 119:130; Matt. 21:42; Matt. 22:29; Luke 24:27, 32; John 5:39; Acts 8:30-35; Acts 17:11; Rom. 15:4; Eph. 6:17, 18; 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 4:2; Jas. 1:21, 25.

ARTICLE XXVII, OF PRAYER

We believe that prayer is an indispensable condition of fellowship with God and a vital requirement in spiritual growth and the obtaining of promised mercies; that it must be offered in the name of Christ, in reliance on His merits, and by the help of the Holy Spirit; that it includes adoration, thanksgiving, aspiration, the outpouring of the soul in converse with God, confession of sin and shortcomings, supplication for pardon and all blessings promised in the gospel, and petition for such temporal benefits as may be agreeable to the Divine will; that remembrance of others at the throne of grace is an obligation without which the life of prayer cannot be fully realized; and that God has given the intercession His children an essential place in bringing about the salvation of men and in promoting the advance of His Kingdom and the doing of His will on earth.

Neh. 1:4-11; Psa. 17:1; Psa. 32:5; Psa. 62:8; Psa. 122:6; Ezek. 36:37; Dan. 9:4; Matt. 5:44; Matt. 6:9-15; Matt. 7:7, 8, 11; Mark 11:24; Luke 11:2- 4; Luke 18:9-14; John 14:13, 14; John 16:23, 24; Acts 9:11; Rom. 8:26, 27; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:3, 15-23; Eph. 3:14-19; Eph. 6:18, 19; Phil. 1:9; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:3, 12; 1 Thess. 5:25; 1 Tim. 2:1- 4, 8; Heb. 4:16; Jas. 1:5-8; Jas. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:5; 1 John 1:9; 1 John 5:14, 15; Jude 20, 21, 25.

ARTICLE XXVIII, OF PRAISE

We believe that God is worthy of all praise and adoration because of His glorious perfections as unfolded in creation, providence, and redemption; that praise as a definite ordinance of worship is expressed in words joined to music; and that in this ordinance the Psalms of the Bible, by reason of the Divine inspiration, their excellence, and their evident design, are accredited for permanent use, together with meritorious evangelical hymns in which are expressed the experiences, privileges, and duties of the Christian life.

In 1925 the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church [of North America] decided that a number of hymns that are in accord with the spirit and teaching of the Bible should be selected for inclusion in the church's hymnal; and later it chose 150 hymns and included them in the Church's hymnal in a single volume. In the same way, the Synod [of the Nile] may select

appropriate hymns and append them to its own hymnal for use in worship services.[12]

2 Sam. 23:1, 2; 1 Chron. 16:7-9, 23; 2 Chron. 29:30; Psa. 47:6, 7; Psa. 95:1, 2; Psa. 105:2; Psa. 137:3; Psa. 147:1; Psa. 150:1, 2; Matt. 26:30; Luke 20:42; Luke 24:44; Acts 1:20; Rom. 15:9; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16; Rev. 4:11; Rev. 5:9-14; Rev. 14:3; Rev.15:3, 4.

ARTICLE XXIX, OF SABBATH OBSERVANCE

We believe that the holy Sabbath, originally a memorial of creation, is an institution which has its foundation in the revealed will of God, which was established for the physical, moral, and spiritual well-being of man, and which was designed for all ages and nations; that its transfer from the last day of the week to the first, commemorating the resurrection of the Redeemer of mankind, was effected by Christ's own example and by Apostolic sanction; that, in the spirit of gratitude for the blessings it conveys, the Sabbath, or the Lord's Day, should be hallowed by refraining from worldly employments and recreations and, aside from the duties of necessity and mercy, by devoting the day to public and private worship, spiritual culture, and Christian activities; and that the civil Sabbath of legally protected rest, because of its great and manifold benefits to human society, should be maintained and defended against desecration.[13]

We believe that the Lord's Day, though not a civil Sabbath of legally protected rest in most of the country,should still be maintained, and we should offer prayers to God so that our country may receive great blessings.[14]

Gen. 2:2, 3; Exod. 20:8-11; Exod. 31:13; Lev. 19:30; Neh. 13:15-22; Isa. 56:2-7; Isa. 58:13, 14; Isa. 66:23; Jer. 17:24-27; Matt. 5:17, 18; Matt. 12:2-12; Mark 2:27, 28; Luke 4:16; John 20:19, 26; Acts 2:1; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10.

