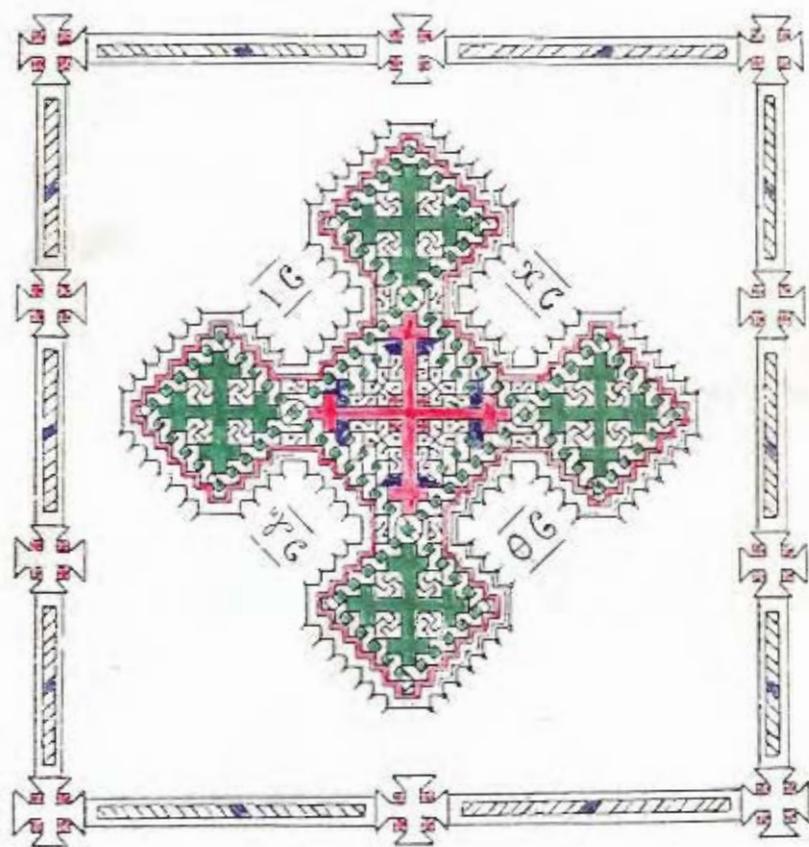


# THE STORY OF THE COPTS

THE TRUE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN EGYPT

by  
Iris Habib el Masri



## BOOK II

FROM THE ARAB CONQUEST  
TO  
THE PRESENT TIME

# THE STORY OF THE COPTS

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## BOOK II

FROM THE ARAB CONQUEST TO  
THE TIME OF ABBA SHENOUDA III

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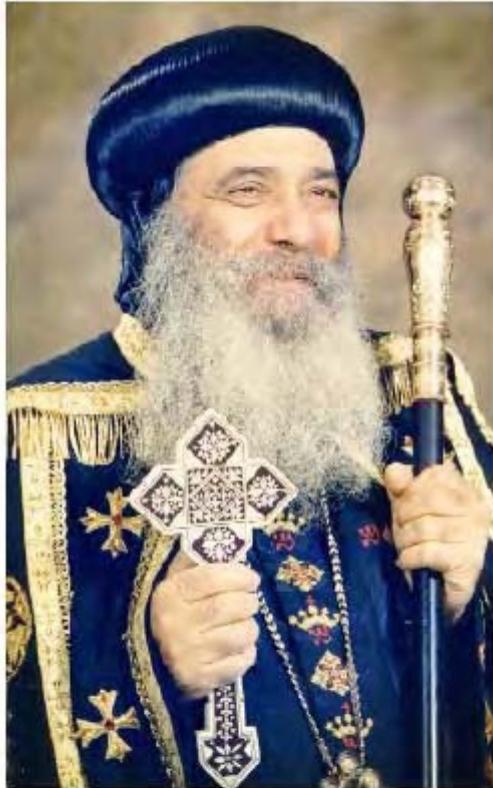
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**Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, King of Kings and  
Lord of lords**



**THE BEHOLDER OF GOD  
MARK THE EVANGELIST  
SAINT AND MARTYR**



*H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of  
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark*



**His Grace Bishop Daniel  
Bishop of Sydney and Affiliated Regions**



Coptic textile design showing  
the Coptic "Looped" Cross.  
(IV-V Centuries)

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"In that day there will be an altar  
to the Lord in the heart of Egypt."  
(Isaiah 19:19)

The Coptic Orthodox Church is one of the oldest Christian churches in the world. The Copts believe that it is the only church that has kept the Orthodox faith and struggled - with no violation - many centuries to save it without any changes from the teachings of early Christianity, and offered thousands upon thousands on the altar of the martyrdom. Truly, they call it the Church of the Martyrs.

The author voluntarily did more than her best to fulfill this great work. She spent many years in researching in history books here and there and everywhere, seeking the history of the Copts down through the ages.

Finally we have this document (treasure) in our hand. We consider Sister Iris H. el Masri the only historian in the Coptic Church at the present time.

St. Anthony Monastery of the desert of Southern California introduces the Second Volume to all of you.

May God grant that the reader gain a complete knowledge of the oldest Church in history.

Fr. Pachom Anba Bishoi  
Priest-Monk

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is with deep gratitude that I offer my thanks to our Heavenly Father whose aid and guidance have been my lodestar throughout the years.

My thankful homage to the Spirit of my Father Pishoi Kamil whose encouragement by prayer, words and continued endeavour added to my zeal and fervor, and strengthened me to persevere on the path towards fulfillment.

My thanks are extended also to all my family circle and friends, with special appreciation to the budding artist Habib Amin el Masri, my nephew, for giving me some of his paintings to adorn this volume.

As for my sister Eva el Masri Sidhom, I consider her my co-writer; she and her husband Youssef did their best in editing and typing this work.

Side by side, with all those who encouraged me on this plane, are all those beloved ones who have gone on ahead and whose invisible help has been my sustenance as I pressed forward towards my goals.

**Iris Habib el Masri**

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The author with her mother:  
Salima Mena

## DEDICATION

TO MY MOTHER:

"She always leaned to watch for us,  
Anxious if we were late;  
In winter by the window,  
In summer by the gate;  
And though we mocked her tenderly,  
Who had such foolish care;  
The long way home would seem more safe  
Because she waited there.  
Her thoughts were, all so full of us -  
She never could forget!  
And so I think that where she is  
She must be watching yet,  
Waiting till we come home to her  
Anxious if we are late -  
Watching from heaven's window  
Leaning from heaven's gate."

Margaret Widdemer

---

XXII. THE FINAL YEARS OF THE BYZANTINE RULE  
OVER EGYPT, AND THE ARAB CONQUEST

"The old order changeth yielding place  
to new,  
And God fulfils Himself in many a way.."  
-Tennyson

- A. Abba Benyameen elected to succeed  
Abba Andronicus
  - B. The Arab conquest of Egypt
  - C. The saintly Samuel of Qalamon
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- 400. Samuel in captivity
- 401. A Child is given to Zerkandas
- 402. Zerkandas baptized
- 403. Serenity in the end
- 404. St. Samuel's Monastery

A. 372. When Abba Andronicus went unto his reward, the year was 625 A.D., the same year in which Emperor Heraclius recaptured from the Persians the provinces of Palestine, Syria and Egypt. The Persians had held them for seven years after conquering him during the earlier part of his reign. He had recovered these provinces after three costly campaigns. <sup>1</sup>

373. Now Abba Andronicus was the sole Coptic Pope who lived through the Persian rule. In his short papacy, he had done his utmost to relieve the sufferings of his people as well as that of the refugees from the neighbouring countries. He had, however, experienced great pain and sorrow because he could not do more. Among the persons who gave him most strength and solace was Benyameen the young and asiduous disciple and secretary he had chosen shortly after his ordination. The aged successor of St. Mark and the youthful disciple of his choice loved one another deeply, and by this strong bond, were mutually consoled and sustained.

374. Benyameen was one of those spiritually sensitive youths who, early in his life, felt a strong urge to relinquish worldly living and dedicate himself to the service of God. Responding to this urge, he had gone to one of the monasteries near Alexandria, where he became disciple of a wise old ascetic called Theonas, who guided him in the study of the Scriptures and in striving toward Christian perfection. He set himself in such spiritual attunement that he was vouchsafed heavenly visions. In simplicity of heart he used to relate his visions to Theonas, his spiritual father, who warned him not to allow this to lead him vainglory. Heeding the warning, Benyameen applied himself more attentively to the exercise and practice of self-discipline in Christian virtues.

One day Theonas needed to go to Alexandria and took Benyameen along with him. Upon finishing their errand, they went to visit Abba Andronicus and receive his blessing. Theonas introduced the young monk to the Patriarch relating to him his visions. Impressed with what he had heard and with the young man's personality, the Patriarch asked Theonas to leave him by his side. Immediately he consecrated him priest and appointed him his secretary. Thus it came about that when Abba Andronicus passed away, clergy and people unanimously elected Benyameen to be the thirty-eighth Head of the Church of Alexandria.

375. Meanwhile Emperor Heraclius, having become in no way wiser by his military defeats, had resumed his despotic manner of treating the Egyptians. In blindness of heart, he had named his own minion - a man called Cyrus - to become both civil governor

of Egypt and intruder-Patriarch of the church.

While Cyrus was on his way to Alexandria, Abba Benyameen had a vision in which an angel advised him to leave his metropolis and seek refuge in the desert, and to advise his Bishops to do likewise. This, the celestial vision told him was in order that they may avoid dire affliction.

376. Abba Benyameen obeyed the heavenly counsel. The following day, at the end of the church service, he gave his people his injunctions on how to face the impending dangers, then sent letters to all his Bishops telling them of his vision. Having given his clergy the needed directions, he left the city quietly, taking with him his two most intimate disciples. Travelling on foot, they journeyed to Mareotis, where they spent several days, then continued their journey again by foot southward to the monasteries in the desert of Scete. Arriving they found the monasteries dilapidated and most desolated due to the ravages of the Persians. Only a few monks were still there, continuing to live in the tradition of the great desert luminaries. After spending a few days with these faithful torchbearers, the saddened Pope and his two companions left for Upper Egypt, where they took refuge in a small Monastery in the Theibaid region.

377. When Cyrus, the intruding Patriarch-governor, arrived at Alexandria, his first aim was to seek out Abba Benyameen. Failing to find him, he arrested his brother Mena, and ordered his soldiers to persecute him so that he may divulge the whereabouts of the authentic Pope. The brave man bore the persecution valiantly and in stubborn silence

until he was killed. Thus Mena became the first Christian to be martyred by Cyrus.

378. The tension that prevailed throughout Egypt was proof that Emperor Heraclius had chosen a ruthless tyrant in the person of Cyrus. Invested with the double religious and civil authority, he abused both to excess. He did not hesitate to torture the Egyptians regardless of sex, age or status. The Emperor had commissioned him to try and compel the Egyptians to accept the Chalcedon doctrine couched in a new formula promulgated in an imperial edict known as "the Ecthesis."<sup>2</sup> To his chagrin, however, he had discovered that with all the power and authority at his command, he failed utterly. In spite of the horrible hardships to which he subjected them, the Egyptians obstinately refused to bend and maintained firmly their resolution to remain true to the pure orthodox<sup>3</sup> faith they had received from their fathers.<sup>3</sup> The picture presented the once glorious Egypt during this period was pathetic indeed. On the one hand were the turbulent, obstinate, oppressed Egyptians; on the other, the implacable, dictatorial, avid rulers of Constantinople. Inevitably discontent, restlessness, and chaos resulted.

B. 379. Amidst all this turmoil, a new threat appeared: the Arabs. Under the impetus of the new religion preached to them by the Prophet Mohammad, they set forth to conquer new lands. In their zeal, they triumphed over Persia. Delighted by this easy victory, they continued their campaign, taking Syria and Palestine in their stride. Strangely enough their triumphant march did not so much as move Emperor Heraclius. Having squandered his energy over unnecessary religious spites

and squabbles, he seemed to have settled into an unusual apathy.<sup>4</sup> Thus the political situation, the spiritual unrest, the rivalries, degeneracy, and corruption among the higher ranks of the rulers of the Eastern empire - all these factors paved the road for the advancing Arabs.<sup>5</sup> To them, the hour was indeed propitious.

380. Encouraged by their uninterrupted and unexpected victories and by their growing desire to spread their dominion and their religion, the Arabs marched into Egypt. The general who led them towards the Nile Valley (circa, 642 A.D.) was 'Amr ibn ul-'As. He besieged a Red Sea city known as Farama (Pelusium). The siege and the fighting lasted for an entire month, after which the city fell. It was the landing spot for all invaders coming from the East, the first milestone in their conquest. The Arabs continued their march into the interior of the country, taking a southwestward course. The first resistance they encountered was at the town called Bilbeis, where they had to fight for another month. This obstacle overcome, they set out for Babylon (Old Cairo), which was defended by an old Roman fortress built by Emperor Trajan, to which they laid siege, and the fighting is generally stated to have continued for six months. During the siege, reinforcements were sent to the Arabs, while the Emperor in Constantinople sank into a state of complete apathy - as though of Lethe he had drunk.

381. While the battle was being waged, the Arabs negotiated terms of surrender with a man called Mogawgas, whose identity is still enigmatic. Mogawgas agreed to their terms and signed the treaty whereby Egypt passed

under the Arabs' rule. His ready submission branded him forever as a traitor even though his identity is not clearly known. In speaking of this, Pere de Henaut says: "The absence of help from constantinople, the hatreds which divided the Copts and the Greeks, the probable treason of a very important personality vaguely designated by the name 'Mogawgas' easily explain the fall which was the death knell of the Byzantine domination over Egypt..." then adds in the footnote, "Moreover, who is precisely, this traitorous Mogawgas? the Melkite Patriarch Cyrus?... or perchance an imaginary personality?"<sup>6</sup> A number of historians tend to identify him with Cyrus, the intruding bishop-governor, because he was the one in whose hands the reins of the government had been placed. Gaston Wiet, the eminent Orientalist, says: "The Arabic texts give to the official who organized the defense of Egypt, then signed the treaty of recapitulation, the surname, still unexplained, of Mogawgas... It is generally conceded that he is Cyrus the Melkite patriarch on whom Heraclius had conferred the civil administration of the country."<sup>7</sup> While in the Encyclopedia Britannica (14th ed., vol. 8, p. 78) we read: "The ease with which this valuable province was wrenched from the Roman Empire appears to have been due to the treachery of the governor of Egypt, Cyrus, patriarch of Alexandria, and the incompetence of the Roman generals."

382. Whoever Mogawgas may have been, he was not an Egyptian, for at that time the natives of Egypt were powerless, having been deprived of the right to defend their own country by these very same Byzantines since the reign of Emperor Phocas, some eighty years earlier. However in abandoning their detested masters, the Copts in no way abdi-

cated their national pride. <sup>8</sup>

383. Having conquered Babylon and garrisoned some of his men at al-Fustat (i.e. "tent," so termed because it is the spot on which the Arabs pitched their tents during the siege of the Babylon Fortress), 'Amr led his men northward to Alexandria. During this march, his troops encountered the Byzantine troops stationed at different towns of the Delta, but their civil and military officers did not concert together, had no plan of action and were loathe to fight. Each of them watched the others being overpowered in turn, and none lifted so much as a finger to help. Each remained impassive at his post until he was attacked; not one of them endeavoured to launch an offensive or to ally with the others. The lethargy which had overtaken their Emperor seemed to have engulfed them, too. They could not forget their petty jealousies nor realize that a united front might rout their common foe. Their very attitude hastened their own undoing, so 'Amr and his men easily conquered these divided forces and soon pitched their tents outside the walls of Alexandria. The same conditions existed there. While the siege of the great metropolis continued - from three months, according to some reports, to fourteen months, according to others-once more rivalries, jealousies, corruption, and indifference were the basic factors leading up to the capitulation of the second capital of the Eastern empire. But for these forces of immorality, the besiegers would have been frustrated and marched away in despair, for Alexandria had all the assets making it impregnable. It was a city with a long sea front humming with countless ships, while its land front was narrow and protected by massive walls. Food and reinforcements

could easily reach it if the city had had defenders worthy of the name. But in spite of its assets, Alexandria capitulated. Doubtless the contention of the factions within the city and the absence of competent, incorruptible generals led to its surrender. By the autumn of 642 A.D., Egypt had passed from the hands of the Constantinople Emperors into those of the followers of the Arabian prophet. The treaty by which this transfer was validated was signed by 'Amr ibn ul-'As and Cyrus, both of whom were equally alien to Egypt.

384. 'Amr chose al-Fustat for his capital. He had made a pact with the Copts by which he promised to leave them unmolested and grant them the freedom of worship on the condition that they pay the tribute fixed at two dinars per capita for men between the ages of fifteen and fifty; and one dinar per capita for the women of the same age—exempting those less than fifteen and those above fifty. He relegated the administration of the provinces to their leaders and granted them the right of their own legal and judicial systems. Hearing that Abba Benyameen and the majority of his Bishops had retreated to the monasteries, 'Amr asked Sanutius, the foremost Coptic leader, to request them to return to their Sees. Later, 'Amr asked to meet the Alexandrian Patriarch, after which meeting he told his men, "Verily, I have not seen a man of God so upright and so majestic in all the provinces through which I passed." 10

385. After a brief period, 'Amr marched against Barga in Libya and received word upon arrival that Alexandria had been captured by Emperor Heraclius. Thereupon he hastened

back and waged a fierce battle with the Byzantines, during which the Byzantine general was killed. The Arabs' victory was complete. Unfortunately, in the process of the battle, Alexandria was mercilessly plundered, destroyed, and set on fire.<sup>11</sup> From this time until the ninth century, the once dazzling metropolis of beauty, culture, and learning existed as a mere hamlet.<sup>12</sup>

386. It is imperative to consider here an incident of far-reaching import: the burning of the world-famous library of Alexandria. This incident has been the subject of continuous controversy. Yet those who presume that the army of 'Amr was not responsible for this act, should be reminded that their general gave specific orders to destroy the whole of Alexandria after his second, and final, victory and burn it completely. His theory was that when it became a mass of rubble, the Byzantine authorities would not attempt to recapture it. Also it is imperative to state that it was the Caliph Omar ibn'l Khattab who gave the order to burn the library, beside the fact that its fate was that of the entire city.<sup>13</sup>

387. After destroying Alexandria, 'Amr settled at al-Fustat (present-day old Cairo), which became the capital of Egypt in this phase of its history. As for Abba Benyameen, aided by God's grace, he kindled the enthusiasm of his people to rebuild as many destroyed churches and monasteries as they could. For a short period, the Copts enjoyed peace, prosperity, and security.

'Amr entrusted the administration of the provinces to the Coptic leaders but barred

the Copts from military service, thus depriving them of the right to defend their own country, hoping thereby to evade any possible revolt.

'Amr, however, was recalled by the Caliph, who expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of revenues he had received from Egypt. He appointed as 'Amr's successor, 'Abd-'Allah ibn Said, who was avidly mercenary and extorted from the Copts great sums of money both for the Caliph and for himself.

388. During this same period, an Arab contingent invaded Nubia and conquered Dongola. A polltax, imposed upon its king, was to be paid yearly together with three hundred and sixty slaves of both sexes. As the Nubians were never regular in supplying either quota, intermittent skirmishes continued between them and the Arabs.<sup>14</sup>

389. Meanwhile, Abba Benyameen's men were repairing the monasteries. Finding that the Monastery of Abba Bishoi-- in Wadi-n-Natrun was in a state of total destruction Abba Benyameen ordered its reconstruction. Upon its completion, the wise Successor of St. Mark asked the monks to repair the Monastery of St. Macari. They were so delighted with the work that after finishing it, they built a church within its enclosure and then sent a delegation to Abba Benyameen to come and consecrate it; he joyfully responded.

390. When Abba Benyameen and the brethren assembled they began to chant the Consecration Service. At the point where he started to pour the chrism over the altar to sanctify it, he had a vision of the Christ anointing the altar as well as the walls of the sanctuary. In ecstasy he quoted Psalm 84: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!

My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord..."

Throughout the service, the eyes of Abba Benyameen were aflame and his face bright. After the prayers, he sat with the brethren to exchange with them the experiences and sentiments of each. He said to them, "Believe me, my children, I have been caught up into heaven and, like unto the blessed St. Paul, 'I heard unspeakable word which it is unlawful for man to utter: (ed.: II Cor. 12:4) I have beheld the glory of the Most High filling the sanctuary; I have seen the heavenly hosts praising the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; I have envisaged the blessed Macari standing in our midst, sharing with us the joy of consecrating this holy place. And as I was administering the Eucharist, I saw, with exultation, the incense issuing like unto perfume from the mouths of the brethren; this incense which is the prayer of the saints (ed.: Rev. 5:9) ascending from their mouths up to the very throne of Grace. Then was I overjoyed to know that their prayers had been accepted. In heartfelt gratitude, I offered my praise to my Lord Jesus, the Christ." Thus did Abba Benyameen and the brethren spend their day discoursing on the great wonders of the Heavenly Father.

At night, when Abba Benyameen retired to sleep, he had a dream. A shining Person appeared to him and said: "Awake, O Bishop, set in order the canons of the church whereby thy people may be guided for your departure from this world will be on the anniversary of the consecration of this church." The venerable Patriarch replied: "Enable me to do Thy will, O Lord, and blessed be my Saviour Jesus, the Christ, the Lover of my soul, Whose Mercy overwhelms me." After these words, the shining One vanished from sight.

Mindful of the magnitude of his responsibility, Abba Benyameen asked Agathon, his secretary, to record all that had happened. He then set himself to the task of collecting and collating the Church canons. He had hardly finished this task when, as he had been told in the dream, he was called into his Lord's Presence, having<sup>15</sup> shepherded his people for thirty-nine years.

C. 391. It is indeed satisfying to the soul of the seeker to find that the love he bears for the ancients is being shared by others and that it has penetrated even the hearts of those who once were heedless to its call. Such is the case of the seeker into the facts of Coptic history, especially that part which depicts the inner life of the people. This history bears very little resemblance to that official history which centers on kings and conquerors. For the Coptic documents concentrate their concern on the history of human thought, particularly that ray which pervade Egypt at certain epochs.

From these epochs, the earnest seeker can endeavour to penetrate into the dark corners of remote antiquity which might seem almost impenetrable elsewhere, but which are rigorously historic in Egypt. As he penetrates deeper and ever deeper, he will come to a fuller realization that it is of greater significance to follow the evolution of thought than to know that at such a date a certain tyrant committed some execrable crime against his fellow human beings. As an illustrious French historian wrote, "... to trace the history of human thought, the works of Coptic literature are of greatest utility, even the works which are less elevated, and less comprehensive, even the 'Lives' of the least known monks."<sup>16</sup> It is, therefore, most meri-

torious to trace here the life story of as prominent a saint as Samuel of Qalamon, even though this means going back a little and speaking of a saint who lived in the latter days of Byzantium.

392. The son of a priest and a God-fearing mother, Samuel had been brought up, from his tenderest years, in the Christian aspiration towards perfection. As he grew, his ardent desire was to forsake the world and become a monk. A contention ensued between Samuel and his parents on this subject. How long this lasted is not known, but eventually they acquiesced, their hearts softened by his zeal and ardour. Throughout their lives, Samuel continued to live with his parents and led an ascetic's life of prayer and meditation. However, after they died, he decided to enter the Monastery of St. Macari. Although three centuries had elapsed since it had been founded by that giant of God—three centuries of intermittent peace and strife—it still captivated the imagination of many a God-seeking youth. Samuel was drawn to the "mountain of Macari," where "the heart of the monk is weighed" to find out its worth before God. In this hallowed region the sacred fire continued to burn intensely despite the Libyan marauders.

393. Samuel left his home after distributing his inheritance among those he considered most needy. When he reached the edge of the desert, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in the form of a monk and accompanied him into the desert as he had accompanied Tobias centuries earlier. After discoursing with him on God's wondrous ways, the disguised angel said: "In this mountain there is an aged saint named Agathon; he lives

on this earth the life of the angels in heaven. If you seek to advance in the ways of righteousness, I advise you to go and live with him." Samuel replied, "Show mercy to me, my father, and conduct me to him; I shall be very grateful to you." The two went together into the desert until they reached the cell of Agathon, when the heavenly messenger said: "Go to him in peace, for he will receive you. Listen to all he says and obey him implicitly." He then took Samuel by the hand and they entered into the presence of Agathon, whereupon he said to Agathon: "Accept this youth as your disciple, for he will be a son to you in your old age." Having spoken thus, the messenger disappeared.

394. Samuel advanced with some trepidation, but no sooner did his eyes meet those of Agathon than his fears were dispelled. Agathon welcomed him saying, "Happy is your coming to me, O Samuel, servant of the Most High." Later, Agathon chanted the Ritual Service over Samuel and dressed him in the monk's garb, saying, "May the God of our desert luminaries St. Antoni and St. Macari be with you and help you henceforth to follow their illustrious examples." From that moment onward Agathon consecrated himself to the instruction and training of Samuel in the virtues of humility, silence, and the love of God and man as well as the Holy Writ; while Samuel set himself to studying the Scriptures, meditating, praying, and interrogating his mentor whenever he felt at a loss. In this manner, he advanced continuously on the path towards perfection. In addition to the spiritual and intellectual pursuits, Samuel and his teacher worked with their hands. Quite likely they descended once a year to help gather the harvest, as did Macari and his monks. At

the end of three years, Agathon fell sick. Following three months of loving nursing care by Samuel, Agathon died, but his spirit rested with Samuel, as did that of Elijah with Elisha (see II Kings 2:15).

395. By his unceasing pursuit of perfectin, Samuel acquired a great reputation among the neighbouring villagers and throughout the Nile Valley, as well. He was ordained a priest. Naturally, many disciples came to live with him and he delighted in teaching them. As his reputation went further and further-carried, as it were, by the waters of the Nile-the sick, the infirm, and the demon-possessed were brought to him for deliverance by his prayers. The mariners, also, when they found themselves caught in a tempest, implored God in the name of Abba Samuel to rescue them, and they experienced immediate relief.

396. During the lifetime fo Abba Samuel, the Constantinople Emperors sought to exasperate the Egyptians by inquisitorial methods. Not content to govern their bodies and collect their taxes, they sought to penetrate into the very intimacy of the Egyptians' souls and regulate their consciences and convictions in the way they regulated the amount of corn which Egypt had to furnish each year. But the Egyptians retained their pride in spite of their wounded feelings. Whenever their monks found it necessary to go to Constantinople to meet the Emperor, they treated him with a sort of respectful familiarity which was nonetheless condescending, as though they honoured the emperor by their presence rather than were honoured by his audience.

397. An act of coercion ended Samuel's stay in Scete. One day the chief of the imperial troops was charged by Cyrus to force the Egyptians into submission to the "Ectheis." The approach of these troops to the hallowed region was a signal to its inhabitants to disperse. Samuel and a few others remained. The imperial captain ordered them to assemble, then read to them the imperial decree and asked, "Do you believe in what is here written?" Their response was utter silence. Infuriated, he stormed, "Don't you know that I can spill your blood?" At this threat, Samuel came forward and a short dialogue ensued, after which the chief of the imperial troops gave him the decree. Samuel tore it into shreds, saying, "Excommunicated be this impious formula. Excommunicated be the Council of Chalcedon and all who accept it." The captain was so exasperated that he beat the holy man with his own hands, then ordered four of his soldiers to thrash him. When his entire body was bruised and bleeding, he was hung by his arms and beaten with rods. One of the soldiers hit his right eye, crushing it. The scene became so horrifying that the imperial troops themselves walked away. Samuel was unconscious. His monks, who had watched in utter silence, came forward and tenderly carried him to a nearby cave. A few hours later, however, he regained consciousness and, in time, he regained also his health.

Before leaving, the captain had given his orders that should Samuel remain alive, he was to be expelled from his province. So when Samuel was able to travel, he selected four brethren and they journeyed southward. Along the way, they consoled each other by repeating the Psalms and other passages from the Scriptures. They went to Mount Qalamon,

southeast of Fayoum, about four hundred fifty kilometers south of Alexandria. Here they settled in a small monastery dedicated to the blessed Virgin. (It is surmised that this monastery had been built before Abba Samuel's time, but it flourished during his occupancy and bears his name to this day. It is described in the book of Abu Salih, now in the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris, which dates from the twelfth century. al-Makrizi also mentions it in his book written in the fifteenth century. The monastery currently exists and is still inhabited with monks.) In the vicinity of the monastery, there flows a stream with many fish in it. While the monks laboured to reclaim and cultivate some of the desert land around them, they were able to sustain themselves on the fish and the water which the stream provided.

398. In their new monastery, the reputation of Samuel again surpassed the limits of the desert. Fourteen brethren came to live with him, then others followed. The multitudes also flocked around him, bringing to him the sick and the infirm. He patiently attended to their needs and gave them great comfort.

Whenever he felt the urge to solitude, he quietly slipped out of the monastery and retired to a cave nearby. There he would spend a week, content with the companionship of God, before returning to the monastery with a radiant countenance.

399. As his reputation spread, it reached the ears of the notorious Cyrus-known also as Mogawgas-who decided not to leave this man in peace, and so set out to find him. Samuel, forewarned of his coming, assembled his monks and counseled them to scatter. He remained alone with an old porter. Arriving

at the monastery, Cyrus questioned him about many things, but winced at the deeply spiritual and fearless answers the priest gave him. The wily Cyrus temporarily concealed his anger, left for Fayoum, and then sent his agents to bring Samuel to him. They tied the priest's hands behind his back, encircled his neck with an iron chain, and drove him before them. No sooner was he before Cyrus than he was cudgeled, then asked, "Who has established you abbot of the Qalamon monastery? And who has authorized you to curse me in front of your monks?" He replied calmly "It is better to obey God than man, and more edifying to submit to our saintly Patriarch Benyameen than to an imposter such as you."

Thereupon, Cyrus ordered him struck on the mouth, then commanded that he be beaten to death. But the Fayoum magistrates interceded for him so he was released, and told not to return to Qalamon. Immediately some of his disciples came and carried him to an oasis, where they cared for him tenderly until his recovery. They consoled one another by reciting passages of comfort from the Scriptures and by relating the stories of saints and martyrs. Because the atmosphere of the region was soothing to the souls of the contemplatives, Samuel and his brethren decided to remain there.

400. Scarcely had they made this decision than hordes of Berbers from Libya invaded the region. When they marched into the village church in the area to pillage it, they chanced upon Samuel, whom they took captive, thrashed, put on the back of a camel, and took with them. After gruelling experiences which almost resulted in Samuel's death, they arrived in Libya. There Samuel found Yoannis, abbot of St. Macari's monastery, who had been cap-

tured and was serving as a camelherd. Samuel was relegated to the service of a man called Zerkandas, a chief among his people. As they were all sun worshipers, Samuel's master commanded him to worship likewise. Upon his refusal, Zerkandas ordered that Samuel be tied to a tree and left without food or drink. After five days, Yoannis succeeded in interceding for him; however, it took him two weeks to recover from the effects of his torture. But his master was of a cruel nature and kept mistreating Samuel until, by an act of Providence, it was discovered that God had bestowed upon him the gift of healing. Through his prayers, a man who had been lame for twelve years was able to walk. The story of the miracle spread quickly, and many with ailments flocked to him in search of healing.

401. Now it so happened that the wife of Zerkandas was, herself, in need of healing, so she entreated her husband to ask Samuel to heal her. At first, Zerkandas was afraid of angering the sun-god, but he finally acquiesced. Samuel placed his hand on her head and said aloud, "May my Lord Jesus the Christ heal you," and she was made whole.

Zerkandas had no children, so he told Samuel, "If you will pray that God grant me a son, then I vow to permit you to go back to your homeland."

Samuel asked, "Do you sincerely believe that I am empowered to do that?"

He replied, "Indeed I do."

"May it be unto you according to your faith," responded Samuel.

402. In due time, the wife of Zerkandas did bear a son, and the father was overjoyed. As he had promised, he told Samuel that

he might return to his country, but if he would stay, Zerkandas would give him a portion of his wealth. Samuel declined this offer, spent a few weeks of companionship with Yoannis then headed back home. Zerkandas supplied him with all necessary provisions for the journey and for safe conduct home. Furthermore, he requested Samuel to baptize him before departing. Then only was he escorted back to his homeland. Thus ended another of the turbulent, but memorable episodes in the life of this saintly man.

403. Shortly after, some brethren went to live with Samuel despite his old age. He set himself to teach and warn them. At long last, Samuel was permitted to live in peace and serenity and to have the leisure for prayer, fasting, and meditating to his heart's content.

Eight days before Samuel's death, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him and foretold him of it. Then his disciples, who numbered 120, all gathered round him; together, they spent six days in spiritual communion. On the seventh day, Samuel lost consciousness for a period and then regained it. Seeing his monks crying, he comforted them saying, "Be of good cheer, for our good Lord Jesus the Christ will take care of you. As for me, at last I am going to be in the Presence of my King and my Saviour, where all tears shall be wiped away and there will be neither woes nor trials." Thus saying, he slept quietly; the next day he went to his Heavenly rest.<sup>17</sup> After a one-week period of mourning, life at his monastery returned to normal, for they all believe firmly that this life is but a prelude to the bliss of the hereafter.

404. St. Samuel's monastery is still in existence. The spring of water, once within the

enclosure but now outside the monastery walls, has a strange and wondrous characteristic: It bubbles up at the approach of an animal or person coming to drink or fill his jar; the bubbling subsides later. Around the spring grows a plant called *gharda*, a short, stocky bush bearing a cyclamen-coloured fruit resembling grapes. The monks drink its juice. In addition, they toast the seeds, grind them, and brew them as they have an excellent thirst-quenching property regardless of whether they are drunk hot or cold.

The author had the privilege of visiting this monastery in July 1958, a visit like a flash of light from another world. There were then eighteen monks in residence, among whom was a saint who had lived more than a century. The young monk who was consecrated to the service of this centenarian was born of Muslim parents, but was converted when he observed the exemplary life of a neighbour who had obeyed our Lord's command: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

## XXII. NOTES

1. Clumbia ency., 3d ed., p.938.
2. Ency. des Sc. Rel., vol. IX, pp. 331-2
3. H. Munier. *Precis de l'Histoire d'Egypte*. Tome II, *Premiere Partie: L'Egypte Byzantine*. pp.68-92.
4. Ency. des Sc. Rel., vol. VI, p.184.
5. Munier. *op.cit.*, Tome II, 2eme partie;

also L'Egypte, Musulmane de la conquete Arabe  
'a la conquete Ottomane by G. Wiet, p115

6. Pere de Henaut. L'Egypte de Menes  
a Foad I.4th ed.p.197 and footnote.

7. G.Wiet. L'Egypte...p.110; See,also,  
Dictionnaire d'Archeologie et de Liturgie  
Chretienne, par cabrol et Leclerg, T.IV,  
2eme partie,col.2475 where it is stated (in  
trans.): "Cyrus, the Caucasian took on himself  
the charge of submitting to the emperor the  
conditions of the Muslims...Heraclius was  
contented to make him appear before his tri-  
bunal and to send him to exile. His birth-  
place 'Caucasia' explains the Arabic appella-  
tion 'Mogawgas', And W.F. Adeney: The Greek  
and Eastern Churches,p.575 where he says,  
"Heraclius ... proved to be one of the most  
incompetent blundering rulers who ever mis-  
managed a great empire,..." and p.579 adds:  
"Butler advocates that he is none other than  
Cyrus ... Mogawgas is derived from the word  
'Caucasia'... Cf. A.J. Butler: The Arab Con-  
quest of Egypt, Appendix XIII; also D. Att-  
water: The Christian Churches of the East,  
vol. II,p.201.

8. Guettee. Histoire...V,p.530; also W.  
Muir. The Caliphate: its rise, decline and  
fall.pp.65-6

9. For details on this period,cf.W. Muir:  
The Caliphate...pp.153-63; S. Lane Poole:  
History of Egypt during the Middle Ages,  
p.20; Munier,Precis... 1ere partie,pp.1-13;  
and 2eme partie by G. Wiet, pp.109-11.

10. Elias ul-Ayubi. Misr ul-Islamiyya.p.16;  
Severus,Bp. of Ashmuneim.pp.496-7.

11. Ayubi. *ibid.* p.99; S. Poole. *ibid.* p.22.
12. Pere de Henaut. *op.cit.* footnote p.199.
13. G. Wiet, *Precis...* pp.111-2; Mgr. K. Macaire. *Etude sur le Serapeum d'Alexnadrie*; *Galette. Histoire...* IV, pp.93-94 and V.5, pp.471-2; Ibn Khaldoon: *Mogaddema*.
14. M. Simaika. *Guide to the Coptic Museum (in Arabic)*, Vol. II, p.141.
15. Severus Bp. of Ashmunein. p.503; alAyubi. pp.102-3.
16. E. Amelineau. "Samuel de Qalamon" pub. in *Revue de l'Histoire de Religions*, p.2.
17. The most important ms. containing the "Life of Abba Samuel" is kept in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. It is Ms. 578, no.9 Saidic. The life of this saint is also recorded in Jean Simon's: "Fragment d'Un Homelie Copte en l'honneur de Samuel de Qalamon: pub. in *Miscellanea Biblica* pp.161-178. Roma, 1934, kept at the New York Public Library (in French).

XXIII. THE FIRST ARAB GOVERNOR OF EGYPT-  
AND THE COPTIC POPES DURING HIS RULE

- A. Abba Agathon
- B. Abba Yoannis III
- C. A Consummate Scribe
- D. A Syro-Egyptian Shepherd
- E. Resplendent Constellation

- 405. Priest in disguise
- 406. Whole hearted consecration
- 407. Divine Providence
- 408. Angelic guidance
- 409. Translatin of Abba Agathon
- 410. Consecration of Abba Yoannis
- 411. Two Coptic scribes
- 412. Misunderstanding and reconciliation
- 413. Governor's friendship
- 414. Constructive efforts
- 415. The monk Iss-haq
- 416. Governor residing at Monastery
- 417. Illness and death of Abba Yoannis III
- 418. A rare ms. from the VIIth century
- 419. Iss-haq's decision to seek monastic life
- 420. The beautiful art of writing perfected  
in the monasteries
- 421. Iss-haq becomes Coptic Pope
- 422. Governor contributes to church building
- 423. Death of Abba Iss-haq
- 424. A Syro-Egyptian succeeds him
- 425. Christian love
- 426. Imperial perversion
- 427. Abba Simeon's service, and final rest
- 428. Host of Saints
- 429. A devoted deacon

430. Bishop Gregorius appointed manager of Church affairs

431. Election of 43rd Pope

A. 405. When Abba Benyameen had been forewarned by the angel of the Lord to leave Alexandria, one of those to whom he entrusted the Church was a priest called Agathon, a man of grace and wisdom. Very early in his life, he had shown an inclination to withdraw from the world and study the Scriptures. Once ordained, he became keenly aware of the magnitude of his responsibility. Watching the ever-intensifying tyranny of Constantinople's agents, he had pondered how best he could serve his distressed people without being hindered by the authorities. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, he disguised himself as a carpenter, in order to move from house to house unmolested. Thus he was able to administer the Sacred Mysteries and strengthen the hearts of his beloved flock.

When Abba Benyameen returned, he was so delighted by the ingenuity of Agathon that he appointed him his secretary. Not only did Agathon discharge his secretarial duties loyally, but he also became his Pope's biographer, giving posterity authentic information regarding this decisive era. Later Agathon became 39th Pope of Alexandria.

406. In his new and elevated capacity, Agathon's dedication was complete; he continued to serve his Church indefatigably. One of his major concerns was to ransom the Christian captives whom the Arabs had brought from Sicily and other Roman provinces. Their plight saddened his heart, and he was apprehensive lest they deny their Faith. While he did his best to strengthen and sustain them, he also understood to build a church in the name

of St. Mark. Upon its completion and consecration, he built a spacious house facing it, wherein visitors, strangers, and the needy could find a haven of hospitality.<sup>1</sup>

407. Agathon's heart rejoiced to see that in his time the monasteries of Scete began to flourish again. The number of monks increased, and many distinguished themselves in a variety of ways.

408. One of these was a man called Yoannis of Samannoud, who had earned a reputation of being ecclesiastically and secularly learned. Once, during a pilgrimage to the monasteries of Scete, he had become seriously ill. The brethren cared for him, but the possibility of his recovery seemed very doubtful. Yoannis had a vision one night, in which he saw St. Mark interceding for him, and the next morning he awakened wholly well. This experience affected him in such a way that he became a monk and lived on the outskirts of Fayoum with only two brethren. Later, Abba Agathon in a dream saw an aged man dressed in white, who counseled him, saying, "Send for the monk Yoannis of Samannoud that he may assist you in your work, for he shall be your successor on the Apostolic Chair." The following morning he sent for Yoannis. When he arrived, his wisdom and serenity greatly impressed Abba Agathon, who without hesitation, requested him to stay with him and assist him administer the affairs of the Church.

409. Yoannis conducted himself so well that he won the affection and confidence of the people. Therefore, when Abba Agathon went to his rest, Yoannis was unanimously elected to be his successor.

B. 410. The consecration of Yoannis took place in the year 673 A.D.; making him fortieth Successor to St. Mark. Thus was realized the vision Agathon had had concerning his successor.

411. Meanwhile, Caliph Marawan had become the new ruler of the Arab Empire. Both powerful and ambitious, he immediately appointed his eldest son, 'Abd-'l-Malik, governor over Syria, and his son, 'Abd-'l-'Aziz, governor over Egypt. The new Egyptian ruler was benevolent; among the officials in his immediate office which he himself had appointed were two Coptic scribes who served him faithfully. They were likewise loyal to their Church and to the Successor of St. Mark. Deeming it opportune, Abba Yoannis III sent them a letter asking them to intervene in the case of the churches which had been closed by order of Cyrus. His response was immediate: to break the seals and deliver all the churches and their property to the Alexandrian Pope.

412. Abba Yoannis III was one of God's good and upright men, and his relations with the governor were cordial. However, a small incident occurred during the visit of 'Abd 'l-'Aziz to Alexandria to collect the tribute. Unaware of his arrival, Abba Yoannis did not go out to meet him. His failure gave the Chalcedonians a chance to malign him; they told 'Abd 'l-'Aziz that he had slighted him intentionally. Angered, the governor sent for the man of God and asked him to account for this breach of protocol. Serenely, the holy man replied that he simply had not known that the governor was coming and that this was the only reason for his failure to meet him. The unruffled demeanor of the Pope angered 'Abd 'l-'Aziz all the more. In his

fury, he delivered him into the hands of an officer called Samad, a merciless man, who took Abba Yoannis on the first day of holy week and demanded that he pay one hundred thousand dinars. Again the Pope answered with calmness that he did not have even one hundred thousand dirhams (one-tenth of the amount demanded) much less dinars. Thereupon Samad ordered his men to torture the venerable man. In the midst of torture, Abba Yoannis maintained his equanimity and kept praying. Realizing that no torture could demoralize the man of God, Samad began to bargain with him, reducing his demand to ten thousand dinars.

While Abba Yoannis was being harassed, his people were desperately trying to find the means for rescuing him. Hearing that the sum demanded had been reduced to ten thousand dinars, they deputized some of their worthy leaders to meet 'Abd 'l-'Aziz and declare their readiness to pay the demanded sum if he but release their holy Father. It was Maundy Thursday when the delegation met the governor; through the grace of God he agreed to accept their offer and ordered Samad to let Abba Yoannis come and meet him.

413. When the venerable Abba Yoannis came into the presence of 'Abd 'l-'Aziz at this second meeting, the latter's eyes were opened like the prophet's of old (Numbers 22:31), and, it seemed to him that he was beholding an angel of light. Thereupon, he ordered that a soft cushion be brought and requested the man of God to relax on it. The governor then asked, "Do you not know that the ruler is not to be gainsaid?"

The Pope replied, "Truly, he is given authority from on high and should be obeyed,

But obedience is due to him only within the limits of his conformity to the will of God."

The governor then asked, "Your God loves honesty and truth, does He not?"

The saintly man replied, "My God is all Truth; in Him is no lie."

'Abd 'l-'Aziz responded, "I perceive that you are an honest man. Therefore, whatever the Christians have collected to ransom you, that I will accept, but henceforth I will require no tribute from you."

Abba Yoannis thanked the governor, who released him with due honour. He rode out amid the acclamations of his people, who formed a procession to escort him and chanted the Church songs as they went before him. Arriving at the church, the Successor of St. Mark celebrated the Maundy Thursday Ritual of the Laqgan. (This consist of prayers chanted over the water which the ministrant clergyman then uses to wash the feet of any member of the congregation who so desires, as the Christ washed His disciples' feet before the Last Supper (John 13:4-16). There was great rejoicing as he completed the Service; Pope and people were grateful to their Heavenly Father, Who had given them the opportunity to be reunited for the three remaining days of Holy Week.

After this incident, 'Abd l-'Aziz regarded Abba Yoannis favourably and sent a special circular letter to all concerned, stating that the venerable Head of the Church of Alexandria was to be addressed only in the highest terms of courtesy and respect and none should bar his way nor hinder him on any path.

414. Secure under the benevolet rule of 'Abd'l-'Aziz, the vigilant Abba Yoannis set himself to the task of repairing and rebuilding the ruined cathedrals and churches.

The Copts all rallied around him, everyone contributing his share in their restoration. After that the Pope worked assiduously to provide means for supplying the needs of the people and the maintenance of the Churches. Among other things, he built a wheat mill and a linseed press. The Lord blessed Abba Yoannis, and all of his efforts bore fruit.

415. Meantime, the Pope earnestly entreated God to signal out for him the monk who should succeed him as head of the Church. While visiting the monastery of St. Macari one day, he saw a learned and virtuous monk called Iss-haq, and something within him told him this was the man. Following tradition, he brought him to Alexandria and appointed him his secretary.

416. The amicable relations between 'Abd'l-'Aziz and Abba Yoannis had become so strong that when the former was advised to reside at Helwan, (a health spa south of Cairo) because of ill health, he chose to reside at the Coptic Monastery of Tammuh, in the same vicinity, on the opposite bank of the Nile. Abba Yoannis visited him often to act as his host. Consequently, the governor donated 20,000 dinars to the monastery.

417. In the year 681, while at the monastery with the governor, Abba Yoannis fell ill with what was to be his final illness, and he was carried back to Alexandria and put to bed. Even in sickness he prayed constantly and urged those around him to keep the bond of love, to take good care of the Church, and to elect his secretary Iss-haq as his successor. Then, eight years and one month after his accession, he peacefully joined the ranks of the Church Triumphant.<sup>2</sup>

C. 418. One of the rare, still extant manuscripts from seventh century Coptic Egypt was written by a bishop called Abba Mena of Pshati and entitled "The Life of the Saintly Pope Abba Iss-haq," the forty-first successor of St. Mark.

The biographer gives many details of Abba Iss-haq's life as a boy, a young man, and then Head of the Church. Born before the Arab invasion, he had shown a keen interest in calligraphy and a passionate desire to pursue this art. Discerning his interest and talent, his parents entrusted him, as soon as he had finished school, to a relative called Meneson, who was secretary to the Byzantine Eparch, or governor, of Egypt. Under him, Iss-haq worked as notary and acquired such skill and fame as a scribe that many were the notables who demanded his services. At the time, scribal dexterity implied not only the ability to write beautifully but also to compose well. In time, the eparch became aware of him and of his talents, appointed him his chief notary, and ordered that he live at the praetorial headquarters.

419. By the time the eparch died, Iss-haq -now a young man in his mid-twenties -decided that he wanted to seek more learning and devote his talents to the glory of God. Therefore, instead of returning to his parents' home, he secretly sought refuge in the desert and became a monk in the Monastery of St. Macari. His parents were unaware of his whereabouts for a few months, until he himself sent them word and told them of the course he had chosen for his life.

420. The art of writing, in which Abba Iss-haq was talented, and which he had learned and perfected before becoming a monk, stood

him in good stead at the monastery. He spent many hours practicing it and teaching it to the brethren.

From the earliest historic times in Egypt, writing was considered one of the most beautiful arts. High esteem was accorded to the scribe worthy of the title who could write the illuminated decorative pages which to this day amaze many. The extant manuscript referred to above states that it was in the monasteries that this beautiful art was lovingly and carefully cultivated and that Abba Iss-haq contributed much to its cultivation. It also states that as a monk, Abba Iss-haq gave himself whole-heartedly to the study of the Scriptures and the theological teachings of the Church Fathers. In time his knowledge and understanding of them was such that no problem was insoluble to him.<sup>3</sup>

421. Abba Iss-haq became Pope in 681 A.D. He remained Head of the Church for only two years and eleven months. Although brief, this period was one of action and achievement.

During his secretariat, he had rejoiced to see how 'Abd'l-Aziz, the Arab governor, venerated Abba Yoannis. For whenever Yoannis III went to the palace to settle matters relating to the Copts, he took Iss-haq with him. When Iss-haq became Head of the Coptic Church, the same cordial relations continued between him and 'Abd'l-Aziz.

422. 'Abd'l-Aziz had built for himself a palace at Helwan. One day he invited Abba Iss-haq to the palace and insisted that he spend several days with him. When darkness fell and Abba Iss-haq retired to the room set for him, he stood up to pray. The governor's wife, looking from behind her mushrabiya (lattice-woodwork window, allowing those inside

to look out but not be seen from the outside), saw the room illumined with celestial light and an angelic host surrounding it. On the following day, she related her experience to her husband; he answered that such a vision was compatible with the saintliness of the man of God. Subsequently, for Abba Iss-haq's sake, 'Abd'l-Aziz ordered that new churches and monasteries be built in Helwan. Abba Iss-Haq personally supervised the building and solicited the aid of his people, who responded with gladness and contributed their skills, time and money to the projects. The new churches were both massive and beautiful, harmonizing with the beauty<sup>4</sup> of the new town. According to one historian,<sup>4</sup> surrounding this city's mosques with graceful minarets, 'Abd'l-Aziz planted luxuriant gardens. Helwan became a city befitting the refined taste of a prince and attracted many visitors, especially those seeking a cure in its sulphur springs.

423. But, alas, the days of Abba Iss-haq sped by. Scarcely had he rejoiced at the completion of the construction than he fell sick. The governor provided a ship to carry him down the Nile to Alexandria. A few days after his arrival, he was called by his Lord to a well-earned rest.<sup>5</sup>

D. 424. Upon the vacancy of St. Mark's Chair, bishops and layleaders conferred to select a successor to Abba Iss-haq. After much discussion, they entrusted this august position to a venerable monk called Simeon, who had been born in Antioch, Syria. In his early youth, his parents had brought him to Alexandria and offered him to the service of its Church. After his consecration as deacon, he had been sent to one of the monasteries for education and training and was put under

the spiritual guidance of Yoannis, one of the abbots. In due time, the Bishop in charge of the monastery ordained Simeon priest and subsequently appointed him Assistant-Abbot. In this capacity he continued to serve his brethren humbly and faithfully and submitted wholeheartedly to his Abbot and to the labours of the communal life. Abba Simeon became Simeon I, forty-second Pope of the Coptic Church, in the year 684 A.D.

425. In spite of his unexpected elevation, he remained devoted to his spiritual father, Yoannis, whom he called to Alexandria and appointed as his assistant in administering the affairs of the Church. Simeon continued to call him "father," as he had done in the monastery. This mutual Christian love which bound St. Mark's Successor and his spiritual father, and their co-operation in all matters were of great benefit to both Church and people.

426. During the first year of Abba Simeon's shepherding as Pope, Emperor Justinian called a council known as "in trullo" for it was held under the dome of the imperial palace. The legal successor of St. Mark was neither invited nor represented by anyone at this council. In spite of that, however, the Council, accepted as bases of its ecclesiastical constitution the canonical epistles of Dionysius, Petros I, Athanasius, Timotheos, Theophilus, and Kyrillos<sup>6</sup>—all of whom were predecessors of the Pope whom Emperor Justinian and his council ignored. Such behaviour gave added evidence that the Byzantine authorities were still heedless of the warning of their defeat.

427. Abba Simeon remained Pope for seven

years and eight months. He did his utmost to follow in the footsteps of his predecessors by serving his people faithfully, and keeping good relations with the Arab Governor. He succeeded in all his efforts and hence was able to consolidate the Church and unite the believers around him.

During his last year in office, the saintly prelate fell ill, just after Easter. He had a premonition within his heart that this illness heralded his release from the body, so he called his secretary and said to him: "Let us go unto the holy valley, even Wadi-n-Natrun that I may receive the blessing of the Fathers, and bid the monks farewell, for I feel that this will be the last time that I shall see them with these mortal eyes." In obedience, the secretary accompanied the Pope and the two went together to the hallowed region. From thence they returned to Alexandria, and a few days later, Abba Simeon was delivered from the bondage of the body.<sup>7</sup>

E. 428. During this age, a host of saintly men lived in Egypt, its deserts, its monasteries, and its provinces. The aroma of their lives filled the land, revitalizing the faint-hearted and adding strength to the courageous.

Among this host may be mentioned the sages Gawargius and Abraam who reflected God's boundless love; Epimachus who was likened unto Moses because he was powerful in word and in deed; Mena who followed in the footsteps of the great St. Antoni, and who became Bishop of Thumuis.

429. Gawargius was a learned deacon, who had almost been elected Patriarch at the time Abba Iss-haq was elected. Failing to attain this supreme position, he busied himself in writing the biographies of the Popes of Alexan-

dria in chronological order—beginning with the fourth century and ending with the eighth. In his story, Gawargius described the political situations and delineated the characters of the temporal rulers who were contemporary with the prelates about whom he wrote. Thus he made good use of the talents entrusted to him by the Heavenly Father.<sup>8</sup>

When the news of the death of Abba Simeon reached the ears of Governor 'Abd'l-Aziz and his scribes, they were grief-stricken. As for the faithful, their hearts were well nigh broken, as though they sensed beforehand what troubles were in store for them.

Meantime, a Coptic scribe by the name of Athanasius had become president of Diwan, and had loyally protected the interests of the Church. Upon Abba Simeon's death, he and a number of Coptic leaders met 'Abd'l-'Aziz to discuss with him their affairs. They told him that since the property of the Church of Alexandria necessitated the payment of a heavy tax, they needed a strong man to take care of its management immediately. They implored him to entrust this to Abba Gregorius, one of their outstanding bishops. The governor granted their request, and they gratefully withdrew from his presence.

Abba Gregorius discharged his responsibilities with great ability and proved worthy of the trust placed in him. And although he and his people conferred together often on the election of a successor to Abba Simeon, three years elapsed before the Chair of St. Mark was filled. The man chosen to fill it was a monk from the monastery of az-Zagag, by the name of Alexandros. When 'Abd'l-'Aziz saw him, he saw the Grace of God reflected on his face, and readily authorized the Copts to consecrate him. Straightway they journeyed to Alexandria and celebrated the

Rite of Consecration which elevated Alexandros II, forty-third Pope. His consecration took place on the 30th of the Coptic month of Parmuti (May 8) which is the anniversary of St. Mark's martyrdom. At this coincidence, joy mingled with fear, within many hearts: joy at the hope that Abba Alexandros would firmly uphold the glorious teachings of the Evangelist; fear that he might face persecution, or even martyrdom as had St. Mark.

### XXIII. NOTES

1. Ya'kub N. Rufeila. *Tarikh ul-omma 'l Qibtiya* p. 63; also W. budge: *Book of the Saints ... I, p.158.*
2. Severus of Ashmunein. part III, pp. 10-21
3. Amelineau: *Vie du Patriarche Isaac* (trans from Coptic), pp. 13-15
4. *Ibid.* pp. 61-62.
5. For details of Abba Iss-haq's biography, see Amelineau's above work, pp.1-80.
6. Guettee. *Histoire...* V, pp.506-7.
7. Shenouda'l Baramusi, vol.I, pp. 109-117
8. Nakhla, Kamil S. *Book and list of Coptic Patriarchs of Alexandria* (in Arabic). p.15.

XXIV. DEATH OF GOVERNOR 'ABD'L-'AZĪZ  
USHERS ERA OF TRIALS

- A. Successors of 'Abd'l-'Azīz
- B. Ferment and rebellion
- C. The volcano erupts

- 432. Copts subjected to many hardships after death of 'Abd'l-'Aziz
- 433. Arabic language declared official language of Egypt
- 434. Through God's mercy, years of hardship interspersed with years of beneficence
- 435. Death of Alexandros II
- 436. An Interlude
- 437. Election of Theodorus
- 438. Tyranny and revolt
- 439. Forward in spite of all odds
- 440. A masterlight: Abba Moyses, Bishop of Wissim
- 441. A dark episode
- 442. How the successor of Theodorus was selected
- 444. Heavy burden on Copts
- 445. Relief comes
- 446. Political strife among Arabs brings about a change for the worse
- 447. A favoured Coptic official helps his people
- 448. A pastoral tour permitted
- 449. Pope's intervention and its successful result
- 450. A succesful but short-lived revolt
- 451. More revolts and battles
- 452. Imprisonment of Abba Mikhail and plunder of Coptic leaders
- 453. Burning of al-Fustat

- 454. Tyranny despite distress
- 455. Marawan's son entreats his father for Coptic Pope
- 456. A courageous Copt secretly visits and serves imprisoned clergymen
- 457. Defeat of Marawan
- 458. Peace and Rise of New Dynasty

A. 432. It was shortly after the election of Abba Alexandros II <sup>1</sup> that the greatly beloved governor 'Abd'l-Aziz died. The Copts were very sad indeed at the loss of so benevolent a ruler, and their sadness grew more intense when they groaned under the heavy yoke fo a number of his successors during whose rules they were the victims<sup>2</sup> of uninterrupted despoilations and vexations. Not only was the poll tax imposed on them doubled and sometimes tripled, but the methods used in collecting this tax were appalling. At one time, permission to bury the dead was not given except after paying the poll tax. Even the indigent who could not buy bread were not exempted. Such brutality led to unimaginable sufferings. Everywhere people sent up their mute groanings heavenwards, for that was all they could do, and God was their only refuge.

433. It was during this tense period also that the Arabic language was declared the official language of the State instead of the people's ancient native tongue-the Coptic. Faced with this dilemma the Copts assiduously studied Arabic and were soon adept at it.<sup>3</sup>

434. In the midst of their woes and troubles, a ray of light pierced through; a Coptic official in the diwan, called Yoannis, found favour with the governor, Qurra, and was empowered by him to collect the taxes accord-

ing to his own assessment. He was also entrusted with the affairs of the Chalcedonians. Thus empowered, Yoannis travelled throughout Egypt, penetrating into the far recesses of the desert to inquire about the monks and their needs. He succeeded in winning the sectarians to Orthodoxy.

Interspersed with the years of tyranny were the years of beneficence. The interplay of light and shade is most marked in this era."...one exceptional ruler is described as a God-fearing man, just and incorruptible, in contrast to another whose maxim was 'milk till the udder be dry and let blood to the last drop.'<sup>4</sup>

435. In the year 720 A.D., amidst these chequered events, Abba Alexandros II died suddenly while he was in a boat journeying to Alexandria. When the boat arrived in the ancient metropolis, the bishops carried the body of their Pope to St. Mark's cathedral where he was buried with the honour due to his dignity. He had guided the church for twenty years and nine months.<sup>5</sup>

436. Once again, bishops and layleaders conferred together and then duly consecrated Cosmas, a monk from St. Macari's monastery the forty-fourth Pope of Alexandria. Cosmas considered this supreme honour a responsibility so great to bear, that instead of entreating God to strengthen him, he incessantly prayed to be removed from this world. As if in answer to his prayers, he spent fifteen months only on the august Chair, after which he was given the release he sought.

437. Only too soon did the Copts find themselves faced with the necessity of electing another successor to St. Mark. As clergy and

laymen surveyed the possibilities, their attention was drawn to an ascetic who lived in a monastery in the Mariut region, and whose name was Theodorus. An ardent Christian youth, Theodorus had left kith and kin and joined himself to the monastery of Timnooh, where he daily reminded himself of our Lord's injunction "whosoever of you will be chief shall be servant of all" (Mark 10:44). Hardly had the Chair become vacant than Theodorus was seized, taken to Alexandria, and consecrated amid the acclamations of the faithful. Thus he became the forty-fifth Pope of the Copts in the year 721 A.D.

B. 438. Meantime, a new man-al Hurr ibn Youssef-was appointed governor. No sooner had he settled in his governorate than he increased the poll tax on the Copts. Finding that both governor and finance administrator conspired to squeeze out of them their last penny, a state of ferment began to spread among them, and the Copts in the Red Sea region rose in revolt. For three months, the war raged between them and the Arab militia. Finally they were overpowered, but fortunately for them al Hurr was transferred to Spain. A short period of peace ensued<sup>6</sup>. "It is remarkable," said an eminent historian, "that, in spite of such intermittent oppression, and their invariable position of inferiority, and also the temptation to escape the poll tax and all disabilities by the simple process of conversion to Islam the Copts in general remained steadfast to their faith.... Most governors appear to have come to Egypt escorted by their own clan of 6,000, 10,000 or even of 20,000 men."<sup>7</sup> Gaston Wiet, the eminent, contemporary French orientalist and historian corroborates<sup>8</sup> the facts that Lane-Poole found remarkable.

439. Despite the great odds, and the problems he had to cope with, however, Abba Theodorus was granted the joy of watching the church grow and flourish as a result of his activities and the concern and watchfulness of his clergy. He remained on the Apostolic Chair eleven years, and seven months, serving to the best of his ability, then he was gathered unto his forebears.

440. The lifestream of a community, like that of a river, is made up of all the individual drops and tributaries flowing into it. But, whereas no difference can be detected between one drop of water and another, the opposite is true of the individuals who form the community. Diversity is the keynote of society; it enhances its interest and attraction.

During the eighth century, the stream of Coptic life flowed with intense agitation. Their Popes upheld the Orthodox Faith, sustained by the clergy and supported by the people. This loyalty to their Creed necessitated that they pay the price: either in money, in apostacy or in death.

Among the prominent fathers of this tumultuous age, whom we must pause to speak of is Abba Moyses, Bishop of Wissim (a town to the south of Cairo which had considerable importance during the early centuries, but has now diminished in size). This bishopry had already had a long history behind it. During the Diocletian persecutions, (in A.D. 284) it had a Bishop, called Hellenicus who had been martyred for his faith. Abba Moyses was indeed a worthy successor to this martyr.

An only child of his parents, Moyses had been brought up on the lofty Christian principles, and given a good education. As he grew up his parents noted his disposition towards ascetism, and observed him gaining

knowledge daily in both the sacred and the profane sciences.

In his early youth, he was ordained deacon, and shortly after went to Scete. There, he joined himself to an aged father whom he served eighteen years. Daily he trained himself in humility, charity, and self control.

It so happened that after this long service, the Bishop of Wissim was called unto the joy of his Lord. Clergy and people set their hearts on Moyses, and he was chosen and consecrated Bishop of that town amid the jubilation of its inhabitants. Divine Grace seemed to permeate him through and through as the years rolled by. His spiritual strength seemed to double as his physical strength diminished. Providence added grace to grace, endowing him with the spiritual gifts of healing and performing miracles. The crowds who sought him were both Christians and Muslims; his bishopry was a haven to all the tempest-tossed. His outgoing sympathy was like a magnet attracting to him wholehearted love and devotion. Such sentiments became the rampart which added to his strength in his wrestling against the forces of evil. So, it happened that in spite of what he was subjected to occasionally by the merciless temporal powers-such imprisonment, beating, buffeting and reviling, Bishop Moyses lived to a ripe old age-passing the century mark-and his life was like unto a candle which shed its light until it was finally snuffed out-being completely burnt to its very end. He was what the Church called a 'confessor'-a person who was persecuted but not martyred for the Christ's sake. He triumphed and survived and bore his persecutors neither grudge nor malice but continued to be the essence of blessing and charity to all who sought him in distress-just like the Lord and Master

in Whom he believed and Whom he served.<sup>9</sup>

It is worth noting here that after the death of Abba Moyses a Church was built in Wissim and named after him to commemorate him. The Church flourished a few centuries but in the Middle Ages it gradually fell into disuse as the number of Copts in the area diminished. The name of Moyses was still so powerful, however, that the Muslims came along and built a mosque on top of the Church (which still stands underground), calling it the Mosque of 'Sheikh Moussa'.

In recent years the Church was discovered under the mosque while it was being repaired, and the Dept. of Antiquities was able to restore whatever was left of it which was quite impressive. By special permission, tourists and interested persons are allowed to go down beneath the mosque and visit this old Church.

C. 441. Shortly after the death of Abba Theodorus Egypt became a prey to both plague and famine. To these two pestilential forces, al-Qasim, the new Arab governor, was the third. Disregarding the people's agony, he persisted in raising the tribute and imprisoning those who could not pay it. At times, the penalty was flogging in public. Throughout this period of great distress, the Chair of St. Mark remained vacant. Both clergy and laymen did not possess that security so necessary for practising their right of election. The yoke on their shoulders was growing heavier day by day. Only in the monasteries was there peace and serenity. When matters became intolerable, the bishops decided to go together to meet al-Qasim. When they reached his palace, they found out that he had been recalled by the Caliph, and had just left. Without any delay they followed him,

and overtook him while he was at the town of Bilbeis, near the Red Sea, where in a strong united plea they entreated him for two things: authorization to elect their Pope, and orders to relieve the tax imposed on the Copts. Arrogantly, he waived them off. Anguish and consternation filled their hearts, but Abba Moyses of Wissim who was with them soothed them saying, "If this man returns to Egypt, then God has not spoken to me, a sinner." His words came to pass, for al-Qasim was imprisoned upon arrival and never returned to Egypt.

442. Reassured by the statement of Bishop Moyses, and notwithstanding al-Qasim's defiant attitude, a number of bishops decided to go ahead and quietly confer with the lay leaders of the Copts regarding the next successor of St. Mark. After ten days of conferring, they reached no final decision even though the debates had been intensely strong.

Bishop Moyses had not attended the meetings because of his advanced age and frail health, but when the conferees found they had not been able to agree among themselves, they decided to seek his sagacious judgment. And so he came to the meetings, carried upon a chair by some of his devoted children. No sooner had he arrived than his very presence calmed everybody and created an atmosphere of peace. In his loving paternal way he just advised them to disperse, spend some time in prayer and meditation, and then return a day later after having sought God's inspiration.

The following day, they assembled at the church of St. Sergius (in the section of old Cairo known as Babylon). The name of a monk called Mikhail, from St. Macari's monastery was suggested, and Abba Moyses

declared that he knew him and had a high regard for him. His opinion carried weight, and all those assembled agreed to send a special delegation to Scete to escort their designated nominee to the metropolis.

443. In the meantime, the abbots and monks of the Scete monasteries had, in a meeting of their own, decided to send a delegation to the newly appointed governor-Hafs-ibn il-Waleed, to entreat him to relieve them and all the Copts of the exorbitant tribute imposed upon them by his predecessor. The two delegations met on the way and one of the delegates of Scete was Mikhail, the monk nominated for the papacy. As they mutually introduced themselves, the people's deputies were delighted to find their elect among the others, and regarded this as a sign of providential care. They all went back together to Governor Hafs, who listened to them intently and told them to go ahead with the consecration of the man they had elected to be their Pope. As for the reduction of the tax, he did not promise anything but said he will see what he could do.

On the day of Abba Mikhail's consecration, as he went in procession to St. Mark's Cathedral, surrounded by the deacons and crowds of people chanting their religious songs, it started to rain heavily in the city. For two whole years there had been scarcely any rain in Alexandria, so everybody considered the downpour a good omen, and kept telling each other joyfully that Abba Mikhail must truly be a blessed man of God.

Upon reaching the cathedral, the monk Mikhail was solemnly consecrated the forty-sixth Pope of Alexandria.<sup>10</sup>

444. During the first year of Abba Mikhail's papacy, the tribute imposed on the Copts remained excessively high-so high that not a few among them renounced their religion in order to evade its crushing burden. Deeply saddened by this, the new Pope went about trying to edify his people and admonished them to remain steadfast, trusting that the Christ will surely succour them. At the same time he enjoined all the clergy in all the churches and monasteries to keep praying earnestly, continuously and without ceasing so that the Loving Father will have mercy on the faithful, sustain them, and lighten their burden.

445. These continuous prayers were graciously answered by the Almighty God. A new governor was appointed called Hassan who was likened unto Solomon in his justice. No sooner had he assumed office than he showed sympathy and friendliness towards the Copts, and gave orders that they be treated with fairness, and without extortion. Getting to know Abba Mikhail, he also learned to have great respect for him and to seek his counsel in thorny matters. Furthermore, he got to have such deep veneration for Abba Moyses, Bishop of Wissim that for three years he went to live in that town in order to enjoy the blessing of his company and his spiritual wisdom whenever it was possible for him to do so.

446. Unfortunately, however, at the end of these three years there followed a period of political strife among some of the Arab factions. It was marked by a struggle for power with battles and bloodshed between the rival princes. Marawan ibn 'Abd-'l-'Aziz gained the upper-hand and ruled with an iron fist. Busy in trying to preserve his

Caliphate, he appointed governor of Egypt a man who would serve his own purposes and consolidate his position-with instructions to use any means.

This governor took the most drastic measures, in order to quell beforehand any inclination to insurrection. His need for increased income led him to demand imaginary figures from Abba Mikhail who, of course, was unable to pay even a fraction of them. Thereupon he was thrown into prison, with a heavy iron collar around his neck, and a block of wood shackling his feet. Imprisoned with him but exempt from the fetters, were Abba Moyses, Abba Theodorus, Bishop of Babylon, and Elias, a spiritual son of the Wissim Bishop. The so-called prison into which they were thrown was a cave carved in the rock with no aperture whatsoever. In this lightless airless cavern there were numerous other prisoners. Upon knowing that the new comers were these venerable men-of-God, some of them were so struck with remorse that they entreated them to pray for them and absolve them. They did so, soothing their hearts, and blessing them.

447. During that period of hardship and travail God's Mercy overshadowed His people in the appointment of a devoted Copt as superintendent over the governor's table. Succeeding in winning great favour with the governor, he was able to get permission to visit Abba Mikhail and his companions in their prison daily, and carried to them whatever they needed of food and clothes.<sup>11</sup>

448. A month later, the governor sent for the imprisoned Pope and his companion bishops and renewed his demand for the imposed tax money. Abba Mikhail quietly told him that

he did not have even a fraction of what was demanded; but that if he were permitted to make a pastoral tour, then whatever his children offered him, that he would pay to the governor. The governor yielded to him and gave his consent. And so St. Mark's Successor boarded a ship and journeyed up the Nile. Wherever he stopped, his people rushed out to meet him. It was an opportunity for him to heal the sick, and bring back to the fold the stray sheep, as well as collect whatever money was given him. His return to al-Fustat was on a day in the year 750 A.D., on which a violent earthquake shook the land of Egypt causing losses in lives and property, and terrifying many people. Nature's fury had a subduing effect on the governor. It softened his heart and he accepted what Abba Mikhail paid him quietly and proclaimed the end of his imprisonment. In gratitude to the Heavenly Father, St. Mark's Successor went straight to St. Gergius' Church and there he chanted the Liturgy amidst a big crowd who thronged round him to offer with him their praise and their thanksgiving.

449. During the period in which Abba Mikhail was still in prison, news of his imprisonment had reached Kyriakos, king of Nubia. Infuriated, he decided to invade Upper Egypt and free the Pope. As he advanced, he dispatched an envoy asking the governor to release the man-of-God. Instead of giving heed to the request, the governor had thereupon imprisoned the royal envoy himself. Getting no answer, Kyriakos continued his march northward, and his army pillaged and plundered the towns through which they passed. As they neared al-Fustat the governor was alarmed and released the Nubian envoy. But the Nubian King continued in his aggression. St. Mark's

Successor who had in the meantime been released from prison, was sent to meet him in person, and try to persuade him to stop his advance, and return to his country, which he did.<sup>12</sup>

The Pope's successful intervention transformed the governor's attitude towards him leading him to exchange visits with the Church leaders and their bishops and to seek their counsel.<sup>13</sup> Abba Mikhail seized this opportunity to get approval for the restoration of the destroyed churches and the building of some new ones.

450. Once more, however, peace was short-lived. The Caliph appointed his second son-also called Marawan to be general of the army, and a new cycle of crushing pressures to exact the most out of the Copts began. The burden again became intolerable, and in the region of the Said-or Upper Egypt- this inevitably brought a revolt that was soon fanned into a regular war. A man called Yoannis of Samannood assumed the leadership and for several days a battle raged. Then unfortunately a treacherous renegade betrayed the secret encampment of the leader Yoannis, and just as Judas Iscariot betrayed his Master- so did this Coptic traitor lead the Arab Militia under cover of darkness to the very camp where Yoannis relaxed serenely, unaware that a friend had become a foe. The Arabs crept stealthily, killed Yoannis and his captains, then sent up a shout of triumph which rang ominously in the silence of that fateful night. The Copts woke up to find their leaders killed and themselves surrounded on every side. Despite this disastrous calamity they fought till they were overwhelmed. Those who were not killed were captured. Throughout the land, each house had at least one man among the fallen, the wounded, or the imprisoned.<sup>14</sup>

451. This war was waged at a time when ominous clouds were thundering over the Umayyad Dynasty. The revolt of the Copts was by no means the only one: similar insurrections raged in Syria as well as in<sup>15</sup> Spain, while civil strife intensified them. And while Marawan was trying to face all the rebels and the rival princes, a new antagonist appeared: Abu Muslim unfurled the great black banner of the Abbasids.<sup>16</sup> As he marched against Marawan's governors throughout the Arab Empire in the Near East, he overpowered them one by one. Marawan decided to flee to Egypt and attempt a last stand against the foes there. He arrived in Egypt on the 27th of June 751 A.D.<sup>17</sup> The revolt of Yoannis had barely been crushed when another had begun. The Bashmurites<sup>18</sup> in their turn, raised the standard of revolt and refused to pay the poll tax. An army detachment had been sent to subdue them, but they had killed all its men. Another detachment was sent, reinforced by a fleet, but the Bashmurites were victorious again. When Marawan heard of this, he thought it wiser to win them by strategy, so he wrote them a letter promising to pardon them if they submitted and stopped fighting. Having lost confidence in him, they ignored both the letter and its bearer. Thereupon Marawan sent an army against them; this army could not reach them, however, because they fortified themselves behind their marshes where they could be approached only in single file, and where if a man slipped in that narrow path, he would sink in the mud and perish in a horrible fashion. Knowing their region well, the Bashmurites were able to stand against their foe; they kept quiet by day and sallied forth by night. Thus they continued to triumph.

452. To add fuel to the fire burning everywhere, the governor of Alexandria rebelled, hoping to become the independent ruler of the city. This time, Marawan sent Hawthara, his most ferocious agent, to subdue the rebel, which he did and then massacred him and all his supporters. In an overwhelming wave of vindictiveness, for no reason, he also arrested Abba Mikhail, plundered the Coptic leaders and captured their wives and children. As Hawthara's fury mounted, he remembered that the Bashmurites were of Abba Mikhail's people, and decided that he pay for their rebellion. Consequently again he was heavily chained, then thrown into prison.

News then reached Marawan that Abu Muslim and his forces had entered Egypt. He dispatched a speedy message to his own forces who were still attempting to quell the Bashmurites asking them to return in haste, and support his own defenders. He also sent for Hawthara, who entrusted Abba Mikhail to one of the princes that he may take him to al-Fustat while he sped forward.

The Pope's secretary hurried to Wissim and reported to its Bishop all that had happened. Some time later the man-of-God passed by them on his way with his escort. Upon seeing them, the venerable sage of Wissim said: "Let him who is willing to suffer in the name of the Christ follow me," and he left all and joined Abba Mikhail.

453. Meanwhile, Marawan ordered a trumpeter to proclaim throughout al-Fustat that within three days he shall set the city on fire. The proclamation spread panic; and in terror a mass attempt to flee to the opposite bank of the Nile began. In this disorganized, hurried attempt, many were drowned. As for the old, the blind and all the disabled, they

were heedlessly left to their fate. Few individuals kept their level-headedness amidst this pandemonium; and among them were the priests of the churches enclosed within the Babylon fortress. They remained behind and kept guard round their churches and round all those who could not flee or who sought their help. Thus they succeeded, by God's Grace, to save them from the conflagration.

After burning the city, as he had threatened, Marawan crossed over to the western bank of the Nile. Where ever he moved, he ordered his soldiers to escort Abba Mikhail and his men and bring them along to the place of his encampment.

454. At sunset-on the 26th of July-the vanguards of the invaders reached the eastern bank of the river facing Marawan's forces. But there were no bridges then, and it had not occurred to the invaders to come by water. So the two contending forces were within sight of one another, but could not as yet begin the battle: the eternal river stood as a barrier between them.

The following day, Marawan ordered that Abba Mikhail and his men be brought before him. His fury had been fanned by one of his courtiers who said that the man-of-God had foretold their defeat. When they stood before him, Marawan ordered his soldiers to pluck the beard of Abba Mikhail-hair by hair. This was done within sight of the two armies. After this act of disdain, St. Mark's Successor and his men were left in the glaring sun throughout the day. It was too drastic a measure in the hot season, but they all survived the ordeal.

The next day a number of bishops and monks came to inquire about their Pope. They joined the imprisoned group before sunrise.

Soon after dawn, a swordsman took Abba Mikhail by the hand saying that Marawan desired to see him alone. But Abba Moyses stood up and said: "As the Lord liveth, I will never part with my spiritual father, but will follow wherever you may take him." While the swordsman was haranguing with Abba Moyses, hoping to dissuade him, another order came that the whole group be taken. They were given over to the custody of a prince called Yazid. When the sun rose high in the heavens, Yazid displayed his instruments of torture before Marawan. Then did Abba Moyses ask Abba Mikhail to absolve him, and they all prayed for one another, the lesser in priestly dignity saying to the higher ones: "When you will find mercy before our Lord the Christ, remember us."

455. All the encampment on either side of the Nile saw them and heard their words. Some Muslims began to weep in sympathy and pity. Marawan's eldest son entreated his father, with tears, to release them saying: "Behold, my father, our enemies are near at hand. We may have to take refuge in the Sudan. Many Sudanese are spiritual children to this venerable man. Should you kill him, how do you expect them to meet us? Might they not find it oportune to take their revenge?" Thereupon Marawan ordered Yazid and his men to put their instruments of torture away and to put St. Mark's Successor and his men in prison till the battle be over. Again imprisoned, Abba Mikhail, in spite of what he had gone through, was able to speak words of comfort to his companions, and his speech was like the music of a harp to their sore hearts.

456. Living in the vicinity of the encampment

was a God-fearing Copt called ibn Qustus, who developed a plan to make quiet, secret daily visits to the venerable Pope and his companions in their prison and offer them what food and services they needed. He was a shining example of the risks a loyal son was willing to run for the spiritual fathers of the Church.

457. On the 10th day of August, Abu Muslim's men forded the Nile and the battle began. Soon enough Marawan was overwhelmed and had to flee southward. The battle raged for two days and when it ended only four hundred men survived of the eight thousand who formed the Caliph's army.

458. In his desperate flight, Marawan forgot all about Abba Mikhail and his companions. His last attempt to bar his enemies' advance was to set his encampment on fire. But this fire was speedily put off by the people of Giza. Finding themselves freed from the nightmare which was Marawan, some Muslims went at sunset to the dungeon in which the Alexandrian Pope and his companions were imprisoned and set them free. They also accompanied them to the residence of Abba Petros, Bishop of Giza. The first thing the whole group did—including some Muslims—was to go to church and offer "The Prayer of Thanksgiving" to the Almighty for having delivered them.

With the fall of Marawan, the Caliphate passed to the Abbassids, who later on chose Baghdad to be their capital.

#### XXIV. NOTES

1. S.Land-Poole.Op.cit.p.30.

2. Gaston Wiet. *Precis...* II, p.27.
3. Lane-Poole. p.27.
4. *Ibid.* p.25.
5. Severus of Ashmunein. *op.cit.* pp.48-79; also Manassa'1 Qommos. pp.409-13.
6. al-Ayubi, *op.cit.* pp95-6.
7. Lane-Poole, pp.28-29.
8. G. Wiet. *Precis...* II, p.137.
9. 'as-Sadik ul-Amin. vol. II, pp.289-90; als Wallis-Budge: *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church*, II, pp.441-2 and IV, pp.1204-5.
10. as-Sadek ul-Amin. II, pp.300-301.
11. S. Lane-Poole, p.27; Severus of Ashmunein. pt. III, pp.144-5; Pere Henaut. p.207.
13. Severus of Ashmunein. pt. III, p.148.
14. al-Ayubi. p.96.
15. W. Muir. *op.cit.* p.409.
16. *Ibid.* p.423.
17. Severus of Ashmunein. pt. III, p.156.
18. Extinct inhabitants of what is now the Shargiya province, which runs parallel to the shore of the Red Sea up to the Suez Canal.

XXV. NEW ARAB DYNASTY, AND ATTITUDES  
OF ITS FIRST FEW GOVERNORS TOWARDS COPTS

- A. An era of peace marred by an internal act of treachery
  - B. Altar Balloting: a digression
  - C. A governor like unto a 'second Daniel come to judgment'
  - D. A momentous period
459. Abba Mikhail honoured by victorious General
460. Peace alternates with strife
461. A benevolent governor
462. Abba Mikhail's last years spent in peace
463. Controversy over icons
464. Election of Abba Mena
465. Peace with the governor but a tragic act of treachery from within
466. Petros, the traitor, meets the destitute end predicted for him
467. Fifteen months' vacancy of St. Mark's Chair before it is filled
468. Resorting to principle of altar balloting
469. Beneficence of peace
470. The deacon Marcus
471. Destruction of Churches
472. Death of Abba Yoannis IV
473. Consecration of Abba Marcus II
474. Mutual liking and understanding between Patriarch and Governor
475. Repentance and return of prodigals
476. Construction of a church in Alexandria
477. Calamity befalls monasteries of Scete, and death of Marcus II
478. Choice and consecration of Yacobus
479. Reconstruction of destroyed monasteries
480. Pastoral tour and building of Church in Jerusalem

481. Visit of the Patriarch of Antioch to Egypt  
482. Death of Abba Yacobus

A. 459. Having been a witness from across the Nile of what had transpired between Abba Mikhail and his persecutor Marawan, the victorious general of the advancing forces inquired about the Pope, and wanted to know what happened to him. Upon hearing that he had been released, he sent for him and received him with great honour. He also accorded him the right of protecting the Church property in all the provinces. As for the Bashmurites about whose plight he had heard, they were exempted from the poll tax, and were even given other revenues as gifts.

460. With the re-establishment of peace, the lifestream that had been so turbid, resumed its normal flow. For a while it seemed that the Copts were going to have a break but alas-restlessness crept in soon enough because of the speedy change of governors.<sup>1</sup> This incessant and rapid change could only spell renewal of hardships for the Copts as most governors were too eager to accumulate as much money as possible before the order of their dismissal came. After two years of peaceful security, the Copts were, once more, faced with the exaction of exorbitant poll taxes. At their impotence to meet these exactions, again some of them renounced their faith. Dismayed, Abba Mikhail courageously went to meet the instated governor and remind him of the oath given him two years earlier by the triumphant general. The governor prevaricated in his answer and pretended that it was the Caliph who had given the order for demanding increased taxes. St. Mark's Successor intuitively refused to be convinced by this answer. Together with Abba Moyses,

he continued to negotiate and plead on behalf of his people until finally the governor gave in and reduced the increases in the sums demanded. It was only a partial success but it did somewhat alleviate the situation.

461. The Copts waited and prayed, and again, in answer to their prayers the Caliph appointed a new governor called Abu'Awn who turned out to be fair and benevolent. With his appointment, another period of peace ensued. Abba Mikhail seized it and went on a pastoral tour. When he visited the monasteries, his heart was comforted to behold the manner of life the monks lived. Some of them attained such a degree of holiness that the spiritual gifts of healing the sick and of prophecy were bestowed upon them.

462. Peace continued to reign for the rest of Abba Mikhail's hitherto eventful and turbulent life. At last the Loving Father recompensed him for all the travail he had endured. Worn out by vicissitudes he had had to face during his papacy, he joined the ranks of the Church Triumphant after having steered the Church Militant through<sup>2</sup> stormy seas for twenty-three years and a half.

