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وطني لوشغلت بالخلد عنه نازعني إليه في الخلد نفسي "أحمد شوقي"
أسسها أنطون سيدم ١٩٥٨ عام



الأحد ١ يناير ٢٠٠٦
إصدار أول : السنة ٧ العدد ٤

٢٢٩٧

كتاب

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من قلب الأخبار

١٠٠ زيادة في مرتقبات الوظيفين

فيOLA فهم:

صرح الدكتور احمد درويش وزير الدولة للتنمية الادارية ان مجلس الشعب سيعلن خلال مرحلة الالية مشروع قانون الموظفة العامة الجديدة والذي سيتم بمقتضاه زيادة الرواتب بنسبة ٧٠٪ خلال السنوات الست القليلة.

وتخمن المشروع زيادة اجراء العامل العام بتحريك ما يقتضى العامل بالرادة نتيجة تحريك بدلات ونهايات الاجور مما يذكر له اثر على الاخوة الاسفالية الكمالات والحاقدون التي تسبب فرقاً في الراتب الأساسي.

وأضاف درويش ان المجلس بصدد مقاضاة شهوده عن طريق اخرى في شأن الفساد العقارية والفساد المالي الذي وذاك من اجل مد مطافه الى المنشئين الماليين وذلك اخضاع كل المواطنين للضرر.

بنك لأسلامة امتحانات

الثانوية العامة

انتهى خبراء الركن الفوقي للامتحانات والتقويم التربوي من اعداد كتاب خاص لامتحانات الثانوية العامة في جميع المواد.

وصرح د. رفعت زيدان رئيس امتحانات الثانوية العامة بـ«الجامعة» ان اتم تكثيف خبراء الركن بابعاد هذا النيل بحيث يشكل اسلمة امتحانات شاملة كافية لامتحانات الثانوية العامة.

قال ايهاب سلام مدير البرامج

وافتخار الماسجين

والدكتور احمد درويش وزیر

البنوك ابراهيم

البنك العربي

</

غرامات يومية تصل إلى مليوني يورو في اليوم على شركة ميكروسوفت العاملة لسنوات بروم وظيفة التشغيل الخاصة بالكمبيوتر إلى أن تتيح الشركات المناسبتها القدرة على الوصول إلى أنظمة تنفيتها.

وقالت الفوضوية إن الشركة لم تقدم حتى الآن المعلومات المناسبة بخصوصها بما ينطوي الموقف لتقديم استثناء ملزمة

خمسة أيام لتأخير الشغل الخاصة

بها، وتحث المفوضية على تقديم ملزمة

قبل اليوم، بفرض الغرامات اليومية وقال

الاتحاد الأوروبي إنه بعد أيام خيار آخر بعد أن قدم ميكروسوفت كل الفرض

للتغيير في قرار سابق يخصيص

مكافحة الأحكام في حكم قانوني باز

صدر في مارس عام ٢٠٠٣ بالإضافة إلى أن

جهاز تنمية متعددة في استغلال موقعها

للحكم وفرضت عنها غرامة ضخمة

وطلب منها أن تكشف عن انتهاكها

تنفذتها.

وكانت ثانية على حكم تأثيره للأداء

النهائي بالاتصال بالشركات وروابط

الاصناعي بحضور حذرت الشركة بأنه من

الماضي أن دفع غرامة لكن في اعتقاد

تقديرها وسعدها بتسهيل تطبيق

ميكروسوفت خاصته المفوضية الأوربية

إلى أن الشركة لم تقدم ما يكتفي من

بيانات المطلوبة.

تجدد قيمة الضريبة على مرتبات العاملين

فيولا فهمي:

صرح حسني جاد رئيس مجلس

الضرائب العامة أنه لا ينافي من إعداد

برنامج جديد يحدد قيمة الضريبة

الواجب تحصيله للموظفين من مرتبات العاملين

وتفاقم القانون الجديد لضرائب على

الدخل.

وأكمل جاد أن الموقف ينبع من

الاعتراض على تقييم الضريبة

على هذا البرنامج سجلا على قرض

الاختزانة التي تختلف باختلاف

المرضى والمتغيرات التي تواجهها

أمام عن حجم

وجود دعم معنوي وغياب التجربة

والإرشاد شاهد عن الدعم المالي

وإذا من أكبر العوائق التي تواجه

أى متغير

ومن جانبها شارل المهندس أشرف

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وجود دعم معنوي وغياب التجربة

نداء من أجل أبناء مصر

جمعية رعاية مرضى الكبد

الشهرة برقم ٨١٧ لسنة ١٩٩٧

عضو اتحاد الجمعيات الأوروبية لمرضى الكبد ELPA

نداء إلى كل فرد من شعب مصر والعالم العربي وكل عربي في أنحاء العالم إلى رجال الأعمال والجمعيات الخيرية والفنانين وجميع وسائل الإعلام وجميع شركات المحمول

بمناسبة الأيام الدينية المباركة ساهم معنا بتوجيهه الزكاة أو الصدقات من مالك لعلاج مرضى الكبد غير القادرين

هل تعلم أن بيننا الملايين من مرضى الكبد غير القادرين؟
ولهذا أنشئت جمعية رعاية مرضى الكبد من أجلهم منذ عام ١٩٩٧

هل تعلم أن علاج المريض الواحد يتكلف آلاف الجنيهات؟
هل تعلم أنه كلما زادت تبرعاتك.. تقل تكلفة العلاج؟
هل تعلم أنك تستطيع مساعدتهم.. وعلاجهم.. وتخفيف المعاناة عنهم؟

الحملة العربية العالمية للتخلص من الفيروسات الكبدية

للترع على حساب رقم ٠٣٧/٦٦٦٦٢٧٩ بفرع المديري بالمنصورة
وجميع فروع بنك مصر وأى فرع من فروع البنك الأهلي لصالح البنك الأهلي
فرع جامعة المنصورة حساب رقم (١٣٨٤٢)

تحت إشراف

جمعية رعاية مرضى الكبد - أول جمعية أهلية في العالم العربي
عضو الجمعية الأوروبية لرعاية مرضى الكبد ELPA
جمعية غير هادفة للربح مسجلة بوزارة التأمينات الاجتماعية
برقم ٨١٧ لسنة ١٩٩٧

رئيس الجمعية أ.د. جمال شيخة

ترسل الشيكات والتبرعات
باسم جمعية رعاية مرضى الكبد
٤ شارع ابن كثير - خلف الحزب الوطني
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أطمئن هذا الفيروس لا ينتقل إلا عن طريق الدم ويمكن مخالطته
المريض بدون خوف

كل متبرع سوف يعتبر عضواً عاملًا في الجمعية..

جمعية أهلية مشهورة برقم ٨١٧ لسنة ١٩٩٨

حشام شاكر
الستاربة الترفيهية المتكاملة
تمني تفاصيل البابا شرودة لاثاث
بعد الميلاد المجيد
وتدعوه جميع أقباط مصر
لقضاء يوم العيد معنا