ARTICLE XXX, OF THE SACRAMENTS

We believe that the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted by Christ and are of perpetual validity and obligation; that they are signs and seals of the new covenant and channels of a real communication of grace to those receiving them in faith; and that through their observance the Church of Christ confesses her Lord and is visibly distinguished from the world.

We believe that baptism with water into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is the sacrament that recognizes membership within the Church, in which are set forth union to Christ, regeneration and cleansing by the Spirit, the remission of sins, and our engagement to be the Lord's; that it is rightly administered by the pouring or sprinkling of water upon the person, but the mode is not essential; that not only are adult believers to be baptized, but also the children of believers before reaching the age of accountability, on the faith of the parents, who appropriate for their children the benefits which the sacrament offers and promise to rear them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

[12]The italicized section has been added from the Egyptian version of the confession.
[13]The underlined section is not included in the Egyptian version of the confession.
[14]The italicized section has been added from the Egyptian version of the confession.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is the sacrament of communion with Christ, in which bread and wine are given and received in thankful remembrance of Him and of His sacrifice on the cross, and they who in faith receive the same partake of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, after a spiritual manner, to their building up in grace; that it should never be engaged in without previous self-examination as to a sincere desire to be cleansed from all sin, a true and living faith in the Lord Christ, and brotherly love toward all; and that all are to be invited to the Lord's Supper who have confessed their faith in Christ and are leading a Christian life.

Gen. 17:7; Isa. 52:15; Ezek. 36:25; Matt. 26:26-30; Matt. 28:19; Mark 10:13-16; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 18:15-17; Luke 22:17-20; John 3:5; John 6:48-58; Acts 2:38-41; Acts 8:12, 37 , 38; Acts 16:15, 33; Acts 22:16; Rom. 4:11; Rom. 6:3, 4; 1 Cor. 7:14; 1 Cor. 10:1- 4, 16, 17, 21; 1 Cor. 11:23-34; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3: 27; Eph. 5: 25, 26; Col. 2: 12; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3: 21.

ARTICLE XXXI, OF LAWFUL OATHS AND VOWS

We believe that an oath is an act of religious worship in which we solemnly call upon the only true and living God to witness the truth of what we affirm or our voluntary assumption of an obligation to do something in the future, with an implied imprecation of God's judgment if we lie or prove false to our engagements; that the proper circumstances under which an oath may be taken are those in which serious and perfectly lawful interests are involved, in which an appeal to God is necessary to secure confidence and end strife, and where the oath is imposed by the duly constituted authority of Church or State.

We believe that a vow is a promise formally made to God, in way of thankfulness for mercy received, or for the obtaining of what we desire; that it is of like sacred nature with an oath, because it is God to Whom the promise is made; that a vow cannot bind to do what which is unlawful or impossible, nor where its continued observance is inconsistent with our spiritual interests; and that to vow on a trifling occasion, or, having rightly vowed, to fail in performance, is to be guilty of profanity.

Gen. 24:2-9; Gen. 28:20-22; Exod. 20:7; Lev. 19:12; Deut. 6:13; Deut. 10:20; Deut. 23:21; Judg. 11:30, 36, 39; 2 Chron. 6:22, 23; Neh. 5:12; Neh. 13:25; Psa. 15:4; Psa. 61:8; Psa. 66:13, 14; Psa. 76:11; Psa. 116:14; Prov. 20:25; Eccl. 5:5; Isa. 65:16; Jer. 4:2; Matt. 5:33-37; Mark 6:23, 26; Acts 18:18; Acts 23:12-14; 2 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:20; Heb. 6:16; Jas. 5:12.

ARTICLE XXXII, OF THE CHURCH

We believe that there is one holy Catholic or Universal Church, consisting of the whole number of those of every age and nation who have been chosen of God unto salvation and redeemed by the Lord Jesus, and who, being united by the Holy Spirit to Christ their living Head, are one spiritual body in Him; that it is the will of Christ that His Church on earth should exist as a visible brotherhood, composed of all those who profess faith in Him and obedience to His laws, together with their children, organized for the confession of His Name, the public worship of God, the preaching and teaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, the nurture and

fellowship of the children of God, the propagation of the gospel, and the promotion of social righteousness; and that all particular Churches or ecclesiastical denominations throughout the world which hold the fundamental truths of evangelical religion and own allegiance to Jesus Christ as Divine Lord and Saviour are to be regarded as within the one visible Church.

