

## PREFACE

The idea for this volume originated at the international symposium on Christianity and monasticism, held February 8-11, 2009 in the Monastery of the Archangel Michael at Naqada. Gawdat had helped to organize the meeting, which was sponsored by the St. Mark Foundation for Coptic History Studies and by the St. Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society, but he himself was prevented from attending. At the concluding session one of the participants reminded us that Gawdat would be celebrating his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday very soon. It was high time to begin thinking about a *Festschrift* to honor him. A proposal to convert the volume of papers presented at the symposium into such a *Festschrift* was quickly rejected – not only on account of what would be its ad hoc character but also in view of the fact that Gawdat himself was one of the editors responsible for producing it. The three of us had known and worked with Gawdat for many years and knew first-hand how very exceptional has been his fostering and support of, indeed his high estimation of female colleagues' scholarship. It occurred to us that a tribute to his generosity and kindness towards a number of women working in the field would be a particularly appropriate acknowledgment of our indebtedness to him. And so we planned this “distaff” tribute.

Gertrud agreed to take on the editing of contributions in French; Cilla assumed responsibility for the German articles and for the initial formatting of the volume; contributions in English were left to Marianne, as was the final editing, to ensure consistency, as well as the compilation of the lists of abbreviations and illustrations.

The publication with its abundance of color illustrations would not have been possible if it hadn't been included in the SKCO series with the generous support provided by the Brigitte and Martin Krause Foundation. Professor Krause, Gawdat's *Doktorvater*, has also provided the *laudatio* which introduces the volume. We are also indebted to Sigrun Kotb and Ursula Reichert of Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden, who saw the volume through the press with accustomed conscientious attention to every detail.

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January 2011