٧-٩-٢٠١٣

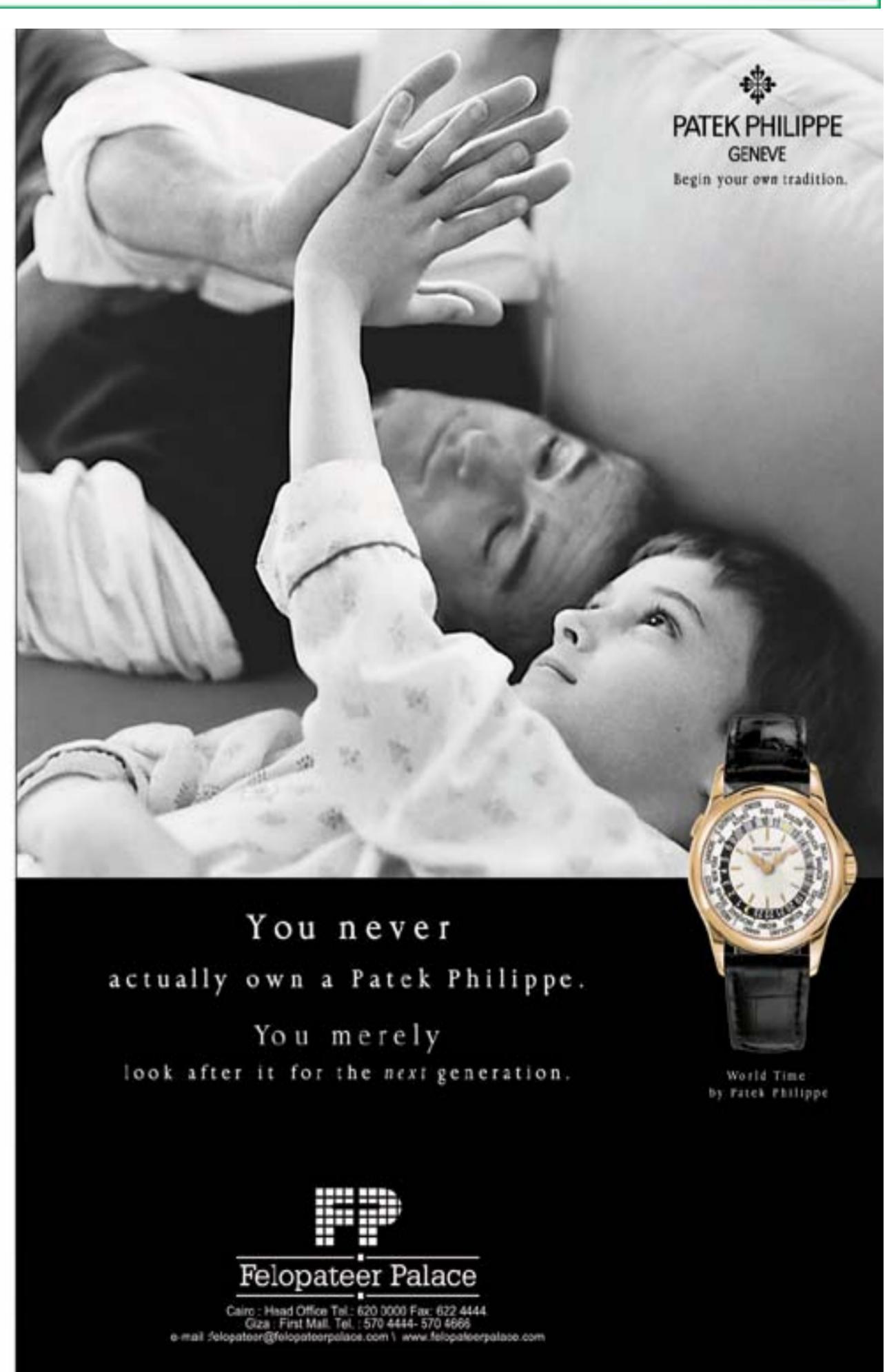
هيثم شاكر

سعر خاص جداً جداً للمجموعات
٢٥ جنية بدلاً من ٣٥

خول ومسارسة جميع الألعاب أي عدد من المرات وحضور الحفل

جبرولاند - مدخل مدينة العبور - طريق مصر الإسماعيلية الصحراوي - خطاب الساخن ٦٢٦١٤٣٤ - ٤٧٧٦٠٨٤ (خطوط ٨)

تليضونات «وطني»
٣٩٢٧٢٠١ - ٣٩٣٦٠٥١ - فاكس: ٣٩٣٥٩٤٦



WATANI
Published by
Watani Printing
and Publishing Corporation
27, Abdel Khaled Tharwat st.
Cairo – Egypt
Tel. 202-3927201, 202-3936051
Fax 202-3935946
Website: www.watani.com.eg
E-Mail: watani@watani.com.eg

Editor-in-chief
Youssef Sidhom



Managing Editor
Samia Sidhom

Sunday

1 January 2006
23 Kiyahk 1722
1 Thul-Higga 1426
YEAR 5
ISSUE 255

Editorial

2006: Year of national effort

Youssef Sidhom

A year ago, precisely on 2 January 2005, *Watani's* editorial was entitled "2005: Year of citizenship rights". This year I was inadvertently tempted to use the same title, but I remembered last year's editorial and had to revise the matter. Citizenship rights still top the agenda of national work and, during the past four months—full of intense political and national activity—the term 'citizenship' became a fixture of political rhetoric.

It is true that last year's limited progress on the citizenship rights front is particularly frustrating; nonetheless it must be owned that the steps achieved in 2005 have set in action a political mobility which, if well-exploited, will undoubtedly lead to the long-awaited change. Last May, the Constitution was changed to allow for multi-candidate presidential elections, and the first such elections since 1952 were held in September. In November, parliamentary elections led to an unprecedented shift in the political powers in Parliament.

Egypt went through three decades of dark ages where freedoms, human and citizenship rights are concerned, not least because these rights were curtailed, but more so because we seemed to be inside a dark tunnel with no hint of light at the end. Today though, I write with a large degree of comfort and optimism that milestones on the road to democracy and change have been put in place, especially regarding changes to the Constitution, legislation, and prevalent anti-democratic behaviour. It remains for us to put our faith in the spirit of change which now fills the air, and to realise that active participation is now imperative.

We look forward to a new year dedicated to national reconciliation. We hope the table will be set for a national dialogue around which all partners in the homeland will gather to clear the air and establish a basis of affection and common effort for the required dialogue. It is heartening to witness that the healthy build-up of dialogue in the media over the last three months has created a strong foundation of transparency, candour and disclosure.

At this critical interval of political reform, we look forward to a new year that would herald in a national coalition. So far, the political constants on the field have yielded exclusive leadership to an arrogant National Democratic Party (NDP)—the ruling party for some three decades—and mere cosmetic roles to the other despairing parties. Given that the freedom to form civic non-religious political parties is imperative, the establishment of a national coalition remains a viable option for reform through active participation.

We look forward to a new year during which the silent majority would emerge out of its political isolation and join the forces of national effort for change. This pre-requires that all eligible voters should register themselves on the official voter lists, an action which should be ranked as a national duty on equal footing as military or community service. Participation also requires breaking the isolation barrier and engaging in joint activities with all partners in the homeland. This, in my opinion is the role of and challenge facing civil and non-governmental organisations, in order to pull all Egyptians into the circle of active co-existence.

If we can succeed in moving forward with the cause of national reconciliation, coalition, and revitalising the silent majority in 2006, we would have indeed advanced on the road of modernising Egypt.

Desert development

Egyptian international scientist Faroud al-Baz proposed a plan to develop Egypt's Western Desert through establishing eight passageways—each composed of a highway and a railway—crossing and dividing the desert. Electricity and water networks, and small urban communities will be set up to attract investors. The project was presented late last month in an extended meeting chaired by the then Higher Education Minister Amr Ezzat and attended by university presidents and research centre chairmen. Dr Bazz said the project could be instrumental in supporting the Egyptian economy and facing the overpopulation.

Risk capital

The European Investment Bank has grant-



"I say... heavy traffic on this line!"

Somewhere on the route between Egypt and Sweden two carrier pigeons met in midair. They landed on a park bench in some town and soon discovered they were delivering post to the same two persons in contact.

"What do you think of what they write? What do they see in each other?" the Egyptian Hamaam or pigeon enquired sceptically.

"Oh, but they appear friendly enough," The Swedish Duva or dove said.

"How could there come anything good from the West?!" exclaimed Hamaam.

"What about democracy?" Duva tossed her neck.

Hamaam didn't listen.

Duva continued: "Such prejudice! Why this strange relation between Europe and the Crescent? People here in the West started to sip at Arab culture—not enough, but at least they started. I see clear signs of ethnocentrism breaking down. Edward Said is an idol here. And in November they played Assir as-Sultan in Stockholm's biggest drama house. Fully booked!"

Duva went on: "I understand it when many Egyptians don't feel like looking westwards—they see the dirty morals. But there are also treasures to be found, spread out here and there. Poets waiting for an Arabic audience. Really profound and original Christian literature. And how can you do without a painter like Chagall?"

Hamaam was taken by the vision. "We need a meeting place. There must be a way of crossing these two streams of culture."

The pigeons glanced at the letters, took the envelopes in their beaks and with courteous bows, went their separate ways.

Can we dream of a 2006 which would herald in any hint of mutual understanding?