Psa. 2:8; Psa. 22:27-31; Matt. 16:18; Matt. 18:17; Matt. 28:18-20; John 10:16; John 17:21, 24; John 21:15-17; Acts 8:1; Acts 13:1; Acts 20:28; Rom. 15:9-12; Rom. 16:1, 3-5, 16, 23; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Cor. 10:32; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13, 28; 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Cor. 16:19; Gal. 1:2, 13, 22; Eph. 1:10, 22, 23; Eph. 2:19, 20; Eph. 3:10; Eph. 4:11-13; Eph. 5:23-32; Phil. 3:6; Phil. 4:15; Col. 1:18, 24; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 7:9, 10; Rev. 22:16.

ARTICLE XXXIII, OF CHURCH ORDER

We believe that the supreme and only head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ, under Whose authority and according to Whose will the worship, teaching, discipline, and government of the Church are to be administered; that through those who serve lawfully in the offices of the Church Christ exercises mediately His own power and enforces His own laws; and that the Presbyterian form of church polity is in accordance with the Scriptures.

Matt. 16:19; Matt. 18:17, 18; Matt. 28:18-20; John 20:23; Acts 14:23; Acts 15:2-29; Acts 16:4; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Cor. 12:28; 2 Cor. 2:6-8; Eph. 4:11, 12; Eph. 5:24; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:18; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Tim. 4:14; 1 Tim. 5:17; Tit 1:4-9; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; 1 Pet. 5:1.

ACTICLE XXXIV, OF THE MINISTRY

We believe that Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church has appointed therein the official ministry of reconciliation; that He calls men to this ministry through the working of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and by the orderings of providence; and that those thus called are to be set apart by ordination, whereby they are solemnly invested with the authority, powers, and duties of their sacred office.

Matt. 9:38; Acts 13:2, 3; 1 Cor. 3:5; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Cor. 12:28; 2 Cor. 5:18; Eph. 4:11, 12; Eph. 6:21; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:7; Col. 4:7, 17; 1 Thess. 3:2; 1 Tim. 4:14; 1 Tim. 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6; 2 Tim. 4:5; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4.

ARTICLE XXXV, OF CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

We believe that all who have accepted Christ as their Redeemer should unite themselves with some branch of the visible Church, in order to share in the privileges and responsibilities of its members and confess Christ before men; that under Christ they should yield the Church their supreme loyalty, honoring its ordinances and seeking its welfare in season and out of season; and that with this they should forsake all association, whether secret or open, that they find prejudicial to their Church allegiance and a hindrance to the fulfillment of Christian duties.

Matt. 10:32; Acts 2:41, 42, 47; Acts 11:26; 1 Cor. 10:32; 1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 6:14-

18; Eph. 4:11-13; Eph. 5:11; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 10:25; 1 John 2:15, 16, 19; Rev. 18:4.

ARTICLE XXXVI, OF THE FAMILY

We believe that the family is theunit of society and is fundamental to human welfare; that marriage is ordained of God, and is therefore an institution which involves a religious as well as a civil contract; that the law of marriage, requiring monogamy, governing the prohibited degrees of consanguinity or affinity, and establishing the permanence of the tie, is laid down in the Word of God, upon which the enactments of the State may not transgress rightfully; that the true Christian home is built on the Divine ideal of marriage, is sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and is observant of family religion; and that it is the duty of parents to dedicate their children to God and give them a moral and spiritual training for the making of character. We believe that since the standard of marriage is a lifelong union of one man and one woman, its dissolution is not to be lightly regarded; that, where warrantable, this can be effected only by competent civil authority; and that the remarriage of divorced persons is permissible, while both parties are living, only when the divorce has been obtained on the ground of adultery, and then for the innocent party alone.

Gen. 1:27, 28; Gen. 2:24; Gen. 5:1, 2; Lev. 18:6-30; Deut. 6:6, 7; 1 Sam. 1:11, 28; Jer. 1:5; Amos 2:7; Matt. 5:31, 32; Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 6:18; Mark 10:2-12; Rom. 7:2, 3; 1 Cor. 5:1; 1 Cor. 7:10-16, 39; Gal. 1:15; Eph. 5:22-33; Eph. 6:1- 4; Col. 3:18-21; 2 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 13:4.