463. One of the subjects that became controversial in numerous Christian Churches at that time outside Egypt was whether icons (or pictures of saints) should be used at all in churches. Those who were opposed to their use came to be called iconoclasts. The Coptic Church favoured the use of icons, and gave to these iconoclasts the following line of argument to support its stand: Some may ask how can you make an image of the Invisible and the Infinite? How can you paint Him who has no body? But since He has become

man, you can paint His human form: His birth from the Virgin, His baptism, His transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, His passion, His Cross, His burial; His Ressurrection and His Ascension. You have an equal right to express these facts in colour as in speech. And the expression in colour can be grasped more easily than the expression in words: the former being readily perceived by everyone, while the latter has to be deciphered before being understood. By expressing himself in colour and form, the artist endeavours to remind the onlooker of the virtues and the spiritual value of those he paints, and through this reminder incites them to imitation, and uplifts their souls. Thus holy images may be regarded as vehicles inducing men to contemplate, and as windows giving them a glimpse of heaven.

This controversy had started at Constantinople. It spread and was debated with zeal throughout Christendom. The Coptic Church, having been alienated by the maltreatment at Chalcedon, and the persecutions which followed in its wake, was given no active part in it. Nonetheless it upheld the principle of adorning the churches with icons. The screen separating the sanctutuary from the church aisles is called the iconostasis. A note should be added in passing that even though political and religious circumstances had forcibly made the Coptic Church withdraw from the world community of Churches,<sup>3</sup> the teachings of its illustrious 'universal' Fathers, were widespread and renowned. In the eighth century, Alcuin, the most learned of European fathers, used quotations from the writings of Theophilus of Alexandria and his brilliant successor<sup>4</sup> Kyrillos I as texts to teach his students. Thus the seed sown by St. Mark's Successors continued to bear fruit long after its sowers had gone to their

reward, and long after their Church was forced to withdraw from the world scene.<sup>5</sup>

464. Once more St. Mark's Chair became vacant; once more clergy and people prayed and deliberated about who was to fill it. They were guided to elect Mena, a monk from St. Macari's monastery, who had been one of the spiritual sons of Abba Mikhail. He was consecrated forty-seventh Pope of Alexandria in the year 758 A.D.

Once elected, Abba Mena devoted himself wholeheartedly to the duties of his high office. So gladly did he serve that everyone who saw him marvelled at the Grace which radiated from his face. The peace which prevailed then between the Copts and their governor helped him to do his work in a climate of security.

465. Unfortunately, however, as Abba Mena was savouring the governor's friendship and reaping its benefits of peace and justice for the Copts, a tragic act of treachery occurred which caused him much heartache and pain for over a year. And who was the person who committed this act? Alas, none other than a monk of his own people. Like the prophet of old when asked, "What are these wounds in thy hands?" St. Mark's successor answered in anguish of heart: "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."<sup>6</sup>

The act of treachery alluded to have occurred in the following manner. A monk named Petros who had been in the same monastery as Abba Mena got gripped by vaingloriousness, so he went to the Pope and asked him to consecrate him Bishop. The Patriarch refused, explaining that this was not a position anyone could seek for oneself. Angered and thwarted in his ambition, Petros forged a letter in Abba Mena's name to the Patriarch

of Antioch and carried it to him himself, requesting financial aid for the treasury of the Coptic Church, which according to him had been depleted. Then, when he was believed and given a generous sum of money, he took that money, went to Damascus to the Caliph Abu Gaafar'l-Mansoor, and-to ingratiate himself in his eyes-gave it to him as a gift, and stayed on in Damascus for a while, paying his respects to the Caliph from time to time. Three months later when he had decided to return to Egypt, the Caliph, who held the Christians in high esteem and who had wanted to return a favour to Petros, asked him if he had any special request. He answered immediately that he desired to be the Pope of Alexandria. In speedy response, Abu Gaafar granted his request and gave him a letter to that effect to the governor of Egypt.

As soon as he reached al-Fustat, he presented the Caliph's letter to governor Abu'Awn who immediately sent a messenger to Abba Mena asking him to come and meet him at once. Upon his arrival Abu'Awn showed him the Caliph's letter in the presence of Petros and told him that, although he hated to do so, he had to obey the Caliph's order. Abba Mena, who feared no worldly power, stared at Petros and said: "None takes this honour of his own choice for it is accorded by God Himself. Hear, therefore, what I say unto you-that 'every tree which is not planted by the Heavenly Father, will be uprooted and thrown into the fire.' Your authority will surely be taken away from you, and you will die in destitution." Petros replied: "Do my bidding and save yourself from torture." And turning to Abu'Awn he said: "See! he disobeys the decree of the king in your presence." At this remark, the governor recoiled inwardly; outwardly, he entreated Abba Mena to obey.

The Alexandrian Pope felt intuitively the conflict within the soul of the governor, so he declared his willingness to obey Petros who ordered that he be kept in custody until he summoned all the bishops to meet him.

Meantime, Abba Mena sent an encyclical letter asking the bishops to assemble at Al-Fustat; they hastened to respond. They then held a meeting at the church of Abu Sarga, where Petros joined them escorted by a band of soldiers. Assuming the leadership, he was about to enter the sanctuary when Abba Moyses and the bishop of Tanbooh barred his way saying: "You are unworthy, O new Judas to chant the Holy Office." At these words, he ordered the soldiers to surround all the bishops and escort them to the governorate where the Pope was still detained. Upon their arrival, Abba Mena embraced them one by one saying: "Be of good cheer! for we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." 8

A few days later Petros pretended-before Abu'Awn-that Abba Mena and his bishops knew the secrets of alchemy. Meeting with their denial, he urged the governor to decree that they work in coating the ships with tar. Abu'Awn was loathe to comply, but feared the Caliph's anger. So the Pope and some of the bishops toiled in the wharves for a whole year. One day, the governor dared to reprove Petros who retorted that he was going to accuse him to the Calips. Abu'Awn was so enraged that he threw Petros into solitary confinement, and sent an immediate message to Abba Mena requesting him and his bishops to depart to their respective Sees in peace.

466. As for Petros, he languished in prison for three years, at the end of which Abu'Awn was replaced by governor Salih ibn 'Ali who

set him free. But he had hardly breathed the air of freedom, than news came that Caliph Abu Gaafar was dead. Dismayed and discomfited, Petros realized too late the truth of the prophetic warning: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in human succour."<sup>9</sup> He retired to his native village where he died in poverty and loneliness as had been predicted by Abba Mena.

Abba Mena spent the rest of his span in fruitful serenity. In the year 766 A.D., he was gathered unto his forebears having guided <sup>10</sup>the Church for eight years and ten months.

B. 467. Peace still reigned throughout Egypt. The bishops kept busy each in his See, looking after the welfare of his people, and strengthening the hearts for whatever the future may hold. Being so constructively engaged, fifteen months elapsed after the death of Abba Mena before they convened with the lay leaders to consider who might be his possible successor. An aged deacon suggested the name of a monk called Yoannis known for his righteousness and for the melodiousness of his voice. Yet, despite his high repute, bishops and people thought fit to resort to what is now known as the Altar ballot-i.e., the practice of writing the names of the two top candidates on different slips of paper and placing them on the altar. In this instance, the names of Yoannis and another monk were written, each on a separate slip of paper together with a white (blank) slip, in case both are refused by divine Will. Folding these slips, they placed them on the altar under the Paten (or plate of the Eucharist) during the service of Holy Liturgy. At the end of the service, a little boy was brought forward and asked to pick one of the slips. Unfolding it, they

found the name "Yoannis" on it. They repeated the same process on the two following days; each time it was the name "Yoannis" which was drawn. Reassured that this must be the divine choice, they consecrated him the forty-eighth Patriarch of Alexandria, under the name of Yoannis IVth.

468. Here it is incumbent that we pause to ponder this principle of choosing by ballot. We note that it is the very first time that the successor to St. Mark was so elected, though he was the forty-eighth in the chain of succession. Why, then, was this method not used in the earlier centuries? The Apostolic Fathers drew their inspiration from the Word of God. They knew that, through the grace granted by the Holy Spirit, man was given wisdom, freedom of choice and the ability to discern the right. They, therefore, resorted to deliberations followed by voting whenever the Chair of St. Mark was vacant. They also declared that the voice of the people was the echo of God's Voice-hence the principle established from early times was that he who wins the majority of votes must be considered as the elect of God, and be accepted by all, whether they gave him their vote or not.

In the New Testament, the one instance in which the Apostles resorted to balloting, was when they chose Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:23-26). This one instance had taken place before Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on them. Once they received "the power from on high," they never resorted to balloting again as a means of reaching a decision, because they relied on the Holy Spirit that filled them to guide their choice. The Fathers of the Coptic Church followed the pattern of the Apostles, and so they invoked the inspiration and help

of the Holy Spirit, and then exercised their faculty of deliberating and choosing. Hence, election by ballot had not been practiced until 876 A.D. In the case of Abba Yoannis IV, the suggestion was made and accepted. A precedent was set, and followed whenever the occasion called for it. The idea behind it was to make the final choice not man's but God's'; popular election was the first step; when the two or three who received the highest number of votes were known, the elect among them was chosen by Church-balloting as described in the case of Abba Yoannis.

469. The civil authorities were kindly inclined towards Abba Yoannis IV and this gave him the ease and security needed for going about doing good. He had the freedom to build and to teach and so inaugurated another era of constructiveness; several new churches were built; old churches were repaired and redecorated. The spirit of enterprise filled the Pope and was contractd by his people. Their hearts glowed with confidence and they contributed to Abba Yoannis IV in the same way that the early Christians contributed to the Apostles: they brought to him all the money they could give so that he may dedicate it to the service of God and of his flock.

470. As he went about performing his tasks, one of the deep wishes of his heart was to choose an ardent and sagacious youth to be his secretary. His choice finally fell on Marcus, a deacon-monk who chanted the Gospel with such compassionate harmonious tones that the faithful crowded the church as early as possible to soar with him joyfully.<sup>11</sup> Abba Yoannis IV observing with joy the love of the people for Marcus, promoted him, making

him his own counsellor. As time went on, he became his constant companion and active assistant.

471. Suddenly, the peace was broken by a rebellion against the Abbassid authority, but fortunately it was a short rebellion that was speedily quelled.<sup>12</sup> A new governor, by the name of al-Fadl was appointed. He, too was kindly disposed towards the Copts. But because of his ambition, he was speedily recalled by the Caliph who appointed his nephew, al Mahdi, instead. al Mahdi, though equitable considered it no encroachment on justice to demolish the churches. When Abba Yoannis IV paid a visit to al-Fustat he made a tour of the churches of the region. To his great chagrin he found a number of them completely destroyed and others half shattered. To all appearances, his life-time work was lost. He held a Service and changed Holy Liturgy in a roofless church. During the service, his tears mingled with his prayers, as he implored the Heavenly Father to give His children sufficient grace thereby enabling them to regild the destroyed churches. Such was the ardour of his supplications that an angel of the Lord appeared to him saying: "You have amply fulfilled your duty and merited your reward; the Lord will, therefore, take you unto Him to give you a well-earned rest. He will accord your successor the grace you have so earnestly entreated." The heart of Abba Yoannis IV leaped for joy; the people saw that he was in ecstasy as he completed the Liturgy and administered Holy Communion.

472. Some time later, Abba Yoannis returned to Alexandria. The day of his arrival coincided with the arrival of a new governor called Labib-ud-Dawlah, who demonstrated by his behaviour that he loved the Christians. The

Alexandrian Pope told the bishops who accompanied him: "Verily God's mercy is great, my brethren; for I was foretold of my departure from this world and of the arrival of a new governor who would love the Christians." Though their hearts were heavy at these words the bishops asked: "Did not the Lord single out for you your successor?" With a benign smile he answered: "Indeed He did. My successor-designate will be none other than my beloved counsellor Marcus." A few days later the man-of-God sickened slightly; he was carried serenely away by the angels of Light, after having spent twenty-two years in steering the helm of the Church.<sup>13</sup>

C. 473. Marcus, secretary and counsellor to the departed Pope was one of those rare souls to whom all the glitter of the world was but dross. That is why he had fled into the desert in his early youth. After the Pope's solemn funerary ritual, the Bishops went to al-Fustat to take counsel with the lay leaders, and disclosed to them what Abba Yoannis had revealed to them regarding his successor. When they all immediately gladly and unanimously consented, they sent a delegation to the governor to inform him of their choice. The governor readily approved. Upon returning to Alexandria, they discovered the disappearance of Marcus. Concluding that he must have fled to the desert, they sent their experts there to trace his footsteps. Finding him, they bound him and carried him to Alexandria where he was consecrated forty-ninth Pope of Alexandria, under the name of Marcus II.

474. The first Sunday after his consecration happened to be the eve of Lent. Abba Marcus II went to the monastery of Az-Zagag (west

of Alexandria) to devote himself wholly to prayer and fasting during this most hallowed season. Having soared the heights of the spirit and celebrated the glorious Easter with the monks, he went to al-Fustat. Taking the bishop of Babylon with him they went to visit the governor. When he reached the outskirts of the city, the crowds rushed out to welcome him, and formed themselves into a procession, chanting as they marched.

When the spiritual and temporal chiefs met, an instantaneous sympathy bound them. After the exchange of greetings, the governor said, "Declare to me your heart's desire and I shall be only too delighted to put at your disposal all the means for its realization." Abba Marcus was silent for a few seconds, then answered: "God guard you, and grant you increased favour with the Sultan, O Governor." Then smiling radiantly added, "You know mine is the realm of the spirit. The authority given me from on high is to tend, teach and uplift the souls. One means for attaining my goal is to facilitate the way for worship. Therefore I need to erect churches especially that some unjust rulers have destroyed a number of them. So I pray you permit me to rebuild those fallen sanctuaries wherein the hymns of praise to the Almighty will rise like an incense. This, my dear prince, is my sole desire." "Your wish is granted, O venerable man-of-God," replied the governor, and he gave his orders for putting into immediate action the plea of the Pope who glorified God with exultation.

475. Meantime, one blissful event succeeded another: a group of Christians whose ancestors had alienated themselves from the church began to yearn after their spiritual Mother. When St. Mark's Successor heard of it, he

set himself to pray for their reconciliation with fiery zeal saying: "O Lord of hosts, You have prepared for us the means of our salvation by Your unutterable Incarnation. You went into the wilderness in search of the stray sheep, and rejoiced to bring him to safety. And when the prodigal son returned, You met him with open arms and called the angelic host to rejoice over his return. Now, O my God, hear my prayer for these erring children of Yours, and move their hearts to rejoin their Mother-Church." This prayer rose like an incense to the very Throne of Grace; The two leaders of the estranged group went to meet him. As soon as they went into his presence, they declared their readiness to submit to him and to uphold the Orthodox Faith. He put them to the test. Finding them sincere, he accepted them with joy unspeakable. They, in turn, asked him to re-consecrate their church at al-Fustat and he readily accepted. To express his joy at their return, Abba Marcus II repaired their church at his own expense and adorned it with artistic masterpieces. They, on their part, called it "The Church of the Patriarch."

476. With heart at ease because the repentants became firmly grounded in Orthodoxy, the Pope left for Alexandria. There, he was met by an exultant crowd who asked for his permission to build a church in the name of the Saviour in the very center of the city. After discussing the matter with them, he gave them his blessing. They thanked him saying: "Your prayers will be a fortress unto us, protecting us from harm." And they began to work immediately. Such was the joy of St. Mark's Successor at their zeal that whenever he prayed, he invariably went to see how the work was progressing and often took active

part in constructing it. The Church was soon completed and consecrated amid great jubilation. On that happy occasion, the rich regaled the poor, and the Pope lavished his gifts profusely on all who thronged him-that day seemed to the believers a flashlight from heaven.

477. In the midst of this time of prosperity and joyous constructiveness, Abba Marcus II was deeply saddened by a calamity that befell the strongholds of peace and serenity in the Church-the monasteries of Scete. Nomadic tribes of the desert marauded the region, looted the monasteries, destroying much of them, and killing many of the monks. Only those who were able to flee or hide in the caves escaped the savage mauraders.

When news of this savage vandalism reached the Pope, he was stunned by them. In anguish of heart, he kept praying for wisdom, power and sustenance from on High to be able to overcome his greif and do something about it. A few months later, after he had celebrated the Easter Service, his spirit quietly left his earthly body. He had shepherded the Church for twenty years and seven days.<sup>14</sup>

D. 478. The destruction of the Scete monasteries was so devastating that the few monks who had been spared dispersed in Upper Egypt. One of the monks of St. Macari's monastery who had unintentionally escaped was a saintly man called Yacobus. He happened to be visiting a monastery in the far south during the barbaric attack of the nomads. One night after that, the blessed Virgin appeared to him in a dream and ordered him to go back to St. Macari's. Being a man of steadfast faith, he did not doubt the veracity of his dream,

and so he set out for Scete without delay. Soon, a good number of monks joined him, lived under his guidance, and were comforted by his wisdom. When the Bishops and lay leaders fasted and prayed asking for guidance in the choice of a new Pope some among them remembered the recommendation that had been given by Abba Marcus II of Yacobus. Straight-way, the people declared their willingness to have him elevated to the Papal Chair. He was sent for and duly consecrated as the fiftieth Pope of Alexandria.

479. The first goal which Abba Yacobus set for himself and to which he gave priority was the reconstruction of the destroyed monasteries. At the beginning of the first Lent after his elevation to the papacy he went to the monastery of St. Macari. Apart from prayer and fasting, he directed his whole attention to this task of the reconstruction of the dilapidated sanctuaries. In time, he succeeded in reconstructing a church within each monastery. The church of St. Macari "became a Monument<sup>15</sup> to the Patriarch, and a glory to the Lord."

480. The energy expended by Abb Yacobus seemed boundless. Hardly had he terminated his reconstruction than he went on a pastoral tour throughout Upper Egypt. The mere contact of the Pope with his people was mutually exhilarating to them. Then with the memory of the myriad happy faces cherished within his heart, the Man-of-God returned to his metropolis. From there he focused his attention on building a church in Jerusalem where the Copts, who went on annual pilgrimages, could assemble to glorify their Maker.<sup>16</sup>

481. Sometime later, Mar Dionysius, Patriarch

of Antioch, made his first visit to Egypt. His aim was to meet 'Abdalah ibn Tahir, the governor, and disclose to him the injustices committed by his brother in Edessa. He succeeded in obtaining a letter from him forbidding his brother from infringing on the rights of the churches throughout the See of Antioch. Ibn Tahir was as good as his word for he offered the Copts all the facilities needed for accomplishing their work of constructiveness. He also established peace by expelling the trouble-making Andalusians from the land.

Mar Dionysius paid a second visit to Egypt for the sole purpose of seeing Abba Yacobus. When the two met, they rejoiced with spiritual joy; while the Copts who went out to welcome their great guest chanted "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."<sup>17</sup> Antiochenes and Copts spent many days together in spiritual concord.

482. Having fulfilled his duties in the most commendable manner, Abba Yacobus was given release from the body in peace and serenity, after guiding<sup>18</sup> the church for ten years and eight months.

#### XXV. NOTES

1. Muir, pp. 430-31; Lane-poole, p. 30.
2. Severus of Ashmunein, pt. III, pp. 88-215 gives full details of this restless period.
3. Guettee. V. pp. 559-565.
4. Guettee. V, pp. 18-68.
5. The Coptic Church remained withdrawn

from the world community of churches until the ecumenical movement began in our time; the second meeting of the World Council of Churches held at Evanston, Illinois, in 1954 was the first to be attended by the Coptic Church. Then only did It join after It had sent Its own delegates to attend that historic meeting.

6. Zechariah 13:6.
7. Matt.15:13; see also Heb.5:4.
8. Romans 8:38
9. Jeremiah 17:5.
10. Fr.Shenouda 'L Baramusi.vol.I,pp.183-191.
11. W.Budge,Book of the saints...vol.III, p.822.
12. S.Lane-Poole,p.34.
13. Shenouda '1 Baramusi,vol.I,pp.196-9.
14. Ibid,vol.I,pp.199-214.
15. Evelyn White.The Monasteries of Wadi n-Natrun,partIII,p.35.
16. al-Magizi.ed.pub.byMarcusGirgis.Cairo, 1898.p.54.
17. Psalms85:10.
18. Shenouda '1-Baramusi.vol.I,pp.214-27.

## XXVI. THE TIDE TAKES AN UNPROFITIOUS TURN

- A. A baleful blow
- B. External turmoil and internal peace
- C. St. Yoannis Kami

- 483. A short-lived papacy
- 484. The 52nd Pope elected and consecrated
- 485. His first year the only one of peace
- 486. The tide takes a plunge for the worse
- 487. A Coptic revolt and its baleful consequences
- 488. Coptic Pope sends letter to King of Nubia
- 489. And also to both King and Bishop of Ethiopia
- 490. Coptic artists and craftsmen participate in building new Caliph's summer residence
- 491. Monasteries flourish again
- 492. Abba Yusab rests in peace
- 493. A fleeting cloud
- 494. Election of Abba Cosmas II
- 495. Two favoured Copts in the Governor's diwan
- 496. Caliph during time of Abba Cosmas a benevolent one
- 497. Election of 55th Pope
- 498. Pastoral tour
- 499. Period of Constructiveness
- 500. Abba Shenouda wards off attack on St. Macari's monastery
- 501. Death of Shenouda I
- 502. How Divine Light shines through saintly men
- 503. Discipleship of Yoannis to the monk Teroti
- 504. Yoannis Kami leaves Teroti in obedience to a celestial vision
- 505. Order of the blessed Virgin carried out by Yoannis
- 506. Manifold blessings
- 507. Ordination of Yoannis Kami priest

508. Influence of Yoannis Kami's sanctity goes far beyond his earthly life  
509. The origin of the name Suriani  
510. An interesting feature about this monastery  
511. A paragraph of meditation

A. 483. The fifty-first Successor of St. Mark was Simeon II. His Patriarchate was very short-lived, however, lasting seven months only. He died in the same year in which he had been consecrated, which was 829 A.D.

Abba Simeon's speedy departure into the world beyond inaugurated a period of two years of turmoil and molestation in which St. Mark's Chair remained vacant.

484. Finally, the bishops succeeded in convening with the lay-leaders and all unanimously agreed to elect a monk called Yusab to be the Head of the Church. Yusab had been the only child of Godfearing parents both of whom had died while he was yet in his tender years. An eminent Copt who was an official in the diwan of the Caliph, had adopted him. Yusab had lived with him till he became of age, then disclosed to him his desire to become a monk. His foster father replied: "My son, you were brought up in ease and luxury. The desert life is too simple and frugal for you, and I fear you may not be able to endure it." Yet though he answered him thus, he pondered his desire and resolved to write about it to the Pope of Alexandria who, at the time happened to be Abba Marcus II. So he wrote him a letter in detail and gave it to the youth himself to carry to the venerable Father.

Upon receiving the letter Abba Marcus II entrusted Yusab to the most renowned monk-teacher in Alexandria telling him to take

special care of him and bring him up in the tradition of knowledge and learning so highly prized by the Egyptian Fathers. Yusab spent a year with this teacher, then the call of the desert reverberated once again within his breast. Going to Abba Marcus, he confessed to him his aspirations, consequently Yusab was sent by the Pope to the monastery of St. Macari. There, the young aspirant devoted himself to the noble task of total spiritual self-discipline. Sometime later the Alexandrian Pope visited the monastery and in accord with the Abbot's recommendation ordained the youth a priest.

In due season Yusab himself was elected and consecrated the fifty-second Patriarch to sit on St. Mark's Chair.

485. The first year of Abba Yusab's papacy was a year of peace and plenty, a beginning which proved just to be like the calm preceding the storm. During this year of peace St. Mark's Successor consecrated bishops for the Pentapolis, Nubia and Abyssinia.<sup>1</sup> He also bought plots of ground with his own stipend and endowed the churches with them.

486. Then the tide began to take an unpropitious turn. Two new officials appointed to collect the taxes began harassing the people with their exorbitant demands. Those who could not pay, they were imprisoned and flogged. So callous were they that they gave orders to inflict any kind of torture on the indigents even to the point of killing. A time came when, unable to bear this any longer, the people revolted; the rebels being Copts and Muslims together. Several battles were waged in different towns with no decisive issue. Through this period of terrible strife, Abba Yusab ceased not from prayer and fasting.

As the rebellion gathered momentum al-Mo'tassim, brother of the Caliph, was sent to Egypt at the head of four thousand Turks to quell it. He triumphed, killed the leader, dispersed the rebels, and returned to Baghdad driving before him a crowd of miserable bare-footed ill-clad prisoners. In spite of this drastic measure, the insurrection broke out five months later. This second time the insurgents were the Copts alone.

487. At the news of this fresh revolt, the Caliph himself, al-Mamoon, resolved to go to Egypt. He led his troops in person in the Delta region, sending his Turkish general Afshin against the region of Hawf, south of a.l-Fustat. "When he triumphed, he massacred the Copts in cold blood, had their villages burnt, their wives and children sold as slaves...so brutal was the reprisal that Egypt became, for the first time, an essentially Mohammedan country."<sup>2</sup> This baleful blow was dealt by al Mamoon in A.D. 832. Having crushed the subjects whom he considered unruly for having rebelled against the merciless treatment of his own officials, instead of redressing the injustices incurred upon them he left them to their agony, humiliation and their sorrow, and returned to Baghdad. He outlived this outrage by some<sup>3</sup> months only, for he died in the autumn of 833.

488. This devastating storm having subsided, Abba Yusab began to think of his broken-hearted people and of the best means for preserving their remnant.

Nubia and Abyssinia must needs have their share in his responsibility: as he was meditating on how best he could reconcile the Nubian King with the rulers of Egypt. He heard that the new Caliph had sent a

letter to Zachariah, king of Nubia, reminding him that for fourteen years he had failed to pay his tribute. Hearing of this, Abba Yusab sent a letter to the king urging him to pay the tribute in order to evade any possible war.

When King Zachariah received the letters of both the Pope and the Caliph, he loaded his crown prince with gifts and sent him to Egypt straight to Abba Yusab; the prince then took permission to leave for Baghdad to present the gifts to the Caliph. There he was met with due honour, and the Caliph told him that since he had taken the trouble to come all the way to see him in obedience to his request he was going to exempt him from paying the arrears. After spending a few days in the Caliph's palace, the Nubian prince took leave. On his homeward journey he was escorted by a guard of honour. They passed through Egypt where the prince gave a full report of his visit to Abba Yusab. The Man-of-God was joyed that the visit went so well, and in gratitude he chanted the liturgy which was attended by the prince and his retinue. When the prince was about to depart, St. Mark's Successor blessed him and presented him with a portable altar.<sup>4</sup>

489. The Alexandrian Pope directed his attention then towards Ethopia. Its bishop at the time was called Yoannis and had been a monk in the Baramus Monastery. Abba Yusab dispatched letters to both the King of Ethopia and its Bishop, telling them how they must all cooperate to work for the good of their people and keep the peace with the Caliphs.

490. Again, God's providential care pierced the dark clouds like a shining ray of light and was manifested by an unexpected oppor-

tunity: the Caliph Al Moftassim desired to build a new city for his summer resort in the north of Iraq. So he sent for the artists and craftsmen of Egypt to build it and beautify it. Many of them were Copts, and one of the evidences that support this statement is that some of the remains extant bear the sign of the cross on their backs; while others have the phrase: "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" engraved on them.<sup>5</sup>

491. His heart now comforted and fully confident in God's Providence, Abba Yusab directed his energies in full force to his people. He rejoiced to see the monasteries rapidly regaining their prosperity and the number of monks in them mounting. Especially was he filled with joy to watch the monk Shenouda who "raised monuments in honour of St. Macari, vineyards and gardens and cattle and mills and oil presses and many useful things...he began to build a church to the north of the great church (of St. Macari) and named it after the Fathers disciples. This building described as capacious in size, and beautiful in structure, was dedicated in A.D. 847."<sup>6</sup>

Having completed the building of the church, Shenouda with a number of his monks visited Abba Yusab and asked him to come with them and consecrate it. He readily went with them. As he scanned the new edifice, his heart was overwhelmed with happiness at the great mercy God had shown toward his people. And so ardent were his prayers in the Consecration Service that tears of joy filled the eyes of all those who attended it.

492. After years of labour, of travail, and of striving, the Heavenly Father beckoned to Abba Yusab. He sickened slightly for eight

days. The ninth was a Sunday; at the hour when the Holy Eucharist was being administered to the people, the Alexandrian Pope closed his eyes on this world to open them on that beyond. His papacy had lasted seventeen years and eleven months.

B.493. When the student of history surveys the panorama of human life stretching behind him, imagination must needs come to his aid that it may give form and voice to those men and women who walked this earth in the past. Some of them stand out distinctly; they present a vivid and captivating picture. Others pass on like a fleeting cloud in a clear sky. Among those who flitted speedily was Abba Mikhail II, the fifty third in succession on St. Mark's Chair. He was given one year and four months only to steer the helm of the Church, during which peace reigned.

494. Only too soon did the bishops and the layleaders have to consider the choice of a new Pope. In spiritual concord, they elected a deacon-monk called Cosmas who thus became Cosmas II, the fifty-fourth Successor to St. Mark.

495. After his consecration, he went to meet the governor of Egypt who gave him a warm welcome. It happened that, at the time, there were two Coptic officials in the diwan favoured greatly by the governor. Their names were Macari and Abraam. Desirous to serve their Pope, the two requested him to settle in Damira, east of al-Fustat and to their joy he consented. Macari and Abraam were thus enabled to fulfill all the behests of Abba Cosmas.

496. al-Mutawakkil, who was the Caliph at the time, was benevolent. The people, feeling

secure in the peace extended by him, were happily engaged in their diverse vocations. For seven years and seven months Abba Cosmas II shepherded the Church in uneventful serenity.

497. Once more clergy and laymen conferred at Alexandria, then sent their delegation to al-Fustat. While convening, a monk from St. Macari's monastery, called Shenouda, chanced in. He had come to discuss with the diwan officials the tribute assigned to the monasteries. They seized the opportunity and asked him to suggest the names of a few monks he deemed worthy of St. Mark's Chair. In all modesty he responded, then hastened to the desert. His behaviour so recommended him in their eyes that they disclosed to the official, Abraam, their desire to elect him. He suggested that they take him by ruse. So they sent their messengers asking him to return and suggest some new candidates as the ones already mentioned were not altogether acceptable. Shenouda fell into the snare. No sooner did he come back than he was carried to Alexandria and consecrated fifty-fifth Pope.

498. With a state of peace reigning in the country, Abba Shenouda's first undertaking was a pastoral tour. He first visited the monasteries; from thence he went to the southernmost borders of Egypt, staying at several places on the way and spending as much time in each place according to the need of his people.<sup>9</sup>

During his pastoral tour Abba Shenouda I was met by the governors with due honour. His winsome personality and the grace reflected on his face won their friendship, culminating in the concordant response of Anbassa ibn Iss-haq, the last governor of Arab descent.<sup>10</sup>

499. At that time, all the elements seemed to coalesce in giving the Egyptians that peace they craved, and of which they had been deprived for many years. Abba Shenouda I found the time propitious to reconstruct and repair some of the churches and monasteries that had been destroyed or damaged. The people, taking their clue from their active Pope, produced a number of artistic creations, some of which can still be seen in the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo.

After four years of equitable rule, Anbassa ibn Iss-haq was recalled by the Caliph. His departure was an ominous turning point in the history of Egypt, for it ushered in the rule of Turkish governors who were so whimsical that the whole tone of life under them was marked with instability. Despite this instability, however, Abba Shenouda I succeeded in planning and executing the digging of canals underneath the streets of Alexandria, by which its inhabitants were supplied with fresh water. 11

500. In the year 866 A.D. Abba Shenouda resolved to go to the monastery of St. Macari during the Easter season. Some of the Coptic leaders tried to dissuade him because of the recurrent nomadic raids on Wadi n-Natrun. He quieted their fears and went. To his dismay he found numerous cells plundered and destroyed. His presence comforted the monks. They celebrated the Rites set by the Fathers for Passion Week in daily order. After the Maundy Thursday service, as the monks were about to return to their cells, they were met by a volley of stones hurled at them by the nomads. They went back to church and reported to Abba Shenouda I. He soothed their aching hearts, and went out to meet

the marauders all alone. He thus "displayed great courage...and his presence at this crisis was of real importance, as convincing him that somehow or other, the barbarian menace should be checked."<sup>12</sup> His courage in facing the assailants alone caused them to beat a hasty retreat.

Consequently he began building a fortified wall"... and he collected much stone and pushed on the work until it was finished with its towers...he even laboured among the workmen as one of them...There is every reason to believe that much though certainly not all of Shenouda's work still shelters the present Deir Abu Makar"<sup>13</sup>

501. This constructive work was the last oblation offered by the Man-of-God. The last year of his papacy was spent in serenity; he passed on to the world beyond in all peacefulness, having shepherded<sup>14</sup> his people for eleven years and three months.

C. 502. Whenever the Divine Light shines within the heart of one man, Its radiation is inevitably reflected through him on to others. And just as a prism reflects the light in various hues, so does the human being reflect the Divine Light in many ways. Some see in him God's Grace; others His mercy; still others His Wondrous love. Fortunately, the reflection of the Divine Light through a sanctified person is not only shed on his contemporaries, but shines on successive generations long after the physical death of the man himself. That is why the people of this present age can still bask in the Light reflected through the saints of bygone days. And by this reflection, the whole of humanity is raised to higher levels.

503. One such reflector of Divine Light is Yoannis Kami who lived in the first half of the ninth century. His love for his fellow-men found an outlet in giving alms to the poor and shelter to the stranger. While his love for God found expression in his unceasing prayers and thanksgiving and in the constant study of the Scriptures. He incessantly trained himself to control his body and his tongue until he achieved both.

One night, as Yoannis was standing up in prayer, he beheld a luminous man by his side who said to him: "Tomorrow as soon as you wake up, go to Scete; seek out the aged Teroti and ask him to make you his disciple, for he was made worthy of winning many souls unto the Christ."

Yoannis was overjoyed. No sooner did the first rays shoot across the eastern sky than he set out for Scete, seeking the Sainly Teroti who had been forewarned by the Spirit of the young man's arrival. He, therefore, greeted him with delight, then said: "Doubtless you know that a monk is bound by chastity, poverty, obedience and charity." Yoannis replied: "I hope to find grace in your sight, for I have come to live under the protective shadow of your prayers." Teroti, pleased by this answer, accepted him immediately.

504. After years of ardent striving, Yoannis saw an angel of the Lord standing before him. He gazed at the heavenly visitant with confidence and heard him saying: "Hail to you, O faithful servant of God. Tomorrow morning take leave of your teacher and journey westward to the cell of the shining star, Yoannis, the short. Build a cell there for yourself; a multitude will come and live with you and you shall be father unto many. And as you have followed in the footsteps of the

desert luminaries, so will you receive their reward. I shall encamp round about you, in obedience to God's Will."

Early the next morning Yoannis reported to his teacher what he had seen and heard. Teroti told him: "Go, my son, fulfill God's plan for you." He then blessed him and Yoannis departed.

505. Armed with his teacher's blessing, Yoannis left for the region signalled out for him by the angel. There, he lived in a cell "alone with the Alone." His constant vigil and meditation sharpened his awareness of the spiritual world, enabling him to see the invisible, and hear the chanting of the angelic hosts. Often, while he was chanting the Holy Liturgy, he could perceive the glory of God overshadowing the altar in the form of a floodlight.

One Sunday eve, while, he was absorbed in prayer, he beheld the blessed Mother-of-God surrounded by angels, and enveloped in ethereal light. At this unutterable glory, he prostrated himself. She took him by the hand and lifted him up saying: "O faithful lover of the Christ, remain in this place and build a monastery thereon; many will come to be spiritual sons unto you. And may the blessing of my Son rest with you forever." With these words the blessed Virgin saluted Yoannis then disappeared out of his sight. Thereupon, he set himself to the task of building the monastery immediately.

Soon, the aroma of his life pervaded the land. Many came to live with him. He taught them and strengthened their souls. Together, they built a large monastery with high fortresses and solid walls.

506. It happened that one midnight while he was chanting the Psalms with the brethren,

Athanasius the Apostolic appeared to him and said: "Peace be unto you, O good and faithful servant of the Most High. Peace be unto all these sons of yours, and to all those who will follow in their footsteps in future generations. Your prayers have come into the presence of the Heavenly Father, a sweet smelling incense and ensign of righteousness." These words filled Yoannis with ineffable joy. He requested the brethren to mention the name of Athanasius whenever they chanted the Doxology (or hymn of glorification),<sup>15</sup> of the three youths in the fiery furnace. The brethren obeyed, and their successors after them up to the present day.

507. Yoannis was not ordained priest except many years after his faithful and devoted service. In his extreme humility, he thought this was too much of an honour. During the ordination ritual, when it was his turn to officiate, he beheld the glory of God filling the sanctuary; in ecstasy, he glorified God the Lover-of-mankind for vouchsafing unto His creatures a glimpse of the bliss to come.

Soon after the angel of the Lord disclosed to Yoannis the hour of his departure from this world. So he gathered the brethren and counselled them to walk in the fear of the Lord; then commended his spirit into the Hand of the Father.<sup>16</sup>

508. Yoannis Kami was one of the most outstanding desert fathers and saints of the Coptic Church, and the sanctity of this life attracted disciples over a long period of time. The few lines terminating the Coptic Ms. of his biography indicate this. They read as follow: "I pray the reader to remember his poor scribe; the sinner Yacobus, son of Shenouda, son of Yoannis Kami." These words denote that

the author was a spiritual son of a disciple of this teacher.<sup>17</sup> Yet the known monks are but a fraction, and the very biographer of Yoannis Kami remains unknown. Among those attracted by Kami's sanctity were the Syrians, one of whom was Marutha, an aged ascetic of great renown. In a dream he had, he saw that he had been snatched up to heaven and beheld the numberless hosts praising God. Two aged men standing side by side captivated his attention, and he gazed at them in wonder. Then he whispered in the ear of the angel nearest to him: "Who may these two shining ones be?" The angel answered: "The tall one is Abba Macari, father of the monks of Scete; the second is Yoannis Kami who followed in his footsteps." When Marutha woke up, the awe of his dream was still about him. He took his brush straightway and painted the icon of the two saints as he had seen them. Then, under the impetus of that same dream, he carried his icon and went to Scete, heading straight for St. Macari's monastery, after which he went to that of Yoannis Kami. Marutha arrived when Shenouda the disciple of Yoannis Kami was Abbot. He related to him and his monks the awesome dream he had had and showed them the icon he had painted. They were most delighted, and Shenouda recognized the likeness of his spiritual father. Marutha felt such spiritual affinity and was so attracted by the winsomeness of the monks that he spent the rest of his life in the Scete monastery with them.

509. Marutha's example was followed by many Syrians; hence the monastery in which he lived (and one of the four flourishing to this day) became designated by adjective "As-Suriani"-or the Syrian. This appellation still prevails, leading many into thinking

that the monastery was either built by the Syrians or acquired by them later on.<sup>18</sup> From a study of the history of the Scete region, however, it is almost certain that the Suriani Monastery was that of St. Yoannis Kami.<sup>19</sup>

510. One interesting feature about this monastery is that it was never abandoned by its monks except for a very short interval in the fifteenth century A.D. From the very beginning it was surrounded by high thick walls which gave it good protection against marauders. When the nomadic hordes destroyed the monasteries of St. Antoni and St. Paul in the eastern desert and exterminated all their monks, (without exception) in A.D. 1484, Abba Ghabrial VII (the 95th Pope) re-peopled them with monks of the Suriani Monastery, sending ten monks to each of them. The very same Pope replenished their impoverished libraries<sup>20</sup> by books from that same monastery.<sup>21</sup> Thus, these monks re-kindled the spark of life, worship and sanctity in the monasteries founded by the great Saints Antoni and Paul.

511. And so we see that while potentates and powers reeled, leaving the people bewildered and wondering whether they will ever obtain stability, God's 'athletes' lived in serene seclusion, rising above all worldly worries. And even when their monasteries were attacked and destroyed, they reconstructed them so that the silent desert spaces in which they lived echoed and re-echoed the hymns of praise to the Almighty God and rarely did these echoes stop. As for the prayers, they went up to Heaven day and night, and were so ardent they were more like mighty travails. For, secluded as they were, the desert fathers felt deeply "the

giant agony of the world,"<sup>22</sup> much of which, during long centuries of our historical account was the agony of their own people. And it was through these arduous prayers that they strove to alleviate it.

## XXVI. NOTES

1. Hosn us-Solook fi tarikh 'l Batarika wal Molook by a monk from Baramus.in Arabic. partII,p.24.
2. S.Lane-Poole,pp.37-8,e1Ayubi,p.97.
3. Muir.pp.510-11.
- 4 This is a square piece of wood in the center of which is carved a cross surrounded by the initials of the Christ, and over which the Rite of Consecratin is chanted. It can, thus serve as an altar anywhere, even in the open air.
5. G. Wiet:Precis...T V,2eme partie,p.147.
6. E. White.partIII,p. 35.
7. Shenouda'lBaramusi,vol.I,pp.228-54.
8. Ibid.pp.256-65.
9. W. Budge.Book of the Saints...vol.III, pp.830-3.
10. S.Lane-Poole.p40.
11. Ibid.pp42-3,al Haqrizi.p.56Manassa'l Qommos,p469.
12. E. White, partIII,p.36.

13. W.Budge.vol.III.pp.796-7.
14. Shenouda'lBaramusi,vol.I.pp.265-79.
15. Book of Daniel.chap.3.
16. Biography of St. Yoannis Kami, written in Coptic and later translated into Arabic by anonymous writers; both undoubtedly monks. The Coptic Ms. is kept at the Vatican Library.
17. Biography of Yoannis Kami.pp.22-3.
- 18 History of as-Suriani Monastery. in Coptic and Arabic;...that monasteries were numerous in Scete is proven by the endless ruins which litter large areas of it. It is said that at one time there were as many as fifty of them. Cf.Prince Omar Tousson. 'Wadi-'l-Natrun, Its monks and Its Monasteries.
19. Biography of the Saint...pp.40,45-6.
20. The nomadic hordes had settled among the ruins for 80 years and used the ms. for fuel.
21. Biography....p.53.
22. Expression borrowed from John Keats the English Romantic poet. (From: :The fall of Hyperion: a Dream)

## XXVII. VARIEGATED PATTERNS

- A. Abba Mikhail III and the governors Ahmad ibn Tulun and Khumaraweyh
  - B. The 57th to the 60th Popes live through half a century dominated by political strife
  - C. Severus, Bishop of Ashmunein; a man with a versatile mind
512. Election of 56th Pope
513. ibn Tulun's personality and love of grandeur
514. Coptic architect designs ibn Tulun's mosque
515. Exorbitant tax imposed on the Pope by ibn Tulun
516. Khumaraweyh, ibn Tulun's son, succeeds him
517. Khumaraweyh well-disposed towards Copts and enjoys visiting their monasteries
518. Disruptive elements create dissensions
519. Bishop, friendly with Governor, acts to dispel dissensions
520. Copts convene at last to elect their 57th Pope
521. Stealing of St. Mark's body by Venetian merchants
522. Country in a state of chaos
523. Abba Cosmas
524. Abba Macari
525. A merciful respite in the person of a new ruler
526. Abba Theophanius
527. Severus, Bishop of Ashmunein

A. 512. When Abba Shenouda went unto his reward, Coptic clergy and lay leaders convened immediately and elected a monk called Mikhail to be his successor because he was described as a "man like burnished gold," by his brethren. It, thus, happened that one month after his predecessor had passed away, he was consecrated and became Mikhail III, 56th Pope of Alexandria.

The beginning of his steering the Church was characterized by peace, and this enabled him to devote both his whole-hearted attention and his energies to the fulfillment of the pastoral obligations of his high office. While he was engrossed in this joyful preoccupation, a new prince, Ahmad ibn Tulun, arrived to govern Egypt-this was in 868 A.D.

513. Ahmad ibn Tulun had a strong personality. Gradually and wisely he asserted himself and built his prestige until he became the real-not only the deputed-ruler of the country.

Among ibn Tulun's marked characteristics was an excessive love of grandeur and a flair for finery. He built a new city with gardens, a racing-course, mews, and a menagerie. In the midst of this city the great mosque that still bears his name and has immortalized it to this day was erected. His instructions to the architect were that the mosque must be matchless in style and in artistic beauty.

514. The architect who designed ibn Tulun's mosque was a Copt called ibn Katib 'l Farag-hani. To assure the governor of what it would look like, he made for him a miniature model of it in leather before undertaking the task of building it. ibn Tulun liked it so much that he recompensed its creative architect with ten thousand dinars, and a handsome allowance for life.

515. Although ibn Tulun did not exact more taxes from the Coptic populace, he yet imposed upon Abba Mikhail III the sum of twenty thousand dinars, and threw him into prison when he could not pay them. While the Pope was in prison, two Coptic scribes in the governor's diwan interceded constantly for his release.

Failing in their intercession, they solicited the aid of another Copt called Yoannis, who was scribe of ibn Tulun's visier. Yoannis was a man of insight, so he consulted ibn Tulun's mother who was both wise and pious. She advised him to enlist the visier to his cause. Thereupon, Yoannis took his son and set out at dawn towards the visier's mansion. The visier, accustomed to going to the mosque before sunrise, was surprised upon his return that day, to find Yoannis and his son awaiting him by the gate of his house. He inquired into the cause of their early presence, and they told him they had come to implore him to use his influence on behalf of their Pope's release. He promised them he would do so and fulfilled his promise. When Abba Mikhail III was released, however, it was on condition that he pay ten thousand dinars within a month's time, and another ten thousand within the four succeeding months. The Copts collaborated together in collecting the first ten thousand dinars; to raise the other half of the imposed sum, the Pope was constrained to sell a lot of land which had been endowed to the churches of Alexandria, and another lot on the outskirts of al-Fustat. He was deeply anguished to have to sell property devotedly bequeathed to the Church-but it was the only course open to him to pay the governor the rest of the tax he demanded.

Abba Mikhail III went unto his reward after having guided his people for twenty-five years and one month. He outlived ibn Tulun by two years.

516. ibn Tulun was succeeded by his son, Khumaraweyh, who was young and had a decided taste for self-indulgence and refinery. Despite this taste, however, he had to go to war in order to safeguard his father's throne. The victory he won was so <sup>3</sup>smashing that the Caliph married his daughter.

Khumaraweyh was a munificent ruler, benevolently disposed toward the Copts. However, he was so busy with his own and the State affairs during his first years of wars and weddings, that he could not meet with the Coptic leaders to find out who they wanted to elect as Pope. The approval of the Governor of the nominee had become an established precedent, even though it was just a formality. Consequently, the Chair of St. Mark remained vacant although St. Mark's people enjoyed peaceful security.

517. Khumaraweyh derived much joy from visiting the Coptic monasteries. Oftentimes after acquitting himself of his multiple responsibilities he would leave the turbulent city and seek to ease his tensions in the quietude of the monasteries and the congenial, serene companionship of the monks. And he reciprocated their friendship with royal liberality.<sup>4</sup>

518. Seizing the opportunity of the vacancy of St. Mark's Chair, a few factional, non-peaceloving persons tried to arouse dissensions among the Copts by reviving some of the old 'Chalcedonian' controversies. The Coptic clergymen, with the Bishops leading them, became quickly aware of that and nipped these activities in the bud.

519. One of the bishops who was especially friendly with Governor Khumaraweyh was Abba Pakhom, Bishop of Taha. He decided to go

and meet the governor and explain to him how important it was for the sake of peace and unity within the Church as well as the country that the Copts convene immediately and elect their Pope. Khumaraweyh, sensing his sincere concern, empowered him to go ahead and act according to his own best judgment.

520. Returning to Alexandria, Bishop Pakhom went immediately to the local city governor and told him of the meeting he had had with Khumaraweyh. Together they went to a man who had illegally and without any right imposed himself as Pope. They deposed him and called the Coptic clergy and people to convene and elect their rightful Pope.

While still convening, an unforeseen calamity befell the whole of Egypt. Prince Khumaraweyh<sup>5</sup> was killed in Damascus in the year 896 A.D.

Notwithstanding the upheavals resulting therefrom, Coptic Bishops and people fulfilled their duty, electing a monk called Ghabrial from the monastery of St. Macari, who was duly consecrated Pope of Alexandria, and became Ghabrial I, the 57th in the line of succession of St. Mark.<sup>6</sup>

521. It was during this period of chaos and unrest that some Venetian merchants surreptitiously crept into the port of Alexandria one dark night, went to the church near the shore in which the body of the Evangelist had been buried since his martyrdom in 68 A.D., stole it and returned to Venice before anybody was aware of what they had done.<sup>7</sup> When the Copts discovered the theft, they were greatly distressed, but there was nothing they could do about it then. The Saint's head, which had been severed from his body

when he was martyred and had been reverently placed in a separate casket remained in St. Mark's Cathedral in Alexandria, and is still kept enclosed within the wall over the main entrance even though the edifice had been torn down and rebuilt several times through the numerous centuries that have elapsed since then.

As for the relics of St. Mark, after centuries of abiding in a strange land, they were finally returned with due honour and glory to the land wherein he had preached the Christ and was martyred for the Saviour's Name, and to the Church he had founded and whose Popes will forever be considered his successors.

The return of the Evangelist's relics to Egypt took place on June 23, 1968, during the week in which the Coptic Church was celebrating two memorable occasions: the dedication of the new St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo, especially built for the occasion, and the celebration of the 19 hundredth anniversary of St. Mark's martyrdom. A special Coptic delegation went to Rome to receive the precious relics and bring them home. The Pope (Kyrillos VI), his clergy, and deacons, together with an immense crowd awaited its arrival at the airport, and the songs and fervent expressions of religious joy and thanksgiving demonstrated one the occasions were among the most deeply-moving and impressive sights and sounds eyes could behold or ears hear. The writer was among the thousands privileged to be present on that occasion.<sup>8</sup>

And now to return back to the mainstream of our story, after having interposed this historically important interlude.

B. 522. Abba Ghabrial I remained on the august Chair of St. Mark for eleven years. During

his times as well as the times of his three successors—for well-nigh fifty years—political strife with consequent insecurity were dominant characteristics of life in Egypt. Rival rulers and princes kept rocking the ship of State to see who would gain ascendancy.

Abba Ghabrial I was unable to stand living in the city under these circumstances, so he spent most of his time in the desert monasteries. He, thus, rendered himself rather ineffective and failed to fulfill many of the obligations incumbent upon him as the spiritual leader of his people. This was incompatible with his high position and deviated from the pattern traditionally established by his forebears, which was to face any storm courageously and fearlessly.<sup>9</sup>

523. No sooner had Abba Ghabrial died and the Ritual Service been sung for his funeral, than bishops and people resolved to choose the monk Cosmas as his successor, for "he was righteous and pure and exceedingly merciful and compassionate; and he was learned in the books of the Church and in the interpretation thereof."<sup>10</sup> He was consecrated by the name of Abba Cosmas III, 58th Pope of the Church of Alexandria in 919 A.D.

Abba Cosmas did his best to shepherd his people and serve them faithfully. Unlike his predecessor, he lived and moved among them, offering to them whatever aid and solace he could. And he prayed continuously for them, for the severe sufferings through which they were going as a result of the wars that were tearing the country, moved him to the depth of his soul. Sorrow and sadness invaded his being, and he passed away after shepherding his harassed flock for twelve years.

524. When the death of Abba Cosmas occurred,

the people's need for a Shepherd to replace him immediately was very pressing. Realizing that, Bishops and lay leaders conferred and agreed to elect a monk called Macari, who lived in the monastery of the great luminary whose name he bore. Accordingly, he was consecrated fifty-ninth in the chain of succession to St. Mark, in 931 A.D.

Abba Macari's first act was to go on a pastoral tour. As he passed by his home-village, he stopped to see his mother, imagining that she would be delighted at the great honour he had received. Upon his arrival, she happened to be sitting at the door of her house, spinning. To his exceeding amazement she continued to spin without so much as raising her eyes from her work. Presuming that she must have failed to recognize him, he said: "Peace to you, dear mother, do you not know that I am your son? See-I left you to become a simple monk. Today I come to you as the Successor of St. Mark." At these words, his mother looked up, and her face was the very epitome of anguish. Aghast, he gazed at her in silence for a few seconds, then queried falteringly: "You do not seem to be glad at all that your son is now the Pope of Alexandria?" Her voice was clear but subdued as she answered: "How can I be glad when you bear the burden of the whole Church? You are now accountable before God for your people. I tremble at the magnitude of this responsibility; my tears mingle with my continuous prayers that you may be granted power from on high enabling you to fulfill your august duty as befits a successor of our beloved Evangelist." These words set Abba Macari meditating; his tears mingled with those of his mother. He then took leave of her, but her words kept reverberating within his soul. Consequently, he contended strenuously for

his flock, urging them to vigilance through incessant prayers and study of the Scriptures. Invariably he prayed and fasted for a few days before ordaining any bishop or priest. Then, secure in the Divine inspiration, he laid his hands on the man he considered most worthy of the office in question.<sup>11</sup>

525. During this period, Egypt was not only a battlefield of rival governors, for above that a violent earthquake occurred and took heavy toll of its people and its houses. Under the calamitous circumstances of this event, however, God's mercy came in the form of a new ruler, Ikhshid, who proved to be equal to the emergency. He ruled the country for eleven years during which order was restored and maintained.<sup>12</sup>

Amidst all this flux and reflux, Abba Macari went about among his people. When peace settled, at last, he visited the monasteries of Scete, and rejoiced to find the number of monks increasing. It only pained him to see the aged fathers constrained to go a long and rugged distance to attend the Holy Liturgy at the monastery of Yoannis-the-Short, as there had been no church in that of Yoannis Kami as yet. He, therefore, began by the Grace of God to have one built there. When it was finished, he returned to the monastery to chant its Consecration Service, taking with him a number of bishops and priests. It was named after the Blessed Virgin.

After twenty years as a "good and faithful servant," Abba Macari was called unto his rest. During that time he had endeavoured to the best of his ability to acquit his conscience so that he might win the approval of his mother along side with the reward of Heaven.<sup>13</sup>

526. The papacy of the sixtieth Successor

of St. Mark, whose name was Abba Theophan-  
ius, was short-lived -lasting only four years  
and eight months-and constitutes one of the  
somber episodes in the story of the Copts.  
Elected with haste and without the customary  
prayers and deliberations, and consecrated  
immediately after the election, the people  
discovered soon after they had conferred upon  
him the honour of this supreme position,  
that he was unworthy of it. Impetuous and  
hot-tempered, he lacked the wisdom, the insight  
and the personal and spiritual qualities that  
most of his predecessors not only possessed  
but of which they were shining examples.

One day a number of the Coptic leaders  
had gone to see Theophan-ius to discuss a  
matter of vital importance. While trying to  
convince him of their viewpoint and show  
him its rightness, he got so enraged that  
forgetting his sacerdotal honour, he took off  
the Schema, threw it at their faces and said:  
"If you insist on gainsaying me, take what  
you have given me, because I have no need  
for it." By this impetuous act, he stood con-  
demned. And as the high priest of old, in  
rending his clothes, tore also his own priest-  
hood, so did this sadly unfortunate Alexand-  
rian Prelate forfeit the Divine Grace by throw-  
ing away the insignia of his priesthood. (In  
writing an account of it in his 'Hisoty of  
the Patriarchs,' Severus, Bishop of Ashmunein,  
has a marginal note in red stating that "this  
is he whom the Grace of God deserted.")  
In a split second he became demented and  
was temporarily chained by the church authori-  
ties until a decision about him would be  
made.

When the Bishops took counsel together  
to discuss his condition, they resolved to  
bear Theophan-ius to al-Fustat so that they

may put him under special treatment. They, therefore, placed him in the hull of a ship out of respect for his dignity, that his dementia may not be exposed to the people. While they sailed he railed and blasphemed. Suddenly he was silent. It was the muteness of death whose hand this time sheltered the majesty of the high priesthood.<sup>14</sup> He was buried quietly and thus ended this heartbreaking episode in the history of the Coptic Church.

C. 527. From the earliest times, the Christian Fathers emphasized the virtues of humility and self-negation. As the history of the Coptic Church unfolded itself, its very unfoldment exemplified this emphasis. Artists and craftsmen refused to sign their work, and only wrote on them the words: "Those who labour for Thee, O Lord, recompense Thou in Thy Kingdom." Many bishops, writers and statesmen are known only through their works; their biographies are altogether unknown.

Among the men who distinguished themselves in this age was a man with a very versatile mind. He was Severus, Bishop of Ashmunein, whose "History of the Patriarchs" has been cited on several occasions in this story. This work has been published in its original Arabic as well as in English and in Latin. Apart from his 'History' Severus wrote on a wide range of subjects from history to philosophy, religion, theology and even psychology. An example of the latter is a book by him entitled 'The medicine of melancholy and the cure of depression.'

The exact number of books written by Severus of Ashmunein is not known. Different lists and figures have been given by different historians, and by comparing them, Graff (a German Egyptologist) concluded that some of his works must have been lost. At least

twenty-six of them are still extant, however, either in manuscript or in published form, and the following are titles of some of these books: 'The book of Unification' (al-Ittihad); 'A book of Elucidation' (or the Lamp of the Soul'); 'The Councils,' 'Explanation of the Creed'; 'On the Education of Children of Believers'; 'Instructions on Confession'; 'A Concise Exposition of the Faith.' The above titles-as well as an idea of what a great theologian and teacher of the Church Bishop Severus was, and how he tried to use his God-given talents to the glory of Him who had endowed him with these talents.

Yet with all the books, essays and homilies written by Severus of Ashmunein, very little is known about this indefatigable and versatile writer. Where and when was he born? Which monastery did he join? When was he consecrated priest, then bishop and by whom? All these questions and others remain unanswered. But from his writings, it can be gathered that he lived in the second half of the tenth century. His signature is the first among the bishops on the letter written in A.D. 987, in answer to Mar Dionysius, Patriarch of Antioch. It is, therefore, feasible to conclude that it was Abba Macari I, the 59th Pope, who had consecrated him. So far, the facts of his life are still unknown while his works depict him as a keen observer, a deep thinker, and a consummate theologian. Abba Severus is, thus known through his works only; a signal fact making of him a striking symbol of the Church he served so well. His imprint is so indelible that up to the present, writers still attribute to him any history of the Patriarchs—even those who lived in the twentieth century. <sup>15</sup>

## XXVII. NOTES

1. S. Lane-Poole, pp.59-63.
2. Kamil S. Nakhla: op. cit. pt. II, p. 112.
3. S. Lane-Poole. pp.72-74.
4. G. Wiet. Precis... T. II, 2eme partie pp.159-164.
5. S. Lane-Poole. pp.75,78-79; G. Wiet. p.160.
6. Severus of Ashmunein. Bk. II, pp.91-3.
7. Memoirs of Barnard, a Benedictine monk on his travels through the Holy Land in 860 A.D.; Coptic Synaxarium, under 9th of Hathor (19th of November).
8. The celebrations described only partially here were attended by President Nasser of Egypt, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and dignitaries representing the Churches of East and West, including the American Churches, the World Council of Churches and the Russian Orthodox Church. I was one of those rare occasions in which the spirit of human brotherhood and Christian brotherhood was truly made manifest.
9. Severus of Ashmunein. Book II, pp.91-93.
10. W. Budge. vol. III. p.666.
11. Ibid. p.731.
12. Ibid, p.731
13. Sh. al Baramusi, Vol. I, p.292-3.

14. Severus of Ashmunein.vol.II.part2.pp.83-84.

15. y'Abd'l Masih:Severus, Bishop of Ashmunein, known as ibn'l Mogafa "pub in Arabic in" \*Risalat Mari Mena:, Alexandria 1950.pp. 185-200.

XXVIII. THE THREE POPES THAT HEADED THE  
CHURCH UNDER THE LAST OF THE IKHSHIDS AND  
THE FIRST TWO FATIMID CALIPHS

- A. Abba Mena II
- B. Abba Abraam
- C. Abba Philotheos

- 528. The youth of Mena
- 529. Election of Mena and his consecration
- 530. Kafur l-Ikhshidi a benevolent ruler
- 531. Kafur's death
- 532. Caliph Mo izz the Fatimid, one of the most benevolent rulers
- 533. A "Woman chief" serves the Pope
- 534. Abba Mena II dies serene and content
- 535. Era of contrasts
- 536. Election of a Pope of Syrian origin
- 537. Abba Abraam's freindship with Caliph al-Mo izz and the miracle of the moving moving the mountain
- 538. Abu'l Yomn, the Coptic vizier
- 539. Abba Abraam's papacy short butglorius
- 540. al-Aziz succeeds his father
- 541. Election of Philotheos I
- 542. Behaviour and character of Philotheos disappointing to the Copts
- 543. CompensationsCopts have against their Pope's shortcomings
- 544. Muslim writers who described peace and beauty of Coptic monasteries.
- 545. The death of Philotheos I

A. 528. In the year 956 A.D., the Ikhshids still reigned and peace continued to be the order of the day. Consequently the monasteries not only flourished but swarmed once

more with active ascetics. One of these ascetics was Mena, a young monk who combined the courage of his convictions with integrity of conduct.

Mena had made the choice to follow the path of the contemplative, consecrated way of life at a rather early age, but once he made it, he quietly slipped out of his parental home one night and went to the desert monastery of St. Macari. And it was not till three years later that his parents discovered where he had gone, and were able to go and see him. Beholding the Grace reflected on his face, they returned home thankful and glorifying God.

At the monastery, Mena spent a number of years as a disciple of one of the old ascetic known for his sagacity and saintliness. After receiving his in-depth spiritual training at his hands, he became an anchorite.

529. When, after the sorrowful experience the Copts had had with the 60th Pope, the time had come to choose his successor, they sent a special delegation to the monasteries to search diligently for the man most suitable for the high position. One of the persons towards whom they inclined at the beginning was Mena's old teacher, but when they made the suggestion to him, he refused it gently but firmly, saying to them: "The papacy is a weighty responsibility; it needs a man who is neither too old to bear it nor too young to underestimate it. Therefore, I recommend to you my disciple, Mena." Highly recommended also by all those who knew him, Mena was accepted as candidate. The delegation took him with them to Alexandria where he was consecrated the sixty-first successor of Saint Mark, under the name of Mena II.

530. Though a succession of low inundations together with petty wars harassed the Egyptians at the time, they remained calm and contented with their ruler, Kafur, because of his benevolence towards all his subjects. His favourite vizier was a Copt named Cosman Abu'l Yomn who served him throughout his reign. During this period of security, Abba Mena II joyously constructed churches and schools, supervised them with care, and encouraged the arts.

531. At the death of Kafur, a period of chaos ensued, for his successor was a mere child. This gave Mo 'izz, the Fatimid, the chance he was waiting for; he gave orders to Djawhar, the general of his army to start a campaign to win Egypt. Five months later, Djawhar entered al-Fustat in full pomp of drums and banners—on the 5th of August 961 A.D.. On the night of that same day, he laid the foundations of al-Qahira (Cairo) with the intention of making it the capital, and in order to heighten the significance of the new capital, he ordered the construction of a new impressive mosque. In two years the mosque was completed and came to be known as the renowned al-Azhar, the greatest centre of Islamic culture in the Arab world.<sup>1</sup>

532. Mo 'izz was one of the most benevolent rulers which Egypt knew. Abu'l Yomn, Kafur's Coptic vizier was kept at his post by him and entrusted with even added authority.

Then, in 965 A.D. Djawhar observed that the leaders of Syria were trying to assemble their forces once more. Therefore, he entreated Mo 'izz to come to Cairo, so that his nearness may dispel the enemies' illusions that they could seize Egypt. Accordingly, the Caliph reached Alexandria in May of that year. A month later, he sat in the peaceful

garden of a monastery near Giza, where he was warmly welcomed.

533. During the periods of unrest that occurred while he was Pope, Abba Mena II moved among the different provinces of Egypt by turn. For a while, he settled in Mahallet Danial one of the many important towns of Egypt that have now ceased to exist. There, a "Woman chief"<sup>2</sup> named Dinah gladly served him and his disciples-for she was both rich and God-fearing. In appreciation of her hospitality he built a dainty church in the name of St. Mark in her town.

534. The sympathetic attitude of al-Mo 'izz towards the Copts lifted the weight of worry off the mind of Abba Mena II. He returned to his metropolis serene and contented, to offer his heartfelt thanks to the Merciful Father. After almost eighteen years of faithful and devoted service to his<sub>3</sub> Church, he passed on to the Mansions of Light.

535. The period ushered by Mo 'izz was one of the most amazing periods in the age-old country of Egypt. It was a period of divergent contrasts: sympathetic tolerance alternated with atrocious brutality.

Mo 'izz, the first Fatimid to rule Egypt, was one of the most equitable of kings. Under his sway, relaxation and calm contentment pervaded the souls of the Egyptians. In this atmosphere of leisurely satisfaction, St. Mark's Chair remained vacant for two years. Finally, bishops and lay leaders roused themselves and assembled in the church of St. Sergius-or Abu Sarga as popularly called. For several days, they evaluated possible candidates without coming to a decision.

B. 536. At that time there lived, in Egypt,

a man called Abraam who was Syrian by birth. He was an elderly man whose beard flowed over his breast like the patriarchs described by the Psalmist. (in Ps. 133:2) He led a life of chastity even though he never lived in a monastery. His rule of life was exemplary: to care for the widow and the orphan, and to seek out the needy with special emphasis on those who had been rich and lost their wealth.

Because of his high destiny, Abraam walked into the Church to pray while the bishops and layleaders were convening. At sight of his dignified mien, one of the men whispered: "Verily this man is worthy to sit on St. Mark's Chair." The bishops looked at Abraam, and felt intuitively convinced of the man's suggestion. So, a friend of Abraam then present motioned to him to come forward on the pretext of wanting his advice. Abraam went forward. Immediately, the assembly closed round him and took him to Alexandria. Going to St. Mark's Church straight way, the prayers of consecration were chanted, raising Abraam to the dignity of sixty-second Pope and successor to the Evangelist.

Abba Abraam's initial act was to distribute his vast wealth: partly among the poor, and partly on the churches and the monasteries.

537. Being a friend of Mo 'izz, Abba Abraam was often asked by the ruler for advice. At times, he would also be invited to the religious debates held in the halls of the royal palace, because Mo 'izz had a leaning towards mysticism. His court witnessed many an assembly of the leaders of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, wherein each expounded the doctrines of his creed in all frankness. It was during this time that the famous miracle

known as the "miracle of the moving of the mountain" occurred. The circumstances which led up to it were so stirring and so unusually challenging that they are worth recording here.

One day a Jewish vizier, called ibn Killis, went to Caliph Mo 'izz, and maliciously told<sup>4</sup> him, "You know, Prince of the Faithful,<sup>4</sup> it is written in the book of the Nazarenes (meaning the New Testament, of course) that if any person has faith as much as a grain of mustard seed, he can move a mountain. Why not ask their Pope to verify this verse in action? If he can do so, well and good; if he cannot they should all be punished for bearing false witness against God." These words sounded logical to Mo 'izz, so he sent for Abba Abraam and asked him if such a verse really existed. When the Man -of-God affirmed it, Mo 'izz told him: "There are many thousands of Christians in my realm. Find one among them who can perform such a miracle; otherwise I shall exterminate you all with the sword." The Pope was too dazed to reply immediately; then regaining his composure, he asked for a three day's respite, which were granted.

Abba Abraam headed straight for the church of al Mu 'allakah, then sent for clergy and people and disclosed to them the Caliph's demand. As for him, he remained in the Church keeping total abstinence; he travailed mightily in prayer. Before dawn of the third day as he dozed off out of sheer weariness, the blessed Virgin appeared to him and said: "Fear not, O faithful shepherd; I will not forget the tears you have shed in this Church, nor forego the prayers and fasting of your people. Go out now from the gate leading to the market, and you shall meet a one-eyed man bearing a pitcher on his back.

Get hold of him, for he is the man designated by God to perform this miracle." With these words, She disappeared. Abba Abraam woke up reassured and alert and hurried towards the gate. As the porter opened it for him, he saw the very man designated by the Mother-of-God. Getting hold of him, the Pope took him inside the Church and disclosed to him the vision he had in answer to his prayers and asked him who he was. The unknown man replied that he was called Simeon-the-Tanner, and that he wakes up at dawn daily to fill his pitcher with water and distribute it among the aged, the infirm, and those who cannot pay the wages of the water-carrier. After this service of charity he goes to the tanning house where is a hired labourer. At sunset, he usually takes a frugal meal, and spends most of the night in prayer. Ending his report about himself, Simeon asked Abba Abraam to keep it a secret while he lived, then, added "Go up to the mountain singled out by the king. Take with you your priests and your people. Carry aloft the Gospels, censors, crosses, and long candles. When you stand at the top of the mountain, read what portions you choose of the Gospel. Then you and your priests chant the "Kyrie-layson," -or "Lord, have mercy" keep absolute silence for a few seconds, then prostrate yourselves in unison before the Most High. Repeat the process thrice. Each time, you stand up after the prostration, sign the mountain with the Cross. Then shall you behold the glory of God. As for me, I shall stand immediately behind you."

Abba Abraam, with heart at ease, went to Mo 'izz and declared his readiness. The Caliph took his retinue and sallied forth to the sound of the trumpet. At the top of the mountain (called to this day the Mokattam,

meaning broken) each group stood facing the other. The instructions of Simeon the tanner were followed implicitly. Each time the sign of the cross was made the mountain shook perceptibly and a loud sound was heard. At this unexpected sign, Mo 'izz proclaimed: "Great are Thou, O God." Turning to Abba Abraam he said: "This is enough to testify to the verity of your faith."

Naturally this heavenly sign caused a great tumult and when order was re-established, Abba Abraam turned round to look for Simeon, but he was nowhere to be found. Tradition affirms that he was snatched away by an angelic host, for no one saw him on this earth again, as was the case with Enoch in ancient days, when "he walked with God; and he was not; for God took him." (Genesis 5:24)<sup>5</sup>

As they descended the mountain, Mo 'izz said to the exultant Pope: "Declare to me your wish, and I will grant it." After some seconds of silence, the Man-of-God said: "Please grant me to rebuild the church of St. Mercurius in Babylon, which has been partly destroyed and is being partly used as a sugarcane warehouse. Also, the walls of Al-Muallakah (the Hanging Church) need to be repaired." Mo 'izz gave his immediate order for writing the decree to the effect. He also offered to pay the needed money. Abba Abraam accepted the decree of authorization, but courteously refused the money.

Then followed a period of rebuilding and repairing. 6

538. The Coptic vizier of Mo 'izz, as already mentioned, was Abu'l Yomn who had enjoyed great favour with Kafur ul-Ikhshidi. Such was the trust placed in him that he was also appointed "Head of the Customs;" first in Egypt, then in Palestine. Being deputed to

go to Palestine, he entrusted Abba Abraam with his wealth, telling him before he left, "Should you hear of my death, distribute my money among the needy, the strangers and the churches."

In Palestine, Abu'l Yomn was so active and so conscientious that he collected two hundred thousand dinars. Just then, a rebel called Karmati rose against Mo 'izz. At his advance, Abu'l Yomn carried the money to a monastery on Mt. Tabor, and entrusted its Abbot with it. Some rumours reaching Egypt said that he joined the rebels, others that he was killed. Thinking that his trust had been betrayed by Abu'l Yomn, Mo 'izz -in a moment of fury-arrested all the men members of that distinguished Copt's family and gave orders that their wealth be confiscated. Fortunately for them, however, Karmati was finally crushed and Abu'l Yomn returned to Cairo. The first thing he did upon his return was to go to the Caliph, give him a full report about the situation and put in his hands the two hundred thousand dinars he had collected and so carefully hidden. Mo 'izz received him cordially, expressed his regrets at having doubted him, and immediately gave orders for the release of his family. And not only did he return to Abu'l Yomn his confiscated wealth, but he compensated him generously for the invaluable services he had rendered.

It may be noted here that several men from the Abu'l Yomn family were prominent during the Fatimid period. Foremost among them were Abu'l Makarim ibn Hanna, Abu'l Farag 'Alam es-Saada, and Abu'l Farag ibn Abu'l Yomn. All these men were faithful servants of the Church and the State.

539. The days of the papacy of Abba Abraam

were not too many, for they extended over three and a half years, after which he was called to live among the saints.<sup>7</sup> They were crowded with glorious deeds, however, and so may be most aptly described by the two following lines of poetry:

"One crowded hour of glorious life,  
Is worth an age without a name."<sup>8</sup>

540. As the stream of life continued to flow, the tenth century A.D. entered its last quarter; and as it did so, the last pages were turned in the lives of the two persons who occupied the highest positions both in Egypt and in its Church, for both Mo 'izz and Abba Abraam passed away in the same year.

The vacancy of the throne of Egypt was filled immediately in a natural and peaceful way, for al-'Aziz, son of Mo'izz inherited his father's throne without opposition from anybody.

Fortunately for the Egyptians in general and the Copts in particular, al-Aziz was as good a man as his father had been. Described as being "of a humane and conciliatory disposition, loth to take offence and averse from bloodshed,"<sup>9</sup> he created for the people he ruled an atmosphere in which they could relax, work and toil, and also, if talented, produce exquisite art that reflected their contentment.

C. 541. Under these conditions of peace and relaxation, time passed imperceptibly in the land of the Nile, and it was not till six months had passed after the death of their revered and beloved Abba Abraam that the Copts held their conventional meetings to decide on whom to elect to be his successor. When they finally agreed upon the Pope-

designate, he was consecrated immediately as Philotheos I, 63rd Head of their Church.

542. As time went by, the Copts realized, to their chagrin, that Philotheos I was not as promising as some of those who had nominated him from the beginning had thought he was. In fact, he was neither of the same high spiritual and intellectual calibre as many of his eminent predecessors had been, nor did he possess the integrity of character expected of a person in his elevated position. He resorted to a practice hitherto unknown in the Coptic Church—the practice described by the term 'simony' (or the conferring of ecclesiastical positions for a price). These traits in their Pope shocked the sensibilities of the Copts and caused them much sorrow.

543. God in His Mercy, however, compensated them in a number of ways. They still had outstanding bishops of whom they could be proud, and Severus of Ashmunein was still one of them. And since King al-'Aziz enjoyed listening to religious debates and encouraged them, he often invited Bishop Severus to his palace to discuss doctrinal subjects with the famous Muslim theologian al-Qadi ibn Nu 'man. Moreover, such was the quality of the king's tolerance and his charitable spirit that he refused to allow the persecution of any Muslim who turned Christian, even though apostasy was punishable by death in Islam.<sup>10</sup>

The Copts had other compensations. Their art flowered, and their artists and craftsmen flourished once more. They passed through a period of prosperity in which Churches and monasteries flourished and multiplied, and received liberal endowments from the people with means. This providential

prosperity compensated them for the deficiency of Abba Philotheos, and their faith in the destiny of their Church and their hopes for it remained steadfast.

544. It is interesting to note that some of the Muslim writers of the period have described in poetic terms, and in some detail, the peace and beauty of the areas surrounding the Coptic monasteries and how the Caliphs used to go there for rest or recuperation. Most notable among these writers may be mentioned ash-Shabushti, librarian of the Royal Library of al-'Aziz; Abu Bakr Mohammed al-Khalidi; and abu'l Farag 'l-Isfahani,<sup>11</sup>

545. Just as everything good or evil comes to an end, so did the papacy of Philotheos I. One Sunday morning as he was chanting the Divine Liturgy, he was suddenly struck with apoplexy, and one of the bishops with him had to take over and finish the services. A few days later he went unto his reward. This occurred twenty-four years and eight months after he had been ordained Pope. The year was 1004 A.D. The second millenium after Christ had already begun,<sup>12</sup> al'Hakim, son of al-'Aziz had succeeded his father to the throne.

## XXVIII. NOTES

1. S.Lane-Poole.p.104.
2. This is a literal translation of the phrase used by Bishop Severus of Ashmunein to describe her. It denotes the prestige of the Coptic woman even during the Middle Ages.
3. Severus of Ashmunein, vol.II,pt.2.pp. 124-36;also G. Wiet.p.180.

4. One of the titles used in addressing the Caliphs.
5. The story of the moving of the mountain is one that has been recorded in many of the Coptic Church history books and Books of Saints. Bishop Severus of Ashmunein was a witness to it and describes it in his account of the Patriarch Abraam.
6. W.Budge. Book of Saints...vol.II, p.326.
7. Severus of Ashmunein. vol.II, partw. pp.135-50.
8. Sir Walter Scott. Ode on immortality.
9. S.Lane-Poole. p.119.
10. G.Wiet. p.181.
11. 'Some Egyptian monasteries according to the unpublished mss. of ash-Shabusti by Dr.A.S.'Atiya. pub. in 'Le Bulletin de l'archeologie Copte. 1939. pp.1-28; also Maqrizi. Al-Khitat, vol.I, p.270; and Y.N.Rofeila. pp.108-9.
12. Fr. Shenouda al-Baramusi. vol.I, pp.312-24.

XXIX. THE COPTIC POPES DURING THE REIGNS  
OF AL-'HAKIM AND HIS TWO  
SUCCESSORS

- A. The saintly Abba Zakariya
- B. Abba Shenouda II
- C. Abba Christodolus

- 546. al-Hakim, son of Al-'Aziz and how he assumed power and appointed a Coptic vizier
- 547. Consecration of the 64th Pope
- 548. Seven years of peace and security followed by drastic change in al-Hakim's behaviour
- 549. Abba Zakariya thrown to the lions
- 550. Bishops pray in the desert and people hold their services after dark
- 551. Return of prodigals and its effect on al-Hakim
- 552. Peace restored as al-Hakim amended his ways
- 553. Mysterious disappearance of al-Hakim
- 554. Last years of Abba Zakariya spent in peace
- 555. Abba Shenouda II
- 556. Abba Christodolus, a contrast to his predecessor
- 557. Cairo becomes Papal headquarters
- 558. Relationships of Pope with authorities
- 559. Caliph al-Mustansir
- 560. Coptic leaders in high offices
- 561. Abba Christodolus rests in the Lord

A. 546. al-Hakim, son of al-'Aziz, was only eleven years old when his father died. For a period of time he remained under the tute-

lage of his father's vizier Bardjawan but the manner in which the latter abused his power was so flagrant that, four years later, al-Hakim got the upper hand and beheaded him. Bardjawan's secretary was a Copt called Fahd ibn Ibrahim. When he saw his master being beheaded in the royal hall, he grew pale and panic-stricken, but al-Hakim dispelled his fears by giving him then and there the title of "Chief." Fahd immediately set himself to the task of winning the royal favour, and succeeded to such an extent that in a short time he was made vizier.

547. The same year that saw the advent of al-Hakim, witnessed also the consecration of Abba Zakariya, the sixty-fourth Successor of St. Mark. He was a monk who had been serving as priest in the city of Alexandria, and all those who knew him testified to his piety, integrity of character and charitable spirit. When he became Pope, he lived up to his good reputation and to his people's high expectations. And during the first seven years of al-Hakim's reign, which were years of peace and security for the Copts, he went about fulfilling all the pastoral obligations that his supreme position demanded of him with energy and devotion.

548. In that period, al-Hakim was primarily interested in books. He followed the tradition of his family by instituting a magnificent library which he named 'The House of Science and of Wisdom' in the halls of which lectures, discussions and debates were often held. Jurists, doctors and scientists were invited to talk on their diverse subjects, and at the end, were showered with royal gifts.<sup>1</sup> This great center of learning was kept open to the public without any discrimination.

But al-Hakim's conduct and kindly inclinations changed all of a sudden as if his personality had split and he had become a different man. He started to harass and torment the people to such an extent that they lived in constant fear of what might befall them. For three years he dealt out this kind of treatment to all the Egyptians, then decided to direct his darts exclusively at the Copts. He decreed that each was to wear round his neck a heavy wooden cross and to dress in black. No Copt could have a Muslim servant, or be ferried by a Muslim boatman. To safeguard against any intercession on their behalf, he beheaded Fahd, his Coptic vizier, who had served him many years in all faithfulness. Then, an order was given to destroy the churches and confiscate their property. Having sown terror among the Copts, he declared that whoever adopted Islam would thereby be immune. This declaration inevitably enticed some to apostasy, but not enough to satisfy the evil spirit that had become manifest in al-Hakim. He forthwith summoned a chief among the Copts named Ghabrial ibn Naqah and offered to make him vizier if he but renounced his Christian Faith. Ghabrial asked for twenty-four hours in which to think about it. Returning home, he gathered his family and friends, and disclosed to them al-Hakim's offer, declaring that he would never renounce his Saviour. Naturally some of them were panic-stricken but Ghabrial was emphatic. The next day, he returned to al-Hakim but informed him of his resolution. Immediately orders were given that he be scourged a thousand lashes. Half-way through, the valiant man commended his spirit into the Hands of the Heavenly Father.

After the death of Ghabrial, al-Hakim relished the idea of trying to seduce the

prominent Copts into apostasy. Ten more were summoned and told to join the ranks of Islam. When they refused, the lashes fell heavily and mercilessly on their backs. Six of them expired through the ordeal. The four others, unable to stand the agony, declared their willingness to renounce the Christ. Thereupon, the tormentors ceased their horrible work. That same evening one of them breathed his last. The three remaining others retreated in silence until the death of al-Hakim. Then, they<sub>2</sub> reappeared and declared their repentance.

549. All these cruel measures fell short of satisfying al-Ahakim; so he ordered the imprisonment of Abba Zakariya. Having developed the habit of keeping lions in his gardens as means of frightening his people, he decided to regale them on St. Mark's Successor. So he ordered their guards to keep them hungry for three days, after which the venerable Pope was thrown to them. Praying as the Prophet Daniel had done centuries earlier (Daniel VI:22) and standing his ground faithfully, courageously and imperturbably, the lions did not come near the Pope. Imagining that the guards must have fed them, furtively al-Hakim kept them under his own charge for three more days and again let them loose on the Pope. Once more they did not so much as scratch him. Too impressed, and somewhat intimidated by this, al-Hakim released the man-of-God, after he had kept him in prison for three months.<sup>3</sup>

550. During those years in which the lust for harassing the Copts dominated al-Hakim, a good number of the Bishops retired into the desert to devote themselves completely to unceasing prayers and intense supplica-

tions, especially since the majority of the churches had been closed and sealed with the royal effigy. Many of the faithful who could not attend weekly services, got into the habit of going to the desert for prayers twice a year: on Epiphany and on Easter. But, of course, the majority of the Copts could not go at all because of the long distances, the expenses of travel, or having small children. In some areas away from the big cities authorities were either induced or bribed to look the other way. Churches were opened after dark and thus the Services were often held at night quietly and secretly.

551. The deranged state of al-Hakim's behaviour continued for nine consecutive years. Then one day a number of those Copts who had adopted Islam, barred his way and requested him to permit them to return to their religion. Instead of getting angry, he asked them: "Where are your crosses, your girdles and your other insignia?" When they produced them from under their clothes, he ordered them to wear them in front of him, which they did. Apparently pleased by their courage, he decreed that they be left unmolested, and free to follow their diverse professions. Among these men was a monk named Poemen who, for some reason, found great favour in the eyes of al-Hakim. He entreated him to allow him to repair a monastery outside Cairo, in the region of Shahrān, and permission was granted him immediately. When the reparations were completed, a number of monks joined Poemen, and they all lived together. al-Hakim grew so fond of Poemen that he often spent days in the Shahrān Monastery. Whenever anyone had a plea and requested Poemen to present it before al-Hakim, the desired request was readily accorded.

552. At the time when vicissitudes were the daily lot of the Copts, Abba Zakariya, too, lived in the desert in St. Macari' Monastery. In its solitude, he travailed mightily in prayer. Finally, his supplications were answered. Poemen's intercession on behalf of the Pope was accepted by al-Hakim who also expressed his wish to meet the man-of-God. So Abba Zakariya and his Bishops met the king in the guest chamber of Shahrān. al-Hakim looked at them in apparent amazement, and suddenly his eyes seemed to have opened as if there had been scales on them that had fallen off. For even though the Pope was humble in appearance and plain looking, he felt inspired by the light emanating from him and reflected on his visage. The ruler enquired "How far is this man obeyed?"; and the answer he received was: "Throughout Egypt, Nubia, the Sudan, Ethiopia, the Pentapolis, and certain regions of Palestine and Africa." The king's amazement was apparent in his voice as he queried: "By what means do all these people obey him? He has no army, nor does he resort to bribery!" Their answer was frank and unequivocal: "It is by the power of God through the Christ and His Cross that they obey him." al-Hakim was so pleased by their frankness that he asked them to stay till he granted their wishes. He then presented them with the most unexpected decree: it empowered them to open all the closed churches and repair the destroyed ones. All the wood, the stones, the gardens and the estates which had been confiscated were to be given back. In addition, the heavy wooden crosses and other insignia which they had been forced to wear, were to be discarded. The bells were to ring once more from the heights of their belfries. It was indeed a joyous day; a day whereon the Copts regained their freedom

of worship and their sense of security. Clergy and people united in offering their praise and glorification to God. Once more, they could celebrate Epiphany by the banks of the Nile, turning night into day by the myriads of torches; once more they could indulge in the joyous processions of Palm Sunday; their Ritual hymns echoed and re-echoed in the streets and alleys as they marched through them bearing their crosses their candles and their censors. al-Hakim, to expiate for all the evil he had irrationally committed, resumed the habit of his father and his grandfather, by attending these festivals in person, and by distributing gifts on all the officials.

