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John Lieder and his Mission in Egypt: The Evangelical Ethos at Work Among Nineteenth-Century Copts

The English Church Missionary Society (CMS) dispatched a contingent of missionaries to Egypt in 1825. This article analyses the methods and impact of that contingent. The schools that the CMS missionaries introduced are cast not as vehicles of enlightenment — as is frequently the case in mission historiography — but as technologies of power. Specifically, the article recounts how the head of the mission, the Reverend John Lieder, deployed Lancaster schools among the Coptic Christians of Cairo to effect not merely a spiritual, but further, a cultural conversion of this Orthodox community. Lieder, his predecessors, and his contemporaries in the Mediterranean field sought to instil in the Copts the “evangelical ethos” of industry, discipline, and order. The article links this CMS project of cultural conversion to the process of state-building in Egypt. Indeed, Lieder was a pioneer purveyor of technologies of power that would prove indispensable to late-nineteenth-century elites in their efforts to produce, in the subaltern strata of Egyptian society, industrious and disciplined political subjects resigned to their lowly positions in the Egyptian social order.

“Enlightenment” or “Colonization”?

In a seminal 1970 article, “Coptic Communal Reform,” Samir Seikaly credits a representative of the English Church Missionary Society (CMS), dispatched to Egypt in 1825, with having set in motion a process of “reform” within the Coptic Orthodox Church. Specifically, the article identifies the educational projects of the Reverend John Lieder as a stimulus for Church “modernization” efforts of the late nineteenth century — efforts led by Coptic Christians themselves. According to Seikaly, both Lieder and the elite “native” reformers confronted a Church that was static, corrupt, and primitive — one in need of rescue from the “ignorance” and “superstition” that pervaded the “lower classes of the community.”¹

This is a familiar narrative in the traditional historiography of Christian mission in the Middle East. Scholars of the region have long clung to an

1. Samir Seikaly, “Coptic Communal Reform: 1860–1914,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 6, (1970): 247–70.

image of missionaries as catalysts for “reawakening” and “revival” in the Eastern Churches. For Seikaly, as for George Antonius, Albert Hourani, and Elie Kedourie, Eastern Christians’ acceptance of the “reform” advocated by Christian missionaries to the Middle East was an unproblematic part of the natives’ “enlightenment.”

Perhaps the best-known discussion of Christian mission efforts in the Middle East is that offered by Antonius in his influential account of the rise of Arab nationalism, *The Arab Awakening*. He explicitly identifies French and American missionaries as “the foster-parents of the Arab resurrection.”² Antonius 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.”³ 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 at last within reach. The American presence led to a revitalization of education “consonant with the traditions of the people” and the installation of a printing press. According to Antonius, such measures had a decisive impact 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.”⁴

Hourani, through his *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, and 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, 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.⁵

Kedourie displays particular passion in his discussion of the impact of American missionaries upon the Armenian community: “salvation by grace alone, 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.

2. George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1969), 35.

3. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 39.

4. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 40–43.

5. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 55.

After a while, the ‘Enlightened,’ as is proper, won and reorganized the government of the Armenian community.”⁶ No longer could ecclesiastical authorities retain political power, declared the generation of Armenian youth “enlightened” in mission schools.

Such depictions of the legacy of mission in the Middle East are problematic, for under a mask of objectivity, they conceal networks of power. The analysis of the educational techniques the Reverend Lieder employed among nineteenth-century Copts that I intend to undertake will, in contrast, raise that question of power. What were the emblems and features of the “ignorance” and “superstition” Lieder and the elite reformers condemned? What were the “modern” techniques Lieder and the elite reformers proposed to rid the Coptic community of such “ignorance” and “superstition”? How were such techniques employed to serve the distinctly social, political, and economic interests of their advocates, both among the missionaries and the elite Copts they inspired?

Drawing upon the letters, journals, and reports that the CMS missionary penned during his tenure, I will argue that Lieder was not merely concerned with forcing upon the Copts cursory professions of Anglicanism.⁷ Largely through schooling, he sought to effect “conversions” of far greater depth. The mission strategy he embraced is aptly cast as an effort in “colonization,” as Timothy Mitchell defines the term in his *Colonising Egypt*.

According to Mitchell, colonization is not merely a matter of a European presence upon Egyptian soil. The colonization to which he refers is about the imposition of particular methods of ordering life, of apportioning space and time. In the nineteenth century, Egyptian state administrators came to view control of space and time as a means to gain control of the Egyptian “subject” — control of his or her social behaviour and economic production. Rulers had long employed violent coercion as a means by which to control Egyptians, but coercion was frequently inefficient and ineffective. The administrators came to believe that if they thrust Egyptians into institutions within which space and time were tightly controlled, such as the army or schools, the state could at last instil in the Egyptian “subject” a sense of industry and discipline. According to such logic, as that “subject” internalized industry and discipline as values, the power that had apportioned space and time became imperceptible: “In the uniformity of appearance, the equidistant interval, and the geometric angle, the acts of distribution, if practised quietly, unceasingly,

6. Elie Kedourie, *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle-Eastern Studies* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), 289.

