

THE INFLUENCE OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH
UPON THE COPTIC CHURCH OF EGYPT

By

MARGARET W. ANDERSON

B.S., Westminster College

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INTRODUCTION

THE INFLUENCE OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH
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INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject

1. The Subject Stated and Explained

The problem with which this thesis deals is that of discovering what influence the Evangelical Church of Egypt has exerted over the ancient Coptic Church which has been the National Church of Egypt since the first century A. D. The Evangelical Church, which is the product of Protestant missionary activity, has grown rapidly both in membership and scope ever since it was founded about a century ago. This past century has also brought a new awakening to the Coptic Church. It is the purpose of this thesis to try to establish what bearing these two facts may have on one another, and then to suggest what present or future relationships could be developed between these two branches of the Church of Christ which are working in the same geographical area.

2. The Subject Justified

In these days of ecumenicity the eyes of the Christian world have been focusing with new interest upon all branches of the historic Christian faith. The Church of the West has become aware as never before of the existence and the importance of the ancient Eastern Church with all of her branches, whether orthodox or heretical. In this century of extensive missionary activity on the part of the Western Church,

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problems have arisen as to the relationship between these two large branches of Christendom. What the Western Church considers as necessary evangelization among those who are Christian only in name and tradition, the Eastern Church regards as proselytizing and therefore strongly resents. Many young indigenous Churches are now existing side by side with these ancient Churches and the problem of their relationship to one another is a present reality and one that needs to be solved in such a way as to present to the non-Christian world the greatest amount of unanimity possible. Therefore the problem of this thesis is very pertinent for Christian leaders today, particularly those interested in working in the Near East, the Middle East, or North Africa, where these old Eastern Churches have their primary influence.

3. The Subject Delimited

This thesis will deal with the Coptic Church only as it is found in Egypt and not those branches of it which are located in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan or in Ethiopia. The Evangelical Church mentioned here refers primarily to the Protestant organization founded by the United Presbyterian Mission in Egypt, which encompasses the great majority of the Protestant Christians of the land. The study will be confined to a survey of the history of the Coptic Church with an additional analysis of the way in which the Evangelical Church has been responsible for certain changes which have occurred in the last one hundred years. No attempt will be made to trace the development of the Evangelical Church as such, but only of its influence upon the Coptic Church.

B. The Sources for the Study

The sources used for this thesis include books on Church

history, on the history of Protestant missions in Egypt, and on the customs and social conditions of the modern Egyptians. Much use has been made of the annual reports of the Board of Foreign Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America. Whenever this source is utilized in the body of the thesis it will be designated in the footnotes by the following abbreviation: U. P. Annual Report, (date, and page). In addition pamphlets and periodicals dealing with present Church life in Egypt and the ecumenical movement throughout the world will be utilized.

C. The Method of Procedure

The first chapter sets the stage for the actual problem by tracing the historical development of the Coptic Church prior to the establishment of the Evangelical Church. The second chapter then discusses the relationship that has existed between the two Churches, the reasons for this relationship, and the results of it particularly in reference to the Coptic Church. In closing it will attempt to give suggestions as to the wisest procedure for the Evangelical Church to follow in present and future relations with the Coptic Church.

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORY OF THE COPTIC CHURCH OF EGYPT
UNTIL THE FORMATION OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH

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A. Introduction

Before one can comprehend with any degree of adequacy the kind and the extent of influence which the Evangelical Church has had upon the Coptic Church during this past century, it is necessary to come to a general understanding of the condition of the Coptic Church at the time when the Evangelical Church was founded, and the reasons for those conditions. In order to gain such an understanding, it is helpful to study the Coptic Church as it has developed through history. Therefore the following chapter will deal briefly with the historical factors which have proved most formative and far-reaching in their effects upon the life and character of the Church of Egypt from the first century to the middle of the nineteenth.

B. The Coptic Church Before the Moslem Conquest

1. Her Beginnings

From the middle of the first century A. D. until the present day, there has existed in Egypt a Christian Church known to the world today as the Coptic Church.¹ According to seemingly well-established

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1. The title "Coptic" is a corruption of the Greek word for "Egyptian", which is significant in that the Copts are, generally speaking, the only true descendants of the ancient Egyptians. Cf. William H. Worrell: A Short Account of the Copts, 1945, p. viii.

tradition, this Church was founded by St. Mark in about 45 A. D.¹ when he came to Egypt with the Apostle Peter. It is believed that for a time Peter and Mark lived in the Egyptian city of Babylon² while Mark wrote his Gospel with the purpose in mind of using it in the evangelization of Egypt.³ He then moved to Alexandria, where his first convert was a shoemaker named Annianus. When Mark had to leave Egypt to return to Jerusalem, he ordained Annianus as the first bishop of the Egyptian Church and appointed three priests and seven deacons to assist him. In 49 A. D. Mark returned to Egypt, where for more than a decade he controlled most of the affairs of the Church.⁴

According to tradition, Mark was martyred in 62 A. D. on the twenty-fifth of April, during the pagan feast to Serapis, which he had openly denounced as being idolatrous. The pagans were so maddened by his denunciations, that they seized him, tied a rope around his neck and dragged him through the streets in the triumphal procession in honor of their goddess, Serapis, until finally he died.⁵ Annianus was chosen as his successor and so became the first official Patriarch of Egypt. He was, according to Eusebius, "a man beloved of God and admirable in all things" and he ruled the Church for twenty-two years.⁶

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1. Cf. Charles Roger Watson: Egypt and the Christian Crusade, p. 101.
2. The Babylon referred to in I Peter 5:13 is believed to be the old fortress city of Egypt, now known as Old Cairo, rather than the old deserted city in Assyria. Cf. Ibid., p. 102.
3. There is an Egyptian tradition, not backed by real authority however, that the Gospel of Mark was originally written in the Coptic language and then translated into Greek. Cf. Montague Fowler: Christian Egypt, p. 3.
4. Cf. Edith L. F. Butcher: The Story of the Church in Egypt, Vol. I, p. 21.
5. Mark was buried in the church at Baucalis, where for centuries later the election of the Patriarchs took place by his tomb. Cf. Fowler: op. cit., p. 4.
6. Cf. Ibid., p. 6.

2. Her Rise to Power

a. The Catechetical School of Alexandria

The Church of Egypt from its small but promising beginnings in the first century under St. Mark grew to a thriving organization which continued to expand until its influence was felt not only in Egypt, but throughout the whole Roman Empire. One reason for this unusual growth can be traced to the strategic location and unique character of the city of Alexandria. It was a well-known center of Greek culture and learning, and as such had far-reaching effects on the life of the Church both for good and for evil. One beneficial result was that from very early times the Church realized the importance of an intelligent, educated leadership, and in order to secure such leadership they established the first Christian theological school. Due to the influence of Greek philosophy this theological school, known as the Catechetical School of Alexandria, aimed primarily at a philosophical understanding of the Scriptures, which often led to rather strange interpretations. As Schaff says, "Alexandrian theology is intellectual, profound, stirring and full of fruitful germs of thought, but rather unduly idealistic and spiritualistic and loses itself in arbitrary allegorical fancies."¹ In spite of this tendency, the school wielded a powerful influence for good during the early centuries.

The first superintendent of the Catechetical School was a converted Stoic philosopher, Pantaeus, who opened the school probably

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1. Philip Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol. II, pp. 778-780.

about 180 A.D.¹ He was later sent as a missionary to India by the Patriarch, Demetrius, and left the school temporarily in the charge of his famous pupil, Clement. Just before the close of the second century, Clement became the official superintendent of the school and earned the distinction of being the "Father of Alexandrian Christian Philosophy". He "united thorough Biblical and Hellenistic learning with genius and speculative thought. His theology is a confused mixture of true Christian elements with many Stoic, Platonic, and Philonic ingredients."²

Clement was followed by his even more famous pupil, Origen. Unlike his two predecessors, Origen had been brought up from boyhood in the Christian faith, and he received his early training at the Catechetical School, where he too adopted the philosophical theology of his time. To Origen can be traced the beginnings of extreme asceticism which later on took a disproportionate hold on the people of Egypt and resulted in the monastic system. Origen refused to own two garments at once, went barefoot all year, ate only the poorest of food, for a time did not allow himself even the pleasure of studying literary subjects which he loved, and finally went so far as to emasculate himself. This final act of asceticism greatly disturbed the Patriarch, Demetrius, because according to general practice and opinion it made Origen ineligible for the priesthood.³ Later Origen was ordained a priest in Caesarea contrary to Demetrius' wishes, which resulted in his exile.⁴

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 780.

2. Butcher: op. cit., p. 43.

3. The Coptic Church has always strongly encouraged a married priesthood though the Patriarchs and bishops are to be unmarried. Cf. Ibid., p. 23.

4. Cf. Ibid., pp. 69-71.

In spite of the fact that Origen was exiled from Egypt and even branded as a heretic because of some theological inaccuracies which arose from his allegorical approach to the Scriptures, he was very influential in the Church. His humble spirit and deep desire to understand the Scriptures made up for his inaccuracies, and his contribution to the Church through his exegetical works was of great value. People rallied around him and even centuries after his death anyone who criticized Origen was anathema to the Christians of Egypt.¹

The Catechetical School in Alexandria reached its pinnacle of fame under the leadership of Clement and Origen, but it continued to thrive until the early part of the fifth century. Its contribution cannot be overestimated, for it provided the Church with most of its outstanding saints and scholars during that period. When it was moved to Pamphylia during the Patriarchate of Theophilus in about 412 A. D., the way was opened up for chaos, confusion and degradation to set in.²

b. The Era of Martyrs

Because of their remote position in relation to the center of the empire at Rome, the Church of Egypt escaped persecution until the early years of the third century during the reign of Septimus Severus.³ The school in Alexandria had to close for awhile and there were many martyrs including Leonides, Origen's father.⁴ A few years

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1. Cf. Schaff: Vol. II., op. cit., pp. 793-794.

2. Cf. Butcher: op. cit., p. 272.

3. Cf. Watson: op. cit., p. 102.

4. Origen, who was a teenager at the time, became so filled with fanatical zeal that he planned to offer himself as a martyr also, but was restrained by his mother who hid his clothes until he had given up the idea. Cf. Schaff: op. cit., p. 786.

later Origen himself was the butt of pagan hatred but he always managed to escape martyrdom.

Again in 250 A. D. the great persecution under Decius broke out. Some Christians recanted their faith and sacrificed to idols, but many more remained true to their Lord and were massacred.¹

So throughout the third century there were scattered persecutions in Egypt. Most of these were severe while they lasted, but they were fairly brief. However, in 303 A. D. Egypt came in for such a devastating siege of persecution under the emperor Diocletian that it has named this period "The Era of the Martyrs", and their church calendar is dated from the year of his accession to the throne in 284 A. D.² This persecution was ushered in by a series of three edicts, which declared that all Christian churches were to be demolished, all copies of the Bible burned, and all Christians deprived of public office or civil rights. This last edict made all Christians liable to torture and outrage, for they were no longer protected by the civil authorities. Diocletian's son and successor, Maximian, shortly after this issued a fourth edict, even more severe than the others, which required that all people sacrifice to the gods on pain of death. In 308 A. D. he forced the issue to the extreme of commanding that all food in the markets be sprinkled with sacrificial wine so that the Christians were forced to a decision between apostasy and starvation.³ Again many recanted, but thousands were made to work as slaves in the stone quarries or lost

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1. Cf. Butchers: op. cit., pp. 77-78.
2. Cf. Watson: op. cit., p. 105.
3. Cf. Schaff: op. cit., pp. 66-68.

their lives after enduring unspeakable tortures.¹ This continued until Constantine issued in 313 A. D. the Edict of Toleration.

