

History of the Coptic Church Part I

By

Fr. Rewis Awadalla

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Importance of History

1. Should be proud of our heritage
2. Ancient church but still fruitful
3. Precious faith to protect and deliver without change
4. Massive contributions to Christian civilization
5. Great role in dark ages and most glorious chapters in the story of Christian civilization
6. Future will not be different than the past
7. Proves that the gates of Hades didn't prevail against it

Who are the Copts?



- The rightful descendants of the ancient Egyptians
- The word “Copt” derives from the Greek “Aigyptios” (Egyptian), via Coptic “Kyptaios” and Arabic “Qibti”
- “Aigyptios,” in turn, derives from “Hakaptah” [house of the Ka (spirit) of Ptah], one of the names for Memphis, the 1st capital of Ancient Egypt

- “Ha-ka-Ptah” = “Agyptios” = Copts
- When the Arabs conquered Egypt in 642 AD, all the native Egyptians were Christian
- Therefore, they called Egypt “Dar-el-Qypt” which means, the home of the Copts
- From the Arab conquest and until today, this term refers to the Christian Egyptian, distinguishing them from the Muslim (Arab) Egyptian settlers
- The Copts are the direct descendants of the ancient Egyptians or the “modern sons of the Pharaohs” and the Coptic Orthodox Church is the indigenous Church of Egypt

The Term Copt

Pharaonic Name:
Hak-ka-Ptah

Greek Name:
Aigyptos

gypt

Egypt

Gibt or Qibt or Copt



Blessed is Egypt My People

- Egypt was a refuge to many biblical figures
- Visited by the Holy Family (Matt. 2:13-21)
- Became a representative of the Gentiles



Isaiah Said...

- “Behold, the Lord rides upon a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt will totter at His presence... In that day there will be an alter to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border.”
(Isa. 19:1,19)
- “Blessed is Egypt, My people.” (v. 25)



Ruins of Pharaonic Monuments - Tel Basta

The Holy Family in Egypt

Sources of Information

- The only country visited by the Lord Christ (Matt. 2:13-21)
- It is recorded that the idols fell in the towns visited by the Lord and the Holy Family
- St. Cyril the Great interpreted Isaiah's prophecy saying: "The glittering cloud which carried the child Jesus to Egypt was His mother, St. Mary, who surpassed the cloud in purity. The altar which was established in the midst of the land of Egypt is the Christian church which had replaced the temples of paganism as the idols collapsed and the temples were deserted in the presence of the Lord Jesus."

- The tortuous trails they followed within Egypt, are chronicled by Pope Theophilus, the 23rd Patriarch of Alexandria (384-412 AD)
- He prayed to build a great cathedral to replace the small church; in a vision, the Holy Virgin explained that it was the will of her Son that the church should be kept as it is, as a symbol of Christ's humility
- Before consecrating this alter, she told him that the Lord, the Virgin Mary and the Disciples came together upon a cloud to the small church to bless and dedicate it; and they held the 1st liturgy there

- He testifies, in his celebrated annals that on the eve of Hathor 6th (November), after long prayer, the Holy Virgin related the details of the Holy Family's journey to, in, and from Egypt, and bade him record what he had seen and heard



- The early local tradition is another source of the flight information
- The flight of the Holy Family in Egypt is also found in the writings of Hippolytus of Rome (was a theologian, a Biblical commentator during the early 3rd century, and active church leader)
- He refers to the stay period of the Holy Family in Egypt for 3 years and 6 months
- He may have received the early local traditions within the Christian church in Egypt just over a mere 200 years after the death of Christ

- Another source is a work composed by Sozomen, the Christian historian in the middle of the 5th century, covering events during the years 325 to 425, providing more information about local sites in Hermopolis
- In chapter five he records “At Hermopolis, in the Thebaid, is a tree called Persis of which the branches, the leaves and the least portion of the bark are said to heal diseases, when touched by the sick; for it is related by the Egyptians that when Joseph fled with Christ and Mary, the holy mother of God, from the wrath of Herod, they went to Hermopolis; when entering at the gate, this largest tree, as if not enduring the advent of Christ, inclined to the ground and worshiped him.”