7. The archives of the Church Missionary Society at the University of Birmingham proved a peerless resource for the research undertaken. Manuscript materials relevant to CMS activity in Egypt are scattered throughout the archives. However, of interest to the researcher of Lieder, in particular, is a file holding most of the correspondence the missionary dispatched to CMS headquarters in London during his tenure as a Society representative, 126 documents in all, reference C M/O 48. For the researcher with a broader interest in the conduct of the mission to the Copts, there exist the mission books — reference C M/M 1 to 12, for the period in question — in which most of the official correspondence CMS Mediterranean missionaries undertook was reproduced in chronological order for the benefit of the CMS secretaries in London. Each mission book is indexed by author.

and uniformly, almost disappear from view.” By such means, state administrators were to “colonize” not merely the body of the Egyptian but, far more importantly, his or her mind.⁸

This article aims to demonstrate that nineteenth-century evangelical missionaries were among the inaugural agents of such “colonization” in the Egyptian context — that is, the inaugural purveyors of technologies of power that were ultimately seized by Egyptian state administrators for the purpose of inculcating, among their “subjects,” the values of industry, discipline, and order. Perhaps the most important such “technology of power” was the Lancastrian method of schooling, introduced to Egypt by the missionaries in 1828. But why would Muslim administrators find Christian mission schools expedient as a model for Egyptian state schools?

The explicit aim of the mission institutions was to nurture adherence to an “evangelical ethos” embracing the values of industry, discipline, and order. Indeed, for the CMS Cairo mission, the aim of inculcating this ethos superseded that of garnering verbal professions of Anglicanism from the mission’s targeted audience, the Coptic Christian community of Egypt. The Reverend Lieder and his peers were convinced that for the Copts to convert to an “uncorrupted” Christianity, they had, above all, to conform to a particular order in life, an order rooted in the Scriptures. The touchstones of that “scriptural order” were the values of industry and discipline. Indeed, for Lieder, the “spiritual” and “cultural” dimensions of conversion were inseparable: Christianity *was* industry, discipline, and order. And Lancastrian mission schools were to serve as the agents of the vast “cultural” conversion he planned — the “colonization” of the Coptic Orthodox Church and community.

The CMS Mediterranean Mission

In June 1811, Dr Cleardo Naudi, a Maltese Catholic, addressed a letter to the headquarters of the Church Missionary Society 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 purported failure of his Church to effect change in the Middle East. Such a claim was spurious indeed, notably as far as Egypt was concerned. Roman Catholic missions in Egypt had caused Coptic Orthodox Patriarchs much consternation through the years, particularly with the Catholics’ decision in the eighteenth century to establish a Uniate Church upon Egyptian soil. Nevertheless, the letter served the CMS as a pretext for intervention, and the Society proceeded to appoint Naudi as the CMS correspondent at Malta.

The Mediterranean mission then inaugurated would, as Naudi had requested, aim at the spiritual revival of the fallen Eastern Churches.⁹ However, there

8. Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

9. 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.

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.¹⁰

William Jowett, a Cambridge graduate and the son of a founding member of the Society, was designated “Literary Representative” of the CMS for the Mediterranean, and dispatched to survey the field. He visited Egypt in 1819, 1820, and 1823. In the blueprint for the Mediterranean mission that Jowett penned, published in 1822 under the title *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean*, the CMS Literary Representative concluded that a presence in Egypt would serve Society 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.¹¹

However, by the mid-1820s, there was a further factor that spoke strongly in favour 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.¹² 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 Muhammad Ali. One such matter was that of relations with Christians. From roughly the mid-1820s through to his death, Muhammad Ali is lauded in travellers’ 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.”¹³ Travellers noted that they could visit the mosques of Cairo and ride horses without harassment.¹⁴ 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.”¹⁵

10. Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, Vol. I (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899), 222–25. 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.

11. William Jowett, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean* (London, 1822), 369.

12. Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, I, 230–31.

13. Andrew Paton, *A History of the Egyptian Revolution*, Vol. II (London: Trubner, 1870), 281.

14. William Arnold Bromfield, *Letters from Egypt and Syria* (London: Private Circulation, 1856), 58; 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), 547.

15. 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: the Association for the Furtherance of Christianity in Egypt, 1883), 35.

Jowett remained in the field intermittently until 1832, residing principally at Malta, the headquarters for CMS efforts in the Mediterranean. However, the Society had dispatched the inaugural mission contingent to reside upon Egyptian soil in 1825. John Lieder, William Krusé, Theodor Muller, and Christian Kugler were representatives of the English Church Missionary Society — but not one among them was English, or had yet received ordination in that Church. 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. 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.¹⁶

Lieder was 27 upon his departure for Egypt on 28 November 1825. A year prior, he had received the orders of the Lutheran Church in Stuttgart. All members of the inaugural contingent had studied arithmetic, geometry, geography, universal history, and Latin at the Basel Seminary. Lieder, although not as “quick” as his peers in academic matters, was noted for his strength in pulpit oratory. The Seminary Inspector had warned the CMS Secretaries in a March letter, “Lieder resolute and persevering; of a reserved rather than an open disposition, and not quite free from an aspiring turn of mind.”¹⁷