Contributed by *Watani* reader **Marie Tonkin**, 21, from Stockholm

COPTS 2005

Nader Shukry

Tensions between Copts on the one hand and Muslims and the State on the other escalated in 2005 to levels unprecedented since the Kosheh sectarian violence which erupted on the eve of the second millennium and claimed the lives of 20 Copts.

Born Christian

The days that ended 2004 witnessed wrathful demonstrations by thousands of Copts as they conducted a five-day sit-in at the grounds of St Mark's cathedral in Abbassia, Cairo, which is also the papal seat. They demanded the return of a priest's wife, Wafaa' Costantine, who had disappeared under suspicious circumstances. They claimed she had been abducted and forced into converting to Islam. While the Muslim villagers said that she had eloped with a friend, the Copts insisted that she had been seduced or coerced, and demanded that the security authorities bring her back. The crowds expressed outrage at what they saw as infringement on Copt's freedom of belief.

The demonstrators demanded that Pope Shenouda III should intervene with the authorities to return the "abducted" woman. When none of the authorities' repeated promises to return the lady materialised, the pope left Cairo to Anba Bishoi monastery in the Western Desert in a gesture of protest. The security officials then handed over the missing lady to a delegation of Bishops. But clashes had already begun between the crowds in the Cathedral grounds and the security forces outside. Thirty-five men were arrested and charged with fomenting unrest.

On Wednesday 8 December Ms Costantine officially appeared before the Ain-Shams prosecution office that "she was born Christian, is Christian, and will remain Christian to the day she dies." The 35 detained Copts were released before Coptic Christmas day—7 January. Some Islamist youths demonstrated calling for the woman's return to Islam.

Questionable conversions

A few months later, a Cairene woman called Wafaa' Ra'fat left her family and converted to Islam. Although seven mem-

bers of her family went on a hunger strike to press for her return, she insisted on not coming back. The police refrained from responding to her family's compliant against the Muslim neighbour who they claimed had lured her into leaving her husband and baby, converting to Islam, and marrying him.

Another woman disappeared—rumoured to have also converted to Islam—in Qusayreen, Cairo, due to family problems, but she came back three days later and the Church interfered to resolve the problems with her husband.

In late February, demonstrations broke out in Fayoum to protest the disappearance of two female medical students as rumours circulated that they had been coerced or seduced into converting to Islam. The security forces knew their hideout and handed them over to the Church. It was found that they had not converted to Islam and their disappearance was related to problems with their families.

In Alexandria and the kaff

The worst sectarian event in 2005 took place in October in Alexandria—a city famous for its cosmopolitan nature and peaceful co-existence among different peoples and religions. Thousands of Muslim youth violently demonstrated in front of Mar-Girgis church in Moharram Bey district to protest against the church-produced play *I was Blind but Now I See* which allegedly defamed Islam. Although the play was a one-time performance two years ago and its main theme was taken from the famous film *al-Irhabi* (*The Terrorist*), protesters set fire to more than six churches as well as cars and shops owned by Copts. Clashes between the police and demonstrators left 39 people injured including 13 policemen. The Church issued a statement stressing national unity and condemning attempts to insult religions.

After a squabble that occurred last November between a Muslim and a Copt in the village of Kafr Ibrahim Salama in

Minya-Qamh, east of the Nile Delta, during which the Muslim's father died of heart failure, Muslims surrounded Copts' houses and burned their property. The event claimed the lives of six Copts.

Disappointment

The last legislative elections left a great deal of frustration among Copts. The ruling National Democratic Party fielded no more than two Copts out of 444 candidates, despite Coptic support to President Mubarak in the presidential elections held last September. Apart from Youssouf Botrous Ghali, none of the Coptic candidates—fielded either by the ruling party or the opposition—emerged victorious. The great shock however was the defeat of Mounir Fahmy Abdel-Nour, prominent leader at the Wafd Party. The president sought to correct the situation through nominating five Coptic members to Parliament.

End-of-year

The conference held in Washington last November—sponsored by prominent expatriate Copt Adly Abadir Youssef—to discuss democracy and minority grievances in Egypt and the Middle East, caused wide controversy among the Egyptian public. Since the conference held a session at a hearing chamber in the US Congress, the Egyptian media criticised it heavily, claiming that the Coptic issue should be discussed only inside Egypt. The conference ended in a split between Copts who advocated international intervention to alleviate the grievances of Copts, and those who adhered to a home-grown remedy.

The year ended on a hopeful note in December however, when President Mubarak issued a decree facilitating the procedures required for restoring, renovating, pulling down and rebuilding existing churches. Although the move marked progress with respect to granting Copts their legitimate rights, the decree's stipulation of the necessary approval of concerned bodies—without clarifying the identity of these bodies—leaves the process subject to the domination of security apparatuses.

Same boat ... different directions

Soliman Shafiq

but this does not excuse a lack of insight or objectivity. Anger and bitterness should not characterise leaders who consider the future of a nation.

But how do expatriate Copts view the achievement of full Egyptian citizenship for Copts? William al-Meiri wrote in *Watani*: "The Coptic issue first gained strength on account of the Coptic movement abroad. The issue should be internationalised, because minorities are always trampled by the majority. The international community interfered before in favour of minorities, as in Bosnia when the Muslims were exposed to genocide by the Serbs."

Historical wisdom

Expatriate Copts call for intervention by the international community in favour of Egypt's Copts, a point which Copts in Egypt oppose. Mr Meiri is counted among the immigrant doves, yet one can easily appreciate the gap between his address and Sidhom's. So we should open a dialogue between

immigrants and Copts living in Egypt.

Expatriate Copts reprove Copts at home for what they see as undue esteem of the regime. I believe, however, that our immigrant brethren's attitude warrants blame for their disregard of our Egyptian historical experience. Copts could be seen throughout the ages not as overly fearful of their hostile rulers, but as "bowing to the storm till it passes", and this may be what has preserved them to the present time. Copts survived even the most dreadful ages of oppression because of their "wisdom". They depended on their inherent strength and not any other strength borrowed from abroad.

What it's all about

Our dear expatriate Copts, we are the voice, not the echo! Do not make us feel that you are harder and more cruel than our oppressors. Our history as well as our present-day experience reveals that our Egyptian citizenship cannot be chopped into a Coptic or a Muslim one. No one can ever gain a right by alienating a fellow citizen. And this is what National Dialogue is all about.

The Washington conference of last November revealed a painful truth: that Copts are now a split minority, one at home and the other abroad. It saddened me to learn that Mr Adly Abadeer Youssef, the conference executive chairman, tampered with the final resolutions which had been agreed upon by the members of the convention, and issued a revised document.

In *Watani*, Youssef Sidhom wrote, "The final document of the Washington conference was telefaxed for approval to Mr Youssef [who, due to health reasons was not in Washington but in Zurich where he resides]. On the last day, however, we discovered several changes to the document. The final version dealt a blow to rational, balanced thought ... It was clear that the anger had gained the upper hand."

Angry and bitter

This climate of anxiety and vacillation serves to tear up the nation socially and psychologically. Wisdom is lost and hard-line Copts, in their anger, slip into rashness and indecision. It is the right of minorities to be angry and bitter

Japanese medical care

Last month, Japan made a \$63,836 grant to Mit-Ghorab Association for Local Community Development, to provide medical equipment and services, and raise health awareness for an estimated 16000 citizens in the village of Mit-Ghorab in Daqahliya, north east of the Nile Delta. The Mit-Ghorab Association, established in 1994, has provided the local community with a nursery, children's library, women's club, and an Information Technology Club. It also engages in micro credit financing for a "cattle breeding" project.

European scholarships

An agreement has been reached between Egypt and the European Union (EU) by virtue of which the EU will finance 150 scholarships in European universities for

Egyptian professors and teaching staff. Egyptian universities currently implement 33 EU-sponsored educational projects in higher education at a cost of 12.44 million Euros, and nine supplementary structural projects at a cost of 1.1 million Euros.

Ibsen 2006

The year 2006 will mark the 100th anniversary since the death of Henrik Ibsen. Norway will hold a year-long commemoration—Ibsen 2006—worldwide in honour of the occasion, presenting Ibsen's plays in various places around the world simultaneously, and printing his works in editions for children. Next October, a musical of one of his plays will be presented at the foot of the Giza pyramids in Egypt. Ibsen wrote many plays among which are *The Dolls House*, *Pillars of Society*, *Brand*, *Peer Gynt*, *An Enemy of the People*, and *The Master Builder*.

