

**Arab-West Report, June 30, 2014**

**Title: Interview with Cornelis Hulsman, head of Arab West Report in Cairo on 04.10.2013**

Transcript Matthias Gillé and minor editing of Cornelis Hulsman

Wolfram Reiss introduced me per email to Cornelis Hulsman, who sent me, prior to my visit to Egypt, some important articles. He gave me much time to respond to all my questions. I first showed him my temporary table of content. We started talking about the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt. He advised me, in this particular study, not to base this section of my study on his book on the Holy Family.

The first minutes were not recorded and part of the recording was difficult to hear due to the background sound of the prayer in the nearby mosque. My questions are in cursive (A = author, M= my wife). Explanations are given in between and marked between brackets. The text is a full transcript, and for this reason sentences are sometimes not complete. Some confidential names were left out. The interview became one of the sources for the thesis of Matthias Gillé. A summary of his thesis was made for AWR and can be found [here](#).

*CH:* So we repeat. Meinardus was committing self-censorship. I have been working with Meinardus for a long time. I have worked with him on a Coptic bibliography that was never finished, unfortunately. It was too big and I left for Egypt in (19)94 and this wasn't finished. That's a *big* thing. And second, I have been touring around [Egypt] with Meinardus since the year 2000 till he passed away in 2005. So the last years of his life he came to Egypt to visit sights and to write about those. I was very often accompanying him and he was coming here. He came here in this house with his wife to have his dinners and of course, during the dinners you speak on things – [I would ask him] do you really believe that to be true? Do you really believe this and that? ... No [Meinardus explained] this "Heilige Familie" [in reference to travel details], it is all fantasy but it is fantasy with a purpose. It is not history. And he [Meinardus said this but] didn't write that. He uses in his writings traditions but then doesn't further explain it. Then he writes they went from A to B to C to X seeing this. But that's not historic. His topic is that its travel route developed throughout the centuries with the first references to the Holy Family in the fourth century stating that the Holy Family came [to al-Ashmunayn]. That tradition is old. And it is the story in those years of Christianity or the Christian faith being victorious over the Graeco-Roman faith: Where Christ is coming the idols are falling before him. So it fit the stage the church was in in those years. It had a purpose. Later on in the Islamic period, the purpose changes and you see it in the stories being reported. There was one lecture of Meinardus that unfortunately was never properly recorded. It was recorded. I recorded it but we never had someone who could work this out but if this could have been published, it would have been interesting because that was Meinardus really telling in a lecture what he thought of the Holy Family tradition – which was never published. Most Muslims in the Muslim period had the story of the thousand and one nights. And one of those (stories) is the flying carpet. This is from Meinardus. Christians – you find this back in Graf – they had a story of the Holy Family. They went [back to Palestine] on a cloud.

[A. *When was that?*]

CH: That's medieval, in the Islamic Period. Now I have to be careful here. They went by boats to Upper Egypt and they flew back on clouds. That was the story. That was reported from a medieval manuscript. Meinardus said [in his lecture]: "Where Muslims have the flying carpet, the Christians have their clouds." Now, Christians today won't do this because they find it a bit embarrassing to tell the believers they flew back on a cloud to Israel/Palestine. In those years, this was common belief. So you see a common belief, at least it was one of the stories told in those years. So, things like that Meinardus knew and he was explaining this also in his last lecture before he passed away. That was here at the Coptic Evangelical Seminary. Then he went back to Germany. And then a few months later, he passed away. *There* he was really honest on what happened about the Holy Family stories but not in his writings.

[A. *Would you say that the self-censorship also helped him in his research because he kept good contacts with the church?*]

CH: Meinardus had good – more or less – a good personal relationship with Pope Shenouda. And he treasured those relations with Pope Shenouda. He was also critical of Pope Shenouda but he wouldn't state that [in public]. I went with Meinardus several times to Pope Shenouda. I am not sure of what the value was of his relationship to Pope Shenouda.

[A. *for Meinardus?*]

CH: Yes – not (in) the later years because Pope Shenouda would receive you, it would be nice and polite but no contact, no concrete information that you would not be able to attain elsewhere. No introductions of Pope Shenouda – of course as the church could do – to see people that otherwise would not be possible.

[A. *You mean other bishops or?*]

CH: Right. He didn't do this. So it was more sentiments – as I would see it with Meinardus – to the past. He knew Pope Shenouda from [the time] when he was a monk and was in his cave. He had his own cave.

[A. *He already knew him at that time?*]

CH: Yeah, Yeah, Meinardus was going around, he was teaching at the American University [in the] mid-fifties and Pope Shenouda had joined monastic life in 1954. So Meinardus knew him from that time and has had good meetings with Pope Shenouda as a monk from those days. Those must have been – if I meet with monks it's different than when you meet with church leaders. Church leaders are aware of their position and they know they have to be cautious in whatever they say – and certainly to foreigners. So Pope Shenouda – in the last years of [his life] Meinardus – it was social, it was friendly but it was always non-political.

[A. *So you mean he wouldn't talk about the details of politics or church matters?*]

CH: He wouldn't do this at all. He could receive Meinardus because of the early years. Of course welcomed.

[A. *As an old friend?*]

CH: As an old friend, and at a certain moment after Meinardus passed away, I got a photo from Eva Meinardus, his widow, to give to Pope Shenouda, which I did. And that was a photo from Pope Shenouda when he was still a monk in his cave. I could see the emotion in Pope Shenouda's face when he received that old photo because that was remembering the old days but in modern issues you wouldn't get anything from Pope Shenouda. He would be very cautious, very aware of what he was saying.

[A. *Do you think he was afraid or...?*]

CH: No he was not afraid. He is a politician. Pope Shenouda has been turned into – He was a politician before he went to monastic life as the head of the Sunday School movement. But he was also young - young, ambitious. You explain your ambitions to people that you meet. But later on, he was faced with so many problems within the church and outside the church that any word that he could say could have an impact. So you weigh your words. You are a politician. It is not a matter of being afraid. Pope Shenouda would say things that he *wanted* to say and he would not say things that he would not want to say.

[A. *So he was very careful of his words – and he knew well the impact of his words*]

CH: Yes, he knew very well the impact of his words as Pope.

[A. *Would you say if you describe the development of his monastic life to becoming a long-term pope of 40 years. Has he changed a lot or was he about the same like before?*]

CH: He was an activist all of his life. He was an activist as editor-in-chief of the Sunday school movement, definitely. He was an activist as a monk. He was part of the group of [Father] Matta Al-Maskin and he left Matta Al-Maskin to be on his own. He didn't want to serve under the authority of [Father] Matta Al-Maskin, who was then really the main figure in Coptic Monastic life.