The persecution not only depleted the Church in numbers and robbed it of valuable leadership, but also it gave rise to many internal conflicts. Those who did not recant their faith tended toward extreme fanaticism and intolerance. Many offered themselves as martyrs. Others suffered a great deal for their faith. Quite naturally a contempt and hatred arose in them toward the many who had become apostate. At the close of each period of persecution large numbers of those who had been faithless repented of their cowardice and wanted to return to membership in the Church. The struggle that ensued over this matter gave rise to the Meletian and Donatist schisms, which further weakened the Church.²

In spite of all this, the Church of Egypt maintained its position of influence throughout the Christian world for nearly a century and a half following the Era of Martyrs.

c. The Arian Controversy

The Egyptian Church had little time to recover from the devastation of the Diocletian persecution before it was torn from within by heresy. There arose during the persecution an ultra form of spirituality which produced unfavorable reactions in many of the people.³ One of these people was a presbyter of Alexandria named Arius, who began

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1. The methods of torture during this period were perhaps the most barbarous in all of history. People were torn apart, burned, dragged through the streets, hung by one foot and upside down from a tree etc. Cf. Butcher: op. cit., p. 129.
2. Cf. Schaff: op. cit., p. 197.
3. Cf. Butcher: op. cit., p. 143.

to propagate the doctrine that Jesus was not divine but human. He gained a great following largely because of his pleasing personality and persuasive powers. The old Patriarch, Alexander, and his young assistant, Athanasius, did all they could to refute this heresy and prevent the spread of his influence. In 321 A. D., a council in Alexandria deposed and excommunicated him and he was forced to leave Egypt. Arius' influence however spread through Syria and Palestine and soon became a matter of concern throughout the empire. Finally it came to the attention of the emperor, Constantine,¹ who called the first ecumenical council at Nicaea in 325 A. D. in order to settle the matter.² At this famous council, due to the brilliant efforts of Athanasius, who headed up the orthodox party, Arius was anathematized and banished. Everyone felt that this would end the controversy, but actually the struggle was continued for ten years between Arius and Athanasius, and then at the death of Arius, became a duel between the Roman Emperor and the Patriarch of Alexandria.³

The emperor, Constantius, favored Arius⁴ and so by political intrigue an Arian Patriarch was placed in Alexandria. The Egyptian Church remained loyal to Athanasius, who was then Patriarch though he had been forced to flee the country, and refused to recognize the Arian appointee. Athanasius was deposed and exiled several times because of false accusations made against him by Arius and his followers. Each time he was able to return in triumph after his exile and was enthu-

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1. The Emperor Constantine in the beginning favored Arianism but swung over to the orthodox side during the Council of Nicaea.
2. Cf. Schaff: op. cit., p. 620.
3. Cf. Butcher: op. cit., pp. 146-147.
4. Eusebia, Constantius' wife, was an Arian and greatly influenced her husband's opinion in the controversy.

siastically welcomed by the people. Since the Roman Emperor was so involved in the whole conflict, it gradually moved from the realm of theology or doctrine into the area of politics. In fact after the death of Athanasius in 373 A. D., the primary concern of the Church of Egypt became the maintenance of her ecclesiastical supremacy.¹

For a time after the death of Athanasius, the Arians actually gained control of the Church in Alexandria and they severely persecuted those of the orthodox faith. The Emperor Valens, who reigned from 364-378 A. D., encouraged such persecution because he too was Arian. However, his successor, Theodosius I, was a strong supporter of Nicene theology and in 380 A. D. he issued an edict requiring his subjects to accept the orthodox position. Thus the controversy came to an end at last with orthodoxy victorious.²

3. Her Decline and Separation

a. The Rise of Monasticism

The effect upon the Egyptian Church of the long drawn-out struggle against Arianism was far from beneficial even though it ended in outward victory. Many of the most spiritually sensitive leaders of the Church became discouraged and disgusted at the political intrigues indulged in by both sides, and were drawn more and more frequently to retreat into places of solitude where they could concentrate upon spiritual matters unhampered. Many of them also firmly believed that the last days were at hand, because of the presence of Arius, whom they considered to be the Anti-Christ. They lost their concern for the world

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1. Cf. Watson: op. cit., p. 106.

2. Cf. Schaff: op. cit., p. 638.

and for social conditions and flocked by the thousands into remote desert caves and monasteries.¹

Egypt had always been a land where asceticism thrived. Even in pagan days there had been priests of Serapis who were monks, and Greek Stoics who were ascetics. Even early Christian leaders such as Origen had practiced extreme asceticism but had remained in contact with normal society life. Then during the great era of persecution, Church leaders had been forced by circumstances to flee to the desert for safety. In this way gradually holiness became associated in their minds with desert hideouts.²

At first only a few men went to the desert and took up life there as hermits. The first of these, according to tradition, was St. Paul of Thebes, who retreated into the desert during the Diocletian persecution and discovered there a little grotto having a spring and a palm tree. Here he is believed to have lived on a loaf of bread brought to him each day by a raven, until he was 112 years old. St. Anthony, another famous hermit,³ was greatly revered even in his lifetime. He came to Alexandria during the severe persecution under Maximian in 311 A. D., in the hope that he would be martyred, but the authorities were afraid to do him any harm. In 351 A. D., he returned as an old man to testify in favor of Athanasius in his conflict with Arius, and in a few days he converted more people than the Church had gained in a year.⁴

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1. Cf. Schaff: op. cit., p. 620.

2. Cf. Schaff: Vol. III, pp. 154-155.

3. St. Anthony is known as the "Father of Anchoritism", which is a branch of monastic life in which each monk lives in his own solitary cell as a hermit, and not in a group within a monastery.

4. Cf. Schaff: Vol. III, op. cit., pp. 179-185.

Due to the great influence of these few hermits, the desire to escape from the moral corruption of society in the Roman empire, and the warm, dry climate of the land, the principle of monasticism took root with unusual force in Egypt. In fact the actual numbers of those who took monastic vows of one kind or another is incredible. For example, the city of Oxyrhynchus alone claimed to have 10,000 monks and 20,000 nuns living in it at one time. In the Arsinoite nome, the whole population were under monastic vows.¹

The result of such wholesale retirement from the world was spiritual suicide for the Church for several reasons. In the first place, the most consecrated of the Church leaders became monks due to their deep desire to develop the holiest life possible. This robbed the Church of those who could have given her prayerful, Christ-centered guidance. Positions of importance were seized upon by corrupt and selfish men who often used them for personal aggrandizement.² Secondly, the monastic system, contrary to the way it developed in Europe, produced centers of extreme ignorance. Studying was considered a worldly interest and therefore was abolished, so that superstition and fanaticism had free reign.³ From this superstition grew their exaggerated concepts of Mary, the saints, demons, visions, miracles and so forth which nearly eclipsed their basic orthodox beliefs. Also a false sense of values was produced. For instance, cleanliness was regarded as a luxury so that filth became a virtue. Men lost their sense of responsibility toward their families, their Church, and their nation in their concern for their own souls.

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1. Cf. Butcher: op. cit., p. 195.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 191.

3. Cf. Watson: op. cit., p. 107.

And finally it developed the false concept of a works-religion, for they felt that all this self-torture and self-denial was their only way of gaining eternal life.¹

b. Heresies Within the Church

In addition to the great losses suffered by the Church through persecution and through the mass retreats of the people into monastic living, heresy and dissension took their toll, especially during the fourth and fifth centuries. The great theological matter under discussion during that period centered around the person of Christ with His divine and human natures. The Alexandrian School of Theology, because of its philosophical and mystical interest, tended to become so speculative that the human nature of Christ was practically forced out of the picture. The Antiochian School of Theology on the other hand went too far the other way, so that Christ was thought of as being only human. So from these two sources arose a chain of heresies which did much harm to the cause of Christ in the whole eastern section of the Roman empire.²

Arianism was the first of these heresies and it leaned so far toward the human side that Apollinarianism grew up in reaction to it. This heresy was wide-spread in Syria and Palestine but did not cause too much confusion in Egypt. However, when Nestorius started a reaction in the other direction again, Egypt was definitely involved in the conflict. Nestorius and his ideas gained a great following. The Patriarch of Alexandria, Cyril, who was ambitious to assert his influence in the Church at large and who was unscrupulous and radical in his methods,

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1. Cf. Schaff: Vol. III, op. cit., p. 177.

2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 706-707.

took up the cudgels against Nestorianism and did all he could to persuade the Emperor to call another ecumenical council to settle the dispute. He gained his end in 431 A. D. when the First Council of Ephesus convened. Cyril arrived in Ephesus with huge groups of supporters made up of monks, bishops, and famous hermits. There were so many, in fact, that Nestorius refused to attend for fear of his life, so held his own council in which he anathematized Cyril. Cyril also brought large sums of money to be used for bribes. There was a great deal of violence shown throughout the council by way of riots and mobs,¹ but finally Cyril emerged victorious and Nestorius was excommunicated.²

Again Egypt paid dearly for her victory, for the Monophysite heresy, which held that in the incarnation the human nature was transmuted into the divine so that Christ had only one nature, had its foundations laid at this time. Cyril, in his zeal against the Nestorians, had gone too far once more. This new heresy eventually precipitated the separation of the Egyptian Church from the rest of Christendom.³

c. The Monophysite Heresy

In order to understand fully the sequence of events which have had such far-reaching effects upon the Egyptian Church ever since the middle of the fifth century, it is necessary to examine the political issues as well as the doctrinal ones which were at stake. During the second to the fifth centuries, three ecclesiastical centers of

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1. Most of the riots were caused by members of a Church guild in Egypt, called the Parabolani, who were noted for insubordination and riotous behavior. Cyril evidently had brought quite a number of these parabolani for the express purpose of gaining his ends by force if need be.
2. Cf. Butcher: op. cit., p. 279.
3. Cf. Watson: op. cit., p. 109.

authority had grown up: Rome, Constantinople, and Alexandria. Since these had developed through natural circumstance rather than through the arbitrary designation of authority by some ecclesiastical body, there were no set boundaries within which their power was to be confined. As the Church grew in size and expanded over larger areas, this question of authority became an important problem and began to usurp the position of primacy in the motives of the various "Popes". Because of his location in the capital city of the empire and his close connections with the Emperor, the Pope of Rome came to have a primacy of honor over the other two. However, in actual influence during those early days, both Alexandria and Constantinople overshadowed Rome because they were much closer to the centers of Christian activity. Nevertheless, slowly the Roman Patriarch asserted his authority as supreme until it reached a peak in the hands of Leo the Great, who, as head of the Roman See at the time of the Monophysite controversy, was determined to make Rome supreme in power as well as in honor. In addition, the second ecumenical council had declared that Constantinople was to be second in honor. Therefore, the Alexandrian Patriarch was supposed to wield the least amount of authority and be subordinated to the other two. Although this was the prescribed hierarchy, in practice the Alexandrian "Pope" exercised authority equal to that of Rome and greater than that of Constantinople. For instance no "Pope" in Alexandria had ever been deposed by the combined forces of Rome and Constantinople, though Rome and Alexandria, and on one occasion Alexandria alone, had deposed some of the Patriarchs of Constantinople. Therefore, the Alexandrian Patriarch was very jealous of his freedom and resisted any attempt at subordination on the part of Rome or Constantinople. So the biggest issue in the

Monophysite controversy centered not upon doctrine but upon the problem of national primacy and freedom.¹

The doctrinal difficulty arose through an almost unknown Church official from Constantinople, named Eutychus, who had followed in Cyril's footsteps in overemphasizing the deity of Christ and underplaying His humanity. Flavian was at that time the Patriarch of Constantinople and therefore had jurisdiction over the heretic. Another Church official, Eusebius from Dorylaeum, brought an accusation to Flavian against Eutychus on the charge of heresy, and influenced Flavian to depose Eutychus and excommunicate him. Eutychus then appealed both to Rome and to Alexandria for recognition. Dioscurus,² who was then Patriarch of Alexandria, warmly supported his cause, his motive in doing so being the desire to assert his authority in contradiction to that of Flavian, who had too little power to do anything about the situation. Before Leo the Great had time to answer Eutychus, due to delay in the mails, Dioscurus took affairs into his own hands and arranged a second council at Ephesus to be held in August of 449 A. D. to discuss the question. Dioscurus' high-handed way of handling the situation so angered Leo that he refused to attend the council and later dubbed it the "Council of Robbers" because of the violence shown there.³ Indeed this council proved to be a disgrace to Christendom in many ways. All semblance of order disappeared and discussion degenerated into a shouting contest in which Dioscurus won. The council absolved Eutychus and re-instated him as a

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1. Cf. Butcher: op. cit., p. 283.

2. Dioscurus followed Cyril as Patriarch and proved to be even more unscrupulous than his predecessor.

3. Cf. Butcher: op. cit., p. 287.

presbyter, but Dioscurus was not satisfied with that but went to the extreme of deposing both Eusebius and the Patriarch, Flavian.¹ This mistake caused a riot in the course of which Flavian was so beaten and kicked by certain of Dioscurus' followers that he died three days later.²

In this turn of events Leo the Great saw his golden opportunity to crush the authority of the Patriarch of Alexandria and to strengthen his own position. Dioscurus, by allying himself with Eutychus, had moved out of the circle of the orthodox faith and had been at least partially to blame for the death of Flavian, and these two factors were sufficient to condemn him. Therefore, when a new emperor, Marcian, ascended the throne, Leo exerted his influence to persuade him to call another council to reconsider the decision made at Ephesus.³ So in 451 A. D. a council convened at Chalcedon which turned out to be another tumultuous affair. The outcome was that all Eutychians (or Monophysites) were declared heretics and as such were to be banished from the empire and their writings burned. Dioscurus, of course, was deposed and banished with the rest and amazingly enough he accepted his fate with resignation and did nothing to dispute it.⁴

The Church of Egypt, however, did not accept the decision of the Council with any such resignation. With one voice they rose to the de-

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1. Even some of Dioscurus' own bishops begged him not to penalize a Patriarch for the misdeeds of one of his presbyters. However, success evidently had gone to Dioscurus' head and he would not listen to reason.
2. Cf. Schaff: Vol. III., op. cit., p. 739; also Cf. Walter Adeney: The Greek and Eastern Churches, p. 98.
3. The Emperor Theodosius II was in power at the time of the "Council of Robbers" and he favored Dioscurus against Leo not on doctrinal grounds but because of Leo's disrespect towards him in refusing to attend the council.
4. Cf. Butcher: op. cit., pp. 298-300.

fense of their Patriarch and declared that whatever he felt to be true was law to them also. They considered themselves excommunicated with him. Very few understood the intricacies of the theology involved, but that was of little consequence, for to them it was a question of patriotism and national honor, not of doctrine.