ARTICLE XXXVII, OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

We believe that civil government is an ordinance of God, instituted for His glory and the welfare of society, and that the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus Christ extends over this province of human life, so that States and their rulers are responsible to Him and are bound to render Him obedience and to seek the furtherance of His Kingdom upon earth, not, however, in any way constraining religious belief, imposing religious disabilities, or invading the rights of conscience; that it is binding on all to yield willing submission to constituted authorities except where this very clearly conflicts with the still higher duty of obedience to God; and that the due fulfillment of our duties as citizens includes a loyal consent to taxation for the necessities of the State and the lesser civic communities, the giving of aid to all worthy public causes, and faithful participation in the government of the country.

Psa. 2:10-12; Psa. 22:28; Psa. 47:7-9; Psa. 82:1, 2; Prov. 8:15, 16; Matt. 22:21; Acts 4:19; Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 1:20-22; 1 Tim 2:1, 2; Tit. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14, 17; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 19:16.

ARTICLE XXXVIII, OF THE SOCIAL ORDER

We believe that the Divine plan for mankind includes a social order in harmony with the ideals and spirit of Jesus Christ; that the triumph of the Kingdom of God in its present aspect would mean not only its establishment in the hearts of men individually, but a world in which righteousness and brotherhood should prevail; and that a primary duty of the Church is to give positive witness that the Christian principles of justice and love should have full expression in all relationships

whatsoever – personal, industrial, business, civic, national, and international.

Exod. 20:1-17; Micah 6:8; Mark 12:30, 31; Acts 17: 26; Rom. 13:1-10; Eph. 6:5-9; Phil. 1:27; Col. 3:22- 4:1; Jas. 5:1- 6.

ARTICLE XXXIX, OF THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

We believe that the souls of the righteous dead are immediately made perfect in holiness, and during the interval until the resurrection, though separated from the body, continue conscious, active, and at peace in the presence and fellowship of Christ, Who, after His ascension, sat down on the right hand of God; that in the abode of woe the souls of the impenitent wicked also continue conscious and active, enduring punishment for their sins; and that this intermediate state is one of incompleteness, the supreme blessedness of the saints and the utter wretchedness of the lost beginning only with their resurrection and the judgment.

Luke 9:28-36; Luke 16:19-31; Luke 23:43; John 8:56; John 14:3; Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:26; 2 Cor. 5:8-10; Phil 1:6, 23; 1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 11:39, 40; Heb. 12:23; 1 Pet. 1:7; 1 Pet. 3:19; 1 John 3:2; Jude 6; Rev. 7:9; Rev. 19:1-5.

ARTICLE XL, OF THE SECOND ADVENT

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, Who at His ascension was received up into heaven, will come again to earth in person, visibly, with power and great glory; that His coming marks the consummation of the Kingdom of God; that the time thereof is reserved in the Divine counsels; and that this blessed hope is to be cherished as an incentive to watchful living and faithful witness-bearing on the part of Christ's followers.

Matt. 24:29-51; Matt. 25:1-13, 31-46; Mark 13:33-37; Luke 9:26; Acts 1:7, 11; Acts 3:21; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 5:4; 2 Pet. 3:8-13; Rev. 1:7.

ARTICLE XLI, OF THE RESURRECTION

We believe that through the power of Almighty God there will be a bodily resurrection of all the dead both of the just and of the unjust; that to the just it will be a resurrection unto life and to the unjust a resurrection until condemnation; and that the mortal bodies of those who are fallen asleep in Jesus, as well as of the faithful who are alive at His coming, will be fashioned anew and conformed to the body of His glory.

Job 19:26; Dan. 12:2; John 5:25, 28, 29; John 11:23-25; Acts 24:15; Rom. 8:11, 23; 1 Cor. 15:12-58; 2 Cor. 4:14; Phil. 3:11, 21; 1 Thess. 4:15, 16; 2 Tim. 2:18; Heb. 11:35.

ARTICLE XLII, OF THE JUDGMENT

We believe that, at the resurrection, He Who alone can read the heart will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ; that the wicked, being condemned for their inexcusable sin and

depravity, will go away into eternal punishment; and that the righteous, although made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, will be acquitted and eternally accepted, and of God's grace rewarded according to their deeds.