[A. *Do you remember - when this was - roughly?*]

CH: I would have to ask. I know this. He didn't stay long with Matta Al-Maskin. The person who knows this is Abuna XY, he knows it because he was a long term associate of [Father] Matta Al Maskin and when I did my report for "Christianity today" on Pope Shenouda and Matta Al-Maskin, I did this together with Father XY on behalf of Matta Al-Maskin – and Bishop Marcos on behalf of Pope Shenouda. And I have checked information continuously on both sides. I know that Abuna XY knows when this happened and how. So Abuna XY would be a key person.

[A. *Is he from (the monastery) Anba Makarios?*]

CH: Yes, you need to go to the monastery of Anba Makarios.

[A. *But he probably will not talk on the phone, right?*]

CH: No, he doesn't know you. You have to gain trust. Gain trust is what you do with an introduction, which I can take care of and then you first explain who you are. And it is not an abrupt intruding with a phone call. That doesn't work.

[A. I explained in brief that I could speak briefly with Bishop Pachomius on the telephone, also if this call was not long but we both agree that normally this would not work]

CH: And the phone lines are also widely believed to be tapped by the Egyptian Security. So - No, with Abuna XY you would need an introduction. Pope Shenouda has been ambitious all his life, has been an activist all of his life but his activism - but his activism to a certain extent has been reduced in becoming older - to a certain extent it is not black-white because if you look at the issue of Wafa'a Constantine he was the old activist again of not willing to compromise - and here I am standing up for my rights and here this and here that. And really mobilizing the clergy behind in the position that he took. That is not reported. But I know from priests who were called into the monastery to listen to Pope Shenouda's view on Wafa'a Costantine. So he was mobilizing the clergy behind him. That is an activist. But on other issues, he has definitely been more cautious than he was in his earlier years. So he has become more cautious but it is not that his activism has totally disappeared with age. It has become milder. It has been softening. He must have realized that not everything in the church was that great. On Abu Fana he has been more cautious.

[A. *What is Abu Fana?*]

CH: The monastery of Abu Fana. I have been spending a lot of time - over a year reporting on Abu Fana. He must have discovered by (...? Recording unclear) that he would speak about it that the Bishop of Malawi has not given him a full picture of what happened in Abu Fana and for any church leader that is of course very disappointing. You expect that if someone is (put in the bishopric), the bishop is giving you full information.

[A. *Did he take consequences of that?*]

CH: I don't know because this is internal and he would not go public with this. You are not going to publicly rebuke a bishop but of course he [must have done this] internally.

[A. *In what way?*]

CH: I don't know. I know with some bishops [of being rebuked] but then again you don't know all the stories behind it because that would not be made public. Bishop Amonious from Luxor was rebuked for very different reasons and was sent to his monastery and could not function as bishop any more. So he was able to take strong measures against his own bishops but then what was really happening in talks between the Pope and his bishops we don't know because it is not published. And no one will give you information about that. They wouldn't speak about that.

[A. *I talked to Anba Boula and he said e.g. that – at least he himself never had that experience - the Pope never took any decision back that he made. But there are other examples as you said?*]

CH: Bishop Amonious is an example and then what the reasons were - I know the arguments in Luxor but Bishop Amonious was accused by his own priests to be too severe in being a monk. So he wanted his priests to lead a more simple life and he wanted them not to live in luxury and, and, and – so you go walking to your congregation you have to lead a very simple life as monks in the monastery do. That was an accusation.

[A. *The accusation was that he was too hard on them?*]

CH: Yes, that he was too hard on his own priests. And his own priests have been complaining to Pope Shenouda. This I know for sure. One - that was reported. Second I have family, my wife is Egyptian and her family is from Luxor. So we know this from Luxor. So this is certain. What happened in the talks between the bishop and Pope Shenouda is guessing. That was never reported back to the priests in Luxor. Pope Shenouda made his decision and the decision was that the bishop was to be removed from his diocese. He is still bishop but no longer a functioning bishop. So he was forced to retire to his monastery keeping the title of bishop but not able to function as bishop.

[A. *That's interesting - now when you compare the time under Sadat and under Mubarak. Would you say that because of what happened with the exile –some people say that he was so ambitious at the beginning and that brought him into trouble and later he calmed down not to... ]*

CH: That is very often heard and when Pope Shenouda was 25 years pope I had the opportunity to interview him and I did so together – I had organized this for the Foreign Press Association. And we asked Pope Shenouda that question. Did you change after you had been in exile to your monastery? The answer of Pope Shenouda himself was: “No I have not changed, the president has changed and because of that I am dealing differently with Mubarak” – that was in 1996. Of course, 25 years after [his election]. So in 1996, I am dealing [differently] with Mubarak than I was then dealing with Sadat. So he himself claimed that he had not changed. Interesting then was also the question that I asked. How do you view yourself? What is your self-image? Very interesting and typical Pope Shenouda. He was seeing himself as a teacher of the church, which is very typical. I think that is a correct self-description. In the Wednesday evening meetings. In all the things he was doing, the books that he was writing. He would see himself as a teacher of the church.

[A. *Did he ever say anything how he saw the relationship between church and state? I asked Anba Boula a similar question and he said you can't separate politics and religion. Did he say anything about himself - how he saw that?*]

CH: Not that explicit. He would probably say the same thing as Anba Boula because – one time – that I was with him he said he was seeing him(self) as a father of the church. Now a father has to take care of his children regardless of the situation that they are in. In other words, it is the

teaching part but it is also if there are problems with the state you have to interfere. So he was seeing him(self) as overall responsible for what is happening in the church (...) and that means you could not separate it.

[A. *Would you say – if we speak about the relationship of Mubarak and Shenouda – some people say that they had a very close relationship at the end. They say at the beginning it was cold but then it became better but they would not consider themselves as friends, right?*]

CH: No, No but Bishop Boula would know better than I do but how many times has Pope Shenouda met with Mubarak *privately*? I think if am correct – I would have to check it – but I think only once. That is not a sign of friendship. Of course, he has met Mubarak on different occasions that many people were there [would attend] as well. You are part of an audience and the Pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church is attending as well. So he has met with Mubarak on frequent occasions but private – one on one – to discuss issues of concern for both church and state as far as I know only once. You would have to check this but Bishop Boula would know. He should know it.

[M. *Did Mubarak use to attend the ceremonies of Christmas or Easter before?*]

CH: No.

[A. *He never came?*]

[M. *He used to always to send (one of his ministers) and later he used to send his son]*

CH: He sent his own son. He sent Usama al-Baz, one of his own advisers. This he has done but he didn't go himself.

[M. *And that shows they were never friends?*]

CH: No, I don't think they were friends but you would (need) to check that as well. He was at a certain moment – Pope Shenouda in politics – advising Christians to vote Wafd party. When the Pope is giving an advice for a particular political party that is not the President's party. That's a sign of tensions between the two but Pope Shenouda has not been in favor of direct (regime change?) (...). But he was never speaking out directly for the opposing party. But that was not out of friendship. He knew well that would bring Islamists to power. Then you have to go to my reports that I published. So he knew that they would come into power. Well with many Christians, certainly today but also in those days and many liberals there was a lot of critique on Mubarak. But if there were a choice between Islamists and Mubarak, it would always be Mubarak.