553. One of the habits al-Hakim had developed and in which he persisted throughout his reign was that of rambling at night alone. This gave him the opportunity of discovering many things about his people and spread among them the awe-inspiring assumption that he had the power of knowing the unknown. For years he went out unarmed and unguarded; his personal ferocity, and the mystery enshrouding him safeguarded him. One night, however, he mysteriously disappeared never to be seen by mortal eyes again. No conclusive clue to his disappearance was ever found, although many conjectures and rumours spread about it. Meantime his sister acted as regent for two years then gave the throne to her nephew, az-Zahir, al-Hakim's son. <sup>4</sup>

554. As for Abba Zakariya, he outlived al-Hakim by three years, during which peace continued. az-Zahir and his paternal aunt followed the tradition of tolerance and goodwill that had been set by Mo'izz. The Copts really savoured this freedom especially because it followed in the wake of travail and stifling restraint.

During these three years of recreative repose, Abba Zakariya was graciously granted the power of healing. One day, the Bishop of Tilbana went to see him, having been struck with sudden leprosy. The man-of-God said to him in quietness and soreheartedness: "O My Brother, I am afflicted because of your suffering; my heart aches for you in sympathy. Yet I am in duty bound to remind you that your priesthood shall not be valid unless the Heavenly Father restore your health." The Bishop said as he shook with sobs: "I know it, but I entreat you to help me with your prayers." He then departed to a church named after the blessed Mother-of-God. It was Monday and he said to his disciple: "Leave me alone until Wednesday afternoon." When he was left alone, the Bishop stood before the icon of the Blessed Virgin weeping and praying throughout Monday and Tuesday and on until the afternoon of Wednesday. Overcome by prayer and fasting, his head leaned heavily against the icon in semi-consciousness. Half dazed, he felt a hand stretching out of the picture and anointing his whole body. At this sensation, he became fully awake to find that he was made whole, and his skin was without blemish. Overjoyed, he called the priest who hastened towards him. The Bishop asked him to scan him carefully. The priest testified to his cure, and both glorified God. When the Bishop's disciple came, he, in turn, testified to the cure. The relieved Prelate said: "My son, our Master the Christ has graciously healed me by the intercession of His Holy Mother and the prayers of our saintly Pope. I shall remain here for three more days to praise God for His manifold blessings. Therefore, come back to me on Saturday and bring with you a beast of burden." At the appointed time, the disciple came;

the Bishop of Tilbana rode straight to Abba Zakariya's abode. Arriving Sunday morning, he found him already in Church, where he joined him and said: "Your prayers on my behalf have been accepted, holy father." And the man-of-God replied: "It is your faith which has made you whole." Then did the two men rejoice. And Abba Zakariya asked the Bishop to officiate saying to him: "Worthy indeed are you to offer the Eucharist because of the Grace you have attained." The Bishop was in ecstasy while he officiated; his exultation permeated the hearts of all the congregation.

Thus did Abba Zakariya shepherd his people in all humility, consecrated service, and sympathetic sharing. And having spent twenty-seven years and eleven months in vigilant duty, he rested in the Lord.<sup>5</sup>

B. 555. Abba Shenouda II, the man who became the sixty-fifth Head of the Coptic Church in the year 1032 A.D. turned out to be a weak personality who did not leave much to be remembered by, even though his papacy lasted for fourteen years and seven months.

There are two notable things worth mentioning about the period in which he was Pope, however. One is that az-Zahir continued to be the ruler throughout most of it, and so the Copts continued to live and work in peace and security and to find scope for the expression of their creative, artistic talents. The other is that in 1035 A.D. a treaty was signed between az-Zahir and Constantine VIII, the Byzantine Emperor, whereby agreement was reached that Constantine was to repair the mosque at Constantinople while az-Zahir was to repair the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem which had been burned by his father's orders. The Copts

and all Christians of the region rejoiced greatly at this because<sup>6</sup> of the significance of that Church for them.

C. 556. In contrast to his predecessor, Abba Christodolus, was a faithful ministrant who believed in and acted upon the Christ's saying: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17). He inaugurated his papacy by building several churches, and consecrating the priests and deacons needed for their service. To the joy of the people, he ordained the men most worthy of God's service. He, also counselled his people well and became a source of inspiration and strength for them in the moral and spiritual spheres.

557. On his first visit to Cairo, Abba Christodolus decided to take up his abode in it instead of in Alexandria. He thought it would be in the interest of the church to be near the rulers of the land. Having taken this decision, he selected the well-known Church in Old Cairo, known as al-Mu'allakah<sup>7</sup> to be his headquarters.

558. Abba Christodolus had his ups and downs in his relationships with the people in authority. When nobody interfered in them, they were amicable relations; but when jealous courtiers or evil calumniators made false accusations about him behind his back, it always took him time to unravel the harm they had done, reveal the true facts and restore the good relations. And he was a man of such honesty and such sincerity that ultimately he was always able to prevail.

559. The Caliph who reigned while Abba Christodolus was Pope was still a Fatimid called al-Mustansir. On the whole, except for a

short period of chaos, there was a climate of peace during his times. The Copts, like all the Egyptians, enjoyed this climate and thanked God for it. Once only was their peace marred by a vizier called Yazouri who was so extortionate and committed against them such acts of ill-will that his behaviour angered even the Muslims. Some of them went to the Caliph and complained so strongly against him that the Caliph ordered his immediate dismissal.

560. In contrast to Yazouri, there were Egyptians in power who manifested attitudes of tolerance and affection towards the Copts, and tried, by their example, to spread this spirit of fraternal friendliness. Several Copts won favour and were appointed to high government positions. Most prominent among them was Yoannis ibn Youssef 'l Abahh, who became first the private secretary of the Caliph himself and later his vizier. During his vizierate, he succeeded in obtaining permission for building the Church of St. Barbara (one of the many women martyrs of the Diocletian era), in Old Cairo, and in repairing that of Abu Sarga (where the Holy Family stayed some time of their sojourn in Egypt). And such was his esteem in the eyes of the Caliph that when he died his son was appointed in his office.<sup>8</sup>

561. Abba Christodolus guided the affairs of the Church like the good and faithful servant lauded by the Christ (Matt. 25:21-24) for twenty-five years and eight months. Then he went unto his Lord to receive the crown he had won.<sup>9</sup>

## XXIX. NOTES

1. S.Lane-Poole.p.130;Y.N.Rofeila.pp.114-15.
2. Maqrizi.al-Qawl ul-ibrizi.p.58.
3. Severus of Ashmunein.vol.II.p.193.
4. S.Lane-Poole.pp.133-4.G.Wiet.pp.182-83. A tradition among the Copts relates that he entered the monastery of Shahrān where he was baptised and spent the rest of his days. Another tradition states that he went to the Lebanese Mountains where he founded the religion of the Druses. The Muslims relate that he was killed and his assassin managed to do away with his body, even though it was never found. Whatever the explanation such was the end of his rule.
5. Severus of Ashmunein.pp.174-221.W.Budge.vol.I,pp.238-43.
6. Fr.shenouda 'l-Baramusi.vol.I.pp.347-354.
7. The Mu 'Allakah Church is one of the few ancient Coptic Churches that have remained practically intact to the present and is one of the churches visited by tourists.
8. 'Biography of the Martyr Barbara and her Church' (in Arabic) by the Association called after her.pp.55-72.Bp.Gregorius ad-Deir ul Muharrak. (inArabic) Cairo. 1969.
9. Shenouda al-Baramusi.vol.II,pp.361-84.

XXX. DIFFERENT MANIFESTATIONS OF  
THE ONE SPIRIT

- A. Abba Kyrillos II, a legislator
  - B. Faithful service - Abba Mikhail IV
  - C. Abba Macari II, an artist
  - D. A cluster of statesmen
  - E. Abba Ghabrial II and his Successor
  - F. Abba Mikhail V
- 
- 562. Election and consecration of the 67th Pope
  - 563. An era of architectural growth
  - 564. Amicable relations established between Pope and authorities
  - 565. Abba Kyrillos becomes a legislator of the Church
  - 566. Completion of repairs of Church of Holy Sepulchre in 1092 A.D.
  - 567. Abba Mikhail-his assets and election
  - 568. Difficulties and reconciliation with his own people
  - 569. Mediation with Ethiopia concerning the Nile water
  - 570. Abba Mikhail IV's death
  - 571. Abba Macari II, an accomplished artist
  - 572. An earthquake shakes Egypt
  - 573. Unfortunate arrival of the Crusaders
  - 574. Lacunal records
  - 575. A few eminent Copts of the eleventh century
  - 576. The choice and consecration of the 70th Pope
  - 577. Absolute honesty and courage of Pope wins Caliph's respect
  - 578. Series of assassinations

- 579. A misunderstanding with Ethiopia that was quickly cleared
- 580. Two codes of Canon law
- 581. Death of Ghabrial II
- 582. Short-lived papacy of his kindly successor
- 583. An eminent bishop-writer

A. 562. At the vacancy of St. Mark's Chair, a delegation was sent to the monastery of St. Macari, where they spent two months praying and pondering. From thence they went to Yoannis Kami's monastery seeking a saintly ascetic called Pissius. As soon as he saw them, and before they disclosed to him their quest, he said, "Your elect is in St. Macari's Monastery; he is the ascetic Gawargius." They returned, seized the suggested monk and headed straight for Cairo. As soon as they arrived, a number of its inhabitants joined them and they all left for Alexandria. The whole city went out to meet them. They marched with buoyant spirits to St. Mark's Church, where the monk Gawargius became Abba Kyrillos II, sixty-seventh Pope of the Church of Alexandria.

563. Egypt was enjoying peace and productivity at that time. The hum of workshops echoed once more in the radiant valley. The material prosperity went hand-in-hand with an architectural fluorescence. Badr, the Caliph's deputy in his incessant endeavours, enlarged Cairo and built a solid wall around it. Three massive gates were constructed within it; they were planned by a Coptic monk named Yoannis.<sup>1</sup>

564. After his consecration, Abba Kyrillos II left for Cairo. No sooner did he arrive than he went to the Church of the Archangel Mikhail to lift up "The Prayer of Thanks-

giving." He was met there by the Bishop of Babylon, who had sent word to Sheikh Abu'l Fadl, Chief of police. The Sheikh sent a stately steed for Abba Kyrillos to ride when he went to meet the Caliph. As they set out for the royal palace, the Bishops and chiefs surrounded their Pope followed by a big crowd. When they reached the door of the audience hall, the master of ceremonies led Abba Kyrillos II inside, where al-Mustansir, his mother, and his sister were awaiting him. The two ladies sprayed St. Mark's Successor with rose water as a token of honour, then said, "Bless us and bless our palace, please." His immediate response delighted them. After a short conversation, the Pope signalled to Bishop of Damira to read the invocation. Then followed an exchange of greetings, after which the guests left. The whole procession went to the house of Badr-'l-Djammali, where Abba Kyrillos II was received with great cordiality. During this visit, the Governor of Cairo was present, and Badr ordered him to accompany Abba Kyrillos and his retinue to the papal abode. At the same time, he enjoined the governor to put himself always at the Pope's disposal. After thanking the great vizier, Abba Kyrillos II and his retinue left.

The cordial and friendly spirit shown by Badr towards St. Mark's Successor and his people was certainly among God's blessings upon them in this period. One Saturday, Badr invited the bishops to his mansion, discussed with them diverse affairs, then asked them to tell him frankly what they desired. After a thorough examination of their interests, he called the officials of his diwan and ordered them to write the decrees empowering the bishops to put their projects into effect. So joyous were they that they went

straight to the Church of Abu Sefein, where they offered their thanks unto God. After celebrating the liturgy amidst great jubilation, each returned to his See to work towards the realization of his hopes and aspirations for his people.

565. Abba Kyrillos II was inspired by the very name he bore, that of the masterful Kyrillos, who elucidated the unity of the Christ's divinity with His humanity at the Third Ecumenical Council (431 A.D.). At his election, Abba Kyrillos II was a simple priest known for his sanctity, but with very little learning. Being elected Pope he became filled with awe at the magnitude of his responsibility. Inspired by this inward feeling, he set himself to study and reasearch until he mastered the church teachings and laws. "And the church shone, through him, and all the people...rejoiced.<sup>2</sup> He wrote a concise code of canon law, comprising thirty-four articles, and promulgated it among his people.<sup>3</sup> The majority of these canons dealt with the conduct and duties of Bishops, the remaining with those of other clergy and the people.

566. One great, happy event during the papacy of Abba Kyrillos II occurred at the completion of the reconstruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The Pope of Antioch asked St. Mark's Successor to delegate some of his bishops to officiate at the Consecration Service. He responded with joy. The celebration was chanted with pomp and splendour during the Easter season of 1092 A.D.

That same year just a few weeks after celebrating that same Easter in Cairo, Abba Kyrillos II departed unto his Lord. He had shepherded his people in all diligence for fourteen years and six months.<sup>4</sup>

B. 567. The sixty-eighth Successor to St. Mark's Chair was Mikhail IV, a monk elected after much deliberation and discussion between the Coptic clergy and people. Sanctity and learning were the assets for which he was elected and in which later he proved himself.

568. Not having been accustomed to life in the big cities, however, the first year of his papacy was marked with difficulties between him and his people, but happily these ended on peaceful terms. Hardly had this internal strife come to an end, hardly had Pope and people settled into optimistic anticipation of reconstructive work, than they were shaken by the news of Djammali's death. The Egyptians loved this vizier because, although born in another land, he had served Egypt with the devotion of a son.<sup>5</sup> He was succeeded in his vizierate by his son al-Afdal.

569. It then happened that one year the Nile inundation was low. The Caliph al-Musta 'li, -who had succeeded al-Mustansir-knowing that the sources of the eternal river lay in Ethiopia, requested Abba Mikhail IV to go there, meet the king, present him with sumptuous gifts, and entreat him to find the means by which the Nile waters could readily reach the desired amount. Abba Mikhail was only too glad to perform this service. He was welcomed in Ethiopia with joy. The king ordered his men to remove all the impediments in the course of the river. This led to a rise of over five feet during one night. St. Mark's Successor spent some time in Ethiopia, and consolidated the bonds of friendship between the Caliph of Egypt and the King of Ethiopia, which both greatly appreciated.

570. A few months after his return from

Ethiopia, Abba Mikhail was stricken with the plague while he was riding his donkey during a pastoral tour. He would have fallen from the back of his docile animal but for his own men's vigilance. Watching him attentively, they saw him swaying and steadied him on his beast until they reached his residence, where he passed away the following morning. He had served his people for nine years and seven months.

C. 571. The translation of Abba Mikhail IV occurred at the beginning of summer, when the Nile dwellers are usually somewhat busy with harvest. So the Copts did not convene to think about the monk to be elected until October. For a whole month, however, they could not decide on Abba Mikhail's successor; then, in a flash, as it were, they came to a unanimous conclusion: the monk Macari was the man they wanted. He was adorned with learning and unshakeable faith in addition to being an artist.<sup>7</sup> The time allocated to monks for handwork, he spent painting icons and illuminating manuscripts. Having reached this happy decision, the delegation escorted their elect from his desert monastery to Cairo. At the outskirts of the city, Abu'l Fadl, the Coptic secretary of al-Afdl, met them, then hastened to inform the vizier of their arrival and to intercede on behalf of Macari so that he may be exempted from paying the taxes that had been imposed on the Copts by the Alexandria authorities. al-Afdal was greatly moved and asked to see the selected man. So Macari, surrounded by the Bishops, the priests, and the chief laymen, went to meet him. The Vizier was attracted by Macari's gentleness and his well-seasoned speech. He ordered his clerk to write a letter to the Prefect of Alexandria, asking him to exempt

Macari from paying anything. Armed with this letter, the whole group went to St. Mark's metropolis, where the elect became his sixty-ninth Successor.

572. A few months later, the people of Egypt were panic-stricken because darkness overtook them in the daytime, a tempestuous wind raged, and thunder roared. Hardly had they regained their breath at the return of sunlight than a violent earthquake shook the whole land. During the night following the earthquake, the church of the Archangel Mikhail was destroyed. Abba Macari II wept bitterly at the sight of the fallen sanctuary and asked the deacons to retrieve the books and the holy vessels and store them in a safe place until the Church was rebuilt.

573. These calamitous outbursts of nature seemed to presage disaster, which did come after that from the West. The forces of the Crusaders were on the warpath. Unfortunately, the cross was their insignia. They distorted the symbol of peace into a sign of war. These distorters dreamed of power, though they veiled their dream by the proclamation that they desired to liberate the Holy Land from Muslim rule. Because once they became masters of Jerusalem, they forgot every noble sentiment; they even forgot the teachings of the Saviour Whose ensign they bore. These warriors, wearing the Cross on their breasts, massacred seventy thousand Muslims in the streets of the city of the Prince of Peace. Then the Franks surprised the Egyptians before the city of Ascalon and attacked them despite the flag of truce. Pursuing the retreating Egyptians, they set fire to a nearby wood in which the fugitives had taken refuge. In face of such treacheries, al-Afdal hurried

with his army to their homeland. In this manner the vizier and the people curtained their inward unrest. The flow of life glided smoothly on the surface, but the undercurrents were most turbulent.

Abba Macari II, though secure in the equitable rule of al-Afdal, was, nonetheless, disturbed by the war of the Crusaders. His heart was heavy as he contemplated the inhumanities of those whose emblem was the Cross. Sorrow was heaped upon sorrow when, in A.D. 1178, King Baldwin invaded Egypt and burned Farama (on the Red Sea), then marched against Tinnis, which he destroyed completely. In the midst of this seeming triumph, however, he was stricken with disease and was forced to retreat to the Holy Land, where he died. The Egyptians did not retaliate; they deemed it wiser to remain on the defensive. This prudent policy safeguarded the frontier of their beloved country and enabled them to follow their sundry vocations without being molested.

Suddenly, in an unexplained outburst of fury, al-Amir, the Caliph, killed al-Afdal. The Caliph had always been easy-going before that and was wont to go for his relaxation to some monastery, particularly that of Nehia, (which was about 30 kilometers south of Cairo, and has long been destroyed). He was usually very generous and contributed to the monastery one thousand dinars on each visit; on his very first visit to it, he endowed it with thirty acres of tax-free land.<sup>10</sup> His assassination of al-Afdal was only one expression of his general mood of anger at the Crusades.

Barely a year later, Abba Macari II went unto his reward. His papacy had lasted twenty-seven years and one month.<sup>11</sup>

D.574. It is indeed regrettable that the annals

of the Copts are lacunal: a stray word here, a sentence there, and the rest is silence. The reader's interest is aroused or his imagination fired, yet when he seeks to satisfy his interest or feed his imagination, he meets with frustration. In vain does he seek to know the man whose name he has read or whose remark was provocative. Doubtless some records may not be lost forever for it is still hoped that they are hidden in some as yet remote, undiscovered corner, and may some day be found. At present, the seeker must be satisfied however with the little he finds; sufficient is that the mainstream continues to flow, though the tone and form of the myriad drops which form it be unknown. The Popes who stand out by the sheer impressiveness of their position could not have succeeded one another in one unbroken chain if there had not been enough bishops and layleaders to elect and support them. And if the vicissitudes of the centuries have inevitably destroyed an unknown number of records, the residue is still potent. The labour of the vanguards affords us with a glimpse into the past, which has shaped the present, and should inspire us to act in accordance with our higher selves that the future generations may be happier and nobler.

575. The eleventh century has legated to us the names of several Coptic statesmen who have striven to serve their people and raise them to higher levels. The sentences which describe them, though few, are still fraught with meaning. Among the most outstanding, the following have been picked and described in a few lines.

Suroor Galal, collector of revenues for the Caliph al Mustansir. The integrity of

his character and the perspicacity of his mind won for him royal confidence and favour. One of the main responsibilities relegated to Suroor was to organize for the Caliph the pageantry held on the Feast of the Inundation, which he invariably attended. Suroor remained humble despite his high position. This virtue worked like a magnet, attracting everyone to him. He dispensed his charity towards all those in need regardless of creed, and thus won the love of all his compatriots.

Abu'l Yomn Youssef, entitled Amin'l Omana (or chief secretary), was treasurer of the Caliph's chest. His absolute honesty led the Caliph to appoint him collector of the revenues in the Delta. This position heightened his prestige. He capitalized it by building an imposing monastery in the midst of a large grove on the Nile. This monastery became the Vizier al-Afdal's favourite spot for relaxation because of its restful beauty with the Nile gliding carressingly by its palm trees.

Abu Sa ad Mansoor, son of Abu'l Yomn, who was an eloquent writer and an intrepid hero. al Mustansir appointed him vizier. When the Turkish troops rebelled against the Caliph, Mansoor assembled the troops who were still loyal to the Caliph, aroused them with his eloquence, then led them into battle against the Turks. He succeeded in quelling the rebellion, and thereby won the lasting gratitude of al-Mustansir.

Abu'l Malih, nicknamed Mamati, was among the rich whose wealth was an asset, because he used it for charitable purposes. His benevolence earned for him his nickname, for that word "mamati" in Coptic means "give me," and it was repeated so often to him that he became known as 'Mamati.' Egypt was famine-stricken during his lifetime. During

the famine, the hungry children followed him with the cry "mamati," and he cheerfully lavished on them his gifts.

Buqaira ar-Rashidi was another whose bounty relieved the famine-stricken people. During those horrible periods, he used to go out to the slum areas to visit the lowly employees, the labourers, the infirm, and the needy. As he went about from house to house, he noted the state of the families, then distributed among them the food and clothes they needed. These visits he performed during the day; after sunset, he visited the sick, the strangers, and the imprisoned—thus fulfilling our Saviour's command to those who would follow Him.<sup>12</sup>

as-Said Abu'l Fakhr was executive financier during the Caliphate of al-Hafez, then became President of finance. At his death, his eldest son, Shadid'l Molk, was appointed in his place.

Abu'l Hassan'l Amahh was private secretary to the Caliph al Hafez.

al Akhram ibn Zakariya was Emir (prince) of the government offices. He reached this position because the astrologer of al-Hafez defined for the Caliph the traits of the man most loyal to him, and he found the identical traits in ibn Zakariya. Consequently, the Caliph confided in him and consulted him on various matters.

Ibn Kotama was Secretary of State during the Caliphate of al-Faiz.

Ibnul Miqat presided over the military board.

al-Ahzam was Chief of accountancy, whose duty was to supervise the different government officials; he had authority to appoint and dismiss them.

Besides those who served the State, several prominent men engaged in quiet research. One outstanding contemplative was

ibn Sabbaaf, a theologian. He wrote a book in which he expounded Church doctrine, teachings, and rituals very lucidly; he also explained the most important verses in Genesis, the different ecclesiastical offices, the seven sacraments, the reason for, and symbolism of the incense, the censer, and the icons; and, finally,<sup>13</sup> recorded the Church feasts and their import.

E. 576. Now there was a deacon serving in the Church of St. Mercurius (or Abu Seifein), in Old Cairo whose name was Abu'l Ola ibn Turaik. He was well versed in both the sacred and the profane knowledge and was alert, charitable, and wise. He spent much of his leisure time in transcribing books, in visiting the widows and the orphans, and in comforting those in prison, and he worked as clerk in the diwan of the Caliph. When order had been restored after al-Afdal's assassination, and the Copts sent their delegates to Scete to seek a successor to their departed Pope, the abbot of the Monastery of Yoannis Kami, an aged saint endowed with the divine gift of prophecy, met them and told them: "My children, return to Cairo, for the man you seek is no other than the Deacon Abu'l Ola." Upon hearing this, they returned joyfully, their hearts brimming over in anticipation. They carried the deacon to Alexandria, and there he was instituted the seventieth Pope with the name of Ghabrial II.

577. As soon as he was consecrated, he went to the Monastery of St. Macari for forty days to fortify his soul. On his return to Cairo, a priest offered him a large sum of money and asked to be ordained bishop. The man of God refused. The priest presumed that he could coerce him by appealing to the

Caliph's son, again offering rich gifts. The prince interceded for him. Abba Ghabrial answered, "It is forbidden by our Christian religion to ordain any man for money." This answer, short and to the point, satisfied the intercessor. From that time on, both the Caliph and his son honoured the Pope throughout their lives, giving their order that he be revered wherever he went.

578. During this period, a Coptic monk named abu Nagah became principal advisor to the Caliph al-Amir, though he did not attain the rank of vizier. A few months later, the monk was assassinated by al-Amir, who had already killed two viziers. As a safeguard to their own lives, his courtiers consequently murdered al-Amir. He was succeeded by his cousin al-Hafiz.

579. It then happened that the King of Ethiopia asked Abba Mikhail (his own primate) to consecrate for him one bishop more than the historic number for his country. Abba Mikhail replied that he could not infringe on traditional agreements without referring to St. Mark's Successor. Dissatisfied, the Ethiopian monarch sent a speedy messenger to the Caliph with a plea to the Pope. When al-Hafiz received the message, he sent it immediately to Abba Ghabrial with the request that he satisfy the Ethiopian king. The man of God went in person to the Caliph and said to him with firmness, "Should I submit to this request, I would hasten the day of separation between the Coptic Church and its daughter Church, in Ethiopia, which it has reared with pride." This reply satisfied al-Hafiz. Having convinced the Caliph, Abba Ghabrial hastened to send his explanatory reply to the King of Ethiopia. The papal messengers returned to say that

the havoc caused by the famine and the plague there forced the king to submit quietly. They also bore a letter in which that king entreated the Pope to absolve him and send him his blessings. Abba Ghabrial answered immediately, thus comforting the Ethiopians and their king.

580. St. Mark's Successor then began to think of the future generations. He promulgated two series of canon law: The first comprised thirty-two articles concerned with regulating the conduct and the duties of the bishops and the priests, and comprising the practices and the rituals of the Church; the second dealt with regulating questions of inheritance. He prefaced his laws with the following: "Ghabrial, by the Grace of God and His boundless Wisdom, called by the preordained knowledge of God Pope of the great City of Alexandria and what belongs to it, writes to all the brethren overshadowed by Divine Grace, the elect, the beloved bishops, priests, arch-priests, deacons, and all the Orthodox people who believe in the Christ, may God bless them and by His powerful Hand save and protect them. Peace and grace be unto you and abide with you; may they dwell henceforth in your homes. Amen.<sup>15</sup>

581. One night the Alexandrian Pope, who had been quite sick for a time, saw a dream in which a host of priests and monks carrying Gospels and crosses visited him and told him: "We have come to ask about you today. You shall be well. In a year's time however, we shall come to take you home with us." Abba Ghabrial regained his health, and worked hard during that year. Having acquitted his conscience and his duty, a year later, his spirit departed to its eternal abode. He had

shepherded his people for fourteen years and three months.<sup>16</sup>

582. The seventy-first Pope, Mikhail V, was a monk graced by such kindness, love, and christian humility that as soon as he was consecrated, his people flocked around him and sought his prayers and blessings.

"And this father used to teach the people, and exhort the sinners to repent; and all his flock feared him because they knew that God was with him..."<sup>17</sup> He was revered by Muslim and Copt alike; they all thanked God for granting them such a loving and lovable Pope. In this auspicious atmosphere churches and monasteries flourished.

Soon after his consecration, Abba Mikhail V ordained five bishops, admonishing them to be alert to the wishes of their people. He also took special interest in the monks, urging them to live up to their vows.

Unfortunately, this serenity was only too fleeting; eight months after his consecration, Abba Mikhail V fell ill. A month later, finding himself still sick and thinking the desert air would be salubrious, he went to St. Macari's Monastery. But even there he languished and then peacefully gave up the Ghost.<sup>18</sup>

583. Contemporary with Abba Mikhail V was another Mikhail, who was Bishop of Damietta. Although next to nothing is known about his life, this bishop has legated to us a number of writings, extant in four copies, two of which are kept in the library of the Coptic Papacy in Cairo, one at the Vatican Library, and one at the Bibliotheque Nationale de Paris.<sup>19</sup> All we know of him is that he was appointed assistant to Abba Mikhail V and that he lived until the period of the seventy-

third Pope. As for his writings, they treat a variety of subjects of which the following are samples: confession, circumcision, shaving the head, incense, the sign of the cross, marriage between relatives, barefootedness inside the churches...etc. We thus find scattered in Coptic history numerous unknown soldiers to whom dedication to Church Service was sufficient reward and who gave no thought to leaving biographical records of themselves.

### XXX. NOTES

1. S.Lane-Poole.p.152.citing Abu Salih '1 Armani.
2. W. Budge.vol.IV.p.995.
3. 'The Canons of Cyril II, LXVII patriarch of Alexandria' trans. into Eng. by O.H.E. Burmester. pub. in Le Museon T.XLIX,Louvain. 1936.pp.245-88.
4. Shenouda '1 Baramusi.vol.II,pp.385-95.
5. Pere de Henaut.op.cit.pp.236-9;S.Lane-Poole.pp.150-154.
6. al-Baramusi.vol.II.pp.396-405.
7. M.Simaika.Guide to Coptic Museum.vol. II,p.165.
8. Guettee.vol.VII.pp.268-97.
9. S.Lane-Poole.pp.163-5;G.Wiet.pp.188-9.
10. Manassa'1 Qommos.pp.543.
11. al Baramusi.vol.II.pp.406-11.

12. Manassa'l Qommos, pp.522-23, Y.N. Rofeila. pp.163,165,167-8.
13. Da'irat al-Maaref al-Qibtiya (Ency.)ed. by R.Tadros.vol.I,pp.31,32,36,50-52,62,74. A copy of ibn Sabaa's book is in the British Library and another in New York Public Library.
14. S. Lane-Poole. p. 166; G.Wiet. p.190
15. Details of these laws are given in "The Canons and Laws of Inheritance of Abba Ghabrial LXX Patriarch of Alexandria.' trans. and pub. (each separately) in Orientalia Christiana Periodica. Rome 1935. 1st ser. pp.5-45; and nos. 3-4.pp.315-27.
16. al-Baramusi. vol II, pp.412-419; W.Budge vol. III, pp. 798-801.
17. W. Budge. vol. III, p.780.
18. al Baramusi.vol.II.p.419-21.
19. These writings have been published in their original Arabic with an English translation by O.H.E. Burmester in Orientalia Christiana Periodica, Rome 1936, under the title of 'Sayings of Mikhail, Bishop of Damietta'.

## XXXI. FLUX AND REFLUX

- A. Abba Yoannis V
  - B. Abba Marcus III
  - C. Yoannis VI becomes 74th Pope in the same year that Salah-ad-Din (Saladin) becomes Sovereign of Egypt
  - D. Unrest leads to delay of twenty years before consecration of St. Mark's Successor
- 
- 584. Election and consecration of Abba Yoannis V
  - 585. The hardships suffered by the Copts
  - 586. The Papacy of Yoannis V
  - 587. Election of Abba Marcus III
  - 588. Lure of Egypt
  - 589. Oriental grandeur and refinement
  - 590. Salah-ad-Din 'l-Ayyubi enters the stage of history
  - 591. Priestly loyalty and venomous fury
  - 592. The vigil of a 'Good Shepherd'
  - 593. A new dawn
  - 594. The life of Abba Marcus III ends in peace and serenity
  - 595. Consecration of Yoannis VI
  - 596. The great qualities possessed by Salah-ad-Din bequeathed to his progeny
  - 597. Papacy of Abba Yoannis VI
  - 598. Lady Tarfa, a great Coptic woman
  - 599. Abba Mikhail a 12th century unknown hero
  - 600. Election of 75th Pope delayed because of a number of circumstances
  - 601. Consecration of Kyrillos III
- 
- A. 584. Only too soon did the rythm of life

and death necessitate that Coptic clergy and leaders assemble to consider a successor to their departed Pope. As they pondered and prayed, their attention riveted on a monk called Yoannis ibn Abi'l Fath, from the monastery of St. Yoannis Kami. Thereupon they unanimously agreed to elect him and he was duly consecrated as Yoannis V, seventy-second Pope of the See of St. Mark. This took place in 1146 A.D.

585. At that time, Egypt was in a state of unrest due to the rivalries between the Caliphs and their viziers. Coercion was the inevitable allotment of the Copts. Some were dismissed from government offices; the wealth of others was confiscated; some were executed summarily. Still they braved their lot heroically. <sup>1</sup>

This wrath against the Copts was intensified by the incursions of the Crusaders into Bilbeis. Many of the Egyptian Muslims could not draw the line between the Christian invaders and their native Christian compatriots, for both wore the cross as symbol of their faith. And since the aggressor bore this emblem, all those who believed in that same cross had to pay for his aggression. As for the crusaders they killed the Egyptians indiscriminately <sup>2</sup> and so for awhile it looked as if the Copts had fallen between the crushing weight of a grindstone, and were getting mercilessly treated by both the invaders and their own compatriots.

One of the sorrowful consequences of all this violence to which the Copts were subjected to, was that many of thier churches also were plundered and destroyed in the process. But the Good Lord, who never abandons his people completely, even in their darkest hours, inspired and enabled one of

his children to begin reconstruction work.

Ass ad Saleeb, a prominent Copt who still worked in the diwan and somewhat escaped the storm amidst which he lived, made possible the rebuilding of the churches in the Cairo area. Through his quiet influence and his financial contributions, he contrived to achieve that. 3

586. Another source of inspiration and strength the Copts found during that period of hard trials was in the faith and fortitude of their Pope and their clergy who did their utmost to sustain them and keep the faith alive in the breasts of the survivors.

After having steered the Church through wind and storm for eighteen years and ten months, Abba Yoannis V commended his overburdened spirit into the Hands of the Father.<sup>4</sup>

B. 587. When Abba Yoannis V died, Egypt was still in the throes of ambitious viziers and figurehead Caliphs. Jealousy, sectarianism, and intrigue were the primal forces driving men to scheme, to plot, and to assassinate. Life was fraught with danger and degradation. Within the boundaries of the land, rival rulers stalked in the dark, realizing that each must kill or be killed. Outside those boundaries, Orientals and Crusaders were warring fiercely and ruthlessly. All eyes were fixed like a ferret's on Egypt, for this land, which had witnessed the rise and fall of many an empire, was on the verge of unprecedented happenings.

Under these jolting circumstances, bishops and leaders realized that filling the vacancy of St. Mark's Chair had to be accomplished speedily. However heavy a burden the Pope may have to bear, there had to be someone to shoulder it without delay. In times of

trouble the people would feel insecure without the paternal solicitude of a good shepherd. Like little children, they would feel the need to nestle on their mother's knees or rest on their father's shoulder. Such being their conviction, they unanimously placed their trust in a rich merchant called Abu'l Farag ibn Abi's-Saad, who, despite his wealth was adorned with integrity, chastity, and deep learning. His consecration was accomplished with great fervour and heartfelt supplications of the people, who had experienced repeatedly the providential care of their Heavenly Father. At his consecration, Abu'l Farag was given the name of the Evangelist Marcus, whose seventy-third successor he became.

No sooner was Abba Marcus III consecrated than he journeyed by boat on the eternal river. As he passed by the different towns and villages, he counselled and consoled his people.

588. After a number of skirmishes, Shawar, the prefect of Upper Egypt, took the reins. Desirous of maintaining his position, he aligned himself with Nur id-Din, conqueror of Syria. No sooner did he feel secure than he turned traitor and joined forces with Amalric, King of the Franks. Then began a race for the Nile. Amalric and his Franks encamped on the eastern bank, Shirkuh (general of Nur id-Din) and his troops on the western. The age-old story was re-enacted by two new forces. Yet the goal was ever one and the same; to gain mastery over the ancient land of the Pharaohs, The lure of Egypt had inflicted many a heartache on its peace-loving people. Time and again, the foreigner had marched against it with ruthless arrogance, leaving in his wake a land bathed in blood.

589. The Franks thus allied themselves with Shawar against the army of Nur id-Din. They then made most unexpected demand: King Amalric gave his hand to the Caliph's representatives and insisted that the Caliph take identical action toward the Franks. This request could not easily be granted, as the Caliph, true to his Fatimid tradition, had enshrouded himself in a cloak of mystery. Very few Muslims were permitted to see him, and King Amalric was a non-Muslim. But Shawar was in no position to refuse; it was the Franks or Nur id-Din. Finally an audience was arranged for Hugh of Caesarea and Geoffrey Fulcher the Templar, and they were conducted by the vizier himself through "mysterious corridors and guarded doors where stalwart Sudanese saluted with naked swords. They reached a spacious court open to the sky and surrounded by arcades resting on marble pillars; the pannelled ceilings were carved and inlaid in gold and colours; the pavement was rich in mosaic. The unaccustomed eyes of the rude knights opened wide with wonder at the taste and refinement that met them at every step; here they saw marble fountains, birds of many notes and wondrous plumage, strangers to the Western world; there, in a further hall more exquisite than even the first of a variety of animals such as the ingenious hand of a painter might depict or the license of a poet invent, or the mind of the sleeper conjure up in the visions of the night."<sup>5</sup>

590. After many windings and turnings, Amalric's envoys met the Caliph; the treaty was ratified and the battle against the Nur id-Din forces began. It was at this battle that Salah ed-Din il-Ayyubi (known to the West as Saladin) made his entry into Egyptian

history as well as the history of the world. The Franks persisted in fighting until they forced Shirkuh to retreat. Shawar, relieved, turned on his allies because he had found them overbearing. They left an occupying army in Cairo, insisted that their men guard the city gates, and demanded a hundred thousand pieces of gold in addition to the sum already agreed upon. Once more the battle cry resounded; Amalric marched into the country, this time as a foe. Arriving at Bilbeis he and his men added crime to perfidy. They massacred its inhabitants regardless of sex, age, or creed. Watching their advance, Shawar ordered the burning of al-Fustat, which was densely populated. The sight of the city in flames filled the Egyptians with horror.

The treachery of the Franks and the repugnance felt at the burning of the city, which continued for many days, caused the Egyptians to turn promptly to the side of Nur id-Din. Consequently, Shirkuh and Salah ad Din gained the ascendancy. Within two days, they gained an overwhelming victory.

591. The burning of al-Fustat was devastating to the Copts since hundreds of them lived in it in houses they owned. Moreover, the old fortress of Babylon enclosed the oldest and most beautiful churches in the land. Some priests displayed great heroism; they refused to flee and endeavoured to put off the flames and to guard these hallowed sanctuaries of the Most High. Their loyalty was compensated as six of these churches remained intact despite the raging flames.<sup>6</sup>

Not satisfied with this atrocious act of burning the city, Shirkuh poured on the Copts the venom of the fury he felt against the Franks. To him, the sins of the invading cross-bearers were to be atoned for by the

native cross-bearers. Numbers of them were martyred, and the tribute skyrocketed. Countless of the Copts in Upper Egypt sought the protection of those Arabs who had settled in Egypt earlier. These Copts were exempted from the enormous tribute and escaped death, but they were treated as slaves. It was a period of darkness and terror.

592. What was St. Mark's Successor doing throughout those dark days? As he scanned the ferocity with which the Copts were treated, he had but two means at his disposal: to pray with all the ardour of his soul and to go among his people that he might encourage them to endure their lot with fortitude. His prayers and his patient toiling among them were requited by the Heavenly Father, Who is ever mindful of man's labour. Shirkuh met with sudden death; his reign of terror lasted two months only. Salah ad Din became vizier under the nominal rule of al-Adid—the last Fatimid.

593. Salah ad Din was as good as his name, which literally means 'goodness of religion.' He inaugurated an era of security and justice. All the Egyptians were given equal rights. Generosity and personal charm reinforced his sense of justice. Little wonder that the Egyptians learned to love him and gave him their whole-hearted loyalty. Once again the fluent wave of fear and worry was washed away by the refluxing tide of equity and fraternity. The age-old rhythm symbolized by the ageless Nile restored the balance to the life of the Egyptians. Again they could delight in their ever-ready wit and their love of life.

594. As for Abba Marcus III, his heart over-

flowed with praise to God, Who graciously heeded his prayers. Going about among his people, he incessantly reminded them of God's bounty. For they were again admitted to the diwan of the sultan, their confiscated wealth was given them, they were appointed to offices of high rank, and they were permitted to rebuild their fallen sanctuaries. Thus the papacy of Abba Marcus III, which began under ominous clouds followed by storms, ended under a radiant sun. This radiancy was reflected from his face; it attracted the hearts to him more closely. Some five years of blissful liberty passed, after which Abba Marcus III departed this life in peace and serenity. He had guided the <sup>7</sup>Church for twenty-two years and six months.

C. 595. Just as all that is human is ephemeral and must pass away sooner or later, whatever its nature, so the Fatimid rule of Egypt gave way to the Ayyubids, whose greatest figure was Salah ad Din, who became sovereign of Egypt in the same year that the august Chair of St. Mark became vacant at the passing away of Abba Marcus III. Coptic Bishops and leaders of the time agreed to raise a wise and learned layman called Abu'l Magd ibn Ghalib to this supreme honour. He was gentle of speech, had a suave manner and ready smile. His modesty enhanced his virtues, which were all the more marked because he was rich, owning a sugar factory and a corn mill. He loved his people and gave liberally to all.<sup>8</sup> Having come to this unanimous agreement, the delegation escorted their elect to Alexandria, where he was consecrated seventy-fourth Successor to St. Mark by the name of Yoannis VI. This was in 1188 A.D.

596. In A.D. 1193, Salah ad Din died. His

Egyptian subjects lamented for him greatly. Copts and Muslims both realized that they had lost a magnanimous ruler who had been both sympathetic and simple. His magnanimity had been such that his private secretary was a Copt whom he had appreciated to the extent of giving him the honorary title of ash-Sheikh ar-Rais Safei-ad-Dowlah ibn Abil Ma 'ali (i.e. the Elder, the Chief, the Choice of the State, Son of the Father of Greatness). Abi'l Ma ali was a scion of a well-known family whose name was Sharafi. His father had been an outstanding statesman during the reign of the Caliph al Adid.

Salah ad Din had also ordered the reuilding of the destroyed churches and monasteries, the construction of new ones, and the return of all confiscated possessions. He had reinstated the Copts who had been dismissed from the government offices and had exempted them from wearing the heavy crosses and the special insignia which had differentiated them from Muslims. When a number of Armenians departed for their homeland and left a church, at Abi'l Ma ali's request Salah ad Din had given it to the Copts. Above all, during the rule of the Franks, the Copts had been refused admission to the Holy Land. On recapturing it, Salah ad Din had allowed his Coptic subjects to resume their pilgrimages on different occasions and exempted them from paying the tax which his predecessors had imposed for such visits. And when Salah ad Din went to Jerusalem he donated to the Copts the property that came to be known as Deir as-Sultan.

al Aziz, son of Salah ad Din, followed his father's policy of tolerance and magnanimity. To cite but one example: When al Aziz returned to Cairo following a trip to Syria and learned that during his absence his vizier

had closed two churches and confiscated their property, al. Aziz immediately ordered the vizier to return the confiscated property to the owners and reopen their churches.

Fortunately, Mansoor, son of al. Aziz, also followed in his father's footsteps. Liberty and equity were his watchwords, and he impressed them upon the mind of his son al-Adil, who abode by them unflinchingly. His name (meaning "the just") seems to have stamped his character.

Such a continuous tradition of equity filled the Copts and their Muslim compatriots with joyous security; they lived in a climate of fraternity. Whenever an intriguer tried to dupe the Caliph into exacting a higher tribute, or demanding a corvee after the manner of some past kings, he would reply, "If others were unjust, we need not follow in their footsteps."

597. The papacy of Abba Yoannis VI would have been one of deep satisfaction but for one heart-rending event. The Pentapolis, which had been under St. Mark's Chair since the first Christian century, was lost; the remnants of Christians living there had turned to Islam during this period, and not one single Christian remained in the region. From that time onwards (until 1972), no bishop was consecrated for the Pentapolis, as no flock remained to shepherd there.<sup>9</sup>

Abba Yoannis VI remained Pope for twenty-six years and eleven months,<sup>10</sup> then passed away to meet his Maker. By then almost a decade and a half of the 13th century had already come and gone.

598. The scant Coptic records extant from the Middle Ages have preserved for us the name of an outstanding woman, Lady Tarfa,

a contemporary of Abba Yoannis VI. It is recorded that she built a church in the name of Abu Nofer, the wandering anchorite. Above this church she built a convent for nuns and provided sufficient land for its upkeep. Her zeal was so great that she spent the remainder of her fortune on commissions to scribes who manuscribed books, which she donated to the convent and the church. She thus kept up the tradition which characterized the Egyptian woman as the torchbearer, illuminating<sup>11</sup> the path of the seekers after the Truth.

599. Another great Church personality of the 12th century worth pausing for awhile to contemplate, even though he is among the phalanx of the unknown and unsung heroes of old, is Abba Mikhail, Bishop of Damietta. Abba Mikhail legated to us a rich heritage of artistic, religious creations. Realizing the magnitude of his responsibility when he was made bishop, he carefully studied the state of his people and found that the majority of them were illiterate. Being an artist and a true son of Egypt, he painted ninety pictures to illustrate the four Gospels. Each picture is, in reality, a succession of scenes depicting the details of the passage covered. For instance, to illustrate the massacre of the babes of Bethlehem, Abba Mikhail first shows the Magi following the Star; next to it, their meeting with Herod, who is seated on a throne surrounded by doctors of the law; next, Herod is giving injunctins to the Magi; this is followed by the picture of the wise men on the road once more; then are depicted their arrival before the stable, their entry and their offerings, their return by another road; then follows the scene of the soldiers snatching away from their mothers

the babes and killing them; lastly, the wailing mothers huddled under a tree while the soldiers carry the mangled bodies in baskets for presentation to Herod. These nine scenes compose one picture; they are painted on one level with no perspective and no dividing line, just as the Pharoanic artists painted. The colours used are the same vivid hues of the Pharoanic paintings. These ninety illustrations were completed in two years for the Coptic manuscript containing them bears, at the end, the dates 1179-1181 A.D. This manuscript is one of the rarest in the world, as there are very few illustrated copies of the Gospels; moreover, it proves that a Coptic Bishop in the twelfth century retained in the depth of his being the pharoanic artistic heritage and expressed it in the service of the Christ.

It is deplorable, however, that whenever the invaders stalked into Egypt, they appropriated whatever they could of the artistic, intellectual, and religious heritage of the Egyptians, as witness the collections in various libraries and museums. Abba Mikhail's manuscript is, at present, among the treasures of the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris; it bears the sign "ms. Copte no. 13." It is supposed that King Louis IX stole it when he led the Crusaders and failed lamentably at Mansoorah. He fell into captivity in 1250 A.D. and was ransomed by his wife. As he retreated, it is supposed that he carried this priceless treasure with him.

Abba Mikhail legated to us, in addition, a number of sermons and explanations of the Holy Scriptures. Also, the letters he exchanged with Abu Salih 'l-Armani are still in existence. (Some years ago, researchers found a manuscript whose first pages were lost, bearing the name Abu Salih 'l-Armani,

and thought him its author. On further study, they now deem him its owner, its author being the Copt Abu'l Makarim). These are concerned with a person of high rank who vacillated between Orthodoxy and the Chalcedonian doctrine.

Despite all these productions, nothing is known of the life of Abba Mikhail, regarding whom Renaudot, the French Coptologist commented, "He takes his place among the many unknown labourers who loyally served the Coptic Church."

D. 600. When Abb Yoannis went to his rest, Egypt still held sway over the Middle East, and ocurences in it affected the whole region. Two successive low inundations in two years led to famine and pestilence, and in addition, a violent earthquake caused great havoc. Over and above that, the misery created by these natural causes was increased by the fact that the members of Salah ad Din's family disputed with one another and created internal insecurity. The one prudent person in the family was al-Adil Salah ad Din's brother who tried steadily to pacify them all and to consolidate the Ayyubid Empire.

al-Kamil, Sultan of Egypt, had two Copts in his diwan, Ibn ul Miqat, his scribe, and Ibn Sadaqa, administrator of his groves. A strong bond of friendship bound the Sultan to these two men.

Feeling somewhat secure at the departure of the crusaders, one day the Sultan went hunting. After crossing a stream, he entered into the desert and came upon the cell of a Coptic hermit. Stopping there for a rest, he complained of a pain in the chest. The man-of-God consecrated some oil and gave it to the Sultan, saying: "Anoint the place of pain, and the Almighty God will be your

Healer." The Sultan obeyed, and immediately felt that the pain had left him and that he had been healed.

Thankfully leaving him and going forth, he reached the area of Scete and went into the monastery of St. macari where he was very cordially received. At ease, he and his retinue spent a few days with the monks who did everything within their power to make them comfortable and happy. Desirous of showing his appreciation, he gave the monks a very generous gift that consisted of substantial quantities of wheat, barley and beans. He also gave them a written decree exempting them from all taxes and stating that any monk's possession is to be inherited by his monastery and not by the State.<sup>12</sup>

While the devastating forces of war had been disputing the destiny of Egypt the Copts could, in no way, meet and discuss possible candidates to the succession of St. Mark. As they scanned the sway of the scales of fortune between their compatriots and the invaders, they were too worried and distraught to think of anything else, even when it was the choice of their Pope. They, therefore watched and prayed. Thus St. Mark's Chair remained vacant for twenty years.

When peace and stability were restored to the country, at last the Copts were seized with a terror that instilled in them a sense of urgency for the election of their Pope. Several of their bishops had passed away during the period of strife and disputes, and to have them replaced it was imperative that they first elect their Pope. Thereupon their leaders took immediate counsel with the remaining bishops, and a few of them suggested the choice of Daoud ibn Laqlaq, a monk who had spent years as an ascetic in the monastery of Mar Boctor outside the

town of Fayoum. While there he had earned a reputation of being an indefatigable seeker after wisdom and knowledge. So many had heard of him that he was readily accepted by everyone and then consecrated as Kyrillos III, seventy-fifth Pope of the Church of Alexandria, in 1234 A.D.

601. No sooner had Kyrillos III been consecrated than he sent the customary letters of communion to his brother the Patriarch of Antioch, to the King of Ethiopia and to the Copts in Damascus, who were part of the congregations entrusted to his guidance. Copies of these letters - and other writings of Kyrillos III are still extant - some in manuscript form at the library of the Coptic Papacy in Cairo, and some in a collection printed by the Suriani monastery.<sup>13</sup> They denote that the reputation of Kyrillos III as a monk had been well-founded. When his letters were received, they were read in all the sovereignty of the recipients; they indicated how erudite in the Orthodox faith he was, and how eloquently and clearly he exposed it. His books, one of which was entitled 'Confession,' and another "The teacher and his disciple reveal his ability to teach through the written word, and how he used it as a vehicle to fulfill his pastoral obligations.

Kyrillos III undertook also the task of filling the need that had become so pressing in the Church. He consecrated bishops for all the vacant Sees in the land. In A. D. 1239, he consecrated Bishop Basilius, the first Coptic bishop for the city of Jerusalem, with his duties comprising shepherding the flock of St. Mark living in Palestine, Syria, and as far as the Euphrates. Since that time Coptic bishops to the Holy Land have succeeded one another without a break through

the ensuing centuries and the services they render both to the residing as well as the visiting Copts who go on pilgrimage have been incalculable.

Kyrillos III demonstrated by his life and character how difficult it is for a human being to be perfect. He possessed many admirable traits and rendered invaluable services to the Church he had been elected to guide. He was energetic, active, a great and eloquent writer and a man full of initiative. Although his papacy lasted only seven years and nine months, his accomplishments were substantial and he left his stamp on Coptic Church history. One weakness marred his traits, however, which was that he sometimes resorted to simony—a reminder to all of us that "to err is human." His admirers and supporters excused this on the ground that the pressures and financial demands made on him forced him to resort to that; but the bishops and the people to whom integrity was not to be compromised for any reason whatsoever, strongly disapproved of the practice and at one time, even, a storm raged against him on its account and he was asked to retire for a while until this storm subsided. "To forgive is divine," however, and Kyrillos III returned from his temporary retirement and spent his last days among his people.

His accomplishments and services to the Church were such that in making a total assessment of him, one<sup>15</sup> must say that the scales tip in his favour.

#### XXXI. NOTES

1. G. Weit. p.192.
2. Y.N. Rufeila. p.158.

3. S.Lane-Poole.pp.171-4;G.Wiet.pp.194-5.
4. al-Baramusi.vol.II.pp.422-31.
5. S.Lane-Poole.p.180.
6. Manassa'l-Qommos.pp.544-5.
7. al-Baramusi.Ms.vol.II.pp.432-41.
8. Ibid.p.441;also W.Budge.vol.II.pp.480-1.
9. Z. Riad.pp.66-73. It should be noted here with joy that Abba Shenouda III, Pope of the See of Zlexandria since November 1971, consecrated a bishop for the province of Boheira in February 1972, and added to him the charge of the Pentapolis. This Bishop, called Abba Pachomius, has already visited the Libyan cities of North Africa known as the Pentapolix, and two churches have already been opened; one in Tripoli and one in Beni Ghazi.
10. Sh. 'l-Baramusi, vol. ii, pp.441-54.
11. Manassa 'l-Qommos.p.541
12. S. of Ashmunein.vol.II.pp.122-5; A.S. Atiya. History of Eastern Christianity'p.95.
13. K.S.Nakhla. Kyrillos III, his life and a collection of his writings (in arabic). printed in the monastery of as-Suriani Pr., Wadi-n-Natrun.
14. Magallatu-n-Nahda'l Morcosiya,vol.I,no.5 (May 1952),pp.157-8.
15. al-Baramusi,vol.II.pp.454-5; K.S.Nakhla. op.cit.pp.105-8.

XXXII. SOME PROMINENT COPTS OF THE  
AYYUBID ERA, AND THE END OF THE AYYUBID  
DYNASTY

- A. Abba Boulos 'l-Boushy, Bishop  
of Babylon
- B. Abba Yusab, Bishop of Fowah
- C. Leaders whose works and deeds are  
the only monuments they raised  
unto themselves
- D. First signs of concern about the  
Coptic language
- E. Athanasius III, the last Pope during  
the rule of the Ayyubid dynasty

- 602. The life, writings and influence of Abba  
Boulos 'l-Boushy
- 603. Another outstanding prelate-Yusab, Bishop  
of Fowah
- 604. A number of eminent leaders in various  
fields
- 605. Concern about the Coptic language and  
some of the men who expended efforts  
to preserve it
- 606. Athanasius III

A 602. During the papacy of Kyrillos III and throughout the thirteenth century, a number of Coptic individuals became such prominent leaders that they could be likened unto stars of the first magnitude. They comprised men from all walks of life: distinguished clergymen, writers, artists and government officials who occupied high and influential positions. The rulers of the Ayyubid

dynasty, as already mentioned, had created conditions of peace and security that contributed to a renaissance of arts and sciences.

At the summit of the Coptic leaders of the time stands Bishop Boulos 'l-Boushy, a man who distinguished himself through his brilliant writings—denoting the depth of his erudition—which he legated to posterity, as well as through his total dedication to the service of his people and his Church.

Very little is known about the childhood or youth of Boulos, nor is it known when he became a monk. What is known is that when he embraced the monastic life, he developed a passion for poring over manuscripts, trying to absorb knowledge and solve the riddles besetting the human mind. In time the pursuit of this passion made of him both an eloquent, captivating speaker, and one of the illustrious writers among the Church Fathers.

Before the election and consecration of Kyrillos III, the name of the monk Boulos had been endorsed and highly recommended as one of the possible candidates for the august Chair of the Evangelist. He had been well aware of that, and yet when he did not win the candidacy in the final choice, this did not in the least affect him. In fact he was one of those who gave Abba Kyrillos III, as sovereign Head of the Church, his unconditional loyalty and staunch support all along. And when he noticed the storm gathering around him, it was his wise counsel and his restraining influence that led Abba Kyrillos to retire for a short period until the people calmed down and were prevailed upon to let their Pope return to his See.

Bishop Boulos 'l-Boushy was one of the first monks to be elected and consecrated bishop to fill the See of Babylon (Old Cairo).

As soon as he assumed his dignified office, he went about fulfilling its duties with the same humility and devotion with which he had set himself to his studies. As a result, he won the whole-hearted affection of his people.

Abba Boulos 'l-Boushy wrote several books, and he and Abba Kyrillos III undertook jointly the translation of the teachings of the early Church Fathers from Coptic into Arabic. Among these translations, with the translators' commentaries, the one on 'Confession' which they described as spiritual medicine (or what might be called in modern terms 'therapy') became very popular at the time.<sup>2</sup>

Among the other subjects of great interest that Bishop Boulos tackled may be mentioned: 'The Mystery of the Incarnation,' on which he wrote a book entitled: 'An essay on the logical reasons leading man to the knowledge of God-Incarnate;' and the subject of predestination versus human freedom, which was one with which thinkers from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries were constantly preoccupied. Bishop Boulos wrote about it in a book entitled 'Spiritual Sciences.' These are only examples of the books he wrote. Fortunately all of them are extant in manuscript form, though none have been put into print as yet and are waiting for the patient researcher or editor to do that. The Ms. containing the essay on the Incarnation of Our Lord is at present in the Bodleian Library, Oxford University, under Ms. no.38/5. Other Mss. are in the Libraries of the Coptic Papacy in Cairo and of the Suriani Monastery in Wadi-n-Natrun.

B. 603. Another outstanding bishop who shouldered the burden of shepherding the people with Abba Kyrillos III is Abba Yusab, Bishop

of Fowah. Again what is known about his life is very scarce. The only known facts are that he was a monk at the monastery of Abba Yoannis Kami in Scete; while there, his most outstanding habits and practices were prayer, meditation and self-effacing service to his fellow-monks. He was such a favourite with them that they appointed him assistant-abbot. As such, he came to be known and was eventually selected and consecrated Bishop of Fowah.

Abba Yusab spent many years collecting and commenting on the lives of the Popes. His writings, still in existence, are a witness to his extensive learning, and are the testimonials he left to generations of Copts, reminding them of the glories of their forefathers. 3

C. 604. Besides these two distinguished prelates, there were other men of high calibre-who served their Church and their country in this era, and whose names and works are the only reminders to us of the impact they made on their generations. With not a word written to posterity about their personal lives, they constitute a part of that great phalanx of Copts who believed that man's mission is greater than his life story, and that duty rightly discharged is sufficient unto us for it is the manifestation of our obedience to the Divine Will, and the way in which we can use our talents as the faithful servants we are expected to be.

Of the men who were eminent under the Ayyubids-either because they occupied high government positions or because of some worthy accomplishment, 4 Yacoub N. Rofeila cites twenty-one names, and tells as much as he was able to find about them. Some of these will be given here as an example

of the variety of their talents and kind of accomplishment.

Abu Said Yohanna'l Iskandarani was a poet who won fame for his exquisite imagery and fluent style.

Ass'ad Saleeb ibn Mkihail, whose name has already been mentioned in the last chapter in connection with repairing the Church of St. Mena after the burning of al-Fustat, was an influential government official, and a Copt devoted to the service of his Church. His interest in education was such that when he repaired the Church, he adjoined to it a school and a study center.

Amin-ad-Dawlah, was the treasurer of the government finances. He, too, helped greatly to have many churches repaired and restored.

Sharaf-ur-Riasa ibn Habalan, was chief scribe to the Army during the reigns of al-Adid and Salah-ad-Din.

Abul Makarim, was a consummate writer and historian and legated to his people twenty books on diverse subjects, chief among which was a valuable history book that had been mistakenly ascribed to Abu Salih il-Armani.

Abu'l Farag ibn Mikhail was secretary to the Governor of Cairo during the reign of al-Adil; and his leisure time concern was serving the Church. Two churches received his special attention-that of the Blessed Virgin in Adaweya (north of Cairo), which he repaired; and that named after the doctor-martyr Abba Qolta, which he enlarged and redecoreated. To enhance its beauty, he demolished one of his own houses to provide a spacious square in front of it.

Abu Mashkoor and abu mansoor, the two architects who built the citadel of Salah-ad-Din overlooking Cairo; it still stands on its rock as a testimony to their unusual skill.

The Sultan recompensed them well for their work, and they, in turn were able to contribute much to their Church.

Abu'l Khayr at-Tayyib, who was priest, doctor and at the same time private secretary to Prince al-Qadi'l Fadil, vizier to Sultan Salah-ad-Din. Though he combined the multiple duties of spiritual and physical healing with that of his service to the State, he still found time to write three books that reveal his deep knowledge and understanding. These are entitled respectively: 'Tanweer ul-ukul' (or the enlightenment of the minds); 'The faith of the Christians,' an exposition to non-Christians; and 'Logical and traditional proofs of the free will of man.' Naturally, the three books are written in Arabic.

Even though what is known about Abu'l Khayr is scanty compared to what could have been recorded, there is enough evidence to show that he wielded great influence during his life.<sup>5</sup>

Last, though not least, of the eminent individuals selected to be listed here are two author-priests both of whom would be aptly described as scholarly. They are <sup>6</sup>Abu'l Fath as-Saidi and Boutros as-Sedmanti. The former wrote and manuscriped several books which he donated to churches and monasteries. Boutros legated to us a number of books of great religious and theological value. One of them called at-Tas-heeh... (or the Elucidation of the Passion of The Christ) was published in 1872 under the auspices of Abba Kyrillos V who was Pope then. It was edited with a commentary by Father Philotheos, Priest of St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo.

Many readers would, doubtless, be intensely interested to know that, in 1969, Father Peter Van Akberg, a Dutch Jesuit wrote the Ph.D. thesis whereby he earned his

doctoral degree from Lyons University, France, on the subject of the books of Boutros as-Sedmanti. For his thesis, he had been able to locate and make a good study of fourteen books by this author which he had found in manuscript form scattered between the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris, the Vatican Library and a few monasteries of Lebanon. He had made the trips to these places in search of these manuscripts,<sup>7</sup> and thus through his laudable efforts, many more people will come to know about this eminent Coptic Father.

The several names listed in this section are but some examples given to show how varied were the talents of the Copts who served their country as well as their Church at this particular era. But they provide examples, too of hundreds, nay thousands, some known but mostly unknown, who passed through the successive eras before and after them since the beginning of Christianity. Thanks to them, the Torch of Faith was kept burning and the zeal for it was kept alive in the hearts of the Copts and their Church today is still a living vital witness of a strong Egyptian minority as any visitor to Egypt, or reader about it, can find out.

D. 605. Among the major concerns that started to get serious consideration by leaders of this epoch, and on which much effort was expended by able writers and thinkers was the preservation of the Coptic language. Many books started to be written about it and about how to teach it to the young and keep it alive. For over two centuries the Copts had started to learn and to communicate in their daily living in Arabic so much so that the Arabic language was gaining preponderance, and Coptic was beginning to be forgotten. This prompted a class of Coptic scholars who

knew the Coptic language well to decide on writing on Coptic grammar and Coptic dictionaries. According to their terminology a grammar book was called a "Preface" and a dictionary "The scala."

Some of the books written seven centuries ago are still the foundation on which the study of Coptic is based. Of the known 'Prefaces' special mention will be made of the following: 1. 'The Preface' by Bishop Yoannis of Samannood (who was among the first bishops ordained by Kyrillos III); 2. 'The Preface' of the sage Ibn Katib Qaisar whose father had been given the honorary descriptive title of 'al-Amir Alam-ed-Din by the Sultan because of his political and social influence. The title of Ibn Katib's preface, literally translated, means "enlightening the path to language."<sup>8</sup> Several copies of its oldest edition are still in existence, one of which is in the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris. 3. And finally, the prefaces and Coptic dictionary by two of the famous four brothers known as 'awlad' (or the sons of) al-Assal.' These brothers all distinguished themselves as such scholarly authors and prolific writers, that to this day they constitute a subject of study by Orientalists.

The Assal brothers were all well-versed in several languages-Greek, Syriac, and of course Coptic and Arabic. They were also steeped in the knowledge of Christian doctrine, and wrote many homilies. To this day, because of their Mastery of Arabic and their literary eloquent expressions, their Good Friday and Easter homilies are still read in Church and are exceedingly moving.

Each of the four brothers is famous for his writings on a variety of subjects, but in this section about the Coptic language, the two of them to be mentioned are al-Assad

Abu'l Farag who wrote a Coptic preface and al-Mu'taman Abu Ishaq Ibrahim who wrote a concise dictionary of Coptic.

It must be said before closing however, that each of the four - the last two of whom were called al-Amgad ibn ul-Assal, and as-Safeyy Abu 'l Fada'il Abu Shaker ibn ul Assal, held a high position under the Ayyubid kings. Though we do not know exactly what positions each held - except for al-Amgad, who was the chief scribe of the military diwan, we do know that they all enjoyed the favour of the Ayyubids under whose reign they lived. The titles they bore as honorary titles provides ample evidence of this favour. <sup>10</sup>

E. 606. Seven years after Kyrillos III had passed away, his successor Athanasius III was elected by Altar ballot and consecrated seventy-sixth Pope. Inspired by the name he was given, he worked assiduously and vigilantly for his people, and promoted many of their interests. Among a number of other things, he secured the Sultan's protection for the holy places in Jerusalem. <sup>11</sup>

It was during the papacy of Abba Athanasius III that the rule of Egypt passed from the hands of the Ayyubids to those of the Mamlukes.

The last Ayyubid Sultan-Turanshah, son of Sultan Salih il Ayyubi-was murdered by one of the Mamlukes themselves during the battle in which the French Crusaders were retreating from Egypt at Damietta. <sup>12</sup> His power was assumed temporarily by a very capable woman who had been a wife of his father and who had displayed singular ability in governing the country during a long and critical period in which her husband had been ill. <sup>13</sup> The name of this woman was 'Shagar ad-Durr' literally meaning 'trees

of priceless gems,' a name familiar to any of my readers who know the history of Egypt in the middle ages.

Athanasius III remained Supreme Head of the Coptic Church for a little over eleven years. His problems were minimal for his people were fairly prosperous and had grown secure enough to be able to carry on their lives normally and to develop their God-given talents. So he steered the ship of the Church through a comparatively calm sea.

Generally speaking, and in spite of wars and political problems, one can say that on the whole, the period of the Ayyubid rule of Egypt was a pre-eminent period, both from the point of view of internal prosperity and resolute defence against invasion.

As far as the Copts are concerned, it has come to be known in thier history as the 'golden age' of their creativity in all fields of arts, crafts and literature. <sup>14</sup>

But the law of change is an inexorable law to which all things temporal must succumb. And so this story will now proceed to tell how the change that took place then affected the Copts and how they fared under the rulers which superseded the Ayyubids.

## XXXII. NOTES

1. Fr.J.Muysers'Abba Boulos, Bishop of Babylon, his life and writings'. (in Arabic) pub. in Risalat Mar Mena, Alexandria, 1950pp. 212-264.

2. A copy of the manuscripts of these translations is preserved in the library of the Coptic Papacy in Cairo, and several other copies exist in various libraries of the monasteries. Readers with Arabic-language reading

knowledge are referred to the article cited above if they are interested in more details about Bishop Boulos 'l-Boushy.

3. Kyrillos III...pp.119-20.
4. In his Arabic book 'Tarikh ul-Ummah al-Qibtiya'.pub in Cairo, with no pub. date.
5. Y.N. Rofeila,pp.183-6.
6. After the location near Beni-Suef, called Gebel Sedmant from which he came.
7. Dr. Mounir Shukry. In an article published in the Sunday Weekly 'Watani' of January 26, 1969, on Dr. Van Akberg.
8. 'at-Tabsirah' is the Arabic title of Ibn Katib Qaisar's Coptic grammar, as for his father's title it means "The Prince, the Banner of Religion."
9. Dr. Graf, the German orientalist, wrote an extensive article about them which was published in 'Orientalia Roma'vol.I,fasc.1,2&3, 1932; also S. Nakhla& Farid Kamil (Jt. Authors) Tarikh ul Ommah...(in Arabic)pt.II,pp.124-28.
10. Each of them bore the title of ash-Sheikh (which was conferred only on learned men) while each was designated by such honourific adjectives as "la-Mo'taman" -or the trusted; "al-Safeyy" or the chosen friend; "al-hakeem" or the wise; and "Abu al-fadail" or the father of virtues.
11. Ibn Taghribardi, Y. an-Nujum uz-Zahirah fi muluk Misr wa'al Qahirah. (Arabic biographical ref. source) vol.VII,p.194.

12. S.Lane-Poole.p.239.
13. *ibid.*p.237.
14. Shenouda '1-Baramusi.vol.II,p.155;K.S. Nakhla.History of the Patriarchs.(in Arabic)2nd ser.p.6-15.

Concerning the works of art, a visitor to any of the major museums that have Coptic collections either in the U.S. or European capitals, will be able to see some of them.

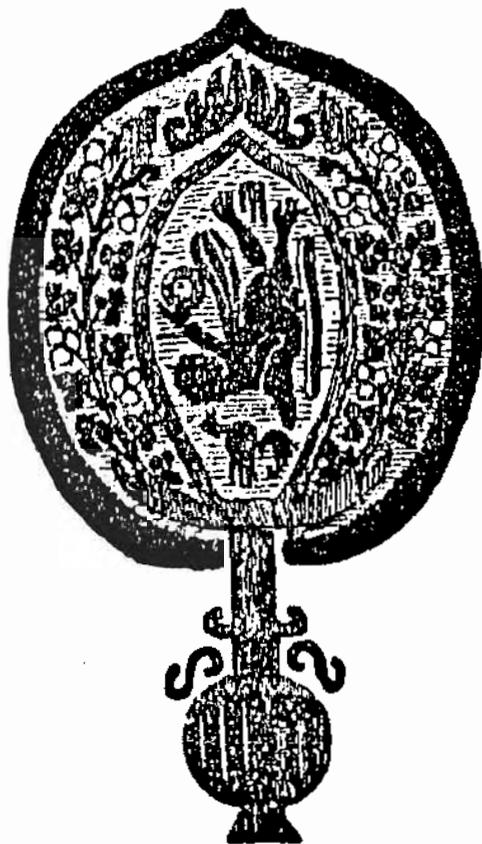
It may be, also, noted that there is a printed copy of the book of Bishop Yoannis in the Oriental section of the Brit. Lib. under the title: A Compendium of Coptic Grammar in Arabic.pub. in 1643.cat.no.622e5.



A Torchbearer in Mamluke Times  
- Sketched by Habib Amin el Masri -

BOOK III

GRANDEUR AND SERVITUDE:  
FROM THE REIGN OF THE MAMLUKES  
TO THE END OF ISMAIL'S RULE



Textile, with very fine floral designs surrounding what is intended to be the human spirit in its flight heavenward after leaving the body.

(about VIIIth Century)

TO ALL THOSE SOULS  
WHO  
WERE HUMBLE IN GRANDEUR  
AND ENDURING IN SERVITUDE

### XXXIII. THE RULE OF THE MAMLUKES<sup>1</sup> OVER AND ITS IMPACT ON THE COUNTRY

- A. Who were the Mamlukes and how the rule passed into their hands
  - B. The intermittent hardships the Copts suffered under them
  - C. The Popes who occupied St. Mark's Chair in the first 110 years of the Mamluke rule
607. The first 'Mamluke' sultan and how power passed into his hands
608. Origin of Mamlukes explain nature of their behaviour
609. The condition of the Egyptian masses under the Mamlukes
610. The condition of the Copts
611. The ten Popes from the 77th to the 86th
612. Some examples of the harassment the Copts endured
613. Intervention of the Nubian King, and later, of the King of Ethiopia, bring to Copts some relief from persecution
- A. 607. When Shagar-ad-Durr succeeded her husband and became ruler in her own right, the fact became a controversial subject in many places—even though she had proven her skill and ability in government. While this concept was being discussed everywhere, Aybak, one of the Mamluke army officers who had played a leading role in defeating the French Crusaders, hastily appeared in Cairo and went to see the queen. Either by co-ercion or persuasion, they reached an agreement that he would become her husband and the official ruler of the country. And

it was thus that the matter was settled, and Egypt fell under the rule of the Mamlukes.<sup>2</sup>

608. Now the word 'mamluke' in Arabic means 'owned by' or 'property of.' The Mamlukes, originally, were slaves of non-Arab stock—usually Turkish, Circassian, Mongol or even Crusader-captives—whom the dynastic Caliphs and Sultans got into the habit of acquiring as bodyguards and soldiers from the 10th century onwards, in order to fight their wars and protect them against personal enemies. Since the services they rendered were invaluable, in time they were enfranchised and many of them were rewarded with appointments in high army positions as well as with gifts and land properties. As time went on these Mamlukes became so powerful that they were able to challenge the very existence of the rulers who, theoretically, were their masters. Eventually they superseded the dynastic Arab sultans and began a rule of their own. From the years 1260 to 1517<sup>3</sup> they remained the sole rulers of the country. During the Turkish period, they continued to be a powerful class, and it was not until the advent of Mohammad Ali at the beginning of the 19th century that they were finally exterminated.

Because the Mamlukes originally neither shared the aspirations nor even spoke the language of the Egyptians, they had little concern for the people whom they ruled.<sup>4</sup> They were first and foremost seekers after their own personal interests, wealth and glory—and, for them this end justified the means to achieve it. Neither humanitarian nor other ethical values were given consideration if they did not serve their purposes. This does not mean that there were no good or kindly men among them at all. It simply means that

on the whole their rule was ruthless. Even among themselves, there was a constant struggle for power, and an ever-present threat of betrayal, treachery or assassination, for the throne did not pass on from one Mamluke Sultan to the other by inherited succession, but always went to the strongest and the most powerful. Hardly ever did the rule of one of them end in his natural death, or last more than an average of five to seven years.<sup>5</sup> In this sense the Mamlukes never constituted a dynasty that could be likened to the dynasties they superseded.

609. Under a rule of this nature, life for the total mass of Egyptians was far from being either good or, at times, even tolerable. Insecurity was its general characteristic, and often it was pervaded by fear and misery.<sup>6</sup> They were considered useful for cultivating the land, paying the taxes, which supported the Mamlukes, and manufacturing the goods needed by the ruling noblemen and sultans, but had nothing much to do with running the affairs of the State nor were they to expect any due rights.

B. 610. For the Copts, life under the Mamlukes was pervaded by even more insecurity and uncertainty. Intermittently there were sporadic cases of violence against them, of popular persecution, and of Church-burning.

Through the succeeding generations, the Copts had developed outstanding ability and skill tantamount to a genius for the management of both private and public finances. Through this genius, and through their renown for faithful and honest service, many of them were able to acquire wealth and to rise to positions of power. The Mamluke rulers and oligarchy, just like their predecessors, soon

discovered the potential of the Copts for rendering very useful services and so could not help but appoint them as State officials. The destitute populace however, could not bear to see prosperous Copts, while they suffered want and misery. Consequently, on and off, they clamoured for their dismissal from office. And this blind mob reaction was so forceful at times that even the Mamluke despots could not control it and had to give in to it. When such dismissals occurred, the machinery of the State got paralyzed, and the rulers had to resort again to the re-appointment of that segment of society that could correct the condition-namely the Copts. And it was thus that affairs kept going on in a sort of vicious circle.

While life for the Copts was more tolerable under certain Mamluke rulers than under others, altogether they suffered many indignities and humiliations. Only on rare occasions was there that kind of relaxation that gave them a real sense of peace and security. Constantly they had to be on the defensive, to watch and to pray. Sometimes they were forced to close their churches and thus to conduct their worship services underground; at other times they dared not show themselves unless in disguise.<sup>10</sup> But still the bulk remained true to the faith of their Fathers, and to the Church that so many saints and martyrs had kept alive since its foundation. And the wonder of it is the manifestation of the Divine strength in the weakness of this people and the Divine Will to keep them, hence the innumerable among them who were able to withstand the worst trials without cracking! **Rather somehow they grew stronger, closed their ranks and maintained the integrity of their Church from the inside, whatever happened to them in the outside world.** And what

there is no doubt about it that the Coptic Popes, bishops and clergymen, including the Monks in the desert who prayed without ceasing, played a big role in sustaining their people, in strengthening them and helping them to bear the unbearable.

C. 611. Between the years 1269 and 1378 A.D.- in the approximately first 110 years of the rule of the Mamlukes, ten Popes succeeded each other on the august Chair of St. Mark and assumed the awesome responsibility of shepherding the Copts and steering the helm of the Church through the often turbulent waters of those times. These Popes were the 77th to the 86th Supreme Heads of the Coptic Church. In consecutive order, their names are: Abba Ghabrial III; Abba Yoannis VII; Abba Theodosius II; Abba Yoannis VIII; Abba Yoannis IX; Abba Benyameen II; Abba Petros V; Abba Marcus<sup>11</sup> IV; Abba Yoannis X; and Abba Ghabrial IV.

Each of these revered Popes was elected in the tradition of the Church and they succeeded each other with little or no interim periods between the passing away of one and the accession of the other. The longest period in which the Chair remained vacant was one and a half years between Yoannis VII and Theodosius II, the 78th and 79th Popes.

The achievements of these Popes varied according to external circumstances, and the trials they and their people had to face, the problems they had to solve, or the specific situations they had to deal with. But whatever variations there were between them, the one thing they all had in common was the way they gallantly and courageously handled the awesome responsibilities their high rank exacted of them, and each in turn kept the holy fire of the Faith burning within the Church.

612. Just to give the reader an idea of the harrowing experiences some Popes of that era went through, a few of them will be given here as examples of what their people and they, as their leaders, had to bear.

During the papacy of Abba Yoannis VIII which lasted twenty and a half years (and incidentally was the longest of the ten aforementioned) a wave of severe persecution flared up and raged for about two years. Copts were dismissed from government posts; the already high tribute was increased by one dinar per head; it was decreed that the Copts wear blue turbans to differentiate them, and also that Churches be closed, a decree enforced on most of them. The Sultan's chief prince went even as far as to declare that whoever killed a Copt had a right to lay hands on his possessions!

During those dark days, the only Church where St. Mark's successor himself could pray was the Church of the Blessed Virgin at Harit Zuweila, and so he went and lived in the house on top of it without venturing out until the dark years came to an end. And how did that occur? When the Copts and their Pope found no compassion among men, they earnestly sought the compassion of heaven through constant prayers and fasting. It finally came when the Mamluke princes got entangled in a war which caused them to loosen their hold on the people they had been so harassing. Gradually the Copts were able to open their Churches one by one; and again they crowded them to celebrate their services and give thanks to their Heavenly Father, an act they had been doing secretly and quietly all along.

Another of the many sad episodes of those troubled times occurred during the

papacy of Abba Yoannis IX. In a case of spreading mob frenzy, numerous churches were burned all over the country-in Upper Egypt as well as in the Delta. Several monasteries were also destroyed and their monks killed or dispersed. Alarmed, the ruling Sultan at the time, Mohammad ibn Qalawoon wanted to punish the rioting perpetrators, but was persuaded by some of his princes that this was an act foreordained by God. So he just sent his soldiers to the troubled areas to re-establish order and that was the end of it.

A month later, on a tempestuous day, a raging fire broke out in Cairo. The winds were so violent that it rapidly spread and became extremely difficult to extinguish, destroying several quarters of the city. By the time it was over, a few mosques and hundreds of houses had been burnt to the ground. The Copts were immediately suspected of having caused that fire as an act of retaliation. Three of them were arrested and thrown into prison. When they were brought before the judge, they pleaded guilty. According to W. Muir<sup>12</sup> the admission of guilt came as a result of excessive torture inflicted on the men, forcing them<sup>13</sup> to deny their innocence; while G. Wiet,<sup>13</sup> corroborating the same view, said that had the Christians wanted to retaliate, they would have done it on the spot and not a month later. Besides they knew of the Sultan's attitude and that it was he who stopped the riots by sending his troops without delay, so it would not have been in their interest at all to commit such an act. "One is quite tempted" he went on to say, "to suspect that the vengeance, so belated, was the work of Muslim instigators desirous of causing new pressure on the Sultan.

Whatever the case may have been, when the three Copts pleaded guilty, the Sultan's

chief advisor suggested to him to send for Abba Yoannis IX. He was sent for at night and brought before the Sultan with a heavy escort of guards as a safety measure. Upon his arrival, the accused were brought before him and again confessed their guilt. On hearing them, the man of God shed bitter tears and said "Christianity enjoins us to love our enemies. These miscreants are the rabble of the Christians responding to the rabble of the Muslims. But such behaviour is alien to the teachings of the Christ." The answer touched the Sultan and his men, so the guards were ordered to escort the Pope back to his abode, offering him a mule to ride on.<sup>14</sup>

This episode, however, did not put an end to the tension under which the Pope lived constantly, for the spirit of destructiveness continued several months after the fire. Other churches were attacked and numerous individual Copts lost their lives. It became hazardous for any ecclesiastic to appear in public, so they all consecrated their energies to prayer and fasting while at the same time they sent their deacons among the people to serve and sustain them. When that peace, for which St. Mark's Successor had so earnestly prayed came at last, he was in a failing state of health. Not long after that, his spirit sped on to those 'Realms of Light' where peace reigns eternally.

A third example of the type of brutality meted out to the Copts of those times occurred during the papacy of Abba Marcus IV, the 84th Spiritual Head of the Copts.

One day it happened that a Copt wearing rich clothes and riding a fine horse was passing through the street stretching from al-Azhar. His affluent appearance caused a Moroccan traveller to rouse the mob so much that they attacked him, pulled him off his

horse, tore his clothes and would have killed him were it not for the intervention of some of the more enlightened, prudent Muslims who, fortunately for him, happened to be passing at the same time. <sup>15</sup>

Dissatisfied that their victim had escaped alive, the ringleaders went to one of the chief princes and complained of the elegant appearance of the Copts. This complaint induced the prince to send for the Pope and remind him of the decree concerning the manner of dress imposed upon his people. Abba Marcus promised to make them submit to this decree, yet in spite of that, he was thrown into prison for several weeks and very cruelly and meanly treated. <sup>16</sup> In addition, the Sultan gave orders that all Copts be dismissed from government offices.

613. These specific incidents ended when the Nubian King, upon hearing of the imprisonment of Abba Marcus, got so enraged that he ordered the imprisonment of all the Muslim traders among his subjects and sent word to the Sultan of Egypt that they would not be released until the Alexandrian Pope was set free and the persecution of the Copts ceased. Heeding these threats, the Sultan complied with what the Nubian King had requested. <sup>17</sup>

These accounts are but a few of the many similar experiences the Copts had to endure throughout the rule of the Mamlukes. Such was the pattern of life for them and their spiritual leaders-the Popes, bishops and clergymen-that they never knew the meaning of lasting peace. There were some periods of peace, but they were always broken by periods of persecution, hence there was never a feeling of total security, but rather an ever-present sense of insecurity. In spite

of that. The Copts learned to live with this sense, and what is more, they learned to exploit the periods of peace in constructive works and to make the most of them while they lasted. The Popes would consecrate bishops, visit the monasteries or go on short pastoral tours and fulfill all the other obligations incumbent on their high office. Destroyed churches and monasteries would be rebuilt (even though the eventuality of their being attacked again at any time was always a possibility). The people responded to their leaders because their faith in the ultimate Mercy of God remained ever stronger than their fear of what might happen to them.

This faith was reinforced by the Divine Light shining through the life of a dedicated servant to his country and his Church: ibn Kabar. He began his career as chief-scribe to the Mamluke Prince Beibars whom he aided in writing a history book known in the West and entitled "Zibdatu'l fikra fi tarikh'l Higra." Then resigning his post, he was ordained priest to the Church of the Blessed Virgin (al-Mo allakah). In his new capacity, he wrote: 1. A book on the Holy Chrism; its components, the Rite for its consecration and why it is administered; 2. A book on explaining the mysteries of Christianity; 3. A book entitled "Misbah az-Zulma..." -or the Lamp of Elucidation, in which he explained the Orthodox Doctrine, the works of the Apostles, and the Canons of Church and Councils; 4. Two epistles in answer to questions posed by Muslims and Jews; 5. An epistle on freewill versus fate; 6. A detailed dictionary on Coptic. He also recorded that when the churches were closed by force, those in Scete remained open and were thus the Beacon for all loyal believers in the Christ. Thus ibn Kabar proved himself among the intrepid torchbearers.