Gen. 18:25; Matt. 10:15; Matt. 12:36; Matt. 25:31-46; Luke 12:47, 48; Luke 16:26; John 5:22, 24, 27-29; Acts 10:42; Acts 17:31; Acts 24:25; Rom. 2:5-16; Rom. 8:33; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 4:4,5; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; 1 Cor. 11:32; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:8, 9; 1 Tim. 5:24; 2 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 6:2; Heb. 9:27; Heb. 10:27; Heb. 12:23; Jas. 1:12; 2 Pet. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:7; 1 John 4:17; Jude 6, 14, 15; Rev. 20:11-15.

ARTICLE XLIII, OF THE LIFE EVERLASTING

We believe in, and with glad and solemn hearts look for, the consummation and bliss of the life everlasting, wherein the people of God, freed from sin and sorrow, shall receive their inheritance of glory in the Kingdom of the Father, and with capacities and powers exalted and enlarged, shall be made fully blessed in the fellowship of Christ, in the perfected communion of saints, and in the service of God, Whom they shall enjoy forever and ever.

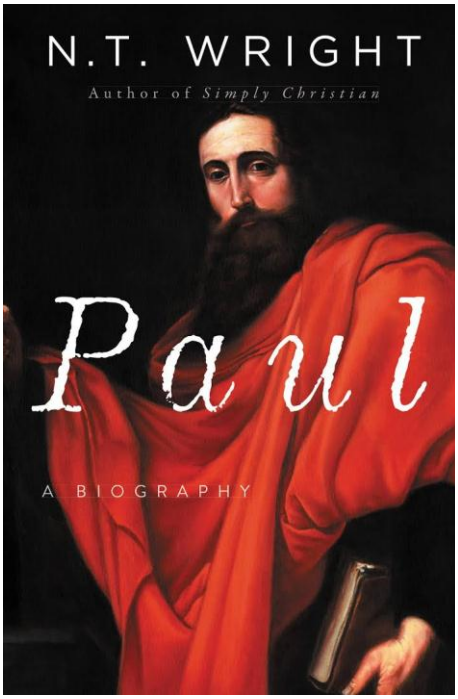
Psa. 16:9-11; Psa. 17:15; Psa. 23:6; Psa. 73:24-26; Matt. 25:21, 23, 34, 46; Luke 23:43; John 3:15, 16; John 14:3; John 17:22-24; Rom. 6:22; Rom. 8:18-25; 1 Cor. 13:12; 2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil 1:23; Col. 3:4; 2 Tim. 4:8; Heb. 9:15; Heb. 12:22-24; Jas. 1:12; Jas. 2:5; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; 1 Pet. 5:1, 10; 2 Pet. 1:11; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 3:4; Rev. 7:13-17; Rev. 14:13; Rev. 21:3, 4; Rev. 22:1-5.

ARTICLE XLIV, OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE AND THE FINAL TRIUMPH

We believe that, as disciples and servants of Christ, we are bound to further the extension of His Kingdom by our prayers, gifts, and personal efforts, to defend the truth, to do good to all men, to maintain the public worship of God, to hallow the Sabbath, to preserve the inviolability of marriage and the sanctity of the family, to uphold the just authority of the State, and to live in all honesty, purity, and charity. We obediently receive the word of Christ bidding His people go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, declaring unto them that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and that He will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. We confidently believe in the ultimate and complete triumph of our Saviour King, that by His grace and power all His enemies shall ultimately be overthrown, and the Kingdom of this world shall become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

Exod. 20:8; Psa. 2:1-12; Psa. 22:27, 28; Psa. 72:8-17; Matt. 6:10; Matt. 13:31, 32; Matt. 16:18; Matt. 19:3-9; Matt. 24:14; Matt. 28:19, 20; Rom. 7:2,3; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; 2 Cor. 5:19; 2 Cor. 9:7-15; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 4:1, 2; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 1 Tim. 2:4; Tit. 2:11-14; Heb. 10:25; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14; Jude 3; Rev. 5:12-14; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 19:11-16; Rev. 22:17.