[A. *That is what he would have said?*]

CH: Well he didn't say that but he behaved that way and when the revolution started I was with a group of priests, Catholic priests, in Upper Egypt, that was on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January [2011] and the [Orthodox] priest was then giving a sermon in the church – and that was very remarkable

because it was all the atmosphere of revolution and the priest was speaking about that the real authority is with God. And we should first be obedient to God. So he [the Orthodox priest giving the sermon] didn't speak in favor or against the revolution. He spoke about authority of God, to counter... That was a sign – for me at least – that here is a priest who is very cautious knowing the tensions all around you and possible security sitting in church – you don't know. And here he is speaking not in favor of the revolution. Everybody was speaking in favor of the revolution [those days]. The priest didn't do that.

[A. *You mean - in general - the priests didn't do that?*]

CH: No, I don't think so. But of course, I attended this particular church and I listened to this particular sermon. This priest of the church of Abd el Masih el Managhi, a major pilgrimage site, – so it is not a far off small village church – a major pilgrimage sight - did not do this. And I haven't heard this but I have not attended other churches – because I can only be in one church at the same time. There is no research but I have not heard of any other priest having spoken in favor of the revolution. Christians did.

[A. *Some took part*]

CH: Some took part but not really church leadership.

[A. *If I can go back to the Sadat era. I haven't heard it from Matta Al-Maskin myself but I heard that he sharply critized the role of the Pope in the seventies – I am still not familiar with the details – there were a lot tensions between Christians and Muslims (...) and Matta Al-Maskin said as I understood it that Pope Shenouda was part of the problem and not part of the solution. Would you say that this accusation is justified or an overstatement?*]

CH: Well, yes I think it was justified. I was there in the seventies, and Pope Shenouda was taking public stances that were bound to lead to responses from the Muslim side. And Matta Al-Maskin, he wrote then his famous book – I don't know if you have seen this – *on church and state*

[A. *I have bought it but I haven't read it yet*]

CH: It was written in that period. No – earlier. Actually, it was when the church started to mingle itself more in politics and Matta Al-Maskin had a very strong opposition (to that). Clergy should not get themselves involved in politics but should speak about spiritual principles that are applicable in all ways of life – also in politics, but not speak about particular situations. He wrote his book. And I have worked with a German student Kathrin Köhler on her thesis on Matta Al-Maskin on church and state and the role of Pope Shenouda in that. You should see her thesis.

[A. *Is it available anywhere?*]

CH: She unfortunately wrote this in German.

[A. *That's not too unfortunate*]

CH: Not for you but for that reason it was never published, not in Germany and not outside of Germany. We had asked Kathrin – please write this in English but her supervisor in Leipzig University said no.

[A. *Did you say Kathrin Köhler?*]

CH: Kathrin Köhler.

[A. *I know her. I think so. She studied Arabic right?*]

CH: Yes, and political science. She was good. (...) Well - give her my regards because she was really good but I disagreed with her – tell her this – I still disagree with her that she wrote her thesis in German. No, I have read her thesis. It was well-written – there was no problem there. But we are a small organization and I couldn't get the funding to translate her thesis in English. So nothing was done with it – which is a pity because the issue of church and state is (...) today very important. Her thesis is very important and it is not known. It is not known outside a very small circle of people. Wolfram Reiss made the same mistake with his thesis on the Sunday School movement. At that time, I have been summarizing his German thesis in English that is now more widely read – my summary – than his thesis because in Egypt no one really reads German. So there are using (in the church meeting) my summary of Wolfram Reiss thesis to understand what Wolfram Reiss has been doing in this thesis. So what language are you writing? (...)

[He tries to convince me to write in English and offers the assistance of a professional language editor. I only promise him an English summary]

CH: Yes, you can quote me but only a transcript shows in what context.

[I show the table of contents and he reads]

CH: .....Wunder“ [miracles] – well go to an interview that was done with me in a Dutch newspaper. It should be on our website as well. I translated it from Dutch to English and it is on our website – on miracles. There are so many miracles that are being told and I don't know what is true because much is – I have become with all those years in Egypt a great skeptic. People tell you stories and the stories have a purpose but what of that is true and what of that is not true – in the newspaper interview I mentioned the miracle of moving the Moqattam, a well-known miracle in the church – you know it I guess – Abuna Sama'an – in the time of patriarch, I think, Abraam, - [there were] great problems Muslims, Christians and the church and there was a discussion between the then ruler of Egypt and the patriarch. And there was a Jew there who said: “All these Christians have a strange faith because there is written in the Bible in the New Testament, in the Christian New Testament: “If you have the faith of a mustard seed, then you can move mountains.” So he took that verse very literally. So the ruler asked the patriarch. “Is it true that this is in your Holy Book?” “Yes it is true.” “Well show me – otherwise I will destroy the church” – or whatever else the threats were. And there comes the miracle of the Muqattam. You will not find this back in any secular document. You will find this back only in church texts. You can trace it back to medieval days but not [exactly] to the days of [Abraam]. It is later coming up



in Coptic texts. If you have a text about a miracle that is not from the same era that it was supposed to have taken place, and you do not find something big like this written in any secular document, you should start to question it. Is this really true or is this a story like the Holy Family stories that were developed for a certain purpose for teaching within the church. Or the Holy Family – Meinardus as he told me that [one/part] of the Holy Family story is because it [places Dayr al-Muharaq in the center of the tradition] – probably was a sermon of a bishop of the monastery of El-Muharaq because they were restoring the monastery and they needed funding and you make the monastery of Muharaq the central focus (...) and there bringing in pilgrims. And pilgrims bring in funds. You help develop a monastery. So there are other motives that play a role. I have been invited to one of the miracles in a village in the Delta, where the Holy Virgin has appeared. That was in (19)95, 96, Shantena el Hagar, and I went there together with a German journalist photographer and my Coptic wife – we were there on the roof of a building opposite to the church and the priest has given us the best possible place to see the miracle happening and what we saw where light flashes on the church tower and when light flashes were happening, the crowd was screaming: “the Holy Virgin.” –Was this so? (...) flashes – I [told the priest I] don’t see anything else. Then our German [friend] made the biggest mistake of his life – at that moment – I don’t know what other mistakes he made later on. He made a photo with flash. And the priest was trying to stop him but he was not in time to stop him. And you should have seen the reaction of the crowd (...) (they thought) the Holy Virgin is appearing again. So I told the priest that I wasn’t really convinced that this was the Holy Virgin. He declared me to be an unbeliever. So my poor wife – also didn’t see anything except flashlights. So she was declared an unbeliever as well. Well it is true I am an unbeliever in that miracle. In that sense, yes I am an unbeliever. So the priest was not entirely wrong. But you need to have belief that this is truly the Holy Virgin. I have been [with American author Paul Perry to Assiut] – it is in our website making a photo in a church in Assiut with his camera and on the camera appeared a flashlight and immediately Muslims who were sitting beside us, Muslim security as well – so it is not only Christians - said: “This is a miracle, this is the Holy Virgin.” But we didn’t see anything on the church tower. It was only on the camera, a normal electronic, digital camera. It became a big issue in Assiut. The bishop sent the priest after us wanting to get a copy of the photo. He got it and he then gave it to Sabah-al-Khayr magazine, and it became a big story in Sabah-al-Khayr that an American had made a photo of the Holy Virgin [see: <http://arabwestreport.info/year-2002/week-51/12-blessed-be-my-people-egypt>]. I am sorry, when you are experiencing this – I am a skeptic. I am not saying there are no miracles. I wouldn’t say that. But many of the miracles that are claimed to be miracles are not [miracles].

