

Editor's Note

This issue of the *Journal of the Canadian Society for Coptic Studies* contains articles that had their genesis in presentations at the Sixth Annual Coptic Studies Symposium “Coptic Heritage: Traditions and Transitions” held at the University of Calgary on 9 February 2013. The keynote speaker for the symposium was Piaternella van Doorn-Harder, whose lecture topic was “Coptic Popes in Context: The Future of the Religious Past in the 21st Century.” Unfortunately, due to the shifting of events in Egypt over the last year and other pressing academic commitments, Van Doorn-Harder was unable to revise her lecture for inclusion in this volume. However, her presentation did provide glimpses into the patriarchate’s response to the current changes in Egyptian politics.

The 2013 Coptic Studies Symposium was the first to be held outside of the province of Ontario; therefore, it marks the expansion of the Canadian Society for Coptic Studies into western Canada. As the organizer of this endeavor, I would like to acknowledge the financial support and assistance of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, the Department of Religious Studies, Douglas Shantz, holder of the Chair of Christian Thought (University of Calgary), and St. Mena’s Coptic Church, especially Mina Damian who served as the key liaison between the Calgary Coptic Community and the Canadian Society for Coptic Studies. I would also like to thank Roselle Gonsalves, Sharon Mogen and Christie Mellen, graduate students in the Department of Religious Studies, for their assistance with the conference administration.

The Sixth Annual Coptic Studies Symposium exemplified the diversity and interdisciplinary nature of Coptic Studies. There were presentations on the early Graeco-Roman Egyptian context of early Christian theology, the evolution of the early Coptic Church, Coptic iconography of the thirteenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries and modern issues associated with the Church in Egypt and the Greater Toronto Area. The presentations incorporated insights from media studies, place studies, sociology, papyrology, and socio-historical analysis. Consequently, this journal is a “sample” of the diversity and interdisciplinary of the symposium and Coptic Studies in general.

In the opening article, Ihab Khalil presents a “history of ideas” analysis of the eternal generation of the son. Beginning with the Pyramid Texts through the Heliopolitan Atum mythology, Khalil shows how particular ancient Egyptian mythological ideas may have informed Origen’s and Athanasius’ views of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. The second article, by Michael G. Domeracki, addresses one of the pivotal topics associated with the Christian theologian Origen—the salvation of the Satan. In Domeracki’s detailed reading of pivotal primary texts, one understands how Origen’s detractors, either in error or for political gain, distorted Origen’s logic.

In the third article, Heather Barkman conducts a comparative analysis of the Melitian and Donatist schisms. Adhering to the type of comparative study advocated by Jonathan Z. Smith, Barkman’s analysis focuses on the topic of the Church of the Martyrs that both groups used as part of their identity-formation. True to any

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academically rigorous study, it is both the contrasts and similarities between the two groups that provide the real insight in the “micro-Christianities” of North Africa and Egypt.

In the fourth article, Lincoln Blumell and Thomas Wayment present, for the first time, an edition of eleven Sahidic Coptic New Testament fragments on paper and parchment and dating from the seventh to the tenth centuries that are part of the Brigham Young University collection. The disclosure of these fragments contributes to the increasing “database” that is pivotal for understanding the transmission of the New Testament in Coptic and the interpretation of scripture within the Coptic Church.

The next article, by Helene Moussa, utilizes insights from James Scott about the different ways in which oppressed or subordinate groups create social spaces to express their resistance to dominant groups to maintain these identities. The employment of Scott creates a new lens through which to view specific icons—those discussed span the thirteenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries—and this lens shifts one’s perspective from matters of art history and symbolism to issues of social agency and expressions of Coptic identity within a Muslim majority culture.

The volume is rounded off by Magdy El-Shamma, who uses “media snapshots” to give glimpses into some of the complexities of the Muslim-Coptic dialogue and the Coptic Church’s and Coptic community’s roles, influences and responses to the political events of 2010–2013 in Egypt. While many have commented on the role of social media in the facilitation of political protests and the distribution of ideologies, El-Shamma reverses the hermeneutical flow to see how social media opens windows onto the events.

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Guest Editor