Hedda Gabler and *The People's Enemy*, and died in 1906 at the age of 78.

Antiquities in Spain

Egyptian antiquities are currently on show at the Arts Centre Museum in Madrid under the title "The Pharaohs". The three-month exhibition is expected to contribute LE7 million to Egypt's coffers, said Wafaa' al-Seddiq, director of the Egyptian Museum. Insurance against theft, acts of terrorism, and earthquakes amounted to \$220,890,000. Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Antiquities Dr Zahi Hawas said. The 115 pieces showcased include a statue of Queen Hatshepsut, who bestowed the title of pharaoh upon herself, and another of Queen Nefertiti, wife of Akhenaten of the New Kingdom (1353–1336 BC).

Marking the Passage of Time: Reflecting upon 2005, Welcoming 2006

2005: Another Year of Challenges and Blessings

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven"
(Ecclesiastes 3:1)

By Saad Michael Saad

As 2005 comes to a close, humanity is reflecting upon the year gone by, counting gains and losses and looking ahead to the promise of a new beginning. At *Watani International*, we too have reviewed 2005, and have compiled a list of ten events that we believe have had (or will have) the most significant impact on the lives of Copts living inside and outside of Egypt.

1. International Coptic Conference, Washington, 16-19 November

The Second International Coptic Conference convened in Washington DC from 16 to 19 November 2005. Originally, the theme of the conference was "Democracy in Egypt for Muslims and Christians" but because of the diversity of the more than 50 speakers and the topics they covered, the theme was expanded to "Supporting Freedoms and Democracy in the Middle East."

The speakers came from throughout the Middle East, Europe, North America and Australia. Approximately half of the speakers were Muslims, and one-quarter were women.

The conference was co-chaired by Mr. Adly Abadeer and Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim. More than 200 intellectuals attended including authors, Middle East specialists, human rights and pro-democracy activists. Through the tireless efforts of Mr. Magdi Khalil, the conference was covered by ten Arab radio and television channels and many Arab newspapers. In its 18 November issue, *The Wall Street Journal* published an article by Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim about the theme and objectives of the conference.

The entire conference was broadcast live on www.copts-united.com, where you may find more information and watch selected segments. [Watani, 27 November to 25 December]

2. Aghapy Television

In November, AghapyTV, a Coptic Television Network, was launched on the American Satellite Telstar 12. This is the first television station in the world dedicated to Coptic Orthodox Christians. It was begun with the blessings of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and the tireless efforts of His Grace Bishop Botros, and is funded by donations from around the world. Broadcast in English, Arabic and Coptic, programming includes church services, stories on the lives of the saints, Bible studies, sermons, hymns and religious films. AghapyTV is currently available in Egypt with plans for expansion to North America. Programs may also be viewed on their website: www.aghapy.tv/aghapy/index.php.

3. Response to Violence against Christians

Violence against Christians occurs around the world, and Egypt is no exception. In response to the violence that ensued in Alexandria, Egypt, when several thousand Islamists stormed seven Coptic churches, destroyed Bibles, burned property, stabbed a nun and others, Copts in Sydney, Paris, New York, Los Angeles and many other cities where democracy lives, demonstrated publicly and peacefully to voice their protest and bring awareness. The events in Alexandria also marked the first live television and internet coverage of violence against the Copts in Egypt. [Watani, 6-13 November]

4. The Long History of Monastic Tradition Continues

The Coptic Orthodox Church is credited with establishing Christian Monasticism and nurturing it throughout the centuries. 2005 confirmed this by bringing us news of one of our oldest monasteries and our newest.

On 9 August, 2005, Reuters reported that archaeologists working on a site near the Red Sea coast unearthed the oldest example of a building housing Christian monks, dating from between the 4th and 5th centuries.

And on 20 August, 2005, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III consecrated the altar of St. Mary and St. Moses Abbey, located on 92 acres of lakeshore property in Corpus Christi, Texas. The Abbey, which is under the auspices of His Grace Bishop Youssef, Bishop of the Diocese of the Southern United States, is the second Coptic monastery in the U.S. In addition to H.G. Bishop Youssef, five monks, previously from El Souryan Monastery,



HG Bishop Serapion surrounded by priests and 16 chanters of the new ecclesiastical choir of Saint Maurice Church in Pomona, California. Several other churches in the Diocese of Los Angeles have established all-girls' choirs in 2005.

5. Girls Choirs in Coptic Churches in Los Angeles

Under the guidance of His Grace Bishop Serapion, Bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles, several churches in the diocese established girls' choirs to sing during the liturgy. His Holiness Pope Shenouda III approved this step, which was welcomed by the congregation, for its positive influence. Establishing a girls' choir also opens the door for greater ecumenical co-worship with other Oriental Orthodox Churches who have had such female choirs for many years.

6. Coptic Missionary Work in Africa and Asia

Youth groups from North America and Europe spent months of missionary work in Kenya for mutual benefit. Villages in Maseno, rural Kenya, witnessed the establishment of new churches and clinics designed to improve the lives of the local populace. Servants have started medical awareness campaigns aimed at educating people about AIDS, including its causes and prevention. The Coptic Hospital, as well as the Hope Center in Nairobi, have expanded their services for HIV infected patients and have given many hope for the future. In June, His Grace Bishop Paul, along with a group of dedicated servants, began missionary work in Nigeria.

Coptic evangelism is also active in the South Pacific. Several Coptic churches were established in the Fijian Islands and the Kingdom of Tonga under the guidance of His Grace Bishop Suriel of Melbourne, assisted by youth from Melbourne and the U.S. (www.cocom.org.au). And His Grace Bishop Daniel of Sydney continued to establish missions in Japan, Thailand, Singapore and other East Asian countries (www.coptic.org.au).

7. Five Coptologists Who Are No Longer with Us

At this time, we also acknowledge and remember those who contributed to Coptic civilization by devoting their life's work to Coptology. In 2005, we lost the following renowned scholars lives:

- Otto Meinardus (1925-2005). Professor of History, whose writings became the standard reference for all scholars in modern Christianity in Egypt. Meinardus' works included *Christian Egypt, Coptic Saints and Pilgrims*, and a classical work on the renaissance of Coptic Monasticism in the 20th century. [Watani 25 September]

- W. H. C. Frend (1916-2005). Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the United Kingdom, whose publications on Early Christian History are considered the best such works in the field. Frend, however, alienated many Copts when he insisted on using the term Monophysite in reference to Coptic Christianity.

- Ernest W. Tune (1918-2005). Taught Coptic at Claremont Graduate University and participated in the translation of the Nag Hammadi Library. The Ernest Tune Coptic Library, a rich collection of books on Coptic and Nubian topics, is housed at Claremont School of Theology where Tune was a Library

Director for eight years (<http://iac.cgu.edu>).

- Sami Hanna (1927-2005). An esteemed professor of Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic Linguistics, who worked alongside Prof. Aziz Surial Atiya in establishing Middle East Studies at the University of Utah in 1960. He founded the American Coptic Studies Association, which promoted Coptic Studies in Oregon for several years. He authored several books on teaching Arabic.

- Theodore Hall Partrick (1923-2005). An Episcopalian priest who spent decades in serving his church and teaching Church history in multiple academic institutions in the U.S. and Central America. He is the author of *Traditional Egyptian Christianity*, the best selling English language book on the 2000 years of Coptic Church history.

8. MA Program in Coptic Studies in Sydney

In March 2005, Macquarie University (www.mq.edu.au) in Sydney, Australia, commenced its first course of offerings in a new MA Program in Coptic Studies. The program, which is offered in both a traditional class format and online, covers Coptic History, Language, Art, Archaeology and Egyptian Monasticism. Approximately 40 students are currently enrolled; half are Copts, and half are participating on-line. [Watani, 24 April]

9. Coptology Conferences

Perhaps 2005's most prestigious Coptology Conference was the Seventh Annual St. Shenouda Coptic Conference held at UCLA in August. Attendees came from all over the U.S. to learn about the scholarly work being done by graduate students, university professors, and various members of the St. Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society. [Watani, 4 September]

10. New Books about Coptic Christianity

- *Words to Live by: Journeys in Ancient and Modern Egyptian Monasticism*, by Tim Vivian, 2005.