- Other sources of information include accounts by 2nd and 3rd century Greek and Jewish writers, philosophers, and historians
- Many churches and monasteries were built in the locations which have been blessed by the visit “Then the Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day and will make sacrifice and offering” (Isa. 19:21)
- Many miracles took place in these locations during the Holy Family visit more than 2000 years ago (and continue to occur to this day)
- Among the places visited by the Holy Family is Zeitun in Cairo, where the Holy Virgin Mary appeared in 1968

Anno Domini

- In her book “The Story of the Church of Egypt” (1897), E. L. Butcher wrote:

IN a certain gallery in London there is a celebrated picture, which most of us have seen, called Anno Domini. It represents a not uncommon scene in the Egypt of that year, a gorgeous procession of the Egyptian gods. The singers go before, the minstrels follow after; in the midst are the damsels playing on the timbrels; and in the place of supremest honour is borne the goddess, Isis, with Horus upon her knee. The sick are brought by their friends to the wayside to receive strength and healing as the gods pass. Little images of them are sold as charms to ward off evil from the purchaser. But in the centre of the canvas a very humble cavalcade meets and makes way for the grand procession of the gods: a tired donkey bearing a woman and child, while the peasant husband trudges alongside. Those ancient gods are lost and forgotten, their temples are lonely ruins; but that child's name is honoured now in every quarter of the globe: Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

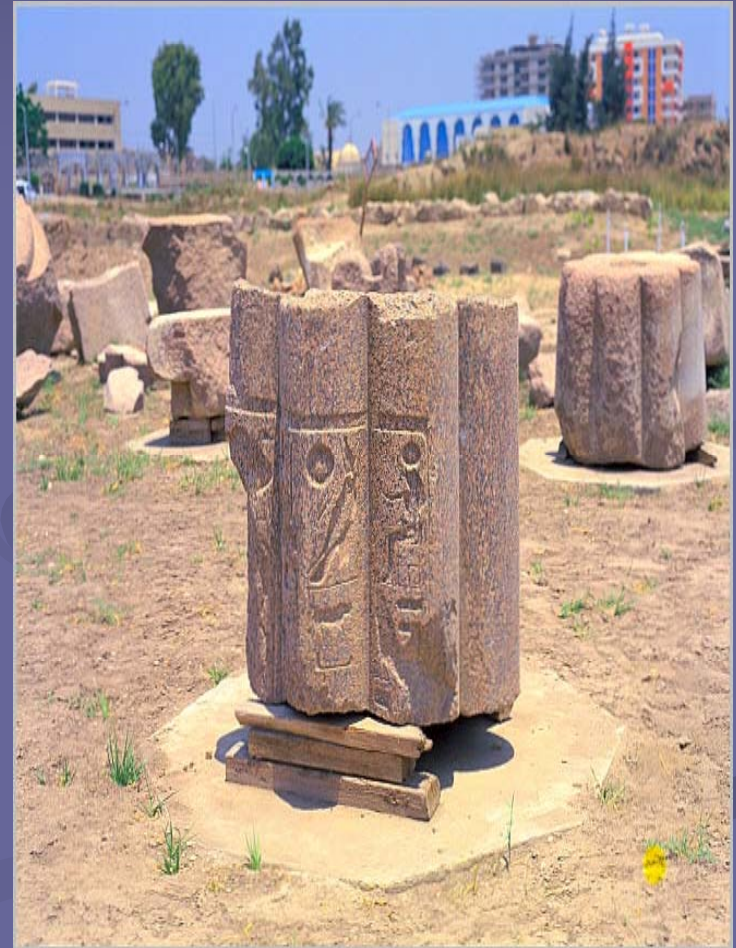


Mediterranean Sea



Important Stations

- The Holy Family took shelter at:
 - Bubastis (Tel-Basta): where they rested under a tree which survived till 1850 AD, and a spring of water erupted; from which the Holy Family used to drink and it has a healing power; and where the pagan statues collapsed before them



