

Sinaiticus



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DIFFICULT TIMES IN SINAI

This issue of the bulletin focuses on the security situation in Sinai, both today and in times past. Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office continues to warn against 'all but essential travel' to South Sinai, advice echoed by the United States and other governments. In February of this year, a bus carrying South Korean pilgrims from Saint Catherine's was attacked near the resort of Taba, resulting in four deaths and many injuries. Suicide bombers struck in Al-Tur in May, with a police checkpoint and a passenger bus the targets. The risk of hijacking and kidnapping persists. Sinai is never very far from the headlines.



A jihadist bomb destroyed this tourist bus travelling from Saint Catherine's Monastery to Jerusalem. A group of South Korean pilgrims was on board. *Photo AP/PA Images*

In his 'Reflections on the Third Anniversary of the Egyptian Revolution' (see page 18), Dr Ismail Serageldin regrets the violence, terrorism and repression of recent months. He believes that a more inclusive, pluralistic society will emerge from the turmoil, if not now, then a generation from now.

Through this period of uncertainty, the work on the library at Saint Catherine's has continued, as Father Justin reports in his blog on page 8. The renovation of the South Wing is more important now than ever, as it will increase the security of the rooms where the manuscripts and icons are stored. The vulnerability of the monastery and its treasures is a constant source of worry.

These concerns have a parallel in earlier times, when marauding Saracens roamed the region. On page 15, Dr Marlia Mango introduces four historic texts showing just how dangerous travel in Sinai was in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries. 'In a Frontier Zone, Then and Now' reveals a not-so-bygone age of monastic fortifications, military escorts and guards.

In the 21st century, as in the sixth, the Jebeliya Bedouin remain the monastery's first line of defence. The strong connection between the Bedouin and the monastery continues with the help of the Saint Catherine Foundation. Be sure to read Father Justin's profile of Hemeid Sobhy on page 3. The first

university-educated member of the Jebeliya tribe, Hemeid is employed by the monastery, the third generation of his family to work at Saint Catherine's.

Many generous donors have responded to the foundation's appeal for help for the local Bedouin community. These funds are feeding hungry families and paying for essential medicines. The sale of camels and livestock has been halted, and many leaking roofs have been repaired. Further assistance will be needed, however, with no improvement in the local economy envisaged for now. These are truly difficult times.

FOUNDATION FUNDS HELP STRUGGLING BEDOUIN

Friends of the foundation have contributed generously to the Bedouin of St Catherine village, substantially augmenting the \$24,000 in support agreed by the London, New York and Geneva boards in November 2013. A total of \$95,000 has been collected to date for distribution by the Fathers and the South Sinai Foundation's local team, in agreement with a local committee.

Dr Hilary Gilbert of the South Sinai Foundation reports that 'the impact of this support cannot be overstated. The funds have halted the Bedu's need to sell their camels – an irrevocable step, and one which deprives local men of the ability to earn their living as guides once tourists and pilgrims eventually return. In addition to food, many families have used the help to buy essential medicines. In a recent outbreak of measles, several children in remoter areas tragically died without treatment, but children in St Catherine had medicine and none were lost. Funds have been used to help restore high mountain gardens (many dating to Byzantine times), and for the first time in many years local produce is appearing in local markets. People have reinforced their roofs against the winter rains, which have brought misery to St Catherine for three years, and illness in their wake. Others have been able to buy a sheep or a couple of goats or chickens to improve their livelihoods.'

The foundation has sufficient funds to carry the Bedouin through to the end of February 2015. But with no upturn in tourism in sight, the community will continue to experience hardship. The monastery needs the foundation's continued assistance if the Fathers are to maintain the present level of aid. Once again this year, the Saint Catherine Foundation will dedicate the proceeds of Christmas card sales and Christmas donations to the Bedouin of St Catherine.

AGAINST THE ODDS, WORK ON LIBRARY MOVING AHEAD

Father Justin's blog on pages 8 and 9 shows just how much progress has been made in recent months. Father Theokistos and his team of Bedouin workers have provided the labour, demolishing the old interior and

creating more space for manuscript storage and the new reading room, according to the approved plans. The work has gone ahead in spite of the unrest in Egypt, thanks to the resolve of HE Archbishop Damianos and the Synaxis, notably a dynamic new member, Father Hesychios.

The work on site has advanced faster than work on the budget, however. Every item must be costed, both locally, on the Egyptian market, where applicable, and abroad – a time-consuming task. The monastery and the foundation have had many discussions about the financing mechanisms, and those talks continue, as does the collaboration between monastery and foundation. A revised budget should be presented to the Boards of the foundation for approval before the end of the year.

The manuscripts and printed books remain in their crates for the time being. Nevertheless, with the help of the computerised filing system created by the Ligatus team, Father Justin has been able to locate specific books for research purposes.

SUBSTANTIAL LEGACIES BENEFIT THE UK AND US FOUNDATIONS

The Saint Catherine Foundation and the American Associates are the beneficiaries of substantial legacies established by Ronald and Norma Hawkrigde of Cheltenham, England and Charles G Delgado of Burlingame, California.

In 2002, Ron and Norma Hawkrigde heard a talk at Tewkesbury Abbey on the Monastery of Saint Catherine and the foundation's conservation work there. Eve Graves, then Lecturer at Camberrwell College of Arts, was the compelling speaker. The Hawkrigdes established a legacy in favour of the foundation. Advancing in years, and with no children or close family members, they were determined that their worldly wealth should benefit causes dear to them. With characteristic modesty, the Hawkrigdes expressed the hope that sufficient funds would remain to the foundation should they live a long time!

To the end of their lives, Ron and Norma Hawkrigde maintained a keen interest in the conservation work at Saint Catherine's. Norma, an artist and needlewoman known for her ecclesiastical embroidery, died first, in 2010, followed three years later by Ron, a civil engineer active in the work of the church. A tribute to this exceptional couple by the Very Reverend Michael Tavinor, Vicar of Tewkesbury from 1990 to 2002 and now Dean of Hereford Cathedral, appears on page 11.

Charlie Delgado learned of the work at Saint Catherine's from Father Justin himself, at a lecture he gave in California. Generous in life and in death, Charlie contributed to the foundation in memory of his mother, Mary Delgado Perry, and through the bequest that followed his death in 2013. See page 11 for the tribute to Charles Delgado.

PROFILE: HEMEID SOBHY

FATHER JUSTIN OF SINAI

Hemeid Sobhy was born in 1983 in the village of St Catherine ('Katrin'), near Saint Catherine's Monastery. He is a member of the Jebeliah tribe, which came to the Sinai in the sixth century at the command of the Emperor Justinian, to build the Sinai monastery, and to continue to live in the area and protect the monks. When he was thirteen, he would work during school vacations at the tea stands on the peak of Mount Sinai, and below, at the Basin of the Prophet Elijah, selling tea and coffee and other items to the visitors. Once Father Pavlos gave him a donation, and he applied it to the purchase of his first computer.

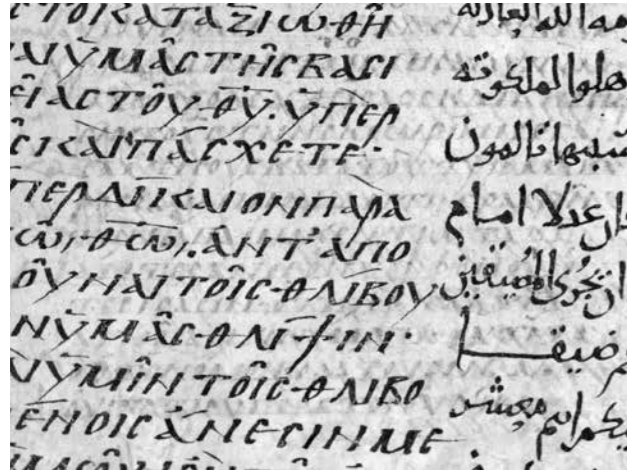
Hemeid excelled in primary school, and he was urged by his teachers and others to continue his education by attending university. He traveled to Cairo, but found that the constant noise and crowds gave him a headache. He enrolled in the Suez Canal University in Ismailiah, and became the first member of the Jebeliah bedouin tribe to receive a university degree. His major was in the Faculty of Commerce, where he studied accounting, economics, management, mathematics, English, and computer science. His plan was to find work in a bank, but it is difficult to find such a position in Egypt. Friends of his found successful careers in the Gulf countries, but Hemeid preferred to stay among his own people. The Archbishop knew of his studies at university, and invited him to work for the monastery. Several of his cousins work here. His father and his grandfather had also worked for the monastery. When he applied for work, in 2007, he was assigned to help me in the photography of the Sinai manuscripts.

In October of 2010, he also became a radio correspondent, responsible for reporting the news from Sinai and the surrounding area. This has provided him with the opportunity to interview many of the older members of the Jebeliah bedouin tribe, about their way of life when they were children, when the tribe was still living a nomadic way of life. Accounts of that time are important in recalling their own heritage, though Hemeid finds that he must translate the bedouin Arabic into the Egyptian Arabic that those listening to the radio would understand. More recently, he has interviewed many of the visitors to the area, to share their stories with a wider audience, and to help promote visits to the Sinai. When he first began work as a radio correspondent, reporters were using tape recorders and transmitting reports by playing them over the telephone. Since then, they have adopted digital recorders, and now send their interviews to the central office through the internet.

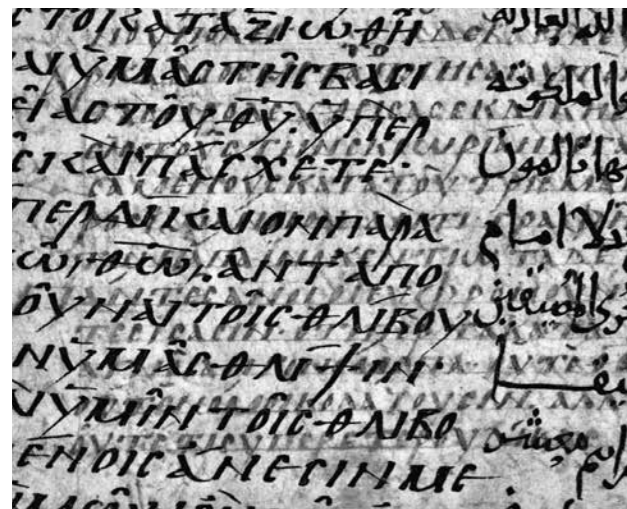
In October of last year, he completed work on his house, and was able to marry the following month. Father Michael and I went to pay our respects at his wedding, when many hundreds of the Jebeliah bedouin tribe came to be present and to take part in the festivities. Hemeid continues his work with the Sinai manuscripts, but is called upon increasingly to facilitate the visits of the team that comes here to photograph the Sinai palimpsests, and to help other visiting scholars. His work involves the latest technology of computers and high resolution scanners in our modern world, where everything is connected through the internet. But in doing so, he is following traditions that extend back to the sixth century, and the Emperor Justinian, whose provision that the Jebeliah live in the area and protect the monastery is still in effect.