In later medieval times there was another outside intervention on behalf of the Copts which proved to be quite efficacious and which brought them a good measure of relief. This intervention was that of the Negus or King Ethiopia. His threatening power was strong because he menaced on the one hand to deflect the course of the Nile, and on the other to retaliate against the Abyssinian Muslims. By posing these threats, he was able to come to terms with Egypt's Sultan to relieve the Copts to some degree of the pressures and hardships they had been suffering.<sup>18</sup> And so the stream of life went on for them.

#### XXXIII. NOTES

1. The plural "mamaleek" is in usual use in Arabic, but since the English writers use the term "Mamlukes," it is used here.
2. Lane-Poole.p.239.
3. Sir William Muir.The Mamlukes or Slave Dynasty of Egypt.pp.1260-1517.
4. A.S.Atiya.op.cit.p.97;S.Lane-Poole.p.253.
5. The Columbia Ency.3d ed.p.1292; S.Lane-Poole.p.246.
6. S.Lane-Poole.p.245.
7. *ibid*.p.253.
8. A.S.Atiya.p.97.
9. Y.N.Rofeila.op.cit.pp.204-61.A.S.Atiya.p.97.

10. S.Lane-Poole.pp.310-311.
11. Accounts of the lives of these Popes will be found in several sources chiefly the Arabic histories by Y.N. Rofeila; by K.S. Nakhla; and the history-in manuscript-by Shenouda 'l-Baramusi, as well as by the author of this book in its Arabic form.
12. In his 'History of the Mamluke Dynasty' p.84.
13. G.Wiet.Chap.XV.p.486.
14. The account of this incident is given not only in the two preceding works by W. Muir and G.Wiet but also in two works by Arab historians, Maqrizi and Hassan Habashi in their respective works al-Khitat,vol.II.pp. 498-500 and p.517; and Ahlu'ah'Dhimmah fi'l Islam.pp.67 and 78. Although both writers are Muslim, they side with the Copts in giving the details of these heart-rending events.
15. Maqrizi.al-Khitat.vol.IV.p.405.K.S.Nakhla. p.60.Manassa'l Qommos.p.580.
16. Maqrizal.vol.VI.p.406.
17. K.S.Nakhla.pp.57-63.
18. A.S.Atiya.p.98.

XXXIV. UNCONQUERABLE BUOYANCY: THE VERY  
SAINTLY ABBA MATTHEOS II,  
SURNAMED 'THE POOR'

614. Fecundity of the Church as manifested  
by the life and works of Abba Mattheos  
I
615. Good relationships develop between Abba  
Mattheos and Sultan Barquq
616. The Pope's letter to the King of Ethiopia  
at the request of Barquq
617. Pope's valorous Spirit
618. Barquq banished but returns in triumph  
again
619. A Copt, Fakhr-ud-Dawlah, commissioned  
by the King of Ethiopia to organize govern-  
ment affairs for his country
620. Spiritual gifts of Abba Mattheos
621. Death of Barquq brings era of peace  
to an end
622. Prince Gamal-ed-din's cruel treatment  
of the Copts
623. Abba Mattheos foretells the name of his  
successor before he rests in peace,  
and performs many miracles even after  
his death

614. We stand now before one of the giants of the Coptic Church, a man who scaled the heights of holiness and attained the zenith of Christian virtues; a worthy compeer of Athanasius, the Apostolic, Kyrillos, the Pillar of Faith, and Dioscorus, the Intrepid Confessor. This saintly giant is Matheos I, 87th successor of St. Mark.

When very young, Matheos tended his father's sheep. And like David, of old, defend-

ed his flock from the wild beasts even while yet a lad. At the age<sup>1</sup> of fourteen, he joined a monastery in Esna. though he continued to work as a shepherd. He began to train himself in abstinence, so that in summer he would eat once every two days, and in winter once every three days. The bishop of the region watched him with great care; so much did he appreciate him that he ordained him priest at the age of eighteen. When the bishop's Father-Confessor expressed his astonishment at this ordination, the bishop replied: "This lad is worthy of the papacy."<sup>2</sup>

Having overheard this conversation, and being very meek, Mattheos ran away secretly and joined the monastery of Abba Antoni. There, he did not disclose his priestly dignity, but served only as a deacon. But God, Who always glorifies Himself in His saints willed otherwise. For while this 'deacon' was reading the Gospel of the Holy Liturgy, a Celestial Hand offered him the censer thrice,<sup>3</sup> then disappeared. When the aged among the ascetics saw this spiritual phenomenon they felt sure that this "servant" was destined to sit on the Chair of St. Mark. Mattheos, under the impetus of his meekness, fled for the second time. He went to Jerusalem where he worked during daytime in building houses, and during the night in building his own soul. But once again, his meekness necessitated his flight, so he returned to St. Antoni's Monastery.

It, then, happened that the Crusaders made a raid on Alexandria, killed and pillaged then captured a number of women and fled. And, since they bore the sign of the cross on their breast, this roused the ruling prince and his men against the Copts. Not content with harassing the inhabitants of the cities and villages, they went as far as persecuting the monks in their desert fastnesses, and

the monks of St. Antoni's monastery had the lion's share of these persecutions. Mattheos who had become abbot by then was arrested, and so were several of his monks, chief among whom was an aged saint called Marcus. They were driven like cattle across the desert towards Cairo, and on the way were beaten, thrown to the ground, and refused food and water. Content with hunger they implored their persecutors for a drink, but their pleading was haughtily disdained. Suddenly, it not only rained but poured to the extent of forcing them all to halt. The ascetics were thus able to quench their thirst at God's bounty! By the time they had reached the town of Atfeeh, south of Cairo, the order of the Sultan had come that they be left to go back to their monastery. And so they returned to their haven in peace and gratitude.

Soon after, Mattheos took leave of his brethren and went to al-Moharrak Monastery. There, he served the aged and the infirm: feeding them, bathing them, and fulfilling their behests. He watched the kitchen and its utensile. In fact he made himself the servant of everyone. Most of his nights he spent in a cave outside the monastery; and when the wild beasts found no food for their little ones, they used to carry them to the man of God so that he might feed them. These beasts, also, used to form an escort for him whenever they found him walking alone in the desert, and even came to him for help. One day, a mother Hyena followed him persistently. Sensing that she must be in need, he walked alongside with her. She led him to a cave in the midst of which was a deep chasm. At the bottom of this chasm, he saw her cub. So he descended into it, carried the cub on his shoulder and brought it up to her. In gratitude, she licked his feet,

for<sup>4</sup> a long time, followed him like his shadow.

In the year 1378, when Abba Ghabrial IV went unto his reward, Coptic bishops and people with one accord resolved to elect Mattheos as his successor. When he got word, he fled from the monastery, boarded a ship and hid in its bottom. But a little boy among the travellers disclosed his secret. He evaded them for a second time, but they succeeded in getting hold of him. So he entreated them to allow him to go and seek the counsel of St. Antoni's sages. They accepted, but accompanied him lest he disappear in the desert solitudes. When the aged saints declared that it was God's Will that he accept, he obeyed in surrender. Escorted to Alexandria, he was consecrated the eighty-seventh Pope and gave himself the title of 'al-Miskeen' or the poor.

Abba Mattheos was such a compassionate man that he used to carry food and raiment to the needy by night so as not to be recognized, and his loving tenderness for others prompted him to give even his own clothes when he found nothing else to give. One day, he consecrated a very saintly monk as bishop. This new bishop was so poor that he could not afford to buy the needed vestments. Abba Mattheos told his deacon to bring his own vestments and give them to the newly-ordained. His deacon protested saying that he had but one set of them, and what will he do for the next service? The Man-of-God urged him, saying: "Our Heavenly Father will provide." While the deacon was trying to convince the Pope to keep his vestments, behold a woman came and presented him with a new set of vestments of beautiful satin, saying she had made a

vow to offer them because of answered prayers! The new vestments were joyously given to the bishop.

The life of Abba Mattheos is an epitome of the Christian virtues; not only did he give everything he could, but he participated in the labour of the simplest of his people in order to identify himself with them. He baked with the bakers, built with the masons, cleaned the basins with the cleaners and carried the burdens with the porters. Yet he was revered and venerated by all and his face radiated with Divine Light; when he officiated at the Services, it appeared to the believers like the face of an angel!

615. During his papacy, the most outstanding prince among the Mamlukes was called Barquq. He got to know Abba Mattheos and to have great confidence in him. When the Sultan died and the princes suggested that he succeed him, Barquq asked Abba Mattheos for his advice. As usual, the Prelate went to take counsel with the sages of St. Antoni. As he neared the monastery, the fathers went out to meet him carrying the Gospels, the Crosses, the lit candles and the censers filled with incense. Together with the eighty men who came from Cairo with their Pope they formed a grand procession and marched rejoicing into the monastery.

The first thing Abba Mattheos did upon his arrival at the monastery was to dedicate the new church which the fathers had built in the name of the three youths in the fiery furnace. He then celebrated Passion Week with his monks and conferred with them. The sages told him to counsel Barquq to accept the sultanate, which he did. Consequently, through his reign the Copts enjoyed peace and great prestige.

616. Sultan Barquq, eager to keep up friendly relations with Ethiopia, requested Abba Mattheos to write a letter to its king Wedem Asghar. When the Pope sat down to write the letter, he addressed it instead to David, the king's brother. Thinking he had made a mistake, his secretary called his attention to this and asked him to correct it; but he insisted on leaving it that way. When the delegation bearing the Papal letter reached the border of Ethiopia, they got word that the princes had deposed Wedem who had been unpopular, and had enthroned his brother David in his stead. Entering into the presence of the king, they gave him the letter. He was delighted to find it addressed to himself, then asked them to give him the cross and handkerchief sent to him by St. Mark's Successor. Seeing their astonishment he told them that Abba Mattheos had appeared to him in a dream, blessed him and given him a cross and a handkerchief. When they heard these words all those present gave glory unto God!

617. Abba Mattheos made regular visits to the monasteries. Once while in Scete, some rabble headed for the church of Al-Moallakah with the intention of burning it. Sultan Barquq heard of it and immediately sent the four judges of Islam there to intercept them. The judges went and ordered them to disperse. Angered by this sentence, the mob supposed that they could burn the monastery of Shahrān. But by the time they arrived before it, Abba Mattheos had reached Cairo, and had hastened to the monastery at the news. He faced the mob alone and exclaimed: "Whoever dare, let him draw his sword and kill me because here I stand and will not permit anyone to enter this monastery." The mob taken aback

by this valour, retreated. The man-of-God went straight to Sultan Barquq and related to him what had happened. The Sultan issued a decree that no one was ever to go near the monastery or molest its inhabitants.

618. For a short period during Barquq's rule two of the Mamluke princes got the upper hand and banished him to Syria. Taking matters into their hands, they began planning a systematic harassment of the Copts. The first person they aimed at was Abba Mattheos. One of the princes sent for him and asked for the Church treasures. Met with a resolute refusal, he was so astounded that he let the man-of-God return safely. The second was met by a stern reprimand from the Pope who had heard that he was about to persecute his people. Infuriated, he unsheathed his sword. Abba Mattheos calmly stretched his neck saying: "Kill me speedily." Again the prince, in astonishment, left him in peace. Both princes, however, were speedily overthrown by the other Mamlukes, who recalled Barquq back to Egypt.

Returning in triumph, Barquq established peace and security, not only within Egypt's borders, but also with its neighbours. For when the Nubian king raided Aswan; Barquq did not war against him, but asked Abba Mattheos to write him a letter of conciliation. The king was so touched that he sent to the Sultan presents carried on the backs of twenty-one camels.<sup>7</sup>

619. During that era, an outstanding Copt named Fakhr-ud-Dawlah went to Ethiopia. Its king welcomed him and charged him with organizing his government's affairs. Fakhr-ud-Dawlah regulated for him the methods for collecting the taxes, and laid for him the

laws by which the different departments of the government were to be run. He also designed for him the official clothes to be worn by king, princes, and state ministers.

620. Abba Mattheos went among his people incessantly. One day, passing by a rich man's house, he found his porter sick and uncared for. He sent immediately for some warm water, sat beside the poor sick man and began to wash him gently. When the porter felt relaxed he implored God to let him depart from this world while the Pope was still beside him. His plea was heard. The man-of-God carried the dead porter and interred him with his own hands.

The prayers of Abba Mattheos were a buttress even to those of his people who could not reach him bodily, but only yearned for his intercession. This was experienced by some laymen against whom the anger of the Mamluke princes had been aroused. In their distress these chiefs decided to go and seek their Pope's prayers. While journeying, night overtook them and they had to wait till sunrise. That night one of them dreamed that he saw Abba Mattheos standing before the icon of St. George interceding for them and saying: "O St. George, Martyr of the Christ I know no way out for these men except through your intercession." Immediately he saw the saint bend his head forward in acquiescence.

In the morning the man related his dream to his colleagues. While they were doubting, word came to them that they had already been pardoned. They got up and went in haste to thank Abba Mattheos because he had interceded for them even without having been told of their request. They found out

that he had known of their need by the spirit, consequently he prayed for them.

Abba Mattheos was endowed with many of the spiritual gifts that St. Paul speaks of in his first epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 12. Among these were the gifts of prophecy, of healing and of leading sinners back to repentance. The stories of how he used these gifts to the glory of God in the service of his people would fill many pages, but the fact that he was given these gifts and used them in those days when the Copts were in such dire need for them is a remarkable fact of God's wondrous supervision. For it gives one more proof on the one hand of how God never abandons his people, and on the other hand of how deeply steeped in spirituality the Coptic Church was—so much so that it could still produce men of such colossal spiritual stature as Abba Mattheos in spite of all it had gone through!

621. The years Abba Mattheos remained Supreme Head of the Church were not all years of peace, for at the death of Barquq, peace was dissipated. A prince called Sodon took the reins of government. He was cruel and tyrannous. One day, he plotted with his attendants massacre the Copts. Abba Mattheos knew by the spirit of Sodon's plotting. He got up immediately and went to the church of St. Mercurius where he spent seven consecutive days praying, heedless of food and sleep. After this mighty spiritual travail the Blessed Virgin appeared to him in an ethereal light and said to him: "God has heard your prayers and has brought to naught all the plotting of the adversary." He was overjoyed and went out of the church as though floating on wings. Arriving at his residence he was

told that Sodon had sent a messenger requesting him to go and meet him urgently. When he went, Sodon told him he felt an inward compulsion to confess to him the plot he had intended. St. Mark's Successor calmly answered him that God was the Fortress of His people, and that a Sultan, however powerful, will not hurt them except by His permission. The prince was filled with awe at these words and left him to return in peace. The triumphant Pope assembled his people, and they all went to the church of the Blessed Virgin where they offered their heartfelt thanks.

Nonetheless, some of the supporters of Sodon were obstinate in persecuting the Copts, and especially his second man Prince Ozbek, who killed and imprisoned as many as he could lay hands on. Abba Mattheos entreated him to leave his people alone, but he was adamant. In anguish of heart, the man-of-God again went to Church and spent six days on end imploring the Archangel Mikhail to come to the rescue of the persecuted people. At the end of these days word came to him that Prince Ozbek had been stabbed by a sword and killed.

622. Peace returned for a period but it was only too short; for another prince called Gamal-ed-Din renewed his persecution of the Copts with raging ruthlessness. The man-of-God renewed his travail in prayer. The intensity of his fervour was so great that his frail physical frame could stand it no longer and he became sick. But even in his sickness, Prince Gamal's men came to inform him that a tax of half a million dinars had been imposed on him and that he must either pay them or suffer the consequences. The

Copts, in their love for their Pope and to safeguard him against this prince's cruelty, exerted themselves to the utmost to collect this exorbitant sum and pay it as requested. When he got the money Gamal-ed-Din grew more arrogant and despotic and sent the Pope a messenger telling him he is to go and meet him in person. Abba Mattheos was sick in bed, but with a radiant smile, he told the messenger: "Come for me tomorrow, for today I am unable to comply with the Prince's request." The fact was that he was forewarned by the Spirit that the following day he was going to be in Paradise. And sure enough, when the prince's messengers returned at the appointed time, they found him already beyond their reach, for his spirit had soared heavenwards in the early hours of dawn!

But, God Who said: "Vengeance is mine." (Romans 12:19) did not leave this prince unpunished-even in this world. For suddenly the Sultan was wroth against him, and in his wrath confiscated all his wealth and ordered his soldiers to beat him to death.

623. Before his departure from this world, Abba Mattheos had sent for his disciples and told them of his approaching hour. Exhorting them to live in brotherly love, he asked them to bury him in the monastery of Al-khandaq,<sup>10</sup> that he may be among his flock after leaving the body. He had lived seventy-two years, thirty-two of which he had spent in shepherding the Church with paternal love. He was lamented not only by his people, but by many Muslims and Jews also, and the multitudes who followed him to his final rest were accompanied by soldiers and headed by the Chiefs of the State.

Forty days after his departure, some

strangers coming from Upper Egypt; were in the vicinity of Al-Khandaq monastery. As it was sunset they decided to sleep in the shadow of that building. Towards dawn, they woke up to pray Mattins and saw the venerable Abba Mattheos in his priestly vestments going round with the censer in his right hand incensing the whole vicinity. They were filled with awe and glorified God "Whose Mercy endureth forever,"<sup>11</sup> and Who so overwhelmed the heart of this wondrous man with His love, that even after leaving the body, his spirit hovered around his people and shepherded them.

While on his death bed Abba Mattheos had also told his disciples that his successor will be Ghabrial, a monk from the monastery of Abba Samuel el Qalamoni. But in their deep sorrow, they had forgotten to relate this to the bishops and people.

While a meeting was being held at al Mu allakah Church to elect the new Successor to St. Mark, an aged saint saw the departed Pope standing next to the altar and laying his hand on the head of Abba Ghabrial who happened to be there. The saint went near him requesting to be blessed, and asking in wonder what brought him there. Abba Mattheos blessed him and said: "My brother, I am going to Alexandria to attend the consecration of Ghabrial." This incident immediately reminded those who had already been told of it, that the deceased Pope had named his successor. They carried the elect to Alexandria where the Consecration Ritual raised him to the papal dignity.

While in St. Mark's Cathedral, and during the Service, there was a priest named Yoannis who had been suddenly stricken with dumbness. Abba Mattheos came up to him

and said: "O Yoannis, from this moment onwards you shall be able to speak. So get up and tell those assembled that I have come to take part in consecrating Ghabrial Pope of the Chair of Alexandria." The priest came to himself and found that he was indeed able to speak. So proclaiming God's wonders to everyone, he repeated what he had been told. And all those who heard gave glory unto the Heavenly Father Who had showered His gifts on Abba Mattheos during his life and after his death.<sup>12</sup>

#### XXXIV. NOTES

1. A town adjoining Aswan, famous for its Pharaonic temples; the monastery is one of the many that were totally destroyed, but has been rebuilt in 1968.
2. Severus of Ashmunein. Book III, part 3, pp.136-7.
3. Just before reading any portion from the Bible, the deacon presents the censer to the priest that he may incense the Holy Scripture first, then the people. Should the reader be a layman, he is not offered the censer, as censuring is the prerogative of the priesthood.
4. M.H.Youssef & Y.Habib. al-Qiddis Matta'l Miskeen.p.19.
5. See book of Daniel, Chap.3.
6. These represent the four Schools for expounding Islam.

T.Iskaros.Nawabigh ul-Aqbat(in Arabic)

vol.I,pp.48-58.

8. H.Amin.Qiam dawlat-il-Mamaleek.(in Arabic)p.160. It should be noted that the author is now Father Ghabrial, Priest of St. Mark's Church, Jersey City, N.J.

9. The interested reader is referred to the reference given in No. 4 above for these extensive accounts and also to the author's Arabic "Qissat ul Kanisat il Qibteya" vol.III. pp.329-350.

10. A monastery which was located on the present day Abba Roweiss grounds, the site of the Institute of Coptic studies, the new St. Mark's Cathedral and a number of modern Coptic edifices, one of which is a small church, under which Abba Mattheos and three of his successors are buried beside Abba Roweiss. Also on Tuesday 11th of October 1977, the cornerstone of St. Mark's hospital was laid by the joint hands of Abba Shenouda III and President Sadat amidst the joyous acclamations of Copts and Muslims-in the northwesterly corner of the Abba Roweiss Ground.

11. Refrain of Psalm 136.

12. Severus of Ashmunein.pp.136-158;K.S. Nakhla 3d ser.pp.7-61.

XXXV. THE 88TH TO THE 93RD POPES OF  
THE COPTS AND THEIR VARIED  
DESTINIES

- A. Abba Ghabrial V
- B. Abba Yoannis XI
- C. Abba Mattheos IInd surnamed  
as-Saidi
- D. The 91st to the 93rd Popes

- 624. The papacy of Abba Ghabrial V
- 625. Abba Yoannis XI and the trials he met
- 626. Abba Mattheos II
- 627. Abba Ghabrial VI
- 628. The 92nd Pope remains in office only  
one year, and his successor has a short  
papacy as well

A. 624. When Abba Mattheos went unto his reward after having "fought the good fight and finished his course..." (2nd Timothy 4:7) the year was 1409 A.D. Egypt was still destined to be ruled by the Mamluke Sultans for another one hundred and eight years. And in that period of one century and approximately one decade, seven popes, from the 88th to the 94th, occupied the august Chair of St. Mark in succession. Each in his turn had to endure whatever cross he was given to bear, but each in his turn stood up with and for his people and helped to keep the flame of the Faith alive in their hearts.

The immediate successor of Abba Mattheos was no other than the monk designated by him, namely Ghabrial. He was taken to Alexandria, where the Consecration Ritual elevated

him to the position of Pope, by the name of Ghabrial V.

Because of the ruthlessness Gamal-ed-Din had shown, and the exorbitantly high sum he had imposed on his predecessor towards the end of his life, Abba Ghabrial had to begin his papacy in a state of total impoverishment. The Copts were aware of that, since it was they who exerted themselves to the utmost to collect the money requested by Gamal-ed-Din and pay it as a ransom so that no harm or suffering will be inflicted on their saintly Abba Mattheos. Now they were ready to exert themselves again in order to meet the needs of their new Pope and of their Church. And whatever they could give, they offered gladly.

As for Abba Ghabrial, he was such a self-disciplined ascetic that poverty did not bother him. For his own needs he could be contented with the barest minimum; and for the Church needs he was confident they would always be supplied through the Grace of the loving Father. He accepted with gladness to live on the bounty of his children, and prayed without ceasing that they may be blessed and compensated for their sacrificial giving.

He let nothing deter him from being faithful in the exercise of his spiritual care for his flock. Walking on foot, he ceased not from going among his people, fortifying them and deepening their roots in the upright Faith.

During his time, an Antiochene priest-monk named Basilius Behna came to Cairo with some of his friends and requested to be consecrated Patriarch over Antioch. Abba Ghabrial convened his Council and discussed the subject with them. The Council selected Mikhail, Bishop of Samannood, Ghabrial,

Bishop of Assiut Kyrillos the Syriac Bishop of Jerusalem, and Assad Abu'l Farag, the priest of St. Mercurius' Church to perform the Rite of Consecration. They changed it in that last-named Church and thus ordained Basilius Patriarch over Antioch by the name of Ignatius Behnam I. After his ordination, Mar<sup>l</sup> Ignatius visited Jerusalem and from thence went to his metropolis. And it is a wonder to contemplate that Abba Ghabrial, supported by the love of his people, was able to furnish his brother Patriarch with all his needs for the journey, including a horse on which to ride.

During his time, also, news came that the King of Ethiopia was ill-treating his Muslim subjects. Without even trying to verify whether these news were true or false, the Sultan sent for Abba Ghabrial and threatened him with death if he did not use his influence to have this maltreatment halted.<sup>2</sup> St. Mark's Successor promised to write to the Ethiopian king immediately. Providentially the Sultan took him for his word and left him to go in peace.

Despite the pressures from the government and the hardships he met now and then, Abba Ghabrial ceased not from being vigilant over the affairs of his Church and his pastoral duties towards his flock. His papacy lasted almost twenty years, at the end of which he rested in the peace of His Lord.<sup>3</sup>

B. 625. As the Copts wondered about, and then discussed, the names of possible candidates from among whom to select Abba Ghabrial's successor, the name of Father Abu'l Farag, the priest who had participated in the consecration service of Mar Ignatius of Antioch, was in the forefront. Bishops and

laymen unanimously agreed upon his choice, and he was consequently consecrated Pope by the name of Yoannis XI.

After his consecration, Mar Ignatius decided to visit him in person and congratulate him on the people's trust in him and on his elevation to the highest position in the Church. Yoannis XI met him in brotherly love and the two prelates officiated together the Holy Liturgy. The Antiochene Pope told his host that the Church of Antioch had totally run out of the Chrism and Abba Yoannis therefore insisted that he remain with him at the Mo allakah Church throughout passion Week so that they will pray together the prayers of those most holy days including the prayers of consecrating the Chrism during the night between Good Friday and the 'Saturday of Light' (as the Saturday preceding Easter is called in the Coptic Church). Mar Ignatius accepted the invitation and stayed on and it was a blessing for the people that Mar Kyrillos Bishop of Jerusalem had also joined his two brother-Prelates and participated in the prayers. The two Church dignitaries spent a considerable time as the honoured guests of St. Mark's Successor.

But the papacy of Abba Yoannis XI which began so auspiciously was not destined to continue in a climate of peace. Rather, he was one of the Popes who met many storms during his career, and who, personally, suffered numerous ill-treatments at the hands of the temporal powers. The historical record of what he went through has been written and handed down to us by a Muslim historian of the times whose name was Muhammad ibn Abdir-Rahman as-Sakhawi in a book he wrote entitled: 'at-Tibr ul-Masbak fi dnail is-suluk.'

The hardships met by Yoannis XI began

as soon as his guests departed to their Sees. The first restrictions came in the form of a decree that all churches must be re-assessed to find out whether any new churches had been built without permission, or any reparations made in old churches. In consequence of this decree, an order was given to close many churches until the re-assessment decreed was concluded. Providentially, these churches were re-opened some months later.

The Sultan then decided to hold a council to be attended by the four judges of Islam, together with Abba Yoannis XI and the Chief Rabbi of the Jews. After the first session, it was decided that they have a meeting in the house of the Chief Sheikh of Islam. At that meeting the Copts were informed of the decrees to be enforced against them which were: a. No church, monastery, or cell were to be renewed or repaired; b. No masons or builders were to be allowed to do any work in any of these edifices; c. No refurnishing or repolishing was to be allowed within these places; d. No Muslim was to be allowed to buy wine for a non-Muslim, nor sell it to him, nor offer it to him for drink. Should any man-be he the Pope himself-transgress any of these decrees, the Sultan will demolish the church or monastery or cell that has been touched.

At this period, a delegation arrived from Ethiopia headed by a notable of the king's retinue and a Muslim merchant called 'Abd-al-Rahman. They brought with them numerous presents comprising seventy women slaves, a wash-basin, and jug of gold, a golden lined sword and stirrups, a number of gold plates. With these presents, they bore a letter from the king to the Sultan. He began it by greetings and an exaggeration of extolments, then added:

"Our aim is to renew the pacts of our forefathers between our country and yours, so that the relations will be mutually respected. Your forebears treated the Christians with equity, and defended them against all aggressors. We have heard that this policy is now changed...that there are those who transgress against the Christians even while they are praying inside the churches and during their festal Services, and that they are in great distress. Our brethren, the Christians who are under your sultanate are but a fraction of the number of Muslims under our sway. We treat them with kindly justice...listening to their complaints and according them their rights. You can send your envoys to ask them of the truth of what we are saying. So, we entreat Your Sultanic Majesty to treat the Christians with justice and benevolence, that our relations may remain amical and peace will prevail..."<sup>5</sup>

This letter infuriated the Sultan and the princes because they realized that their tyranny had become known outside Egypt's boundaries. Nonetheless, the Sultan sent presents to the Ethiopian king with a letter in which he presumed that the Copts have spread false rumours against his rule, and that they renew their churches and monasteries without his permission.

When the Sultan's letter arrived, it also infuriated the Ethiopian king. He put the Sultan's messenger under arrest; made war against the Muslim chieftain in his country and killed him. He enforced the messenger to ride with him to the battlefield and showed him the body<sub>6</sub> of the killed chieftain thrown on the ground.

News of all these turbulences reached Egypt. The Sultan, in his fury, found no

one on whom to vent his vengeance except Abba Yoannis XI himself. He sent for him and ordered his men to beat him mercilessly. Next, he imposed upon him writing a letter to the Ethiopian king in which he was to describe the beating, and the sneers that befell him; he was also to tell him that the Sultan has threatened to massacre all the Copts in vengeance if his messenger did not return safely. Upon receiving this letter the Ethiopian king treated the Sultan's messenger kindly but detained him for a considerable period. After four years of absence, he permitted him to go back.

Yet the return of the messenger did not calm the Sultan. He called the four judges of Islam to his presence, and again brought Abba Yoannis XI. At that meeting, St. Mark's Successor was again beaten then thrown into prison and his possessions were confiscated. In addition, he was forbidden from writing to the Ethiopian king and from ordaining for him any bishop or priest without taking permission. Should he disobey this order, he would be beheaded.

These cruel measures against the Alexandrian Pope were still insufficient in the eyes of the Sultan for he promulgated more despotic rules concerning the non-Muslims. These rules were: a. No Christian or Jewish doctor was to treat a Muslim. (This order was quietly disregarded by many of the reasonable Muslims who continued to resort to the doctors in whose skill and ability they confided, regardless of their creed.) b. All wealthy Copts were to be questioned if they had any Muslim female slaves, and if they did, they were to release them immediately.<sup>7</sup>

To add to the trouble of the Copts, news came that the king of Ethiopia was pre-

paring to invade the Hejaz; and that he was going to accumulate impediments in the midst of the Nile at the borders of his country so as to stop its flow into Egypt. It happened in the following season that the inundation was so low that even the Sultan began to be afraid. He asked the Caliph to pray and he distributed money and clothes among the poor. But the Nile continued getting lower. A cry was sent out that all people were to go out to the desert and pray there. And such was the panic which prevailed that even the Copts were allowed to go out and pray. The multitudes continued to pray incessantly until God's Mercy overtook them, and the Nile began to rise. And the wonder of it is that the raise began in September in which time the Eternal River usually reaches the height of its inundation.

It is sad to register that during this sombre period many Copts behaved like Judas Iscariot; they sold their Lord for worldly gain. And to their shame, their apostasy was no safeguard for them, because at the least provocatin the Sultan's fury mounted against them. Once he became so angry against such a man whom he had made vizier that he confiscated his possessions and<sup>8</sup> ordered beating him with cudgels till he died.

In apposition to this treachery, there were a number of prominent Fathers in this period whose alertness was a buttress to their people. Foremost among these vigilant prelates was Abba Kyriakos, Bishop of Bahnassa who moved among his people constantly to sustain and fortify them, and who wrote for them numerous hymns of praise to lift up their spirits, and several doctrinal epistles and homilies to keep the Faith alive in their hearts

Abba Yoannis XIth shepherded his people for a little over twenty-four years, a period in which he patiently endured many persecutions and hardships. Despite what he went through, he did his utmost to guide his harassed people both directly and indirectly, then was he called unto the rest of his Lord. He was buried at the monastery of al-Khandaq beside the valiant Abba Mattheos. <sup>9</sup>

C. 626. It was four months after Abba Yoannis XIth had passed away that the Coptic bishops and people convened to elect his successor. Acting with one accord, they unanimously agreed he should be Soleiman, a monk from the monastery of al-Moharraq. He was sent for, escorted to Cairo and consecrated at the Church of the Blessed Virgin in Harit-Zaweila. He was named Mattheos the Second and surnamed 'as-Saidi' or the Upper Egyptian. Thus he became the ninetieth Pope in the succession to St. Mark's See.

At his time, a delegation arrived from Ethiopia requesting the consecration of a Bishop for their country. Providentially the new Sultan-Al Mansoor Othman-welcomed this delegation and facilitated for them the means of communicating with Abba Mattheos. Thus, the Bishop was promptly consecrated and promptly sent to his new homeland.

At one point during his papacy, Abba Mattheos found that the Church was in great need of more Chrism. One of the amazing phenomena, proving God's wondrous Care of them, is that the number of Copts remained steadfastly high enough to make necessary regular consecration of the Chrism-that Great Sacrament whereby God's Holy Spirit indwells the spirit of man and fills him with the Grace needed for bearing all life's vicissitudes. Following

the tradition of the Popes, Abba Mattheos II invited the bishops to join him in consecrating the Chrism; six of them were able to respond to the invitation. A chief layman who still held favour in the diwan, and was also an archdeacon entitled as-Sheikh Waliyud-Dawlah Mikhail, was supervisor of the church at Harit Zaweila. He made it possible for them to meet and officiate in peace.

Abba Mattheos As-Saidi guided his people for thirteen years, yet during his time four Sultans succeeded one another on the throne of Egypt. When he died, he too was buried in the Khandaq Monastery beside his great predecessors. 10

D. 627. Some five months after the repose of Abba Mattheos II, his successor was elected. Originally from the village of Abydos, made famous by the temple that the Pharaoh Seti I had built there, he had spent his monastic years at the monastery of St. Antoni. The fame of his piety and uprightness had brought him to the people's attention so they brought him and consecrated him their 91st Pope under his own name, Ghabrial. He became Abba Ghabrial VI and resided at the Church of the Holy Virgin at Harit Zaweila. During his papacy which lasted for almost nine years, the Copts were fortunate enough to enjoy a period of peace and serenity. Consequently, he moved among them openly and they welcomed him gladly and without fear.

Abba Ghabrial VI thus lived and passed away in tranquility.

628. Apparently, because of the peace that prevailed, the Copts had become so absorbed in their general affairs that twenty-six months passed before they realized it was high time

to fill the vacant Chair of St. Mark. Becoming aware of that necessity, they elected the monk Mikhail as-Samalooti and consecrated him without delay by the name of Abba Mikhail VI. Regretably, however, his papacy was all too short for it lasted just one year and three days. He passed away like a fleeting cloud.

Again the Copts allowed over two years to elapse before taking any move towards the election of their supreme shepherd. Only then did the bishops take action and convene the meeting necessary for deliberation on this subject. After considering all possible candidates, the majority finally agreed to elect the monk Yoannis al-Moharraqi, who, upon consecration, became Yoannis XII. Again, his was a short papacy, though a little longer than his predecessor's. It lasted three years and four months and was characterized by the same peace that had been prevailing for over a decade.<sup>11</sup>

#### XXXV. NOTES

1. Mar(-e) is the title, equivalent to Saint or Father in the Churches of Syria and Assyria. It should be noted that a minimum of three bishops is necessary for consecrating a Pope while he, alone, is empowered to consecrate bishops.
2. Manassa'1 Qommos.p.601.
3. K.S. Nakhla,4th ser.pp.6-9.
4. ibid.pp.15-17.Manassa'1 Qommos.p.602.
5. As-Sakhawi.at-Tibr...vol.I,pp.39-40.

6. *ibid.*pp.67-71.
7. *ibid.*pp.72 and 123-4.
8. *ibid.*pp.244.
9. K.S.Nakhla.4th ser.pp.10-41.
10. *ibid.*pp.43-46.
11. *ibid.*pp.47-48.

XXXVI. THE SAINTS AND MARTYRS  
OF THE MAMLUKE AGE

- A. The Saints
  - 1. Abba Barsum as-Erian
  - 2. The Spiritual Sage Marcus
  - 3. Abba Roweiss
- B. The Innumerable Martyrs
- C. A word about the art of manuscibing  
among the Copts

- 629. How the Holy Spirit continued to abound  
in the Church through its Saints
- 630. Abba Barsum al-Erian
- 631. The Spiritual Sage Marcus
- 632. Abba Roweiss
- 633. The story of the Abba Roweiss Ground
- 634. The martyrs of the Mamluke age
- 635. A word about the art of Manuscibing  
and how it continued to thrive among  
the Copts

629. One of the descriptions once made of Athanasius, the Apostolic, is that he 'combined dignity with sanctity, endured hardships but remained fruitful, knew misery but remained glorious.' This very same description could be made about the Church he and many of his successors served so well—and especially during this medieval epoch of its history. For although through the ages peace and persecutions had alternated for it more than once, in the age of the Mamlukes the Coptic Church experienced this more frequently. It passed from one trouble to fall into another; and it was barely relieved of one persecution

when it had to endure another. And yet, in spite of these recurrent horrors, through the Grace of God, the Holy Spirit still abounded within it and so filled even some of its simplest men and women that they either became saints or courageously accepted martyrdom for the sake of their Faith. As we contemplate this fact we cannot help but realize that through the centuries the Coptic Church has been a living witness of Our Lord's words: "In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Of the saints of the times under consideration whose lives were shining examples of sanctity and Christian charity, three will be described here. The first of these is:

#### A. 1. Abba Barsum al-Erian

630. The father of this saint was a man whom Queen Shagar ad-Durr, wife of the first Mamluke Sultan, had selected to be her private secretary as soon as she had ascended the throne.

He had been so faithful in serving her that she expressed her esteem for him by giving him the name of 'al-Wageeh al-Mofaddal' (or the Notable, the preferred). Wealthy and influential, he had been above all a God-fearing man. Both he and his wife had tried to live exemplary Christian lives. Barsum absorbed from them his religious passion. When they passed away, he followed the inclination of his heart, left his wealth and the possibility of worldly honour and went to live as a hermit in a cave adjoining the Church of St. Mercurius in Old Cairo. He spent his time in meditation, worship and service of his fellowmen. His reputation for sanctity spread far and wide so that many people,

including Muslims, went to him seeking his counsel and blessing.

In one of the persecutions which flared up, he was arrested with a number of other Copts and thrown into prison. While in jail, he kept imploring the Heavenly Father on behalf of his harassed brethren. His prayers rose like incense to the Throne of Grace. Relief came rapidly and the imprisoned were released and allowed to go in peace.

Abba Barsum then went to live on the roof of a church in a suburb south of Cairo called Turah, near Helwan. This old church still stands and now bears his name. Hundreds of people crowd the church during the festivities held in his commemoration to seek his benediction and intercession.<sup>1</sup> The cave in which he began his ascetic life also still stands and lies to the left of the entrance to the Church of St. Mercurius. It is subterranean and eighteen steps lead down to it. Since it was hallowed by his life, an altar has been built in it, and on September 27th of every year, a Liturgy is chanted on this altar in his honour. Many sick and infirm attend the celebration in quest of healing through Abba Barsum's intercession. And in fact many cures have been effected across the centuries which separate us from him in this span of life.<sup>2</sup>

Abba Barsum was entitled al-Erian because like John the Baptist, he wore nothing but a short tunic on his loins.

## A. 2. The Spiritual Sage Marcus

631. Marcus was born in a small village of Upper Egypt. At the age of five, as he was going with his mother to the market, he met the Bishop of Assiut. The bishop beamed on the boy, carried him on his arms and

asked him: "What is your name?"-"Marcus" was the prompt reply. The bishop said with joy: "Indeed by son you shall be like unto Marcus the Evangelist of our land." He blessed him, returned him to his mother and said: "Be very mindful of this boy of yours for he is a chosen vessel unto his Lord." The mother's heart rejoiced. She obeyed the bishop's command, especially that within a few weeks of this encounter, her husband died and she found herself the sole educator of her son.

The mother of Marcus was accustomed to fast by abstinence until four in the afternoon daily. So he grew up in the habit of such fasting. He watched his mother diligently; whenever he saw her standing up to pray, he would buckle his waist with a leather girdle to keep alert and stand next to her and pray.

Since his parents were poor, Marcus had to labour from his boyhood days to help his mother earn a living. He used to go out with the farmers, plant with them, harvest with them, and do sundry works for them. Because he laboured from sunrise to sunset, his mother used to give him his lunch. But when he found anyone who was poorer than himself, he would give away his food and remain hungry till he returned home.

Though very young, his heart was full of tenderness; he was not content with giving his food to others. He noted that a poor woman used to come and steal part of his share in the harvest, so he used to collect for her all that was left to him by the harvesters and add it to her share. Seeing him, she felt ashamed that so small a boy would help her even though she stole what was his, and thus she was cured by his kindness.

Little wonder that Marcus was so considerate! For his mother was an ideal example: she persevered in attending church, as well as in prayer and fasting. She was a living witness to her Lord and set an example to many of her friends and neighbours.

Marcus noted that his mother was extremely generous also in spite of her poverty. Whoever knocked at her door was given something. If she had no money, she would give eggs or wheat or whatever else she happened to have. Her small house was a haven of rest for weary travellers, needy monks and indigent passersby.

When Marcus reached the age of twenty-three, he took permission from her and went to a nearby monastery. But so astounded was he by the laxity of its monks in prayer and fasting that he returned to his mother. As soon as her eyes fell on him she said: "I thought that you had died to the world, so what has brought you back? Have you forgotten our Lord's saying that whoever lays his hand on the plough and looks backward is not fit for the kingdom of heaven?" (Luke 9:62) At these words, he left her and went to St. Antoni's Monastery. There he met his spiritual father, who received him with great rejoicing. After spending a few days with him, he accompanied him to St. Paul's Monastery which was farther away in the desert and had fewer monks.<sup>3</sup>

As a monk, Marcus trained himself to remain without food one day, then two, and so on until he succeeded in abstaining from food for a whole week. His abstinence however did not detain him from work; he helped the monks in planting and harvesting, in cooking and baking, or in collecting the old twigs and leaves needed for lighting the fire.

For six years, he lived in this manner. Then the monks carried him back to St. Antoni monastery and urged their brethren there to make him eat. These latter succeeded in making him eat at every sunset. He would eat one kind of food only and put the Bible on his lap in order to read portions of it even while he ate.

Yet despite his fasts and his vigils he lived for a century. He used to collect the monks round him and speak with them of God's love and His wondrous ways. After these long years, he commended his spirit into the Hands of the Father. It was midday and the bells were ringing declaring the end of the Holy Liturgy. The aged ascetics present said that they saw an angelic host descend and surround him, until a Lady Whose radiance outshone the sun arrived. She sat beside him and received his soul. Then, they all ascended<sup>4</sup> up to heaven to the sound of angelic singing.

### A. 3. Abba Roweiss

632. The third Saint to be considered here is another of those mighty spiritual giants of the Coptic Church whose life may be likened to a dazzling light that sparkled amidst the gloom of his era. A contemporary of Abba Mattheos I, he was very much like him in his colossal Christian stature and attainments. This saint is Abba Roweiss.

Although of poor and simple origin, as well as illiterate, when the life span of Abba Roweiss was over, the Church found that in him there had been so much sanctity, such incessant striving after Christian perfection, and such spiritual transparency that he was counted worthy to have his name listed

among the saints in the Holy Liturgy. He typified the words of St. Paul "as unknown and yet well-known, as dying and behold we live;...as poor and yet making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing all things." (2nd Corinthians 6:9-10). And, like unto St. Paul also, persecution neither frightened him nor reduced his love for God and man; beating did not alarm him, and tyrannous despotism did not abash him. He faced all hardships and endured all sufferings with the firmness of a rock. Indeed in this he was the personification of his Church—the Church of persistence and invincibility against which the 'gates of hell could not prevail.' (Matt. 16:18)

Abba Roweiss was born in the village of Miniet Yamin (some 130 kilometers north of Cairo). His parents named him Freig. Because they led a most frugal and simple life, he had to labour from his tender years. At times he tilled the earth, at others he carried the harvest sheaves. He had a small camel of his own on which he used to carry salt and sell it. A touching friendliness linked him to his camel, because it responded to him by bowing its head, so he called it Roweiss (i.e. small head). The camel used to put his head against the cheek of Freig as though kissing him. Later on the Saint, in his humility, took the name of his camel and it is the name by which he is known.

Early in his life persecutions flared up with such ferocity that many Copts weakened and renounced their religion. Among them was Freig's father. Freig was so grieved that he kept praying for him with groaning and tears until he remorsefully repented. Freig was twenty then, and decided to flee to Cairo. Being poor and in flight, he journey-

ed on foot. After walking two days on end he felt so weary that he lay on the ground and slept. He had a dazzling dream: two men in shining clothes carried him up to heaven and entered into a church thronged with celestial beings. He heard a voice telling him 'You are hungry. Come, eat of the food of life.' His two luminous guides led him to the altar, and he partook of the Holy Eucharist. Thus refreshed his friends brought him back to earth.

When he woke up, he decided to travel south and for several years he moved from town to town and from village to village in Upper Egypt. He had two aims in view: to free himself from blood ties and to strengthen the faith of the harassed Copts. At the same time, he worked with his hands. Thus like unto his Lord, he had nowhere to lay his head; and like unto St. Paul, he earned his living through the sweat of his labour. He satisfied himself with very little food and spent his wages on others, oftentimes sending some of it to his father. Also he was like unto John the Baptist, in that he only covered his loins, going about bare-headed, barefoot with naked trunk. In his extreme ascetism, he trained himself in abstinence to the extent of being able to live without food for twenty-six days on end.

He also persevered in partaking of the Holy Eucharist although he was filled with awe as he approached the altar. The administering priest used to see him go back a step or two before coming forward to partake of the Elements. On being asked, he confessed that he was unworthy of this perfect Food; that he also could see the angel with outstretched wings watching over the Offering.

One day as he stood beside a priest

who was baptizing a babe, he exclaimed: "Worthy indeed" for he saw the Seraphim and the Cherubim hovering over the baptismal font.

Soon his sanctity became known to all as he settled at Deir al Khandaq (Cairo), so numerous disciples collected round him, and some of them followed him wherever he went. Often the rabble threw stones at him because of his outward appearance. But he had trained himself to be silent in face of any disdain. One day as he was on an errand, some evil people stoned him. As usual he remained silent. Taking him for dead, the stoners left him lying on the ground. His disciples found him and carried him to a nearby store to care for him. As they sat round him, they saw a fire in the corner of the store and were frightened. He soothed away their fears saying: "Think not that tis is a fire, it is the Light of our Lord Jesus the Christ who appeared now because it is said 'The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing.' (Psalms 41:3)

The Almighty God endowed Abba Roweiss, also, with another very rare talent: that of being able to spiritually transport himself from one place to another, transcending time and space. An example cited of his ability to do so, says that one day the wife of Prince Mintash's secretary was worried over her husband's undue delay. He had gone with the prince to Syria, and had stayed more than the time he had fixed for her. In her worry she went to the man-of-God and said: "I am indeed upset because my husband should have come some days ago from Syria, and I have no word from him." He stood up to pray, and seemed in a deep trance. A whole hour passed. Then he came to himself and

said to the woman: "Be at peace. Your husband was in danger but is safe now." Feeling reassured, she went home.

When her husband came back, she asked him what had happened. He said: "On our way back, the prince went ahead of us. The soldiers, knowing that he had entrusted me with his money, wanted to take it, threatening to kill me. Suddenly I saw a man bareheaded and barefoot with only a goat skin about his loins come to my rescue with his men. They surrounded me and accompanied me till we neared the gates of Cairo. Then, they disappeared as suddenly before I had a moment to thank them or know who they were." The woman said with joy: "I know him. Come with me that we may thank him together." So they went. As soon as the man saw Abba Roweiss, he exclaimed: "Indeed this is my rescuer." They offered him some money after thanking him. But he said: "Keep your money for yourself. Be assured that the Sultan will appoint you in his diwan for six years." His words came true.

When Prince Sodon tyrannized over Abba Mattheos, he sent for Abba Roweiss and questioned him on his life and works but received no answer. So he ordered his soldiers to beat him four hundred lashes. They began to beat him. As usual, he kept absolutely silent. Sodon, infuriated by his silence, ordered them to stop; to tie him on a camel's back after dressing him up as a clown, and to parade Cairo's streets abusing him and throwing at him bad eggs and pebbles. In spite of all this abuse, he remained silent. The abusers finding him almost unconscious, untied him and threw him into prison with one of his disciples. But the Lord of Glory appeared to him and healed him.

He found eighty Copts in prison; they had been there for months. Seeing the saint, they fell at his feet and implored him to pray for their delivery. He lifted up his eyes towards heaven and prayed in secret. Hardly had he said Amen than Abba Mattheos entered in person bringing them the order of release.

But when St. Mark's Successor himself was in prison, Abba Roweiss was at the time in his habitual retreat. One of the Pope's disciples went to reproach him by saying: "What are you doing, O man-of-God, when the Father-Pope is in jail? Are you praying for him?" At these words, the saint stood up lifted his eyes up to heaven and said in a whisper: "Our Blessed Lady will save him." At that instant, the disciple saw a cross of light in the sky from which a white dove emerged and spread her wings over the head of Abba Mattheos. He also heard Abba Roweiss saying: "O Mattheos, rest assured that the Beautiful Dove whom you revere has gone out to save you." The disciple came to himself, went to prison and related to the Pope all that he had seen and heard. Even while he was yet speaking, a prince who was antagonistic to Sodon broke open the prison gates and released Abba Mattheos and all those who were with him. They all went straight to the Church of the Blessed Virgin and offered their "Prayer of Thanksgiving."

Abba Roweiss did not only foretell the Pope's release, but was able to foretell many things. One of the many services he rendered was foretelling the people of a famine which would have been fatal had they not believed him and stored before-hand as much of their needs as possible.

His protective care lay not only in his spiritual gift of curing the sick and of comforting the troubled; it also embraced those whom the evil one would have led to perdition. Among the many whom he regained was a youth called Fakhr ud-Daola ibn'l Mo'taman, or 'Pride of the state, son of the trust-worthy.' This youth was both handsome and prominent. The Sultan enticed him by wealth and marriage. Consequently he renounced the Christ, married a princess, and lived the life of ease and luxury in the Sultan's palace. A year later, he felt like one entangled in a mesh. Remorse filled his soul. In his anguish, he went to Abba Roweiss and confessed to him, ending with the words: "O man-of-God have mercy on me, for the evil one has vanquishd me and I know not how to disentangle myself." "Fear not, for he shall have no sway over you. I have seen you wrestling with him and overthrowing him. Therefore, I shall support you and wrestle with you until your final triumph. Go, live in the monastery of St. Antoni, and I shall implore God to make the Sultan forget you." Fakhr ud-Daola obeyed with confidence. He strove valiantly to gain spiritual perfection. When he heard of the Sultan's death he went and thanked Abba Roweiss, then returned to the monastery where he lived in peace till his last breath.

Providence gave Abba Roweiss a long life in spite of all the beatings and buffetings he sustained and the toil and hardships he endured. The last nine years of his life, however, he spent lying on the ground because of his weakness. But the people continued to flock around him, seeking his comforting words, his counsel or his healing prayers, which he persevered in giving unstintingly.

He was both a solicitous father, and a sympathetic doctor.

When he knew of the approach of his hour, he called his disciples and commanded them to love and serve one another. Then he rested in the peace of the Lord and was buried in Deir al Khandaq.

And such was his love for his disciples that they felt his care for them even after he had left them bodily. One of them, whose name was Soliman, was particularly attached to him and was accustomed to go with him to church at dawn. After his teacher had passed away, he used to get up at dawn as usual, go to church, knock at its door and say: "O man-of-God, open for me please." And the door would open for him promptly.<sup>5</sup>

Abba Roweiss spent the greater part of his life in the region which had originally been known as Dir al Khandaq, but was named after him posthumously, and came to be known as the Abba Roweiss Ground. This region has a history, too, which is of great significance; here it is:

633. When Djawhar was building Cairo, the Copts had had a monastery which used to be known as the monastery of the bones because several saints of theirs had been buried in it. The plot of land on which it stood lay within the circumference of the intended plan of the city's builder. He dispossessed them of it and built on it the Husseiny mosque; but desiring to be just, he compensated them by giving them another plot of ground on which they built the monastery of Khandaq. Thus, this ground became a possession of the Copts ten centuries ago.<sup>6</sup>

Three hundred years after Djawhar had given it to the Copts, there were eleven churches within the enclosure of these grounds.

These churches remained standing for over a century but were destroyed in 1341 A.D. during the reign of Sultan Qalawoon.

The Copts built in their stead two churches, one called after the Archangel Ghabrial and the other after St. Mercurius. This latter became known by the name of Abba Roweiss after his burial in it. The Archangel's church was destroyed in 1888 A.D. and was replaced by a new one named after the Blessed Virgin.

As the years sped by, the ground gradually became a cemetery. But when Cairo grew in dimensions and the inhabited quarters extended beyond this spot, the Egyptian Government asked the Coptic Papacy to stop using it as a cemetery, and offered the Copts the plot of land known as 'Al Gabal-al-Ahmar' in the desert outskirts of the city to serve for the purpose. It, also, asked that the bodies be lifted and the ground levelled. After that, the government presumed that such a spot should belong to it. The Coptic Pope asserted his right, and in 1937 relegated the defence of the Church's right to Habib el Masri (chief lay leader then). From 1937 to 1943, he continued his defense: he wrote three memorandums: One to the Prime Minister, One to the minister of Public Health, and the Third to the Minister of Interior. After discussing with the authorities all the documents proving the Copts' right of possession, the government gave in, on one condition that it be used for public services.

As a result, the Higher Institute for Coptic Studies was built in 1953, comprising a hall which accomodates nine hundred people. Then, in 1962, the new Theological Seminary was completed; it stands now next to the Institute, bearing the name of Abba Kyriillos VI (116th Pope).

As the year 1968 began, the Coptic Church was preparing to celebrate the passage of nineteen centuries since St. Mark's martyrdom. Negotiations had been going on three years earlier between Kyrillos VI and Paul VI, Pope of Rome, for the return of St. Mark's relics to the See of his evangelization. These negotiations were crowned with success. Consequently, a spacious cathedral intended to accommodate twenty thousand people was erected. Under its altar a reliquary was built. And on the 24th of June 1968, the relics were hailed with joy by fifteen thousand Copts, apart from Muslims and other Christians. The celebrations lasted for three days. This vast cathedral is built on the same ground bearing the name of Abba Roweiss. In addition, when Abba Shenouda III became Pope of Alexandria in November 1971, he decided to build a papal residence next to the great cathedral. At the same time, the building of the Higher Institute houses the Bishopry of Social Service and Public Relations, as well as the Bishopry of Scientific Research and Higher Education. Thus, the ground bearing the name of Abba Roweiss has become a Center of cultural and religious radiation. And here we pause to wonder at God's marvellous ways! For the name of Abba Roweiss, the poor illiterate man who disdained all the world's glory for the sake of the Christ, has now become a name of international renown! And the highest and noblest endeavours, thoughts and aspirations of the Copts sparkle out from that spot on which lived the man who was the very epitome of human worth.

B. 634. From the onflow of the story of the centuries of the Mamluke rule, it has become amply evident that the Copts as a people intermittently suffered many hardships and

persecutions. There were two consequences to this condition. On the other hand there were those among them who weakened from the burdensome stress to which they were subjected, and-unable to tolerate it beyond a certain point-sought relief by changing over to the religion of the majority. On the other hand there were those whose inward resilience was such that 'when the going got tough,' they became tougher and able to "bear all things" for the sake of their Lord and Saviour. These were the ones willing to pay the ultimate price for their faith-the price of martyrdom.

The martyrs of this age, as those of every age of hardship, were quite numerous. But the vast majority of them, like the soldiers who fall on the battlefield, remain nameless and unknown. History has not been unable to record except a negligible fraction of them. Of the few names that have come down to us of the martyrs of this epoch, the following list is given. As we read these names let us remember that they were people like us 'who pulsated with life and the love of life, and yet in the moment of the supreme test, they counted everything as nothing to win the glory of being in the presence of the Christ. Here are a few of the names found in sketchy records:

1. Mikhail Abu Moqaitef and his three young daughters who went chanting as though they were going to a wedding, and Rizqallah their cousin;
2. Ileya from Dronka;
3. The Priest Sidrak and his five brother monks from St. Antoni's Monastery
4. Arsenius from al-Moharraq Monastery

5. Five priests: Abu'l Farag, Rofail, Yoannis, Cosman and Hibat-ul-Katib-each from a differen town;
6. The monk Moussa and his six companions who were soldiers;
7. The pure-hearted Gadid from Giza who was condemned to follow his Muslim grandfather, and he answered them: "Make haste and kill me, for I have no father, no mother and no grandparent save my Lord Jesus the Christ."
8. The two youths Nasr Allah and Abu Iss-haq; Yaqub and Yohanna from Sonbat;
9. Boulos from Bani Khasseeb;
10. Freig at-Tanani;
11. The priest Yaqub who was martyred at dawn;
12. The two monks from Scete: Mansour and Daoud;
13. The valiant youth Mamadius called Mikhail who was a Muslim and became Christian, so his head was cut off with the sword;
14. Abu'l Farag the mason from Maqs;
15. Ibrahim from Shubra;
17. Yaqub from Al Manawat;
18. Girgis who committed many sins, then returned unto himself like the prodigal son and atoned for 7 his transgression by martyrdom.

A contemplation of these names makes us aware of the fact that they came from various towns and places in Egypt. And this is evidence that persecutions were not confined to any single spot but raged throughout the whole country. Thus the whole Valley of the Nile was watered by the blood of the martyrs.

And became more fruitful for the Church as a whole.

One of the few martyrs of that era the story of whose heroic faith has been recorded in the annals of the Church and has thus been handed down to us is a martyr whose name is simply Saleeb, or-literally-'Cross.'

This saint was born in the village of Hor (in central Upper Egypt) of Godfearing parents who founded him from his early life on the invincible Rock (1 Cor. 10:4) which is the Christ. When he became of age, he left his village and lived the life of an errant hermit: going from one monastery to another, and visiting the hermits in their cells. He prayed, fasted and meditated on Holy Writ. He incessantly entreated the Blessed Virgin to aid and intercede for him. As he grew in spiritual wisdom, he yearned after martyrdom. One day he saw the Blessed Virgin in a dream in the midst of a dazzling light and she told him that he will attain his heart's desire for the crown of the martyrs, and that the Archangel Mikhail will be his guardian till then. This celestial vision added zeal to Saleeb's already burning Faith. He began to ramble in towns and cities in order to enthruse the Copts. His action angered the governor of Upper Egypt, and he called him and cross-questioned him. Saleeb declared to him that his aim was to fortify the hearts of his co-religionists. At this answer, order was given to cudgel him. He remained absolutely silent while the soldiers beat him very hard. His silence added fuel to the governor's anger so he ordered them to chain and stone him. But neither the chains nor the stoning stirred him; consequently he was thrown into prison. There, he spent his nights in prayer; he prayed so earnestly that the Blessed

Virgin appeared to him again and said to him with deep tenderness: "Be of good cheer Saleeb, for you are nearing your coronation." The other prisoners saw nothing but heard the Voice (Compare with Acts 9:7) and were panic stricken and wanted to run away, but he soothed their hearts.

A week later, Saleeb was sent chained to Cairo. The journey by boat was irksome because the soldiers, not content with chaining him, amused themselves with beating him. In spite of that, his heart was at peace and he kept his usual silence.

Arriving at Cairo, the soldiers took him to a Coptic family and asked them to pay for his journey. Hearing of all that happened, they offered him food, washed his wounds, and paid for him the demanded sum. He said to them: "You have served me and soothed my heart, may my Lord Jesus the Christ recompense you with His heavenly kingdom and may He grant you all you ask for in this fleeting world."

Saleeb was led to Cairo's governor, who, in turn, cross questioned him more. The following day he was made to stand before the Sultan who was surrounded by his courtiers and his guards. Saleeb, nothing daunted, declared his Faith in the Christ the Saviour. The Sultan said to him: "Listen, renounce your Christ and I will forgive and honour you." He answered: "In the Christ I believe and I declare my Faith in Him openly." Thereupon, the order was given to kill him. A camel was brought, and an improvised cross made of two wooden pieces to which Saleeb was tied and then placed on the camel and firmly tied again. The soldiers paraded with him in the streets of Cairo, allowing any passerby to abuse him. Throughout this

mock parade, his face was radiant and he was absolutely silent. The Copts who saw him rejoiced at his radiance.

Reaching the main square, he was met by a judge and the swordsman. The judge said: "You still have a chance. Have pity on your own youth; renounce your faith and live." Saleeb answered: "I have lived a Christian, and I shall die a Christian." The judge gave the order; the swordsman lifted up the sword; and Saleeb's head rolled on the ground.

The day of his martyrdom was the day commemorating the presentatin of the Blessed Virgin to the temple by Her parents when She was three. May Her prayers that supported the martyr Saleeb support us throughout life. Amen. 8

C. 635. Whatever the changing events taking place from day to day in the procession of time and the unfolding of history, one absolute certainty was that 'Life' inexorably went on. and the onflow of life necessitated its continuity in many spheres. And so just as the martyrs followed the traditional footsteps of their gallant forbears, so did those who strove in other fields.

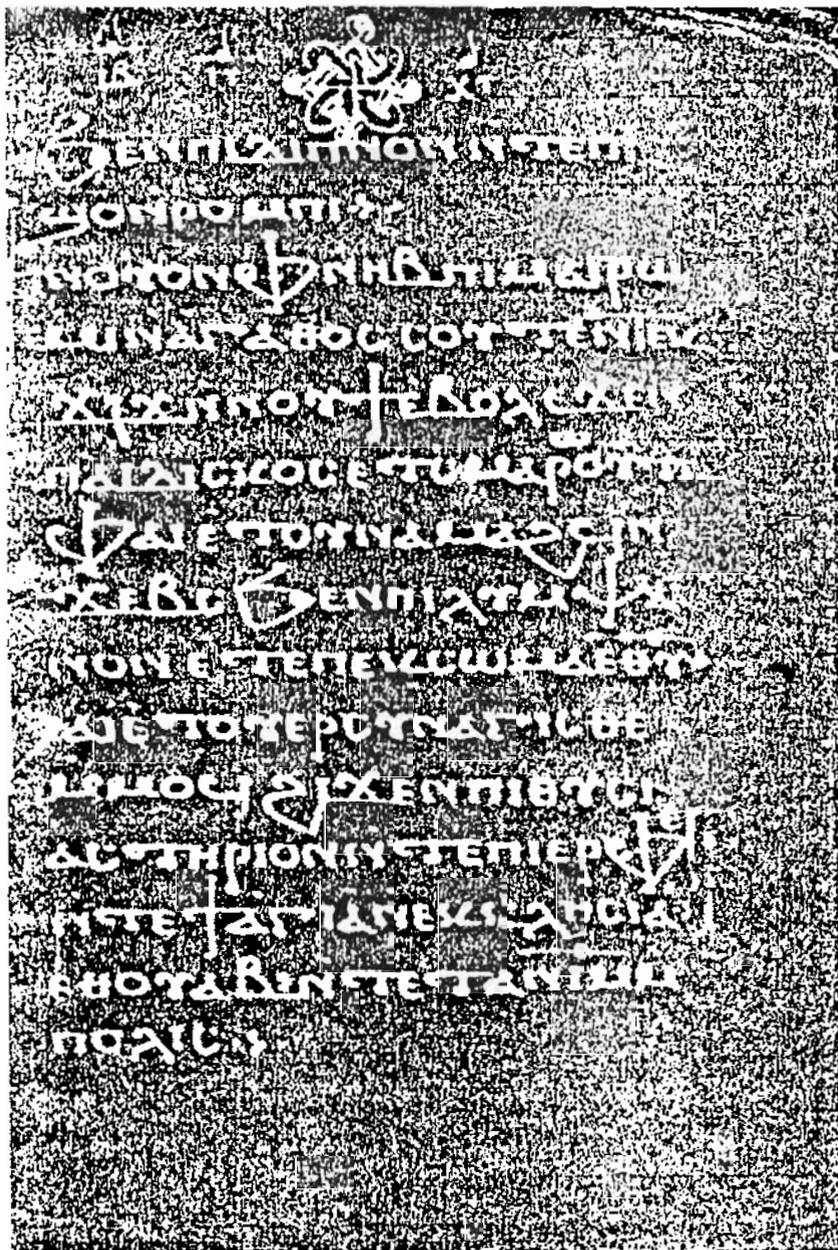
One of the outstanding means of striving among the Copts continued to be 'manuscribing. This art which began being prized in ancient Egypt where scribes were greatly appreciated, continued down through the ages to be an art in which excelling gave a person a mark of distinction. And many were the Copts, especially in the monasteries, who excelled in it during these centuries of the so-called Middle Ages. Like all those who strive in various spheres of life, striving is its own reward, and the majority of struggling strivers, though gallant, remain unknown forever. For

instance we read that there were in the eastern desert of St. Antoni a hundred scribes, who spent their lives in the monastery manuscibing and adorning books. Each ten as a unit dedicated themselves to writing books on a certain subject: for example, ten manuscibed the Passion Week Prayers; ten the Gospel, and so on. They were all experts in the Coptic language, as testify their writings, because what is extant of them is well and correctly written. Each page contained the exact number of lines as the others, each line was equal to every other, even each letter occupied an equal space like all the others! Despite this measured precision and this skill, we know the name of their leader only. Excavators have unearthed some stray pages in the handwriting of the scribe Girgis, bearing the date 1385 A.D. It is mentioned in these papers that they were copied from much older Mss. written by Boutros ad-Doronki who had himself been a monk at St. Antoni's monastery at an earlier time.

The scribes among the monks made (and still make) their own inks: black, red, yellow, blue, green, silver and gold. They used geometric and plant designs in addition to portraying saints, martyrs and angels. Their works are still the subject of wonder and admiration to all who see and appreciate them.<sup>9</sup>

#### XXXVI. NOTES

1. K.S.Nakhla and F.Kamil.2nd series.p.124.
2. Budge.Ethiopie Synaxarium.,vol.IV.pp.1283-6.
3. It should be noted here that St. Paul is the very first Coptic Hermit who preceded



A page in Coptic script from a book on  
The Consecration of Church Vessels\*

St. Antoni. Cf. Book I, Chap. VI.

4. K.S.Nakhla 3d series.pp.75-85. The shining lady described is of course the Blessed Virgin.

5. K.S.Nakhla.3d series.pp.86-101;also booklet published by the Committee of the Church of Abba Roweiss containing his biography.

6. Taghribadi.vol.IV.p.430.

7. The names of these martyrs are all recorded in various sections of the Coptic Synaxarium according to the dates of their martyrdom in the Coptic calendar.

8. K.S.Nakhla.pp.55-9.

9. W. Shenouda.'Murshid ul-Mathaf il Qibti. pp.66-7.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

- A. The Papacy of Abba Yoannis XIIIth and its highlights
  - B. The Turkish conquest and its disastrous consequences
  - C. The Coptic Church under Turkish rule
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    - 2. Abba Yoannis XIV
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- 
- 636. Abba Yoannis XIII
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  - 639. Constructive works of Abba Yoannis XIIIth
  - 640. The Arab marauding tribes destroy the monasteries of Abba Paul and Abba Antoni
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  - 643. Abba Ghabrial VII
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  - 645. Abba Ghabrial undertakes rebuilding the two monasteries destroyed by Arab raiders
  - 646. Abba Ghabrial VII visits St. Antoni's monastery and rests in the Lord while there
  - 647. Choice and consecration of Yoannis XIV
  - 648. Abba Yoannis XIV undertakes three pastoral tours during his lifetime
  - 649. Two Jesuit delegates sent by Pope of

- Rome fail to win Coptic Church to their own
650. Death of Abba Yoannis one week after departure of Jesuit delegates
  651. Choice and consecration of Abba Ghabrial VIII
  652. Excessive tribulations of his times plus renewed efforts of Roman Pontiff
  653. Abba Ghabrial VIII goes to his reward after eleven years of vigilant shepherding of his Church and people
  654. Scanty records of the century and what they reveal

A. 636. In 1483 A.D. the Copts elected and consecrated their 94th Pope, Yoannis XIII. He was a monk from Assiut, known for his piety, kindness and charitable spirit, and his name in his monastery was Yoannis ibn il-Misri. The Chair of St. Mark had remained vacant for fifteen months by the time he was elevated to it, and he occupied it until the year 1526 A.D. Thus he was destined to see the end of the Mamluke rule over Egypt and its conquest by the Turks.

Abba Yoannis XIII proved to be worthy of the trust that had been placed in him. Not only did he manifest a spirit brimming with Christian charity towards his own people as well as all others, but he was also steeped in the knowledge of the Scriptures, the Church Doctrine, and the history of the saints and their teachings. He wrote several books on Ritual and Church Principles. <sup>1</sup>

Because Abba Yoannis XIII had a long papacy under more or less peaceful conditions most of his time, he led a life filled with services to his Church. Among the highlights of this life were his care for and interest

in the Coptic Churches in Cyprus, the Pentapolis, and Ethiopia, which figure in the writings about him.

637. The relationship of the Copts to the Isle of Cyprus was an old one, for it should be noted that St. Mark, the Evangelist, had himself carried the Word of God to this island before coming to Egypt at the outset of his missionary enterprise. This fact is mentioned in a French book written by a Dominican monk called Vansleb, who was both a traveller and a writer and who came to Egypt during the 16th century. Vansleb's book is entitled *Histoire de l'Eglise Copte*, and on page 27 of it he says (in translation) "...the kingdom of Cyprus was under the jurisdiction of the Pope of Alexandria because St. Mark had preached there..." 2

The information on the Copts in Cyprus is very scanty in general, and only a little of it is given in some Cypriot history books. The Italian Jacobus di Verona, writing on the churches of Famagosta (the port of Cyprus), says that there were those which belonged to the Jacobites (the epithet given the Copts by the Chalcedonians). What is pertinent to our story at this point is that when Abba Yoannis became Pope, he delivered a speech addressed to his bishops by name and among them is mentioned Abba Mikhail, Bishop of Cyprus. Also, in the monastery of Abba Yoannis Kami there is a manuscript which mentions that Abba Yoannis XIII presented Abba Abraam-whom he had consecrated successor to Abba Mikhail Bishop over Cyprus, with a book entitled 'Spiritual Healing.'

When the Turks invaded Cyprus in the middle of the sixteenth century they killed many clergymen among whom was the Coptic

Bishop. Another Italian, Sylvano di Lusignano, mentions that Nicosia (capital of Cyprus) was adorned with palaces and churches: Greek and Copt... The Copts took part in the festal processions which paraded the streets on the feasts of our Lord, and of St. Mark. The Coptic Church bore the name of St. Antoni. The Copts lived not only in Nicosia, but were scattered in the hills to the north of the island; they had a monastery named after St. Macari the famed father of Scete. Although this monastery was taken over by the Armenians when the Turks exterminated the Copts of Cyprus, it still bears its original name. When the Turks first ruled, and before beginning their massacres they made a general census of its population and mentioned the Copts among the groups on whom the taxes were to be imposed.<sup>3</sup>

638. The writings of Abba Yoannis IIIth prove that the Copts had a Coptic Bishop in the Pentapolis up to his time, even though historians have erroneously recorded that Christianity came to an end there during the reign of Salah-ed Din. For Abba Yoannis has left letters, still extant, and an epistle of benediction written in 1508 A.D. in which Abba Kyriakos, Bishop of the Pentapolis is mentioned. This bishop, however, was forced to leave his See by the Turks after they had subdued Egypt. He then returned to his old monastery-theSuriani-reassumed the old name of Sawiris which he had borne as monk before becoming Bishop, and busied himself for the rest of his life with writing of books on the Church and its Doctrine. These books are still in manuscript form<sup>4</sup> and are kept in the library of the monastery.

639. It was in 1517 A.D. that the Turks tri-

umphed in the battle of 'Marg Dabeg' in Syria, a battle during which al-Ghuri, Mamluke Sultan of Egypt at the time was killed. This led to the Turkish Conquest of Egypt, a conquest caused not so much by their valour or military superiority as by the dissensions and disunity in the ranks of Mamlukes. Thus one historic era in the life of Egypt was closed and another historic era which was much more sombre began. For it was an era the main characteristics of which were brutality, injustice and utter disregard of the people whose country was being taken over and exploited. But although the Turkish conquest took place during the life of Abba Yoannis XIII, it took them several years to establish themselves and show the dark face of their government. Consequently, for the duration of his papacy, Abba Yoannis was left in relative peace. He was able to capitalize that peace in rebuilding and repairing damaged churches and monasteries; in building new ones, and in writing books, in addition to visiting his people. His was a time of renewed growth.

One of the Bishops who aided him in his constructive work was Abba Mikhail<sup>5</sup> IV, Bishop of Qais (in the province of Minia.)

640. One unfortunate feature that marred the peace of that time, however, concerned the destruction of the two oldest monasteries in the far reaches of the Eastern desert—those of the great saints Abba Paul and Abba Antoni. These monasteries were raided by the Arab tribes which had settled in Upper Egypt many years earlier. Their raids were so ferocious that they exterminated the monks of both. They then destroyed the greater parts of their buildings, and settled among their ruins. When they felt cold, and when

they wanted to cook their food they found no fuel except the Mss. This disastrous destructiveness continued for eighty years. Thus was lost a priceless legacy which will never be regained. The smoke of the burning covered the walls and the ceilings of the churches. Fortunately, modern techniques have succeeded in clearing it away without damaging the icons which adorned them.<sup>6</sup> Abba Yoannis was saddened by the news of these raids and his utter helplessness to prevent them or stop them. He rested in the peace of the Lord in the year 1526 A.D.

B. 641. In contrasting the era of the Mamlukes which came to an end during the papacy of Abba Yoannis XIIIth with the era of Turkish governance which began then, it can be clearly seen that era of Turkish rule was much more disastrous and harmful to the country than the Mamluke era ever was. True, many of the Mamluke Sultans were tyrannous and despotic; true, they disdained the people and squeezed as much money as they could from them; true, a number of them inflicted more hardships and imposed higher taxes on the Copts, martyrizing many of them, but there were sporadic times of peace in which they relented. Besides, since Egypt became the only country they could call their own, and since their own prestige and grandeur depended on their building it and extending its power, they did just that. During their times, Crusaders and Mongols were crushed to no return. Egypt's Empire stretched from the North of Syria westward to Cyprus and as far south as the Hejaz. European kings of the times sought to establish amical relations with it. The arts and sciences were encouraged; many beautiful and grand mosques were built. In fits of magnanimous generosity, the poor were

regaled lavishly. Public gardens became numerous and special efforts made to beautify the big cities. Altogether the country could boast of growth and development. But the story of Turkish rule was totally different. More despotic and tyrannous even than the Mamlukes, their main interest was to get as much out of Egypt for the benefit of their own country no matter how much they impoverished it. The country's fall under their yoke meant, therefore, the loss of its prestige, the death knell of arts and sciences. And the end of all striving towards a better life. When Sultan Selim, called 'the conqueror' did conquer and enter Egypt, he carried with him to Turkey all the experts he could lay hands on in the various professions, arts and crafts: engineers, doctors, artists, artisans and craftsmen-even masons, stonecutters and smiths.

Among the leading Copts he carried away from his homeland was a man called Barakat, the chief scribe of the state. Barakat was an expert in mathematics, engineering, astronomy and fiscal matters. In his exile, he organized for Sultan Selim the state finances and the methods of collecting taxes.

In describing this dark and desolate period in Egypt's history, Moberly Bell says: "From the time when the Turk assumed sway in Egypt, until he lost it, history and art alike cease. The triumph of the Turk is marked by ruin, and by moral, political and social degradation." 7

C. 1. 642. The lot of the Copts under Turkish rule was harder than ever. They were subjected to more tyranny, injustice and ill-treatment than their compatriots; highly exorbitant taxes were often imposed on them; and persecution to the extent of martyrdom continued. The wonder of it is that their inward resis-

tance had become so strong and their attachment to the Faith of their fathers so adamant that they could still take whatever was dealt out to them and keep on going. The 'Light of the Church' which was but a reflection of the 'Light of the World' kept burning on and never went out. At times it may have weakened but it kept burning on nonetheless...

643. The Popes who continued to be elected and to succeed each other as Heads of the Coptic Church had an awesome responsibility to bear. Knowing that, however, none of them shirked it when the call for him came and most of them—with very few exceptions—fulfilled that responsibility conscientiously and faithfully with full hope and trust that their help would come from the Lord, the Help of the helpless.

The first Pope to be elected after the beginning of the Turkish rule was Abba Ghabrial VIIth, 95th successor of St. Mark. A pious monk with many years of ascetic training behind him, he proved to be a good and faithful shepherd of his people.

644. During his papacy, he had the satisfaction of seeing the Coptic Church reconciled with the Church of Ethiopia, its spiritual daughter. Relations between the two churches had been severed for some time due to the tyranny of the Mamlukes, and the Roman Pontiff had seized the opportunity of what was actually an enforced, temporary break to ordain a Portugese Catholic bishop for Ethiopia and call him, grandiloquently, 'Patriarch of Alexandria.' This unfortunate episode was short-lived, however, for Emperor Glaodios who acceded to the Ethiopian throne at the time immediately corrected the situation. He informed

the imposed Portugese clergyman that he had either to go back to his country or, if he wanted to continue living in Ethiopia, to do so as a layman. At the same time he dispatched a messenger to Abba Ghabrial VII entreating him to consecrate a bishop for him and his people. Fortunately the messenger was admitted by the governor of Egypt. He met the Alexandrian Pope who gladly complied with his request.

645. One of the projects that Abba Ghabrial set himself as a goal for accomplishment and succeeded in so doing was the rebuilding of the eastern desert monasteries that had been destroyed by the Arab marauding tribes, and the restoration of monastic life to them. When they were completed and made habitable again, he re-peopled them with monks from the Suriani monastery to which he himself had belonged as a monk-so that once again the prayers reverberated from their walls and rose to the Heavenly Throne and the aroma of incense filled their sanctuaries.

646. Towards the end of his life, Abba Ghabrial himself retreated to the monastery of St. Antoni, to keep for a while out of reach of the Turkish Governor and evade the indignities that he knew would be inflicted upon him until the Copts paid the two thousand dinars imposed on them. The Pope knew that the Turks were ruthless to anyone regardless of his religious position, and that unless their demands were complied with immediately, they would use the lash even against the Head of the Church himself. Hence he withdrew to this haven beyond the reach of the officials and kept constant vigils and prayers for his people. When the stressful times passed-at least for the time being-and the tax had

been paid, he had travailed so much that his physical powers were exhausted. While in the monastery, he went unto the peace of His Lord after a long, active life full of good works. Like his predecessor, his papacy lasted about forty-three years.<sup>9</sup>

C. 2. 647. When Abba Ghabrial VII went unto his reward, the Copts were groaning under the heavy hand of the ruling Turkish governor. Consequently, the Chair of St. Mark remained vacant for two and a half years. When bishops and layleaders finally roused themselves to the imperative duty laid upon them, and assembled to fulfill it, they unanimously agreed on the choice of Yoannis il-Manfaluti, a monk from the Baramus monastery. He was brought to Cairo and consecrated the 96th Pope in 1573 A.D., under the name of Yoannis XIV.

648. Three times during his papacy which lasted fifteen years and four months, Abba Yoannis undertook pastoral tours among his flock all over Egypt. These tours were primarily motivated by the Turkish tyranny, for periodically he was demanded to pay excessive taxes which he could not pay of himself. Going among his people enabled him to appeal for their assistance on the one hand and to take refuge among them on the other hand. Invariably they all hastened to succour him and to protect his from the Turkish lash. At the same time the visits he had with the Copts around the country provided him with the opportunity of giving them spiritual strength, help and sustenance.

649. One unfortunate fact about this dark Turkish era is that the Pontiff of Rome recur-

rently found it opportune to try and gain recruits from the ranks of the Copts for his own Catholic Church. This happened during the life of Abba Yoanni XIVth, but was to happen again and again during the succeeding centuries. So that the Heads of the Coptic Church and its religious leaders had to be alert in order to protect the integrity of their faith and the solidarity of their people on two fronts-the home front against the Turks and their nefarious malevolence, and the foreign front against the incursions of the Roman Church. If the latter were to have been fair and understanding, they would have realized that the Coptic Church was one of Christ's many communities and that, in distress, it needed that other Christian communities pray for it and at least keep their hands off it. Regretably, however, such was not the case...

What happened during the papacy of Abba Yoannis XIV was that the Pope of Rome sent two Jesuit delegates to meet him. They held with him several meetings trying to convince him to declare his Church part of theirs but to no avail. Meanwhile, the Governor of Egypt became suspicious of their long stay and suspected them of being spies. Consequently, he ordered their arrest. A few days later he released them after exacting from them five thousand pieces of gold. Relieved by their release, they left for Rome immediately.<sup>10</sup>

650. Feeling at ease at their departure, Abba Yoannis thought he would now guide his people serenely. However, <sup>11</sup>he was called unto his rest that same week.

C. 3. 651. Nine months after Abba Yoannis had passed away, his successor Abba Ghabrial

VIIIth was chosen and consecrated the 97th Head of the Church. This took place in 1590 A.D. and since his papacy lasted eleven years, it covered the span of the rest of the 16th century.

652. From the beginning of his papacy, he and his people experienced diverse tribulations, added taxes, imposition of certain modes of dressing, restraint in commerce and confiscation of harvests. Added to these woes, Egypt experienced a violent earthquake in which numerous houses and minarets fell and even the Moqattam hills were cleft at three points.<sup>12</sup>

In the middle of those turbulent times, the Roman Pontiff renewed his efforts to win the Copts. His messengers again came to Egypt and met St. Mark's successor; but despite their diplomacy and their suavity, they failed completely.

Nonplussed by their failure among the Copts. they assailed the Ethiopians. Temporarily the King of Ethiopia weakened and was inclined to swerve to the Jesuit point of view. But the Ethiopian people were harder to win. With the vigilance and concern of a good shepherd, Abba Ghabrial wrote letter after letter addressed to both king, clergymen and people of Ethiopia. Expounding to them the Orthodox Faith, he entreated them to guard it in its pristine integrity. The Coptic Bishop expended every effort to convince the king to remain faithful to his own Church; when he did not succeed in his efforts, he excommunicated him. Hearing of this, his own people revolted against him and in the conflict that ensued, the king was killed as well as many others. Thus was the Roman assault the cause of a fratricidal war that

ended<sup>13</sup> only with the withdrawal of the assailants.

653. In anguish of soul, Abba Ghabrial VIII went to the Wadi-n-Natrun monasteries to spend a few days among the monks and rest his weary spirit in the silence of the desert. Shortly after reaching the Suriani monastery, the Heavenly Father relieved him from his burdensome earthly life and took him unto his eternal rest.<sup>14</sup>

D. 654. Scanty as the records of this century are, those of them still extant reveal to us glimpses of the Light that kept burning on in the Church. Most of these records are in unpublished manuscript form, waiting for the scholar who will edit and publish them.

We know from the records of Coptic manuscripts kept in the British Museum for example that one of the distinguished Teachers of the Church of the times was Yoannis, Bishop of Taha, a contemporary of Abba Ghabrial VII. A work of his, kept at the Museum, consists of two hundred and forty-nine papers, written in beautiful big script and bound in leather. Headings and capitals are in red, green and yellow.<sup>15</sup>

Another interesting manuscript legated to us by this period is one written in black and red and bound in red embossed leather. Its contents are miscellaneous and include an explanation of the Creed, of the teachings of the Fathers, of the Scriptural prophecies and a number of other very interesting educational items.<sup>16</sup>

Yet another manuscript extant is ornamented with gold lettering, and bears at the end the testimony that it was written in Damascus "under the guidance of Abba Petros, Bishop

of the Copts in Jerusalem and all Syria, by ibn Lutfallah, may God forgive his sins.<sup>17</sup> This simple statement indicates that the Coptic Fathers were vigilant wherever they were.

Among the fleeting glimpses of Light we get from these dark days is the record of one of the myriad nameless martyrs whose name and story are given in full. He is Yoannis al-Qalioobi, a monk from the monastery of Abba Pishoi. Yoannis had gone to the city on an errand in the service of his brethren when one of the princes met and arrested him. Demanding of him to deny the Christ, he refused categorically. Forthwith an order was given to arrest and torture him. His hands were pierced with a knife, he was tied to a camel's back and the camel paraded the streets with the rabble following and shouting all sorts of insults at the monk on its back. When Yoannis bore this with utter patience and long-suffering, murmuring only quiet prayers even for his persecutors, and the prince got word of it, he was further infuriated. He ordered that the monk be tied to a tree and lashed. Such was the ferocity of the lashing that Yoannis died before the scourger had finished his brutish work. Thus did this faithful servant of the Christ receive the martyr's crown.<sup>18</sup>

### XXXVII. NOTES

1. Ibn ur-Rahib. at-Tawareekh...p.248.
2. A copy of Vansleb's book is kept in the Oriental Section of the New York Public Library.
3. O.H.E. Burmester. The Copts in Cyprus article pub. in 'Le Bull. de l'archeologie

Copte.T.VII (1941)pp.9-12.