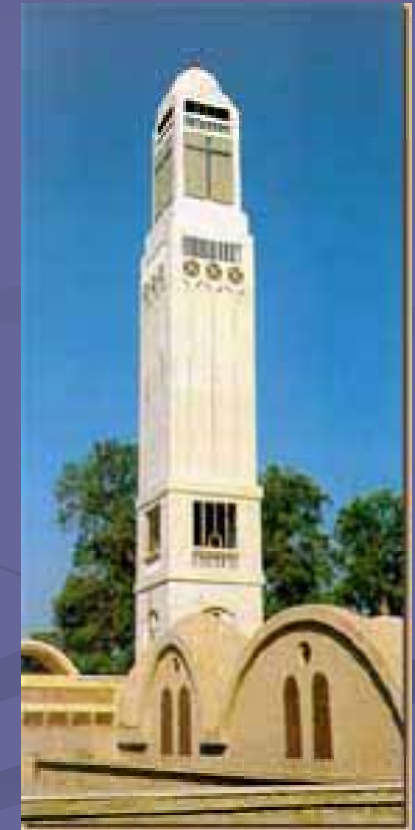
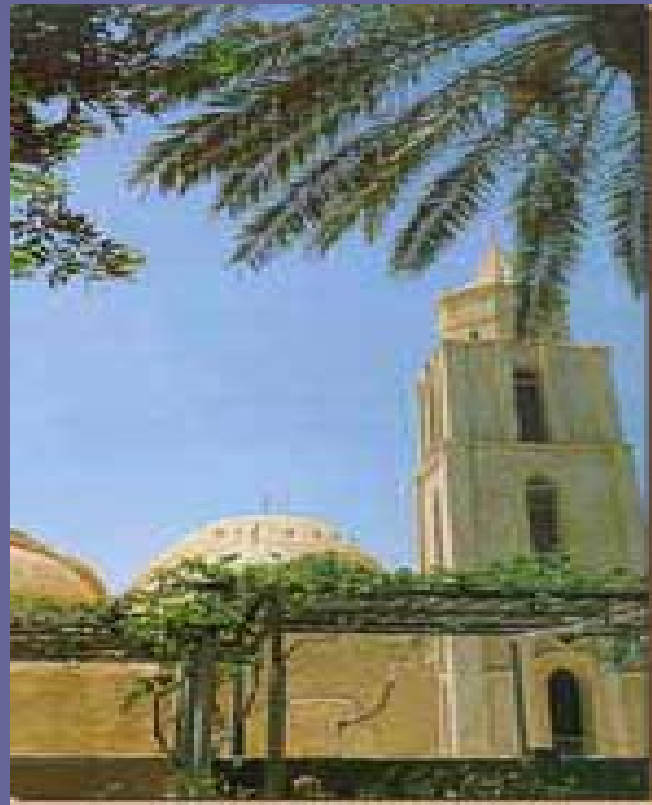
- Al Mahamma (Mostorod): “the Bathing Place,” a name given to the town because the Virgin Mary bathed the Christ Child and washed His clothes
- Samannoud : where a large granite trough which was used by the Virgin for kneading dough, and a water-well which the Child Christ, Himself hallowed



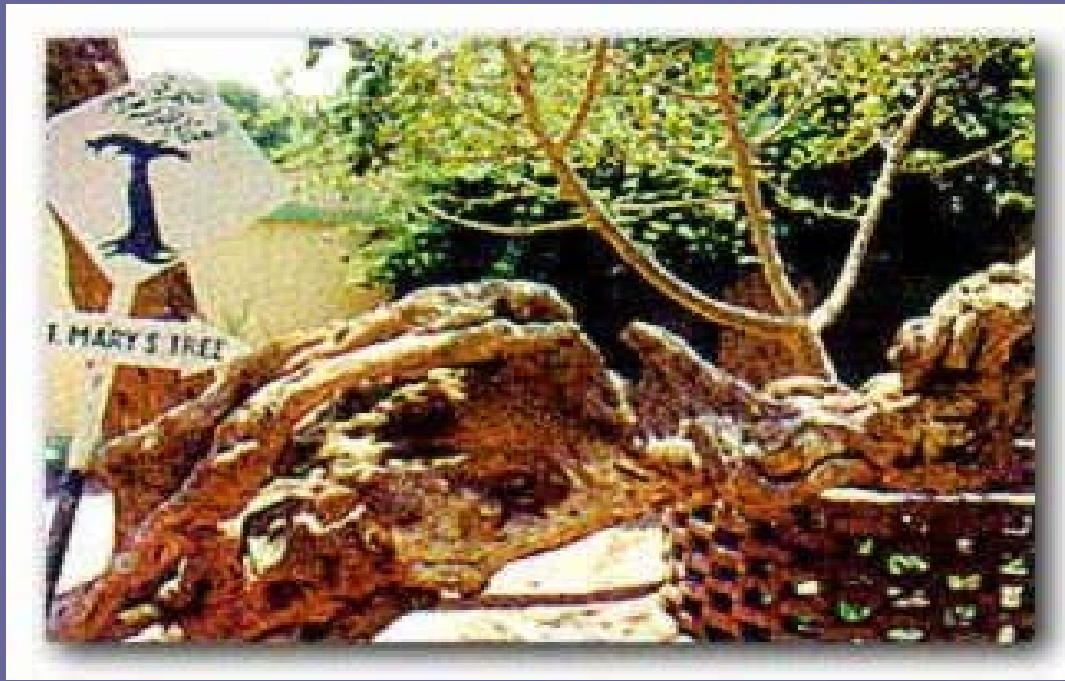
- “Pekha-Issous” (Sakha): means “the foot of Jesus” for the Child Jesus’ foot-print was marked, here, in bas-relief on a rock



