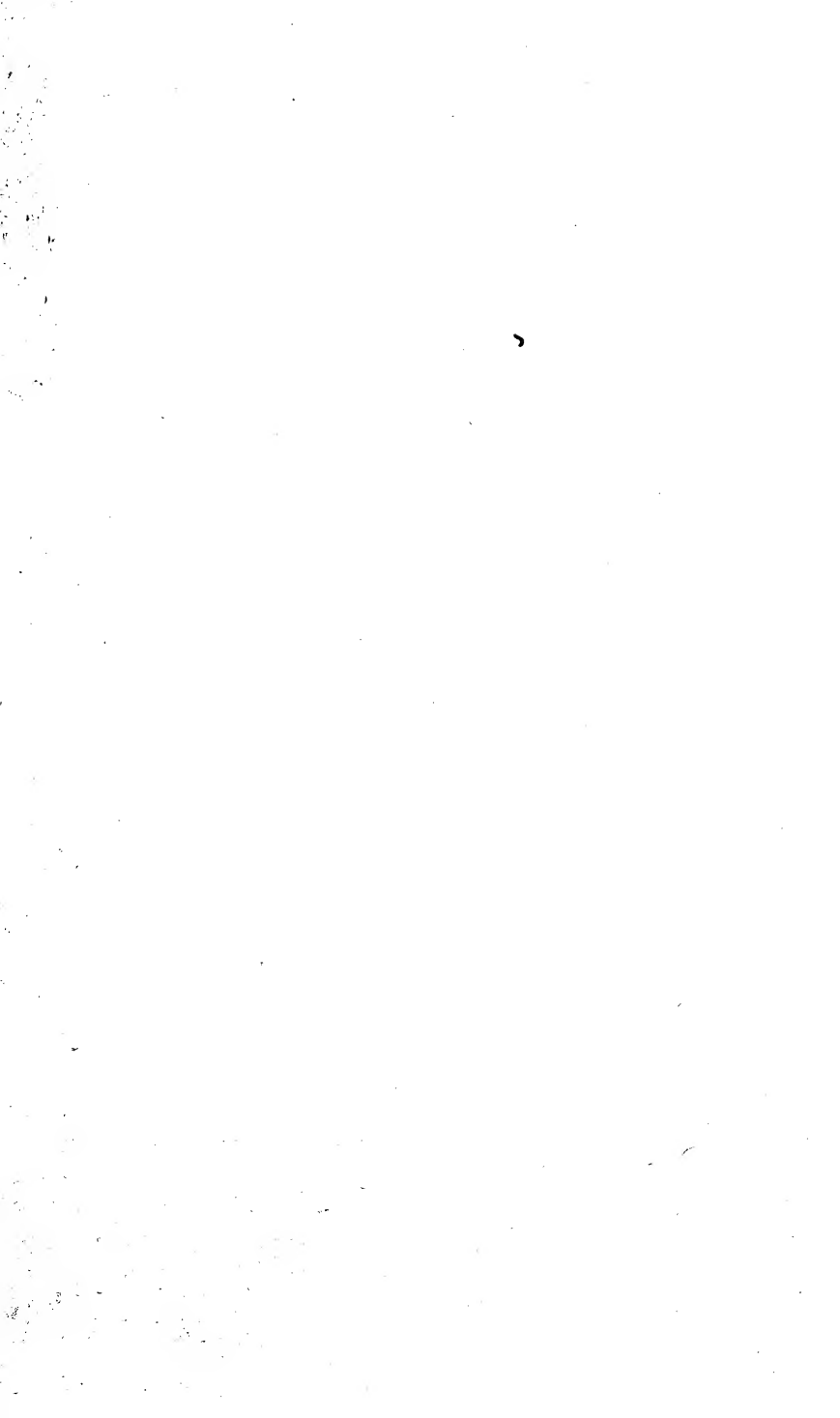






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24

The Ancient Church in Egypt

THE SUBSTANCE

OF A

PAPER READ ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 1883

AT THE

VICTORIA HALL, NORWICH

BY THE REV.

W. DENTON, M.A.

VICAR OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW, CRIPPLEGATE, LONDON

*PUBLISHED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DESIRE OF THE ASSOCIATION
FOR THE FURTHERANCE OF CHRISTIANITY IN EGYPT*

RIVINGTONS

WATERLOO PLACE, LONDON

MDCCCLXXXIII

*STATE OF THE ANCIENT
CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN EGYPT.*

RECENT events have led to the occupation of Egypt by English troops. This occupation will be more or less of a permanent character, or at least will bring us into more intimate relations with the people of Egypt than hitherto. I need not speak of the causes of that occupation, they are fresh in your memories. I confine myself to the state of the Christian Church and the condition of the Christian people of that country, and to the responsibilities we have incurred towards a large part of its population, the Coptic or native inhabitants of Egypt. I do not mean that our responsibilities end with the Christian people; they extend to all within our influence, Copts or Moslems, but I speak now only of the former, the members of the Christian Church in that country.

