



Coptic Saints and Pilgrimages

Otto F. A. Meinardus

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The Coptic Christian tradition is one that goes back almost two thousand years to the very beginnings of Christianity: Mark the Evangelist himself is said to have brought the faith to Alexandria. In his *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity* (AUC Press, 1999), renowned scholar Otto Meinardus reviewed the history of the official church from its earliest days to the end of the twentieth century, with its doctrinal disputes and its long isolation from other world churches. Here in *Coptic Saints and Pilgrims*, he examines the other side of the coin, the popular traditions and beliefs of the people. While the Coptic Orthodox church is strongly influenced by Hellenistic modes of thinking, many of the folk attitudes and practices by contrast have their roots in the religious heritage of pharaonic Egypt, and while the official faith is by its sacramental nature exclusive, the folk religion is inclusive and touches every aspect of the personal lives of ordinary Copts. It is this popular aspect of Coptic religious devotion that is revealed here, in its many points of focus: biblical saints, martyrs, ascetics, equestrian warriors, 'silverless' physicians, women saints, pilgrimage, dreams, visions, and apparitions.

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