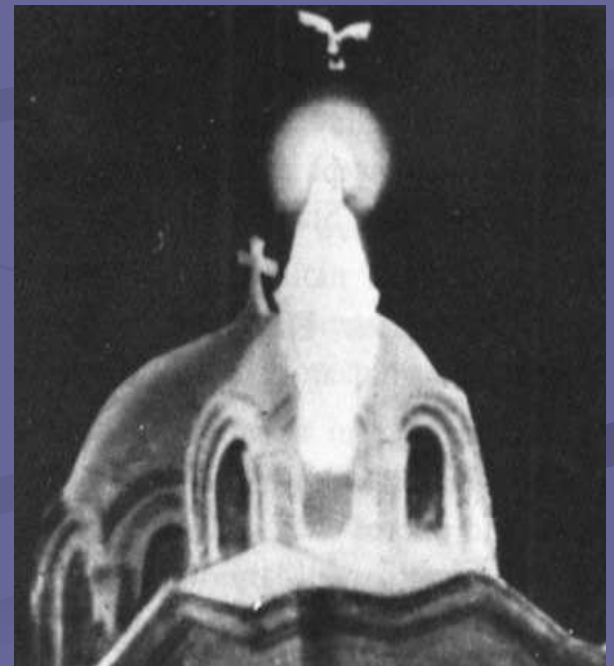
- Wadi el-Natroun (Natroun Valley): the site of anchoretic settlement, and later of many monasteries



- Matariyah: where St. Mary's tree is, for the Family had rested in its shade; a fragrant balsam plant blossomed where St. Mary poured the washing water; it has pain-soothing properties and its essence is used to compose Holy Myron



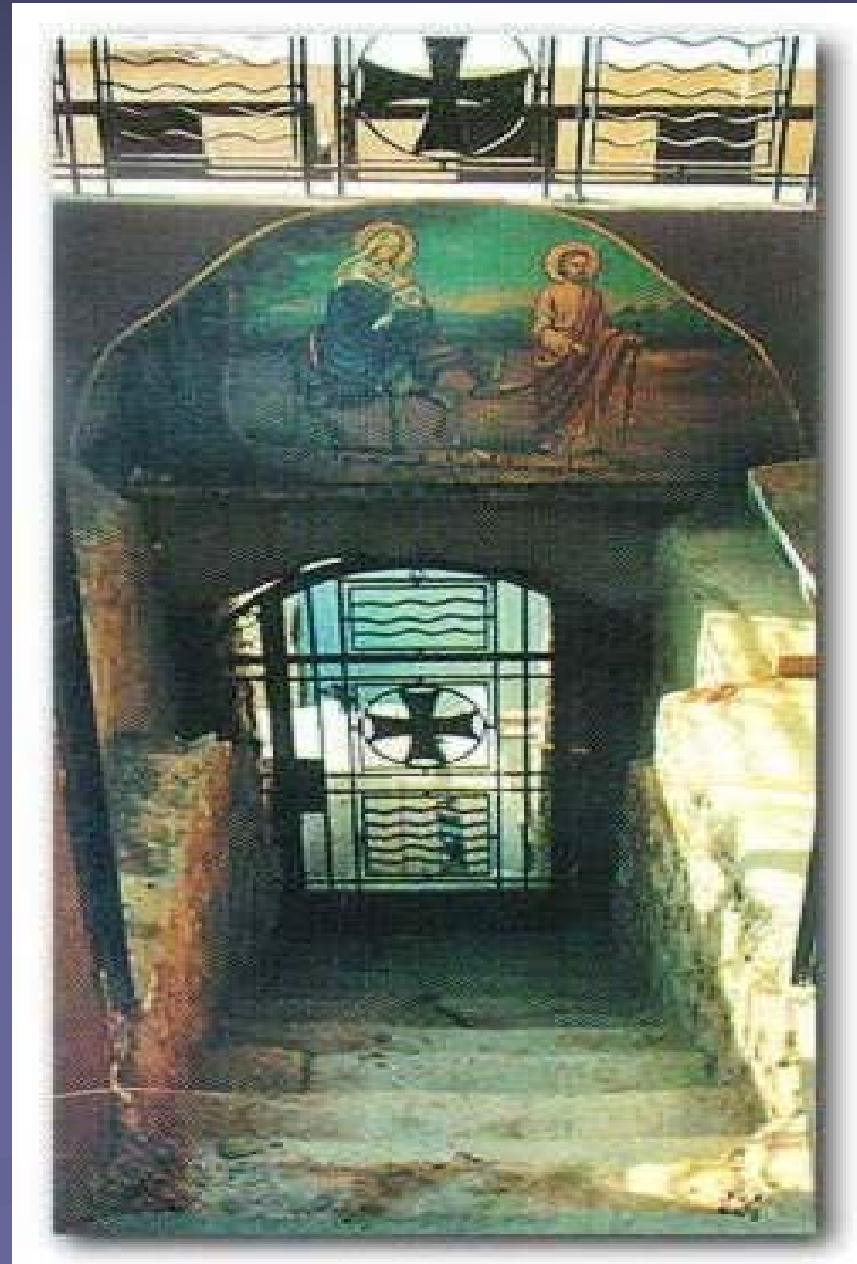
- Zeitun District was visited by the Holy Family
- St. Mary appeared on her church in Zeitun (1968 till 1971) almost every day for many hours
- Seen by thousands of people from different countries, religions, and languages
- Many miracles and wonders occurred