4. K.S.Nakhla.pp.51-55;also article by the same writer pub. in 'Maqallat a-Tawfiq'. Dec.16,1936.p.10,on 'The Pentapolis'

5. Al-Kommos Misail Bahr 'On the Minia Province' pub. in 'Sawt-ush-Shuhadaa.vol. no.4.no.2.(Feb.1962)p.38.

6. K.S.Nakhla.p.68.

7. In his book From Pharaoh to Fella"pp.44 and 180;see also: M.A.Mustafa 'Tarikh Misr il-hadith.p.35;F.Girgis: 'Dirasat fi tarikh Misr as-siyasi...p.18;Histoire de la Nation Egyptienne:T.V.'L'Egypte Turcque' par H. Deherain.p.9.

8. K.S.Nakhla.Silsilat tarikh il-Babawat. Bk.IV.pp.70-72.

9. Manuscript no. 391 in the library of St. Antoni Monastery.

10. G.Macaire.Histoire de l'Eglise d'Alexandrie. pp.323-24.

11. K.S.Nakhla.pp.77-80.

12. Kitab tarikh al-Amir Haydar Ahmad ash -Shahabi.p.622.

13. Y.N.Rofeila.pp.251-2.

14. K.S.Nakhla.p.86.

15. Record of Coptic Mss. kept at the British Museum,p.331,Ns.no.764.

16. Ms. 111 (196 Theol.) kept at the Library

of the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo.

17. W. Shenouda.op.cit.p.80.

18. Book of the Holy Chrism, Ms. 106 Theol.  
by Abba Athanasius, Bishop of Qoos, kept  
at the Patriarchal Library, Cairo.

XXXVIII

- A. Abba Marcus V
  - B. Abba Yoannis XV
  - C. Abba Mattheos III
  - D. Abba Marcus VI
  - E. Abba Mattheos IV
  - F. Abba Yoannis XVI
- 
- 655. Election and consecration of Abba Marcus V
  - 656. His special talents
  - 657. Renewed Jesuit disruption of peace in Ethiopia
  - 658. Election and consecration of 99th Pope
  - 659. New additional taxes and oppressive harassments
  - 660. Pope enquires about his flock in Jerusalem and goes on two pastoral tours in Egypt
  - 661. Election and consecration of Abba Mattheos III
  - 662. Short period of peace followed by the imposition of a high tax on Pope
  - 663. King Vassilaos of Ethiopia and the good news he sends to Abba Mattheos
  - 664. Second and last pastoral tour of Abba Mattheos III
  - 665. After celebrating the 'Saturday of Lazarus' service, Abba Mattheos dies quietly in his sleep
  - 666. Election and consecration of Abba Marcus VI
  - 667. Unseemly behaviour of the new Pope
  - 668. The notable Coptic historian Abu Daqn il-Menoufi
  - 669. New Pope selected with care

- 670. He proves himself a good and faithful shepherd
- 671. Periods of peace alternate with periods of excessive hardships
- 672. Abba Mattheos rests in the Lord
- 673. Coptic Church and practices described
- 674. Growth of Mamluke influence in the second half of the 16th century
- 675. Consecration of Abba Yoannis XVI
- 676. Failure of the attempts of Roman Pontiff and his Catholic missions
- 677. The visit of Abba Yoannis XVI to the monastery of St. Antoni
- 678. Accomplishments of Abba Yoannis XVI and his visit to the Holy Land in 1709
- 679. Egypt devastated by three plagues
- 680. Four of the distinguished leaders: two laymen and two bishops

A. 655. Due to the social and political unrest in Egypt, which increased the stress upon the Copts, the Chair of St. Mark remained vacant for eight and a half years before the responsible Coptic leadership could gather its forces and meet to consider filling it. When the meeting was finally held, all those attending agreed with one accord upon the choice of the monk Marcus, from the monastery of St. Macari. He was consecrated by the name of Marcus V in 1610 A.D.

656. Besides being well-versed in Holy Writ, the history and teachings of the Fathers, and canon law, Abba Marcus was endowed with spiritual insight and the gift of healing his people's troubled souls. He persevered in visiting them and in journeying from the Delta to Upper Egypt to counsel and guide them, spending with them as much time as their needs necessitated. He extended his

visits to the Holy Land as well, where he ordained a priest for the Coptic Church of the Holy Sepulchre and stayed for some time with his flock there.

657. As for Ethiopia, peace had remained established there until 1607 A.D. when the Jesuits renewed their efforts to win the Church over under the leadership of a man called Pedro Paez. So subtly and assiduously did he work that the Ethiopian king at the time, whose name was Soosinius, was taken by him and declared his willingness to join the Catholic Church. At first the people kept quiet, imagining the declaration was made for some political purpose, but when they found out that the king was going to abide by his declaration, they rose in revolt against him. Naturally the Coptic Bishop sided with the people. The same tragedy that had happened before was again repeated, this time on a larger scale. The fratricidal war raged for six consecutive years, and peace was not finally restored until the people triumphed.

On his part, St. Mark's Successor supported the people by his letters and his prayers. Thus the Faith legated by the Fathers had to be firmly and strongly upheld on two fronts: in Egypt against the Turkish brutality, and in Ethiopia against the Jesuit marauders. At that specific period, the Coptic Church won the victory on both fronts.

As for Abba Marcus V, he reached the end of his earthly journey after shepherding his people in wisdom and vigilance for eleven years.<sup>1</sup>

B. 658. This time the Chair of St. Mark remained vacant for one week only because Abba Yoannis XV, the 99th Pope was selected and elevated immediately after his predecessor

had gone unto his reward.

A pious monk with fiery zeal, he had been revered among his brethren, particularly for his loving tenderness and his spirit of strict equity. These traits commended him for this high position which in that era was fraught with such awesome responsibilities.

659. During his papacy, not only were new and additional taxes imposed on the Copts, one of which came to be known as 'al-Gawali' and was enforced per capita,<sup>2</sup> but they were subjected to other forms of harassments. They were forbidden to walk on the right side of the street, to ride horses, or to wear any colour other than black; furthermore—from time to time, they were ordered not to perform their regular Church rituals. This, to them, was the most vexatious of all. The sole purpose of the Turk in issuing this order was to find an added means of squeezing more money out of them. So whenever the Copts—singly or in groups—could offer their callous ruler the amount that would satisfy his rapacity, he would ease for some time the strict enforcement of his throttling orders.

660. Because of the various oppressions to which his people were being subjected, the heart of Abba Yoannis yearned tenderly for going among them and offering them both solace, support and edification. He succeeded in sending a messenger to the Holy Land to ask about the affairs of his flock there (it should be noted that Jerusalem at the time was not only suffragan to the See of St. Mark, but was also under direct control of Egypt's governor); and he managed to go on two pastoral tours all over Egypt.

On his return journey from his second tour, he became sick for half a day after

which he commended his spirit into the Hands of the Father. This was in 1631 A.D., after<sup>3</sup> he had been Head of the Church for ten years.

C. 661. Once more the Coptic leadership selected and elevated the man who was to become their church's one hundredth supreme shepherd shortly after the funeral services of his predecessor had taken place; for they realized the imperativeness of providing the people with the spiritual leader who would be like a father to all of them, and who would give them the strength, sustenance and succour they needed amidst the trials and tribulations to which they were in constant danger. This man was a monk from the monastery of St. Macari, and he was consecrated by the name of Abba Mattheos III in September of 1631 A.D.

Abba Mattheos III turned out to be a man of high spiritual calibre, and his concern for the edification of his people and for the fulfilment of the weighty duties of his office was just as great as that of his predecessor's.

662. In the first year of his papacy, Abba Mattheos and his people enjoyed a fleeting period of peace in which they were able to hold their religious services freely, and to have a certain measure of security. But soon enough, the Turkish Governor who had left them in peace was told by some of the ruling princes that every new Coptic Pope was expected to pay to the treasury a fixed sum of money. Glad to hear of this, the governor sent for the Coptic leaders and told them he expected their Pope to pay into the treasury 4000 dinars within a specified time limit, or he would be thrown in prison. Dismayed by this and knowing that their Pope had no earthly means or possessions, they hur-

riedly went out and looked for someone to lend them that sum. Upon finding him, they returned to the governor and paid it immediately, then went to Abba Mattheos and related to him the story.

Prompted by the need to collect this sum in order to repay the lender, Abba Mattheos decided to make his first pastoral tour. He boarded a boat and went up the Nile to visit the Copts in the towns and villages of Upper Egypt. They received him joyfully, and as many as could, offered to share the burden of the tax imposed upon him. Even the widows gave their sacrificial mites, like unto th widow whom the Master lauded (Mark 12:42). Granting his blessings to his people and his grateful thanks to his Heavenly Father, Abba Mattheos III returned to Cairo with a heart brimming over with joy, for his people had amply filled his need. True the problems he had to meet and solve were still continuing, but he never lost his inner peace and serenity, nor his trust that God in His Mercy will always help to solve them, and enable his people to carry on through any dark storms until the Light shone upon them again as it was bound to do.

663. One of the great satisfactions Abba Mattheos had in his life was to hear the good news that came to him from Ethiopia.

In 1632 A.D. a new king called Vassilaos had acceded to the throne of that country. Dismayed at finding that the Jesuits had succeeded in winning over a number of Ethiopian youths, he decreed the banishment of all foreigners other than traders from his land. After re-establishing security within his borders, he sent a letter to Abba Mattheos telling him what he had done and requesting him to consecrate a Coptic Bishop for them. His

request was gladly complied with, and a bishop by the name of Marcus was sent to them.

To ensure the stability of his policy, King Vassilaos signed a treaty with the Turkish Sultan in which the latter agreed to bar the passage of any missionary through his sultanate. Ethiopia celebrated the expulsion of the Jesuits by an epigram which said: "The sheep of Ethiopia have been delivered from the hyenas of the West by the doctrines of St. Mark, the Apostle, and St. Cyril (Kyrillos) the great,<sup>4</sup> the Pillars of the Alexandrian Church..."

664. Before the end of his papacy, Abba Mattheos decided to make a second pastoral tour to visit his children in the Delta and his own birthplace. He went first to Tanta (a town located midway between Cairo and Alexandria), then to the nearby small village of Birma, which has a historical Church named after St. George. After celebrating a Liturgy in that church, he visited a number of villages and hamlets in the surrounding areas, going at last to his own village of Tukh-an-Nassara. The people met him in a jubilant procession and escorted him with hymns and chants to their own village church. So much did his visit mean to them that they implored him importunately to stay on and on with them. So for a whole year he stayed in their midst teaching and guiding them.

665. On the last Saturday in Lent before the beginning of the Passion Week-which the Coptic Church calls the Saturday of Lazarus because it commemorates on it the Master's miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead-Abba Mattheos sat down just outside the sanctuary of the church after having celebrated

the Holy Liturgy; his purpose was to receive whoever wanted to have a special prayer or benediction said for him. (This is one of the customary habits of the Coptic Popes and Bishops whenever they hold services in any of the churches in their Sees.)

While he was sitting there, one of the Church deacons came to him and told him: "My holy Father the Pope, some of us have decided to go to the Holy Land on pilgrimage next Easter, God willing. We all desire that you be our honoured guest on that occasion, so that we' will be doubly blessed." Abba Mattheos answered in an audible voice that all who were sitting around could hear: "My son, it is not God's will that this should be so-for here, in this very spot, is the place where I will be buried. I shall not go anywhere from here." Saying this he gave the people his general benediction and retired to his rest. A short while afterwards his disciple (i.e. his private secretary) went in to see whether he was asleep or awake, and found that he had already gone to his final rest. With his hands crossed on his breast and his face turned eastward, he seemed to everyone who came in to see him to have an expression of radiant peacefulness.

Abba Mattheos was carried to the church where he had sat an hour or two earlier, and after the funerary rites had been sung for him, was laid under its altar. He had lived to a ripe old age, in intimate communion with His God.<sup>5</sup>

D. 666. At the midway point of the seventeenth century, (i.e. in the year 1650 A.D.) the selection and ordination of Abba Marcus VI, the one hundred and first Pope of the Church took place. He was a monk in the monastery of St. Antoni whose name was Marcus al-

Bahgoori. His election was made in haste and without the usual deliberations between the religious and lay leaders but only upon the recommendation of one of them, who naively believed what he had heard about him and transmitted it to the others. After his consecration they all discovered to their dismay that his choice had not been as sagacious as the selection of his predecessors, and that Abba Marcus VI did not possess either the personality or the spiritual qualities that were primary requisites of his high office. Therefore he could not provide his people with the guidance and support they were in such dire need of during those years of hardship.

The papacy of Abba Marcus VI lasted ten years. At its outset, he himself had had the unfortunate experience of having been imprisoned due to a false accusation made against him by one of his very own monks. This monk, called Qodsi, had led a small insurrection against him when-within his own rights and in conformity with the precedents set by the early Fathers-the Pope decreed that no monk was to leave his monastery except to render a service to his brethren and by the permission of his Abbot. When Qodsi defied this decree, the disciplinary procedures for such disobedience were taken against him. In a fit of human waywardness he seized the first possible opportunity to avenge himself by bringing this aforementioned false accusation against Abba Marcus VI, thus giving the Turkish governor a good excuse for throwing him in prison.

After a short while, Qodsi realized the enormity of the consequence of what he had done, and so going to the governor, he confessed that he had lied about the Pope and pleaded for his release. The governor

accepted on condition that he pay him as soon as he possibly could a large sum of money as a ransom for his release.<sup>6</sup>

667. The prison experience apparently hardened the heart of Abba Marcus VI, and his one life-purpose after that was to use his authority to exact fixed sums of money from the Copts for himself. When he went among them, it was not to bless them and share their troubles, or to guide and sustain them but to collect his dues regardless of whether the people's circumstances allowed them to pay or not. At first, of course, he wanted to make sure that he could give the governor the ransom money he had asked for; but later he continued in following the same policy, pretending that he could never tell when more taxes would be imposed on him.

Naturally, the behaviour of Abba Marcus VI, so devoid of the spirit of Christian compassion and charity, and so far-removed from the saintly and noble characters of the majority of his predecessors, alienated many of his people. The leaders who tried to dissuade him from persisting in this inconsiderate, unkind mode of behaviour were infuriated by his refusal to listen to them, and broke the strong friendly relations they had developed with him at the beginning. Of the considerable sums of money Abba Marcus collected, he used only a small part for the public benefit of his people. This was to build an assembly hall adjoining the Church of the Blessed Virgin at 'Harit-Zaweila'. This hall still stands today-perhaps as a memorial to atone for his sins. It is still being used by the nuns of the convent attached to the church.

Altogether, the Copts during the papacy of Abba Marcus VI suffered the double ordeal of having to bear Turkish injustice, as well

as the unfairness and uncharitableness of their own supreme shepherd. This hurt them much more deeply because it was neither what they expected nor had been accustomed to.

In 1660 A.D. Abba Marcus VI went unto his reward after a very short illness. He was interred in the vault set aside for the burial of Popes in the Church of 'Abu Seifein' in Old Cairo.<sup>7</sup>

668. One of the notable Coptic laymen of this period, whose name deserves being recorded is Abu Daqn il-Menoufi who has legated to posterity a book on the history of the Copts, the Arabic title of which is 'Mogmal tarikh il-Qibt wa's-Said wa'l Habashah' (or Concise history of the Copts, the Said (i.e. Upper Egypt and Ethiopia.) Abu Daqn's book is still extant and is presently kept at the Bodleian Library of Oxford University. In it he gives a detailed description of the spiritual and social state of the Copts, a logical exposition of their Orthodox Doctrines, and a comparison between them and other Christians. In 1675 his book was translated into Latin and in 1693 into English. In the year 1740 it was published in Holland with commentaries on various parts of it by the Orientalist Jean Nicole.<sup>8</sup>

Here are a few of the interesting facts Abu Daqn has recorded in his book: He said that the Copts who served the State lived in security, together with their families, for the princes treated them with great cordiality;...that the Coptic monks and nuns were more ascetic and more meticulous in performing their rites and rituals;...that education among the Copts (of the times, of course) was of a lower standard than among the Europeans;... that one of the aspirations dominating the

Copts was their desire to visit the Holy Land. ...that there were many among them who were expert goldsmiths, metal and wood-carvers, and who excelled in many other arts and crafts. As for family life, he said, they considered that it was sacred and should be carefully guarded. He goes into numerous other details about all aspects of the social and religious life of the Copts, which make his book a fascinating revelation of his times.

E. 669. Smarting under the painful experience that Abba Marcus VI had given them and their harassed people, the Coptic leaders promptly decided to select his successor very carefully after praying for guidance and investigating the matter very thoroughly. The bishops and lay-leaders convened together, studied the records of all possible candidates for the august Chair and then narrowed down their choice to two monks: Girgis, the Abbot of the Baramus monastery, and Yohanna, a monk of the same monastery. Sending a delegation to fetch them for the purpose, both resisted so hard on the ground that they were unworthy of this honour, that they were brought to Cairo by force and put under custody in the governor's palace-who, fortunately, was of a friendly disposition, and accepted to set a special wing aside for them. Shortly afterwards, the night guards who were keeping watch over them, noticed through an open window and after the lights had been put out, that as the monk Girgis was kneeling in prayer, there was a light emanating from his head. Excitedly, they related what they had seen to the Copts who came on the regular morning visit. This was taken to be a sign from heaven, and Girgis thus became the final choice. At the appointed time he was led to the Church of Abu Seifein and conse-

crated by the name of Mattheos IV. At his ordination, the Muslims shared the joy of the Copts. This was at the very end of the year 1660 A.D., only about a month before Christmas.

670. Abba Mattheos IV fulfilled all the hopes and aspirations the Copts had placed in him and amply compensated them for the shortcomings of his predecessor. He showed great concern for all his flock, for sharing and alleviating their burdens, and for giving them that kind of compassionate understanding that enabled them to bear whatever came their way. He persevered in visiting the widows and orphans, in seeking out the needy and the stranger, and in making sure that all was well with the affairs of the monks and nuns in the monasteries and convents. In short, he was a supreme shepherd who realized the magnitude of his responsibilities and made every effort to fulfill them faithfully.

One of his accomplishments was the re-examination of the laws of personal status to find out how well-organized they were and how far they were implemented according to the Christian Orthodox traditions and practices. He sent injunctions to his bishops, asking each to make sure that his people understood them and lived in accordance with them.

671. The papacy of Abba Mattheos IV lasted for fourteen years and eight months. During his time, the Copts enjoyed the peace and security for short periods but these alternated with sporadic periods of undue hardships and unfair rules imposed on them for no reason except to squeeze some more money out of them or to satisfy the whim of a ruler or government-official who found pleasure

in putting more pressures on them. It seems, however, that the solicitude and loving paternal concern of Abba Mattheos gave them the inward sense of security needed to strengthen and sustain their endurance. For they quietly bore whatever came their way, which was so often excessively hard to bear. True, some of the poor among them fled and hid in desert caves when they knew the tax-collectors were coming-in order to escape the lash which was the inevitable punishment of those who could not pay; but the amazing fact is that hardly any instance of apostacy is recorded, and that the majority preferred to remain faithful to their Saviour the Christ than to have the burden of hardships and persecution lifted off their shoulders.<sup>10</sup>

672. After years of vigilant service, Abba Mattheos IV felt sick and knew by the spirit that his end was near. He sent, therefore, to the Abbess of the Convent of St. Marina in 'Harit-ir-Rum (an old suburb of Cairo)<sup>10</sup> and entrusting her with the papal possessions, told her to keep them faithfully and to give them to his successor because they belonged to the Church. He also sent a circular letter to the bishops requesting them to shepherd the people with lovingkindness and to keep the zeal for the Christian Faith burning in their hearts. Having thus fulfilled his duty to the end, he rested in the peace of his Lord. He was greatly lamented by his people and was buried in the special papal vault in the Church of 'Abu Seifein'.<sup>11</sup>

673. It was at this epoch that the Orientalist and Dominican monk Vansleb visited Egypt and then<sup>12</sup> wrote his history on the Coptic Church. Since his testimony is that of a westerner who belongs to another Church,

it is worth recording here for he was one of the outsiders who was able to see, objectively, the beauty and spiritual meanings in our Church and its practices, and to describe fairly what he saw. Here, in translation are a very few excerpts of his book. "The Copts venerate the sacred places highly... They deem it necessary to decorate them with diverse forms of beauty... They light candles and candelabras during the Services because the Church-to them-is a symbol of Heaven, and the lights therein represent the stars. They also believe that icons should be placed in churches because this is a practice they have received from the early Christians. They believe that keeping the icons constantly before the eyes of the believers enables them to lift up their souls by contemplating the lives of the saints and martyrs that these icons represent... I have found in these icons numerous meritorious traits such as meekness, modesty and religious expressiveness. They paint the Blessed Virgin with reverence, with a veil covering her head and clothes covering every particle of her body; Her Son is depicted in the same manner. This is a lesson to us-that we should not expose an icon of the Holy Virgin with bare breast, holding Her Son sometimes completely naked... The Copts never place an icon in Church without consecrating it with the 'Chrism',,, They never kneel after partaking of Holy Communion, nor even bow their heads, because they believe that on the day they have taken within them Him Who triumphed over Satan and hell, it is unbecoming to do that which denotes either sadness or servility.." After giving a detailed description of Coptic beliefs, Vansleb describes the people he met and the places he visited. Among these, he speaks of Abba Mikhail who was

Bishop of Fayoum at the time. He describes him as "noble, well-learned, very pious and extremely meek." He says that he received him in his house for a week and patiently expounded to him the Coptic Church doctrines and rituals. Of his visit to the Church of St. Dimiana during the week in which the saint's commemoration was being celebrated, he said that the Church with its twenty-five cupolas was dainty and very attractive, and that it was crowded with Copts and Muslims, too, all of whom believe that the saint appears over the central dome of her Church during the three main days of the feast, and that through her appearance many miracles are effected...

F. 674. During the second half of the 16th century, the Mamlukes gradually regained some of their power and authority in Egypt, even though the Turks remained the titular rulers. This enabled them to become wealthy and influential again, and in many instances, especially in the provinces, they were able to gain good positions and to dominate the Turkish officials. Some times they dominated even the governor himself, who was an appointee of the so called 'Sublime-Porte' (i.e. the Turkish Sultan).

As far as the Copts were concerned, the growth of Mamluke influence was, on certain occasions, a blessing in disguise; this was the case, for example, when once the Turkish Governor-in a fit of maliciousness-was at the point of ordering the demolition of some of the Coptic Churches which, as he had been told, had been repaired and decorated without his permission. Before he had given the order to demolish them, however, the Almighty God had softened the heart of some of the Mamluke princes, so they went

to him and interceded on behalf of the Copts. He accepted their plea, and spared the churches, imposing on the Copts a fine instead. Thankfully, they collected the sum imposed and gave it to their Pope, who in his turn, gave it to the governon...Generally speaking, however, Mamluke power added to Turkish power meant increasing pressure on the Copts, especially as far as the taxes imposed on them went. For the Mamlukes were greedy and wanted special taxes for themselves over and above what was being paid to the general treasury for the Turkish government. 13

675. The Pope who was destined to be the one hundred and third Head of the Coptic Church and to direct its affairs and guide his people through the last quarter of the 16th century and almost for two decades of the 17th century was Abba Yoannis XVI.

Formerly a monk at the monastery of St. Antoni, he was selected and consecrated a few months after his predecessor had gone unto his reward. He proved to be just as vigilant, concened and mindful of his responsibilities as Abba Mattheos IV, and he demonstrated this by loving words and deeds towards his people on every possible occasion.

Because he was a man of action, and was blessed with a long papacy, Abba Yoannis was able to accomplish many things in his life, and to meet, solve and overcome numerous problems and repeated outside attempts from the Pope of Rome to win him or win some of his flock.

At the outset, he resolved to establish with his people the closest possible ties in order to provide them with all the help and support he knew they would inevitably need. The first thing he set out to do therefore was go on a pastoral tour to every possible

place both in Upper Egypt and in the Delta. His visits and benediction provided the Copts with strength and comfort, and enabled them to bear the harsh rules to which they were subjected. During his times, for example, in a wave of wickedness, one of the Turkish governors decreed that the Copts going to public baths should wear rattles round their necks. (This rule, however, was not enforced except for two years.) Abba Yoannis often went quietly at night from house to house and gave the needy all the succour and help he could; following the example, the rich vied with other in helping their less favoured brethren.

676. It is regrettable to record that the Pope of Rome and the Catholic missions renewed their attempts, towards the end of this century, to encroach on the independence and rights of the Coptic Church, often using their political power and influence with the Turkish Sultan to achieve their ends. In 1694, the Roman Pontiff succeeded in establishing a Franciscan mission in Upper Egypt and a Jesuit mission in Cairo. The aim of both missions was to meddle in the affairs of the Coptic Church and to try and win some of its adherents to the Catholic faith. But Abba Yoannis XVI remained very vigilant of what they were doing and alerted all his clergymen to be wary and to watch over the flocks. Consequently, the efforts of the missions failed in achieving the desired results, and the Copts of the 17th century remained firm in the Faith legated to them by their fathers. M. Maillet, the French Consul in Cairo, testified to their integrity in a letter which he wrote in 1696 in which he said (in translating): "The number of the faithful is reduced to a small number of Catholics, either born

of Catholic parents or nourished from their infancy on the sentiments of the Roman Church ...the fruits of so much labour, offered with prodigality by the Franciscans and the Jesuits, are reduced ordinarily to the preservation of the few ancient Catholics from the dangerous contagion of the general example."<sup>14</sup>

677. A period of peace prevailed then, and when Abba Yoannis felt he could travel with his heart at rest, he decided to visit the monasteries and both seek spiritual refreshment there as well as attend their needs. Staying for a while at the monastery of St. Antoni, he was inspired to rebuild the monastery of St. Paul which was not far from it. The monks of St. Antoni's monastery became enthusiastic for the project and promised to undertake it, if the necessary building materials were sent to them, together with a few skilled workers. Estimating the materials and the number and kind of workers needed, Abba Yoannis sent them along to them upon his return to Cairo after a stay of four months with them.

When the reconstruction of the monastery was completed—including the monks' cells, the small guest-house and the Church—word was sent to the Pope informing him about it and requesting him to bless them with his visit again in order to consecrate the Church. Preparing all that was needed for the Church: the altar vessels, the books, the crosses, the censers and incense, the curtains and carpets, the holy vestments and the Chrism, he packed them, and taking with him a priest, his own secretary and four laymen to accompany him, they all headed for the eastern desert. After a rest and short stay in St. Antoni's monastery, monks and papal company together went to the newly-built monastery.

All of them, including Abba Yoannis himself, co-operated in furnishing the church and putting it in the shape necessary and suitable for worship. They covered the altar, spread the carpets, hung the curtain on the door of the sanctuary, etc. By Saturday evening, two days after their arrival, everything was ready, and the Pope started the solemn Prayers of Church-consecration which lasted all night and culminated in the very early morning hours with the chanting of the Holy Liturgy. Thus Abba Yoannis had the great gratification of having rebuilt the monastery of the very first saint who had gone to the desert to be "alone with the Alone"-that same monastery which had been destroyed by the marauding Arab nomads well over a century earlier. Since then, thank God, no destructive hands touched the Eastern monasteries.<sup>15</sup>

678. Abba Yoannis enjoyed bountiful heavenly blessings. He was given the opportunity to build a number of churches, to restore others, and to ordain the priests and deacons needed for service therein. In addition, he began the tradition--still followed today--of having the Holy Eucharist taken by the priest to the sick, the infirm, and the aged (i.e. to all) who were unable to attend the church services and who desired to receive Holy Communion.

Another great satisfaction Abba Yoannis had was to visit the Holy Land, a visit which fulfilled a yearning he had long had.<sup>16</sup> In the year 1709 A.D. he was able to realize his deep-rooted wish. A few months before starting his journey he sent a circular letter telling his bishops of his intention. The moment was propitious, he told them for any of them who wished to go, for a strong governor had just been appointed for the region

of Gaza and had restored peace and order after the previous chaotic situation in which it was hazardous to travel. The Pope's letter filled not only the bishops but many of the people with enthusiasm. All who could, hastened to respond and to plan on the trip. The Pope and his retinue left Cairo on the 11th of March, 1709 and arrived at Jerusalem a month later. After rejoicing because of the thrill of walking on the same roads that their Saviour had trodden, and being entranced by celebrating His glorious Resurrection, they returned to Egypt, their hearts brimming over with joy and thankfulness!<sup>17</sup>

679. Although the times of Abba Yoannis were, generally speaking, times in which all Egyptians, including the Copts enjoyed comparative peace, it is regrettable to say that three recurrent plagues had a devastating effect on the land. In the third of these epidemics, the Pope himself was a victim of it. He had reached old age, but he so loved the people that he continued to visit those who lay sick or dying, and he travailed mightily for them in prayer. With this incessant physical and spiritual striving, he finally succumbed. The pestilence had ended but so had the life of the Pope. He had guided the Church for forty-two years and three months, a period during which the Holy Spirit had been his constant source of inspiration and guidance. The day of his departure was one of great sadness among all Egyptians, from the shores of the Mediterranean to the hills of Asswan, among Muslims as well as Christians. They all felt that they had lost a loving and understanding father.<sup>18</sup>

680. This Yohanine era was also blessed by a number of leaders, both laymen and bishops.

Apparently the vigilance and loving personality of the supreme head of the Church stimulated those who had hidden talents for service, and motivated them to put these talents to work for the public good. Among the numerous laymen who dedicated themselves to the service of their church, two will be cited as examples: Girgis Abu Mansur at-Tukhi, and Yohanna Abu Misri.

Girgis Abu Mansur lived in a house adjacent to the Church of the Blessed Virgin at 'Harit-ar-Rum', which was the Papal Seat at the time. He had had an only son who died in his youth. At his death he decided to consecrate his time, energy and money to serve his church and people. The Pope had appointed him supervisor of the Church of Harit-ar-Rum, and each Sunday, after the service, he developed the habit of inviting the ministrant priest, the deacons and as many of the congregation as could come, to his home for lunch. The poor were especially invited and served with great hospitality. In appreciation of what he was doing, the Pope himself sometimes attended these luncheons and enjoyed the bounty of his loyal son. Girgis had also shown great zeal in repairing and re-decorating both Churches at Harit-ar-Rum, the main Church of the Holy Virgin and the Church of St. George next to it. On being appointed supervisor, also, of 'al-Moallakah Church in Old Cairo, he undertook the same work of repairing and redecorating it as well as completing its library building. He rendered invaluable services, all of which are recorded in manuscripts of the times.<sup>19</sup>

Yohanna Abu Misri worked as chief scribe and financial supervisor of the Government of Egypt, but he was very attached to his Church. The Pope appointed him adminis-

trator of the Church of the Holy Virgin at 'Harit-Zaweila, and he served it faithfully. Not only did he spend on its maintenance but he gave it many gifts, among which was a new and beautifully carved pulpit. He also took special interest in its library, and spent large sums of money on having new books manuscripts and added to it. He appointed a deacon called Nessim Boutros to be curator for it. 20

Of the outstanding bishops of this age, and they were many, two also will be singled out: Abba Athanasius, Bishop of Bahnassa and Ashmunein; and Abba Mikhail, Bishop of Melig and Attrib. The former devoted a good part of his time on expounding the Orthodox Doctrine and to help maintain the hearts of his children deply-rooted in it. He was a very effective speaker who made the people aware of the grandeur of their heritage. 21

Abba Mikhail of Melig was a writer and some of his writings are fortunately still extant. One of these is a Synaxarium (or resume of biographies of saints and martyrs), and the other is an incomplete manuscript consisting of 560 pages (the rest of it having apparently gotten lost.) The title of this manuscript is 'Spiritual Medicine.' At the beginning of our present century, a German orientalist called Franz Coln translated it into his own language and published it in the periodical called 'Revue Oriens Christianus' between the years 1906 and 1908. 22

### XXXVIII. NOTES

1. K.S. Nakhla.p.92
2. Hasan Othman.'Tarikh Misr fi l-asr il-Othamani'.p.254.

3. Y. Girgis. 'Mowgaz tarikh il-Batarika'.  
vol.II.p.71.
4. W.Smith & H.Wace. A dictionary of Christian biography, literature, sects, doctrine.london, 1877.vol.I,p.680.
5. Ms.no.47 hist. kept at the Papal Library, Cairo.p.3.
6. K.S.Nakhla.Silsilat...ser.IV.pp.107-108.
7. ibid.p.110.
8. Y.N.Rofeila.p.254;Coptic Ency.(in Arabic)
9. K.S.Nakhla.op.cit.pp.121-2.
10. Two old churches and a convent still stand today in the same spot at Harit-ir-Rum.
11. K.S.Nakhla.ibid.pp.130-132;also Mss.no.289 and 343 Ritual, kept at the monastery of St. Antoni.
12. Vansleb.'Histoire de l'Eglise Copte' of which a copy is in the Oriental collection of the New York Public Library. Vansleb's remarks on the Bishop of Fayoum coincide with those of the English writer -Leeder - in his book "Modern Sons of the Pharoahs" pub.in 1919. See his chap. on Abba Abraam and SS 637 & 774C of this book.
13. Ms.no.391.Ritual, kept at the Lib. of St. Antoni's Monastery.
14. G.Macaire:Histoire de l'Eglise d'Alexandrie.p.336;M.Fowler."Christian Egypt".p.121.

15. K.S.Nakhla...pp.146-8.
16. This yearning to visit the Holy Land and the hope of fulfilling it, fills the hearts of all sincere Copts.
17. Ms.no.128.Ritual.Coptic Mus. Lib.,Old Cairo;"Tarikh'l Korsi'l Oroshalimi" pub. in the monthly "An-Nahda'l Marcosiya" July 1953-Feb.1954-taken from Ms.202(Coptic Mus. Lib.).
18. Special Synaxarium of St. Antoni's Monastery.no.343.
19. Ms.128.Ritual;Ms.391. Lib.of St.Antoni's Monastery.
20. Mss.nos.13-55 (Lib. of Harit Zaweila Church) dated 15th Misra 1421 A.M.(1705 A.D.).
21. Fr.M.Bahr: "Iqlim ul-Minia..."pub. in Sawtash-Shuhada vol.IV.nos.6-7.(June-July) 1962.p.40.
22. Vol.VI,1906.pp.70-237;vol.VII,1907,pp.1-135,&vol.VIII,1908,pp.110-229; Two copies of this Ms. are kept at the Papal Lib. Cairo: nos. 390 (507) & 437 (753) respectively.

## XXXIX. THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

- A. Abba Petros VI
- B. Abba Yoannis XVII
- C. Abba Marcus VII
- D. Abba Yoannis XVIII

- 681. Petros, a monk from St. Paul's monastery elected
- 682. He goes on a pastoral tour
- 683. Succeeds in influencing Turkish governor to decree that Christians abide by their own laws in personal status problems
- 684. Abba Petros succumbs to the plague
- 685. Notable bishops of the age of Abba Petros
- 686. A turbulent period
- 687. In spite of external circumstances, Copts convene to elect their 105th Pope
- 688. Two major problems Yoannis XVII had to cope with
- 689. Valiant, persistent fight put up by Abba Yoannis
- 690. Death of Abba Yoannis XVII
- 691. Abba Marcus VII
- 692. Similarity of problems he had to cope with
- 693. Short period of peace provides chance for pastoral tour
- 694. Appointment of first Roman Catholic Bishop of Egypt
- 695. Efforts of Abba Marcus and other Church spiritual leaders to counteract foreigners' doctrinal teachings
- 696. Abba Marcus VII rests in the Lord
- 697. Consecration of Abba Yoannis XVIII

- 698. Growth of mystic movements
- 699. Appearance of Ali Bey al-Kabir on the political scene
- 700. Ali Bey is betrayed by a rival Mamluke
- 701. A messenger from Rome arrives at this gloomy hour to tempt the Pope of Alexandria to pronounce his allegiance to Rome
- 701. Abba Yoannis commissions Abba Yussab ibn il-Abahh, one of his most erudite bishops, to send to the Pope a written answer that causes him to end his efforts
- 703. Abba Yoannis XVIII rests from his labours in 1790 A.D.
- 704. A few Coptic laymen of this era

A. 681. In September, 1718 A.D., about two months after his predecessor had passed away, Abba Petros VIth, the one hundred and fourth successor of St. Mark was elevated to take his place in the unbroken line of Coptic Popes-of the See of Alexandria. He had been a monk by the same name in the monastery of St. Paul, and the departed Abba Yoannis XVI had known him well and spoken highly of him on numerous occasions. At the time that he had visited the monastery to consecrate its reconstructed church, he had seized the opportunity and ordained him priest. The bishops and lay leaders who had accompanied their Pope then, all remembered him well. When, therefore, his name was mentioned as a possible successor to the papacy he was endorsed by a good number, and elected by unanimous agreement. There was a feeling of optimism and confidence that he would be a shepherd worthy of the dignity conferred upon him. And when Abba Petros VI did assume his responsibility, he amply justified the people's expectations of him.

682. During the first year of his papacy, the two most outstanding Mamluke princes contended against each other and thus unbalanced the people's normal daily life. As soon as the contentions ceased and orderly life was restored again, Abba Petros found it opportune to go on a pastoral tour. Providentially, this successor of St. Mark enjoyed great favour with the ruling governors and princes. This favour made his journey easy and free from provocations. In conformity with the tradition of his predecessors, he responded to the needs of his people, and the length of his visits to the various towns and villages was determined by those needs. The paternal solicitude he showed them led to mutual affection and understanding between them and bore rich fruits when he appealed to them to promote the philanthropic and building projects of the Church.

683. Upon his return to Cairo, Abba Petros exerted his influence with the Turkish governor and succeeded in making his issue a 'Firman' (or official decree) acknowledging the right of the Copts to follow their own laws (as defined in Christian teachings) for marriage and divorce. This was a landmark achievement,<sup>1</sup> and one of the numerous notable accomplishments of this Pope.

684. In the midst of a period of relative peace and constructive activity, and while he was going around trying to succour those among his children who had been victimized by the plague, Abba Petros himself succumbed to that merciless epidemic. He had been a vigilant and faithful servant of His Lord for seven and <sup>2</sup>a half years when his life came to its end.

685. During these short years of his stewardship, Abba Petros VI was aided in his work of edification by a number of diligent labourers. Foremost among them was Abba Petros, Bishop of Esna who made a special study of ecclesiastical laws and regulations. He wrote a book on them in the form of questions and answers. This book is still extant in manuscript form<sup>3</sup> and is kept at the Papal Library in Cairo.

Another vigilant shepherd of the times of Abba Petros VI was Abba Mikhail, Bishop of Bahnassa and Ashmunein, who is entitled "al-allamah" or the scholar. He legated to us a number of books, the greatest of which is a comprehensive explanation of the Orthodox Doctrines of the Coptic Church. This book also is in the Papal Library.<sup>4</sup>

B. 686. No sooner had the misfortunes caused by the plague subsided than the country was subjected to a different kind of misfortune that cause hardships and suffering to all the people and particularly to the Copts. The Turks increased the taxes they were levying, and the Mamlukes retaliated by rioting against the Turks. Violence spread, and to all appearances it seemed as if it was the law of the jungle and not any civil law that ruled. Over and above the intensified imposition of taxes on all, a specific 'capitation' tax was imposed on the Copts, and everybody had to pay it, whether rich or poor, clergyman or layman. What made matters worse was that the tax collectors were not Egyptians whose hearts could soften at their countrymen's extremity but were agents sent by the Sultan to do this job and return to their own country. They seemed like birds of prey which swoop on their victims and then fly carrying their spoil. This was indeed a dark hour for all.<sup>5</sup>

687. In spite of this darkness and all the untoward external circumstances, bishops and layleaders managed, with providential aid, to designate and consecrate the successor to St. Mark's See. Like his predecessor, he had been a monk in St. Paul's monastery. Elevated to the august Chair, he became Abba Yoannis XVII, the one hundred and fifth Pope of the Coptic Church, 1727 A.D.

688. Over and above having to help his people face and deal with the political insecurity and despotic injustice prevalent in his times, Abba Yoannis had to cope with two other major problems of the first magnitude. One of them affected all the Egyptians; the other affected only the Copts. The latter grew out of the former and was a consequence of it.

The problem that affected all the Egyptians was the imposition of the system that came to be known in Egyptian political-economic history as the 'foreign capitulations system.' This system, resulting from numerous treaties signed between the Turkish Sultans and individual foreign countries at various dates of the Turkish rule, granted the foreigners many privileges and rights the Egyptians did not possess. Foremost among these rights was the right to live, buy property, trade and invest money in Egypt without paying any taxes on their land, profit or income; and the right of any foreigner not to be subject to the laws of the country and not to be tried by Egyptian courts for any offence, whatever its nature, even if it be a serious crime.<sup>6</sup>

As a result of the rights and privileges granted through this capitulations system, the second major grave problem threatening only the Copts confronted the Pope and all the religious lay leaders of the Church. For

the Roman Prelate taking advantage of these capitulations, resolved that the time was opportune for the Catholic Church to make a planned systematic assault against the ancient native Church of Egypt. Catholic priests and monks, trained for the purpose, were sent to all the main cities of Upper Egypt that had strong Coptic populations. There they were to open Catholic schools for Coptic boys, and promise free higher education abroad, in France or Italy, for the distinguished among them. Money was spent liberally in all-out efforts to proselytise among the Copts and entice as many as possible from among them to join the Roman Catholic Church. With a little imagination, the inequity and unfair exploitation in the situation becomes very obvious. On the one hand there was the Catholic foreigner, who could freely follow any profession, who had the right to monopolize any industry or commerce, whose schools were above government supervision, and who received bountiful sums from abroad, to spend on the achievement of his goals.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand and in contrast, there was the Egyptian who belonged to the Coptic Church. He was enchained by burdens, hemmed in by Governor and Mamluke, forced to pay a substantial part of his income in taxes or capitation. The confrontation was thus between a wealthy, free person, and a shackled, tattered one. No wonder then that the Catholics had some measure of success. The wonder of it is that with all the advantages on their side their success was neither sweeping nor decisive.

689. Among the reasons that limited the success of the Roman Catholic effort to win the allegiance of the Orthodox Egyptians are two important ones. The first is that in spite of all the vicissitudes of life, the Copts were intensely

patriotic and intensely loyal to their Church; the other is that whenever the Copts were faced with a similar danger, their religious leaders rallied to alert them to it and to stand up with them against it. The loyal layleaders also gave them enthusiastic support.

At this specific time in their history, it should be recorded that Abba Yoannis XVII "fought the good fight" to keep his children within his fold. Like a military general who goes to the battle in person and stands in the front line with his army, he did exactly that. He went on several pastoral tours; he wrote a number of books and epistles (still extant)<sup>8</sup> in which he explained the Orthodox Doctrines and spoke of the valiant stands of the Fathers in the Ecumenical Councils, even in the face of the temporal powers; and he spared no efforts to maintain the integrity and unity of his people. He knew that what these foreigners were doing would result in splitting and splintering, and thus weakening his beloved Church, at a time when more than ever it needed to be made stronger. So, even though his success was partial and he did not achieve complete victory in his fight, he never faltered in his efforts<sup>9</sup> For he kept reminding himself of St. Paul's words: "For necessity is laid upon me; yea woe is me if I preach not." (I Cor. 9:16)

690. After sheherding his people with vigilance and an indomitable spirit, Abba Yoannis XVII entered into the joy of his Lord. He had steered the helm of the Church for eighteen years and three months in this turbulent period.

Contemplating the lives and writings of the Copts of this era, one cannot help but discern that God's Word must have truly been a lamp unto their feet and a light unto

their path (see Ps. 119:105) for with all the surrounding darkness, it would have been impossible to achieve anything without that Light shed from on high.

C. 691. Marcus VII, the 106th Pope of the Coptic Church was consecrated only forty days after his predecessor's decease. This was in 1745 A.D.

692. The problems Abba Marcus had to cope with were essentially similar to those faced by his predecessor. Externally, periods of peace alternated with periods of strife, with fewer peaceful periods than otherwise, for the Mamlukes and the Turks were intermittently in conflict with each other, and the eruption of fury between them kept occurring on and off until the French expedition ended Turkish rule, and Mohammad Ali exterminated the last of the Mamlukes.<sup>10</sup>

Internally, the threat to the unity of his Church still continued, (and was to continue for the Copts until the ecumenical movement started, and the realization dawned upon Western Churches that Co-operation and understanding between Christian people was far more in keeping with the Christ's teachings than was the way of sectarian imposition of one group over another.).

693. During the first two years of his papacy, Abba Marcus was blessed with a period of peace. Short though it was, it provided him with the opportunity of going on a pastoral tour in the same manner as his forebears. These pastoral tours have always been (and still are) a great boon to the Copts, for they cemented their hearts and made possible the establishment of closer relations of affection and mutual understanding between them and

the Head of their Church.

694. Soon enough strife replaced peace, due to a meeting among the soldiers of the governor. No sooner had this strife subsided than the Pope of Rome consecrated the first Catholic bishop of Egypt. And the irony of it is that this Catholic bishop who was alien to Egypt and to her Orthodox Church was given the name of Athanasius, the foremost defender of the Orthodox faith. In line with this irony, this same bishop made his abode in Jerusalem and never set foot on Egyptian soil,<sup>11</sup> but sent a representative to reside in Cairo. The reason for this was that the Roman Pope wanted him to exert some effort with the Turkish Sultan to try making him give the Catholics certain churches in the Holy City. These churches belonged to the Greeks; in this specific case, the Catholic bishop failed in achieving his goal, for the Judge of Islam decreed that the Greek Orthodox rights to these churches were not to be violated.<sup>12</sup>

695. Abba Marcus VII, together with the spiritual leaders of the Church, continued to exert their utmost to safeguard their doctrinal beliefs and to minimize the influence of the foreigners' encroachment upon it. A number of existent manuscripts from this period and to be found either in the Papal Library in Cairo, the Library of the Coptic Museum of Old Cairo, or the British Museum, London, give us fleeting glimpses of the quality and kind of writings made by these leaders for this purpose.<sup>13</sup> They are really worth being the subject of study of some future scholar.

696. When Abba Marcus VII felt that his end was near, he called to his side the eldest of the bishops, who happened to be Abba

Petros of Girga, and entrusted him with the affairs of the Church until St. Mark's new Successor was elected. Then he rested in the peace of His Lord, after having steered the Church through strife and serenity for twenty-four years.

D. 697. The successor of Abba Marcus VII was consecrated only six months after his departure from this world. He became Abba Yoannis XVIII, the one hundred and seventh Pope, and he took the reins of the Church in 1770 A.D. His contemporaries have described him as "eloquent in speech, melodious of voice, beloved, charitable, highly respected and like unto the angels." 14

698. In his epoch, civil and political turmoil continued in the country, and misery was rampant among the Egyptian people. But one outstanding fact about the history of Egypt in general and that of its Church in particular, is that the darkest hours were nonetheless pierced by shafts of light. In this particular period we see this light in the growth of mystic movements. Several schools sprang up, attracting crowds of people and providing them with an outlet from the many causes of discontent and frustration they had. They met in groups to chant and perform certain rituals to the sound of drums and clarionets. These group activities that were semi-religious in nature, created a sense of fraternal solidarity between everybody and led to co-operation and sympathetic actions towards the poor. They also led to the propagation of culture, as they required the study of holy books, of poems and of literary songs which were chanted in unison. Other offshoots of these movements were flourishing of narrative poems, sagas of popular heroes and patriotic canticles,

and the creation of a new type of show called 'Aragoz' (a sort of puppet show) which the Egyptians used as a means of expressing their criticism of their<sup>15</sup> rulers in veiled jokes and subtle witticisms.

699. In the political sky, the pitch darkness was broken for a short while when a ray of light and hope pierced it in the person of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, one of the Mamluke princes whose personality and strong character amply qualified him to rise to power. In 1769, he openly revolted against the Turkish Sultan and succeeded in instituting himself as an independent ruler of Egypt. Elated by his success he sent his army against Hejaz and conquered Mecca; the following year he became master of Damascus. He then contacted the Russians, who were Turkey's enemies, and when he succeeded, he went further and signed a treaty with the Venetian government. Following on this, he opened the Egyptian ports to foreign trade, and even struck his own money, entrusting his finances to the foremost Copt, Rizq-Agha. The historian Jabarti described him by saying: "...he did not have social intercourse except with the sober minded and the elderly...he established security. During his days the Christians won great favour through the mediation of his secretary Rizq, and his assistant secretary Ibrahim ag-Gohari..."<sup>16</sup> For the brief period of seven years, people felt secure and inwardly at rest.<sup>17</sup>

700. Unfortunately, however, Turkey found an ally in another Mamluke who betrayed 'Ali Bey and brought his kindly rule to an end. Thus Egypt was pushed back again into the throttling grip of Turkey. With the fall of 'Ali Bey, anarchy ensued. The chaos was

such that the Copts of Upper Egypt rebelled and refused to pay the taxes, and, for a while at least, the governor left them alone and did not send his agents to chastise them or force them to pay.<sup>18</sup> But this was only for a while; soon enough the old methods, so fraught with cruelty and injustice, of sucking the Copts and trying to get out of them as much revenue as possible without giving them anything in return, were resumed again. And were it not for the Grace of God and the spiritual sustenance they drew from their faith and the support of their religious and lay leaders, they would not have continued to exist as a people.

701. Meanwhile their Supreme Shepherd, Abba Yoannis XVIII continued to bear his full responsibility towards them and to fight gallantly on all fronts, both to defend and stand up with and for them. Thus he tried to uphold their morale; and to do his best to protect his Church's integrity against the repeated Roman Catholic attempts to break it. For the Pope of Rome chose this gloomy hour, when he thought the defenses would be weakest, and sent a Roman monk called Bartholomew to meet Abba Yoannis and speak to him of the advantages his church and people would gain if they were willing to acknowledge the sovereignty of the See of Rome. Abba Yoannis thanked him politely but told him very clearly and firmly that he would certainly not accept his offer to betray his forbears and the sacred legacy he had received from them. He also told him he would give him a written answer to hand to his Pope. Thereupon Abba Yoannis dispatched a message to the most learned and scholarly among his bishops, Abba Yusab ibn il-Abahh, Bishop of Girga, asking him to write a reasoned answer to the demands of Rome.

702. Abba Yusab set himself to the task, and his answer was a detailed, long, reasoned, logical and irrefutable explanation of the true Orthodox doctrines as expounded by the Early Church Fathers and accepted by all Churches even the Church of Rome, until they deviated from it at Chalcedon in 451 A.D. Such was not the intention of the Church of Alexandria then and will never be its intention.

When the Pope of Rome received this epistle, he decided that, for the time being at least, it would be preferable to suspend his efforts to win the Church of Egypt, for they would be fruitless.

Abba Yusab ibn il-Abahh was one of the most active co-workers of Abba Yoannis XVIII in his field activities to teach and preach among his people, and to maintain their faith alive and their loyalty to their Church.<sup>19</sup> In fact he was a prolific writer. One of the spiritual treasures he legated to posterity is a book called 'Silah ul-Mu' Mineen' (or The armour of the believers); he also wrote thirty-one expositions on his doctrines and practices of the Coptic Church.<sup>20</sup>

He lived to a ripe old age, and though consecrated bishop by Abba Yoannis XVIII, in 1773 A.D., he continued his struggle under three succeeding Popes.

703. As for Abba Yoannis himself, he, too, served his Church and people for a considerable number of years, for when his papacy ended in 1790, the 18th century was only a decade away from its close. Though unaware of it, the end of the dark tunnel through which Egypt had been passing and suffering so many dire consequences, was approaching.

704. As usual, the historical records concern-

ing any of the Coptic laymen, who served their church during the Turkish period are very scant indeed. This does not mean that there were none, for the works of art left in numerous churches, their continued maintenance, and even the continued existence of the Copts themselves are indications that there must have been a leader-sometimes even many of them. Like the soldiers who fight and fall for their country, they are and will remain unknown soldiers-whose record of achievement is known only to the Almighty God.

However, during the times of Abba Yoannis XVIII, and during the rule of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, a few Copts distinguished themselves about whom we do have some records. Brief mention will be made of three of them.

One of the areas in which Coptic laymen tried to make an honest living was that of the production and trade of crafted goods. Trade was an open field and any person with skill, perseverance and imagination could venture into it. It, too, could provide not only a good means of living but also an outlet from the many frustrations that government pressure created.

Among the Copts who achieved great success in this field was Ghabrial Shenouda, a man from Upper Egypt. Together with a few partners, they carried on a prosperous trade with the Sudan. Ghabrial became an intimate friend of the Sultan of Darfour. So close was this friendship that the Sultan appointed him his deputy and entrusted him with furnishing all the rich embroideries and decorated materials necessary for covering the Ka 'bah and preparing the Holy Carpet.<sup>21</sup> Such confidence denoted the great favour he enjoyed as well as the standard of wealth he attained. But more importantly, he served

church and his Pope faithfully.<sup>22</sup>

Two other lay leaders who served their country as well as their church faithfully and whose eminence was notable because of the government positions they attained were Mo'allim Nairooz and Rizq Agha.

Nairooz was very skillful in accounting and book-keeping and because of that was made scribe of the finance minister of Egypt in the 1760's. He enjoyed the latter's confidence and thus became an influential man. Using his influence he was able to get permission for himself and all who wished to join him of the Copts to go to Jerusalem on pilgrimage one Easter season. Unfortunately his planned trip was not consummated because when he and the large group who had come to join him from various parts of the country gathered and encamped outside Cairo in preparation for the journey, a mob was incited against them. The mob attacked and pillaged them and so they dispersed as quickly as they could in order to escape with their lives. Nonetheless, this unfortunate incident does not reflect on the influence of Nairooz but on the sad fact that mobs could be easily aroused against Copts.<sup>23</sup>

As for Rizq he was a man who possessed a number of outstanding qualities. He was well-versed in mathematics, astronomy, fiscal subjects and ecclesiastical teachings. Besides he was equitable, a man of his word, and a person dedicated to serve all people equally well. All these qualities singled him out so that he served as secretary to Sheikh al-Hamaqy, one of the four leading sheikhs of Islam. His integrity and the way in which he resolved problems led to his appointment as Magistrate over the Sharqeya province,<sup>24</sup> because a number of lawless persons had got into the habit of intercepting the Caravan

of the Holy Carpet and looting and killing the pilgrims. Again, Rizq lived up to the trust placed in him and took the action necessary to end this situation.

During his term of office, he received a plea from an English traveller-explorer called Bross, who had arrived in Alexandria on his way to Ethiopia and its neighbouring countries. He was carrying with him geographical and astronomical instruments, and the customs officials, thinking they were war weapons, had confiscated them. In this dilemma Bross sent his appeal to Rizq who immediately gave orders for the release of those instruments. Arriving in Cairo, Bross called on Rizq to thank him and offered him some gifts. Rizq declined to accept the gifts, asked to see the instruments, and invited Bross to be his guest while in Cairo. Bross accepted and stayed<sub>25</sub> in his home for three days before moving on.

When 'Ali Bey al-Kabir became ruler of Egypt, he took Rizq for secretary, then appointed him Director of the Mint and vizier of finance. He served him faithfully and loyally all during his rule.

The life of Rizq Agha came to a tragic end, however, just as the life of 'Ali Bey; for Abu'd Dahab, the Mamluke who had betrayed 'Ali Bey and killed him<sub>26</sub> upon succeeding him, also killed Rizq Agha.

These are only three among the many other laymen, known and unknown, distinguished or simple, who through the succeeding generations of Copts that lived under the heavy yoke of Turkey, clung tenaciously to their Church, responded to and supported their religious leaders as best they could, and thereby all contributed to maintaining alive "the altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt" of which the prophet

Isaiah had prophesied. (Isa. 19:19).

### XXXIX. NOTES

1. M. al-Qommos.p.622.
2. Fr. Shenouda al-Baramusi.vol.II.p.512.
3. Mss.no.755.dated 1715 A.D.
4. Mss.no.171.Theol.
5. Fr. Sh. al-Baramusi.ibid.p.513.
6. For an exposition of this system see article in Ency.Brit.14th ed.,vol.IV,p.802. This unjust capitulations system continued being applied until 1937 when it was abolished by the Treaty signed at Montreux between the Egyptian and British governments. Among the many Egyptians who strove to abolish it was Habib el Masri (Pasha) who wrote a long paper on the subject, exposing the capitulations' innumerable abuses and appealing for their repeal. This paper was presented at the International Parliamentary Conference held in Paris in August, 1927.
7. H.Deherain.Histoire de la Nation Egyptienne,T.V.L'Egypte Turcque.p.197.
8. Ms. 56 Lit. kept at the Library of the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo.
9. M.al-Qommos.pp.623-26.
10. P.M.Holt. Egypt and the fertile crescent. Cornell U.P.,1966.p.60;M.Sharobim al-Kafi fi tarikh misr...pp.111-12.

11. G. Macaire.op.cit...Cairo.1894.
12. D. Rizq.'Qissat al-Aqbat...'p.49
13. Ms. 342 (no.410) kept at the Coptic Museum Library;Ms.487 (no.818) kept at the Papal Library, Cairo; Catalogue of Coptic Mss. kept at the British Museum,pp.353&360; Mss. nos. 841 and 857.
14. M.al-Qommos.p.627.
15. Hasan 'Othman.op.cit. a chap. in the book entitled 'L\_MuGMAL FI IT\_Tarikh il-Misri'.ed. by Hasan Ibrahim Hasan.pp.274-8.
16. Gabarti.Ajaib ul-athar.'...V.I.p.381.
17. J. Aldridge.Cairo,Boston,1969.p.153.
18. ibid.p.151.
19. Fr.S.T. as-Suriani.Abba Yusab ibn il-Abahh.Article pub. in Majallat ul-Mahabba' Nov./Dec. 1968.pp.322.
20. Mss.no.330-390 kept at the Papal Library, Cairo.
21. The Ka 'bah is the sacred black stone in the midst of the mosque at Mecca, round which the Muslim pilgrims make their processional prayers. Each year the coverings are changed, being offered by one of the Muslim Monarchs. The Holy Carpet is also a yearly royal donation to be used for prayer.
22. G. Yaqub. Mowgaz...Vol.II,pp.73-74.
23. M.Sharohim.op.cit...Vol.II.p.140;J.Aldridge. p.142.

24. Gabarti.V.I.p.381. As for the Sharqiya, it is the province running parallel to the Suez Canal.

25. A.Zaqlama.al-Mamaleek fi Misr.p.81.

26. K.S.Nakhla and F.Kamil.op.cit.pp.140-41.

XL. THE TURMOIL AND CHANGES  
CAUSED BY THE FRENCH EXPEDITION

- A. Abba Marcus VIII, who witnessed and shared with his people the experience of these changes
  - B. The distinguished Coptic laymen of the times
    - 1. The illustrious Gauhari brothers; Ibrahim and Girgis
    - 2. A number of others who served in various capacities
    - 3. General Yaqub
- 
- 705. Abba Marcus VIII and the thirteen eventful years he spent on the Chair of St. Mark
  - 706. The Gauhari brothers: the life and works of Ibrahim
  - 707. His brother and successor Girgis
  - 708. Eminent Copts who served in various capacities during the brief French rule
  - 709. Muallim Malati, chief judge of the assembly appointed by Napoleon
  - 710. Muallim Ya'qub who later became a General in the French Army
- 
705. Dr. A. S. Atiya, the notable scholar and historian of our times whose works won for him international renown, wrote the following words which, in translation, say: "... most splendid in our history is the unbroken chain of Popes of Alexandria, who represent the spiritual personality of the Copts; the archons (or lay leaders) of the people used

to bring them in chains in order to seat them on the Chair of St. Mark. There was no rivalry over the ecclesiastical positions because they could estimate their weighty responsibilities. In fact our Coptic Church by its traditions and rituals which it has carefully guarded to the present is a living museum of early Christianity. In this careful guardianship it differs from the churches of the West that have accepted many changes. Our duty is to continue guarding these religious traditions and sacred rituals as carefully as our forebears and to protect them from innovation..." 1

That the Coptic Popes represented the Church's spiritual personality as Dr. Atiya stated is certainly true. But it must be constantly kept in mind that they were also the actively solicitous Fathers who constantly stood in the front line to defend their children, to bear with them whatever they had to bear and to share with them all their terrors as well as all their joys and ecstasies. With them they passed through "the valley of the shadow of death" as well as through the sunny planes, immersing themselves completely in all their experiences and thus giving them support, sustenance and strength to survive and to triumph.

Abba Marcus VIII, the 108th Pope in the chain of succession to St. Mark, was the Pope who lived and shared with his people one of the most momentous periods of Egypt's history—a period the events of which changed its character and direction and marked for it the end of one era and the beginning of another. He was consecrated in 1797, only four months after his predecessor had passed away. In 1798, just one year after he had acceded to the Chair, the French conquest of Egypt, under Napoleon, took place. It

was a short-lived conquest, lasting only three years but it had deep and far-reaching consequences; for many of the drastic changes brought about by it, for good or evil, intentionally or unintentionally, lasted long after it was over and even to this day. (One of the most palpable lasting influences of the French occupation of Egypt is the stamp they left on Egyptian civil law, which-when written-was based totally on the Napoleonic code.)<sup>2</sup>

Because Abba Marcus VIII was destined to be the Coptic Pope at this specific period in history, it was his lot to share with his country and people the numerous terrors and agonies, as well as the ecstasies of their achievements. The agonizing experiences were caused by the invasion of an army of foreign soldiers who entered his country and fought on Egyptian soil. Inevitably this brought much suffering, killing, looting, pillaging and destruction committed not only by the invading army but by the furious Turks and Mamlukes who were being routed. The fury of the Turks sometimes expressed itself in the indiscriminate killing of Christians whether French or Egyptian. The French army was bent on winning this land, which Napoleon had realized was crucially situated and would be necessary for him if he were to build his dreamt-of world empire. The Egyptian people themselves were hardly in a position to stand up against the French since they had been down-trodden, ill-treated and untrained in war. It was the Mamlukes and Turks, who lived off the wealth of the land and whose young men were trained in warfare, whose armies were supposed to ward off any foreign attacks on Egypt. However these two 'foreign' peoples themselves either did not care or were unable to stand up against the French. And when Napoleon reached Cairo,

it was the Egyptians' deep sense of patriotism that impelled them to try and defend it, however their attempt. An American writer has described this by saying: "As soon as the Egyptians saw the French army, they hurled themselves at it with fury. The battle was bloody on both sides. But the French manoeuvred all over the place, and the Mamluke officers didn't, so that the Egyptians were caught in a terrible cross-fire. It was a hot, windy day, and the citizens of Cairo watched the dust and smoke of battle rising over their city...at the end, the Mamlukes fled..."<sup>3</sup> ...And it was thus that the French occupied Cairo and shortly the whole of Egypt.

Whatever the pains, the suffering or the devastation caused by the French occupation of Egypt and by the historical events that brought it to an end,<sup>4</sup> when regarded retrospectively this momentous occurrence was beneficial in many respects. For it weakened considerably the Turkish power over the country; and even though this power was restored to the Turks for a while—a disgraceful act committed by the British after Nelson's victory at the battle of Abugir<sup>5</sup>—it was never the same again. Just a short period afterwards Mohammad 'Ali rose to power, founded his dynastic rule, exterminated the Mamlukes, and a new page was turned in the history of our ancient land. Modern Egypt was born through the throes of what happened in those short eventful years.

Among the further fruits that Egypt reaped from the brief French presence in it, may be counted the facts that, for the first time, Egypt was exposed to Western thought and politics; and that it became once and for all a factor in international affairs.<sup>6</sup> This opened up for it avenues of communication with the outward world, and life for the

Egyptian society began to change continuously from then onwards.

What about the Copts and St. Mark's Successor during that period of turmoil, change and upheaval? Were they able to take any special action or did they just allow events and circumstances to be dominant and bear whatever they brought upon them? The records that have come down to us give us ample proof that both the Pope and the Coptic laymen whose wealth and positions of leadership had given them some power, co-operated together in doing their best to aid their country, to alleviate human suffering, and to take whatever steps they could to make life better for the Copts.

In the hours of the bitter fighting and the ensuing chaotic conditions and excessive impositions on his children, Abba Marcus had but two roads open to him: First and foremost the road of prayer, and then the road of the pen. He trod both roads simultaneously. If darkness and calamity surrounded him, he knew that the Gate of the Heavenly Father was ever open and would provide the Light necessary to dispel this darkness. And so he had constant recourse to it. Coupled with his ardent entreaties, he set himself to write to his children, for he could neither visit those near nor journey to those far from him. A manuscript in book form containing twenty-eight epistles written by him is still extant.<sup>7</sup> These epistles cover diverse subjects yet all are written with one aim in view, namely that of edifying and consoling his children.

When all battles ceased, and the short period of French occupation ended, the weakened Turkish governing authorities tried to restore some sort of social peace. They made a public declaration saying that neither Christians

nor Jews were to be molested for they were all subjects of the Sultan. They also requested everyone to let bygones be bygones.<sup>8</sup>

Rejoicing at the news of both declaration and request, Abba Marcus started a series of reconstructive works within the Church. He set himself to renew the churches and monasteries that were in need of repair.<sup>9</sup> Moreover God blessed his efforts so that he was able to build a new cathedral in the name of St. Mark on a big lot of land in the center of the city of Cairo (near the main railway station). On the same lot he built a small church in the name of St. Stephen, the first martyr (Acts, Chap.7) and a big house to be the Papal residence. All these constructions remain Coptic landmarks in Cairo to this day. The house continued to be the abode of eight Popes who succeeded Abba Marcus, the last of whom was Abba Kyrillos VI who departed this world in 1970. (The present Pope, Abba Shenouda III, is the first one to reside in the new quarters built for him in the Abba Roweiss area.)

After a few years of constructive activity in which he was privileged to see the dawn of a new day for his country and his people, Abba Marcus VIII went unto his reward. This was in 1810, after he had been a faithful Shepherd for a little over thirteen years.<sup>10</sup>

B. 706. Among the Coptic laymen who, by virtue either of their wealth or their government position (or both), had become distinguished leaders in their Church and co-operated with their Pope in promoting its welfare are a number whose names have come down to us and whose services deserve special mention here. It is important to note that these men rose to distinction and power because they were loyal and faithful in their services

to their country and its government. And it was this that enabled them to render noteworthy services to their Church and their people.

Foremost among the Coptic leaders (or archons) of the times are the two illustrious Gauhari brothers, Ibrahim and Girgis, both of whom had become substantially wealthy through their hard work and invaluable governmental services, and both of whom commanded universal respect from their Muslim and Coptic contemporaries. Ibrahim, who was the older of the two, had actually died on the eve of the French expedition (in 1797) but since his services extended through that period and long after his death, and since his name is always coupled with that of his brother—who outlived it—both of them are remembered as being leaders of that specific time in history.

Ibrahim had moved upward through various governmental positions until he became Chief Scribe for the whole of Egypt—a post that might be likened to that of prime minister in our times. Because of the great influence he wielded, and the wealth he possessed he was often called 'Sultan of the Copts.'

But power, wealth and influence did not make Ibrahim lose touch with the common man, or forget his Church to which he was passionately attached from his boyhood. He remained a humble and excessively charitable man throughout his life and his door remained ever open to the poor and needy who knocked on it and always received help and succour.

When sorely tired by losing his only son, instead of becoming bitter or rebellious, he overcame his grief by intensifying his services to the Church to which he donated most of his wealth in the form of gifts to individual churches or monasteries or to pious

and philanthropic foundations in the community. A list of 283 gifts and endowments bearing his name show the extent of his wealth and his generosity.

Among the further invaluable services Ibrahim ag-Gauhari rendered to his Church must be mentioned that it was he who procured the 'firman' (or Sultan's decree) from Istanbul for the erection of St. Mark's Cathedral and the papal residence that Abba Marcus VIII later constructed; and it was through his influence that legal dispensations were granted for the repair and restoration of numerous churches and monasteries. And finally, his religious zeal had motivated him to hire special scribes and make them copy many of the older theological works for distribution among the churches. This was the first attempt in modern times to revive Coptic theological studies.<sup>11</sup> The most appropriate words with which to end this brief description of his life and works, are the words of 'Proverbs 10:7: "The memory of the just is blessed."

707. Girgis ag-Gauhari was of the same high calibre, and possessed the same noble characteristics as his brother. He succeeded him in his governmental position, and became chief of the diwans of the last two great Mamlukes Ibrahim Bey and Murad Bey.<sup>12</sup>

In 1798, when the French entered Egypt, Girgis ag-Gauhari decided to take positive action to see if he could help his fellow-Copts. He wrote to Napoleon, whom he described as "the true son of the French Revolution, the exponent of the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity;"<sup>13</sup> it was a strong plea on behalf of the Copts. Being a politician, however, and wanting to win the support of the majority, Napoleon's steps were always cautious and had as their ultimate aim gaining

the goodwill of the Muslims. To achieve that, some of his officers even posed as Muslims. Soon however the French, recognizing the talents, skills and abilities of the Copts, used them widely in administration and in other capacities. Girgis ag-Gauhari was appointed to a key position in taxation-after the flight of the Mamluke Amirs from the French-and he came to be considered as the first man among the Copts.

When Napoleon went to Suez and took with him a number of Egyptians-sheikhs, governors, engineers, painters, etc., Girgis ag-Gauhari was among them. Napoleon's officers followed his lead and invariably asked Girgis to accompany them wherever they went.<sup>14</sup>

At the end of the French rule, when the Turks re-entered Egypt, many of the Copts fled from Cairo to its environs. Girgis ag-Gauhari and many of his compeers remained in their homes, however, and openly sought the goodwill of their Muslim compatriots.

When Mohammad 'Ali rose to power, he made Girgis ag-Gauhari his finance secretary. Thus Girgis was unique in that he was the only man of his age who earned and kept the confidence of the Mamlukes, the French and the Turks.

While serving Mohammad 'Ali's government, Girgis was constrained to be somewhat lenient in collecting the taxes because of his compassionate understanding of his compatriots' conditions. Though this endeared him to their hearts, it angered Mohammad 'Ali himself, so he removed him from office, imprisoned him for a short term then released him after demanding of him to pay a high tax himself, and finally banished him to Upper Egypt. He was not permitted to return to Cairo except four years later. Upon his return crowds of Copts and Muslims went

out to meet him and to express their joy at his release. He lived one more year in Cairo enjoying the delight and kind friendship of the people, and then went to meet his Maker in November 1820.<sup>15</sup>

It is interesting to note that there is a lifesize portrait of 'Muallim' Girgis ag-Gauhari in the Oriental Hall of the Versailles Palace. It must also be noted that while Girgis served his country and its government faithfully and devotedly, his services to his Church were just as outstanding as those of his brother's. He shared with him in the contributions to the construction of churches and monasteries, and in endowing them with the needed books, vessels, and expenses for their maintenance.<sup>16</sup>

708. Among the numerous other distinguished Copts who served their country loyally during this period and about whom sketchy records exist, a few more will be mentioned here.

For example, when Napoleon first formed a general 'diwan' or assembly of Egyptians for solving civil and judiciary problems, he appointed a number of Copts in it. Initially this assembly consisted of 60 members, but after Cairo's first revolt against him, he reorganized it and reduced its number to fourteen, of whom four were Copts.

The Coptic members were: Lutfallah il Misri, Garr ul-Ayet, Ibrahim Maqar and Katibas-Sorra; chief among them was Muallim Malati about whom more will be said presently.<sup>17</sup>

Gar-ul-Ayet was a prominent businessman. While in the Assembly he wrote a report which he presented to it on the economical and commercial state of Egypt. He documented it with statistics and explanations. A copy of this report is still kept at the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris.<sup>18</sup>

Copts who served the French in other capacities were Muallim Shukrallah who was appointed to collect the money needed for their evacuation; Muallim Nasrallah and Muallim Rofail, both of whom were translators between the French and the Egyptians; and Muallim 'Abdallah who gathered the labourers to raise the barricades in the hope<sup>19</sup> of blocking the advance of the British army.

709. Muallim Malati was among the Copts who had been already quite eminent when the French arrived. Because he was beloved by all his compatriots, both Muslims and Copts, and because he was reputedly a very equitable person, he was selected by Napoleon to be his Assembly's chief judge and the president of its committee for commerce. At the general meetings he was the Assembly's spokesman who read the conditions set by the government and the decisions reached. He remained active and productive in this assembly until it was disbanded on the eve of the French withdrawal.<sup>20</sup>

When the Turks returned and their rage expressed itself in undue rapacity and extortion, Muallim Malati was one of their unfortunate victims. They seized him, beheaded him and left his body lying by the gate of Zaweila. For two days no one dared to show his compassion and bury this loyal servant of Egypt?<sup>21</sup>

710. The last of the leading Coptic laymen of the period to be discussed here is the most controversial figure of them all: Muallim Ya 'qub Hanna, a man whose career was full of activities and services and who enjoyed the unique position of having been made a 'General' in the French army.

'Muallim 'Ya qub was born in the town of Mallawi, in the middle of the 'Said' or Upper Egypt. After finishing his studies he worked as assistant scribe; but being ambitious he continued studying even while working so that gradually he acquired expertise in several branches of knowledge. Being fond of sports he also learnt to be a master horse-man and a deft swordsman. Working as the scribe of one of the influential Mamlukes, and winning his favour helped him in acquiring these skills.

When Napoleon desired to use the Copts who had talents for his benefit, he appointed Ya qub as general manager of the French expedition. Ya qub had already become a wealthy and influential man. He was charged with supplying provisions for the French army, with collecting taxes from the whole of Upper Egypt, and with planning and controlling the army's general expenditures. In addition, he arranged the systematic carrying of the mail between key points in the country by a group of specially trained camelmen. Also, Ya qub had to carry out the administrative orders of General Desaix, the regional General of the French Army.

Through all these multiple duties and responsibilities, and the experiences he gained from them, Ya qub became convinced that the Egyptians must be trained to defend themselves. He discussed the subject with General Desaix who agreed with him. Subsequently Ya qub gathered 2000 youths from among the Copts of Upper Egypt-as a nucleus for the implementation of his idea-and they began receiving military training by French officers selected by the distinguished General Kleber himself who was second only to Napoleon. And it was thus that for the first time in

centuries the Coptic Legion was formed under the command of Colonel Ya qub Hanna who was later awarded a sword and promoted to the rank of 'General' in the French army.

In 1801, the French signed a treaty with the Turks, accepting to withdraw from Egypt. General Ya qub and his family and some friends decided to depart with them. They embarked on the British battleship 'Pallas' from the port of Alexandria on August 10, 1801. The ship was under the command of Captain Joseph Edmonds. General Ya qub's ultimate motive in leaving his country was to try and convince the British government that Egyptian independence was the only solution to the Egyptian question. Unfortunately, however, Ya qub fell gravely ill and died while the ship was still at sea. (Because of his position, his body was preserved in a case of spirits and laid to rest on French soil at Marseilles in a military funeral on October 18, 1801.)

Ya qub's honourable and patriotic intentions were revealed later when the memoirs of Lascaris, Chevalier of the Order of Malta, were published. Lascaris had been one of his fellow travellers on the 'Pallas' and acted as his interpreter in the deliberations he had, prior to his illness, with Captain Edmonds. He said, among other things, that Ya qub entrusted the Captain with carrying the views he expressed, as a message to his government. Captain Edmonds faithfully delivered this message to the Lord of the Admiralty, then the Earl of St. Vincent, with a covering letter dated October 4, 1801. Reports and notes, found on the person of General Ya qub were also delivered to the British government, and all are still kept in its archives.<sup>22</sup> And thus it was that the last page was turned

in the career and hidden aspirations of Ya qub Hanna of Mallawi, but in this page we catch a glimpse of the Copts' deep sense of nationalism. This sense had ample scope to be revealed again and again in the more than century and a half that have elapsed since the end of that episode in the history of Modern Egypt.

## XL. NOTES

1. Article by Dr.A.S. Atiya, pub.in Magallat Madaris il-Ahad, Jan.1949.p.8.

2. Among the indelible marks left by the French Conquest of Egypt may be cited the following ones. (1) Napoleon had brought along with him an hundred scientists, historians, archaeologists and artists. They set out to discover and study the land from all aspects. As a result, 'L'Institut de l'Egypte' was founded: an unequalled study was made of Egypt and published in the colossal 24-volume work 'Description de l'Egypte'; and the Rosetta Stone was discovered and deciphered by Champollion, thus providing the secrets of the hieroglyphic pictographic language. (2) A further important consequence of the French conquest was the strong foothold that the French language and culture made in Egypt and the influence it exerted and still continues to exert on many sectors of the Egyptian society.

3. J.Aldridge.Cairo.p.155.Boston,1969.

4. For a record of these events, see any good history book of the period, e.g. A.E.

Abdul-Karim.Tarikh Misr...1798-1879 (in Arabic) or in English Tom Little's Modern Egypt,N.Y. 1967;Gregory Blaxland's 'Objectie: Egypt', London, 1966 or any other book on the history of modern Egypt.

5. Moberly Bell. From Pharaoh to Fellah. p.181 where this English writer says: "Whatever may have been the motive, whatever may have been the ultimate cost, Egypt owes to Bonaparte a debt of gratitude for having, even for a moment, lessened the influence of the Porte (Turkey). And to England must remain the disgrace of having, in 1801, replaced her under that yoke. Egypt, the cause of the contentin of the two greatest empires in the world, was handed over to the Turks without one single stipulation for her future welfare."

6. A.S. Atiya.op.cit.p.101.

7. Ms.no.1815 kept at the Papal Library, Cairo.

8. Gabarti.Vol.II,p.183.

9. al-Baramusi,Fr. Shenouda.v.II,p.218.

10. ibid.pp.219-222.

11. Tawfik Iskaros op.cit.vol.I,pp.207-266; Y.Nakhla Rofeila...pp.273-287. (Both books are in Arabic); Gabarti.vol.II (Obituary in 1209 A.H.)

12. A.S. Atiya.op.cit.p.100.

13. ibid.p.101.

14. Gabarti.Diary.vol.I,pp.115 and 193.

15. *ibid.* vol.II, pp.129 and 137.
16. K.S.Nakhla and F.Kamil.Bk.II, pp.137-8
17. The most informative sources about these and other prominent Copts of the times are: T. Iskaros. *Nawabigh ul-Aqbat wa-mashaheerohom* 2 vols., 1910-1913; and R. Tadros. 'Da'irat ul-Ma aref il Qibtiyah'
18. R.Tadros. *Da'irat...* vol.I, pp.13-4.
19. *Gabarti*. vol.II, pp.78 and 158.
20. *ibid.* pp.79 and 87.
21. Rev. S.T. as-Suriani, Muallim Malati Youssef. pub.in *al-Mahabbah* monthly magazine, no.7, vol.35, pp.232-8.
22. *Gabarti*. vol.II. p.158; *Rofeila*. pp.289-91; Coptic Historical Commission, under auspices of Pope Yoannis XIX: Publication no. 3, Cairo 1935; A. S. Atiya: "History of Eastern Christianity". pp.101-3.

XLI. THE COPTS IN THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY

"This above all to thine own self  
be true and it must follow as  
the night the day Thou canst not  
then be false to any man."

Shakespeare

Hamlet, Act I Sc. 3

- 711. Introductory statement
- 712. Spiritual and temporal chieftains
- 713. Condition of Copts
- 714. Permissin to rebuild St. Mark's Cathedral  
in Alexandria
- 715. Three joyful events
- 716. Confrontatin between Abba Petros and  
Russian Ambassador
- 717. Discordant note
- 718. Catholic Church gains official status
- 719. Positive action of Abba Petros in defence  
of his flock
- 720. Bishop Serapamon and the Coptic layleaders  
of the time
- 721. Abba Kyrillos IV "Father of Coptic Renais-  
sance"
- 722. His early life and preparation
- 723. His Monasticism and the projects he  
initiated in the monastery
- 724. Abbot Dawood commissioned by Abba  
Petros to go to Ethiopia
- 725. His return and election
- 726. The educational projects of Abba Kyrillos  
IV
- 727. His buying the first private printing  
press in Egypt.

- 728. Repairing St. Mark's Cathedral and other churches
- 729. Regular weekly assemblies for the priests
- 730. Inauguration of keeping proper Church Archives
- 731. Successful mediation
- 732. Abba Kyrillos IV aims at Orthodox Unity
- 733. Abba Basilius of Jerusalem
- 734. Impact of Kyrillian reforms
- 735. Father Philotheos Awad
- 736. Consecration of Abba Demetrius II
- 737. Accession of Ismail Pasha to the throne of Egypt and its effect on the Copts
- 738. Short-lived Papacy of Abba Demetrius II
- 739. Eminent clergymen and laymen of this age

711. As we follow the story of the Copts during the nineteenth century and on to the twentieth, we are struck by their amazing vitality and their resurgence like a phoenix.<sup>1</sup> This fact immediately reminds us that they are indeed prophetically blessed by God (Isaiah 19:25). Because through our study, we shall discover that for the Copts, the 19th century was one of opening up, of pressing forward, of gaining emancipation from the many Ottoman-imposed restrictions and discriminations, and of pioneering in new fields of worthy services. It was also a century in which the Coptic Church proved to the world what little disregard it had for offers of money, power or security. Over and over again such offers were made by strong foreign Powers or Churches in order to win its allegiance, engulf it under the guise of so-called 'protection' or make it give up its apostolic, bought-by-blood traditions of Faith and Worship in favour of westernized, presumably more 'enlightened' ways. But over and over again the Coptic Church proved true to Itself; and

and It proved that neither gold would dazzle It nor power impress It, for both of these were ephemeral while the Rock on Whom It had leaned through the ages was Eternal and could be trusted forever; and the Faith It held in Him would continue to be the Faith legated by St. Mark and all the Popes, Fathers, and Saints of the Church, who succeeded him.

712. Four Popes succeeded each other on the Chair of St. Mark during this 19th century A.D. in which so many social, political and economic changes took place. The first one was Abba Petros 'L Gawli, the 109th Head of the Coptic Church. He had been a monk in the monastery of St. Antoni, and had been singled out in 1802 by his predecessor to be his assistant. During his years of assistantship he had taken active part in many of the current events of the times in lieu of his aged Pope; and the Copts had a chance to note his loyalty and ability. At the vacancy of the Chair, therefore, he was the one unanimously elected to fill it.

713. The reign of Monammad 'Ali, the governor who had been appointed by the Sublime Porte (as the Turkish Sultan was referred to) to be Viceroy to Egypt in 1805-at the insistent request of the Egyptians,<sup>2</sup> almost coincided with the presiding of Abba Petros VII over the Coptic Church. A cordial relationship developed between the two personalities which made it possible for the Pope to carry out many of his constructive projects.

It took Mohammad 'Ali a few years to rid the country of the last vestiges of the intriguing Mamlukes after the defeat of the British in Rasheed; at the same time he grad-

ually consolidated his own position, and founded his own dynasty.

During his first critical years as Pasha,<sup>3</sup> Mohhamad Ali had several occasions in which to note the patriotism and loyalty of the Copts. Hence he learned to like and trust them. Commenting on that, Gabarti, the well-known historian writes that "...they were selected to work in the diwans of the sheikhs and princes...they were invariably invited to the feasts and banquets...they mutually received and gave precious gifts..."<sup>4</sup>

714. In 1818 some prominent laymen strove to obtain permission to rebuild St. Mark's Cathedral in Alexandria, which had been demolished during the French expedition. Mohammad Ali granted it, issuing a 'firman' (or decree) to Salih Attallah-one of these laymen-empowering him to collect donations while supplying him with the workers needed for the project. This act generated so much enthusiasm that the Cathedral was built within a year's time and Abba Petros consecrated it amidst great jubilation.

715. Three other events gave Abba Petros and his people cause for rejoicing. The first was the arrival of a special deputy from Ethiopia requesting the Pope to select and consecrate a Bishop from their country. This request was immediately complied with. While the Bishop was in retreat for forty days in the monastery after his consecration-according to Coptic tradition<sup>5</sup> - the Church books, vestments, incense, etc. were all prepared for him, and the delegation that was to accompany him was selected. Joyous religious celebrations preceded their departure.

The same thing happened shortly after-

wards when Abba Petros consecrated two Bishops for the Sudan. This came about on the heel of the re-opening of Nubia to Egypt, which made it possible for St. Mark's successor to reach his children there and fulfill their wishes.