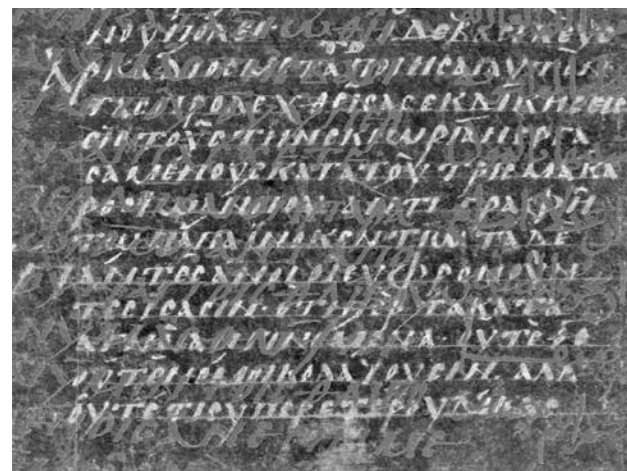
THE SINAI PALIMPSEST PROJECT



A detail of Sinai Greek New Finds Majuscule 2, folio 72 verso.



The underlying text has been enhanced and assigned a second colour in what is known as a false colour image.



The parchment and upper ink appear dark, and the underlying text white, in a reverse image. The underlying text becomes much easier to read.

A palimpsest is a manuscript written on parchment, where the original writing was erased, and a new text written over the old. The Sinai monastery has always been isolated, and there were times, especially from the seventh to the tenth centuries, when it was very difficult to obtain new parchment. For this reason, the Sinai library has over one hundred manuscripts with palimpsest text. Scholars have been able to read words that are visible in the margins, and have understood the importance of these underlying texts. But until now, they have remained elusive, and it would seem, beyond recovery.

Recent advances have been made in what is called multi-spectral imaging, in which palimpsests are photographed with narrow bandwidths of light ranging through the entire spectrum, from infrared to ultraviolet. The resulting images are processed and enhanced by imaging scientists. If the right combination can be found, the underlying text suddenly becomes clear and legible. Much of this technology was developed in order to recover the underlying text of the Archimedes palimpsest. The same team that did such stellar work on that manuscript has agreed to work on the Sinai manuscripts.

This project has been made possible through the generosity of the Arcadia Fund. It is being directed by Michael Phelps, of the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library, in Los Angeles, California, together with Nikolaos Zarkantzas, CEO of Praxicom, in Thessaloniki, Greece. Michael Toth, a Technology Integration Consultant, R B Toth Associates, is the Project Manager. Kenneth Boydston, CEO of Transcendent Imaging, in Santa Barbara, California, is responsible for the camera operation. Imaging scientists are Roger Easton, of the Chester F Carlson Center for Imaging Science at the Rochester Institute of Technology, Keith Knox, an independent imaging scientist, William Christens-Barry, the Chief Scientist at Equipoise Imaging, LCC, based in Maryland, and David Kelbe, a doctoral candidate in the field of imaging science at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

Data Management and Electronic Catalogue Design are the responsibility of Doug Emery, Data Manager at the University of Pennsylvania, Susan Marshall, Systems Administrator from Los Angeles, California, and the staff of Praxicom, a software and IT firm in Thessaloniki. Project Documentation is being carried out by Meghan Hill, Technical Writer at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

The photography itself is the responsibility of Damianos Kasotakis, from Athens, and Evangelos Theodorou, from Sparta. (Yes, the Peloponnesian War of 431–404 BC is still remembered.)

But the recovery of these precious texts would not be possible without the expertise and experience of a number of scholars. This aspect of the project is under the direction of Claudia Rapp, of the Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, at the University of Vienna.

The other participating scholars are:

Greek

Panagiotis Nikolopoulos – former Director, National Library, Athens

Vasili Katsaros – Aristotle University, Thessaloniki

Agamemnon Tselikas – National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation, Athens

Dieter Harlfinger – University of Hamburg

Nigel Wilson – Lincoln College, Oxford

Giuglielmo Cavallo – Università La Sapienza, Rome

Ernst Gamillscheg – Austrian National Library

Syriac and Christian Palestinian Aramaic

Sebastian Brock – Oriental Institute, Oxford

Christa Müller-Kessler – Universität Jena

Alain Desreumaux – Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Paris

Paul Gehin – Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Paris

Grigory Kessel – Philipps University, Marburg

Georgian, Armenian, and Caucasian Albanian

Zaza Alexidze – former Director, National Centre of Manuscripts, Tbilisi, Georgia

Bernard Outtier – Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Paris

Jost Gippert – Universität Frankfurt

Latin

Michelle Brown – London

David Ganz – Notre Dame University, Indiana

Slavic

Heinz Miklas – Universität Wien

Ethiopic

Stephen Delamarter – George Fox University, Portland, Oregon

Getatchew Haile – St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota

Arabic

Sidney H. Griffith – Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.

Hikmat Kashouh – Baptist Theological Seminary, Beirut

These scholars will make the preliminary identification of the underlying texts, and assign a date based on the palaeography. Images will then be made public through a dedicated website. The recovery of these important texts, that have eluded former generations of scholars, is a very exciting prospect.

FATHER JUSTIN OF SINAI

THE DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE SINAI MANUSCRIPTS

We are continuing with our program to photograph the Sinai manuscripts with high resolution digital cameras. Our original Sinar camera, with the cradle made by Alan Buchanan (purchased with funds generously provided by the Saint Catherine Foundation), is still capable of taking excellent photographs. To this, we were able to add a camera and cradle made by Stokes Imaging, of Austin, Texas. Our work is being guided by the requests of scholars, in which we are a little behind. Scholars have come to rely on these photographs even more these days, when there is more apprehension about traveling to Sinai.

We are also ready to begin a project to photograph our large collection of scrolls in Arabic and Turkish. These photographs will be taken on a sliding table that moves past the camera in steps. The resulting sequential images will be joined with stitching software, so that each scroll will be one photograph, but at a resolution that allows the study of the smallest seals, inscriptions, and other details. These scrolls are a record of the monastery's long history as a respected Christian institution within the larger world of Islam.

FATHER JUSTIN OF SINAI

HELEN C EVANS WINS WORLD BOOK AWARD FOR *BYZANTIUM AND ISLAM: AGE OF TRANSITION*

Praised by scholars and critics alike, the Metropolitan Museum catalogue by Helen C Evans has received a unique honour: the Islamic Republic of Iran's 2014 World Book Award. Dr Evans accepted the prize in a ceremony held in Tehran in February 2014. At the event, the former President of Iran, Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani, spoke in praise of books. Congratulations to the winners were also expressed by Mohammad Reza Vasfi of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, who called the book published in conjunction with the Metropolitan's 2012 *Byzantium and Islam* exhibition 'one of the best new works in the field of Islamic Studies'.

An interview with Helen Evans about the award and her trip to Iran is posted on the Metropolitan Museum website: <http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/now-at-the-met/2014/helen-evans-interview>.

FATHER JUSTIN OF SINAI

LIGATUS ACTIVITIES

Members past and present of the Ligatus team, including those brought together by the conservation project at Saint Catherine's, came together to give 12 presentations at two international conferences earlier this year. The first, the 16th in the regular series of highly regarded conferences under the title 'The Care and Conservation of Manuscripts' put on by the Arnamaganean Institute of the University of Copenhagen at the beginning of April this year, saw Aurélie Martin, the Ligatus research assistant, give the paper, written with Thanasis Velios, 'Fitting a quart into a pint pot at the Sir John Soane's Museum in London: A new library management and conservation survey tool for historic libraries'. This described a tool they had devised to help with the extraordinarily complex shelving needs of this very important collection housed in Sir John Soane's London townhouse (now the museum). It made use of the tool originally designed by Thanasis Velios for the housing of the manuscripts at Saint Catherine's.

The second Ligatus contribution was a paper by Alberto Campagnolo, 'Errata (per oculos) corrige: Visual identification of meaningless data in database records of bookbinding structures', in which he described work which is part of his PhD thesis with Ligatus, due to be submitted later this year. His work explores the possibilities of creating graphic images out of word-based database records and makes extensive use of the records from the survey of the printed books in the monastery. This was followed by Dr Martha Romero, from the Instituto de Investigaciones Bibliográficas-UNAM, in Mexico City, and another Ligatus PhD student, with 'The binding of a 16th-century Mexican manuscript as evidence of the encounter of two cultures'. This research came out of the work she did for her doctorate on 16th-century Mexican bookbinding and which itself was based on the methodology for describing bindings developed for the monastery.

Cédric Lelièvre, of the Atelier Cédric Lelièvre, Nîmes, and a member of one of the survey teams at the monastery, described an example of his work as a book conservator, 'Looking for economical solutions for the treatment of a valuable 15th-century illuminated parchment manuscript'. Nicholas Pickwood gave a paper describing his work on mounting a very large parchment document from a National Trust property in Cornwall, 'The Lanhydrock pedigree: Mounting and framing an oversize parchment document'.

The second conference, 'Men and Books: From Microorganisms to Megaorganisms', was held in St Poelten, to the northwest of Vienna, by the European Research Centre for Book and Paper Conservation – Restoration of Horn in Austria. This time, six of the lectures were given by past or present members of Ligatus. The first, 'The continuity of the Georgian bookbinding tradition as seen through a 17th-century manuscript', was given by the long-term survey team member Maria Kalligerou of the Oxford Conservation Consortium. This was based on research that Maria started in the library at Saint Catherine's, which contains an important collection of Georgian bindings. Nicholas Pickwood followed this with 'Coming

to terms: The question of the doublure and other matters', about the glossary shortly to be made available on the Ligatus website and based on the glossary of terms put together for the databases used in the surveys at Saint Catherine's. Current work on database design for Ligatus was described by Thanasis Velios, assistant director of the Ligatus Research Centre, in a paper entitled 'Beyond databases: Linked open data for bookbinding descriptions'. We plan in due course to transfer data from the monastery library surveys to a new database using linked open data in order to give better access to it. The next 'Ligatus' speaker was Dr George Boudalis of the Byzantine Museum in Thessaloniki, Ligatus' first PhD student (his thesis title: 'The Evolution of a Craft: Post-Byzantine bookbinding between the late 15th and the early 18th century from the collections of the Iviron monastery in Mount Athos, Greece and St Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, Egypt') and a member of the Ligatus monastery team from 1998. He has continued his research, which he started in the monastery library, into the complex and often very beautiful endbands used on Greek bindings and gave a paper entitled 'Twined endbands in the bookbinding traditions of the eastern Mediterranean'.