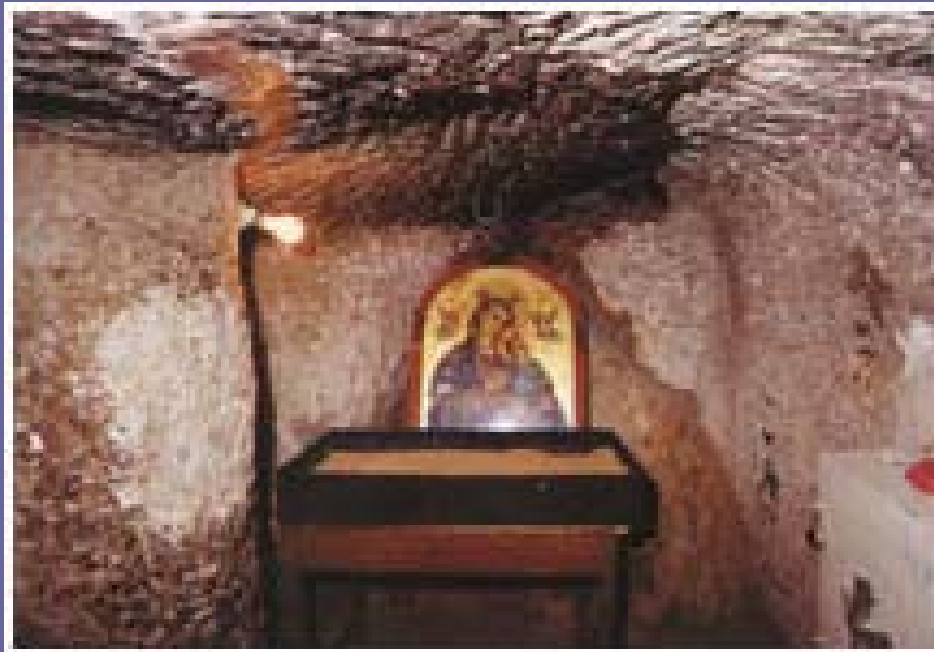
- Old Cairo: is among the most important locations visited by the Holy Family
- Among the most important sites there:
 1. Hanging Church
 2. St. Sergius church
 3. St. Barbara
 4. The Convents of St. George & St. Mercurious
 5. The Coptic Museum and the ramparts of the Fortress of Babylon



- Maadi (outlying district of Memphis): they boarded a sail boat which carried them up the Nile towards southern Egypt; a historic church built upon the spot from which they embarked