As to the origin of this name Copt, there are at least two opinions, both supported by authorities who have a claim to be heard. Some derive it from a partial corruption of the Greek name for Egypt, *αἴγυπτος*, Kepti, Gipti, as pronounced by the Copts of the present day; others, however, derive it from Coptos, a city of that name in Upper Egypt, once a place of great size and of political as well as of commercial importance, though now small and of little consideration.¹ To this city in early days the Christian people fled for refuge during the several persecutions, with which they were visited by the local governors or by the imperial authorities at Rome. This was especially the case during the persecution in the second year of the reign of Diocletian, A.D. 284. This persecution made so deep an im-

¹ Lane's *Modern Egyptians*.

pression upon the memories of the Christians, that it is still used as the point from whence to reckon time. The era of the martyrs is the date from which time is measured by the Copts, and thus the present year of grace, 1883, according to our reckoning, is, in the Coptic Church, 1599 of the era of the martyrs.¹

The Coptic or native Church of Egypt owes its existence, according to ecclesiastical tradition, to the preaching of St. Mark, the disciple and interpreter of St. Peter,² who proclaimed the Gospel in Alexandria, at that time the second city in the Roman Empire, but the chief in commercial greatness. This city at the Incarnation of our Lord was very populous, consisting of Jews, large in numbers and of commanding influence; Macedonians, descended from the settlers planted there by Alexander the Great; and a considerable body of natives as well as strangers from Syria, Lybia, and Cilicia. Hither also flocked Nubians, Ethiopians, Arabs, and even Bactrians, Scythians, Persians, and Hindoos, attracted by the commerce which centred in this Babel of the nations. The exports of corn from the fertile valley of the Nile, and its bazaars of silks, spices, and the products of India in general, brought together traders and merchants, money changers and usurers "And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea."³

It was here, or in an island off Alexandria, probably Pharos, that the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Old Testament, was made, partly for the use of the Jews, who had lost their own language, and spoke Greek, and partly to satisfy the curiosity of the heathen as to the religion and history of the Jews. The translation was made mostly in the third century before the birth of Christ, and was one of the preparations, though those who made the translation had no such intention, by which the ways were made straight for the coming of Christ to the hearts of the Greeks and others outside the pale of the chosen nation. At the beginning of the Christian era the Jews in Egypt were reckoned at one million—a busy, thriving, learned, but withal a turbulent people, objects of jealousy to the rest of the inhabitants, and a constant anxiety to the powers at Rome, which alternately

¹ The Coptic year commences in September of our calendar.

² St. Jerome.

³ Rev. xviii. 17.

petted and plundered them. History tells us of large massacres of these people; and, though ancient figures are rarely to be relied on, yet when we read of fifty thousand being put to the sword at one time, we may at any rate conclude that their numbers were great.

Jews of Alexandria are mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as "disputing with Stephen," the first martyr.¹ Apollos was a native of this city,² and you will remember that it was in a corn vessel of Alexandria St. Paul took his passage to Rome,³ and that when this vessel was wrecked at Malta, he was transferred to another ship from the same city, "which had wintered in the isle."⁴ Among the Jews of Alexandria were large numbers of Therapeutæ, Ascetics, mostly Pharisees. These resembled, in their way of living and in their religious observances, the Essenes of Palestine; indeed the chief distinction between the Essenes and the Therapeutæ of Egypt was this, the first were Hebrews who preserved the language of Palestine, and the latter were Greek-speaking Jews. Both were earnest, self-denying, and, it must be added, fanatical.⁵ Alexandria, again, was a city of large libraries, the home of philosophical and theological speculators, distinguished for their daring and subtle theories. Here dwelt Philo the Jew, whose writings have descended to us, though we know little of his personal history. We know, however, that he was a contemporary of Josephus, lived, that is, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. Here, somewhat later, were born the philosophical theories, half Christian, half Gnostic, which are known by the name of Neo-Platonism. It was in this intellectual hot-bed that the Alexandrian Church was planted, and the various phases and various stages of the civilization which prevailed there, its turbulence, its asceticism, and its lofty but daring, unchastened speculations are reflected in the philosophizing of Clemens of Alexandria, in the allegorizing of Origen, in the lives of the hermits of St. Anthony and of the Nitrean deserts, and also in the turbulence which hovered around the patriarchs Dionysius, St.

¹ Acts vi. 9.

² Acts xviii. 24.

³ Acts xxvii. 6, 38.

⁴ Acts xxviii. 11.

⁵ Jahn's *Archæolog. Bib.* § 322; Philo, *De Contemplatione*; Tillemont, *Memoires pour servir à l'hist. Eccles.*, thinks that the Therapeutæ were Christian converts. Be this as it may, many of them were probably included among, and popularly confounded with, the Therapeutæ.

Cyril, St. Athanasius, and Dioscorus, men of widely different schools, but all reared in the atmosphere of Alexandria. When I name these few among the great ones who adorned the schools, or were seated on the patriarchal throne of this city, it is clear that I must be content with thus naming them. To dwell even for a moment, on the philosophers and divines, the orators and saints, connected with the early Church of Alexandria, would take up a much longer lecture than I contemplate, or than your patience, great though it may be, would endure.

I proceed very briefly to sketch the history of the Church in Egypt. From the founder, St. Mark (martyred in this city on April 25th, A.D. 68),¹ till Dioscorus, we have a succession of twenty-three patriarchs, the most distinguished of whom were Dionysius in A.D. 247; Alexander, who was present at the Council of Nice, and died in 325; St. Athanasius, who attended Alexander as his deacon, or, as we should now say, his archdeacon, at that Council, and succeeded him as patriarch of Alexandria; and St. Cyril, who held this See from 412 to 446, when he was succeeded by Dioscorus. During this time Alexandria was a part of the undivided Church, and its history is included in general ecclesiastical history.² Its annals, however, are marked by greater turbulence and by keener contests, though by the same controversies as those which arose in other parts of the Church in the East. In some of these controversies the untamed spirit of the East and the unbridled fervour of African zeal were painfully evident. Athanasius fled for his life, and but for this would have been murdered by the mob, which favoured Arius. Hypatia, the female professor and lecturer, who defended the cause of dying paganism in Alexandria, was torn in pieces by the brutal mob, with whom at that moment St. Cyril happened to be the favourite. These mobs made use of the names at one time of Arius, at another of Cyril, to stimulate their own evil passions; but we have no right to charge their crimes and violence on either the heresiarch Arius or the great theologian St. Cyril.

Before I speak of the heresies with which the names of Arius,

¹ Tillemont, *Mem. pour servir à l'hist. Eccles.*, tom. ii.; *The Conflicts of the Holy Apostles*, ch. xv., translated from the Ethiopic MS. by Rev. S. C. Malan.