This was followed by a paper by Dr Nikolas Sarris of the Technological Educational Institute Zakyntos on 'The conservation of a 13th-century illuminated Byzantine manuscript from Kefalonia'. Nikolas wrote his PhD with Ligatus on the finishing tools used to decorate the bindings on the manuscripts at Saint Catherine's. Next in line was our research assistant, Aurélie Martin, who also spoke in Copenhagen. She described the new database to be launched by Ligatus later this year, 'A new digital tool to identify and record decorated papers: The Ligatus Decorated Paper project'. This project is being managed by Aurélie and should provide a resource for everyone working with old books worldwide. The sixth 'Ligatus' paper of the conference was given by Heather Ravenberg, perhaps better known to members of the Saint Catherine Foundation as the person running the London office of the foundation. Heather also studied successfully for an M.Phil with Ligatus at the University of the Arts London. Her paper was based on her work for her M.Phil, with the title 'A data model to describe book conservation treatment activity'. We hope that her work can be made use of as and when there is a new conservation workshop in the monastery.

The Ligatus Research Centre at the University of the Arts London was born out of the work done for the library conservation project at Saint Catherine's, and it is very gratifying to see so many alumni of both the project and the university coming together in these international gatherings to describe their current research. The conference also heard a paper given by Fabian Hollaus (co-authors Melanie Gau and Robert Sablatnig) of Vienna University of Technology, Institute of Computer Aided Automation, Computer Vision Laboratory, about the multi-spectral imaging of palimpsest manuscripts currently underway at the monastery with the title 'Digitalization and enhancement of historic manuscripts'. This work is supported by the Arcadia Fund.

NICHOLAS PICKWOOD

ACTIVITÉS DE L'ASSOCIATION SUISSE EN 2013

En février, Madame Nancy Ševčenko a présenté une série de documents photographiques du Monastère, 'Images of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai', au cours d'une causerie qui sera suivie d'une publication dans les brochures de l'Association.

En mai, le Professeur Roberto Nardi, créateur et directeur du Centre de Conservation Archéologique de Rome, a donné une brillante conférence sur 'La restauration de la mosaïque de la Transfiguration dans l'église du monastère de Sainte-Catherine au Mont-Sinaï', dans le hall du Musée Ariana. Cette manifestation était donnée en partenariat avec l'Association des Amis du Musée Ariana, (Musée de la porcelaine et du verre), avec la Société Genevoise des Etudes Italiennes, ainsi qu'avec la Société des Amis du Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Genève.

En juin, s'est tenue l'Assemblée générale de l'Association, au cours de laquelle le Président Charles Méla a présenté le thème 'Le Graal et l'Orient', qui faisait suite à une visite de l'exposition 'Le lecteur à l'œuvre', présentée dans le Musée de la Bibliotheca Bodmeriana.

Au courant de l'année, le Comité s'est réuni à trois reprises (mars, avril et décembre). Au cours de ces réunions, le Comité s'est attaché à suivre de près les événements internes du Monastère. Dans ce cadre, il a été décidé que le Professeur Bertrand Bouvier représenterait l'Association suisse lors de la réunion d'Athènes du 26 février, qui réunissait les deux Associations américaine et suisse, ainsi que le Monastère.

Ce fut l'occasion de passer en revue les problèmes de collaboration entre les Fondations et le Monastère, en raison des changements intervenus dans l'exécutif de la fraternité de Moines, problèmes suscités également par les travaux à entreprendre en relation avec le contrôle de leur financement. Cette collaboration sortit renforcée à la suite de cette rencontre, qui déboucha sur un programme de travaux sur une période de deux ans et demi, au vu des autorisations des différents Ministères et Services égyptiens accordées.

Il a été remarqué à cette occasion qu'en dépit du stockage des livres, des chercheurs avaient pu obtenir la consultation de manuscrits pour les étudier, grâce à la collaboration du Père Justin.

Fin octobre, le Président Charles Méla présenta devant une soixantaine de personnes, à la librairie La Chaîne d'Encre d'Hermès à Paris, le film sur 'Les mots et les monnaies, de la Grèce ancienne à Byzance', réalisé à propos de l'exposition qui s'était tenue à la Bibliotheca Bodmeriana. Ce film a été présenté par la suite aux membres de l'Association suisse.

En septembre, le Professeur Bouvier fit un voyage au Monastère et, à son retour, attira de nouveau l'attention de l'Association sur la situation alarmante des Bédouins à la suite des troubles politiques et militaires en Egypte, qui avaient pour conséquence la raréfaction des touristes, très préjudiciable à la survie financière du Monastère et à celle de cette communauté.

Au vu de cette situation préoccupante, une lettre signée par le Président de la Fondation Sainte-Catherine de Londres Dimitri Dondos, la Princesse Catherine de Serbie en tant que Présidente de l'association américaine et par le Président Charles Méla pour la Suisse, a été adressée en fin d'année à l'ensemble des Amis pour leur faire part de ces soucis.

À la suite de ce constat, la décision fut prise d'effectuer un don unique de USD 8'000.- (prélevé sur les réserves de l'Association suisse) pour venir en aide aux Bédouins, ainsi que de leur affecter les ventes des cartes de Noël 2013 pour les aider et soulager leurs souffrances.

Il s'agissait pour l'Association suisse de s'associer au soutien décidé par les deux autres Associations de Londres et de New York, le montant total des trois efforts réunis s'élevant à USD 24'000.

A cette somme s'ajoutent quelques donations substantielles qui proviennent d'une part de la vente des cartes de Noël et d'autre part de donations aux trois entités pour un total de USD 95'000 à titre d'aide pour les Bédouins de Sainte-Catherine. Au vu de la situation tragique des Bédouins proches du Monastère, cette année encore, les recettes des cartes de voeux de Noël et des donations éventuelles seront à nouveau offertes à cette Communauté.

NICOLAS GAGNEBIN



FATHER JUSTIN'S BLOG

LIBRARY RENOVATION



On May 14, Father Theoktistos and his crew began removing the tiles from the floor of the library. The metal partitions that had formed offices were also removed, to create one long hall for the storage of the manuscripts and early printed books.



Representatives of the Egyptian Ministry of Archaeologists have visited regularly, reviewing the work that has been done, and approving the continuation of the project. They have been pleased with the way the work is progressing.



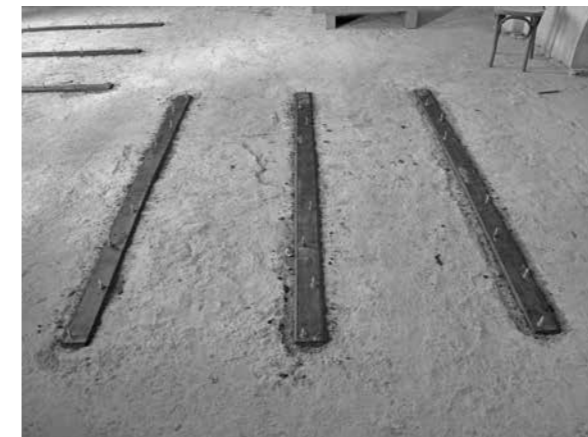
Arches in the reading room have been reduced in size. A storage room has been created to one side, making the room square, in keeping with the original design of Demetri Porphyrios Associates.



The concrete balconies around the long storage room have been removed. They will be replaced with wider steel balconies. An opening for a stairwell has been created.



The removal of the 1951 concrete facing has revealed sixth-century ashlars that will be left visible in the new library. The mortar around the later stones has been repointed.



The floor has been reinforced with steel plates. The concrete slab is being completed along the south wall.

OBITUARIES

Paul Jeffrey Borrett
(1928 - 2013)



Paul Borrett was an ardent philhellene, and Paul and his wife Jennifer were devoted to the Monastery of Saint Catherine. They supported the Saint Catherine Foundation as Founding Benefactors, having joined in 1996. Paul Borrett had an exceptionally wide career in banking and private equity. He was responsible for the corporate business of Barclays Bank, Deputy Chairman of EFG Private Bank and Chairman of Baronsmead, a leading UK private equity group.

Sinbad Coleridge gave the following address at Paul's funeral on 11 September 2013.

Paul was a great man and in particular a great Barclays man. I have no doubt that all those from Barclays today will have their memories of him and what made him great. He spent his whole career in Barclays moving smoothly from one job to the next, promoted steadily ever upwards. Nothing startling about that. So what was it that made Paul great? I only knew him for eight hugely enjoyable years before he retired. It spanned the period when Ted Foster and he founded Corporate Division and made it into the most formidable team in corporate banking in London.

Most of you will have known Paul for much longer than I did. For me he was the most intelligent and the wisest boss I ever had. People who are highly intelligent are sometimes not necessarily wise. Paul certainly was. His knowledge of banking was immense and his career spanned dramatic changes in banking. He had the invaluable experience of working through deep economic recessions and dealing with the consequences. His memory of people, deals and events was like that of the elephant who never forgets. And he was prepared to share this knowledge, experience and intelligence willingly and often with those who worked for him.

There was nothing obvious about Paul's style of management or obviously heroic about his leadership. I have always been a fan of John le Carré's books. Paul struck me as the George Smiley of the organisation. He was always

understated but he had no fear of stating what he thought was right – using his intelligence, knowledge and common sense to win over his senior peers and juniors to his position. He rarely failed but never boasted about his successes. He led by example – he seldom ordered or even told us to do anything. He would ask, suggest and then tell us why – usually as we were all about to go home. He would stick his head round the door and say, 'Ah, Sinbad, I've had an idea! Would you just...?'. It happened as regularly as clockwork.

He was a great man for having an agenda and then relentlessly making it happen. He was invariably consistent – always relaxed, cheerful and willing to give of his invaluable advice. His door was always open to everybody. Paul was loyal to a fault, to those who worked for him, to those he reported to and above all to the bank. He was always at the forefront of the battle when there was a problem and the proverbial bullets started to fly, supporting the division and ensuring justice was done. He loved Corporate Division and was immensely proud of his achievements and those who worked for him.

Perhaps the soundest measure of Paul's leadership skills and style of management was that, as far as I can remember, few wanted to leave the division except by promotion. We all enjoyed coming to work each morning because it was fun and a challenge. His planning was, of course, meticulous – right up to the end. Before he died, he arranged that a case of wine be available for the annual Corporate Division reunion lunch in November. I have no doubt that the wine will be superb. We will drink to his memory with both sadness and joy. We will be sad because he has left us and joyful because we had the honour of knowing him and respecting him for all that he did for us and for the bank.