Book Review:
Paul: A Biography
By N.T. Wright
New York, Harper One, 2018, 465 pages



N.T. Wright is a prolific writer who has produced a number of books on the apostle Paul, including *The Climax of the Covenant* (1991/1992), *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (2013), and *Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (2015). In addition to these, he has also written a commentary series on the New Testament, which gave him ample opportunity to discuss Paul's letters as well as his life. In the preface to this latest book, *Paul: A Biography*, Wright observes that the genre of biography allows him to ask different questions about Paul and that in biography "we are searching for the man behind the texts." Still, giving Wright every benefit of the doubt, it seems unlikely to me that he is breaking much new ground in his latest effort. Nevertheless, I thoroughly enjoyed this book and highly recommend it as a general introduction to Paul as well as to Wright's thought.

With the exception of Jesus, there is no one whose life is presented in greater detail in the New Testament than the apostle Paul. This is due not only to Luke's treatment of Paul in the book of Acts but also to the thirteen letters written by Paul in the New Testament, which, Wright informs the reader, come to a little less than eighty pages in standard modern translations. This is significantly less, Wright explains, "than almost any single one of Plato's dialogues or Aristotle's treatises," yet it is certain that this small body of work has "generated more comment, more sermons and seminars, more monographs and dissertations than any other writings from the ancient world."

Wright asks two big questions about Paul. First, how is it that this first-century Jewish writer came to be so important in the world of ideas and religion? And, second, what was the nature of Paul's "conversion" on the Damascus road and how did it effect his later ministry? These questions give Wright an opportunity to explore Paul's life, offering speculation where facts are thin but staying well within the boundaries of what the historical context will reasonably allow.

Wright begins by arguing that Paul was a Pharisee whose defining characteristic was "zeal," comparing him to the Old Testament figure Phinehas, who threw a spear at an errant Israelite man and a Moabite girl, killing them both. This made Phinehas a hero whose zeal was commended by God and recognized as "righteousness." In the same way, Abraham's zeal as demonstrated in his willingness to slaughter his son Isaac was "reckoned … as righteousness" as was Elijah's zeal in slaughtering the priests of Baal and Judas Maccabaeus' zeal in leading a revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. Paul, however, took this traditional zeal towards the God of

the Old Testament and redirected it towards Jesus as messiah and the "good news" of the kingdom that he proclaimed.

Having discovered a new object for his zeal, Paul's life as a persecutor ended, and his life as an object of persecution began. As a leader in the Messiah movement, he was attacked by Jews as a traitor and by pagans as an insurgent. Though he was clearly an opponent of pagan religion, it was never his intention to repudiate "Judaism" or create a new religion called "Christianity." Paul, who always considered himself a Jew, saw Christ as the fulfillment of Israel's hopes. The process of reinterpreting traditional Judaism in the light of the life of Jesus took time, which Wright suggests took place largely over the three-year period that Paul spent in Arabia after his Damascus road experience.

Though Paul had studied Judaism as a Pharisee in Jerusalem, becoming one of the great Jewish scholars of his time, he was also comfortable with contemporary Greek philosophy. He was familiar, Wright explains, with Stoicism and Epicureanism, the two chief philosophical systems of the time. And he could quote the philosophers of these systems. Wright says that he recognized their flaws, but he also observed that they "could and did aspire to live wisely and well." In Philippi, he called on the church to consider "whatever is true, whatever is holy, whatever is upright," and so forth. Paul, Wright seems to be saying, was not a narrowly educated religious bigot. Rather, he was just the opposite.

Wright the biographer considers such things as whether Paul was ever married, an expectation of all orthodox Jews at the time. He considers four options: he was never married; he was married but his wife died early; his wife broke off the marriage when Paul returned from Damascus with a radical new religious commitment; or—Wright's favorite—when Paul returned to Tarsus as a newly committed Christian, his fiancée or her parents ended the engagement. All of this, of course, is speculation, but I appreciate Wright's laying out of the various possibilities.