² See in Fleury's *Hist. Eccles.*, in index.

of Nestorius, and of Eutyches are associated, I would ask you to note a distinction between the religious controversies which disturbed the peace at different times of the Eastern and Western portions of the Church. The subtle genius of the East loved to indulge in flights of lofty speculation, and the being of God, the nature of God, the mystery of the Trinity, and the union of the divine and human nature in the One Person of our Blessed Lord were the fields in which its controversialists roamed. Hence the proud boast of the East is the orthodoxy of the doctrine it holds. It is the orthodox Church. The more practical, legal, and orderly mind of the West was seen in the kind of controversies that sprang up there; the predestination of man by God, the mode in which His grace operated on the hearts of man, the effects of the redemption of Christ on the world, the validity of this or that mode of baptism, the presence of our Lord in the sacrament of the altar, the order, jurisdiction, and government of the Church of Christ. It has been careful of apostolical order. This on the whole, with but seeming and partial exceptions, has been the course of the controversies in the East and in the West. In this paper, when I speak of the East, I confine myself to the patriarchate of Alexandria.

The first important controversy which disturbed the peace of the Church arose in this city. Arius, the father of Arianism, was born in Libya in 256, and was ordained priest by Achillas, the patriarch of Alexandria. He was the very popular parish priest of the oldest church in that city, situated in the heart of the commercial part of Alexandria. "He denied the eternity and essential divinity of Christ; but held that Christ was truly God, though but a secondary God of a different substance, created by the Father before the world, by a free act, and out of nothing, and that he created the world and became incarnate from the Virgin Mary."¹ He was condemned and excommunicated by a provincial synod of one hundred Egyptian and Libyan bishops at Alexandria in 321, and by the Œcumenical Council of Nice in 325. In 336, when on the eve of being restored to the communion of the Church, by the order of the emperor, he died. It would lead me too far from the main purpose of this paper were I to speak in detail of his controversy with St. Athanasius

¹ *Dictionary of Christian Biography.*

the patriarch, who succeeded Alexander on the throne of the patriarchate. About a hundred years after Arius, and when the strife and din of controversy respecting his tenets had died away, the Church of Egypt was disturbed by the teaching of Nestorius, from whom sprang the sect of the Nestorians. The teacher and his teaching were condemned by the General and Œcumenical Councils of Ephesus in 431, and of Chalcedon in 451. This controversy was of a more subtile kind than that stirred up by Arius. Nestorius, who was patriarch of Constantinople, rejected the term *θεοτόκος*, as applied to the Blessed Virgin, and maintained that she ought rather to be styled *χριστοτόκος*. Not she who bore God, but she who bore Christ, who bore, that is, the human nature of Incarnate God, and therefore was mother of Christ. To this St. Cyril, the great patriarch of Alexandria, replied, that since Christ was God, the Blessed Virgin was rightly called *θεοτόκος*.¹ The heresy and schism into which at last the followers of Nestorius fell were probably due to the vehemence of controversy, rather than to any deliberate design of the teacher. Both the sect and the doctrine, the sect more however than the doctrine, exists at the present day. It was once very numerous and very powerful, and its missions extended throughout Asia, and by their means Christianity was introduced into China.² This heresy has a close relationship to the heresy which, at least in name, exists in Egypt now, and which separated the Coptic Church from the orthodox Church of the East, as represented at Constantinople, and also from the West, the Church of Italy and Rome. Eutyches, a presbyter and archimandrite of Constantinople, had ranged himself on the side of a much greater theologian, St. Cyril, the learned and zealous patriarch of Alexandria, and in reply to Nestorius had asserted that the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ Jesus was so intimate, that these two became one nature, and as the divine was the superior, he was driven into maintaining that the human was swallowed up in the divine.³ St. Cyril was now dead, and his successor, Dioscorus, took up and

¹ See *Library of the Fathers*. St. Cyril's tracts against Nestorius and on the Incarnation.

² Dr. Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*.

³ On the use and meaning of *μία φύσις*, in the writings of St. Cyril, see *Tracts Theological and Ecclesiastical*, by J. H. Newman, D.D., 283-336.

supported Eutyches, but so far modified the doctrine which he maintained as to the person of Christ, that he taught that in the Incarnation of the Word, the true nature of God and man were so intimately united as to be mixed or blended, and that as a result there was one nature humano-divine. This was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon, 451, and as the Egyptian Church accepted the teaching of its patriarch Dioscorus, it separated itself from the great body of the Church and became in doctrine Monophysite, that is, a believer in one only nature.¹

It is in opposition to this doctrine that we declare, in the words of the Athanasian Creed, our belief that Christ is "One altogether; not by confusion of substance: but by unity of Person," and that "as the reasonable soul and flesh," remaining soul and flesh though closely united, "is one man, so God and Man," not mingled, not confused, "is one Christ."

The adherents of Dioscorus accused the Council of haste and unfairness. The Council thought Dioscorus obstinate and rebellious, and even immoral. As, however, the people among whom the patriarch lived and who knew him best enthusiastically supported him, it is not likely that this part of the charges against him was well founded. Of such accusations made at such a time, it will be well to bear in mind the caution of the poet:—

"Times of faction times of slander be."²

The results of the unhappy controversy were the excommunication of Dioscorus and his banishment to Gangra, the schism in the Church, which has never been healed, and the hardening of a theological statement into heresy, under which the Church in Egypt has dwindled to its present feeble state.

I will not weary you with the painful details of the ecclesiastical history of Egypt immediately after its separation from the orthodox Church of the East, as represented at Constantinople; internal divisions, mob-dictation and mob-rule, orthodox patriarchs, sometimes intruded by the authority and military power of the emperor, but unable to secure a succession of orthodox bishops to their throne, themselves scorned and often

¹ See third volume of the English translation of Bishop Hefele's *History of the Church Councils*.