[A: I explain briefly that miracles are not the focus of my work, it is only a short part of the introduction]

CH: About the miracles that are reported in the church, you should be a bit careful how to write about it. If you [just] write about it as a narrative, you are not given an honest [description].

[A: I explain my thoughts]

CH: But you can refer to that interview that I have done with that Dutch newspaper in Trouw – you find it on our website because they were asking about the miracles.

[A: he reads further in the table of contents]

CH: “Kirche der Märtyrer” [church of the martyrs]

[A: I explain briefly my intentions]

CH: “Sonntagsschulbewegung,” this is of course Reiss – and if you want my summary – it is online. [see: <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2002/week-46/23-renewal-coptic-orthodox-church-notes-phd-thesis-revd-dr-wolfram-reiss>]

CH: “Kindheit”??? [period as child]

[A: I explain in brief what I mean]

CH: Yes, I think he [Pope Shenouda] grew up in a very pious family, growing up in a pious Coptic family *is* important.

[A. *That’s how he came to faith..*]

CH: Yes [*looks into the table of contents*], “Klostereintritt” [entering monastic life]. You have to know, I have written about it. He was very ambitious. Do you know that he wanted to be pope from the very first moment he became a monk?

[A. *No I never knew that. That’s for sure?*]

CH: Well that is an interpretation, but a likely interpretation because look at what happened.

[A. *But with a heart to reform the church, right?*]

CH: Yes, of course. He always had a heart to reform the church.

[M: *But I think he never wished that to himself and he said about the day that he became pope – that this was the saddest day of his life.*]

CH: But that is not true.

[M. *But he said it himself*]

CH: Yes, because it is good to show the wider audience that you are very modest as a monk and a person and that is why he also went into a cave. That was also image.

[A. *What do you mean – “image”? It was not his own desire to go there?*]

CH: It is Matta Al-Maskin, Matta Al-Maskin genuinely went into a cave to separate him(self) from the world. No one [of the Sunday school movement] has done this before him.

[A. *(No one) before Matta Al-Maskin?*]

CH: Well in the old days but not in the days of Matta Al-Maskin, of course there are already examples of the church fathers, and Matta Al-Maskin was using this also as an example for himself – but not in his days. Matta Al-Maskin got a tremendous following specifically because of this. People [said]: “What is this? Someone is withdrawing in a cave. What kind of person is this?” So he attracted people. Pope Shenouda did so for the same reason, to attract people. This is how you get the attention of people.

[A. *But how can you judge the motifs of someone?*]

CH: Go to an interview that we did with Tarek Heggy. Tarek Heggy is a Muslim liberal who was befriended with Pope Shenouda and who has known Pope Shenouda for a very long time. Tarek Heggy is no longer in Egypt because of the Muslim Brotherhood. He felt threatened and he lives in London. I have his contact information. But Tarek Heggy came to our office and we did an interview with him. The interview is on the website. And he says: “look at the history of Pope Shenouda when he” – and Abuna XY would say the same thing, bishop Qulta would say the same thing. Bishop Qulta is Catholic. Now Pope Shenouda was head, leader, of the Sunday School Movement as editor in chief of the Sunday School Magazine. He was the main person of that movement when Pope Yusab [II] was kidnapped (in) 1954. What did Pope Shenouda do? What did Nasir Gayid do? He started a discussion on the succession of who would be the most ideal candidate to succeed Pope Yusab. He didn't denounce the kidnapping – not denouncing the kidnapping of your own pope and then starting a [discussion of succession] – that is a scandal because that means you are not loyal despite all the mistakes of Yusab. He was weak, and he was given in to all forms of corruption within the church. There was a lot of critique possible but he nevertheless was the head of the church. You are now accepting the violent removal of Pope Yusab from the throne by members of the Umma Al Qibtiyya. That is questionable. Of all the responses of Pope – Nasir Gayid in those years.

[A. *But he didn't say anything against it, that means he was more like passive instead of being an activist - ?*]

CH: No, No, No he was not passive. He was in fact justifying the removal of Yusab II by starting a discussion on his succession. *That* is the critique. Tarek Heggy, Abuna XY, Bishop Qulta all three agree. Abuna XY would not do this in public and Bishop Qulta did not do this in public. It was private. Tarek Heggy did so in the interview that we did at the Arab West Report. Look at that. Secondly I have referred (to it) in my in-memoriam of Pope Shenouda. Shortly after Nasir Gayid starts the discussion he becomes a monk. The police of Nasser brings Yusab II back. So he is not deposed. He remains head of the church until his death, a severely hurt Pope, he lost a lot of authority in the church and in fact after he returned a group of bishops were ruling the church – so he was only Pope in name for the last two years in his life. He passed away in '56 and what happens? There are three candidates from the Sunday School Movement to succeed him, one of them Abuna Antonius, previously Nasir Gayid. That is not an accident. This is not possibly an accident, that you have the head of the Sunday School Magazine starting a discussion on the succession of Yusab, he becomes monk because this is the only way to become pope and then he offers himself to a candidate to succeed him in 1956 – two years later. Not an accident.

[A. *Ok – I read (in one source) he already became a priest, just one year after he be-came monk – that was also pretty quick. Normally it takes longer right?*]

CH: Yeah but this I don't know.

[A. *How long it normally takes*]

CH: For sure – Abuna XY would know because there you go into [details] – you can ask Abuna XY. At least in 1954 he becomes monk *after* the discussion that he himself started on the succession of Yusab and then he was a candidate in '56.

[A. *How can he be a candidate if he wasn't even a bishop yet?*]

CH: You didn't need to be a bishop. Wrong. Total wrong. Read Reiss. It was – you (have) to be a monk and Pope Shenouda himself changed this later that you can also be a bishop and then become Pope. Read Abuna XY. He wrote a book on church laws. He wrote a big book on church laws clearly stating that you have to be a monk in order to be elected as a Pope not a bishop a bishop is prohibited.

