

Textbook Maneuvers:  
Evangelicals and Educational Reform in Nineteenth-Century Egypt

by

Paul Sedra

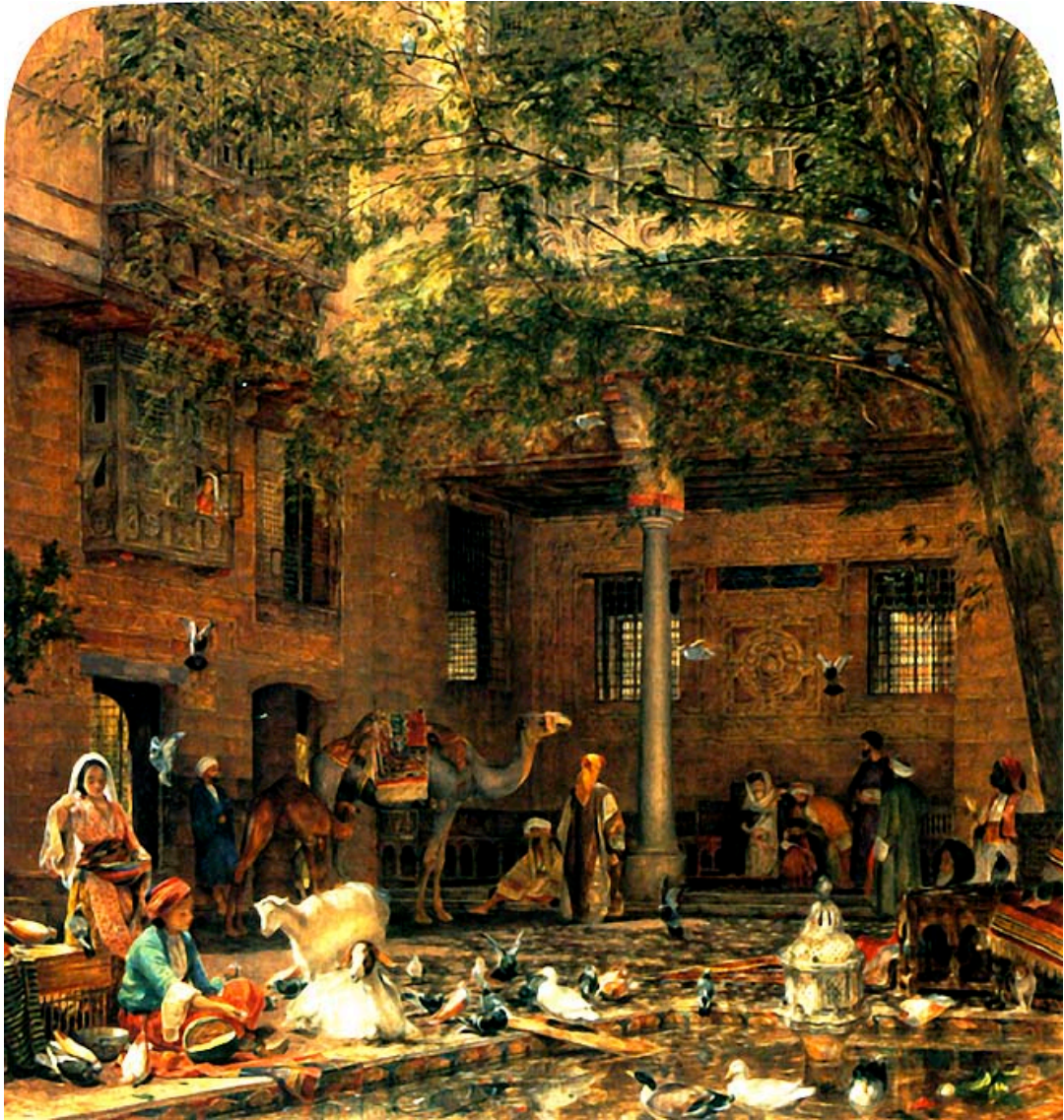
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“The Hosh (courtyard) of the house of the Coptic Patriarch, Cairo; the Patriarch is dictating to his secretary dispatches to a convent in the desert, to be conveyed by the Arabs in waiting”

by

John Frederick Lewis, 1864

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, who have never ceased to inspire by their example, both academic and personal.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One of my greatest regrets is not having had the chance to talk with my Egyptian grandparents about their past. By the time I had begun to visit the country, both had passed away. Later, I would spend night after night sitting with my uncle on the balcony of his Doqqi apartment, lingering over old photos and their stories. Those nights convinced me to pursue modern Egyptian history, and for helping me to make that choice, I am most grateful to him.

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to expose the connections between textuality, morality, and political power in nineteenth-century Egypt. The thesis of the dissertation is that the principal aim of nineteenth-century educationalists in Egypt was to eliminate an oral culture in which the speakers of words, rather than texts, were bearers of authority. By eliminating that oral culture, educationalists aspired to depersonalize authority — that is, influence the behavior of subaltern Egyptians on a mass scale, without regard to particular circumstances or contexts. To this end, the dissertation offers a detailed interrogation of particular moments in Egyptian educational history. These are moments of contestation as to both the methods and the purposes of education — contestation between Anglican and Presbyterian missionaries, Ottoman and Egyptian officials, Coptic priests and Muslim reformers, and landowners of both faiths on the one hand, and the subaltern inhabitants of the Nile Valley on the other. While focusing heavily upon the educationalists involved in movements for educational reform in nineteenth-century Egypt, such as John Lieder and Joseph Hekekyan, the dissertation ventures further than past works in this vein, exploring how subalterns resisted the technologies of power deployed by ‘modern,’ ‘educated’ elites, and how such elites molded the technologies to meet the challenge of resistance in local contexts.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

The Press gives an extensive publicity to the thoughts and transactions of men, it unfolds the secret recesses of humanity, and whilst it thus renders private possession a more conspicuous part of the whole Commonwealth, its value is both heightened and secured through its very publicity. The property of the individual thus becomes the common property, or interest of all, and vice versa. And as in this manner the individual more easily learns to feel interested in the prosperity of the whole community; so they also learn to feel more for the welfare of each individual. Hence a higher and more just esteem for life and for usefulness is engendered, and more general exertions are made towards their security.

— C. F. Schlienz, of the Church Mission Society Press at Malta, 1839<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation aims to expose the connections between textuality, morality, and political power in nineteenth-century Egypt. The thesis of the dissertation is that the principal aim of nineteenth-century educationalists in Egypt was to eliminate an oral culture in which the speakers of words, rather than texts, were bearers of authority. By eliminating that oral culture, educationalists aspired to depersonalize authority — that is, influence the behavior of subaltern Egyptians on a mass scale, without regard to particular circumstances or contexts. Words were to carry messages independent of the circumstances or contexts in which they were relayed. The elimination of an oral culture was thus essential to the project of

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<sup>1</sup> C. F. Schlienz, *The Liberty of Publishing in Malta, With Especial Regard to Religious Publications* (Malta: Church Mission Society Press, 1839), 7.

fostering an abstract morality among subaltern Egyptians. Indeed, only with the elimination of an oral culture, with the depersonalization of authority, with the transfer of that authority from individuals to texts, could an abstract morality prescribing behavior operate across contexts, regardless of circumstances.

Ultimately, an abstract morality occasioning homogeneity in behavior was thought critical to the modern state's efforts to control the bodies of its subjects.

In his classic study *Orality and Literacy*, Walter Ong explores the dynamics and implications of the process of 'technologizing the word.'<sup>2</sup> Ong emphasizes that oral expression existed long before written expression — that the oral can exist entirely independent of the written — despite the enormous influence that written expression has had upon oral expression. The oral never necessarily depends upon the written and, hence, an oral culture, untouched by the technologizing of the word, is quite distinct from a written one in various ways. For instance, Ong emphasizes that formulas, patterns, and mnemonics play a critical role in oral cultures, for such devices facilitate the recovery of words from the memory. Given this emphasis upon repetition, the elders of an oral culture are vested with an authority that they may not possess in a written culture: "By storing knowledge outside the mind, writing and, even more, print downgrade the figures of the wise

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London: Methuen, 1982). All references to this work are drawn from the Routledge edition published in 2002.

old man and the wise old woman, repeaters of the past, in favor of younger discoverers of something new.”<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps most importantly for my purposes here, Ong explicitly links the technologizing of the word with the rise of the catechism and the textbook.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the catechism and the textbook are characterized by statements of ‘facts’ that are authorized by powers that the reader may not be in a position to question. There is a marked absence of dialogue and disputation associated with the use of the catechism and the textbook of a print culture, particularly when contrasted with the forms of knowledge which had prevailed before the rise of print. As Ong captures the point, “Print encourages a sense of closure, a sense that what is found in a text has been finalized, has reached a state of completion.”<sup>5</sup> Finally, he suggests, near the end of his text, a link between the inwardness promoted by print and the obsession with individual examination of conscience in the modern world.<sup>6</sup>

However, *Orality and Literacy* is not without problems. For instance, there is a certain romanticism surrounding the oral that pervades Ong’s work. Despite occasional concessions to potentials inherent in literacy and print extending beyond the aims of control and domination, Ong’s narrative of the shift from the oral to the written is unmistakably a story of loss. Indeed, he frequently contrasts what he

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 131-132.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 149-150.

terms ‘natural’ orality with ‘technologized’ literacy, and seems to lament the loss of a world in which words were ‘embodied’ — that is, a world in which mastery of gesture and intonation determined one’s skill in dialogue and disputation. That world, the ‘old order’ one might say, was artless and unrestrained in a way that the world of print, the ‘modern order,’ cannot be, given the modern materiality of the word. The questions arising from this romanticism surrounding the oral are potentially legion. Is the rise of print necessarily a mortal danger to the oral, as Ong appears to suggest? Is Ong in fact invoking a teleology of sorts in *Orality and Literacy*?

On a related point, Ong argues that challenging an author within an oral culture is far easier than within a written culture, for reading a text is a solitary activity. Indeed, he ventures to assert, “Once the word is technologized, there is no effective way to criticize what technology has done with it without the aid of the highest technology available.”<sup>7</sup> This would appear to suggest a certain powerlessness on the part of the illiterate when faced with the rise of such modern technologies of power as the printing press and the modern school.

But are those for whom the word remains a matter of speech rather than writing in fact so ill prepared to confront those educated in ‘modern’ schools? After all, technologizing the word is hardly a mechanical or self-actualizing process. Despite the reference to technology, the process is not machine-like, in

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 79.

the sense that it could rely upon the independent agency of a particular pedagogy or press. There is always, and there must always be, a pedagogue or a printer involved — that is to say, a human agent who, at the least, sets the given technology of power in motion. This human agency in technologizing the word makes contestation inevitable, and much of this dissertation will concern itself with the dynamics of that contestation — how subalterns resisted the technologies of power deployed by ‘modern,’ ‘educated’ elites, and how such elites molded the technologies to meet the challenge of resistance in local contexts.

### **Islamic Reform and the Hegemony of the Text**

To grasp the particular implications of the shift from an oral culture to the hegemony of the text in the modern Middle East, one need only contrast the thought and methods of Muhammad ‘Abduh with his forerunners as interpreters of Islam. Indeed, one might label ‘Abduh a quintessentially textualizing figure, and in this he is representative of Islamic reform as a whole. In the late nineteenth century, ‘Abduh was one of several Muslim reform figures — among them, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghani and Rashīd Rida — who felt that European domination of Muslim lands was profoundly humiliating, and required, on Muslims’ part, a ‘return to the roots’ of their faith.<sup>8</sup> Only such a return to the roots, and the

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<sup>8</sup> For the classic accounts of Abduh’s life in English, refer to Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement*

elimination of ‘superstitious practices’ that it entailed, would permit Muslim peoples to restore their dignity and expel the Europeans occupying their lands.

Essentially, the idea behind ‘Abduh’s principal published work, *The Theology of Unity*, was that the Quran must take the central place in every Muslim’s existence, because ‘the Book’ was the only text whose divine provenance was beyond question. The Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by God, and thus, the words of the Quran are the words of God. However, ‘Abduh issued an important warning in this regard: the significance of the Quran for Muslims must extend well beyond the correct pronunciation of the words in the text. He was urging that Muslims analyze the text in rational terms, that they aim to grasp the meaning of the text and, thereby, grasp God’s order for the universe.

Indeed, ‘Abduh ventured to suggest that the text was framed for rational analysis. Of course, this suggestion had enormous implications. ‘Abduh himself drew a number of these out in the text. For instance, of the Prophet Muhammad, he wrote, “In his preaching he took up the cudgels against the slaves of habit and the traditionalists, calling on them to liberate themselves from their bondage and throw off the chains withholding them from action and from hope.”<sup>9</sup> ‘Abduh was

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*Inaugurated by Muhammad ‘Abduh* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933) and Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*, reissue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 130-160.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad ‘Abduh, *The Theology of Unity*, trans. Ishaq Masa‘ad and Kenneth Cragg (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), 115. This text, known in Arabic as *Risalat al-Tawhid*, was originally published in Cairo in 1897. Although *The*

doubtless speaking as much about the slaves of habit and traditionalists of his own day, as about those of the Prophet's day. Who were these slaves of habit, these traditionalists? They were the sheikhs of the village *kuttābs* who believed that the ability to recite the Quran was sufficient education for Egypt's youth. 'Abduh was chastising such men, declaring Egypt's youth capable of 'understanding and exploiting everything within their hands.' The truths of the Quran were not a secret held by a privileged class of men; rather, they were within the reach of all with rational minds.

### **A Role for Coptic Reform in Egyptian Modernity?**

'Abduh is widely seen as the intellectual pioneer of Egyptian modernity. In 1933, Charles Adams proclaimed him "the prophet of a new day for Egypt and for Islam," and subsequent assessments have proved scarcely less enthusiastic.<sup>10</sup> As Yvonne Haddad has explained, "While there may be a certain fickleness in the way historians choose to recognize certain individuals as formative in the various stages of a nation's history, there is little doubt that anyone writing about Egypt as it emerged from the nineteenth century and plunged its way into the twentieth could

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*Theology of Unity* is perhaps the work most familiar to a Western audience, Abduh's body of writings includes *Al-Islām wa al-radd 'ala muntakidih* (or *Islam and the Reply to Its Critics*), *Al-Islām wa al-Nasraniyya ma' al-'Ilm wa al-Madaniyya* (or *Islam and Christianity and Their Respective Attitudes Towards Learning and Civilization*) — both of which appeared originally as series of articles, in *Al-Mu'ayyad* and *Al-Manar* respectively.

<sup>10</sup> Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 1.



imagine not acknowledging the enormous contribution of Muhammad ‘Abduh to modern Islamic thought.”<sup>11</sup>

However, Islam was not the only scene of contest between text and supposed ‘superstition’ in nineteenth-century Egypt. In the scholarship of Samir Seikaly, Coptic Orthodox Patriarch Cyril (Kīrulus, often transliterated as Kirolos) IV — who ascended the Patriarchal seat in 1854, apparently phoenix-like, to lead the community from the path of ‘superstition’ to that of ‘progress’ — holds a position in Coptic reform strikingly parallel to that which ‘Abduh holds in Islamic reform.<sup>12</sup> Seikaly’s 1970 *Middle Eastern Studies* article, “Coptic Communal Reform,” remains the only detailed examination of the nineteenth-century Coptic community of Egypt to have appeared in English — detailed, but scarcely original, for Seikaly merely rehearses conclusions Coptic historians have reached about the shift from ‘degradation’ to ‘enlightenment’ in their community during the nineteenth century. The parallels between Seikaly’s article and “The Awakening of

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<sup>11</sup> Yvonne Haddad, “Muhammad Abduh: Pioneer of Islamic Reform,” in Ali Rahnama, ed. *Pioneers of Islamic Revival* (London: Zed Books, 1994), 30. She concludes at page 60, “Abduh’s legacy in defining Islam for the twentieth century is evident in the hundreds of texts that reiterate various aspects of his thought.”

<sup>12</sup> The principal published work I have in mind is Seikaly’s article “Coptic Communal Reform, 1860-1914,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 6 (January 1970). However, this research was initially developed in his unpublished doctoral dissertation, entitled “The Copts Under British Rule, 1882-1914” (University of London, 1967).

the Coptic Church,” published seven decades prior in London’s *Contemporary Review*, are striking.<sup>13</sup>

“The Awakening” was penned by Murqus Simaika, among the most influential and widely known Coptic public figures of his time. According to Donald Malcolm Reid, “By 1900 Simaika had established himself as a main liaison between the Patriarch and occupation authorities and visiting clergymen.”<sup>14</sup> Beyond his extensive involvement in Coptic communal affairs, particularly through the communal council, Simaika served in the Egyptian Legislative Council from 1906 to 1913, and in the Legislative Assembly in 1914. However, he derives the bulk of his renown from his involvement in the 1908 establishment of the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo. His contributions of artifacts and funds were vital to the project.

Simaika casts the Coptic Church as having remained ‘asleep’ for centuries, a ‘slumber’ interrupted only “by the persecutions directed against her by the inveterate enemies of her faith — the Muslims, the great mass of whom, alas! are

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<sup>13</sup> Murqus Simaika, “The Awakening of the Coptic Church,” *Contemporary Review* 71 (1897).

<sup>14</sup> Donald Malcolm Reid, “Archaeology, Social Reform, and Modern Identity Among the Copts, 1854-1952,” in Alain Roussillon, ed. *Entre Reforme Sociale et Mouvement National: Identité et modernisation en Egypte, 1882-1962* (Cairo: CEDEJ, 1995), 322. This chapter constitutes the only intervention in the historiography of the nineteenth-century Coptic community, of which I am aware, that aims at contextualizing and criticizing the dominant ‘Awakening’ narrative I will proceed to describe.

the descendants of her own children.”<sup>15</sup> The Copts were quiescent in the face of such persecutions, acceding to their plight. Only through obscurity, through concealing their identity, could they enjoy a degree of security from the hostile Muslim monolith. Yet, such quiescence and concealment left the once proud Coptic community profoundly weak and irresolute. With the rise of Mehmed Ali, argues Simaika, ‘light’ penetrated the prevailing ‘darkness.’ At last, Christians could realize their aspirations, both for their community and their country. In contrast to the sectarian leaders of the past, Mehmed Ali was concerned only with ‘progress’ — and if that demanded the advice of Christians, he was prepared to admit them into the service of the state. The sanction the state afforded Christian mission permitted an unprecedented infusion of ‘knowledge’ into Egypt, the Coptic community in particular.<sup>16</sup>

According to Simaika, Patriarch Cyril IV was a pioneer among the Copts in seizing upon that knowledge — in seeking to marshal that knowledge in the service of his people. He commends the intentions Cyril held, but laments his failure to institutionalize reform. Scriptural study was fostered, icons were forsaken — but the problem of clerical ignorance remained. As Simaika recounts, “while the laymen were slowly but steadily advancing in knowledge, the clergy, especially the bishops and the religious orders from which these dignitaries are now recruited,

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<sup>15</sup> Simaika, “Awakening,” 734.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 735-736.

remained in an almost stationary condition and were soon left far behind.”<sup>17</sup> To remedy the problem of ignorance, one had to reform procedures of recruitment into the Church hierarchy. The Church hierarchy was, in 1897, still selected from among the monks, and as the monks “generally come from the lower classes of society, and are in most cases driven to the monasteries by abhorrence of work, the majority, when they come into power, make up for past privations by exerting themselves in amassing wealth by every conceivable means, and spend it on themselves and their relations.”<sup>18</sup> Simaika memorably remarks in a footnote, “It is a shameful confession, but we must acknowledge that very few of the existing bishops belong to respectable families.”<sup>19</sup>

Nearly all the historiography of the nineteenth-century Coptic community, in both English and Arabic, is framed through the classifications and concepts of this narrative — what one might label the ‘awakening narrative.’ The pioneering work in this historiography, Y‘aqūb Nakhla Rūfīla’s book *Tārīkh al-Umma al-Qibtiyya* — like Simaika’s article, published in 1897 — established a pattern nearly all subsequent works on modern Coptic history would emulate.<sup>20</sup> Rūfīla was, in an important sense, a product of the ‘awakening’ which he would chronicle in his

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 737.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Y‘aqūb Nakhla Rūfīla, *Tārīkh al-Umma al-Qibtiyya* (Cairo, 1897). The text was reissued in 2000 by Metropole Publishing in Cairo with a new preface by Gawdat Gabra, the Director of the Coptic Museum. All translations from this text are my own.

1897 history. Fluent in Arabic, Coptic, English, and Italian, he had begun his work life as a teacher in the Azbakiyya school Cyril IV had founded. He followed his tenure as teacher with a commitment to printing as a profession, and served as an editor at the state's Būlāq Press. In 1877, he was instrumental in the establishment of the newspaper *Al-Watan*. Among the founders of the Coptic Tawfīq Society in 1891, Rūfīla won election as President of the Society in 1893, 1894, and 1896, and paid particular attention to Tawfīq's publishing activities.

Rūfīla's *Tārīkh al-Umma al-Qibtiyya* was the inaugural one-volume, comprehensive, indexed, 'scientific' study of the Coptic community to appear in the Arabic language, and is lauded as such by the Director of the Coptic Museum in his preface to the work's recent reissue. In the original introduction to the work, Rūfīla ventures to label the history of the Copts virtually unknown, and casts his task as an urgent one: A community must know its history as it looks to the future. Indeed, he describes the principal motivation behind the work as love for the Copts as a 'race' (*jins*), and dedicates the book to the children of that 'race.' The history of the Copts is traced from the Tower of Babel and the heyday of the 'Pharaonic state,' through the Persian, Greek, Roman, and Muslim invasions and 'occupations' of Egypt, all the way to the visionary leadership of Cyril IV and the nineteenth-century 'return to existence' of the 'Coptic nation.'<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 303.

Rūfīla's exploration of the Ottoman period of 'Coptic history' merits particular attention, particularly in so far as it mirrors the distinctly gloomy Egyptian nationalist analyses of the Ottomans so usefully explored by Gabriel Piterberg.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, *Tārīkh al-Umma*'s chapter on the Ottomans opens in distinctly inauspicious fashion: "The condition of Egypt in Ottoman times was no better than it had been under the two Mamluk regimes, because the only concern of the rulers was siphoning money from the people in any way possible, without exception and without discrimination between Muslim and Christian."<sup>23</sup> The instability arising from this situation led, Rūfīla claims, to a situation in which Copts were vulnerable to the predations of Arab tribesmen, and he cites an incident of pillage in the heavily Christian town of Akhmīm to substantiate his point.<sup>24</sup>

Rūfīla emphasizes that particular Copts enjoyed the confidence of Muslim notables, due to their talents as administrators of property. Further, Coptic knowledge of astrology and soothsaying frequently made Christians influential within communities of the Nile Valley. Rūfīla notes, "The wise Muslims knew the importance of the Copts and their need for them, and thus appreciated and

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<sup>22</sup> Gabriel Piterberg, "The Tropes of Stagnation and Awakening in Nationalist Historical Consciousness: The Egyptian Case," in James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni, eds. *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 42-61. Piterberg mounts a fascinating exploration of 'adherence to Orientalist discourse' among such Egyptian historians as Shafiq Ghurbal, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, and Ahmad Izzat 'Abd al-Karīm.

<sup>23</sup> Rūfīla, *Tārīkh al-Ummah*, 261.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

protected them.”<sup>25</sup> A rise in the number of Catholic missionaries in Egypt during the eighteenth century led to initial stirrings of moral reform. Conversions divided families and ruined long-standing inheritance arrangements. Under such circumstances, strengthening the unity of the community and eliminating Muslim resentment required, on the part of privileged Copts, a renunciation of ostentation and pretension.<sup>26</sup> Rūfīla proceeds to devote attention to the ‘faithful’ Coptic servants of Egypt’s Mamluk rulers in the late eighteenth century — among such servants, Mu‘allim Rizq and Mu‘allim Ibrāhm al-Gaūhari. The former is depicted as a close confidant of ‘Ali Bey, while the latter would become chief scribe under ‘Ali’s successor, Murad Bey.

Ibrahim’s brother, Girgis, captures Rūfīla’s imagination much as Cyril IV will in subsequent passages — and this is due, above all, to the association of Girgis with the French Occupation. Indeed, Girgis had prepared a house for Napoleon’s use upon the latter’s arrival in Cairo — a service for which he was rewarded with a uniform and decorations. Rūfīla makes a point of explaining that the French dealt with Copts and Muslims on the basis of equality. Emblematic of this attitude was the *diwān* the French established to handle the administration of commerce, half of whose twelve members were Christian.<sup>27</sup> When the French faced attack from British and Ottoman forces, Rūfīla alleges that the Ottomans

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 265-266.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 288-289.

engaged in persecution of the Christians of Cairo. The Christians of Azbakiyya were protected by the Copt Y‘aqūb who, with a corps of Coptic soldiers he had recruited, saved the Patriarchate from destruction. Y‘aqūb was subsequently entrusted by General Kleber with the task of collecting the fine the French imposed upon those Muslims who had collaborated with the Ottoman forces.<sup>28</sup>

The ultimate expulsion of the French from Egypt, although lamented by Rūfīla, would not prove a catastrophe for the Copts, given the rise of Mehmed Ali Pasha. In Rūfīla’s words, when the Pasha “cleansed the country of corruption and rid Egypt of the rebellious Mamluks, he inaugurated a program of improvement.”<sup>29</sup> One Mu‘allim Ghali would play an instrumental role in assisting the Pasha to realize his ambitious program. Rūfīla credits Ghali with the idea of surveying the countryside for the purpose of enhancing revenue collection. Mehmed Ali and his successors would, generally speaking, enable all inhabitants of the Nile Valley, regardless of faith, “to contribute their efforts to the state according to their abilities.”<sup>30</sup>

Far and away the most scrutinized and lauded personality of the modern period in Rūfīla’s account is Patriarch Cyril IV. The remarks with which he concludes his description of Cyril’s life are emblematic of his attitude towards the Patriarch:

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 294-295.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 296-297.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 303-304.



He was a person of great energy, understanding, and wisdom, easily satisfied and quick to forgive. Highly respectful of his background as a monk, he preserved the fundamentals of the monastic life. He was most interested in meeting knowledgeable people, conversing and debating with them, and it was never difficult for him to admit mistakes, if he indeed was mistaken. One of his finest characteristics was his love for his flock, and his tirelessness in working for their welfare. If death had spared him a few more years, he would have achieved still greater aims.<sup>31</sup>

Rūfīla emphasizes that Cyril could not achieve all that he had wished to achieve, particularly in the realm of modern education — but that he viewed the schools he managed to establish as “stairs on which the Coptic nation would climb in the future to a position of greater stature among nations, and thus regain its ancient glory.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, he ventures to quote two remarks he claims to have heard the Patriarch make: “I am waiting with bated breath for the preparation of students in our schools to receive scientific knowledge, such as logic, which will expand the mind and enrich its matter” and “The transition from where we are, to where we should be, requires much work and pain, enough for a lifetime, the longevity of Noah and the patience of Job.”<sup>33</sup>

For all the Patriarch’s humility, he had, according to Rūfīla, provided the means for Copts to achieve lofty aspirations. To underscore the point, he suggests that, “At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Coptic nation had reached the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 318-319.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 320.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 320-321.

greatest depths of degradation. Ignorance and poverty had taken hold as a result of corruption in governance, as well as a succession of disasters and crises which, if they had afflicted a different nation, would have destroyed it completely.” Rūfīla continues, “If we consider the community’s current situation, and compare this with its situation as it existed at the beginning of the century, we find a huge difference, not only in terms of education (*tarbiya*), but further, in customs, manners, dress, and housing. The credit for all this is due to the fairness of the government, to education, and to witnessing and assimilating foreign ways.”<sup>34</sup> In short, according to Rūfīla, the Copts have at last achieved a sort of equality of opportunity. While, in the past, they had found themselves confined to particular professions — like those of scribe, farmer, or craftsman — now Copts ranked among Egypt’s greatest merchants, poets, physicians, pharmacists, judges, lawyers, and government administrators.

Among historians of the past half century, Samir Seikaly is hardly unique in having relied exclusively upon the writings of elite Copts like Simaika and Rūfīla to analyze the community and, in turn, woven an elitist narrative of Coptic cultural distinctiveness, ‘reform’ and ‘modernization.’<sup>35</sup> Subhi Labib has argued, in a

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 324-326.

<sup>35</sup> Among the texts upon which Seikaly relies, beyond those already mentioned, are Yusuf Manqariyus, *al-Qawl al-yaqīn fī masalat al-Aqbāt al-Urthudhuksyin* (Cairo: Matba‘at al-Watan, 1893) and Tawfīq Iskarus, *Nawābigh al-Aqbāt wa mashahiruhum fī al-qarn al-tāsia ‘ashar*, two volumes (Cairo: Matba‘at al-Tawfīq, 1910 and 1913).

comparable vein, that the quest for an abstract equality structured Coptic political action through the nineteenth century. In the 1983 article ‘The Copts in Egyptian Society and Politics,’ he explains:

During the rule of Sa‘id in 1855, there took place a decisive turning point toward equality between Muslims and their fellow citizens, the Copts: the abolition of the *jizya* — which represented the last burden of the typically Islamic *dhimma*- and *millet*-systems. The achievement of full rights of citizenship was ratified in 1855, and this created the very first precondition for any national action undertaken by the Egyptians, without regard to differences in religion. By this step Sa‘id created a new social pattern for the nation which could soon strike deep roots.<sup>36</sup>

Labib proceeds to claim that Khedive Ismā‘īl, through his decision to convene the Chamber of Deputies, “set in motion a movement that fought inexorably for a constitutional and responsible government.”<sup>37</sup> But responsible to whom exactly? To landowners? Perhaps. But to the ‘backward’ peasants who sought only to escape their ‘responsibilities’ to the Egyptian state, whether extracted through conscription, taxation, or forced labor? Not at all.

While recent scholarship in English on the nineteenth-century Copts has remained largely limited to articles and book chapters like those of Seikaly and Labib, scholars writing in Arabic during the past half century have produced book-

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<sup>36</sup> Subhi Labib, “The Copts in Egyptian Society and Politics, 1882-1919,” in Gabriel R. Warburg and Uri M. Kupferschmidt, eds. *Islam, Nationalism, and Radicalism in Egypt and the Sudan* (New York: Praeger, 1983), 301.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

length and, indeed, multi-volume studies of the subject. Yet, like their counterparts writing in English, scholars writing in Arabic have failed to offer a critical perspective on the ‘awakening narrative’ as described above. Rather, they have contributed to the hegemony of that narrative, by all too faithfully conforming to the contours of argument pursued by Simaika and Rūfīla.

The monumental work of Irīs Habīb al-Masri is a case in point. Her nine-volume history of the Coptic Church, *Qissat al-Kanīsa al-Qibtiyya*, remains by far the most detailed study of Coptic history to have emerged in print.<sup>38</sup> After studying psychology in London, al-Masri began her career as a teacher in Zamalek. However, she soon became heavily involved in the service of the Coptic Orthodox Church, acting as secretary to Patriarch Yūsāb II. Her access to the libraries and archives of the Church, both at the Patriarchate and in individual churches and monasteries, permitted her to pursue an interest in Coptic history in unprecedented fashion. The celebration of nineteen centuries of Egyptian Christianity in 1968 drove this research forward, prompting her to survey libraries and archives not in Egypt, but in England, France, and the United States as well. Ultimately, she came to teach Church history both at the Institute for Coptic Studies in Cairo and at the Coptic clerical college, until her death in 1994.

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<sup>38</sup> Irīs Habīb al-Masri, *Qissat al-Kanīsa al-Qibtiyya* (Alexandria: Maktabat Kanīsat Mari Girgis, 1975). All translations from this text are my own.

As in the works of Seikaly, Simaika, and Rūfla, al-Masri depicts the tenure of Cyril IV as nothing less than pivotal in the modern history of the Church. Great emphasis is given to the notion that Cyril was ‘ahead of his time,’ particularly in so far as his educational experiments were concerned. On this score, al-Masri points to the fact that children of all faiths were admitted to Cyril’s schools; that no tuition fees were charged; and that he championed female education.<sup>39</sup> Further, she points to the fortuitous coincidence of Cyril’s tenure as Patriarch with Sa‘īd’s tenure as Egypt’s Pasha: The constraints Sa‘īd’s predecessor, ‘Abbās, had imposed upon Coptic worship, particularly in the area of church construction and renovation, were apparently eliminated.<sup>40</sup>

According to al-Masri, Cyril was entirely committed to the notion of Copts as equal citizens rather than protected persons of the Book. She ventures to claim that, when Cyril read of the Sultan’s February 1856 decree mandating equality for non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, he insisted that Sa‘īd Pasha permit the unfettered admission of Copts to government higher education. In response to the allegation leveled at Cyril by English sources, that he opposed the conscription of Copts, she proffers a quotation from the man himself: “God forbid that I should be such a coward, one who does not know the value of citizenship, or who would deny the sons of this country the opportunity to express their love of country by serving

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., vol. IV, 318.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., vol. IV, 319.

and defending it. That is not why I am here. I am here to ask for equal rights and equal responsibilities for the Copts.”<sup>41</sup>

Riyad Sūryāl’s *Al-Mujtama al-Qibti fī Misr fī al-Qarn 19*, despite an exclusive focus upon the period in question, has little to offer in terms of reinterpretation of the existing Arabic sources, or reconceptualization of the dominant ‘awakening narrative.’ Once again, 1854 and the accession of Cyril to the Patriarchal seat become a turning point. According to Sūryāl, from 1854 onward, the Coptic Church extended its concerns well beyond elementary shepherding by priests and basic instruction in the principles of Christianity, arithmetic, and Arabic. Due to Cyril’s influence, church construction and theological exploration grew apace.<sup>42</sup>

### **An Overview**

This pervasive reliance upon the ‘awakening narrative’ has forestalled among historians questions I want to explore. Indeed, I would argue that the Enlightenment paradigm Coptic historians have uncritically accepted from Simaika and Rūfīla — with a necessarily attendant disdain for the ‘lower orders’ of the community, afflicted with ‘backward’ and ‘offensive’ customs — has forestalled all possible research agendas focused upon questions of power. Specifically, how

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., vol. IV, 335.

<sup>42</sup> Riyad Sūryāl, *Al-Mujtama al-Qibti fī Misr fī al-Qarn 19* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Mahabba, 1984), 115.

were technologies of power like the modern school adapted to an Egyptian context, and subsequently, resisted by those whose ‘subjectivity’ the technologies were intended to influence?

The Coptic ‘awakening,’ of which Cyril is emblematic, and Muslim ‘awakening,’ of which Muhammad ‘Abduh is emblematic, both involve marginalizing the ‘superstitious’ practitioners of popular forms of faith, the faith of the common people. In this context, one might recall Ong’s observation, “The fact that oral peoples commonly and in all likelihood universally consider words to have magical potency is clearly tied in, at least unconsciously, with their sense of the word as necessarily spoken, sounded, and hence power-driven.”<sup>43</sup> What Cyril and ‘Abduh were urging, largely by means of ‘modern’ education, was an understanding of the text, whether the Bible or the Quran, in the place of a blind reverence for the dictates of men claiming holiness. By ‘modernizing’ faith along these lines, Cyril and ‘Abduh were domesticating faith — that is, making faith, in a sense, predictable. As long as faith was a matter of ‘superstition,’ there was no way to bring faith under control. The faith of Cyril and ‘Abduh is the faith of the textbook — a faith of inwardness, a faith concerned with individual examination of conscience, a faith authorized from above rather than below.

However, ‘Abduh, Cyril, and their textualizing impulses had not emerged in a vacuum. This dissertation endeavors to expose what had made these textualizing

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<sup>43</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 32.

impulses so urgent in the course of the nineteenth century, by exploring moments in Egyptian educational history that have hitherto attracted little attention among scholars. Often these are moments of contestation as to both the methods and the purposes of education. Indeed, I would venture to suggest that nineteenth-century Egypt was the scene of a sort of epistemological warfare — and, in these pages, I will chronicle important battles in this war between two forms of knowledge, one spoken, one written.

My point of departure in the dissertation is the British and Foreign School Society, or BFSS. The BFSS was the outgrowth of Joseph Lancaster's efforts at spreading the method of education he pioneered, the monitorial system, throughout the British Isles and, ultimately, the world. Chapter Two examines the origins of the system, and how both evangelical and utilitarian intellectuals of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century England came to view the BFSS as a means by which to spread the values of industry, discipline, and order.

The BFSS is emblematic of the social reform projects which emerged in England as responses to the challenges of the French Revolution and rapid urbanization. Across the political spectrum in the English elite, 'improving' the morals of the lower orders of English society was thought critical to preserving political and social stability. But what is important about the BFSS, as far as Egypt is concerned? The aspirations of the organization were determinedly universal, cutting across perceived barriers of race, just as they cut across perceived barriers



of class at home. Specifically, in bringing the ‘light of the Gospel’ to the ‘heathen shrouded in darkness,’ Christian missionaries found the educational methods of the BFSS most expedient.

When exploring Enlightenment discourses of educational and social reform, intellectual and cultural historians have often privileged consideration of utilitarian reformers of secular mind, over that of their evangelical counterparts.<sup>44</sup>

Specifically, although mission historians have paid a great deal of attention to the role of disciplinary and educational institutions in evangelism, intellectual and cultural historians have often neglected the distinctly evangelical origins of the modern prison and school.<sup>45</sup> This dissertation suggests that to separate nineteenth-century educational and social reform from evangelism is mistaken — that is to say, English educational and social reform projects of the nineteenth century were, for the most part, driven by an evangelical agenda. If one is to step beyond the realm of the Enlightenment theorist into that of the actual practitioner of

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<sup>44</sup> As Dorinda Outram has suggested, perhaps the principal culprit on this score is Peter Gay, “who significantly subtitles one volume of his synthetic study of the Enlightenment as the ‘rise of modern paganism.’” Refer to Outram’s *Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 31. An important recent exception to this trend is Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann, eds. *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>45</sup> For instance, in his recent sourcebook and reader on the Enlightenment, Paul Hyland selects passages from the works of David Hume, the Marchese di Beccaria, Immanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham, and the Marquis de Sade as emblematic of Enlightenment thought on ‘moral principles and punishments.’ Refer to Paul Hyland, ed. *The Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 2003), 209-232.

educational reform, one must come to terms with the role of faith in reform — because the practitioners were, in the vast majority of cases, ardent believers, whose entire purpose in implementing reform was to advance the cause of the faith, as they understood that faith.

The aim of the evangelical missionary enterprise was to integrate all the peoples of the world into the Lord's dominion, and becoming part of that dominion entailed subjecting oneself to constant moral scrutiny. Monitorial schools were a means by which to ensure such self-examination. In short, missionaries seized upon monitorial schools because their aims were parallel to those of educational reformers at home. Where home reformers aimed at the normalization of the body of English political subjects, the development of the English 'social body,' missionary reformers aimed at the normalization of the body of God's children.

Again, where is Egypt in all this? As in England, faith became the idiom through which Egyptian educational reform projects were justified. The ethos of monitorialism, rooted in industry, discipline, and order, was embraced by Coptic and Muslim educationalists alike, who sought a means by which to inculcate such values. Such was the legacy of a dedicated cadre of European and Ottoman educationalists — mesmerized by English ideals of moral improvement — of whom John Lieder and Joseph Hekekyan were emblematic. They are the subject of Chapters Four through Six. Lieder was a missionary of the English Church Missionary Society, who viewed the Coptic Church as a conduit through which to

channel evangelical notions of industry, discipline, and order into Egypt at large. As head of the Būlāq School of Engineers, Hekekyan was at the forefront of educational reform in Mehmed Ali's administration.

Shortly after his arrival in Egypt in 1825, the Reverend Lieder founded a school embracing the monitorial or 'Lancastrian' methods of the BFSS that would, ultimately, attract the attention and praise of the nascent Egyptian state. Upon a visit to the mission in December 1839, the Minister of Public Instruction "explained in the Boys' Day School to his other companions the superiority of the Lancastrian System, imitating and ridiculing the manner of teaching used in the Muhammedan schools of the country."<sup>46</sup> By March 1840, he had founded both a Lancaster school and an infant school in Cairo. Nearly a year later, Lieder reported that the principal master of the Lancaster school "often visits us and our schools to see our management and gain our experience, when we give him all the aid in our power."<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, such events find no place in accounts of Egyptian educational history — not in J. Heyworth-Dunne's magisterial *Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, not in Gregory Starrett's *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt*, and perhaps most shockingly, not in Timothy Mitchell's *Colonising Egypt*, the text through

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<sup>46</sup> Archives of the Church Missionary Society, University of Birmingham, UK, Lieder to the Secretaries, 13 March 1840, C M/O 48/30.

<sup>47</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 20 January 1841, C M/M 8.

which most Middle East scholars were introduced to the whole concept of the Lancaster school.<sup>48</sup>

Sent at age ten to England to pursue his education, Hekekyan soon found himself under the guardianship of Mehmed Ali, Egypt's Ottoman *vali*, who insisted that the Armenian, like several young students dispatched to Paris, come to Egypt to help him realize ambitious reform aims in such fields as the military, agriculture, industry, and education. To this point, Hekekyan's papers have attracted the attention of political, social, and cultural historians of Egypt, who have extracted details from his exhaustive journals about such varied matters as the personnel of Mehmed Ali's administration, the structure of educational institutions the viceroy developed, and the status of women in nineteenth-century Egypt.<sup>49</sup> Ranging in subject from hydraulic engineering to ancient Egyptian chronology to the moral status of prostitution, ranging in tone from the abstract and esoteric to the impassioned and personal, and indeed ranging in language from English and

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<sup>48</sup> J. Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, reprint of 1939 edition (London: Frank Cass, 1968); Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

<sup>49</sup> Among such historians are Helen A. B. Rivlin, *The Agricultural Policy of Muhammad Ali in Egypt* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1961); F. Robert Hunter, *Egypt Under the Khedives, 1805-1879: From Household Government to Modern Bureaucracy* (Pittsburgh, 1984); and Ehud Toledano, *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Perhaps the only historian who has approached Hekekyan in holistic fashion is Ahmed 'Abd al-Rahim Mustafa, "The Hekekyan Papers," in P. M. Holt, ed. *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt* (London, 1968).

French, to Armenian and Ottoman Turkish, to Greek and Arabic, Hekekyan's writings expose facets of life in the nineteenth-century Ottoman world that have long remained beyond historians' grasp. However, this sort of academic scavenging has left Hekekyan himself little understood by historians, who have viewed him only as a useful 'native' informant — and an English-speaking one at that.

Although, by the 1840s, the two men would observe the dismantling of the educational infrastructure they had helped to build, the reform measures Lieder and Hekekyan had proposed in their respective spheres would ultimately find an advocate in Coptic Patriarch Cyril IV. Upon his accession in 1854, Cyril mounted a campaign that echoed the concerns the two reformers had raised, and employed the techniques they had endorsed. The principal element in that campaign was the Great Coptic School, which commenced instruction in 1855.

Chapter Eight introduces a vital caveat into this account of the rise of 'modern' schools in Egypt — that subalterns were not mere passive receptacles for the values such schools sought to transmit. Writing the history of institutions of power — schools, hospitals, prisons — must involve a step beyond merely recapitulating the internal logic of such institutions.<sup>50</sup> Gregory Starrett and Khaled Fahmy have made that critical step, attempting to write the history of Egyptian

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<sup>50</sup> On this point, refer to Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

schools and hospitals not from the point of view of the institutions or of the state, but from the points of view of students and patients respectively.<sup>51</sup> Further, they have demonstrated how Egyptians deployed the techniques of such institutions to defend themselves against and, at times, attack the state.<sup>52</sup>

In short, historians employing Foucauldian frameworks must avoid becoming seduced by just the discipline and order whose genealogy they seek to expose. They cannot allow themselves to assume that the blueprints for networks of power were consistently acted upon in uniform fashion. Chapter Eight makes the case that Upper Egyptian peasants made good use of American educators in Upper Egypt, for purposes unforeseen by the latter. The chapter focuses upon the cases of peasant children, whose attendance at mission schools in Asyūt resulted in exemption from forced labor. Coptic peasants, like missionaries and state officials, were parties to a *cultural negotiation*, in which emerging institutions were molded, and existing ones, remolded — in which modernity was manipulated, and tradition, invented.

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<sup>51</sup> Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*; Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>52</sup> Starrett and Fahmy have seized upon a frequently neglected strain of Foucault's thought — the enormously productive capacity of power. Focusing upon subaltern resistance to state projects rather than subaltern appropriation and manipulation of state projects tends to obscure the 'politics of everyday life' — a notion brilliantly explored by Stephen Kotkin in his *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). As Kotkin notes at 21-22 of the work, "One resists, without necessarily rejecting, by assessing, making tolerable, and, in some cases, even turning to one's advantage the situation one is confronted with."

The dissertation concludes with a discussion of the late-nineteenth-century elite's ambivalence and apprehension about the Egyptian masses — ambivalence and apprehension that Lieder and Hekekyan had expressed in the 1820s. Both Coptic and Muslim landowners undertook to eliminate the 'backward' and 'offensive' customs of subalterns through education — in the case of the Copts, through the Tawfīq Society, founded at Cairo in 1891. Although the Society constructed hospitals and orphanages, the preponderance of Tawfīq resources were committed to schools. As in England, the ostensible purpose of reform efforts like Tawfīq was to discipline the body of God's children. Nonetheless, Coptic and Muslim landowners alike were keenly aware, like their counterparts in the upper strata of English society, that 'modern' schools could yield a docile body of Egyptian political subjects.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Education for Integration: The Evangelical Effort to Discipline the Lord's Dominion**

#### **The Blind Leading the Blind**

The behaviour of the congregation during the services, is in general very irreverent, the people often talking together, laughing and moving about; the conduct of the priests is, also, frequently the opposite of solemn; this is not surprising, considering the tedious length of services performed, and in so rapid, listless, and formal a manner, as to be early unintelligible to the people, and little calculated either to instruct the head, or improve the heart.

In several particulars of their religious customs, the Copts appear to have imitated the Jews and the Moslems. They are enjoined by their Church to pray in private seven times in the twenty-four hours; they recite in their prayers portions of the Psalms in Arabic, and of a chapter of one of the Gospels; after which they say, in Coptic or Arabic, 'Oh, my Lord, have mercy,' forty-one times, some using a string of forty-one beads, — others counting by their fingers; then they add a short prayer in Coptic, or the Lord's prayer.

This rule of the Church is, however, only observed with any degree of strictness by a minority of the people; they are often seen repeating their prayers when walking, riding, or engaged in their ordinary vocations, and muttering them rapidly over, without the slightest appearance of devotion. They are thus taught to consider the act of praying as mere machines, the service of the lip without any participation of the heart or the understanding, to be all that is required from his rational creatures by an infinitely intelligent and loving Creator.

— An 1849 Deputation of the Malta Protestant College,  
on the State of Coptic Worship<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of a Deputation Sent to the East by the Committee of the Malta Protestant College, in 1849: Containing an Account of the Present State of the Oriental Nations, Including Their Religion, Learning, Education, Customs, and*



During missionary tours of Egypt in the late 1820s, the Reverend Lieder formed a distinctly negative impression of the state of education among Coptic Christians. In his journals, he came to the stark conclusion, “I can scarcely leave any School of the Copts without being greatly afflicted at the excessive rudeness both of the boys and adults.”<sup>2</sup> In this vein, a deputation from the Malta Protestant College would subsequently explain, “The instruction in the schools is conducted by ignorant teachers, and consists in a mechanical exercise of the memory, without any cultivation of the other mental faculties. The consequence is, that the people mostly repeat the Scriptures, without understanding them, and have only a superficial knowledge of other subjects.”<sup>3</sup>

However, there was a particular feature of the Coptic *kuttāb*, or village school, that troubled Lieder to no end. Virtually all the ‘*arīfs*’ — the ‘schoolmasters,’ as he labeled them — were blind.<sup>4</sup> The missionary was utterly bewildered. In June 1827, during an itineration through the Fayyūm, Lieder engaged in a debate on the subject with a priest of Medina, by the name of Gabriel. Upon visiting the two Coptic *kuttābs* of Medina, Lieder informed Gabriel “that it is

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*Occupations: With Outlines of Their Ecclesiastical and Political History; of the Rise and Decay of Knowledge Among Them; and of the Doctrines and Discipline of the Ancient Christian Churches*, Part I (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1854), 20.

<sup>2</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder Journal of Delta Itineration, 29 July 1829, C M/M 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of a Deputation*, 23.

<sup>4</sup> William Jowett, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean* (London, 1822), 161.

almost unpardonable to employ a blind man as schoolmaster.” The account of the dialogue and the conclusions Lieder reached as to *kuttāb* learning warrant citation at length:

I asked him [Abuna Gabriel], if it would not be possible to establish better schools, without delay? He answered, that he could do nothing before he had the approbation of Abuna Uskuf (our father the Bishop), but that he would speak with him about it as soon as he returns to Medineh. In the second school the master has not quite lost his eyes, but his children learn only as in the former, by heart, chiefly from want of books. I promised to come again and to give each boy who wishes to learn to read, a little book, gratis. The want of books is the first cause of the bad state of the schools in the East, but which I hope will soon vanish by the help of the Benevolent Bible and Tract Societies.<sup>5</sup>

Lieder was convinced that the problem was merely a lack of books. If the children in the Coptic *kuttābs* had access to printed texts, the blind ‘*arīf*’ phenomenon and the practice of recitation — mere ‘rote’ learning — would surely vanish. Yet, was the nature of learning in the Coptic *kuttāb*, focused upon recitation, a function of a lack of books?

The degree of comment the phenomenon of the blind Coptic ‘*arīf*’ attracts, speaks not to a lack of books, but to the forms of knowledge Copts valued. Travelers’ and missionaries’ accounts indicate that Coptic *kuttābs* differed little in their approach to learning from Muslim *kuttābs* — that the forms of knowledge

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<sup>5</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder Journal of Faioum Itineration, 2 June 1827, C M/O 73/13. Emphasis in the original.