SINBAD COLERIDGE

Norma Hawkrige
(1934 - 2010)

Ronald Hawkrige
(Died 2013)



Ron and Norma Hawkrige were a couple devoted to each other and to the service of the Church.

Born in Derby, Ron served in the army in Europe and in the Middle East. It was during one of his tours of the Middle East that he achieved one of his lifetime's ambitions by being in Bethlehem for Christmas. It was in the Holy Land that he began a special interest in the relationship between Christians and Jews.

After a seven-year training in Civil Engineering, Ron held positions as Civil Engineer with the Ministry of Works and the City of Nottingham. This led to an appointment with the Central Electricity Generating Board in Birmingham, where he worked on the design and construction of conventional and nuclear power stations, and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Ron was one of the lead consultant technicians when the Chernobyl nuclear power plant went into meltdown in 1986.

Alongside his professional work, Ron was an active Christian, standing for General Synod in 1970 and involved in parishes in Birmingham and latterly at Tewkesbury Abbey. He had a deep commitment to Christian Unity and his love of Eastern Orthodoxy led him to receive an ecclesiastical commendation for his work from that church, an honour of which he was very proud. His ecumenical interest led to his participation in the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, being its local treasurer for many years.

Norma grew up in Lancashire, where she became part of Christian communities from an early age. Her great interests were dancing and embroidery. She loved ballet and danced to entertain the troops in Red Cross Clubs, military camps and hospitals. She was taught embroidery at school, but it was after her marriage to Ron in 1956 and their moving to Birmingham in 1961, that she developed her love of and skill for ecclesiastical embroidery.

Norma studied at the Bournville School of Art and became an expert in goldwork, laidwork and medieval split stitch. She was the proud recipient of one of the Bournville School's prestigious design awards for a low mass set of Trinity vestments. In becoming a member of Tewkesbury Abbey, Norma joined and then led the St Mary's Guild for embroidery, and under her leadership, the group increased in membership and developed a much-respected tradition of design and repair of embroidery and linens at the Abbey.

Both Ron and Norma found, in the worship of God, the 'beauty of holiness' which encouraged and enriched their faith. They would have been delighted to know that, after their deaths, the conservation of objects of beauty and faith would, through their support, continue – so that future generations might be drawn to their beauty and the Christian message to which they give witness.

MICHAEL TAVINOR
VICAR OF TEWKESBURY 1990-2002
DEAN OF HEREFORD 2002 -

Charles Gonsalves Delgado
(1923 - 2012)

Charlie Delgado was twice a benefactor of the American Associates, providing support during his lifetime in memory of his mother, Mary Delgado Perry, and on his death, thanks to the very generous legacy he created.

A private man, Charlie Delgado did not seek recognition, quietly ensuring that the Sinai library would benefit from his passing. The American Associates acknowledge this exceptional gesture of support with gratitude and thanks.

Théodore Jules Klat
(1927 - 2012)



The Association suisse des Amis de la Fondation Sainte-Catherine mourns the passing of Théodore Klat, a long-standing member, with his wife Annie.

Théo had an enduring interest in the Monastery of Saint Catherine. For he grew up in Egypt, in the tolerant, inclusive Alexandria of the 1930s. The Lebanese Christian Klat family had moved to the city around 1860, their talents contributing to its development into a vibrant, cosmopolitan port at the centre of the world cotton trade. It was almost preordained that Théo's father would serve as Chairman of the Cotton Exchange and a Municipal Councillor.

Théo enjoyed an idyllic childhood and adolescence in multicultural, multilingual Alexandria. He moved easily between the city's various communities, speaking as he did fluent French, English and Arabic. Like the historian George Antonius a generation before him and King Hussein of Jordan a few years after, he studied at Victoria College, the leading private school in the Middle East. The British education he received there prepared him for his years as a Cambridge undergraduate, reading Economics and Law at Selwyn College, where he obtained an MA in 1952.

Théo returned to Alexandria to continue his law studies at the university, followed by a postgraduate economics course in Switzerland, at the University of Geneva. After a three-year clerkship with a firm of chartered accountants active in Egypt, and further training with Du Pont, Théo Klat began his career back in his native city as a Member Broker on the Alexandria Futures Exchange. He was also appointed director of nine major corporations in Egypt. But these were difficult times. The 1952 revolution and Suez Crisis four years later brought great changes, as nationalisations and sequestrations caused the once-thriving business community to decline rapidly.

Like so many of his fellow citizens, Théo left Egypt to settle in Europe. His career also took a new turn, concentrating now on investment banking with particular exposure to the Middle East. Work with French and

American banks in Paris followed, as well as assignments in Lebanon. Théo and Annie married during this period and settled in Geneva. They joined the Association suisse at the time of its founding and gave their enthusiastic support to the conservation work at Saint Catherine's.

Théo established the Saudi Finance Corporation in Geneva in 1977, serving as General Manager until 1981, when he was mandated to set up a Lebanese Bank (BIT). On his retirement he worked as an independent investment advisor.

Théo Klat was well known for his business acumen, his integrity, generosity and great sense of humour, qualities that made him a valued advisor, a good friend and a beloved husband. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

John David Power
(1919 - 2013)



Known to the foundation as 'Colonel Power', John D Power supported the charity in the last years of his long life. He became a Friend in 2002, following a visit to Sinai, when he sketched the scene of the monastery reproduced above. We publish here an extract from the eulogy given at his funeral service by the Revd Phil Brown, Vicar of St Mary's Church, Chartham.

John was born in Edinburgh, the son of a distinguished naval officer. He was himself a professional soldier for 37 years, joining the army as a gunner in 1937, and training at Woolwich, which he referred to fondly as 'the shop'.

The Power family moved to London when John was a child. He went to Rugby School, followed by his two younger brothers, Mac and Mike, and his two young cousins, Nigel and Dick. John, the eldest, was aptly named 'Power Major'. During the war John served in North Africa and fought his way through Italy, where he was badly injured, and on to Greece. He was due to go to Burma, but as he said, the Japanese heard that he was coming, so they surrendered!

John was recommended for an MC (Military Cross), and he was mentioned in dispatches, but typically, when Andrew, his grandson, asked him what for, he replied, 'Oh, I'm not sure, just being a good chap I suppose!'. After the war, John served in Palestine.

John met his wife Liz at a party in London in 1949. He proposed to her just two weeks later, and they married on 10 June 1950. Liz and John had three daughters, Jennifer, Isabel and Mia. During their army life together, they lived in Hong Kong, Germany, Ghana and Belgium.

When John left the army in 1975, the family moved to Mystole in Kent. John became bursar at the King's School, Canterbury, a job he loved. He retired in 1983, when, far from taking things easy, John occupied himself with many and various hobbies. He was always learning new things. If he didn't know how to do something – for example, bee keeping or calligraphy – he would take a class. He filled an art gallery with the many paintings he made, and he became very skilled at woodcarving. He made fabulous wooden toys

for all his adored grandchildren – rocking giraffes and dinosaurs, doll's houses and swings all over garden! One of his carvings takes pride of place in the church of St Mary's – a small lectern on the communion table, in use every week.

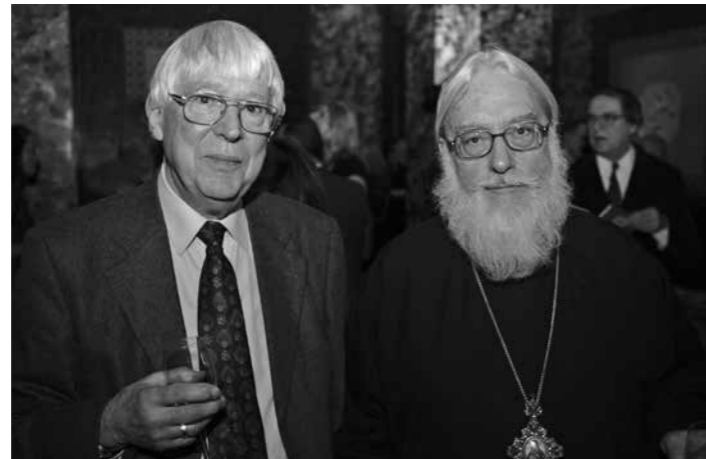
As well as all this, John was Kent County Secretary and Kent Vice-President for SSAFA – the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association. He was an active member of St Mary's – a member of the Parochial Church Council, churchwarden and treasurer. In fact, he described his Christian faith as the rock of his life.

John was strong willed, hospitable and generous. He had a genuine concern for the well being of others, a concern that translated into action in many different ways.

Liz was the love of his life, and they were married 60 years and six months. When she died, John was quietly brave, but he missed her desperately.

John was a wise and cheerful man who was an inspiration to a great number of people, a man with a tremendous sense of discipline and duty and love – love towards his girls, his country, his God and his family and friends. There are many other things that could be said of John Power – and there are many other stories, too – a good few, I've been told, cannot be repeated in church.

THE REV. PHIL BROWN



Tony Rudkin on his 80th birthday (left) and on St Catherine's Day 2006, with The Most Rev. Kallistos, Metropolitan of Diokleia.

Anthony S Rudkin, to all his friends Tony, died suddenly of a heart attack on April 29th.

I met Tony for the first time at an International Conference in 1994. We were both invited by our mutual friend, Prof. Tony Courakis, who was the mastermind behind this event, 'Economic Thought and Economic Reality in Ancient Greece', in the European Cultural Centre at Delphi. How auspicious and appropriate was Delphi for our encounter! Delphi, considered in Ancient times as the 'omphalos' (centre) of the universe and the most important of Greek sanctuaries, gave us the perfect backdrop for many searching discussions on religion. Both he and I were very much interested in an ecumenical manner in Christianity and Islam, and a long-term friendship started. Tony was concerned with the Arab world through Anthony Rudkin Associates, an agency which represented academic publishers in the Middle East, and he had travelled extensively to Egypt and other parts.

Tony was born in Kingswood, Surrey and lost his father when only fifteen years old. This had a devastating effect on him, particularly as he was the eldest of three brothers. Educated at a local prep school which was evacuated to Derbyshire in the early years of the war, he subsequently went to Bedford School, which he found rather dull, as most of the intelligent masters were fighting in the war. Like most young men at this time, he did National Service, and this was, as it happened, in the Palestine Police, which gave him the first glimpse of this complicated part of the world, and his love for the people.

Back home, he went up to Cambridge, to Pembroke College, to read Economics; however, he found it limited, so he promptly changed over to History. Unlike present-day undergraduates, he took three years' sabbatical after Finals and went to Florence. He had a wonderful time in this sublime Renaissance city, and it was here that he became interested in Catholicism, to which he later converted.

