

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate

Diocese of Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada

## **St Paul Theological Seminary**

Course Designator: **CHIST I**

Title: **Church History I - Origins to the Arab Conquest**

Instructor: **Dn. Severus S. A. Mikhail, PhD**

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This is a survey of the development of early Christianity from the Apostolic Age through the early Arab Conquests of the seventh century. The emphasis will be on the history and historiography of the Coptic Orthodox Church (the See of Alexandria), but the course will touch on the major political and theological developments and personalities of the early Christian era as well.

### ***Prerequisites***

None

### ***Learning Goals***

- A. To acquire a holistic understanding of the origins and historical development of early Christianity and the Christian tradition within the Roman Empire, particularly in Egypt.
- B. To describe and critically analyze interactions among Christian jurisdictions, institutions, values, and ideals within Christendom down to the seventh century.
- C. To critically engage Christian source material from a wide spectrum of historical evidence, including patristic literature, ecclesiastical canons, hagiographic texts, and monastic rules.

### ***Books and Readings***

The core readings will be provided to you in PDF format (see the Reading Schedule, below). In addition, I strongly urge you to acquire *The Popes of Egypt* trilogy. The first volume is important for this class, the other two will be important for *Church History II*.

Stephen J. Davis, *The Early Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and Its Leadership in Late Antiquity*, vol. 1 The Popes of Egypt (Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2005).

Mark N. Swanson, *The Coptic Papacy in Islamic Egypt (641–1517)*, vol. 2 The Popes of Egypt (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010).

Magdi Guirguis and Nelly van Doorn-Harder, *The Emergence of the Modern Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and its Leadership from the Ottoman Period to the Present*, vol. 3 The Popes of Egypt (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2011).

I also highly recommend the following (last three will be also important for *Church History II*)

Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

Lois M. Farag, *The Coptic Christian Heritage: History, Faith and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

Otto F.A. Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity* (Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 1999).

M.S.A. Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt: Religion, Identity and Politics after the Arab Conquest* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014). [This volume is published in Egypt as *From Islamic Egypt to Christian Egypt: Religion, Identity and Politics after the Arab Conquest* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2014)—this edition is only available in Egypt and is not distributed or shipped by AUC press outside the country]

### ***Expectations & Grading***

Regular, consistent attendance and participation are expected. Be prepared to discuss and analyze the sources surveyed.

20 % *Participation and in class discussions*

*Meaningful* participation includes interpretive and analytical questions, answers, and discourse.

80 % *Analysis/reaction paper* (approximately four double-spaced pages long)

The prompt is below. This is *not a summary* of the readings, but an intellectual assessment and reaction to the lectures, discussions, and prescribed readings.

### ***Reading and Lecture Schedule***

This is a reading guide. Please note that in some cases the PDF files provided will contain more pages than are required. Check the page numbers of your readings carefully. ***To get the most***

**out of these intensive lectures, you are highly encouraged to read the assigned PDF readings before the class convenes on the weekend of April 24th. This will allow you to get a great deal more out of the lectures, and will better inform our discussions.** As you read, mark up the texts, write down your notes, thoughts, and observations; these will provide the source material for your written assignment. Please, print out and bring these readings with you to class. Even if you did not read them yet, when we discuss certain passages, it will be much more beneficial if you have the text in hand, immediately at hand.

#### UNIT 1: THE HISTORICAL DISCIPLINE AND EARLIEST CHRISTIANITY IN EGYPT (evening)

##### Lecture 1: *Introduction to the Study of Ecclesiastical History*

PDF: George Florovsky, "The Challenge of Our Time," *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 1.1 (1952), 3-5.

##### Lecture 2: *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Alexandria*

PDF: Roman Symbol / Creed

PDF: *Martyrdom of Saint Mark* (from the *History of the Patriarchs*)

PDF: *Gospel of Judas*

#### UNIT 2: ADDRESSING THOSE WITHIN AND THOSE WITHOUT (morning)

##### Lecture 1: *Apostolic Fathers and Apologists*

PDF: Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Philadelphians*

PDF: Selections from Justin Martyr's *First Apology*

##### Lecture 2: *The Age of Demetrius and Origen*

PDF: Tito Orlandi, "Literature, Coptic," *Coptic Encyclopedia* 5:1450-60.

#### UNIT 3: MARTYRDOM, ASCETICISM, AND THE DAWNING OF A NEW AGE (afternoon)

##### Lecture 1: *Third and Early Fourth Centuries*

PDF: *Martyrdom of Saint Coluthus*

##### Lecture 2: *Age of Constantine*

PDF: Accounts of the Conversion of Constantine

#### UNIT 4: UNITY AND DIVISION (afternoon)

##### Lecture 1: *Nicea to Chalcedon*

PDF: Canons of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea (325 AD)

PDF: Janet A. Timbie and Jason Zaborowski, "Shenoute's Sermon *The Lord Thundered*: An Introduction and Translation," *Oriens Christianus* 90 (2006), 93-125.

##### Lecture 2: *Chalcedon to the Arab Conquest*

PDF: Johnson, David W. "Anti-Chalcedonian Polemics in Coptic Texts 451-641," in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, ed. Pearson and Goehring, pgs. 216-234 (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1986).