Copts valued were comparable to the forms of knowledge Muslims valued. In short, the evidence indicates that recitation was the cornerstone of an approach to learning Christians and Muslims held in common.

In this chapter and the next, I will examine traveler and missionary accounts in a distinctly anthropological spirit — that is to say, with an eye to the vastly contrasting forms of knowledge, and means for the transmission of knowledge, that nineteenth-century Protestant evangelicals and Orthodox Copts valued. To my mind, the volume of comment the phenomenon of the blind Coptic ‘*arīf*’ attracts in the Western accounts, speaks not to a lack of books — or, for that matter, to the spiritual ‘darkness’ of the Copts, frequently referenced by nineteenth-century evangelicals — but, rather, to the importance of the spoken rather than written word in the nineteenth-century Coptic community as a means for the transmission of sacred knowledge. Here, I will begin this examination with a close reading of the reform plans of evangelical educationalists, with the aim of suggesting how an emphasis upon literacy as the only ‘route to enlightenment’ could lead to the destruction of forms of knowledge and authority that had prevailed among nineteenth-century Coptic peasants — a process I will discuss in ensuing chapters.

### **The Historiography of Christian Mission to the Middle East**

Perhaps the best known discussion of Western missionary efforts in the Middle East is that offered by George Antonius in *The Arab Awakening*. Antonius

explicitly identifies French and American missionaries as “the foster-parents of the Arab resurrection.”<sup>6</sup> He laments the ‘degeneracy’ of eighteenth-century literary Arabic and the lack of familiarity with classical Arabic literature that characterized the time: “The patterns of literary expression were lost and the spiritual influence of a great culture removed.”<sup>7</sup> However, with the 1820 arrival of a Presbyterian mission in Beirut — dispatched by the American Board of Commission for Foreign Missions — recovery of the ‘lost inheritance’ was, according to Antonius, at last within reach.<sup>8</sup> The American presence led to a revitalization of education ‘consonant with the traditions of the people’ and the installation of a printing press. Antonius claims that such measures had a decisive influence upon Arabs’ notion of their identity, for the Americans “gave the pride of place to Arabic.” In the words of his renowned conclusion, “because of that, the intellectual effervescence which marked the first stirrings of the Arab revival owes most to their labours.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1969), 35.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>8</sup> At page 37, Antonius links the ferment of mission work at the time — the mid-1830s, in particular — to a rivalry between Jesuits and Presbyterians for converts.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-43. In the historiography on Christian mission to India, there exists a nearly identical narrative, frequently linked to the Bengali reformer Rammohun Roy. Consider, for example, T. Thomas, “Foreign Missions and Missionaries in Victorian Britain,” in John Wolffe, ed. *Religion in Victorian Britain: Culture and Empire*, volume V (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997). For a critical view of Rammohun Roy and the mission-reform link, refer to Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). For his part, Max Warren chronicles the ‘catalytic’ effect of missions not merely in India and the Middle East, but indeed

Albert Hourani, through his *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, and Elie Kedourie, through his essays ‘Minorities’ and ‘Religion and Politics’ in *The Chatham House Version*, offer comparable insights into the legacy of Christian mission in the region. Hourani speaks of Christian communities ‘strengthened’ by missions, particularly given the educational opportunities they offered: “there sprang a group of educated men aware of the new world of Europe and indeed in some sense a part of it.” The Maronite priesthood was infused not only with an appreciation for European culture, but with a greater knowledge of Oriental languages and antiquities by Catholic missionaries. Notably, through mission, Maronites were educated as to the roots of the traditions their sect had preserved through the ages. They were afforded, at last, an appreciation of their history, a notion of their legacy.<sup>10</sup> Further, in his discussion of the Lebanese journalist, Farah Antun, Hourani identifies a purportedly unprecedented expression of political consciousness among Arab Christians — one to which Western missionaries had contributed a great deal.<sup>11</sup>

Kedourie displays still greater passion in his discussion of the impact of American missionaries upon the Armenian community: “Salvation by grace alone,

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throughout the world, in *The Missionary Movement from Britain in Modern History* (London: SCM Press, 1965) and *Social History and Christian Mission* (London: SCM Press, 1967).

<sup>10</sup> Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 55.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

without the deeds of the law: the implications of the doctrine are as exhilarating as they are dangerous.” Dangerous to whom? To the hierarchy of the Armenian Orthodox Church, as Kedourie continues: “within the Orthodox community itself, parties of ‘Enlightened’ and ‘Reactionaries’ were formed. After a while, the ‘Enlightened,’ as is proper, won and reorganised the government of the Armenian community.”<sup>12</sup> No longer could the *millet* system suffice, no longer could ecclesiastical authorities retain political power, declared the generation of Armenian youth ‘enlightened’ in mission schools. According to Kedourie, efforts at mission undertaken by Russia, through the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, among the Greek Orthodox of Palestine had just such a result:

A new generation grew up, bitter at the pitiful spectacle of their community, resentful of the corrupt hierarchy which ruled them, contemptuous of their spiritual directors and convinced that only a radical parting with tradition would ameliorate their condition. Tradition was mute or gave a hateful sound; and therefore abstract principles, brought to them by missionaries and educators, had to replace and do the work of tradition.<sup>13</sup>

Such depictions of the legacy of mission are problematic, not least because they tend to imply that ‘the natives’ were mere passive receptacles for missionaries’

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<sup>12</sup> Elie Kedourie, *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle-Eastern Studies* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), 289.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 330. The Tsar had intended the Palestine Society to address the needs of Russian pilgrims to the Holy Land through hostels and hospitals. Nevertheless, by the late 1880s, the Society had established teachers’ colleges for the local Orthodox community. In 1912, thirty years after the foundation of the Society, there were eleven thousand ‘native’ students in the roughly one hundred Society schools.

‘modern’ values. In a starkly different vein, several historians and anthropologists, particularly Africanists, have lumped missionaries together, in analyses of colonial projects, with a relatively undifferentiated mass of ‘colonizers.’ One can find perhaps the foremost instance of such an approach in T. O. Beidelman’s influential work, *Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots*. According to Beidelman, “Although all colonial organizations display similar characteristics, missions are the quintessential example; they aim at the most far-reaching domination, attacking the most deeply held traditional beliefs and values as well as economic and political forms.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> T. O. Beidelman, *Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 29. Equally influential in this vein are V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), and Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, Volume One (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1991). Further, missionaries play a critical role in Catherine Hall’s recent *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2002). For contrasting, relatively sanguine views as to the links between mission and empire, refer to Andrew Porter, ed. *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880-1914* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003) and Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004). The latter is the only recent text, penned by an academic, which looks at the history of Protestant missions in an explicitly comparative, holistic fashion — as opposed to focusing upon a particular case study. Indeed, Porter is a prolific critic of those who would dismiss missionaries as colonizers. On this particular point, refer to his “‘Cultural Imperialism’ and Protestant Missionary Enterprise, 1780-1914,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 25, 3 (September 1997), 367-391 and “Religion, Missionary Enthusiasm, and Empire,” in Andrew Porter, ed. *The Oxford*

There is little doubt in my mind that evangelical missionaries dispatched to the nineteenth-century Middle East were ‘colonizers,’ but only in a quite specific sense.<sup>15</sup> My view of ‘missionary colonialism’ is akin to that developed by Brett Christophers in his recently published analysis of Anglican missionary activity in nineteenth-century British Columbia. As Christophers explains, “Indigenous peoples were not consigned to a prehistory equated with savagery. Instead, Anglican missionaries invoked a single history that bound God’s children

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*History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Ussama Makdisi is one of the few Middle East historians who has drawn attention to the role of Christian missionaries in Arab social and cultural life, but rejected the laudatory tone of Antonius, Hourani, and Kedourie. Consider his “Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity,” *American Historical Review* 102, 3 (June 1997), 680-713 and *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). For comparative purposes, refer to such recent scholarship as Carole Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls: The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America, 1632-1650* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000); C. L. Higham, *Noble, Wretched, and Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000); Sue Peabody, “‘A Dangerous Zeal’: Catholic Missions to Slaves in the French Antilles, 1635-1800,” *French Historical Studies* 25, 1 (Winter 2002), 53-90; J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Philipp Prein, “Mission to Arcadia: The Moravian Invention of an African Missionary Object as an Example of the Culture of German Nationalism and Colonialism,” *German History* 16, 3 (1998), 328-357; Sara H. Sohmer, “Christianity Without Civilization: Anglican Sources for an Alternative Nineteenth-Century Mission Methodology,” *Journal of Religious History* 18, 2 (December 1994), 174-197; and Keith R. Widder, *Battle for the Soul: Métis Children Encounter Evangelical Protestants at Mackinaw Mission, 1823-1837* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999).



together.”<sup>16</sup> He continues, “If the mission enterprise was successful, Christianity would dominate and assimilate the heathen world it deemed other. This otherness, identified as savagery, legitimated empire but would not survive its fruition. The Other was a temporary break in the Same, a moment in its imperial history.”<sup>17</sup> To employ Christophers’ terms, the point was to eliminate the temporary break in that single history that bound God’s children together.<sup>18</sup> Missionary colonialism, in contrast to, say, the colonialism of the settler or the administrator, aimed at incorporation of the heathen through domestication, rather than separation.

This domestication was not possible without text. According to evangelical rhetoric, freedom to read the Scriptures and the right of private judgment were vital. Brian Stanley captures the point succinctly: “Evangelical Christians saw conversion as an intense drama culminating in conviction of sin and a free and

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<sup>16</sup> Brett Christophers, *Positioning the Missionary: John Booth Good and the Confluence of Cultures in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998), 32-33.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Hefner captures the notion succinctly in his “Introduction: World Building and the Rationality of Conversion,” in Robert W. Hefner, ed. *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). At page 30, he explains, “The hallmark of the world religions — or, again, of their most successfully institutionalized core variants — is their subordination of local spirits, dialects, customs, and territory to a higher spiritual cosmology. They declare the superiority of God or gods over low spirits, scriptural Word over local babble, transregional clerics over local curers, and a Holy Land or lands over local territory. Their world rejection, then, is of worldly consequence. It relativizes everyday reality by proclaiming that the new religion stands above local custom or community.”

conscious choice by the individual (albeit under the persuasive influence of the Holy Spirit) to yield his or her sphere of individual sovereignty to the lordship of Christ.”<sup>19</sup> Christians had to think for themselves; the mediation of Scriptural truth by a corrupt clergy, as in the case of the Copts, was an abomination.

However, the evangelicals would not, in fact, forsake all such mediation. Consider the words of William Jowett, Lieder’s predecessor as Church Missionary Society representative in Egypt. In *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean*, the blueprint for the CMS Mediterranean Mission William Jowett penned, he explained: “The circulation of the Holy Scriptures, to the greatest possible extent, is perhaps the most efficient measure which can be adopted, in the present circumstances of the Mediterranean Churches, for the promotion of the Society’s objects.”<sup>20</sup> In lands permeated by the text of the Scriptures, he continued, “the Christian Missionary may converse with unspeakable advantage: Controversy he may decline, on the authority of St. Paul in his Epistles to Timothy: Love he may claim and cherish, receive and communicate, on the authority of Christ himself.”<sup>21</sup>

The right of private judgment was an illusion, after all, for missionaries developed subtle techniques of interpretative control. Jowett himself had acknowledged that there existed limits to the purported right: “Liberty of private

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<sup>19</sup> Brian Stanley, “Christian Missions and the Enlightenment: A Reevaluation,” in Brian Stanley, ed. *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 14.

<sup>20</sup> Jowett, *Christian Researches*, 293.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

judgment must be had, as the only proper foundation of sincere piety; and it must be accompanied by a spirit of subjection to Authorities, divine and human, as the proper fruit of piety.”<sup>22</sup> The dilemma that faced the missionaries was, how to inculcate that spirit of subjection — how to establish their authority.

On this point, of particular interest in *Christian Researches* is the depiction of ‘the Introduction of Christianity into the World’ — the model for mission efforts contemporary Christian societies must emulate, according to Jowett.<sup>23</sup> At the dawn of the Christian era, the spread of Christianity was effected *without force*. Christianity spoke to men *as individuals in secret*. Revealed to them was a Kingdom *invisible and eternal*. Although men were required to think for themselves, Christianity imposed constraints upon such liberty. Jowett emphasizes that self-control is vital: “With the acquisition of Knowledge, a feeling of Liberty enters the breast of man; but, depraved as we are, we have reason to fear the blessing, unless it be accompanied with due restraints. These restraints are plainly described in the Scriptures; and should no less plainly appear in the conversation and deportment of a Christian.”<sup>24</sup> The stated aim of mission was conversion of the individual to Christianity — but for the nineteenth-century evangelical, Christianity

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 295.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 283-284.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 282.

was industry and discipline, Christianity *was* order.<sup>25</sup> The Lord had created a world of order, and to work with industry and discipline was to adhere to the plan of the Lord for Creation. The account of the model missionary Jowett develops in *Christian Researches* reveals the importance of such values for the evangelical. Under ideal circumstances, the missionary was to act as an instrument in the hands of the Lord:

Some persons content themselves with doing precisely what they are set to do, and no more. This temper of mind, so far as it reaches, is an invaluable requisite, in all who serve in the work of Missions; for the success of which, subordination and diligence are indispensable virtues: nor can the most brilliant genius exempt the Christian Labourer from the duty of exercising them. Labour is his lot, and his designation. *In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips — and, we may add, the mere excursions of the Imagination — tend only to penury.*<sup>26</sup>

However, to grasp the missionaries' worldview, and the techniques they would employ to spread that worldview, one has to step back to the context from which missionaries like Jowett had emerged, in late-eighteenth-century England.

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<sup>25</sup> For a general account of the emergence of industry, discipline, and order as values in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, refer to Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>26</sup> Jowett, *Christian Researches*, 394. Emphasis in the original.

## Malingering Servants

In speaking of conformity to the will of God, we must not omit to mark the duty of HOLY RESIGNATION. Acquiescence in God's appointments, and submission to his afflictive dispensations, constitute a considerable part of evangelical obedience. When we suffer in a right spirit, we serve. It is indeed passive obedience: but if it be from the heart, it is not less acceptable than active exertion. In truth, this obedience of submission implies a very high degree of active grace within; keeping down the spirit of rebellion, discontent, and dissatisfaction; silencing every murmur, every sigh, and every wish, that is at variance with the good and wise and holy will of our Heavenly Father.

— William Jowett<sup>27</sup>

In 1787, Mrs. Sarah Trimmer, founder of a Sunday School at Brentford, published *The Economy of Charity*, subtitled *An Address to Ladies Concerning Sunday-Schools*. A concern with the insubordination of servants was becoming pervasive among the upper strata of English society in the late eighteenth century, and Trimmer was convinced that a lack of proper education was responsible for the lamentable state of affairs. She noted, “It is a general complaint that domestic servants are not attached to their masters and mistresses, but act towards them from selfish and mercenary motives; and that no confidence is to be placed in the lower kinds of labourers and workmen.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Helps to Pastoral Visitation: In Three Parts, Illustrating the Spiritual Intercourse of a Minister With His Flock* (London: Seeley, Burnside, and Seeley, 1844), 50-51.

<sup>28</sup> Mrs. Sarah Trimmer, *The Oeconomy of Charity; or, An Address to Ladies Concerning Sunday-Schools; the Establishment of Schools of Industry under*

Further, according to Trimmer, the utter vulgarity of the lower ranks of society literally erected a communication barrier between servants and their employers: The language of the former was all but unintelligible to the latter. In his autobiography, Francis Place, a prominent advocate of monitorialism, captures the sense of revulsion of the upper strata at the state of the capital.<sup>29</sup> Of the stretch between the statue at Charing Cross and the head of Parliament Street, Place remarks, “The manner in which many of the drunken filthy young prostitutes behaved is not describable nor would it be believed if it were described.”<sup>30</sup> Particularly offensive to Place was the fact that “children were permitted to run about their filthy streets, to hear all sorts of bad language and to mix with whomsoever they pleased.”<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps of greater importance, however, was the lack of understanding on the part of lower ranks as to their proper duties and station in life. In a subsequent edition of *The Economy of Charity*, Trimmer explained:

In appointing different ranks among mankind, our all-wise and beneficent Creator undoubtedly intended the good of the whole; rich and poor, high and low are the work of his hand; they are equally the objects of his providential care, and he had made their happiness and

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*Female Inspection; and the Distribution of Voluntary Benefactions* (London: T. Bensley, 1787), 26-27.

<sup>29</sup> For the contours of urbanization, refer to Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> Francis Place, *The Autobiography of Francis Place (1771-1854)*, ed. Mary Thale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 228.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

welfare to depend in a great measure on a mutual interchange of good offices, by appointing to each condition in life appropriate and relative duties; — to all in superior stations justice, humanity, condescension, and charity; to the poor, honesty, sobriety, diligence, humility and gratitude.<sup>32</sup>

This 1801 edition of her work was quite specific as to the dangers inherent in the lack of education for the poor: Nothing less than public safety depended upon wresting poor children away from morally corrupt parents. One can scarcely overstate the importance of home and family in the evangelical worldview: Parents were held responsible for the behavior of their children, and evangelical parents frequently carried their sense of such responsibility to extremes. Doreen Rosman notes that evangelicals “justified their excessive watchfulness in terms of their evangelistic mission, in fulfillment of which they adopted a priestly role towards their children, regarding themselves as divinely appointed spiritual supervisors.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Mrs. Sarah Trimmer, *The Oeconomy of Charity; or, An Address to Ladies; Adapted to the Present State of Charitable Institutions in England: With a Particular View to the Cultivation of Religious Principles, Among the Lower Orders of People*, Volume I (London: J. Johnson, 1801), 6-7.

<sup>33</sup> Doreen M. Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture* (London: Croon Helm, 1984), 99. For further discussion of mid-nineteenth-century cultures of evangelicalism, refer to D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Natasha Erlank, “‘Civilizing the African’: The Scottish Mission to the Xhosa, 1821-64,” in Brian Stanley, ed. *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001); Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New

As yet, Trimmer had no grand plan for dealing with the masses of children without proper ‘spiritual supervisors,’ and limited her prescriptions to young people in service. For instance, employers had an obligation, according to Trimmer, to ensure that their domestic servants attended church services with them, and spent Sundays in the employer’s home without visitors.

Trimmer sought to illustrate the dangers of malingering servants in a tract entitled *The Servant’s Friend, an Exemplary Tale*, that by 1787 had already emerged in a third edition. The protagonist of Trimmer’s tale is Thomas Simpkins, a model servant, whose principal virtues are his avoidance of idleness, his refusal to lie or to steal, and his insistence upon learning to read the Bible. Trimmer depicts such virtues as nothing less than divine ordinances: “God alone knows whether what we pray for is best for us or not: many things may appear to us desirable,

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Haven: Yale University Press, 1957); Mark A. Noll, “Revolution and the Rise of Evangelical Social Influence in North Atlantic Societies,” in Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk, eds. *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Stephen Orchard, “Evangelical Eschatology and the Missionary Awakening,” *Journal of Religious History* 22, 2 (June 1998), 132-151; Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Robert Ross, “Missions, Respectability and Civil Rights: the Cape Colony, 1828-1854,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25, 3 (September 1999), 333-345; Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999); and Peter van der Veer, “The Moral State: Religion, Nation, and Empire in Victorian Britain and British India,” in Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann, eds. *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).



which, if they are granted, would be very hurtful to us; and therefore, if we pray for particular blessings, we must always pray that God will grant them if they appear good to his infinite wisdom, or else make us contented without them.”<sup>34</sup>

God alone knows what is best for the individual, but the individual must nonetheless strive to behave according to God’s will — hence the importance of reading the Bible. Indeed, Simpkins not only reads, but pores over the Bible in an effort to determine his proper role in the world: “both before and after church, on Sunday, he employed himself in searching for the texts that related to the duty of a servant, and wrote them down in a little book, which he made for the purpose, that he might read them over often, and remember.”<sup>35</sup> Which passages strike Simpkins as most applicable to his role? There are two, above all, to which attention is enjoined:

Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;  
Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;  
With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:  
Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Mrs. Sarah Trimmer, *The Servant’s Friend, an Exemplary Tale; Designed to Enforce the Religious Instructions Given at Sunday and Other Charity Schools, by Pointing Out the Practical Application of Them in a State of Service*, third edition (London: T. Longman, 1787), 9.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>36</sup> Ephesians vi. 5-8.

*Exhort* servants to be obedient unto their own masters, *and* to please *them* well in all *things*; not answering again;  
Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.  
For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,  
Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.<sup>37</sup>

Mr. Brown, master to Thomas Simpkins, makes no secret of the consequences that will befall the young man's should he not heed such injunctions: "you will have opportunities of wasting my property very much; but depend on it, if you do so, God will, at the great day of judgment, call you to account for it; for he will view all your actions when they are hidden from the eyes of the whole world."<sup>38</sup> What greater menace could possibly loom over the young servant than that God would have His eyes upon Simpkins, whatever the occasion?

### **Exposure to the Eyes of God**

Your souls, my dear hearers, are infinitely valuable; and it is possible that many of you may perish, notwithstanding you are favoured with the Holy Scriptures, and frequently hear their meaning explained, and their truths enforced by faithful ministers of the Lord Jesus. In the name of my glorious Master, I ask you — Has the word of God penetrated your hearts? Has it produced a revolution in your minds? Do your tempers — your pursuits — your conversation — and your character, comport with the spirit and

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<sup>37</sup> Titus ii. 9-12.

<sup>38</sup> Trimmer, *Servant's Friend*, 44.

principles of genuine Christianity? We are glad to see you under the word — we are thankful for your pecuniary assistance in the cause of missions — but we are anxious to know that you are essentially benefited by the truth you hear. Beware that you do not trifle with everlasting things: the gospel must be a savour of life unto life; or, it will be a savour of death unto death to your souls.

— Reverend John Hyatt, 11 May 1815<sup>39</sup>

The challenge with which pedagogues like Trimmer were faced was to make servants, and the lower ranks of society generally, *feel* the eyes of God upon them.<sup>40</sup> In *The Christian School-Master: or, The Duty of Those Who Are Employed in the Public Instruction of Children*, James Talbott explains that, where students are concerned, masters “must frequently remind them that this Almighty God, who made all Things, fills all Things with his Presence; that he is always in all Places; that he hears all they say, and sees all they do, (how secretly soever) as plainly as

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<sup>39</sup> “Encouragement to Perseverance in Missionary Exertions,” *Four Sermons, Preached in London, at the Twenty-First General Meeting of the Missionary Society, May 10, 11, 12, 1815* (London: J. Dennett, 1815), 49.

<sup>40</sup> Consider Foucault’s extraordinary observation at page 60 of *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990): “One has to be completely taken in by this internal ruse of confession in order to attribute a fundamental role to censorship, to taboos regarding speaking and thinking. One has to have an inverted image of power in order to believe that all these voices which have spoken so long in our civilization — repeating the formidable injunction to tell what one is and what one does, what one recollects and what one has forgotten, what one is thinking and what one thinks he is not thinking — are speaking to us of freedom. An immense labor to which the West has submitted generations in order to produce — while other forms of work ensured the accumulation of capital — men’s subjection: their constitution as subjects in both senses of the word.”

they can hear or see what is said or done most openly.”<sup>41</sup> The question then became, how, in practice, to make the student *feel* the presence of God, everywhere, at all times. For his part, Talbott acknowledges that, for masters, the rod is perhaps the easiest tool with which to enforce God’s injunctions — but hardly the most effectual. Indeed, one must chastise not only the body, but further, the mind.

In 1797, the Reverend Dr. Andrew Bell published *An Experiment in Education, Made at the Male Asylum of Madras, Suggesting a System by Which a School or Family May Teach itself Under the Superintendence of the Master or Parent*. Bell was a Scot by birth, son of a barber, who had received his university education in his hometown of St. Andrew’s. After employment as a tutor in Virginia, he had decided to pursue a clerical vocation. In 1787, he ventured to India, and two years later, assumed responsibility for the Madras Male Orphan Asylum. The Asylum was home to orphaned and distressed sons of European military men. Bell is said to have finally resorted to monitorialism given the resistance of his staff to teaching innovations intended to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

Upon returning to England in 1796, after giving up the various army chaplaincies he held in India, Bell put pen to paper to describe the methods he had

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<sup>41</sup> James Talbott, *The Christian School-Master: or, The Duty of Those Who Are Employed in the Public Instruction of Children* (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1817), 24.

employed in educating the Asylum boys.<sup>42</sup> In Bell's *Experiment*, Mrs. Trimmer found a means by which to make children *feel* the eyes of God — a means, in Talbott's terms, to chastise not merely the body, but the mind as well.

Monitorialism was embraced at the Protestant Charity Schools, St. Botolph's, Aldgate in 1798, and at the Kendal Industrial Schools in 1799.<sup>43</sup> With disturbing political developments both at home and across the English Channel, the impulse to 'educate' the poor as to their 'proper' station became urgent.<sup>44</sup> By 1801, Trimmer was compelled to remark, "surely there is at this time a powerful call upon every one who is invested with authority of any kind to exert it for the purpose of counteracting the evil designs of those who would destroy all social order, and who have unhappily been too successful in their attempts to infect the minds of the lower classes with their leveling principles."<sup>45</sup>

According to Bell, if masters limited themselves to chastisement of the body, implementing what he derisively termed a 'system of terror' in the classroom, they would never succeed in eliminating improper thoughts or behavior.

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<sup>42</sup> Richard Aldrich and Peter Gordon, eds. *Dictionary of British Educationalists* (London: Woburn Press, 1989), 22.

<sup>43</sup> Henry Bryan Binns, *A Century of Education Being the Centenary History of the British and Foreign School Society 1808-1908* (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1908), 12.

<sup>44</sup> For details of such developments, one might begin with E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963) and Norman Hampson, *A Social History of the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

<sup>45</sup> Trimmer, *Oeconomy of Charity*, Volume II (1801), 12.

The master's eye cannot rest upon all the children, everywhere, at all times. In light of this, the student remains perpetually aware of openings to transgression. Bell sought to eliminate such openings altogether — to prevent, rather than simply punish, transgression. For Bell, the key to prevention was *exposure* — or, at least, a *perception* of exposure. As long as students felt exposed to a withering gaze, everywhere, at all times, then they would shun transgression. The question became, how to cultivate this perception of exposure. The answer was to make every student a master — to make every pair of eyes in the classroom analogous to God's eyes. In short, students would monitor their peers.

Monitorialism was thought not only to prevent poor behavior, but further, to serve as an economical, efficient, effective means by which to educate. Students were strictly regimented according to ability, and would learn skills from fellow students in superior classes, who had recently learned the given skills themselves. With an elder student undertaking the instruction, rather than a master far removed in age, the younger student would, according to this logic, grasp the skill with greater speed, because two students communicate with greater ease than student and master. Further, entrusted with a degree of responsibility for the educational process, the elder students serving as monitors would take pride in their position, and remain eager to support the efforts of the master. Students who were thought to represent a potential problem, particularly vivacious or garrulous children, were

often appointed monitors for, according to this logic, they would put their excess energy into the exercise of duty rather than the promotion of transgression.

With his *Experiment*, Bell became the inaugural champion of monitorialism. Nevertheless, Joseph Lancaster would swiftly supersede him as the system's most articulate and passionate champion. Lancaster was a much younger man than Bell, and had grown up in a starkly different social environment.<sup>46</sup>

Southwark was his home — a densely populated district of London with poor infrastructure. Lancaster's father, Richard, had served as a soldier of the British army on the continent, but ultimately came to ply his trade in the Borough, as Southwark was widely known, as a cane sieve maker. After entertaining the notion of joining the Royal Navy, Joseph found an opening as a teacher's assistant — and thus began his career as educator and educationalist.

When examining the inspiration behind Lancaster's monitorialism, Mora Dickson, Lancaster's principal biographer, looks to Joseph's own education, which was handled, for a time, by a former military man. The teacher apparently insisted upon strict military discipline in his school: "he gave commands in a stentorian voice which he expected to be instantly obeyed, and he had worked out

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<sup>46</sup> The following biographical details are drawn, for the most part, from Mora Dickson's biography of Lancaster, *Teacher Extraordinary: Joseph Lancaster 1778-1838* (Sussex, United Kingdom: Book Guild, 1986). Joyce Taylor has penned a much shorter — and entirely uncritical — biography, entitled *Joseph Lancaster, the Poor Child's Friend: Educating the Poor in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Kent, England: The Campanile Press, 1996).

complicated evolutions to be gone through when school was dismissed.”<sup>47</sup>

Whatever his inspiration, as early as 1801, Lancaster could claim subscribers to his educational project as illustrious as Zachary Macaulay, then of the Sierra Leone Company, and William Wilberforce. Wilberforce was the influential evangelical public figure who had, in 1787, founded the Society for the Reformation of Manners.<sup>48</sup> In 1804, Lancaster’s monitorial experiment in Southwark had attracted the attention of King George III himself, and a meeting took place in November of that year. Within a year, the King had joined the list of subscribers, contributing one hundred pounds towards Lancaster’s efforts.

One could sum up Lancaster’s philosophy with the following line from the 1803 edition of his *Improvements in Education*: “Coercion of any kind, which grates upon our very hearing it, is the most disgusting, uncouth word in the British vocabulary.”<sup>49</sup> If not through the rod, how would the master maintain classroom

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<sup>47</sup> Dickson, *Teacher Extraordinary*, 4.

<sup>48</sup> For details as to Wilberforce’s worldview, refer to his *Practical View of Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians: Contrasted With Real Christianity* (London: Davis, 1834).

<sup>49</sup> Joseph Lancaster, *Improvements in Education, As It Respects the Industrious Classes of the Community: Containing, A Short Account of Its Present State, Hints Towards Its Improvement, and a Detail of Some Practical Experiments Conducive to That End* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1803), 23. Just as evocative is his remark in *The British System of Education: Being a Complete Epitome of the Improvements and Inventions Practised by Joseph Lancaster* (Georgetown: Joseph Milligan, 1812), 77: “The guillotine in France, during the reign of terror, and the rod in the hands of the advocates of ignorance, are alike.”



order? Lancaster's 1812 manual of the 'British system' offers the most succinct reply:

In society at large, few crimes are ever committed openly; because immediate detection and apprehension of the offender would follow. On the contrary, many are committed in privacy and silence. It is the same in performing the simple duties of monitors in my institution: their performances are so visible, that they dare not neglect them; and, consequently, they attain the habit of performing the task easily and well. This effect is produced from one cause: that every thing they do is brought to account, or rendered visible in some conspicuous way and manner.<sup>50</sup>

To eliminate privacy, to render students and their acts visible and conspicuous — just as in Bell's *Experiment*, the notion of exposure is critical in Lancaster's *Improvements*. To this end, Lancaster had monitors assigned for all imaginable purposes. There were 'general monitors' of order, of reading, and of arithmetic. Further, there were 'subordinate monitors' of classes, of drafts, and of inspection. The general monitor of order had the most considerable duties — to enter the classroom well before the arrival of the students to ensure the proper order of learning materials, to give commands to students as to when to begin their writing exercises or dictation, and to record the names of students worthy of recognition or punishment. James Bonwick, a student at Lancaster's Borough Road School in Southwark from 1823, recalls in his memoirs, "Lancaster had such implicit faith in his Monitors, that he thought little of adult service. He instituted,

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<sup>50</sup> *The British System of Education* (1812), 30-31.

therefore, House lads, from whom he selected his future Masters of Schools. They were boarded, lodged, and prepared to be sent forth to work.”<sup>51</sup>

Lancaster’s obsession with exposure extended still further, to the design of the schoolroom. He wrote a treatise on this subject alone, entitled *Hints and Directions for Building, Fitting Up, and Arranging School Rooms on the British System of Education*. In the work, he insists upon classroom doors contiguous to the master’s desk: “This will render the boys conscious of the inspection of their conduct by the superior coming in, and going out of school, and make that inspection easy to him.”<sup>52</sup> Equally remarkable is Lancaster’s admonition that classroom floors incline towards the back, such that the master, positioned upon a platform at the head of the room, can view all the scholars in unobstructed fashion: Specifically, he suggested a gradation of three feet over the length of a sixty-foot classroom.<sup>53</sup> Further, Bonwick notes, “A clock was fixed over the platform, and a large bell stood on the Master’s desk. Yet that was seldom used, as the sharp call ‘Halt!’ for order, was distinctly heard over the room.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> James Bonwick, *An Octagenarian’s Reminiscences* (London: James Nichols, 1902), 29.

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Lancaster, *Hints and Directions for Building, Fitting Up, and Arranging School Rooms on the British System of Education* (London: Free School, 1809), 15.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

<sup>54</sup> Bonwick, *Reminiscences*, 5.

## The Monitorial Machine

Littered throughout the texts of both Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster is the machinery metaphor. In an 1807 sermon, Bell spoke to the tenor of the times: “Machinery has been contrived for spinning twenty skeins of silk, and twenty hanks of cotton, where one was spun before; but no contrivance has been sought for, or devised, that twenty children may be educated in moral and religious principles, with the same facility and expense, as one was taught before.”<sup>55</sup> Like a machine, monitorialism was both self-contained and automatic: Each part of the system had a role to play to ensure the proper functioning of the whole. Perhaps the best illustration of this ‘automatizing aspiration’ was that, according to Lancaster’s blueprint, not even the detection of misbehavior would interrupt the classroom routine. Monitors were expected to lodge accusations against their peers in silence, for which purpose they were given “a number of printed cards with different charges: as, ‘I have seen this boy idle,’ ‘I have seen this boy talking,’ &c. &c.”<sup>56</sup>

The machinery metaphor was no haphazard choice on the part of Bell and Lancaster: A monitorialism that was self-contained and automatic would be perceived, by students, not as dependent upon the whims of fellow students or the

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<sup>55</sup> Andrew Bell, *Extract of a Sermon on the Education of the Poor, Under an Appropriate System: Preached at St. Mary’s, Lambeth, 28 June 1807: for the Benefit of the Boys’ Charity-School at Lambeth*, second edition (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807), 17.

<sup>56</sup> *The British System of Education* (1812), 67.

master, but rather, as impersonal and impartial, as above the interests of individuals, as all but divinely ordained. Indeed, Bell was convinced that monitorialism had to become the watchword not merely for the classroom, but for society as a whole:

it may be permitted humbly to remark, that the general principle and practice of the Madras System of moral Government, which are inseparably linked together, bear an intimate analogy to the branch of legislation now on the tapis. Indeed, the laws of nature and of God are universally true and universally applicable. What men have to do, is to apply them to their legitimate objects. If the Government of the State be conducted on principles and laws analogous to those of the new System of Education, its subjects will undergo a similar amelioration to that of the members of a school.<sup>57</sup>

Rather less humbly, in May 1819, Bell ventured so far as to compare the principle of monitorialism to the principle of gravitation: Just as the universe was regulated by the ‘Almighty Governor’ through gravitation, the classroom was regulated in a comparably harmonious fashion through monitorialism.<sup>58</sup> For his part, Lancaster took the rhetoric of ‘automation’ to remarkable levels of hyperbole, suggesting in his 1810 manual that “when the pupils, as well as the school-master, understand how to act and learn on this system, the system, not the master’s vague,

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<sup>57</sup> Andrew Bell, *The Wrongs of Children; or, a Practical Vindication of Children from the Injustice Done Them in Early Nurture and Education* (London: Rivingtons, 1819), 14.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

discretionary, uncertain judgment, will be in practice.”<sup>59</sup> Such a claim seems particularly ironic in light of traveler Louis Simond’s description of an 1811 visit to Lancaster’s school:

Seven or eight hundred boys, from six to twelve years old, filled these benches. They were all talking together and making a great noise. They seemed divided into classes or sections, distinguished by small flags; some of the classes writing on sand, others on slates, that is to say had written, or might have written, for none were doing any thing but playing.<sup>60</sup>

In January 1808, Lancaster came together with Joseph Fox and William Corston to form the organization that would become known as the British and

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<sup>59</sup> Joseph Lancaster, *The British System of Education: Being a Complete Epitome of the Improvements and Inventions Practised at the Royal Free Schools, Borough-Road, Southwark* (London: Royal Free School, 1810), 45.

<sup>60</sup> Louis Simond, *An American in Regency England: The Journal of a Tour in 1810-1811*, ed. Christopher Hibbert (London: Robert Maxwell, 1968), 130-132. Simond made these observations on a day Lancaster was absent from the school. Such days became increasingly common as the educationalist devoted himself to spreading his technique throughout the British Isles and beyond. Lancaster claimed in the 1810 edition of *The British System of Education*, vi: “as a plain man speaking plain things, detailing matters of fact, developed in their native language, he has had the honor of being attentively heard, by above 100,000 of the King’s most loyal subjects.” Such travels were forced upon Lancaster, given the public commotion confrontations with Bell about the origins and conduct of the system had generated. At Sarah Trimmer’s urging, Bell would become head of a National Society devoted to the spread of his brand of monitorialism, which was all but indistinguishable from Lancaster’s brand of such except in terms of affiliation. That is to say, Bell deployed monitorialism to communicate specifically Anglican doctrines, whereas Lancaster, as a Quaker, refused all sectarian attachments, focusing in his own scheme upon the study of the Bible alone. Each cause became associated with a particular journal — Bell’s with the *Quarterly Review*, and Lancaster’s with the *Edinburgh Review*.

Foreign School Society, or BFSS. The aim of the Society would prove no less ambitious than Lancaster's was — the spread of the Lancastrian system throughout the world — but Fox, a surgeon dentist, and Corston, a straw plait manufacturer, insisted that pursuit of that aim had to remain guided by good financial sense.

### **Monitorialism, Mission, and Modernity**

Valuable as the Bible is, it can be of no use to untutored nations, unless its truths are published, explained, and inculcated by proper teachers employed in this important work. It is by the labours, or under the superintendence of these teachers, that the inspired volume is to be translated into the languages of the heathen, and that those who are ignorant of letters are to be instructed so as to be able to peruse it.

— Reverend Angus McIntosh, 10 May 1815<sup>61</sup>

One might label the BFSS enterprise a utilitarian-evangelical partnership, for in the annual reports of the Society, one finds the names of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill alongside those of Wilberforce and a host of evangelicals.<sup>62</sup> Yet, the evangelicals shouldered the burden of actually implementing the system. This was most emphatically the case beyond Britain's shores, where representatives of all the great nineteenth-century missionary societies put Lancaster's scheme for

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<sup>61</sup> "The Importance of Christian Knowledge," *Four Sermons, Preached in London, at the Twenty-First General Meeting of the Missionary Society, May 10, 11, 12, 1815* (London: J. Dennett, 1815), 12.

<sup>62</sup> For further details of Bentham's links to the BFSS, refer to George F. Bartle, "Benthamites and Lancasterians — The Relationship Between the Followers of Bentham and the British and Foreign School Society During the Early Years of Popular Education," *Utilitas* 3, 2 (November 1991), 275-288.

disciplinary education into practice and, in a number of cases, actually laid the foundations for subsequent systems of public instruction through networks of state schools. Where such foundations were swept away by political currents, the logic of disciplinary education often found expression, ultimately, through elite reformers who had, as children, received training in mission institutions. I would venture so far as to suggest that evangelical missionaries were the pioneer purveyors of Foucault's and Mitchell's modern technologies of power, throughout the colonial world.<sup>63</sup>

Monitorialism was thought particularly fitting for missionary schools, for the explicit aim of monitorial education, like that of evangelical missionaries of the time, was to nurture adherence to such values as industry, discipline, and order. Mission and monitorialism alike were, in that early-nineteenth-century context, rooted in the notion that conversion to 'serious Christianity' was a matter not of merely professing such, but of conforming to a 'Scriptural order.' In the Church

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<sup>63</sup> Wayne Fife pursues this connection explicitly, using a London Missionary Society case study, in his brilliant "Creating the Moral Body: Missionaries and the Technology of Power in Early Papua New Guinea," *Ethnology* (Summer 2001), 251-269. At page 259, he explains, "By the turn of the [twentieth] century, L.M.S. missionaries were increasingly writing about the individual body as the most important location for disciplining, or as they often put it, civilizing the primitive Papuan villager. Also increasing were reports of individual villagers assuming new moral identities and 'spontaneously' urging similar transformation on others." For missionary-state connections generally, refer to Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle, eds. *Christian Missionaries and the State in the Third World* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002).

Missionary Society's fifth anniversary sermon, delivered in 1805, the Reverend

John Venn put the matter this way:

the Gospel, by elevating the mind, by inspiring it with the noblest hopes and the grandest views, by working on the most generous and powerful affections, puts in motion a force of the greatest efficacy; but, at the same time, it gives a right direction to that force, by the most precise and authoritative declarations, respecting the necessity and nature of righteousness.<sup>64</sup>

What exactly was the 'direction to righteousness,' as specified precisely and authoritatively by the Gospel? The inaugural volume of CMS proceedings had explained that, under the influence of the Gospel, "Rulers become the fathers of their people, and subjects cheerfully yield obedience." In short, the 'spiritual' and 'cultural' dimensions of conversion were considered inseparable: Christianity *was* industry, discipline, and order. Venn was quite specific:

So far as improvement in man bears a relation to himself, he ought not only to be sober, temperate, chaste, modest, and humble, but he should be ready to exercise self-denial, he should be regular and uniform in his general habits of life, and able to subdue his passions, to moderate his desires, and to keep every temper in a state of subordination to reason.<sup>65</sup>

In line with such thinking, the manuals the BFSS published through the first half of the nineteenth century proclaim one message most consistently — that the

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<sup>64</sup> "Sermon Preached 4 June 1805 for Fifth Anniversary by Rev. John Venn," *Proceedings of the CMS*, Volume I (London: L. B. Seeley, 1801-1805), 419.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.



principal aim of the monitorial school was not to transmit knowledge, but rather, to mold the character in line with the Scriptures.<sup>66</sup> When Lancaster explained his opposition to the teaching of specifically Anglican doctrines in his schools, he was quite clear as to his vision of the broader Christian morality he aimed to transmit: “a reverence for the sacred name of God and the Scriptures of Truth, a detestation of vice, a love of veracity, a due attention to duties to parents, relations, and to society; carefulness to avoid bad company, civility without flattery, and a peaceable demeanor, may be inculcated in every seminary for youth, without violating the sanctuary of private religious opinion in any mind.”<sup>67</sup> Indeed, all the lessons of BFSS schools, whether in reading and writing, geography, or indeed arithmetic, were geared towards not merely conveying a skill, but further, a frame of mind. Consider, for instance, the 1831 manual’s admonition regarding reading the Bible: “it becomes an object of the highest importance that the pupil should not only understand the meaning of what is read, but be so far interested in its

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<sup>66</sup> Beyond the manuals, there are the comments of Lancaster’s supporters, like Sir Henry Moncrieff Wellwood in *A Sermon, Preached in St. Andrew’s Church, Edinburgh, on Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1812, for the Benefit of the Lancastrian School Established in That City* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Lancastrian School, 1812), 1-2: “Every portion of the Gospel is full of practical instruction. Our Lord’s discourses, transmitted to us, uniformly come home to the situations and the business of common life. He incorporates, on almost every subject, the doctrines of immortality and salvation, with the essential duties and relations of the present world. He seizes on the occasions or incidents, which naturally occur in his intercourse with his disciples or with the multitude, and builds on them the instruction which he intended for every age and condition of mankind.”

<sup>67</sup> Lancaster, *Improvements* (1803), iv-v.

communications as to regard them with reverence, and habitually to apply them to his own conduct and conscience.”<sup>68</sup>

How would monitors and masters ensure that students had grasped the message of a given passage? An elaborate system of interrogation was devised to test students as to their understanding of the Bible’s ‘proper’ message. In 1831, Henry Althans recorded the following exchange:

*Master:* What meat are we not to labor for?

*Scholars:* “That which perisheth.”

*Master:* Give me some passages which teach us that we ought to labor?

*Scholar One:* “We commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”

*Scholar Two:* “Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good.”

*Scholar Three:* “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”<sup>69</sup>

Such an exchange likely took place between the master and several of the school’s elder students — but this concern with improving manners was not limited to scholars familiar with the Scriptures. Indeed, Lancaster consistently voiced his opposition to the mere memorization of Biblical passages: “I do not approve of

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<sup>68</sup> *Manual of the System of Primary Instruction, Pursued in the Model Schools of the British and Foreign School Society* (London: Longman and Company, 1831), 25.

<sup>69</sup> Henry Althans, “A Compendious Report of the Order of Proceedings and Actual Operations in the Central School of the British and Foreign School Society, Borough-Road,” *Sunday School Teachers’ Magazine and Journal of Education* (1831), 10.

boys being required to learn whole chapters, or long portions of Scripture by rote, unless united with emulation; and then they should be concise, and connected with some subject that has been recently, or is intended to be introduced particularly to their notice.”<sup>70</sup> A second exchange recorded by Althans reveals how the most mundane vocabulary lessons were geared towards modifying behavior:

*Master:* What is a habitation?

*Scholars:* A dwelling.

*Master:* What are those persons called who live in it?

*Scholars:* Inhabitants.

*Master:* What part of speech is that word?

*Scholars:* A noun.

*Master:* Give me the verb?

*Scholars:* To inhabit.

*Master:* What is that derived from?

*Scholars:* From *habeo*, I hold or possess.

*Master:* Mention some other words that are derived from *habeo*.

*Scholars:* Habit, a cloak; habitable, fit to live in.

*Master:* What is a habit?

*Scholars:* A cloak or covering.

*Master:* In how many senses is the word used?

*Scholars:* In two — 1<sup>st</sup>, a covering for the body — 2<sup>nd</sup>, a covering for the mind.

*Master:* What characters do you give to the habits of the mind?

*Scholars:* Good and bad.

*Master:* Mention a bad habit of the mind?

*Scholars:* Laziness.

*Master:* Why is laziness called a habit?

*Scholars:* Because it is difficult to cast off.

*Master:* If so difficult to be cast off, what should that teach us.

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<sup>70</sup> Joseph Lancaster, *Improvements in Education As It Respects the Industrious Classes of the Community*, third edition (London, 1805), as excerpted in Carl F. Kaestle, ed. *Joseph Lancaster and the Monitorial School Movement: A Documentary History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1973), 85.

*Scholars:* That we should be very careful to strive against it.<sup>71</sup>

Of still greater importance in grasping the affinity that existed between mission and monitorialism in the early nineteenth century, is the fact that both were considered, by their practitioners, as *universal* and *universalizing* — and here I return to Brett Christophers' point about missionary colonialism. Scholars of the evangelical missionary enterprise in the nineteenth century must reckon with an almost unspeakably vast network of agents throughout the world, in constant communication as to method. Equally daunting to conceptualize is the vast ambition of that network — to realize the universal empire of Christ on earth. On this point, one need only quote the Reverend Thomas Biddulph. His 1804 CMS anniversary sermon is, to my mind, no less than a manifesto for missionary colonialism:

The comprehensive rule of duty, which is now under our consideration, comprises within its wide embrace every individual of the human species. Its objects, expressed by the plural pronoun others, are all mankind. Of the Divine Law in general, as well as of the glorious Gospel, and particularly of this epitome of moral duty,

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<sup>71</sup> Althans, "Compendious Report," 7. David Savage expands upon the point discussed here in his "Missionaries and the Development of a Colonial Ideology of Female Education in India," *Gender and History* 9, 2 (August 1997), 201-221. At page 209, he explains, "The aim of all missionary education became the reformation of character: not simply the formation of character in succeeding generations of the young, as was possible to contemplate in the imagined homogeneous culture of England, but its re-formation, its rescue from the influences of Hindu culture and transformation into a new personality with new habits agreeable to the sensibilities of the English schoolmaster."

we may with propriety observe, that, like the light of the natural sun, its going forth is from the end of heaven, and its circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.<sup>72</sup>

For Biddulph, as for the evangelical missionaries of his time, the sun never set upon Christ's empire. Therein rested the challenge — and the challenge perceived by Lancaster and his followers was scarcely less momentous. The Reverend Robert Jones, speaking in September 1813 at the inauguration of the Free School on Long Street in Cape Town, remarked that observers should not wonder at the nearly concurrent development of monitorialism and vaccine inoculation: "As the one prevents the infection of perhaps the most loathsome and deadly disease to which our frame is exposed, the other acts as a preventive against the no less fatal ravages of vice and ignorance. The New System of Education is mental vaccination."<sup>73</sup> The BFSS Annual Report of 1815 proclaimed, "Surely we may hope that the day is not far distant, when Statesmen and Legislators of all countries will open their eyes to the awfully important truth, and, beholding in a sound and moral education, the grand secret of national strength, will co-operate for the

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<sup>72</sup> "Sermon Preached 22 May 1804 at Fourth Anniversary by Rev. Thomas T. Biddulph," *Proceedings of the CMS*, Volume I (London: L. B. Seeley, 1801-1805), 279.

<sup>73</sup> *Report of the British and Foreign School Society, 1814* (London: Richard and Arthur Taylor, 1814), 43-44.

prevention rather than the punishment of crime.”<sup>74</sup> No doubt the Annual Report of 1833 captured the point most emphatically:

Of no other institution for the promotion of public education can it be said, “It is a messenger of good tidings to all lands,” — “Its line is gone out through all the earth, and its word to the end of the world.” — The companion of the Missionary, and the forerunner of the Bible and Tract Distributor, it yet stands alone, — the only society which proposes, by means at once simple, economical, and effective, to unclasp the sacred volume everywhere, and to confer the inestimable benefits of a Scriptural education on the whole human race. To effect this sublime purpose, it simply asks with the blessing of God, THE UNION OF GOOD MEN OF ALL NATIONS, the cordial and active co-operation of the different members of that large and scattered family, who, “being many, are yet one body in Christ.” If “love and unity” be the motto and the pervading principle of this great “household,” — the whole earth, which already groaneth and travaileth, sighing to be redeemed from the darkness of ancient errors, and the bondage of degrading and decrepit superstitions, will soon rejoice not only in the light of moral and intellectual truth, but over the “glad tidings of great joy” which belong “to all people.” “Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us: God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.”<sup>75</sup>

Grappling with the language here is vitally important: Note the references to “all lands,” “all the earth,” “the whole human race,” “the union of good men of all nations,” and “this great household.” The kinship between mission and monitorialism is unmistakable, for both had hegemony as their aim. Indeed, in the

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<sup>74</sup> *Report of the British and Foreign School Society, to the General Meeting, November 1815* (London: Richard and Arthur Taylor, 1815), 3.