² Daniel's *History of the Civil War*, Book i., chap. 61.

ill-treated by the Monophysite mob ; then the Monophysite patriarchs exiled and sometimes murdered. Everywhere confusion and strife, and every evil work. Christianity in every form, orthodox or heretical, suffered, as was to be expected, and the Monophysite party seemed hastening to extinction, when it was revived by the zeal and genius of James or Jacob Baradaeus, Bishop of Edessa in 541. He did so much to revive the Monophysite bodies in Egypt and elsewhere, that he came to be looked on as almost the founder of the sect, who from his name began to be called Jacobites, a name commonly applied to them at present, whilst the orthodox were known as Melchites, or royalists, from the Syriac or Hebrew מֶלֶךְ, a king, because they held the same faith as the emperor. This state of things lasted from the death of Dioscorus, in 454, to the capture of Alexandria by Amru, the lieutenant of the Caliph Omar, in 641, and to the supremacy of the new Mahommedan power. As in other parts of Christendom, the Christian schismatics of Egypt on this occasion preferred submission to the army of the Caliph rather than to resistance by the side of their fellow, but separated, Christians. Hence "the Copts of Egypt held out the hand of fellowship to the Mahommedan and Monophysite patriarchs, and Monophysite creeds received the support and protection of the Crescent."¹ Let it be remembered, however, that when the Copts did so they knew nothing of the stern, relentless yoke to which they bowed. They submitted under conditions which were seldom observed, or were only observed so long as their quiet submission was necessary to the new invaders. They submitted to Arab not to Turkish masters.

One important event followed on the capture of Alexandria. Though it always remained the commercial capital of Egypt, it ceased to be the seat of government. Amru, by directions of the Caliph Omar, withdrew the bulk of his troops from Alexandria and pitched the head-quarters of his army near Memphis, the ancient city of the Pharaohs. Around his forces grew a military station, called, from its origin, Fostât "the Encampment." It expanded rapidly into the capital of Egypt, and is known as old Cairo. The modern Cairo or "city of victory," as

¹ *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, etc., Art. "Coptic Church," by Mr. J. M. Fuller.

it is known to the world without, is about two miles from the older city. Though Cairo is the modern name, the inhabitants cling to the original name Fostât. Here Amru laid the foundation of a great mosque, which still bears his name.¹ After a while the patriarch, whose throne was at Alexandria, from which city he derived his title, removed to Cairo, and the city has been, as it is now, the seat of the patriarch and the centre of church life and administration in Egypt, although the patriarchate is still called that of Alexandria.

The patriarchs who have ruled over the Egyptian or Coptic Church since the country passed under the rule first of the Arabs and then of the Turks, were many of them men who have deserved and have earned a place in history—Men in earnest for the spiritual improvement of the Church and the authors of canons “held in esteem to the present day.” By their labours, moderation and prudence, the schisms which distracted the Coptic Church were healed. Of course there are exceptions in the long list of the patriarchs who have presided over this church. There have been avaricious and unlearned men, time-servers, and men careful more to increase their own power than to feed the flock. But alas! of what branch of the Church Catholic may not the same be said. Their Turkish masters soon found out that the most convenient way to squeeze money out of the Copts was to compel the patriarchs to be their agents in this respect, and as the local Mussulman governors were practically irresponsible of the Caliphs at a distance, they robbed and ill-treated the patriarchs and bishops much as they did the humbler members of their flocks.

An incident in the life of one of the patriarchs, Chail the Third, who succeeded to the patriarchial throne in A.D. 881, will give some idea of the treatment to which the Christian bishops were exposed, and at the same time account for some of the evils which have grown up in the Coptic Church. Chail had, with the concurrence of a synod of bishops, deposed the bishop of Saca, who, enraged at this, proceeded to Cairo, and knowing that the Mussulman governor was preparing an expedition to Syria but wanted money, informed him that the plate of the churches, the

¹ Sir William Muir's *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, p. 243, 244.

vestments rich with embroidery, and the works of art preserved in the churches under the keeping of the patriarch, would yield a considerable sum and supply the needs of the Mahomedan troops. The patriarch was summoned and bidden to surrender these treasures. In vain he denied the existence of these imaginary treasures. He was imprisoned, and only released after he had been confined for a twelvemonth, and was bidden to raise twenty thousand pieces of gold, one-half to be paid in a month, the remainder at the end of four months. No means of obtaining the sum required was forthcoming, when it was suggested to the patriarch how he might avoid the punishment for non-compliance with this command. Ten bishoprics were vacant, and if they were sold, half the money would be forthcoming. The patriarch yielded, the sees were sold, and half of the money demanded was given to the governor. The remaining half the patriarch obtained by the sale of the lands of the Church at Alexandria. He never recovered the character he had lost by his compliance with the threats of the governor; and, though he lived until A.D. 899, Chail was never able to undo the effects of the degradation he had brought upon his Church and office. He is said to have begun the official practice of simony, and his successors have continued it.¹

But I must not linger over the history of the Coptic Church. After A.D. 1200 its annals are scanty and perplexed. From time to time, yielding to the blandishments or threats of the Arabian or Turkish authorities, many of the Copts apostatized from Christianity and became Moslems, earning by so doing the detestation of their co-religionists and the contempt of the Mussulmans their masters. "These infidels," said one of the latter, "have adopted El-Islam through the sword and by force, but no sooner have they become free by their change than they have denied the truth. They have embraced El-Islam for mere love of gain and for quiet. It is true that they are no longer slaves but still they are not Mussulmans."²

The Coptic language, as it is spoken and written at the present day, is the modern form of the ancient demotic or

¹ See Neale's *History of the Church of Alexandria*, and Mr. Fuller's Art. on "Coptic Church" in *Dictionary of Christian Biography*.