For two years nothing was done in the way of selecting a new Patriarch, for the Emperor hoped that in that time the antagonistic feelings would die down. However, even the appointment of Proterius, who had been selected by Dioscurus to be in charge during his absence, caused a general outbreak because of his professed allegiance to the Chalcedon decision. In fact only fourteen bishops supported him, while all the rest of the Church remained loyal to their banished Patriarch. Finally in 454 A. D. Dioscurus died and three years later the people chose their own successor to him who rivaled the Patriarch set up by the Byzantine Emperor. From that time on there was a division in the national Church in Egypt. A small section owed allegiance to the Greek Orthodox Church and the Emperor at Constantinople, while the other remained independent of the rest of Christendom. The latter division is what is today called the Coptic Church of Egypt and it has always commanded the loyalty of the great majority of the Egyptian Christians.¹

C. The Coptic Church During the Middle Ages

1. The Moslem Conquest

a. The Condition of the Church

The beginning of the seventh century found the Egyptian Church

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 304.

at a very low ebb spiritually, just at the time when they needed strength as never before to meet the rising threat of Islam which started in Arabia and quickly spread over all of the territory east of Egypt. The factor which played the major part in preparing the way for the Moslem invasion was the presence of two conflicting Christian groups: the National Church and the Greek Orthodox or Byzantine Church. Each had her own Patriarch and creed, yet both professed the same Lord. The spirit of antagonism and rivalry between them could not have been greater if one of them had been of an entirely different faith.¹

The National or Coptic Church, although much larger in numbers, was politically subordinate to the Byzantine Church. Through secular channels and authorities this smaller Church did much to persecute the National Church. In fact their Patriarch had to live in the desert in hiding much of the time and could come out only by stealth. In addition the National Church lost most of her endowment, for she was no longer the State Church and all of the revenues from her ancient endowments were paid over to the Byzantine Patriarch. Many of her church buildings were claimed as state property also and were therefore given to her rival. Naturally all this caused deep resentment in the National Church and she longed for some means of reprisal or at least of deliverance.²

The breach between the two Churches was further widened by the fact that Greek fell into disuse among the bulk of the people. The Byzantine Church retained the Greek language, but the National Church trans-

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1. The National Church took the color green as their symbol, while the Byzantine Church rallied around the color blue. The intense hatred between the greens and the blues became so notorious that the colors were used to denote opposing teams in the chariot races of the day. Cf. Ibid., p. 328.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 326.

lated their liturgies into the Coptic language.¹ The impoverishment of the Church and the loss of the Greek language caused a greater decline of learning so that superstition took great hold on the people. Monasticism still flourished and in spite of the fact that the monasteries were centers of abysmal ignorance, they still had great influence over the Church. A demonstration by the monks was sufficient in most cases of itself to change Church policy.

Thus the Church had degenerated from a powerful political force with intelligent, consecrated leadership, into a heretical, segregated and persecuted group who had lost their vision and purpose in their violent hatred of their rivals and their mistaken ideas of holiness.

b. The Attitude of the Copts Toward the Moslem Invasion

If one were to open the pages of history directly to the story of the Moslem invasion of Egypt without knowing any of the preceding annals of the nation's history, one's reaction would probably be that of amazed contempt for a people and a Church which could stand by and watch apathetically and with complete indifference as a foreign power with a different faith swept over their country. It seems incredible until one can see all the factors involved.

In the first place, the members of the National Church had never been permitted to be in the Imperial troops and so they had no knowledge of fighting skills. Several times the Church had risen in

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1. The Coptic language is a modified form of the ancient Egyptian vernacular written in Greek letters with a few necessary additional symbols. It was developed by the Christian Church sometime between 250-350 A.D. for use in teaching peasants who knew no Greek. Cf. Worrell: op. cit., pp. 6-8.

revolt against the tyranny of the Byzantine authorities¹, but each time they had failed to gain their freedom. Barbarous measures were used to try to stamp out these rebellions so that finally they learned that it was hopeless to try to shake off the yoke of bondage by themselves. Therefore, they welcomed help from anyone who would give them deliverance from these enemies they had suffered under for so long.²

It is also apparent that the Church was fairly ignorant as to who the Moslems were and what they stood for. They knew that they were monotheists and religious reformers, and there was none of the ingrained hatred toward Moslems as toward the Greek Orthodox. They had no great patriotic loyalty for their country, so a change of rulers was no calamity to them. They looked on passively not directly siding with either party but leaving things to the judgment of God. And so in December of 641 A. D. Egypt became a Moslem-controlled country and has remained so ever since.³

Yet strangely enough, the first part of the Moslem regime was a time of release for the National Church. Amr ibn Aas, their conqueror and first Moslem Emir, evidently realized the importance of conciliating the Church, for when a procession of monks came in to Alexandria to ask him for a guarantee of their safety, he drew up a charter which gave them considerably more freedom than they had under Byzantine rule. He promised not to appropriate or destroy any Chris-

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1. The most famous of these revolts was called "The Revolt of the Three Brothers" and was led by the brothers: Abaskiron, Menas, and James against the Imperial party in 582 A. D. For some time they were successful, but eventually they too were defeated. Cf. Butcher: op. cit., pp. 328-338.
2. Cf. Watson: op. cit., p. 70.
3. Cf. Butcher: op. cit., p. 365.

tian churches or to interfere with their religious affairs as long as they would pay tribute to him and live peaceably under his rule.¹ He also allowed the Patriarch to return to civilization and go about his work openly. In fact the only deed he did which was definitely detrimental to the Church was the burning of all the books from the famous library in Alexandria, and this was done at the command of his superior, the Caliph Omar.² Nevertheless, this respite was short lived and soon the National Church discovered how great a mistake they had made in not resisting the invasion of Islam, and they have had to pay dearly for this mistake ever since.

2. The Suffering of the Church Under Saracen Rule

a. The Reasons for Moslem Persecution

Although at first the Moslem invaders practiced amazing leniency with the National Church, in the long run they were unable to reconcile the claims of Egyptian nationalism with their own purpose of world domination. Therefore, as soon as the Church in any way stood in their way, they did not hesitate to cut it down.

At first their persecution was directed primarily at the Church leaders with the motive of gaining as much of the wealth of the Church as possible in order to finance their regime and line their own pockets. They would arrest the Patriarch and release him only after he had promised to collect ten to twenty thousand pieces of gold as ransom money. Several of the Patriarchs had to go on extensive

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1. Fowler: op. cit., p. 52.

2. Omar's comment when asked about the books was: "If the books agree with the Koran then they are superfluous; if they differ from it they are pernicious. Therefore all should be burned."

begging tours to raise the money.¹

Another reason for persecution arose from the jealousy of Moslem workers over the fact that so many Christians held government office positions. This was due to the great superiority of education and business ability found among the Christians which made their services indispensable even though unappreciated. Often it was their own overbearing attitude and assumed superiority of action which brought persecution upon them. In 1300 A. D. the Moslem Vizir, El Maghrib, saw a Christian official riding a beautiful horse in style down the street but ignoring or actively repulsing the crowd who followed him begging for his help. This so angered the Vizir that he enacted laws which would forcibly prevent any Christian from having so much wealth and prestige.² Their ability as artisans was also envied and made the butt of persecution till finally their skill vanished.

Friction within the Church or between the two great divisions of the Church in Egypt often brought persecution upon the Christians. One party would bring charges to the Moslem authorities against the other and these excuses were readily seized upon by the government and used against the Church. For instance in 742 A. D. the Greek Church sent an illiterate needle maker named Paul to the Moslems to accuse the Coptic Church of having dishonestly acquired property by falsely representing themselves as being the National Church of Egypt. The Caliph was glad for this opportunity to confiscate much of the Church property.³ Again in 1012 A. D. John, a priest of the National Church,

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1. Worrell: op. cit., pp. 44-45.
2. Fowler: op. cit., p. 104.
3. Butcher: op. cit., p. 403.

wanted to be consecrated a bishop but was turned down by the Patriarch, Zacharias, because he was not fit for the position. In revenge he appealed to the Emir Hakim, who imprisoned Zacharias¹ and soon afterwards began a new persecution of the whole Church.²

Several times the Copts revolted against Moslem authority, but again as had been the case under Byzantine domination, they failed because of their ignorance of fighting methods and their lack of equipment. With each revolt came inevitably a pitiless retribution of such ferocity that no attempt at gaining their liberty was made after 831 A. D.³ They did at times revenge themselves on the Moslems by firing mosques, palaces and private Moslem houses.

In all of these issues, religious differences were not the real motivating factors behind the persecutions, though in almost every case they were cited as the provocation for them, until finally the average Moslem peasants became so fanatical that they persecuted the Christians without any need for a particular motive other than religion.

b. Types of Moslem Persecution

As was stated above, the first type of persecution was designed primarily to bleed the Church of its wealth both in terms of its gold and its other valuable possessions. When prominent Church leaders were imprisoned or sentenced, the Church would have to bail them out at considerable cost. When a new Patriarch was consecrated, great sums

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1. There are both Christian and Moslem authorities who testify to the fact that twice Hakim threw Zacharias to the lions but they made no move to harm him.
2. Cf. Butcher: The Story of the Church in Egypt, Vol. II., pp. 22-24.
3. Cf. Butcher: op. cit., Vol. I., p. 437.

were demanded. This often caused them great hardship, as for instance in 849 A. D., when the Patriarch Michael II was installed. They were forced to sell some of the Church plate in order to pay for his consecration, and then he died in little over a year leaving the Church with a new obligation to meet before the old debt was paid off.¹ In fact the Church became so impoverished that the golden plate used in celebrating the sacraments all had to be sold and replaced by wood or other cheap materials. Heavy taxes were levied on all Christians under various pretexts, and when they were unable to pay them, their children were sold into slavery. They had to pay a poll tax in order to be exempted from the army which they were forbidden to join anyway. Burial fees were demanded for all Christian dead, even those martyred by the Moslems, and the property of the martyred Christians was seized by the Emir. All monks were branded in order that they could be taxed an extra gold piece and all bishops paid exorbitant fees as high as 2,000 gold pieces in 704 A. D.² Besides enriching themselves from the pockets of the Christians, they enriched their mosques and public buildings with marble pillars, arches, and other ornate objects pilfered from Coptic Churches. Many Churches were completely demolished to provide these valuable materials.

The persecutions were not confined, however, to the economic sphere but soon encompassed almost every imaginable phase of life. The people endured great physical suffering and thousands of martyrs were added to their record. Often these persecutions were controlled merely

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1. Cf. Worrell: op. cit., p. 45.

2. Cf. Butcher: Vol. I, op. cit., p. 394.

by the whims of the ruling Emir. Since those changed very rapidly, the Christians were never certain of what to expect from them. A number of times there were official decrees giving the Moslems the legal right to mutilate, blind and kill all Christians. In the fourteenth century, one of these periods of unhindered massacre was carried out to such an extent that finally the King of Spain intervened in behalf of the Christians even though they were a heretical offshoot of the Catholic Church.¹ Copts were beaten and robbed with no provocation, and civil law did nothing to protect them. One of the favorite means of punishing them for some misdemeanor was to cut off their hands, and sometimes their feet as well. So the Coptic Church for the greater part of eight centuries were subject to outrage and massacre to such an extent that even as early as the ninth century they had been reduced to a small minority group in their own country — that land which at one time had been almost totally Christian.

Those who escaped martyrdom suffered other kinds of persecution which were intended to humiliate and undermine their morale more than anything. In 849 A. D. edicts were issued stating that no Christian woman could wear a girdle, which was a symbol of femininity, while the men were required to wear them. Certain prescribed colors of clothing and of turbans were required of the Christians which set them apart from the rest of the population.² For a while they were required to have patches of another color at least four inches long sewn somewhere on their clothing. At various times they were forced

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1. Cf. Fowler: op. cit., p. 106.

2. Jews were under similar restrictions though often their clothing and headgear were of even a different color from those of the Christians.

to wear heavy wooden crosses around their necks and to ring a bell when they entered a public bath. Christians were forbidden to ride any animal other than an ass or a mule and at times this regulation was made even more stringent by requiring that they always ride so as to face the animal's tail. Specially marked saddles, wooden stirrups, and rope bridles completed the picture. Christians were often branded or tattooed, so that they could not pass themselves off as Moslems and thus avoid all of these regulations.¹

Church activities were also curtailed in ingenious ways. Crosses were forbidden in their services, no processions were allowed, and they were forbidden to celebrate the Christian festivals. In order to prevent the service of communion, laws were passed forbidding the growing of grapes and the selling of wine. The Christians circumvented this law by importing raisins from Italy and soaking them in water to get a type of wine.² Also for a time even baptism services by the Nile were outlawed while sacred vessels were stolen from the churches and monasteries and sold in the market place.

Many miscellaneous persecutions were instituted for shorter periods of time. All Christian houses were required to put the figure of an ape, a dog, or a devil over the door, which in those days of deep superstition must have proved a real trial. Graves had to be left unmarked.³ Many of the people were forced into slave labor in the alabaster and stone quarries or elsewhere. In 768 A. D. even the Patriarch

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1. The custom of tattooing a cross upon the inner wrist is still very common among the Christians in Egypt today, but it is now done voluntarily and is considered a marking to be proud of.
2. Cf. Butcher: Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 449-451.
3. Cf. Watson: op. cit., pp. 72-73.

and several of his bishops were made convict laborers in the docks of Alexandria for a year. Laws were often made preventing Christians from holding any public office, but these repeatedly had to be repealed because of the great need for competent officials which were found mostly among the Christians.