<sup>75</sup> *Twenty-Eighth Report of the British and Foreign School Society* (London: S. Bagster, 1833).

monitorial school, missionaries saw their ideal world in microcosm, a world in which all people, and all peoples, understood the fact of their exposure to the eyes of God — that is to say, understood the fact of their common, Christian subordination.

The BFSS claimed to have incontrovertible evidence of the universal applicability of monitorialism. Indeed, the Society pointed to the example of students drawn from all parts of the world who had passed through the halls of the Borough Road School and, ultimately, taken monitorial methods back to their homelands. Such students, irrespective of faith or race, had reacted to monitorial methods as well as English students had, insisted Lancaster and his peers in forum after forum. Brian Stanley captures the general point: “Missionary support in the nineteenth century thrived on lurid tales of ‘heathen’ blindness and the savage cruelties of idolatry, but these tales would have been pointless if the blindness and savagery were innate” and “The position that a particular people occupied on the scale between savagery and civilization was not fixed.”<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps most noteworthy in this regard is the testimony of John Pickton before the House of Commons Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders in the Metropolis. Pickton was schoolmaster at Borough Road when he

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<sup>76</sup> Brian Stanley, “Christianity and Civilization in English Evangelical Mission Thought, 1792-1857,” in Brian Stanley, ed. *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 169 and 173.

delivered his testimony to the Committee in 1816. Much of that testimony concerns the aptitude of the Africans under his instruction. At the time, there were four Africans training as masters at the School. When asked about the progress of these students, he replied, “their abilities are quite on a par with Europeans, and the lad who made the greatest progress in learning in a given time, was an African.” Of this particular thirteen-year-old from Sierra Leone, Pickton reported, “he was totally ignorant of his letters, and at the expiration of sixteen months could read the Bible well, could write an excellent hand.”<sup>77</sup> The questioner, apparently doubtful as to Pickton’s sanguine assessment of the Africans, proceeded to ask quite specifically whether such students were “promising, at least as likely to give satisfaction, as the Europeans which you commonly select from other schools, and educate for the same purpose?” Pickton was steadfast in his response: “If I may judge from their dispositions and manners, and from the progress they have made in their education, I would say equally so.” Further, he proceeded to emphasize that the Africans were “constantly with the Europeans; they board at the same table, and sleep in the same apartments.”<sup>78</sup>

Pickton’s testimony would appear to accord with the conclusion Michael Adas reaches in his *Machines as the Measure of Man*, namely, “Though most Europeans clearly considered themselves superior to African or Asian peoples,

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<sup>77</sup> *Report from Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders in the Metropolis* (London: House of Commons, 1816), 181.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.



until the last decades of the [nineteenth] century their conviction of superiority at the level of ideas, as distinct from that of social interaction, was based primarily on cultural attainments rather than physical differences.”<sup>79</sup> That is, in the early and, perhaps, mid-nineteenth century, race was not yet viewed by European educationalists as an immutable category determining intellectual potential. Of course, European educationalists were dismissive and condescending of Africans and Asians, but these were attitudes rooted in the notion that such peoples had not fulfilled their intellectual potential — not that they lacked such potential altogether. Indeed, the educational experiments that formed such a critical part of the missionary enterprise in the early and mid-nineteenth century would have seemed without purpose, had there not existed a firm conviction among missionaries — and, indeed, their benefactors in the British public — that Africans and Asians were available, intellectually, to the redemptive force of their message.

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<sup>79</sup> Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Man: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 273-274.

## CHAPTER 3

### **The Idea of Egypt: Restoring Rationality to Civilization's Pioneers**

That the religious and intellectual welfare of a people is intimately connected with their social condition and domestic habits, is a most important truth, more distinctly perceived, probably, in our times, than at any former period. It is now well understood that filthy, ill-drained, and badly-ventilated dwellings, dirty clothing, and bad food, exert a corrupting and debasing influence upon the religious, moral, and intellectual faculties, and that this influence, unless removed, will tend to counteract all efforts to raise the character of a degraded people to a higher standard in the scale of religious, moral, and intellectual worth. Christianity and civilization always progress together, and any attempt to promote the spiritual regeneration of the nations of the East will naturally lead, also, to the amelioration of their social condition; so true is it, that 'Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come.'

— An 1849 Deputation of the Malta Protestant College<sup>1</sup>

In nineteenth-century narratives of Western and Christian development, the Coptic Christians of Egypt held a particularly exalted role, not only as the direct descendants of the pharaohs, but as the oldest Christians in the world, Christians who had survived the Arab invasion, endured persecution at the hands of Muslims,

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of a Deputation Sent to the East by the Committee of the Malta Protestant College, in 1849: Containing an Account of the Present State of the Oriental Nations, Including Their Religion, Learning, Education, Customs, and Occupations: With Outlines of Their Ecclesiastical and Political History; of the Rise and Decay of Knowledge Among Them; and of the Doctrines and Discipline of the Ancient Christian Churches, Part I* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1854), 11.

but resisted the pressure to convert.<sup>2</sup> British travelers who came into contact with actual Coptic contemporaries, however, perceived their Coptic ‘brethren,’ despite this grand legacy, as morally ‘corrupt’ — engaged, according to the travelers’ accounts, in rampant cursing, lying, hypocrisy, and diffidence, to a degree unmatched by Muslims. Under such circumstances, British missionaries arrogated to themselves the task of educating the Copts as to the Coptic legacy — to restoring the ‘rationality,’ ‘morality,’ and ‘order’ the Copts had supposedly pioneered, centuries prior.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Copts in the British Imperial Imagination**

Virtually all nineteenth-century Western travelers to Egypt describe a particular interest in the Copts as the lineal descendants of the ancient Egyptians, as the ‘modern sons of the pharaohs.’<sup>4</sup> The travelers were convinced that the Copts

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<sup>2</sup> C. A. Bayly has undertaken a fascinating comparison of colonial appropriations of the Coptic past in Egypt and the Islamic past in India in his “Representing Copts and Muhammadans: Empire, Nation, and Community in Egypt and India, 1880-1914,” in Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C. A. Bayly, eds. *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 158-203.

<sup>3</sup> Temporal maneuvering of this sort is usefully explored in Johannes Fabian’s seminal text, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> In the words of Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians, Written in Egypt During the Years 1833-1835* (London: Darf Publishers, 1986), 533, “The fame of that great nation from which the Copts mainly derive their origin renders this people objects of great interest, especially to one who has examined the wonderful monuments of Ancient Egypt.” Hoda Gindi

had preserved the purity of their race through the centuries, given a purported refusal to mix their blood with that of the ‘Arabs,’ as Egyptian Muslims were labeled.<sup>5</sup>

A dialogue between an English child, Percy, and a ‘native informant,’ Mr. Haradin, in a fictionalized travel account of the period aimed at children, speaks to the notion, then widely held in the West. Young Percy asks Haradin, with a measure of confusion and frustration, “why the inhabitants of Egypt are always called *Arabs* instead of Egyptians. I never hear any one talking of Egyptians; it is always ‘those clever Arabs,’ or ‘those lazy Arabs,’ that every one speaks of. Now, why is this? We are not in Arabia, Mr. Haradin?” Haradin proceeds to inform Percy that, “ever since Egypt was conquered by the Arabs in the seventh century, the mixed inhabitants have received the name, just as they have adopted the language of their conquerors.” Percy is disturbed by the response for, given his fascination with the splendors of ancient Egypt, he had aimed to meet and honour the ancients’ lineal descendants. He is thus relieved to learn from Haradin that “Copts are the descendants of the ancient Egyptians, and have, on account of their

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offers a useful summary of traveler attitudes in “The Copts of Egypt: Neither Christian nor Egyptian?” in Paul and Janet Starkey, eds. *Interpreting the Orient: Travellers in Egypt and the Near East* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2001), 97-110.

<sup>5</sup> For comparative purposes, consider Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

professing the Christian religion, never amalgamated or intermarried with the Arab race, except, indeed, such of them as have first embraced the Moslem faith.”<sup>6</sup>

The travelers frequently insisted that they could discern the distinctive racial features of the Copts, and offered pseudo-scientific evidence to support their notion of lineal descent. William George Browne traveled through Egypt at the close of the eighteenth century:

I was not struck with any resemblance of the negro features of form. Their hair and eyes are indeed of a dark hue, and the former is often curled; but not in a greater degree than is occasionally seen among Europeans. The nose is often aquiline, and though the lips be sometimes thick, by no means generally so; and on the whole, a strong resemblance may be traced between the form of visage in the modern Copts, and that presented in the ancient mummies, paintings, and statues.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Our Trip to Egypt, by the Author of 'The Better Way'* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1859), 171-172.

<sup>7</sup> William George Browne, *Travels in Africa, Egypt, and Syria, from 1792 to 1798* (London, 1806), 77. The physiognomy of the Copts is analysed further in J. Barthelemy Saint-Hilaire, *Egypt and the Great Suez Canal: A Narrative of Travels* (London: Richard Bentley, 1857), 95; Dominique Vivant Denon, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt in Company with Several Divisions of the French Army, During the Campaign of General Bonaparte in That Country* (London: Longman and Rees, 1803), vol. I, 206-208; and Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 534-535. According to W. H. Bartlett, *The Nile Boat; or, Glimpses of the Land of Egypt* (London, 1850), 87-88, “It is impossible for the most ordinary physiognomist not to be struck with the heavy, sullen, and somewhat sinister look of this singular people, so different from either the Turkish or the Arab race.” For James Augustus St. John, *Isis: An Egyptian Pilgrimage* (London: Longman, 1853), vol. I, 206, “as a people, the Koptos are certainly among the most ill-favoured in the East. Not that their faces are coarsely formed, or their figures bad, but that they have generally a yellow, unwholesome complexion, suggesting the idea of their having been dipped in train-oil, and left to dry and bake in the sun.” However, Alexander William Kinglake, *Eothen, or Traces of Travel Brought Home from the East* (Evanston, Illinois:

Of particular interest is the insistence upon parallels with European features, and the rejection of such parallels with African features. In his *Black Athena*, Martin Bernal argues that the West has sought, principally since the nineteenth century, to obscure the distinctly Afro-Asiatic roots, in ancient Egypt, of classical civilization. Prior to the nineteenth century, according to Bernal, there existed in Europe a fascination with and veneration for the ancient Egyptians. In the Middle Ages, the roots of non-biblical philosophy and culture were traced to Hermes Trismegistos, an incarnation of the ancient Egyptian god of wisdom, Thoth.<sup>8</sup> By the eighteenth century, the Freemasons had seized upon Egypt as the birthplace of geometry, and modeled their associational life upon that of ancient Egyptian priesthoods.<sup>9</sup>

However, Bernal is convinced that, in the nineteenth century, an effort to obscure the Egyptian contribution to classical civilization emerged, in earnest. He attributes the effort to the rise of racism at the time — racism that spawned an “increasing dislike of the Egyptians, who were no longer seen as the cultural ancestors of Greece but as fundamentally alien.” The development of the discipline

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Marlboro Press, 1992), 185, offers perhaps the most memorable racial insight: “still there lives on the race of those who were beautiful in the fashion of the Elder World; and Christian girls of Coptic blood will look on you with the sad, serious gaze, and kiss your charitable hand with the big pouting lips of the very Sphinx.”

<sup>8</sup> Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), vol. I, 23-24.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26.

of Egyptology is cast as one part of that effort to set Egypt aside, whereby scholars could “study this exotic culture and at the same time maintain and reinforce Egypt’s distance from the ‘real’ civilizations of Greece and Rome.”<sup>10</sup> In his *Mediterranean Passion*, focused upon Victorian and Edwardian travelers, John Pemble concurs with Bernal. He warns against misinterpreting the interest in Egyptian and Assyrian archaeology apparent among the Victorians for, he insists, “there was no inclination to pay the tribute of envy or emulation. The remains of these ancient societies were essentially museum specimens: the fascinating but unedifying products of alien and inferior civilizations.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet, a cursory glance at the terms in which nineteenth-century travelers described the ancient Egyptians and their monuments reveals the persistence of the veneration Bernal concedes existed prior. Jerome Van C. Smith notes during a visit to Dendera in 1850, “No description could do justice to those inimitable specimens of artistic skill. I have already seen enough of architecture in Egypt to convince me that four thousand years to come will not produce their equal.”<sup>12</sup> William Jowett recounts a conversation with a Coptic priest of Luxor, in which the priest asked “why the English Travelers spent so much money on the granite statues and other

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 441-442.

<sup>11</sup> John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (London: Oxford University Press, 1988), 61.

<sup>12</sup> Jerome Van C. Smith, *A Pilgrimage to Egypt* (Boston, 1852), 156.

antiques. Some idea seemed to have crept into his mind, that the English would put them into their Churches, and worship them.”<sup>13</sup>

The priest was scarcely far from the mark, for the travelers’ comments reveal that, if given the choice between preservation of the ruins of ancient Egyptian temples and that of the ruins of ancient Coptic churches, they would opt for the former. Carl Lepsius describes restoration efforts in temples the ancient Copts converted into churches, during which he “loosened the stucco, which is generally covered over with totally uninteresting Coptic paintings, that I might restore the splendid sculptures of the Egyptian gods and kings concealed beneath them once more to their older and greater claims on our attention.”<sup>14</sup> Evangelical travelers themselves condemned the ‘vandalism’ of temples in which the ancient Copts had engaged. John Foulkes Jones, in his *Egypt in Its Biblical Relations and Moral Aspect*, notes that the ancient Copts “thought that by their mud-plasterings they were ‘doing God service;’ but it would have been well if they had been quiet.” He proceeds to justify his claim: “I should like to see Christianity preaching in its granite pulpit in the temples of Egypt, and perhaps we shall before long; but not

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<sup>13</sup> William Jowett, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean* (London, 1822), 145.

<sup>14</sup> Carl Richard Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai* (London: H. G. Bohn, 1853), 268.



such a Christianity as this. What better is St. Peter, with his Keys of Heaven, than the Egyptian Pthah, with his Key of the Nile!”<sup>15</sup>

Such were the comments of individual travelers — but how is one to account for the widespread persistence of, if not expansion in, reverence for Egyptian antiquities in nineteenth-century Europe? On the first of May 1821, Giovanni Belzoni unveiled his finds in the temples and tombs of Egypt at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly. Two thousand visited the exhibition that day, and the antiquities remained at the Egyptian Hall for a year.<sup>16</sup> The next year, Jean Francois Champollion revealed how he had, at last, deciphered hieroglyphics.

As Anthony Sattin argues, in contrast to Pemble, “Britons enjoyed the opportunity of comparing themselves with one of the great civilisations of antiquity.”<sup>17</sup> With the rise of empire through the nineteenth century, the British and French cast their gaze to a great empire of the past, seeking reaffirmation of their greatness through the erection of parallels between their morals and the morals of the ancients.<sup>18</sup> Further, as Edward Said has recounted, for Europe to appropriate Egypt was to link epic narratives of empire, to bind the legacy of ancient Egypt with the destiny of the emergent great powers of Europe: “Because Egypt was

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<sup>15</sup> John Foulkes Jones, *Egypt in Its Biblical Relations and Moral Aspect* (London, 1860), 220.

<sup>16</sup> Anthony Sattin, *Lifting the Veil: British Society in Egypt, 1768-1956* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1988), 42.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

saturated with meaning for the arts, sciences, and government, its role was to be the stage on which actions of a world-historical importance would take place.”<sup>19</sup> In short, ancient Egypt played a critical role in the British imperial imagination, well into the nineteenth century. That the prognostication Kinglake offered in his *Eothen* was ultimately realized in the occupation of Egypt is perhaps the strongest evidence of that role:

Upon ancient dynasties of Ethiopian and Egyptian kings, upon Greek and Roman, upon Arab and Ottoman conquerors, upon Napoleon dreaming of an Eastern empire, upon battle and pestilence, upon the ceaseless misery of the Egyptian race, upon keen-eyed travellers, — Herodotus yesterday, and Warburton today, — upon all and more this unworldly Sphinx has watched, and watched like a Providence with the same earnest eyes, and the same sad, tranquil mien. And we, we shall die, and Islam will wither away; and the Englishman, straining far over to hold his loved India, will plant a firm foot on the banks of the Nile and sit in the seats of the Faithful, and still that sleepless rock will lie watching and watching the works of the new busy race with those same sad, earnest eyes, and the same tranquil mien everlasting. You dare not mock at the Sphinx.<sup>20</sup>

Given their purported lineal descent from the ancients, the Copts represented one means by which the British could bind the legacy of ancient Egypt with their imperial destiny. Benedict Anderson discusses in his *Imagined Communities* how Dutch colonial officials sought to establish that the ‘natives’ of

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<sup>19</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995), 84-85.

<sup>20</sup> Kinglake, *Eothen*, 185-185.

the East Indies were not, in fact, the descendants of the people that erected the ancient monuments in the colony — that, rather, Indian immigrants were responsible for their construction.<sup>21</sup> A parallel ideological effort, although unofficial during the period in question, separated Copts from Muslims. In such institutions as the Egyptian Society, founded in 1836, travelers to Cairo gathered with the European residents of the city — Egyptologists, physicians, merchants, consuls, and missionaries — and advanced that effort in separation, through the discussion of such matters as the racial origins of the Copts.<sup>22</sup> As each traveler/scholar read the works of his or her forbears in the Society reference library, a ‘conventional wisdom’ developed and spread — that only the Copts had the genetic capacity for greatness.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 181. As Anderson notes at page 178, “museums, and the museumizing imagination, are both profoundly political.”

<sup>22</sup> Philip Sadgrove, “Travellers’ Rendezvous and Cultural Institutions in Muhammad ‘Ali’s Egypt,” in Paul Starkey and Janet Starkey, eds. *Travellers in Egypt* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998), 259-261. By 1841, the Society had 149 members. A general meeting was held each month, in which members delivered papers, principally upon archaeological matters. The Society library was, in fact, located in the Coptic quarter of Cairo. In 1842, the Association Litteraire was founded with comparable aims. The Association was under British sway, given a predominantly British membership and British financing of library acquisitions.

<sup>23</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 176-177. For a traveller’s view of the Society, refer to William Arnold Bromfield, *Letters from Egypt and Syria* (London: Private Circulation, 1856), 58.

## **The Copts in the Evangelical Imagination**

The importance of the Copts for the nineteenth-century Briton was amplified still further by their status as the pioneers of the primitive Church. As the 1839 Egypt installment in the Popular Geographies series reports, “In the earliest period of the Christian era, Alexandria became the stronghold of the true faith, which the number of ruined churches and convents scattered throughout the land attest to have had many followers.”<sup>24</sup> A young evangelical traveler wrote in January 1839, upon a visit to the monasteries of the Natron Lakes, “thousands have lived and died, unknown and unlamented, and found a grave beneath these unfathomable sands: the feet of a mighty army, with noiseless step, have traversed these wilds, to execute their sovereign’s command, and Christian blood has flowed upon the flinty rocks around.”<sup>25</sup>

British evangelicals revered the text of the Scriptures, as the product of divine inspiration.<sup>26</sup> Yet, as Robert Glen notes, “when they turned to their Bibles for guidance they were not primarily after intellectual or historical exegesis of the text. They were searching for guides to holy living, plain truth practically

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<sup>24</sup> Popular Geographies, *Egypt: A Familiar Description of the Land, People, and Produce* (London: William Smith, 1839), 131-132.

<sup>25</sup> Miss Platt, *Journal of a Tour Through Egypt, the Peninsula of Sinai, and the Holy Land in 1838, 1839* (London: Richard Watts, 1841), vol. I, 276-277.

<sup>26</sup> D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 13.

applied.”<sup>27</sup> The text of the Scriptures was the quintessential account of the ‘order’ the Lord had imparted to the world and, hence, the Bible was a distinctly ‘functional’ document.<sup>28</sup> Reverence for the Scriptures reached unprecedented heights as the evangelicals came to the Middle East. In Egypt and the Holy Land, they believed they had before them proof of the literal truth of the Scriptures.<sup>29</sup> The most minute details of life were the subject of elaborate comment, as they related to passages of Scripture.<sup>30</sup> Miss Platt, stepdaughter of an Anglican evangelical clergyman and scholar of the Coptic language, noted in March 1839:

There is something in the appearance of a caravan in the Desert that forcibly reminds one of Patriarchal days. The wild descendant of Ishmael still leads his camels, laden with merchandise, over the sandy plain or through the rocky valley, as did the travelling company of his forefathers, when Joseph was delivered into their hands by his brethren. And the wandering tribes take their black

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Glen, “Those Odious Evangelicals: The Origins and Background of CMS Missionaries in New Zealand,” in Robert Glen, ed. *Mission and Moko: The Church Missionary Society in New Zealand, 1814-1882* (Christchurch, New Zealand: Latimer Fellowship of New Zealand, 1992), 21.

<sup>28</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 58-59.

<sup>29</sup> Pemble, *Mediterranean Passion*, 122 and 185; Sattin, *Lifting the Veil*, 65. For evangelical confessions of that belief, refer to Jowett, *Christian Researches*, 165-166; Lindsay, Earl of Crawford, *Letters on Egypt, Edom, and the Holy Land* (London: Henry Colburn, 1838), vol. I, vi; and Charles Tilt, *The Boat and the Caravan: A Family Tour Through Egypt and Syria* (London: David Bogue, 1847), v-vi.

<sup>30</sup> For the importance of this sort of ‘missionary ethnology,’ refer to Jane Samson, “Ethnology and Theology: Nineteenth-Century Mission Dilemmas in the South Pacific,” in Brian Stanley, ed. *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001).

tents, their flocks, their skins of water, and, with their wives and children, remove from place to place, as in the days of Abraham.<sup>31</sup>

British travelers generally, and evangelicals in particular, could not but approach the Copts with a degree of humility, given the Coptic legacy — and that humility would have an impact upon the strategy missionaries advocated for Egypt. Reverence for the idea of Egypt, for the idea of the Copts that missionaries held, led them to conclude that conversion of the Copts to Anglicanism was not a suitable aim.<sup>32</sup> They advocated, rather, the resurrection of the glories and grandeur of the primitive Church — and resurrection of such primitive glories and grandeur, as the evangelicals perceived them, demanded the imposition of ‘order’ upon the ‘fallen’ Coptic Church.

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<sup>31</sup> Platt, *Journal of a Tour*, vol. II, 130. For further instances, refer to Jowett, *Christian Researches*, 166 and *Our Trip to Egypt*, 123-125.

<sup>32</sup> Such reverence was strictly limited to the *idea* of the Copts, for the actual condition of the community excited only loathing within Jowett. He emphasizes the virtues of kindness and humility, fearful that the missionary to Egypt will trample upon Copts’ sensibilities, given their evidently ‘degraded’ morals. Jowett confesses at page 359, “It is not possible to contemplate this striking contrast between a devout and independent English Bishop, and one in the East who governs perhaps an equally extensive Diocese and yet crouches for his bread, without perceiving that more than common meekness and urbanity are needed to raise such deep depression.”

## Moral Degradation Through Spatial Disorder

The ancient wisdom of the Egyptians has given place, as foretold in the sacred prophecies, to the decrepitude and imbecility of a second childhood.

— An 1849 Deputation of the Malta Protestant College<sup>33</sup>

The apportionment of space in Coptic churches was, for a number of Western travelers, emblematic of contemporary Coptic degradation. Among the travelers, Andrew Paton perhaps best captures the notion, in his *History of the Egyptian Revolution*:

On one occasion I determined on attending Divine service on Palm Sunday in the Coptic cathedral, where the patriarch was to officiate. Plunging into the Coptic quarter, I passed through a succession of crooked lanes, and at length arrived at the temple of this ancient people, which was undistinguished by any architectural decoration, — a truly remarkable lapse in the external circumstances of a nation, when we think of the colossal magnificence of the Pharaonic and the elegance of the Greek periods of Egyptian architecture.<sup>34</sup>

The approach to the Coptic church is a source of frequent bewilderment and consternation to travelers — particularly in Cairo — for, as Paton notes, one can scarcely distinguish a church, in architectural terms, from the prevailing confusion of edifices.<sup>35</sup> Western travelers had a particular interest in scrutinizing the

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<sup>33</sup> *Journal of a Deputation*, 61.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Paton, *A History of the Egyptian Revolution* (London: Trubner, 1870), vol. II, 281-282.

<sup>35</sup> For further such comments, refer to Amelia Cary, *Chow Chow: Selections from a Journal Kept in India, Egypt, and Syria* (London, 1857), vol. II, 85-86. For

traditions and practices of their persecuted Coptic ‘brethren,’ but there remained the perennial problem of finding the churches of such ‘brethren.’ Of concern was not only the difficulty of developing an architectural typology for Coptic churches — one which could facilitate the location and enumeration of Christian places of worship — but the ‘hidden’ character of such churches.

William Jowett recalls his quest to locate the Coptic Patriarch: “The approach to his residence is through mean and narrow streets; the houses lofty, and apparently ready to fall; and the dust suffocating. On arriving at the door of his Convent, the street is so narrow, that the ass on which I rode had but just room to turn round in it. You enter the Patriarch’s gate by a very small wicket.” He proceeded to conclude, “These circumstances display the humble condition, and the timorous spirit, of the Christian Church in Cairo.”<sup>36</sup> Western travelers, evangelical ones in particular, frequently wondered why the Christians of Egypt had, apparently, forsaken pride in their faith. How could Coptic ‘parishioners’ fulfill their spiritual obligations, if places of worship were as difficult to find as the travelers believed they were? Egypt was, after all, the land of bondage, the site of the deliverance through Moses of the chosen people. Egypt was the land of refuge, the site to which the Holy Family fled with the Savior to escape Herod. Finally,

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Cairene architectural development and urban planning, refer to Janet Abu-Lughod, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

<sup>36</sup> Jowett, *Christian Researches*, 111.



Egypt was the land of the primitive Church, an Apostolic Church, the site of conversions to Christianity at the hands of Mark the Evangelist himself.

Upon entering the Coptic church, missionaries are immediately struck by the darkness therein — one that reflects, in their eyes, the poor state of Coptic spirituality. They can scarcely fathom the lack of pews in the church, particularly given the length of the services, and mock the staffs upon which parishioners could lean for support. Jowett memorably remarks that, upon his visit to the Cathedral, he was “squeezed into that part where the Patriarch and the Priests stood; and I could not help feeling how inevitable contagion would be in such a situation, if Plague were in Cairo.”<sup>37</sup> His visits to bishops throughout Egypt were marked by just such consternation, for he frequently discovered animals occupying rooms immediately adjacent to churches in the episcopal residences. Both at Esna and at Akhmīm, Jowett was forced to traverse stables of asses in order to meet with a bishop.<sup>38</sup> For Jowett, such arrangements were odd indeed, for the division of space was not, in his eyes, suitable. To draw upon that last case, an episcopal residence just could not contain a stable, for the existence of a stable in the residence scarcely spoke to the spiritual authority of the bishop therein.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 136 and 157.

<sup>39</sup> The evangelicals are frequently disturbed by an apparent lack of deference to, and respect for, superiors in the Church hierarchy.

In his account of a fierce debate with a number of Copts, one concerned with the construction of churches in remote mountainous areas, a Wesleyan missionary reveals just this concern with planning, functionality, and order:

I asked the reason of their being erected in such lonely places; and they replied, that they had been there built, in order that the people might repair to them with the priests upon stated occasions to pray to God. "But," said I, "it would be more convenient to have them in the towns and inhabited places; is not God here and everywhere?" "Yes," was the answer, "and therefore we go everywhere to seek him; and these mountains are nearer to heaven than are the plains below." "But why," rejoined I, "go to seek God elsewhere, when he is here?" "Because," said one of them, "we shall find him if we seek in many places." This brought to my mind the "high places" of scripture, and I perceived that these nominal Christians had but very poor ideas of the attributes of Jehovah.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, Coptic church services were, in evangelical eyes, scarcely 'functional,' 'ordered' affairs themselves. The travelers and missionaries consistently report their dismay with the marked lack of decorum, the irreverence of Coptic congregations. Andrew Paton recounts of the service he attended, "there was much general conversation and whispering, and at one moment a most audible discussion between the deacons as to the forms of the service." As the Gospels were read to the congregation, the din reached such heights that the priest was reportedly forced to exclaim, "There is no hearing on account of this noise."<sup>41</sup>

Jowett notes that, during a service at the Cathedral, "Some little boys were standing

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<sup>40</sup> MacBair, *Sketches of a Missionary's Travels*, 156.

<sup>41</sup> Paton, *Egyptian Revolution*, vol. II, 283.

laughing and trifling in the presence of the Patriarch; and though one of the Priests reproved them, it seemed to make but little impression on them.”<sup>42</sup>

Beyond the realm of the spiritual, missionaries attacked the lack of order in the administration of the Coptic Church. Jowett repeatedly laments the fact that most priests must secure a living from the charity of their parishioners, that the Church fails to provide each priest with a regular salary. Further, he is bewildered by the absence of meticulous record-keeping.<sup>43</sup> During an April 1819 visit to Akhmīm, Jowett, upon learning that the local bishop had no record of the priests in his diocese, informed his host, “in England, when a man was made Priest, his name was put into a book, and the Bishops, of course, knew their number.” The bishop replied, “the Priests of England are not like ours: they do not go about saying, ‘Give me a piastre — give me two piastres.’”<sup>44</sup>

### **Replacing Superstition with the Text**

Rites, sacraments, and ceremonies, were multiplied, and the magnificence of the churches increased. The use of costly vessels, rich dresses, lights, incense, and music, was introduced, and the Church services performed with imposing pomp and splendour, especially in the administration of the Lord's Supper. A belief in the efficacy of the sign of the cross, of fastings, self-mortification, and pilgrimages, became general. The use of the pictures of saints in

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<sup>42</sup> Jowett, *Christian Researches*, 113. For further such comments, refer to Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 543.

<sup>43</sup> As Walter Ong explains, “Orality knows no lists or charts or figures.” Refer to his *Orality and Literacy*, Routledge edition (London, 2002), 97.

<sup>44</sup> Jowett, *Christian Researches*, 157.

churches and the veneration of their relics were encouraged, and churches were dedicated to them. The number of saints' festivals was greatly increased, to the serious interruption of industrial pursuits, and the demoralization of the people, who spent them mostly in idleness and vice.

— An 1849 Deputation of the Malta Protestant College,  
on the Decline of the Coptic Church<sup>45</sup>

Of perhaps greatest concern to the evangelical was the ‘superstition’ in which the Copts were steeped. The facet of such ‘superstition’ that drew by far the most vitriolic comment, was monasticism. Evangelicals could scarcely conceive of how cloistering oneself in an austere desert convent could serve the purposes of the Lord. Of the monks of the White Convent, near Edfu, one evangelical traveler characteristically remarked in 1838, “Banished from the world, with scarcely an idea beyond the trifling occupations of their nearly useless days, — and living almost in ignorance of the doctrine of the Holy Religion, which, amidst many corruptions, has been handed down to them from so remote a period, — they are indeed objects of pity.”<sup>46</sup> Devoid of ‘function,’ the monastic life was thoroughly reproached.<sup>47</sup>

Emblematic of such reproach is an encounter recounted in a considerable proportion of the nineteenth-century travel accounts, with an astonishing degree of consistency. The scene is the Monastery of the Virgin Mary at Jabal al-Tayr, or the

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<sup>45</sup> *Journal of a Deputation*, 114.

<sup>46</sup> Platt, *Journal of a Tour*, vol. I, 180.

<sup>47</sup> For a particularly strong attack, refer to Jowett, *Christian Researches*, 128-129.

Mountain of the Birds, near Minyā.<sup>48</sup> As the Nile cangier approaches the mountain, a pair of naked monks with lengthy beards emerge from the monastery, descend from the cliffs at a phenomenal pace, and plunge into the river, all the time exclaiming ‘Christiano Howaga,’ in an effort to draw the view of the traveler. Upon reaching the cangier, the monks ask their ‘Christian brethren’ for a ‘charitable donation’ to the monastery. After coins are secured, brandy and wine are, according to all such accounts, demanded.<sup>49</sup>

The incident prompts, for the most part, expressions of the utmost disappointment and disgust. Stephen Olin notes, “I seldom give to beggars who, like the present applicant, forfeit their claim to charity by a professional devotion of their lives to the work of disgracing the Gospel as well as human nature.”<sup>50</sup> The monastic visitor to the cangier of W. H. Bartlett “was a stalwart rogue, and as he stood, *in puris naturalibus*, upon the deck, I thought that had there been any on board to whom it would have signified, I would have had him soundly switched with the corbash [*kurbāj*, whip] and kicked into his favourite element,

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<sup>48</sup> For background on the site, refer to Otto Meinardus, *Coptic Saints and Pilgrimages* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2002), 78-79.

<sup>49</sup> Henry Paul Measor, *A Tour in Egypt* (Rivington, 1844), 107-108; Bayle St. John, *Village Life in Egypt* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), vol. I, 264; Smith, *Pilgrimage to Egypt*, 125-126; Tilt, *Boat and Caravan*, 69.

<sup>50</sup> Stephen Olin, *Travels in Egypt* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1843), vol. I, 141.

notwithstanding our Christian brotherhood.”<sup>51</sup> John Foulkes Jones laments the existence of such a “ragless dupe of superstition.”<sup>52</sup>

For the evangelicals, not merely the monks, but all the Coptic Orthodox of Egypt, were ‘dupes of superstition.’ Although members of an Apostolic Church, they had lost the purity which — the evangelicals believed — must have characterized their forms of worship long prior. They had developed superstitious customs with no basis in the Scriptures and, thus, corrupted the faith. According to Jowett, “When the Teachers are destitute of learning, Ignorance becomes inveterate; and Superstition sways her leaden scepter, commanding generation after generation.”<sup>53</sup>

Evangelical travelers are struck by the Copts’ attachment to particular holy sites, and by the extent of pilgrimage to such sites. The focus of the evangelical attack is not the notion of pilgrimage — for the travelers were, indeed, pilgrims themselves — but the criteria for the selection of such sites. Whereas the Copts revered particular sites in light of tradition, ‘scientific’ topographical observation and close reading of the Bible directed the evangelical. The latter frequently engaged in frenzied debates as to whether the landscape of a particular site adhered

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<sup>51</sup> Bartlett, *Nile Boat*, 119.

<sup>52</sup> Jones, *Egypt in Its Biblical Relations*, 73.

<sup>53</sup> Jowett, *Christian Researches*, 5. For the European response to Muslim ‘superstition,’ refer to Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 39.

to that described in the Scriptures.<sup>54</sup> Such ‘scientific’ exercises in Biblical geography were an obsession for evangelical travelers, particularly in the Sinai — and in most cases, constituted the principal motivation for the pilgrimage. The notion that tradition was of value in determining the authenticity of a holy site was cast aside as mere ‘superstition.’<sup>55</sup>

One holy site the Copts revered was the Grotto of Saint Sergius, in which, according to tradition, the Holy Family had found refuge during their residence in Egypt. Upon a visit to the site in December 1838, an evangelical traveler concludes that the grotto is artificial, and proceeds to argue, “it was made and ornamented by those whose avarice induced them to hope that they might reap a rich reward in representing the place, to the superstitious enthusiasm of the early Egyptian Christians, as one which it behooved them to regard with the utmost veneration.”<sup>56</sup> A further such site was a sycamore at Matariya, known among the Copts as the Tree of the Virgin Mary, and reputed to have provided shade to the Holy Family during the flight into Egypt.<sup>57</sup> Of the authenticity of the claim, William Arnold Bromfield remarks, “Without placing implicit faith in a story

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<sup>54</sup> Pemble, *Mediterranean Passion*, 184.

<sup>55</sup> One must keep in mind, as Bebbington emphasizes at page 57 of his *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, that evangelicals were products of the Enlightenment, and had no aversion to ‘empirical,’ ‘scientific’ methods at all. There were, indeed, ardent Newtonians among them.

<sup>56</sup> Platt, *Journal of a Tour*, vol. I, 239.

<sup>57</sup> For detailed background on the site, refer to Meinardus, *Coptic Saints and Pilgrimages*, 89-92.

handed down amongst a Christian sect so notoriously ignorant and superstitious as the Copts, I can yet believe the tree may have been in existence at the time of the ‘flight,’ for its appearance indicates extreme age.” Nevertheless, exercising his distinctly ‘scientific’ powers of observation, Bromfield concludes, “the tree must have been in its infancy in those days, and much too youthful to have afforded any great degree of shade to the holy and way-worn group.”<sup>58</sup>

Why was the elimination of ‘superstition’ of such urgency? Why was ‘superstition’ such a great threat to the missionary cause? As long as there remained ‘superstition,’ the missionary could not ‘capture’ the Copt, could not grasp or control the individual. ‘Superstition’ was a region to which the missionary had no access, and thus, they sought to eliminate or, at least, domesticate ‘superstition.’ The means to the realization of that vital task was the text.

### **The Role of Recitation**

For the missionaries, the ‘blind,’ ‘ritualistic’ recitation that characterized Coptic worship was the epitome of ‘superstition’ — a field devoid of utility and order and, hence, a field the missionaries could scarcely infiltrate and control.<sup>59</sup> For the missionary, worship was about grasping a particular message, and how

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<sup>58</sup> Bromfield, *Letters from Egypt and Syria*, 211. For a detailed condemnation of Coptic motivations for pilgrimage, refer to Tilt, *Boat and Caravan*, 227-228.

<sup>59</sup> Robert Maxwell MacBrair, *Sketches of a Missionary’s Travels in Egypt* (London, 1839), 151-152.



could Christians grasp the message of God if they uttered the Scriptures in a language, Coptic, they could not understand?

In examining the practice of recitation among Egyptian monks in the third and fourth centuries, William A. Graham's *Beyond the Written Word* hints at an answer. Of the Pachomians, he notes that they engaged in the chanting of memorized Scripture throughout the day, particularly during labor.<sup>60</sup> Such chanting was the cornerstone of the monks' notion of meditation. In this context, one might recall Walter Ong's observation, "Protracted orally based thought, even when not in formal verse, tends to be highly rhythmic, for rhythm aids recall, even physiologically."<sup>61</sup> For his part, Graham cites Jean Leclercq: "to meditate is to read a text and to learn it 'by heart' in the fullest sense of this expression, that is to say, with one's whole being: with the body, since the mouth pronounces it, with the memory which fixes it, with the intelligence which understands its meaning, and with the will which longs to put it into practice."<sup>62</sup>

Winifred Blackman's *Fellahin of Upper Egypt*, published in 1927, and S. H. Leeder's *Modern Sons of the Pharaohs*, published in 1918, provide specific hints as to the role recitation and, in particular, the blind Coptic 'arīf, who so mystified the

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<sup>60</sup> For details on the Pachomians, refer to Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

<sup>61</sup> Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, Routledge edition (London, 2002), 34.

<sup>62</sup> W. A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge, 1987), 134.

missionaries, once held in the Coptic community. Blackman and Leeder confirm that there once existed among Coptic Christians a commitment to recitation comparable to that which exists among Muslims — not in the Arabic language, but in the Coptic.<sup>63</sup> Arabic was the chief medium of instruction in Coptic *kuttābs* as in Muslim *kuttābs*, and Arabic was the language all the inhabitants of Egypt, Christians and Muslims, spoke.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, as Blackman and Leeder note, indispensable to the performance of Coptic church services was the Coptic language.

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<sup>63</sup> Indispensable to an understanding of the Muslim *kuttāb* and recitational learning are the works of Dale F. Eickelman, “The Art of Memory: Islamic Education and its Social Reproduction,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20 (1978), 485-516 and *Knowledge and Power in Morocco: The Education of a Twentieth-Century Notable* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). The latter is a social biography of a Berber *qādi*, Hajj ‘Abd ar-Rahman Mansuri, through which Eickelman questions the purportedly ‘rote’ nature of recitational learning. Comprehension of a sacred text is cast as a matter not of exegesis, but of working text into context — that is, of citing sacred texts in appropriate contexts, weaving a fabric of rhetoric from Qur’anic references and poetry. At page 63, he observes, “Former students emphasized that throughout the long process of memorizing the Quran, they asked no questions concerning the meaning of verses, even among themselves, nor did it occur to them to do so.” There was a different notion of ‘comprehension’ at work in the *kuttāb*. As to the Yemeni context, Brinkley Messick makes a similar point at page 92 of his *Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): “It is in the ‘heard’ texts mode that instruction most closely approximates the ideals of the legitimate transmission of knowledge.” Finally, as to the Egyptian context, refer to Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur’an* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2001).

<sup>64</sup> For a fascinating look at the role of classical Arabic in everyday life, refer to Niloofar Haeri, *Sacred Language, Ordinary People: Dilemmas of Culture and Politics in Egypt* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Coptic is a textual rendition of the ancient Egyptian vernacular, with an alphabet of Greek and Demotic characters. Although the language thrived in Egypt from the fourth to the seventh centuries, Coptic came to suffer a gradual decline in the wake of the Arab invasion. By 706, Arabic had replaced Coptic in affairs of state; by the tenth century, as Muslims came to exceed Christians in number, Arabic displaced Coptic in conversation; and by the twelfth century, the Patriarch had introduced Arabic into church services.<sup>65</sup> Yet, Coptic was preserved in such services, and developed the aspect of a sacral language. By the nineteenth century, no Copts, with the exception of a small number of priests at the Patriarchate in Cairo, understood Coptic — that is, Coptic had no broad ‘exegetical significance’ in Egypt. Nevertheless, utterance of Coptic liturgies and portions of the Coptic Scriptures was of such spiritual importance to the Copts that Coptic characters were transliterated into Arabic script to facilitate recitation.<sup>66</sup>

Blackman recounts her experience of the funeral procession of a Copt in a Fayyūm village. In her words, “The priest was accompanied by the ‘*arīf*, as the

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<sup>65</sup> William H. Worrell, *A Short Account of the Copts* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1945), 8 and Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity* (London: Methuen, 1968), 18. For the spread of Arabic and Islam in Egypt, refer to Ahmad Mukhtar Umar, *Tārīkh al-lughā al-‘Arabiyya fī Misr* (Cairo: Al-Haya al-Misriyya al-‘amma lil-ta’līf wa-al-nashr, 1970) and Qasim ‘Abduh Qasim, *Athār al-Islām fī Misr: wa athar Misr fī al-hadara al-‘Arabiyya al-Islāmiyya* (Cairo: Matba‘at al-Hay’a al-‘Ammā li-Qusur al-Thaqafa, 1999).

<sup>66</sup> Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians, Written in Egypt During the Years 1833-1835*, reprint of 1896 edition (London: Darf Publishers, 1986), 541.

man who leads the singing in a Coptic church is called. The latter was quite blind, and had a very resonant voice. When he sang he accompanied himself on a pair of cymbals. There was a great deal of this ‘music,’ and also recitations by the priest of portions of the Gospels.”<sup>67</sup> Later in the text, she clarifies the role of the Coptic cantor, the ‘*arīf*, whom the nineteenth-century evangelicals had labeled a schoolmaster: “Coptic boys acquire a smattering of the ancient language when at the school of the ‘*arīf*, the title of the officiant who leads the singing in the church.”<sup>68</sup>

Leeder offers a range of revealing observations. He emphasizes the importance of inaudible prayer in church services. As to the role of the choir in services, he notes, “there is something wildly impressive and exciting in the great shout of praise and supplication which goes up.”<sup>69</sup> Again, one might recall Ong’s observation, “Oral communication unites people in groups. Writing and reading are solitary activities that throw the psyche back on itself.”<sup>70</sup> In line with nineteenth-century evangelical remarks, Leeder wonders at the choice of Coptic priests to employ ancient homilies in their services, rather than draft sermons themselves. Further, he notes, “The practice of private prayer is strictly observed

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<sup>67</sup> W. S. Blackman, *The Fellahin of Upper Egypt: Their Religious, Social, and Industrial Life To-day with Special Reference to Survivals from Ancient Times* (London, 1927), 125.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>69</sup> S. H. Leeder, *Modern Sons of the Pharaohs: A Study of the Manners and Customs of the Copts of Egypt* (London, 1918), 197.

<sup>70</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 68.

by the pious Copt. Like the Jews, he prays seven times a day.”<sup>71</sup> Such prayers are uttered while Copts are engaged in labor, and “some repeat the whole Book of Psalms during the ‘seven times’; others use the rosary to keep count of the frequent repetitions of the Lord’s Prayer and the Kyrie Eleison.”<sup>72</sup>

Such comments render the nineteenth-century evangelicals’ miscomprehension of ‘*arīf*’ blindness, with which I opened Chapter Two, comprehensible. As William Graham explains, “The evidence is substantial that it is in only relatively recent history, and specifically in the modern West, that the book has become a silent object, the written word a silent sign, and the reader a silent spectator.”<sup>73</sup> When Scripture was spoken, the blind were not emblematic of spiritual darkness, as they were for the evangelicals.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, of blindness in Mamluk Egypt, Fedwa Malti-Douglas has written, “this physical marginality is not that of a handicap, but merely one of physical difference, of a variation from the normal, and not one which excludes from society as a whole. Hence, in this

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<sup>71</sup> Leeder, *Modern Sons*, 219.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>73</sup> Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, 45.

<sup>74</sup> For comparative purposes, refer to Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

schema, a blind individual is physically different but not necessarily handicapped.”<sup>75</sup>

One hardly knows whether to label as ironic or tragic the choice of Presbyterian missionaries in 1867 to instruct Coptic ‘*arīfs* “to read Arabic in the embossed characters of the system invented by Mr. Moon of Brighton. It is proposed to employ them as teachers of the blind.”<sup>76</sup> As early as 1849, a deputation from the Malta Protestant College had declared the spread of texts with embossed characters in Egypt a priority, using the following reasoning: “this would be an incalculable blessing to the very large number of unhappy blind, who are now reduced to a state of complete brutish darkness and misery; they would be capable of becoming spiritually enlightened at some later period by the study of the whole of God’s Word.”<sup>77</sup>

### **Textualizing Tradition**

Anglican clergyman Henry Tattam believed he could perceive a utility and order in the Coptic language. Tattam was no innovator, for the German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher had studied Coptic at the Vatican in the seventeenth century, as

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<sup>75</sup> F. Malti-Douglas, “*Mentalités* and Marginality: Blindness and Mamluk Civilization,” in C. E. Bosworth, C. Issawi, R. Savory, and A. L. Udovitch, eds. *The Islamic World: From Classical to Modern Times* (Princeton, 1989), 218.

<sup>76</sup> Archives of the Board of Foreign Missions, United Presbyterian Church of North America, *Egyptian Missionary Association Minutes*, reference VMX48 Eg98ma, 175.

<sup>77</sup> *Journal of a Deputation*, 63.

part of the effort to decipher hieroglyphics.<sup>78</sup> Yet, Tattam was the European researcher who introduced the grammatical study of Coptic into Egypt, with the aid of the Reverend Lieder. The interest in Coptic Tattam had developed derived principally from his quest for ancient manuscripts of Scripture, to benefit scholars of the Bible.<sup>79</sup> As he visited Egypt in search of such manuscripts, he came to realize the implications his work could have for the contemporary Copts.<sup>80</sup>

Of students in the Coptic *kuttāb*, a deputation from the Malta Protestant College would complain, “Portions of the Psalms, Gospels, and Epistles are taught in Arabic, and also portions of the Gospels, Epistles, and Liturgy in Coptic. They do not, however, learn the Coptic language grammatically; and it is said that there is not a Copt to be found, who can speak or write it correctly.”<sup>81</sup> In line with such thinking, Tattam was convinced that, if they were provided with grammars and lexicons, the Copts could develop a ‘rational,’ ‘ordered’ grasp of their language. As Mitchell notes, for the nineteenth-century Orientalist, “Language was to be considered part of an ideal realm, like law and custom (and later culture or social structure), the realm that gives ‘form’ to people’s ordinary life. This form was

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<sup>78</sup> Bernal, *Black Athena*, vol. I, 164.

<sup>79</sup> According to Henry Tattam, cited in Association for the Furtherance of Christianity in Egypt, ed. *Christianity in Egypt: Letters and Papers Concerning the Coptic Church, 1836-1848* (London, 1883), 35, “the Coptic New Testament is a very close translation from the original Greek.”

<sup>80</sup> For details of the linguistic work Tattam undertook, refer to E. L. Butcher, *The Story of the Church of Egypt*, vol. II (London: Smith and Elder, 1897), 395-396.

<sup>81</sup> *Journal of a Deputation*, 23.

something unique to a particular people.”<sup>82</sup> One could ‘reach’ the Copts, in spiritual terms, only through their ‘native’ language. If the Copts were to return, as a people, to their former greatness, they had to reject the language of their ‘oppressors,’ and embrace that of their illustrious ancestors.<sup>83</sup>

Whereas a number of CMS colleagues and evangelical travelers to Egypt encouraged Lieder to work for the eradication of Coptic, the missionary grasped the spiritual importance of the language for the Coptic Orthodox, as reflected in church services. Beyond that, however, in line with Orientalist thought, he attributed importance to the restoration of the Copts’ ‘native’ language. Hence, in cooperation with Tattam, he fostered the grammatical study of Coptic, and promoted the publication of selected sacred texts. Both Lieder and Tattam aimed at supplanting ‘superstitious’ recitation with the ‘scientific’ study of Coptic texts.