Industry, Discipline, and the “Scriptural Order”

Nineteenth-century evangelicals revered the text of the Scriptures, not merely as the product of divine inspiration, but as a distinctly “functional” document. The text of the Scriptures was the quintessential account of the “order” the Lord had imparted to the world. According to the evangelicals, the Lord had set forth in the Scriptures how Christians were to lead their lives in specific, substantive terms. 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 applied.”¹⁸ To work with industry and discipline was to adhere to the plan of the Lord for Creation, to the “scriptural order.” The description of the model missionary William Jowett developed for the CMS Secretaries reveals the importance of such values to the mission enterprise. As Jowett explained in his *Christian Researches*, the missionary was, under ideal circumstances, 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

16. 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.

17. Archives of the Church Missionary Society, University of Birmingham (hereafter CMS Archives), United Kingdom, letter from Theophilus Blumhardt to Josiah Pratt, dated 3 March 1825, reference G/AC 14a/32.

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

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*.¹⁹

Such an interpretation of the Scriptures was rooted, to a great degree, in the missionaries' social origins. To effect the "colonization" of the Coptic mind, Jowett and the Secretaries of the Society needed missionaries who were themselves convinced of the value of industry, discipline, and order, and prepared to transmit such values to the "natives." The principal reservoir of support for the evangelical movement at large was the artisan community, ranging from shoemakers to carpenters — and at the time, most missionaries were drawn from such ranks. The artisans were social climbers, convinced that, through disciplined labour, they could achieve their aspirations. Mission work was attractive to the artisans for, as Stuart Piggin has explained, 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."²⁰ An 1824 letter from the head of the Basel Seminary to CMS headquarters in London confirms that, prior to his admission to the Seminary, the Reverend Lieder had worked as a shoemaker.²¹

The profile of India missionaries Piggin has developed speaks plainly to the evangelical conception of Christianity as industry, discipline, and order: "They were dynamic opportunists, who longed to work with 'efficiency,' to maximize their 'usefulness,' to 'improve' everything they touched, and to make everybody 'respectable.'"²² However, Piggin speaks in general terms of the missionaries of a number of societies. Expanding upon such research, Jon Miller has developed 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.²³ Further, the education seminarists received in Basel was explicitly structured with the aim of instilling industry and discipline. Ambition, creativity, and initiative were consistently discouraged as detrimental to the spirit of subjection the Seminary hierarchy sought to inculcate. In fact, that 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

19. Jowett, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean*, 394. Emphasis in the original.

20. Stuart Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries, 1789–1858: The Social Background, Motives, and Training of British Protestant Missionaries to India* (Sutton Courtenay Press, 1984), 128.

21. CMS Archives, Blumhardt to Pratt, 3 July 1824, G/AC 14a/26.

22. Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries*, 47.

23. Miller, *The Social Control of Religious Zeal*, 41.

many shirts, frocks, and handkerchiefs were acceptable, and of what styles and materials 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.”²⁴

The social profile Piggin and Miller have developed enables one to contextualize the comments Jowett offered in *Christian Researches*, as to the demands of mission. Jowett repeatedly declared that compassion for the heathen was 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.”²⁵ Yet, that action had to remain controlled, and missionaries had to remain conscious of their place: “*Keep thine heart with all diligence* — without which it will soon escape the confines of common sense.”²⁶

Mission Strategy in the Egyptian Context

The “colonization strategy” that Lieder embraced in his mission to the Copts was not merely a function of social origins or education. There existed particular contextual reasons why the colonization strategy was expedient. Egypt was a unique place, and the Coptic Christians were a unique people, not only for evangelicals but for all Britons in the nineteenth century. Egypt was 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 Saviour to escape Herod. Finally, 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.

Nineteenth-century Britons held a profound fascination with the Copts, despite the theological rift of fourteen centuries’ standing between Eastern and Western Christianity. At the Council of Chalcedon, the Coptic Patriarch Dioscorus had suffered excommunication because of his insistence that the human soul of Christ had remained integrated with his divine nature and, hence, that Christ had possessed only one indivisible, divine nature. For Dioscorus, the Chalcedonian reference to the two natures of the second person of the trinity implied imperfect union. Ussama Makdisi has noted that nineteenth-century missionaries to the Middle East aimed to excise the centuries of division from the history of Christianity, and resurrect the wondrous “primitive Church,” faithful to the teachings of the Scriptures.²⁷ Indeed, the 1839 Egypt instalment in the Popular Geographies series reported, “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.”²⁸

24. Miller, *The Social Control of Religious Zeal*, 101.

25. Jowett, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean*, 385–86.

26. Jowett, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean*, 395. Emphasis in the original.

27. Ussama Makdisi, “Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity,” *American Historical Review* 102, (1997): 683.

28. Popular Geographies, *Egypt: A Familiar Description of the Land, People, and Produce* (London: William Smith, 1839), 131–32.