His professional career became publishing, starting at Duckett's and following at Hutchinson's, where he became their export director. With the oil crisis in 1973 Tony became redundant. However, he saw the Arab world as an opportunity, and by 1974 he had set up Anthony Rudkin Associates, in which he continued until 2003. Tony had an inquisitive mind; therefore becoming an armchair *retrouvé* was not on his agenda. He promptly registered as a mature student at Blackfriars in Oxford, where he studied Medieval Philosophy and Theology.

All these and other abilities made him an ideal member of the Board of the Saint Catherine Foundation. Therefore, when in 1996 the initial idea to create a foundation to protect and preserve the heritage of the monastery at Sinai was proposed in London, Tony's name was among the first to be considered. For I vividly remembered that he was already deeply involved since the early 1990s in the preservation of the site. He had extensive correspondence with influential personalities as he worked to save the monastery from the idea of turning it into a tourist attraction.

Tony, besides being an active member of our Trustees and helpful in advising us, also devoted a lot of time to another love, that of photography, in which he became professional, and he remained a member of the Eckhart Society to the end. We will greatly miss his presence, his wisdom, and his kindness.

He leaves his devoted wife Ann and their son Thomas.

JENNY RICHARDSON

IN A FRONTIER ZONE, THEN AND NOW

MARLIA MANGO



Fig. 1. The fortified monastery of Mount Sinai, built by the emperor Justinian. According to Procopius (Text I), the monastery was constructed in AD 527-565, a date consistent with inscriptions preserved in the church.

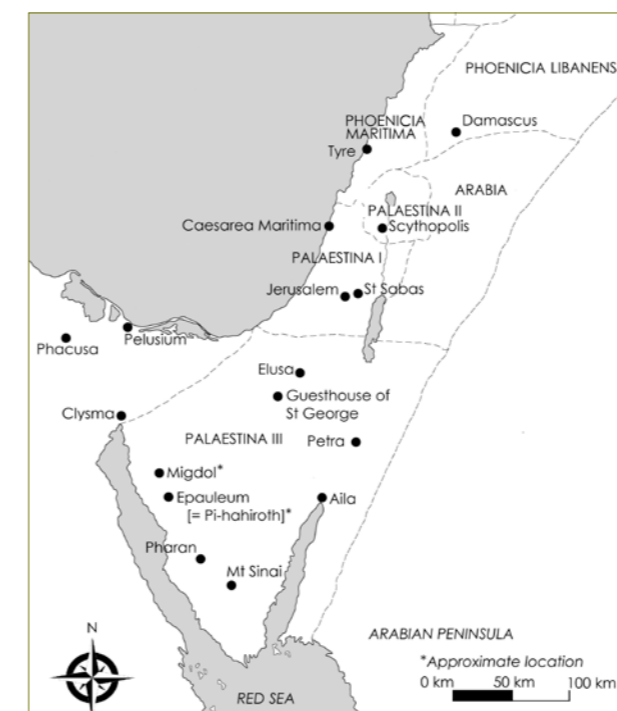


Fig. 2. Map of the provinces of the Diocese of the East where it joins Egypt, at the time when the Sinai monastery was built. Indicated here are provincial capitals and sites mentioned in Texts I-IV.

Map: Marlina Whiting

From the beginning, the monks established at Sinai lived a precarious life in a desert area on the border between the Roman Empire and the Arabian Peninsula. The region was inhabited by nomadic tribes referred to as Saracens. The fortified monastery, as it survives today (fig. 1), was part of a line (*limes*) of fortifications that marked the frontier from Aila in the east to Clysma in the west (fig. 2). As the four texts cited here demonstrate (Texts I-IV), comparison could be made between the isolation and vulnerability of the monastery then and now.

The texts are written by two prominent writers and two pilgrims to the Holy Land, all of the fourth to sixth century. They make clear that the Sinai monastery was situated in an area that had been desolate since the time of the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt and Moses' arrival at Sinai, and was also dangerous in the Late Roman period when the present monastery was built. During her visit to Sinai and eastern Egypt in AD 383-4, the western pilgrim Egeria refers to the protection afforded to her and other visitors by the forts and the military personnel who 'on behalf of the Roman authorities' escorted them from fort to fort as they visited various monks in the countryside (Text IV). Nearly 200 years later (ca AD 570), after the present monastery at Sinai had been built (before 565), another western pilgrim, from Piacenza, remarks that the walls around this monastery are strong (Text III). He

mentions the Guesthouse of St George, south of Elusa (fig. 2), as a fort which provides ‘a refuge for passers-by’. He also describes Paran (Pharan), which had been a village when Egeria visited it, as a fortified city with 800 guards in state service stationed there and supplied by the treasury of Egypt ‘to guard the monasteries and hermits against Saracen raids’. Both these pilgrims visit the fortified harbour of Clysma (Suez), the principal port of ships arriving from India.

The two prominent writers of the sixth century are directly connected to the emperor Justinian, who built the Sinai monastery (AD 527-565). One is his principal historian Procopius, the secretary of the general Belisarius, who from first-hand experience recorded *The Buildings, The Wars* and *The Secret History* of Justinian. Procopius was a native of the Holy Land, born at Caesarea Maritima, capital of Palestine I. The other writer is Cyril, also native of the Holy Land, born at Scythopolis, capital of Palestine II; the Sinai monastery is situated in Palestine III (with its capital at Petra). Cyril is the author of the *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, including Sabas (Text II), who visited Justinian in Constantinople to present a list of five urgent projects of building in Palestine, two of which were the result of the uprising of the Samaritans. Two others concerned the building in Jerusalem of a large church and a hospital. The fifth concerned a garrisoned fort to be built by Summus, *dux Palaestinae*, to protect monasteries built east of Jerusalem, including the ones Sabas founded (fig. 2), ‘on account of the inroads of the Saracens’ as Cyril writes. This is precisely the reason given by Procopius in Text I, that ‘at the base of the [Sinai] mountain the Emperor built a very strong fortress (fig. 1) and established there a considerable garrison of troops, in order that the barbarian Saracens might not be able... to make inroads with complete secrecy into the lands of Palestine proper’.

TEXT I

Procopius, *The Buildings* V.viii.1-9, trans H.B. Dewing. *Building of fortified monastery at Sinai by Justinian, AD 527-565.*

In what was formerly called Arabia and is now known as ‘Third Palestine’ [fig. 2], a barren land extends for a great distance, unwatered and producing neither crops nor any useful thing. A precipitous and terribly wild mountain, Sina by name, rears its height close to the Red Sea, as it is called. There is no need at this point in my account to write a description of that region because everything has been set forth in the Books on the Wars, where I gave a full description of the Red Sea and what is called the Arabian Gulf, as well as of the Ethiopians and Auxomitae and the tribes of the Homerite Saracens. At that point I shewed also in what manner the Emperor Justinian added the Palm Groves to the Roman Empire. Therefore I omit mention of these things, that I may not acquire a reputation for bad taste. On this Mt. Sinai live monks whose life is a kind of careful rehearsal of death, and they enjoy without fear the solitude which is very precious to them. Since these monks have nothing to crave – for they are superior to all human desires and have no interest in possessing anything

or in caring for their bodies, nor do they seek pleasure in any other thing whatever – the Emperor Justinian built them a church which he dedicated to the Mother of God, so that they might be enabled to pass their lives therein praying and holding services. He built this church, not on the mountain’s summit, but much lower down [fig. 1]. For it is impossible for a man to pass the night on the summit, since constant crashes of thunder and other terrifying manifestations of divine power are heard at night, striking terror into man’s body and soul. It was in that place, they say, that Moses received the laws from God and published them. And at the base of the mountain this Emperor built a very strong fortress and established there a considerable garrison of troops, in order that the barbarian Saracens might not be able from that region, which, as I have said, is uninhabited, to make inroads with complete secrecy into the lands of Palestine proper.

TEXT II

Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of St Sabas, in The Lives of the Monks of Palestine, Chapters 72-75. Pp. 184-190. Building of fort to protect monasteries east of Jerusalem by Justinian, ca AD 557.*

Chapter 72. HE PRESENTS REQUESTS TO THE EMPEROR.

A few days later the emperor summoned the sanctified Sabas and said to him, ‘I have heard, father, that you have founded many monasteries in the desert. For whichever of them you wish, ask for a revenue for the needs of the inmates and we shall provide it, so that they may pray for the state entrusted to our care.’ [Sabas declined such help, but countered that he had five specific requests for church building in the provinces of Palestine, the last of which is this.] ...on account of the inroads of the Saracens we beg Your Serenity to order the most glorious Summus to build at public expense a fort in the desert at the foot of the monasteries founded by your humble servant [fig. 2]. Chapter 73. THESE REQUESTS ARE GRANTED. All these requests of our father Sabas were fulfilled without delay by our most pious emperor, and all his prophecies were accomplished by the benevolent God, as we shall discover clearly in what follows... Attending also to the fifth request of the godly Sabas, our most pious emperor sent a decree to Summus, ordering Abba Sabas to be provided with one thousand *solidi* from the revenue of Palestine for the construction of a fort and with a military guard to protect his monasteries, supported from public funds.

TEXT III

The Pilgrim from Piacenza, *Travels from Piacenza, in Jerusalem, Pilgrims before the Crusades* trans. J. Wilkinson, Warminster, 2002, Chapters 35-41. *Journey to Sinai, in ca. AD 570.*

Chapter 35. THE DESERT: GUESTHOUSE OF ST GEORGE.

Leaving the city of Elusa [fig. 2] we entered the desert. Twenty miles on is a fort, the guesthouse of St George, which provides something of a refuge for passers-by and

gives food for hermits. Leaving that we went into the heart of the desert to the place of which the Bible says ‘A land transformed into a salty waste because of the wickedness of its inhabitants’.

Chapter 37. MOUNT SINAI.

Going on through the desert we arrived on the eighth day at the place where Moses brought water out of the rock. ... Then they took us with them into the valley between Horeb and Sinai. At the foot of the mountain is the spring where Moses saw the miracle of the burning bush and at which he was watering the sheep. This spring is within the monastery walls, and the walls round the monastery are strong. It has three abbots who are learned in languages – Latin, Greek, Syriac, Egyptian, and Bessan – and there are many in that place who can translate from one foreign language....

Chapter 40. PARAN

From Mount Sinai it is eight staging-posts to Arabia, and the city called Aila [fig. 2]. Shipping from India comes into port at Aila, bringing a variety of spices. But we preferred to return through Egypt, and went to the city of Paran, where Moses did battle with Amalek. In that place is a chapel with its altar built over the stones with which they supported Moses while he prayed. A city is there, fortified on all sides with walls, but the place is completely barren, apart from some water and palm trees. There is a bishop in the city.

There are eight hundred guards in state service there, who have wives with them, and get their supplies and uniforms from the treasury of Egypt. They cannot work on the land, since there is nowhere suitable, and everything is just sand. But each day they go out on patrol with their Saracen horses, which are sent straw for stabling and barley from the treasury, in order to guard the monasteries and hermits against Saracen raids.