[A. *It's only written in Arabic?*]

CH: It is only in Arabic. But it is there in the monastery of Makarios. He wrote about it. And we have on our website the table of contents of that book translated. Again funding - I found it important. Meinardus found it important. We discussed this together and what we did on our website was only this translated table of contents – perhaps a small introduction – possibly but that is what was done. You are speaking here about 2004, 2005. Well it must have been before Meinardus passed away because it was discussed with him. Meinardus found this a tremendously important book that should be translated – yeah, but where do you get the funding for it?

[A. *Very important book within the Coptic Church – that was used by the clergy?*]

CH: Yes, so Abuna XY wrote this book. It is not [mentioned] in it [the book]. But he is the author.

[A. *He wrote it but it is not in the book?*]

CH: No, his name is not in the book. It says a monk from the monastery of Makarios. This is typical that monks from the monastery of Makarios would publish. They would not publish under their own name. They would publish under the name: A monk from the monastery of Makarios. Well I know who this “a monk” was. And he does not hide that in interviews. It was clear that it was his work with – of course with the blessing of the monastery. You cannot publish without having – as a monk of St. Makarios – without having the blessing of your own monastery. So of course, it was with the blessing of his own monastery. So according to this book, only a monk and not a bishop [can become Pope]. A bishop, in comparison, is married, married to a diocese. And as husband and wife – you are married I guess? – good. Then you are

not supposed to leave each other. You are married for life. The bishop is married to his diocese for life. So you are not going to another wife – to another diocese. The Pope is the bishop of Alexandria. You are not going to be the husband of the diocese of Assiut and become the husband of the diocese of Alexandria.

[A. *It never happened, that...?*]

No, it happened but it only happened in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they started to change it – already before Yusab. Yusab – I think was the third. It is Pope Yuannis in the twenties - something. He was a diocesan bishop who became Pope and it – there was no consensus on it. There was critique that a diocesan bishop had become Pope. Then you have bishop Makarios in the Second World War, who then becomes Pope Makarios, then you get Yusab and then you have Pope Shenouda. Those are the only bishops in the entire history of the Coptic Orthodox Church who were bishop and who had then become Pope. All others were monk and became Pope. Now the monastery of Makarios - *strongly* – has always advocated that it is only a monk who can become Pope. Pope Shenouda changed this. And you go to the interviews that we have with Abuna XY about this in Arab West Report. As well as with Bishop Marcos in Arab West Report. And Bishop Marcos is of the opinion – just as Pope Shenouda was – that you (have) the diocesan bishop and you have the general bishop. The general bishop is new. It was only newly introduced in the 1960s by Pope Kyrillos under the influence of Pope Shenouda, who later became bishop Shenouda – but under the influence of Shenouda. The general bishops are only from the 1960s. (...) General bishops are serving the church in general and not in a specific geographical diocese – therefore they are not married to a particular geographic diocese. And also Pope Shenouda when he became Pope of Alexandria - bishop of Alexandria, he did not give up his position as general bishop. He was bishop of education. And that explains my interview when I asked him what is your self-image – well I am here a teacher of the church. The bishop of education, Pope Shenouda had remained the bishop of education. So the Pope of Alexandria was also the bishop of education. So you see the change from the old church teachings on succession: from only a monk to the introduction of a general bishop, the general bishop is also able to become pope. So he has his own justification for this – Pope Shenouda – but it was a political motivated justification.

[A. *Do you think he did that so that he had the chance to become pope?*]

CH: Yes, it makes sense – but of course this is an interpretation. He would never state that but you have – throughout the history of Pope Shenouda's life, he started this discussion on the succession of Pope [Yusab] in (19)54. He nominated himself in (19)56. He was rejected by the then bishops as too young. We don't want someone who is that young and then making the minimum age 40 – that is still enforced today and then that you need to be so many years monk before you can be elected. That was a rule made to keep Nasir Gayid out (...). It was Nasir Gayid and Matta Al-Maskin. Also Matta Al-Maskin was a candidate in (19)56 – also coming from the Sunday School Movement.

[A. *And that time they were still together, or...?*]

CH: No, no they were already separated. So the separation was before (19)56. I don't know – somewhere between (19)54 and (19)56. It is not difficult. If you formulate your question for Abuna XY in writing in English you send it to me – and I send it on to him. Well, I have a German friend working on a thesis – can you get a response to that. The only thing that Abuna XY will have to do is – so don't expect long [explanations] – he will not write long texts but he can give a year – it happened in that year – he can do that because that is a matter of - *why?* - you need to go in an interview but to get a year is a simple e-mail.

[A. *When I went to the monastery of him (Pope Shenouda III.) – they told me that he was at the beginning also a librarian – and they showed me the room where he used to live – where he used to sleep and so on but at the same time the different biographies say he was six years in the cave. What didn't make sense (to me) was – for six years in the cave – at the same time librarian – and they said for three years he has been living in this room and at the beginning he has been living with everybody else? Did he really live six years in the cave?*]

CH: I don't know. Ask Abuna XY but make the questions in such a way that Abuna XY doesn't have to write long texts because this will simply not happen but if you say – what year, or even what month? Month and year – you will get a response. If you ask from when to when was he in the cave then you don't need a monk who – reads his e-mails but does not write long texts (...) You can send (it to) me and I can make a phone call to him. (...) I send you an e-mail. Can you respond to this question? Perhaps (he) doesn't give me an answer by e-mail but by telephone. (...)

[A. *So Matta Al-Maskin was in St. Makarios and Pope Shenouda was first in St. Anthony and then St. Bischoi?*]

CH: No, he was not in St. Anthony.

[A. *No – I am sorry I meant the Syrian monastery.*]

CH: Yes.

[A. *(This time) I only visited the Syrian monastery of St. Mary (Syrian) and the one of St. Bischoi but they told me if you would go to (St.) Makarios they wouldn't talk much with you anyway. – (...) Is there a big tension between the monasteries?*]

CH: (Well) no, no – I was years ago in the monastery of Makarios – and it was in the moment that St. Makarios came under the direct control of Pope Shenouda – and that was when bishop Michael, who had been the abbot, – not Matta Al Maskin. He had not been the abbot. – The abbot of the monastery was bishop Michael of Assiut. He is still alive – he is still there in Assiut in his late 80s and I think we should inform the Guinness book of records because he is probably the oldest living bishop in the world because he became a bishop in 1946. So a bishop consecrated in 1946 and still bishop today – I don't think in any single church anywhere in the world you will find someone with that record. So this is Guinness book of records.