A third cause for thankfulness and rejoicing came when Yohanna at-Tawil, one of the outstanding government officials, was able to obtain a viceregal decree empowering the Copts to rebuild the Churches and monasteries in Jerusalem. Elated, and with the document in hand, at-Tawil went immediately to the Pope to give him the good news. Forthwith Abba Petros dispatched to Damascus an architect by the name of Antonios 'Asfour together with Habib Hanna, one of the lay leaders, to meet the Governor and show him the Firman. Endorsing it and adding to it another sealed and signed by him, he sent the two men to Jerusalem. There they met the Chief Judge; in his presence and that of the city chiefs, they registered the two firmans in the High Courts. After these legal steps, they commenced their work. So full of enthusiasm were those who worked on this project that they rebuilt seven Churches and their adjoining halls and houses in two years -completing them on the 2nd of April 1821.<sup>6</sup>

716. One of the famous incidents often recounted about Abba Petros VII concerns the offer for protection made to him by the Ambassador of Russia. It says that accompanied by his private translator, this eminent diplomat went in person one day to call on the Pope. Walking into the courtyard of the Papacy, they found an elderly man sitting on a wooden bench surrounded by books which he was perusing and comparing. They stopped to tell him that

they had come to see the Head of the Coptic Church, and to ask if he could usher them into his presence. To their utter astonishment the man declared to them that he was the person they were seeking. This prompted the Ambassador to ask him, "How is it that you ignore all appearances?;" to which the serene reply was: "The servant is not above His Lord, and my Lord was simple in His dress and frugal in His fare." This answer increased the interlocuter's amazement, so, turning to another subject, he queried: "How is your Church faring?" "Very well" answered the Pope, "and since it is His, and He is Our Shepherd, He will ever keep His Eye on His Church and people." The Ambassador, wondering, still persisted in his questioning. "Did it ever occur to you to ask for protection?...You know, our Czar is mighty and he is the guardian of all the Orthodox." Looking at him calmly Abba Petros asked "Does your mighty Czar die?" Getting an affirmative answer, the simple sage said: "We are under the protection of a King who never dies and is ever watchful over us." Filled with awe, the Ambassador told his translator: "Verily I have not met a man more worthy of serving Our Lord."... On leaving the Papacy the diplomat went straight to Mohammad Ali's palace and related to him the conversation interchanged between him and Abba Petros. This heightened the prestige of <sup>7</sup>St. Mark's Successor in the eyes of the ruler.

717. The one discordant note that marred the harmony of this era came, unfortunately, through the renewed attempt of the Catholic Church to dominate the Coptic Church. And this time the attempt was made through official channels; for the French noting the amicality

of Mohammad Ali towards France, suggested that he use his authority to sway the Copts towards Catholicism. In response to their suggestion, the Pasha called his chief scribe Mu'allim Ghali, his brother Francis and his son Basilios and told them of the French proposition. The three agreed that while it would be impossible for them to induce the Pope or any number of Copts on a large scale to accept this proposition, they themselves were willing to do so for the sake of making the Pasha appear successful in the eyes of his strong allies. And it was thus that these three leaders, their families and their retinues joined the Catholic Church...This was in the month of January 1822. Six months later-on July 1st 1822, Mu'allim Ghali was assassinated by one of Mohammad Ali's own men. The reason??? His brother Francis had forged a letter in the Pasha's name and with his signature requesting the Roman Pontiff to ordain a friend of his as Archbishop of Memphis and promising to coerce the Copts into submission to Rome. Furious by this act, Mohammad Ali himself ordered Ghali's assassination, in accordance with the Oriental concept that the head of a family is responsible for the actions of its members. (The copy of the letter forged by Francis is still kept at the library which once belonged to the Vatican and was later appropriated by Garibaldi.8)

718. The entry of Ghali and his followers into Catholicism gave the Catholic Church the official status it had long been seeking -heretofore without success-in the land of the Pharaohs. This status constituted the first rift, which, alas, was to be followed by other rifts made through the efforts of

missionaries of various Protestant denominational Churches, mostly American, throughout the nineteenth century. Unfortunate as they were—because of the lack of insight and deeper spiritual understanding of the real meaning of unity in Christianity—they caused only fringe damages to the solidarity of the Coptic Church and Its determination to remain true to Itself and to Its inherited Orthodox beliefs.

719. Reacting immediately to these outside attempts to break the unity and solidarity of His Church, Abba Petros took the only course of positive action open to a vigilant shepherd: the course of intensifying his teaching and preaching. By so doing, he hoped to build a strong protective fence around his fold and keep the number of those who strayed out to the minimum number.

The first thing he did was to go on an extended pastoral tour, visiting as many of the towns and villages of Egypt as possible. And then, upon his return, he wrote a series of epistles clarifying the Orthodox Doctrines so valiantly defended by the Fathers.

A number of these epistles are still extant and a mere study of their titles indicates how they were geared to counteract the misleading concepts western missionaries were trying to instill in the minds of the Copts to create in them doubts about their Church, Its faith and Its leaders. The following are examples of these titles of epistles by Abba Petros: (1) An Answer to those who say that God has deprived the Copts of him who can defend them before temporal powers; (2) An Answer to those who say that we are negligent in our endeavours to build up our people; (3) An Answer to those who say that in the Christ there are two separate natures and

two separate wills; (4) An Answer to those who presume that the Copts, unlike other Christians, rarely confess and commune; (5) An Answer to those who feign that the Copts are deprived of their Creator's sustenance; (6) An Exposition to him who is inclined towards doctrines other than his own in quest of worldly honour and wealth; (7) A Lament over those who circulate falsehoods.<sup>9</sup> Abba Petros left a number of other writings besides these epistles, among which is a full-length book entitled 'An Exposition of the Orthodox Doctrine.'<sup>10</sup> To the end of his life, he contended ceaselessly and struggled energetically to keep his flock within his fold and to contain the efforts of the powers that coalesced against him. Among his most laudable acts in striving towards this goal was the foundation and organization of the private and public patriarchal libraries.

An Englishman describes him as follows: "Petros VII, a man of high character did his utmost to improve the condition of the Copts."<sup>11</sup>

It pleased God to grant Abba Petros VII forty-two years, three months and twelve days of Pastoral leadership. He has been described by his contemporaries as "tall of stature, well-built, full of health and a man who hardly ever complained of any ailment." He commended his spirit into the Hands of God on April 6th 1852.<sup>12</sup>

720. Abba Petros'L Gawli had many outstanding contemporaries among the Copts, both laymen and clergymen.

Among the leading bishops of his times was Abba Serapamon, Bishop of the Menufiya province. This man of God was endowed by his Creator with rare spiritual gifts, among

which was the gift of healing.

One of the occasions in which he was called upon to exercise this gift is worthy of being mentioned here. This occasion presented itself when the only daughter of Mohammad Ali got grievously ill, and all medical care failed to cure her. Some of the Viceroy's courtiers-prompted either by real concern or by malice-suggested to him to seek the aid of Abba Petros, who in turn called hastily for Abba Serapamon and asked him to go on this errand of healing. The Bishop obeyed without remonstrance, humbly and confidently trusting that His Lord was able to justify him. Arriving at the palace, he was immediately led to the room where the princess was lying. At sight of him, the young woman screamed and writhed, then fell at his feet in a deadly swoon. The man of indomitable Faith knelt down, took the head of the princess in his hands and prayed, travailing mightily. Making the sign of the Cross over a glass of water, he sprinkled her face, and gave her a drink. The princess suddenly calmed down, heaved a long sigh of relief and sat up, looking normal and healthy. The attending doctor immediately ran out of the room to give the good news to the Viceroy and his family. And there was great rejoicing in the palace. In gratitude, Mohammad Ali offered the Bishop four thousand pounds; but the Bishop refused, and told the Pasha: "If you wish to thank me, kindly re-instate the Coptic officials who have been unjustly treated." The Pasha acquiesced and fulfilled his promise. He also ordered his guards to line up and give the man of God a royal salute as he left the palace.<sup>13</sup>

This miraculous healing was only one of many that the Bishop was instrumental

in performing during his life. He was beloved and venerated by everybody who got to know him because of the compassionate concern with which he invariably responded to their needs.

The prominent Coptic lay leaders of the times were also very numerous--so numerous that if they were to be given due mention and credit for their services to their country and people here, many chapters would have to be written about them. For the Arabic-speaking readers, the best reference source about them is the one mentioned in the two last end-notes, namely the two-volume work by Tawfig Iskaros entitled 'Nawabigh ul-Aqbat wa-mashaheeruhum...' or 'biographies of Famous Copts' in the nineteenth century. For the readers of the English language only, suffice it to say that they consisted of officials in various departments of government as well as in the Diwan of the Viceroy; of accountants, scribes, trusted secretaries to many of the princes and big landlords; of professional men in the fields of medicine, engineering, finances, and administration. And because of their loyalty, ability, high moral quality and devotion to their work, the Copts in general earned the reputation for <sup>14</sup>honesty, integrity, truthfulness and efficiency.

721. The successor of Abba Petros VII, who became the 110th Pope of the Coptic Church, was a Shepherd so outstanding and so unusually progressive for his age, that even though his papacy was of relatively short duration (lasting only seven years--from 1854-1861), he has left an indelible mark on the life and thoughts of the Copts of his time and ever after. And his name has become inextricably coupled with the title he so rightfully

gained, which is 'Father of Coptic Renaissance.'  
This Shepherd is Kyrillos IV.

722. Born of God-fearing parents who were farmers in a small town of Girga in Upper Egypt, he was named Dawood (or David). At the age of seven he was sent to the school adjacent to his town Church where he learned reading, writing, and arithmetic in addition to basic Church Doctrines and prayers. At twelve, he had to work in the field with his father. During his early years of toil and struggle, he became very friendly with the neighbouring Arabs. From them he learned and mastered the arts of riding both the horse and the camel. Oftentimes, also, he accompanied them on their long desert journeys. Thus he acquired the habit of frugality in food and raiment, and developed a leaning towards the contemplative, meditative life.

723. At twenty-two, he hearkened 'the Call' within his heart, and decided to join the monastery of St. Antoni. This was in 1838. Not long after he had become monk, the brethren in the monastery began noting that he possessed a talent for administrative organization, and a keen, avid interest in learning and reasoning. This prompted them two years later to elect him successor of their deceased Abbot. No sooner was he elected than he started a series of projects that demonstrated how worthy he was of their trust.

The monastery of St. Antoni owned a large estate in the town of Boosh (some 80 kilometers south of Cairo). Through vigilance and careful, thoughtful management, he increased its resources substantially. This enabled him to initiate a number of projects that were very progressive.

Among these pioneering projects was the opening of the first free elementary school in the area, for the instruction of all children on and around the estate at Boosh. Then, with an eye to raising the educational, spiritual and intellectual levels of his fellow monks, he founded a library in the monastery for which he acquired all the books and manuscripts he could possibly find. He went on to organize classes and regular meetings in which the monks would assemble to study and discuss what they had read and what he assigned to them and encouraged them to read.

724. While Abbott Dawood was engrossed in his work of edification, several letters were being exchanged between Abba Petros VII and both the Emperor and Bishop of Ethiopia. Through the correspondence of the latter, the Pope was informed that British officers had arrived in Ethiopia and were training young Ethiopians in methods of warfare. However, the Bishop disclosed his strong suspicions that these officers were missionaries in disguise. The Pope decided that this matter could not be investigated through letters but was serious enough to warrant sending a delegation to Ethiopia. Consequently, Abbot Dawood together with a brother monk called Father Barsum were selected by the Pope to go on this mission. ...They found out that the British were indeed guilty of what they had been suspected of, and that, furthermore, wishing to divert the attention of the Copts and to squander their energies, they had roused the Ethiopians and instigated them to request the Turkish Sultan to decree their right of possessing Deir-as-Sultan in Jerusalem (which had belonged to the Copts ever since Sultan Salah-ad-Din

had given it to them). And this is exactly what the Chief Judge of Islam asserted when the Sublime Porte relegated the matter to him after the Ethiopians had presented their request in accordance with the British instigation. Meanwhile Abbot Dawood had succeeded in convincing the Emperor of the real motive of the British, whose officers were consequently expelled from Ethiopia.

725. Having spent one year and four months on this mission in Ethiopia, Abbot Dawood returned to Cairo. Upon his arrival, he found out that three and a half months earlier, Abba Petros VII, had passed away. He also found out that the Copts had made up their minds that they would elect him their next Pope, and were eagerly awaiting his return. And so, shortly after he came back, the sublime Rite of Ordination was chanted by the Bishops over him, raising him to the august Chair of St. Mark by the name of Kyrillos IVth.

726. As Pope, Abba Kyrillos IV showed the same courageous, pioneering spirit of promoting altogether new ideas and projects as he had shown when he had become Abbot of St. Antoni's monastery. This time, however, his projects had the much broader dimensions of being directed towards serving not only the whole Coptic Community, but all Egyptians as well.

Education was one of the chief goals he strove to achieve for as many young people as possible. With the money his predecessor had managed to accumulate through his frugality Abba Kyrillos IV was able to establish the exemplary college he had envisioned, next to the Coptic Papacy. Instruction in it was free, and even text-books and stationery were distributed without charge. The best

available professors were appointed to teach both the standard subjects of the academic curriculum as well as an array of languages: Coptic, Arabic, Turkish, French, English and Italian. The college became his favourite place for meeting the many guests and foreign dignitaries who came to visit him.

Abba Kyrillos opened also two other schools in Cairo—one for boys and one for girls. The latter school was the first of its kind in Egypt, so, he may be regarded as the pioneer of female education in the country. Both these schools are still in existence, fulfilling their educational function.

727. In his ardour to use the printed word as a means of spreading knowledge and enlightenment, Abba Kyrillos bought a printing press from Austria. It was the first private press to be installed in Cairo, and was second only to the Government Printing Press in Bulaq, which had been acquired a few decades earlier by Mohammad 'Ali.

When the press arrived in Alexandria and was carried by train to Cairo, Abba Kyrillos IV happened to be in St. Antoni's monastery at Boosh. But so elated was he at the news of its arrival, that he sent orders to St. Mark's priests and deacons to don their ecclesiastical vestments, go to the station, wait for it and carry it in a procession all the way to the Cathedral, while chanting the joyous Church hymns. Some of the lay-leaders were surprised by the Pope's order. When they asked him about the rationale for it, he answered that he considered this to be an event of such import that had he been in Cairo he would have danced before the

press as King David had danced before the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6:14). For to him it represented the great means through which 'the Word' of knowledge and enlightenment would be printed and propagated, and go forth to fill men's minds and hearts with learning and wisdom!

728. Among the many other activities that Abba Kyrillos undertook was the reparation of old Churches and the building of new ones. One of his greatest achievements was the rebuilding of St. Mark's Cathedral in Ezbekieh, which continued to be the Papal Church for over another hundred years-until the building of the new Cathedral in the Abba Roweiss grounds in the mid-1960's.

729. Following the tradition he had established in the monastery for the monks, Abba Kyrillos organized regular weekly assemblies for all the priests in the Churches of Cairo and its nearby areas. He, himself, made a point of leading these meetings and conducting systematic readings and theological discussions for the edification of his clergymen.

Abba Kyrillos was also rigorous in requiring the priests to practice church discipline, and more especially in regard to traditional sacred music and vestments. He assigned a priest called Father Takla, who was noted for his mastery of the ancient, legated, vocal music of the Church, to give regular classes to the deacons in this enriching form of worship.

730. Abba Kyrillos undertook also the painstaking task of re-organizing the method of handling church property and the intake of

its revenues. He eradicated the informal and often confusing ways in which this was done, and introduced the more orderly book-keeping methods. He also instituted the keeping of standard registers for property, and for marriages, births, deaths and similar matters. Thus the papal archives began to be kept in a proper fashion from then onwards.

731. In 1856, following a misunderstanding between the governments of Egypt and Ethiopia that might have led to war between the two countries - Said Pasha (son of Mohammad 'Ali), who was then the ruler of Egypt - asked Abba Kyrillos IV to go to Ethiopia as a mediator, to try and clear this misunderstanding. The Pope promptly complied and went on this delicate diplomatic mission. Starting on September 4, 1856, he did not return except a year and a half later, in February, 1858, after he had successfully accomplished the purpose of his mission, and settled the differences between the two countries with great tact and skill.<sup>15</sup>

732. Said Pasha was very pleased with the results achieved by Abba Kyrillos on his mission. However, rulers can be fickle in their attitudes, especially when their suspicions are roused by ill-intentioned third parties. And this is what happened-with sad consequences-in the relationship of the Pasha and Abba Kyrillos a little later.

One of the things Abba Kyrillos envisioned was the unity of all the Orthodox Churches. Towards the achievement of this end, he had cultivated the friendships of the Greek and Armenian Patriarchs and invited them to spend some time with him at Boosh, on the estate

of St. Antoni's monastery. Both the British, whom he had outmanoeuvred in Ethiopia, and the French, who had been frustrated by the way in which he had constantly rebuffed all Catholic overtures, found this to be a good chance to malign him in the eyes of the ruler. So, through their diplomats, they whispered in the ears of Said Pasha that should Abba Kyrillos succeed in forming the bonds of union he aspired to, his position would be very strong and he would outrank him, the ruler. Aroused, Said Pasha became angry and suspicious, and sent a messenger to the Governor of Beni-Suef (the province in which Boosh was located) asking him to inform St. Mark's successor that he wanted to see him immediately. Abba Kyrillos IV answered calmly that he would go as soon as the visit of his eminent guests ended. This answer reinforced further the ruler's anger and suspicion. And so, when the man-of-God did actually call on him in all good faith, the ruler—who had given apriori orders—had a poisoned cup of coffee ready to be offered to this illustrious pope,<sup>16</sup> who had served him so faithfully only a short while before.

No sooner had Abba Kyrillos IV left the Pasha's palace and returned to his residence than he felt the pains of the poison's action; but such was the strength of his physique that he got better the next day! The British and French diplomats, dismayed by his resistance suggested to the Khedive that he send him his French doctor. To assure their success they sent with this 'doctor' two men: a Syrian and an Armenian, who had been friends of the venerable Pope. And like Judas, both of them assured the man-

of-God of the skill and goodwill of the doctor. Trusting their friendship, he took the medicine. Within a few hours he was already in the world beyond-on January 30th, 1861. 17

The Papacy of Abba Kyrillos IV lasted for just seven years and eight months, but his achievements and the calibre of his intellect and character were such that he will forever remain one of the outstanding Popes in the chain of St. Mark's notable successors. 18

733. Among the most outstanding Bishops of the age of Kyrillos IV is Abba Basilus, he had been one of his fellow-monks in the monastery of St. Antoni, and a strong affinity had developed between them from those days of prayer and meditation. In 1855, when the See of the Holy City became vacant, Abba Kyrillos ordained him Bishop for that See as well as for the northeast Delta province of Daghaleya. Abba Basilus became one of the most energetic and active Bishops, and increased greatly both the property and the prestige of the Copts in Jerusalem.

Two of the many impressive acts of Abba Basilus deserve special mention here. One of them was that he established and decorated the small but unique and fascinating chapel that the Copts own at the head of the stone of the Holy Sepulchre under the great central dome within the immense Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Copts (or others) who have gone on pilgrimage to the Holy Land know the chapel I am referring to. This chapel indicates that the Copts have the second place within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Greeks were given the first place as they were the compatriots of King Constantine

and his mother Queen Helena who had built this great Christian Sanctuary, after expending great efforts to locate the place where the Christ had been crucified. From the time of its establishment, the Coptic chapel was the envy of many a Church, more especially the Russian one that had no right whatsoever within it. Such being the case, the Russian Consul to Jerusalem went to visit Abba Basilius one day, and-knowing his great need for money to complete his many projects-trying to make to him a very enticing offer for this unique Coptic sanctuary. After an exchange of courtesies, he came to his point by telling the Bishop that, should he be willing to sell the Chapel, the Czar of Russia would be ready to fill it up for him from floor to ceiling, with golden pounds. Abba Basilius asked him how much he thought this sum might amount to, and the Consul answered it would be at least two million pounds. The Bishop looked the Consul straight in the eyes and answered him serenely, "Do you want us to behave like Judas Iscariot and sell our Lord for dross?"

The second act of Bishop Basilius to be recorded here was his acquisition of a large mansion in Jaffa surrounded by ten acres of orange trees, and transforming it into a guest house where the Copts arriving by ship from Egypt, could stay-until they went to Jerusalem, during their pilgrimage on Easter and other festivals.

At that time the diocese of Abba Basilius included the city of Mansoorah, where he stayed a part of each year, diligently serving the Copts who greatly venerated him and gave full support to all his projects. The town of Damietta was also part of his diocese and it was from there that he embarked by ship

to go to the Holy Land.

One Easter season, accompanied by a good number of Copts aboard his ship, they arrived in the city of Jaffa at nightfall. Having no property in the city and no place to go to, the pilgrims accompanying the Bishop sought the trees in the meadows and lay themselves under their shelter. As for the Bishop, the Armenians came to see him, and offered him the hospitality of their own Bishop's mansion. Abba Basilus thanked them but categorically refused this hospitality, saying: "How can I accept the warmth and comfort of a home when my children are all by the wayside? I have only two choices in this situation: either to share sleeping outdoors with my children, or to find a mansion to buy."... The people of Jaffa, eager to secure the blessing of the Bishop, whom they greatly esteemed, scattered to look for saleable property, and returned half an hour later to tell him of the mansion and orange grove mentioned above. He went to see it, liked it and immediately agreed to buy it, offering a third of its price as advance payment. And instead of leaving his children to sleep in the open, he called on all of them to come to their new abode. They all came and spent the night in prayer and praise to the Heavenly Father who so promptly fulfilled their need.

The next morning they went to Jerusalem for their pilgrimage.

In due time through the generous donations of his supporters, Bishop Basilus was able to pay the full price of this property and to build a Church in one of the corners of the grove. When his course was eventually run, he was laid to rest under the altar of that very Church.<sup>19</sup>

734. It is well-nigh impossible to assess the impact of the reforms of Abba Kyrillos IV on the Copts, and the felicitous results they had. Suffice it to say that his College graduated many young men who thronged the departments of state, some reaching the very high posts in the government Administration. Among these may be mentioned Boutros Ghali Pasha and Youssef Wahba Pasha both of whom became Prime Ministers in Egypt, and Mena Ibrahim Bey and Hanna Nasrallah Pasha who reached high posts in the Judiciary. Among their Muslim colleagues may be cited: Hussein Rushdi Pasha who became Prime Minister, then President of the Senate House; and Isma 'il Zuhdi judge in the Court of Appeal.

Many other Coptic laymen of this age distinguished themselves in various fields of service to their country and people-in the areas of education, journalism, medicine and all other fields. The foundations were strongly laid for the renaissance that was to take place within the Coptic Church in the following century, and for the great role that many of the Copts were to play in the national movements within their country.

735. Also among the noteworthy results of the work of Abba Kyrillos was the growth of a new generation of illumined priesthood that was able to stand up and counteract the growing power of the missionaries whose chief aim was to proselytize the Christians, rather than convert non-Christians.

Father Philotheos Ibrahim 'Awad (1837-1904) provided a great example of progressive learning, eloquence and public service. Priest of St. Mark's Cathedral and later Rector of a Special school for the education of monks,

he put up a valiant combat against the inroads of both the Catholic and Protestant missionaries. His zeal and his mastery of the art of preaching, coupled with the appeal of his impressive eloquence, drew great crowds and opened their eyes to the richness of their faith and heritage which far surpassed anything the Western churches could offer. He, also, wrote a book on Coptic Orthodox catechism.

736. What happened to Abba Kyrillos IV was such a stunning blow to the Copts, that it took them a year and four months to recover and consider electing a successor to him. Then, in 1862, by unanimous agreement between bishops and layleaders, a monk from St. Macari's monastery was elected and consecrated Pope by the name of Abba Demetrius II. The consecration took place on Sunday the 16th of June 1862,<sup>21</sup> and Abba Demetrius thus became the 111th Successor of St. Mark.

Abba Demetrius has been described by his contemporaries as "sagacious, wise, a lover of knowledge, vigilant<sup>22</sup> over schools and a considerate organizer." He did his utmost to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor and to continue the good works begun by him but left unfinished when his term was so tragically ended.

One of the regrettable historical facts that have to be mentioned at this point is that it was the Americans who tried to put spokes in the wheels of activities of Abba Demetrius, in order to promote their interests at the expense of the endeavours of the Copts and their Pope. The American Missionaires had arrived on the Egyptian scene about this time, and, promising the Khedive that their missionary activities would not be directed towards evangelization among the Muslims-

they were welcomed by him, and received many privileges bountifully.

While Abba Demetrius II was carrying on his Papal activities, the American Consul met Said Pasha and asked him for a plot of ground on which they might open a school. The Pasha readily complied and gave them a spacious mansion on the Mouski Street, which was then one of Cairo's main thoroughfares (and is, at present, part of the old colourful, native shopping areas in the city.)

The mansion given to the Americans was not far from the Papal residence and Coptic College, because one of the missionaries' aims was to compete with and weaken the educational activities of the Copts. Ironically enough, this mansion, received as a free gift by the Americans, was later sold to Ismail Pasha (nephew of Said who succeeded him) for 7000 pounds.<sup>23</sup>

737. Ismail Pasha acceded to the throne of Egypt in January 1863. He was a man of great vision, and his ambitions for Egypt and for himself were boundless. In his desire to gain international prestige and to transform Egypt into one of the progressive countries of the then civilized world, he was willing to expend every effort and to spend lavishly without consideration of the possible consequences. Everyone who could help him achieve his grandiose dream was given a chance for service: Muslims, Copts, but above all Europeans and Americans. (The Suez Canal was completed and inaugurated during his rule.)<sup>24</sup>

Within the first three years of his reign, schools spread in Egypt not only in the cities but also in the rural areas. Many of these schools were non-governmental, private schools. Of the latter, a goodly portion were endowed

by wealthy Coptic families throughout the country; nonetheless other competing ones were founded by missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant—mainly French and American. Were the American and French objectives purely educational, they would have been welcome by the Copts; but, unfortunately, they went beyond that. The foundation of the Mission Schools was a means to the chief end sought: namely to win converts to Catholicism and Protestantism from among the Copts.

The missionaries had arrived not only in Egypt but in all the countries of the Middle East. In Syria, where the Christian minority belonged to the Church of Antioch, one of the ancient Orthodox Churches and a sister of the Coptic Orthodox Church, a religious sedition erupted as a result of the American missionaries' activities. This sedition provided these missionaries with an opportunity to come to Egypt and bring with them a number of formerly-Orthodox Syrians whom they had proselytized. These Syrians were the stepping stones by means of which the Americans followed the same tactics in the valley of the Nile. One of the Syrians—Faris Hakim—roused a religious riot in Assiut, one of the most progressive and prosperous cities of Upper Egypt and the hometown of numerous Copts. This riot prompted the missionaries to ask their own government to request of Ismail Pasha to strengthen the position of the missionaries and their helpers. Ismail Pasha complied with the American government's request, thus enforcing on the Egyptians the fact that the missionaries were supported by the political power of the West and had come to uphold it.<sup>25</sup>

Having conceded so much to the West, Ismail Pasha realized that he must counter-

balance it in favour of his own subjects. He therefore granted the Copts several pieces of land on which to build schools, and decreed that the Ministry of Education be responsible for the examinations in the Coptic schools in the same way as it was in the government schools, thus ascertaining that the level of education in both Coptic and government schools would be equal.

Another friendly act shown to Abba Demetrius by Ismail Pasha was his provision of a private ship to the Pope in which to sail to Upper Egypt. Taking with him a number of his priests and deacons, Abba Demetrius went on a pastoral tour that lasted three months. He and his companions stopped at all the big cities and numerous towns and villages. They made prodigious efforts all along to expound and defend the Orthodox doctrines. These efforts have been acknowledged and recorded by the Americans themselves.<sup>26</sup> To counteract these efforts, the missionaries roused the vehemence of their proselytes to such a pitch that three formerly-Coptic men, of eminent families, tried to burn the Church of their forefathers in Assuit. They were caught in the act, pleaded guilty, and Ismail Pasha ordered their banishment. Once more the Consuls of England and the U.S. intervened, asking the Pasha to grant them pardon, which he did.<sup>27</sup>

An important event during the reign of Ismail Pasha occurred when he invited the Turkish Sultan to visit Egypt, and the Sultan accepted the invitation. It was during this visit that he officially changed the title of Egypt's governor from 'Pasha' to 'Khedive.'

On the second day of the Sultan's arrival in Egypt, Ismail Pasha held for him a grand

reception to which all Heads of Churches, diplomats and statesmen were invited. As Abba Demetrius arrived and walked into the Audiece Hall, he noted that whoever saluted the Sultan had to kiss the hem of his garment. When his turn came, he kissed the Sultan on the left side of his breast, saying: "In Our Holy Book it is written "The king's heart is in the Hand of the Lord,<sup>28</sup> so in kissing your breast, I have kissed the Hand of the King of Kings and the Sultan of Sultans." This statement so pleased the eminent guest that Ismail Pasha granted the Coptic Papacy 1500 acres of land. This grant enabled the Pope to open twelve schools in Cairo, one in Old Cairo, one in Gizeh and two in Alexandria. In all these schools, apart from the usual curricula, French, English and Italian were taught. <sup>30</sup>

738. Unfortunately the Papacy of Abba Demetrius IInd was also short-lived, lasting seven years, seven months and three days. In the year 1870 he was called unto his final rest, and the Egyptian government joined the Copts in their grief over his departure.<sup>31</sup>

Here is a heart warming comment on him: "Under the Patriarch Demetrius, the Coptic Church is still the most remarkable monument of Christian antiquity."<sup>32</sup>

739. Among the eminent clergymen and laymen of the age of Abba Demetrius IInd many were contemporaries of his predecessor and continued to serve their Church and Pope with the same faithfulness and devotion that they had shown under Kyrillos IVth. One outstanding example was that of the Hegomenos Philotheos 'Awad, already mentioned, who continued to use his writing and oratorical talents to

win back the sheep who had strayed from the flock of their Church. He joined Abba Demetrius on his pastoral tour to Upper Egypt and was one of his best assistants. Two other clergymen who accompanied their Pope on this journey were Fr. Tadros Mena, priest of the Church at 'Fum il-Khalig',<sup>32</sup> who was Administrator of the Papal property and was also known for his strong personality and gift of eloquence; and Fr. Abd-ul-Malik al-Moharraqi, Abbot of the Moharraq Monastery,<sup>33</sup> During his Abbotcy, it happened that the estate of the monastery was raided and so robbed that the monks were in dire need of food and raiment. Fr. Abd-ul-Malik selected fifteen of them, and, together, they went to Istanbul where they succeeded in obtaining an audience with the Sultan. Their meeting with him was so effective that they were given a 'firman' safeguarding the estate of the monastery and<sup>34</sup> forbidding anyone from harassing the monks.

The eminent Coptic laymen of the age were so numerous that it is not possible to list them all here and do justice to their achievements and services. They were men of varied qualifications, skills and talents, who put these talents in the service of their government, their country, and their Church. Therefore a few of them only will be mentioned here as examples of their calibre and their talents.

Two historians whose books have been cited as sources in the present 'Story...' lived in that period. They were Ya'qub Nakhla Rofaila, author of 'Kitab tarikh il-Ommah 'il-Qibtiyyah' (or History of the Coptic Nation); and Kamil Salih Nakhla, author of the five-volume encyclopedic history 'Tarikh al-Ommah al-Qibtiyyah.'

Rofaila began his career as a teacher of English and Italian in the Coptic School adjoining the Papacy, then became its Director, and later was appointed by the Government to be the chief of its official press. This enabled him, when the private Coptic Association called 'at-Tewfiq Society,' was founded and he enrolled in its membership, to participate in buying a press for it and become its Supervisor. Like numerous other lay-leaders, the title of 'Bey' was conferred on Rofaila in recognition of his services by the Khedive.

Other laymen of the age were Tadros 'Erian, Chief of the Finance Administration, and his son 'Basili Pasha Tadros, Counselor of the National Court of Appeal and later honorary President of the Mixed Courts; Ibrahim Bey at Toukhi who served in different government posts, the last of which was Counselor of the National Court of Appeal, besides which he was a consummate theologian and wrote six volumes on Church teachings and doctrine; Dimian Bey Gad, a high official in the Ministry of Finance, who enjoyed such prestige with Khedive Ismail that the Government proclaimed a day of mourning when he died, while all the <sup>35</sup>princes and ministers walked in his funeral; Mikhail Bey Sharobeem, a brilliant man who served the government in various capacities: as translator, as employee in the Customs Department, as the Director of the Port-Said Customs and finally as Judge in the Mansoorah National Court. He was highly esteemed and received medals and decorations from a number of foreign governments, among which were those of Greece, Spain, Iran and Ethiopia. He, too, had the gift of writing, and besides writing several stories, he devoted his last years to writing

his four-volume history of Egypt 'al-Kaifi.'<sup>36</sup> It might be noted, incidentally, that he was the father of one of Egypt's most active, contemporary women, Sophie, Mrs. Youssef Boutros Ghali. Sophie was a prominent worker in the Red Crescent, the Mohammad 'Ali Benevolent Association, and above all the Coptic Women's Association for Child Education. (The author and her sister, together with a number of zealous Coptic women had founded this association to provide free education, including the religious, to poor Coptic children in the suburbs of Cairo as well as in numerous villages of Upper Egypt.) Also, Boutros B. Ghali, the actual Minister for Foreign Affairs, is her son-i.e. grandson to Mikhail Bey.

#### XLI. NOTES

1. Legendary bird whose youth is continuously renewed.
2. M.S. al. Rafi 'i 'Asr Mohammad 'Ali, pp.19, 33 and 64-75.
3. Turkish (and eventually Egyptian) title of honour conferred on governors and eminent men serving the State. This title (as well as all others) was abolished by Nasser when Egypt was declared a Republic on the 23rd of July 1953.
4. Gabarti, 'Aga'ib ul-athar...' vol.IV, pp.68-9.
5. This is due to the example set by the Christ when He went into the desert immediately after his baptism and just before commencing His Ministry-Matt.3:13-17 and 4:1; Mark 1:9-13-See also S577.

6. K.S. Nakhla, *op.cit.* Bk.V, pp.122-5.
7. *ibid*, Bk.V, p.127; T.Iskaros, *op.cit.* Vol.I, p.6.
8. Francis al-Itr: *al-Omma'L Qibtiya*, p.59.
9. Ms.no.361 kept at the Papal Lib., Cairo.
10. Ms.no.1531 kept at the Papal Lib., Cairo.
11. Y.N.Rofeila: *op.cit.* pp.300-5.
12. T.Iskaros: *op.cit.* Vol.I, pp.58-131.
13. *ibid.* Vol.1, pp.131-156 and Vol.II, pp.309-10; 380-1.
14. Y.N.Rofeila: *op.cit.* pp.305-24; T.Iskaros, Vol. II, pp.60-197.
15. It is interesting to note that the Pope used the time of his long journeying to learn Turkish from the eunuchs whom Said Pasha had sent with him, Rofeila: *op.cit.* p.315.
16. Fr. Ph. 'Awad: "Abu'i Islah" (a biography); T. Iskaros: *op.cit.* Vol.II, pp.60-197.
17. M.Fowler: *Christian Egypt*, pp.132-3.
18. Fr. Ph. 'Awad: *op.cit.* pp.1-264.
19. T. Iskaros: *op.cit.* Vol.II, pp.198-279; K.S. Nakhla: *Tarikh al Kursi*. "pub. in *Magallat an-Narda...*" March 1954, p.90 and April 1954 pp.119-20.
20. Iskaros, Vol.II, p.85. It should be noted that Fr. 'Awad is the author cited in notes 16 and 18.

21. Traditionally, consecration of 'all clergymen must take place on a Sunday unless it is chanted on Ascension Day which is always a Thursday.
22. M. Sharobim: *op.cit.* Vol.IV, p.177.
23. E.E. Elder: *Vindication of a Vision*, p.28.
24. For all the works and achievements of Ismail, read in English: 'Ismail the Maligned Khedive' by Pierre Crabites (London, 1935); and in Arabic 'Asr Ismail' by Ilias al Ayyoubi (Cairo 1933).
25. Andrew Watson: *The American Mission in Egypt, 1854-1896...* 2nd Ed. Pittsburgh, U. Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1904, pp. 126-136, 332 and 442.
26. \_\_\_\_\_ p.199; 'Blessed be Egypt' (a quarterly paper) Vol. VII, Jan.1906, no.26, p.26.
27. M. Al-Qommos. p.722. It is worth noting that some of the living grandchildren of these men who had been aroused against their own Church to the point of trying to burn it have now relinquished the Protestant Church and become once more faithful adherents of the Coptic Orthodox Church. The author of this book knows some of them in person.
28. Proverbs XXI:1.
29. Elias ul-Ayubbi. *op.cit.* Vol.I, pp.210-212. It is noteworthy that Abba Demetrius spoke to the Sultan in Turkish.
30. *ibid.* Vol.I, p.221.

31. Fowler.pp.133-35.
32. Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines, ed. by W. Smith and H. Wace.p.81.
33. A suburb within the vicinity of the Citadel, half-way between Cairo and Old Cairo.
34. This monastery is built on a location where the Holy Family stayed while in Egypt. A special Church in the monastery commemorates that blessed event; see also S.230.
35. Rev. S.T. As-Suriani. Al-Adyira al-Misriyyah al-Amira.pp.213-214.
36. K.S.Nakhla.Bk.V.pp.112,235-9 and 243-4.

For more extensive reading on the prominent Coptic laymen of this period, the Arabic-speaking reader is referred to the biographical work by Ramzy Tadros entitled: 'al-Aqbat fi il-quarn il-'ishrin (The Copts in the 20th Century) (contents are mainly about late 19th and early 20th century history and personalities). The publishing date of this book is 1910 and it consists of five volumes. Other Arabic sources of biographical material have already been mentioned in numerous end-notes in this book. Among them are the 2 volume book by T. Iskaros and the historical works of Nakhla and Rofaila.

XLII

"Be astounded O ye heavens..."  
Jeremiah 2:12

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740. When Abba Demetrius II went unto his<sup>1</sup> reward, the Papal-Deputy at Alexandria, was chosen "acting-patriarch" until the election of a new Successor to St. Mark. Ever since 1047 A.D. when the Popes chose Cairo for their residence, a Papal-Deputy is selected to reside in Alexandria.

Before following the onflow of events, however, it is noteworthy to remember that the Coptic Church was—since Its foundation—a Church of the people in which the laity shouldered the burden of responsibility with the clergy. This shouldering was spontaneous and natural in accordance with the Apostolic tradition.<sup>2</sup> But at this specific period, the layleaders decided that their sharing should be official and by government decree. In face of such a decision, it should be noted that there are two divergent means of authority: Law supported by the Sword, and Love whose way is persuasiveness. These two means are exemplified in the incident of the woman taken in adultery.<sup>3</sup> And Paul the Apostle asserted this fact when he said: "The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life."<sup>4</sup> The layleaders, in 1874, began to rationalize after the manner of this world, so they met during its first month and decided to ask the government to decree that the Copts have a "Maglis-Milli," i.e. a community council. This council was to be of twenty-four members elected by public vote every four years; they were to manage the economic, legal and social affairs

of the Church. After this decision, they met the Prime Minister and presented to him their resolution; he obtained for them a decree from the Khedive giving them the demanded legal status-which was thus accorded while St. Mark's Chair was vacant.<sup>5</sup>

741. On the first of November 1874 Yohanna-n-Nasikh (or John the Scribe), a monk from al-Baramus Monastery was elected the 112th Pope of Alexandria by the name of Kyrillos V. No sooner was he consecrated, than the layleaders met and confronted him with the Khedivial decree concerning the community council. At first it seemed that this government-instituted body will be able to work harmoniously with its Pope who was officially its President. But the sombre fact is that dissensions arose and continued for several years. More sombre still is that these dissensions were proclaimed in the daily papers and in public speeches. Those who supported Abba Kyrillos V wrote<sup>6</sup> in Al-Watan, An-Nil, Al-Haq, Al-Fara-id. Opposing them were the writers in At-Tewfiq and Al-Islah. And such was the vehemence of these debates that the Maglis-Milli members supported by some layleaders declared their open rebellion against their Pope!

742. During this distressing episode, it is sad to say that the influence of the missionaries and the western powers fanned the rebellion to fury. Consequently Boutros Ghali (a cabinet minister) headed a group of layleaders and met on the 27th of July 1892; they presented a request to the Khedive to banish St. Mark's Successor to his monastery! Abba Yoannis, Bishop of Bohaira<sup>7</sup> was to be banished also, but to the monastery of Abba Paul (near

the Red Sea) for he was Secretary to the Holy Council and his Pope's right hand. The decree of banishment was not actually issued except on the 9th of September of that same year.

743. The People, however, who were neither minions of the temporal rulers, nor mimics of the missionaries' general trend, but were wholeheartedly loyal to St. Mark's Successor, expressed their indignation so forcefully that on the 31st of January 1893, the governor of Alexandria with two high government officials and two hundred citizens went to al-Baramus Monastery to escort Abba Kyrillos V back with due honour. When he arrived at the Cairo station, he was met by the statesmen and given a military salute. Moreover, in apology, the Khedive conferred on him "al-Wishah'l Magidi" -i.e., the Order of Sultan 'Abd'l Magid-the highest decoration then.

One very important point to note is that ten days later, the rebels returned in repentance like unto the Prodigal Son, and like unto the Loving Father he met them with rejoicing.

744. Here it is incumbent to examine the "why" and "wherefore" of this most unexpected behaviour of these prominent men. Their logical reasons were that the clergy was not as well educated as the laymen; that the land and other property owned by the monasteries should be administered by men living in the world; that problems of personal status (marriage, inheritance, etc...) are the domain of the fathers of families. Now let us suppose that these reasons are valid, they certainly do not justify the methods used. It is therefore necessary to examine the behaviour of Abba

Kyrillos V to see how far these reasons can stand the scrutiny.

745. To begin with St. Mark's Successor was entitled "the Scribe" while in the monastery. This title, he earned because he spent the time allotted for labour in copying and re-editing the books he came across, then in distributing them among the monks. His love for books continued in greater measure when he took the helm of the Church in his hands. For during the months which followed his return to Cairo, he sent his chief archdeacon-Habib Girgis-on a tour of great import: namely to collect money for the projects he aspired to accomplish. Habib Girgis returned with eleven thousand pounds, half of which was donated by the bishops and monasteries, and the other half by the people.

746. The first move he took was to open a Theological Seminary, inaugurating it on the 29th of November 1893. He had bought for it a spacious mansion with a far-flung garden in Mahmasha - a suburb very near the main railway station so that the students coming from the Said and the Delta will be able to reach it even on foot.

Concomittant with the Seminary, Abba Kyrillos V emboldened Qladius Labib to write a Copto-Arabic dictionary because this man was among the very few who persisted in speaking Coptic at home. This is attested to by Y. N. Rofeila in saying: "We should acknowledge the beneficence of H. B. our Father Kyrillos V for encouraging, to his utmost, this author who is the most competent for such a task."9

He also selected for teaching in the Seminary those he deemed most loyal Orthodox as well as most efficient in teaching the rising

generation. Among them were Youssef Manqarius and Habib Girgis who both began as teachers then succeeded each other in its deanship.

747. The following year (1894), he opened a School of Handicraft for boys and one of Housekeeping for girls-both in Bulaq (one of the biggest and poorest suburbs of Cairo). These schools were built within the capacious garden surrounding the Church of St. Dimiana.<sup>10</sup>

748. Naturally, at sight of these institutions, the people were enthused: more money was donated. So from 1904-1913 the following schools came into existence:

1. Two primary schools, one in Ezbekieh and one in Bulaq, each had two separate sections - one for boys and one for girls;
2. A primary school for boys at Harit-ar-Rum;
3. Two primary schools at Harit Zaweila - one for boys and the other for girls;
4. Two similar schools in Old Cairo;
5. Two more schools on the same line at Giza;
6. Two more schools on the same line built by Kyrillos IV was renewed and expanded, and such was its degree of education that an American commented: "In 1908 there was only one institution which provided a complete course of secondary education which did not belong to the government, this was the Coptic College in Cairo. Alongside is the witness of an Englishman, it is: "I have visited their (The Copts) schools as well as Miss Whately's (an Englishwoman) and the American Presbyterian Board of Mission schools where I was told the Copt Schools were a farce and they really taught nothing; I have seen them and heard the boys all reading the Bible

in Arabic; heard and examined them in English, dictated to them in English and had it written for me in English, French and Arabic; and have kept the production of five boys varying from twelve to sixteen as sample. I was ashamed, astonished and gratified by what I saw and heard."12 While a third attests: "...the Coptic Church expends considerably over Eg. £ 5000 a year upon the education of its children in its schools in Cairo. Towards this amount the Patriarch contributes out of his private purse."13

749. The year 1904 saw two other auspicious events: the first one being the reconstitution of the Maglis Milli; new members were elected and they began to work in harmony with their Pope - it has, since then, continued in its service to the Church up to the present. The second was a Pastoral tour throughout the Said up to Aswan and from thence on to Khartoum. As usual the tour was by ship on the Eternal River; and it is noteworthy that the State offered him a flag-ship for this journey. Abba Kyrillos V left Cairo on the 25th of January after celebrating the two glorious feasts of Christmas and Epiphany on the 7th and the 19th of January respectively. Following the footsteps of his predecessors, he fulfilled it at a leisurely pace: staying at each town according to the need of its people. He sat among them as one of them, listening to what they wanted to say and giving them his paternal blessing. From Aswan, he boarded another ship to Khartoum<sup>14</sup> which was reached on the 25th of March. Needless to say that this tour cemented the hearts of his people to him. Yet it may be needed to say that Muslims, also, hastened to meet him and expressed to him all their

esteem and their reverence. During this tour, he laid the foundation-stone for a church in Beni-Suef, another in Halfa and a third in Khartoum. His return to Cairo was on the 22nd of April.

One point of interest is that at Beni-Suef, Tafida, daughter of Mikhail Khair, the chief layleader of that town, delivered a poem which she had herself composed for the occasion. While at Tahta, Amina, daughter of the layleader Maqar'<sup>1</sup> Mallakh, offered him a bouquet of flowers.<sup>15</sup>

750. Five years later, he went on a second Pastoral tour, during which he consecrated the three churches to which he had laid the foundation-stones, as well as ten other churches erected between his two visits - seven of which were in the Sudan. Consequently, on his return he consecrated two bishops for this sister-country: one for Atbara and the other for Om Dorman.

751. In his solicitude for his people, he incessantly remembered the monasteries and the convents, endeavouring to the best of his ability to uplift the spiritual strivings of monks and nuns.

1. He repaired the church and monastery of Abba Barsum al-Erian in Tura,<sup>16</sup> adding to them a guest-house and enthusing the monks to transform their garden into a sort of miniature paradise.

2. Nearby and right on the bank of the Nile, he built a church in the name of Mari Girgis, building next to it a house for the priest and his family.<sup>17</sup>

3. Facing this church - on the west bank of the Nile - stood (and still stands) an

ancient monastery named after St. Abu Sefein in the midst of a wooded expanse of palm trees. He interspersed these trees with dainty chalets for the repose of those who came to seek the saint's intercession.

4. He opened a school in al-Baramus Monastery for the benefit of the Wadi-n-Natrun monks, another in the monastery of Abba Antoni for the monks of the eastern desert and a third in al-Moharrag (in the Assiut province) for the monks living in that region.

To add sustenance to the monastic schools, he sent seven monks to the Athens Theological Seminary.

Still pursuing his aim, he turned his gaze towards the convents:

1. One such ancient sanctuary had been standing by the eastern bank of the Nile at Ma'adi named after the Blessed Virgin. The convent has long ceased to be, but the Church still stands. He repaired it and built round it a block comprising half a dozen flats - also for the relaxation of those seeking the Maternal protection of the Mother-of-God. To one side of it, and still by the Nile, he planted a fruit garden.

2. He repaired and re-decorated the two convents of Abu Sefein and Mari Girgis, both of which are in Old Cairo. And here again, he surrounded them with fruit gardens.

3. Another hallowed spot is at Manial Shiha (South of Giza) where a church in the name of "the Five and their Mother"<sup>18</sup> needed repair. He renewed it, and this time he surrounded it with a large garden of palm trees and cactus figs.

4. He repaired the convents of the Blessed Virgin at Harit Zaweila, of St. Marina (a martyr) at Harit ar-Rum, and that of the

Mother of God at Mostorod; the last of which had been built on one of the spots sanctified by the stay of the Holy Family. And because it enclosed a well, the man-of-God prompted the dwellers in the vicinity to plant corn, beans and vegetables in the ground surrounding the whole compound.

5. His ubiquitous eyes encompassed the Mo'allakah Church then swirled northward to a new suburb added to Cairo, called Qubbah Gardens, where he built a church and named it after the Archangel Mikhail amidst a palm grove.

6. Moving from the Capitol, he bought a large plot of ground in Helwan, where he built a dainty church and called it after the Blessed Virgin. He surrounded it with chalets, and the whole was enclosed within a garden on which diverse fruit trees flourished. The planning and building of all these edifices were entrusted to Fr.<sup>19</sup> Mikhail, a monk from St. Macari's Monastery.

752. Another field in which Abba Kyrillos V shone with lustre is that of books. The authors he sponsored and the books written under his auspices are numerous indeed. Any researcher at some of the world's most renowned libraries is sure to discover this fact, as these <sup>20</sup>books are already scattered far and wide.

753. He, then, foresaw that the students and graduates of the Seminary should be trained for service before being ordained. On 14th September 1918, Habib Girgis had become its Dean. Under the impetus of his clearsighted Pope, he started a double movement: the Sunday School classes and the ambulating teachers - the latter were those who paid

regular visits to the villages where there were no churches because only one or a few families lived therein. These two movements have been growing despite all obstacles; at present they compass the whole of St. Mark's See.

Habib Girgis, consecrated Archdeacon, then entrusted with piloting the Seminary, lived up to the expectations of his venerable Pope. Such was his devotion to his Church that he denied himself the joy of a family life in order to be wholly consecrated - dispensing all his talents and his energy to this One Goal: sowing the Seed. He served not his generation only but also the generations to come, as he has legated to them a good number of books among which are:

1. The Seven Mysteries (sacraments);
2. The Mystery of Godliness (1 Tim.3:16)
3. The Orthodox Doctrine (in seven volumes);
4. Al-Kanz al-Anfas (four volumes) on the Orthodox Teachings;
5. The Theological Seminary between the Past and the Present.

He also founded two monthlies:

1. The Sunday School - still flourishing;
2. Al Karma (The Vine) which continued for seventeen years and ended with his own ending on the 22nd of August 1951.

754. The behaviour of Abba Kyrillos V and the works he accomplished thus prove him to have been a tender Father, a vigilant Shepherd, a faithful administrator and a man who had the courage of his convictions. If such was the calibre of this Successor of St. Mark, then why was the beginning of

his papacy marked with a rebellion from his own people? To answer this question, we must scrutinize the currents and counter-currents which disturbed Egypt at that period.

755. One stark reality is that the Valley of the Nile has ever been the target of diverse peoples: conquerors, seekers<sup>21</sup> of wealth or power, traders and rascals.<sup>22</sup> Even religion was taken for a subterfuge! The attempts of these different groups had been more or less futile until the Napoleonic expedition which roused the West to Egypt's strategic position - a position intensified by the transformation of the Suez Isthmus into a canal.<sup>23</sup>

756. The predilection for France was paramount since Mohammad 'Ali's rule. But the bankruptcy of Ismail brought England alongside with it. This move added more fuel to the already seething country. Thereupon the tenacious Egyptians decided to work out their own salvation. An Assembly of Delegates had been instituted by Ismail; it was a serious-minded body conscious of its obligations. During the rule of Tewfiq, it withstood him and his cabinet resolutely inspecting the financial situation, and insisting on its right of keeping in office its desired ministers. It was staunchly supported by the army headed by 'Orabi whom the Khedive reluctantly made Minister of War at the coercion of the Assembly. Egypt was beginning to feel exhilarated at the prospect of freedom; its Nationalists proved their prowess on three different occasions: in 1879, in 1881, and in 1882. People of the three main faiths: Muslims, Christians and Jews whose home was Egypt were united by what seemed the dawn of a new liberation for the Egyptian Spirit.<sup>24</sup> But alas! The Nile Valley was not to be left in peace. The dreamt-

of freedom was dashed to smithereens by the British occupation.

757. The Egyptians were disenchanted to horror at finding that Gladstone, after disparaging the use of force, was the man who ordered the bombardment of Alexandria.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, they were stunned and wounded. During the first ten years of British occupation (1882-1892), they turned their gaze inward in quest of spiritual revivication. This self-introspection enthused those aspiring towards higher education to go to Europe for it. As a result, two groups of Egyptians were produced which were poles asunder: the one becoming more intensely nationalistic, the other altogether subservient to the land wherein he studied. This unbridgeable abyss was not confined to the field of politics but engulfed the creed as well. And however sad it is to state the bitter fact is that the missionaries added to the melee.

758. The disruption caused by proselytizing the Copts was not restricted to breaking their doctrinal solidarity (and thus weakening them in face of the non-Christian majority), it also caused so much heartache in matters of marriage, inheritance, divorce and all that pertains to personal status. One of the western witnesses asserts: "...the new nationalism is basically a reaction against that religion which came with the West and is regarded as one of the acids that have eaten away the substance of national life and character."<sup>26</sup>

One added incident igniting the situation was the following: The Catholic Church ordained a man by the name of Kyrillos Maqar Patriarch of Alexandria. Presuming that he is the successor to St. Mark, he published an encyclical pastoral letter. Abba Kyrillos V responded

immediately by dispatching a Pastoral Epistle throughout St. Mark's See to alert his people, nonetheless, the Catholic Prelate continued his activities in opposition to the Copts.

It then happened that in 1906 Kyrillos Maqar was convinced of the Verity of the Orthodox Teachings. Desiring to rejoin the Coptic Church and fearing a refusal because of his former activities, he met Photius, Patriarch of the Greeks, in Egypt. He was heartily welcomed. But the Greek Government refused to admit an Egyptian within their Church. Thereupon, Kyrillos Maqar went to Beirut where he published a book or Origen in 1907; <sup>27</sup> another entitled: "La Constitution Divine de L'Eglise" provided the proofs that Orthodoxy is the Doctrine legated by the Apostles (in 1913). These were followed by two other books refuting some teachings promulgated by Catholics in Egypt.

At this junction, some of his faithful adherents met Abba Kyrillos V and declared to him their Prelate's desire and theirs to be reunited to their Mother-Church. The Alexandrian Sage answered instantaneously: "This was my heart's desire, but you rashly sought the Greeks."

Proving his words by deeds, he formed a committee whose members were: Abba Macarius, Bishop of Assiut, Abba Lucas, Bishop of Qena, Girgis Pasha Antoon, Marcus Pasha Simaika and Professor Francis el-Etre. But alas! As these men were preparing to leave for Beirut to escort Kyrillos Maqar to Cairo, word came that he was suddenly transported to the Mansions of Light.

It was rumored that he was poisoned.

It should be noted that eighty families followed Kyrillos Maqar and rejoined the Coptic Orthodox Church. Foremost among them was

al-Etre family whose most prominent member was Professor Francis. Being of a fiery nature, he knew no half measures. Consequently he became the Archdeacon of the Church of the Apostles Peter and Paul - popularly known as al-Boutrosiya and built by the Boutros Ghali family. His mastery of the ritualistic tunes coupled with his zeal inspired him to train three successive generations of deacons serving in different churches of Cairo. A point to note is that he was a consummate Arabist having obtained the permission to study at Al-Azhar. He taught Arabic in the following schools:

1. The Jesuit (for boys);
2. The Lycee Franco-Egyptien (boys and girls);
3. The American College (for girls);

apart from private courses given in the homes of those who sought his knowledge. The author has had the honour and the pleasure of being among his numerous students. He achieved so much for he lived ninety-five years; he passed away just before the Easter of 1970. It should be noted that he wrote two books on the Orthodox Doctrine apart from the many articles published for him in diverse monthlies.

759. Abba Kyrillos V was a fiery patriot. As an outstanding member of the Assembly of Delegates, he sculptored the nationalistic stand against foreign encroachment. This was due to his firm conviction that Egypt is the Mother of Copts and Muslims alike; a Mother to whom he gave his wholehearted allegiance. And such was his love and loyalty for Mother-Egypt that he put all the weight of his prestige on the side of 'Orabi and later on that of Zaghloul.<sup>29</sup> He, thus crystallized the role

of the Coptic Church during the two revolutions for the liberation of Egypt and for making manifest its potentialities. He was fully aware of his duty as defender of Egypt as well as of the Coptic Orthodox Doctrine at one and the same time. This awareness activated his very existence to the extent of making him declare that the British have trespassed against Christianity itself by their occupation of Egypt, for the Christ taught us by His Very Life that Love is the basis of behaviour.

This scrutiny proves that the struggle between St. Mark's Successor and the Maglis Milli was, in its factuality, a struggle between nationalism and foreign influences,<sup>30</sup> the determined resolution of Kyrillos V to uphold the independence of the Coptic Church and the purity of its Orthodoxy. It was the very same wrestling which, time and again, was waged between the Popes of Alexandria and the intruding powers. And though these contentions mobilized all their forces of spirit, mind and body, those Successors of St. Mark who grasped the magnitude of their responsibilities stood in the front line and dared to brave the assailants. And by God's Grace, these invincible defenders of Egypt and Her Church were invariably victorious. The Coptic Church as it is<sup>31</sup> today, is a living witness to their victory.

760. Amidst all these contending forces, a new voice was raised: that of Mustafa Kamil. The one colossal phrase proclaimed by him was "Egypt for the Egyptians;" it reverberated throughout the whole land. His movement was essentially intellectual; his weapons the spoken and the written word. In a speech he gave in March 1907, he said: "The Muslims and the Copts are one people 'Sha ab' united by patriotism, customs, morals and conditions

of life; it is impossible ever to divide them."<sup>32</sup> Following his words by action, he formed "Al-Omma" (i.e. the Nation) Party whose aim was to endeavour by all peaceful methods to liberate Egypt. This Party was immediately joined by many Copts. One forceful organ used by Muslims and Copts was the Press. Mustafa Kamil had issued two daily papers "Al-Moayyad" and "Al-Liwa" in 1889 and 1890 respectively. All the members who had the ability of writing co-operated - Copts and Muslims - in<sup>33</sup> creating a public awareness of nationalism.<sup>33</sup> The forceful conviction expressed with such fiery zeal in all his speeches and his writing was one of the momentous reasons<sup>34</sup> for withdrawing Lord Cromer from Egypt.<sup>34</sup> Among the most inspiring slogans was "Had I not been Egyptian, I fain would have been an Egyptian." And it is indeed infelicitous that Mustafa Kamil died prematurely. Had he lived, there is no doubt that his movement would, in time, have united the natives of all shades of political opinion aiming<sup>35</sup> at the entire control of their own affairs.<sup>35</sup> He succeeded, nonetheless, with all those who shared his aspirations<sup>36</sup> in starting the Egyptian (now Cairo) University.<sup>36</sup>

It must be borne in mind that the movement he proclaimed sank deep into the subconscious of Egypt, and was one of the elements which intensified its nationalistic awareness as the years sped by.

Abba Kyrillos V, true to his Ideal, supported this movement and encouraged the Copts who joined it. For was it not an attempt to raise Mother-Egypt to Its self-realization.

761. Egypt's self-awareness, ever on the ascendance, led the British to double their efforts in this "battle of wits." One such

effort was to seize the opportunity of Roosevelt's visit to Egypt in 1910 and make him the spokesman of their scheme. This U. S. President was one more disappointment to the Egyptians, he did not deprecate them in their country only, but also at the Guildhall in London.<sup>37</sup>

762. However, 1911 was the year which saw the climax of British machination: for on its 6th of March the Coptic Conference was held and on its 29th of April the Muslim Conference met. The former was held at Assuit, the bastion of the Protestant missionary activity. Abba Kyrillos V sent his warning against it, but those who planned and did carry it out, were mainly the recruits of the missionaries.<sup>38</sup> When the ever-vigilant man-of-God saw that his warning was unheeded, he requested Abba Macari - Bishop of Assiut - to put it under his auspices and thus temper it. This sagacious behaviour attained its goal.

As for the Muslim Conference, it was held in Heliopolis. Here, too, the current of the opposing forces met with the counter-current of Egyptian perspicacity. For though both Copts and Muslims exchanged mordant accusations, moderation and conciliation won the day. So it can be genuinely said that the intended climax of causticity was the very point at which the Egyptians came to a full realization of their brotherhood! Their eyes were opened - so to speak - as Copts and Muslims recognized that it is only their solidarity that will make them succeed in their battle for independence.<sup>39</sup>

763. Still the British and their partisans did not relent in face of this growing force of nationalism; they extended the advantages of the Capitulations to all those who became

their vice-consuls in the provinces, as well as to those who deserted their own native Coptic Church and followed any of the diverse sects introduced by the missionaries.<sup>40</sup> Naturally, many Egyptians were enticed thereby, and consequently alienated to their country and their compatriots; an abyss yawned between the nationalists and those Egyptians who came to be among the most useful tools of the British and their partisans. This situation was one more reason why Abba Kyrillos V was so adamant towards missionaries.<sup>41</sup>

764. Then came "the Deluge:" the first world war erupted. And the British who occupied Egypt to defend Khedive Tewfiq from the so-called barbaric Egyptians round-about<sup>42</sup> turned against 'Abbas Hilmi (Tewfiq's son)<sup>42</sup> -always at the expense of Egypt. They dethroned him, placed his uncle Hussein in his stead with the title of Sultan, then declared Egypt a British Protectorate. This so-called Protectorate replenished her "Protectors" with all their needs: food, cattle, railways, roads, labourers and whatever else was demanded! The heroism of the Egyptian Labour Corps<sup>43</sup> is testified to by the English themselves.

765. While the war raged, the British proclaimed slogans which proved to be double-edged, such as "England for the English!" They and their Allies declared time and again that they were fighting for the freedom of all nations: small and great. An added emphasis came with President Wilson's "apostolic" pronouncement in favour of self determination.

In face of all these assertions together with all the services and the sacrifices offered by Egypt to the Allies at their darkest hours, what more natural than that two days after the armistice, Zaghloul and two of his friends

call on the British High Commissioner to claim null and complete independence for the Egyptians. Their claim was altogether ignored to the extent of refusing Egypt a seat at the Versailles Peace Talks! Then, a few years later she was also denied the right of appeal to the League of Nations!

766. Zaghloul, as a member of the Legislative Assembly, had given an address in the Hall of "The Society for Legislation the Economy" in which he declared: "In 1914 Britain, of its own will, declared its protectoracy over Egypt without our request or acceptance; therefore this protectoracy is null and void - it has no legal existence." These words had the potency of magic on the Egyptians; in a flash they rid themselves of the weight of the centuries of tyranny and oppression. They shattered what seemed invincible obstructions: the British occupation, those in authority subservient to Britain, the shackles of government sway and the bureaucracy fawning at the feet of the temporal powers; the foreign sects and their abuses. In a flash Egypt defied the Empire over whose boundaries the sun never sets! She defied this Empire at the hour of its victory! And the victorious Empire had to come to terms with "the Rebels!" A commission was delegated to go to Cairo under the presidency of Viscount Milner in the first week of December 1919 when Zaghloul was in exile. The second in line of his Party "The Wafd" headed by Wissa Wassef (a Copt) declared boycotting the Commission. The national surge was so overwhelming that the Cabinet had to resign on the 7th of December before the arrival of Milner. As usual, the English sought a leak in the Gigantic Dyke and thought themselves fortunate when they found it in the person of a Copt -Youssef Pasha Wahba-

as they imagined it a blow to this fraternal solidarity. Before they could savour their craftiness, however, Erian Saad, a Coptic student of Medicine, threw two handbombs on Youssef Wahba's car on the 15th of December. He did not kill him, but the whole country seethed with excitement. Erian was arrested and courtmartialled on the 16th of January 1920. In accordance with the customary British "magnanimity," the sentence of hanging him was exchanged for life-imprisonment with forced labour!

The Copts, however, did not express their fury at Youssef Wahba by his deed only, a meeting was held in St. Mark's Cathedral (the Papal Seat) on the 21st of December 1919 presided over by its priest, Fr. Basilius and five colleagues of his; it was attended by four thousand men. Speeches of protest were delivered, and dispatches were sent to the Prime Minister and the High Commissioner. The following day two thousand women met in the same Cathedral and for the same purpose. They, too dispatched their protests to the same persons, signed on the Coptic side by the wives of: Hanna Mesiha, Aziz Mishriqi, Nagiv Iskander, Rofail Baghdadi, Salib Manqarious, Mikhail Labib, Wissa Wassef<sup>45</sup> and Miss Juliette Salib and Miss Mary Mirhom.

The feelings had risen to such a pitch that Youssef Wahba's cabinet had to resign on the 19th of May 1920.

As for Erian Saad, he remained in prison until Zaghloul formed his first cabinet in 1924. His first act was a general amnesty to all the interned patriots. He, then, appointed Erian among the Secretariat of the Senate House. <sup>46</sup> At present he is working in the Arab-League.

Here it should be noted that Abba Kyrillos was asked to appoint his deputy in the

Senate. He selected Abba Lucas, Bishop of Qena (one of those who had studied at Athens).

The Revolution whose banner was unfurled by Zaghloul is one of the most awe-inspiring episodes in the annals of Egyptian history. To give it due justice, one needs volumes! Being under necessity, we will epitomize it with the expression: Egypt realized its own unique Personality. This realization is most adroitly described in an address to Mohammad Farid, as follows: "Behold, Farid, how the nation united; how for Egypt's sake the children vie with the elderly; the women emulate the men, the Copts join issue with the Muslims. Observe how the Cross embraces the Crescent, the Qur'an the Gospel and the Sheikh the Priest."<sup>47</sup>

On the 28th of February 1922 Egypt was, consequently, declared autonomous with a king for ruler and its own diplomatic representatives abroad. But England did not evacuate Egypt totally except in 1952. The conflict thus raged for thirty-three years taking heavy toll of blood and sweat on both sides - which could have been evaded.

767. Before proceeding any further, it is edifying to quote two Englishmen on this valourous movement. The first is Viscount Milner who said: "...the revival of the country during the last few years, under and in spite of the writhing conditions, is almost worthy of a fairy tale."<sup>48</sup> The second is Murray Harrison asserting: "Those who have personally known a number of Egyptian judges and seen them at work cannot but be struck by their high standard which leaves little to be desired even when appraised by comparison with the most advanced nations of the West."<sup>49</sup> Alongside is the witness of an English woman, it is "...the unexpected way of Egypt, after

sleeping for four or five centuries, she will suddenly wake up and proceed to make history at a rate that a quarter of a century<sup>50</sup> will give her chronicler material for a volume."

768. With these comments ringing in our ears, we proceed to mention the most active Copts in the 'Orabi and the Mustafa Kamil galvanisms.

A. The first Orabist is Bakhum Lutfallah, a member of "the Assembly of the Delegates" who, with three Muslim colleagues defied the Khedive and his Prime-minister in the historic meeting on the 6th of January 1879. They refused to disperse and repeatedly pointed out with emphasis that although the three-year term of the Assembly had indeed passed, they could not disperse without inspecting the financial policy of the government. Bakhum was also among the fifteen-member constitution subcommission elected by the Assembly to examine the text of the Constitution.<sup>51</sup>

Another Copt who has legated to us numerous writings is Latif Sabungi who corresponded regularly with W. S. Blunt<sup>52</sup> sending him fourteen letters between the 11th of June to the very morning of bombarding Alexandria (11th of July). Being a member of the Assembly of the Delegates and a very close friend of Orabi, Nadim<sup>53</sup> and all members of the inner circle of the Nationalists, he kept Blunt informed of the diverse events as they unrolled. In his first message he said: "We have fourteen Mudirs (i.e. province governors) out of whom three only are opposed to Orabi. The Copt and Arab element of the fellahin (i.e. peasants) are unanimously with him...Ninety thousand persons have signed petitions to Dervish Pasha (the Sultan's envoy) to reject the proposals of Europe and keep Orabi in office." As for

his letter of the 19th of June, it ends with a jubilant note: "I must tell you that I have been received here (at Shubra) with such honour, respect and politeness as I never could dream of. All the pashas, colonels, sheikhs and merchants receive me with open arms..."

On the 2nd of July, the letter is one which Orabi dictated to Sabungi at Alexandria and sent to Blunt desiring him to communicate it to Gladstone. It was neither signed nor sealed and sent in Sabungi's English translation. After affirming Egypt's readiness to humane and friendly means with England, Orabi says: "Only let her not under-rate the patriotism of the Egyptian people..."

In addition to these fourteen letters, Sabungi sent six telegrams also to Blunt. These missives prove the eagerness and the zeal of the writer for the triumph of Orabi and the nationalists. And though Egypt's aspirations were dashed to pieces, it was a less ignoble fate to yield after a defeat than at once at the first summons.<sup>54</sup>

Once more we pause to ponder two remarks made by two English clergymen: The first is: "Mr. Rizq Gorgi is a very learned man, a deacon who manages the property of the Patriarch; he gives his services for nothing and was so good as to let me go every day to his house with Youssef Hanna a most interesting man and very devout. I shall never forget his prayers with and for me the day I was leaving Cairo. He was also my interpreter as he is teacher of English in the Copt schools. At his house, I met a number of priests, dignitaries and learned Copts... Their applications of Scriptures were so ready and intelligent and they seemed quite ready to give a reason from the Scriptures for all

I ask them..." As for the second, it is: "Dean Butcher, writing from Cairo, thus states his impressions, 'Last Saturday-April 28th, 1883-Coptic Easter Eve, I attended the deeply interesting and gorgeous service in the Cathedral of Cairo. I left it with a much higher opinion of the spiritual reality of the Service than I had ever had before...The fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians was listened to with deep attention, and the sermon was stirring and practical, appealing to the people with directness and fervour. The hymns chanted were simple and beautiful, and the ceremony of closing the doors while half the choir remained within and the other half stayed without chanting the Ps. 24:7-10 exactly as when it was chanted when the Ark was taken from the house of Obed-Edom to the stronghold of Zion, produced an overpowering effect owing to the enthusiasm of the worshippers and the vividness of the historic reminiscence. I left the church after midnight impressed and grateful'..."<sup>55</sup>

B. As for the Copts who hastened to the Call of Mustafa Kamil, they were numerous; but we will content ourselves with two examples only for brevity's sake.

The first one is Mikhail Abd es-Sayyid, proprietor and editor in chief of the bi-weekly Al-Watan, who used his pen in the service of the Nationalist Cause on all occasions. One of his comments on Mustafa Kamil's speech is: "Our hearts glowed at his words, for he has proved that there is among us a man who is able to express our feelings and explicate them with poise and pensiveness."

The second is Marcus Pasha Hanna, an outstanding lawyer who served Egypt from Mustafa Kamil's movement throughout Zaghoul's

time. During the latter he became cabinet-minister on more than one occasion. In his elegaic speech he said: "The heroes are not the generals of the armies, nor yet the admirals of the fleets; rather are they those men who sustain the integrity of their Principle and the rectitude of their character; they are those who persevere in their noble task to the end despite its arduousness. Our beloved departed-Mustafa Kamil-has trod this path so firmly that he has, indeed, shown us the means of brotherliness, loyalty and affability, and proved to us that our unity-Copts and Muslims - is the surest road to liberty and independence."<sup>56</sup>

769. When Egypt resurged for the third time at Zaghoul's Call, she had fused the experiences of Orabi and Mustafa Kamil in her own crucible. Consequently the Egyptian socio-spiritual awareness had apprehended firmly the inherent unity blinding Muslims and Copts.

770. Again we have to be satisfied with examples, but here they will be more than the preceding because their share is preponderous: they faced with their Muslim compatriots, exile, courtmartialing, imprisonment and threats of capital punishment; the banner under which they all rallied was a Crescent encircling a Cross.

In the front lines stood the priest, following the example of St. Mark's Successor. Two of them are selected. The first one is Fr. Boulous Ghabrial who was endowed with masterly eloquence by which he inflamed the crowds in mosques and churches. He was the priest of St. Marina's Church at Harit ar-Rum. His house was adjacent to it. Standing in the heart of the ancient part of Cairo,

it became the refuge of patriots hiding from British vengeance. One of the youths who hid there is none other than President Sadat.

The second is Fr. Marcus Sergius who can be summed up as a living volcano. He was the first Coptic clergyman to speak from the pulpit of Al-Azhar. He had a ready wit and a most impressive oratory, and he used both on the streets, the squares, the trains and wherever he went. One day he was addressing a crowd gathered in the square in front of the Continental Hotel. While he spoke, a British soldier came towards him with a revolver. The crowds shouted: "Abuna (i.e. father) go away lest he kill you." He replied: "Since when do we fear death? Let him spill my blood as a libation. I will be one more martyr whose blood has drenched Egypt's soil." His intrepidity caused the soldier to retreat. Nonetheless, he was arrested and banished to Rafah (in Sinai) for eighty days. On another occasion, he was standing in Ramses Square (main Cairo railway station square) and he asked the crowds: "Guess what I did today?" All eyes were fixed on him in query. He resumed: "I chanted a Christian wedding for a Muslim girl!" The eyes grew wider as he completed: "I joined Egypt in Holy Matrimony to Independence!" Of course the applause was deafening. Zaghoul, himself entitled him "the Orator of Egypt." 57

It is feasible to say that the Copts in the Wafd were well-nigh numberless. The following are but specimens: Wissa Wassef, was a disciple of Zaghoul at the Faculty of Law. He was a fiery writer in Mustafa Kamil's papers. During the thick of the combat, he was imprisoned and later courtmartialled. Coming out safe, he was elected President of the House of Deputies in 1928. A year

later, King Fuad ordered the suspension of the Parliament and the locking of its door with chains. A troop of the army men stood on guard. Wissa Wassef resolved to hold the session despite the royal order. When he and the members walked into the Parliament courtyard, the soldiers left them thinking that they will have to return at sight of the chained door. But when he saw this obstruction, he called the Captain of the Parliament Guards and requested him to break the chains. Immediately he got a hatchet and cut it. And the session was held.<sup>58</sup> Makram Obeid, the young advocate who rose to the much coveted position of secretary of the Wafd and who shaped its destinies and consequently those of Egypt for almost two decades. He was invariably referred to by Zhagloul as "my son."<sup>59</sup> Wassef Ghali, spokesman of the Wafd in French; he became Minister for Foreign Affairs several times and is described as "a man of remarkable though rather dreamy ability." He expressed this "dreaminess" in a French book on Arabic poetry entitled "Le Jardin des Fleurs."<sup>60</sup> Nagib Iskandar, the able physician who became Minister of Public Hygiene in several Wafdist Cabinets, and his brother Raghib, the well known lawyer and member of the Maglis Milli. Salama Mikhail, Judge in the Court of Appeal. Sadiq Heneim and his brother Girgis both of whom were high officials in the Ministry of Finance. Nagib Mahfuz, a world-famous gynecologist who was invited several times by the English Royal College of Gynecology to lecture. Whenever he was requested by this renowned Institute, announcements of the time and place of his lectures were sent to all similar colleges in different parts of the world. Gorgi Sobhi,

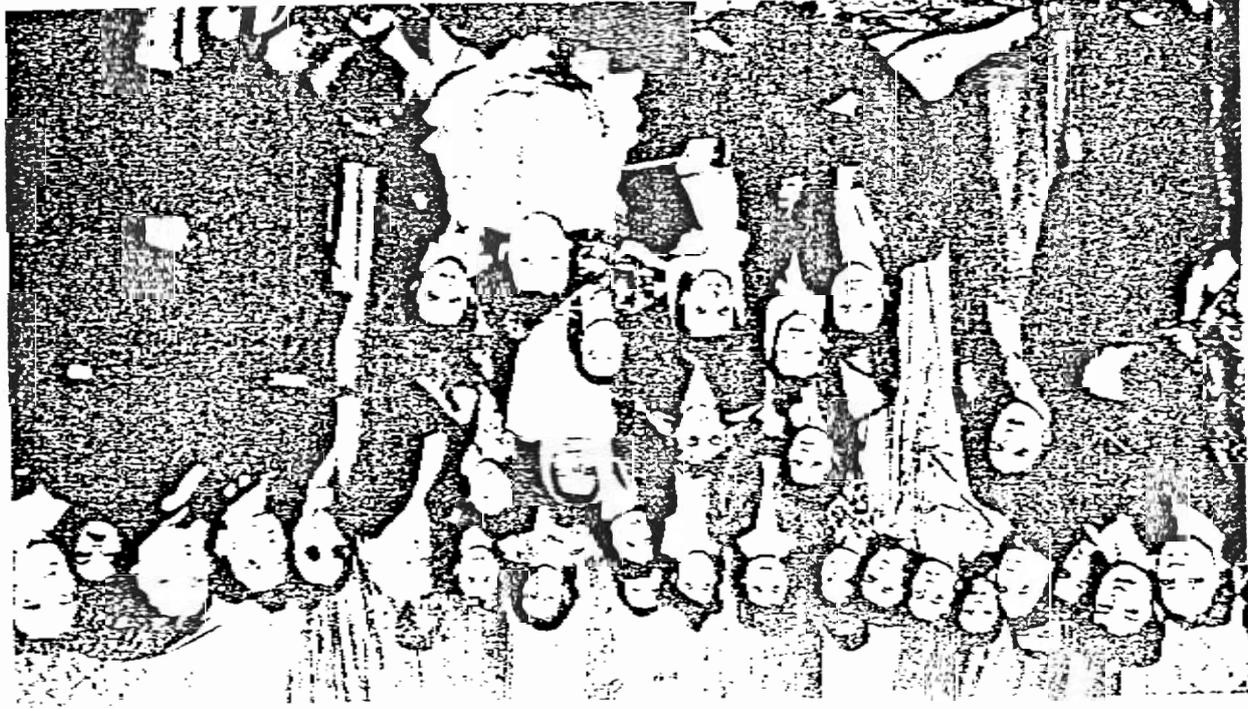
outstanding physician by vocation, well known Egyptologist and Coptologist by avocation. He was among the very few scholars who knew Demotic (the last phase of the hieroglyphic). He has legated to posterity numerous books and articles in the diverse fields of his research. The Library of the British Museum contains the following of his works: 1. "The Abridged Version of the Book of Simple Drugs" ed. with an English trans. Egyptian University, Faculty of Medicine, pub. no. 4, 1932; 2. St. Helias et l'encomium de l'evêque Stephanos de Hnes sur St. Helias, Le Caire 1919; 3. Texts from the Monastery of St. Macarius with an Appendix on a Copto-Arabic Ms. pubs. of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Egyptian Expedition, Vol. II, 1926; 4. Common Words in the Spoken Arabic of Egypt, of Greek or Coptic Origin, Societe de l'Archeologie Copte, Le Caire 1950. Kyriakos Mikhail, author of "Copts and Moslems Under British Control," Smith Elder and Co., London 1911; after publishing it he became the "Al-Ahram" correspondent in London. When he joined the Wafd, he was expelled from England on the 29th of December 1919. As soon as he arrived in Cairo, he was imprisoned for six months. Salama Musa, writer, journalist and owner of a highly intellectual monthly magazine "Al-Magallatul Gadida." He was also a much sought lecturer. Sinut Hanna who started with Mustafa Kamil. His devotion to Zaghloul led him to share his exile in the Seychelles Island. He, too, was invariably called "my son" by Zaghloul. And it should be noted that Zaghloul had no children of his own, and the two nearest his heart, his sons by the spirit, were Copts. Sinut's devotion was of that rarified kind for he refused the ministerial as well as any other position. He was content to serve

the cause for its own end. And after Zaghoul's death his loyalty was transferred to his successor - Nahas Pasha. Here again his devotion was exemplary as the following incident proves. On the 2nd of January 1933, he was standing next to Nahas in an open car to respond to the greetings of the crowds. One of the soldiers, lined up to keep order, came running from behind with his spear aimed at the back of Nahas. In a flash, Sinut's arm surrounded his chief and received the wound in his stead. So, for love of Sinut his two brothers, Bushra and Raghib were made ministers by turn.<sup>61</sup>

In addition, there was an "Underground Corps" among whose members were: Tewfiq Salib head of the publications department; Munir Girgis and his brother Kamil; Azir Ghabrial and his brother Nashid - the last four were university students. The five and their Muslim colleagues were, at one time<sup>62</sup> arrested and imprisoned for seven months.

771. Zaghoul's puissance moved the woman too. The English had deported him to Gibraltar. Following on his deportation, hundreds of women walked in a long procession of manifestation, shouting: "Long live Egypt free! Long live Zaghoul!" The British soldiers faced them with their bayonets. Those in the front line exclaimed: "Shoot! that Europe may know that you have shot unarmoured women! Shoot! that all the world may know that Egypt's women back their men!" Naturally these cries caused the British to beat a hasty retreat. Hearing of their heroism, Zaghoul asked: "And what did the men do at that hour?" The answer was: "They had lined on both sides of the street and watched their women as one watches a congregation at prayer."<sup>63</sup>

Mrs. Safiya Zaghloul, sitting in the middle, surrounded by Egyptian patriots, to the right of the onlooker - and among those sitting - is Eva Habib el Masri (x) - who became Mrs. Youssef Sidhom.



772. Yet though the preponderant majority of the Copts sided with Zaghloul, there were those who joined other political parties and reached ministerial posts. Foremost among them may be cited: Nakhla'L Motei, minister for Communications; Twefiq Doss for Agriculture then for Transport; Wassef Simaika for Agriculture; Salib Sami for War and Marine then for Foreign Affairs; Kamil Ibrahim for Foreign Affairs; Sadiq Wahba and his brother Murad who succeeded one another for Agriculture; Saba Habashi for Commerce and Industry.<sup>64</sup>

Another non-Wafdist is Youssef Soleiman who served as lawyer then as judge and was among the loyal workers of the Maglis Milli. He was chosen to be minister for Agriculture from the 22nd of May 1920 - 16th of March 1922; then Minister for Finance from 30th of November 1922 - 9th of February 1923. Towards the end of May 1923 Adly Yeken Leader of the "Dosturiyin" Party selected him among the delegates who accompanied him to London to negotiate with Prime-Minister Henderson. During these negotiations "The African World" published an article on the 10th of June in which was said: "Youssef Soleiman and his friend Ahmad Tolat have proved that their decisions simply followed the dictates of their conscience."

On the 14th of April 1923, the Empress of Ethiopia visited Egypt with her entourage. At the advice of Abba Kyrillos V, she stayed at the house of Youssef Soleiman. On the following Sunday (22nd of April) she attended the Holy Liturgy at Al-Moallaka. That same night she gave a farewell reception at the Continental Hotel during which her host gave a speech in which he reviewed the relations between the Copts and Ethiopians since the time of Abba Athanasius the Apostolic. He

ended with a hearty farewell as the empress left for her country the following morning.<sup>65</sup>

773. But to go back to the Man sitting on St. Mark's Chair: he had taken the helm of the Church at the age of fifty; he steered it for fifty-three years and nine months! And the wonder of it is that the years merely enfeebled his body. His mind continued to be alert and his spirit aflame. As the story of Egypt and Its Church unfolded it could be seen that his papacy was during a very ebullent and very awe-inspiring period. Throughout this long period, he was indeed a vigilant captain with eyes ever-open on the efferescent waves. All who saw him towards the end of his life (and the author is one of them) were amazed at the subtlety of his sagacity. And it is indeed a fact to ponder that God granted Abba Kyrillos V to see Egypt travailing until the birth of a new age: he witnessed the treacherous Tewfiq, the loyal but naive Orabi, the brilliant though ephemeral Mustafa Kamil; and the gigantic Zaghoul son of the peasantry epitomizing the unconquerable bouyancy of Egypt's Spirit. That Spirit which seemed at times almost dead, but which invariably emerged like the Phoenix.

Having witnessed all these upheavals, Abba Kyrillos V rested in the Peace of his Lord with a joyful heart at the triumph of Mother-Egypt on the 1st of July 1928.

Pondering this wondrous Man-of-God and the age in which he lived, the words of a contemporary thinker reiterate this mysterious inexhaustibility of Egypt in the following terms: "But these people are sustained by an abundant will to live. The economic harshness, the weight of the foreigners, the political constraint, the social misfortunes - all

these could envelop them just as the black robe envelops their peasant woman. But this black robe has, on either side of the breasts a slit - a simple tearing - through which the mother suckles her babe. And one can easily see, in this every-day state, the eternal vitality of Egypt piercing its robe of mourning."66

774. During the papacy of Abba Kyrillos V, the Church was graced by a number of bishops who gauged the weight of their responsibility. Three of them will be cited as examples:

A. Abba Serapamon of Khartoum was a monk in As-Suriani Monastery then became its Abbot in 1889. During his abbotcy he built new cells because a number of youths embraced monasticism; he constructed a guest house instead of the old one which he demolished. He also renewed the cells and the guest house on the Itris farm which belongs to the monastery; he, then, built five tenement houses on the Clot Bey street in the vicinity of St. Mark's Cathedral in Ezbekieh.