² Art. on "Coptic Church" in *Dictionary of Christian Biography*.

vernacular speech of Egypt, but with a totally new alphabet adapted to the ancient language about the same time that the knowledge of Christianity was revealed to the Egyptians. The old demotic speech was represented in part by alphabetical signs, in part by syllabic signs taken from the hieroglyphics. The new Egyptian or Coptic alphabet contains thirty letters, of which twenty-four are adapted from the Greek alphabet, whilst the remaining six are borrowed from Egyptian forms.¹ Into this language the Holy Scriptures were early translated. As Egypt was of old divided into various provinces or kingdoms under distinct and contemporary rulers, the language spoken in these provinces or kingdoms differed or at least constituted separate dialects. In these dialects we have three versions of the Scriptures in whole or in part. One of these represents the speech of Upper Egypt, the second that of Lower Egypt, the third, of less account, is supposed to have been prepared for people living on the frontiers of these two provinces.² The version in the language of Upper Egypt is known as the Sahidic or Thebaic version, the version for the use of the people of Lower Egypt is known as the Memphitic or Bahiric. This, which was the language with which visitors and traders from Europe were best acquainted, is like the Attic dialect of Greece, the literary and most cultivated of the Egyptian dialects. Into both the Memphitic and Sahidic dialects the New Testament was translated, and part if not the whole of the Old Testament in the earlier half of the second century, so that in the Memphitic version, which has come down to us complete and which is the only version now in use, we have a version far older than any existing Greek manuscripts, and proportionately more useful for all critical purposes. Of the Sahidic we have large fragments, though not the complete version. Of the Bahmuric, made it is thought for the use of Christians who spoke neither the Thebaic nor Memphitic dialects, we have only fragments. In 1829 the British and Foreign Bible Society published an edition of the four Gospels in Memphitic and Arabic, in 4to, for the use of the

¹ For the steps taken by the Greek emperors to compel the adoption of the alphabet, and of the Arab conquerors afterwards to substitute Arabic for Coptic, see *Description de l'Arabic*, par Carsten Niebuhr, tom. iii. pp. 75-80.

² Dr. Davidson, in Kitto's *Cyclopædia*.

native Christians of Egypt, and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge published, in 1848-52, a magnificent edition of the New Testament in Memphitic and Arabic, in two folio volumes, for use in the services of the Coptic churches.¹

The mention of Coptic versions of the Holy Scriptures leads naturally to the mention of the liturgies of the Egyptian or Coptic Church. There are still three liturgies—by liturgy I mean the office for the Holy Communion, the central office of the Christian Church. These liturgies existed in the Coptic Church and were used before the Mussulman invasion of Egypt. One, ascribed to St. Basil, and used on all fast days of the Church; one to Gregory Nazianzen or Theologus, appropriated to the festivals of the Church, and one bearing the name of St. Cyril, the great patriarch of Alexandria immediately before the separation of the Copts from the orthodox Church, is reserved for Lent and for use during the month Cohiac, the month of the Egyptian year extending from November 26th to the 26th of December according to our reckoning.²

These offices were, most probably, originally written in Greek for the Greek-speaking Christians of Alexandria. In Upper Egypt, however, Coptic liturgies must have been in use from the first, for the hermits or monks of St Anthony had little knowledge of Greek. In these liturgies, we have probably the primitive rite of the Church of Alexandria. The liturgy of Cyril was but “the liturgy of St. Mark, which Cyril perfected.”³ This was the liturgy which St. Athanasius received from his predecessors and made use of. We are thus carried back almost to Apostolic times. We need not suppose that the Evangelist himself drew up this liturgy, though it is possible that he did. It was the liturgy used in St. Mark’s Church at Alexandria, and this may have obtained for it the name it still bears, for though the Coptic Church calls it by the name of the reviser, and speaks of it as St. Cyril’s liturgy, yet the remnant of the orthodox Church entitled it the Liturgy of St. Mark. In his *Origines Liturgicæ*, Sir William Palmer, however, tells us that “there is nothing unreasonable in supposing that the main

¹ Bishop Lightfoot, in *Scrivener’s Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*.

² Bond’s *Handy Book for verifying Dates*.

³ Palmer’s *Origines*, vol. i. p. 85.

order and substance of the Alexandrine Liturgy, as used in the fifth century, may have been as old as the Apostolic age, and derived originally from the instructions and appointment of the blessed Evangelist Mark.”¹ In 1870, “the Eastern Church Association” printed a translation of a Coptic manuscript of the thirteenth century, in the library of Lord Balcarres, which contains the liturgies of St. Basil, St. Gregory, and St. Cyril, as used in this Church.² These differ somewhat in their arrangement from our own and from other Western liturgies, but they are, in all essential points, one with our own—full of the spirit of devotion, rich in scriptural truths, and warm with holy thoughts and spiritual aspirations.³ By means of their liturgical books, the Copts have preserved some knowledge of their vernacular language. This, however, is but slight. It is still indeed the custom in their churches to read the lessons from Holy Scripture in Coptic, but this is immediately followed by the reading of them in Arabic, the only language known by all Copts.⁴ Sometimes only a few verses are read in Coptic, the whole lessons being read in Arabic.

The jurisdiction and authority of the Patriarch of Alexandria is owned by about 150,000 Coptic Christians of Egypt. Formerly there were many churches in Nubia, but the Christian life of the country has been extinguished by Mussulman persecutions and by the temptations held out by them to apostatize from the faith of Christ. Abyssinia, however, that is the Ethiopian Church lying south of Nubia, still acknowledges the supremacy of the Egyptian patriarch, who, on each vacancy of the office, selects the Abuna or Primate of the country, who is appointed by him to the bishopric of Auxume. The fact that Ethiopia is separated from Egypt by the intervening province of Nubia, has led to the preservation of many peculiar rites which reflect the history of the introduction of Christianity into that country. It is the fond belief of the Abyssinian Christians that the country was led to adopt Judaism by the influence of the Queen of Sheba, who visited the courts of Solomon, and returned full of admiration for his wisdom and power.⁵ Afterwards, the knowledge of Chris-

¹ Palmer's *Origines*, vol. i. p. 105.