Chapter 41. FROM SUKKOTH TO CLYSMA

... Leaving that, we went on to the point on the shore where the children of Israel made their crossing [from Egypt: Exodus,14]... A small city is there called Clysma [fig. 2], and to this too come the ships from India. ... There we were given bright green nuts which come from India....

TEXT IV

Egeria’s Travels*, trans. J. Wilkinson, 3rd ed., Warminster, 1999, pp. 101-116. *Journey of Egeria to Sinai, in AD 383-January 384.

p. 101 Y4 From Jerusalem to the holy Mount Sinai, it is twenty-two staging-posts [fig. 2].

p. 101 Y5 Before you reach the holy Mount Sinai you come to the fort of Clysma on the Red Sea, the place where the children of Israel crossed the sea dryshod.

p. 103 Y6 Clysma itself is on the shore, right by the sea [fig. 2]. It has an enclosed harbour which makes the sea come right inside the fort, and it is the port for India, which is to say that it receives the ships from India, for ships from India can come to no other port but this in Roman territory. And the ships there are numerous and great, since it is a port renowned for the Indian merchants who

come to it. Also the official known as the *logothete* has his residence there, the one who goes on embassy each year to India by order of the Roman emperor, and his ships lie there. The children of Israel came to this place on their way out of Egypt when they were escaping from Pharaoh and the fort was built later on, to be a defence and deterrent against Saracen raids.

p. 105 Y15 Close to the village of Paran [fig. 2] – a mile and a half away [from the Desert of Paran] – the mountains converge to make a valley not quite thirty feet wide....

p. 106 Y16 From Paran there is a thirty-five mile journey before you reach the holy Mount Sinai.

p. 106 Y17 So, coming in from Paran, we said the prayer. Then, going on, we made our way across the head of the valley and approached the Mount of God... Late on Saturday, then, we arrived at the mountain and came to some cells. The monks who lived in them [the cells were probably rock-cut before the monastery was built in the sixth century] received us most hospitably, showing us every kindness. There is a church there with a presbyter....

p. 115 From Clysma and the Red Sea it is four desert staging-posts before you reach the ‘City of Arabia’ [= Phacusa; fig. 2] and the desert is of a kind where they have to have quarters at each staging post for soldiers and their officers, who escorted us from one fort to the next.

p. 116 Pi-hahiroth [Epauleum] was pointed out facing us, and we went to Migdol, today a fort with an officer and men representing the Roman authorities. As usual they escorted us to the next fort.

p. 118 At this point [at the staging post of Arabia = Phacusa] we dismissed the soldiers who had provided us with an escort on behalf of the Roman authorities when we went through the danger areas. We no longer needed military protection, since we were on the state highway from the Thebaid to Pelusium, which passed through the City of Arabia [Phacusa].

Further reading

On the date of the *castrum* and church of the monastery built at Sinai by Justinian, see amongst others C. Mango, Ihor Ševčenko and the Sinai Monastery, in *St Catherine’s Monastery at Mount Sinai: its manuscripts and their Conservation*. Papers given in memory of Professor Ihor Ševčenko (London 2011), 1-6. P. Grossmann, The Monastery that Justinian Built, *ibid.*, 7-16.

DR MARLIA MANGO is a Research Fellow of St John’s College, University of Oxford, and a member of the Board of Directors of the American Associates of the Saint Catherine Foundation. Her book, *Buildings, Silver Plate and Books: The economy of material culture in the Roman Diocese of Oriens, AD 313-641* is forthcoming.

HISTORIC HOURS AND TUMULTUOUS TIMES: REFLECTIONS ON THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION

ISMAIL SERAGELDIN



Bomb damage, Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo: *Umayyad artifacts, Mamluk lanterns, Fatimid woodwork, medieval manuscripts – some of the finest legacies of our history are destroyed.*

Alexandria, 25 January 2014

Today we celebrate the third anniversary of the Egyptian revolution, a milestone that calls for reflection on those three years of chaotic action, great moments, dashed dreams, big achievements, sacrifice and betrayal, and all the components of a human drama of the highest order. Tumultuous times, historic hours...greatness achieved, then lost, retrieved and lost again in the fog of uncertainty as the elusive dream of building our new republic on an inclusive society and a system of laws seems to be overtaken by an active war on terror.

Yesterday, four bombs killed and maimed many innocent victims in Cairo and destroyed part of the Museum of Islamic Art – an unbelievable jewel, one of the finest museums in the world, with irreplaceable pieces shattered and lost to future generations. Umayyad artifacts, Mamluk lanterns, Fatimid woodwork, medieval manuscripts – some of the finest legacies of our history are destroyed. It is amazing how artifacts of bygone times should touch us so deeply in the midst of the real blood of real people,

but they do. People are not defined just by current bonds; they are defined by their culture and historical legacy. Our heritage counts.

The promoters of political Islam, having lost the support of large parts of the public, and having failed to undo the removal of their regime, have opted for terrorism. We are no longer talking of violence during massive public demonstrations, we are no longer talking of individuals killed in massive confrontations in the street: we are now witnessing bombs, sometimes targeted at the symbols of state power, sometimes against ordinary people, always intended to terrorize and intimidate. But the people are not intimidated. They demand the repression of the fanatics by the army and the police. The calls for law and order and for an iron hand are widespread, and they are demonstrating a strong streak of determination among the public, but they are also raising the ever-present specter of the autocratic state and its apparatus of repression.

The revolution started with a magnificent grandeur in its waves of youthful peaceful protesters, armed only with

their convictions. Violence and the scramble for power tainted that greatness. Blood has been spilled. Violence has taken its toll. And today we are locked in an epic struggle between the forces of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and its Jihadist allies, and the forces of the state, cheered on by the vast majority of the population and the national media.

Today, Egypt is at a difficult crossroads. It is affirming its right to build a democratic system in which human rights are respected and protected. But forces are pulling in different directions. The MB and the Jihadists seem determined to use violence and terror. The machinery of the state is determined to stop them. And the people with a profound anger against the Brotherhood and their Jihadist allies are calling for that machinery of state to crush them, to destroy them. They are willingly calling upon, and egging on, the forces of the state. But that same machinery will also unleash the forces of the autocratic state. And there, our dreams of democracy and pluralism are themselves at risk. That is the price we pay for waging a 'war on terror', for wanting security at any cost, order by any means. We risk embarking on a slippery slope towards the autocratic state.

The terrorism of the MB and its allies will eventually fail, for ultimately terrorism always does. But it leaves its legacy of dead and maimed behind. The chaos they try to launch, mostly at universities, brings the forces of government to restore order and inevitably lives are lost. Sometimes local residents, not the police, take on the MB and their allies. But violence still erupts, with its horrors and its anguish, and brings sad stories of innocent lives lost, whether police or demonstrators. We as a nation have to end this spiral of death and destruction.

But what makes the usually mild Egyptian people so fierce in their opposition to the MB and its Jihadist allies? It is that when unable to manipulate and mobilize large enough numbers of people to support their cause publicly, the MB and its Jihadist allies have turned to violence and terror. Mistaking the mild temper of the average Egyptian to be a weakness that would succumb to intimidation, they completely missed the real dimension of the unique phenomenon that is the Egyptian Revolution. That revolution, peaceful though it was, broke the traditional docility of the people, broke the barrier of fear that erstwhile repressive services had imposed. The people are no longer afraid. They will not be intimidated. Their caring side is transformed into anger by the loss of life that has become a staple of Egyptian politics today. True, it is proportionately far less than the violence that is found in other Arab countries, but it is still a very significant departure from the Egyptian norm, enough so as to be recognized as a qualitatively different situation. We are – literally – in a new world, fashioned by the events of the last three years. It is a different Egypt.

In that different Egypt, the loss of life has taken its toll. Death is the ultimate price that a human being can pay. And today, as I reflect on the three years of the revolution, I must write of terrorism and its repression. I must write of death.

So how can one write of events that bring repression and death and threaten even more? How can we

communicate the passion and tumult, the chaos and purpose that give crowds their character and individuals their resolve? Oh to be able to write in a strict, distant prose in a swift and uncompromising manner that feels like sudden death...a surprise, yes, for death always is a surprise, even when it is expected. It is the finality of death that surprises us, for we continue to advance, day to day, in the narrative of life, but the dead have aborted their narrative in mid-sentence, so to speak.

Every life is precious. Every death touches many hearts.

Death and its aftermath

People react differently to death, not death in the abstract, but the death of a loved one, especially the death of someone young who is killed in the flower of youth, without warning. And every death is connected to many lives, and it affects each of them.

Family and friends can perhaps find in themselves the emotional resources to cope with the pain of separation in the case of prison, and may even be able to marshal the tenderness and support that can help overcome the legacy of prison, but they have no recourse to the finality of death, except grief and mourning. Some scream and wail as if to exorcise the devilish anger and searing pain they feel. Others keep their grief locked up in silence and sadness, a veritable miracle of restraint. But wherever you look, wherever the violence took its toll, the grief of mourning in all its searing agony, writhing incoherence, painful confusion and frustrated anger is there.

The process of mourning the dead creates a bond cemented by the grief that binds together the dead and the living they leave behind. To me, the manner of mourning is important. I remain convinced that it is most true and powerful when it occurs in the dignity of internal reflection, not in the practiced forms of public howling and crying in a ritualized process. These societally sanctioned rituals have even developed a professional caste of performers who ensure for the grieving family that there is enough wailing at a commemorative event for the departed. But whatever the manner of its expression, the grief is real. It is palpable. It leaves scars on the living.

Egypt has had more than its share of such deaths in the last few years, and every one of them needs to be accounted for and properly investigated, with the responsible parties brought to a court of law. We cannot simply turn a blind eye to the loss of life. Every human life is precious, and the murder and mayhem of terrorism cannot be justified no matter what the political cause the terrorists are trying to advance. Killing and maiming innocent people can never be justified.

It is usually the young who die in such conflicts, whether they are the ones who strap explosives to themselves or who shoot and are shot at, whether they serve in uniform or are caught in the crossfire. The mothers weep for their sons; the fathers are shattered. Parents expect to be buried by their children, not to have to bury their offspring. It is the most devastating loss – the lives un-lived, the dreams unfulfilled, the story of a life's journey

aborted at its very beginning, in the flower of youth. The siblings and friends are also overwhelmed and shaken to the core. For in youth we feel invincible, we think death is far away in the future. Now it becomes close and personal.

There is a finality in death that is insurmountable. The loss, even if expected after a long illness, is still a painful and difficult transition. It forces us to confront our own mortality, our own lives. And the loved one leaves a vacuum in our lives. But the loss of the flower of youth brings pain and anger, not just sadness and grief.