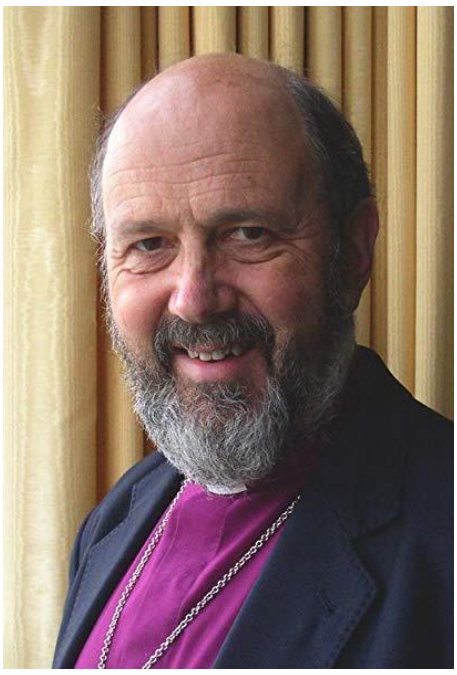
Wright is careful to provide geographical and cultural background so that readers will understand Paul's travels. He also describes the politics in the church—he dominance of the "pillars" in Jerusalem, and the division between Jewish and Gentile Christians—and is careful to describe the cultural and political context in the Roman cities that Paul visits. For example, he writes to correct a common misperception about Acts 17, arguing that "the Areopagus … was not a philosophers' debating society" but a court in which Paul was on trial (Acts 17). Wright also notes his personal relationships such as those he had with Barnabas, Peter, John Mark, Timothy, and others. Perhaps most important for students of the Bible, Wright carefully explains each of the main Pauline letters, noting their message as well as the personal, political, and religious contexts from which they emerged.

Wright also deals with questions of authorship. Did Paul really write all those letters or where some written by others? In general, he says, yes, he was the author of the letters attributed to him, observing that differences in style in the various letters should be expected given the different settings and times in which Paul wrote. Also, he observes, scholarly fashions, such as nineteenth-century German liberal Protestantism, come and go. Hence in the past century, the Pauline authorship of some letters was rejected, but today these same letters are generally accepted. Though many scholars would disagree with him, Wright argues that Paul wrote both Ephesians and Colossians, but he is not as confident about the pastoral letters: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

As is common in Wright's books, he makes the point that simply "going to heaven" is not the heart of the gospel. For him, this is a medieval distortion of Jesus' message of the kingdom, one that shifts attention from earth to heaven and hell. The gospel was also not written to answer Martin Luther's question: "How can I find a gracious God?" An answer to this question can be found in Paul's writings, but if this is all we are seeking, we will miss the point. For Paul, as Wright describes him, the gospel offers liberation to human beings seeking to participate in God's "rescue operation" for the entire planet. For Wright, the good news includes personal salvation but also much more: the restoration of a creation groaning for renewal, the marriage of heaven and earth in the age to come, and the "colonizing" of earth by heaven. Jesus launched this kingdom project during his lifetime, but it will not be fully realized until the age to come. Paul fully embraced the individual-communal and present-future aspects of Jesus' teachings. Though Christians have often emphasized the individual and future features of the kingdom, Paul believed that, as Wright explains, the kingdom of God "had to do with the foundation of a new *polis*, a new city or community, right at the heart of the existing system."

For Paul, this was a practical matter that concerned building new communities, but it was also a spiritual matter that concerned overcoming the power of darkness. This was perhaps never more true than in Ephesus, where Paul seemed to confront "human authorities [that were] acting merely as a front for other powers that would attack through them." Faced with this dark spiritual reality, Wright comments, "He sensed it, he smelled it, the whiff of sulfur surrounding the hard faces of the magistrates, the diabolical glee of the guards entrusted with whipping or beating their new prisoner, perhaps even the smug faces of people he had thought might be friends but turned out to be enemies."

Wright is also concerned with language. The Roman emperors of Paul's time used Greek words like *euangelia* (good news), *Kyrios* (Lord), and *Soter* (Savior) to refer to the emperor and his reign. Paul used these same words, contrasting and opposing the lordship, good news, and salvation offered by Jesus to that asserted in the political realm by Caesar. Paul's message, in contrast to "the smoke and mirrors of imperial rhetoric," presented the reality of new communities rooted in morality and love that offered spiritual equality, elevated women, and called implicitly for moral reform—reform that would come later in the form of hospitals, education, and care for the poor. In the context of the Roman Empire, Paul's message of good news must be seen as deeply subversive.