On the 12th of July 1897, he was consecrated Bishop. When leaving for his new abode, he carried with him his own books as well as all those he could buy. No sooner did he reach Khartoum than he bought a piece of ground on which he built the first Coptic school to be erected there. At first, it was for boys only, then a new wing was added to it for girls. Also he started a series of talks on the Orthodox Doctrine and the history of the Church by which he succeeded in winning many of those who had been enticed to follow other teachings.

Having given sustenance to spirit and mind, he built an episcopal mansion and

secured for it as well as for the school building the installation for electricity and water-pipes.<sup>67</sup>

Extending his potentialities, he aided his brother bishops in building a church at Om Dorman, renewed the Atbara church and erected next to it a guest house. Finding that he still had possibilities, he built a church in Khartoum Behari, then bought a piece of land in al-Obayyid and another in Wadi-Madani with a view to building a church on each of them. But this hope was fulfilled by his successors, as he rested in his Lord before even beginning them - after shepherding his people for thirty years.

Incidentally, Abba Serapamon was the clergyman who chanted the Wedding Service for the author's parents on one of his visits to Cairo.

B. Abba Thomas of Minia and Ashmunein<sup>69</sup> was one of the monks who studied at Athens; he was ordained on the 12th of March 1903. His first oblation was the building of a school for boys, comprising both primary and secondary education in his metropolis. This was followed by a school in Bayyadiya, another in Samalut and a third in Rodah - all three for boys. As for the town of Mallawi, it was given two schools: one for boys and one for girls. He, then, scanned the whole of his bishopric and found twelve villages in need of churches and five churches of which needed repair. Thereupon, he built twelve churches and renewed five.

Under his jurisdiction was the ancient and renowned Monastery of the Blessed Virgin in Gabal at-Tair. The Monastery had long ceased to be but the Church was (and is still) in use, for this site is among the few whose inhabitants are entirely Copt. Perched on:

a high promontory overlooking the Nile, it is within access. Agriculture and raising poultry are the only means of livelihood. Abba Thomas bought thirty acres of land in the vicinity and donated them to the Church, thereby enabling the poor to earn a living.

Sensing the satisfaction of his people, his next step was to pull down the episcopal mansion and build a new one that was spacious enough to house those whom he would invite for conferences or retreats, as well as the strangers and the travellers. When he finished this project, he built a guesthouse adjoining the church of Mari Mena in the town of Manhari.<sup>70</sup>

Then, hardly had World War I begun than he was transferred into Paradise.

C. Abba Abraam of Fayoum who lived up to that perfection enjoined upon all believers by the Christ our Lord (Matt.5:48); and thereby has greatly enriched the lives of numerous people - both during his lifetime and after his departure to Paradise.

The first years of his ascetism were spent in al-Moharraq Monastery, then he went to live in al-Baramus. Once more, we see the wondrous Providence of the Heavenly Father, for this move brought the man-of-prayer-and -meditation to the same sanctuary in which Yohanna-n-Nasikh lived. Consequently when the latter became St. Mark's Successor and the Fayoum people needed a Shepherd, he ordained for them the one-time Moharraqi monk whom he loved greatly.

Abba Abraam gained renown not only in Egypt but far beyond it because of his sanctity, his spirituality and his intense compassion on all the needy. Endowed with extraordinary gifts including that of healing,

he used these gifts to cure and relieve all those who sought him, however numerous. As for the poor and the indigent, he offered them whatever donations of gratitude he received from the well-to-do, without distinction between Copts and Muslims. Although he died in 1914, the factual accounts of the miraculous healings wrought by the Holy Spirit through him still abound. Many are still living today whose parents, grandparents or friends saw with their own eyes or heard with their own ears, accounts of the miracles performed by this simple wholly-dedicated Christ-like saint.<sup>71</sup>

## XLII. NOTES

1. Sanabu, in the Assiut province, about 400km. South of Cairo.
2. Acts 1:14-15, 2:44 and 6:1-4.
3. John 8:1-11.
4. 2 Cor. 3:6.
5. W. Soleiman: "...Min tarikh'l Maglis al Milli" pub. in the Sunday School monthly, Dec. 1948, no. 7, pp.3-16; Youssef Manqarius: "Al-Qawlal Yaqin..." Al Watan Press Cairo 1893, p.262.
6. Al-Watan, a daily which first appeared on the 16th of January 1877; Al-Haqq, a weekly issued by Y. Manqarius in 1895; Al-Ikhlās, another weekly issued by Ibrahim Abdal Masih in 1896; during that same year appeared "Misr" a daily evening paper and At-Tewfiq a monthly published by the society bearing this name. Two monthlies appeared: 1. Al-Faraid which

first appeared on the 7th of August 1891, its editor-in-chief was Wahbi Bey, Director of the Papal Coptic schools, and its proprietors were Girgis Zaki and Fawzi Hanna; 2.Ar-Rawi which appeared on the 15th of February 1892, its proprietor and editor-in-chief was Boutros H. al-Assiuti. Marqa-n-Nagah owned and edited by Atiya Girgis appeared on the 26th of July 1892 but continued to appear on the 1st and 11th and the 21st of each month. A year later, a weekly appeared "Al-Alam al Misri," every Tuesday, owned and edited by Boutros and his brother Zaki Awad. While Fr. Youssef Habashi (one of the priests of St. Mark's Cathedral) started on the 23rd of March 1892 issuing a weekly religious brochure. It should be noted that all these and other Egyptian papers were closed down when Egypt was proclaimed a preprotectorate governed by martial law. The only Arabic papers left were those owned by Syrians.

7. The most northwesterly province, Alexandria is within its boundary but has its own governor.

8. Manassa'l Qommos...pp.677-692; W.Soleiman "Ishroon Sana... 1893-1913" pub. in the Sunday School monthly, nos. 6&7, September 1949, pp.72-83; S.H. Leeder: Modern Sons of the Pharoahs" 2nd ed.p.260 where he says:"...Never within memory has Cairo been the scene of such a thrilling ovation as greeted the Patriarch when he returned...", p.261: "...it is clear that the Patriarch, who had been removed by the British Agent's word, had finally proved himself master of the situation, and the worldly wisdom of the political ruler of Egypt was forced to bow before this subtle priestly influence."

9. In his book "Tarikh..." p.326: The Seminary has been transferred to a new building erected under the auspices of Abba Kyrillos VI and named after him. It stands on the Abba Roweiss Ground (see s.633). It has become a college comprising of two "schools:"
1. The Morning one for students who passed their Secondary School Certificate; its courses or study are for four years, and its graduates are ordained for the small towns and villages.
  2. The Night one for University graduates whose love for their Church enthused them for Its service; they follow a two-year course and are ordained in the cities, and also for foreign countries.
10. See s. 110.
11. Clayton Sedgewick Cooper: "The Man of Egypt" p.121.
12. Rev. W.H. Oxley: "The Copts,: a letter to his sisters sent from Port Said on the 8th of March 1880, copy kept in the Library of the British Museum. No. 4765 bbb19.
13. Montague Fowler: "Christian Egypt"p.53, where he says: "The Coptic Church has been preserved by the mercy of God for some great work in the cause of Christianity in the future," and on p.201 he listed the schools and the number of pupils in each of them.
14. Khartoum is the capital of Sudan; Halfa is south of Nubia; see also s. 732.
15. Y. Manqarius,op.cit.pp.213&345 respectively.
16. See s. 630.

17. See s. 112-as for the church and the house, they were pulled down in 1958 to make way for the Cairo-Helwan Corniche. The government, however, paid sixteen thousand Egyptian pounds and a piece of ground on which church and house were rebuilt; they still overlook the Nile.

18. See s.111.

19. Severus of Ashmunein,op.cit., Bk.III, part 3, p. 179. ed. by A. Khatir and O.H.E. Burmester,pub. by "La Societe d'Archeologie Copte", Cairo 1974; Y. Manqarius: "Tarikh al Omma'l Qibtiya...1893-1912",pub. at St. Macari's Press, Old Cairo 1913,pp.63-64.

20. The Author has come across the following in: I. N.Y.Public Library. 1. Copto-Arabic book entitled "Taqrīb al-Arab fī Looghāt al-Qibt wal Arab" by Nagīb ibn al-Hegomenos Mikha'il pub. in Cairo 1603 A.M. (1887 A.D.); 2. Al-Asasul-Mateen..." by Fr. Abd al-Masih, a monk from al-Baramus monastery, pub. with the one before it and within the same binding, and its author states in the introduction that Abba Kyrillos V requested him to write his book as well as revise and correct his colleague's. 3. Al-Bakura..."by Barsum Ibrahim, pub. in Cairo 1874. 4. Al-Gawhara..." by Yohanna ibn Zakariya, known as Ibn Sabaa, pub. in Cairo 1902. II. The Library of the British Museum - 1. A copy of nos. 1&2 kept at the N.Y.Pub.Lib. 2. "Ath-Thamara...".. Cairo 1877; 3. Al-Kharida..., Cairo 1881 - both by Barsum Ibrahim. 4. "At-Tas-hih..." by Fr. Boutros es-Sedmenti, at the end of which it is stated: "This book was published by order of H.B. Abba Kyrillos V and revised by Fr. Philotheos Awad priest of St. Mark's

Cathedral, Ezbekieh, Cairo-see s.604; 5. Ad-dalil al Amin: by Nakhla Salih, it is a very interesting description of its author's pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1875, pub. in the same year. 6. "Mayamir as Sayyida..." (i.e. homilies on the Blessed Virgin) collected and edited by Girgis Mena and financed by Girgis Henein who states in the preface that this work was accomplished under the auspices of Abba Kyrillos V. It should be noted that the financier was a merchant from Zagazig (in the Suez Canal area), and the collector-editor his chief clerk- thus even such men were enthused by their Pope. 7. An Arabic Ms. found in as-Suriani Monastery (considered apocryphal) on the works of the Apostles Andrew and Bartholomew - Cat. No.753. 8. A copy of the Apostolic Canons and those of the ecumenical and local councils (in Arabic) pub. in Cairo 1877. 9. A monthly magazine entitled "Ain Shams" on cultural, archeological and social subjects, pub. by Qladius Labib (see s. 746), it appeared in Cairo from 1901-1904 only. 10. A General Directory of Egypt for the years 1889-1891 (in two vols.) by Youssef Asaf and Qaisar Nasr. It should be noted that the political unrest caused by disappearance of so much of the intellectual and spiritual productions: the fruits withered but the roots remained alive. Here, the comment of a contemporary is worth noting, it is: "It is universally admitted that the Patriarch leads a model life of purity and self denial and that he is animated by the highest ideals. I was struck when I accompanied him in his last journey to the Sudan by the attachment and the veneration of the people and he certainly deserves it, for whereas the revenues of the Patriarchate amount to Eg. Pound 35,000 a year, he does not spend more than Eg.

Pound 50 on himself, leading the most frugal life instead of living in a palace, keeping carriages and a large retinue of servants as a man of his exalted position would be quite justified in doing. Practically the whole of the Eg. Pound 35,000 is spent on the schools, the churches and the poor. Further, the Patriarch spends the large sums he receives as gifts from the members of the Community as well as his own private property on the building of new churches and schools and relieving distressed families. I had ample proof of this in my tour with him of February last... At Beni Suef, he gave Eg. Pound 300 for the completion of the new church...in Manfalout, he ordered the Bishop of the Moharraq to build a school out of the funds of his monastery...At Aswan, he gave Eg. Pound 40 in aid of the school there, and at Khartoum Eg. Pound 300 in aid of the fund for building a school besides Eg. Pound 200 in aid of the poor clergy and laity of the Sudan...Can such a man be accused of retrogression?..."- Cf. Archdeacon Dowling: "The Egyptian Church" Appendix III, pp.49-50.

21. Baring (Evelyn, Lord Cromer): "Modern Egypt" vol.II,p.561, where he says: "...those 11300 Europeans, although constituting only 1.6% of the total population, represent the greter part of the wealth and intelligence and no small proportion of rascality and aggressive egotism..."; Viscount Milner: "England and Egypt", p.15.

22. Andrew Watson "The American Mission in Egypt, 1854-1896", pp.28,31,126-136,332; Charles Watson: "In the Valley of the Nile", pp.13&221; "Methods of Mission Work Among Moslems" being those papers read at the first

Missionary Conference on behalf of the Moham-  
medan World held in Cairo April 4-9, 1906-  
and the discussions thereon which by order  
of the Conference were not to be issued to  
the public, but were to be privately printed  
for the use of missionaries and the friends  
of the missions - this specific copy being  
the one kept at the British Museum Library,  
no.4764 e.11. The irony of it is the statement  
in the introduction that the Conference was  
held in "Bait Orabi" (i.e. the house of Orabi);  
J.R. Mott "The Evangelisatin of the World  
in this Generation" pp.116-120 & 131; Hendrick  
Kraemer: "The Missionary Implications of the  
End of Western Colonialism and the Collapse  
of Western Christendom," in "The Student World,"  
1960, nos. 1&2,p.201; Paul Abrecht: "The  
Churches and Rapid Social Change," pp.65,83,111.  
It should be noted that amidst all this "Babel,"  
there were the few equitour, for example  
R. H. Malden, in his book "Foreign Missions,"  
said on p.11 "No two nations are precisely  
alike, and the fact that the Gospel is for  
all men means that each race has a special  
contribution to make its interpretation." But  
these equitour persons were like "a voice  
crying in the wilderness" at the time, now  
their cry has won a victory!

23. D.A. Cameron: "Egypt in the Nineteenth  
Century," p.236; P.G.Elgood: "Egypt," p.95;  
F.C. Penfield: "Present Egypt," p.184 where  
he says: "It is a sad fact that the international  
waterway has, by a strange fatality, passed  
from the control of the nation that built it  
to that of the country that fought its construc-  
tion strenuously."

24. Jacob Landau: "Parliaments and Parties  
in Egypt," p.24; P.M. Holt: "Egypt and the

Fertile Crescent 1516-1922," pp.210-215; "The Near East from Within" (anonymous) pub. by Funk and Wagnall Co. N.Y.1918,pp.106-108, copy at Brit. Mus. Lib. Cat.no. GIE; Jean et Simone Lacouture: "L'Egypte en Mouvement" p.11.

25. "The U.S. and the Middle East," ed. by Georgiana G. Stevens-The American Assembly Columbia Univ. 1964,no.6; "U.S. Policy in the Middle East" by Richard H. Nolte p.232 where he says: "...so early as July 7th the Khedive pointed out that the bombardment should be immediately followed by the landing of a military force. Gladstone objected because he said to the Commons 'the landing of a force involved the assumption of authority upon the Egyptian question and would have been grossly disloyal in the face of Europe...' It is difficult to conceive the frame of mind of anyone who considers that firing several thousand shot and shell into Egyptian forts did not 'involve an assumption of authority'." Cf. also Ed.Dacey: "The Egypt of the Future, p.100; Mary Rowlatt: "Founders of Modern Egypt," p.56; "The Emancipation of Egypt" by A.Z. trans. from Italian p.19; Moh. Mustafa Safwat: "Great Britain and Egypt," pp.103-107 and 114.

26. Stephen Neill: "Christian Missions," pp.420, 423 & 453; Cf. also Ed. R. Hardy: "Christian Egypt-People and Church," p.296; R.H. Malden,op.cit.p.208 where the author urges the missionaries "not to pauperize the native churches;" D. Attwater: "The Christian Churches of the East" vol. I, p.208; B.J. Kidd: "Churches of Eastern Christendom" pp. 457-459.

28. Y. Manqarius...pp.74-88; the two books of F. al-Etre are: "Al-Omma'l Qibtiya..." and "As-Sulta'l Vaticaniya" pub. in Cairo 1947 & 1953 respectively, see note 8 of chap.XLI.

29. Salah Issa: "Hikayat min Misr", Al-Watana'l Arabi, 1975, pp.118-145; W.S. Blunt: "Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt" p.358 where he states: "Henry Middleton has been much in Egypt and was intimate there with the Coptic community. A letter written to him during the war by the Patriarch has been published. It is interesting as showing how entirely the Copts were with Orabi at that time."

30. Ed. R.Hardy,op.cit.p.195; E.L. Woodward: "Christianity and Nationalism in the Later Roman Period" p.42.

31. J. Berque: "L'Egypte-Imperialisme et Revolution," p.32 where he says: "L'Egypte toujours perdante n'a jamais perdu," (i.e. Egypt always losing has never lost); Ed. R. Hardy,op.cit.p.200 where he says: "The history of the Coptic Church, ancient and modern shows that the Christianity which can survive in Egypt is that which claims to be really Egyptian."; Adrian Fortescue: "The Lesser Eastern Churches" p.253 where he states: "The most remarkable qualities of the Copts have always been their power of reviving and their comparative prosperity in spite of fierce persecutions...No persecution could ever extinguish them."

32. Jacob Landau,op.cit.p.120.

33. J.M. Ahmad: "The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism," p.71.

34. P.F. Elgood: "Transit of Egypt" pp. 146-150; Clara Boyle: "Boyle of Cairo," Preface p. VII; Ch. Roux: "L'Egypte de l'Occupation Anglaise a l'Independence Egyptienne" (Hist. de la Nat. Egypt. ed. par G. Hanotaux), T VII pp.212-213.
35. A Cunningham: "Today Egypt" p.235.
36. S.H. Leeder: "Modern Sons of the Pharaohs" pp.331-338.
37. Ahmad Shafiq: "My Memoirs through half a century" (Arabic) part 2, s.2, p.312; M.S. Kilani: "Al-Adab al Qibti" Cairo 1961, pp.93,124,130-131; H. Fyfe: "The New Spirit in Egypt"p.176.
38. D. Sladen: "Egypt and the English" p.142.
39. R. Tadros: "Al-Aqbat fi'l Qarn al Ishreen" vol. II, pp.11-12 and 15; T. Habib: "Memoirs of the Coptic Conference" (Arabic), Cairo 1912; A. R. ar-Rafi i: "Moh. Farid" (biography) p.51 - M. Farid was successor to Mustafa Kamil.
40. R. Makarius: "La Jeunesse Intellectuelle de l'Egypte" p.83; Milner, op.cit.pp.40-45; "The Emancipation..."p.96; Ed.Dicey,op.cit.p.57 where he states: "...the capitulations constitute a scandal and an abuse and inflict a grave injustice upon the Egyptian people." -see also s.688 and 6,Chap XXXIX together with no. 3 of s.792A.
41. Anonymous, Brit. Mus. Lib. no.4766 bbb3, A Short Account of the Lord's Work in Egypt Lady Duff-Gordon: "Letters from

Egypt" re-edited with additional letters by Gordon Waterfield, Routledge and Kegan Paul London 1969, Letter XLIII.

42. Francis Adams: "The New Egypt" pp.144 and 210; Mary Rowlatt, op.cit. pp.3-4; De Lacy O'Leary: "Islam at the Crossroads" pp.55-56 and 144.

43. M. Rowlatt: "A Family in Egypt: pp.129-130; P.G. Elgood: "Egypt", p.113; V. Chirol: "The Occident and the Orient-the Peculiar Case of Egypt", p.85.

44. H. Young: "The Independent Arab", p.276; P.M. Holt, op.cit. pp.294-295; H. Lorin: "L'Egypte d'Aujourd'hui", p.186; Egypt and the U.N., National Studies on International Organizations, Report by a Study Group prepared for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Manhattan Pub. Co. N.Y. 1957, p.10.

45. It is noteworthy that the same priests presided. Naturally Muslim women attended too, chief among them was Hoda Sha-rawi, wife of one of Zaghloul's two companions. Another vital remark is that 'Erian was a member of a youth underground movement, but he refused categorically to confess this fact before the English judge despite the insistent cross questioning.

46. H. Mo'-nis: "Dirasat..." no.418 of Dar al Ma 'arif, series

47. F. Radwan: "Mustafa Kamil", it should be pointed out that Egypt was the first country to revolt against foreign rule, and that its occupation by Britain was the shortest among all the nations who smarted under the foreign yoke.

48. In his book "England and Egypt", p.5.
49. In his book "Egypt under the Egyptians" p.227.
50. Mrs. E.L. Butcher: "Egypt as we knew it", pp.3-4.
51. Jacob Landau, op.cit. pp.24-25.
52. A very loyal friend of 'Orabi who did his utmost to dissuade Gladstone from bombarding Alexandria; when he failed, he became one of 'Orabi's advocates.
53. Poet, orator and editor-in-chief of "at-tabkit wat-tankit", a daily paper in which he criticized the Khedive and his government in satiric verse.
54. W.S. Blunt: op.cit. pp.327,345,372 and 378, see also pp.361-426; M. Wallace: "Egypt and the Egyptian Question", where he says: "Never since the days of Moh. 'Ali was there a man who had such a firm hold of the country as 'Orabi...The British prevented the Khedive from getting rid of Orabi at the commencement. Then when the Nationalist Party was victorious they prevented 'Orabi from getting rid of the Khedive."
55. The first commentator is the Rev. W.H. Oxley in his letter to his sisters (see note 12), while the second is the Rev. W. Denton in "The Ancient Church of Egypt," Norwich 1883, presenting Dean Butcher's view on p.20, see also 2 Samuel 6:1-4 - These remarks are presented that the readers who have no knowledge of the Copts may gain some insight into their standards.

56. F. Radwan, op.cit.p.256.
57. H. Mo'nis, op.cit.pp.226-228; Al-Mosawwar Weekly 7th of March 1969.
58. From a personal interview between the author and Isis - Mrs Nasif Muftah - eldest daughter of Wissa Wassef. It is noteworthy that his son, Ramses, was both an architect and an artist. He and his wife Sophie Habib Gorgi, (see s. 792A) originated a school for tapestry in the village of Harrania adjacent to the Pyramids, Cf. R.W.W.,-B. and W. Forman. "Tapestries from Egypt woven by the children of Harrania"; also Wissa's second daughter, Ceres, published a book on: "Pratiques Rituelles et Alimentaires des Coptes".
59. J.M. Ahmad, op.cit.pp.71&115.
60. Clara Boyle, op.cit.p.233, - a copy of Ghali's book is kept in the section of the Oriental books, Brit. Mus. Lib.no.14573a3b.
61. H. Mo'-nis, op.cit.p.268 - Seychelles is one of the small islands in the Indian Ocean, about half-way between India and the southern part of Africa.
62. H. Mo'nis, ibid, p.270.
63. Mutafa Amin: "Min Wahid li Ashara" (sketch of his boyhood in Zaghoul's home).
64. Marcel Colombe: "L'Evolution de l'Egypte, 1924-1950", pp.331-332.
65. Moh. Moh. 'Orabi (an Azharite): "Bainal Haqiqa wat-Tarikh", (a summarized biography); "Asdiqa' al Kitab..." monthly nos.8&9 May-June 1939; also see s.143.

66. J. Berque: "Histoire d'un village Egyptien au XIX Siecle", p.87 - the phoenix is a legendary bird which invariably rises renewed from its own ashes - see note 1 ov Chap.XLI.

67. Naturally these things are now the bare necessity, but were not so a century ago and in Khartoum.

68. For detailed information on this bishop and the following one, Cf. Y. Manquarius, op.cit. pp.493-495, 501-503.

69. He is thus among the successors of the well known Writer-Bishop of Ashmunein, see s. 527.

70. See s. 109.

71. For a good account by an English writer on this saintly Bishop, see Chap.VI, pp.275-304 of S.H. Leeder "Modern Sons of the Pharaohs".

It is to be noted that during the 20th century Egypt achieved: 1. The first national university opened in 1908 and became co-educational in 1924; it has mushroomed into numerous universities since then. 2. Political rule by a two-house Parliament started in 1924 which has evolved into a one-house "the People's Assembly". 3. The establishment of its own banking system. All this and much more has made Egypt a member of the community of independent democratic nations. Mahmoud Mikhtar, one of Egypt's foremost sculptors expressed this stupendous fact by a statue called "The Awakening of Egypt." It represents a woman standing tall and with head uplifted, unveiling her face with one hand and placing the other on the head of the sphinx who

is rising on its front paws - thus symbolizing the millenia of the Past hearkening to the Call of the Present: the Call coming from Woman who has incessantly been the Vigilant Mother of Egypt and Its Torchbearer. This monument stands on the premises of the Cairo University.

### XLIII. MORE TRIALS

- A. Abba Yoannis XIX
- B. Abba Macari III
- C. Abba Yusab II

- 755. An alert monk elected bishop
- 776. Politics plays a game
- 777. Another British failure
- 778. A major service
- 779. A new bishop for Ethiopia
- 780. Faithful watchfulness
- 781. Fellowship with God and its sequel
- 782. Resuming Pastoral duties
- 783. A Trail-blazer
- 784. Assets of Abba Macari
- 785. Ascetic frugality
- 786. Edifying faith
- 787. Election of Macari
- 788. Fleeting Papacy
- 789. A man of mysticism and action
- 790. "Everywhere preaching the word"<sup>1</sup>
- 791. Premature death
- 792. "God blessed the house of the Egyptian"<sup>2</sup>
- 793. Vehement argumentation
- 794. Enraging simony
- 795. Joining World Council of Churches
- 796. The Higher Institute for Coptic Studies
- 797. Appearance of Blessed Virgin in St. Dimiana's School
- 798. Holy Council convenes
- 799. Journey's end
- 800. A solicitour Father
- 801. Some layleaders

A. 775. When Abba Kyrillos V departed from this world, bishops and layleaders chose Abba Yoannis, Bishop of Bohaira and Menufiya, to be "Acting-Patriarch" until they decided on the new-elect. Now this bishop had been banished with his Pope, and like him, had spent his monastic years in al-Baramus Monastery. Chosen to be its Abbot in 1878, he renewed the church of the Blessed Virgin within it; then built a guest-house. Later, he bought for the monastery an irrigation machine to facilitate the work for the monks; dug a deep well on which he set a strong pumping engine to draw sweet water from the sub-soil, this water being sweeter than the surface water.

On the Eve of Lent 1887, he was consecrated Bishop of Bohaira and Menufiya. For the former he renewed the Coptic School in Damanhur (capital of the province), as well as four churches in four different villages. Then he built a church in the town of Damatew.

As for Menufiya, he renewed the church at Hisat Birma<sup>3</sup> and built within its garden a school for boys and another for girls; doing likewise for the towns of Batanon, Melig and Mit Khaqan. Following these constructions, he built seven new churches in seven different villages.

Then, to aid Abba Kyrillos V, he offered him five hundred pounds for the Handicraft School and one hundred and fifty pounds towards the reparation of the Abu Sefein Convent.

Residing at Alexandria, he constructed a most magnificent building facing St. Mark's Cathedral and within its courtyard. It housed two schools: 1. A Seminary for the monks of al-Baramus, as-Suriani and Abba Pishoi monasteries: 2. A secondary school for boys. At present it has become the later solely.

776. Meantime throughout all the stress and strife, the forces opposing the Nationalistic ascendancy - in the Church as well as in the whole country - still persisted in their endeavour to undermine it. At the disappearance of so preponderant a personality as Abba Kyrillos V, they presumed it possible to regain some lost ground. So while the Copts were deliberating on compatible candidates, a group of those whose minds had been saturated with westernism suggested Yuhanna Salama who had been a monk in al-Moharraq Monastery. He was Assistant-bishop of Khartoum and was known to be anglophile. Naturally all the nationalist-minded refused him. And seeing that Egypt was still at her tug-of-war with Britain, King Fuad I thrust his weight into the fray. He, therefore, summoned Tewfiq Doss<sup>5</sup> and asked him: "What are these rumours that I hear about Yuhanna Salama?" Tewfiq Doss answered: "You are well acquainted with the history of the Coptic Church, my lord, and you know therefrom that none of its Popes ever forgot his nationalism." The wily monarch retorted: "If it never happened before, is this a guarantee that it will not happen now?" The queried was acutely intelligent, he sensed a hidden desire behind the question, so he asked: "What is your wish, my lord?" Quick came the reply: "It is Abba Yoannis whom I trust completely and whom I desire to be Pope at this specific period." And the two men contrived the scheme by which "his majesty's" desire was realized. By this contrivance, the 113th in the line of St. Mark's succession was the very first - at the beginning of 1929 - by his own name, so he became Yoannis XIX.

777. Once more the English presumed that they could find a hole to squeeze through.

They had their bishop for the Middle East residing at Cairo. Promptly he invited the layleaders to tea. After being refreshed by eating and drinking, he remarked: "I am amazed at you Copts! How can you accept a Pope imposed upon you by the king?" One of those present asked: "What do you want us to do?" The diplomat in the guise of a bishop said: "Annull this choice and get the man after your own hearts." At these words, Habib el Masri declared: "You want to divide us, brothers, we certainly will not allow you! Abba Yoannis is now the Successor of St. Mark and as such he is our Father - all of us. We will not permit you to use us as a cat's paw for disregarding him or his prestige!" Thus ended the tea party.

778. One major service rendered by Abba Yoannis XIX is the College for Monks which he inaugurated at Helwan in a mansion within the garden surrounding the church built by his predecessor. It was to be a centre of study and research for monks selected from all the Egyptian monasteries. Consequently he appointed for its deanship the most prominent theologian of the time, Fr. Mikhail Mena who has legated to posterity a three-volume compendium on the Orthodox Doctrine.

After guiding the Church for thirteen and a half years, he rested in the Lord on the 21st of June 1942.

779. One of the spiritual leaders who gauged the depth of mystic experience during this period was Fr. Sidaros, one of the monks of St. Antoni's Monastery. He was sent by his Abbot to serve in the Holy Land. In 1920, Abba Kyrillos V selected him to shepherd the Copts in Bahgura, a town which had been

subjected to strong missionary influences. After nine years of vigilant service he was consecrated Bishop of Ethiopia with that meritorious name in the Coptic Church: Kyrillos. After his consecration, he spent forty days in his monastery<sup>7</sup> then left for his new home with the delegates deputed to accompany him: half of which were Ethiopians and the other Copts.

780. Abba Kyrillos spent the first six years in peaceful constructiveness. Then in 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia. And as the Italians -with their new weapons-advanced despite the desperate efforts of the Ethiopians during seven months, Emperor Haile Selassie found it imperative to flee so as not to fall into the hands of his malevolent enemy. Meeting Abba Kyrillos, he entrusted him with the guardianship of his people then left Addis Abeba. The Italians entered on the 5th of May 1936<sup>8</sup>. It goes without saying that the conquering general ruled with an iron fist. And he realized that if he succeeded in causing the Bishop to declare his allegiance to them, the people will automatically submit. He cajoled him at first; failing he thundered: "I shall certainly kill you." The man-of-God, unruffled, answered: "Your authority is on this mortal frame, do with it what you please. As for my soul, it belongs to the Christ my Redeemer". This daring baffled even the ruthless tyrant.

Some weeks later, Abba Kyrillos was taken by ship to Rome where he was treated royally. But all the efforts to entice him away from his allegiance to the Alexandrian Pope were empty baubles. At their utter failure, the Italians refused him admittance to Ethiopia, disembarking him at Port Said and nicknaming him "the Sphinx."

781. In addition to his wholehearted allegiance to his Church, Abba Kyrillos never forgot that he had essentially aimed at being "alone with the Alone." Every year he disappeared for a month, retreating to some desert cave in Egypt or some mountain cavern in Ethiopia, without anyone knowing where. At the end of the month, he would emerge as silently as he had disappeared. All those who saw him discerned the amazing phenomenon which the Hebrews beheld when Moses returned to them after having spoken to God; namely the skin of his face literally shone.<sup>10</sup>

Another trait characterizing this man who lived in close communion with God was the power to foresee events and explain their hidden meaning. One such example was experienced by the author and her family; it is as follows: On the 2nd of May 1942, a bus accident happened to Habib el Masri by which his shinbone was fractured and he was carried to the Coptic Hospital. During the first week, the attending doctor prohibited all guests from going into his room. So a loyal friend sat in the vestibule to record their names. On the afternoon of the third day, a young man asked to be allowed in. Being told of the doctor's order, he said: "I come from a plane other than yours; I came specifically to ask about the pasha; after I leave you shall not see me again." These enigmatic words were repeated to Habib el Masri, his wife and children who were all surrounding him. As he had visited the Holy Land a few weeks earlier, he concluded that the young man in question had come from Jerusalem, so he said: "This is an exceptional case, let him in." The Guest was ushered in. Neither Habib nor his wife and children recognized him. And the inexplicable fact

is that none asked him who he is! Half an hour later he excused himself and went out.

During that first week, Abba Kyrillos was in his yearly retreat. On his return to Cairo, he came to ask about Habib. No sooner did he walk into the room than both men embraced one another and their tears mingled. Then subduing himself the Bishop said: "God knows that for the last six months I knew that something was going to happen to you; throughout this time I implored Him to take pity on you." Habib commented: "Doubtless your prayers were answered for the accident might well have killed me." It, then, struck Mrs. Habib to relate the incident of the young man who remained unknown, asking who he might have been. The man-of-God serenely said: "His language betrays him." All eyes stared questioningly as he continued: "He is certainly one of the saints sent by God to soothe your hearts after the perturbation you had. He came in the guise of a youth that you may not identify him because the message he came to deliver is more important than the disclosure of his personality." One and all accepted his verdict because they knew what heights of mysticism he attained.

782. When Haile Selassie resumed his authority in 1942, he inquired about Abba Kyrillos. Receiving the information he wanted, he sent a delegation on a special plane to escort him back to Addis Abeba. This delegation arrived in June of that same year. Naturally they met the authorities: ecclesiastical and temporal. It is to be noted that the Minister for Foreign Affairs then was Salib Sami, a Copt. After these meetings, the Alexandrian Pope selected: 1. Farag Musa who had been Egypt's Ambassador to Ethiopia and was then

working at the Foreign Affairs Ministry but was re-instituted in Ethiopia; 2. Merrit N. Ghali a grandson of Boutros Ghali and has since 1935-founded "La Societe d'Archologie Copte" whose President he is, up to the present (by election every four years); 3. Iskander Qasabgi, a judge in the Court of Appeal and the Secretary of the Society which built the church of the Blessed Virgin at Zamalek (one of Cairo's smart suburbs) - he selected them to accompany Abba Kyrillos on his journey back to his flock. Thus the man-of-God resumed his pastoral duties until the summer of 1950. Feeling unwell, he came to Cairo for treatment. But the Heavenly Father willed to transport him to Paradise <sup>11</sup> on the 20th of October of that same year. His departure from this world marked the end of the bishops of Coptic blood to Ethiopia - since then they are of Ethiopic descent.

A note in passing: the Cabinet-minister and the three laymen who accompanied Abba Kyrillos are, indeed, good examples of their numerous contemporaries; they point to the diversity of vocations practised by the Copts during the twentieth century.

783. A fact to be remembered is that towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Egyptian woman became more and more aware of her potentialities. Quickened by Zaghloul's surge, she resolved to shoulder her responsibility in public life. Actually it was during Mustafa Kamil's ebullition that she began her first though timorous activity. Among the pioneers who dared to brave public criticism was Balsam 'Abd al-Malik who began her career as a teacher in the Tewfig Coptic school for girls in Sohaq (in Upper Egypt) in 1903, then became its head-mistress in 1915. Under the impetus

of the Zaghloul Revolution she started a woman's monthly magazine which she called "Al-Mar'atul Misriya" (The Egyptian Woman); it continued to appear until the death of its inaugurator on the 1st of November 1939. Side by side with her magazine, Balsam edited a book on the well known poetess, Bahithat al-Badiya, in 1920, then a book on home-economics in 1925. She also co-operated with the Feminist Union members by her numerous articles, some of which were published in the Feminist bi-weekly "Al-Misriya." All these activities, however, did not deter her from being an assiduous housewife<sup>12</sup> and a model mother to her two daughters.

784. When-once again- the Copts were concerned about the person to choose for sitting on the august Chair of St. Mark, many of them suggested the name of Abba Macari, the powerful Bishop of Assiut. At the mention of his name, bishops and laymen split into two: the firm in upholding the old tradition of selecting him from the monks in face of those who were altogether fascinated by the personality of Abba Macari-and he certainly was captivating!

In his early youth, he had joined the monastery of Abba Pishoi. Being of an artistic temperament, he spent the time for labour in ornamenting manuscripts and in creating multiform and multicoloured designs which are still kept in the library of the monastery -a wonder to behold. At twenty-seven, he was consecrated Bishop for Assiut by Kyrillos V. And to be selected for this bishopric, in particular, meant that he was well-steeped in the Orthodox Doctrine because it was the stronghold of American missionaries. They had a hospital, a college for boys and girls,

a school for girls and an orphanage in the metropolis, apart from their offshoots in the villages. These institutions were so impressive that they ensnared many a Copt. The Youth sanctified for its bishopry was a thorough Orthodox, an artist, a man given to mysticism and meditation and handsome withal. His voice was not simply melodious, it was compassionate too. To all these assets, he had that rare quality: clement patience.

785. When he went to his metropolis, he lived by the same ascetic frugality which he practised in the monastery. And such was the extent of his bounty that, at times, he did not have his day's meal. At such times, he would send his "disciple"<sup>13</sup> to the nearest house to tell them: "Our Father Bishop requests to dine at your bounty." Of course, they were only too glad to offer what they could.

786. His first aim was to fortify Orthodoxy in the hearts of his people, so he arranged classes for teaching it. In this endeavour God's sustenance was manifested in the person of a layman called Habib Iskandar who was both an ardent Orthodox and a most eloquent speaker. His clear simple exposition of the Doctrine and of pointing out its Scriptural and Apostolic roots attracted numerous people: they crowded his classes and the churches in which he preached.

Next thing, Abba Macari rejuvenated the two primary and two secondary schools (for boys and girls) which pertained to the Church. This was followed by building a grand Cathedral in the name of St. Mark. One day as he was on the scaffolding to see how the spire is being constructed, his foot slipped and down he went. In mid-air, he

cried aloud: "Take charge of me, O Christ my Lord"<sup>14</sup> - and he landed smoothly without so much as a scratch.

When, in 1911, some Copts held their conference despite the Pope's warning and Abba Macari was entrusted with moderating it, his speech had the needed restraining effect.

787. Thus the personal magnetism added to some forty years of service sanctified him in the esteem of many people. The tidal wave of popularity was so redundant that he, who was the leader, allowed himself to be led. During the controversy, Habib el Masri was wholeheartedly on the side of the monks though he grew up under the aegis of Abba Macari. For did he not spend his boyhood in Assiut, in a house under the very shadow of the Cathedral built by the Bishop? Habib's zeal for the monks caused Abba Macari to feel so hurt that he visited him in his home and reproached him. Habib, being fully convinced and quite frank, answered: "You know, holy father my love and reverence for you. But my loyalty to the Principle takes precedence even over my loyalty to you."

On the 13th of February 1944, Abba Macari became the 114th Pope of Alexandria.

788. It, then, happened that one of Habib el Masri's daughters was getting married; the wedding service was to be chanted in St. Mark's Cathedral on Sunday 31st of July 1944. Abba Macari officiated in person. The following morning, the bride's parents went to thank him for his graciousness. The venerable Pope embraced his spiritual son most affectionately and his tears streamed down his long-flowing beard as he said: "You were

right; I should have remained in my bishopry; I should not have allowed the tide to carry me away."

His Papacy lasted for one year, six months and six days. Whether the remorse which overwhelmed him or the turbulence through which he lived, or both forces together shortened his span or not is a fact known to God alone.

789. Among the bishops contemporary with Abba Macari III was Abba Basilus of Luxor - one of those rare persons who succeeded in living up to that standard of perfection required by the Christ.

He was an only child of God-fearing parents who named him Shafiq (i.e. compassionate). Hardly had he reached the age of seven than he lost his father. His mother endeavoured by all the means within her power to give him a good education. So, no sooner did he graduate from college than he worked in the Sudan Railways to earn a living. This necessity however, could not snuff out his yearning after the ascetic life. During the day, he fulfilled his duties to the best of his abilities. But his nights were at his disposal; he therefore spent them in vigils and prayers - in close communion with his Lord. So, despite his having to live amidst the hubbub of the world, he found time to be "alone with the Alone." He continued in his work for eight years. Finding that his mother could live after that without his salary, he took her permission, resigned from his post and went to St. Antoni's Monastery. And such was his striving after perfection that nine months later when the Luxor people came seeking a monk to be their Bishop, his Abbot and his brethren nominated him

unanimously. On the 23rd of September 1939, he was consecrated Bishop over Luxor, Esna and Aswan together by the name of Basilius. He was, then, thirty-two years old.

790. The parental choice of his name seems to have been an inspiration. For no sooner did he reach Luxor, which was to be his metropolis, than he set himself to search out all the needy of his far-flung bishopry. He went on a Pastoral tour by which he discovered all the tiny hamlets and all of the out-of-the-way villages. This first tour caused him to regulate his time so as to make it yearly that he may be able to teach his people and listen to their hopes and fears and not only visit them. He took special care of the orphans and the widows. He, thus, followed in the footsteps of the Disciples when "they went everywhere preaching the word."

791. But this man-of-God, who was enabled to combine spiritual mysticism with active service, was given a short time in which to till the Vineyard of His Lord. He and his people had joyfully celebrated the glorious Easter in 1947 and had resumed their habitual labours. But barely had six months passed than he was suddenly translated into the World of Light on the 16th of October. The words of the prophet Jeremiah concerning Jerusalem "... her sun is gone down while it is yet day..."<sup>15</sup> could feasibly be applied to him.

792. A. Again there are numerous outstanding persons in diverse fields, but one example of a leader with two members of his family will be given, not only to epitomize the whole but also to give an insight into the primordial



Abba Macarius  
Bishop of Assiut  
(Later Macari III, 114th Pope of Alexandria)



Abba Kyrillos  
Primate of Ethiopia from  
2nd of June 1927 - 10th of October 1950

affinity which is one of the prominent traits among the Copts.<sup>16</sup>

The select is Habib el Masri. Born of God-fearing parents in Assiut on the 6th of May 1885, he attended the Kuttab<sup>17</sup> in that city. On finishing it, he was sent to a government secondary school in Cairo. No sooner did he get his certificate than he started his career as government official. His first post was in the Land Surveying Department. While he worked, he entered the French Law School as its classes were in the evening. At the end of each school year, he went to Paris for his examinations. In the finals - the summer of 1908 - he succeeded with honours. Throughout his studies, he continued to serve as government official, moving upwards as the years sped by. The last post he occupied was that of "Royal Counsellor to the Ministry of Justice."<sup>18</sup> On the 24th of November 1943, he resigned and worked as lawyer and juriconsult in addition to lecturing to the post-graduates in the Faculties of Law and Commerce in both Cairo and Alexandria.

His most pre-eminent achievements are:

1. On the 28th of February 1922, the English signed a "Declaration" by which Egypt became autonomous. This Declaration was worded in French and sent with a<sup>19</sup> special Envoy to present it to Sultan Fuad: Before presenting it however, it had to be translated into Arabic and Habib was chosen by the Prime-minister for this work, so he was the very first Egyptian to know its contents.
2. In the summer of 1924 he was deputed to go to France, England and Belgium for three months for an intensive study of their parliamentary systems. On his return, he laid the rules and regulations by which work in the Houses of the Senates



Cardinal Tisserand, a French Orientalist,  
about to enter the Coptic Museum (Old Cairo)  
on the 29th of May 1930; behind him  
-next to his left shoulder is  
Habib el-Masri

ASSIUT COLLEGE  
AMERICAN MISSION  
ASSIUT EGYPT

مكتبة اسيوط  
الامانة الامريكية  
اسيوط - مصر

May 16, 1949

Habib Pasha al-Masri  
11 Sharia Hansas  
Heliopolis

Dear Habib Pasha:

It is with deep gratitude that I write to thank you for your splendid service to us last Friday. Your address was an inspiration to all who heard it, and all Assiut is talking about how fortunate we were in having you as our commencement speaker. I am sure that the audience who heard you, and in particular the graduates, will long remember your challenge to worthy living and patriotic service.

We could never recompense you for this service, but we had hoped to hand you an amount that would cover your travel expenses. However, Khawaga Nashid would not consent, so I reluctantly put the letter back in my pocket.

It has been a privilege to know you, and we hope you will visit us again and often.

Cordially and gratefully yours,

*Walter J. Skellie*

Walter J. Skellie

and the Deputies was to be administered. 3. On August 1927, he was selected among those who represented Egypt at the Inter-parliamentary Conference held in Paris; he distributed among the delegates a booklet of two parts: the abuses of the capitulations with a plea that they be abolished; and the fight set up by Egypt against drug traffic. 4. Again, in 1934, he was sent by the Minister of Finance to Budapest to buy the first Diesel trains to run on Egyptian soil. 5. While in the summer of 1938 he was chosen to go to France and England - this time to study their taxation systems, after which he laid the new tax laws and organized the new government department for taxation. In recompense for these colossal services, he was given the title of "Pasha" on the 15th of September 1941. 6. When Egypt became a republic in 1952 and needed a new Constitution, he was selected among those who codified it.

These services were for Mother-Egypt, as for Mother-Church, his achievements can be summed up as follows: a. He served as member of the Maglis Milli for a quarter of a century - from September 1938-August 1953, twelve years of which he was its Vice-President. Across the twenty-five years, he legislated all the laws needed by the Church, eg. personal status, amendment of the Maglis Milli rules, regulations on the election of the Popes, etc... He also defended the rights of the Church such as<sup>20</sup> the ownership of the Abba Roweiss Ground. b. He was member, vice-president or president of the following Benevolent Societies: Al-Khairiya al Kobra, Al-Iman<sup>21</sup>, As-Salam, Ar-Rahma, At-Tewfiq, Al-Haqq, Al Karma and Mari Girgis. c. In April 1940, a group of women formed "The Coptic Women's

Association for Educating Children" and asked him to lay for it its rules and regulations. Having done this, he and Habib Girgis - Dean of the Seminary - pleaded the Association's Cause before the Maglis Milli and procured its unanimous acceptance for opening a section for "Teachers" in the Seminary. Its graduates were to teach in the free Coptic schools of the Women's Association or sponsored by it. These schools extended from Alexandria to Abydos (of Pharoanic fame) before the 1952 revolution. By means of this movement, a school for folk arts budded-these arts were painting, weaving and sculpture. This time, Habib el Masri co-operated with Habib Gorgi by procuring a house for its pupils who were recruited from the above mentioned schools. Habib Gorgi - Chief Art Inspector in the Ministry of Education - contended that each human being has a racial subconscious in addition to his own; on this postulation the talented Egyptian, who has not come under foreign influence will produce an art which is altogether indigeneous. This school continued until the 1952 revolution also. During its twelve years of life, two exhibitions of its productions were held: one at the Palais de Chaillot (Paris) in the summer of 1949, and the second the following summer in the Islamic Centre (London). An offshoot of it, however, is the Harrania Tapestry school started and supervised by Habib Gorgi's daughter and her husband. (See note 58 of Chap. XLII.) d. On Maunday Thursday 13th of April 1944, while on pilgrimmage in Jerusalem, Habib el Masri and some of his friends-colleague-pilgrims founded "The Jerusalem Federation for the Copt Orthodox" whose aim is to encourage and facilitate pilgrimmages to the

Holy Land so dear to the hearts of Copts. Since then, it has grown beyond measure. Its headquarters in Cairo is a magnificent seven-storey building enclosing a library, a spacious hall for weddings, a theatre and a roof-garden, part of which is a church called "The Mount of Olives;" while on its ground floor is a replica of the Manger. Each year its board of directors draws five lots for a free pilgrimage. It has a tri-monthly magazine and issues a yearly calendar. Habib was elected president and continued to serve it in this capacity until the end of his life.

On the 9th of October, 1953, Habib passed on to the world beyond;<sup>22</sup> of him, the words of St. Paul: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith..."<sup>23</sup> are indeed applicable.

B. Among the vanguard of Egyptian women was Salima Mena - second cousin and wife of Habib el Masri. She was the daughter of Mena Mangarius who served his Church as member of at-Tewfiq and al-Iman societies. His progressive outlook caused him to send his daughter to the American School at Ezbekieh from which she graduated with two others in the summer of 1908.

She was honorary president of As-Salam Society under whose guidance were two primary schools: one for girls and one for boys; two orphanages on the same line. With these institutions, the Society built a spacious church in the name of Mari Girgis and a large audience hall for public lectures and discussions, or any other needed meetings.

In her maternal solicitude, she often invited the orphans to her home for lunch or tea, where she and her daughters served them in the Oriental fashion. Also, she spon-

sored many picnics and excursions for their delight and their instruction.

At the beginning of 1951, a group of Coptic women in Zeitoun<sup>24</sup> formed a society for mothering orphan girls in that vicinity. They had succeeded in buying a lot of ground on which they planned to build a mansion for housing the orphans. Consequently, they asked Salima Mena el Masri to be their president. She accepted and together with the members, they requested Abba Yusab to come on the 1st of April of that year and lay the foundation stone of the building. He consented, and at the appointed hour, they received him with the liturgical chants fit for the occasion. After offering the Prayer of Thanksgiving, St. Mark's Successor laid the foundation stone while Mrs. el Masri stood at his right. The building was completed within two years and is indeed both beautiful and capacious. It was ceremoniously inaugurated by Abba Yusab and again at the request of Salima and her colleagues. It still stands erect, a silent though eloquent witness of the strivings of those who labour in Faith.

C. Amin, the eldest son of Salima and Habib was of a very sensitive and affable nature which led him to study medicine. He specialized in Orthopaedics for he considered it an urgent humane method for service in the specific circumstances through which Egypt was passing. His insight was indeed verified. For in 1948 (two years after he had completed his studies), the first Egypt-Israeli war broke out. Though he was not an army doctor, his sense of brotherliness caused him to volunteer. And such was his altruism that he readily went to the thick of the battle:

servng in the hospital set up by the army at Magdala which had been chosen headquarters by the Egyptians. For nine consecutive days, he and his colleagues lived under recurrent bombardment for the Red-Crescent Flag was not respected. But God's Providence overshadowed him and he returned unscathed.

Coming back, he was posted at the Students Hospital in Alexandria.

It then happened that on the 10th of October 1963, Ahmad Abdallah, a boy of fifteen was brought to him with a paralyzed leg due to bone-cancer. Amin succeeded in transplanting for him a wholesome leg instead of his cancerous one. Twenty-four days later Ahmad was not only out of hospital, but was also playing football. His healing was complete.<sup>25</sup>

But such is the inexplicable mystery of life: this chivalrous young doctor was suddenly transferred to Paradise during the minutes preceding the dawn of the 4th of March 1964.

793. The last day of August 1945 which saw the setting sun of Abba Macari III inaugurated a period of dissensions and confusion. Abba Yusab, Bishop of Girga, was chosen "Acting-Pope." In this position, he and the Girgawi leaders began a propaganda campaign for his election. Of course, this campaign was met by numerous counter-currents. There were those who still upheld the pristine tradition of electing a monk, and they were again headed by Habib el Masri. There were, also, other bishops swayed by the prestige of St. Mark's Chair and willing to be enticed by the clamouring of their partisans. A sort of amnesia seemed to have so overpowered them to the extent of making them oblivious both of the behaviour of their forebears and of St. Paul's

declaration: "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron."<sup>26</sup> Numerous meetings were held in the different cities and quite a number of articles appeared in daily papers, weekly magazines and even private pamphlets. The vehemence of these contrasting currents lasted ten months.

The 12th of June 1946 was the voting day. Luckily for the Bishop of Girga it happened to be a day on which all the public transport workers were on strike. Luckily for him because among his partisans was an influential army colonel who succeeded in procuring army vehicles to transport only those sharing his view. The supporters of the other candidates had to find the means of going to the Maglis<sup>27</sup> Milli Hall - Assigned for the actual voting - but many of them could not. Thus Abba Yusab succeeded in becoming the 115th Pope.

794. If the months preceding the Papacy of Abba Yusab II burnt with vehemence, the years which followed were even more vehement - the convulsions this time coming from within! For the new-elect seemed to have spent his energy to its very residue blazoning himself. Once he attained his aim he allowed his "disciple" to assume authority! As ill luck would have it, this "disciple" was extremely unscrupulous - his only aim was to amass as much money as possible. Consequently he practised simony.<sup>28</sup> In practising it, he behaved like an auctioneer: each new candidate for any degree of Holy Orders had to pay more than the one before him. Disappointingly enough, Abba Yusab II left him to do as he pleased without so much as a remonstrance! The bishops met him and endeavoured to convince

him of the impropriety of overlooking his disciple's behaviour - but to no avail. Everyone was outraged and specifically those who exerted themselves to make him sit on St. Mark's Chair. They complained to him and urged him to dispense with this "pest" as they called him. Strange enough Abba Yusab II was deaf to all their complaints! At this inadvertance, they became so exasperated that they asked the Minister of the Interior to order this "ghoul" to go and live in Girga. Their request was granted - but only for four months! The Pope demanded his return, so back he came and grew more ghoulish than ever!

795. Yet the Lord Who is ever mindful of His Vineyard sent a ray of sunshine bursting through this dense darkness. At the beginning of 1954, the World Council of Churches sent an invitation to the Coptic Church to attend its Conference to be held in Evanston Illinois during the summer of that year. The invitation was, of course, sent to St. Mark's Successor, but a copy was sent by a friend to the author who had just returned from Philadelphia (Pa.) after a year's research into Coptic Manuscripts. At first Abba Yusab II was diffident: apprehensive lest the conveners discuss doctrinal matters which according to his postulate, might lead to more dissensions. After several discussions and by the intercession of Abba Mikhail (Assiut's Bishop), he became fully aware of the import of accepting the invitation. So convinced had he become that he assigned to the author the role of secretary, gave her his seal and authorized her to correspond with those who had sent the invitation. He nominated three men to represent him and the Coptic Church at the Conference; they

are: 1. Fr. Macari as-Suriani - now Abba Samuel, Bishop of Public Relations and Social Service; 2. Fr. Salib Surial, Priest of St. Mark's Church at Giza then - now Ministrant to the Copts in Frankfurt, Stuttgart and other West German cities; 3. Dr. A.S. Atiya, Prof. of History at Alexandria University and author of numerous books, now Prof. Emeritus at Utah University and has attained international renown. The three of them did attend the Conference. And so impressed were the Conference members by these Coptic Delegates that Fr. Macari was offered a scholarship for a year at Princeton University, during which he presented a thesis on "Education Among the Copts" by which he was given an M. A. Honours. Since then, Coptic Delegates have attended all the general conferences of the World Council of Churches as well as all the assemblies of the Committees stemming therefrom.

796. God's ever-watchfulness was not evident only in this propitious act, but His Grace enlivened the Copts in yet another vital field: that of study and research into the legacy of the Fathers. For on the 26th of February of that same year "The Higher Institute for Coptic Studies" was inaugurated. These studies comprise: the Orthodox Teachings, Coptic history beginning with the era of transition from paganism to Christianity; the Egyptian language in all its phases of evolution, i.e. hieroglyphic, hieratic, demotic and coptic; law both canon and civil; art and music to which is added photogaphy; the Coptic Community in its evolution and present-day needs, and African studies. In addition, there are courses termed "aiding-studies" - these are the English, the French and the German languages. Studying is not only theoretical, for

the students under the guidance of the professors visit historic sites, monasteries and ancient churches. Also, adjoining the Institute is a hall accomodating nine hundred seats with a high spacious platform for possible theatrical performances. In this hall, public lectures, seminars and diverse meetings are held.

The first Dean of the Institute was Dr. Sami Gabra whose discovery of the town of Tuan'l Gabal (in the middle of Upper Egypt) and whose numerous researches into the period of Egypt's transition from paganism to Christianity made him world-renown. Then on the 10th of May 1967, Abba Gregarius was consecrated "Bishop for Higher Studies and Scientific Research." After his forty days' retreat in al-Moharraq Monastery (where he was a monk) he became the Dean of the Institute.

797. Another sign of God's ever-mindful Providence was vouchsafed to the Copts in Jerusalem: it is as follows- The Coptic Patriarchate in the Holy City owns two schools: St. Dimiana's for girls and St. Antoni's for boys. On Thursday morning the 21st of June 1954, the girls of the sixth year had the exhilarating experience of seeing the Blessed Virgin in their class! At first She stood in the north-easterly corner, then She walked round the room. Naturally, Her Appearance caused no small commotion and the other classes hurried to have the ecstasy of seeing Her. In Her Motherly Tenderness, She continued to appear for a whole week during which everyone within reach in the Holy City had the joyful opportunity of gazing at Her to their hearts' content. Consequently, the class in which She appeared was transformed into a dainty church. Up to the present, the Copts chant the liturgy in commemoration of Her Appearance annually.<sup>29</sup>

798. These auspicious moves together with the elating experience in Jerusalem warmed the hearts but did not assuage their pain because of the continuance of simony. Thereupon Abba Thomas, Bishop of Gharbiya and Secretary to the Holy Council, took on himself the responsibility of convoking his brother-bishops to convene. They all hastened to Cairo in response to his convocation; they were: 1. Abba Yacobus of Jerusalem and the Middle East, 2. Abba Sawirus of Minia, 3. Abba Mikhail of Assiut, 4. Abba Athanasius of Beni-Suef, 5. Abba Aghabius of Dairut, 6. Abba Abraam of Luxor, 7. Abba Kyrillos of Qena, 8. Abba Lucas of Manfalut, 9. Abba Isaac of Fayoum, 10. Abba Yoannis of Giza, 11. Abba Timotheos of Daqhaliya, 12. Abba Benyameen of Menufiay, 13. Abba Mattheos of Sharqiya, 14. Abba Yoannis of Khartoum, 15. Abba Ghabrial Bishop of St. Antoni's Monastery, 16. Abba Arsenius Bishop of St. Paul's Monastery, 17. Abba Macari Bishop of al-Baramus Monastery, 18. Abba Theophilus Bishop of as-Suriani Monastery, 19. Abba Pakhom Bishop of al-Moharraq Monastery, 20. Abba Abraam Bishop of Baliana and Abbot of St. Macari's Monastery.

It is evident that they well-gauged the gravity of the situation, for even those whose Sees were out of the boundaries of Egypt promptly responded.

At their meeting, they unanimously essayed to convince Abba Yusab of dispensing with his disciple. Despite their concerted effort and their common consent, he still persisted in wanting him by his side. Thereupon the Holy Council decreed unanimously also that he was to withdraw to al-Moharraq Monastery until he submit to their decree. They, then, elected three of them to form

a Papal Committee to administer the Church affairs in his absence. The three selected were: 1. Abba Aghabius of Dairut to be President, 2. Abba Mikhail of Assiut and 3. Abba Benyameen of Menufiya members. And the strange fact is that despite this unanimous decree, Abba Yusab II persisted in his obduracy. Thereupon the decree was put into immediate effect, and he left his Papal Seat the very same day, on the last of March 1956.

799. During his reclusion, he fell ill, and his health deteriorated unremittingly. By the 6th of November the doctors, who were treating him, ordered his transference to the Coptic Hospital in Cairo by ambulance. He remained in hospital until the 12th when he fell into a coma. In this unconscious state, it was deemed compatible with his ecclesiastical dignity that he be carried to his Papal Abode as it was evident that he was dying. The following morning he departed from this world. His papacy lasted ten years and five months.

800. On the 1st of September 1946 - two months and three weeks after his enthronement - Abba Yusab II ordained an Antonian monk Bishop for Jerusalem and the Middle East by the name of Abba Yacobus. No sooner did he reach his metropolis than he went on a pastoral tour, visiting Bethlehem, Jaffa, Haifa, Nazareth, Jericho and the Dead Sea region. Pastoral tours have been a source of mutual elation and understanding in the Coptic Church, for they were always undertaken with deliberate patience; the spiritual Father accorded his people the needed time for expressing their hopes and fears. And though his episcopacy lasted for almost ten years and six months only Abba Yacobus accomplished a

number of projects: 1. He repaired Queen Helena's Church in which he resumed the chanting of the Holy Liturgy. 2. He built a rest-house on the shore of the Jordan with stairs leading straight to the river. (The author had the joy of sharing in the task of building on the afternoon preceding the Epiphany in 1948.) 3. He bought a piece of land in Lydda, another in Nazareth and a third in Bethlehem, on each of which he built a church: on the first he built it in the name of St. George as it was next to his tomb; on the second in the name of the Blessed Virgin and on the third in that of "the Nativity". 4. He inaugurated the School of St. Antoni for boys and that of St. Dimiana for girls. The latter is the one in which the Blessed Virgin appeared (see s. 797). 5. He repaired that part of the Holy Sepulchre Church which belongs to the Copts. 6. He built a gateway and an annex to the Monastery of St. Antoni in Jericho for the relaxation of the pilgrims. 7. He published a monthly magazine in the name of St. Mark which ended with the end of his life on the 23rd of March 1956.<sup>30</sup>

801. Numerous were the layleaders of this period, but again a few examples will be selected. These are: Fahim Soleiman, son of Youssef Pasha at whose home the Empress of Ethiopia stayed. He was State-Prosecutor then Judge at the Court of Appeal as well as a prominent member of the Maglis Milli and at-Tewfiq Society. Raghib Ayyad - Professor of Painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts from 1934-1952. He, then, resigned and opened a studio of his own. His fecundity was such that he succeeded in having a yearly exhibition until 1978. Adly Andarawos, of an outstanding Luxor family. He started his career as a

barrister at Law, then became judge in the Mixed Courts.<sup>31</sup> When these were abolished in the summer of 1937, he was appointed Ambassador of Egypt in Athens then in Paris. At the Yalta meeting - from 4th-11th of February 1945, it was agreed that a Conference of the U.N. was to be held in San Francisco. Egypt sent her Delegation to that Conference and 'Adly was its Legal Advisor. On the 25th of April, when it was held, 'Adly summed up Egypt's view before the representatives of the nations who met at this U.N. Conference.<sup>32</sup> Soleiman Ne-matallah, Prof. of Pediatrics at the Cairo University. Munir Ghabrial, started as a teacher in a secondary school pertaining to the Ministry of Education. Then he resigned and worked in a printing press. In 1939, he decided to have his own press, so he founded a printing-house by the name of "Daral 'Alam al-'Arabi" which has been growing constantly and which has expanded to printing in English and French in addition to the original Arabic. It is the press at which the first edition of this book was published.

Woman's share in public life grew steadily in size and diversity. Now, Egyptian women are doctors, engineers, teachers, professors in different University Faculties, lawyers, members of the Diplomatic Corps and of the People's Assembly as well as Cabinet-Ministers.<sup>33</sup> But we will content ourselves with two examples only: Emily 'Abd al-Masih who studied Child Education in London and graduated in 1922. Returning to Egypt, she taught in a secondary school belonging to the Ministry of Education, then in a College for training teachers under the same Ministry. In 1932, she was asked to organize the Kindergarten education system throughout Egypt; then she supervised these schools for three years.

Finally she became inspectress of the Women's Training Colleges, fulfilling the duties of this post until 1959 when she retired. Her educational services, however, could not make her forget her loyalty to her Church. For she joined "The Coptic Women's Association for Educating Children" whose secretary she was for six years. She was also a member of "Abna' al Kanisa" Society whose aim was to train deacons, to serve in the villages and to propagate the knowledge of the Coptic language through teaching and publications. In addition, she sponsored and supervised all the socio-educational activities in her native village of Kafr Habashi (about forty kilometers north of Cairo). In recognition of her service, the primary school of her village has been named after her. Helena Sidaros, studied in London also, but in the field of medicine - specializing in Gynecology. She graduated in 1932. Going back to her native land, she worked in a government hospital at first. Three years later she went to work in the Coptic Hospital in Cairo. All along she had her private clinic. It is feasible to say that the women she treated are well-nigh numberless throughout the forty-five years of her service. Helena, also, could not forget her loyalty to her Church though her work was very strenuous. She was member of Al-Khairiya al-Kobra, ar-Rahma and al-Ikhlās societies by her subscriptions and by treating the needy freely.<sup>34</sup>

#### XLIII. NOTES

1. Acts 8:4.
2. Genesis 39:5 - incidentally el-Masri means the Egyptian.

3. See s. 664.
4. Y. Manqarius, *op.cit.* pp.448-449; Fr. S.T. As-Suriani: "Al-Adiera..." pp.488-490.
5. A scion of a notable Assiut family some of whose members joined the American Presbyterians, among whom was his father. He and his brothers and sisters, however, rejoined the national Church. At the time, he was Minister of Transport.
6. This tradition - like all traditions and teachings of the Coptic Church - is based on the Apostolic pattern. Because when the Apostles chose Matthias in place of Judas, they did not select him from among the seventy Disciples, but "of these men which have accompanied with us" (Acts 1:21). They inserted this non-transference of the bishops in the XIVth of their Canons. The Fathers at the Nicean Council concurred with this Apostolic law and recorded it as the XVth of their twenty canons. When the second ecumenical council met in 381 A.D., the question of the transference of bishops was discussed and the Fathers affirmed their adherence to the Apostolic and the Nicean canons. Along this same line of thought, the Copts reiterated on every occasion that the Priesthood is a Calling by God (Exodus 28:1, Numbers 16:5 and Hebrews 5:4). For that very reason, we have seen how - on numerous elections - the nominee had to be chained by his electors and brought for his consecration. It should be noted that the Rite of Consecration is chanted over the monk only, for it is one and the same for pope and Bishop - the former being the "Bishop" of the capital. As such, a bishop is only installed and not consecrated as the Rite is not to be repeated.

7. See note 5 of Chap. XLI.
8. "...in spite of the principles of the League of Nations, even the English Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, and the French Prime-Minister, Pierre Laval, were resigned to the establishment of an Italian protectorate over Ethiopia," Cf. Ency. Brit. XVth ed., Helen Hemingway Benton, Published, 1973-4, vol. VI, p.1011 and vol. XII p.751 where is stated that Europe, having expressed its horror, did no more.
9. Compare with s. 354.
10. Exodus 34:35.
11. From the Report kept in the Archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on the relations with Ethiopia for the years 1942-1950; also the personal memoirs of the author.
12. 'Al-Misriya', Monthly no.70, Cairo 15/12/1939, p.14.
13. Among the Copts, the bishop's (or pope's) secretary is referred to as his disciple; see s. 665.
14. Compare with Psalms 91:11.
15. Jeremiah 15:9.
16. As has been implied in connection with the Boutros Ghali, the Wissa Wassef and other families.
17. The primary school adjoining the Church for the Copts and the Mosque for the Muslims.

18. When Egypt was a Kingdom, each cabinet-ministry had a jurist for its legal counsellor and as such was termed "Royal Counsellor."

19. He was made "King" after both countries had signed the Declaration - see s.766 (at its end).

20. See s. 633.

21. i.e. "The Faith" founded by Fr. Girgis Boutros, Priest of Mari Girgis church in Geziret Badran (Shubra). He started it on the 1st of January 1912 with Eg. Pounds 6 a year. Forty years later, its expenses per year were Eg. Pounds 48,000 and it could boast of:  
1. A School of Commerce for boys and girls,  
2. A primary and a secondary school for boys,  
3. The same for girls,  
4. A hospital including an outpatients clinic, and a setting aside of an amount of money and a number of beds for free treatment. In September 1962, at the death of Fr. Girgis, the Ministry of Education appropriated the Schools and that of Hygiene the hospital.

22. "Habib el Masri", a biography by the author on her father based on the official Dossier of his government service and on the minutes of the Maglis Milli sessions during his membership in it - pub. by the Church of Mari-Girgis in the Karnak Press, Alexandria 1977 (in Arabic).

23. 2 Timothy 4:7.

24. A suburb to the N.E. of Cairo through which the Holy Family passed. Its church is named after the Blessed Virgin and is the one wherein She appeared on the 2nd of April 1968.

25. Cf. the daily paper "Akhbar al-Yaom" no. 299 issued on the 9th of November 1963.
26. See note 6 - above.
27. Enclosed within the compound of St. Mark's Cathedral and the Papal Mansion at Ezbekieh in the heart of Cairo.
28. See s. 542.
29. See the June Commemorations recorded in the annual calendar of "The Jerusalem Federation of the Copt Orthodox.'
30. Book of the Silver Jubilee of "The Jerusalem Federation for the Copt Orthodox - 1944-1969," pub. by "Dar al-Geal," Cairo July 1969, pp.59-65.
31. These were courts in which judges and litigants were of different nationalities; the Egyptian judges among them were the exceptions. At their abolishment, the Egyptian courts replaced them.
32. Egypt and the U.N., op.cit. pp.16-21 -it may be noted that Yalta is in Ukrania; those who met were President Roosevelt, Prime-Minister Churchill and President Stalin.
33. An incident may be cited here though it is personal: when the author was researching into the Coptic Mss. in Philadelphia (Pa.) in 1953, Dr. Cyrus Gordon, under whose instructions she was working, wanted to enroll her membr of the Archeological Society in that city. To the amazement of both of them, she was refused admittance on the excuse that there were no women members. Meantime she was (and still is) a member of "La Societe

d'Archeologie Copte" in Cairo. In her elation, she seized the first opportunity when giving a talk to "The Association of University Women" and said: "Friends, the old is not as old and the new is not as new as you think; for in Cairo I am a member of the Archeological Society while here - in Philadelphia - I am denied this right."

34. The information on "C-Abba Yusab II" to its end, is from the memoirs of the author based on personal interviews with those mentioned or with their nearest relations. It should be noted that Appendix I is a sample of the numerous writings of H.G. Bishop Gregorius; while the author is Professor of Coptic History at the Institute.

#### XLIV. A LUMINOUS ERA

802. A momentous year
803. The monk Mena
804. Mena becomes a solitaire
805. His constructive efforts
806. Meditating though among the crowds
807. Mena becomes Abba Kyrillos VI
808. Extraordinary spiritual talents
809. Paternal loving kindness
810. Pastoral visit to Ethiopia
811. 1st Conference of Orthodox non-Chalcedonians
812. Plea for peace and equity
813. Study of Copto-Byzantine relations
814. A Christmas Service in Brotherly unison
815. Consolidating the Africans
816. Blazing a new trail
817. Surveyance across continents
818. The Shepherd seeks the needy
819. Watchful piloting
820. All-encompassing fervour
821. Envoys to Pan-Orthodox and Vatican Councils
822. Concern for Egypt
823. The Wondrous 1968:
  - A. Appearance of the Blessed Virgin
  - B. Return of St. Mark's Relics
824. Joyful repose
825. Outstanding Personalities

802. One of the many outstanding facts about Egypt is the ever-recurrent momentous events throughout the aeons of its history - and the year of Grace 1956 was fraught with such

momentum. On the temporal plane, England and France coalesced with Israel in war because of their rage at Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal but were thwarted by Eisenhower (then President of the U.S.). While on the spiritual plane, the Copts were aflame with yearning after a God-chosen Pope. Their tension stemmed from their ardor to return to the Apostolic Principle upheld by the Church from the beginning up to 1929: the Principle of selecting a monk to whom the world's glitter was but dross. This primordial precept had been broken by the three successors of Abba Kyrillos V, but experience proved the wisdom of the Coptic Fathers in adhering to the Apostolic Tradition.<sup>1</sup> The currents and counter currents continued their surge and resurge from the 13th of November 1956 to the 3rd of May 1959 when the foment ended by the triumph of Fr. Mena al-Baramusi. A week later - namely on the 10th of May - he was consecrated by that most awe-inspiring Rite so lovingly prescribed by the Fathers for raising a simple monk to be the august Successor of the beloved Evangelist of Egypt. At his consecration, he was given that cherished name: Kyrillos, becoming the sixth of the illustrious bearers of this name.

803. Born in Alexandria of God-fearing parents, he was given religious and secular education. After obtaining his secondary school certificate, he worked in the world-famous Thos. Cook and Son Co. Nonetheless, his heart glowed with the love for the ascetic solitariness. In obedience to his parents, he sought the guidance of St. Mark's Successor who happened to be Abba Yoannis XIX and who advised him to go to al-Baramus monastery. He promptly entered the sanctuary - on the 27th of February 1927. Six years later, the call to be

"alone with the Alone" was so overpowering that he entreated his Abbot to allow him to leave the monastery and live in solitariness. The Abbot looked him straight in the eyes and apperceived his ardour so he gave him the desired approval. He spent seven months within the vicinity of al-Baramus. One day Hasan Fuad, the Director of the Museum of Arab Antiquities and an American friend chanced upon him. True to the Egyptian monastic tradition, he received them with joy, courtesy and hospitality. As they were leaving Hasan Fuad declared his readiness to help him if he ever needed any service.

804. Fr.<sup>2</sup> Mena was passionately attached to St. Mena and longed to rebuild his monastery at Mariut. But the English army was still in Egypt and the desert was jealously guarded by them to the extent of refusing the mediation of Abba Yoannis XIX. At this refusal, Mena went to that section of the Moqattam hill overlooking Cairo where there were several windmills deserted from Mamluke times. He selected one of them with the intention of settling in it. But the guard appointed by the Government told him that these mills belong to the Arab Antiquity Department which categorically refused to allow any person even to rent one of them. The following day, the ardent ascetic went to meet H. Fuad who not only gave him the permission, but paid the rent out of his own pocket. Thus the solitude sought by Fr. Mena was vouchsafed him in October 1933. One companion, however, shared his solitariness from sunset to sunrise - a most unexpected companion. A wolf which presumably had been living there, found Fr. Mena's presence no intrusion and immediately accepted him!

He was left to his solitude and his unwonted companion until World War II erupted. The English army was again responsible for causing him to leave.

805. But how unsearchable are God's plans! When Fr. Mena descended from the hill, he stayed for some months in a room adjoined to the church of the Archangel Mikhail. He had become known (even while in solitude) for his healing power. The many who sought his assistance expressed their gratitude to him by buying for him a plot of ground on which he built a church in the name of Mari Mena and a cell for himself on its roof. Then he built, within its courtyard and facing it, a series of rooms for the university students whose homes were outside Cairo. And such was his impact upon the youths who lived under his tutelage that a good number of them adopted monasticism - foremost among them are Abba Samuel (Bishop of Public Relations and Social Service) and Fr. Matta al-Miskeen the <sup>4</sup>spiritual teacher of the Abba Macari monks. Annexed to the rooms occupied by the students he built a separate flat where the poor boys of the vicinity were taught weaving, mechanics, soldering and <sup>5</sup>incrustation that they may thereby earn a living.

806. In Egypt, the saintly men of God were and still are eagerly sought by Copts and Muslims alike and all are equally welcomed. The enforced descent of Fr. Mena brought him nearer to the people who flocked round him during the day and far into the night. Yet such was his dynamism that despite the onflow of the crowds, he could still continue in his prayers and meditations. Incredible! Yes. But did not H.J. Breasted record that what is fabulous elsewhere is natural in Egypt?<sup>6</sup>

807. When Fr. Mena became Kyrillos VI, his "old" dream glowed anew. So, on the 22nd of June 1959 he set out for Mariut. Thousands of Copts from Cairo, Alexandria and other cities hastened to go with him, among whom were the author, her sisters and her brothers. The Mari Mena Association had pitched, the day before, a huge tent round the fallen sanctuary of the Martyr-saint. And here, again, is a point to ponder: the Holy Liturgy reverberated once again in that Shrine after a silence of nine centuries! And what is more, next to the tumbled walls and shorn columns, a new monastery now stands enclosing a grand Cathedral, a well-sized church and a small one beside the cells for the monks and a rest-house for guests. A square tower with the name of St. Mena carved on its four sides and lit up by night can be seen miles afar and fills the hearts of all travellers in that region with a sense of security and well-being. 8

808. Abba Kyrillos VI was in very essence a man of prayer and was endowed with a most amazing power of endurance. For despite his multi-responsibilities and the never-ceasing flow of visitors - Egyptians and foreigners - he would get up at four in the morning to chant the Rite of Praise which he likened to the "manna" that had to be collected by sunrise. He, also, succeeded in chanting the Holy Liturgy daily throughout his papacy. And those who are familiar with the Coptic Church know that on numerous occasions, prayers are chanted after sunset and for long hours into the night. Abba Kyrillos was invariably officiating at these prayers. As for the Easter Service, he started it at midnight and ended it with the first rays of

dawn. These incessant prayers rising out of the depths of a truly loving and devoted heart, gave St. Mark's Successor an insight into the souls, as proved by innumerable incidents. Few examples selected will explain this marvelous power: A young couple had lost their only son, aged five. Desirous to bring solace to his wife, the husband took her to visit Abba Kyrillos. They stood in the queue awaiting their turn and she had a green scarf covering her head. He looked over the long line and motioned to her to come forward. Uncertain of being the one, she remained in her place. So he said: "O lady with the green scarf come here." Naturally she obeyed. He put the cross on her head saying: "You are desolate because your only son died, but be of good cheer for God will grant you one in his stead, whom you will call Marcus." In due time she did get Marcus and went with joy to present him to the man-of-God.

Another example concerns the author's cousin. He was sick and feverish. His brother hastened to Abba Kyrillos who, no sooner did he see him than he drew a thread off his vest (woven from palm bark) and gave it to him saying: "Take this and ask your brother to tie it round his waist, and by God's grace the fever will vanish." The man did exactly as he was told and a few days later the sick brother came to express his gratitude.

809. One more example shows the extent of his paternal solicitude, it is as follows: Some lovers of Mari Mena hired a bus and went to the monastery in Mariut at a time when Abba Kyrillos VI was there. After attend-

ing the Holy Liturgy they departed. Half an hour later, the monks saw their Pope pacing back and forth along the corridor which joins the two churches. He was perturbed and was reproaching Mari Mena audibly. Ten minutes later, he smiled and added: "Thank you dear St. Mena" and retired to his room. The following day two men from the group came to express their thanks on behalf of them all. The bus carrying them had fallen on its side after crossing one of the many bridges built over the canals which have turned part of the desert into green fields. And the wonder of it is that one and all came out unscathed. It was during these minutes that Abba Kyrillos was earnestly entreating his patron saint for he had seen the whole thing exactly as it happened.<sup>10</sup>

810. Ethiopia had its share of his solicitude as it welcomed him on a two-week pastoral tour which he began on Wednesday 26th of October 1960. Next day he consecrated the church called after the first Christian martyr St. Stephen. From thence he went to the church of the Blessed Virgin. In the evening he chanted the "Prayer of the Lifting-up of the Incense" in the church of "the Saviour of the world" wherein he performed the Holy Liturgy the following morning. Each day saw Abba Kyrillos in a different town offering some Liturgical Rite in its church. And in loyalty to his Saviour he wended his way through the different sections of the hospitals wherever he went. He then had the joyous blessing of praying in the renowned churches of Lalibela.<sup>11</sup>

Returning to Addis Abeba on the 4th of November he chanted the Liturgy in the Church of St. Gawargius (George) in cele-

bration of the thirtieth anniversary of Emperor Haile Selasie's enthronement. The same evening he attended the session of Parliament, giving his Apostolic blessing to its members. After that, he went to the Gondar province and as the plane hovered over Lake Tana, its captain descended as low as possible so that Abba Kyrillos will bless its waters.<sup>12</sup> His last stop was in Eritrea where he spent two days among its people.

811. On the 16th of January 1965, he was again in Ethiopia - this time to preside over the first conference of the Orthodox non-Chalcedonians. Those who attended it were: Mar Ignatius Yaqub III Patriarch of Antioch; Abba Yakin I Catholicos of the Armenians in U.S.S.R.; Abba Khorin Catholicos of the Armenians in Lebanon; H.G. Bishop Theophilus of Harrar in his own capacity and representing the Catholicos of Ethiopia who could not attend because of his sickness; Abba Basilios Catholicos of the Orthodox-Syrian Indians. The Secretary to this Conference was Ato Bibarta Ethiopian Minister for Public Health.

812. Apart from discussing the major problems which concern them all, the assembled Fathers and those with them probed the question of world peace. They decreed that peace is not simply the disappearance of war, rather is it a positive state of living in harmony and cooperation. Accordingly, they sent their plea to all the international institutions foremost among which were the World Council of Churches and the U.N. urging them to endeavour to their utmost in establishing good will among the nations.

813. On his return, Abba Kyrillos VI convoked his Council and gave it full details of all

that happened. All those who attended gave their wholehearted and unanimous consent. They also appointed a committee for studying the relations between the Coptic and the Byzantine churches with the aim of coming to a mutual understanding. This committee has worked continuously and has unravelled numerous old knots; its last meeting was held by the Byzantines in Mt. Athos during the second week of January 1979.

814. True to their decisions, the non-Chalcedonian Fathers met in Cairo during the first week of January 1966. Abba Kyrillos VI found it propitious to have them assembled then so as to invite them to chant<sup>13</sup> with him the Ritual Service of Christmas Eve. Each prayed in his own tongue and his native tunes. The Service was broadcast to the thrill of the millions who heard it for they felt transported to the Apostolic times when Christians lived in unison.

They, then met on January 1967 in Antelias (Lebanon) in response to the Armenian Church; and on January 1968 in Damascus where the Hostess Church was that of Antioch. These yearly assemblies still continue by rotation with the exception of Ethiopia which, unfortunately, has fallen under Communism.

815. As Father to the oldest African church and Successor to the African Evangelist,<sup>14</sup> Abba Kyrillos VI directed his verve towards St. Mark's continent-compatriots. Consequently, in 1960 he sent:

1. Fr. Macari As-Suriani (now Bishop Samuel) to South Africa where he visited Fr. Isshaq Girgis (from Abba Pishoi monastery) and the southern Africans who joined the Coptic Church; he conversed and interchanged views

with them on the vital subjects which concern them.

2. Fr. Shenouda As-Suriani to attend the meeting of the Founding of the All Africa Council of Churches.
3. Fr. Pakhom al-Moharraqi (now Bishop Gregorius) to attend the first conference of the A.A.C.C.
4. Dr. Zahir Riad, Prof. of African studies at Cairo University. Deacon Wagdi Ilias (now Fr. Marcus of Toronto) and George Bibawi (now Dr. Prof. of Theology at the Coptic Seminary, Cairo and lecturer in the Seminaries of Damascus and Beirut) to attend the African Youth Conference in Nairobi.
5. Fr. Youssef Abdou to attend the meeting of the Theological Committee for Christian Peace held in Freetown (capital of Sierra Leone) in September 1965.
6. Fr. Antonius As-Suriani (now Pope Shenouda) to Nairobi to attend the series of studies on "the African Family."

Following the same pursuit, he encouraged Fr. Youssef Abdou to continue his studies on African affairs by sending him to visit the churches in Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia during the first three months of 1965. On his return, Fr. Youssef prepared a thesis which he presented to the Cairo University. This thesis was discussed on the 29 of April 1968. The Examining Committee awarded him the Doctrate with honours.

816. He, then, blazed a new trail: consecrating bishops for specific fields. He ordained Abba Samuel for Public Relations and Social Service; Abba Shenouda Bishop for the Theological Seminary and the Sunday Schools; and Abba Gregorius for Higher Theological Studies, Coptic Culture and Scientific Research.

These fields had grown in importance and needed his personal concern which only a devoted bishop can give.

817. But Africa was by no means the only object of his sympathetic interest: other continents demanded their share.

1. In response he sent Fr. Mena Iskandar (a former assistant professor at the Faculty of Science, AinShams University) to tour the main cities of Germany that he may guide and direct the Copts therein (in 1960).

2. In 1961 the Copts in Kuwait succeeded in obtaining from its Emir a piece of ground on which they built a church. St. Mark's Successor sent them Fr. Angelius al-Moharraqi and the deacon Samir Khair <sup>15</sup> to serve them.

3. He deputed Bishop Samuel to obtain first-hand knowledge on the Copts in U.S. and Canada through the summers of 1963-1966 consecutively. As a result Coptic churches came into being in Jersey City, Toronto and Montreal.

4. In March 1968, Abba Kyrillos consecrated Fr. Mena Labib and sent him to Sidney. Two years later he sent Fr. Philemon to Melbourne: both for shepherding the Copts in Australia.

818. But what about the Copts in their own homeland? As he scanned their state, he found that numerous villages were still totally deprived of spiritual surveyance. To amend this state, the ever-vigilant Shepherd consecrated portable altars <sup>16</sup> to be carried by the priests serving in the towns within whose regions are deprived villages. These ministrants were to visit the villagers during weekdays at fixed times carrying with them the portable altars that they may chant the Holy Liturgy for them and teaching them and listening to their requests.

819. Moreover as Father to his Church, Abba Kyrillos VI realized his duty towards his daughters, so he sent the author to represent the Coptic Church at the Conference of the World Week of Prayer held in Madras (India) from the 4-11 of February 1961. Naturally at her return, she had the blessing of meeting him and giving him a full report on the Conference.