Egypt has had a lot of that pain and anger in the last three years, and at an accelerating pace in the last few months – mothers burying their sons in Northern Sinai, or receiving the coffins with bodies of officers and servicemen killed in action there, wondering, ‘Why? Why him?’.

The pain. The anger. These are deep-felt emotions that touch all those who lose a loved one. But all of us feel another form of pain and anger: the pain of dreams unfulfilled, the anger at feeling that our revolution has been betrayed, time and again. The dream of freedom, social justice and human dignity for all has eluded us in successive regimes. The dream of an inclusive participatory democratic republic that involves all and protects all as equal citizens in a system of just laws remains elusive. Economic well-being, a booming economy with opportunities for youth to find gainful and dignified employment, has been promised and remains feasible, but just beyond reach. The millions of unemployed youths that swell our cities were the prime artisans of our peaceful people-power movements, those human waves that surprised our rulers and impressed the world. Today many of them have been manipulated into becoming the spearhead of the forces of disruption of the Muslim Brotherhood and its Jihadist allies, wreaking havoc in universities and desperately trying to show that they can upset the pattern of normal life and activity, or even becoming the cannon fodder in the acts of terrorism that punctuate the Brotherhood’s campaign for political power since the removal of President Morsi.

The pain and the anger that spread in Egypt like wildfire are mobilizing the Egyptian people against the Brotherhood and its Jihadist allies and strengthening calls for ever stronger action against them. The calls are morphing from concern for stamping out terror into demands for a strong hand, if not an iron fist, to rule the country and crush them. And there’s the rub. Such governments may well succeed in the appointed task of destroying the forces of terrorism, but they invariably limit our democratic processes and challenge our conceptions of a state devoted to freedom and pluralism.

The pain and the anger motivate the calls for such actions. And the horror of terrorism and its destructive violence and barbarism do require a state capable of providing its citizens with basic safety. But beware the vortex of violence and the slippery slope of necessary shortcuts. This is not just about Egypt, but about all states that have found, or will find, themselves confronted with the challenge of dealing with terror and those who choose violence as a means of advancing their political agenda.

The Vortex of Violence, the Downward Spiral of Repression

Political regimes dealing with opponents who have adopted violence as a means of pushing their political agenda have to be firm and use force. But that usually also puts them in the difficult position of having to gauge, monitor and judge how harsh their own forces should be. Violence by opponents turns to terrorism, and terrorism can never be justified, no matter what the political agenda. It must be dealt with firmly, for every citizen has a basic human right to safety.

But not all opponents of the regime, not even most of those who are active members of the opposition movement, are terrorists. Where and how does the decision-maker draw the line? It is tempting to justify harsh measures against the opposition by asserting that they were plotting the killing and maiming of innocent citizens. Some undoubtedly were. Others may have sympathized with their cause but had misgivings about the methods they wanted to use. Others, doubtless more numerous, simply sympathized with the cause in very general terms. Still others were not involved with the cause but were opposed to the regime in power, and thus found themselves making common cause with those who advocated, and even executed, terrorist acts.

But just as rounds of cyclical violence between feuding tribes claim a basis in previous rights denied, or previous assaults by the ‘other party’, the regime and its opponents enter that treacherous terrain at the risk of destroying that which they claim to protect and defend. Soon blood flows on both sides. Soon calls for harsh measures, initially to stem the flow of blood, then to break the back of those who plan the violence, are commonplace. Then the harsh measures begin. Crowds tired of insecurity and insistent on law and order initially welcome them. But the violence of the opposition soon turns to terrorism, and the harsh measures of the regime soon extend not just to those caught in the act, but more broadly to those who support them. The deadly machinery of repression starts taking hold.

The decision-makers become embarked on a slippery slope where speed soon picks up and you can neither stop, nor slow down, nor get off. It takes a very able and self-assured hand to steer a course that balances the different concerns well, and gauges the dose of harshness to keep focused on where it will avoid the spilling of innocent blood, and to keep it bound by the norms of justice, and to mete out justice tempered by mercy and compassion.

Few regimes succeed at that. Confronted by an opposition that turns to violence and terrorism, they manage to stop the violence and stamp out the terrorism, but they do so at enormous moral cost, and with a loss of the legitimacy of their actions by the excesses of their agents. Even when there is a watchful press and an active political opposition and a well-informed public, excesses do occur. Vast numbers are deprived of their freedom for the flimsiest of reasons, and worse, far worse, despite what the legal texts say, the merciless logic of the downward spiral of repression takes hold. The prisoners are questioned, then abused and ultimately tortured.

Enlightened Despots and the Road of No Return

Whether or not those who control political power wanted it, they now find themselves at the helm of an increasingly autocratic and repressive regime. That paves the way to dictatorship. Dictators are sometimes claimed to be enlightened despots, but to me the emphasis has to be on the word despot. Despotism is the opposite of democracy, and it has never been compatible with respect for human rights. Soon the autocratic regime throws its net wider, captures more and more of the opposition that it can label as terrorists or terrorist-sympathizers. Soon all opposition is suspect. Soon the numbers in the prisons increase. Their rights are violated in the name of national security. It is a road of no return. The forces of reason must stop the ship of state from embarking on that journey. If not, these violations, initially few, will become common, and then they become the norm.

Opposition, any opposition, is soon considered unpatriotic and even treasonous. The dream of pluralism and inclusion and of building the mechanisms of democracy to allow a chorus of views to enrich public debate and engage the nation, fades away. Opposing views are censored. Discussion is derided as indecision and debate as obstruction. Instead, the pursuit of unification around national purpose is hailed as salvation. That national purpose is what the government says it wants for the good of the country. All those who oppose it are now not just suspect, but enemies to be crushed in the name of national security and society’s interest.

The Horror of Repression

In invoking national security and the vague concept of the interests of society, the door is opened to moving from firmness in enforcing the law to repression. Opposing views are marginalized then outlawed. Dissent is derided then forbidden. Order has to prevail, and grey men who operate the machinery of the state start to wield enormous power that they never earned from the public they claim to protect.

Security services are the same everywhere. They look with suspicion at all who disagree as the potential fomenters of trouble, as the potential artisans of terror. Imperfect evidence is sufficient; due process is circumvented. Soon the innocent join the guilty in the prisons. Treatment in the prisons worsens, and confessions are extracted from the incarcerated to justify their incarceration.

The renunciation of what the prisoner believed in, the necessary breaking of the person’s will to get him or her to admit the error of their ways, is the stuff of dictatorships based on political ideology. It was the stuff of Stalinism at its worst in the Moscow trials of the 1930s, so vividly depicted by Arthur Koestler’s appropriately named *Darkness at Noon*, where renunciation and self-denunciation were a necessary prelude to the inevitable execution. It is as if the tyrants needed to have confirmation that they were right in the murder of their opponent, or that at least they would use that final betrayal by the prisoner of all they had stood for as not only denial of self-worth, but a demonstrable

proof to their comrades opposing the regime that they no longer deserved their support. No martyrs allowed.

But that is precisely why the approach to dealing with opponents driven by a powerful political ideology cannot be based solely on strength and coercion. Knowing this, the prisoners will find inner strengths to withstand psychological pressure and even physical pain, far longer than anyone would expect.

I once asked a colleague who, in his youth, had been imprisoned and tortured, why not just give the jailers all they want immediately? After all, everybody has a threshold, after which that confession or information would be torn from them, and the torturers, sadists all, would not tire out or give up before that threshold was reached. So it made eminent and rational sense to give them what they want and avoid the agony and the horror that was to come, or at least to minimize it.

His answer was compelling. It is not a case of rational argument here. It is an emotional response to an extreme situation. Refusing to give in is not a matter of bravado but a case of trying to deny the jailers their victory and maintaining the dignity of the prisoner. By affirming their political belief in the face of coercive force and brute power, the prisoners were screaming their rejection of the barbaric state that would do this to its own citizens, and deny its agents, the jailers, the satisfaction of hearing their position ‘justified’ by the self-incrimination of the prisoners. It was the last desperate attempt by those confronting the abyss to seek to affirm remnants of human dignity.

Prisoners who have been abused and even tortured do go back into society, but they are never the same. Some have been broken. A few have reflected and become wiser. Others are simply more cautious. Most are as headstrong as the day they were imprisoned, defiantly defending the worth of the cause they suffered for, and feeling more committed than ever because of the price they have had to pay, and because of the horrors that they were forced to endure by the agents of the state they oppose.

The Legacy of Violence

Egypt’s revolution has been claiming a large number of young lives, and an even larger number has been ravaged, if not totally destroyed, by imprisonment, which not only leaves a mark on their records that they will carry for the rest of their lives, but also – and perhaps more importantly – changes their outlook on life. Prison does that. It robs the interned of their idealism and their innocence; it destroys their dreams and leaves behind largely embittered souls. Seldom does prison result in socially rehabilitating a person of criminal inclination. All the more so, when that person is incarcerated for political reasons.

Whether they were incarcerated as part of the political confrontations or whether they are the hapless families of those who died at the hands of the terrorists or state agents, grief and sadness give way to a demand for settling scores. The anger at past misdeeds combines with the desire for justice, and the two grow into a fern of a thousand leaves, each promising redress, solace, and closure. Yet

with the passage of time, justice shows that it is not the same as vengeance. And the fern-leaves of the past wither, yellow and dry. The drive for justice is gradually replaced by the desire for revenge. The once bright green leaves become brown and lifeless. And the anger and the desire for vengeance leave scars on the living that are fuel for resurgent hatreds.

Oh how mean the vengeful are. Oh how embittered they become. A sense of justice denied drives them to deny justice to those who hurt them. The cycle of violence and of hatred feeds on such feelings.

We need to learn from the noblest of our peers, those who were able to transcend personal tragedy and turn their hands and their energies to building a better future. For in truth there is no fulfillment in hatred and revenge. For revenge is an empty promise. The reason for seeking revenge is sometimes lost in the fog of hatred of that unjust other who once upon a time caused us pain and grief and even agony. Punishment becomes the purpose of the quest. Let violence be rained upon the heads of those who initiated the violence. Let them suffer as we, their victims, suffered once so long ago. The causes, the reasons, the justifications, are all there. Pressed like a dried fern-leaf in the pages of the book of memory, they are there, but when you return to them, they are dead, brittle, and crackle into dust...so do not be afraid to confront the memories, to transcend them.

Listen to the Better Angels of our Nature

Remember the early days of the revolution. Remember the grandeur and nobility of the peaceful demonstrations that stunned the world and brought to life dreams of better tomorrows. It is now three years since we launched our revolution. Many young people have paid with their lives for the pursuit of their dreams, whatever their dreams were. But the dead are still among us, not just in the grief of those who loved them, but in the burden they pose to our memory.