Jowett could not but approach the Copts with a degree of humility, given their legacy. Reverence for the idea of Egypt, for the idea of the Copts that Jowett held, led him to conclude that conversion of the Copts to Anglicanism was not a suitable aim.²⁹ Jowett 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.

Further, virtually all nineteenth-century Western travellers to Egypt, evangelical or not, described a particular interest in the Copts as the lineal descendants of the ancient Egyptians, as the “modern sons of the pharaohs.”³⁰ The travellers were convinced that the Copts 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 labelled. As the lineal descendants of the ancient Egyptians, the Copts had once known “rationality,” “morality,” and “order” — reflected not least in the temples of the ancients, with their orderly lines and angles. Unfortunately, years of persecution had obliterated the legacy of the ancients among the Copts — a legacy Europe had embraced and preserved.

As the evangelicals in particular came to perceive their Coptic “brethren,” despite their grand legacy, as morally “corrupt” — engaged, according to mission reports, in rampant cursing, lying, hypocrisy, and diffidence, to a degree unmatched by Muslims — the urgency of “colonizing” the Church, community, and mind of the Copt only grew. From his arrival in 1825, Lieder devoted himself to educating the Copts as to their legacy, as he perceived that legacy. In a sense, the missionary sought merely to restore to nineteenth-century Copts the “rationality,” “morality,” and “order” he believed their ancestors in the ancient world had pioneered.

The Lancastrian Model

In accordance with the “colonization” strategy, the inaugural CMS mission to Egypt refused to attack the Coptic Church as an institution. According to Lieder, Copts had only to reach to the Scriptures to learn how the Lord had intended them to lead their lives, to structure their community, and to administer their Church. To “facilitate” comprehension of the Scriptures, to aid the Copts in interpreting the text “properly,” CMS missionaries introduced their “brethren” to “modern,” “rational” methods of schooling.

To return to *Colonising Egypt*, Mitchell recounts that Egyptian state administrators of the nineteenth century seized upon monitorial education — the system of mutual instruction — in the effort to control the social behaviour

29. Such reverence was strictly limited to the *idea* of the Copts, for the actual condition of the community excited only loathing within Jowett. Nevertheless, he emphasized the virtues of kindness and humility, fearful that the missionary to Egypt would trample upon Copts’ sensibilities when faced with their evidently “degraded” morals.

30. In the words of Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, 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.”

and economic production of the individual Egyptian. Although perhaps most closely associated with Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker schoolmaster, and his British and Foreign School Society, elements of mutual instruction were developed by Andrew Bell, an Anglican clergyman, of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church.³¹ As the name of the latter organization reveals, the system was intended to “enlighten the lower orders” of English society. The pioneers of the system in England pointed to mutual instruction as a means to expand educational opportunities for the poor, as students were called upon to aid in the instruction of fellow students, thus reducing the resources required for the educational effort.

However, according to *Colonising Egypt*, the Lancastrian system was scarcely an expansion of opportunity at all, but rather an elaborate effort in social control. Mitchell characterizes the Lancaster school as an academic factory, meticulously regulated through the numbered seats upon parallel benches and the numbered boards that surrounded the benches. The school was divided into classes, and each class had a bench and a monitor, in the person of an elder pupil. Students were beckoned to the boards by whistles or bells. After lengthy drills, and under the threat of punishment by the monitor, the classes learned to shift their activities swiftly, moving from board to board according to the sound of the school whistle or bell. Students were to undertake each assigned exercise simultaneously, “with all pupils writing the same word or the same letter, starting the word or letter at the same moment and finishing it at the same moment.”³² Yet, the hallmark of the system was the monitorial dimension, for “there were monitors who promoted students up or down in the order of seating, monitors who inspected the slates, monitors who supplied and sharpened pens, monitors who checked on students who were not in their position, and a monitor-general who checked on the monitors.” As Mitchell notes, there could scarcely have existed a system better suited to the inculcation of the values of industry, discipline, and order in the mind of each individual student:

Students were kept constantly moving from task to task, with every motion and every space disciplined and put to use. Each segment of time was regulated, so that at every moment a student was either receiving instruction, repeating it, supervising, or checking. It was a technique in which the exact position and precise task of each individual at every moment was coordinated, to perform together as a machine. Authority and obedience were diffused, without diminution, throughout the school, implicating every individual in a system of order.³³

31. A. L. Tibawi, *British Interests in Palestine, 1800–1901: A Study of Religious and Educational Enterprise* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 19. Bell’s particular plan was labelled the Madras or National system, and Lancaster’s, the British or Lancastrian system. The former was introduced to Britain through a pamphlet penned by Bell and entitled *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* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1797). A fierce debate subsequently raged as to who had actually inaugurated mutual instruction: Lancaster claimed that he had begun teaching London’s poor according to monitorial principles in 1793.

32. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 70.

33. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 71.