Through the science of grammar and the technology of printing, the missionaries had undertaken an effort to infiltrate language, one rooted in ‘textualization.’ For Lieder, to convert the Copts, one had to grasp, quite literally, their heritage, their traditions, their identity — hence, the plundering of monasteries in the relentless quest for manuscripts. Once the manuscripts were in the hands of the evangelical, secure at last — for the ‘natives’ had no conception of their

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<sup>82</sup> Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 141. For the political implications of such a conception of language, refer to E. W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995), 121-123.

<sup>83</sup> C. R. Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai*, trans. Leonora and Joanna Horner, revised by the author (London: H. G. Bohn, 1853), 36.



significance — the process of ‘rationalizing’ and ‘textualizing’ Coptic heritage, traditions, and identity could begin. Thereafter, the evangelical could impart to the unwitting Copts a ‘rational,’ ‘textual’ grasp of their heritage, traditions, and identity.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Imbibing Improvement: Lieder and Hekekyan, 1820-1830**

While most of the nations of Europe have, in our own times, been either convulsed by sanguinary democratic revolutions or oppressed by military despotism, what has been the cause of the uninterrupted peace and prosperity enjoyed by Great Britain, but the fact of a large proportion of her people being governed in the discharge of their public and private duties by the faith and morality of the Bible? The clear inference to be deduced from this incontestable fact is, that the only way of restoring to the Egyptians the blessings of Christian civilization is to provide them with the means of obtaining a good education based on the doctrines and precepts of God's holy Word.

— An 1849 Deputation of the Malta Protestant College<sup>1</sup>

Johann Rudolf Gottlieb Lieder was born in Erfurt in 1798 to Prussian parents. Joseph Hekekyan was born in Istanbul in 1807 to Armenian Catholic parents. Although the two men were born into starkly different worlds — and, for that matter, worlds apart from England — both would come to embrace the peculiarly English obsession with moral improvement, and venture to Egypt to inculcate this obsession throughout the land, principally by means of education.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of a Deputation Sent to the East by the Committee of the Malta Protestant College, in 1849: Containing an Account of the Present State of the Oriental Nations, Including Their Religion, Learning, Education, Customs, and Occupations: With Outlines of Their Ecclesiastical and Political History; of the Rise and Decay of Knowledge Among Them; and of the Doctrines and Discipline of the Ancient Christian Churches*, Part I (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1854), 201.

<sup>2</sup> As to the history of modern education in Egypt, the seminal work in the field remains Ahmad ‘Izzat ‘Abd al-Karīm’s mammoth *Tārīkh al-Ta‘līm fī ‘Asr Muhammad ‘Ali* (Cairo: Matba‘at al-Nahda al-Misriyya, 1938). The only

Lieder was working as a shoemaker when he decided to enter the Basel Seminary, in Switzerland. The main reservoir of support for the evangelical movement at large was the artisan community, ranging from shoemakers to carpenters — and most nineteenth-century missionaries were drawn from such ranks. The artisans were social climbers, convinced that, through disciplined labor, they could achieve their aspirations. For their part, the Pietists at Basel revered the text of the Scriptures, not merely as the product of divine inspiration, but as a distinctly ‘functional’ document. To work with industry and discipline was, for the Pietists, to adhere to the plan of the Lord for Creation, to the ‘Scriptural order.’ Hence, the education the seminarists received was structured with the aim of instilling industry and discipline.

Hekekyan’s father, a civil servant in the administration of Mehmed Ali, Egypt’s Ottoman *vali* or viceroy, sent him, at age ten, to England to pursue his education.<sup>3</sup> His parents had, perhaps rather curiously, dubbed the young man the ‘little Englishman’ prior to his departure, given a predilection for English manners.

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comparable English-language history is J. Heyworth-Dunne’s *Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt* (London: Luzac, 1938), although Amir Boktor’s *School and Society in the Valley of the Nile* (Cairo: Elias' Modern Press, 1936) deserves a look.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmed Abd al-Rahim Mustafa claims Hekekyan’s father was a translator. Beyond his English-language chapter about the Hekekyan Papers, cited in the Introduction, Mustafa has published an Arabic-language book entitled ‘*Asr Hakākyān*’ (Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Misriyya al-‘āmma li’l-kitāb, 1990). Pages 71 to 88 deal specifically with the Hekekyan Papers, providing background of slightly greater detail than that in the English-language chapter.

Hekekyan lived up to the label, embracing the values of the mythic ‘English gentleman’ and striving fiercely to embody them. During his studies in England, at Clapham Academy and Stonyhurst College, he rubbed shoulders with sons of the ‘respectable’ folk whose approval he sought, and gradually lost whatever facility he had once enjoyed in the languages of his childhood. After the death of the boy’s father in Cairo, Mehmed Ali undertook responsibility for Hekekyan’s maintenance, with the understanding that the Armenian — like several young Ottoman students dispatched to Paris by the *vali* — would ultimately come to Egypt, prepared to help the viceroy realize ambitious reform aims in such fields as the military, agriculture, industry, and education.<sup>4</sup>

Lieder and Hekekyan brought a distinctive sensibility to their educational endeavors in Egypt — one rooted in their respective backgrounds. Above all, they aimed to impart ‘modern morals’ to the Egyptians, through the disciplinary modes of education pioneered by the British and Foreign School Society. To that end, they were ardent ‘textualizers,’ entirely committed to ‘technologizing the word,’ fostering the spread of literacy, the textbook and the catechism. Indeed, only

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<sup>4</sup> Mustafa suggests that Hekekyan’s father asked Mehmed Ali’s permission to send his son to England, only upon learning that the Pasha had decided to send an educational mission to Paris — implying that Hekekyan’s education was financed by Mehmed Ali even before his father’s death. However, the autobiographical sketch in the Hekekyan Papers gives a different impression. Although fascinating, Hekekyan’s journals of his education in England have never been published. For the sake of comparison, refer to Rifa‘a Rafi‘ al-Tahtāwi, *An Imam in Paris: Al-Tahtawi’s Visit to France (1826-1831)*, trans. Daniel L. Newman (London: Saqi, 2004).

through print could they accomplish their aim of imparting morals to the masses. To exert moral authority on a mass scale, they could not rely on local networks — to invoke Ong’s words, the ‘wise old man and wise old woman’ who, as ‘repeaters of the past,’ possessed social influence in an oral culture.<sup>5</sup> They had to step beyond such intermediaries, to establish a relationship with the individual — and still further, a relationship of power, a relationship that could have an impact upon the behavior of the individual. The inculcation of an abstract morality through disciplinary education thus depended upon the selective invocation of the rhetoric of faith, as will become apparent in Chapter Five.

### **The Emergence of Evangelical Mission in Egypt**

In June 1811, Dr. Cleardo Naudi, a Maltese Catholic, addressed a letter to the headquarters of the CMS in London. He lamented the state of ‘degradation’ into which Eastern Christendom had fallen, and called upon the Anglican Church to ‘enlighten’ the Eastern Churches, given the failure of Rome to effect change.<sup>6</sup> Naudi was shuttled to London and appointed the CMS correspondent at Malta. The Mediterranean Mission then inaugurated would, as Naudi had requested, aim at the

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<sup>5</sup> Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, Routledge edition (London, 2002), 41.

<sup>6</sup> Roman Catholic missions had long proselytised within Egypt and, despite the claim of Dr. Naudi, were then causing the Coptic Orthodox Patriarch, Peter VII, much consternation. According to Edith L. Butcher, *The Story of the Church of Egypt* (London: Smith and Elder, 1897), vol. II, 394, the Catholics had developed a Uniat Church upon Egyptian soil during the eighteenth century.

spiritual revival of the fallen Eastern Churches.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, there was, throughout, a broader aim in mind — the conversion of the heathen of Asia and Africa. Given limited resources, the CMS was incapable of converting all the Muslims and pagans who rimmed the Mediterranean — but if the existing Churches in such areas were infused with the evangelical ethos, with an uncorrupted Christian spirit, then perhaps, both by example and through missionary zeal, they could contribute to the conversion of the heathen themselves.<sup>8</sup>

By 1815, triumph at Waterloo had enabled British missionaries to enter the Mediterranean field in earnest.<sup>9</sup> William Jowett, a Cambridge graduate and the son of a founding member of the Society, was designated ‘Literary Representative’ of

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<sup>7</sup> Protestant missionaries had entered Egypt prior to the advent of the CMS Mediterranean Mission, but had experienced little success, principally given the rulers’ hostility to their efforts. Lyle L. Vander Werff, *Christian Mission to Muslims, the Record: Anglican and Reformed Approaches in India and the Near East, 1800-1938* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1977), 100, cites the work of the Lutheran Peter Heyling in 1632, and that of a series of Moravians from 1768 to 1783.

<sup>8</sup> Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899), vol. I, 222-225. The Roman Catholic Church could not act as an ally in such efforts, given the ‘snare’ of Papal infallibility. The Eastern Churches, despite their degradation, suffered under no comparably pernicious doctrine, according to the evangelicals.

<sup>9</sup> Vander Werff, *Christian Mission to Muslims*, 153. British forces numbering 22,000 had landed at Abu Qir in 1801, with the aim of expelling the French from the Ottoman province and, thereby, securing threatened communications and commercial links to India and the Persian Gulf. Although the French evacuated Egypt that year, British officials continued to perceive their French foes as a threat in the eastern Mediterranean. The British yielded control of Egypt to the Ottoman Sultan as agreed in the 1802 Treaty of Amiens, but maintained a strong naval presence in the vicinity.

the CMS for the Mediterranean, and dispatched to survey the field. He visited Egypt in 1819, 1820, and 1823. Jowett concluded that a presence in the country would serve CMS aims, for both Alexandria and Cairo were superb points of access to commercial networks that ran through Asia and Africa — networks that could facilitate the swift spread of the missionary message to the heathen.<sup>10</sup>

However, by the mid-1820s, there was a further factor that spoke strongly in favor of Alexandria and Cairo as mission stations. In response to petitions condemning missionary activity in Syria, the Ottoman Sultan issued a *firman* in 1824 prohibiting the import of the Scriptures into the Empire.<sup>11</sup> Egypt, although a titular province within that Empire, had long pursued a distinctly independent approach to policy in a number of matters, under the leadership of Mehmed Ali.

One such matter was that of relations with Christians. From roughly the mid-1820s through to his death, Mehmed Ali is lauded in travelers' accounts for his policy of religious tolerance, for his elimination of 'native fanaticism,' and for the unprecedented security and freedom of movement he offered citizens of Western powers within his domains. According to Andrew Paton, "His great object was to get the European powers to think favourably of his rule; and this was most likely to be accomplished by strict protection of Franks and Christians."<sup>12</sup> Travelers note

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<sup>10</sup> Jowett, *Christian Researches*, 369.

<sup>11</sup> Stock, *History of the CMS*, vol. I, 230-231.

<sup>12</sup> Paton, *Egyptian Revolution*, vol. II, 281. According to Henry Dodwell, *The Founder of Modern Egypt: A Study of Muhammad 'Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge

that they could visit the mosques of Cairo and ride horses without harassment.<sup>13</sup> Further, the position of Copts within the administration was elevated, to the point that a number received the title, ‘bey.’<sup>14</sup> An Anglican clergyman reported to the Archbishop of Canterbury in March 1840, “Now all religions are equally tolerated and protected in Egypt; and all persons are appointed to offices of trust in the Government without any reference to their religious creed.”<sup>15</sup>

The question of Mehmed Ali’s relations with Christians came into particularly sharp focus during his occupation of Greater Syria during the 1830s.<sup>16</sup> The occupation was run from day to day by Mehmed Ali’s son, Ibrahim — and Ibrahim went to great lengths to demonstrate his good will towards the Christian inhabitants of the areas brought under Egyptian rule. In April 1834, a British diplomat in Beirut reported, “The great complaint of the people is the excessive taxation; but the Christians of all denominations and even Jews admit, that while

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University Press, 1931), 239, the policy of religious tolerance Muhammad Ali embraced stood in stark contrast to that which his predecessors had maintained. The latter had required Christians to wear distinctive clothing.

<sup>13</sup> Bromfield, *Letters from Egypt and Syria*, 58; Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 547.

<sup>14</sup> Jacques Tagher, *Christians in Muslim Egypt: An Historical Study of the Relations Between Copts and Muslims from 640 to 1922* (Altenberge: Oros Verlag, 1998), 199.

<sup>15</sup> Henry Tattam, cited in Association for the Furtherance of Christianity in Egypt, ed. *Christianity in Egypt: Letters and Papers Concerning the Coptic Church, 1836-1848* (London, 1883), 35.

<sup>16</sup> For details of the occupation, refer to Latifa M. Salim, *Al-Hukm al-Misri fi al-Sham, 1831-1841* (Cairo: Madbuli, 1990). In English, there is Fred H. Lawson’s *Social Origins of Egyptian Expansionism During the Muhammad ‘Ali Period* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).



the taxes are high, there is great justice done to all classes, for the Turks are not allowed to rule as arbitrarily as before.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed, upon visiting a Roman Catholic convent at Jerusalem, Ibrahim was said to have “requested to know whether it would be necessary for him to take off his sabre and his babouches before entering, as it was his wish and desire to comply with the usual forms and ceremonies.”<sup>18</sup>

Of critical importance to missionaries, who sought to spread their message as widely as possible, were the issues of security and freedom of movement — and as Mehmed Ali broadened his domains, that sphere of security broadened as well, to the great satisfaction of mission societies. In his *Sketches of a Missionary's Travels*, Robert MacBrair, a Methodist missionary who traveled through Egypt in 1834 and 1835, extols his “rights as an Englishman, — rights which are far superior to those of the highest Egyptian subject under Mohammed’s government, by procuring a firman, and by having the union jack flying from the stern of my *cangier*.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Public Record Office, London, reference FO 195/119, MacKenna to Campbell, 22 April 1834.

<sup>18</sup> Public Record Office, London, reference FO 195/119, Campbell to Ponsonby, 25 April 1834.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Maxwell MacBrair, *Sketches of a Missionary's Travels in Egypt, Syria, Western Africa* (London, 1839), 122.

## **Molding Missionaries**

Jowett remained in the Mediterranean field intermittently until 1832, residing principally at Malta, the headquarters for CMS efforts in the area.<sup>20</sup> However, the inaugural CMS contingent to reside upon Egyptian soil had arrived on the scene in 1825. John Lieder, William Kruse, Theodor Muller, and Christian Kugler were representatives of the English Church Missionary Society — but not one among them was English. They were Lutherans and their native tongue was German. They had received their education at the Basel Seminary, with whom the CMS had developed a cordial relationship.<sup>21</sup> CMS recruitment from both the Basel and the Berlin Seminaries was then critical to the survival of the Society. The CMS simply could not find Englishmen, of ‘suitable’ backgrounds, willing to embrace the missionary lifestyle.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, vol. I (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899), 349.

<sup>21</sup> The Seminary had emerged in 1815 under the aegis of the German Society for Christianity, and dispatched graduates to the field with the CMS, the Dutch Missionary Society, and the North German Missionary Society. Paul Jenkins discusses the relationship in “The Church Missionary Society and the Basel Mission: An Early Experiment in Inter-European Cooperation,” in Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley, eds. *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000). For a broader view, refer to Andrew F. Walls, “The Eighteenth-Century Protestant Missionary Awakening in Its European Context,” in Brian Stanley, ed. *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> According to Jon Miller, *The Social Control of Religious Zeal: A Study of Organizational Contradictions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 42, from 1820 to 1850, roughly one hundred missionaries educated at Basel were recruited by the CMS. Jocelyn Murray, *Proclaim the Good News: A Short*

Stuart Piggin has analyzed the social roots of contemporaneous Protestant missionaries to India, and concluded that those roots were modest indeed. Mission work was attractive to artisans for, as Piggin notes, mission societies “offered an education which the State did not provide and which applicants could rarely afford; they paid a regular salary; they undertook the expense of educating the children of missionaries; they pensioned those who had to retire through ill health; and they offered benefits for widowed and orphaned children.”<sup>23</sup> An 1824 letter from the head of the Basel Seminary to CMS headquarters in London confirms that, prior to their admission to the Basel Seminary, both Lieder and Kruse had worked as shoemakers, Kugler as a farmer, and Muller as a butcher and then an usher in a boys’ school.<sup>24</sup>

The profile of the India missionaries Piggin develops speaks plainly to the evangelical conception of Christianity as industry, discipline, and order: “They were dynamic opportunists, who longed to work with ‘efficiency,’ to maximise their ‘usefulness,’ to ‘improve’ everything they touched, and to make everybody

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*History of the Church Missionary Society* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), 12, relates that in the inaugural years of the Society, the dismissal meetings wherein CMS representatives were given their charge remained rather cursory affairs, for most such representatives lacked the facility in English to reply to the charge. Of the twenty-four inaugural Society representatives, only seven were English — and of the Englishmen, only three had received ordination.

<sup>23</sup> Stuart Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries, 1789-1858: The Social Background, Motives, and Training of British Protestant Missionaries to India* (Sutton Courtenay Press, 1984), 128.

<sup>24</sup> Archives of the Church Missionary Society, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, Blumhardt to Pratt, 3 July 1824, reference G/AC 14a/26.

‘respectable.’”<sup>25</sup> However, Piggin speaks in general terms of the missionaries of a number of societies. Expanding upon such research, Jon Miller develops a social profile specific to the Basel Seminary. He reveals that Basel in fact *sought* applicants of modest social origins, for the Seminary believed that such applicants would willingly accept authority and conform to rules, given the improvement in social standing education bestowed upon them: “It was received wisdom among the missions of the time that uniformity in beliefs, education, and experience contributed to predictability and efficiency in training and was the key to rank-and-file conformity.”<sup>26</sup>

The Seminary was Pietist and, as Miller notes, hierarchy, rules, and obedience were then critical facets of the Pietist world view.<sup>27</sup> Seminarists were expected to accept, without question, the authority of the Seminary Committee and Inspector. Ambition, creativity, and initiative were consistently discouraged, as detrimental to the spirit of subjection the Seminary hierarchy sought to inculcate.<sup>28</sup> In fact, the Seminary hierarchy succeeded in inculcating subjection of such durability that, in the field, former seminarists willingly complied with Seminary injunctions embracing “the make-up of a proper missionary wardrobe (how many shirts, frocks, and handkerchiefs were acceptable, and of what styles and materials

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<sup>25</sup> Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries*, 47.

<sup>26</sup> Miller, *Social Control*, 41.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

they should be), the daily allowance of wine, the quantity and style of home furnishings (how many chairs, plates, and pots, of what design and quality), and the proper use of mosquito netting.”<sup>29</sup>

Monitoring of behavior was effected not only by the seminarists’ superiors, but by their peers, for the Seminary code of conduct, or *Hausordnung*, mandated perennial mutual suspicion.<sup>30</sup> The Seminary leadership justified the policy through the notion of a ‘higher spiritual loyalty.’ Violations of the *Hausordnung* constituted an affront not merely to the Seminary leadership, but to the Lord — hence the importance of reporting such affronts to superiors, who punished, in their wisdom, according to Scriptural injunctions. All members of the Seminary were thus, in theory, “servants of a discipline whose origins and logic lay outside their control and whose intrinsic value buffered it from practical criticism.”<sup>31</sup> Further, the breadth of the *Hausordnung* was such that no facet of seminarists’ lives could remain beyond the purview of the authorities: “virtually every activity between waking and sleeping was covered by written prescriptions.”<sup>32</sup> Among the memorable admonitions, “If a missionary encountered a woman alone in a room,

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 98.

he was expected to leave if possible; otherwise, he was to leave doors and windows open.”<sup>33</sup>

The social profile Piggin and Miller have developed enables one to contextualize the comments Jowett offers in *Christian Researches*, as to the demands of mission. Jowett repeatedly declares that compassion for the heathen is without purpose, unless accompanied by action: “the Christian Labourer rises to the strong and vigorous grace of Active Pity. He seeks to know the misery of man, that he may apply the remedy.”<sup>34</sup> Yet, that action must remain controlled, and missionaries must remain conscious of their place: “*Keep thine heart with all diligence* — without which it will soon escape the confines of common sense.”<sup>35</sup>

### **From Basel to Cairo**

After his secondment to the Church Missionary Society by the Basel Seminary, Lieder undertook the journey to England, to receive his commission from the CMS Secretaries. Within seven months, Lieder returned to the continent in search of a wife. Rejected by a potential mate, the missionary decided to proceed immediately to his mission post. He was 27 upon his departure for Egypt,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>34</sup> William Jowett, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean* (London, 1822), 385-386.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 395.

in November 1825.<sup>36</sup> As there existed no public means of transport from Geneva to Marseilles at the time, Lieder was forced to hire a coachman. En route to Marseilles, not only were his books and tracts seized, but he fell victim to an extortion scheme. The missionary's troubles were just beginning, though, as he discovered in Marseilles that there was no vessel headed to Malta. Accordingly, he opted for a French vessel headed to Messina. After repeated detours, bouts of illness, and an appeal to the King of Naples to release the vessel from custody, Lieder finally reached Messina, only to suffer harassment at the hands of local Catholic priests. No doubt the missionary was relieved to reach Jowett in Valetta after a 49-day journey from Marseilles.

Upon making his way to Egypt after consultations with Jowett, Lieder resolved to tour the countryside as widely as possible — and the journals he kept during these 'itinerations' reveal much as to his preoccupations at the time. For instance, the journals are littered with estimates as to the size of village congregations, comprehensive to such a degree that they constitute an informal census of the Christian population of Egypt. The missionary mounted a meticulous, perennially frustrating, effort to ascertain the number of priests in each diocese, the number of families in each village, the number of students in each school.

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<sup>36</sup> Church Missionary Society, *Register of Missionaries (Clerical, Lay, and Female) and Native Clergy, 1804 to 1904* (Private Circulation).

In March 1828, during a visit to Manfalūt, Lieder remarked, “I think that even the Bishop does not know the true number of the Christians in his Diocese, for they have no Books in their Churches to write down their parishioners. They do not keep even a book in which they write the name of a child and the day when it is baptised.” Upon learning of the salaries his English counterparts receive, the Bishop of Manfalūt, with a jovial sarcasm, informed the priests in his presence of his imminent departure for England. Lieder proceeded to scorn the notion, with a distinctly sober reproach: “I think you would not like it in England; for you are wont to do nothing but drink tobacco and coffee all day.” He informed the assembled priests that, in stark contrast to their English counterparts — perpetually engaged in the spiritual labors of Scriptural study and sermon preparation — “you have nothing to do but to read your Coptic and Arabic Prayers in the Church.”<sup>37</sup>

### **The Education of the ‘Little Englishman’**

Joseph Hekekyan recalls, in an undated autobiographical sketch, his experiences as a child at a series of Constantinople schools. Initially, he was placed with an Armenian instructor for whom corporal punishment was the mainstay of discipline: “by dint of frequent beating and imprisoning the good man succeeded in teaching me how to read and write the Armenian language.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder Journal of Nile Itineration, 5 March 1828, C M/M 2.

<sup>38</sup> British Library, Hekekyan Papers, Vol. I, 163.



However, most impressive to the young boy among such schools was an academy he attended under the supervision of Armenian priests. There, Hekekyan explains, “The solemn air of the masters induced respect, and the number of scholars in strict discipline who attended to their studies, meals and recreations in regular hours caused me to be more docile and attentive.”<sup>39</sup> Before his arrival at the academy, his fondness for fighting and running about led him into mischief; at the academy, though, he was provided with books, paper, and perhaps most importantly, an example of discipline to emulate, all of which induced him to attend dutifully to his responsibilities there, like tidying up and delivering water.

Hekekyan’s father soon resolved to send his son abroad to continue his education. The young man arrived in England one night in 1818 where, he subsequently wrote, “The houses, streets, shops, carriages, and the costume of the inhabitants quite astonished me: Every one walked quick as if there were conflagrations in the town.”<sup>40</sup> English manners were puzzling to Hekekyan immediately upon his arrival. Indeed, at one stage, he ventured to conclude that “there was no water in England — for I saw nothing but tea, coffee, beer, ale, porter, cider, wines, brandy, gin, rum, whiskey and every sort of made liquors.”<sup>41</sup> Hekekyan’s care was entrusted to Mr. Samuel Briggs, who sent the young man on to the Clapham Academy. English, French, Latin, geography, geometry,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 170.

arithmetic, and elocution were among the subjects of instruction at Clapham, to say nothing of the military arts, in which Hekekyan ultimately took a great deal of pride. Indeed, he was “placed as bugleman to the whole academy where there were above 80 lads many grown up and six feet high.”<sup>42</sup>

The Jesuit Stonyhurst College was Hekekyan’s next destination — one he subsequently came to regret.<sup>43</sup> The classics were the focus of study at the college, to the extent that, in Hekekyan’s eyes, “a person leaving Stonyhurst was unfit for any useful and active business.”<sup>44</sup> The place had one distinctly redeeming feature, however: “The discipline kept up in this college was strict and rigorous, highly proper for youth in every respect.”<sup>45</sup> Perhaps worse than Stonyhurst was the academy of one Mr. Mylius, where Hekekyan found himself lodged after his tenure with the Jesuits. Hekekyan declares in his autobiography that he found “the whole system of the establishment so contemptible that about a month after my first arrival there, I gave up the instructions of Mylius and his usher, to follow my own plan of education.”<sup>46</sup>

At roughly this point, in December 1824, Hekekyan received a letter from Egypt which would decide his future. Upon the death of his father, Hekekyan had

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 171-172.

<sup>43</sup> According to Mustafa, *‘Asr Hakākyān*, Stonyhurst was deemed appropriate due to Hekekyan’s Catholicism.

<sup>44</sup> British Library, Hekekyan Papers, Vol. I, 174.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 180.

committed himself to the service of Mehmed Ali, and the Pasha agreed to assume responsibility for the young man's expenses in England. Now the Pasha was making his claim upon Hekekyan's loyalty, through Boghos Bey, Mehmed Ali's Minister of Trade and External Affairs:

Although I have not received any letters from you with a report of the progress you have made in your studies, in the course of so many years, I have nevertheless received satisfactory information at various times from Messrs. Briggs and Co. which has enabled me to give some account of you to H.H.; who, with his accustomed goodness, has been much gratified to hear of your advancement in the pursuit of Literature. It is satisfactory that the expense which your education in England has occasioned His Highness, has not been thrown away upon you. The Pasha desires me to communicate to you his wish, that you should now apply yourself most assiduously to Mechanics so as to become a perfect master of them, that you may be able on your return to Egypt to devote your attention to that branch particularly, and in preference to the other acquirements which your Patron considers you must by this time have attained in a sufficient degree to enable you to exercise them either collectively or individually as the service of His Highness may require.<sup>47</sup>

Hekekyan claims to have acceded to the Pasha's demand, casting aside his military interests in favor of engineering texts, and putting his mind to techniques of spinning and weaving. From May 1825, he ventured to cotton mills and cloth factories in Manchester and Glasgow for research purposes. In the final year of his studies in England, he kept a detailed journal of his endeavors which reveals much

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 182-183.

as to the attitudes, the sensibility which he had developed during his education, and which he would take with him to Egypt.

### **Moralizing or Missionizing?**

Wherever he traveled in England, Hekekyan was struck by the lax discipline of the laboring poor. When observing the construction of an embankment in July 1829, he noted that the two hundred workers engaged in the enterprise commonly involved themselves in criminal activity, considering themselves beyond the reach of the law. He recounts that, on this occasion, “the amusement of horse racing was carrying on in the vicinity of Liverpool; many of these men went there in a body and from their outrageous and insulting behavior the constables and the police set about to disperse them. The barbarians resisted with club sticks and severely wounded the police and obliged them to quit the field.”<sup>48</sup> Hekekyan concludes that, in the midst of industrial revolution, the inculcation of morality within youth is critical to the improvement of the individual and, by extension, society:

The Arts are merely the means placed in our hands by which we are enabled to administer to our wants and comforts; but that this may be done effectually we must first be disposed to do good by an early moral education; for, the mischief done by wicked men by means of the Printing Press is incalculable; erroneous opinions and the seeds of wickedness are conveyed from one country to another and there

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 29.

sown in the minds of people who otherwise might have formed good subjects under their respective governments.<sup>49</sup>

In his insistence upon early moral education, Hekekyan quite clearly echoes the early-nineteenth-century concerns of English evangelicals, utilitarians, and the upper strata generally, as to social order in the wake of the French Revolution. For his part, however, Hekekyan lays great emphasis upon the moral code held in common by all peoples of religious conviction:

All religions have fundamental principles of morality in no manner differing from one another; — and it is the due observance of these or a contempt of the same which render a man, moral or immoral. The differences in religions lie in the outward signs — and it is for these alone that men often contend with each other and forget their duties. Intercourse and social habits between nations, as between small families, will certainly, in some future period not far hence, bring all into one, — not by one prevailing over another — nor by the union of one with all its parts with another — but by that union which will comprehend the good part of each — forming one system all over the world. Moral education would be one in all places; no new system would be admitted without the knowledge of all mankind. Crime in one place would be a crime in another; and the good would be honoured and respected everywhere.<sup>50</sup>

This is where Hekekyan seems to set himself apart from his hosts. The pretension to a universal morality is common to both. However, Hekekyan allows for the possibility of a universal morality in a world of sectarian differences, whereas, for most Britons, the spread of morality was inextricably linked to the rise

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 58-60.

of Christian dominion on earth. Indeed, perhaps most interesting about Hekekyan's assertion above is his insistence that 'moral union' and concomitant social order will not emerge from acts of domination or conversion, by the West over the rest, for instance. As F. Robert Hunter explains, "An internationalist at heart, Hekekyan imagined a single world order in which everyone could benefit from expanded trade and modern communications."<sup>51</sup>

This strain of Hekekyan's thought appears to have developed from his distinctly personal experience of cultural alienation in England, about which he writes with a piercing wit. Indeed, among Hekekyan's writings is a lengthy and utterly remarkable satirical dialogue between him and various Britons about the ways of the East. At the home of one Mr. Roundshoulders, Hekekyan has to contend with the condescension and ignorance of his host's family, a family friend by the name of Major Stiffneck, and the local clergyman, the Reverend Mr. Charity. The core of the satire is a lengthy exchange between Hekekyan and Charity about Western missionary work in the East:

*Reverend Charity:* If you allow me to have a little conversation with him; such an opportunity...

*Mr. Roundshoulders:* Oh! With all my heart! (The charitable man!)

*Reverend Charity:* What kind of scholar is he? I mean...

*Mr. Roundshoulders:* All I can say of him, is, that he is an intelligent barbarian.

*Reverend Charity:* I understand our Missionaries have been successful in their pious labours in the East.

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<sup>51</sup> Hunter, *Egypt Under the Khedives*, 93.

*Hekekyan:* Yes, Sir — your Missionaries have been successful in parting with their stock of Bibles — and in some villages have gone so far as to convert certain individuals.

*Reverend Charity:* Have not they been openly hindered from preaching the Truth in certain parts of Turkey?

*Hekekyan:* I am not prepared, either to deny or affirm anything in corroboration of what you imply by your question. Doubtless, if Missionaries have attempted to interfere with the peace of families, it has been the duty of authority to interpose.

In the face of the condescension of his hosts and the guests assembled, Hekekyan assumes an air of cold politeness, and immediately emphasizes the logic with which he will approach the clergyman's queries.

*Reverend Charity:* Then you would insinuate that the charitable endeavours of disinterested men to bring their erring brethren in the East from the paths of idolatry and irreligion to the thorny road of eternal salvation through the merits of Jesus, are destroying the peace of families?

*Miss Roundshoulders:* (Blessed Jesus, enlighten his soul!)

*Mr. Roundshoulders:* (We'll civilize him.)

*Major Stiffneck:* (Give it him young Turk — these parsons!)

*Hekekyan:* Assuredly — you bring trouble into poor families who observe the laws of their country, and of society. For example supposing a Missionary prevails with a poor cottager's daughter; the Missionary thinks he has worked her Salvation — the mother of the girl thinks he has worked her ruin — the old father curses the day and hour his lost daughter came into the world — the son, forgets his work and vows vengeance against the blessing Missionary — and the poor girl's lover forsakes her, is reduced to despair, and in an unlucky hour knocks the pious man's brains out. Then a fresh martyr swells your long lists, and it is given out the Turks are barbarous. Is not this bringing trouble into families? Is this the property of the Christian Religion?

The attack begins with the impact missionizing can have on familial life. Hekeleyan emphasizes that missionaries may cast a pall upon families that respect the state and the social order, by dividing them from within. Missionaries are cast as mere troublemakers who in fact disturb rather than strengthen the fabric of society. Hekeleyan is cunning in his emphasis on damage to the social order — a major concern of Britons in the wake of the French Revolution and with the rise of urbanization. Challenging the traditional image of a ‘serious Christianity’ allied to social order through respect for state authority, he suggests that missionaries may in fact prompt such damage.

*Mrs. Roundshoulders:* (Blasphemy! Let me pray.)

*Reverend Charity:* You are wrong altogether. I see you have but ignorant notions of the Holy Christian Religion. Dissension and strife in families favoured by the light of the Holy Ghost, are only the evil workings of the Black Spirit of Hell... What proof have you in the truth of your own Religion? Was not the Bible written before the Koran? Is not the Christian Religion of an older date than the Mahometan? Are you ignorant that Mahomet was only a merchant and afterwards became a General over thousands of rapacious Arabs which he blinded by rapine and the expectation of great earthly riches, to the belief of his own doctrines?

*Hekeleyan:* What proof have you of your own Religion? Was not the Bible written before the New Testament? Is not the Jewish Religion of an older date than the Christian? Are you ignorant that Jesus was only a carpenter's son, and afterwards endeavoured to deliver the Jewish nation from the yoke of the Romans, with the expectation of his succeeding in that praiseworthy attempt and to enjoy the delights of authority?



Charity calls upon Hekekyan for evidence as to the authenticity of Islam, but Hekekyan matches him point for point with questions about the provenance of his own faith — and with no appeal to a shared Christianity. The Ottoman student refuses to correct Charity's mistaken notion that he is a Muslim. Despite the faith they hold in common, Hekekyan ventures to challenge the motives of Jesus in just the way Charity has challenged the motives of Muhammad.

*Reverend Charity:* Where, pray, have you gained your information? Is not the New Testament founded on the Old Testament which you call the Bible?

*Hekekyan:* And have not you learnt in your Universities that the Koran is also founded on the Old Testament?

*Reverend Charity:* No man on earth, however foolish, could be any longer in the misery of darkness, did he but know the history of the rapid dissemination of the Gospel. In spite of the cruel opposition of the Roman Emperors and of their underlings, the progress of the light of truth, directed by the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the blessed Apostles, was nowhere permanently obstructed. The heathen world in a few years through the infinite mercy of God, was released from the bonds of sin and received into the bosom of Christ.

*Hekekyan:* But you cannot deny how much quicker the doctrine of Mahomet was received. Mahometan preachers, more enterprising than the Apostles, carried their faith, and made proselytes all over Persia, India, and the Asiatic Islands; whilst in Africa, they penetrated into Empires, Kingdoms, and Principalities, and converted them to the Mahometan faith — places so little known to the Christian world, that it was only the other day some Englishmen came to know their names. As for the number of people in the world professing the Mahometan faith — it is well known, they are to Christians as 4 to 1.

*Reverend Charity:* But the primitive Christians did not take up the sword to convince idolators of the truth of the Holy Faith and the efficacy of Baptism.

*Hekekyan*: Nor did Doctor Eady recommend his pills with the sword or the bayonet. He told his patients, that unless they took his pills they would lose their ears and noses. And Saint Paul told the Corinthians that unless they believed in Jesus Christ, they would lose their souls.

*Reverend Charity*: But the first Christians were persecuted.

*Hekekyan*: And the first Mahometans were opposed by entire nations who took up arms to defend themselves.

*Reverend Charity*: But the primitive Christians were covered with sack cloth and ashes.

*Hekekyan*: (The dirty beasts.) Sack cloth and ashes are no arguments for the truth of religions. If a man sleeps in cow dung and feeds upon acorns, he gives me no proof that his way of thinking on a certain theory is true. He only proves that he has a thick skin and a strong stomach; — moreover that he is a filthy beggar and in many respects like a hog.

Here Hekekyan critiques the missionary narrative of a Christianity spread without force. Charity contrasts the force employed in the spread of Islam with the peaceful spread of Christianity, but Hekekyan points to missionary threats of damnation as forms of force in their own right. Compulsion was involved in the spread of Christianity, he insists, just as in the case of Islam — a different form of compulsion, perhaps, but compulsion nonetheless. Then he proceeds to suggest that the asceticism of the early Christians hardly speaks to the legitimacy of their cause. The poverty and humility of the early Christians are flaunted by Charity, yet Hekekyan castigates them for having failed to maintain hygienic standards. Again, point by point, Hekekyan aims to expose the various hypocrisies of missionary strategy and the evangelical worldview.

*Reverend Charity:* But — young man — you don't call the Christian Religion a 'theory'? You must know I am a clergyman...

*Hekekyan:* (A glorious specimen of a Christian Missionary?)

*Reverend Charity:* ...and one, not to be insulted...

*Hekekyan:* (A sample of Christian meekness!)

*Reverend Charity:* ...with impunity...

*Hekekyan:* (A little of the boasted charity!)

*Reverend Charity:* ... by a young barbarous Musselman!

*Hekekyan:* (Here is the Toleration, by Jupiter!)

*Hekekyan* to the whole company: Gentlemen and ladies, I do declare to you, that if the reverend gentleman will prove to me that there are three Gods and yet but one God — and that God is one person, and yet three also — and that God the Father was from all Eternity — and that God the Son proceeded from God the Father — yet is God the Son also from all Eternity — if, I say, these things are proved to me so that I may understand them I shall believe — and will leave your most hospitable and civilized roof, a convert to the reverend gentleman's way of thinking on this subject.

*Mrs. Roundshoulders* to *Miss Roundshoulders*: My dear, upstairs — in the cupboard under a heap of my dirty petticoats you'll see Buccan's Medicine, Ovid's Art of Love, Grand Mamma's Prayer-book, Butler's Analogy, Porteus, the Holy Bible and Johnson's Dictionary — dear child, don't break the china, but bring down Porteus, Butler and the Bible.

*Reverend Charity:* Young man, you have doubtless read our holy Bible in the Hebrew original...

*Hekekyan:* I have not had that felicity...

*Reverend Charity:* Have you read the Leipzig edition of the Life of Christ, in Latin?

*Hekekyan:* No Sir.

*Reverend Charity:* Have you read the Memoirs of Saint Winnefilda written in Dog Latin?

*Hekekyan:* I have not had that pleasure Sir.

*Reverend Charity:* I'll explain it to you in three words... attention... You know the plant called shamrock...

*Hekekyan:* Certainly...

*Reverend Charity:* Well, one stalk supports three leaves; does it not?

*Hekekyan:* Yes.

*Reverend Charity:* Then the three leaves proceed from one stalk — and that stalk is God — and those leaves are the three Persons — and each leaf has a stalk, consequently each Person is a God.

*Hekekyan:* Pray Sir, have you read the Koran?

*Reverend Charity:* Yes I have, and more than once too.

*Hekekyan:* In Arabic?

*Reverend Charity:* No, not in Arabic — but I studied the English translation of it.

*Hekekyan:* Oh! But it must be read in the pure original. Have you seen Abou Hakim's Tracts on the 5th Chapter, in Persian?

*Reverend Charity:* Persian? No, we don't study Persian in England.

*Hekekyan:* But you must have fallen in with Abul Selim's Unity of God Mathematically demonstrated?

*Reverend Charity:* No, but I think Burckhardt mentions it as having been proscribed.

*Hekekyan:* (You lying hypocrite, Burckhardt mentions no such thing!) The book I mention was written 10 years after Burckhardt's death — therefore, it appears to me you labour under a great mistake to suppose you know it. Perhaps you mean all the time Ebu Mohammed Ebu Ali Chelebi Isak Arabi Choban Shefi Khan's great dissertation on the Blessed Prophet's left slipper which he lost in the battle of Bender.

(Here the worthy Rev. Mr. Charity was struck with an apopleptic fit. The whole house was in the greatest confusion. The young Turk offered his services — he ran and sent a surgeon immediately — after which he made the best of his way home, in reality unconverted, but altogether convinced that he was treated very unkindly. He was looked upon as a scarce animal and was upon the whole very cruelly used by that family of Christians.)<sup>52</sup>

Finally, Hekekyan asks for evidence as to the authenticity of the Holy Trinity, whereupon Charity asks about the young man's familiarity with a range of ancient languages. Hekekyan mocks the scholasticism of the clergyman's defense of Christianity by invoking the scholasticism of the Muslim tradition, establishing,

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<sup>52</sup> Hekekyan Papers, Vol. I, 116-125.

once again, that the traditions of the two faiths are not as disparate as Charity argues.

Through this dialogue, Hekekyan aims to expose what he views as a fundamental contradiction between moralizing and missionizing — a contradiction embodied by the Western missionary to the East. Indeed, Hekekyan seems to suggest through the satire that missionizing gets in the way of the urgent task of moralizing — and this, despite the fact that Hekekyan himself was a devout Armenian Christian.

Thus, to describe the reform programs of Lieder and Hekekyan as comparable is not to suggest that their motives or intentions were — and this is why comparing an educationalist of European origins, and one of Ottoman origins, becomes so urgent. Indeed, Hekekyan was hard-pressed to reconcile an intense admiration of the ideals of industry, discipline, and order his English supervisors espoused, with an equally intense disappointment with the failure of subaltern Britons to live up to such ideals — to say nothing of his frustration with the double standards he confronted in England as a ‘civilized Oriental.’

## CHAPTER 5

### **Inculcating Improvement: Lieder and Hekekyan, 1830-1850**

#### **Faith in the Lord, Faith in the State**

To accomplish any number of open conversions was, under the peculiar political and religious circumstances of the country, next to impossible; but, by persevering for many years in training up a considerable number of the young in the principles of the Bible, a more correct system of morality has been gradually and silently instilled into the minds of a large proportion of the pupils; religious errors and superstitious practices have been removed, and scriptural truths substituted in their place; and the mass has been gradually leavened with some amount of pure doctrine, although there is a great work remaining to be done. Every scriptural school may, in this aspect, be considered as a missionary Church, furnishing the best, and sometimes the only, opportunity of preaching the Gospel to the native population.

— An 1849 Deputation of the Malta Protestant College,  
on the Efforts of the CMS Cairo Mission<sup>1</sup>

The Reverend Lieder refused to attack the Coptic Church as an institution.

Rather, he believed that the CMS mission could strengthen that Church, by ‘educating’ Coptic youth as to their grand legacy as descendants of the ‘original Christians.’ Youth had only to reach to the Scriptures to learn how the Lord had

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal of a Deputation Sent to the East by the Committee of the Malta Protestant College, in 1849: Containing an Account of the Present State of the Oriental Nations, Including Their Religion, Learning, Education, Customs, and Occupations: With Outlines of Their Ecclesiastical and Political History; of the Rise and Decay of Knowledge Among Them; and of the Doctrines and Discipline of the Ancient Christian Churches, Part I* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1854), 4.

intended that both they, and their ancestors, should lead their lives, structure their community, and administer their Church. With time, Lieder declared, the Copts would come to grasp that the Lord had mandated industry, discipline, and order.

For his part, Hekekyan would probably have agreed that industry, discipline, and order were the cornerstone of the Lord's plan for creation. However, Hekekyan understood that, for all the modern moral values he held in common with missionaries, English evangelicals would not succeed in inculcating such values among Egyptians. Indeed, despite Lieder's peculiar linguistic efforts to make 'evangelical modernity' seem culturally authentic to the Copts, his modern ethos was nevertheless tainted by condescension. According to Hekekyan, the moralizing project, so critical to social order throughout the world, would never succeed in an Egyptian context unless shorn of missionary connections — that is, of cultural associations which would render the project disagreeable in a Muslim country. Hence, Egyptian educationalists would appropriate the missionary's modern moralizing, to convert the masses not to faith in the Lord, but to faith in the state.

### **Translating Lancaster into Arabic**

In his *Colonising Egypt*, Timothy Mitchell credits the introduction of mutual instruction into Egypt to the Egyptian administrators who visited Lancaster

schools during missions to England from the 1820s.<sup>2</sup> However, he neglects the existence of the Lancaster schools erected upon Egyptian soil by the Church Missionary Society at just that time — schools which were themselves scrutinized and lauded by Egyptian administrators.<sup>3</sup>

William Jowett forcefully endorsed the introduction of the Lancaster system into Egypt in his *Christian Researches* — emphasizing the virtues of ‘union, order, and perseverance’ — and pointed to the existence of an Arabic tract detailing the system, circulated by the Church Missionary Society.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, American missionary Pliny Fisk spoke, in 1822, of witnessing “an Arab boy setting types to reprint a Tract which he had put in circulation, originally published by the Church Missionary Society, the subject of which was the Lancasterian System of education.”<sup>5</sup> According to Geoffrey Roper, who has exhaustively detailed the operations of the CMS Malta Press in his doctoral dissertation, this Arabic tract was that “which seems to have achieved the greatest circulation, and aroused the

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<sup>2</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 69.

<sup>3</sup> For a strikingly parallel development in a starkly different context, refer to the fascinating discussion of Lancaster schooling among the Maori of New Zealand, offered by Valerie Carson, “Submitting to Great Inconveniences: Early Missionary Education for Maori Women and Girls,” in Robert Glen, ed. *Mission and Moko: The Church Missionary Society in New Zealand, 1814-1882* (Christchurch, New Zealand: Latimer Fellowship of New Zealand, 1992), particularly 61-68.

<sup>4</sup> William Jowett, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean* (London, 1822), 308. He reports the implementation of the system in Malta.

<sup>5</sup> Alvan Bond, *Memoir of the Rev. Pliny Fisk, A.M., Late Missionary to Palestine, from the American Board of Missions* (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1828), 193.



greatest interest, in the Middle East before 1825.”<sup>6</sup> The tract, prepared by John Macbride, Professor of Arabic at Oxford, aided by Syrian poet Mikhā’il Sabbāgh, was originally published in London in 1818 with the title *Risālat al-Idah li-l-Sirat al-Mustaqīm fī Sha’n al-Ta’līm*.

In 1828, Jowett wrote to his missionaries in Cairo, Kruse, Muller, and Lieder, that “a central school as a model, conducted, as far as circumstances would permit, upon the plan of mutual instruction, would be requisite.” Kruse was thought up to the task of heading the institution, and was advised “to have at his disposal, for the purpose of liberally paying a good master under him, and regularly rewarding monitors or meritorious scholars, not less than two hundred dollars per annum.” The Mediterranean mission pioneer reckoned that, “When the Patriarch and the Copts thus see that it is for their interest, they will probably in a tacit way sanction the proceeding.”<sup>7</sup>

In an 1831 letter to the Lay Secretary of the CMS, John Lieder described his individual vision for the development of a ‘truly Christian school’ in Egypt — one unmistakably influenced by the Lancaster system. He insisted upon placing the school within the home of the missionary, to facilitate the ceaseless monitoring of morals. The finest students were to live at the mission, and receive their food and

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<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Roper, “Arabic Printing in Malta, 1825-1845” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Durham, 1988), 102.

<sup>7</sup> Archives of the Church Missionary Society, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, Jowett to Kruse, Muller, and Lieder, 11 January 1828, C M/M 2, 225-227.

clothing from the CMS. The missionary was to undertake a detailed inspection of the students and their quarters each morning. Although the mission could entrust reading, writing, and counting to qualified instructors, only the missionary was to educate in spiritual matters. Only the missionary, as ‘spiritual father’ to the children, could reveal the route to salvation.<sup>8</sup>

James Bartholomew, a Wesleyan missionary, had actually already made a tentative effort to introduce Joseph Lancaster’s method of instruction into Egypt by way of a Christian mission school. Bartholomew was part of an aggressive Methodist Society effort to proselytize not simply among native Christians, but indeed, among Muslims, in Alexandria. The mission was founded in 1825 by Donald Macpherson, who remained in Egypt for four years. Shortly after his arrival in Alexandria, he saw a potential conduit for the missionary message into the community through local Greeks, and accordingly, he met with their patriarch. According to J. H. Sislian, “The Greek patriarch heartily approved the idea of a school and sanctioned it. So the first British mission school in Egypt was opened at Alexandria in December 1826.”<sup>9</sup>

From his arrival in 1830, Bartholomew worked, again through a school, to extend the Methodist reach beyond the Greek community. As James Augustus St.

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<sup>8</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to Coates, 9 December 1831, C M/O 48/9.

<sup>9</sup> J. H. Sislian, “Missionary Work in Egypt during the Nineteenth Century,” in Brain Holmes, ed. *Educational Policy and the Mission Schools: Case Studies from the British Empire* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 182.

John noted, “Into this school it was at first intended to admit the children of Copts, Levantines, and Jews, as well as Mohammedans; but to this part of the plan the Pasha objected, observing that it was not yet time for such an innovation.”<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, according to St. John, Bartholomew ultimately secured not only the Pasha’s approval, but indeed his funding, for the project, when he committed himself to make no effort at conversion of the students. However, this project faltered almost immediately, in large part due to Bartholomew’s failure to master Arabic. Lacking a command of the language, he was forced to rely upon the native instructors whom he could recruit in Alexandria and train in the Lancaster system, drawn largely from the Syrian and Coptic Christian communities. As Sislian recounts:

with rare exceptions these teachers were unsatisfactory. They were lazy and dishonest, receiving a salary from the missionary as well as fees, secretly, from the children's parents, when the schools were free at the beginning of the mission's work. Attendance fluctuated with the change of teachers, with the introduction or abolition of fees, and with the extent to which the missionaries gave presents and money. On the average there were throughout the years of the mission's activity some thirty pupils in monthly attendance. The schoolrooms were in a cellar without window or opening to admit light or air, and no sooner had the children come in than their breath made the place intolerable and many of them suffered from bad health as a result.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> James Augustus St. John, *Egypt, and Mohammed Ali; or, Travels in the Valley of the Nile*, vol. II (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1834), 405.