Still pursuing his care for the rising generation of girls, he decreed on the 20th of October 1966 that the author become Counsellor to Coptic girls by the following letter (in translation):

"To the blessed daughter, Iris Habib el Masri, God's blessing be upon her, Blessings be upon you, and on your behalf devout invocations. Being cognizant, daughter, of your consuming zeal, your mature judgment, your loyalty and devotion to the Church and its members; of your unflagging concern for the welfare and the flourishing moral, social and cultural future of the young girls of the Coptic Orthodox Faith; and of your dedication to the inculcating of the Orthodox teachings and tradition of the Church in these young girls so that they may become worthy examples and virtuous models to all others in our beloved country, and all will see their good works and glorify God thereby....

We have seen fit to decree your appointment as "Counsellor to Coptic Girls," holding meetings with them in the Assembly Halls adjoining the two churches of the great saints Mark the Evangelist and George the Martyr in Heliopolis, as well as those adjoining other Coptic churches.

You are to be responsible for fixing the time and place of the meetings, and for giving regular weekly lectures, notices of which are to be inserted in the newspapers,

instructing the girls spiritually, morally and socially that they may grow more attached and more loyal to the Coptic Church and to their beloved Motherland.

We have no doubt that you will prove yourself worthy of the great task with which we have charged you, certain that you will inform us periodically of your diverse activities and will thus assure us of your wholehearted strivings in this blessed field.

God Almighty help, guide and bless your endeavours for the good of the Church and Its blessed girls.

May His Grace overshadow you and His Arm protect you. To Him be praise and thanksgiving forever.

20th of October 1966  
(signed) Kyrillos VI  
sealed with the  
Papal Seal."

(Original in Arabic)

820. His fervour encompassed the churches of Christendom whatever their Creed:

I. He welcomed to Cairo in 1961 H.H. the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople; H.H. Alexis Patriarch of Moscow and the U.S.S.R.; H.B. Macarius, Bishop and President of Cyprus; (in 1962) H.B. Pivali Archbishop of Finland; (in 1969) H.H. Justinian Patriarch of Roumania. All these, though Orthodox, are Chalcedonians.

II. The Protestant clergymen who were received by him are: Dr. Visser't Hooft, then Secretary of W.C.C. the 3rd of May 59; Dr. Franklin Fry, Head of the American Lutheran Church (summer of 1959); Dr. Scharf, Bishop of W. Berlin (spring 1961); Dr. Edwin Esby a Baptist and the Secretary of the American Council of Churches (autumn 1961); Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, Head of the United Evangelical Church

in U.S. who became General Secretary of W.C.C., -he came from 1-4 March 1969 in response to the invitation extended to him by the Middle East Council of Churches and was received by Abba Kyrillos on the 2nd of March. III. The Anglicans: On the 23rd of April 1966, he extended his greetings to Dr. Donald Cogan, Bishop of York (later Archbishop of Canterbury); H.E. Mackeens, Archbishop of Jerusalem and the Middle East, who invariably went to see him whenever he passed through Cairo; H.E. Allen, Bishop of Fulham.

IV. The Catholics: Cardinal Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna; Cardinal de Fistenberg, Head of the Oriental churches at the Vatican; Cardinal Tisserand, the renowned Orientalist; Cardinal Duval, Archbishop of Algiers; Bishop Willibrandt, General Secretary of the Committee of Christian Unity at the Vatican who was welcomed by Abba Kyrillos first in 1964 in St. Mena's Monastery at Mariut, then in the Papal Residence Cairo 1965; Bishop Olivetto, Assistant-Patriarch of Venice.

821. Moreover Abba Kyrillos VI sent his envoys to both the Pan-Orthodox and the Vatican Councils in all their meetings from 1961 until his departure from this world in 1971. And it should be noted that whenever a "Dialogue" was held between the Alexandrian and the Roman churches, Abba Gregorius was the deputed speaker of the former.

Then in the summer of 1963, he deputed Abba Shenouda (Present Pope), Fr. Cosman al-Baramusi and Fr. Boulos al Moharraqi to represent him at the celebrations of the Millennium of the Mt. Athos Monasteries.<sup>18</sup>

Since then he has formed committees for inter-church affairs, monasticism and social service. And it is noteworthy that

many women and girls are among the members of these committees. In addition to these committees, he inaugurated<sup>19</sup> "The Didymus School" for the Church Cantors.

822. As usual, Abba Kyrillos VI was concerned for the well-being of Mother Egypt. Consequently at the end of June 1967 - after the disastrous war defeat - he sent Bishop Samuel to the churches of England, France, Germany, U.S. and Canada, as well as to the W.C.C. in Geneva to explain to them the situation as Egypt sees it. After delivering his message to all these churches, he went to meet Paul VI, Pope of Rome, and discussed with him the stand of the Egyptian churches towards Jerusalem as a sacred city in the esteem of Christians and Muslims alike. As a result, all these churches became aware of the facts as opposed to Zionist propaganda. They expressed their sympathy, not only in words, but also in sending food and clothes to the refugees and in appreciating Egypt's heroism despite her defeat.

823. One noteworthy fact which should be emphasized to this present generation is that He Who promised to remember the giving of a cup of cold water<sup>20</sup> still keeps His Promise and will ever keep it. To Egypt and Its Church He vouchsafed more than one marvellous experience during the year of Grace 1968.

A. This year formed a striking contrast to 1967. It is a modern example to be added to the myriads of the past of God's loving consideration. For in 1967, the Egyptians experienced one of their worst depressions throughout their long history. To the Copts, the depression was double: not only was their homeland defeated in war, but this

devastating defeat led to the fall of Jerusalem into the hands of Israel. The city of the King of Peace enshrining the Holy Sepulchre and other holy spots became barred to them. They had aspired across the ages, ever since they accepted the Christ's Message, to visit these places hallowed by the Redeemer's life on earth. Thousands of them had the joy of fulfilling this aspiration during Easter and other spiritual festivals each year.<sup>21</sup> Such dream of ecstasy became impossible.

As Passion Week was drawing nigh - in 1968 - thousands of hearts were lifted up in an agony of longing towards Him Whose Passion was consummated in Jerusalem. Amidst this agony a most unexpected event happened. On the 2nd of April - the Monday of that very Holy Week - the mechanics of the bus company in the garage facing the Church of the Blessed Virgin in a suburb of Cairo called Zeitoun were aghast at the sight of a young woman - with her back turned to them - in the act of descending the central dome of that Church. In panic they cried out: "Lady be careful, you will slip and get killed!" She turned round and faced them. No sooner did they see Her Face than they shouted: "It is our Lady Mariam!" repeating these words in great joy and amazement. Their Cry reverberated and spread like wild fire. That evening inaugurated a period of two years and four months during which the Blessed Virgin appeared each night. Thousands of people thronged all the roads surrounding the Church from sunset to sunrise, praying and chanting the whole night through. These multitudes were of diverse creeds and nationalities: Copts, Muslims, believers, doubters and athiests, foreigners from different nations of Europe and the U.S. At times She appeared

in a luminous incandescent form; at others as a person; sometimes She stood in full length, others in bust; at instances, She was holding the Christ on Her Arm; at others, She was kneeling before the Cross topping the central dome. Oftentimes, She effected surprising cures: not only did the blind see or the lame walk, but even surgical operations were evaded by Her interception.<sup>22</sup> She healed and helped whoever implored Her: Muslims and Copts, Egyptians and foreigners.

During the nightly visits, other supernatural phenomena took place: white doves in threes, fives or sevens, appeared in formation and flew with outstretched wings without any flapping; creamy-blue light in circles or in shafts; columns of incense rising from earth upwards filling the air with fragrant aroma.

The author has had the ecstasy of seeing the Blessed Mother-of-God at the dawn of Saturday the 29th of June 1968 for thirty-five minutes; from 4:40 to 5:15. She stood beside the dome topping the northeast corner of the roof but was taller than it, while a soft breeze seemed to be blowing as Her Veil was waving ever so gently. In compassion, She turned to one side then to the other so that all present could see Her Face.

As for the author's brother, he was blessed with seeing Her in bust form as a luminous incandescent Person over the top of the central dome. That night, She appeared from midnight till five in the morning while the crowds moved so that those who saw Her gave place to others.

It should be noted that "Zeitoun" means olives. At the same time, this Church lies on the road which the Holy Family traversed on their way from the Red Sea to Babylon

(Old Cairo). The Church, though rather small, is topped by a big central dome and four smaller ones at each of the four corners of the roof.

Naturally, a Papal Committee was formed of three bishops and a number of doctors of diverse medical specializations. This committee made a thorough study of as many cases of cures as they could contact; they also spent many a night in the church, in its garden and on its roof: watching, noting and examining. They then held a press-conference at the Papacy in Cairo, giving information and replying to questions. Some time later, Abba Gregorius (who had presided over the papal Committee) wrote a book in Arabic (then in English) in which he gave detailed descriptions together with documents of a number of specific cases of persons miraculously healed. This book on the great Visitant from Heaven is entitled 'Al-Adhra'a fiz-zeitoun' (The Virgin in Zeitoun); it was published in 1969 by "Dar al-Alam al-Arabi Press" Cairo.

An appropriate summing up of this marvellous event would be a quotation from Chap. 1, p.1 of a book entitled "Our Lady Returns to Egypt" by an American author, Fr. Jerome Palmer, a Benedictine Catholic priest. He says: "...Our Lady is more busily engaged on earth today than She is in heaven. Unique in the history of Marian apparitions, unique in the circumstances of time and place, unique in the almost complete silence of the American press, religious and secular, are the appearances in Zeitoun (Cairo) in 1968 and 1969, continuing at the time of this writing..."<sup>23</sup>

B. While these exhilarating apparitions were being experienced by thousands of peoples, another heart-warming event took place. The Coptic Church had been planning some three years earlier to celebrate the 1900th anni-

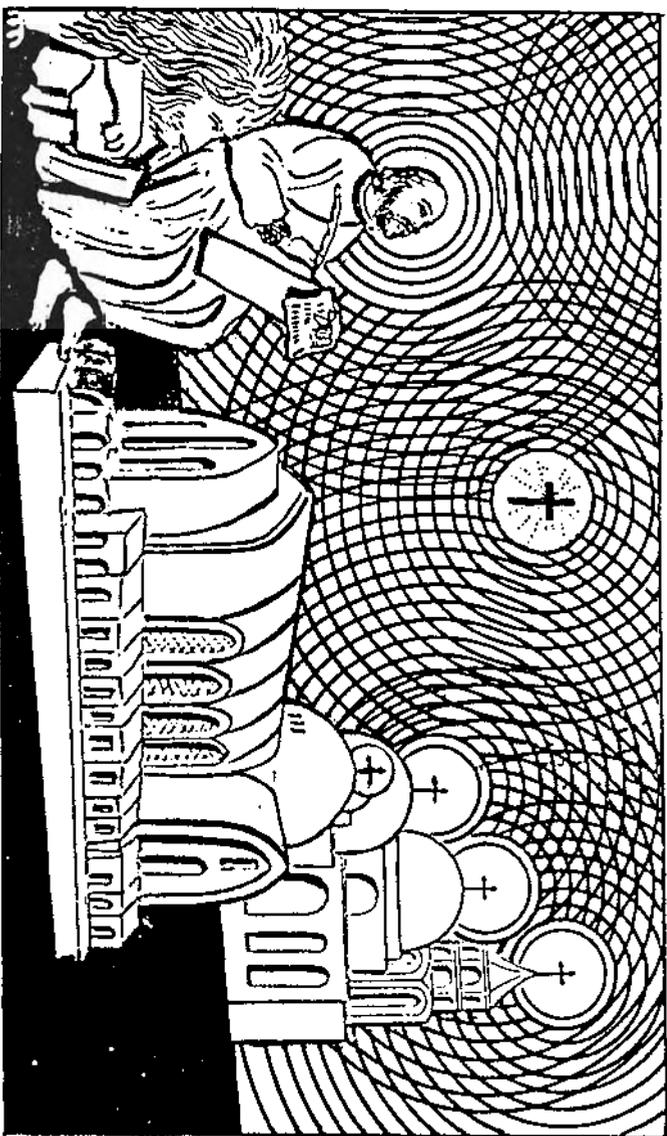
versary St. Mark's martyrdom. With this aim in view, a grand cathedral was built in the Evangelist's name on the Abba Roweiss ground.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, enthusiastic amical negotiations took place between deputies of the Coptic Church and those of the Catholic Church, the purport of which was the return of St. Mark's relics to the land he served and whose soil was hallowed by his blood. These relics had been stolen by Venetian merchants and placed under<sup>25</sup> the altar of St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice. Providentially, these negotiations succeeded. A Coptic Delegation was sent by Abba Kyrillos VI to Rome to escort the relics to Cairo. Heaven Itself seems to have shared the brimming joy of the Copts for no sooner did the Papal Delegation board the plane with its "Precious Cargo" than three white doves flew beside it, one on either side and the third bringing up the rear. The sign of their being celestial messengers is that they accompanied the plane until it landed at the Cairo international airport. Moreover a dazzling floodlight enveloped the dome of the Evangelist's Cathedral during the night of the relics' arrival.<sup>26</sup>

Abba Kyrillos VI awaited the Delegation and carried on his own shoulders - helped by one of his bishops - the box containing the relics. It was cubical in shape, draped in green velvet embroidered in golden crosses. Together with his bishops, priests, deacons and people, Abba Kyrillos marched out of the airport amid the cheers and halleluias of the multitudes, for there were an hundred and fifty thousand Copts (the author among them) and numerous Muslims who thronged the airport on that evening of the 23rd of June 1968.

On the 24th and the two successive



Abba Kyrillos VI



The Coptic Church celebrated, in June 1968, the XIXth centenary of St. Mark's martyrdom. The above card was designed in honour of the occasion by Youssef Sidhom (brother-in-law to the author).

days, the Coptic Church celebrated the passage of nineteen centuries since St. Mark's martyrdom. These celebrations were both international and inter-churchal. Nasser together with his foremost colleagues co-operated in the success of this great occasion which was also attended by Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia. St. Mark's Successor had invited an hundred and seventy-two guests representing all the churches throughout Christendom. The Holy Liturgy was chanted by him, his bishops and those patriarchs and bishops representing the Orthodox non-Chalcedonians. This magnificent celebration was broadcast on radio and television so that millions were enabled to enjoy seeing and hearing it. At the end of the Service, the precious relics were placed under the altar of the especially-built grand Cathedral in a reliquary planned specifically for them. It is circular in shape, its walls are decorated with scenes depicting St. Mark's landing, his martyrdom, then the arrival of his relics to Cairo. Intercepting these scenes are the four archangels: Mikhail, Ghabrial, Surial and Rafail. In the center of this circular reliquary is the black granite block enshrining the relics. It is topped with an almost life-size icon of "the Pantocrator" or the Christ on His Throne surrounded by the four incorporeal animals.

824. After this glorious record of vigilance and exhilarating experiences, Abba Kyrillos VI was suddenly struck with a heart attack; he commended his spirit into the Hand of his Saviour on the 9th of March 1971 in joyful serenity. He had fathered his people during eleven years and ten months. Throughout his papacy, a sense of security and well being pervaded the souls of Copts and Muslims.

But for the dark defeat of 1967, these years were all resplendent. His mortal remains rest in a spacious reliquary built under the altar of St. Mena's Cathedral enclosed within the compound of that saint's monastery - that saint with whom he was so closely intimate while yet in the body. And because love is stronger than death. Abba Kyrillos VI still expresses his care for his people in the wonders he continues to perform on their behalf.

825. Now, because of the age in which we live is an outgoing age wherein freedom is acknowledged, there are numerous prominent Copts. Nonetheless we are restricted to cite examples. The first is Farag Youssef who was born and bred in Giza within the horizon of the Pyramids. Having specialised in Law, he started his career as a State Prosecutor and ended by being a Counsellor in the Supreme Court. His love for his Church caused him to be among the founders of "The Higher Institute for Coptic Studies;"<sup>28</sup> he was also a member of the "Maglis Milli" for ten years. In addition, he contributed in the planning and the putting into effect of building "The House for Deacons;" this house is now a seven storey edifice including a church, a well-sized library and a theatre - this last is spacious enough to hold five thousand people and is used for conferences, inter-province assemblies,<sup>29</sup> and the celebrations held on special occasions. Farag Youssef has also assisted in building at Abuqir (a sea resort) a house called "Ghosn az-Zeitoun" (olive branch) in which the families and the youth of modest means can spend their summer holidays under the auspices of the Church.

The second is Henry Boutros who was born in Assiut. He became a government official

in the ministry of Public Hygiene for many years until he attained the post of Director of one of its departments. Suddenly, he was hit with a severe eye-disease which threatened to blind him. So he vowed that if God grant him his sight, he will resign his government post and consecrate himself wholly to the service of the Church, and he fulfilled his vow. Thenceforth, he became a deacon in the church of the Blessed Virgin at Faggalah where he later became an archdeacon serving within the Haikal.<sup>30</sup> His services, however, were not limited to public prayers and meetings, but encompassed work among the disunited families whom he endeavoured to reconcile.

One amazing fact is that among the lay-leaders were men who, if measured by worldly honours, would seem puny; but who were, in the sight of the Church, of priceless worth. One great example of human worth, as such, was Raghieb Sawiris. Born a cripple of humble God-fearing parents, he grew up to love his Redeemer and cherish His Church. As he had to earn his living, he was apprenticed to a tailor and later on had his small shop where he made the traditional native costumes of Egyptian peasants and labourers. Ordained deacon, and despite his having to move on crutches, he formed a "Society of Deacons" with the aim of serving in the suburbs where the most destitute lived in utter penury. He and his fellow-deacons planned that two by two in turn will perform the service made imperative by Christian love. Accordingly, they fed and clothed them; they taught them the Scriptures and the Orthodox Doctrine; whenever necessary they took them to the doctors or the hospitals. Over and above they invited them to picnics and parties on festive occasions. Raghieb Sawiris and his

co-servers were described by the recipients of their ministrations as "the angels of mercy."

With these faithful servants of their Lord, two priests will be cited:

1. Father Gawargius Girgis, a scion of the priestly family of the al-Kushh vilage;<sup>31</sup> he studied at the Theological Seminary. On graduating in 1932, he became the disciple (secretary) of Abba Kyrillos of Ethiopia<sup>32</sup> whom he served for nine years. Then leaving his post to his younger brother, he was ordained priest of the Blessed Virgin church in his home village. No sooner was he ordained than he built a separate edifice facing the church to be an elementary school. He succeeded in having two youths to aid him in teaching. When the "Association of Coptic Women for Educating Children"<sup>33</sup> began to spread, they decided to co-operate with him: supplying him with the books and stationary needed. In 1947 a government inspector visited the school and reported to the Women's Association that it was not only exemplary in its standard of education, but also its director - Fr. Gawargius - was a man of high spiritual stature. This school, like the majority of educational institutions, was either appropriated or closed by the 1952 Revolution Minister of Education. So Fr. Gawargius had to content himself with shepherding his people, repairing his church and beautifying it.

2. The most dazzling personality is, beyond doubt, that of Father Pishoi Kamil; he was not simply prominent, he was magnetic. For he had that divine capacity of an all-embracing love. He seemed to breathe love, to radiate it - so much so that all who came in contact with him, loved him spontaneously. Born the 6th of December 1931, he started his career as a teacher of science in the Ramlah



Rev. Fr. Pishoi Kamil

Secondary School (Alexandria). Then on the 2nd of December 1959, Abba Kyrillos VI ordained him priest for the church of Mari Girgis in Sporting, Alexandria. At his ordination, the church was merely a rectangular shed used from Sunday to Sunday when a deputed priest came just to celebrate the Holy Liturgy. When Fr. Pishoi became its "angel,"<sup>34</sup> his radiating love permeated the souls to such an extent that the money donated was sufficient to build four churches! The three others were: a church called after St. Takla Hymanot the foremost Ethiopian saint; a second bearing the name of the Archangel Mikhail; and a third named after Abba Pishoi Ieromartyros.<sup>35</sup> It is noteworthy that Muslims were among the donators.

The church of Mari Girgis became a centre of radiation: each morning the Liturgy was chanted and each afternoon was meeting time for some group - children, youths and families. And however astounding it may seem, the church was invariably full to overflowing. Those who experienced the ecstasy of Fr. Pishoi's indelible warm-heartedness were not the Copts only, nor were they those in the ancient Nile Valley, rather were they peoples from different European countries, from Canada and from the U.S. All those who saw or heard him said that he seemed an image of the Christ. The author is bound to him in love and gratitude; had it not been for his constant inspiring "The Story of the Copts" in both its Arabic and its English forms would never have appeared.

The most appropriate summing up of his life is the elegy by Father Matta al-Miskeen and published as the editorial of the "Mari Marcus" monthly April 1979. He said: "This priest has offered his life unto the Christ as an ointment of Spikenard which

he poured several times daily without any care for himself. Every time he poured it at the feet of the Christ, God would replenish it for him with a perfume more aromatic and more fragrant, so much so, that he filled the whole world with the sweet savour of the Christ. He has attracted many souls unto the Christ and unto the life of piety and consecration, not by the cleverness of words but by the Spirit of Grace and by incessant supplications. He has attracted more souls unto the everlasting life by his sickness and his silence than by his health and his service. He has served the Christ by his suffering more than he had served him by his teaching. No one noted that his soul grew more radiant each day, nor did he see that himself; yet everyone could sense the Mystery of God within him. I have known a lot about this meek soul, but all<sup>36</sup> I can say is that the stripes of the Lord<sup>36</sup> were both efficacious and luminous in him; they were the source of his life, his peace and his comfort.

He was transported during the season of Holy Lent - that season which he loved -so that he may celebrate the feast of the Resurrection with the Christ and His saints who loved him and were beloved of him.

He has departed in his white robe, his lamp in his hand full of oil...

The comfort of all his children and his co-workers is that he was an "Ideal Model" who will ever fill our hearts, our thoughts and our affections throughout the years."<sup>37</sup>

#### XLIV. NOTES

1. See s. 776 and note 6 pertaining to it.

2. See s. 109.
3. Memoirs (in Arabic) on the life of Abba Kyrillos VI by Hanna Youssef Atta and Fr. Rafail Abba Mena, pub. by Moharram Sena-iya Press, Cairo 1972, pp.37-8.
4. Ibid, pp.43-4.
5. "Al-Baba Kyrillos wal Qiyada ar-Rowhiya" by Fr. Rafail Abba Mena, pub. by Abnaa'l Baba Kyrillos, Cairo 1974, p.23. It should be noted that these devoted children of Abba Kyrillos VI can be contacted through the following address: Pope Kyrillos VI Pub. Inc., P.O. Box 395, Trenton N.J. 08608.
6. Last paragraph of Intro. B.
7. An Association formed in Alexandria at the beginning of 1949 with the aim of rousing the interest in the legacy of the Copts. To attain their goal, they issued a yearly bulletin called "Risalat Mari Mena," published numerous books on the lives of saints and on ancient sites. They, also, organized excursions to different shrines and regions of historical worth.
8. The Monastery with its Cathedral, churches, cells, guest house is already well-established.
9. Exodus 16:21.
10. All these and many other wonders were seen by the author so she relates them as an eye witness.
11. Lalibela was King of Ethiopia when al-Hakim was ruling Egypt (ss 548-550). He

desired to have some churches built, so he sent to St. Mark's Successor asking for architects, artists and artisans. These went and carved out for him the desired churches within the rocks. They are still a witness to the skill and dexterity of the Copts - Cf. Louis Findley: "The Monumental Lalibela Churches," pub. in "Le Bulletin de la Societe d'Archeologie Copte," volIX, pp.21-23 (1943); also the Arabic counterpart of this book, part III, ss. 56 and 230.

12. Lake Tana is in the heights of the region of the Nile sources.

13. Christmas Eve, in the Coptic Church, is on the night of the 6th of January - thus the "Dream" of Kyrillos IV was fulfilled by Kyrillos VI, see s.732.

14. St. Mark is native of Cyrene (Libya) as mentioned in the first chapter.

15. Fr. Angelius is now Abba Maximus, Bishop of Qaliobiya, and Samir is Fr. Antonius As-Suriani, Vice-Bishop of Khartoum. As for the Kuwait church, it bears the name of St. Mark and has not only grown in dimension, but also, all the Eastern Orthodox working there have joined it.

16. See s.488 and note 4 pertaining to it.

17. i.e. The same day on which he succeeded in the elections.

18. Hakim Amin and Youssef Mansoor: "'Ashr Sanawat..." Cairo 10th of May 1969, this is a record of the papacy of Abba Kyrillos VI during ten years, and was published on the day commemorating its tenth anniversary.

19. From ancient Egyptian times, the cantors in the temples were selected from among the blind. For the blind are far less distracted than those who see while their ears are much more sensitive. Thus, they could keep the tunes as pure and as integral as possible especially that there were no recorders. As for Didymus, see s.189. It should be noted that all these committees are still functioning.

20. Matt. 10:42.

21. The author was blessed with visiting the Holy Land twice for Easter and once for Christmas. There are no words adequate enough to describe the joy and the elation which fills the spirit as the person's imagination visualizes the Master walking on these same roads through these same towns.

22. A young man - Magdi Mikhail - related to the author by blood ties had an abcess at the end of his spine. The surgeon saw him on a Friday and told him to return on Tuesday for an operation. When Magdi went to bed, he began imploring the Virgin to come to his aid. To his left was a balcony, to his right the door of his bedroom. Suddenly he saw the Blessed Mother-of-God come in from the balcony, walk to his bed smiling and nodding her head, then walked out of the door. At this vision, he slept soundly. Next morning a nephew of his - who is a doctor - came to see him. Magdi asked him to examine him. To the astonishment of both, there was only a small scar in place of the abcess! Joyfully they both went to the church of the Blessed Virgin at Zeitoun where they stayed until the next morning - Sunday. They attended the Liturgy and partook of the Holy

Eucharist, returning home in high spirits. On Monday both men went to the surgeon who scolded them for going to him before the time appointed. Magdi said: "But something has happened and I want you to see what it is." After examining him, the surgeon declared that he has no need for the operation. Receiving the explanation, he exclaimed: "Good God! This is the third time that the Virgin snatches from me an operation this week!"

23. This book was published in San Bernardino, California (U.S.A.) by Culligan Publications Inc. in 1969.

24. See ss. 632-3.

25. See ss. 8 & 521 and note 8 of Chap. XXVII.

26. When Abba Kyrillos VI carried the relics at the airport, he and his retinue went to the new grand cathedral of St. Mark where they placed them inside the Haikal. At midnight, the Muslim porter of a house facing it, came hurriedly and roused the handy-man of the Higher Institute for Coptic Studies to behold the dazzling Light envelopping the dome of the cathedral. Meantime, Abba Gregorius was sitting in his office (at the Institute) to write the speech he was to deliver on the morrow. Next morning, the handy-man went in excitement and related to him what he had seen. To his joy, the venerable bishop corroborated the fact.

27. Rev. 4:6-7, it should be noted that the four animals represent the diverse creatures on this earth. Also, each one of them symbolizes an evangelist. The "man" represents St. Matthew who begins his Gospel with the

geneology of the Christ; the lion, St. Mark who starts with the words "The voice of one crying in the wilderness;" "the calf", St. Luke who tells us at first of Zachariah and his entry into the inner sanctuary to offer the sacrifice for the people; and "the eagle", St. John whose Gospel centres on the spiritual Teachings of our Saviour.

28. This Institute was inaugurated in February 1954; its aim is to propagate Coptic culture in its diverse forms: to attain it, lectures, excursions and excavations are its means. Its first Dean was Dr. Sami Gabra, the well known discoverer of Tuna al-Gabal. Now it is under the guidance and direction of H.B. Abba Gregorius.

29. It has been the author's privilege to share in the realization of this project and to take part in its diverse activities. The last instance of her sharing was to give the inaugural lesson to the Youth Conference held on the 1st of August 1978 - she spoke to them on "The Invincible Church," explaining how the Coptic Church withstood persecutions, heresies, intrigues and enticements.

30. The Haikal is the inner sanctuary enclosing the altar, wherein all the liturgical rituals are held. Faggalah is one of the old suburbs near the main railway station; its church was built under the auspices of Abba Kyrillos IV.

31. Al-Kushh is near the town of Balyana - the region round Abydos where the beautiful temple Seti I still stands.

32. See ss.779-83.

33. See s. 792A.

34. Rev. chaps. 1-4.

35. See chap.IX.

36. When he came to London the last week of January 1975, (the author was in that city at the time) it was to be treated for cancer in the cerebellum. All the doctors and the nurses at "The Royal Free Hospital" who came in contact with him declared that they loved him. While the surgeon who operated on him said: "Father, you are a Mystery!" That was the "Mystery" of which Fr. Matta said it is "of God."

37. All those mentioned in s.825 have been personal friends of the author; hence it is through personal relation with them and their families that she records these fleeting glimpses of them.

A noteworthy fact is the appreciation expressed in November 1969 by the Egyptian Government who celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Zaghloul Revolution. On that occasion, it was decided to honour those men and women, still living, who braved all dangers for their country's freedom. Four women were decorated: among them was a Copt, Esther Wissa; and six were given medals, one of whom is Liza'l Mallakh. It is interesting to know that Liza is the youngest sister of Amina (mentioned in s.749).

## EPILOGUE

The present-day Father of the Coptic Church is Abba Shenouda III, the 117th in that glorious succession to St. Mark.

The Church is more alive and revitalized than ever. A veritable new re-awakening is evidenced by the amazing growth in the number of new churches continuously being built and always full to overflowing; by the number of university-educated young men and women who have entered the priesthood, the monasteries, and the convents and by the immense growth of Sunday Schools. What is more vital is the immense growth of awareness among the Copts to the wonders of their Church.

Apart from expanding and developing within its own boundaries, the Coptic Church has extended in a surprising way far beyond those boundaries. It is now a member of the W.C.C., the Middle East Council of Churches and the All Africa C.C. At the same time, churches have been founded by Coptic immigrant communities in many parts of the U.S., Canada, England, Germany, Australia and Africa. In France, two Frenchmen who had lived for some time in the Wadi n-Natrun monasteries were ordained Bishops by Pope Shenouda III on Pentecost Day 2nd June 1974; they were given the names of Abba Marcus and Abba Athanasius.

So, although the story of the Copts as recorded in this book will end here, the Story of the Copts as a living active people and of their Mother-Church that has played the main role in keeping them active and

Living, is still a continuous Story. It is both heartening and full of promise; and it re-enforces the confidence held by their majority that through the Grace of God, they will continue to have a story worth telling until time is swallowed into eternity.

## APPENDIX I

### THE CHRISTOLOGICAL TEACHING OF THE NON-CHALCEDONIAN CHURCHES

Text of an address given by:  
(Dr. Waheeb Atalla Girgis, B.A., B.D.,  
E.A.D., Ph.D., Manchester, England;  
who has now become:)

His Grace ABBA GREGORIOS, Bishop in Cairo  
for Higher Theological Studies, Coptic  
Culture and scientific research

(Printed by His Grace's permission.)<sup>1</sup>

Two points are to be noted concerning our Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church of St. Mark the Apostle, well known in Church History by the name of the Alexandrian Church.

First, THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH IS A VERY CONSERVATIVE CHURCH.

On the whole, our people have been very religious, not only since the day they embraced the Christian faith but many centuries before that, namely since the beginning of

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1. This address was given at a Conference of different Church representatives held in the city of Jerusalem, April 13-15, 1959, and organized by the Evangelische Akademie Schleswig-Holstein.

The address was first published in 1961 by the Coptic Orthodox Theological College, Cairo.

their early civilization, that is before History began. Religious feeling is inherited in our nation; its love runs in our blood. We do not dare to change and we do not like to change. We stick to the principles of Christianity preserved in our Church. We are brought up to preserve most carefully our Christian faith and hand it over to the younger generation without any alteration, i.e., in its very early and pure form, according to what our Lord said in the book of the Apocalypse, "that which ye have, hold fast till I come." (Revelation 2:25)

Second, THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH IS A DEEPLY SPIRITUAL OR EVEN A MYSTICAL CHURCH.

Her spiritual leaders and thinkers had to deal with philosophy, but on the whole they knew they must not mingle philosophy with religion. This mingling or mixing is most harmful to our religion. It is the source of heresy. Most of the heretics were pious men who mixed religion with their own philosophy. A theologian has to know a good deal of philosophy that he may be able to follow the way of thinking of philosophers and consequently can influence them with the precepts of our religion. But to read philosophy or even to discuss philosophical problems is one thing, and to change religion into philosophy is quite another thing. It is most faulty to think that philosophical terms and expressions could confine theological meanings which are purely divine. If philosophical expressions are not fit to express all that philosophers mean to say, new terms are often created. Others may use the same term with a somewhat changed or completely different meaning. Is not the same thing true with our divine religion? Is it not more needful

in our religion not to depend on philosophical terms in understanding and conceiving a divine fact, especially if this fact is concerned with the Divine Essence or the Divine Nature of our Lord?

I dare to state that the whole controversy between the Roman Catholics, the Protestants and the Chalcedonian Churches on one hand and the Monophysites or the non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches on the other hand, is altogether a philosophical controversy, raised because of the right term the Christians should use to express their belief in the kind of union existing between the deity and the humanity of our Lord and Saviour.

We people of the East are most fearful of using philosophical terms to define divine meanings. The non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches believe in the deity of the Christ as well as in His humanity. But the Christ is to us One Nature. This may seem contradictory. Whatever the rational contradictions may be our Church does not see any contradiction in her profession concerning the Nature of the Christ.

There is always a mystical and spiritual solution that dissolves and overcomes all contradictions. Because of this mystical experience we do not always ask why and how.

There are many mysteries in our religion which we accept with deep acquiescence just because they are revealed by God. We believe in them contrary to the evidence of our senses and to our reason if we may use the word, just because they are proved to be from God. As we believe in God and in His omnipotence, so we believe in the mysteries of our religion without any need to ask why and how. A philosophical mind cannot agree to this mystical faith. But a philosophical mind is not in

fact a true religious mind. It rather believes in its own capacities and measures. Religion to a philosophical mind is a science that could be treated on the same level as any other branch of human knowledge. A philosophical mind applies to religion the scientific method. Here analysis, classification, philology and so on enter into religion, in order to make it more reasonable and acceptable to a philosophical mind. Alas, in this kind of dealing with our religion we cannot understand the spirit of our religion. Where reason interferes, mystical experience disappears. We have to use our minds up to a certain point, but beyond that we should leave our minds to the guidance of a mystical experience.

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The Orthodox faith according to our profession is that our Lord is perfect in His Godhead and perfect in His Manhood. However, we dare not say that He is God and Man together, for this expression implies separation. He is rather God Incarnate. The Godhead and the Manhood are united in Him in a complete union, i.e, in essence, hypostasis and nature. There is no separation or division between the Godhead and the Manhood of our Lord. From the very moment of the descent of the divine Word, in the Virgin's womb, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity took to Himself from St. Mary's blood, a human body with a human rational soul, and made Himself one with the Manhood which He received from the Holy Virgin. The One born of St. Mary, therefore, is God Incarnate, one essence, one person, one hypostasis, one nature. Or we may say that He is ONE nature out of two natures. In other words

we may speak of two natures before the union took place, but after the union there is but ONE nature, ONE nature having the properties of two natures.

Hence the union in which the non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches believe differs essentially from the kind of union which Eutyches professed. Eutyches said that our Lord is one nature, but his union is based on a notion that the Manhood of the Christ is totally absorbed in His Divinity and completely vanishes like a drop of vinegar in the ocean. Eutyches in fact denies the real existence of the Manhood of the Christ.

Contrary to Eutyches, the non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches profess that the Christ is ONE nature in which are completely preserved all the human properties as well as all the divine properties, without confusion, without mixture, and without alteration, a profession which the Coptic celebrant priest cries out in the liturgy holding up the paten with his hands.

"Amen, Amen, Amen, I believe, I believe and I confess till the last breath that this is the Life-giving flesh which Thine Only-begotten Son our Lord, our God and our Saviour Jesus the Christ took from our Lady and Mistress of us all, the Mother-of-God, the holy Mary. He made it one with His Divinity without mingling, without confusion and without alteration...I believe that His Divinity was not separated from his Humanity for a single moment nor for the twinkling of an eye." The Godhead, then, is preserved, and the Manhood is also preserved. Though the Christ is of two natures, He is not two natures after the Union, as Pope Dioscorus of Alexandria said. The Godhead did not mix with the Manhood, nor were they confused or changed

to one another. The Godhead and the Manhood are united not in the sense of a mere combination or connection or junction, but they are united in the real sense of the word union. But how does it happen? How the distinct properties of Godhead and Manhood unite in one nature without mixture, without confusion and without alteration, we do not know. How can it be that the Christ has the properties of the two natures, but not the two natures, we do not know either. This may be illogical and contradictory. There is one thing of which we are sure: that there is a kind of union that surpasses all human understanding and imagination. In a mystical experience we overcome all contradictions. This Union is a real union. We may speak sometimes of a divine nature and a human nature, but this separation is in our minds only. In fact there are not two natures after the Union. It did not happen that a divine nature and a human nature separated from each other, then came together in union. What happened is this: the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity came down and dwelt in the Virgin's womb and made for Himself a human body with a human soul according to what the Gospel of St. John declares, "And the Word became flesh." (John 1:14) There is no other word than "became" that could be more powerful to denote the complete union which took place. Holy Writ could use another expression but it did not. There is no duality here between two natures. There is but ONE nature. This is a real proof of the Union in the sense in which the non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches profess it.

The Union between the Godhead and the Manhood in the Christ is likened to the union between the soul and body in man. Although the soul and the body differ from

each other in essence, the union existing between them made of them but one nature to which we refer by the expression "the human nature." Another figure may be clearer: the union existing between coal and fire in a firebrand or live coal. However, the union in the Christ cannot be likened or compared with any kind of union that we know in our human experience. It is a union which has no equal.

Again I repeat, we believe in ONE nature. This nature is not the Godhead alone, nor the Manhood alone. It is One nature which has the properties of the two natures without mixture, without confusion and without alteration.

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And now it appears that the difference between our profession and the profession of the Chalcedonian Churches is insignificant. It is a matter of expressing the same meaning and the same theological fact. I believe that this is true to a great extent. Still we have our reasons to stick to our traditional expression "ONE nature of the Logos incarnate", One nature that has the properties of the two natures without mixture, without confusion and without alteration.

These reasons may be summed up in the following points:

I. THERE IS NOT A SINGLE BIBLICAL TEXT WHICH DECISIVELY PROVES THAT THE CHRIST IS TWO NATURES AFTER THE UNION.

On the contrary, all biblical texts are on our side. We may mention only a few passages as examples:

St. John says very explicitly: "And

the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."  
(John 1:14)

In the book of Revelation, our Lord declares "I am the first and the last, and the Living One, and I was dead, and behold I am Alive for evermore and have the keys of death and of Hades." (Revelatin 1:17&18). The pronoun "I" in this passage shows no duality. It is He Who is the first and the last and it is He Who was dead.

The same meaning is clear in other passages, "And no man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, (even) the Son of Man Which is in heaven." (John 3:;13). Then He is the One that is in heaven, and He is the Son of Man on earth. Always the same thing: ONE essence, ONE hypostasis, ONE nature.

St. paul, speaking to the bishops of Ephesus, claims the same union: "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the Church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28) How could the Apostle say that the blood shed is the blood of God if there were duality in the Christ in any sense?

The same Apostle states in his first epistle to the Corinthians, "for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (I Cor. 2:8) Then the crucified One is the Lord of glory Himself. Once more there is no duality.

The same fact is quite clear from other passages as "great is the mystery of Godliness; God was manifested in the flesh." (I Tim.3:16) "Who being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men,

being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself becoming obedient, even unto death." (Philippians 2:6-8).

Other passages are from St. Matthew 3:17; St. Luke 1:44; St. John 1:18; 3:16; 8:58; Ist Corinthinas 8:6; 10:4 7 9; Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 4:8-11; Colossians 1:15 & 16; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:9 & 10;13:8.

II. THE EXPRESSION "TWO NATURES UNITED TOGETHER" IS QUITE A DANGEROUS EXPRESSION.

1. It implies duality or even a kind of separation between Godhead and Manhood. Otherwise there is no sense in insisting on the expression "two natures" since there is union.

2. It does not denote a real union. It rather expresses the existence of two separate natures coming together or combined together. Consequently such expression opens a way for Nestorianism which the Chalcedonian Churches surely condemn as a heresy against our Christian faith.

3. The expression of two natures united together is a dangerous expression against our salvation. If there were two natures in Christ after the union, then the redemption of the Christ was an act of His humanity, for it is the flesh that was crucified. Consequently the redemption of the Christ had no power to save the human race. In fact, its value lies in the fact that the One who was crucified is the Word Incarnate. Surely the Godhead did not suffer crucifixion, yet the Godhead gave the crucifixion its infinite value and capacity to save all the human race. The expression "One nature that has the properties of the two natures" saves our belief in the redemption of Our Lord. The expression "two natures" implies the possibility of a crucifixion of the flesh of the Christ not the Christ Himself. All passages of the

Scriptures are against such understanding. The blood, Saint Paul said, is the Blood of God, "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28).

4. The expression "two natures in the Christ" cannot explain the dogma professed by the Roman Catholics and the Chalcedonian Churches that Saint Mary is the Mother of God.

On the contrary, the Chalcedonian expression implies the possibility of the Nestorian heresy, which all Protestants in their diverse bodies accept, that St. Mary is not the Mother of God. She is simply the mother of the man Jesus. I do not know how the Chalcedonian Churches could maintain their belief in St. Mary as the Mother of God. The expression that Jesus the Christ is ONE nature can easily explain this fact, because the One born from St. Mary is not the Man Jesus but the Word Incarnate.

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Such are the reasons why the Eastern Orthodox Churches refuse the expression "two natures" and stick to their old traditional expression "ONE Nature" which St. Athanasius the Great and St. Cyril of Alexandria professed. Similarly, these are the reasons why the non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches refuse to acknowledge the tomos of Leo of Rome and the Chalcedonian definition, for they profess explicitly the existence of two natures after the union.

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This is our position today. I am deeply

convinced that the Chalcedonian profession is far from being a Nestorian profession; and the non-Chalcedonian profession is far from being an Eutychian one. Therefore we do not give up the hope that one day all Churches will have not only the same faith but also the same profession and the same theological terms and expressions. An Ecumenical Council should take the initiative. Conferences like ours may pave the way. I am sure that such meetings will lead to better understanding, and will help pushing forward the Ecumenical Movement. Let us pray from a full heart for the unity of the Church of the Christ, that she may be able to hold fast the Torch of Light, preaching the Gospel and fighting the evils of our world, combatting atheism and materialism. The unity of the Church is not only God's will, it is also the condition without which the mission of the Church and the Christ would cease. "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word, that they may all be one even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me." (John 17:20&21) AMEN!

## APPENDIX II

### BASIC PLAN OF SELECTIONS TO BE READ IN CHURCH FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

The Fathers of the Coptic Church aim at instructing the believers in the Biblical Teachings and Principles which endorse the Orthodox Faith. They have, therefore, selected from the Holy Writ those portions which clarify this Faith. Naturally festivals and commemorations are considered the pivot round which these portions turn.

The readings for the whole year are collected in four books which form One Whole, because they are intended to lead the believer to the realization of God's wondrous Plan of Redemption. These books are:

1. The yearly Katameros,<sup>1</sup> containing selected portions for reading during all the days of the year including Sundays;
2. The Katameros for Lent;
3. Bood for Passion Week readings;
4. Katameros for reading during the fifty days following Easter Sunday and ending with Pentecost Day.

The specific aim from these readings is to concentrate the attention on the One Vital Theme, namely "The Work of the Holy Trinity within the Church." Consequently, the general subjects are arranged according to the months in a logical sequel, associating the beginning of the year and its ending with both the beginning of the Church on earth and Its ending, and those of the world. In addition, the natural phenomena are associa-

ted with the Church services and festivals. For example, the Feast of the Cross (June 19th) is also the "Feast of the Drop" in reference to the beginning of the rainy season over the heights of the Ethiopian mountains wherein lies the source of the Nile.

The readings for each day comprise three Gospel portions: evening, mattins, and the one preceding the Holy Liturgy. The last being the most important contains the main lesson to be emphasized during the Sunday portion. It should be noted that all the chosen verses centre on the phrase: "The Love of God the Father, the Grace of His Only-Begotten Son, and the Fellowship and Gifts of the Holy Spirit" - this phrase being the very epitome of the One Vital Theme mentioned above. Beginning with the month of Thoth,<sup>2</sup> the theme for the Sunday readings is: "The Love of God the Father for Mankind" and is arranged as follows:

1st Sunday - The Wisdom of God; Luke 7:28-35;

2. "The Gospel of His Son," Luke 10:21-28

3. His Salvation, Luke 19:1-10;

4. "His Compassion," Luke 7:36-50

Babeh Sundays: The theme is "The Authority of the Christ"

1. "Purifying the Souls" Mark 2:1-12;

2. "Attracting the souls unto Himself," Luke 5:1-11;

3. "Casting out devils," Matthew 12:22-28;

4. "Bestowing Life" Luke 7:11-17.

Hathor Sundays: Seeing that this month is closely associated with planting, the similarity between sowing the seed and sowing the word of the Gospel is emphasized. First Sundays "The fruits of the Gospel," Luke 8:4-15; 2. "The blessings of the Gospel," Matthew

13:1-9; the Church here repeats the story of the sower as related by St. Matthew to bring out before the believer the "blessing expressed in the words" some yield an hundred-fold, some sixty fold, and some thirty fold."

3. "The tribulations of the Gospel," Luke 14:25-35; 4. "The Reward of the Gospel" Mark 1:16-31.

Kyak: According to the Coptic Computation, this is the month at whose end the Christ was born. Hence, the first chapter of Luke is divided into four portions to be read during the four Kyak Sundays. They are arranged as follows: 1. Celebrating the<sup>3</sup> Mercy of God declared in the birth of John the precursor to the Saviour, preparing the way before Him, 1:1-25; 2. The Anunciation, 1:26-38; 3. Aspiring towards God's Justice and Mercy, 1:39-56;<sup>4</sup> 4. Propheying His Appearance 1:57-80.

And since Kyak is the month of the nativity special prayers are set for its Sunday eves which are called "Seven and four" because they comprise seven "Theotokias" or hymns of praise in honour of the Theotokos (i.e. Mother of God), and four Doxologies or hymns in praise of the saints or (and) martyrs whose commemoration falls on that week.

Toba Sundays: 1. Declaring the Salvation to the Gentiles, Matthew 2:13-23; 2. The Blessings of Salvation, Luke 11:27-36; 3. The Life of Salvation, John 3:22-36; 4. The Illumination of Salvation, John 2:1-38.<sup>5</sup>

Meshire Sundays speak to us of God's Table or the spiritual food, while the selected verses from the Psalms tell us of offerings, sacrifices and plenty. The readings are: 1. The Majesty of the Faith, John 6:22-27; 2. The Offering of the Saviour, John 6:5-

14; 3. The Life of the Saviour, John 6:27-46; 4. The Frace of Salvation to those who who accept the spiritual food, Luke 19:1-10.

The fast called "Jonah's Fast" takes place two weeks before Lent. Its aim is to rouse the attention of the believers to the effects of repentance, and of God's Mercy to the Gentiles - Symbolic of the Christ's all-embracing Redemption. As mentioned in the Scriptures, this fast is for three days, during which the Book of Jonah is read, together with select portions from the Gospel. These are: Monday-Matthew 13:36-43; Tuesday Luke 11:29-36; Wednesday Matthew 15:32-16:1-4. On Thursday morning, the Church commemorates Jonah's deliverance, reading John 2:12-25.

The sunday preceding Lent is used by the Fathers to direct the believer's attention to the necessity of prayer, fasting and almsgiving as the basis of worship, therefore the readings for that day is Matthew 6:1-18.

As for Lent, it is divided into seven weeks, each beginning with a Monday an ending with a Sunday. Specific readings are set for each week but all of the centre on the Christ's acceptance of repentants; they are: 1st Sunday-Guidance to the Kingdom, Luke 6:27-38; 2. Victory over temptation, Matthew 4:1-11; 3. The Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11-42; 4. Armouring the repentant with the word of Life, John 4:1-42; 5. Fortifying the repentant, John 5:1-18; 6. The Fruits of Baptism; sonship, renewal, purification and sanctification, John, Chap. 9.

The weeks following on the sixth Sunday is the last because Passion Week stands alone. Consequently the Friday of this week is called "the Seal of the fast." On this day the Church

Service begins with the Prayers of Consecrating the oil of the Unction (which is one of the seven Sacraments). When the prayers end, everyone present comes by turn to be anointed by the officiating priest because the Unction is considered a medicine for body and soul. After that, the readings which end with the Holy Liturgy follow. Next day is called "the Saturday of Lazarus" in commemoration of the Christ's calling<sup>6</sup> him back to life four days after his burial.

### PASSION WEEK AND EASTER SERVICE

Passion week occupies such a special place in the Coptic Church that it is worth the reader's while to pause and contemplate it. Considering it the holiest time of the year, in deep appreciation of our Lord's wondrous Redemption, the early Church Fathers who were so steeped in the spirit of worship laid for it an order of specific prayers, scripture readings, commentaries, interpretations, hymns, etc. that is probably unique in kind and that is matchless in beauty and effect. Their intent was to make the faithful forget, for that one week, the world and all that pertained to it and become deeply aware of the one act in human history whereby they were bought by the precious blood of the Son of God and made through Him children of that same infinitely Loving God. The events which led to the consummation of that act, all took place between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, and so the Church followed them day by day, nay hour by hour in its worship services, which are held daily both morning and afternoon.

Passion Week prayers begin, therefore, with Palm Sunday. The morning service centers

around our Saviour's entry into Jerusalem when He was hailed by the multitudes with shouts of joy "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord..."<sup>7</sup> Yet though this is a feast of triumph and joy, it is, at the same time, the introduction to the suffering and passion of the Christ. Consequently the Fathers of the Coptic Church concentrated all their attention on His Redeeming Passion. And since it is inevitable that some will die during that week, and since the Christ is to be the sole Centre of all the week's prayers, the Fathers decreed that after the Liturgy, a general Diptych<sup>8</sup> is to be chanted in advance in quest of God's mercy over them. These prayers end with chanting: "O King of Peace, grant us Thy peace" in the sad tune.

The Prayers of the Pascha<sup>9</sup> begin on Palm Sunday afternoon and comprise "five hours"<sup>10</sup> each hour of which contains readings from the prophecies foretelling our Lord's Sufferings and ends with the hymn of triumph chanted by the twenty-four priests surrounding the Throne of God<sup>11</sup> which is: "Unto Thee is the power, the glory, the praise and the blessing for ever, Amen, O Emmanuel our Lord and our King; Unto Thee... O Our Lord Jesus the Christ (to which is added from the eve of Wednesday) our Good Saviour. Unto Thee..."<sup>12</sup> This is followed by chanting in Coptic the set portion from the Psalms and the Gospels which are read in Arabic immediately after. The commentaries called in Arabic (Turuhat), come next. The<sup>13</sup> climax is a prayer chanted in a specific tune<sup>13</sup> which comprises implorations for men in all classes and professions; for animals, birds, plants and winds; for the fruitfulness of the earth, and for softening the hearts of the mighty.

The priest chants it couplet by couplet, and the people respond after each couplet with the words "Kyrie eleison" i.e. "Lord have mercy." The prayers set by the Fathers express their deep gratitude to and exaltation of Him Who gave His Life a ransom unto everyone that accepts Him.

The prayers of the Pascha are held outside the sancturay from the eve of Palm Sunday until the dawn of Saturday with the exception of the Maunday Thursday Liturgy,<sup>14</sup> because according to the Old Testament tradition the sin offering was slain outside the camp (i.e. the temple)<sup>15</sup> and also the Christ was crucified outside Jerusalem. Each morning and each evening of the week has its set prayers and worship Service which last at least three hours. On Good Friday, however, the Prayers are continuous from eight in the morning till six in the evening. For this day is the summit of days; its prayers are a reminder to the believers of God's boundless Love for them as manifested in His seeking to save fallen humanity and to lift up people to the glory of being His children. These prayers naturally comprise all the prophecies and their fulfilment in the Cross; they picture all the sufferings hour by hour. The midday prayers remind us, also, of the thief's plea and therefore contain a song called the thief's Confession, sung by the priest or the archdeacon in couplets. The refrain chanted by the people after each couplet is: "Remember me, O Lord, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom; Remember me O Holy One when Thou comest into Thy kingdom; Remember me O Master when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." The prayers after the twelfth (or last) hour end with the Metanoia<sup>16</sup> which is an entreaty for mercy. Before it is said the archdeacon

proclaims: "Beloved brethren, the righteous Fathers of our Coptic Church have put themselves in place of the whole world and represent it in seeking the mercies of its Good Saviour and Great Creator Who has crushed, by the power of His Cross, the gates of Hades and trod upon the thorn of death. Now, you are this very Church. Therefore, turn your faces towards the east and say "Kyrie eleison"<sup>17</sup> -then to the west, to the north and to the south. At each direction, it is repeated one hundred times. Then follows a procession, within the sanctuary, in which the icon representing the body of the Christ being carried by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea to the tomb is placed on the altar and covered with rose and flower petals sprinkled with orange-blossom water. During this Procession the Choir chants the Burial Hymn.

The Fathers of the Coptic Church guided by the Holy Spirit have deemed it fitting to keep vigil by the side of their buried Saviour. So they<sup>18</sup> have set prayers entitled "The Apocalypse"<sup>18</sup> held from the midnight after Good Friday until seven-thirty Saturday morning. This Saturday (preceding Easter) has been called by<sup>19</sup> the Coptic Church "The Saturday of Light."<sup>19</sup> These prayers of vigil reveal to us the extent of the early Fathers' appreciation of the magnitude of the Christ's act of Redemption and His immeasurable Love for us as manifested in His willingness to accept unutterable sufferings, and to allow His Body to be torn and bruised for our sakes. In remembrance of that they stay up all night glorifying Him. The prayers of this Vigil are: I. "Fourteen hymns of praise which<sup>20</sup> occur in the Old and the New Testaments, followed by the glorification of the angels, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed; II. The

story of Susanna III-all the Psalms; IV.The book of the Revelation from beginning to end,<sup>22</sup> and numerous other prayers and hymns. All these prayers sing the praise of the Christ, His wondrous kingdom, and His power to hear the prayers of all who seek Him. The song of the three youths in the fiery furnace for instance, has a refrain chanted by the people, which says: "Blessed art Thou, O God of our Fathers, above all praise and all blessing for ever, Amen." Another wondrous response during these unutterably beautiful prayers is: "No slave is without sin, and no Lord without mercy." Thus these prayers glorify the Christ the Redeemer even at the time when His dead body lay in the grave. They end, in the early morning, with the Holy Liturgy.

The Easter Service begins at seven in the evening to Saturday and continues till one a.m. Sunday morning. After the relevant readings of 1st Corinthinas 15:22-50, 1st Pet. Chaps. 3: to 4:15-3; and Acts 2:22-33, the deacons chant the song of the Resurrection. Then all the lights are put out and the curtains of the sanctuary are drawn. The following dialogue is chanted by two chief deacons, one inside the sanctuary and the other outside it. The latter begins: "Lift up your heads, O ye Gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors; for the King of Glory shall come in;" "Who is this King of glory?" asks the second. - "The Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in Battle." - "Lift up your heads O ye gates; even lift them up ye everlasting doors for the King of glory shall come in." -"Who is this king of Glory?" - "The Lord of Hosts, He is King of glory" (Psalms 24: 7-9). As soon as this dialogue ends, all the Church lights are immediately lit, the curtains

of the sanctuary withdrawn, and feast bombs explode, while everyone present exclaims "Christos Anesti" or "Christ is risen." Then all the deacons hold lit candles and form a procession headed by a deacon holding a big cross set on a staff and draped in red silk, embroidered in gold; they all go round the altar thrice; bring up the rear is the priest with the censer in hand, in front of him and walking backward so as to face him is a deacon holding the icon of the risen Christ. After the three rounds inside the sanctuary, they make three rounds of the Church, chanting all along the song of the Resurrection in Coptic then in Arabic. This exhilarating chanting is followed by a homily, the Gospel, the patriarchal Paschal epistle, the sermon, and crowning it all the Divine Liturgy.

The association of life and death, of the buried Saviour, and the Saviour triumph over death has led the Fathers of the Coptic Church to sing the prayers of joy and praise amidst the gloom of the grave: while in the midst of the tune of sorrow vibrates the note of triumph; and through the flash of joy emerges the tone of sadness. By these prayers and these tunes the Church has walked in the footsteps of Its Redeemer: It rejoiced exclaiming Hosanna on Palm Sunday; It dressed in black during the Passion Week. Yet despite the sorrow that overwhelmed It, the Coptic Church has expressed lucidly Its invincible Faith in Him Who said: "In the world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world."

It should be noted, also, that the Sunday preceding Palm Sunday is called "Baptism" Sunday. The reason for this appellation is that in the early days of Christianity, the

catechumens were given concentrated lessons during Lent. And as they were forbidden from attending the Divine Liturgy, and since those responsible for the Church desired to give them the opportunity for enjoying the Passion Week Prayers, they set the examinations for these catechumens a week before. Those who passed were baptized on this Sunday, hence its name. Until the present day, many parents take their children to be baptized on Baptism Sunday, considering it a day of special blessing.

Mention is appropriate here also of the fact that the Coptic Church firmly believes in transubstantiation: that the bread and the wine consecrated on the altar during the Liturgy become in fact and actuality-visible only to those who see them with their Spiritual eyes-the Body and the Blood of the Christ. Relevant with this belief is that each communicant takes the whole of the Christ in the morsel given him by the celebrant priest. To explain this impalpable truth, St. John Chrysostom said: "If you put any number of utensils filled with water in the open, you shall see the sun in its wholeness reflected in each of them. Is not the Creator of the sun, then, able to reside in His entirety within each soul partaking of the Holy Mystery?"<sup>23</sup> That is why the Fathers of the Coptic Church forbade kneeling after Communion, because a person carrying the Christ within himself should not and must not kneel.

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The best way of ending these prayers is to give the hymn of praise of the angels chanted on the night of the "Apocalypse," which is: Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men.

We praise Thee. We bless Thee. We serve Thee; We worship Thee. We confess Thee. We speak of Thy Glory. We thank Thee for Thy Great Glory.

O Lord; O King; O Celestial; O Father Almighty; O Lord; O Son; O Only Begotten; O Jesus the Christ and the Holy Spirit. O Lord God; O Lamb of God; O Son of the Father; O Bearer of the sins of the world - have mercy on us. O Bearer of the sins of the world accept unto Thee our invocation. O Thou that sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. Thou alone art Holy. Thou alone art the Highest.

The Lord Jesus the Christ and the Holy Spirit in the glory of the Father. Everyday I bless Thee and praise Thy Holy Name forever and ever. In the night my spirit slips unto Thee O God, for Thy commandments are Light on the earth. I intone in Thy paths because Thou are become my help. In the mornings Thou shalt hear my voice. At dawn I shall stand before Thee and Thou shalt see me.

Make us worthy O Lord of this day and guard us from sin. Blessed art Thou O God of our Fathers and multiblessed. Thy Holy Name is full of glory forever, Amen.

May Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us even as we have relied on Thee. For the eyes of everyone hope in Thee, for Thou dost give them their food in due season.

Hear us, O God Our Saviour, Thou Hope of the uttermost parts of the earth.

And Thou O Lord wilt keep us, save us and redeem us from this generation and unto the end of the ages. Amen.

Blessed art Thou O Lord, teach me Thy Justice. Blessed art Thou O Master make me to understand Thy righteousness. Blessed

art Thou O Lord illumine for me Thy upright-  
ness. O Lord Thy mercy endureth forever.  
Neglect not the works of Thy Hand O Lord.  
O God Thou hast been a refuge unto me from  
generation to generation.

I said Lord have mercy on me and heal  
my soul for I have sinned unto Thee. O Lord  
I have taken refuge in Thee save me and  
teach me to do what is pleasing unto Thee.  
For Thou art my God. With Thee is the foun-  
tain of life.

With Thy Light do we see the light.  
May Thy mercy come upon those who know  
Thee and Thy equity upon the upright in  
heart. Unto Thee blessing is due. Unto Thee  
praise is due. Unto Thee glory is befitting.

O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit Existing  
from the beginning and unto the end of all  
ages.

Worthy is it to confess the Lord and  
praise the Name of the Most High that I may  
speak of Thy mercy in the morning and Thy  
righteousness each night.

Holy is God. Holy is the Strong. Holy  
is He Who dies not (thrice). Glory be to  
the Father and to the Son and to the Holy  
Spirit, now and unto the ages of all ages.  
Amen.

O Holy Trinity have mercy on us. O  
Trinity All Holy have mercy on us. O Holy  
Trinity have mercy on us. Amen.

\* \* \*

**Pentecost Sundays:** St. Luke tells us  
that our Lord showed Himself unto his disciples  
after His Resurrection and spoke to them  
on matters concerning the Kingdom of God.  
(Acts 1:1-3). Therefore the readings selected  
for the Pentecost Sundays speak to us about the

Kingdom in the following order: 1. The Saviour's New Testament, John 20:19-31-This first Sunday is called "Thomas' Sunday" for our Lord appeared on that day to confirm the faith of His doubting Apostle-and all the believers through him-in His glorious Resurrection; 2.The Life of the believers by their Lord, John 6:35-45; 3. The Lord's spiritual blessings to those who believe on Him, John 4:1-42; 4. His Confirmation of the believers John 21:35-50; 5. He is the Way, John 14:1-11; Ascension Thursday, Luke 24:36-53; 6. A Sunday Awaiting the Holy Spirit, John 16:23-33; 7. The Descent of the Holy Spirit, John 15:26 - 16:1-15.

Pashons - The first two Sundays of this month fall always within the Pentecost days, whereas the two last may or may not be included within them. (This is due to the variability of the Easter date). Therefore special readings are set for them in case they occur after Pentecost day: they are centred on the reign of the Saviour over His people, and are: 1. Our Saviour's Omnipotence, Luke 11:20-28; 2. His Victory over Satan, Luke 4:1-14.

Paoni Sundays tell us of the Communion and the gifts of the Holy Spirit; the readings are concerned with: 1. Gift of the Holy Spirit, Luke 11:1-13; 2. His forgiveness of sins, Luke 5:17-26; 3. His casting out the devils, Matt. 12:22-37; 4. His Spiritual gifts, Luke 6:27-38.

Epip Sundays centre on the aid of the Saviour to His disciples: 1. His authority within them; Luke 10:1-20; 2. His Law with them, Matt. 18:1-9; 3. His blessing of their preaching, Luke 9:10-17; 4. His Resuscitating their hearers, John 11:1-45

Messra Sundays deal with the destiny

of the Church on earth and are set as follows: 1. Reforming the Church by banning its wicked shepherds, Luke 20:9-19; 2. The Christ's Law for the good shepherds, Luke 5:27-39; 3. His chaining the devil, Mark 3:22-35 (it should be noted in this portion that "the strong" symbolizes the devil and "the house" the believers); 4. Assembling the Chosen together, Mark 13:3-37.

The Small Month may contain one Sunday for which the reading centres on the eternity of the Saviour and the end of the world, Matthew 24:3-35.

In addition, some months may contain five Sundays, therefore a lesson has been set for such an occurrence, and tells us of the Food given by the Gospel, Luke 9:12-17.

The Church, in its aim of edifying the believers, has arranged that week days are to be consecrated for the commemoration of the saints and martyrs, therefore the readings on these days centre on the Church history. Seeing that some saints excel others, the Church arranged that such saints are to be given special honour by setting specific readings for their commemoration. These select portions are then read in remembrance of those who are similar to them. For example, the Church commemorates St. Antoni on the 22nd of Tobi for whom a selected portion is said. When some monk is commemorated, the verses set for the 22nd of Tobi are read.

Throughout the year, with the exception of Lent and Passion Week, the readings are set in the following sequel: 1. from a Pauline epistle, 2. from a general epistle, 3. from the Acts, followed by reading from the Synaxarium and just before the Gospel. The former is a book containing resumes of biographies

of saints and martyrs; it is considered complementary to "the Acts," hence its place in the sequence of readings. It aims at commemorating people as well as important events, for example the 24th of Tobi is the date for remembering the 'Departure' (or death) of St. Mary the Ascetic Solitaire; whereas the 23rd of Thoth commemorates the re-opening of the Church of the Blessed Virgin at Hait ar-Rum (Cairo) after its having been closed for eleven years by order of a Mamluke prince.

The Church celebrates the memory of its saints and martyrs for the following reasons: 1. To emphasize that though dead, they yet live, Luke 20:38; 2. To set them up as patterns to be followed by the believers seeking perfection, Ps. 112:3; 3. Because God is wellpleased in them, Ps. 16:3; 4. In gratitude to God for them.

The beginning and end of each year are two occasions seized by the Church to guide its people. On the eve of the New Year, prayers are chanted until after midnight; then on the first day of Thoth, It implores the Lord to bless the New Year and the portion selected for reading is Luke 4:14-30. At the end of the year the Church celebrates the Glory of the Saviour as revealed in His first miracle, reading John 2:1-11. It may also be noted that this miracle is read during the prayers said for blessing new homes.

Among the prayers arranged by the Church is the Horlogion-that is the prayers to be said daily at the seven canonical hours. These hours are not those fixed according to the sun, but are connected with the Lord's Sufferings as well as with our daily lives. For instance the Prayer for Mattins is set for the commemoration of our Lord's Resurrection, and also in gratitude to God because

of a new day. It is noteworthy that, in the introduction to Mattins, the verses selected are from Ephesians 4:1-5 where the emphasis is on "forbearing one another in Love". The goal of this section is to allow the significance of Love to envelop the heart of the believer by dint of his daily reading.

It is to be noted that symbolism is prominent in the Coptic Church. As an example for this symbolism: the Paten and the Chalice<sup>24</sup> are both covered with a silken cloth adorned with crosses and called "the Prosfereen." The big cross embroaidered in its centre has jingles sewn to its middle and at the end of each of its four equal arms. This is to remind the believer of the "Great earthquake"<sup>25</sup> which happened at the Christ's Resurrection through the tinkling of the jingles as the officiating Priest uncovers the Paten and the Chalice.

Thus, the Church seeks to confirm the Faith of the believers by setting their hearts on the Scriptures, the Apostolic teachings and the lives of the saints and martyrs throughout the year as well as on specific occasions by all the means It can muster.

## APPENDIX II. NOTES

1, Greek word adopted by Copts meaning "according to portions," because specific parts of the Bible are set for each occasion, such as reading the prophecy foreseeing the Flight on the day commemorating the Entry of the Holy Family into Egypt.

2. The 1st month in the Coptic calendar, beginning on the 11th of September and ending on the 10th of October. Each Coptic month is thirty days, while the remaining five or

six days form a month by themselves. The Coptic months are: Troth, Babe, Hathor, Kyak, Tobi, Meshir, Paramhat, Parmuti, Pashons, Paoni, Epie, Messra, and "the small month."

3. The word "John" comes from the root of the word "mercy."

4. The verses chanted from the Psalms preceding the Gospel on this occasion are: Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from haven (85:10-11) - Mercy symbolizes the Christ and truth John the Baptist. It is noteworthy to mention that select verses from the Psalms are always chanted before reading the Gospel, because the Psalms is the "deputy" of humanity and the Gospel is God's love for it.

5. The select verses from the Psalms for this month invariably contain the words "heathen," "Nations" and "the earth."

6. All the information on the Church readings are taken from the book (in Arabic) entitled Kunuzan-Nema (or the Treasures of Grace) by Banoob Abdoo, part one, pp.10-25 and 47-55, pub. in Cairo, June 1952.

It should be noted that our Saviour raised Lazarus one week before His Passion to give palpable proof of His power over death.

7. See the Gospels according to Sts. Matt. 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-2; Luke 19:29-40; and John 12:12-19.

8. This is the ritual sung over departed souls at funerals.

9. Pascha is the Greek word for Passover, because the Christ is the Paschal Lamb Who redeemed the world.

10. These "hours" are not "sixty minutes" but are the times commemorating the incidents which led finally to the crucifixion; for instance the first hour reminds us of the plotting in the dark against the Christ.

11. Rev. 4:4-The Liturgical Prayers give us the details of this celestial Revelation, telling us that each of the twenty-four priests wore a crown of gold on his head, and held a golden censer in his hand full of incense which is the prayers of the saints. They all bow down and worship Him Who sits on the Throne, and offer Him the chant mentioned above.

12. This hymn is sung in Coptic and in Arabic alternately by two groups of the choir, the people joining them. The group chanting the Coptic begins; when it finishes the other takes its turn. They thus alternate six times. So impressive is this tune, that once an English woman who attended wrote to me later on saying: "I can never forget "Thok tai ti gom," so terrifically did it hammer at my soul."

13. Actually all the prayers of this week are chanted in tunes which are specifically set for them, and which are not used on any other occasion.

14. Maunday Thursday commemorates the

Last Supper during which the Christ gave His disciples His New Covenant of the Bread and Wine which are His Body and His Blood. And as He washed His disciples' feet, so there is the Liturgy of the Lakkan, or the blessing of the water after which the officiating priest washes the feet of those who come forward for it. This precedes the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

15. See Numbers XIX:1-9 and compare it with Heb. XIII:11-13.

16. Greek word meaning "seeking forgiveness;" the twelfth hour here points to the hour of Vespens on the usual days, because the sixth hour denotes midday.

17. Cf. O.H.E. Burmester: The Egyptia or Coptic Church, Chap. on "The Passion Week" pp.274-302.

18. i.e. "the revelation."

19. Because of the Light of the Christ which shone on all men and is symbolized by the light which bursts from the Holy Sepulchre during the Prayers chanted at the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem on Saturday noon. The author was blessed with attending this Service.

20. These are: a) two hymns of Moses (Ex. 15:1-21 and Deut. 32:1-44); b) Song of Hannah, Samuel's mother; c) King Hezekiah's song (Is. 38:10-20); d) Manassa, Hezekiah's son - this song is written in the church books, taken from the Psalms, and has no test in the Bible like the others; e) Jonah's prayer (Chap. 2) f) Chap. 3 of Habbakuk; g) three

hymns of Isaiah: Chaps. 15, 16:1-9, and 26; 10-29; h) third chap. of Daniel followed by the hymn of Azariah in the fiery furnace; j) The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55); j) Zachariah's hymn (Luke 1:68-85); and k) Simeon's plea (Luke 2:29-33).

21. Daniel recounted it in what is considered apocryphal by the Protestants.

22. Seven candles are lit and arranged in cruciform beside a big cross standing on its base; a basin of oil is also put. The priest reads the first chapter of Revelation, then each of those present reads a chapter by turn until they finish the whole book. Cf. Burmester's book (mentioned in end note 11); pp.293-4.

23. Habib Girgis. al-Asrar as-Sab'aa (i.e.the Seven Mysteries or Sacraments as they are usually called.)

24. The Paten is the plate in which the Eucharistic Loaf is put, while the Chalice is the cup containing the wine. Both Paten and Chalice are made of silver; they are covered by the Prosfereen because they contain what will become the Very Body and Blood of the Saviour by Whose Death man was redeemed.

25. See Matt. 28:2.

APPENDIX III

The names and order of accession of the Coptic Patriarchs from Saint Mark to the present Patriarch Abba Shenouda III. The dates of consecration and duration of their patriarchates are given for each.

Order of Accession	Name	Year of Consecration	Duration of Patriarchate <sup>1</sup>
1	St. Mark, the Evangelist	Founded Church ca. 61 A.D.	7 yrs, 8 mos
2.	Abba Anianus	64 A.D. <sup>2</sup>	22 yrs, 7 mos
3	Abba Meilius	94 A.D.	12 yrs, 9 mos
4	Abba Kardonos	108 A.D.	10 yrs, 9 mos
5	Abba Primus	120 A.D.	12 yrs, 1 mo
6	Abba Yustus	132 A.D.	10 yrs, 10 mos
7	Abba Omanius.	143 A.D.	11 yrs, 3 mos
8	Abba Marianus	154 A.D.	9 yrs, 2 mos
9	Abba Cladianus	163 A.D.	14 yrs, 6 mos
10	Abba Agrippinus	177 A.D.	11 yrs, 7 mos
11	Abba Yulianus	189 A.D.	10 yrs, 1 mo
12	Abba Demetrius, the Vine-dresser	199 A.D.	22 yrs, 7 mos
13	Abba Heraclas	232 A.D.	16 yrs, 1 mo
14	Abba Dionysius	249 A.D.	19 yrs, 9 mos
15	Abba Maximus	270 A.D.	12 yrs, 7 mos
16	Abba Theonas	282 A.D.	9 yrs, 9 mos
17	Abba Petros "Seal of the Martyrs"	293 A.D.	10 yrs, 11 mos

List of Patriarchs (cont.)

Order of Accession	Name	Year of Consecration	Duration of Patriarchate
18	Abba Achilles	303 A.D.	- yrs, 6 mos
19	Abba Alexandros	303 A.D.	22 yrs, 10 mos
20	Abba Athanasius, the Apostolic	326 A.D.	46 yrs, - mos
21	Abba Petros II	372 A.D.	5 yrs, 9 mos
22	Abba Timotheos I	378 A.D.	6 yrs, 5 mos
23	Abba Theophilos	384 A.D.	27 yrs, 2 mos
24	Abba Kyrillos, 'Pillar of Faith'	412 A.D.	31 yrs, 8 mos
25	Abba Dioscorus I	443 A.D.	14 yrs, 2 mos
26	Abba Timotheos II	458 A.D.	22 yrs, 11 mos
27	Abba Petros III	480 A.D.	8 yrs, 3 mos
28	Abba Athanasius II	489 A.D.	6 yrs, 10 mos
29	Abba Yoannis I	496 A.D.	8 yrs, 7 mos
30	Abba Yoannis II	505 A.D.	11 yrs, - mos
31	Abba Dioscorus II	516 A.D.	2 yrs, 4 mos
32	Abba Timotheos III	519 A.D.	17 yrs, 4 mos
33	Abba Theodosios I	536 A.D.	31 yrs, 4 mos
34	Abba Petros IV	567 A.D.	2 yrs, - mos
35	Abba Damianos	570 A.D.	35 yrs, 11 mos
36	Abba Anastasius	606 A.D.	12 yrs, 6 mos
37	Abba Andronicus	619 A.D.	6 yrs, - mos

## List of Patriarchs (cont.)

Order of Accession	Name	Year of Consecration	Duration of Patriarchate
38	Abba Benyameen I	625 A.D.	39 yrs, - mos
39	Abba Agathon	664 A.D.	16 yrs, 9 mos
40	Abba Yoannis III	681 A.D.	8 yrs, 1 mo
41	Abba Iss-haq	689 A.D.	2 yrs, 11 mos
42	Abba Simeon I	692 A.D.	7 yrs, 8 mos
43	Abba Alexandros II	703 A.D.	24 yrs, 9 mos
44	Abba Cosma I	728 A.D.	1 yr, 4 mos
45	Abba Theodorus	729 A.D.	11 yrs, 7 mos
46	Abba Mikhail I	743 A.D.	23 yrs, 6 mos
47	Abba Mena I	766 A.D.	8 yrs, 10 mos
48	Abba Yoannis IV	776 A.D.	22 yrs, - mos
49	Abba Marcus II	798 A.D.	20 yrs, 3 mos
50	Abba Yacoubus	818 A.D.	10 yrs, 9 mos
51	Abba Simeon II	829 A.D.	- yrs, 7 mos
52	Abba Yusab I	831 A.D.	17 yrs, 11 mos
53	Abba Mikhail II	849 A.D.	1 yr, 4 mos
54	Abba Cosma II	850 A.D.	7 yrs, 7 mos
55	Abba Shenouda I	858 A.D.	11 yrs, 3 mos
56	Abba Mikhail III	869 A.D.	35 yrs, 1 mo
57	Abba Ghabrial I	908 A.D.	11 yrs, - mos
58	Abba Cosma III	919 A.D.	12 yrs, - mos

## List of Patriarchs (cont.)

Order of Accession	Name	Year of Consecration	Duration of Patriarchate
59	Abba Macari I	931 A.D.	20 yrs, - mos
60	Abba Theophanius	951 A.D.	4 yrs, 8 mos
61	Abba Mena II	956 A.D.	17 yrs, 11 mos
62	Abba Abraam I	976 A.D.	3 yrs, 6 mos
63	Abba Philotheos I	979 A.D.	24 yrs, 7 mos
64	Abba Zakareya I	1004 A.D.	27 yrs, 11 mos
65	Abba Shenouda II	1032 A.D.	14 yrs, 7 mos
66	Abba Christodolus	1047 A.D.	22 yrs, 8 mos
67	Abba Kyrillos II	1078 A.D.	14 yrs, 6 mos
68	Abba Mikhail IV	1092 A.D.	9 yrs, 7 mos
69	Abba Macari II	1102 A.D.	27 yrs, 1 mo
70	Abba Ghabrial II	1130 A.D.	14 yrs, 3 mos
71	Abba Mikhail V	1144 A.D.	- yrs, 9 mos
72	Abba Yoannis V	1146 A.D.	18 yrs, 10 mos
73	Abba Marcus III	1165 A.D.	22 yrs, 6 mos
74	Abba Yoannis VI	1188 A.D.	26 yrs, 11 mos
75	Abba Kyrillos III	1234 A.D.	7 yrs, 9 mos
76	Abba Athanasius III	1250 A.D.	11 yrs, 1 mo
77	Abba Ghabrial III	1269 A.D.	2 yrs, 2 mos
78	Abba Yoannis VII	1271 A.D.	23 yrs, - mos
79	Abba Theodosius II	1294 A.D.	6 yrs, 7 mos

## List of Patriarchs (cont.)

Order of Accession	Name	Year of Consecration	Duration of Patriarchate
80	Abba Yoannis VIII	1300 A.D.	20 yrs, - mos
81	Abba Yoannis IX	1320 A.D.	6 yrs, 5 mos
82	Abba Benyameen II	1327 A.D.	11 yrs, 8 mos
83	Abba Petros V	1340 A.D.	8 yrs, 6 mos
84	Abba Marcus IV	1350 A.D.	14 yrs, 5 mos
85	Abba Yoannis X	1364 A.D.	6 yrs, 2 mos
86	Abba Ghabrial IV	1370 A.D.	8 yrs, 3 mos
87	Abba Mattheos I	1378 A.D.	30 yrs, 5 mos
88	Abba Ghabrial V	1409 A.D.	19 yrs, 8 mos
89	Abba Yoannis XI	1428 A.D.	24 yrs, 11 mos
90	Abba Mattheos II	1453 A.D.	13 yrs, - mos
91	Abba Ghabrial VI	1466 A.D.	8 yrs, 10 mos
92	Abba Mikhail VI	1477 A.D.	1 yr, - mos
93	Abba Yoannis XII	1480 A.D.	3 yrs, 4 mos
94	Abba Yoannis XIII	1483 A.D.	40 yrs, 10 mos
95	Abba Ghabrial VII	1526 A.D.	43 yrs, - mos
96	Abba Yoannis XIV	1573 A.D.	15 yrs, 4 mos
97	Abba Ghabrial VIII	1590 A.D.	11 yrs, - mos
98	Abba Marcus V	1610 A.D.	10 yrs, - mos
99	Abba Yoannis XV	1621 A.D.	10 yrs, - mos
100	Abba Mattheos III	1631 A.D.	10 yrs, - mos
101	Abba Marcus VI	1650 A.D.	10 yrs, - mos

List of Patriarchs (cont.)

Order of Accession	Name	Year of Consecration	Duration of Patriarchate
102	Abba Mattheos IV	1660 A.D.	14 Yrs, 8 mos
103	Abba Yoannis XVI	1676 A.D.	42 yrs, 3 mos
104	Abba Petros VI	1718 A.D.	7 yrs, 7 mos
105	Abba Yoannis XVII	1727 A.D.	18 yrs, 3 mos
106	Abba Marcus VII	1745 A.D.	24 yrs, - mos
107	Abba Yoannis XVIII	1770 A.D.	6 yrs, 7 mos
108	Abba Marcus VIII	1797 A.D.	13 yrs, 2 mos
109	Abba Petros VII	1810 A.D.	42 yrs, 3 mos
110	Abba Kyrillos IV	1854 A.D.	6 yrs, 8 mos
111	Abba Demetrius II	1860 A.D.	7 yrs, 7 mos
112	Abba Kyrillos V	1874 A.D.	53 yrs, 9 mos
113	Abba Yoannis XIX	1929 A.D.	13 yrs, 6 mos
114	Abba Macari III	1944 A.D.	1 yr, 6 mos
115	Abba Yusab II	1946 A.D.	10 yrs, 5 mos
116	Abba Kyrillos VI	1959 A.D.	11 yrs, 10 mos
117	Abba Shenouda III	1971 A.D.	May God give him long life

NOTES

- Duration for each Patriarch on the Chair of St. Mark is given as approximately as possible. The gaps appearing sometimes in the dates between one Patriarch and the next represent the lapse of time between the passing away of one and the election of his successor

NOTES (cont.)

2. Anianus was selected and consecrated by St. Mark to become his first successor during his lifetime. The Evangelist had to leave Egypt on several occasions on other apostolic missionary trips and left him in charge of the budding Church.

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**A. Pierpont-Morgan Library, N.Y.:**

Codes 578 (IX) - It should be noted that the collection in this Library consists of two major groups and a few minor ones. The two major groups are the bulk of el Hamouli finds and a collection of papyri. These papyri comprise two groups: one of private documents and the other of literary writings. Hamouli is a town in the Fayoum province which once boasted of a sizeable monastery and a big church

- named after the Archangel Mikhail.
- B. The Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris:  
 Mss. no. 13 (in Coptic);; no. 71 (in Arabic);  
 no. 287 Hist. (in Arabic).
- c. The British Museum Library, London:  
 Mss. nos. 764,841,857,865; 90a1,604;5a&25b,ff.;  
 605 fol. 162a; Mss. Or 1242(1) & 1325;  
 622e. 5 which is a copy of the Scale of  
 the Bishop of Samannood with its German  
 trans. pub. in 1643; & 14005e2 comprising  
 the Canons of Abba Athanasius the Apostolic  
 in Coptic and Arabic - ed. & trans. with  
 introductions, notes and appendices by  
 W. Riedel & W. E. Crum, London 1902.
- D. The Patriarcha Library, Cairo:  
 Mss. nos. 47,51,330,390,437,&487 Hist.;  
 Mss. nos.171,246,291&608 Theol.
- E. Coptic Museum Library, Old Cairo:  
 Mss. nos. 30 Lit., 41 Ritual, 66 & 83 Lit.,  
 128 Ritual; 137&144 Lit. 163,195,196,375  
 Theol.; 342,405,&408 Ritual; 469&470 Hist.  
 (Copto-Arabic) & no. 1665.
- F. Abba Antoni Monastery Library:  
 Mss. 289,343&391 - All Ritual; and the  
 Synaxarium of the Monastery.
- G. Collections in various churches and monas-  
 teries in Egypt:
- Ms. no. 3 Hist., dated 21 Tobi 1424 A.M.,  
 kept at the Church of Abu Sarga (St. Sergius)  
 in Old Cairo.
  - Ms. no. 9 Hist., kept at the Church of  
 St. Shenouda in Old Cairo.
  - Ms containing "The Life of St. Dimiana"  
 by Abb Yoannis Bishop of Burullus, dated  
 1482 A.M., kept in the Church of St. Stephen  
 adjoining St. Mark's Cathedral, Ezbekieh,  
 Cairo.
  - Ms. no. 50 Hist. (Arabic) found in the  
 Church of St. Mark at Rosetta, now kept  
 in St. Mark's Cathedral, Alexandria.

- Ms. kept at the Church of the Blessed Virgin in Bussat an-Nassara (near Damietta), containing "The Life of Girgis al-Muzahim" by the monk Mena - written in the XIth century A.D.
- Ms. containing "The Lives of the 49 Martyred Elders" kept at St. Pishoi Monastery in Wadi-n-Natrun.
- Books in Ms form: 1. "Life of St. Pakhom" revised by Fr. Abd'l-Masih el-Baramusi; 2. "History of the Patriarchs" - 2 vols. - copied by Fr. Shenouda'l Baramusi - both books and their scribes are from the Baramus Monastery in Wadi-n-Natrun.

Besides the above western language books and the Arabic and Coptic Mss., the author has consulted numerous Arabic books that deal either specifically with the history of the Copts, or generally with the history of Egypt. Most of these have been cited in the end-notes. All of them are fully cited in her four-volume Arabic book entitled: "Qissat-al-Kanisat-il-Qibtiyah" (i.e. The Story of the Coptic Church) which is the counterpart of this story on a more expanded scale. Hence the Arabic sources consulted will not be cited here.

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