- *Christianity and Monasticism in the Fayoum Oasis*, by Gawdat Gabra, editor, 2005.

- *A Coptic Dictionary*, by Walter Crum, 2005 (Second Edition).

- *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, by Claudia Rapp, 2005.

- *Listening to Islam*, by John H. Watson, 2005.

- *The Early Coptic Papacy: The Egyptian Church and its Leadership in Late Antiquity*, by Stephen J. Davis, 2005.

Concluding Remarks

2005 was a year of continued challenges and spiritual, cultural and political growth. The Coptic community became more aware of their heritage and inner strength. Copts in Egypt and elsewhere reached out to each other and to the world at large, thanks primarily to modern vehicles of communication and networking. While Coptic Christians still suffer from tribulations, we look back upon 2005 and give thanks to God for His Divine providence. As we leave 2005 and face 2006, we pray that all mankind may share in God's love and peace.

Saad Michael Saad is Senior Editor, *Watani International*. Shirin Kestin (Wisconsin), Maryann Wahba and Nardine Saad (California) contributed to this report.

Redeeming the Time

By H.G. Bishop Youssef

"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be unwise but understand what the Will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:15-17)

With the blessing of yet another New Year approaching, each one of us should consider the importance and meaning of "redeeming the time." St. Paul specifically preaches about the importance of continually walking in God's Will, guarding against all manner of evil. Christians do not dispute God's creation of the world as being good, but rather man created ungodliness within it as evil.

To walk within the Will of God darkness and light must be separated with the light prevailing and developing a distinctive spirit in us avoiding the falseness of the world. Each person should spiritually strive to redeem the time in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. By keeping ourselves within the Godliness of God, we can separate from the evilness of the world and walk in His Holy Will.

"The one peaceful and trustworthy tranquility, the one solid, firm, and constant security is this: for a man to withdraw from this whirlpool of a distracting world and to lift his eyes from earth to Heaven, anchored on the ground of the harbor of salvation...He who is actually greater than the world can crave nothing or desire nothing from the world. How stable, how free from shocks is that safeguard. How heavenly...to be loosed from the snares of this entangling world and to be purged from earthly dregs and be fitted for the light of eternal immortality." (Cyprian, c. 250)

How can we "redeem the time"?

First, we must train ourselves to live in the moment of each day walking in the Will of our Lord. We should not desire to live in anticipation of some future date nor wish for a return of the past, lest we neglect how this particular day is spiritually spent. We must live spiritually in the here and now, redeeming the time with adherence to heeding the Will of God in our lives.

The goals for our life should incorporate becoming more focused on developing Godly habits in our life, avoiding impulsivity, escaping into the past, or acting and daydreaming upon the ideal that the future will always be better. With attentiveness, faithfulness and wholeness we need to savor each and every moment God has given unto us and make it worthy of His gift.

Psalm 34:8-10 tells us, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed

is the man who trusts Him! Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger, but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing."

Second, redeeming the time by abiding in God's Will is finding your joy and pleasure in heartfelt spirituality. Earthly accomplishments and earthly gain may only be short lived but dwelling within the Will of God can have life eternal as a benefit.

Cyprian (c. 250) wrote,

"Laurentius and

Egnatius had

also been once

warring in the

camps of the

world. However, they were true and spiritual soldiers of the God, casting down the devil by the confession of Christ. Therefore, they merited palms and crowns from the Lord by their illustrious passion. We always offer sacrifices for them (as you remember) as often as we celebrate the passions and days of the martyrs in the annual commemoration."

A pure heart will savor the time spent in studying the Holy Bible, focusing on prayer, and finding enrichment through service. If your circumstances become difficult in times to come, or encompass sorrow, a pure heart will approach these trials with acceptance as such times are not completely devoid of happiness when one is filled with peace by his relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 195) taught, "Although disease, accident, and ... death come upon the spiritual man ... by the power of God they become the medicine of salvation. Through discipline, they benefit those who are difficult to reform. They are allotted according to what is deserved by providence, which is truly good."

Moments of happiness, joy, and reflection at such undesired times give us all a tiny glimpse of what Eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ must be like. Further, separating yourself from a predisposition towards blaming the Lord and/or others for your circumstances is redeeming the time and walking in the Will of our Lord.

The Holy Gospel of St. Matthew 6:34 tells us, "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

God bless all of your endeavors to redeem the time this New Year.

We are further told, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks; for this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (I Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Cyprian (c. 250) taught, "Nothing distinguishes the unrighteous from the righteous more than this; that in affliction, the unrighteous man impatiently complains and blasphemers. The righteous man is proved by his patience."

Third, in order to know the Will of God for your life, pray for the Will of God to find an open door in your life. Redeem the time by living with hope and trusting that the Will of God will prevail in your life. When you pray present your emotions, temperament, and will before the Lord. Pray to the Lord that none of these things will separate you from your love for His Holy Name.

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created things, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

Tertullian (c. 198) steadfastly believed that, "The exercise of prayer should not only be free from anger, but from all mental disturbances whatever. Prayer should be uttered from a spirit like the Spirit to whom it is sent. For a defiled spirit cannot be acknowledged by a Holy Spirit, nor a sad one by a joyful one, nor a fettered one by a free one...But what reason is there to go to prayer with hands indeed washed, but the spirit foul?"

Prayer can serve as our protection from the most intense evil and pain when we talk to God. Also, prayer can be more than just a means of talking to God; it can also incorporate patience in waiting for a response during overwhelmingly difficult times.

Finally, St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 195) summarized redeeming the time for the devout Christian in this manner, "The whole life of the spiritual man is a holy festival. His sacrifices are prayers, praises, and readings in Scriptures before meals. They are psalms and hymns during meals and before bed—and prayers also again during the night. By these, the spiritual man unites himself to the divine choir."

Let us all be alert in redeeming the time as we so often pray, "...but deliver us from evil in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God bless all of your endeavors to redeem the time this New Year.

His Grace Bishop Youssef is Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States (www.suscopts.org).

Watani International

**Page 2 Editor
Saad Michael Saad**

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Adel Guindy**

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Among those making complaints to

2006 Challenge

Thomas L. Friedman

I'd like to thank Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, for his observation that the Nazi Holocaust against the Jews was just a "myth." You just don't see world leaders expressing themselves so honestly anymore - not about the Holocaust, but about their own anti-Semitism and the real character of their regimes.

But since Iran's president has raised the subject of "myths," why stop with the Holocaust? Let's talk about Iran. Let's start with the myth that Iran is an Islamic "democracy" and that Ahmadinejad was democratically elected.

Since he was elected - after all the Iranian reformers had their newspapers shut down, and parties and candidates were banned by the unelected clerics who really run the show in Tehran. Sorry, Ahmadinejad, they don't serve steak at vegetarian restaurants, they don't allow bikinis at nudist colonies, and they don't call it "democracy" when you ban your most popular rivals from running. So you are nothing more than a shah with a turban and a few crooked ballot boxes sprinkled around.

And speaking of myths, here's another one: that Iran's clerics have any popularity with the broad cross-section of Iranian youth. This week, Ahmadinejad exposed that myth himself when he banned all Western music on Iran's state radio and TV stations. Whenever a regime has to ban certain music or literature, it means it has lost its hold on its young people. It can't trust them to make the "right" judgments on their own. The state must do it for them. If Ahmadinejad's vision for Iran is so compelling, why does he have to ban Beethoven and the Beatles?



IRAQI SUICIDE BOMBERS ARE AGAIN FORCED TO CHANGE THEIR TACTICS.



DENNIS THE MENACE



A Shah in a Turban

And before we leave this subject of myths, let me add one more: the myth that anyone would pay a whit of attention to the bigoted slurs of Iran's president if his country were not sitting on a dome of oil and gas. Iran has an energetic and educated population, but the ability of Iranians to innovate and realize their full potential has been stunted ever since the Iranian revolution. Iran's most famous exports today, other than oil, are carpets and pistachios - the same as they were in 1979, when the clerics took over.