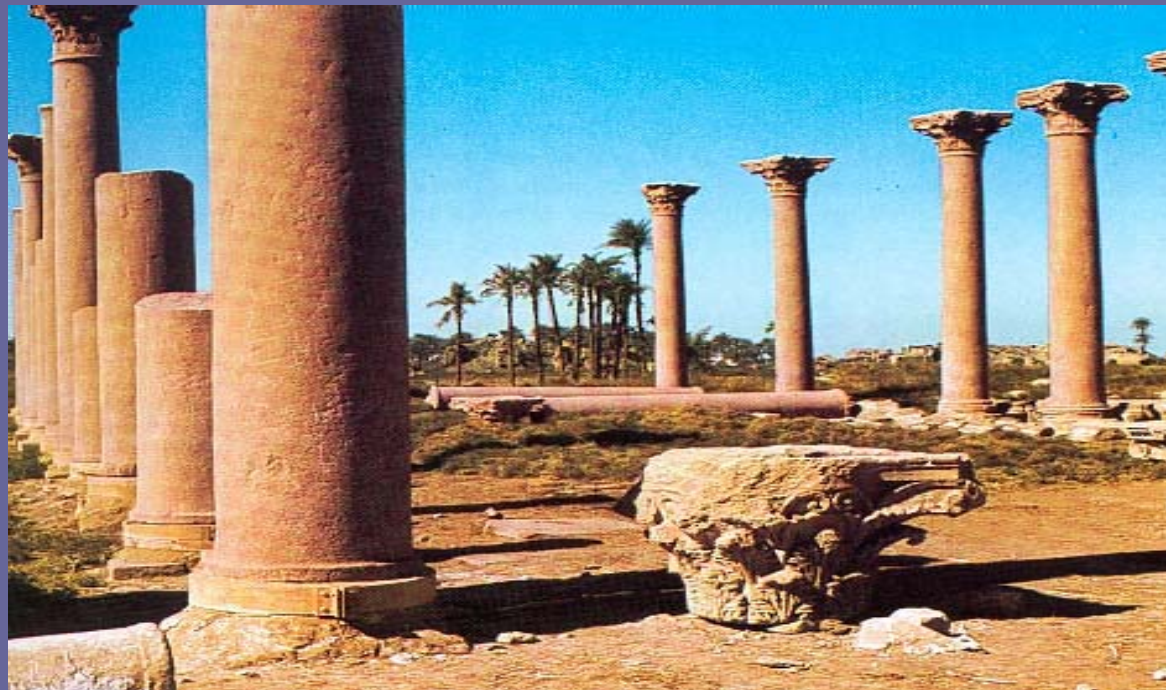
- Monastery of the Virgin upon Gabal el- Tair “Bird Mountain”: The Holy Family rested in the cave which is now located inside the ancient church there; it is also called Gabal El-Kaf “Palm Mountain.” While the Holy Family rested in the shade of the Mountain, Jesus stretched His little hand to hold back a rock which was about to fall upon them