[A. *But it's not in there yet?*]

CH: Well, no, it is all that you report to them – if you want that to be reported to them you have to go through that procedure of the Guinness book of records. So someone should make the effort to inform them and you would have to go through the procedure. And they will ask for evidence and whatever because it is not based on what you just tell them. So this is a procedure but in principle, he should have a place in the Guinness book of records – but Bishop Michael gave up being the abbot of the monastery of Makarios after some mistake had happened – I don't know the specifics. Abuna XY told me this and the monastery in 2010 was divided and you could see this – physically see this by – because Pope Shenouda had come to the monastery. He came to Makarios and he handed over the head [skullcap] – the monastic head that monks have with the crosses which the monks of the monastery Makarios usually never had in the days of Matta Al-Maskin – just a black skull cap and nothing else. The other one is coming from the Syrian tradition, it is not a Coptic tradition. So in Makarios, it was more the traditional – just black and nothing else.

[A. *And the other one with crosses?*]

CH: Yes. That is a Syrian input, from the Syrian Orthodox Church. And Pope Shenouda liked that and promoted that in the church. Matta Al-Maskin never followed him in this.

[A. *He kept the black one.*]

CH: He kept the black one. So the monks of St. Makarios never did so. It was all black. Now when I came in 2010 I saw some monks – Pope Shenouda had met with each monk individually and gave them – Abuna XY told me – a gift, and the gift was this skull cap with the crosses. And he left it to the monks to decide whether they would use the skull cap with the crosses or keep the black one but with this Pope Shenouda could see which monk would be loyal to him by accepting the change and which monk was resisting this. That was very clever. It is a way of seeing how individual monks are accepting your authority – the skull cap with the crosses, it means you accept the authority of Pope Shenouda and if you did not accept this...

[A. *They would take it but not wear - ?*]

CH: They took it – of course they all took it. Abuna XY took it but he wouldn't wear it.

[M. *But I find it good as well. Because as a Pope he could have forced them all to wear it because they are all under his authority.*]

CH: Yes, he could have. But here it is a matter of seeing who will be loyal. The whole thing is – in situations of authority with Pope Shenouda. It is loyalty, loyalty, loyalty. And he would nominate bishops – that is a critique of Father John Watson – he would nominate bishops not because of the quality but because of being loyal.

[A. *“loyal” in the sense of obedient?*]

CH: Obedience, yes.

[A. *But would you say that the church structure of the Coptic Church is pretty hierarchical. Is it about a strict hierarchy – that - what the Pope says everybody has to follow?*]

CH: That's new.

[A. *That's new?*]

CH: That's new. That's Pope Shenouda. It was not [in the same way] before him.

[A. *But I thought if a bishop or so is elected, the church also has to give its consent? Or for a priest to become a priest of a parish – they also have to give their consent right?*]

CH: Yes.

[A. *And I thought that there are some more democratic elements in the church than there were before? But what you would say would be the opposite – right?*]

CH: Reiss – but he was afraid, self-censorship, to write this in his thesis but perhaps he would say this now but when I discussed the thesis, his thesis with Reiss. It was: Pope Shenouda nominated, split up dioceses and why did he do this? To get more power over bishops. If you have a church with a small number of bishops – each bishop is a vote in the synod. And if you are as one pope facing 20 bishops, each individual bishop has one 1/20 of a vote. Now the church has [many more bishops] – I don't know – you would have to check the numbers. I have done this with Meinardus. One story with Meinardus – that – I went to Pope Shenouda and asked for the list of bishops. He didn't have a list of bishops. This must have been in the mid-nineties, perhaps earlier, No – earlier it was earlier. So Meinardus needed a list of bishops and there was no list of bishops. And he was sitting and I was waiting for hours before the Pope was ready writing all the lists of names – hand written.

[A. *He wrote it himself?*]

CH: Yeah, he wrote it himself.

[A. *From his mind?*]

CH: From his mind.

[A. *Wow*]

CH: No, this must have been in the 1980s – I was a student then. This was a marvelous experience sitting six, seven hours with the Pope and waiting for the list to be completed because (there was no list)

[A. *Sitting in the same room?*]



CH: No, no, no because the Pope was interrupted continually by people coming in – so that is why it took to many hours for this to be finished. But ultimately I got my handwritten list from the Pope himself and gave this to Meinardus. That was the first [main encounter with the pope] and I was just seeing what was going on in the Cathedral around Pope Shenouda, and people coming in and out and how he was responding to that. So this was quite an experience. Of course today, this is different but throughout the years –

[A. *What do you mean – today it is different?*]

CH: There is a list. But he had just been released from his – and I was a student. – he had just been released from his monastic arrest – house arrest. And has just being coming up into function – and that was the moment that Meinardus asked for that list. You should find it back in one of the publications of Meinardus. The list of bishops but that was very typical of Meinardus. Meinardus was encyclopedic. Lists, lists, lists. Lists of bishops, list of relics, list of churches, lists of this and that. Very Meinardus. You see this reflected back in his writings. It is good. It is a good thing too. But – so I got this list – but the number of bishops has been increasing throughout the years.

[A. *But also the population has been increasing...?*]

CH: Of course, but you have to look – it will not be easy – but it would be an interesting study in itself how many bishops were in 1970 when Pope Shenouda became Pope – in 1971, how many bishops in 1981 when he was deposed and how many in '84 – probably the same as in '81 – I don't think there was any bishop consecrated. And in (19)85 he was released, January (19)85. Yeah I know because I also was with Pope Shenouda. I finished my studies in '84 and went to Egypt for one year in 84/85. So I was one year in Egypt before I came across a job in the Netherlands in the immigration service. So I have met with Pope Shenouda for this exercise between his release in January '85 and June/July 85 when I went back to the Netherlands – somewhere in summer '85 I went back to the Netherlands. So in that period – in that half year. Meinardus asked me for – meeting Pope Shenouda to get this bishops list. At that moment there was no printed bishop list and he did so from his memory. It is reported about by Meinardus – where I don't know – you would have to go through his publications from (19)86, 87 – what did Meinardus publish? Because it is not only the books. He wrote hundreds of articles.

[A. *He was like a machine...?*]

CH: Yes, he was like a machine and he was like an encyclopedia. And he was proud of being like an encyclopedia. Yes and so - he was sensitive to self-censorship – not influencing his relationships with the church and he was able to get things like this list that I obtained in '85. Without the introduction of Meinardus, I would not have been able to obtain that list. I was there as the representative of Meinardus in '85 with the Pope. For that reason, I was able to sit with him. It was not because of me. He wouldn't [have met me.]. It was because *Meinardus* asked him for this. So it is must be reflected in an article somewhere of Meinardus. I gave Meinardus the list in summer '85 – so handwritten – still it is amazing having a handwritten list of Pope Shenouda – in his own handwriting, having the list of bishops.