Sad. Iran's youth are as talented as young Indians and Chinese, but they have no chance to show it. Iran has been reduced to selling its natural resources to India and China - so Chinese and Indian youth can invent the future, while Iran's young people are trapped in the past.

No wonder Ahmadinejad, like some court jester, tries to distract young Iranians from his failings by bellowing anti-Jewish diatribes and banning rock 'n' roll.

What is a fact is the danger someone like Ahmadinejad would pose if his country developed a nuclear weapon. But that is where things are heading. Iran has so much oil money to sprinkle around Europe it doesn't worry for a second that the Europeans would ever impose real sanctions on Tehran for refusing to open its nuclear program.

"The West has lost its leverage," notes Gal Luft, an energy expert at the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security. Europe is addicted to Iran's oil and to Iran's purchases of European goods. At the same time, the Iranian regime has been very clever at petro-diplomacy.

After the United States invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, "the Iranians knew they needed an insurance policy," Luft added. "So they did two things: they

concentrated on developing a bomb and went out and struck gas deals with one-third of humanity - India and China," the world's two fastest-growing energy consumers. So it is highly unlikely that China would ever allow the UN Security Council to impose sanctions on Iran.

The whole world seems to be getting bought off these days by oil. Gerhard Schröder, the former German chancellor, just became chairman of a Russian-German gas pipeline project - controlled by the Russian government - that he championed while in office. The man just stepped down as the leader of Germany and now he's working for the Russians! I guess Jack Abramoff was not available.

The word from the White House is that President George W. Bush is trying to figure out a theme for his State of the Union speech and for his next three years.

Mr. President, what more has to happen - how many more Katrinas, how much more reckless behavior by Iran, how many more allies bought off by petro-dollars - before you realize that there is only one thing to do for the next three years: Lead America and the world in an all-out push to conserve energy, reduce dependence on oil and develop alternatives?

Because three more years of \$60-a-barrel oil will undermine everything good in the world that the United States wants to do - and that's no myth.

The New York Times



Ending the Silent War in Egypt

Hala Mustafa

While much attention has been paid to the violent attacks and intimidation directed at the opposition during Egypt's recent parliamentary elections, the involvement of the country's security forces in political life is not limited to this sort of visible confrontation. The real threat of Egypt's state security apparatus, as in many other Middle Eastern states, is that it continues to secretly manipulate the entire political system. American and domestic efforts to promote political reform in the region will achieve only cosmetic changes, of the kind we've seen so far, unless this clandestine chockhold is broken.

In Egypt, it is no secret that the security services are deeply involved in the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), selecting high-level officials and most of the party's candidates for elections. As a result, in the recent parliamentary elections, many official NDP candidates were defeated by party dissidents who ran as independent candidates. Nominees of the secret police, it turns out, aren't popular with voters.

Even the NDP Policies Committee — established three years ago as the party's vehicle for reform — could not escape the clutches of the se-

curity services, which promoted a group of phony reformers to positions of influence and visibility in a false response to America's call for political change. Meanwhile, genuine liberal voices were excluded, making reform from within impossible. Such practices are not limited to the highest ranks of the party: Recruitment for all positions is based on loyalty to security authorities rather than merit, qualifications, political background or experience.

The media are subjected to the same control. Even private, independent papers are held hostage to the security services, which have the power to license and shut down any newspaper and which exercise similar control over the granting of licenses to journalists. The same goes for TV stations - including al-Hurra, the U.S.-sponsored satellite channel, which is supposed to be providing uncensored news from an American point of view.

From the beginning, al-Hurra's operation in Egypt was subject to the covert control of the security services, a fact that is not always apparent to those who oversee the station from Washington. The services have close ties to some of the station's directors and handpick many correspondents. They even have final say over which guests appear on programs. As a result, anyone who has paid careful attention to the tone and opinions of the regular programming will notice that liberal,

progressive, open-minded views are presented almost apologetically. While al-Hurra is supposed to be a vibrant, fresh forum for freedom, it has failed to provide a real space for balanced views, and so it has been incapable of competing with the "Islamic" al-Jazeera and "pan-Arabist" Al-Arabiya channels.

Unless the security services are reined in, real political change and efforts to implement "reform from within" will continue to be blocked in Egypt and across the Middle East. The enlightened political elite will remain powerless, individuals who can make genuine contributions will be systematically targeted, moderate groups and trends will continue to be excluded, and most citizens will remain absent from political life (as was unfortunately demonstrated in the recent elections, in which the overwhelming majority of Egyptians did not vote). In a word, the political arena will still echo only one voice.

The "silent war" waged by the security services will keep Egypt stuck at square one, caught between the closed, security-obsessed regime and the Islamic fundamentalists. Is that the future we desire?

Editor of Al-Ahram's quarterly journal al-Dimugratia (Democracy). The Washington Post

Goodwill to All Men (Except the Moaners)

Julie Burchill

I've always liked Christmas; I like comfort and joy, basically, so it appealed to me equally when I was without faith as it does now that I have some. Goodwill to all men is my outlook during December — that is, to all except the stinking miseries who complain about it.

The point about Christmas in the free world is that people are just that — *free* to celebrate it exactly how they like. If they want to ignore it, steer completely clear of tinsel, have a cheese sandwich for lunch and watch *Sopranos* videos all day, they can do that. If they want to feed the homeless, they can do that. If they want to spend the day quietly with those they love — or even with their families! — they may do so. And if they want to spend it at the mosque or at church, they can do that too. And no one will stop them from doing any of these. What a truly amazing thing to be able to say.

When I hear people complaining about Christians becoming too selfish, hedonistic and commercialised, I never fail to marvel at their self-righteousness, uptightness and lack of ability to see beyond the superficial. And the whiners are as bad as the complainers — those people for whom the problem pages telling one How-To-Deal-With-Christmas-Stress exist, and who never fail to re-

mind us that 67% of families row at Christmas. Then there are the warners, who are only too happy to bear the glad tidings that 80,000 people will end up in casualty this Christmas as the result of accidents in the home; apparently, vicious Christmas trees are responsible for 950 of these.

As we whine about the great burden of celebrating Christmas in freedom, maybe it wouldn't hurt us to remember what Christians in other countries have lived through in recent years. This may remind us that, in the greater scheme of things, a few pine needles in the shag-pile aren't a tragedy.

What I would ask you to do is contact the Government of Pakistan, be it by e-mail or letter, and protest to it about the appalling lack of human rights in that country. Our images of Pakistan this year have been those of the blameless victims of the earthquake. But under the current regime there are victims whose plight the Government is not so happy to make public.

Christians in Pakistan have always suffered in this militantly Islamic nation but since the introduction of the 1986 blasphemy laws they have lived in terror.

The first two sections of the blasphemy law, regarding defiling sacred objects or outraging the religious feelings of others, apply to all religions equally. The later two protect only Islam. Damaging a copy of the Koran will get you life imprisonment, while defiling the name of Muhammad is

punishable by death. This last one, Section 295C, is easily abused as the offence can be one of speech alone, even without intent. There is no penalty for false accusation, making this law a blank cheque for the malicious — and as police and courts give far greater credibility to the testimony of Muslim witnesses, Christians come off far worse when it is the word of one person against another. Even when acquitted, Christians have been murdered by zealots, as have judges who have acquitted Christians.

All around the world the story is the same — the massacre, enslavement and forced conversion to Islam of more than a million Sudanese Christians; thousands of Christians murdered or driven from their homes over the past decade by Islamist mobs in Indonesia; rape, kidnapping and forced conversion of Christians in Egypt; the list goes on and on.

Whatever, it is obviously too much to expect the Queen, or any of our neutered church Establishment, to speak up for their persecuted brothers and sisters abroad — but you could do it. Why not use a spare half an hour to write a letter or send an e-mail that in some small way may go towards helping the Christians of Pakistan enjoy even a tiny part of the freedom that we of all faiths — and none — in this country take so much for granted?

The Times

Christian TV Hits Egypt's Airwaves

Sarah Gauch

Aghapy TV, the first completely Christian, Egyptian-run television channel, is hitting the airwaves at a particularly delicate time.