3. The Condition of the Church as the Result of Moslem Conquest

a. Her Cultural Condition

At the time of the Moslem invasion in 641 A. D., the Copts were far from what they had been during the height of their power in the days of Origen and Athanasius. Nevertheless, the country was almost completely Christian, in name at least; the Church was moderately prosperous; the peasants were successful farmers to some degree; the Patriarchs and bishops were for the most part educated, though not always as consecrated as they should have been; and the Church services were conducted in the Coptic language, which was then the language of the people. By 1517 A. D., however, the Church had become a minority group within a strongly Moslem community, had lost most of her wealth and much of her property, while ignorance had blotted out a great deal of her vision. All through the Middle Ages the Egyptian Church was cut off from the stimulating and uplifting influences of Western civilization and was in constant contact with the stagnating influences of the Eastern world. The Moslems discouraged education because they saw no purpose in it, and they were little interested in social improvement because of their fatalistic attitude toward life. Slowly these ideas and standards infiltrated the population until it would have been difficult to distinguish a Christian from a Moslem merely by his character,

standard of living, activities, or even his basic beliefs.¹

b. Her Spiritual Condition

Spiritually the Coptic Church became degraded along with her economic impoverishment and cultural decay. Persistent persecution produced thousands of martyrs but also thousands of apostates. In both cases the Church lost greatly, not only in numbers but in leadership. As the Church became a minority group in the country, the Coptic language gave way to Arabic until by 1300 A. D. Coptic was retained only in the religious liturgy of the National Church.² The peasants, therefore, understood nothing of what was spoken in church and even the priests and monks knew little of what they were reading or chanting. The inevitable result was total ignorance of spiritual truths throughout the Church, and the substitution of form for inner experience.³

Corruptions also arose in the Church as a result of persecution. One of the most notorious of these was the practice of simony,⁴ which was started rather innocently by the Patriarch Michael in 882 A. D. as an emergency provision. The Patriarch had been imprisoned by the Moslem authorities and then was released on condition that he raise 20,000 gold pieces within the next four months. He made a begging tour, sold Church houses and land, and taxed the Christians, but still was unable to raise the money needed. In desperation he demanded a heavy contribution from all those selected as bishops and in this way was able to gather the necessary funds. He did not use the money for himself and

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1. Cf. Ibid., pp. 78-79.

2. Cf. Worrell: op. cit., p. 47.

3. Cf. Fowler: op. cit., p. 202.

4. The paying of an exorbitant fee for the appointment as bishop in the Church.

he was careful to select worthy bishops, but unfortunately he had set a precedent which opened the way for a great deal of corruption and his successors were not slow to take advantage of it.¹ Shenouda II in 1030 A. D. was the first Patriarch actually to sell vacant bishoprics to the highest bidder. He also gained much wealth by decreeing that all personal property of bishops would at their death revert back to the Church. Another infamous Patriarch was David of Fayoum, who finally in 1235 A. D. went so far in demanding bribes from his bishops that a council was formed for the reformation of the Church and he was forced to sign the Articles of Reform. Unfortunately, however, he did not abide by them.²

With increased ignorance came superstition which in turn produced some false theology. In 1160 A. D. a great controversy arose over the question of the efficacy of incense to forgive sins or even to encourage God's forgiveness. In the fourth century a law had been made which demanded that all Christians make a private confession of sins to a priest before taking part in communion. At the same time incense came into use in the Church for the purpose of fumigation. In the growing superstition the two elements of confession and incense came to be thought of as inseparable and it was believed that the incense was the means by which the confession ascended to God. Eventually the people stopped confessing to the priest but knelt before a lighted censer instead. By the time the controversy broke out over this, they believed in addition that somehow the incense brought forgiveness down to them from God.³ Saint worship, Mariolatry, and other superstitions thrived

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1. Cf. Butcher: Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 479-480.
2. Cf. Fowler: op. cit., pp. 85, 96-100.
3. Cf. Adeney: op. cit., p. 606.

as in the Roman Church, though the Copts have never gone to as great length in these matters as has Rome.

Therefore, at the close of the Middle Ages the Coptic Church was made up of an ignorant, superstitious, impoverished minority who were filled more with hatred for their conquerors than with love for God, and were more concerned with religious forms than with Godly character or practice. They were certainly a miserable remnant of what had once been a powerful and glorious Church, but at least they were a remnant and that tenacity with which they held onto their faith, nominal though it often was, is cause for wonder and admiration.

D. The Coptic Church From the Turkish Conquest to the Formation of the Evangelical Church

1. The Church Under Turkish Domination

A new era began for Egypt in April 1517 A. D., when Osman Sultan Selim I, the commander of the Ottoman Turks, overran the country and took control. From that day until the middle of the nineteenth century the Turks had a claim on Egypt and demanded yearly tribute from her. The local ruler set up by the Turks was usually in office only a very short period of time and he was unsupervised as long as the yearly tribute came through to the Sultan at Constantinople. As a result the rulers bled the country in order to amass as great a fortune for themselves as possible during their short stay in office.¹ Selim I set his successors an example of exploitation by making himself the sole owner of all the land of Egypt. He would sublet portions of it to local officers who in

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1. Cf. Watson: op. cit., p. 79.

turn farmed it out in smaller sections. Each one in line got his share of the profits with the result that a few people became very wealthy while the rest were even poorer than before.

Since Egypt was not the native land of the Turks, as it had become for the Arab conquerors, there was no regard taken for its welfare. Each Pasha, as the Turkish officials were called, was interested only in enriching himself at the expense of the country so there was no effort made towards justice or truth.¹

In many ways during this period the Moslems suffered along with the Christians under their alien rulers, but ultimately the Christians were given more hardships because the Turks, being Moslems, tended to be more lenient toward their Moslem subjects. However, the Turks soon learned as had previous rulers, that it was the Christians who were the best educated group, small as their training had been. They were forced to use Christians, therefore, as government officials but proved to the Moslems that this was not favoritism by imposing an extra poll tax upon each Christian. For a large part of the Turkish reign the Moslems were so busy quarreling among themselves that the Christians were left comparatively alone. However, under Hassan Pasha in the last decade before Napoleon's invasion, they were systematically persecuted, their property confiscated, and the poll tax doubled.²

2. The Coptic Church Under the French

Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt in July of 1798 and held the country for three tumultuous years. When he first landed in Alexandria

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1. Cf. Butcher: Vol. II., op. cit., pp. 242-243, 300.

2. Cf. Ibid., pp. 331-332.

the Christians in the rest of the country were put into a position of great peril, for the Moslems feared that they would revolt and join the French, who were representatives of a Christian country. The Christians feared to be outside of their homes for they were liable to assassination by the Moslems. However, when Napoleon actually did defeat the Turks and enter Cairo, it was in the guise of a Moslem deliverer. He immediately printed proclamations to be read to the common people stating himself to be a true Moslem and urging their allegiance. This was Napoleon's greatest mistake in Egypt, for the Moslems did not believe him, and he alienated the Coptic Church, which could have given him considerable support. As it was he succeeded in antagonizing everyone in spite of the fact that during his rule he maintained public security more effectively than had his predecessors for many generations before.

The Turks made an effort to regain the country but were unsuccessful against the superior numbers and superior training of the French. However, when the British came to the aid of the Turks in 1801, they succeeded together in ousting the French.¹ During the final skirmishes, however, the Moslems rose up against the French and the Christians in the city of Cairo, plundered their quarters, ruined their homes and destroyed their churches.

3. The Coptic Church Under Mohammed Ali

To the amazement and consternation of the Egyptians, the English, after wresting the land from the hands of the French, turned it over to the Turkish Sultan and withdrew their claims. The Christians

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1. Napoleon deserted his general, Kleber, and secretly returned to France with almost half of his troops, which left Kleber rebellious and almost defenseless before the combined forces of the English and the Turks.

especially felt that England had betrayed them, for she as a Christian nation had deliberately given them into the hands of their Moslem persecutors once more.¹ The result was again disastrous for the Copts, for the Turkish soldiers were quartered upon them and they used every opportunity to plunder and outrage them. The Moslems too suffered under their rule so that a rebellion was planned. It was just at this point that Mohammed Ali stepped onto the scene and became the rallying point for the scattered, rebellious Egyptians. On May 14, 1805, a popular revolt broke out in which Mohammed Ali was demanded as the leader of the government.² The Turkish ruler, Kurshid Pasha, resisted him at first but in 1806 he forced the Sultan to declare him the Pasha of Egypt.³

The entire country benefited from Mohammed Ali's rule, for he was responsible for the digging of new canals, the establishment of hospitals and schools, the development of many industries, the building up of a good police force, and the translation of European books into Arabic. He worked toward political independence for Egypt but did not succeed in gaining this, although he was given great freedom in his actions, and his family were granted the hereditary office of "Pasha," thus starting the Khedivial line of rulers.⁴

From this time on conditions began to improve for the Christians of Egypt. Although Mohammed Ali professed Islam, he was very interested in European culture and learning and so surrounded himself

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1. Cf. Kyriakos Mikhail: Copts and Moslems under British Control, p. 10.
2. There is considerable evidence to support the supposition that Mohammed Ali himself had carefully planned this revolt and its outcome, though he feigned surprise and unwillingness when he was officially asked to be the new Pasha.
3. Cf. Watson: op. cit., p. 80.
4. Cf. Butcher: Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 366-370.

with Europeans, most of whome were Christians. He found the Christians better educated and more energetic and often more trustworthy than the Moslems and so he used them for positions of public trust. However, his preference always went to the Roman Catholic, Armenian, or European Christians rather than to the Copts, wherever such a choice could be made. Unfortunately, he often murdered the Christians after he had no more use for their services. Nevertheless, the Copts from that time on enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom and protection for which they were grateful.

E. Summary

In this chapter has been set forth the development of the Coptic Church from its seeminly insignificant beginnings under the leadership of St. Mark, down to the middle of the nineteenth century.

The Coptic Church began as a small minority group within a strongly pagan environment. It grew with astonishing rapidity until Egypt was regarded as being a totally Christian nation. During the third to the fifth centuries the Egyptian Church wielded great influence over ecclesiastical affairs throughout the Roman empire. However, due to excessive preoccupation with asceticism on the one hand, and political intrigues on the other, the Church became entangled in the Monophysite heresy, which was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon. Rather than submit to the decision of this council, the Church preferred to withdraw and become an ecclesiastically independent organization. However, through systematic persecution by an endless suc-

cession of non-sympathetic rulers, both Christian and Moslem, the Church again has been reduced to a small minority group, this time within a strongly Moslem environment. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, due to the enlightened rule of Mohammed Ali, they were granted a large degree of tolerance, and thus the way was paved for Protestant missions to enter the country.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY AND ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF
THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH UPON THE COPTIC CHURCH

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THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH UPON THE COPTIC CHURCH

A. Introduction

A new day dawned for the Coptic Church in the middle of the nineteenth century. Political freedom was theirs at last, but more important, there was established in the land a new and vigorous ecclesiastical group known as the Evangelical Church. For nearly a century these two communions have existed side by side and have exerted much influence upon one another. It is the purpose of this chapter to discover the changes, both beneficial and detrimental, which have been produced in the Coptic Church due to the activity and proximity of the Evangelicals. In addition, the present situation will be examined and suggestions made as to strategies which should be utilized by the Evangelical Church in its future relationship with the Coptic Church.

B. The Coptic Church at the Time of the
Formation of the Evangelical Church

In 1854 A. D., just five years after the death of Mohammed Ali, the American Mission¹ established work in Egypt which a few years later resulted in the formation of the Evangelical Church. They found

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1. The American Mission is the name applied to the United Presbyterian Mission. Although it was not the first group to do mission work in Egypt, it was responsible for the creation of the Evangelical Church.

the Coptic Church out from under severe oppression for the first time in centuries and figuratively rubbing her eyes in an effort to believe her good fortune. Stimulating opportunities were ahead and their ecclesiastical leader was ready to take advantage of them. But just as a starving man cannot eat a huge meal at once, so the Coptic Church with its ignorant clergy, superstitious, repressed and poverty stricken laity and its dead religious forms was unable even to comprehend the possibilities of the future.

1. The Social Status of the Coptic Church

The same year in which the American Mission entered Egypt, Cyril X came to the Coptic Patriarchate. He was noted for being an active reformer of the Coptic Church. Schools were established for girls as well as for boys, pictures were destroyed in some churches, and missionaries were welcomed as allies in the interest of reform.¹

Since the Moslem Viceroy, Said Pasha (1854-1863), was also a progressive thinker and interested in reform², he and Cyril X were able to work together in a spirit of cooperation which had been unknown during all the centuries of Moslem domination. This gave the Coptic Church a higher standing than it had enjoyed before, but still the Copts were considered far from equal to their Moslem rulers and the Moslems cooperated with them only in schemes which were to their own advantage. As a general rule the Coptic people, although very poorly educated, had a higher educational standard than the Moslems. They were in much demand as government clerks, accountants, and book keepers. This training

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1. Cf. Adeney: op. cit., p. 614.

2. Cf. Julius Richter: A History of Protestant Missions in the Near East, p. 345.

gave them social prestige of a kind, but also aroused great jealousy and hatred from the Moslems.¹

2. The Doctrinal Position of the Coptic Church

As was pointed out in the first chapter of this thesis, the Coptic Church holds to the Monophysite heresy in which the chief deviation from orthodoxy lies in the practical denial of the humanity of Christ. This heretical doctrine still forms the basis for the Coptic creed, but has had little influence upon the actual life and thought of the Church. In fact through the centuries of oppression the Church sank into such poverty and ignorance that superstition and religious form came to replace all vital and living faith.

Worship services were conducted completely in the Coptic language, which had ceased to be the spoken language of the people before 1300 A. D. and was therefore unintelligible to all the laity and to a great majority of the clergy. Services lasted three hours and consisted of chanting, reading, and praying in Coptic, beating cymbals, bowing to the cross, and making a procession of the Host around the church.² Their liturgy dated back to the days of the early fathers and was three-fold. The one used on Sunday, week days and for some feast days was that of St. Basil. On the Friday before Palm Sunday they followed St. Cyril's liturgy, and for their most important midnight services at Christmas, Epiphany and Easter they used St. Gregory's.³ Sermons were very rarely delivered and then they were homilies written by one of the fathers,

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1. Cf. Gulian Lansing: Egypt's Princes, p. 240.