[A. *Did you make a copy for yourself?*]

CH: I think I made a copy for myself. But I filed that paper somewhere. But the original went to Meinardus, of course, because he was asking for it. So somewhere in '86 you must have an article of Meinardus published. And then you have the later lists of bishops but look at the number of bishops over the years – it is increasing and with increasing [numbers] the influence of the bishop decreases and the influence of the Pope increases.

[A. *He could have more influence on the church through more bishops?*]

CH: Yes, of course. The old bishops were not automatically following Pope Shenouda. The later bishops who were consecrated by Pope Shenouda those were following but look at bishop Michael – he disagreed with Pope Shenouda - and was public in disagreeing with Pope Shenouda (...) because he was nominated as a bishop (before) – he was senior to Pope Shenouda in being a bishop – you may be Pope but I disagree.

[A. *In what particular way?*]

CH: Oh he wouldn't come to Synod meetings. And he would go his own way in Assiut. This is known within the church.

[A. *Is it a certain diocese or?*]

CH: Yeah, yeah, he would rule his own diocese in his own way not considering the opinions of Pope Shenouda.

[A. *We are still talking about the same bishop from the monastery of St. Makarios?*]

CH: The same bishop of the monastery of Makarios. He was abbot of the monastery before Pope Kyrillos asked Matta Al-Maskin to go to the monastery of Makarios and – to reform the monastery of Makarios and to bring new life – because when Matta Al-Maskin went to the monastery of Makarios, there were 10-15 monks left – nothing. It was a monastery that had gone into – falling into ruins and bishop Michael the abbot allowed Matta Al-Maskin to make all those reforms. Well that wasn't in line with Pope Shenouda, so bishop Michael - Abuna XY told me - would be able to say lots of things of where bishop Michael disagreed with Pope Shenouda – but one of the things was the renovating of the monastery of St. Makarios – a major thing.

[A. *Like the way to handle it?*]

CH: Yes, yes, so the bishop was the abbot, not Matta Al-Maskin, but the bishop gave space to Matta Al-Maskin to do it in his way.

[A. *And then - this was also one thing that Pope Shenouda didn't like – the way that Matta Al-Maskin was doing it?*]

CH: No. No.

*[A. When we went to the tomb of Pope Shenouda – we also saw prayers of praise for Pope Shenouda there – do you think this is something that he himself would have agreed to – when/if he saw that now? – or would he have said – No I am just a human like you – pray to God and not to me?]*

CH: I was with Pope Shenouda in 1994 in the Netherlands – those were discussions with the Reformed Churches in the world. The World Federation of Reformed Churches and he was there representing the Oriental Orthodox. He then made the statement – publicly – also on TV that he was the Pope of the church but that he was not like the Pope of Rome. There is no infallibility. He (the Catholic Pope) made a statement on infallibility. Shenouda was saying, No, I am not infallible. I am a human being. I am the head of the church but I am not infallible. Nice – of course it did well with the Reformed. But that was a statement made by him. I don't know, go back to Reiss. Pope Shenouda belongs in the Sunday School Movement to the school – because the Sunday School Movement is itself divided as Reiss writes it in his PhD into the school of Saint Anthony where Shenouda comes from – [which is] very authoritarian. But it is not authoritarian because they want to be authoritarian. They believe teaching should be from a teacher to his disciples while the school – other schools – specifically the school bishop Samuel later came from that reached out social, spiritual and social life – reaching out to the people in need was more important. So Pope Shenouda has always been coming from a tradition – a teaching Sunday School Movement of St. Anthony that was top down. He believed in this. He believed in this top down [structure]. I don't think he would like to see after his death someone on the Papal throne who would not believe in this. So of course – anyone wants his own ideas to live on. Would he welcome this? Perhaps. On the other hand, perhaps not – I don't know. That he would the hierarchical structure top down to continue – yes, because this was his entire life. And of course you want – and all indications were that he wanted this to continue – so that part of his heritage – yes but other things I can't say.

*[A. Would you say that the relationship between the different churches in Egypt have become much better during the time of Pope Shenouda?]*

CH: Definitely not. Definitely not. I have met with Protestant church leaders throughout the last decades – and there is not an increase – despite what Coptic orthodox would tell you of church unity.

*[A. No increase in church unity (in Egypt)?]*

CH: No definitely not.

*[A. And how does that fit with the statement of Christology with the Roman Catholic Church and so on – that people say he did so much for ecumenism?]*

CH: It is not [what you see on the ground]. Pope Shenouda did things for ecumenism from his own perspective. And his own perspective – very Coptic Orthodox – was going to the [early] church councils. So I was there in his meeting

[A. *Coptic Orthodox Church Councils?*]

CH: Yes, of course. For the Coptic Orthodox Church, the schism at the council of Chalcedon is extremely important – still today. In the Reformed Church where I was at that meeting, you are dealing with theologians who say: “well the church council of Chalcedon – well ok. If this is important to the Orthodox we will discuss (it)” – because they were eager in creating an understanding but for them it was not priority. – It was not priority. – For the Catholics? Not likely I wasn’t able to read things with the Catholics but because it was put on the agenda by the Coptic Orthodox – not even by the other Oriental Orthodox churches. But there you would have to go to people who are more insiders because it was – the Coptic Orthodox Church is the strongest of the group of Oriental Orthodox churches. So Pope Shenouda had a leading role in those discussions bringing the other Oriental Orthodox churches with him to strengthen his position.

[A: I explained briefly what bishop Bola had told me on this subject and I have understood him]

CH: I think that is true but there is a text on our website with – that was a book published of all the decisions – or all the main decisions of the Synod, the Coptic Orthodox Synod and all the Christology debate. This was published before Pope Shenouda passed away. So these are the synod decisions during the reign of pope Shenouda. It was published in Arabic. I made an English summary. It is [in the website] on my name – I don’t remember – I’ve written so much but you can find this. Just write 2010 or 2011 and go to my articles – not 2012. A list of subjects discussed in the Holy Synod including all the Christology discussions from a Coptic orthodox perspective – official documents. I wrote comments about it. So there is the summary and comments from me. This (...?) to an understanding of Christology. And those efforts were genuine – I would say to a certain extent because at the same time you see the same Synod in the years of Pope Shenouda making decisions that are not unity oriented, for example baptism – a major issue - Pope Shenouda rejected it outside the oriental orthodox tradition. So rejecting a baptism of a Catholic is definitely not – was definitely a problem (...). That’s not unity oriented. Before that with Pope Kyrillos, that was accepted.

[A. *He accepted it?*]

CH: Yeah

[A. *With Protestants as well?*]

CH: I don’t think all Protestants but I have to be careful here. Perhaps with the Anglicans. I don’t know, but it was certainly accepted with the Catholics and it was almost changed immediately in the Synod after he became pope. I don’t know how long but within the first year of being pope that was changed. That is affecting mixed marriages. You can only be married if you are of the same denomination. That is the consequence of this. So there were no mixed marriages. Either one has to convert to the denomination of the other.