Aimed at promoting the teachings of the Coptic Christian faith around the world, the station made its debut last month with 24-hour programming that will eventually include church services, documentaries on saints, and family programs, all in several languages. Funded by donations from around the world and owned by the Coptic Church, it airs on a US-operated satellite network.

Aghapy TV's executive director, Father Bishop Al-Antony, says the channel's goal is to foster better relations between Copts, who make up about 10 percent of Egypt's population, and the Muslim majority. "Our aim is to get Christians and Muslims closer together," he says. "God is love, and we will show them our God and our love."

But the effort comes amid growing tensions between Christians and Muslims. Just weeks before Aghapy's debut, sectarian riots broke out in Alexandria, killing three people. Parliamentary elections, which end Thursday, are giving surprise victories to the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood.

Copts and Muslims trade insults in Internet chat rooms and Islamic satellite programs criticize Christianity, while non-Egyptian Christian satellite stations target Islam. Analysts worry that a station like Aghapy could deepen the sectarian divide.

Copts and Muslims talk nostalgically about a time when religious affiliation mattered far less. That was before the 1970s, when former Egyptian President Anwar Al-Sadat began supporting Islamic groups in a bid to counter leftist groups.

Sadat announced that he was a Muslim president for a Muslim nation, and made Islamic law Egypt's main source of legislation.

While Egypt's constitution provides religious freedoms for citizens, the Hamayonic Decree, a remnant from Ottoman law, remains in force, requiring a presidential permit to build, renovate, or even make minor repairs to churches.

Discrimination prevents Copts from serving in senior government posts, the police, and military. No Copts are governors or public university deans. Earlier this month, US lawmakers warned that their support for US aid to Egypt will depend on greater governmental protection for Copts.

"Why not let a Copt work in government?" says Bassem, a Coptic accountant, who had aspired to be a diplomat. "In our universities you can't enter certain colleges. It's clear: You're a Copt, you can't enter."

Analysts say that discrimination against Copts has contributed to the rise in sectarian violence. In late 2004, thousands of Christian protesters clashed with police over the alleged forced conversion of a priest's wife to Islam. In 2000, 21 Christians were killed when sectarian fighting erupted in the southern village of Kosheh.

The tensions between Copts and Muslims are rooted in an increasing segregation, commentators say. With the country more fundamentally religious and with government services in decline, Muslims have tended to turn to mosques for help, while, more recently, Christians have turned to their churches.

Some private companies restrict their hiring to a particular sect, while schools often inculcate in children a sense of religious distinctions.

"More and more day-to-day life revolves around the church for Copts and around the mosques for Muslims, which makes them more divided," says

Mounir Fakhry Abdel Nour, a Copt and former parliamentarian with the opposition Wafd party. "This is an extremely dangerous situation."

The gains of the Muslim Brotherhood during the elections, using the slogan "Islam is the solution," are chilling for some Copts. "It's a catastrophe," says Adel, a Coptic manager at a glassmaking firm. "It will make our situation much worse."

Indeed, a senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood argued last week against letting Christians hold senior leadership positions. "If we are to apply the Islamic rule, which says that non-Muslims have no guardianship over Muslims, then a Christian may not be president," Mohamed Habib insisted.

Government officials argue that they are addressing the sectarian tensions in Egypt. "Whenever there is a complaint, we act right away," says Osama Al-Baz, President Hosni Mubarak's political adviser. "Not through police measures, but by amicable means, by talking to people and telling them that it is a travesty of justice to treat a non-Muslim differently than a Muslim."

Some civil groups are trying to bridge the divides. After the riots in Alexandria, two nongovernmental organizations conducted a fact-finding mission there, later recommending that a committee of both religions be formed to discuss solutions. Egypt's National Council of Human Rights, which has close ties to the government, also is studying sectarian problems.

Activists say that greater democratic reforms will strengthen religious rights. "With freedom and democracy and the right to participate," says Fahmy Howeidy, a political analyst, "people will believe that this is their country, to build together."

The Christian Science Monitor (abridged)



Tracing the people's history

In an attempt to trace how modern-day Egyptians finally came to be what they are today, and to refute the controversy that occasionally arises over their origins and the origin of their traditions, *Watani* is printing a monthly series on the history of the Egyptian people—as opposed to the widely known ‘official’ history of the rulers of Egypt. The first episode of the series demonstrated that ancient Egyptians were a mixture of both Hamite and Semitic races. Once the first ‘Egyptians’ settled down to an agricultural life on the banks of the Nile, it was natural that they should look around them and try to understand their universe. The life-giving sun and the River Nile, both of which dominated their environment and their very existence, and both of which in essence



embodied cycles of ‘death’ and ‘rebirth’, formed the basis of their spiritual and intellectual life. Thus the ancient Egyptian religion emerged, based in principle upon the concept of an afterlife and the conflict between good and evil. Despite the seemingly polytheistic nature of the Egyptian religion, it was in fact a religion of one god, and had much in common with the Christian faith which followed. Egypt figured several times in the Bible and its history often crossed paths with that of the Hebrews. When St Mark preached Christianity to the Egyptians they were ready—heart and soul—to accept and embrace it, and to die for it. Their culture continued uninterrupted along the same line as their ancestors—albeit coloured with Christian overtones.

Egyptian Society

Egyptologists describe the hierarchical society of pharaonic times as pyramidal. The stability of the pyramid expressed Egyptian religious and secular organisation, which prevailed with little interruption or change for over two and half millennia.

At the top

The apex of the social pyramid was, of course, the king. The pharaoh’s body was mortal, but his essence was divine. He imbibed divinity like mother’s milk by sucking from the cow-goddess Hathor. The main function of the king was to preserve *maat* or Justice; the proper order of things. In order to fulfil this function, the king was also the high priest who presented the offerings to the gods.

Pharaoh’s power was maintained by government bureaucrats and military supporters whose influence reached its acme during the New Kingdom (1550–1000B.C.). Burgeoning priesthoods stood in for the pharaoh in the temple services for the gods, and maintained the royal mortuary cults. Admission to this elite group was obtained through education, which for the ancient Egyptian meant being trained as a scribe. Despite the autocratic nature of the Egyptian government, scribal training was accessible to young boys from every class of society, thus providing a measure of democracy and equal opportunity.

Man of peace

Pah-hop, said to have been a vizier during the reign of the Fifth Dynasty pharaoh Isesi, prepared a set of instructions for his son to adhere to in dealings with all classes of people. These precepts show that the ideal official was a man of peace whose cardinal

Erian Labib Hanna

virtues were self-control, moderation, kindness, generosity, justice and truthfulness tempered by discretion. This wisdom reflects the principle of *maat* encouraged by the principal deity Ra as the basis of Egyptian civilisation. Part of this often-copied text is preserved on schoolboy’s wooden tablets from the New Kingdom (Carnarvon Tablet 1) in the Egyptian museum.

There were also the landed gentry. These landowners were most often members of the royal family or retainers in Pharaoh’s household who were endowed with property from the monarch’s estates, a typical-pattern in a patriarchal society.



Middle and base

The bureaucrats, the army, priests and landowners together formed the middle section of the pyramidal Egyptian society. At different periods of history, one or another of these groups had a superior position with respect to the others, but overall they appear to have been more or less on equal footing.

The base of the royal funerary complexes from the time of the First Dynasty onwards indicates that there was surplus agricultural production, and hence probably a surplus labour force as well, which could be diverted from the activities needed merely to sustain life. Rather than seizing farmers from the fields, the king’s agents probably lured the unemployed to work in mines and quarries, or serve in the army.

Coptic era

During the Coptic era, the Egyptian Pharaoh was replaced by the Roman ruler. The élite comprised the men of authority, the officers, those who had obtained citizenship in the Greek cities such as Alexandria, Ptolemaia, and Nokratis; and important people in society. Only priests of high positions were considered part of the élite. Ordinary priests were regarded as the common people and most of them were poor and needy. They were part of the base of the society. The monks did not pay taxes—a privilege of which they were deprived during the

Houda works in a butcher shop and lives in a small room in a shabby house that belongs to an old woman. His neighbours include a painter and his wife with whom Houda is deeply in love. Because he is dumb, people are in the habit of speaking freely in front of him on any topic. Houda’s real trouble begins when his pent-up sexuality gets the better of him and he harasses the butcher’s beautiful second wife.