Unfortunately, in crediting the introduction of the system in Egypt to the Egyptian administrators who visited Lancaster schools during missions to England from the 1820s, *Colonising Egypt* entirely neglects the existence of the Lancaster schools erected upon Egyptian soil by the CMS at just that time — schools which were themselves scrutinized and lauded by Egyptian administrators. Equally unfortunate is the implication in Mitchell's argument that the Lancastrian project of disciplining and ordering was a success. Writing the history of institutions of power — schools, hospitals, prisons — must involve a step beyond merely recapitulating the internal logic of such institutions. Gregory Starrett has made that critical step, attempting to write the history of Egyptian schools not from the point of view of the institutions or of the state, but from the point of view of students.³⁴ One cannot simply assume that the blueprints for the networks of power Mitchell describes were consistently acted upon in uniform fashion. Hence the urgency of stepping beyond educational blueprints fashioned in London, to examine just how Lancaster schools were adapted by Lieder for the Cairo context with which he was faced.

Monitoring Coptic Youth

Jowett had forcefully endorsed the introduction of the Lancastrian system into Egypt in his 1822 *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.³⁵ In an 1831 letter to the Lay Secretary of the CMS, Lieder described his vision for the development of a “truly Christian school” in Egypt — one unmistakably influenced by the Lancastrian 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 clothing therefrom. 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.³⁶

By May 1828, fellow CMS missionary William Krusé had established a school for boys in Cairo, administered in line with the Lancastrian system. The next year, Krusé had a sufficient number of students to develop the hierarchy of “classes,” dictated by performance, characteristic of Lancaster schools.³⁷ In November 1833, the most promising students of the boys' school were invited to board at the Krusé household. The aim of the invitation? To ensure that the students remained “under the constant inspection of Mr Krusé, living in the same house, as children of the same family, attending morning

34. Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

35. Jowett, *Christian Researches in the Mediterranean*, 308.

36. CMS Archives, Lieder to Coates, 9 December 1831, C M/O 48/9.

37. CMS Archives, Krusé Report of the Egyptian Mission, 10 June 1836, C M/M 5.

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.”³⁸ However, only by 1837 had the mission received sufficient resources — from travellers, in large part — to hire a European carpenter to erect the arrays of platforms, desks, benches, and boards required for mutual instruction.³⁹

In 1839, Lieder and Krusé offered the CMS Secretaries a detailed account of the boys’ schools administered by the mission. The school for boarders founded in 1833, still under the direction of Krusé six years later, aimed to cultivate potential schoolmasters. The weekly schedule of the school was rigidly divided into 47 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, Krusé supervised the religious instruction himself, to which were accorded four hours for Christian catechism and four hours for sacred history. The boys were, as Krusé had promised in 1833, under constant inspection — particularly that of Mrs Krusé 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 practising English hymns. Krusé 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.”⁴⁰ The day school for boys remained, but under Lieder’s direction. 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 39 lessons in the day school each week.⁴¹ J. Heyworth-Dunne cites the claim of one traveller, that the Lieder school 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 10 years.”⁴²

Why lessons in such fields as “universal history,” geography, and drawing? Why introduce such secular instruction into a mission school, one purportedly aimed at the reform and revival of Eastern Christendom? As Jowett memorably related:

38. CMS Archives, Krusé to Coates, 1 August 1833, C M/O 45/30.

39. CMS Archives, Lieder to Coates, 22 April 1837, C M/O 48/17.

40. Lieder reports a revealing incident to Schlienz, CMS Archives, 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 thoroughly berated and immediately dismissed, for he had corrupted the intellectual purity of the mission.

41. 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.

42. Hamont, cited in J. Heyworth-Dunne, “Education in Egypt and the Copts,” *Bulletin de la Société d’Archéologie Copte* 6 (1940), 101.

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.⁴³

However, the pride of the Cairo mission was the school for girls. The school was established in February 1829 by Mrs Krusé, who had to assume all teaching responsibilities in the institution, given the lack, much lamented by the missionaries, of women schoolteachers in Egypt.⁴⁴ As a result, when Mrs Krusé was quite ill in the summer of 1830, the school 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, Lieder managed to locate a suitable schoolmistress, a widow from among the "natives," and the effort was revived in November 1835.⁴⁵ At just that time, however, Miss Alice Holliday was preparing for the journey to Cairo at the behest of the Ladies' Society for the Promotion of Female Education in the East. Shortly after her arrival in Cairo, Miss Holliday seized control of girls' education in the Cairo mission, and wed the Reverend Lieder. 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.⁴⁶

The structure of instruction differed little from that in the schools for boys. From 1836, the Lancastrian model was embraced, with the school "conducted in 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."⁴⁷ 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. 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."⁴⁸ The next year, the Lieders embraced the Lancastrian hierarchy of "classes" in earnest, with the selection of twenty students, potential teachers, for advanced instruction — notably, from a man.⁴⁹ By March 1845, Lieder could report to the CMS Secretaries that, since the revival of the effort ten years prior, at least three hundred

43. Jowett, 310–11.

44. CMS Archives, Lieder to Schlienz, 21 February 1829, C M/M 3.

45. CMS Archives, Krusé Report of the Egyptian Mission, 10 June 1836, C M/M 5.

46. 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 reports that the pace of instruction in the girls' school far exceeds that in the boys' school.

47. CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 14 March 1845, C M/O 48/121.

48. CMS Archives, Report of the Egypt Mission, 1839, C M/O 45/75b.

49. CMS Archives, Lieder to the Lay Secretary, 12 October 1840, C M/O 48/42.

young women had departed the school with sufficient literacy to grasp the Scriptures.⁵⁰

According to the 1839 mission 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.”⁵¹ Control of the woman was, in the missionaries’ view, a vital means to control the family — and, by extension, to control society at large.⁵²

One Miss Platt, who in fact resided at the home of the Lieders in 1838 and 1839, offers 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?”⁵³

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 travellers’ accounts of the girls’ school emphasized the students’ “graceful and tidy dresses, long white veils, pearly teeth, and plaited tresses.”⁵⁴ As one Briton recounted, “The figures of the elder girls were very graceful, and their dress remarkably becoming.”⁵⁵ The CMS mission had apparently seized a tract of Egyptian soil for evangelical Britain.

“Colonizing” the Coptic Church

By far the boldest educational effort the Cairo mission undertook was a Coptic Institution, developed for the education of Copts intending to enter the priesthood — the Coptic priesthood, not the Anglican. Lieder and his missionary peers viewed the Coptic Church as a conduit through which they could channel their notions of industry, discipline, and order into Egypt at large. Indeed, there existed no better means to “colonize” the Coptic Church

50. CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 14 March 1845, C M/O 48/121.

51. CMS Archives, Report of the Egypt Mission, 1839, C M/O 45/75b.

52. For the perceived importance of the education of the “Eastern woman,” refer to Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 56.

53. Miss Platt, *Journal of a Tour Through Egypt, the Peninsula of Sinai, and the Holy Land in 1838, 1839*, Vol. I (London: Richard Watts, 1842), 235–36.

54. Amelia Cary, *Chow Chow: Selections from a Journal Kept in India, Egypt, and Syria*, Vol. II (London, 1857), 97–98.

55. *Sketches of a Tour in Egypt and Palestine, During the Spring of 1856* (London: J. Nisbet, 1857), 28.

than such a seminary — and there exists no better illustration of the technique of subtle infiltration mounted by the missionaries, with the aim of spreading the evangelical ethos.

A plan was submitted to the Patriarch in February 1840 — but only after three years of debate with the Coptic hierarchy and repeated revisions in the plan could the Institution commence instruction.⁵⁶ The missionaries 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.” Further, if the Institution failed among the Copts, he was willing to accept Muslims therein. Indeed, through such comments, Lieder explicitly revealed that the Institution was aimed not only at spiritual conversion, but at “cultural” conversion. 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.*”⁵⁷

The structure of the Institution, as described in the plan, was in line with the Lancastrian system, and comparable to that of the Krusé 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.*⁵⁸

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 that substantive instruction could begin only in 1845. 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 P.M. to 9 P.M. each evening, he expounded “either a chapter or a portion of it with references to the grammatical meaning of difficult and important passages,

56. CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 14 March 1845, C M/O 48/121.

57. CMS Archives, Lieder Plan for Cairo Seminary, 22 March 1842, C M/M 8. Emphasis in the original.

58. CMS Archives, Lieder Plan for Cairo Seminary, 22 March 1842, C M/M 8.

and have in this way during these two years nearly gone twice through the whole New Testament.”⁵⁹ 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 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.”⁶⁰

The Seeds Sown

The Reverend Lieder’s presence in Cairo, from 1825 through to his death in 1865, was nearly uninterrupted. In fact, by the time of his death, he was perhaps the only Western resident of Cairo who could claim such a tenure. His activities were familiar to virtually all Western consuls and residents, to a great number of state administrators, and to the hierarchy of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

The mission schools were the focus of particular scrutiny in such circles. The publications employed in the schools — among them, Arabic geography and spelling texts produced at the CMS Malta Press — were reproduced by the government press at Bulaq, and incorporated into the syllabus at government educational institutions.⁶¹ 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.⁶² 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 management and gain our experience, when we give him all the aid in our power.”⁶³

The efforts of the Cairo mission were often viewed with suspicion by the Coptic Church hierarchy, but never forbidden. In fact, Lieder argued in his reports that he, with time, developed cordial relations with the most powerful

59. CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 14 March 1845, C M/O 48/121.

60. CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 20 May 1846, C M/O 48/122.

61. Lindsay, Earl of Crawford, *Letters on Egypt, Edom, and the Holy Land*, Vol. I (London: Henry Colburn, 1838), 50; CMS Archives, Lieder and Krusé to the Secretaries, 25 January 1839, C M/O 45/75a, and Lieder to the Secretaries, 20 January 1841, C M/M 8.

62. CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 13 March 1840, C M/O 48/30. In the mid-1830s, Egypt’s ruling Pasha, Muhammad Ali, had committed himself to an unprecedented intervention in the conduct of education, through the development of a network of state primary schools. The project had initially focused upon Girga and Asyut, and involved the distribution of printed texts and uniforms. The curriculum was rigidly planned, and embraced a range of fields. By the 1840s, however, given material pressures, the project collapsed. For a detailed account, refer to Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 27–28.

63. CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 20 January 1841, C M/M 8.

members of that hierarchy. By 1845, the missionary ventured to claim that he enjoyed “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.”⁶⁴ Regardless of whether or not Lieder in fact held that confidence, Patriarch Peter VII was, beyond a doubt, well aware of and interested in the activities of the mission in specific terms. For instance, 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 was that of the inaugural public examination of the schools, held on 12 September 1843. The exam was conducted from 3 P.M. to 6:30 P.M., 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 catechization (a practice unknown among the Copts) on the first 12 verses of the 5th 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.⁶⁵

After partaking of an English dinner, “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.”⁶⁶

Reform and the Coptic Elite

Cyril IV was the successor, in 1854, to Peter VII, the Patriarch who had attended the 1843 mission school examinations. One English historian of the Coptic Church claims that Cyril was, in fact, educated in a CMS mission school.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ Lieder would, no doubt, have flaunted such an “accomplishment” before the CMS headquarters in London. Still, there is conjecture that Cyril may have participated in a mission discussion circle at one point — a claim that is conceivable, if lacking in

64. CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 14 March 1845, C M/O 48/121.

65. CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 14 March 1845, C M/O 48/121.

66. CMS Archives, Lieder to the Secretaries, 14 March 1845, C M/O 48/121.

67. Edith L. Butcher, *The Story of the Church of Egypt*, Vol. II, (London: Smith and Elder, 1897), 396–97.

68. For the Coptic historians, refer to Seikaly, *Coptic Communal Reform*, 248.

substantiation.⁶⁹ 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.

That such a debate has raged among English and Coptic historians speaks to the perceived importance of Cyril, known to Copts as “Abu Islah,” 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.” Indeed, 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.

Upon his accession, Cyril mounted a campaign of “reform” that spoke to all the concerns evangelicals had raised, and employed all the techniques evangelicals had endorsed, in their writings. He ordered a review of the revenues and expenditures of the Church endowments, and the development of a registry of all such endowments. He founded a department of legal affairs within the Patriarchate. 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.⁷⁰ Finally, he defended Copts’ emerging “rights of citizenship,” insisting upon Coptic representation in local government councils, the officer corps of the army, and state schools of medicine and engineering.⁷¹

A number of historians have ventured to claim 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.”⁷² One wonders whether the Reverend Lieder would have had the audacity to utter such words before a crowd of Copts! Efforts to impute to Cyril an evangelical iconoclasm that he may not have possessed prompt one to question the interests that have directed Coptic historians toward particular interpretations of events — the influence of networks of power upon the historiography of the Coptic Church and community.

One could argue that such networks of power have their origins in the schools Cyril founded during his tenure — the principal element in the “reform” programme he enacted, and by far the most influential vehicle for the “colonization” of the Coptic mind. Among the schools, none would have the reputation or the impact of the Madrasat al-Aqbat al-Kubra — known variously as the Great Coptic School and the Coptic Patriarchal College — that

69. Murqus Simaika, “The Awakening of the Coptic Church,” *Contemporary Review* 71, (1897): 736.

70. Iris Habib el-Masri, *Qissat al-Kanisa al-Qibtiyya*, Vol. IV, (Alexandria: Maktabat Kanisat Mari Girgis, 1975), 326–27; Seikaly, *Coptic Communal Reform*, 248–49.

71. Heyworth-Dunne, “Education in Egypt and the Copts,” 104; el-Masri, *Qissat al-Kanisa al-Qibtiyya*, 334.

72. Simaika, “The Awakening of the Coptic Church,” 739n. For a comparable account, refer to Butcher, *The Story of the Church of Egypt*, 328–29. For a challenge to the claim, refer to el-Masri, *Qissat al-Kanisa al-Qibtiyya*, 335–36.

commenced instruction in 1855.⁷³ Apart from thorough grammatical instruction in both Coptic and Arabic, the School offered lessons in Turkish, English, French, Italian, history, arithmetic, geography, and science. The curricula of the School were under the strict supervision of the Patriarch, and he carefully monitored the progress of each class of students.⁷⁴ Cyril had himself supervised the construction of the School, adjacent to the Patriarchal residence. He admitted students of all faiths, and frequently invited foreign travellers and residents to visit the School, to examine his students.⁷⁵

The laymen traditionally associated with the late nineteenth-century movement for reform in the Coptic Church and community were, in striking numbers, educated at the Great Coptic School — one upon which Lieder and his methods had a great impact.⁷⁶ A cursory glance at the 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.⁷⁷

Although the 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. As Heyworth-Dunne recounts, such young men entered into government service under Khedive Ismail, and came to wield great influence, within both the Coptic community and Egypt at large.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ B. L. Carter reveals that the Bishara, Doss, Ebeid, Fanus, Ghali, Hanna, Khayyat, and Wissa families each held in excess of a thousand feddans of land, concentrated largely near Asyut and Minya.⁸⁰

73. Cyril founded six schools in all, four at Cairo, one at Mansura, and one at Bush. Among them, the two girls' schools Cyril founded — both at Cairo — merit particular mention. According to el-Masri, *Qissat al-Kanisa al-Qibtiyya*, 320, they were developed with the aim of cultivating “proper” mothers for Coptic children.