[A: We talk about different themes. Then Hulsman talks about an experience with an Orthodox priest who explained the Bible well and I asked: *Would you say this is something that has to do with the emphasis that Pope Shenouda put on the Bible?*]

CH: Yes.

[A: *Because I once heard that before – Pope Kyrillos didn't give sermons...?*]

CH: No, that's not true – but there you would have to go to Watson but Pope Kyrillos' focus was on prayer. It was fully a life of prayer. Baba Shenouda knew the Bible by heart, if there would have been a Bible competition to quote verses from the Bible – he would be able to quote verses left and right. It was amazing. That was also Pope Shenouda. (...) (But) when it comes to the belief in miracles I am too much of a Westerner where I have become skeptical. So it is not traditions in the Coptic Orthodox Church. It is traditions that can be explained in a way that Abuna (XY) did. Then I say yes, this I can accept. It is tradition but it is tradition with Biblical roots but not coming with stories of miracles – whereby I would never ever claim (...) with my background that miracles don't exist. You have the Bible full of miracles. But not how people would be using this. So the same my (...) background comes in when it comes to relics. Yes there are saints – people who had remained true to their faith until death. So there is no problem with the issue of sainthood but (...) the way relics are dealt with No (...) but this I can easily say to bishops and priests without getting into trouble. They know my view on the Holy Family tradition. They know it very well because my name – the book that I did about the Holy Family for the American University Press is associated to the Holy Family. So they know it (...). It is typically me I would explain what the church believes and I would also explain what I myself believe. I would never state that what the church believes is wrong but that this is my belief. And any western reader will be able to see I do not believe the church teaching on the Holy Family but without being offensive.

[A. *Were some in the Coptic Church offended by this?*]

CH: No, No they were not offended. If you ask Abuna XY about the monastery of Muharaq where I have argued with a monk called father Philoxenos about the way of presenting this - and ultimately his conclusion was: That is no problem, you are a westerner. In this way the discussion was more or less ended. He presented it in the traditional way believing that these are facts, historical and I told him that I don't believe these are facts – I told him in his face. This was really a confrontation but not a confrontation about church dogma. I was not criticizing church teaching. It was only about how to address the issue of the Coptic Holy Family tradition. It is not church dogma. Dogma you go into the Eucharist. There you go into dogma. The status of the clergy in the church. There you go into dogma. I never challenged the church on those issues. I have only challenged the church on the presentation of the Holy Family Tradition.

[M. *Do you doubt that they went from one place to another or do you believe that the flight of the Holy Family didn't exist?*]

CH: No, I would never state it didn't exist. There is the book of Matthew. They went to Egypt. There I would not challenge the book of Matthew. (...) But what I have written is that nobody

knows where the Holy Family really went to in Egypt. They went to Egypt. There is Matthew. Where in Egypt? We don't know. There is a tradition that he went to A, B, C, D – that is local folk belief. It has (come?) for various reasons throughout the centuries. And it says a lot on church history but it is not first century history. The stories of the Holy Family in the fourth century are reflecting the atmosphere of Christians in the fourth century. And the stories that were later developed in Muslim period reflect the situation of the church in those years. So the Holy Family tradition reflects history. That is – quote me on this. That is what I believe the Holy Family tradition is. And thus what happened in the year 2000. Pope Shenouda was asked by the minister of tourism Mamduh El Biltagy to provide him with a map of the Holy Family – where the Holy Family went. There was no map until the year 2000 – or until 1999 there was no map. He prepared one because the minister of tourism requested him to prepare one.

[M. *The one in the hanging church?*]

CH: Yeah, it is all over. And you have it in the Holy Family books. I know exactly how this map was developed. I met with the bishops who were involved in this. So then bishop Bishoi – I questioned him about this. On this I had no problems with the bishops. We disagreed but I know – where it would be a problem is if we disagreed on baptism. But this [on the Holy Family] – he has his position, I have my position and we know the positions are different and there is no (problem) – because it is not dogma. He (bishop Bishoi) placed the monastery of Demiana on the route of Holy Family. Until the year 2000 it was not on the route. It was new. It was created by the bishop.

[A. *He created this?? Did he also confirm this?*]

CH: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I wrote about it in my book and he placed my book in the entrance of the monastery. Not that anyone is able to read this because it is English, not in Arabic. It is because of the image, the photo of the monastery that is in the book. That is why it is opened on that page. And now he says western scholars have confirmed that the Holy Family came to the monastery of Demiana. Yeah - I didn't write that. I wrote that the bishop stated this and he changed this to tell his people that western scholars have confirmed this. Western scholars stated this – on his words. You can circle. So he knows this and I know this.

[A. *Interesting!*]

CH: So it is used to get pilgrims. It is pure commercial interest. I know “commercial” is not the nicest word to use and I wouldn't use this – but there are of course – pilgrims bring in finance. So commercial is too hard. So find another word that is closer to it but it is not historic, it is created by the bishop himself. The bishop that – well this is –

[A. *For me to state that is no problem?*]

CH: Yeah, yeah, if you would confront a bishop with it, he would – if you would ask him I know the answer of the bishop. “Well that is the opinion of so and so. That is his opinion.” So he would immediately do it away as this is my private opinion and end the discussion that way.

*[A. Would you say that in church dogma the Pope has changed a lot in his time or was he just kind of repeating what has been taught before?]*

CH: You are asking the wrong person that question because I haven't really moved much around in the issue of dogma. So I am a sociologist. I am not a theologian but I haven't really moved around in theological issues. I have not written about it as I told it. I have not made statements about this. I am not working in that field. Certainly church unity – I have been to this conference so I have been at this Reformed Council and the Oriental Orthodox churches. I was there but that was not really for any other reason than I was already involved in the Coptic Orthodox Church and I was in the Netherlands. So easy enough to attend and to go there. If this would have taken place in Tokyo or in America, I wouldn't have been there. So it was coincidence that this happened to be in the Netherlands and thus – yes I was there, I was attending.

*[A. But how come he was viewed so much as a unifier of the churches – and I think he got like several honorary doctor (degrees)?]*

CH: Honorary degrees are given for church political reasons. He is, he was the head of the largest – largest I am not sure the Ethiopian church may be larger than the Coptic Orthodox Church in numbers, I don't know. But at least the most influential, the strongest leader in the oriental – the group of Oriental Orthodox churches. The Coptic Orthodox Church was and is still the largest church in the Arab world. So with this it is an important church for western churches, Catholic or Protestant, to deal with and thus in order to – Angela Merkel only months ago got an honorary degree. She got a university degree of the university of Nijmegen. Was this because she deserved this for her scientific work or was this because she is the Bundeskanzler of Germany? You do this for relational reasons. So those honorary degrees are more church politically motivated than saying anything of his achievements.

*[A: End of recording. I do not agree for 100% to the last point]*