<sup>11</sup> Sislian, “Missionary Work,” 182.

## **The Cairo Mission Schools**

The educational efforts of the CMS mission in Cairo would meet with far greater success. By May 1828, William Kruse had established a school for boys in Cairo, administered in line with the Lancaster system.<sup>12</sup> Within two months, the missionary reported a rise in the number of students from six to eighteen — although there existed, altogether, eight benches with 48 seats for scholars. Indeed, these early efforts were fraught with difficulties. The missionary explained in a letter to Malta, “For a method of teaching there can be no question with Arabs. I should be content to find one who would willingly suffer himself to be accustomed to order: such a quality were preferable, even with less faculty for instruction.” Kruse continued, “they have the bad custom here, to continue reading and chanting till they draw breath, without any distinction of points, and without understanding what they read.”<sup>13</sup>

A year later, Kruse had a sufficient number of students to develop the hierarchy of ‘classes,’ dictated by performance, characteristic of Lancaster schools.<sup>14</sup> In November 1833, ten of the most promising students of the boys’

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<sup>12</sup> By the 1830s, a significant stock of British and Foreign School Society materials had reached the Cairo mission through the Ladies’ Society for the Promotion of Female Education in the East. In 1846, however, after correspondence between Lieder and Joseph Beldam of the BFSS, the School Society decided upon immediate intercession, through an appeal for funds in support of the Cairo mission schools.

<sup>13</sup> CMS Archives, Kruse to Schlienz, 12 July 1828, C M/M 2, 437-440.

<sup>14</sup> CMS Archives, Kruse Report of the Egyptian Mission, 10 June 1836, C M/M 5.

school were actually invited to board at the Kruse household. The aim of the invitation? To ensure that the students remain “under the constant inspection of Mr. Kruse, living in the same house, as children of the same family, attending morning and evening-prayers, and whether they are learning in the school, or otherwise employed in their leisure hours, in whatever they do, truly Christian principles will be inculcated upon their minds.”<sup>15</sup> Only with the inculcation of such principles could the mission entrust the students with the weighty responsibility of becoming schoolmasters and catechists themselves. Yet, within only a matter of months, one of the principal problems afflicting mission schools generally had become apparent in the Cairo context:

We had indeed already at the beginning to make a painful experience with a boy who has left the school. This boy had neither father nor mother; we had, as it were, picked him up from the street and educated him; as soon as he knew something he wanted to become a teacher. We remonstrated with him that he was not capable of teaching before he had gone through a course of about six months in our seminary. At first he acquiesced; but afterward, it seems, he has been persuaded by his uncle (who formerly was servant in the schoolhouse, but was dismissed on account of untruthfulness) that having learnt now so much, he could earn his bread in the service of the Pasha. From this time the behaviour of the boy was quite changed; he did no longer like the school, and we knew not why, till he declared that he wanted to leave and become a clerk of the Pasha.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> CMS Archives, Kruse to Coates, 1 August 1833, C M/O 45/30.

<sup>16</sup> CMS Archives, Kruse to Coates, 15 January 1834, C M/O 45/33.

Beyond the ambitions of the students, the severity of the boarding school's regime had an impact upon attrition. As described by Kruse, the boys' daily schedule seems strikingly arduous and intrusive: "All the boys rise at daybreak, and being washed and dressed, they have to learn their lessons, especially the Biblical Catechism, till 7 o'clock when we have common family service, in which I read a chapter out of the Old Testament, accompanying it occasionally with some practical remarks." Lessons continued between 8 am and 12 noon, and then between 2 pm and 5 pm. Yet, according to the missionary's account, the boys' work day was still far from over: "At 7 o'clock supper is served up; after which they are again set to study their lessons till 8 o'clock, when I have evening service with them, in which I read a chapter out of the New Testament (in which I have now gone through the two first gospels) enlarging more in my applicatory remarks than I do in the morning, and keeping particularly in view the state of their heart."<sup>17</sup> By 1837, the mission had received sufficient resources — from travelers, in large part — to hire a European carpenter to erect the arrays of platforms, desks, benches, and boards required for mutual instruction.<sup>18</sup>

In 1839, Lieder and Kruse offered the CMS Secretaries a detailed history of the boys' schools administered by the mission. The school for boarders founded in 1833, still under the direction of Kruse six years later, aimed to cultivate potential

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to Coates, 22 April 1837, C M/O 48/17.

schoolmasters. The weekly schedule of the school was rigidly divided into forty-seven lessons. Of the lessons in Arabic, there were five for grammar, four for the reading of the Scriptures, three for arithmetic, two for calligraphy, four for geography, four for drawing, three for ‘scientific singing,’ two for ‘universal history,’ and two for composition. Of the lessons in English, there were six for Biblical translation, and four for composition. Notably, Kruse supervised the religious instruction himself, to which were accorded four hours for Christian catechism and four hours for sacred history. The boys were, as Kruse had promised in 1833, under constant inspection — particularly that of Mrs. Kruse who, in the words of the report, ensured domestic economy, guarded against evil, and monitored the disposition, cleanliness, and kindness of each student. The students’ evenings were occupied with committing lessons to memory and practicing English hymns.<sup>19</sup> Kruse was proud to report of the school alumni, “A few only have disgraced their education, and fallen back upon the thoughtless errors, and superstitions of their countrymen.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> According to Miss Platt, *Journal of a Tour Through Egypt, the Peninsula of Sinai, and the Holy Land in 1838, 1839* (London: Richard Watts, 1841), vol. II, 13, “Among the elder boys, there are four who are in the habit of meeting together in the schoolroom, of their own accord, while the rest are at play, for the purpose of reading and studying the New Testament.”

<sup>20</sup> Lieder reported a revealing incident to Schlienz, 22 February 1836, C M/M 5. Upon entering the schoolroom one afternoon, he discovered a master of the school, Michael, “engaged with his books. Taking up the book which lay before him, I found that it treated on witchcraft, and another on astrology.” Michael was

The day school for boys remained, but under the direction of Lieder. According to the report, the chief aim of that enterprise was “to show the people generally, what a School ought to be, by setting before them a model school.” There were thirty-nine lessons in the day school each week — of which five were devoted to the grammatical study of the Coptic language, under the supervision of a Coptic priest.<sup>21</sup> Heyworth-Dunne cites the claim of the Veterinary School’s Director, P. N. Hamont, that Lieder’s institution was indeed a ‘model’ — for the students therein “made more progress in three or four years than the students of the government schools did in ten years.”<sup>22</sup> Eliot Warburton described a visit to the school in his 1845 travelogue *The Crescent and the Cross*:

There were about ninety boys at the school when I visited it; an ugly ophthalmic set they were, dressed in blue shirts, and red caps. But a far deeper interest than mere eyesight could receive was excited by the contemplation of these poor children, bending with Arab eagerness of the books, whence they were allowed to imbibe truth, for the first, and, perhaps, last time in their lives.<sup>23</sup>

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thoroughly berated and immediately dismissed, for he had corrupted the intellectual purity of the mission.

<sup>21</sup> CMS Archives, Report of the Egypt Mission, 1839, C M/O 45/75b. The students’ proficiency in Coptic had reached such heights by 1841 that Lieder expected they would soon read the Gospels during services in the Cathedral, at the request of the Patriarch.

<sup>22</sup> P. N. Hamont’s *L’Egypte sous Méhémet Ali* (Paris: Léauty et Leconte, 1843), cited in J. Heyworth-Dunne, “Education in Egypt and the Copts,” *Bulletin de la Societe d’Archeologie Copte* 6 (1940), 101.

<sup>23</sup> Eliot Warburton, *The Crescent and the Cross; or, Romance and Realities of Eastern Travel*, vol. I (London: Henry Colburn, 1845), 144.



Warburton made a point of noting that students “acquire the first rudiments of knowledge, as also the creed, and the Lord’s Prayer, by chanting in chorus, as in our infant schools,” and further, that Lieder and his peers “do not attempt to make proselytes, but content themselves with teaching truth, and leaving it to assume its own form as to creed.”<sup>24</sup> This last point raises the question: Why were lessons in such fields as ‘universal history,’ geography, and drawing offered in the mission schools? Why had Lieder introduced such secular instruction into his school — one purportedly aimed at the reform and revival of Eastern Christendom? As Jowett memorably related:

It may be presumed that British Christians, while promoting the education of (for example’s sake) the Coptic Church, would willingly extend the range of subjects in which the Coptic Youth should be instructed. Adding to Sacred Knowledge, various parts of historical, geographical, and other useful studies, matter would be preparing of a nature not offensive to Mahomedans. The proud Arab, who would spurn the Religion of the Copt, might yet touch the skirts of his Science.<sup>25</sup>

### **Battling the Bulwarks of Superstition**

The pride of the Cairo mission was the school for girls. The school was established in February 1829 by Mrs. Kruse, who had to assume all teaching responsibilities in the institution, given the lack, much lamented by the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., vol. I, 144-145.

<sup>25</sup> Jowett, *Christian Researches*, 310-311.

missionaries, of women schoolteachers in Egypt.<sup>26</sup> In an April 1828 letter, she had recorded her impressions of one encounter with Coptic women, speaking to the urgency of their ‘enlightenment’: “I asked them whether they did not hear the world of God in their church; they answered, the reading of the scriptures is too high for us: our husbands understand it — we keep our fasts, go to church, sitting in a retired place to see only how they pray. Poor people! They are more ignorant than a child in our country.” She underscored her point by recalling an Easter week visit to a Coptic church:

All the men were sitting on the ground, and a priest was reading the Gospel and another constantly correcting him. I looked in vain for the women, and when I asked where they were, I was led outside into another separate and dark place, where they sat, making a noise by talking, that it was impossible to hear what was read in church. We see here that they are not inclined to know something better nor desire to be better instructed.<sup>27</sup>

When Mrs. Kruse was quite ill in the summer of 1830, her school for girls was abandoned for a time; and with the cholera of August 1831, the mission feared the school would close for all time. Four years later, however, Lieder managed to locate a suitable schoolmistress, a widow from among the ‘natives,’ and the effort was revived in November 1835.<sup>28</sup> At just that time, the future force behind girls’

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<sup>26</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to Schlienz, 21 February 1829, C M/M 3.

<sup>27</sup> CMS Archives, Mrs. Kruse to Mrs. Jowett, 7 April 1828, C M/M 2, 364-365.

<sup>28</sup> CMS Archives, Kruse Report of the Egyptian Mission, 10 June 1836, C M/M 5.

education at the mission was preparing for the journey to Cairo at the behest of the Ladies' Society for the Promotion of Female Education in the East.

Lieder set his sights upon Miss Holliday as soon as she arrived in Cairo.<sup>29</sup> The Reverend, despite repeated attempts to find a suitable wife, had not had much success in the endeavor — and by 1838, Miss Holliday had become Mrs. Lieder.<sup>30</sup> By all accounts, Mrs. Lieder was a remarkable woman indeed.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, as is the case with most married women missionaries, there exists precious little archival material detailing her work or experiences in Egypt. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that, shortly after her arrival, she seized control of girls' education in the Cairo mission. Under her leadership, the school for girls thrived, to the degree that the number of pupils she could attract frequently exceeded the numbers her husband could attract for his school.<sup>32</sup>

The structure of instruction differed little from that in the schools for boys. From 1836, the Lancaster model was embraced, with the school “conducted in

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<sup>29</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to Jowett, 25 January 1837, C M/O 48/14.

<sup>30</sup> All the English residents of Cairo reportedly attended the November ceremony, conducted by the English Consul General himself, Colonel Campbell.

<sup>31</sup> By way of comparison, one might consider the career of Suzanne Voilquin, a Saint-Simonist who taught at the School of Midwives in the 1830s. Refer to Khaled Fahmy, “Women, Medicine, and Power in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” in Lila Abu-Lughod, ed. *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 48.

<sup>32</sup> The girls' school continued to offer instruction through to 1860, well after the 1848 closure of the boys' school — a reflection both of the success of the project, and of the perceived urgency of education for the ‘Eastern woman.’ Notably, Lieder frequently reported that the pace of instruction in the girls' school far exceeded that in the boys' school.

every part like those in England. The children begin with the alphabet and are step by step advanced until they read portions of the holy Scriptures from the lesson boards.”<sup>33</sup> The weekly schedule consisted of thirty-five lessons. Although the fifteen afternoon lessons were devoted to sewing and embroidery, ‘both native and European,’ the ‘mental instruction’ of the morning was offered in both Arabic and English, and embraced arithmetic, sacred history, and Bible doctrine. Eliot Warburton points to the afternoon needlework as having proved critical to attracting students to the school: “It is a great inducement to the Egyptian women to send their daughters to these schools, that they there learn the Western style of embroidery, which is greatly prized in the East.”<sup>34</sup>

The mission proudly declared in 1839, “The mothers of various families have complained to Mrs. Lieder, that their daughters have reproved them, when they have heard them, according to the prevailing custom of this country, swearing, or cursing, by telling them: O! mother you sin, the Lord Jesus Christ forbids you to swear.”<sup>35</sup> The next year, the Lieders embraced the Lancaster hierarchy of ‘classes’ in earnest, with the selection of twenty students, potential teachers, for advanced instruction — notably, from a man.<sup>36</sup> By March 1845, Lieder could report to the CMS Secretaries that, since the revival of the effort ten years prior, at least three

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<sup>33</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 14 March 1845, C M/O 48/121.

<sup>34</sup> Warburton, *Crescent and Cross*, vol. I, 145.

<sup>35</sup> CMS Archives, Report of the Egypt Mission, 1839, C M/O 45/75b.

<sup>36</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Lay Secretary, 12 October 1840, C M/O 48/42.

hundred young women had departed the school with sufficient literacy to grasp the Scriptures.<sup>37</sup>

Why was girls' education of such great urgency? According to the 1839 report, "It is in the hearts of the Oriental females, that superstition has erected her strongest bulwarks. The women are therefore the best tools in the hands of their priesthood, exerting an influence not only injurious to their husbands, who otherwise are more open to reason on the better things, but particularly in respect to the education of the children."<sup>38</sup> Hence, control of the woman was a vital means to control of the family.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, Lieder expressed delight when Miss Holliday was

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<sup>37</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 14 March 1845, C M/O 48/121.

<sup>38</sup> CMS Archives, Report of the Egypt Mission, 1839, C M/O 45/75b. For evangelical comments as to the 'degradation' of the 'Eastern woman,' refer to MacBair, *Sketches of a Missionary's Travels*, 138.

<sup>39</sup> There is an enormous literature on the perceived importance of the education of the 'Eastern woman.' For a general discussion of the point, Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) is extremely useful. For the Egyptian case, refer above all to the just-published works by Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805-1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), and by Mona L. Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman: Consumerism, Education, and National Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), as well as to Juan Cole, "Feminism, Class, and Islam in Turn-of-the-Century Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13 (1981), 387-407; Beth Baron, "Mothers, Morality, and Nationalism in Pre-1919 Egypt," in Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, and Reeva S. Simon, eds. *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 271-288; Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), particularly 144-168; Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Omnia Shakry, "Schooled Mothers and Structured Play: Child

appointed instructress in the harem of the Pasha, Muhammad Ali, to offer lessons from 9 to 12 each morning.<sup>40</sup> At last, the mission had the means to infuse the governing elite with the evangelical ethos.

Travelers reveal that she was well respected by her royal pupils, among whom were Nazly Hanum, the eldest daughter of Mehmed Ali, and the ladies of both Ibrahim Pasha and ‘Abbās Pasha.<sup>41</sup> In 1839, Mrs. Lieder furnished the harem of the Pasha, apparently at the request of Victoria herself, a portrait of the Queen, and received an array of ‘Oriental crafts’ in return.<sup>42</sup> According to travelers, the Pasha himself expressed such satisfaction with the services of Mrs. Lieder — among which were direction in needlework and instruction in drawing, geography, and arithmetic — that he invited her to reside in the harem.<sup>43</sup>

Although one can spend much time perusing the blueprints and schedules the missionaries sent to London, one can scarcely develop a sense of the lives

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Rearing in Turn-of-the-Century Egypt,” in Lila Abu-Lughod, ed. *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 126-170; and Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), particularly 56.

<sup>40</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to Coates, 15 June 1838, C M/O 48/24. Given her responsibilities at the mission, Mrs. Lieder ultimately reduced her commitment to Monday and Thursday mornings.

<sup>41</sup> Platt, *Journal of a Tour*, vol. I, entry of 20 October 1838.

<sup>42</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Lay Secretary, 21 November 1839, C M/O 48/28; Attachment to Lieder to the Secretaries, 13 March 1840, C M/O 48/30b.

<sup>43</sup> Charles Tilt, *The Boat and the Caravan: A Family Tour Through Egypt and Syria* (London: David Bogue, 1847), 214-215; Warburton, *Crescent and Cross*, vol. I, 145.

students in the mission schools actually led thereby. Miss Platt, the step-daughter of Henry Tattam, who in fact resided at the home of the Lieders in 1838 and 1839, offered a rare glimpse of the lives of the school children:

At six in the morning, their first hymn, in English, ‘Awake, my soul, and with the sun’ &c., breaks upon our ears, in a strain so familiar, that we scarcely seem to awake in a foreign land. Above head is the Girls’ School, and nearly all day the buzz of lessons is going on around us: but far from interrupting us in our work, it now seems almost a necessary accompaniment to our day’s arrangements; for they are so punctual in their general routine, that the very lessons they repeat serve us for a clock. It is truly gratifying to hear the words of our Christian Catechism, every morning after the prayer, resounding from their united voices, in their native tongue, as a prelude to the business of the day. Who can doubt but that these early Christian precepts will hereafter prove ‘as bread cast upon the waters, which may be found after many days?’<sup>44</sup>

Platt awoke to the idea that she was in Britain, given the English hymn she heard. The school was run with such punctuality, such discipline, such order, that she marked her routine by the echoes of school lessons. United voices resounded through the school. Subsequent travelers’ accounts of the girls’ school emphasized the students’ “graceful and tidy dresses, long white veils, pearly teeth, and plaited tresses.”<sup>45</sup> As one Briton recounted, “The figures of the elder girls were very

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<sup>44</sup> Platt, *Journal of a Tour*, vol. I, 235-236.

<sup>45</sup> Amelia Cary, *Chow Chow: Selections from a Journal Kept in India, Egypt, and Syria* (London, 1857), vol. II, 97-98. Cary’s comment about the girls’ veils is strikingly similar to comments about dress made by visitors to the School of Midwives. Refer to Fahmy, “Women, Medicine, and Power,” 36-37.

graceful, and their dress remarkably becoming.”<sup>46</sup> For his part, Warburton declared, “These schools of Cairo afford altogether a very cheerful aspect to an English eye; and it is a gratifying duty to bear this impartial testimony to their utility and good conduct.”<sup>47</sup> The CMS mission had apparently seized a tract of Egyptian soil for evangelical Britain.

### **Instructing the Interpreters of the Faith**

By far the boldest educational effort the mission undertook was a Coptic Institution, for the education of Copts intending to enter the priesthood — the Coptic priesthood, not the Anglican. Indeed, there exists no better illustration of the technique of subtle infiltration mounted by the CMS, with the aim of infusing the Coptic community with the evangelical ethos.

The idea of the Institution emerged in a meeting between the Reverend T. S. Grimshawe, Rector of Burton, Northamptonshire and Vicar of Biddenham, Bedfordshire, and the Coptic Patriarch in Cairo, presumably in late 1839.<sup>48</sup> Grimshawe was in Egypt at the time, as were a good number of travelers to the country, in order to recover his health. In the midst of his sojourn, however, having observed the ‘degradation’ of the Coptic Church, he believed he could contribute to

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<sup>46</sup> *Sketches of a Tour in Egypt and Palestine, During the Spring of 1856* (London: James Nisbet, 1857), 28.

<sup>47</sup> Warburton, *Crescent and Cross*, vol. I, 145.

<sup>48</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 2 October 1841, C M/O 48/50.



the mission efforts at encouraging reform and revival by seeking an interview with the Patriarch.<sup>49</sup> During the meeting, Grimshawe recounted at length of the glory and grandeur of the Coptic Church as an Apostolic Church, with “its constitution of bishops, priests, and deacons, its ancient creed and liturgies, its long list of confessors and martyrs, its past tribulations, and its singular preservation by the providence of God till the present day in the midst of sever trials and difficulties.”<sup>50</sup>

Grimshawe soon shifted to the contemporary role he had in mind for the Coptic Church:

I then adverted to the present position of Egypt, the introduction of European art and science, its tendency, unless duly curtailed and regulated, to lead to infidelity, the symptoms of approaching dissolution in the Turkish empire, and the importance of replacing the fall of error by erecting on its ruins the cross of Christ. I took occasion from this to dwell on the duties and high responsibilities of all Christian Churches in times like these — that they were cities set on a hill, that their light was to shine, that the eye of God and of the world was fixed upon them, and that He had authoritatively declared, ‘all the churches shall know that I am He which trieth the reins and searcheth the heart,’ that the Coptic Church had now a great duty to perform, that an immense field of usefulness lay before it, and that it might, by the grace of God, become the instrument of great good.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> T. S. Grimshawe, cited in Association for the Furtherance of Christianity in Egypt, ed. *Christianity in Egypt: Letters and Papers Concerning the Coptic Church, 1836-1848* (London, 1883), 37-38.

<sup>50</sup> Grimshawe, cited in *Ibid.*, 38-39.

<sup>51</sup> Grimshawe, cited in *Ibid.*, 39.

Of particular interest is the concern Grimshawe expresses for the misuse of European science in Egypt. The evangelicals had to preserve their comparative advantage in the technological sphere — at least until the Egyptians knew how to employ technology ‘properly,’ that is, in line with evangelical interests. The Coptic Church was, thus, one ‘city set on a hill’ — one conduit through which the evangelicals believed they could channel their ideas about space, time, and textuality into Egypt at large. However, for the Church to act as such a conduit, the evangelicals required a ‘properly’ educated Coptic priesthood. To aid the Coptic Church in achieving that aim, the Church of England would, according to Grimshawe, offer material support. Grimshawe then instructed Lieder to develop a plan for the proposed Coptic Institution.<sup>52</sup>

The Reverend Stephen Olin, President of the Wesleyan University, who happened to encounter Grimshawe in Jerusalem shortly after his negotiations at the Cairo Patriarchate, reported in his travelogue that “the patriarch declined giving any direct pledges upon the subject, but seemed favourably inclined to some arrangements by which the education of his clergy might be improved without danger to their ecclesiastical attachments.”<sup>53</sup> A plan was submitted to the Patriarch in February 1840 — but only after three years of debate with the Coptic hierarchy

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<sup>52</sup> Grimshawe, cited in *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>53</sup> Rev. Stephen Olin, *Travels in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*, vol. I (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1843), 120.

and repeated revisions in the plan, would the Institution commence instruction.<sup>54</sup> A principal aim of the Institution was, according to the plan, to instruct the potential priests in the crafting of sermons. The point was of critical importance, for education in Coptic *kuttābs* was not concerned with the application of Scriptural ‘wisdom’ to contemporary life. Through the tracts they produced, missionaries sought to give Christianity such a ‘functional’ aspect — but to instruct potential priests in the crafting of sermons was to aim at convincing them to think of Christianity in explicitly ‘functional’ terms, to abandon their ‘superstitious’ idolatry and fasting in favor of a ‘practical’ approach to Christianity.

The Institution would accept only boarders, “not only to have their minds constantly influenced and surrounded, as it were, by a Gospel Spirit, but to preserve them particularly from the bane of demoralizing usages by which they might be infected from without.” Strikingly, Lieder declared that, despite his concern with the ordination of his students, “A youth brought up thus, should he not feel himself inclined or called for the ministry, but choose any other honourable branch of life, will always be the gainer for an education of this kind, as he will be able to express himself correctly, either by writing or by speaking.” In fact, the missionary noted that, if the Institution fails among the Copts, he is willing to accept Muslims therein. Hence, Lieder explicitly revealed that the Institution was aimed not only at

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<sup>54</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 14 March 1845, C M/O 48/121. For a provocative interpretation of the debate, refer to Henry Tattam, cited in Association, ed. *Christianity in Egypt*, 55-56.

spiritual conversion, but at a sort of ‘cultural’ conversion as well. Among the subjects of instruction, beyond the composition of sermons, were Coptic grammar, translation from English into Arabic, geometry, geography, physiology, astronomy, and “*Critical Explanation of some portions or books of the Sacred Text*, based on *grammatical, historical rules*; so as to give the pupils a clear view, how the Holy Scriptures ought and can alone be explained without falling into error.”<sup>55</sup>

The structure of the Institution, as described in the plan, was in line with the Lancaster system, and comparable to that of the Kruse school for boarders. In particular, Lieder spoke to the need for an experienced and pious English master who would serve as

*the immediate assistant and confidant of the principal*, especially in watching with him over the moral and religious state and progress of every inmate of the institution — to go out with them when they take an airing, to be about with them in the house as much as possible, and, if he should be an unmarried man, either to sleep in the same room with the pupils, or at least as near as the location will allow.<sup>56</sup>

How was the Institution in fact conducted, from establishment in 1843 to closure in 1848? Most of the students for the Institution were recommended by the Patriarch — but Lieder found their illiteracy in Arabic, Coptic, and English such

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<sup>55</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder Plan for Cairo Seminary, 22 March 1842, C M/M 8. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

that substantive instruction could begin only in 1845.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, by the end of 1843, the Patriarch had ordained three students of the Institution as deacons, and permitted them to participate in services at the Cathedral. Lieder noted in an 1845 report that, during the prayers from 8 to 9 pm each evening, he expounded “either a chapter or a portion of it with references to the grammatical meaning of difficult and important passages, and have in this way during these two years nearly gone twice through the whole New Testament.”<sup>58</sup>

By 1846, according to Lieder, “Four of the young men have had some success in forming discourses on texts from the Holy Scriptures in the way of sermons.” Further, in that 1846 report, Lieder argued that the monitorial system was functioning as expected. He had designated four students superintendents: “They are called my assistants, and take the name of Sheikh at the Institution, whose office it is, to watch over the general conduct of their fellow pupils, to keep

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<sup>57</sup> In describing the Coptic Institution, Lieder focuses repeatedly upon the frequency of instruction in English. His letter to the Secretaries, 20 May 1846, C M/O 48/122, condemns the ‘low and disgusting’ character of Arabic, purportedly given the quantity of ‘sinful epithets’ that exist in the language. Lieder is convinced that English instruction “will in a high degree raise the moral character of our pupils; it brings them nearer to our hearts and ways of thinking.” His condemnation of Arabic and endorsement of English are of particular interest in light of the ‘absence of the vowel’ discussion of Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 146-150.

<sup>58</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 14 March 1845, C M/O 48/121.

order, to admonish those who commit minor faults, and to report to me the most important occurrences, as also whenever their admonitions are not respected.”<sup>59</sup>

### **The Power of Print**

The mission schools were frequently the focus of state scrutiny. For instance, several publications employed in the mission schools were reproduced by the government press at Būlāq, and incorporated into the syllabus at government educational institutions.<sup>60</sup> One of the principal recommendations William Jowett had set forth in *Christian Researches* was the establishment of a printing press to serve CMS Mediterranean stations: “Had the Art of Printing been known in the days of the Apostles, we cannot doubt but that they would have given the utmost possible extension to the Sacred Writings.”<sup>61</sup> By the time Lieder arrived at Cairo, the Mediterranean stations had, at their disposal, the CMS Malta Press.<sup>62</sup> The

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<sup>59</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 20 May 1846, C M/O 48/122.

<sup>60</sup> Lindsay, Earl of Crawford, *Letters on Egypt, Edom, and the Holy Land* (London: Henry Colburn, 1838), vol. I, 50; Lieder and Kruse to the Secretaries, 25 January 1839, C M/O 45/75a; Lieder to the Secretaries, 20 January 1841, C M/M 8. The Būlāq Press dates to roughly 1822, and was led at the beginning by Nicholas al-Masabki. In its first two decades of operation, Būlāq published 243 titles. Refer to George N. Atiyeh, “The Book in the Modern Arab World: The Cases of Lebanon and Egypt,” in George N. Atiyeh, ed. *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 244.

<sup>61</sup> Jowett, *Christian Researches*, 293. For the text of the recommendation, refer to *Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>62</sup> Roper’s dissertation, cited above, gives an exhaustive account of the Malta Press, but remains unpublished. He has, however, published a chapter on one of the

publication of mission materials at Malta commenced in 1825, under the supervision of the former Basel seminarian, Christopher Schlienz. During his tenure of sixteen years, Schlienz dispatched hundreds of thousands of publications in Arabic, Italian, Maltese, modern Greek, Turkish, and Amharic, to the Mediterranean mission stations.<sup>63</sup>

Although publication of the Scriptures in all such languages was a priority, the activities of the press extended well beyond the Bible. Evangelicals lamented the lack of commentaries upon the Scriptures among the Copts, and urged the translation and publication of Anglican commentaries.<sup>64</sup> Further, the Malta Press printed tracts — hundreds of thousands of tracts that sought to apply the ‘wisdom’ of the Bible to contemporary life, tracts that reflected the evangelical concern with industry, discipline, and order. Among the tracts published in Arabic were *Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* of 1827, *The Parable of the Sower* of 1828, *Pilgrim’s Progress* of 1834, and *The Mirror of the Heart* of 1839.<sup>65</sup> In the course of his itinerations — three tours of Upper Egypt, two tours of Lower Egypt, and two tours

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pioneers of the institution, “Faris Al-Shidyah and the Transition from Scribal to Print Culture in the Middle East,” in George N. Atiyeh, ed. *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 209-231.

<sup>63</sup> Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, vol. I (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899), 349. For further details, refer to A. L. Tibawi, *British Interests in Palestine, 1800-1901: A Study of Religious and Educational Enterprise* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 25-26.

<sup>64</sup> Henry Tattam, cited in Association, ed. *Christianity in Egypt*, 21.

<sup>65</sup> CMS Archives, Publications of the Malta Press, C M/M 8, 414-418.

of the Faioum — Lieder distributed 2,500 copies of the Scriptures but, beyond that, 9,000 further publications from Malta, with such tracts foremost among them.<sup>66</sup>

Of particular interest among the Malta publications is an elementary geography textbook originally published in 1833 under the title *Kitāb al-Kanz al-muhtār fī iktishāf al-arādi wa-l-abhār*. The text caught the attention of Rifā‘a al-Tahtāwi, who arranged for reprints at Būlāq in 1834.<sup>67</sup> Composed in the form of a series of dialogues on the countries of the world, the section dealing with Egypt comments at length upon the impact of Mehmed Ali’s rule:

- Q. Is the Kingdom of Egypt large?  
A. Yes, it is large, and it has hegemony over many foreign kingdoms.  
Q. What are the foreign kingdoms that are subject to the King of Egypt?  
A. The Kingdom of the Hejaz, the Kingdom of the Sham together with the Island of Candia, the Kingdom of the Slaves, by which I mean Darfur and Senaar, and a part of the Arab countries.  
Q. What is the population of Egypt?  
A. The people of Egypt, excluding Cairo, number 2.9 million. Cairo has 600,000 only.  
Q. What is the name of the King of Egypt?  
A. Muhammad Ali.  
Q. Has he organized new things in the Kingdom of Egypt?

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<sup>66</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder and Kruse to the Secretaries, 25 January 1839, C M/O 45/75a.

<sup>67</sup> Dagmar Glass, Geoffrey Roper, and Hrant Gabeyan, “Arabic Book and Newspaper Printing in the Arab World,” in Eva Hanebutt-Benz, Dagmar Glass, and Geoffrey Roper, eds. *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution: A Cross-Cultural Encounter* (Westhoven: WVA-Verlag Skulima, 2002), 189. Tahtāwi became one of Būlāq’s most prolific authors and translators, responsible for no fewer than 38 titles from 1837 to 1857. Refer to Atiyeh, “The Book in the Modern Arab World,” 244.



A. Yes, he has done a lot of things — great things, different from what the Orientals are used to. He established schools for sciences, in order for the Egyptian people to learn. He collected the trades and the professions which had not existed before in the lands of the Orient. He established security in all areas, and populated many places. He provided for their protection. He built a great fleet that is currently sailing in the sea of the Greeks. During his rule, the land of Egypt was irrigated and planted, and the plantations increased tremendously, becoming almost like paradise. He collected a large number of soldiers, and used them to open the Hejaz and surrounding lands. He conquered the Wahhabi Arabs and became their King, and he did the same to the King of Darfur and Senaar, and further, he besieged the lands of the Sham, opened them, and ruled them. All of these are the things he has done. Through him the commerce and types of goods that are traded in the land of Egypt increased. He caused the peoples, whether they were Muhammadans or Christians, to follow a single way of life, in which no one is big or little, which is different from what they were used to with the Ottomans. This was from his good planning and sage mind.

Q. What are the great schools that the King of Egypt established?

A. The School of Abu Zabal, or Khanka, and the School of Qasr al-‘Aini.

Q. What is taught in these schools?

A. The science of medicine, as well as the science of veterinary medicine, engineering, arithmetic, and writing, together with other sciences, like grammar and such.

Q. Are there other schools in Egypt apart from these that you have spoken about?

A. Yes, but few, especially in comparison to the large number of the people, and in comparison to the European countries. Further, they have neglected the education of their girls, and did not establish special schools for them.<sup>68</sup>

Importantly, standing at the forefront of Mehmed Ali’s accomplishments as

Egypt’s ruler, according to the missionary textbook, was his insistence upon

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<sup>68</sup> *Kitāb al-Kanz al-muhtār fī iktishāf al-arādi wa-l-abhār* (Malta, 1833), 78.

education: That was what separated him from his predecessors. But what sort of education was Mehmed Ali offering, worthy of attention from students of elementary geography? Without doubt, Lieder and his peers in the CMS mission were convinced that their own methods had had a significant influence upon the Pasha's educational reforms. In an 1839 journal entry, William Kruse recalled a conversation Clot Bey had with the French Consul about the CMS schools:

Not to mention that much individual good has been done to the various classes of people by the English schools, they have besides been a great stimulus to the establishments of the Government in this country, as for instance: When Sheikh Rafaa [al-Tahtāwi] had seen the Seminary, he asked the Pasha's permission to establish something like it, and thus the useful school for training up translators was established; and now they have a female school, the Pasha will have his Harem taught and by and bye will have also girls' schools established.<sup>69</sup>

Indeed, Kruse connected the mission schools not merely with the School of Languages established by Tahtāwi, but further, with Clot Bey's own school for midwives.<sup>70</sup> In the journal, Clot Bey's institution is described as 'a kind of female

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<sup>69</sup> CMS Archives, Kruse Journal, 10 April 1839, C M/O 45/163.

<sup>70</sup> For details of Tahtāwi's life, refer to the works of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, *Tārīkh al-tarjama wa'l-haraka al-thaqāfiyya fī 'asr Muhammad 'Ali* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 1951) and *Al-Tārīkh wa'l-mu'arrikhūn fī Misr fī'l-qarn al-tāsi 'ashar* (Cairo: Dār al-Nahda, 1958); Jack A. Crabbs Jr., *The Writing of History in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: A Study in National Transformation* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984); and Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*, reissue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 69-83. For details on the school for midwives, refer to Khaled Fahmy, "Women, Medicine, and Power in Nineteenth-Century Egypt," in Lila Abu-Lughod, ed.

seminary,' whose examinations were not unlike those held by the CMS.<sup>71</sup> Kruse noted that Clot “spoke in high terms of satisfaction of the progress those females had made, and gave an instance of the last examination at which they had readily answered the most difficult questions respecting the circulation of the blood, the various organs of the human body, and the different functions of those organs, as the heart, the liver &c. &c. to the entire satisfaction and surprise of all who attended.”<sup>72</sup>

According to Lieder, the Minister of Public Instruction himself came to the mission in December 1839, and “explained in the Boys’ Day School to his other companions the superiority of the Lancastrian System, imitating and ridiculing the manner of teaching used in the Muhammedan schools of the country.” The Minister had, by March 1840, founded both a Lancaster school and an infant school in Cairo, in accordance with the British and Foreign School Society model.<sup>73</sup> Nearly a year later, Lieder reported that the principal master of the Lancaster school, situated in the centre of Cairo, “often visits us and our schools to see our

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*Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 35-72.

<sup>71</sup> For details of Clot’s life, refer to Jacques Tagher, ed. *Mémoires de A.-B. Clot Bey* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1949).

<sup>72</sup> CMS Archives, Kruse Journal, 10 April 1839, C M/O 45/163.

<sup>73</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 13 March 1840, C M/O 48/30.

management and gain our experience, when we give him all the aid in our power.”<sup>74</sup>

The question then becomes: Was the English influence in education indeed as great as the missionaries suspected? Sir John Bowring, in his *Report on Egypt*, confirms that mutual instruction was the pedagogical model Mehmed Ali had embraced — indeed, ‘universally’ so.<sup>75</sup> For his part, ‘Abd al-Karīm, in his *Tārīkh al-Ta‘īm*, offers a description of the ‘military system’ (*al-nizām al-‘askari*) of Mehmed Ali’s schools. The students’ days were regulated by the sound of a trumpet or a drum. They were divided into *‘urat* and *blūkat*, and while each *‘urta* had four *blūkat*, each *blūk* had 125 students. The best students were given ‘military ranks’ and led the *blūkat*, while instructors led the *‘urat*.<sup>76</sup> Notably, students with ranks had the authority to discipline fellow students. ‘Abd al-Karīm explains the rationale: “There are writers who attempt to justify this military system adopted by the Mehmed Ali government on the basis that it was needed in order to deal with the moral decline of students in schools.” However, he warns, “We do not need to adopt such a justification, for Mehmed Ali worked to establish order in the various organs of the state — in administration, in factories, and in schools — and to achieve this order, he required military means. Thus the military spirit which the

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<sup>74</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 20 January 1841, C M/M 8.

<sup>75</sup> Sir John Bowring, *Report on Egypt Under the Reign of Mohamed Ali, 1823-1838*, reprint (London: Triade Exploration, 1998), 332.

<sup>76</sup> The ranks were *bashjawish*, *jawish*, and *‘unbashi*.

governor spread was critical to equipping Egyptians to serve the state in the way he saw fit.”<sup>77</sup>

### **An ‘Egyptian Modernity’ in Education?**

English methods undoubtedly had strong allies within *Diwān al-Madāris*, founded by Mehmed Ali in February 1837 — perhaps none stronger than Joseph Hekekyan, who had received his own education under English masters, as recounted in Chapter Four.<sup>78</sup> However, Hekekyan, despite his reputation as an unabashed Anglophile, repeatedly emphasized that Egyptian educationalists could not implement English methods without modification among Egyptian students.<sup>79</sup> When, in January 1843, he was accused of blindly endorsing such methods by Lambert, a fellow member of the translation committee of the School of

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<sup>77</sup> ‘Abd al-Karīm, *Tārīkh al-Ta‘līm*, 459-460.

<sup>78</sup> Mehmed Ali had called for the reorganization of schools in the final months of 1836. At the time, responsibility for educational institutions was still vested in *Diwān al-Jihadiyya*. An ad hoc committee was formed to undertake this reorganization, headed by Mukhtar Bey. Hekekyan, Tahtāwi, and Clot Bey were among the members. Refer to ‘Abd al-Karīm, *Tārīkh al-Ta‘līm*, 93 and Bowring, *Report on Egypt*, 331.

<sup>79</sup> Mustafa provides useful background as to Hekekyan’s career as educationalist and educator in *‘Asr Hakākyān*. Upon his arrival in Egypt from England, the young man was appointed general supervisor of the cotton mills in Khoronfish, Būlāq, and Mabieda. Sent to assist him were twenty students from the Qasr al-‘Aīni College, the foremost preparatory school in the country, from whom he doubtless discovered much as to the state of Egyptian education. Indeed, Hekekyan was expected to fill whatever gaps existed in their knowledge of mathematics, mechanics, and engineering. When, in the mid-1830s, engineering schools were founded in Būlāq and al-Qanater al-Khayriyya, he was entrusted with their management.

Languages, Hekekyan retorted that he sought “to make an Egyptian system by availing myself of the advantages of the French and the English systems.”<sup>80</sup>

Perhaps the best way to gauge Hekekyan’s concept of a distinctly ‘Egyptian modernity’ in education is to look at the reforms he proposed in the instruction of students dispatched to the Pasha’s school in Paris.<sup>81</sup> Darrell Dykstra has analyzed Hekekyan’s 1849 proposals and attributes to him, in the 1982 article “Joseph Hekekyan and the Egyptian School in Paris,” the notion that “Egypt needed to defend itself by converting Egyptians — or at least an influential, centrally-placed cadre — into thorough Europeans.”<sup>82</sup> However, a careful reading of the proposals reveals the nuances of Hekekyan’s position — nuances to which Dykstra pays little heed.

Without a doubt, moral improvement of an English cast was seen by Hekekyan as an important end of education generally, and particularly so in the case of Egypt’s future rulers. He bitterly lamented the fact that the elite students of the Paris school possessed a far greater affinity for Paris’s vices rather than the city’s virtues. As for the students’ conduct within the precincts of the school, a spirit of indiscipline prevailed — one due, Hekekyan claimed, to excessive

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<sup>80</sup> British Library, Hekekyan Papers, vol. II, 72.

<sup>81</sup> For background on the Paris school, refer to Alain Silvera’s articles, “Edme-François Jomard and Egyptian Reforms in 1839,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 7, 3 (1971), 301-316 and “The First Egyptian Student Mission to France Under Muhammad Ali,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 16, 2 (1980), 1-22.

<sup>82</sup> Darrell I. Dykstra, “Joseph Hekekyan and the Egyptian School in Paris,” *The Armenian Review* 35, 2 (Summer 1982), 175.

indulgence of particular students' material wants through high government allowances. Of particular interest in Hekekyan's indictment of the school, however, is his emphasis upon student neglect of Islam. Despite the presence of a *shaykh* within the Paris school, the students entirely disregarded their duties to their faith. Indeed, Hekekyan praised Mehmed Ali for seeking to elevate Egypt to the level of European civilization by sending students to Paris, but underscored the point that greater contact with Europe required greater vigilance among educators as to students' duties to Islam.

Hekekyan recommended that the boys expected to rule Egypt in the future head to private preparatory schools in Europe only at age ten. At age five, they would enter primary school on their native soil, and therein, under European masters, learn reading, writing, arithmetic, drawing, and gymnastics. At the head of Hekekyan's list of subjects, however, were the history of Islam and duties to the faith, for which a *shaykh* would assume responsibility. His recommendations to the Pasha went still further, insisting upon the education of young women as well: From age ten, they would receive instruction in the Arabic language, the history of Islam, and duties to the faith, as well as arithmetic, drawing, and domestic economy.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Hekekyan Papers, vol. XIX, 139-170. It is worthy of note that Hekekyan is singled out in Bowring's *Report on Egypt* as the chief proponent of girls' education in Mehmed Ali's administration. Refer to pages 356-357.

The emphasis Hekekyan placed upon Islam in his proposed educational framework was due to his conviction that making Egyptian society moral required a basis in faith. Hekekyan's problem with the missionary approach to education was not at all connected to specific matters of educational method or technique, but rather, to an overarching condescension in the missionary attitude — that only Christianity could serve as the basis for the moral improvement of Egyptian society. On matters of method or technique, Hekekyan agreed almost wholeheartedly with missionary educationalists that, to promote order and discipline in students, the students had to become enveloped in school contexts almost from birth, to limit the influence of 'worldly baseness' upon their development. Indeed, to this end, Hekekyan endorsed infant schools for both sexes.

Where Hekekyan differed from Lieder was in his view of legitimate sources for moral precepts. On October 14, 1843, Hekekyan had occasion to explain his view of morality's basis in faith to the Pasha's officials:

I was ushered up to the Citadel with Wasil Bey to be sworn. Being Christians the Gospel was brought to us — and on it we swore that we would continue to fulfil our respective duties to the Government. I asked Shereef Pasha if a positive order had been given by the Pasha that his principal employees should take that oath — and on his replying in the affirmative and asking me which book I should prefer, the Coran or the Bible and New Testament, I replied that both were to me equally valuable as containing pure precepts of



morality which, if put into practice, would make good men of Christians and Mahomedans.<sup>84</sup>

An encounter Hekekyan had with Mrs. Lieder just days later, as described in his journals, speaks volumes as to his distaste for missionary ethnocentrism: “It is a pity she does not attend more to her schools. She dares to look down on Turkish women and in general Eastern women — of whom there are indeed very few in her class and standing who are not superior to her in good sense and accomplishments.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Hekekyan Papers, vol. II, 197.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, 230. Mrs. Lieder was hardly a popular figure in Cairo’s European circles either. Michael Bird recounts that she was a frequent visitor to Shepherd’s Hotel in his *Samuel Shepherd of Cairo: A Portrait* (London: Michael Joseph, 1957), 130. However, “her canting gossip was not very agreeable to the landlord.”

## CHAPTER 6

### **Ambitions Abandoned: Lieder, Hekekyan, and the Failure of Improvement**

These two means of power, a large regular army and a large revenue, were the only real objects pursued by Mehmet Ali. Whether the means which he used for the obtaining it did incidentally good or harm to Egypt he cared little; as little as a post-master cares whether his horse be fat or thin, so that it does his work. The work which Egypt had to do was to keep him and his family Pashas by supplying them with soldiers and money: that alone gave to the country any interest in his eyes. He never identified with the Egyptians, he never learned their language, he never employed one of them in any office for which he could get a Turk; he used Egypt, as his son Said is fond of saying, as a *moyen*. As for his successors, they have been cruel, selfish sensualists, who have looked on their viceroyalty as a property held only for life, out of which as much as possible is to be squeezed for their children. So little does Said feel as an Egyptian — as a man to whom the welfare of his country is intrusted, and to whom that welfare ought to be the principal object — that he threatens that if his caprices are interfered with he will turn Egypt into a desert.

— Hekekyan in March 1856, as quoted by Nassau William Senior<sup>1</sup>

In 1834, James Augustus St. John would give the Qasr al-‘Aīni College, founded in 1825 — a preparatory school aimed at the training of young men for government and military service — a distinctly inauspicious review.<sup>2</sup> St. John was

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<sup>1</sup> Nassau William Senior, *Conversations and Journals in Egypt and Malta*, Volume II (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1882), 220-221.

<sup>2</sup> The intent of the College was to prepare students to enter one of the specialized institutes Mehmed Ali had established to educate state servants and military officers. Most of the students were of Turkish, Albanian, and Armenian origin, the sons of the Pasha’s officials, and ranged in age from 10 to 15. The language of

impressed with the institution at an architectural level, recounting, “The college itself is a large quadrangular structure, erected with stone up to the first floor, the remainder being stuccoed and painted in fresco. Each face of the edifice is about one hundred and twenty paces in length. Attached to it are a suite of splendid kitchens, hot and cold baths, a hospital, and a library of twelve thousand volumes.”<sup>3</sup> Despite the impressive exterior, the educational experiment underway within the institution left St. John largely unmoved. Although the library was indeed extensive, the collection, “selected without taste or judgment, is in the greatest confusion.” Further, the French and Italian instructors, who were originally responsible for the education of the 1200 students in the institution, were replaced to dubious effect, according to this account: “the Turks imagined they could dispense with the services of these Europeans, who, on quitting the college, left the

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instruction was Ottoman Turkish, although subjects ranged from Quranic studies to arithmetic, geometry, algebra, drawing, as well as reading and writing in Arabic, Ottoman, Persian, and Italian. Refer to ‘Abd al-Karīm, *Tārīkh al-Ta‘līm*, 83.

<sup>3</sup> James Augustus St. John, *Egypt, and Mohammed Ali; or, Travels in the Valley of the Nile*, vol. II (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1834), 396. ‘Abd al-Karīm’s *Tārīkh al-Ta‘līm* offers a detailed account of the College. The building, large enough to accommodate two thousand students, had two floors, and included classrooms, dormitories, dining halls, a garden, a playground, and a mosque. ‘Abd al-Karīm confirms that the library had between 12,000 and 15,000, mostly in French and Italian, and adds that Tahtawi was the librarian. Refer to page 224.

education of the youths in the hands of their most able pupils; and these, accordingly, now profess to teach all the sciences.”<sup>4</sup>

This, together with St. John’s account of the regimentation of the instruction, would tend to indicate emulation of the Lancaster system: “The exercise of prayer, ablutions, meals, and the periods of study and examination, are regulated by the beat of drum” and “such youths as, from their superior intelligence, enjoy the rank of officers, have the power of keeping in order those under their command, by the power of the Koorbash [*kurbāj*, whip].” However, St. John was clear that College administrators had lost sight of the essential point of such regimentation: “writing-books, with all kinds of stationery, are provided with a total neglect of economy. Little regard is paid to their health or morals.”<sup>5</sup> James Williams, historian of Egyptian education, is particularly emphatic on this score in his 1939 book: “The experiment was a failure. In April, 1832, about 300 of the students were sent off en masse to the Infirmary at Abu Zabal, afflicted with syphilis, ophthalmia, or the itch.”<sup>6</sup> Ali Mubarak, who studied at Qasr al-‘Aīni in 1836, noted in *Al-Khitat al-Tawfiqiyya* that the College was in desperate condition,

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<sup>4</sup> St. John, vol. II, 396-397. According to ‘Abd al-Karīm’s *Tārīkh al-Ta‘līm*, there were 500 students at the time of the College’s establishment, and by 1833, 1200. Refer to page 223.

<sup>5</sup> St. John, vol. II, 397-398. The head of the College reported to *Diwan al-Jihadiyya*.