N. T. Wright

Paul, who clearly enjoyed language, could write poetry, adopt Hebrew prayers and language for Christian use, and employ rhetorical effects to make subtle points. Wright notes that in First Corinthians Paul claims to be presenting a message in simple language while, ironically and no doubt with a wry smile, using "clever rhetoric" to make his point (1 Cor. 1: 22-25). Paul's description in Second Corinthians 11: 23-33 of his ordeals as an

apostle is a parody of the Roman *cursus honorum* (course of honors). Wright considers this to be "one of the finest and indeed funniest flights of rhetoric anywhere in the New Testament" as it turns the *cursus honorum* into a *cursus pudorum* (a course of shame) (2 Cor. 11: 23-33).

It is generally believed that Paul was originally known by his Hebrew name, Saul, and that in the Greco-Roman context he changed it to Paul in order to fit in. Wright, however, offers another reason. He notes that in Aristophanes' writings *saulos* is "an adjective meaning 'mincing,' as of a man walking in an exaggerated effeminate fashion," which suggests that Paul also changed his name in order to avoid inevitable gibes.

Though a careful scholar, Wright's own language is down to earth and often colloquial. Explaining why Paul was so harsh and direct in confronting Peter regarding his change of policy over relating to Gentiles in Antioch (Gal. 2:11, 14), Wright says: "if you see a friend about to step out unawares, into the path of oncoming traffic, leading a group with him, the most loving thing to do is to yell that they must stop at once. That is exactly what Paul did."

Wright's translations are sometimes folksy but always to the point. Here are a few examples. Luke uses the word *paroxysmos* to describe the falling out between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark, which Wright translates to mean "a blazing, horrible, bitter row." Describing Paul's performance on the Areopagus, Wright explains that Paul was "a Sherlock Holmes figure, explaining to the puzzled police chiefs that their different theories about the crime all have some sense to them, but that there is a different overall framework, under their noses all the time but never observed, that will solve the whole thing." And he describes the present and not-yet aspects of the kingdom as "a form of theological jet lag." Christians, he explains, are simultaneously living in a dark world but also in a time zone in which the sun has already risen.

Wright deeply admires Paul on many levels but especially as a systematic and practical theologian. This can certainly be seen in his letters to the Romans, Corinthians and Ephesians; and he says of Romans 8 that it "is the richest, deepest, and most powerfully sustained climax anywhere in the literature of the early Christian movement, and perhaps anywhere else as well." Wright also admires Paul as a man of tremendous courage, facing, for example, beatings in Jewish synagogues that he might easily have avoided.

Yet Wright does not write hagiography. For him, Paul is no plaster saint. Wright observes that Paul could make hasty decisions, act in hot temper, appear "bossy," and be "tactless." Today, he writes, we might refer to him as a "high maintenance" friend. Though he admires the language and rhetoric of First Corinthians, he admits that Paul's second letter to the Corinthians "ties itself in knots," and when Paul needs to speak about fundraising, an uncomfortable subject for him, he uses "labored and tortured Greek."

Nevertheless, he concludes that Paul was "one of the most successful public intellectuals of all time," which he attributes to Paul's energy, confrontational style, and multifaceted letters. Most important for preserving his cause for posterity is that Paul was a letter-writer for all seasons. He was a "young reformer" in Galatians, attacking the heretics; he was a beleaguered pastor in Second Corinthians, confronting the complexities of inter-human relationships; and he was a theologian *par excellence* in Romans, setting forth the gospel in all its complexity and power in such a way that it would continue to inspire new movements in the church even as late as the twentieth century.

Though Wright is particularly interested in Paul as a theologian, he admits that the gospel was spread by "local communities that were living out the gospel imperatives." Yet he is quick to add that the church's thinkers are also crucial to its success. "Theology," he writes, "is the backbone of a healthy church." In the generation following Jesus' resurrection, Paul helped to supply that backbone, and every subsequent generation would look back to him for inspiration and guidance. "His towering intellectual achievement, a theological vision of the One God reshaped around Jesus and the spirit and taking on the wider world of philosophy, would provide the robust, necessary framework for it all."

Wright has the rare gift of being able to explain complex ideas and historical situations in simple but moving language. When evidence is lacking, he does not shrink from speculating or offering multiple interpretations and then suggesting a best option. Since Wright is transparent about his choices and the reasons for them, the reader never feels manipulated. On the contrary, Wright comes across as an honest tour guide of the early Christian world, one full of good common sense, curious facts, and telling details. The result is a portrait of the apostle Paul that is informative, inspiring, and highly readable.

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