2. Cf. Watson: op. cit., p. 113.

3. Cf. Maternus: "The Coptic Church A. D. 40 - 1934", Catholic Missions, March 1934, pp. 67-68.

most often St. Chrysostom, and read in the Coptic language.¹ Unlike liturgical services in Europe or America, the Coptic services tended to be very noisy and undisciplined. Even the priests were sometimes guilty of indecorum and on occasion actual fights broke out during worship services to add to the clamor of cymbals, crying babies, and chattering adults. Pictures were held in great reverence by the people. Although statuary was forbidden, the people practiced the equivalent of picture worship, and many superstitions grew up around various famous paintings. The intercession of Mary or one of the saints formed a basic tenet of their creed also.

Fasting had become probably the greatest single item of importance to the Church. For them it was practically the grounds for pardon and the necessary means of salvation. More than half of the days in the year were fast days and a good Copt felt duty bound to observe them strictly. Wednesday and Friday of each week were set aside for fasting. In addition there were four big fasts: 28 to 40 days for Christmas, 55 days for Lent², 15 days in honor of the assumption of Mary, and 40 days after Pentecost, as well as a number of smaller fasts lasting for less than a week each.³ On fast days nobody is allowed to eat meat or any animal product and all cooking is done with vegetable oil. Some never ate at all until noon or three o'clock in the afternoon, with the frequent result of inefficient work done out of weakness.⁴

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1. Cf. John R. Alexander: "A Great Adventure in the Valley of the Nile", Biblical Review, July 1925, p. 355.
2. When the Moslems invaded Egypt, many unmarried girls were appropriated by them for wives. To save their daughters, the Copts quickly arranged marriages for them with their cousins, a practice they highly disapproved. As a penance for this an extra ten days of fasting were added to the usual six weeks for Lent.
3. Cf. Edward W. Lane: The Modern Egyptians, Vol. II, p. 286.
4. Cf. Butcher: Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

Every period of fasting ended in a feast such as Christmas, Epiphany, Annunciation, Palm Sunday, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost or one of the many secondary feasts in honor of various saints.¹

The Copts for centuries have held to the seven canonical sacraments, which are: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Penance, Orders, Matrimony and Unction of the Sick. Of these seven, none is considered absolutely necessary for salvation. However, baptism for the Copts is a very important sacrament for it is a common belief among them that any who die without baptism will be blind in the future life. They practice infant immersion, baptizing boys when they are forty days old and girls on their eightieth day. Immediately following the baptismal ceremony, the Holy Communion is given to the baby by dropping a little wine on his tongue.² The eucharist is administered to adults only when they have fasted from all food for about fifteen hours, have made confession to a priest and have done any necessary penance for their sins. Each communicant receives a wafer dipped in the wine and these, they believe, have been transsubstantiated into the actual body and blood of the Lord.³

Monasticism still had its influence upon the Coptic Church of the nineteenth century, though not to nearly the extent it had in earlier centuries.⁴ The Patriarch was to be chosen from among the monks and so of course had to be celibate. The people greatly revered him and even the bishops would kiss his signature before reading his letters.

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1. Cf. Maternus: op. cit., pp. 67-68.

2. Cf. Fowler: op. cit., p. 204.

3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 205-206.

4. The decline of monasticism can be illustrated by the fact that less than ten of all the old monasteries and convents of Egypt were inhabited by 1854. Cf. Davida Finney: Tomorrow's Egypt, p. 99.

Bishops too were monks and great efficacy was attached to their blessings or anathemas which they pronounced on their people. The priesthood, however, were usually married though they were forbidden to marry after their ordination. Thus the idea of celibacy had real roots in the thinking of the people, but it had not developed as extensively as it did in other Christian groups.¹

3. The Moral Standards of the Coptic Church

Within the ecclesiastical structure of the Coptic Church moral decay had set in. The financial affairs related to the Patriarchate were little short of a public scandal. Simony was openly practiced, while the Patriarch and his bishops took advantage of their offices to line their own pockets. Relatives of high officials often received bishoprics or were made priests in spite of their lack of spiritual or moral qualifications for the position.² Religious frauds were sometimes perpetrated by the priests themselves. An example of this can be found in the "miracles" of the temple at Damietta. This had been a pagan temple but was then owned by the Coptic Church. Here the Coptic priests produced visions of celestial riders and word went out of wonderful cures performed there. These were later proved by several native Evangelicals to be frauds for the purpose of making money.³

It is small wonder then that the moral standards of the Coptic people too were very low. Since they had been persecuted, despised and

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1. R. Maxwell MacBrair: "The Present State of Egypt", Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, November 1835, p. 842.
2. One bishop admitted to Dr. Lansing that he had made his nephew a priest in order to save him from conscription, although his nephew was known for his laziness and lax morals. Cf. Lansing: op. cit., p. 183.
3. Cf. Andrew Watson: The American Mission in Egypt, 1854-1896, p. 157.

denied many advantages and opportunities, they had learned to employ all sorts of cunning and deceit to save themselves from the malice of their enemies and to gain small privileges.¹ Slowly the lax ethics of their Moslem neighbors permeated their thinking until it was a common practice for a Copt to have one or more concubines. Marriage for many became a mere compact of convenience which could be terminated without great difficulty.² Drinking of alcoholic beverages was freely practiced and even encouraged by the Church to the great detriment of their witness to Moslems who are total abstainers. Therefore, the Christians of Egypt, both in faith and in practice had fallen to a position little advanced over the non-Christian society in which they found themselves.

4. The Cultural Condition of the Coptic People

Probably the first impression one would receive of the average Copts at the time of the formation of the Evangelical Church would be of their poverty and ignorance. The Church, being poor and having lost much of its interest in intellectual pursuits, had neglected the education of its people, especially in the villages. Ignorance made a good breeding ground for superstition and soon the Copts were imitating pagan and Moslem practices. They hung charms around their babies to ward off the evil eye. The hair of young children was cut off, leaving just a tuft to be dedicated to a Coptic saint to insure the intercession of that saint. If a baby died, only the coffin was placed in the cemetery. The body of the baby was buried inside the house to insure the mother's having another.³ Long periods of mourning were held for the dead and for many weeks after

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1. Of. Ibid., p. 59.

2. Of. MacBrair: op. cit., p. 841.

3. Of. Winifred Blackman: The Fellahin of Upper Egypt, p. 101.

a death it was taboo for the family to attend church at all. They veiled their women and kept them secluded and they even venerated some Moslem saints, made vows to Moslem sheikhs and fasted the Moslem fasts.¹ Christians were unable to train for positions which would help them rise in the economic world. They were often not allowed even to own or operate small stores and shops. The land belonged to the small rich minority, and Moslems had priority in getting jobs. All these factors combined to keep the people culturally degraded and dependent upon the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The clergy for the most part were on as low a cultural level as the people, with little or no education other than the memorization of the Coptic liturgy. One of the missionaries described the clergy as those "whose ignorance was only equalled by their indolence".² The office of priest was so mean in its pecuniary resources that sometimes men were taken by force into the priesthood. Some of them worked full time at another job, many carried on a brisk business in amulets and charms, but the majority of them simply begged. The people superstitiously feared the priests for the sake of their office as the vicegerents of God and as holding the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, but they often despised them for their personal character.³

A few Copts, however, were neither poor nor ignorant. These had benefited by the greater freedom and progressiveness of Mohammed Ali's reign and had exercised the Coptic knack for making money. Some of them owned large areas of land and lived in mansions. Therefore, the whole

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1. Cf. Kenneth Latourette: A History of the Expansion of Christianity, Vol. VI., p. 22.

2. U. P. Annual Report, 1884, p. 54.

3. Cf. MacBrair: op. cit., p. 842.

gamut of cultural conditions existed in the Coptic Church.

This was the Church which confronted the American Mission in 1854. These conditions gave rise to the Evangelical Church, and out of this situation the Coptic Church of today has emerged. As Andrew Watson says:

Christian in name, Christian in form, it was well typified by the mummied human body taken out of the tombs. Externally a perfect body, but no intelligence in the head, no motion in the limbs, no life in the heart, wound up in memories of fathers and councils, waiting for the Lord to say to some earnest souls, "Prophecy upon these bones... that they may live." ¹

C. Factors Necessitating the Formation of the Evangelical Church

Missionary activity actually began in 1825, when the Church Missionary Society of the Anglican communion sent five men to Egypt. Their purpose was to do all they could in cooperation with the Coptic hierarchy to bring about the self-reformation of the Coptic Church. They opened up a "Coptic Seminary" in order to raise the educational and cultural standards of the clergy.² They cooperated with the British and Foreign Bible Society in producing an Arabic version of the four gospels. In 1840 a group in England known as the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge made an Arabic translation of old Egyptian commentaries.³ Every means available was employed in the hope that the Copts themselves would catch the spirit of Protestant vitality and transform the old dead Church into a vital, active force for Christ in the country. All of these measures had the official stamp of approval from both the

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1. A. Watson: op. cit., p. 58.

2. Cf. Fowler: op. cit., p. 250.

3. Cf. Adeney: op. cit., p. 613.

Patriarch and the bishops of the Coptic Church. However, thirty-five years later the mission was convinced that this slow gentle method had failed, and that some other technique would have to be developed.¹ In 1854 when the American Mission began work in Egypt, they too had an earnest desire to introduce new life into the Coptic Church with the end in view of using the native church to reach the Moslems of the country. Soon, however, it became apparent that the Old Church was pushing away the helping hand offered to her. The missionaries had to face the alternative of trying to continue the overwhelming job of reforming the Church from within not only without the help of the authorities but in face of their active opposition, or of forming a new Church.² Actually the Coptic Church herself forced the decision by excommunicating those members who favored Protestant views. The mission then had to provide a new fellowship for these ousted Copts as well as to discover a new approach to the Coptic Church. Therefore, in 1860 the Evangelical Church was established in the hope that the activities of a rival Christian group would wake up the Coptic Church to her opportunity and responsibility.³

D. The Period of Coptic Resistance to the Evangelical Church

Although resistance by the Coptic hierarchy and some of the laity had formed the basis for the decision to establish a new communion, the opposition and persecution shown after the formation of the Evangelical Church was unprecedented in extent and severity. It steadily grew to a climax and then tapered off, leaving in its wake a strengthened Evan-

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1. C.R. Watson: op. cit., pp. 144-145.
2. Cf. Richter: op. cit., pp. 70-72.
3. U. P. Annual Report, 1891, p. 25.

gelical Church and a changed Coptic Church.

1. Reasons for Coptic Resistance

Probably the most obvious source of difficulty between the two Churches was the matter of doctrinal differences and a lack of religious forms in the Evangelical Church. The question of fasting took on major proportions and everywhere Evangelicals were accused of gluttony or of making food their religion.¹ Arguments arose over the intercession of saints, angels, or the Virgin Mary. The sufficiency of Christ's atonement without the aid of various religious rites or of good works was seriously doubted by faithful Copts. They hated to have the traditions of the fathers discounted and the Bible proclaimed as the sole authority for faith and practice. The Protestant Bible was viewed with great suspicion and the hierarchy severely opposed its random distribution among the laity.² Had Coptic resistance been founded primarily upon doctrinal variances, however, it probably would not have been able to develop to such large proportions. Many other factors entered the picture but hid behind the facade of doctrine.

One of the most potent of the underlying reasons for resistance was the fear and jealousy felt by the Coptic clergy and hierarchy toward the Evangelical Church. Protestant views were quickly spreading through the land and people were seriously questioning their old faith and allying themselves with the new Church. The Patriarch and his bishops became concerned not just over the loss of members but for their own prestige and their vested interests as well.

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1. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1897, p. 75.

2. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1901, p. 90.

Another reason lay in the close connection felt between the faith of the fathers and national identity. The Copts had maintained their national character through all the centuries of Moslem domination because of their religious tenacity. They greatly feared that if their distinct religion was absorbed by another, their race would also become extinct. Therefore, any schism in the Church was regarded as treason to the national cause.¹

Reasons for resistance did not always arise from the corrupt situation or limited outlook of the Copts. On occasion the Evangelicals behaved so unwisely and so unlovingly that there was ample provocation provided. The worst example of this came in 1869 when some Protestants in Assiut in a burst of iconoclastic fervor, incited a mob, broke into the Coptic Church and destroyed all the pictures that were in the sanctuary. Although they had not acted with the sanction of the Evangelical Church, their action aroused much fury among the Copts and added to their desire to crush the young Church out of existence.²

2. Means Used in Coptic Resistance

a. Ecclesiastical Proclamations

Due to the fact that the Copts firmly believed their ecclesiastical leaders to be Christ's representatives on earth, official proclamations issued by various members of the clergy carried great weight and were strictly obeyed. This was utilized effectively by the Coptic hierarchy during the early years of resistance. At first the word of the local priest was sufficient to deter Copts from attending Protestant ser-

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1. Cf. Richter: op. cit., p. 67.