<sup>6</sup> James Williams, *Education in Egypt Before British Control* (Birmingham, 1939).

with the staff abusing students, affording attention to their military marches rather than their proper nourishment.<sup>7</sup>

The failure of experiments in education like Qasr al-‘Aīni prompted both disenchantment and resentment in Hekekyan and Lieder. Their aim of imparting morality to the masses would remain unrealized during their lifetimes. In both cases, there were particular contextual reasons for the decline of the experiments — reasons I will explore in this chapter. As will become apparent, in immediate terms, the responsibility for failure rests, above all, with the experiments’ respective benefactors.

Having overextended his state in military terms, Mehmed Ali found himself, in the latter years of his rule, with greater priorities than education — and the Pasha’s successors paid heed to his example, refusing to commit resources to keep such institutions, of apparently dubious worth, operational. Not unlike Egypt’s rulers, the Secretaries of the CMS had shifted their priorities as well. To remain viable in distinctly material terms, the Society had to keep donors in Britain satisfied that the faith was spreading — and yet, missionary education had proved, for the most part, ineffectual in securing verbal professions of Anglicanism. Indeed, in Madagascar, the missionary movement as a whole had experienced an enormous setback, with the expulsion and persecution of a London Missionary Society contingent — and this, notwithstanding the fact that the Malagasy mission

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<sup>7</sup> Cited in ‘Abd al-Karīm, *Tārīkh al-Ta‘līm*, 224.

had once served as a model for emulation, due to the extensive system of schools the missionaries had established.

However, beyond the immediate problem of material support, Lieder, Hekekyan, and their successors as educationalists faced a broader dilemma. Despite the intentions of their architects, educational institutions were susceptible to the influence of just the people they aimed to influence. Parents and students possessed an agenda all their own, and in Chapters Seven and Eight, I will explore the implications of this agenda for the institutions.

### **‘Shortsighted’ Statesmen**

There was perhaps no government official who suffered greater disappointment than Hekekyan. In his journals of the 1840s, he excitedly reported the success of plans to implement Lancaster-inspired projects.<sup>8</sup> Within a decade, though, his bright hopes for Egyptian education and, by extension, for the moral improvement of the Egyptians, had faded. Nassau William Senior spent as much time with Hekekyan as with fellow Britons during his sojourn in Egypt from 1855 to 1856, and offered, through his journals, a detailed view of the former official’s frustrated ambitions.

There is little question from one’s initial encounter with Hekekyan in Senior’s journal that the Armenian had an enormous respect for the idea of Egypt:

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<sup>8</sup> British Library, Hekekyan Papers, vol. II, 227.

The recognition of a superior authority entitled to frame and to enforce general rules of conduct is the first step towards civilization. There is reason to believe that Egypt was a country governed by law many thousand years before Europe or even Asia had emerged from savage anarchy. It was in Egypt that the first lawgiver whose laws are recorded, Moses, learned his wisdom. It was from Egypt that legislation flowed to Greece, to Etruria, and to Rome. The Nile was perhaps the civilizer of the world. It produced Egypt, and in Egypt mankind seem first to have begun to improve.<sup>9</sup>

Mehmed Ali went to great lengths to restore the imperative of improvement to this once great civilization, according to Hekekyan, but the governor's selfish quest to preserve his power prevented the realization of this lofty ambition. Hekekyan recalled for Senior how Mehmed Ali had established a School for Administration, aimed at educating the upper ranks of the government service in statecraft. Yet, when the ruler "found that men were to be asked about the incidence of taxation and the theory of government, he put an end instantly to the examinations and to the school."<sup>10</sup>

Hekekyan proceeded, in stridently Orientalist fashion, to attribute this apparent shortsightedness to Islam.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, by this stage in his life, Hekekyan had become so resentful of his treatment by Egypt's rulers that he would declare that Muslims had "no patriotism, no forethought, no public spirit, no mutual

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<sup>9</sup> Senior, vol. I, 134-135.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., vol. I, 249.

<sup>11</sup> Hunter puts great, perhaps undue, emphasis on Hekekyan's anti-Turkish sentiment in his *Egypt Under the Khedives*, 93.

confidence.” He went on to exclaim, “What are the elements in such a society of political life, and of the courage and generous sympathies which political life requires?”<sup>12</sup> Emblematic of the lack of forethought and public spirit was the state to which Mehmed Ali’s successors had allowed the educational experiment of the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s to deteriorate. Senior inquired of Hekekyan as to what remained of the educational institutions of those years: “Nothing except one Preparatory School. Abbas and Said, though they differ on every other question, agree in their hatred or their contempt of knowledge.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Shifting Strategy**

Throughout his career, John Lieder remained a fervent advocate of the mission strategy William Jowett, his mentor, had articulated in his 1822 text, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean*. Although a Jowett enthusiast himself as a young man, Samuel Gobat ultimately came to reject the wisdom of the CMS pioneer, and embraced a starkly contrasting approach to mission in the Mediterranean.

Both John Lieder and Samuel Gobat were among the pioneer missionaries the Church Missionary Society dispatched to Egypt in 1825 — the missionaries designated to put Jowett’s recommendations into practice. Lieder would remain in

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<sup>12</sup> Senior, vol. I, 272-273.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., vol. II, 216.



Cairo for no less than four decades, proselytizing principally among the city's Coptic Christians. In contrast to Lieder, Gobat would venture from Egypt to Abyssinia, to Malta, and ultimately to Jerusalem, as Anglican bishop of the city. Although both missionaries devoted their lives to the evangelical cause, historians of mission remember only Gobat; Lieder and his work are relegated to footnotes, if described at all. The fact that Gobat left such historians a published memoir, whereas Lieder left only scattered manuscript reports of his mission work, has no doubt contributed to the neglect of the latter and his expansive tenure. However, the perception of Lieder as a distinct failure in the quest for souls is of greater importance. Lieder is reputed to have left scarcely a trace of an impact upon the Coptic Christians among whom he proselytized, or upon Egypt at large.

That reputation is due, in large part, to repeated condemnations of Lieder mounted by Gobat, long after the departure of the latter from Egypt. Despite decades as peers and confidants — both as students at the Basel Seminary in Switzerland and as CMS missionaries at Cairo — by the late 1840s, Lieder and Gobat had come to exchange bitter recriminations. The stern, uncompromising administrator Gobat had become through the years could not countenance the respect for Coptic culture Lieder had developed in the field. According to Gobat, Lieder was, by the 1840s, no longer an agent of conversion, but an advocate for, and scholar of, the Copts. Indeed, Lieder was seen by several Western travelers to Egypt at this time merely as a guide to Christian Egypt, with the missionary making

the arrangements for journeys into Sinai for visitors like John Durbin: “It was important that we should have suitable guides and servants, together with camels, tents, furniture, and provisions. Mr. Lieder assisted us much by dispatching a messenger on a swift camel to the encampment of Tualeb, the chief of the Tawaras, whose tents were pitched, for the time, on the edge of the Desert near Belbeis.”<sup>14</sup>

Bishop Gobat ventured to publish his attacks upon his former colleagues at the CMS Cairo mission:

The missionaries seem to follow almost too strictly the plan on which the mission was begun, to seek the friendship of the clergy, especially the higher clergy of the Eastern Churches, with a view to influencing them gently, in the hope that by slow degrees they would become convinced of their errors and themselves reform their respective Churches. But the system has failed, and I am convinced that it will ever fail with the several Eastern Churches, as well as with the Church of Rome. Individual conversions must be the aim, as the only means of prosecuting reformation.<sup>15</sup>

If individual conversion was indeed “the only means of prosecuting reformation,” Lieder and the CMS mission to the Copts were a catastrophic failure for, upon his death in 1865, Lieder could point to but a handful of converts to Anglicanism in Egypt. Indeed, the vision of mission pioneered by Jowett in his *Christian Researches* was no longer in vogue in the late 1840s. Fiscal crisis was,

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<sup>14</sup> John P. Durbin, *Observations in the East, Chiefly in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor*, vol. I (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1845), 88.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Roger Watson, *Egypt and the Christian Crusade* (New York, 1907), 144-145.

by then, the principal concern of CMS administrators in London. They could scarcely resolve that crisis without demonstrating to contributors that conversions, in the form of professions of Anglicanism, were underway. Thus, there no longer existed room for subtlety in the mission endeavor. The betrayal Lieder experienced at the hands of his erstwhile peer, Samuel Gobat, is emblematic of that shift in priorities.

### **Missionary Peers**

The blow Lieder ultimately suffered at the hands of Gobat was one dealt by a formerly close confidant, one with whom Lieder had both spent his formative years and participated in moments of great pain and joy. Although Abyssinia was his ultimate aim, Gobat was forced to remain in Egypt for three years after his initial arrival there, just as Lieder was developing the foundations of the Cairo mission. An opportunity to enter Abyssinia emerged in late 1829, and Gobat's subsequent itinerations, or missionary tours, through the country are the subject of his renowned *Journal of a Three Years' Residence in Abyssinia*. Gobat achieved such notoriety that, upon his return to London in 1833, the CMS secretaries, in an official meeting with the missionary, offered no further instructions, but rather asked for the young man's advice as to the direction of the mission effort.

By December 1834, Gobat had returned to Abyssinia, this time with a wife. A daughter was born during his second series of itinerations through the land.

However, just as Gobat and his wife were returning to Cairo, at the end of 1836, the newborn was struck with a severe illness. A mere three hours prior to Gobat's arrival in the city, his daughter passed away. Plague was then rampant in Cairo — part of an epidemic which had scourged Egypt since November 1834 — and Lieder was among the only Europeans remaining in the city.<sup>16</sup> At that moment of profound pain for Gobat, Lieder ensured that a proper coffin was constructed by a carpenter, and that a Christian burial was conducted upon consecrated land.

Nevertheless, in December 1836, joy displaced pain as a son was born to Mrs. Gobat in Cairo. Further, until their departure for Alexandria in February 1837, both Mr. and Mrs. Gobat acted as intermediaries between Lieder and Miss Holliday, the Englishwoman dispatched to Cairo by the Ladies' Society for the Promotion of Female Education in the East who would ultimately become Mrs. Lieder. At the time, Holliday recounted to the Secretary of the Ladies' Society:

You may judge of my surprise when Mr. Gobat informed me that his dear brother Mr. Lieder had written to the Church Mission House for permission to offer me his hand, — I found that Mr. and Mrs. Gobat had been the advisers and confidants of Mr. Lieder throughout the whole matter, although I myself had not the slightest idea of it until Mr. Lieder received letters from England by the last

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<sup>16</sup> For details of the epidemic, refer to LaVerne Kuhnke, *Lives at Risk: Public Health in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), particularly 78-89. For a particularly vivid description of the epidemic, refer to Kinglake, *Eothen*, Chapter 18. At page 162, he recounts, "When I first arrived, it was said that the daily number of 'accidents' by plague, out of a population of about two hundred thousand, did not exceed four or five hundred; but before I went away [after nineteen days], the deaths were reckoned at twelve hundred a day."

post, wherein the Committee requested him to take under his management all the mission schools in Egypt, with an intimation that they would gladly see him married.<sup>17</sup>

### **Gobat in Jerusalem**

Gobat would not return to Cairo for twelve years, during which his approach to mission shifted radically. Lieder remained the man in the field throughout, seeking innovative means by which to apply the strategy Jowett had set forth in *Christian Researches*. In stark contrast, Gobat was appointed an administrator, and accordingly developed the concern with professions of Anglicanism — with charts illustrating numbers of converts — that characterized the CMS committee in London. He was head of the Malta press, then Vice-Principal of the Malta Protestant College. He reached the pinnacle of his career in 1846, at which point Chevalier Bunsen, Prussian Ambassador at London, invited him to assume the joint Anglican-Prussian bishopric at Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem context remolded Gobat's approach to mission, particularly given how fierce the rivalry among Christian sects for souls was, in the city, at that time.<sup>18</sup> This prompted an unprecedented audacity within Gobat — one that propelled him to view professions of Anglicanism as not only acceptable, but

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<sup>17</sup> Archives of the Church Missionary Society, University of Birmingham, UK, Meeting of Ladies' Society, 21 April 1837, FES/AM1 minute 414.

<sup>18</sup> For the context, refer to Kenneth Cragg, "Being Made Disciples — The Middle East," in Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley, eds. *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), particularly 128-129.

urgent.<sup>19</sup> He viewed with horror how Christians of the Eastern Churches touched by his work were forced to embrace icons and invoke saints, given the threat of excommunication. At the time, excommunication occasioned severe material hardship. Hence, as bishop, Gobat found himself continually pleading for European funds that would permit Eastern Christians to abandon the ‘superstition’ of their sects — funds for a welfare network that could support such Christians after their excommunication.

Gobat had difficulty securing the approval of European officials for his aggressive approach to mission. The King of Prussia himself, Frederick William IV, encouraged the Bishop of Jerusalem to revert to his former conciliatory stance, and by September 1853, no less than a thousand prominent Anglicans had signed a letter protesting against Gobat’s efforts. How indeed would the Emperor of Russia react to an Anglican Bishop developing evangelical congregations from the ranks of Orthodox Christians? Nevertheless, Gobat remained undeterred, insisting in an 1850 letter to the Prussian King:

I have never wished to make converts from the old Churches, but only to lead to the Lord and to the knowledge of His truth as many

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<sup>19</sup> For trends in this direction within the CMS, refer to Peter Williams, “‘Not Transplanting’: Henry Venn’s Strategic Vision,” in Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley, eds. *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000) and T. E. Yates, *Venn and Victorian Bishops Abroad: The Missionary Policies of Henry Venn and Their Repercussions Upon the Anglican Episcopate of the Colonial Period, 1841-1872* (Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1978).

as possible. From henceforth, however, I shall be obliged to receive into our communion such as are excluded for Bible-truth's sake from other Churches; and I trust that in doing so, even though men should blame me for it, the Lord will grant his blessing upon the proceeding.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, considering broader trends in missionary circles throughout the Protestant world, Gobat was behind the times — that is, hardly aggressive enough in emphasizing conversion, rather than reform, as paramount.<sup>21</sup> When Stephen Olin, President of the Wesleyan University, visited the Cairo mission in the 1840s, he expressed only scorn for CMS educational endeavors in the city and, by extension, for the notion that one could ‘enlighten’ local Christians through native churches:

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<sup>20</sup> *Samuel Gobat, Bishop of Jerusalem, His Life and Work: A Biographical Sketch, Drawn Chiefly from His Own Journals* (London: James Nisbet and Company, 1884), 265.

<sup>21</sup> Consider, for instance, developments in American missionary circles, as discussed by Paul William Harris in his *Nothing But Christ: Rufus Anderson and the Ideology of Protestant Foreign Missions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Anderson visited the Middle East on behalf of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in the early 1840s. At page 75, Harris notes, “In his summation of his conference with the Mission in Turkey, he urged ‘the value of the direct, formal preaching of the gospel’ and advocated that Armenian converts cease to worship in the Apostolic Church in favor of formal Protestant services. Although they ought to continue in their ‘civil relations’ with the Armenian community, ‘voluntary association’ should be promoted within the evangelical movement. As far as Anderson was concerned, the principal function of such a ‘native association or missionary society’ was to support their own native pastors and evangelists. The foundation of a new sect was thus clearly being laid in anticipation of an eventual schism.”

Upon the whole, the mission seems to meet with no very flattering encouragement. It is a work of faith to which these heralds of the cross are called, difficult and discouraging beyond most other departments of Christian labor. No person has been converted, none has been brought to a decided and open rejection of the absurd opinions and usages which the ignorance of ages has engrafted on this branch of the Church. Those pupils who have yielded for a time to the lessons of an enlightened piety, soon decline, upon leaving the schools, into the prevailing sentiments and observances.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Lessons of the Madagascar Mission**

This broad emphasis upon aggressive proselytism in Protestant missionary circles during the 1840s had arisen in light of several painful experiences with specifically educational experiments, aimed at subtler infiltration and ‘enlightenment’ of ‘heathen’ communities. No such experience was quite as painful as that of London Missionary Society representatives in Madagascar — one which received extensive attention in the *Missionary Register*, the foremost journal of the nineteenth-century Protestant missionary endeavor, directed at missionaries worldwide without regard to denomination.

In October 1820, the British government had signed a treaty with Radama, King of Madagascar, the provisions of which dealt extensively with missionary activity. David Jones, the pioneer London Missionary Society representative who attended the treaty signing, explained in his correspondence that the King valued, above all, the provisions guaranteeing a modern education for his subjects at

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<sup>22</sup> Stephen Olin, *Travels in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*, vol. I (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1843), 120.



missionary hands: “He has their education and civilization so much at heart, that I am persuaded he would not have agreed to the treaty on any other terms.”

However, despite the missionary direction of the educational effort, Radama was adamant “that his people may be taught in civilization as well as in religion.”<sup>23</sup>

That effort began in 1821, with Radama sending sixteen children to Jones for instruction — among them, three of the King’s sisters, as well as one of the heirs to the crown. This arrangement was formalized with the inauguration of the Royal School in the capital, administered according to the Lancaster system, with an emphasis upon imparting a sense of moral conduct to the students. By October 1821, Radama had decided to build a schoolhouse from which Mr. Griffiths, like Jones a missionary of the LMS, could offer instruction for the general population of the capital. LMS representative John Jeffreys reported to headquarters in June 1822 that Radama was “so anxious for his people to receive instruction that he sends for the parents of children himself and desires them to send them to the missionaries.”<sup>24</sup>

What was behind this apparent urgency? In general terms, the missionaries bowed to Radama’s wishes as far as limiting Christian instruction and promoting loyalty to his rule were concerned. Indeed, Griffiths explained this approach in a

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<sup>23</sup> Archives of the London Missionary Society, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Jones to Telfair, 14 October 1820, Madagascar Mission Incoming Correspondence, Box 1, Folder 2.

<sup>24</sup> LMS Archives, Jeffreys to LMS, 22 June 1822, Madagascar Incoming, Box 1, Folder 4.

November 1824 letter to headquarters: “we make it a fundamental principle to impress upon the minds of all that we have to do with, whether in teaching, catechizing or preaching or conversing that the word of God enjoins unfeigned subjection and true regard for their king.”<sup>25</sup> The reasoning behind Radama’s advocacy of this sort of education soon became apparent. James Hastie, the British Agent in Madagascar, recounted in 1825:

Of the boys under instruction and those sent out as teachers 18 have lately been selected for military service by the orders of the king who finding his best endeavours for the good government of the country cramped and paralyzed for want of agents capable of communication with him by writing is now well convinced that it is necessary that he should use every means in his power to forward the instruction of his people and advance in his service those who acquit themselves to his satisfaction.<sup>26</sup>

By the time of Hastie’s report, the schools were in a flourishing state.

Radama had ordered the consolidation, in March 1824, of several schools at the capital into an institution known as the Missionary Seminary, or Central School, under the direction of Mr. Griffiths. Between April and September 1824 alone, no fewer than 22 further schools were established under the King’s patronage, in which roughly 2000 students received instruction from day to day, at the hands of the graduates of the LMS schools in the capital. Yet, certain tensions between

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<sup>25</sup> LMS Archives, Griffiths to LMS, 4 November 1824, Madagascar Incoming, Box 2, Folder 1.

<sup>26</sup> LMS Archives, Hastie to LMS, 17 March 1825, Madagascar Incoming, Box 2, Folder 2.

Radama and the missionaries which had, to this point, remained in the background, were propelled to the fore by the schools' success. Griffiths was angered by the callousness of Radama's officers, who would visit his school with the explicit purpose of selecting from among the students second wives, prized for their skills in needlework. Further, the King communicated to the schools' boys, through intermediaries, "that he did not intend to bind them to attend the schools longer than to learn what would be beneficial to themselves and useful to their country."<sup>27</sup>

Radama's death in 1828 cast a pall over the enterprise. Although they had had their differences, Radama and the missionaries had accomplished a great deal in a short period of time. The question then became: Would the 'seeds sown' by the missionaries, through their network of schools, yield a stable educational system for the continuing 'enlightenment' of the Malagasy population? Much to the missionaries' lament, Queen Ranaivalona, Radama's widow and successor, was less than enthusiastic about education in an abstract sense, not least because she suspected the missionaries of distancing the people from their traditional idols. Indeed, in a bid to consolidate her authority after her husband's death, the Queen had vested much importance in the reinvigoration of long-held forms of Malagasy spirituality, venturing to close all schools in villages where idols were kept.

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<sup>27</sup> LMS Archives, Jones and Griffiths to LMS, 30 May 1827, Madagascar Incoming, Box 2, Folder 4.

With the lands Radama had secured for his dominion under threat from the French, however, the Queen saw the utility of the schools as a source for manpower. In the early 1830s, recounts one historian of the mission:

It was proposed to add 25,000 men to the forces already enrolled; and for this purpose, every one in the schools, both pupils and teachers, upwards of thirteen years of age, was drafted into the army. It was also expected that the remaining junior classes would also be taken in the next reinforcement that might be ordered; and this proceeding, as might be expected, rendered the parents more unwilling than ever to send their children to the schools under the patronage of the government.<sup>28</sup>

By 1835, the missionaries found their position untenable. Not only were parents withholding their children from the schools for fear of having them conscripted, but various chiefs were lodging complaints with the Queen as to the disrespect students were showing to the idols, in light of the modern education they were receiving. At the end of February, the Queen explained to the missionaries, “I am neither ashamed nor afraid to maintain the customs of my ancestors.”<sup>29</sup> Days later, the situation came to a head with a further rebuke penned by Ranavalona: “As to baptism, societies, places of worship, distinct from the schools, and the observances of the Sabbath, how many rulers are there in this land? Is it not I alone

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<sup>28</sup> William Ellis, *History of Madagascar: Comprising Also the Progress of the Christian Mission Established in 1818; and an Authentic Account of the Persecution and Recent Martyrdom of the Native Christians* (London: Fisher, Son, and Company, 1838), vol. II, 467.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, 493.

that rule?”<sup>30</sup> By the end of that summer, Griffiths and his family had left Madagascar; the final LMS missionaries on the island departed in 1836, having buried whatever Bibles, Testaments, Hymnals, and Catechisms remained in their possession. William Ellis, the mission historian, concluded in 1838, “The government was fully sensible of the advantages of knowledge, and hence both Radama and his successor had encouraged teaching and the useful arts — but it was not for the people. Their steady aim was to monopolize all these advantages, and to use them as means of keeping the nation at large in a state of more entire subjection.”<sup>31</sup>

### **An Advocate for the Copts?**

At a time of fierce contestation as to missionary strategy, Lieder preserved a remarkable six-year silence in his correspondence with the CMS, neglecting to communicate with the Secretaries of the Society from 1852 to 1858. However, Nassau William Senior’s *Conversations and Journals in Egypt and Malta* offers an intriguing, though fragmentary view of Lieder’s activities during this period.

Senior seems to have encountered Lieder during the services the missionary led for the English community of Cairo. On Christmas Day in 1855, Senior reported, “A lofty square room in the Copt quarter is fitted up as a chapel, in which Mr. Lieder,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., vol. II, 496.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., vol. II, 504.

deputed by the Church Missionary Society, officiates. Our congregation consisted of about forty persons, of whom only five or six seemed to be natives.”<sup>32</sup>

However, Lieder would soon become instrumental in Senior’s research as to the status of the Coptic Church. Indeed, Lieder apparently introduced Senior to Patriarch Cyril IV, and proceeded to act as interpreter during a series of meetings in February 1856. Lieder is frequently portrayed by Senior as nothing less than a spokesman for, and adviser to, the Patriarch. For instance, after the Patriarch’s discussion of conscription among the Copts with Senior and British Consul Bruce, Lieder is alleged to have declared, “The Patriarch is very grateful for Mr. Bruce’s advice, and will follow it, and address a memorial to the Pasha.”<sup>33</sup>

Bishop Gobat was, for his part, not entirely without sympathy for the Cairo mission. As late as December 1855, he considered the prospect of closing the mission a pity, and reported, “last summer I met with a few individuals at Cairo on whom the word of God has made good impression, as they told me that in Upper Egypt there are many individuals scattered, whose eyes have been opened to a considerable degree, and who, like those I saw, although perhaps not yet converted in the true sense of the word, are yet open to deeper influences of the truth, if faithfully preached to them.” Further, he was willing to admit that the mission strategy of influencing the Coptic Church from within was yielding results, not

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<sup>32</sup> Nassau William Senior, *Conversations and Journals in Egypt and Malta* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1882), vol. I, 163.

<sup>33</sup> Senior, vol. II, 78.

least given the rise of a reformist Patriarch, Cyril IV: “I do not think that the Coptic Patriarch is a converted man, but his understanding is more enlightened than that of many others, and his partial reforms and schools are likely to be good. He seems in many things to follow the advice of Mr. Lieder.”<sup>34</sup>

By June 1858, though, Lieder’s long-standing silence brought censure from the CMS Secretaries. They explained, “You have gone on drawing your salary as if you were a retired missionary no longer acting under the direction of the Committee.” Their forbearance in dealing with Lieder had come to an end: They would no longer allow the missionary to draw allowances or expenses from the Society, at least until he had updated the Secretaries as to his accounts and activities. The Secretaries concluded the rebuke by admitting, “It is very painful to make this communication to an old missionary of the Society, but you have brought it upon yourself by your disregard of the standing regulations of the Society as well as of your own promises.”<sup>35</sup>

Mrs. Lieder claimed to learn of her husband’s neglect of headquarters only after the arrival of the Secretaries’ June letter. Indeed, the Committee censure represented such a blow to the missionary’s pride that, apparently, his nervous system was visibly shaken. Further, Alice explained, Lieder had suffered injuries to his arm due to a fall. She complained in a private communication to CMS

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<sup>34</sup> CMS Archives, Gobat to Venn, December 1855, C M/M 11, 215-218.

<sup>35</sup> CMS Archives, Secretaries to Lieder, 25 June 1858, C M/L 4, 175-176.

headquarters, “His old exclusive habits as a bachelor have always influenced him against giving that confidence to me in matters of business, which as a wife, I felt I had a right to expect.”<sup>36</sup>

The missionary himself at last put pen to paper in October 1858. He explained that he had had a difficult summer: A recent massacre of Christians at Jeddah had prompted much concern among the Copts as to the possibility of sectarian violence in Egypt. In this context, Lieder makes a rather astonishing claim: “in the absence of the Coptic Patriarch it devolved on me to see to the security of this Christian quarter by having the doors and fastenings rendered safe.” Lieder was clearly unashamed of the intimacy he had cultivated with the leaders of the Coptic community, and indeed boasted of this intimacy elsewhere in the letter: “I feel that I have been useful here, and that my labours have not been in vain. My intimate knowledge of the people and my familiarity with their language has given me an influence over them for good — that it might take many years for a young and inexperienced man to obtain.”<sup>37</sup> All of this speaks to the conception Lieder still held as to his role as missionary in the Cairo context — to seek to ‘enlighten’ the Coptic community through subtle influence from within, largely by way of schools, in the place of aggressive proselytism.

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<sup>36</sup> CMS Archives, Mrs. Lieder to Venn, 17 September 1858, C M/O 48/110.

<sup>37</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to Secretaries, 18 October 1858, C M/O 48/111.



## **Habits of Intemperance**

In December 1859, the CMS committee sent Bishop Gobat to Cairo, such that he could apprise the Secretaries of the situation of the Cairo mission. The report he submitted is missing from the CMS archives, but there is a reference, in an 1860 letter dispatched to Lieder, to a “statement from Bishop Gobat of the habits of intemperance into which you have fallen.”<sup>38</sup> A subsequent letter would seem to indicate that suspicions were raised regarding a problem with alcohol.<sup>39</sup> The CMS Secretaries rendered their verdict upon the missionary:

We have felt it some alleviation to be told that as yet this scandal has not become generally known; but you cannot remain at Cairo longer without this being the case. The Committee therefore feel it their duty to withdraw you without delay from Cairo, and to direct you to go at once to Germany. You will report your arrival there, that the Committee may decide what final measures to adopt towards you.<sup>40</sup>

In a stern response, Mrs. Lieder explained that, although her husband would obey the orders of the Committee and head to Trieste, she would never consent to reside in Germany, “a country with which I have no sympathy, and of whose language I do not speak a word.” Her rebuke to the Secretaries was strikingly scornful:

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<sup>38</sup> CMS Archives, Secretaries to Lieder, 31 July 1860, C M/L 4, 246-247.

<sup>39</sup> CMS Archives, Tattam to Venn, 2 March 1861, C M/O 8/65.

<sup>40</sup> CMS Archives, Secretaries to Lieder, 31 July 1860, C M/L 4, 246-247.

A moment's consideration might have sufficed to assure you that persons could not be located more than 30 years in a place, without surrounding themselves with some necessaries at least; to say nothing of a clergyman's library, etc., and surely this property is not to be cast adrift without any to care for it, at a time when all our funds may be needed for the support of our grey hairs.<sup>41</sup>

John Lieder departed for Europe in September 1860 — and thus began undoubtedly one of the most bizarre and mysterious episodes in CMS history. Six months later, Alice Lieder reported to CMS headquarters in London that she had not heard from her husband at all since his departure from Egypt, and further, that she had begun an investigation as to his whereabouts. Through consultations with the Trieste police, she was able to determine that he had received a visa there on September 11, 1860, en route to Vienna and then England. The Society resolved to contact the Foreign Office to trace his path further, and the Foreign Office confirmed, after contacts with the Austrian government, that Lieder had crossed the Austrian frontier at Salzburg, en route to Bavaria, on September 25, 1860. Only in June 1861 was the CMS apprised that Lieder was in, of all places, Düsseldorf, in the care of a particular hotelier there. Upon meeting with his colleague William Kruse, Lieder apparently confessed that he was too ashamed to proceed to London to meet with his masters, and that he would prefer to head back to Cairo via Basel. Kruse agreed to meet with the CMS Secretaries on his behalf.

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<sup>41</sup> CMS Archives, Mrs. Lieder to Secretaries, 25 August 1860, C M/O 48/113.

Lieder arrived back in Alexandria on July 10, 1861. Marianne Daniell, a friend of the family, wrote to CMS headquarters of his return: “he seemed nervous and agitated at first, but as no notice whatever was taken of recent events, nor the slightest allusion made to any thing unpleasant which had transpired, he soon recovered himself.” She continued, “At first, we thought Mr. Lieder looking older; but now that he has recovered from the effects of the voyage, and had his hair reduced to the English fashion, he looks exceedingly well, and appears to be in the full possession of health and strength, and in a very tranquil, cheerful and loving spirit.” Indeed, the missionary had regained possession of himself to the extent that “influential men among the Copts especially have rallied around him, and held conversations on the present aspect of their affairs, for the Bishops are now congregating to choose a new Patriarch.”<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, questions lingered about Lieder’s mental state, not least given that, as Daniell noted, “he volunteers no explanation of the past.”<sup>43</sup> Mrs. Lieder had confessed, in a letter dispatched to CMS headquarters shortly before her husband’s return, “I cannot divest myself of the fear that there is something essentially wrong in the mental powers. What else could account for his secluding himself in a matter so utterly reckless of all consequences, both to himself and to

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<sup>42</sup> CMS Archives, Daniell to Venn, 19 July 1861, C M/O 48/117.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

his family?”<sup>44</sup> Despite Lieder’s apparent misconduct — perhaps in light of the ‘illness’ to which his wife pointed — the CMS Secretaries recommended that the missionary receive the pension due to him during his retirement. However, in 1865, cholera would bring an end to whatever mental disturbance Lieder was experiencing.<sup>45</sup> Alice made a last report to headquarters about her husband in February 1866: “Mr. Lieder’s beautiful memorial is now erected, and is one of the noblest monuments in the English cemetery.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> CMS Archives, Mrs. Lieder to Secretaries, 25 June 1861, C M/O 48/116.

<sup>45</sup> For details of the cholera epidemic, refer to Kuhnke, *Lives at Risk*, 65-68.

<sup>46</sup> CMS Archives, Mrs. Lieder to Venn, 3 February 1866, G/AC 16/276.

## CHAPTER 7

### **Remolding Reform: Patriarch Cyril IV and the Modern Coptic Subject, 1855-1860**

On the evening of February 8, 1856, the Coptic Patriarch and British Consul Bruce conferred, at the rooms in Cairo of Nassau William Senior, about the impact of conscription upon the Coptic community. The conversation, as recorded by Senior, reveals a great deal as to how Patriarch Cyril IV viewed the mass of Copts, his role as Patriarch, and the nature of Coptic identity in modern Egypt:

*Patriarch:* In many places all the Copts capable from their age and strength of serving are taken. In Sioot [Asyūt] all the males in one house — and they amounted to eleven — were seized. Not one was left to support the women and children. My brother, who has two sons, one of them a priest, has fled from his village with his sons, and is in concealment in Cairo. Under Abbas, Copts were sometimes taken, but when complaint was made they were released.<sup>1</sup>

Upon Bruce's suggestion that the Patriarch recommend to Sa'īd Pasha a distinctly Coptic corps under Christian officers, Cyril made an extraordinary allegation:

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<sup>1</sup> Nassau William Senior, *Conversations and Journals in Egypt and Malta*, vol. II (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1882), 74.

*Patriarch:* The Pasha wishes to extirpate the Coptic Church. Almost all the scribes in the public service are, or rather were, Copts. They have almost all been discharged within a few months; hundreds of families are starving. The pretence is economy, but, as in many cases they have been replaced by Mussulmans inferior to them in education and ability, the real motive is hatred of them as Christians.

*Bruce:* I fear that we cannot interfere with the Pasha's management of his troops, so far as respects their exposure to the dangers of their employment.

*Patriarch:* But I think that if there is to be any interference in our favour means may be taken to prevent our being required to furnish an undue proportion of soldiers. We are only 217,000. The population of Egypt is 5,000,000. We ought not, therefore, to contribute more than one-twentieth of the whole army. Sabbatier, the French Consul-General, offered to assist us, but it was on condition that I would order, as Patriarch, the Jesuits to be admitted into Abyssinia. Indeed, I fear the consequences of any interference, if it were known to be at my suggestion. If it were known that I complained, my people, and I myself, might be made to suffer.<sup>2</sup>

As Cyril's conversation with Bruce indicates, by the mid-nineteenth century, the Coptic Patriarch not only perceived himself as temporal representative of a Coptic community, but aimed to defend his prerogatives and, indeed, 'his people' against the encroachments of the Egyptian state.<sup>3</sup> To succeed in this effort,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Braude has scrutinized the historiography of the Greek, Jewish, and Armenian communities under Ottoman rule, and concluded that *millet* structures, as understood by Western scholars, emerged only in the nineteenth century — that historians of the Greek, Jewish, and Armenian communities retrospectively projected *millet* concepts to the time of Mehmed the Conqueror. Refer to his "Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System," in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers). His conclusion, at page 74 of

however, would require not merely action from without — negotiating with foreign consuls and government officials — but, perhaps more importantly, action from within — solidifying communal bonds through a distinctly Coptic program of ‘reform.’

Critical to this effort was Cyril’s purchase of a printing press from Austria.<sup>4</sup>

One stated aim of the project was to develop print versions of the precious manuscripts scattered throughout the churches and monasteries of Egypt.<sup>5</sup>

‘Textualizing’ the Coptic heritage, it seems, was a priority as urgent for Cyril as it had been for Lieder. Four young Copts were granted permission by Sa‘īd Pasha to work as apprentices at the government press in Būlāq, to prepare for the operation of the Coptic press. Upon the arrival of the press at Alexandria, Cyril was at a desert monastery — but the Patriarch ordered priests and altar boys to greet the

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volume I, that prior to the nineteenth century, the Ottomans possessed “no overall administrative system, structure, or set of institutions for dealing with non-Muslims,” stands in stark contrast to the received wisdom of Hamilton Gibb and Harold Bowen, that Mehmed consolidated the Christian and Jewish communities under the leadership of patriarchs and a chief rabbi respectively. Refer to their *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Moslem Culture in the Near East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), vol. I, part II, 215-217. For the most recent scholarship on this question, refer to Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Coptic historians insist that this was only the second such press to enter the country, after the government press acquired by Mehmed Ali.

<sup>5</sup> Irīs Habīb al-Masri, *Qissat al-Kanīsa al-Qibtiyya* (Alexandria: Maktabat Kanīsat Mari Girgis, 1975), vol. IV, 325. In conjunction with the establishment of the press, Cyril mounted an unprecedented reorganization of church libraries, beginning with the papal library. All books in the collection were identified, catalogued, and arrayed upon 21 bookcases.

press clothed in formal vestments, and to march in a procession with the press, all the time chanting.

After the arrival of the press, the priests questioned the need for such a ceremony, but the Patriarch declared that if he had had the opportunity, he would have danced before the press as David had danced before the Ark of the Covenant.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, according to Irīs Habīb al-Masri, he justified his astonishing claim in the following terms: “It is not that I am worshipping an instrument made of iron. Rather, I am paying my respects to the knowledge that will be spread by its means.”<sup>7</sup> However, there was a quite specific notion of knowledge at work here. The knowledge that Cyril had in mind was not that of the blind Coptic ‘*arīf*, nor that of Walter Ong’s ‘wise old man and wise old woman’ who, as ‘repeaters of the past,’ possessed social influence in an oral culture.<sup>8</sup> Like Lieder and Hekekyan, the Coptic Patriarch grasped the urgency of stepping beyond such intermediaries, to establish a relationship with the individual — in this case, the Coptic individual. Indeed, Cyril would remold English notions of improvement to suit specifically Coptic aims, and thereby — through educational institutions, above all — fashion a modern Coptic subjectivity.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Shoucri, “Cyril IV,” 678.

<sup>7</sup> al-Masri, *Qissat al-Kanīsa*, vol. IV, 325.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, Routledge edition (London, 2002), 41. For the blind Coptic ‘*arīf*, refer to Chapters Two and Three.

<sup>9</sup> For comparative purposes, consider Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Difference—Deferral of a Colonial Modernity: Public Debates on Domesticity in British



## Monitoring the Mission

The efforts of the CMS mission in Cairo were consistently viewed with suspicion by the Coptic Church hierarchy, but never forbidden. In fact, John Lieder argued in his reports that he, in time, developed a cordial relationship with powerful members of that hierarchy. By 1831, the Patriarch had constructed a house for the CMS mission in the Coptic quarter — quite cunningly, no doubt, to facilitate his monitoring of CMS activity. Despite the hefty rent of \$150 per annum, the mission was delighted with the house, built not only “from sincere love and friendship” but, remarkably, “almost in a European style.”<sup>10</sup> Lieder reported with all seriousness that, through the years, the Patriarch gradually moved through the years from addressing him as ‘*waladi*,’ ‘my son,’ to ‘*achi*,’ ‘my brother,’ to ‘*abi*,’ ‘my father.’<sup>11</sup> By 1845, he claimed that he enjoys “the full confidence of the Patriarch, who not seldom sends for me to consult me on important and difficult matters, especially in regard of the intrigues of the Roman Catholics in Egypt and Abyssinia.”<sup>12</sup>

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Bengal,” in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Archives of the Church Missionary Society, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, Kruse to Coates, 20 January 1831, reference C M/O 45/12.

<sup>11</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder and Kruse to the Secretaries, 25 January 1839, C M/O 45/75a.

<sup>12</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 14 March 1845, C M/O 48/121.

The Patriarch was well aware of the activities of the mission not only in general, but in specific terms — that is, he knew much of the techniques of instruction Lieder had introduced in the mission schools. One of the most fascinating episodes Lieder related in his reports is that of the inaugural public examination of the schools, held on September 12, 1843. The exam was conducted from 3 to 6:30 pm, and the Patriarch himself witnessed the event, with an array of priests and elite laymen at his side:

The first part examined was the Boys' Day School, the Patriarch was much pleased with the instruction of the children, but especially with the order in which it is conducted. Then followed the examination of the pupils of the Institution; the teachers went through the several branches given in the Arabic and Coptic languages, and I finished this part of the examination with a catechisation (a practice unknown among the Copts) on the first 12 verses of the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, to which his holiness listened with great attention. And finally followed the examination of the female department. This part of the Mission establishment interested him most, being the first school for female education he ever saw; he heard the girls read, saw their writings, their exercises in Arithmetic; but was perfectly surprised, when he saw some of the best instructed girls, one after the other, mount the rostrum, and read with a loud intelligent voice some portion of the New Testament, a thing formerly unheard of in Egypt, and a fact he would perhaps never have believed without seeing it.<sup>13</sup>

The Patriarch remained for dinner to partake of a traditional English meal of turkey and ham — the latter, Lieder noted, was never consumed by priests, and rarely by Copts generally — and chose to eat in the presence of a woman — an

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

event without precedent, according to Lieder. Finally, after a day of such excitement, “At nine o’clock his holiness offered up a short prayer for the welfare of the Mission establishment, and took leave, evidently highly pleased with what he had heard and seen.”<sup>14</sup>

By 1847, bishops were visiting the Coptic Institution regularly — among them, Michael, the Bishop of Esna, Macarius, the Bishop of Asyūt, and Jacob, the Bishop of Minyā. Each brought Lieder a boy for instruction at the mission — in the case of Michael, the son of his sister, “a fine lad of thirteen years of age.” Lieder related that Michael “told me to regard the boy as my own son, and that as he had dedicated him to the Priesthood, he now submitted the whole of his theological studies to me.”<sup>15</sup> Yet, despite all the purported esteem in which the hierarchy held Lieder and his methods, there is no indication that, at the peak of mission activity during the 1830s and 1840s, there was a movement in that hierarchy to embrace such methods. Lieder spoke of the formation of discussion circles and schools, but was vague as to the degree of official sanction for them, and as to the methods employed therein.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 29 March 1847, C M/O 48/123.

<sup>16</sup> In his letter to the Secretaries, 20 January 1841, C M/M 8, Lieder reports the establishment, during 1840, of seven Coptic schools in Cairo. The masters thereof “have all applied to us for help and books.” Further, Lieder notes that he has supplied existing Coptic schools in Cairo with Malta publications. However, there is no indication in subsequent reports of the degree of Church involvement in such projects, or of the projects’ degree of success.

Nevertheless, there remains the question of the mission school alumni. Were they, as Lieder had intended, ultimately to lead a movement for reform and revival within Church and community? In an 1849 report, Lieder claimed that 1530 pupils passed through the boys' day school from foundation to closure in September 1848. He noted that "as it was chiefly visited by the children of the poor, about 400 of them have been saved from wretchedness, and with them their parents, and are now respectably employed in the service of the government as clerks, copiers and accountants." As for the Coptic Institution, "there are now a number of its former pupils, who by their knowledge and moral principles do honour to it."<sup>17</sup> Heyworth-Dunne cites the claim of one traveler, that at least two hundred graduates of the mission schools entered state employment.<sup>18</sup>

Although Lieder envisioned such alumni as conduits for the moral principles inculcated at the mission schools, none of the laymen traditionally associated with the movement for reform of Church and community was educated at a CMS mission school or at the Coptic Institution. Yet, there exists conjecture among Coptic historians that the informant upon whom Edward Lane relied, in the mid-1830s, for the substance of Chapter Twenty-Nine of *Manners and Customs of*

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<sup>17</sup> CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 27 January 1849, C M/O 48/124.

<sup>18</sup> Warburton, cited in J. Heyworth-Dunne, "Education in Egypt and the Copts," *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 6 (1940), 101.

*the Modern Egyptians*, was a product of the mission schools.<sup>19</sup> The conjecture is of interest given the nature of the comments the informant offered. Lane had chosen to immerse himself in the Muslim culture of Cairo to such a degree, he argued, that Copts refused to speak with him of their culture. Still, as he recounted, “I had the good fortune to become acquainted with a character of which I had doubted the existence — a Copt of a liberal as well as an intelligent mind.”<sup>20</sup> He relied upon the Copt to provide the substance for his treatise on the Copts. That the treatise contains attacks upon the Patriarch for corruption and mismanagement of Church property, and speaks of the Copts as “generally ignorant, deceitful, faithless, and abandoned to the pursuit of worldly gain, and to indulgence in sensual pleasure,” raises the question of mission influence — for the ‘liberal,’ ‘intelligent’ Copt echoes just the notions that pervade mission journals and reports.<sup>21</sup>

Beyond conjecture, there exist documented links between reformers in the Church hierarchy and the mission schools. The case Lieder himself most often cited was that of Andraus, an alumnus of the Kruse school for boarders. Andraus was not only ordained in the Coptic Church, but later appointed Bishop of

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<sup>19</sup> Murqus Simaika, “The Awakening of the Coptic Church,” *Contemporary Review* 71 (May 1897), 736.

<sup>20</sup> Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians, Written in Egypt During the Years 1833-1835*, reprint of 1896 edition (London: Darf Publishers, 1986), 533.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 537 and 551.

Abyssinia.<sup>22</sup> In February 1839, Miss Platt, during one of the quests for Coptic manuscripts undertaken with her stepfather, Henry Tattam, came across Andraus at a desert monastery. Although Platt found his English ‘rather perplexing,’ she related, “He mentioned Mr. and Mrs. Kruse most affectionately; inquired after many of his school-fellows by name; expressed his gratitude for the kindness he had received in the school; spoke of the happy days he had spent there; and begged that we would present his best respects to Mr. and Mrs. Kruse.”<sup>23</sup>

The enthusiasm for the mission Andraus displayed scarcely waned with his ordination or appointment as a bishop. In fact, he frequently corresponded with Lieder from Abyssinia, particularly about his efforts to quash all Catholicism in his diocese — efforts which were, if not incited by Lieder, at least firmly endorsed by him.<sup>24</sup> In one astonishing letter to Lieder, Salama — as Andraus was known after

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<sup>22</sup> Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, vol. I (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899), 351.

<sup>23</sup> Miss Platt, *Journal of a Tour Through Egypt, the Peninsula of Sinai, and the Holy Land in 1838, 1839*, vol. II (London: Richard Watts, 1841), 48-49. The young man was at the monastery “to prepare himself for the priesthood, which he is about to enter.” An ‘Andraus’ is mentioned in a report Lieder submitted to Schlienz, 22 February 1836, C M/M 5. The eldest of the Kruse seminarists, he was dispatched to the boys’ day school as an instructor on the dismissal of Michael — the master condemned for perusing witchcraft and astrology texts.

<sup>24</sup> In the late 1830s and 1840s, a missionary drama was unfolding in Abyssinia, with Protestants and Catholics contending fiercely for the favour of Governor Oubea. According to Platt, *Journal of a Tour*, vol. II, 1-2, by 1838, a Frenchman, M. D’Abadie, had arrived in Abyssinia, and managed to convince the authorities to expel the Protestants from their mission station. With the arrival of Salama at his post, however, the balance of influence shifted markedly in favour of the Protestants. Salama cultivated his relations with Oubea, and excommunicated all

his appointment as bishop — lamented the lack of a British consul in Massowa, “for if you had a Consul in Massowa your dignity would be revered in Abyssinia.”<sup>25</sup>

### **The Legend of the ‘Father of Reform’**

Of far greater importance is the link between Patriarch Cyril IV and the Cairo mission. Cyril was the successor, in 1854, to Peter VII, who had held the Patriarchal seat since 1809 — long prior to the arrival of the CMS in Egypt.<sup>26</sup> One English historian of the Coptic Church claims that Cyril was, in fact, educated in a CMS mission school.<sup>27</sup> However, the claim is widely disputed by Coptic historians, and not without cause — for there is no mention of Cyril as an alumnus in mission reports subsequent to his accession to the Patriarchal seat.<sup>28</sup> Lieder would, no doubt, have flaunted such an ‘accomplishment’ before the CMS

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the Abyssinians found entering the house of ‘Jacob,’ a Roman Catholic missionary. In his 1849 report to the Secretaries, 27 January, C M/O 48/124, Lieder reveals that Salama has succeeded in effecting a remarkable reversal of policy, and persuaded Oubea to expel not only the Roman Catholic missionaries, but all Christians refusing to forsake Catholicism.

<sup>25</sup> CMS Archives, Salama to Lieder, 1844, trans. Lieder, C M/O 48/60b.

<sup>26</sup> For details of the ‘legend,’ refer to Edith L. Butcher, *The Story of the Church in Egypt*, vol. II (London: Smith and Elder, 1897), 396-398; Heyworth-Dunne, “Education in Egypt and the Copts,” 102; Samir Seikaly, “Coptic Communal Reform, 1860-1914,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 6 (January 1970), 248; and Mounir Shoucri, “Cyril IV,” in Aziz S. Atiya, ed. *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 677-678.

<sup>27</sup> Butcher, *Story of the Church*, vol. II, 396-397.

<sup>28</sup> For the Coptic historians, refer to Seikaly, “Coptic Communal Reform,” 248.

headquarters in London. There is conjecture that Cyril may have participated in a mission discussion circle at one point — a claim that is conceivable, if lacking in substantiation.<sup>29</sup> Cyril must have met Lieder prior to his accession — as had virtually all members of the Church hierarchy — and noted the nature of his activities.<sup>30</sup>

Separating fact from fiction as one speaks of Cyril is a difficult task — but the fact that such is the case, that one has difficulty separating fact from fiction, is of as much interest as the acts of Cyril themselves. For instance, a number of historians have claimed that Cyril was an iconoclast, in the most literal sense of the term — that he removed the icons from the Cairo Cathedral and set all ablaze, declaring, “Behold, these wooden pictures ye used to honour and even worship can neither avail nor harm. God alone should be adored.”<sup>31</sup> One wonders whether Lieder would have had the audacity to utter such words before a crowd of Copts! Cyril’s words to Nassau William Senior, subsequently related in the Englishman’s

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<sup>29</sup> Simaika, “Awakening,” 736.

<sup>30</sup> A considerable dilemma facing the researcher of the links between Lieder and Cyril is the ‘deafening silence’ of Lieder in the CMS archives from the 1850s. Thenceforth, he submitted only financial statements and apologetic requests for greater time to prepare his reports. He noted upon his statement of 1 March 1853, C M/O 48/94, “I hope that in a very short time I shall be able to inform you, that the Copts have finally succeeded in the choice of a Patriarch from the character of which much will depend the future proceedings of the Cairo Mission.” From that point, he makes no reference in his correspondence with CMS headquarters of the Coptic Patriarch.