² The translation was made by the Rev. J. M. Rodwell.

³ See in Appendix.

⁴ Lane's *Modern Egyptians*.

⁵ 2 Chron. ix. 1-12.

tianity was thought to have been imparted by that chamberlain of Queen Candace, whom Philip the Evangelist found seated in his chariot, reading the book of the Prophet Isaiah, in his journey from Jerusalem, and whom he baptized.¹ By this means some gleams of Christianity may have penetrated to Ethiopia.² The conversion of the country, however, did not take place until the fourth century, when two Christian youths, preserved by the fierce natives from the massacre of their companions who had been wrecked or captured on the coast, were brought up at the court, rose to offices of trust, and became at length the apostles of the nation. Frumentius, the elder of these youths, having remained in Ethiopia after the departure of his brother Aedesius, was ordained priest, and afterwards consecrated Bishop of Auxume, by St. Athanasius, and became the first primate or Abuna of the Ethiopic Church.³ To the conversion of the Ethiopians to Judaism, and from Judaism to Christianity, is due the blending of Jewish with Christian rites in the Church of Abyssinia. Indeed, we may go beyond this. Let us remember that out of the Temple at Jerusalem, hallowed by the footsteps and the teaching of the Saviour, rose the Church of Christ; and out of the worship of the synagogue, which the Apostles never abandoned, grew, if I may use that term, the worship of the Church. This is impressed upon the traveller, who, for the first time in his life, sets foot within one of the venerable churches of the East. More than twenty years ago, a traveller in the East says, "The whole ceremonial appeared to me essentially Jewish. Let it not be supposed that I use this word disparagingly. The linking together of type and antitype, of promise and fulfilment, invests the services of the orthodox Church with peculiar solemnity. It is as though the unvarying East had retained so much of the services of the elder Church as could be made applicable to Christian worship, and had thus restored to them their full and spiritual meaning. As I stood in the Cathedral of Belgrade, with the myriad lights blazing around, and listened to the full choir chanting antiphonally, whilst the people answered in responsive chorus, using the self-same

¹ Acts viii. 26-39.

² Harris's *Highlands of Ethiopia*, vol. iii. chap. i.

³ Renandot, *Hist. Patriarcharum Alexand. Jacobitarum*, p. 337; Wansleb's *History of the Coptic Church*; Fleury, *Hist. Eccles.*, tom. xi. § 38.

music still heard in the Jewish synagogue, and whilst, with the voices of the people, clouds of incense, symbolizing 'the prayers of the saints,' rose within and without the door of the sanctuary, with its veil of scarlet covering the way to the Holy of Holies, I seemed to be standing in that older Temple at Jerusalem and listening to the music which, at least from the time of David, has been the sacred heritage of God's Church. This illusion was completed when I saw the tall form of the priests, clothed in flowing Oriental garments, full bearded, and with heads as guiltless of the razor as the Nazarites of old. And if the sound of the Gospel, and the Name of the Redeemer, and the sight of the cross borne aloft reminded me that I was in a Christian temple, it recalled, at the same time, the fact that Christianity is the fulfilment, not the destruction, of the old law, and that the new temple of the Church is but the old temple of Moses and of the prophets made more glorious, 'by reason of the glory that excelleth.'"¹ Of the Abyssinian or Ethiopian Church a recent writer, a nonconformist, has thus written: "Considering the fact that Abyssinia has been broken to pieces by great outlying powers of the world, weakened by heretical doctrine, assailed by the sword of Islam and the hammer of Rome, it is remarkable that she has preserved as much of truth and lofty ideal as she may unquestionably claim."² Surely the Church of which this may be said will yet rise from the dust, and be as in the days of old."

The ecclesiastics in the Coptic Church form seven classes—monks, readers, subdeacons, deacons, presided over by an archdeacon; priests, presided over by an archpriest; bishops and patriarchs. The three orders of the ministry are, as in all other parts of the Church, given by the laying on of hands. Orders below that of the deacons, however, are not conferred by laying on of hands, but by touching the temples of the person called to be a monk, reader, or subdeacon. The patriarch consecrates all bishops. The patriarch is chosen from the monks of the monastery of St. Anthony, or according to another statement, from the four chief monasteries. If the election is not unanimous, the selection is by lot. In addition to the Abuna, Aboon,³ or

¹ *Servia and the Servians*, 76, 77.

² Mr. H. R. Reynolds in *Dictionary of Christian Biography*.

³ "Father."

Metropolitan of Abyssinia, there are twelve bishops. These are chosen from the monks, or from the priests who are widowers. The priest must have passed through the diaconate, and be thirty-three years of age before admitted to the priesthood; he may be an unmarried man, but, in that case, may not marry after being ordained priest. He must not have married a widow, nor, should he die, must his wife re-marry. He is supported by the alms of the faithful, and his own industry. Much the same rules as to marriage applies to the deacons.

The Copts have many schools, but for boys only. The females who can read are very few in number. Of late, Miss Whateley has done much at Cairo for the instruction of Copt and Arab girls, whether Christians or Moslems. The education for the boys is very elementary, and though they learn to repeat portions of the Coptic Scripture, they have no real knowledge of the language—at least, no grammatical knowledge of it.