Conspiracy

In revenge, the butcher plots a conspiracy with the town sorcerer to destroy Houda psychologically. They convince him that the butcher has forgiven him, and is even willing to help him get married to a young woman whom the butcher considers will make a good bride. Meanwhile the butcher prepares an effeminate young man to act as the bride. Most people do not oppose these preparations because they want revenge for the fact that he knows all their horrid secrets.

However one person reveals the truth to Houda. Out of love, the painter’s wife tells him what is going on behind the scenes. The ‘wedding’ fails, the conspiracy fails, the dumb man disappears from town, and so does the painter’s wife.

Sameh Samy
Hafez Aziz, Girga, Upper Egypt

Real criminal

With every car accident, the driver is usually the first and only person to blame. No doubt drivers’ recklessness is behind many accidents, but it is certainly not the only grounds. The carelessness of the victim should not be discounted. Many drivers suddenly find someone crossing the road at places where pedestrians are not allowed, even on highways and ramps up and down bridges and flyovers.

Mohsen Mehanna Walaan, Cairo

Where cars should be

I cannot help wondering why pedestrians stroll by where only cars should be. People are everywhere, crossing wide streets such as Galaa’ and Ramses streets as well as bridge ramps—just at the point where cars accelerate up or down a bridge. Pedestrians give themselves the liberty to wander about with no consideration of safety rules; some are even proud of their ‘courage’ in jumping before a car without getting hurt. We have rules but people don’t respect them, pedestrians as well as drivers.

Mary Tony Joseph, Cairo

There are no traffic lights and no footbridge or underpass across Galaa’ Street. How are people supposed to get to the Metro or continue Downtown without crossing the street? In some cases, pedestrians have to take their lives in their hands simply to cross the street. Which does not mean that there are no reckless pedestrians—but surely not all. The Editor.



The Naguib Mahfouz prize

A wedding night

Compiled by Victor Salama

Quotes

• One who loses money loses a lot, one who loses a friend loses more, but one who loses himself loses everything.
• One is in harmony with others when one is able to feel their happiness and pain, and can respect their suffering even if it appears unimportant.
• A good reputation is like an olive tree; it does not grow quickly but lives long.
• The one who gives should remain silent, but the one who takes should tell.
• Do not shed new tears for old pains.
• A community’s civilisation is measured by how treats its weak, infants, aged, sick, and minorities.
Nasser Ramzi Tamer, Assiut

A miracle?

Last month the Cairo weekly *Sawt al-Umma* published an article by Khaled Montasser in which he expressed scepticism of the news currently circulating that the grandson of TV announcer Farida al-Zumur had been miraculously healed of leukaemia by the Holy Virgin. Montasser commented that the recovery was only an illusion which no mind could accept. I can only wonder whether the writer had ever heard or read about the apparitions of St Mary at Zeitoun, Cairo in April 1968, or at Assiut in 2000. I was among those who witnessed these events firsthand, and thus find it presumptuous that Montasser

pronounces his verdict so conclusively. I understand that some—or many—people do not believe in miracles, but this does not mean miracles do not exist.

Zarif Kamel, Cairo

Food Criminals

Former minister of agriculture Ahmed al-Leithi candidly admitted that some vegetables and fruits were treated with carcinogenic hormones which were imported into Egypt before he took up his post. How ever it is our public right to prosecute those who are responsible, and to hold food criminals similar to war criminals—or do we have to keep silent as if people in our country didn’t count?

Waseem Mikhael, Cairo

Still no answer

We have many questions for which we find no answers, sometimes because those who have the answers do not admit it for reasons of which we are all too well aware. I need an answer to one such question. When I go

to the fruit seller and find the sizes abnormally large, I ask: “Is this fruit normal?” The usual reply is: “Sure, it was only treated with hormones.” So I ask: “How does this affect our health?”

Hafez Aziz, Girga, Upper Egypt

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Watani International.... Watani International.... Watani International.... Watani International.... Watani International

Editor-in-chief Youssef Sidhom

Cairo staff

Managing editor Samia Sidhom
Copy editor Jenny Jobbins
Editorial team Ghada Tantawi
Ghali Kozman
Dona Wagdy
Marina Ihab

International staff

Executive editor Magdi Khalil (NY)
Tel (1) 571 5226560, Fax (1) 571 5226561
E-mail: magdikh@hotmail.com
magdikamel@aol.com

Editing advisor William El-Miry (NY)

Contributing editor Mahfouz Doss (LA)
Tel (1) 310 8263388, Fax (1) 310 8208480
E-mail: madoss@worldnet.att.net

Senior editors Saad Michael Saad (Los Angeles)

Adel Guindry (France)

Fax (33) 147012600
E-mail: guindya@aol.com

Laila Shafik Farid (U.K.)
Fax (44) 1704574356,
E-mail: lailafarid@btopenworld.com

Virginia office: 14308 Summer Tree Road, Suite G, Centreville, VA 20121; **Los Angeles office:** P.O.Box 2442, Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274

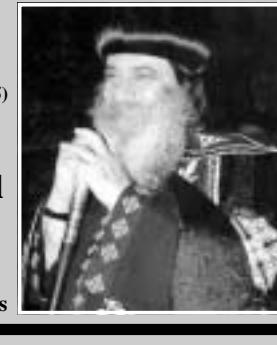
Pope Shenouda III

Introduction

to the four Gospels

The Gospel of Matthew(5)

The Numerical Style in the Gospel of Matthew



Translated by: Dr Wedad Abbas

Among the prominent characteristics that distinguishes the Gospel of Matthew is the numerical style which facilitates the study of the Gospel. Some of the numbers often used by St. Matthew are: 2, 3, 5 & 7. How he used each of these numbers, this we will explain here:

The number (2):

It is use to refer to the number of something, or to compare between two things or two persons.

The number (2) numerically used:

In the book of genealogy the Lord Christ, St. Matthew in his Gospel mentions that He is “the Son of David, the Son of Abraham” (Mt1: 20-23).

Also there are two contradicting chapters, one containing the Beatitudes (Mt5), and the other containing the woes (Mt23).

The Lord Christ, on entering Jerusalem, was sitting on a donkey and a colt (the foal of a donkey) (Mt21: 6, 7).

St. Matthew also mentioned that the Lord cried out twice while on the cross: First He cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” (Mt27: 46). The second time He cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.” (Mt27: 50).

Twice also St. Matthew mentioned a miracle of feeding and filling the multitudes: The miracle of the five loaves and two fish (Mt14: 15-21); and the miracle of the seven loaves and the few little fish (Mt15: 32-38).

As for the comparison held, there are many examples, including the following quotations from the words of the Lord:

• Speaking about the heavenly Father, the Lord said that the Father “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Mt5: 45)

• “No one can serve two masters....You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Mt6: 24)

• The Lord’s talk about the narrow gate and the wide gate; one leads to destruction, and the other to life; many go by the wide gate, and few can find the narrow gate (Mt7: 13, 14).

• The comparison between the wolves and the sheep (Mt7: 15).

• The comparison between the good trees and the bad trees, and the fruits of each (Mt7: 16-18)

• The comparison between the two houses: the one built on the rock, and the other built on the sand, and the end of each (Mt7: 24-27).

• The comparison between the two types of virgins: the foolish, and the wise (Mt25).

• The comparison between the good fish and the bad fish (Mt13: 47).

• The comparison between those who are well and need no physician, and those who are sick and need a physician; and between the righteous and the sinners to whom He came to call (Mt9: 12, 13).

• The distinction between those on the right hand of the King, and those on His left hand in the Judgment; and between the sheep and the goats; the wicked who will go to everlasting punishment, and the righteous who will go to eternal life (Mt25: 31-46).

The number (5):

• The parable of the five wise virgins, and the five foolish virgins (Mt25).

• The person who received five talents, and gained five other talents (Mt25).

• The miracle of feeding the five thousand with the five loaves (Mt14: 17-21; 16: 9)

The number (7):

• The book of genealogy consisted of three series each consisting of 14 generations (7x2).

• The miracle of feeding the multitudes with seven loaves, and seven large baskets of the fragments were left (Mt15: 34-37).

• Forg