<sup>31</sup> Simaika, “Awakening,” footnote to 739. For a comparable account, refer to Butcher, *Story of the Church*, vol. II, 328-329. For a challenge to the claim, refer to al-Masri, *Qissat al-Kanīsa*, vol. IV, 335-336.



*Conversations and Journals in Egypt and Malta*, indeed reveal a rather unorthodox approach to the traditions of Coptic Orthodoxy:

We believe the Bible to contain all that is necessary to salvation, and we do not consider the Apocrypha as a part of Scripture. We do not believe in Purgatory, or in the power of any human being to grant absolution. All that the priest can do is to pray for the sinner. In short, the principal differences between our Church and yours are that we believe the Holy Spirit to proceed from the Father alone, that we rely on the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and of the saints, and that we have monasteries and nunneries.<sup>32</sup>

That debates have raged among English and Coptic historians speaks to the perceived importance of the figure, known to Copts as ‘Abu Islāh, the ‘father of reform.’ Despite his brief seven-year tenure, Cyril is reputed, to this day, to have rescued the Coptic Orthodox Church from oblivion through ‘modernization.’ Both the fiftieth and the hundredth anniversaries of his death were marked by ceremonies at the Patriarchate in Cairo. During that latter occasion, a college of theology was unveiled, and an encyclical was issued mandating the celebration of mass in all the churches of Egypt.

### **From Dāūd to Cyril**

Accounts of the life of the ‘father of reform’ abound, particularly in Arabic. According to legend, Dāūd — as Cyril was known prior to his accession — was

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<sup>32</sup> Senior, *Conversations and Journals*, vol. II, 73.

born in the village of al-Sawāma al-Sharqiyya, near Akhmīm, in 1816, of poor parents. Despite the fact that his father was illiterate, Dāūd was sent to a Coptic *kuttāb*, wherein he commenced his study of Arabic, Coptic, the Bible, and Church doctrine. He is reputed to have mingled with Bedouin as a young man, and to have become proficient at riding among them.

In 1838, at age 22, he ventured to the Monastery of Saint Anthony in the Eastern Desert. At the monastery, he devoted himself to the study of grammar, literature, and history, as well as to the education of his peers. According to J. Heyworth-Dunne, “he soon made himself conspicuous on account of his intelligence, good judgment and studious habits.”<sup>33</sup> Within two years, he was unanimously acclaimed abbot of the monastery, and proceeded to undertake such projects as a reading room and discussion circle for his fellow monks, and a *kuttāb* for the instruction of the Coptic youth of Būsh in Arabic and Coptic. Indeed, the monks themselves came to attend the school at Būsh, in the Beni Suef district. Dāūd’s efforts drew the attention of the Patriarch, who decided, in 1851, to dispatch the monk to Abyssinia, to mitigate tensions between Bishop Salama and the Abyssinian clergy.

A year after Dāūd’s departure, the ailing Patriarch recommended his envoy as his successor to the Patriarchal seat. According to Edith Butcher, upon Peter’s death in 1852, a movement arose in support of Dāūd: “Those who had been his

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<sup>33</sup> Heyworth-Dunne, “Education in Egypt and the Copts,” 102.

fellow-students and knew his desire for a reform of the Church clamoured for his appointment.”<sup>34</sup> However, a lengthy struggle with several bishops prevented a smooth succession. The Bishop of Akhmīm had garnered much support among fellow bishops for his aspirations to the Patriarchal seat. His supporters ventured not only to claim they had the sanction of ‘Abbās Pasha for the appointment, but spread rumors about Dāūd, to the effect that he had not only interfered in the politics of Abyssinia, but married and fathered children during his mission there as well.

To resolve the dispute within the Church, an Armenian mediator was appointed. In 1853, ‘Abbās agreed to the mediator’s plan — that Dāūd be appointed a bishop on a trial basis, to determine his suitability as a leader for the Church as a whole. Dāūd immediately resolved to demolish several houses for the purpose of building a large, modern school for the education of Coptic youth — and collected roughly 44,000 piastres to that end. The audacity of the project apparently convinced Dāūd’s detractors, with the exceptions of the Bishops of Akhmīm and Abu Tīg, that he was the man for the job. Within two years of the death of Peter VII, Cyril had risen to the Patriarchal seat, and become the 110<sup>th</sup> Patriarch of Alexandria.

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<sup>34</sup> Butcher, *Story of the Church*, vol. II, 397.

## The Patriarch's Project

Cyril proceeded to mount a campaign of 'reform' that spoke to concerns evangelicals had raised, and employed the techniques evangelicals had endorsed, in their writings. He ordered a review of the revenues and expenditures of the Church endowments under the leadership of Ibrahim Effendi Khalil, and the development of a registry of all such endowments, for which he took personal responsibility. He founded a department of legal affairs within the Patriarchate, administered by the Bishop of Cairo. He sought to institutionalize compensation for the priesthood — and demanded that, in return, Coptic priests attend theological classes and 'debates' each Saturday, under his supervision.<sup>35</sup> Y'aqūb Nakhla Rūfīla recounts that "he would explain at length the duties of the priests and how they could achieve stature among the people."<sup>36</sup> For her part, Irīs Habīb al-Masri ventures to claim that Cyril was close to the *ulama* and *shaykh* of al-Azhar, and arranged for meetings between them and the senior figures in the institutions he was developing.

Further, Cyril condemned deacons' and priests' lack of familiarity with Coptic — in particular, their 'blind' engagement in the Coptic incantations that pervaded church services, and their reliance upon Arabic commentary to

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<sup>35</sup> al-Masri, *Qissat al-Kanīsa*, vol. IV, 326-327; Seikaly, "Coptic Communal Reform," 248-249.

<sup>36</sup> Y'aqūb Nakhla Rūfīla, *Tārīkh al-Umma al-Qibtiyya* (Cairo, 1897), 318.

comprehend the services.<sup>37</sup> ‘Arīān Girgis Muftāh, who assumed responsibility for the teaching of Coptic in the Patriarch’s schools, insisted upon a grammatical, rule-based approach to the language, in contrast to the techniques of memorization imparted by *kuttābs*. Indeed, the Patriarch created a committee for the purpose of developing a text for Coptic language instruction in all Coptic schools.

However, the principal element in the ‘reform’ program he enacted was the ‘modern school.’ In 1855, Cyril founded boys’ schools in ‘Abdīn and Mansūra. Notably, he founded a series of girls’ schools as well — one adjacent to the Patriarchate, in Clot Bey, and one in ‘Abdīn. According to al-Masri, Cyril “realized that an uneducated girl would not become a good mother who could look after her children properly. He was of the view that, as the mother is mentor to the children, she must be educated.”<sup>38</sup> Apparently the parents of the girls complained to no less an authority than Sa‘īd Pasha about Cyril’s ‘modern methods’ of education, but Sa‘īd stood behind the Patriarch, and ventured to endow the school with a tract of land. In her writings, al-Masri emphasizes that Cyril’s concern with fairness to women extended beyond education into the legal realm: When asked by

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<sup>37</sup> al-Masri, *Qissat al-Kanīsa*, vol. IV, 314-315. Cyril reportedly complained that ‘foreigners’ had developed a greater grasp of Coptic than had most Copts. He entrusted the ‘revival’ of the Coptic language to Abuna Takla, a priest Lieder had employed at the mission for Coptic instruction.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

a Catholic family to offer an opinion about shares of an inheritance, he insisted that daughters receive their due.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Great Coptic School**

Among the Patriarch's schools, however, none would have the notoriety or the impact of the *Madrasat al-Aqbāt al-Kubrā* — known variously as the Great Coptic School and the Coptic Patriarchal College — that commenced instruction in 1855. Coptic historians laud the 'sound pedagogical approach' the School embraced, a phrase one can interpret as denoting a shift from recitation to the printed text.<sup>40</sup> Apart from thorough, grammatical instruction in both Coptic and Arabic, the School offered lessons in Turkish, English, French, Italian, history, arithmetic, geography, geometry, chemistry, calligraphy, drawing, and music. Students received all the books and supplies they required at the Church's expense.

The curricula of the School were under the strict supervision of the Patriarch, and he carefully monitored the progress of each class of students.<sup>41</sup> According to 'Abd al-Halīm Ilyas Nussair, the School's teachers were carefully selected, and remarkably well paid for the era. The English instructor, Muhammad

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<sup>39</sup> "A Speech by Miss Irīs Habīb al-Masri, Professor of Church History in the Institute of Coptic Studies, on Pope Kirolos IV and His Special Care to Develop the Egyptian Girl," *Al-Bābā Kīrulus al-rābia: Majmū'at al-khutab alati qīlat fī al-thikrā al-mia'wiyya al-ūla li-abi al-islāh* (Cairo: Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, 1961).

<sup>40</sup> Seikaly, "Coptic Communal Reform," 249.

<sup>41</sup> Shoucri, "Cyril IV," 678.

Badr Bey al-Hakīm, received twenty pounds in gold each month; Mustafā Rashwān served as French instructor, and Iskandar Garwa, as principal.<sup>42</sup> Not only Copts and Muslims, but indeed, Syrians, Lebanese, Italians, and Frenchmen were all employed as teachers.

Irīs Habīb al-Masri makes a point of noting that Cyril’s aim “was not just to educate but to build character.” Apparently, a number of well-heeled parents visited him with the complaint that one of their sons had suffered a beating at the hands of a teacher, with no regard paid to the boy’s high social status. Al-Masri claims that the Patriarch found the complaining parents so offensive that he refused to release their children from the School that day, until they had each paid five years’ worth of tuition fees. Further, he admonished them in the following terms: “your children will be the men of the future, they will be the ones who build our country, and they should be raised properly.” The parents withdrew with the commitment, “they are not our children, they are yours, and we give you permission to do what is right, according to your wisdom.”<sup>43</sup>

The Patriarch had personally supervised the construction of the School, adjacent to the Patriarchal residence, and the project as a whole cost 600,000 piastres. Cyril admitted students of all faiths, and frequently invited foreign

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<sup>42</sup> “A Speech by Mr. ‘Abd al-Halīm Ilyas Nussair, the Lawyer and Former Member of the Lay Council, on the Contribution of Abu Islāh to Culture and Education,” *Al-Bābā Kirulus al-rābia: Majmuat al-khutab alati qilat fī al-thikra al-miawiyya al-ula li-abi al-islāh* (Cairo: Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, 1961), 65-83.

<sup>43</sup> al-Masri, *Qissat al-Kanīsa*, vol. IV, 318-319.

travelers and residents, particularly educationalists, to visit the School, to examine his students.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, there was a reception area devoted specifically to welcoming such guests, and they were invited to record their comments in a register. Rūfīla claims Abu Islāh often remained in the classroom during students' lessons, and departed with the words, "I have gained with you today something I had not known before."<sup>45</sup>

Lieder and his methods had a great impact upon the School. Indeed, a cursory glance at the methods and curricula embraced in the School reveals the influence of the mission. S. W. Koelle, a CMS missionary dispatched to Egypt in the mid-1850s, reported that at least one former pupil of the mission schools was employed as a master at the School. Further, according to Koelle, Lieder lived, quite literally, across the street from the School.<sup>46</sup> Lieder would scarcely have withheld his opinion of the School from the Patriarch, with whom he was well acquainted.

### ***Kuttāb or Kufr?***

However impressive the School may have seemed to visitors, Coptic youth and their parents were extremely reluctant to give Cyril's institution a chance.

Despite the fact that there were no fees associated with instruction at the School,

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<sup>44</sup> Heyworth-Dunne, "Education in Egypt and the Copts," 103.

<sup>45</sup> Rūfīla, *Tārīkh al-Umma al-Qibtiyya*, 312.

<sup>46</sup> CMS Archives, Koelle to Venn, 25 February 1855, C M/M 11.



the Patriarch was hard-pressed to convince parents to withdraw their children from *kuttābs*. ‘Abd al-Halīm Ilyas Nussair speaks of a rumor campaign directed by the heads of *kuttābs* against the School — heads fearful of the loss of income that could result from the transfer of students to a central school. They apparently suggested that the Great Coptic School was a source of *kufṛ*, or infidelity, and would lead to a corruption of belief. Nussair recounts that the *kuttāb* heads ultimately came to an understanding with the Patriarch. Under that agreement, they would receive monthly salaries for their efforts in early education, after which their students would face examinations to distinguish those fit for the Great Coptic School.

Nevertheless, in the face of determined resistance from Coptic parents, Cyril realized empty references to the future benefits of modern education would not suffice to lure students to the School. To demonstrate the immediate benefits the School could offer pupils, he recruited a priest to develop a choir from among the School’s student body. Choir members were provided impressive vestments to wear during church services. According to Nussair, the uniforms served to dampen parents’ resistance to the School, while Coptic youth themselves reveled in the hymns.

Despite his best efforts, Cyril would not, during his lifetime, manage to convince the mass of Copts that ‘modern education’ was in their interest. Particularly detrimental to Cyril’s efforts in this regard was the long-standing

association in people's minds between such 'modern education' and conscription. Mehmed Ali's educational projects had had the specific aim of preparing the inhabitants of the Nile Valley for service in the military, and peasants were scarcely oblivious to this link, resisting the recruitment of their children for 'modern education' as fiercely as they resisted their seizure for the army or public works. Indeed, the state decision, in 1855, to make Copts subject to conscription — a decision that virtually coincided with the opening of the Great Coptic School — could not have helped Cyril's educational mission.

This problem of perception yielded a Great Coptic School patronized, largely, by the sons of the Coptic elite. Among the graduates of the schools Cyril founded were Faltaus Ibrahim Baghdadi, the architect of Egyptian personal status legislation; Mikhā'il 'Abd al-Sayyid, the founder of the newspaper *al-Watan*; Mikhā'il Sharubim and Barsoom Girgis Rūfīla, judges; and Boutros Ghali, prime minister. Cyril could not possibly have foreseen how the beneficiaries of Church largesse in the Great Coptic School would ultimately rise up against the institution to which they owed their education — ironically enough, all because of the modern Coptic subjectivity Cyril had imparted to them.

## CHAPTER 8

### **Resisting Reform: Peasants Negotiating Subjectivities, 1860-1870**

#### **The Confrontation**

In March 1867, Coptic Orthodox Patriarch Demetrius II departed Cairo for Upper Egypt aboard a Nile steamer lent to him by the Khedive Ismā‘īl. Official approbation of the visit appears to have encouraged the Patriarch to spare no splendor for the spectacle of his arrival: “The entrance of the Patriarch into Assiut riding on a donkey was like a triumphal procession, with priests and acolytes bearing crosses and palm branches, burning incense, beating on cymbals and crying, ‘Hosanna... Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.’”<sup>1</sup>

In their 1867 Annual Report, representatives of the American Presbyterian mission at Asyūt accuse the Patriarch of having come to the south not with godly, but rather, quite sinister motives.<sup>2</sup> They allege that, after the pomp and circumstance of his arrival in Upper Egypt, the Patriarch engaged

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<sup>1</sup> Earl E. Elder, *Vindicating a Vision: The Story of the American Mission in Egypt, 1854-1954* (Philadelphia: Board of Foreign Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, 1958), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Although there is a recent doctoral dissertation dealing with the early years of this mission, it has, unfortunately, few details as to this incident, and provides little in the way of critical analysis as to the Presbyterians’ methods or impact. Refer to Jeffrey C. Burke, “The Establishment of the American Presbyterian Mission in Egypt, 1854-1940: An Overview” (Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, January

not only in ordering the burning of Bibles and other religious books, excommunicating those suspected of Protestantism and other acts of what may be called ecclesiastical warfare, but also bastinadoing by the hands of Government soldiers, imprisoning and severely threatening those who had thus fallen under his displeasure, and entering into intrigues with the local governors for the accomplishment of these purposes.<sup>3</sup>

In May 1867, the Patriarch had the ‘native’ agent of the Akhmīm mission station, Girgis Bishetly — a Coptic convert to Protestantism, and schoolmaster — seized from his home by a government soldier and the Coptic shaykhs of the town. Of Bishetly, the Glasgow *Morning Journal* reported at the time, “Possessed of considerable prudence and judgment, he has yet been unsparing in his denunciations of the Coptic clergy and exposures of their ignorance; and consequently he has for years been the object of the present Patriarch’s most bitter hatred and of incessant petty annoyances.”<sup>4</sup> When Bishetly was called into the Patriarch’s presence, the mission agent was struck in the face by Demetrius himself. The *Morning Journal* quoted the Patriarch as having, rather colorfully, cried: “Seize him. Take him outside from before me. Cast his goods from his

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2000). Of far greater value is Martina Rieker’s brilliant “The Sa’id and the City: Subaltern Spaces in the Making of Modern Egyptian History” (Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, May 1997).

<sup>3</sup> The Archives of the Board of Foreign Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America are housed at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia. Here, I have drawn only upon the annual reports of the Egypt Mission, bound into a series of volumes entitled *Egyptian Missionary Association Minutes*, reference VMX48 Eg98ma. All subsequent references to this work are denoted *Minutes*.

<sup>4</sup> Glasgow *Morning Journal*, 15 August 1867.

house, and expel him immediately from the town; and if you do it not you are all excommunicated. If he refuses to leave, beat him until he dies, and cast him into the river; and if ye be inquired of concerning the matter, even by the Viceroy, say to him that the Patriarch ordered you to do so.”<sup>5</sup>

The mission agent was apparently pursued by a mob as he was returned home to gather his affairs, and suffered beatings throughout. Only with the support of the local chief of police was Bishetly able to convince the Patriarch to permit a last night’s stay at Akhmīm. The next morning, he was removed from the town, as ordered. Through the American Consulate, the Presbyterians launched a protest against the removal, but the Khedive Ismā‘īl refused to act, citing a reluctance to involve himself in matters of faith.

The town of Qus saw still greater unrest. According to one chronicler of the American mission, “some were set upon and beaten at the time of the Patriarch’s visit; others were attacked and thrown to the ground; some were dragged before the supreme Coptic hierarch and compelled to renounce their faith. A mob of about 200 stormed the mission house in Qus with bricks and missiles.”<sup>6</sup> A straightforward deportation of mission personnel was attempted in the town at the end of September 1867. In accord with a Khedival order dispatched by telegram, Fam Stefanos, Anton Matta, and Bassiely Basada were detained by the Governor of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Elder, *Vindicating a Vision*, 47.

Qina and placed upon a boat. That boat, manned by a large contingent of soldiers, was apparently headed to the White Nile, the principal site of banishment for ‘incorrigible’ criminal offenders.<sup>7</sup> However, four days after departure, the boat and detainees were held at Esna, and then permitted to return to Qus, again upon the order of the Khedive. At the request of the Presbyterians, British Consul Thomas Reade had spoken with the Khedive in person, to secure the release of the converts. Nevertheless, Reade reported in late October 1867, “Not only does the persecution continue to exist but it has been exercised to such an extent that the American Schools are entirely deserted.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Reconceptualizing Reform and Resistance**

Historians, whether Western or Egyptian, have not looked kindly upon Demetrius or his 1867 tour. The nineteenth-century Coptic lay reformer, Mikhā’il ‘Abd al-Sayyid, labeled the Patriarch’s tenure as “one of darkness, in which a black cloud shrouded the community, reducing it to a state of total inactivity.”<sup>9</sup> In line

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<sup>7</sup> For details of the penal colony, refer to the works of Rudolph Peters, “Prisons and Marginalisation in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” in Eugene Rogan, ed. *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East* (London: Tauris, 2002), 31-52 and “Egypt and the Age of the Triumphant Prison: Legal Punishment in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” *Annales Islamologiques* 36 (2002), 253-285.

<sup>8</sup> Public Record Office, London, reference FO 78/1977, Thomas F. Reade to Lord Stanley, 25 October 1867.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Samir Seikaly, “Coptic Communal Reform, 1860-1914,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 6, 1 (January 1970), 250. Demetrius, whose accession as Patriarch dates to 1861, is frequently deemed hardly worthy of mention in the historiography

with this assessment, the tour is often depicted as a retrogressive, doctrinaire rejection of the missionaries' modern values of industry, discipline, and order.

The records of the United Presbyterian Mission and travel accounts of the period cast doubt upon this view of the Patriarch.<sup>10</sup> I will argue in this chapter that Demetrius was no less committed to the textualizing and moralizing processes his predecessor as Patriarch, Cyril IV, had inaugurated. In his 1867 tour, he was not rejecting such processes but, in collusion with the Egyptian state, ensuring his control of these processes and safeguarding them against manipulation by subalterns.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, the point of the tour was to bring an end to Coptic peasants' appropriation of the 'modern' schools established by the American mission in

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of the modern Coptic Christian community of Egypt. Samir Seikaly's article is a case in point, with only a single paragraph devoted to the Patriarch's tenure. Demetrius usually attracts attention due to the supposed contrast between his 'inactivity' and the reformist zeal of his predecessor, Cyril IV.

<sup>10</sup> Among published accounts of the Americans' work, most detailed is Andrew Watson, *The American Mission in Egypt, 1854 to 1896*, second edition (Pittsburgh: United Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1904). Among the broadly synthetic accounts are Robert Young, *Light in Lands of Darkness: A Record of Missionary Labour* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1883) and Charles R. Watson, *In the Valley of the Nile: A Survey of the Missionary Movement in Egypt* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1908).

<sup>11</sup> I want to emphasize here that this argument is *not* intended to lend weight to the 'national unity' narratives that prevail in Egyptian historiography as to Coptic-Muslim relations, which suggest that Copts have always stood together with Muslims against the encroachments of foreigners upon Egyptian soil. For a summary of the 'national unity' discourse and references to works which embrace that discourse, consult my "Class Cleavages and Ethnic Conflict: Coptic Christian Communities in Modern Egyptian Politics," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 10, 2 (1999), particularly 221-223.

Asyūt. By embracing mission schools, the peasants believed they could secure exemption from the arduous, and frequently deadly, *corvée*, or forced labor.<sup>12</sup> This appropriation of the schools, dangerous both to the authority of the Coptic Church and the Egyptian state, led to cooperation between Patriarch Demetrius and Khedive Ismā‘īl in the effort to crush the Presbyterian mission.

In a sense, the American mission, the Coptic Patriarch, and the Egyptian Khedive were all, by the 1860s, part of one ‘discursive field,’ concerned, as they were, with the inculcation of industry, discipline, and order among peasants, through the techniques of textualization and moralization described in previous chapters.<sup>13</sup> The Patriarch’s ‘persecution’ of the Americans and their converts was, thus, neither about resistance to industry, discipline, and order, nor about how such values were to be transmitted to the ‘backward’ peasants of the Upper Egyptian countryside — but, rather, about *who* was to undertake that process of transmission.

### **Enlightenment or Exemption?**

American mission work in Egypt began with the arrival in Cairo of the Reverend Thomas McCague in November 1854. The entrance of the Americans

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<sup>12</sup> The work of Khaled Fahmy has had a great influence upon my thinking as to resistance in the Egyptian context, particularly his *All the Pasha’s Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and “The Police and the People in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” *Die Welt des Islams* 39, 3 (1999).

<sup>13</sup> To argue that there existed such a ‘discursive field’ is not to dismiss the critical differences in interest and vision that separated such actors.



into the Egyptian mission field is typically portrayed as quite accidental, prompted by the ill health and political disturbances faced by the mission contingent in Syria. Within five years of the Presbyterians' arrival in Egypt, they had converted four — two Egyptians, an Armenian, and a Syrian. Emboldened by this success, the Presbytery of Cairo was officially formed on 13 April 1860, in the presence of the Reverend McCague, together with the Reverend James Barnett and the Reverend Gulian Lansing.

The 1863 Annual Report of the Presbyterians refers to the existence of a boys' school and a girls' school in Alexandria, and both a boys' school and two girls' schools in Cairo — one in Azbakiyya, and one in Harat al-Sakka'in. By 1865, however, the Presbyterians' reach had extended to Upper Egypt. According to the missionaries, "Our entrance into Osiout [Asyūt] excited a general stir among the Coptic community. Our audience on Sabbath increased from week to week until we had not sitting room enough on the floor of the girls' school-room where we met for worship, and many remained standing at the door and windows."<sup>14</sup>

In March of that year, a boys' school was inaugurated in Asyūt with a meager seven students; within eight months, attendance had expanded tenfold. By 1867, the Presbyterians had formed a theological seminary, and were educating students, sent from Cairo and Alexandria, in exegesis, homiletics, systematic theology, church history, grammar, arithmetic, and algebra. Written examinations

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<sup>14</sup> *Minutes*, 128.

were held to assess students' progress, and rather provocatively perhaps, the missionaries encouraged the seminarians "to exercise their gifts by holding meetings in the surrounding villages."<sup>15</sup> Further, beyond the seminary, the mission held Sabbath and night classes for interested Copts: "One night a week has been devoted to the reading of missionary news and special prayer for the spread of the Gospel; another to the simple exposition of the way of salvation with special reference to anxious enquirers and candidates for church fellowship; and a third (Sabbath evening) to the reading and exposition of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*."<sup>16</sup>

Miss Martha J. McKown established a girls' school in Asyūt as well. McKown, born in Elizabeth, Pennsylvania in 1834, was a graduate of Monmouth College and former principal of a seminary for women in Iowa. She had left that position for the Egyptian mission field in 1860. Her work began at the girls' school in Alexandria, where the enrollment reached 150. However, according to Rena Hogg, one of McKown's missionary biographers, "It was impossible, from Alexandria, to reach the true heart of Egypt. It was impossible to make a school, whose pupils were drawn from the medley of foreign nationalities that jostled each other at Egypt's outer door, a lever that would raise Egyptian womanhood to a

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 174.

higher plane.”<sup>17</sup> Upon her arrival in Asyūt in 1865, McKown resided temporarily with the American Consular Agent, Wasif al-Khayyāt. He proceeded to rent a home for the missionary, one room of which was set aside for the purpose of a girls’ school.

Bible stories were the substance of Miss McKown’s lessons: the 1865 Annual Report relates that her students

seldom failed in giving an accurate and most graphic account of the story in their own words after it had been read and commented upon, and they used to say that their native mothers at home were always pleased to hear them repeat what they learned at school, and that they were as much interested in these Bible stories as they were themselves.<sup>18</sup>

Girls’ schools were frequently of greater importance than boys’ schools in such mission projects, for reasons Mitchell recounts in *Colonising Egypt*. Indeed, if state bureaucrats could ‘order’ family life in the way they had ordered their army, hospitals, and schools, they could realize their aim of inculcating industry and discipline to an unprecedented degree. In ordering family life, they sought to control the environment within which children were raised. Schools could have but little effect in rendering children industrious and disciplined, if such values were rejected in the Egyptian home. Egyptian mothers had unmediated access to

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<sup>17</sup> Rena L. Hogg, “Martha J. McKown: The Elevation of Egyptian Womanhood,” in Charles R. Watson, ed. *In the King’s Service* (Philadelphia: Board of Foreign Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, 1905), 50.

<sup>18</sup> *Minutes*, 131.

Egyptian children in the fundamental years of child development — and, hence, were potentially vital bearers of the modernizers' message.<sup>19</sup> Miss McKown was no doubt delighted that, through her school, she had managed to penetrate the home, and reach 'native mothers' with Bible stories framed as parables endorsing the values of industry, discipline, and order.

The question of how the 'native mothers' received and interpreted the parables remains, however, unanswered.<sup>20</sup> I would venture that such mothers, and Coptic peasants in general, were not mere passive receptacles for 'modern' values.<sup>21</sup> How is one to 'get at' peasant perceptions of the mission project? In fact,

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<sup>19</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 111-113. For a critical expansion upon Mitchell's argument, refer to Omnia Shakry, "Schooled Mothers and Structured Play: Child Rearing in Turn-of-the-Century Egypt," in Lila Abu-Lughod, ed. *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>20</sup> Consider, for instance, Elizabeth Elbourne's words of caution in "Early Khoisan Uses of Mission Christianity," in Henry Bredekamp and Robert Ross, eds. *Missions and Christianity in South African History* (Witwatersrand University Press, 1995). At page 72, she explains, "What is important is that Khoisan converts did not receive the Gospel in exactly the way in which European missionaries intended, but 'heard' the message in accordance with their own needs and existing situations. At least some converts, for example, seem to have seen missionary activity as a response by a God, in whom they already believed, to a crisis situation, rather than a rejection of all their old beliefs." Andrew Walls makes a comparable point in "The Evangelical Revival, the Missionary Movement, and Africa," in Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk, eds. *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> This point is usefully emphasized in Benjamin C. Fortna's *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For the manifold snares facing analysts of peasant social movements, refer to Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," in Ranajit

evidence as to such perceptions pervades the mission reports. In 1865, the Asyūt station admitted that the peasants' principal reason for dispatching their sons to the mission school "was to secure immunity for their boys from the oppressive exactions of the Viceroy."<sup>22</sup> The principal such exaction was the *corvée*, or forced labor, as the missionaries continued:

When the orders were sent to Upper Egypt summoning five sixths of the peasants out to labour at the railway which is to be made from Cairo to Esneh, no exception was made, or allowed when solicited by us, in favour of the boys at our schools. The Viceroy's orders were urgent and the Sheikhs of the villages in order to furnish the quota demanded of them, obliged the parents to withdraw their children from our school.<sup>23</sup>

Peasant and, in turn, missionary frustrations with the *corvée* become a consistent theme in the mission reports. In 1867, the year of the Patriarchal tour of Upper Egypt, the Asyūt station related: "When the boys found that by remaining at our school they became liable to be seized by the sheikhs of their villages and sent to the government works, they left, and went to the Coptic school where they were

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Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds. *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). By far the most influential and provocative analysis of peasant political action remains James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). For a comparable analysis undertaken in the Egyptian context, refer to Nathan J. Brown, *Peasant Politics in Modern Egypt: The Struggle Against the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> *Minutes*, 130.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

sure of procuring exemption from the government levies.”<sup>24</sup> Indeed, as soon as the government grasped that the missionaries were offering peasant children protection from forced labor, the privilege of granting *corvée* exemptions became a carefully guarded one.

### **A History of Peasant-Missionary Maneuvering**

Peasants had begun to make good use of the American missionary presence in Upper Egypt, for purposes entirely unforeseen by the missionaries, long prior to the 1867 Patriarchal tour. The most noteworthy instance of such ‘use’ or ‘appropriation’ came to the fore in 1861, when a different ‘persecution’ — this time undertaken by the judge of Asyūt’s Islamic law court, or *qādi* — was brought to the attention of American officials in Alexandria.<sup>25</sup> The victim, as in the case of Girgis Bishetly, was a ‘native’ agent of the mission, then run by James Barnett and Gulian Lansing in Asyūt. In late July 1861, Faris al-Hakīm of Asyūt, of Syrian roots and a physician by training, but now acting as a bookseller, had suffered the bastinado upon the order of the Asyūt *qādi*. According to William S. Thayer, the American consul at Alexandria, the punishment had not ended at that: “After being

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 174-175.

<sup>25</sup> The incident is detailed, from an American official perspective, in a pamphlet published in London in 1862, entitled *Religious Toleration in Egypt: Official Correspondence Relating to the Indemnity Obtained for the Maltreatment of Faris-el-Hakim, An Agent of the American Missionaries in Egypt*. All subsequent references to this work are denoted *Religious Toleration*.

reviled, beaten with staves, shoes, courbashes (raw hides,) and being spit upon, kicked, and frightfully maimed, he was dragged by a clamorous mob, urged on by the *cadi* and mufti, to the criminal cell of the prison, and only released that evening when the jailor reported him to be dying.”<sup>26</sup>

Upon receiving reports of this incident from the American consular agent in Asyūt, Wasif al-Khayyāt, via the American vice-consul in Cairo, Thayer contacted Zulfīqar Pasha, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, demanding the opportunity to inspect the scene of the crime himself. He managed to secure a meeting with the Viceroy, Sa‘īd Pasha, who, within a week, had removed the offending *qādi* from his post. This was insufficient redress in Thayer’s eyes, who explained to government officials “that half-way measures irritated rather than subdued the disorderly, tempting them to try their strength with the government. For the dispersal of mobs, in my own country at least, the superior efficacy of bullets over blank-cartridges had been conclusively tested.”<sup>27</sup> The diplomatic commotion surrounding the incident culminated in no less than an exchange of letters between President Abraham Lincoln and Sa‘īd Pasha in October 1861, wherein the leaders spoke of their satisfaction with the fines and terms of imprisonment Sa‘īd had been persuaded to impose upon thirteen of the men involved in the beating.

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<sup>26</sup> *Religious Toleration*, 4.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

Who was behind this quarrel, so grave as to have required the intervention of heads of state? A lone peasant woman of Upper Egypt, identified in the *qādi*'s statement to government officials as Fatima, the wife of Ali Hamadi, from the village of Sahel Selim. Fatima had converted to Islam from Coptic Christianity five years prior, in the presence of the *qādi* of Abu Tīg, and had proceeded not only to marry Ali, but to bear him a daughter who, by July 1861, was four years of age. The allegations of Ali, that Faris al-Hakīm “had deceived her, and enticed her from her religion, and had caused her to enter into the Christian religion” and, further, that Faris “had taken her into the [Coptic] bishop’s house, having agreed with her that he would marry her to another man, and had kept her in his house for three days,” had led the *qādi* of Asyūt to act against the mission agent.<sup>28</sup> According to the *qādi*'s statement, Faris had argued, “Since she has abandoned the religion of Islam, and returned to her original faith, you have no further authority over her in these premises. I am her attorney, and shall marry her to whomsoever I will, according to Christian law.”<sup>29</sup>

As one would expect, Faris’s own account of events differed substantially from that which the *qādi* offered government investigators. He claimed that the woman had, of her own will, left her husband and fled Sahel Selim for the residence of the Coptic bishop, with the intention of abandoning Islam in favor of

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 10.



her former Christianity. However, as the bishop was absent from his residence, the woman was advised that Faris could aid her in the matter. Faris explained that Fatima “requested me to be her attorney, in order that if her husband put forth any claim upon her, I might undertake her defence before the government, or as might otherwise be necessary.”<sup>30</sup> When the husband decided to make that claim, Faris was sent by the local chief of police to the police court, where he encountered, by his reckoning, sixty men — among them, the *‘ulama* of Asyūt, as well as the *qādi* and the *mufti*. Upon questioning about why Faris had detained Fatima, Faris informed all assembled that he was acting as the woman’s attorney. At this the commotion began, with the crowd condemning Faris as having promoted infidelity.

Regardless of whose account of events one accepts, Fatima was ultimately successful in ridding herself of her apparently unwanted husband, as Thayer recounted to American Secretary of State W. H. Seward: “having since re-asserted before the moudir [governor] her rejection of Mohammedanism, she has been placed by that officer in the charge of the Coptic bishop, and is allowed to follow her new faith without molestation.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the governor castigated the *qādi* in writing: “it was not lawful for you to permit him [Faris] to be beaten or imprisoned by force; but it was your duty to write me of what he had done, and then with the cognizance of the government that would have been done with him which the law

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 6.

and rules demand.”<sup>32</sup> As the events of 1867 would demonstrate, the import of Fatima’s success was not lost on the peasants of Upper Egypt. Missionaries and their agents were ‘useful,’ not as beacons of the faith, but as bearers of protection.

### **The Origins of ‘Patriarchal Persecution’**

When Demetrius rose to the Patriarchal seat in June 1863, after two years of fierce debate within the Coptic hierarchy about Cyril’s replacement, he brought with him definite ideas about how to approach the growing missionary threat to orthodoxy.<sup>33</sup> Almost immediately after his accession, he made a tour of Lower Egypt only to discover, much to his chagrin, that American missionaries had made significant inroads in Christian communities neglected while leadership debates had exercised monks and bishops in Cairo. According to the Presbyterians’ 1863 Annual Report, Demetrius “had seen enough to convince him that his new-born dignity would not be worth much to him long unless his people were brought into stricter obedience to the faith delivered to them from their ancestors.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>33</sup> The McCagues had already faced the wrath of the Patriarchate, due to the competition of a Presbyterian school in Cairo with the Great Coptic School. In a June 1858 letter, Thomas McCague recounted, “Our Coptic Patriarch gave orders two days ago to the priests to go around to the different families of Copts in Cairo and order them to stop sending their children to our school and if they did not they would be liable to excommunication.” Refer to Burke’s dissertation, “The Establishment of the American Presbyterian Mission in Egypt,” 116.

<sup>34</sup> *Minutes*, 82-83.

After his return from the tour, Demetrius visited Ismā‘īl, who had come to power only a matter of months prior, upon the death of Sa‘īd in January 1863. Interestingly, Ismā‘īl warned the Patriarch at this time not to interfere with the activities of foreign missionaries, but rather to concentrate on the education of his own church — and to this end, he offered Demetrius 1500 acres of land. In their 1863 Annual Report, the Presbyterians accuse Demetrius of ignoring the Khedive’s advice, and working towards the elimination of missionary influence in Coptic communities. Indeed, the missionaries suggest that nothing less than a convention of leading Copts was held to devise an anti-Presbyterian strategy, and that, subsequently, teachers in mission schools were offered large sums or posts in the Transit Administration to lure them away from the Americans’ service.<sup>35</sup> Priests were ordered to make visits to those wavering in their orthodoxy, and missionary publications were, apparently, seized by Church officials.

Perhaps most noteworthy in the 1863 Report is the indication that, “the Patriarch entered the pulpit, for once, with a piece of composition all his own, in which — using the hackneyed phraseology of his cloth — he denounced us as ‘ravens wolves,’ ‘prosebyterians,’ ‘heretics,’ etc.; and branded with the ‘haram’ (or threat of excommunication) all who should persist in holding any further

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<sup>35</sup> The Transit Administration was the predecessor of the Egyptian Railways Organization.

intercourse with us.”<sup>36</sup> The Presbyterians were quite justified in noting the Patriarch’s composition of his own sermon as an innovation. Indeed, the incident speaks to the perceived importance, within the church hierarchy, of the technologies of power ‘Abu Islāh had introduced among Copts.

### **A Foreigner Among the ‘Fellaheen’**

Lucie Duff Gordon, a noteworthy participant in the London cultural scene of the 1840s and 1850s, had landed at Alexandria in October 1862, dispatched to Egypt in the hope that the climate would ease her struggle with tuberculosis. Rather than remain in Alexandria or Cairo, Lady Duff Gordon became, during her seven-year stay in Egypt, a renowned resident of Luxor. Though Duff Gordon had extensive dealings with local Copts, she stood in stark contrast to the preponderance of Western travelers to Egypt, animated as they often were by evangelical sentiment. She apparently embraced a Muslim name and developed close relations with the *‘ulama* of Upper Egypt. Duff Gordon spoke to these relations in a February 1866 letter to her friend, Hekekyan:

I wish the folks who think all Muslims want to cut all Christian throats had beheld me led round the tomb of Seyd Abdurracheem at Keneh clinging on to the Cadi’s skirts and openly prayed for by the Mufti. The jolly Cadi hugged me in the open street and the big turban of Islam knocked off my Christian hat. The kind courteous ulema would not hear of my presence at the Moolid being an

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<sup>36</sup> *Minutes*, 83-84.

offence and said they would show any ignorant people what their opinion was on the subject of well behaved Christians who were friendly to el Muslimeen.<sup>37</sup>

In a May 1867 letter to her husband, Alexander, Duff Gordon noted, “All the Christendom of Upper Egypt is in a state of excitement, owing to the arrival of the Patriarch of Cairo, who is now in Luxor.”<sup>38</sup> Perhaps of greatest interest in Duff Gordon’s account of the Patriarch’s visit is her insistence upon the complicity of Demetrius with the Khedive Ismā‘īl in attacking the Presbyterians — a complicity argued in the mission reports. In that May letter, she continued, “He has come up in a steamer, at the Pasha’s [the Khedive’s] expense, with a guard of cawasses [Turkish gendarmes], and, of course, is loud in praise of the Government.”<sup>39</sup> She concluded, “Evidently the Pasha is backing up the Patriarch who keeps his church well apart from all other Christians, and well under the thumb of the Turks.”<sup>40</sup>

In a subsequent letter to her mother, Duff Gordon declared, “The Patriarch has made a blunder with his progress. He has come ostentatiously as the *protégé* and *pronem* of the Pasha, and he has ‘eaten’ and ‘beaten’ the fellaheen [peasants].”<sup>41</sup> The *Glasgow Morning Journal* held a comparable view as to the

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<sup>37</sup> British Library, Hekekyan Papers, Vol. XVI, Duff Gordon to Hekekyan, 16 February 1866, 331-332.

<sup>38</sup> Lucie Duff Gordon, *Letters from Egypt*, reprint of 1902 edition (London: Virago, 1983), 349.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 354-355.

complicity of Khedive and Patriarch, reporting of the latter, “he had no power of himself to imprison, but the pretensions of Government authority were so far acted upon by the local magistrates that they assisted him in the accomplishment of his designs.”<sup>42</sup> Indeed, British Consul Reade confirmed in a report to Lord Lyons, “The fact that a steamer had been placed at the disposal of the Patriarch, and other facilities given him, by the Egyptian Government to enable him to accomplish his cruise up the Nile, has probably led to the impression that the local authorities had connived in what may have appeared to be a regular crusade against the Protestants.”<sup>43</sup>

In the mission school, peasants discerned a vehicle not for enlightenment, but for exemption. During the investigation that followed the 1867 ‘persecution,’ Akhmīm townspeople apparently complained to American missionaries and Egyptian officials that Girgis Bishetly, the mission agent and schoolmaster who had suffered most from the Patriarchal tour, “had made himself particularly obnoxious to the rest of the community, Mohamedan as well as Coptic, by his endeavours, through bribery, promises of foreign protection, and other unworthy means, to seduce their children from the ordinances of their religion, as well as withdraw them from their allegiance to Ottoman rule.”<sup>44</sup> One chronicler of

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<sup>42</sup> *Glasgow Morning Journal*, 15 August 1867.

<sup>43</sup> Public Record Office, London, reference FO 78/1976, Thomas F. Reade to Lord Lyons, 15 June 1867.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

American mission work in Egypt recalls that, throughout the 1867 Patriarchal tour of the south, Demetrius “insinuated that the missionaries aimed to alienate the Viceroy’s loyal subjects and make them Americans.”<sup>45</sup>

In his support for the Patriarch and his tour, the Khedive was sending a message to the peasants — that they could not escape his reach, least of all at a time during which he desperately needed their labor. For their part, the missionaries were bewildered by the opposition of the Khedive to their educational efforts, explaining in their 1867 Annual Report that “the legitimate political result of the spread of Protestantism in Egypt could only be a truer loyalty to the powers that be, as ordained by God.”<sup>46</sup> Yet, *corvée* labor was a theme upon which Demetrius forthrightly played during the tour:

After upbraiding them for their ingratitude to him for having, through his influence with the viceroy, secured a grant of land which had enabled him to open a school in Asyut, which his highness had, at his instance, taken under his special patronage, by granting exemption from the government levies to all children of the peasantry attending it; he told them that if they persisted in the obstinate opposition to his desires in this matter, they would have cause to repent when repentance would avail them nothing; their sons would be sent to the army or the railway works, and they themselves would be put in shackles and sent to the galleys, or banished to the White Nile.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Elder, *Vindicating a Vision*, 44.

<sup>46</sup> *Minutes*, 181.

<sup>47</sup> Watson, *American Mission*, 204.

British officials, although ultimately choosing to intervene in favor of the ‘persecuted’ converts, were themselves well aware of the implications of such intervention for the perceived authority of the Khedive. Lord Lyons in Constantinople cautioned British Consul Reade in June 1867: “we should of course carefully avoid taking any steps which may have a tendency to encourage simulated conversions, by conveying the notion that converts to Protestantism will obtain British protection for the advancement of their temporal interests.”<sup>48</sup>

### **Upheaval in Upper Egypt**

Accounts differ as to the balance of ambition and profligacy in Sa‘īd and Ismā‘īl that prompted them to amass vast public debt during their rule of Egypt — debt that grew from £3,293,000 upon Sa‘īd’s death in 1863 by an average of £7,000,000 each year until, in 1876, Khedive Ismā‘īl suspended payment of Treasury bills in an implicit declaration of bankruptcy. Beyond a doubt, however, is the spirited role Europeans played in the growth of that debt. European penetration of the Egyptian economy developed, in earnest, from the moment Sa‘īd permitted foreign merchants direct interaction with Egyptian cultivators. That penetration accelerated with the advent of the American Civil War, as cotton came to flow from Egypt to Europe, Britain in particular, at an unprecedented rate. By

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<sup>48</sup> Public Record Office, London, reference FO 78/1977, Lyons to Reade, 17 June 1867.



1865, Egypt was ranked third, behind France and India, as a source of British imports, having advanced in the list from sixth in 1861, sixteenth in 1854.<sup>49</sup> Foreigners flooded into the country — 43,000 in 1863, 56,500 in 1864, and 80,000 in 1865.<sup>50</sup>

In their 1863 Annual Report, the American missionaries spoke in vivid terms to the excitement the cotton trade had prompted in Egypt: “The whole country is in a state of transition. The Viceroy and Pashas are amassing immense fortunes. Fellahs who never before handled a gold coin in their lives are now hoarding them in handfuls.”<sup>51</sup> They continued, “Time worn and stereotyped implements and processes have become antiquated in one year. The ‘shadoof’ [*shādūf*, an instrument for irrigation] and ‘sakkia’ [*sāqiyya*, likewise for irrigation] have been supplanted by the steam engine.”<sup>52</sup>

Sa‘īd and Ismā‘īl encouraged Egyptian integration into the world economy through infrastructure development; telegraph, railroad, and canal projects were undertaken. European entrepreneurs struggled fiercely for the contracts and concessions the Egyptian rulers’ offered, yet were united by one aim — in David Landes’ words, “to exploit the needs of Egypt and the weakness and ignorance of

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<sup>49</sup> David S. Landes, *Bankers and Pashas: International Finance and Economic Imperialism in Egypt* (London: Heinemann, 1958), 56.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>51</sup> *Minutes*, 74-75.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

the Egyptian government.”<sup>53</sup> Such projects required funds, and European usurers swiftly came to the prosperous Egyptians’ aid. Landes points to the words of an 1863 *Times* advertisement, placed by the Egyptian Commercial and Trading Company: “As it is well ascertained that in Upper Egypt and the Sudan, cultivators and traders can afford to borrow money at 4 and 5 per cent per month and still amass wealth, the field of operations is almost illimitable.”<sup>54</sup> However, the client most sought after was the Khedive himself, and the terms of the loans Ismā‘īl contracted were no less scandalous. According to Alexander Schölch, between 1862 and 1873, £68.4 million in loans were contracted, only two-thirds of which in fact reached the Khedive; in 1873, a loan of £32 million yielded a mere £11 million in cash.<sup>55</sup>

Lady Duff Gordon speaks at length to the distinctly practical impact such decisions had upon the peasants of Upper Egypt.<sup>56</sup> In a February 1863 letter to her husband, there exists a degree of hope that Ismā‘īl might break the cycle of debt Sa‘īd inaugurated: “Everyone is cursing the French here. Forty thousand men always at work at the Suez Canal at starvation-point, does not endear them to the Arabs. There is great excitement as to what the new Pasha will do. If he ceases to

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<sup>53</sup> Landes, *Bankers and Pashas*, 96.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>55</sup> Alexander Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptians: The Socio-Political Crisis in Egypt, 1878-1882* (London: Ithaca, 1981), 44 and 47.

<sup>56</sup> For a detailed discussion of this impact, refer to Rieker, “The Sa’id and the City,” particularly 72-73.

give forced labour, the Canal, I suppose, must be given up.”<sup>57</sup> Despite that initial hope, Duff Gordon’s *Letters from Egypt* swiftly becomes a chronicle of the desperation into which Ismā‘īl was willing to thrust his ‘subjects.’ In a particularly poignant passage from a May 1863 letter to her mother, Duff Gordon explains, “the Europeans applaud and say, ‘Oh, but nothing could be done without forced labour,’ and the poor Fellaheen are marched off in gangs like convicts, and their families starve.”<sup>58</sup>

### **The Nineteenth-Century *Corvée***

Forced labor was scarcely an innovation of this period. Mehmed Ali and his successors had frequent recourse to the *corvée* as they mounted major infrastructure projects — noteworthy among them, the Nile Barrages, the Mahmūdiyya Canal, the Alexandria-Cairo Railway, and the Suez Canal. Yet this was not all: Ehud Toledano notes, “forced labor came to be used also on private estates of, and construction projects for, members of the ruling family and prominent members of the Ottoman-Egyptian elite.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Duff Gordon, *Letters*, 40.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>59</sup> Ehud Toledano, *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 188.

James Augustus St. John offers a vivid depiction of the *corvée* under Mehmed Ali. Work on the Mahmūdiyya Canal began in 1819, and to that end, St. John recounts:

The sheikhs of the provinces of Gharbieh, Sharkieh, Mensourah, Kelyoubieh, Ghizeh, Menouf, and Bahryeh, were commanded to furnish each a given number of fellahs, amounting in all to three hundred and thirteen thousand, including women and children. This promiscuous multitude, collected in haste, were marched towards the ground, where they encamped, under the command of the sheikhs, along the intended line of the canal. The government, however, intent on carrying its designs into execution, but, indifferent respecting the injury and misery inflicted thereby on the people, had neglected to provide implements or store of provisions for the workmen: nevertheless, they were compelled to labour incessantly, from the break of day until night; soldiers being stationed along the line of the works, who allowed of no pause or relaxation. The men, destitute of the necessary tools, scratched up with their hands the soft mud, which was removed by women and children in baskets, and placed in heaps on the right and left. Having, in many places, to excavate considerable below the level of the sea, and no pumps being provided to keep the ground dry, they were compelled to work knee-deep in water; and thus, from the severity of the labour, to which they were unaccustomed, united with ill-treatment, and want of food and pure water, twenty-three thousand persons perished in ten months, and were buried in the embankments, like dead dogs.<sup>60</sup>

Of particular concern to Egypt's nineteenth-century rulers was the universal applicability of the *corvée*. In theory at least, no inhabitant of Egypt was to enjoy an exemption from the levy. In the latter years of Mehmed Ali's rule, the Pasha

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<sup>60</sup> James Augustus St. John, *Egypt, and Mohammed Ali; or, Travels in the Valley of the Nile*, Vol. II (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1834), 348-349.

endeavored to get this point across in rather dramatic fashion. British Consul Murray reported to Lord Palmerston in July 1847 that Mehmed Ali was so frustrated with the slow pace of work in eliminating certain mounds of rubbish in the environs of Alexandria, the Pasha ordered “that all classes of his Egyptian subjects, whatever might be their station, wealth, or profession, should, on certain fixed days, work in person” at their removal. Indeed, Murray emphasized, “No excuse was to be admitted, nor any substitute allowed.” The police were dispatched to enforce the order, to the point that “on the appointed days there was to be seen the strange spectacle of shopkeepers, merchants, scribes, ulemas, proprietors of land etc. etc. carrying loads of rubbish in baskets on their shoulders from morning till evening under the heat of an Egyptian July sun.”<sup>61</sup> According to Murray, members of the upper strata of Alexandrian society fled the city to avoid the levy, venturing as far as Beirut for this purpose.