2. Cf. Andrew Watson: op. cit., pp. 269-270.

vices or schools,¹ but eventually the effectiveness of their anathemas wore off and the word of the Patriarch himself was needed. In 1867 he circulated an official document denouncing American missionaries as "wolves in sheep's clothing" and warning the people against having anything to do with them on penalty of excommunication.² Every few months new threats of excommunication were issued and put into effect so that most of the enlightened Copts were cut off completely from their families, their religious community, and in many cases from their jobs as well, which meant great hardship for them.

b. Political Intrigue

Soon it became apparent that proclamations and threats were not sufficient to stem the tide of Protestant popularity. Defensive measures were inadequate, so the Coptic Church took the offensive. According to government regulations, the Coptic Church had legal jurisdiction over its own members, but those who had left the Coptic Church and officially allied themselves with the Evangelicals were free from Coptic legal control and responsible only to Moslem authorities. Therefore, the Coptic hierarchy entered into a series of political intrigues with the Moslem government in order to gain certain legal advantages over the Evangelicals.³

The Khedive Isma'il fell in readily with the schemes of the Patriarch for reasons of his own. He hated foreigners and was too intelligent not to know that religious teachers from free countries would teach doctrines, principles and practices which would expose the injus-

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1. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1903 , p. 153; 1895 , p. 48; 1906 , p. 53.

2. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1867 , p. 24.

3. Cf. Charles R. Watson: In the Valley of the Nile, p. 152.

tice and cruelty of his regime. At the same time he feared to make any direct attack upon the missionaries or the Evangelicals for fear of interference from foreign consular agencies. He saw therefore in the bigotry and ignorance of the Coptic hierarchy an effective tool with which to bring about his own ends.¹

The results of this collusion were seen in many different areas simultaneously. Educational work was greatly crippled by a change in the labor conscription regulation², which up to that time had exempted all students from serving as forced labor. Suddenly the boys attending Protestant schools found themselves deprived of this immunity although the Coptic students still enjoyed it. Panic seized the boys and they quickly enrolled in Coptic schools.³

Churches encountered legal difficulties in procuring sites on which to build. The Coptic clergy ordered their people not to rent or sell land to Protestants and often prevented the actual erection of churches by bribing local officials to delay the work as long as possible. Petitions and counter-petitions had to be sent to the government before the bottle-neck could be removed.⁴

The climax of this intrigue came in March of 1868 when the Patriarch made an apostolic tour of Upper Egypt with the avowed intent of rooting out the Protestant heresy once and for all. In each town he gathered together the Coptic priests or Coptic parents who had permitted

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1. Cf. A. Watson: op. cit., pp. 199-200.
2. Forced labor was used for the construction of railroads, dams, canals, and highways. Each district was required to send a stated quota of men and boys to work for a period of three months without pay and often without food other than what they could provide themselves.
3. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1868, p. 20.
4. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1873, p. 40.

Protestant churches or schools to develop, and had them publicly beaten.¹ He ordered all Arabic Bibles to be collected and burned along with other Protestant religious books. He excommunicated all those suspected of Evangelical sympathies, had some bastinadoed² by government soldiers, and threw many in prison.³

The Patriarch next resorted to direct attacks upon native Evangelical leaders. Mobs were incited to break into their homes, beat them and destroy their possessions. At Kus strenuous efforts were made to corrupt an outstanding Evangelical leader, Fam Stephanos. When these proved ineffectual, the Patriarch included Fam's name, along with several other prominent Evangelicals, in the list of scribes to be sent to the White Nile. This meant banishment, hard labor, and an early death for those sent. The mission appealed to the American and British consulates for intercession in behalf of the Evangelical Church and through their activity the sentence was revoked. This incident proved to the Khedive that it would be politically dangerous for him to continue his efforts against the Evangelical Church so the alliance between him and the Coptic Church was terminated.⁴

c. Competitive Activities

Since political avenues were now closed to the Coptic Church, she began to establish Coptic counterparts to Protestant activities. At the request of the Patriarch, the Viceroy of Egypt gave the Coptic Church 1500 acres of land for the erection of Coptic schools throughout the

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1. Cf. C. R. Watson: Egypt and the Christian Crusade, p. 169.
2. The bastinado was the application of a heavy whip upon the soles of the feet until they become raw and bleeding.
3. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1868, p. 19.
4. Cf. A. Watson: op. cit., pp. 223-224.

country. These schools were not placed in areas of greatest need but as close as possible to the site of an Evangelical school. Tuition was offered free or at very low cost and many inducements were used to wean the students away from the Evangelical schools. In addition, the Coptic schools remained open on the Sabbath and closed on Friday, the Moslem holy day, in order to secure Moslem patronage.¹ Their primary purpose was not to implement Christian education but to hinder the work of the Evangelicals as is clearly pointed out in the report for 1897, which says:

We are confirmed in our opinion that nothing is being done, in religion or spirituality, by either the Patriarchal party or the so-called reform party of the Coptic Church. Their efforts are put forth entirely to oppose and destroy the work of the Evangelical Church. There are scores of places where there are many Copts without any means for the education of their children. These are entirely neglected by them, while both the parties mentioned are striving to break up our schools in other places by opening up opposition schools, and appealing to racial and mercenary prejudices; and if it happens that they succeed, only a few months pass until their own schools are given up also, while never do they establish a school where there is not a Protestant one already in operation. They take no interest in the circulation of the Scriptures, or in training their children in the knowledge of Gospel truths. In some of their schools the Word of God is not even admitted...²

Teachers were offered jobs in the opposition schools at greatly increased salaries. Others were urged to accept lucrative posts in government service. Those who remained faithful were often ostracized from community life and abused or ridiculed in the streets.³

The Coptic churches were also forced to set up rival meetings to counteract the work of Protestant evangelists and to hold their people. As hunger for the Word of God spread, the priests were constrained to imitate the Protestants by holding Bible studies.⁴ Their motive as before

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1. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1899, p. 54.

2. U. P. Annual Report, 1897, p. 42.

3. Cf. A. Watson: op. cit., p. 154.

4. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1887, p. 20.

was not concern for the spiritual life of their flock but fear of Protestant influence.

3. Effect of Resistance on the Coptic Church

a. Increased Interest and Activity

As Protestant evangelists and colporteurs spread over the country proclaiming the Gospel and giving out the Word of God in the vernacular, those who had always considered themselves Christians began to hear of doctrines and practices entirely foreign to them and yet purported to be in the Scriptures. Bibles were eagerly bought by enemies of Protestantism in the hope that study of it would aid in refuting these new doctrines.¹ Such interest was aroused that Copts would close down their shops in order to hear a passing evangelist. Organizations were formed for Bible study among the young men. Coptic clergy began to want an education in order to be more effective in resisting Protestant arguments. They also were more anxious to know the merits of Episcopacy against those of Presbyterianism and thus were encouraged to study and evaluate their own ecclesiastical structure. Healthy interest and curiosity were in this way stimulated by controversy.²

b. Compromised Doctrinal Position

The officials of the Coptic Church, especially those who were forced to answer the many doctrinal questions which arose during this period of dispute, found themselves hard pressed to produce adequate explanations for some of the basic tenets of the Coptic faith. Fasting, picture worship and prayers to the Virgin were one by one called into question by

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1. Cf. A. Watson: op. cit., pp. 235-236.

2. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1884, p. 53.

earnest, thinking Copts. At the same time they refused to accept any answers made by the clergy that were based solely upon tradition but demanded Scriptural substantiation for any explanations given. Since Scriptural evidence could not be produced, the clergy were compelled to compromise their stand. Some began to argue that there was little difference between Copts and Protestants. One bishop who found that his parishioners refused to pay their grain tax to the Church on the grounds that they did not believe in "idolatry" or "will-worship" said: "Those of you who do not wish to worship pictures, need not worship them; those who do not wish to keep the fast, need not fast. Only live at peace and do not breed dissension in the Church."¹

c. Use of Evangelical Resources

The urgency with which the Coptic hierarchy set about to establish opposition schools and rival church activities caught the Church in an embarrassing situation. Interest in education and spiritual growth was so new and unforeseen that there were no leaders within the Church that were trained to supply the demand. Copts, hoping to thwart the educational work of the Evangelicals, sent to the official headquarters in Cairo for teachers to operate their opposition schools. The only ones available were Protestants who had been trained by the mission.² In some cases Copts sent to Syria for teachers and again were able to procure only Evangelicals.³

Preachers and teachers of Bible were also in great demand. In Assiut in 1892 the Copts earnestly requested that an evangelist be sent to preach in their church. For almost a year he ministered to that con-

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1. U. P. Annual Report, 1866 , p. 27.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 25.

3. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1905 , p. 177.

gregation, often to audiences of over a thousand.¹ A few years later an urgent call came from some of the Copts of Girgeh for the loan of a Bible woman. Their own Church had none to send, so the Evangelicals sent them one. She went for two weeks but was retained for two months and then was relinquished with great reluctance.² At times more requests were made for preachers and teachers than the Evangelicals were able to supply.

In addition to personnel, literature was badly needed by Coptic schools and churches, and again their own Church was unable to supply them. One opposition school introduced Protestant text-books into its curriculum in order to provide some religious instruction. Coptic churches sent for Evangelical Sunday-School lesson papers and copies of the catechism, and priests bought commentaries on the Bible from the Protestant bookshops. Slowly, therefore, Protestant doctrine and outlook infiltrated the Church.³

d. Changed Attitudes

On many occasions the Copts were able through the strength of their opposition to achieve their goal of greatly hindering or even annihilating the Evangelical work in various areas, but in almost every case their apparent success meant actual defeat. Gradually even the ignorant superstitious villagers began to lose their fear of ecclesiastical anathemas.⁴ Many became disgusted at the pettiness and cruelty with which the persecution was carried out. The attempted banishment of Fam Stephanos, who was greatly respected by Copts as well as Protestants, became so notorious a conflict that it caused a revulsion of popular opinion

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1. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1892, p. 54.

2. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1905, p. 187.

3. Cf. A. Watson: op. cit., p. 240.

4. Cf. Robert S. McClenahan: "Modern Religious Tendencies in Egypt", New Orient, p. 395.

in favor of the Evangelicals.¹

e. The Formation of a Reform Party

Probably the most far-reaching and encouraging result of the Coptic persecution came in 1890 when a large group of young, intelligent, educated laymen within the Coptic Church formed a society for the purpose of introducing various measures of Church reform. Their first objective was to remedy the scandalous mismanagement by the Patriarch of Church funds. A council of twelve laymen was elected to regulate the administration of Church finances under the presidency of the Patriarch Cyril.² The Patriarch refused to accept such "interference" and retaliated by excommunicating their leader, Athanasius of Sanabu. In the struggle that followed, the people sided with the Patriarch and proceeded to boycott church activities until the reform measures were dropped.³

Having failed in this phase of reform, the society turned their attention to the improvement of social conditions in the Church. A committee carefully prepared resolutions against the mourning and marriage customs, which were pagan in many respects. The Patriarch approved these and they were gradually put into effect.⁴ Efforts were made to secure higher educational requirements for the clergy and definite salaries for the priests in order to eliminate the necessity for begging. Progress was slow because of the suspicion and antagonism of the clergy, but eventually a Coptic College was founded in Cairo.⁵

As one can readily discern, this movement was not motivated by

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1. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1868 , pp. 21-23.
2. Cf. Lansing: op. cit., p. 263.
3. Cf. A. Watson: op. cit., pp. 391-393.
4. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1908 , p. 52.
5. Cf. Richter: op. cit., p. 343.

the desire for awakened spiritual life but primarily by a concern for social, educational and economic reform. Nevertheless, such concern was unique in the history of the Coptic Church since the Moslem invasion and demonstrated the fact that new life blood was beginning to trickle through the atrophied veins of the dead Church.

E. The Period of Coptic Toleration Toward the Evangelical Church

Changes slowly came into the Coptic Church until the two Churches outwardly resembled one another rather closely. Fewer Copts joined the Evangelicals because they found satisfaction in their own communion. A spirit of tolerance arose in the Coptic Church and although there was little in the way of cooperation, there was far less active opposition.

1. Changes in the Coptic Church Which Brought About Toleration

a. Evangelical Influences upon Coptic Worship

Since the Evangelical Church was primarily the result of United Presbyterian missionary activity, they imitated the mission in conducting simple, informal worship services in buildings that were plain and unadorned. There were no pictures, no ritual, and no altar. Services consisted primarily of singing, extemporaneous prayer, Scripture reading and preaching, all of which was in the vernacular. These customs stood out in severe contrast to the Coptic services and led many of the Copts to demand reform in worship and doctrine.¹ Arabic was introduced in place of the dead Coptic language. Sermons were in Arabic, the liturgy was translated, and a bilingual service book was printed.² Preaching became an important part

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1. Cf. C. R. Watson: In the Valley of the Nile, p. 179.

2. Cf. W. W. Cash: "Religious Life in Egypt", The East and the West, October 1923, p. 320.

of the service and the homilies of the Church fathers fell into disuse. Priests kept silent about the duty of worshipping pictures and in some places the pictures were actually removed to some private room.¹ In the larger cities Protestant songs were adopted and even extemporaneous prayer became common.² The attitude toward fasting became one of relative indifference in contrast to the previous attitude of regarding this as necessary for salvation. In some towns the confessional was abolished and the priests refused to baptize children of inactive or unbelieving Copts.³ So in less than half a century, far more changes took place than in the 1500 years preceding.

b. Evangelical Influence Upon Coptic Church Activities

One of the first innovations made in the program of the Coptic Church was in the field of women's work. Coptic Churches provided only a lofty, heavily latticed gallery for the women. Nothing could be seen and little could be heard from this position.⁴ The extensive work done by Evangelical Bible women goaded the Coptic priests to action. Wednesday morning Bible studies were started for women. The study was done in colloquial Arabic and the women were allowed to sit downstairs, where they could see and hear. The women responded with great eagerness so that sometimes as many as five hundred would attend.⁵

As the Evangelical Church expanded its program of Christian Education to include Sunday Schools, Youth groups, Y. M. C. A. and other related activities, the Coptic Church followed suit. Sunday Schools were

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1. Cf. A. Watson: op. cit., p. 390.