PDF: *Letters of Patriarch Timothy II* (457 -477 AD), in R.Y. Ebied and L.R. Wickham, "A Collection of Unpublished Letters of Timothy Aelurus," *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 21 (1970), 321-69. [This seemingly long article includes the Syriac text and an English translation of the letters]

## Final Paper

### Instructions:

The paper is due on or before May 19<sup>th</sup>. Save your file in Word (.doc or .docx) or Rich Text Format (.rtf). Email your paper as an attachment ALSO copy and paste your paper in the same email (just in case I can't open your attachment). Send the final to <deaconseverus@lacopts.org>.

Do not write your answer as if it is addressed to someone within the church, but your intended audience is someone outside the church, who has a basic understanding of the texts and individuals you mention but are a bit skeptical of your answer. . . In other words, make your argument convincing and your evidence clear.

This is not a research paper; all you need may be found in your lecture notes and readings. Nonetheless, you are free to draw upon any academic study published by a scholar (no internet sources; no Wikipedia or OrthodoxWiki). In either case, provide a bibliography of the sources you use in your paper.

### The Prompts

Answer **one** of the following two prompts.

**A)** Identify and discuss the four most important events, personalities, or developments in the history of the early church down to the Arab Conquest (four items in total; you cannot choose any first century figure—including Christ and the Apostles). *Each item must be from a different century.* Discuss why each of the items you've selected is significant? How was it significant in its time and place? And, why does it remain significant today? Provide a clear analysis based on concrete examples drawn from the texts, figures, events, and personalities we have discussed in class and your readings.

**B)** Throughout our lectures and discussions, we have touched on several dichotomous themes: 1) unity and diversity, 2) orthodoxy and heresy, 3) unity and schism, 4) changing while remaining the same. Focus on one of these themes and discuss its various manifestations across the centuries we have discussed in class. How does that theme relate to the history of our church? How helpful or distracting is this theme in studying church history. Provide a clear analysis based on concrete examples drawn from the texts, figures, events, and personalities we have discussed in class and your readings.

### Select Bibliography for the Course

#### **Studies Focused on Egyptian Christianity**

Atiya, Aziz S. *A History of Eastern Christianity*. London, 1968; 1980.

Atiya, Aziz S., ed. *The Coptic Encyclopedia*. 8 vols. New York, 1991.

Bagnall, Roger, ed. *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300-700*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Frag, Lois M. *The Coptic Christian Heritage: History, Faith and Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Gabra, Gawdat. *Coptic Civilization*. Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2013.

- Gabra, Gawdat. *Historical Dictionary of the Coptic Church*. Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2009.
- Griggs, W.C. *Early Egyptian Christianity*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990.
- Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church* (Alexandria: St. George Coptic Church, 1993).
- Meinardus, Otto F.A. *Christian Egypt Ancient and Modern*. 2nd rev. ed. Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 1977.
- Meinardus, Otto F.A. *Christian Egypt: Faith and Life*. Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 1970.
- Meinardus, Otto F.A. *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity*. Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 1999.
- Mikhail, M.S.A. *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt: Religion, Identity and Politics after the Arab Conquest*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2014.
- Partrick, Theodore Hall. *Traditional Egyptian Christianity*. Greensboro: Fisher Park Press, 1996.
- Pearson, B. and J.E. Goehring, eds. *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.

### ***Studies of Orthodoxy***

- Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church*. Alexandria: n.p. , 1993.
- McGuckin, John Anthony. *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture*. Madlen and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Ware, Timothy (Bp. Kallistos of Diokleia). *The Orthodox Church*, New Edition. London and New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

### ***Studies Focus on Early Christianity and Late Antiquity***

- Behr, John. *The Way to Nicea*, 2 vols. Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001-4.
- Bowersock, G.W. *et al.*, *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Brown, Peter. *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150-750*. New York, 1971; 1989.
- Cameron, Averil. *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Chesnut, Glenn F. *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius*. 2nd ed. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986.
- Donald, Leo Davis. *The first seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990.
- Fowden, Garth. *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Frend, W.H.C. *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*. 2nd rev. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Gagos, Traianos and Peter van Minnen, eds., *Settling a Dispute; Toward a Legal Anthropology of Late Antique Egypt*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.
- González, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity: Volume 1, The: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Revised and Updated Edition. New York: HarperOne, 2010.

- Haas, Christopher. *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- Harries, Jill. *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Irvin, Dale T., and Scott W. Sunquist. *History of the World Christian Movement: Earliest Christianity to 1453*. New York: Orbis Books, 2001.
- Jones, A.H.M. *The Later Roman Empire*. 2 vols. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.
- MacMullen, R. *Christianizing the Roman Empire*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.
- Papaconstantinou, Arietta, ed. *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt from the Ptolemies to the Abbasids*. Burlington, 2010.
- Petry, Carl F. ed. *The Cambridge History of Egypt*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Samuel, V.C. *The Council of Chalcedon Re-Examined*. Madras, 1977; 2001.