Under ‘Abbās, laborers at public infrastructure projects began to receive a modicum of compensation for their work, beyond the food ration they had received since Mehmed Ali’s time.<sup>62</sup> Accompanied by Hekekyan, Nassau William Senior made a visit to *corvée* laborers on 5 February 1856, and recorded his impressions:

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<sup>61</sup> Public Record Office, London, reference FO 78/708, Murray to Palmerston, 8 July 1847.

<sup>62</sup> Public Record Office, London, reference FO 195/365, Murray to Palmerston, 18 September 1851.

We followed the line of the Suez Railway. At about a mile from the town we found a gang of 300 men and boys employed in taking earth in baskets from a distance of about 100 yards, and raising a mound with it; about ten persons holding palm-tree sticks were superintending them. They had to make, we were told, about seven metres a day, which generally took them about ten hours, exclusive of meals; but when their work was done they might go. The pay to which they are entitled, without any distinction of age or strength, is fifty paras (about three-pence) a day; but forty-five paras a day are stopped as the price of four very hard sour biscuits supplied by the Government, which, with water, form their food for the day. The remaining five paras are to be paid to them when they are dismissed, which they will be after thirty days' service. But it will be paid in a receipt from the Government, to be taken in payment of taxes. Of two superintendents with whom we talked, one said that they would never get the money, the other said that their Sheykhs would take from them the receipt, hand it to the tax-gatherer in payments of the taxes of the village, and account to them for it. The first superintendent smiled incredulously.<sup>63</sup>

I can understand the Fellah's aversion to Government employ. He is taken from his village, which he never voluntarily quits, forced to labour for ten hours a day in constant terror of the stick or the whip, fed on hard sour biscuit and water, and is rewarded, when he gets home, with a credit on the Government of a halfpenny for each day that he has worked; a credit of which the real value seems to be doubtful. I fear that the Suez Railway and the Suez Canal will occasion much suffering and loss of life. The greater part of the work will be done in the desert. Those who make the railway will have no water, except what is carried to them from a distance of fifty or sixty miles. Those who cut the Navigable Canal will have none, unless the Fresh-water Canal is dug first, and unless it retains its water during the whole period of their work.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Nassau William Senior, *Conversations and Journals in Egypt and Malta*, Vol. II (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Seale, and Rivington, 1882), 59-60.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-62.

In July 1857, British Consul Green reported that ten thousand peasants were at work on the Suez Railway.<sup>65</sup> Nearly five years later, the Reverend F. Ferguson observed a steamer carrying workers headed to the Suez Canal: “They had come from a great distance up the river. We were told that they would get little more than their food for their hard and oppressive work, and that food of the poorest kind.”<sup>66</sup> By the mid-1860s, Ismā‘īl was faced with a rebellion in Upper Egypt, rooted, according to consular observers, in the devastation to rural society wrought by the extent of the *corvée*. In March 1865, British Consul Colquhoun reported to Earl Russell that the Pasha was determined to quell the rebellion in person, and to that end, Ismā‘īl had departed for Asyūt with four or five boats and a contingent of soldiers.<sup>67</sup> Colquhoun attributed the leadership of this movement to one Sheikh Ahmad, who had apparently gathered one thousand peasants behind him. Ahmad met a nasty end, with his body lodged upon the gates of Asyūt.<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, though, Ismā‘īl believed the British could aid him in securing a related culprit: “The Viceroy asked me if I had any knowledge of an individual named Sheikh

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<sup>65</sup> Public Record Office, London, reference FO 78/1314, Green to Clarendon, 4 July 1857.

<sup>66</sup> F. Ferguson, *Sacred Scenes; or, Notes of Travel in Egypt and the Holy Land* (Glasgow: Thomas Adamson, 1864), 95. For further details on forced labor at the Canal, refer to Lord Kinross, *Between Two Seas: The Creation of the Suez Canal* (London: John Murray, 1968), particularly 170-175 and *Suez: De Lesseps' Canal* (London: Dent, 1968), particularly Chapter 8.

<sup>67</sup> Public Record Office, London, reference FO 78/1871, Colquhoun to Russell, 11 March 1865.

<sup>68</sup> For a fascinating discussion of Ahmad and his rebellion, refer to Rieker's dissertation, “The Sa'id and the City,” particularly Chapter Three.

Ibrahim who had, as would appear from the papers found on Sheikh Ahmed's person, escaped from India after the Mutiny and resided for five years in Upper Egypt where he had acquired much reputation as a holy man, and is reported to have organized the movement some time ago before he quitted Egypt to return to India."<sup>69</sup>

For her part, Duff Gordon spoke in her letters to a deterioration in the peasant's plight. In December 1865, to her husband: "From the Moudeeriat of Keneh [Qina] only, 25,000 men are taken to work for sixty days without food or pay; each man must take his own basket, and each third man a hoe."<sup>70</sup> In February 1866, to Hekekyan: "It is not very cheerful here [in Luxor], 220 men away for 60 days to work on the railway finding their own bread even and 11 of our best camels carried off to convey Shaheen Pasha's troops up into the Soodan. The confiscation did not take place without plenty of Coorbaj [*kurbāj*, whip]."<sup>71</sup> In October 1866, to her husband: "the new taxes and the new levies of soldiers are driving the people to despair, and many are running away from the land, which will no longer feed them after paying all the exactions, to join the Bedaween in the desert."<sup>72</sup> In April 1867: "All this week people have been working night and day cutting their unripe corn, because 310 men [of Luxor] are to go to-morrow to work on the railroad below

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<sup>69</sup> Public Record Office, London, reference FO 78/1871, Colquhoun to Russell, 24 March 1865.

<sup>70</sup> Duff Gordon, *Letters*, 257.

<sup>71</sup> British Library, Hekekyan Papers, Vol. XVI, pp. 331-332.

<sup>72</sup> Duff Gordon, *Letters*, 310.



Siout [Asyūt]. This green corn is, of course, valueless to sell and unwholesome to eat.”<sup>73</sup> Finally, in May 1867: “When I remember the lovely smiling landscape which I first beheld from my windows, swarming with beasts and men, and look at the dreary waste now, I feel the ‘foot of the Turk’ heavy indeed.”<sup>74</sup>

### **Contending for Interpretative Control**

In an October 1867 letter, Lady Duff Gordon confessed, “we all wonder why the Pasha is so anxious to ‘brush the coat’ of the Copt Patriarch.”<sup>75</sup> In light of the current state of the historiography about the nineteenth-century Coptic community, transposing the figures in Duff Gordon’s query seems appropriate. Why would Demetrius, given the purportedly retrogressive, doctrinaire, and sectarian attitude attributed to him with such breezy confidence by the current historiography, develop an alliance with the Khedive as ‘unholy’ as that described to this point — one which ultimately served to undermine whatever autonomy he enjoyed vis-à-vis the state, and whatever credibility he enjoyed vis-à-vis his parishioners? Can one only explain Demetrius’s conduct in this context with reference to a narrow-minded, instinctive bigotry?

Demetrius was far from retrogressive, doctrinaire, or sectarian. Indeed, the reform movement Cyril inaugurated never withered under his successor’s

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 347.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 353.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 365.

leadership. One can explain Demetrius's conduct in 1867 with specific reference to a continuing commitment to 'reform' — that is, to the values of industry, discipline, and order. To demonstrate the continuity between the tenures of Cyril and Demetrius as Patriarch, one need only focus upon the trajectory of the educational reform inaugurated by the former. *Madrasat al-Aqbāt al-Kubrā*, known variously as the Great Coptic School and the Coptic Patriarchal College, which commenced instruction in 1855, is emblematic of that reform.<sup>76</sup>

The Great Coptic School was neither closed nor neglected in the years following Cyril's death. Dor Bey, author of *L'Instruction publique en Égypte*, makes explicit reference to his satisfaction with the state of the School in that 1872 text.<sup>77</sup> In an effort to conform to Coptic historiographical trends, J. Heyworth-Dunne, author of the magisterial *Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, makes a concerted effort to conceal Demetrius's role in Coptic educational efforts during the reign of Ismā'īl: "The Copts are recorded as having opened 23 schools in Cairo, Alexandria, Asyut and al-Gizah; the exact date of the establishment of their schools is not given but 1873 appears to have been the date of the recommencement of the reform policy, and the schools were opened between

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<sup>76</sup> Cyril founded six schools in all, four at Cairo, one at Mansura, and one at Būsh. Among them, the two girls' schools Cyril founded — both at Cairo — merit particular mention. According to Irīs Habīb al-Masri, *Qissat al-Kanīsa al-Qibtiyya*, volume IV (Alexandria: Maktabat Kanīsat Mari Girgis, 1975), 320, they were developed with the aim of cultivating 'proper' mothers for Coptic children.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

that date and 1878.”<sup>78</sup> Reform and the year 1873 are intimately linked in the Coptic historiography, for 1873 was the year of Demetrius’s death.

Coptic historian ‘Abd al-Halīm Ilyās Nussair offers the most extensive evidence for the continuity of the reform effort, in the detailed account of the legacy of Patriarch Cyril IV he penned as part of the commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Abu Islāh’s death.<sup>79</sup> Specifically, Nussair cites an 1863 government order requiring supervision of the Coptic schools and their examinations, particularly as far as the textbooks employed were concerned. This requirement was linked to provisions permitting the recruitment of students from the schools for the government service. Nussair proceeds to recount several occasions, during Demetrius’s rule, upon which the official government journal described public examinations in the Coptic schools — examinations attended by government ministers. He quotes at length from an 1871 front-page article in the journal, about the examinations of the Great Coptic School:

The worthiness of each student who submitted to the examination became apparent to all who attended the event, whether the examination was in Arabic, French, Italian, English, Coptic, arithmetic, or calligraphy — in all these subjects, there was a great competition. The bishop, deputy head of the Patriarchate,

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<sup>78</sup> J. Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, reprint of 1939 edition (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 420.

<sup>79</sup> “A Speech by Mr. ‘Abd al-Halīm Ilyas Nussair, the Lawyer and Former Member of the Lay Council, on the Contribution of Abu Islāh to Culture and Education,” *Al-Bābā Kirulus al-rābia: Majmuat al-khutab alati qilat fī al-thikra al-miawiyya al-ula li-abi al-islāh* (Cairo: Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, 1961), 65-83.

supervised the examination. The success of this school and of the examination this year was due to the good work of the principal, Faltaus Ibrahim.<sup>80</sup>

Yet, perhaps the most revealing clue as to the values that animated Demetrius's conduct in 1867 is the fact that he responded to the mission effort at schooling in Asyūt by immediately founding a rival school — and not a *kuttāb*, but a 'modern' school. Indeed, according to the 1865 Annual Report of the Presbyterians, the schoolmaster the Patriarch ultimately chose to employ in his Asyūt school had not only received his education in the Presbyterians' mission school at Cairo, but "uses the same books in his school that we use in ours and pursues the same course of study that we do." The missionaries proceeded to boast that the schoolmaster "moreover regularly attends our services on Sabbath and is as friendly towards us as it is safe for him to be. So that instead of starting an 'opposition school' as was intended, the Copts of Osiout [Asyūt] have brought out a bungled edition of our own work. In fact, they could not do otherwise for all the young men capable of teaching are either almost or altogether Protestant."<sup>81</sup>

Though perhaps less imaginative than Cyril was as to how one might deploy interpretative control of the Scriptures, Demetrius was hardly remiss in recognizing and reacting to threats to that interpretative control. In short, Demetrius understood the power of the 'modern' school.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>81</sup> *Minutes*, 129.

There exist in mission historiography two ironic hints of Demetrius's 'reformist' tendencies. Earl E. Elder concedes in his *Vindicating a Vision*, "it appears that even the Patriarch was led to see that the Scriptures were an anvil that had broken many hammers for a written order was issued to the clergy that in the future no one would be invested with the functions of priest unless he were versed in the Scriptures."<sup>82</sup> Further, according to Andrew Watson, the principal chronicler of the American Mission in Egypt during the nineteenth century, the man Demetrius employed to draft his denunciation of the missionaries, identified as Feltios [Faltā'ūs], was a graduate of the Reverend Lieder's school in Cairo. Watson declares, "It is full of misrepresentations and violent vituperations, but it is well conceived and well calculated to effect the end intended."<sup>83</sup> That Church and mission were in contention is beyond dispute — but they were contending in one 'discursive field,' aspiring to distinctly modern forms of power, and deploying distinctly modern techniques of control to realize that aspiration.

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<sup>82</sup> Elder, *Vindicating a Vision*, 49.

<sup>83</sup> Watson, *American Mission*, 205.

## CHAPTER 9

### **Rationalizing Reform: Fabricating Superstitions in Need of Improvement**

Although Abu Islāh’s Great Coptic School was never particularly well attended, the sons of the Coptic elite were educated therein — sons withheld from the mission schools, given Coptic officials’ and landowners’ fears as to the loss of status they could suffer within the community.<sup>1</sup> As J. Heyworth-Dunne recounts, such young men entered into government service under Ismā‘īl, and came to wield great influence, within both the Coptic community and Egypt at large.<sup>2</sup> Of particular note are the privileged opportunities they enjoyed, as state officials, to acquire vast tracts of land. According to Gabriel Baer, by 1891, the landholdings of the wealthiest Coptic families of Upper Egypt ranked fourth in size behind the holdings of the state, the descendants of Muhammad Ali, and high officials.<sup>3</sup> B. L. Carter reveals that the Bishāra, Dūs, ‘Ibayd, Fanus, Ghali, Hanna, Khayyāt, and

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<sup>1</sup> Although *Our Trip to Egypt, by the Author of ‘The Better Way’* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1859) claims at page 190 that there were three hundred pupils at the School, J. Heyworth-Dunne, “Education in Egypt and the Copts,” *Bulletin de la Société d’Archéologie Copte* 6 (1940), 103, insists that the number never exceeded 150.

<sup>2</sup> Heyworth-Dunne, “Education in Egypt and the Copts,” 103.

<sup>3</sup> Gabriel Baer, *A History of Landownership in Modern Egypt, 1800-1950* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 64.

Wissa families each held in excess of a thousand feddans of land, concentrated largely near Asyūt and Minyā.<sup>4</sup>

Such Coptic landowners of the late nineteenth century defended their holdings as ‘citizens of Egypt,’ but never intended to forsake their Coptic communal identity. In their view, the Egyptian and Coptic dimensions of their identity were scarcely irreconcilable. Quite to the contrary, they were mutually reinforcing, and the link served elite Copts well. Yet, a troubling question soon emerged: Who, among the Copts, in fact merited the ‘modern sons of the Pharaohs’ label? Elite Copts were plagued with just the ambivalence and apprehension about the Coptic masses that missionaries had expressed in the 1810s and 1820s. Coptic peasants, with their ‘backward’ and ‘offensive’ customs, were scarcely considered heirs to the illustrious Coptic heritage, of which elite Copts considered themselves proprietors. The ‘lower orders’ needed not the equality for which the elite was then striving, but ‘enlightenment.’<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> B. L. Carter, *The Copts in Egyptian Politics, 1918-1952* (London: Croon Helm, 1986), 210. The feddan amounts to 0.42 hectares or 1.04 acres.

<sup>5</sup> There is a striking parallel between the maneuvering of the Coptic elite that I will describe here, and that of the Dutch elite as described by Peter van Rooden in his “History, the Nation, and Religion: The Transformations of the Dutch Religious Past,” in Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann, eds. *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). At page 102, van Rooden describes how Dutch historians of the nineteenth century propagated the notion, “All citizens are potentially equal, because they can be morally educated. Only a minority, however, is truly educated and civilized. This is the basis for a discursive distinction between the civilized elite and the rude common people.”

Enlightenment would emerge through the textualizing and moralizing processes pioneered in the early nineteenth century. As in the past, the aim of such processes was to eliminate those local intermediaries to whom villagers and townspeople had long looked for guidance. However, in this case, the struggle was not simply, to use Walter Ong's terms, one between a modern elite 'technologizing the word' and the 'wise old man and wise old woman' who, as 'repeaters of the past,' possessed social influence in an oral culture.<sup>6</sup> Rather, as Chapter Eight suggested, the local intermediaries that the Coptic elite aimed to supplant were part of a Church structure that had a textualizing and moralizing agenda all its own.

For the elite laymen of the Coptic community, convinced that they had earned their wealth through industry and discipline, the monks controlling the Coptic Orthodox Church represented a problem. In the laymen's view, due to the monks' mismanagement, "The revenues of Church property are squandered in the most reckless manner, whilst the churches are suffered to fall into decay, and secular priests are paid only beggardly salaries, or are entirely left to depend for their subsistence on the charity of their congregations."<sup>7</sup> The monks were mere 'superstitious' anachronisms. They still, for the most part, could not understand the sacred language of the Church, yet 'mindlessly' uttered prayers in that language. However, as will become apparent in this chapter, that Church structure would

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<sup>6</sup> Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, Routledge edition (London, 2002), 41.

<sup>7</sup> Simaika, "Awakening," 738.



prove far more adept at textualizing the Coptic heritage, at cultivating a Coptic morality, and at preserving its prerogatives than the landowners had expected.

### **The Nineteenth-Century Coptic Elite**

In 1908, Murqus Fahmi launched a moral indictment of the Coptic community in the pages of the newspaper, *Misr*. Fahmi had graduated from the French Law School in 1892, and continued with his legal studies in Aix-en-Provence. Upon his return to Egypt in 1895, he took up the practice of law, and ultimately became the motive force behind the idea of an Egyptian lawyers' syndicate. Indeed, he wrote the syndicate's inaugural charter in 1899. Further, he was heavily involved in the reform of personal status law within the Coptic community. In his columns for *Misr*, Fahmi claimed that, as a people, the Copts were not merely uneducated as to their legacy, but shamefully backward as to their morals. They refused women the education to which they were entitled, and thus harmed the Coptic home. Further, the Copts were concerned only with material advancement, rather than the spiritual advancement of their community.<sup>8</sup>

The attack Ramzi Tadrus launched upon his community was of still greater virulence. For Tadrus, the Copts were a selfish, filthy people. As Samir Seikaly recounts, the Coptic Committee for the Suppression of Evil Habits was, at the time, engaged in the effort to raise the moral condition of the community. The

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<sup>8</sup> *Misr*, 28 and 29 February 1908.

Committee sought to rid Copts of “offensive burial customs, premature and senile marriages, the exclusion and veiling of women, belief in amulets, and finally, excessive drinking, smoking and gambling.”<sup>9</sup>

Fahmi and Tadrus concurred that if elite Coptic laymen — men who had purportedly served the state, cultivated the land, and constructed factories with industry, discipline, and order — were in control of the community, they could at last render the Church a ‘functional’ institution, and the Copts, a ‘moral’ people. Beyond the ‘modernization’ of the community, however, they sought to rid themselves of the shackles of the confessional governance that then characterized Ottoman domains. They sought to realize aspirations fostered within them by the Great Coptic School, to achieve a position of prominence not merely within the Coptic community, but within Egypt at large.

As the ‘modern sons of the pharaohs,’ Egypt was their ‘native’ land, after all. In the eyes of their Western ‘Christian brethren,’ the Copts of Egypt constituted a human link, both to the erudition of the ancients and to the morality of the primitive Church. This ‘imagined’ narrative of cultural distinctiveness was vital for the elite Copts of the nineteenth century, with their disproportionate influence and wealth, for the narrative declared Copts the ‘most Egyptian’ of all Egyptians. Through the ‘modern sons of the pharaohs’ claim, Coptic landowners succeeded both in strengthening their communal identity and in legitimizing their

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<sup>9</sup> Seikaly, “Coptic Communal Reform,” 266.

control of vast estates. With the ‘modern sons of the pharaoh’ claim at hand, endorsed by the ‘scientific’ judgment of a host of archaeologists, how indeed could a Muslim question Coptic involvement in Egyptian public life?<sup>10</sup>

Hence, the elite Copts published Coptic newspapers — notably, *al-Watan*, developed by Great Coptic School graduate Mikhā’il ‘Abd al-Sayyid in 1877.<sup>11</sup> They distributed Coptic journals — among them, the literary *al-Majalla al-Qibtiyya*, the spiritual *al-Haqq*, and the educational *al-Shams*.<sup>12</sup> They conferred at Coptic clubs, such as *Nādī Ramsīs*.<sup>13</sup> Most prominently, however, they sought to ‘enlighten’ the ‘lower orders’ of the Coptic community through the Tawfiq Society, founded at Cairo in 1891.

In the pages of their newspapers and journals — or cloistered in their clubs and ‘benevolent’ societies — elite Copts applauded the success they enjoyed and, just as the evangelicals had years prior, attributed that success to their ancestry. Ramzi Tadrus pointed to the Copts as “the remnant of a people for ever persecuted but never destroyed; pure descendants of the ancient Egyptians, similar to them racially and in genius and ability.” As Seikaly recounts, Tadrus concluded that,

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<sup>10</sup> Seikaly, “Coptic Communal Reform,” 269, recounts that Gaston Maspero, in an interview, “stated positively that the Copts, more than any other people, had retained their racial purity, and that the present Copts were themselves the descendants of the Pharaohs.” Flinders Petrie ventured to claim “that the Copts, inheriting the characteristics of their ancestors, were the only ones capable of leading Egypt on the path of advancement.”

<sup>11</sup> Heyworth-Dunne, “Education in Egypt and the Copts,” 104-105.

<sup>12</sup> Seikaly, “Coptic Communal Reform,” 267-268.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

given such ‘genius and ability,’ the Copts were destined to serve as “instruments of social change, the harbingers of a true civilization that would not completely dispose of the past, yet would accept European modernity.”<sup>14</sup>

Elite Copts believed they had an equal right to the abundance of that land, and looked to the British to aid them in securing their ‘inheritance.’ At the 1911 Coptic Congress, Mikhā’il Fanous captured the notion succinctly: “As regards man’s personal well-being it is for everyone to struggle for his own advancement.”

He continued:

once the principle of equality is established, no more importance will be attached to the mere acquisition of posts; the words Moslem and Copt will be forgotten. By equality we mean that people should live with each other in science and education, so that only qualified persons shall hold these posts. Thus we arouse in every man great activity and eagerness to improve his mind for the sake of his career.<sup>15</sup>

### **Elite Collaborators**

Despite such exalted ambitions, elite Coptic laymen faced a significant obstacle in the quest to achieve such ‘equality,’ and lead their community to ‘progress and advancement’ — the hierarchy of the Coptic Orthodox Church. In ideological terms, whereas the landowners were convinced that Copts had to

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 269.

<sup>15</sup> Mikhail Effendi Fanous, “The Relations Between Copts and Mohamedans in Egypt,” in *The Coptic Congress Held at Assiout on March 6, 7 and 8, 1911, The Speeches Literally Translated* (Cairo, 1911), 11.

struggle for their ‘rights of citizenship’ and a position of prominence in Egyptian public life, the Church hierarchy sought to preserve the status quo of a ‘separate,’ ‘protected’ Coptic community. In practical terms, however, whereas the landowners were convinced that elite laymen were the members of the community most ‘qualified’ to represent the community and to administer Church affairs beyond the spiritual realm — that is, to control the endowments and the leadership of the Copts — the Church hierarchy sought to preserve the authority of the Patriarch, in both spiritual and temporal affairs.

In 1873, after seven years and seven months in the Patriarchal seat, Demetrius passed away. Upon his death, Bishop Murqus of Alexandria assumed responsibility for the Church hierarchy. In the midst of the confusion surrounding the selection of Demetrius’s successor, elite Copts, who came together under the banner of a ‘Reform Society,’ saw an opportunity. Society members put together a report for Murqus explaining their dissatisfaction with the state of Coptic youth and the Coptic poor. Further, in a petition to Khedive Ismā‘īl, Great Coptic School graduate Boutros Ghali requested permission to wrest control of the Church administration — personal status law, the endowments, Coptic schools, and poor relief — from the Church hierarchy, through the election of a *majlis al-milli*, or

Coptic Community Council. Through a decree issued on 3 February 1874, the Khedive furnished his consent for Ghali's proposal.<sup>16</sup>

Patriarch Cyril V cooperated with the Council for a time. Within a year, the Church had founded both a school for girls and a theological college. However, as Cyril came to grasp the aspirations of the laymen — particularly as far as control of the endowments was concerned — the arrangement collapsed. The Patriarch began to absent himself from meetings of the *majlis*. The Reform Society called upon the government to intervene, to force the Patriarch to respect *majlis* decisions. Although the government exerted much pressure on the Church hierarchy, Cyril resisted that pressure, to the extent that the *majlis* was virtually disbanded for a period of seven years. The educational projects initiated with the Council apparently withered.<sup>17</sup>

By 1883, however, the balance of forces in the dispute had shifted significantly. British troops trod upon Egyptian soil. As Seikaly notes in his doctoral dissertation, “The Copts were a tool to be utilized to further British aims in Egypt, they were a factor in a fluid political situation, and as a politician Cromer had no hesitation to manipulate such a factor in order to insure that his policy would succeed.”<sup>18</sup> Further, the Church of England had seized upon the opportunity

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<sup>16</sup> Rūfīla, *Tārīkh al-Ummah*, 329.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Seikaly, “Copts Under British Rule,” 151. For British perceptions of the Copts at the time, refer to Sheldon Amos, “The Copts as a Political Factor,” *Contemporary*

occupation represented, and developed an Association for the Furtherance of Christianity in Egypt. The elite laymen were sufficiently emboldened by meetings with Association leaders to condemn the Patriarch in public. No doubt frustration was mounting within the community at large due to the administrative confusion *majlis* dissolution had prompted: Legal issues surrounding inheritance and Church endowments were in limbo.

Led by Boutros Ghali, elite Copts petitioned the government in February for the restoration of the Council. A Khedival decree issued on 14 May required the Patriarch to seek Council approval for all his decisions beyond the spiritual realm. Elections to the Council were held, supervised by government officials, but the Patriarch refused to cooperate. Although Cyril had a representative at all Council meetings, he disregarded Council decisions and, within a year, the laymen had withdrawn.<sup>19</sup>

They were, however, scarcely prepared to admit defeat. The laymen developed societies independent of the Church, and cultivated support both within the government and among the British. By 1891, they thought themselves prepared for a further confrontation, and dispatched a delegation to the Patriarch, with the traditional demand for the restoration of the Council. According to Edith Butcher's

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*Review* XLIV (1883); Dean Butcher, "Copts and Al-Islam," *Quarterly Review* CLVII (1884); and G. B. Howard, *England's Religious Duty Towards Egypt* (London, 1884).

<sup>19</sup> Seikaly, "Coptic Communal Reform," 253.

account, “a great popular demonstration was arranged in Cairo, to which came delegates from all the chief Coptic communities of Egypt.”<sup>20</sup> The response of the Patriarch was particularly virulent, and the delegation immediately sought the intervention of Khedive Tawfiq. When the laymen attempted to hold elections at the Patriarchate, Cyril called for police intervention to prevent voters from entering the building. The Patriarch proceeded to convene a synod under the chairmanship of his deputy, Bishop Yuannis of Alexandria. The synod declared the notion of the *majlis* contrary to the laws of the prophets, and both Bishop and Patriarch traveled to Alexandria to present the synod’s declaration to the Khedive.<sup>21</sup>

Boutros Ghali, away in Europe during these events, was briefed by the Khedive upon his return to Egypt. Tawfiq instructed Ghali to find a solution to the Council dilemma and, accordingly, he brought the disputing parties together in the *majlis* chamber. Although a tentative agreement with the Patriarch as to the powers of the Council seemed to emerge from the meeting, requests to convene the *majlis* went ignored for a year. At this point, the Patriarch took the initiative and contacted a number of Coptic notables for informal consultations — but the notables refused to meet, insisting upon a formal session of the Council.

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<sup>20</sup> Edith L. Butcher, *The Story of the Church in Egypt*, volume II (London: Smith and Elder, 1897), 405.

<sup>21</sup> Rūfīla, *Tārīkh al-Ummah*, 340.



Communal infighting became particularly virulent, with the anti-clerical, reform-oriented Tawfīq Society squaring off against an ‘Orthodox Society.’<sup>22</sup>

In July 1892, incensed by Patriarchal ‘intransigence’ and under British pressure, the Khedive ordered the restoration of the Council. As expected, the Patriarch refused to sanction elections to the Council. Elections were held, despite the Patriarch’s opposition, under the supervision of Cairo’s chief of police. In the face of insistent petitioning from the Patriarch to the effect that such elections were illegal and improper, the Khedive snubbed Cyril in a most public, embarrassing way, refusing to receive the Patriarch’s official greetings on the occasion of ‘Īd al-Adha. Indeed, the Khedive ventured to inform Boutros Ghali that the palace would accept no further communications from the Patriarch.<sup>23</sup>

Elite Copts resolved to call for government removal of all the temporal authority Cyril retained, submitting a report to the government illustrating the Patriarch’s efforts to obstruct the Council. ‘Abbās II acceded to the petition, and designated Athanasius, the Bishop of Sanabu, Patriarchal Vicar and President of the Council.<sup>24</sup> Athanasius was promptly excommunicated by the bishops — but the Khedive was prepared to enforce his decision by force. By September, the Council of Ministers had banished Cyril to the desert monastery of Nitria. Butcher recounts that four committees were put in place to administer Church affairs — “one to

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 347.

<sup>24</sup> Seikaly, “Coptic Communal Reform,” 256.

supervise schools, another to receive the Church funds and look after her property, a third to examine the condition of the churches, and a fourth to regulate the ecclesiastical courts.”<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the confrontation, the elite laymen emphasized their commitment to render the Coptic Church a ‘rational,’ ‘functional’ institution. Of the ‘reformers,’ Cromer later remarked, with much esteem, “young Copts see that, unless they wish to be left behind in the race of life, they must bestir themselves.”<sup>26</sup> Edith Butcher, writing in 1897, congratulated the Coptic reformers for having rid the community of one particularly ‘backward’ custom: “At one time fifteen was considered a suitable age to marry a boy, and twelve for the girl. Already, however, public opinion, backed by the remonstrances of the Church, has improved in this respect, and now a man must be twenty and a girl sixteen before the Patriarch or Bishop will grant the license without which no priest can celebrate a marriage.”<sup>27</sup>

Elite Copts were, however, racing not merely towards an abstract notion of ‘progress’ or ‘modernity,’ but towards affluence. Despite the rhetoric of Church ‘modernization,’ the confrontation was, in fact, about control — both of vast tracts of precious yet ‘unexploited’ *waqf* land, and of the leadership of the Coptic community. The British found among the elite Copts willing collaborators, due not

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<sup>25</sup> Butcher, *Story of the Church*, 408.

<sup>26</sup> Cromer, *Modern Egypt* (London: Macmillan, 1908), vol. II, 211.

<sup>27</sup> Butcher, *Story of the Church*, 415.

merely to a common commitment to ‘modernization’ — to the values of industry, discipline, and order — but to common material and political aims. Indeed, with the modern, moral values of industry, discipline, and order, elite Copts possessed an enunciative capacity to defend the extraction of resources and the seizure of authority. As Ramzi Tadrus recounts, “Thanks to the freedom, the justice, and the rapid improvement the Nile Valley was experiencing under British rule, Coptic dignitaries and their families were able to develop their abilities for work and finance, and concentrate almost exclusively their zeal in accumulating fortunes in land, stocks and bonds, companies.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Morality for the Masses**

Perhaps the most powerful illustration of resistance to the ‘moralization’ of the community was the scene Cairenes witnessed in February 1893, upon the return to Cairo of the Copts’ banished Patriarch. Throughout the period of banishment, Copts had forsaken church services, baptisms, and marriages. Church and community were in a state of utter chaos, and the elite laymen were forced to concede the measure of control they had secured. As Seikaly recounts:

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<sup>28</sup> Doris Behrens-Abouseif, “The Political Situation of the Copts, 1798-1923,” in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), vol. II, 195.

the Patriarch, accompanied by a special government envoy, made a triumphal entry into Cairo. The thoroughfare leading from the main station to the Patriarchate was thronged with jubilant people of all denominations. Women and children perched on balconies cheered uninhibitedly, while in the streets below exultant Copts expressed their joy by slaughtering sheep. Wild with emotion, several Copts unharnessed the horses drawing Cyril's carriage and themselves dragged it to the Cathedral, where prayers of thanks were offered.<sup>29</sup>

For the moment, the 'superstitious' masses had triumphed, and defeated the forces of industry, discipline, and order. However, despite such episodes of resistance, Coptic landowners embraced the 'educational process' that evangelicals had brought to Egypt and that Abu Islāh had perpetuated through the Great Coptic School. Elite Copts aimed, through the schools they developed, to cultivate the values they had learned under the tutelage of Abu Islāh — industry, discipline, and order — within Coptic youth. Ultimately, elite Egyptians, both Copts and Muslims, aimed by such means to render impoverished coreligionists industrious and disciplined laborers.

As they enlarged their estates, landowners were confronted with the problem of landless rural laborers, principally from Upper Egypt — a potential source of 'disorder.'<sup>30</sup> Timothy Mitchell recounts at length the efforts landowners undertook to 'reform' education, commencing with the decision of Ismā'īl and his

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<sup>29</sup> Seikaly, "Coptic Communal Reform," 259.

<sup>30</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 96. For how that class emerged, refer to Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 43.

‘landowning’ Consultative Chamber of Deputies in the late 1860s to develop a network of primary schools throughout Egypt. All was rigidly planned and set forth in the Organic Law of 1868 — the subjects, the texts, the schedule, the uniforms, the architectural designs, and the furniture that all schools, without exception, were required to embrace.<sup>31</sup>

Gregory Starrett expands the account to embrace British concerns about Egyptian agricultural productivity in the late nineteenth century — concerns vitally linked to the extent of Egyptian indebtedness to European creditors, to emerging threats to the power of landowning collaborators with the British, and to the potentially disastrous consequences of interruptions in the supply of cotton to British textile manufacturers.<sup>32</sup> The British were, thus, convinced that the inculcation of such values as industry and discipline within landless laborers could, by advancing agricultural productivity, render the imperial grasp of Egypt secure. Further, the inculcation of the value of order could reduce British resort to force among Egyptians, by serving “to immunize the masses against political or religious excitement.”<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, by ‘modern’ means of education, the British and their landowning collaborators could convince landless rural laborers of the legitimacy of the existing class system, and of their ‘proper’ place within that system.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 75-78.

<sup>32</sup> Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 30.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-54.

However, through his *Putting Islam to Work*, Starrett has revealed that, for all their ‘modern’ sensibilities, the British and their Muslim collaborators were not at all averse to marshaling Islamic education, in particular, to serve such aims. They cast the Qur’an as a distinctly ‘functional’ text, as a code of conduct and morality in the life of the Muslim. A focus upon recitation was displaced by a focus upon interpretation — and interpretative control was, in turn, sought as a means to the control of the body and mind of the Muslim.<sup>35</sup>

Specifically, Starrett’s book, *Putting Islam to Work*, seeks to describe the process whereby Muslim elites have rendered Islam ‘functional’ — that is, mobilized religious tradition to serve particular purposes in the public sphere, to accomplish particular economic, social, and political aims. As Starrett recounts, “Traditions, customs, beliefs, institutions, and values that originally possessed their own evaluative criteria and their own rules of operation and mobilization become consciously subsumed by modern-educated elites to the evaluative criteria of social and political utility.”<sup>36</sup> That is to say, through ‘functionalization,’ Islam has become a framework through which elites justify economic, social, and political change. Verses of the Qur’an or declarations of the Prophet are invoked by such elites in a conscious effort to achieve specific worldly aims.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 71-73.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 10.

The principal agent of such ‘functionalization’ is the modern school. In his book, Starrett traces the roots of the modern Egyptian school back to the spread of European educational techniques throughout Egypt prior to and during the British Occupation. During the Occupation, British administrators looked to the modern school as a potential remedy for the ‘restlessness’ of the ‘native element.’ Further, the native masses, the Egyptian elite reasoned, “could, through the inculcation of new skills and habits of thought, be drawn into a new set of social relationships that would give them a vested interest in the maintenance of a new system of class relations.”<sup>37</sup>

British administrators and Egyptian landowners seized upon religion as they endeavored to transmit the values of discipline and productivity to Egyptians through the school — an Islam “not of recited truth, but of behavioral guidelines.”<sup>38</sup> Cromer and his British peers in Cairo conceived of Islam as ‘primitive,’ ‘yet to evolve.’ Islam was prodded in the direction of ‘evolution’ through the educational system. Notions of ‘rationalization’ and ‘functionalization’ were cultivated in students. Islam was framed as a moral code — one that promoted the values of discipline and productivity. Starrett vividly describes how Islam is deployed as a moral instrument: “A hadith of the Prophet condemning the destruction of shade trees in the desert is extended to all kinds of contemporary public facilities: means

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 38.

of transport such as buses and trains; means of communication such as telegraph, telephone, and mail offices; and public services such as schools, hospitals, libraries, museums, gardens and public restrooms.”<sup>39</sup>

According to Starrett, the ‘native element’ — the Muslim Brotherhood, in particular — seized upon ‘functionalization’ as a means by which to attack British administrators and Egyptian landowners. The modern school, once a British tool of subjugation, would now become a tool for the Brotherhood, for the Islamists — a means by which to convince Muslims not to remain content with their lot, but to rise up against their oppressors. While the British invoked particular Muslim texts to justify the status quo, the Muslim Brotherhood invoked such texts to justify revolution. The content of the message shifted — from quiescence to rebellion — but the technique, of ‘moralization’ or ‘functionalization’ of Muslim texts, was common both to the administrators and the landowners, and to their opponents in the Brotherhood. Essentially, ‘functionalization’ meant that Islam was no longer a matter of spirituality or faith alone; Muslims were expected to ‘put Islam to use,’ they were expected to use the texts of Islam as a guide to life. Just as Islamic reformers like ‘Abduh and Afghani had said a century prior, memorization and recitation of such texts were not enough: Muslims had to understand the texts, and act upon them in the public sphere.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 169.



## Stewardship of Communal Morality

At the 1911 Coptic Congress, Aknoukh Fanous spoke not only to his fellow elite Copts, but indeed to all elite Egyptians, when he described the importance of religious education: “It is the most important consideration, both for humanity, and for Governments, that people should obey the commands of their religion, because a religious people is always the least inclined to crime, and the most careful of the rights of others, and a Government can always feel confidence in such a people.” Fanous left precious little ambiguity as to his point: “He who is not faithful to his God knows not how to be faithful to his Government.”<sup>40</sup>

Fanous was merely voicing a sentiment upon which elite Coptic reformers like himself had acted for two decades, through the Tawfīq Society.<sup>41</sup> The Tawfīq Society, founded in 1891, was the specifically Coptic instrument for the ‘moralization’ of the masses — for spreading the values of industry, discipline, and order among subaltern Copts. As Hilmi Ahmad Shalabi notes in his history of Tawfīq, a Coptic Benevolent Society closely associated with the Church had come

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<sup>40</sup> Aknoukh Fanous, “A Method by Which Coptic Government Officials and Students May Be Allowed to Keep the Sabbath,” in *The Coptic Congress Held at Assiout on March 6, 7 and 8, 1911, The Speeches Literally Translated* (Cairo, 1911), 15-16.

<sup>41</sup> Fanous had received his education from the Presbyterian missionaries at Asyūt, and subsequently, at the American University in Beirut, from which he earned his Bachelor’s degree. He returned to Upper Egypt and, in 1878, founded a benevolent society in Asyūt to support the poor. Elected to parliament from Abnub in 1883, he went on to practice law in the civil courts. After serving on the committee which founded the American University in Cairo in 1906, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by that institution. Fanous passed away in 1918.

into existence in 1881.<sup>42</sup> However, the Tawfīq Society, although founded with little fanfare, would distinguish itself through its wide network of operations in Egypt, extending to branches as far afield as Alexandria, Tantā, Asyūt, Minyā, and Beni Suef.

Tawfīq constructed hospitals and orphanages — but the preponderance of resources were committed to schools for, according to the leaders of the Society, “the advancement or backwardness of any community was commensurate with the condition of its schools.”<sup>43</sup> In his account, Shalabi specifically attributes the paramount concern of the 21 founding members of the Society with education, to the influence of Cyril IV: The only means by which to achieve social reform in the Coptic community at large was the ‘modern’ school.<sup>44</sup> The Society reported that the number of ‘bona fide,’ ‘modern’ Coptic schools rose from six in 1892 to forty-six in 1907 — a rise one can credit, in large part, to Tawfīq.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Hilmi Ahmad Shalabi, *The Copts and Social Reform in Egypt: The Role of the Tawfīq Society, 1891-1952* (Cairo: Anglo Bookshop, 1992), 4.

<sup>43</sup> Seikaly, “Coptic Communal Reform,” 254.

<sup>44</sup> Shalabi, *The Copts and Social Reform*, 59.

<sup>45</sup> Seikaly, “Coptic Communal Reform,” 267. Such figures contrast markedly with the figures Heyworth-Dunne, “Education in Egypt and the Copts,” 106, offers. According to Heyworth-Dunne, there had existed twelve ‘modern’ Coptic schools in 1863, eighteen in 1875, and twenty-five in 1878.

## EPILOGUE

The terms for blind and blindness carry two general associations: one, the most common, with the idea of covering, and one with the idea of injury or defect. The notion of defect is already familiar to us. But when we compare both these ideas with the Western philological associations with darkness or confusion, we perceive that the Arabic concepts remain more closely attached to the physical reality of the absence of sight. They do not expand the idea of blindness into a larger world of darkness or the even more general notion of confusion. The relatively down-to-earth aspects of the Arabic terminology, therefore, reduce the separation between the blind and the sighted. The blind are injured or defective, to be sure, but their injury is not projected outward into a more general state.

— Fedwa Malti-Douglas<sup>1</sup>

In their books *Colonising Egypt* and *Putting Islam to Work*, Timothy Mitchell and Gregory Starrett root accounts of the rise of ‘modernity’ in Egypt in shifting conceptions of space, time, and textuality.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the principal dilemma they face in developing their accounts of the ‘modern’ order, is explaining how that order differs from that which prevailed in Egypt prior to the advent of modern technologies of power. Mitchell steps far afield to describe that ‘old order’ — to Algeria and the Kabyle house analyzed by Pierre Bourdieu, and to Morocco and the

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<sup>1</sup> Fedwa Malti-Douglas, “*Mentalités* and Marginality: Blindness and Mamluk Civilization,” in C. E. Bosworth, Charles Issawi, Roger Savory, and A. L. Udovitch, eds. *The Islamic World: From Classical to Modern Times* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1989), 220-221.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

Berber *qādi* analyzed by Dale Eickelman. Starrett remains in Egypt, and cites travellers' discomfort with the movements of *kuttāb* tenants learning to reproduce the word of God, as emblematic of the disparate world views.

In the preceding pages, I have aimed to develop an account of greater nuance as to the Egyptian 'old order,' through a detailed interrogation of particular educational encounters in nineteenth-century Egypt — between Anglican and Presbyterian missionaries, Ottoman and Egyptian officials, Coptic priests and Muslim reformers, and landowners of both faiths on the one hand, and the subaltern inhabitants of the Nile Valley on the other. Perhaps most strikingly emblematic of that 'old order' are the blind Coptic schoolmasters evangelical missionaries discovered throughout Egypt, whose 'disability' they felt necessarily disqualified them from teaching. This dissertation has offered a critical analysis of narratives of 'awakening' as they were developed during the nineteenth century, by looking at how educational reform efforts aimed at ridding schools not only of blind teachers, but of the 'superstition' and 'backwardness' they represented. Specifically, through a close reading of the reform plans of educationalists, I have suggested how an emphasis upon literacy as the only 'route to enlightenment' led to the destruction of forms of knowledge and authority that had prevailed among nineteenth-century Coptic peasants.

In contemporary Egypt, notes Gregory Starrett, "More people are praying, more people are reading about Islam and listening to its preachers, more people are

discovering consciously the salience of religious ideas and practices to their private and public lives, than did a generation ago.”<sup>3</sup> Dina el Khawaga has identified a strikingly parallel development in the Coptic Orthodox community of Egypt, in a recent book chapter. In her words, the urban Copt currently “finds himself ‘absorbed’ by dozens of daily activities which he must carry out not only to witness his faith or partake of the moments of communion provided by the services, sermons, or prayers, but also to ‘progress’ along the spiritual path to life.”<sup>4</sup> The ‘resurgence of faith’ in Egypt is typically associated by social analysts, political scientists in particular, with deteriorating socio-economic conditions. Policies of economic liberalization implemented during the 1970s are specified as the cause of a widening breach between the wealthy and the poor. Lower middle class Muslims, the argument runs, chose to employ Islamic symbols to articulate political grievances — themselves rooted in distinctly material concerns — given the long-standing structural weakness of the left in the country.

In contrast to the preponderance of her colleagues in political science, Dina el Khawaga eschews the relative deprivation thesis, insisting upon a long-term perspective in analyzing the ‘resurgence of faith’ within the Coptic community. Rather than pointing to the oft cited milestones of 1967 or 1974 — the decimation

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<sup>3</sup> Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 91.

<sup>4</sup> Dina el Khawaga, “The Political Dynamics of the Copts: Giving the Community an Active Role,” in Andrea Pacini, ed. *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 187.

of Egypt by Israel in battle, and the inauguration of the *infitāh* era, respectively — she steps back to the years 1893 and 1918. In the former, the Coptic Seminary was established; and in the latter, the Coptic Sunday school movement began to emerge, in earnest. Both developments are cited as milestones in a clerical effort to render the Church the focal point of Coptic communal life, in the face of acculturative threats from the Coptic elite and Egyptian political institutions. The argument Dina el Khawaga advances is reminiscent of that Starrett advances in *Putting Islam to Work*, not least given her focus upon transformations in Coptic educational structures. As Starrett potently declares, “The textbook provides the liturgy for ritual dramatizations of the moral authority of the state.”<sup>5</sup> The school has emerged as a venue for the inculcation of particular values, and sacred texts — whether the Qur’an or the Bible — are cast therein as codes of morality available for interpretation not only to properly educated and accredited scholars of Islam and Christianity, but further, to state functionaries with a range of educational backgrounds.

Stewardship of Coptic communal morality has gradually passed from the hands of the community elite into the hands of the Church hierarchy. By the 1930s, a Sunday School Movement had spread through the Coptic community — one explicitly devoted to the application of Scriptural ‘wisdom’ to the lives of Coptic youth. By the 1960s, the Coptic Patriarch had appointed a Bishop of Education

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<sup>5</sup> Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 142.

committed to delivering a ‘lesson’ to Coptic youth each Friday, interpreting the Biblical passages relevant to such matters as dating, studying, family planning, and class relations. By the 1990s, Moussa, the Coptic Orthodox Church’s Bishop of Youth had not only published booklets entitled ‘Youth and Pure Living,’ ‘Youth and Family Life,’ ‘How Can I Make Decisions?’ and ‘Sex from a Christian View,’ but developed an internet page to ‘enlighten’ Christian youth as to ‘proper’ conduct.<sup>6</sup> Analysis of such polemics yields insight into a marked shift in the deployment of sacred texts among Coptic Christians. Just as the Muslims Starrett describes select and interpret Qur’anic passages to serve particular political aims, in the broadest sense of that term, Coptic Christians deploy Biblical passages in comparable ways — that is, in ‘functional’ ways, ironically reminiscent of the ways in which evangelical missionaries had deployed them during the nineteenth century. As Moussa has explained in one of his tracts:

Sin is darkness — the darkness of separation from God the light, the darkness of spiritual blindness, the sequential blindness of man’s insight. The sinner is actually a blind man who cannot see himself, nor God, nor the way. Thus he stumbles till he falls into the pit and

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<sup>6</sup> For the history of the Coptic Church and community in the twentieth century, refer to Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Marilyn R. I. Tadros, Mohammed Anwar el-Fiqi, and Soliman Shafiq, *The Copts of Egypt* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1996); Airi Tamura, “Ethnic Consciousness and its Transformation in the Course of Nation-Building: The Muslim and the Copts in Egypt, 1906-1919,” *Muslim World* (April 1985); and Edward Wakin, *A Lonely Minority: The Modern Story of Egypt’s Copts* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1963).

dies. But repentance opens man's eyes, and the repentant is led by God's Spirit to the way of salvation and Christ the Savior.<sup>7</sup>

'Darkness' and 'light,' 'blindness' and 'enlightenment' — the tropes are as flexible as the preachers, whether Protestant or Orthodox, Coptic or Muslim, are skilled in deploying them. And for that reason, they are not soon to disappear.

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<sup>7</sup> H. G. Bishop Moussa, Bishop of Youth, *Christmas Gifts* (Cairo: Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Bishopric of Youth, Translation Services), 8.



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