2. Cf. Finney: op. cit., p. 114.

3. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1904, p. 51.

4. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1891, p. 29.

5. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1892, p. 59.

opened and patterned after those of the Evangelicals. Special classes were held for the study of liturgy and Church symbolism. At first the Copts had to use Protestant lesson papers, but soon they produced their own leaflets and distributed them to their schools.¹ Youth Associations, clubs, and eventually summer camps and conferences were added to the Church program in order to appeal to the Coptic youth. Each year groups of young men were given the opportunity to visit one of the Coptic monasteries in the desert and spend periods of retreat in worship and meditation there.²

Other activities were geared especially for Coptic students in government universities. An organization known as the "Friends of the Bible" was started among students in response to the stimulated interest in Bible study. A Coptic branch of the Y. M. C. A. also came into existence and there grew up a small but influential band of young men who sought to increase the spiritual life and power of the Old Church. Unfortunately both of these organizations at the close of World War I were captivated by the political fervor of the day and spiritual efforts disappeared in an enthusiastic nationalism which swept the country.³

c. Evangelical Influence Upon Coptic Education

Education was from the beginning an important tool of the Evangelical Church. The missionaries began schools in most of the large centers and trained many Egyptian teachers who spread education to the villages. Soon the Evangelical Church was famous for its high literacy rate

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1. Of. John R. Alexander: "A Great Adventure in the Valley of the Nile", Biblical Review, July 1925, p. 374.
2. Of. Makary el Souriany: "The Spirit of Coptic Worship", World Christian Education, Vol. X, 1st Quarter 1955, p. 6.
3. Of. Cash: op. cit., pp. 321-322.

and its educated leadership. Thousands of Copts enrolled in these schools so that the Evangelical Church was responsible for making the Coptic community next to the Protestant the best educated and most enlightened part of the population.¹ As soon as possible, the Copts also opened schools and were forced by popular demand to use the Bible as a text book. Very shortly, religious instruction and attendance at Sunday services became obligatory for all of their pupils.²

The reform party in the Coptic Church put pressure on the Patriarch to provide higher education for Coptic young people, especially for the clergy. This need was strongly felt because of the constant contact between the highly trained Protestant ministers and the ignorant, sometimes illiterate Coptic priests. Gradually the number of schools increased until in 1939 the Coptic community was supporting over seventy-five primary schools and twelve secondary schools. Two Coptic seminaries were established for the instruction of monks, priests, and religious leaders and plans were made for the founding of a Coptic University, but due to governmental disapproval the university has never been built.³

There was considerable Evangelical influence exerted in education through Protestant books and literature as well. Coptic clerical students purchased commentaries and various devotional books from the Protestants. One of their leaders translated Matthew Henry's commentary into Arabic for use in their seminaries.⁴ A young Coptic editor in Tanta sought advice from the Evangelicals as to how he could increase the knowledge of the Bible and spiritual truth through his religious monthly. He

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1. Cf. Alexander: op. cit., p. 373.
2. Cf. Richter: op. cit., p. 344.
3. Cf. Finney: op. cit., p. 99.
4. Cf. Alexander: op. cit., p. 374.

accepted proffered materials prepared by Protestants and they circulated among his seven hundred subscribers.¹ So in many direct and indirect ways Coptic education has been influenced by Protestant views.

d. Evangelical Influence Upon Coptic Church Government

In the early 1920's a new movement arose which was semi-Evangelical in nature and was led by a well-educated priest with Evangelical views. This group publicly and persistently urged the hierarchy to undertake reform along four lines: (1) to eliminate practices having no New Testament basis, (2) to revise the liturgy as to content, (3) to reform Church doctrine and bring it in line with orthodoxy, and (4) to permit all levels of the clergy to marry. The hierarchy resisted these innovations and "unfrocked" the priest who headed the group.² However, other priests and bishops have taken up the cry and the desire for reform is becoming more insistent in all parts of the Church, so that the day is probably not far distant before definite steps will be taken to improve Church government.

e. Evangelical Influence Upon Coptic Social Outlook

The Evangelical Church, having been founded and led by missionaries from Western nations where freedom and social equality were the established order, caught much of their spirit of liberty and of personal worth. They began to see themselves not as a groveling minority whose existence was dependent upon the whims of the majority, but as a part of the universal Church with a valuable mission to be accomplished. This new outlook had tremendous psychological effects both on themselves

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1. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1904, p. 51.
2. Cf. Alexander: op. cit., p. 375.

and on the Coptic Church. Copts too began to shed the fears and inhibitions that had developed through centuries of discrimination. They lost many of the objectionable qualities characteristic of an insecure minority, and began to take their place as businessmen, accountants, physicians, and lawyers.¹

A new appreciation of the worth of others also developed. Protestants, as they studied the Scriptures and associated with missionaries, began to see the inherent evil in owning slaves² and one by one they set them free. This shamed the Copts into doing likewise.³ Through political agitation they aroused the public conscience as well until slavery was finally abolished by law.

A greater concern was felt for needy groups within the Church. Orphanages and hospitals were founded and a large home was established for children of tuberculosis patients. Today there are several hundred voluntary societies in the Coptic Church that are responsible for various types of charitable work, while fifty years ago there were none.⁴

2. The Effect of Toleration Upon the Spiritual Life of the Coptic Church

During times of persecution, Protestants longed for the day of toleration, but when it arrived there were detrimental as well as beneficial effects upon the Coptic Church. The many changes which came into Coptic church, school, and social life were effected with the primary aim of holding rather than of edifying the people. These new features gave a semblance of life and blinded the people to their need for a deeper

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1. Cf. Galatoli: Egypt in Midpassage, p. 93.

2. The slaves were from the black-skinned Berber tribes which live along the border of Egypt and the Sudan.

3. Cf. A. Watson: op. cit., p. 297.

4. Cf. Geoffrey Allen: Egypt -- What of the Church?, pp. 10-11.

change.¹ There was a pronounced decrease in the number of Copts joining the Evangelical Church, yet in most localities the Coptic Church still failed to give the people an adequate spiritual diet. Although religious forms had changed to closely approximate those of the Protestant Church, the people were still "holding a form of godliness having denied the power thereof".² This superficial resemblance produced a smug, self-satisfied attitude and made the Copts less approachable.

Another detrimental effect of toleration was a general trend toward laxness in the Church. The hierarchy became less dogmatic in pointing out differences between the Coptic faith and other religious views. This produced a gradually accelerated rate of perversions from the faith. Some drifted into the Protestant fold not out of conviction but in order to avoid the necessity for fasting. Many professed Islam until by 1932 an average of eight hundred a year became Moslems,³ in spite of the fact that there was no serious pressure exerted to persuade them to renounce their faith. A large percentage of these "converts" turned to Islam because of the facility of gaining a divorce under Moslem law. This trend was further abetted by the rise of nationalism shortly following World War I which united the country on a basis of nationality and partially dissolved religious barriers.⁴

There have been many beneficial results of toleration as well. Old prejudices, empty rituals, and corrupt practices have been abolished; the Coptic Church has slowly been waking out of her stupor; and the way has been prepared for a new era of increased cooperation.

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1. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1906 , p. 52.

2. II Timothy 3:5

3. Cf. Paton: "The Missionary Significance of the Last Ten Years", International Review of Missions, p. 191.

4. Cf. Encyclopaedia Britannica: "Copts", 14th edition, Vol. VI, p. 413.

F. The Movement Toward Cooperation with the Evangelical Church

1. Reasons for Increasing Cooperation

As opposition gradually subsided into toleration, so toleration slowly developed into cooperation. Attitudes of jealousy and suspicion disappeared as the two Churches became increasingly similar in their activities and form of worship. A new sense of responsibility for the evangelization of Moslems developed within both communions and resulted in combined efforts in witnessing.¹ Gradually the truth that "when one Church is weak, all are weak" began to dawn upon all. Greater horizons of effective witness opened before the Christian community. There were the remedial tasks of caring for the aged, the sick, the blind, and the underprivileged. Each Church had done enough pioneering work in these areas to realize that greater efficiency and effectiveness could be obtained through cooperation.² A new need arose for united political action in order to preserve the rights of the Christian minority against Moslem restrictions on religious and economic freedom. This became particularly acute in the early 1940's and resulted in the establishment of cooperative organizations which have proved very influential.³

In addition to these factors, the Coptic Church has not been immune to the religious trends of the Christian world today, so that a very real reason for greater cooperation has come through increasing concern for ecumenicity. The development of the ecumenical movement in Egypt has been steady, spontaneous and unforced. Personal friendship led

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1. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1913, p. 83.
2. Cf. S. A. Morrison: "The Churches of the Near East", Ecumenical Review, Spring 1949, p. 284.
3. Cf. S. A. Morrison: "Struggle for Religious Freedom in Egypt", The East and the West Review, October 1941, p. 195.

to informal consultation and then to official collaboration. Common dangers led to active cooperation almost without the necessity for conscious effort in developing an ecumenical spirit.¹

2. Cooperative Movements

a. Unofficial Moves Toward Cooperation

Almost from the very beginning of the Evangelical Church there have been occasional examples of cooperation between the two Churches, but these were only in local situations and without the approval of the Coptic hierarchy. As early as 1875 two pupils from a mission institution were asked to develop work in a village where they remained for over two years conducting nightly meetings for Bible study at the expense of the Coptic community.² Young, educated Coptic reformers had very friendly relations with the Evangelical Church and frequently invited Protestant workers and pastors to conduct their religious meetings. They always showed genuine appreciation of such services.³

In 1911 a Coptic Congress, which dealt with national and civil matters, was held in Assiut. Many of the conspicuous leaders and speakers at this convention were Protestants and the group as a whole showed a moral stand and a spirit of moderation far beyond their usual standards.⁴

Recently there has been a new experiment in evangelistic meetings which has won the support of many Copts as well as Protestants. An interdenominational society known as "The Society for the Salvation of Souls" has established fifteen branches and several sub-branches in large

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1. Cf. S.A. Morrison: "The Ecumenical Movement in Egypt", Ecumenical Review, October 1950, p. 28.

2. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1877, p. 54.

3. Cf. U. P. Annual Report, 1891, p. 26.

4. Cf. C. R. Watson: Report of the Visit of the Corresponding Secretary to Egypt and the Levant, 1912, p. 20.

centers in Egypt. Their aim is to encourage Christians to do more active witnessing both to other Christians and to Moslems. Then for several months in the year they hold nightly open air evangelistic meetings which draw crowds of people. This society has not been officially recognized by the Coptic hierarchy, but many spiritually minded Copts belong to it and do all they can to further its activities.¹

b. The Fellowship of Unity

The first move toward official cooperation was given impetus by the Lambeth Conference in England in 1920, which sent out an appeal for unity among all the non-Roman Churches of Egypt. Bishop Gwynne, the Anglican Bishop for Egypt and the Sudan, responded to this appeal by calling a conference in 1921 for representatives of the Coptic, Greek Orthodox, Syrian, Armenian, Abyssinian, Anglican and Evangelical clergy.² The conference was held at Helwan with the primary objective of establishing friendship between the groups so that questions upon which there was difference of opinion could be discussed frankly in an atmosphere of Christian fellowship.

In 1922 a second conference was held which included laymen as well as clergy and out of this gathering came the organization known as the "Fellowship of Unity". Members joined as individuals, not as representatives of their Churches, nevertheless, the various administrative leaders gave their sanction to the activities of the group.³ This group did a great deal to break down hostility and suspicion between the Churches.

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1. Cf. H. E. Philips: "A Century of Missions in Retrospect", Missionary Horizons, January 1954, p. 267.

2. Cf. Paton: op. cit., p. 198.

3. Cf. S. A. Morrison: "The Ecumenical Movement in Egypt", Ecumenical Review, October 1950, p. 26.

Friendship was established and the determination to know and understand one another better grew rapidly. They resolved to visit the Churches of other communions and to exchange pulpits occasionally. Arrangements were made to hold meetings for fellowship and study at various intervals during the year. Also an annual joint worship service was started at which one of the Churches acted as host each year and took the main lead, while representatives from the others took their share in the reading of Scripture or in prayer.¹ Through publications the group extended its influence throughout the Churches and won increasing support from both clergy and laymen. United efforts were made in relieving distressed Christian people in Asia Minor where the Turks were carrying on severe persecutions, and attacks were made upon the evils of white-slave traffic, venereal disease, and drunkenness.² In this way, the organization contributed greatly to the cause of cooperation.

c. Committee of Liaison Between the Non-Moslem Communities in Egypt

In June 1938, a measure was introduced into the Egyptian Senate whose purpose was to make illegal the teaching of Christianity in the schools to children under sixteen years of age. It did not pass. However, in April 1940, the Arabic press reported that the Council of Ministers had approved the following draft law for submission to Parliament:

Article I: Religious propaganda in whatever form is forbidden outside buildings which are specially designed for the practice of religion or places which procure a special permit for this purpose.

Article II: The following are considered to be aspects of religious propaganda if they occur in educational institutions: (a) Making or allowing pupils to participate in lessons on a religion other than

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1. Cf. Allen: op. cit., pp. 14-15.