The ritual and structure of the Church among the Copts are of great interest, since it is believed that few changes have been made in either for the last thousand years. I have spoken of the ritual, or at least of the liturgy, the office of the Holy Communion, its chief office. I have now briefly to speak of the fabric and ornaments of the churches. How soon after the conquest of Egypt by the Arabs it was necessary to guard the churches against the assaults of the mob or of a fanatical soldiery we cannot say. Judging, however, from the fact that most churches are within the walls of a monastery, and are built with a view to avoid notice, and if noticed to be defended by the worshippers, it would seem that the Christians early felt the bitterness of the oppressor's yoke. I borrow from the account of a recent traveller the result of his observations.¹ Let me cite to you the notice he has given of those of old Cairo, amongst the oldest Coptic churches of Egypt. They are to be found in castle-like groups of buildings, each surrounded by a high wall, and generally with only one small entrance, easily defended against the attacks of the Mussulmans. Within these castles are churches and monasteries varying in number from one to seven or eight, surrounded by the houses of the priests and their families. The walls sur-

¹ See four papers in the *Academy*, for 1882, Nos. 543, 544, 545, 547.

rounding these churches are almost windowless. These churches are generally crowded on all sides by houses, and are absolutely free from any ornament or architectural design outside. What little light they have comes from a lattice grating in the gable of the roof or a small opening at the base of one of the domes at the east end. One might pass and repass the outside of one of these buildings in its dark, narrow street without suspecting the existence of a church. Within the walls of old Cairo are these churches: (1) St. Sergius; (2) El Moallaha, "the suspended church," so-called because built on the old Roman towers high above the ground; (3) St. Barbara; (4) S. Miriam, the Virgin Mary; (5) St. George; (6) El Adra, and two others, one now a Jewish synagogue and the other a Greek church. Let us take St. Sergius as a good type of a Coptic church of the olden time. It is like the other Coptic churches, plain on the outside, and it is a simple rectangular building almost one hundred feet long and sixty wide, without buttresses. The walls are pierced by no windows; and the only openings to admit light are two triangular windows, fitted with a wooden lattice-work to the east and west gables of the nave roof. It is oriented a little to the south of east. It consists of an apse at the east end, a nave and a narthex or vestibule at the west. Its divisions are: (1) the Hêkel, a sanctuary in the apse, with a row of white marble seats, the centre one for the bishop being higher than the others; (2) the choir inside the sanctuary, facing east; (3) the division for the men; (4) a division with chair for the patriarch; (5) women's division; (6) the narthex. In this, as in other churches, are several altars. One, however, is alone in use. The pulpit is of magnificent white marble. As in the East generally, the Coptic altar is small, about five feet long, three feet high, and three deep. It is generally of brick or of stone, with a piece of wood inserted when the Holy Eucharist is to be consecrated. At this part of the service the priestly vestments are worn; on other occasions the priests merely wear the usual Oriental costume.

The screens between the various divisions of the church, the iconostasis, as it would be called in a Greek church, or chancel-screen, the pulpit and lectern are highly ornamented; and the ancient lamps, now mostly transferred to the various museums of Europe, were of glass, unsurpassed by any of modern manu-

facture. One of these in the British Museum may be instanced in proof of this.

In the Holy Communion the sacred elements are administered together, sometimes by dipping the bread into the wine, sometimes by administering both together in a spoon.¹ The wine is mixed with a little cold water, and the communicants receive standing, not kneeling. In some churches a wine-press is found for making the sacramental wine, and an oven for the small round loaf or cake used at the same sacred rite, and occasionally though more rarely, an oil-press for making the oil used in the offices of the church. Among the church furniture may be counted ostrich eggs, real or imitated in porcelain, the symbol of the Creator's watchful care. These were frequently found in the churches of this country before the Reformation.²

Many of these ornaments, many of the observances, much of the pomp and order of the Coptic Church will strike a Western observer as strange. Yet there is a valuable testimony to the solemnity and devotional character of the service borne by a well-known Irish clergyman in the *Guardian* of May 23rd of the present year, which is worthy the attention of all who may desire to know how these ceremonies and the order of divine worship are calculated to influence the heart of the worshipper.

Dean Butcher, writing from Cairo, thus states his impressions: "Last Saturday, April 28th, Coptic Easter Eve, I attended the deeply interesting and gorgeous service in the cathedral of Cairo. I left with a much higher opinion of the spiritual reality of the service than I had ever had before. What was Scriptural and edifying far exceeded what was objectionable. The Bible was read clearly and intelligently in a tongue understood of the people. The fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (our Second Lesson for First Sunday after Easter) was listened to with deep attention, and the sermon was stirring and practical, appealing to the people with directness and fervour. The hymns chanted were

¹ The sacramental cake which is of leavened bread is deeply indented, so as to be easily divided into sixteen portions in the administration of the Holy Eucharist.

² *Royard in Evang.* Dom. xiii. post Pent. Hom. i.; *Quarterly Review*, No. 235, p. 40; Tozer's *Researches in the Highlands of Turkey*, vol. i. p. 79. They are "said to emblem the perpetual attention of the Creator to the universe." See Southey's *Thalaba*, Book iii. 24, and note.

simple and beautiful, and the ceremony of the closing of the sanctuary doors while half the choir remained within and the other half stayed without, chanting the twenty-fourth Psalm exactly as it was chanted when the Ark was taken from the house of Obededom to the stronghold of Zion, produced an overpowering effect owing to the enthusiasm of the worshippers and the vividness of the historic reminiscence. I left the church, after midnight, impressed and grateful. Two friends, who had been present, said afterwards that they had felt the service to be more real than many they had attended in Continental churches."