This is a classical dilemma. Soyinka, a survivor of the Nigerian civil war, testifies to this excruciating tension that comes to the sensitive ones who witnessed and participated in the events where comrades and enemies lost their lives. Soyinka wrote in his inimitable style of 'The Burden of Memory' and 'The Muse of Forgiveness'. He showed how those who were present must bear witness to the sufferings of the victims of the conflicts.... It is almost criminal to think of forgetting them and moving on. To forgive and forget would be a form of treason. And yet, societies must be able to move on. They cannot live in the past forever. They must turn the page and create the new. The sins of the fathers should not be visited on the sons...and because of that Soyinka also writes of the 'Muse of Forgiveness' and the tension that it creates with the necessary and unavoidable 'Burden of Memory'.

And the two are there together. Frustratingly neither will go away. It is easy to succumb to the pull of memory with its rending call for closure and its siren's song of justice and revenge. Yet we know that we must think of

the future. We cannot live in the past forever. That innate dualism of all things will remain within us, but the better angels of our nature tell us that it is better to let the wheels of justice, guided by the due process of law, deal with the murderous few, and to forgive the many who may at some time, or even now, have sympathized with them. That is the path of national reconciliation and the only path to a future for our children – the path that the better angels of our nature call on us to follow.

Even more, the great figures in history all tell us so, and the muse of forgiveness that exists within each of us is awakened and strengthened by reflecting on their example: Jesus calling out to forgive his enemies 'for they know not what they do'. The Prophet Muhammad entering Mecca after years of conflict with its inhabitants, declaring a general amnesty for all. And among our own too mortal politicians, Lincoln freeing the slaves and covering with a blanket amnesty all those who caused, or fought against the Union in the American Civil War. Gandhi reminding us that pursuing a policy of 'an eye for an eye' will make everyone blind. Mandela coming out of prison after 27 long years, not to seek revenge, but to dismantle apartheid, establish democracy and bring about the reconciliation of his people. Restorative justice, by having the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hear the victims and record their grievances, but allow for reconciliation and rebuilding a new 'Rainbow Nation'.

Or the 'dreamers' like Monet and Schumann, who a few short years after the massive slaughter of World War II could articulate a vision of a single Europe, where a community of nations would collaborate and prosper in peace and democracy, outlawing war among their people. And they succeeded, for within a generation, young people in France and Germany could not imagine that their countries would ever go to war against each other.

No action is complete, and imperfection is the lot of all our human attempts. We know within our hearts that ultimately we in Egypt, like others who came before us, and others to come after us, will have to transcend the violence and move on to national reconciliation. But is our public ready to listen to such thoughts now? Or is the war on terror taking its toll in our demand for a strong and muscular path to put an end to the chaos and the killing and bring about a return to normality and security?

The Seduction of Ambition, the Corruption of Power

The political leaders of a country that has a vast and powerful army and a well-established police force and security apparatus, with a popular mandate to stamp out terrorism, bring back stability and launch the country on the road to prosperity, have all doors open to them. They often want to emulate the great leaders who have put their stamp on the history of their countries, a legitimate ambition, no doubt, but one that gives an opening to the practitioners of the black arts of conspiratorial politics, the Machiavellian grey eminences who flourish in the shadow of the leader. It gives such people, and there are many of them, the opening to insinuate themselves around the leader, and to keep all

other voices away from his ears. They control access to the leader. Praetorian guards or their modern equivalent, they create an iron circle around the leader controlled by gatekeepers from among themselves. They keep the leader in a bubble, harping on the historic moment that calls him to greatness, if only he would consolidate his power here, and pull in the opposition there – a nip and a tuck, and a consolidation of power here and a suppression of dissent there... all in the name of realizing their destiny to achieve greatness. The media, no longer a watchdog, but a propaganda machine, reinforces and magnifies that call, that the leader is the indispensable man at the historic moment, and who really has no ambition for himself, only for the country. Not for personal gain, it is for the vast and underprivileged masses that he speaks. Ambition thus thinly disguised is still very seductive, for we all want to believe that we are acting out of noble motivations and for altruistic purposes to serve the public interest. And who does not want to leave a legacy of great achievements for his country and his people?

But the seduction of ambition is invariably followed by its twin: the corruption of power. As Lord Acton famously said: 'Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. And it does.

Those who are corrupted by the process of ruling over others are not innately evil. They usually begin as honest men with a desire to accomplish things that they believe to be in the public interest. And having power, they use it. Then they encounter opposition from equally well-meaning persons who have different views on how to serve the interests of the people, and sometimes it is difficult to find a common meeting ground. Sometimes it is difficult to have to explain and gain the support of the many, especially when dealing with technical issues. Both sides may be motivated by patriotism and altruism, but the one wielding power can enforce his views.

That is where the danger lies. The more the person in power finds that they can more easily get their way by imposing restrictions and compulsions on others, the greater the strain on their own morality. As the appetite for using force against people increases, the leader believes in the unquestionable wisdom of their desired course of action. Such leaders not only cease to be accountable in any meaningful way, they also increasingly tend to surround themselves with advisers who not only share their general viewpoint, but who must also be seen as slavishly loyal to the leader. Such advisors and assistants also seem to derive a peculiar pleasure from forcing others to obey their orders. Friends and supporters are appointed to easy jobs of questionable necessity.

Corruption sets in. Artificial jobs are created for those supporting the regime. Ventures are given monopolies, and land transactions are allowed to benefit the well connected, who in turn share their ill-gotten gains with the leader and/or his cronies. Loans from public entities are given and not repaid. Prestige projects take precedence over basic necessities, and in all this the opposition is silenced by the exercise of power, which prevents any meaningful

accountability. Elections become rituals reaffirming power to those who already possess it. The leader and his surrounding elite lose the ability to distinguish between what is morally right and what is politically expedient. The regime is thoroughly corrupt. That is how unchecked power corrupts those who wield it.

That is why the systems of governance we seek to construct are not those that are designed to make exceptional men shine, but those that ordinary people cannot destroy. For it takes an extraordinary individual to come into power and resist the seductive call of personal ambition and reject the corrupting influence of the exercise of power. Sometimes, providence does send a nation such a man, as it did with George Washington at the time of founding the United States. His exemplary restraint made a government of laws possible, made the separation of powers a reality.

A Providential Leader?

In its hour of anger and loss, Egypt is turning to General Abdel Fattah El Sissi, who has just been given the title of Field Marshal, and who is leaving his post as head of the Armed Forces to become a candidate for the presidency under the newly approved constitution. Barring some totally unforeseeable event, it is a foregone conclusion that he will sweep the polls in a landslide. He will become Egypt's next elected president.

He will face enormous challenges and he will need the support of one and all to deal with the violence in our streets, the corruption in our highest offices, the neglect of our institutions and the shameless efforts to circumvent the law. Will he indeed be the strong and visionary leader who will surround himself with ability and talent and meet these challenges and guide Egypt beyond the current crisis in our land? I sincerely hope so.

Will he be the rare providential man who will show the restraint of a George Washington and allow a nation of laws to emerge, rather than succumb to the seduction of ambition and the corruption of power that the autocratic state and its repressive machinery can so skillfully nurture? I sincerely hope so.

For the sake of Egypt and the Egyptian people, who have suffered much and still pursue that elusive dream of an inclusive pluralistic society, will he be the leader who can end terror and then lead our national reconciliation? I sincerely hope so.

Will he be able to deal with the deeper issues that have riven the body politic of Egypt, and which have created anxiety among our elders, aimlessness among our unemployed youth, and a vacuum of despair among the many who look to religion, not for political guidance but to give an inner meaning to their lives? I sincerely hope so.

Forever Renewed, Forever Young

But whatever happens, I am certain that Egypt has come to a crossroad. The tide of political Islam has been stopped. The Islamist project is receding, but the specter of the autocratic state and its repressive machinery is rising

anew. It may be tamed by our new constitution, our new leader, our new parliament, and a reinvigorated judiciary. The elusive dream of an inclusive pluralistic society may be ultimately at hand. But it may not. And another wave of youthful Egyptians will have to reignite the torch of freedom and lead the country anew, now or a generation from now.

Youthful dreams shape our views, our hopes and make it our purpose to create a better world, a world of beauty and of justice and dignity. I was myself a child of the sixties, when these dreams lit up the planet from Paris to Cairo, from the campuses of America to the lands of Africa, from the fields of Asia to the favelas of Latin America – dreams that did translate into the end of colonialism, the end of apartheid and significant advances in human rights and women's rights everywhere.

Yet as we grow older, many of us find ourselves complicit in maintaining the conventional, the passé, and the bourgeois values that we once detested, despised or dismissed. Those who scoffed at the absurdity of bourgeois values see their own world transformed into bourgeois absurdity. Revolutionaries with beards and long hair, tie-dyed t-shirts and jeans became the CEOs of corporations, bankers, political leaders and bureaucrats that they once despised and attacked. Rebellious youngsters become parents of rebellious youngsters. For such is the cycle of the generations. And every generation brings forth its dreamers and its revolutionaries.

Our youth are the real guardians of the values of humanity. They reinvigorate revolutionary fervor every generation, and they dream new dreams suited to their times. They have shown their mettle in these three years of the Egyptian revolution. I have always had an abiding faith in youth, and I continue to do so. Like Robert Frost, I say:

Now when I am old my teachers are the young.
What can't be molded must be cracked and sprung.
I strain at lessons fit to start a suture.
I go to school to youth to learn the future.

Youth, yes, but also the young at heart. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up our ideals wrinkles the soul. The years may mark our face, diminish our physical vigor, whiten our hair and limit our eyesight, but we can remain young at heart...for you are:

As young as your faith, as old as your doubt;
As young as your dreams, as old as your cynicism;
As young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear;
As young as your hope, as old as your despair.

You will remain young as long as you believe in the beauty of your dreams, as long as you believe in hope, cheer and courage. Only if you give in to pessimism and lose your heart to cynicism, then, and only then, are you grown old. And then, indeed, as Douglas MacArthur said, you 'just fade away.'

The Egyptian revolution itself is still young. It is only three years old. Much remains ahead, unwritten in the book of time. Whatever the future holds, I know that it is only by holding on to the values of human dignity for all, equality for all, liberty for all and creating the institutions of a republic of laws based on freedom and participation that the promise of the revolution will be redeemed, and its dreams – at least partially – fulfilled. And I know that it is the Egyptian youth of today and tomorrow who will make it happen.

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The Saint Catherine Foundation and its related associations in Switzerland and the United States support conservation work at the Monastery of Saint Catherine. The monastery's library is the present focus of conservation activities. To safeguard this historic archive, the foundation is raising funds for the renovation of the Library building and for the conservation and boxed storage of the manuscripts and early books.

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