2. Cf. L. H. Gwynne: "An Effort Towards Unity in Egypt", The East and the West, January 1924, pp. 5-6.

their own; (b) making or allowing pupils to participate in prayers or allowing them to listen to religious addresses on a faith other than their own; (c) distributing to pupils publications or tracts which contradict their religious convictions. (The above regulations apply also to medical and charitable institutions when directed towards patients or clients.)¹

This pending restriction struck consternation into all Christian groups and issued in discussions between educationalists and Church leaders which prepared the way for the formation in 1940 of a widely representative Christian group which met every three weeks to study the subject of "The Church and International Order" under the auspices of the World Council of Churches. Through the activities of this group there was built up a relationship of mutual trust between leaders of different Churches, thus paving the way for more official forms of cooperation.²

In 1944 a new draft law was proposed similar to the one in 1940 but adding that the Ministry of Education must sanction the appointment of all teachers, must determine the qualifications of any foreign teachers, and must lay down the curriculum of all schools. Included in this law were provisions which robbed the Christian courts of many cherished rights and opened the door to a still greater loss of Church membership to Islam by offering certain legal advantages to the Christian who became a Moslem.³ This law struck right at the heart of all the Christian Churches of Egypt so that there was an urgent necessity for united action to be taken. The committee on "The Church and International Order" took the initiative in inviting leaders of the Christian communions to a discussion on how to resist the government proposals. From this discus-

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1. S. A. Morrison: "Struggle for Religious Liberty in Egypt", The East and the West Review, October 1941, p. 195-197
2. Cf. S. A. Morrison: "The Ecumenical Movement in Egypt", Ecumenical Review, October 1950, p. 26.
3. Cf. S. A. Morrison: "The Churches of the Near East", Ecumenical Review, Spring 1949, p. 280.

sion on December 29, 1944 came the "Committee of Liaison Between the Non-Moslem Communities in Egypt". Included in this group were Roman Catholics and some Jews.

At first this committee also was unofficial, made up of leaders of the various Churches who were concerned about the rights and freedoms of Christians in Egypt. Soon, however, the Churches saw the advantage of united action and appointed official delegates to the Committee. They met at least once a month and at first primarily engaged in defending their legal rights. As that problem became less acute, they combined their efforts in various constructive programs such as work among the blind, the Laubach literacy campaign, and an annual evangelistic drive called the "Week of Witness". They took a lead in promoting a common Christian witness on serious questions of morality such as divorce, the quality of cinema films, and standards of social and personal conduct.¹

As a spirit of friendship and mutual understanding emerged, the Committee was able to go one step farther and study the causes for tension between the different Churches and consider some arrangement by which certain Churches could be persuaded to refrain from actions which offended others. It was agreed that no Church would admit members of other Churches whose sole aim in changing communion was to secure an easy divorce or gain some modification of personal status.² No definite action has been taken to form a concordat of Churches to arbitrate these difficulties, but the freedom shown in the discussion of problems which have long been sore points is a great stride toward true unity of spirit.

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1. Cf. S. A. Morrison: "The Ecumenical Movement in Egypt", Ecumenical Review, October 1950, pp. 27-28.
2. Cf. S. A. Morrison: "The Churches of the Near East", Ecumenical Review, Spring 1949, p. 283.

3. Factors Hindering Complete Cooperation

Although much progress has been made toward cooperation between the Coptic and the Evangelical Churches, there remain a number of barriers which deter both groups from wanting more complete unity. Uppermost among these is the great doctrinal differences which still exist between the Churches. The Coptic Church still maintains her stand as a Monophysite Church, continues to venerate the Virgin and the Saints beyond the point at which Protestants can concur, and places more emphasis upon the sacraments than do the Protestants. At the same time she deplores the lack of an episcopal order in the Evangelical Church and regards her own communion as being the only true Church. Because of these differences she will co-operate only with assemblies which pursue practical aims of common actions and not with those which undertake to examine dogmatic questions.¹ Coptic representatives in doctrinal assemblies are required to speak only the opinion of the whole Church and in no way to deviate from it. Therefore "the readiness to reconsider one's Church in the light of the Scriptures" which is usually regarded as the basic condition of ecumenical intercourse sounds to them like an invitation to become Protestant and is therefore repudiated.²

Suspicion and intrigue are very active in the relationships between one section of the Coptic Church and another as well as between Copts and Evangelicals. This has been aggravated by the fact that the majority of the Evangelical Church have become members at the expense of the Coptic Church. This is considered by the Copts as proselytizing.³ Also

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1. Cf. "The Orthodox Churches", Ecumenical Chronicle, 1948-1949, p. 436.
2. Cf. L. Zander: "The Ecumenical Movement and the Orthodox Church", Ecumenical Review, Spring 1949, p. 269.
3. Cf. Paton: op. cit., p. 194.

Protestants have too often shown a lack of concern and understanding toward the Coptic Church and have tended to condemn her rather than aid her, which contributes to her mistrust. Denominationalism recently made itself felt in Egypt with the entrance of numerous smaller sects. This division within the Protestant fold has increased Coptic reluctance to join the Evangelicals in any but superficial efforts toward unity.¹

4. Proposed Strategy for Future Relationships

Since the Coptic Church is loathe as yet to enter into any alliance which has doctrinal implications, the best strategy for the present is to continue cooperative action in evangelistic, educational and social life until sufficient understanding and trust has been fostered to make the time ripe for theological discussions of doctrine and church order. Personal friendships should be developed between the leaders of the two Churches whenever possible and proselytizing will have to cease completely if mutual confidence is to be restored. In this regard it would be wise for the Evangelical Church to imitate the policy of the Anglican Church in Egypt. In its "working principles" it is stated that the distinguishing mark of membership in the Church is Christian witness to the Moslem population and that it covets no accessions except those men and women who are the result of such evangelistic effort or who desire to share in it. Most applicants from other Christian Churches are urged to remain in their own communion and do all in their power to strengthen it. At the same time the Anglican Church seeks to encourage and cooperate with other communions in any effort towards revival.²

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1. Cf. Hamilcar S. Alivisatos: "Orthodoxy, Protestantism and the World Council of Churches", *Ecumenical Review*, April 1954, pp. 283-284.

2. Cf. S. A. Morrison: "The Churches of the Near East", *Ecumenical Review*, Spring 1949, p. 282.

Various activities which exist separately in each Church could be combined on a local as well as a national scale. Among these are Young Men's leagues, Temperance leagues, Debating leagues, and even Bible Study leagues. Such integration would not compromise either communion, yet would be an important step toward greater oneness.¹

Organic union of the two Churches is out of the question for many years to come but the two groups should be able to maintain a functional unity which succeeds in strengthening and supplementing all phases of Church activity and thereby furthers the coming of the Kingdom of God to the land of Egypt.

G..Summary

This chapter portrays the corrupt condition of the Coptic Church in 1854, when American missionary work was founded in Egypt, and then traces the development of changes in the Coptic Church to the present day. Bitter opposition and animosity toward the Evangelical Church was characteristic of the Church until the turn of the century. Their hatred was expressed first in persecution of their own members who evidenced an interest in Evangelical views or activities. Then active hostility was directed at the leaders of the Protestant Church. Progress was hindered at every turn by the use of threats, political alliances, physical compulsion and competitive activities. The result was a greatly increased interest in spiritual affairs due to the great commotion being made over them, and a far more active Coptic Church because of the nec-

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1. Cf. O..R..Watson: Report of the Visit of the Corresponding Secretary to Egypt and the Levant, 1912, p. 21.

essity for duplicating Protestant activities wherever possible. A reform party developed within the Coptic Church which brought about some needed changes in social areas but left untouched the realms of greatest spiritual deficiency in the life of the Church. Outward transformation in worship, practice and education as well as inward changes in social attitudes were brought about largely through proximity to and competition with the Evangelical Church, until the two groups became sufficiently similar to make possible a spirit of toleration.

Although the original intent of the missionary activity in Egypt was to cooperate with the Coptic leadership in bringing about reform within the Old Church, it has only been since the first World War that any real cooperation has been realized except for scattered instances brought about in local areas by enlightened priests. Gradually, however, barriers have broken down and needs have arisen which have demanded united action and forced the Christian communions of Egypt to combine forces. Inter-communal organizations have been established to take social and political action in behalf of all Christians in Egypt. This new trend has not resulted in perfect unanimity or in any moves toward organic union, but it has done much to bring about greater understanding and appreciation between the Churches and to pave the way for more effective work and witness in the future.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A. Summary

It has been the purpose of this thesis to trace carefully the development of the Coptic Church from its founding in the first century until the present day, with particular emphasis upon this last century during which the Evangelical Church was established, in order to determine the extent and the significance of the influence which the young Church has exerted over the old one.

It was discovered that according to tradition the Coptic Church was started and organized by St. Mark in the city of Alexandria. The Church grew rapidly in spite of severe and often inhuman tortures applied by the pagans to the Christians, until by the fourth century A. D., Alexandria was regarded as one of the leading Christian centers of the world. The Church prospered and produced outstanding ecclesiastical and educational leaders, such as Clement, Origen, and Athanasius whose opinions carried much weight even in Constantinople and Rome.

Several detrimental influences then entered the Church in Egypt and proved to be her ruin. Monasticism originated here and took its most extreme form both in the tremendous numbers who turned to monastic life, and in the rigorous type of asceticism which was practiced by those who withdrew into the desert. Secularism and love of power claimed the Patriarchs of the latter part of the fifth and the sixth centuries so that orthodoxy and orthopraxy were sacrificed in the struggle over ecclesiastical supremacy. Heresies harassed the Church in rapid succession, climaxing in the Monophysite controversy in which the Coptic Church sided

against orthodoxy and the decision of the Council of Chalcedon. From this time on the Coptic Church was a separate ecclesiastical body from the rest of Christendom.

The Greek Orthodox minority in Egypt formed the official state Church and so persecuted the Copts that they welcomed the Moslems in the seventh century as deliverers from their Christian oppressors. Soon, however, the yoke of Islam fell heavily about their shoulders and for centuries they were greatly persecuted. Many died for their faith and many recanted so that the Copts became an increasingly small minority in the land. Ignorance and persecution led to a superstitious reliance upon religious form while knowledge of the content of their faith vanished. Even the clergy were illiterate beggars unable to be shepherds of their people.

The nineteenth century opened with Mohammed Ali on the throne of Egypt and a new progressive atmosphere in the air. Religious freedom came to the Copts with the cessation of persecution, but the Church was too degraded to realize her new opportunities. It was at this point that the Evangelical Church was established after an unsuccessful attempt by foreign missionaries to reform the Coptic Church. This young Church was filled with zeal for the Word of God, emphasized the value of content over form, and overflowed with evangelistic enthusiasm. Copts were confronted with the Gospel for the first time and were attracted by the simple sincerity of Protestant worship services so that they flocked by the hundreds into the Evangelical fold. Alarmed and jealous, the Coptic clergy rallied their defenses, but finding them inadequate they took the offensive, stirring up persecution and duplicating Protestant activities. These measures succeeded in holding many Copts but failed for the most part to change the inner heart of the Coptic Church.

A more tolerant attitude grew up in the Coptic Church and gradually warmed into a desire for cooperation within limited areas. Due to the many doctrinal differences still existing between the two Churches, cooperation has been able to develop only in the social and political fields. The two communions have combined forces in meeting the social problems of their membership and in protecting their legal rights in face of the Moslem government. Occasional joint worship services and evangelistic campaigns have laid the foundation for free discussion of doctrinal variations which should eventually result in greater understanding and unanimity.

B. Conclusion

In the examination of Coptic Church history it was noted that there was an abrupt change of development during the last half of the nineteenth century. After more than a dozen centuries of steady decline and degradation, the Church began to make rapid strides in the direction of education, Church reform and social progress. Although there were social and political factors which had great influence during this period, these were found to be inadequate to have produced such an overwhelming change. On the other hand the establishment of a vital, young Protestant Church in rivalry with the old Church was seen to have stimulated her to new interest and activity. Due to the fact that the changes produced in the Coptic Church were in the direction of gaining greater similarity to the Protestant Church, it was concluded that the influence of the younger Church was the primary factor in the rejuvenation of the old Church.

It was further found that the underlying motive for most of

the reforms that have taken place within the Coptic Church was not the desire for a spiritual awakening but the fear that the Protestant Church would deplete the old Church and alienate her members. Therefore, changes have tended to be superficial with an aim at being sufficiently similar in appearance to satisfy the clamor for reform which has arisen due to Evangelical influence and the distribution of Scripture. Most of these steps toward rejuvenation have originated with the enlightened laity, educated in Protestant schools, who have stimulated the Coptic hierarchy to action. Radical moves have been made to rid worship services of meaningless mummery and superstitious practices and to reinstate the preaching of God's Word to its proper position of centrality. Picture worship and the confessional have practically disappeared altogether and fasting has been greatly modified and reduced.

Church activities among women and students have received especial impetus because of similar emphases found in the Evangelical Church. Bible study groups and efforts toward social welfare and reform have grown up and been effective in waking the Church to its wider responsibilities. However, nationalism among the people and apathy within the hierarchy have prevented deep spiritual revival in the Coptic Church and have deflected many movements such as the Reform Party and the "Friends of the Bible" from their original purpose of doctrinal and ecclesiastical reform. Therefore, the Coptic Church today, although far more alert and sensitive to her needs and her responsibility to meet those needs, and far more active in her Church program, is still unchanged in basic doctrine and only very partially transformed in its spiritual life.

It was concluded that the future relationship between the two Churches should develop and strengthen all activities which involve

social action without bringing in dogmatic discussion until a firmer basis of mutual trust and appreciation has been established. It was suggested also that there should be no move at present towards organic union because it would compromise the position of both groups and tend to arouse antagonism. Emphasis should be placed upon joint activities and common needs until the day when the Coptic Church has undergone a genuine spiritual revival which then would make possible a truly united Church in Egypt.

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