74. Mounir Shoucri, “Cyril IV,” in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 678.

75. Heyworth-Dunne, “Education in Egypt and the Copts,” 103.

76. Among the graduates of the schools Cyril founded were Faltaus Ibrahim Baghdadi, the architect of Egyptian personal status legislation; Mikhail Abd al-Sayyid, the founder of the newspaper *al-Watan*; Mikhail Sharubim and Barsoom Girgis Rufila, judges; and Boutros Ghali, prime minister.

77. CMS Archives, Koelle to Venn, 25 February 1855, C M/M 11.

78. Heyworth-Dunne, “Education in Egypt and the Copts,” 103.

79. Gabriel Baer, *A History of Landownership in Modern Egypt, 1800–1950* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 64.

80. B. L. Carter, *The Copts in Egyptian Politics, 1918–52* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 210. The feddan amounts to 0.42 hectares or 1.04 acres.

Such Coptic landowners embraced the “educational process” that the evangelicals had introduced into Egypt and that Cyril had perpetuated through the Great Coptic School. Elite Copts aimed, through schools they developed in the mid- to late- nineteenth century, to cultivate the values they had learned under the tutelage of Abu Islah — industry, discipline, and order — within Coptic youth. Yet, there was a distinctly practical dimension to the endorsement of such values. As they enlarged their estates, landowners were confronted with the problem of landless rural labourers, principally from Upper Egypt — a potential source of “disorder.”⁸¹ Elite Egyptians, both Copts and Muslims, aimed through education to render impoverished coreligionists industrious and disciplined labourers. Mitchell recounts at length the efforts landowners undertook to “reform” schooling, commencing with the decision of Ismail and his “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.⁸²

In his *Putting Islam to Work*, Gregory Starrett expands the account to embrace concerns the British occupation authorities held about Egyptian agricultural productivity from their arrival in 1882. Among such concerns were the extent of Egyptian indebtedness to European creditors, emerging threats to the power of landowning collaborators with the British, and the potentially disastrous consequences of interruptions in the supply of cotton to British textile manufacturers.⁸³ The British authorities were convinced that the inculcation of such values as industry and discipline within landless labourers 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.”⁸⁴ Ultimately, by “modern” means of education, the British and their landowning collaborators could convince landless rural labourers of the legitimacy of the existing class system, and of their “proper” place within that system.⁸⁵

Reconceptualizing Christian Mission to the Middle East

The Reverend Lieder is reckoned a failure by most historians of mission, not least among them, historians commissioned by the CMS through the years to write the “official” Society account. According to Jocelyn Murray, author of *Proclaim the Good News: A Short History of the Church Missionary Society*, Egypt was one of six inaugural mission fields in which “hopes rose, but were soon dashed by opposition from within or without. Few traces now remain

81. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 96. For how that class emerged, refer to Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 43.

82. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 75–78.

83. Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 30.

84. Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 45.

85. Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 53–54.

of the work then begun.”⁸⁶ There is little question that the Reverend fell well short of realising the objective of his mission, as envisioned by the pioneer of CMS activities in the Mediterranean, William Jowett — that is, the conversion of the Muslims of Egypt to Christianity, with the aid of an “enlightened” Coptic Church and community.

However, despite his failure to elicit verbal professions of Anglicanism from the Copts among whom he proselytized, the Reverend was, in fact, a success, in a particular, limited sense — that is, as a vehicle for particular notions of modernity into Egypt, one unacknowledged in *Colonising Egypt* or subsequent research. From his 1825 arrival in Egypt through to his death four decades later, Lieder remained steadfast in his belief that one could capture the soul of the individual only by capturing the mind of that individual. At the root of the world view to which Lieder and his peers clung was the “evangelical ethos” of industry, discipline, and order. They devoted themselves to the spread of that “cultural trinity,” convinced that their fidelity as individuals to such distinctly “modern” values had permitted their rise through the social ranks at home. The mission seized, in particular, upon the monitorial system of education, to accustom the Copt to the industry and discipline that were, according to the evangelicals, the hallmarks of the Scriptural order.

The methods of “colonizing” the Copt that Lieder pioneered ultimately served both Coptic landowners and state administrators as means by which to render networks of power imperceptible to the “colonized” — to legitimize cruelty and inequality on a vast scale, through a range of “rational” institutions. Although Lieder was scarcely the only advocate of industry, discipline, and order in nineteenth-century Egypt, he was a pioneer in the “colonization” effort, particularly as far as the Coptic community was concerned. In this light, the relevant question facing students of Christian mission in the Middle East seems not so much that of Lieder’s success as a missionary, but rather, his success as a pioneer purveyor of modern technologies of power.

86. Jocelyn Murray, *Proclaim the Good News: A Short History of the Church Missionary Society* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), 32–33.