Mr. Sheldon Amos, well known as a writer on law and politics, who is now in Egypt, and who has had opportunities of judging, and is well able to judge, is of opinion that the monophysite doctrine has no hold over the Copts of the present day. As to this matter we must await the inquiries which are now being made. For the sake of the Copts, as well as of ourselves, there must be no mistake on this subject. Heresy—we know not how—saps the spiritual life of individuals, and the national strength of a state. I cannot venture to suggest the cause why this is so. I am unable to do so. One fact I leave for you to ponder over. National life has dwindled and died out of every heretical body. The Arian States, the Burgundians, the Visigoths of Spain, the Goths of the kingdom of North Africa, have ceased to exist, and have left no name behind them. The Nestorians, who penetrated to China and covered the plain of Thibet with Christian mission stations, and were once powerful and influential, have dwindled to a feeble handful of trembling subjects of Turkey. The Monophysites of Armenia, of Syria, of Egypt are but remnants of once powerful nations. They accepted heresy, and with it came loss of national strength and corporate life. The more need for our charity and Christian assistance to prevent them from utter extinction. As nations are more perfectly embued with Christianity, so will their national existence be prolonged, so will their strength as a people be assured to them. The truths of Christianity are no mere barren dogmas, curiosities of the ecclesiastical museum, but the roots which sustain spiritual life, as spiritual life is the sap and nourishment of national existence.

Difficulties there may be now, fresh difficulties may make their appearance in the future, but we are not excused from doing our duty because of difficulties. Our neighbours' needs are a call to us, as their endeavour to preserve their faith is a proof to us of their earnestness. At this moment, the course of public events, the appeal made on behalf of the Copts for our protection against their Moslem rulers, and their readiness to receive our assistance in the education of their priests and people, are so many calls to the Church in this country which we may not, which we dare not, if we hope for God's blessing, shrink from obeying. I note with pleasure the fact that this call upon our Christian charity and sympathy is already being recognized. Before leaving London I was present at a meeting in the Jerusalem Chamber for the formation of a committee to make known to the English people the condition of our brethren in Egypt, and to consider the best means by which we may aid the Copts in their endeavours after a higher spiritual life, a better training for their clergy, and a better education for their lay members, and so be privileged, if it may be, to aid in hastening the time when "There shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. . . . And He shall send them a Saviour, and a great one, and He shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord . . . and shall do sacrifice and oblation . . . and shall return unto the Lord, and He shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them," so that they may be reckoned among those "whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."¹

¹ Isaiah xix. 19-25.

APPENDIX.

(*Extract from the Anaphora of St. Cyril.*)

The Priest. Pluck up idolatry out of the world completely. Break down and humble Satan and all his evil power quickly under our feet. Abolish scandals and those who cause them. Let there be an end of the destructive divisions of Heresies. As at all times, so now, O Lord, humble the enemies of Thy Holy Church. Break down their pride of heart—teach them their weakness quickly—stay their envyings, their plottings, their mischiefs, their evil speakings, which they practise against us. O Lord, bring them all to nought, scatter their counsels, O God, who didst scatter the counsel of Ahitophel. Arise, O God, let all Thine enemies be scattered, and let all that hate Thy Holy Name flee before Thy face, but let Thy people for ever and for evermore abide in blessing, and do Thy will.

Release those who are in fetters—save those who are in distress—satisfy the hungry—comfort the weak-hearted—raise up the fallen—strengthen those who stand upright—bring back those who have wandered—bring them all back into the way of Thy salvation—number them with Thy people—and save us also from our sins, and be our guardian and protection in all things.

For Thou art the God who art above all authority, and all dominion, and all might, and all lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come. For Thou art He before whom stand the thousands of thousands, and myriads on myriads of Angels, and Holy Archangels serving Thee. Before Thee stand Thy two most honourable Beasts with six wings and full of eyes, the Cherubim and Seraphim—with two wings they hide their faces on account of Thy Divinity which no one can gaze upon or comprehend, with twain they hide their feet, and with twain they fly, crying aloud—For all things evermore sanctify Thee: But with all beings that sanctify Thee, receive also our Sanctification, while we sing together with them, saying—

The People. Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of Sabaoth.

The Priest. Of a truth the heavens and the earth are full of Thy Holy Glory—through Thy only begotten Son, our Lord, and our God, and our Saviour, and the King of us all, Jesus Christ.

Fill this Thy Sacrifice, O Lord, with the blessing that cometh from Thee by the coming thereon of Thy Holy Spirit, and ✠ in blessing bless, (Amen.)

And ☩ with purity purify, (Amen.) These Thy venerable gifts, this bread, and this cup, which are now laid before Thee. For Thy only begotten Son, our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and the King of us all, Jesus Christ, in the night He was betrayed, and suffered for our sins, and underwent death of His own accord only, for all our sakes, He took the bread into His Holy, immaculate, blessed, and life-giving hands, looked up to Heaven to Thee who art His Father, the God and the Lord of all beings, He gave thanks (Amen), He blessed (Amen), He sanctified (Amen), He brake, He gave to His holy disciples and to His pure Apostles, saying, Take eat of it, all : For this is My Body which is broken for you, and also for many, being given for the remission of sins ; Do this for My commemoration. Amen. In like manner also the cup after the supper, He commingled wine and water, He gave thanks (Amen), He blessed it (Amen), He sanctified it, He tasted, He gave it to His holy disciples and pure Apostles, saying : Take, drink ye all of it, For this is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you and also for many, being given for the remission of sins ; Do this for My commemoration. Amen. For as often as ye eat of this bread and drink of this cup, ye proclaim My death, ye confess My Resurrection, ye make My Commemoration until I come.

To those who desire to know more of the Coptic liturgies than is found in Sir W. Palmer's *Origines Liturgicæ*, and in the histories of Dr. Neale, the volume of Mr. Malan, *Original Documents of the Coptic Church* (D. Nutt), will be found full of information. It consists of the Liturgy of St. Mark—the Divine εὐχολογιον ; the Liturgy of St. Gregory Theologus ; Gospels and versicles for every Sunday and feast day in the year ; the Coptic Calendar ; the History of the Copts from the Arabic.