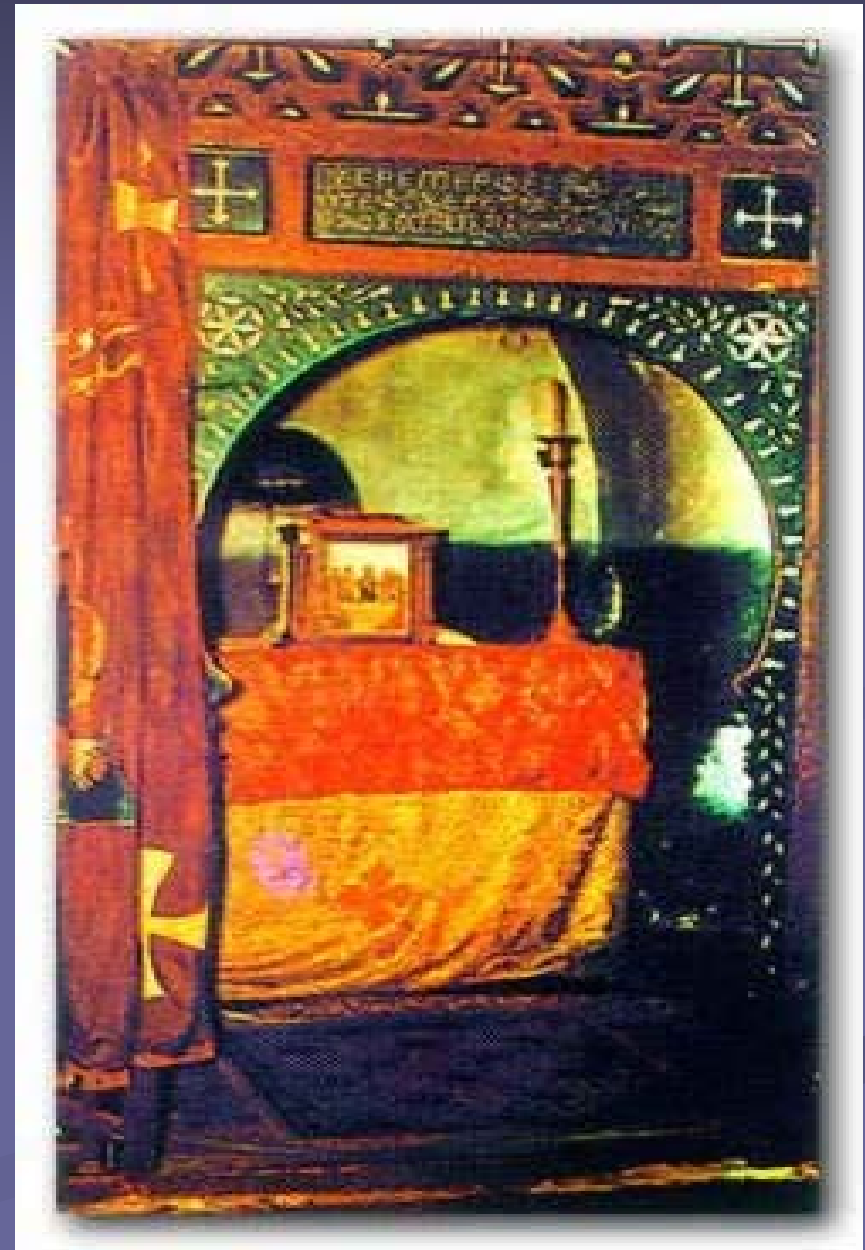
This tree bowed to worship the Lord Christ as He was passing; the configuration of the Tree is indeed, unique: all its branches incline downwards, trailing on the ground, then turn upwards again, covered in a cloak of green leaves; the Tree is called “Al Abed” (The Worshipper)



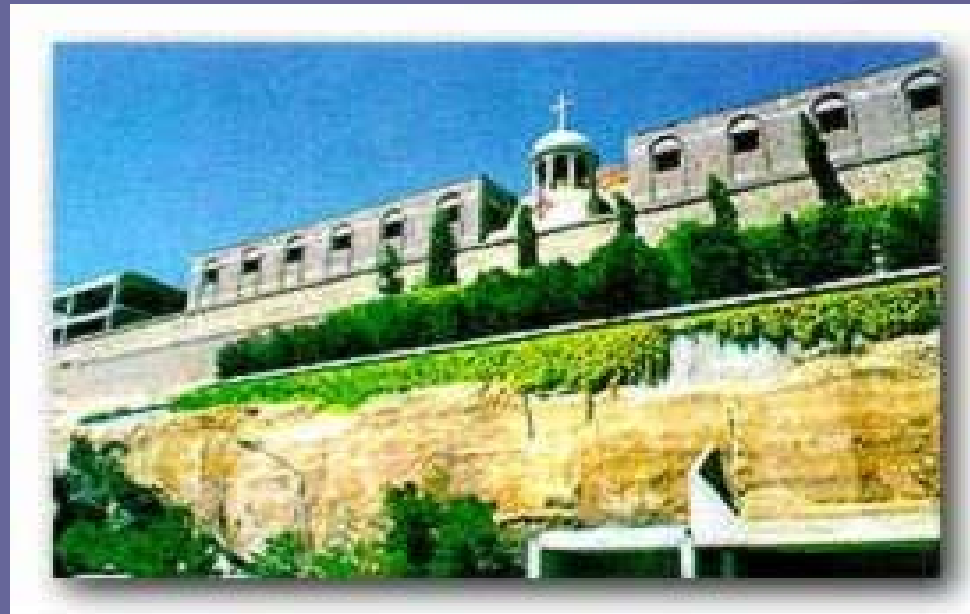
- Leaving behind them the rubble of fallen idols, they blessed Al-Ashmunein
- Qussqam evicted the Holy Family when the stone statue of their local deity cracked and fell
- At Meir (Meira) they were met with warm welcome



- Al-Muharraaq Monastery: the Holy Family remained just over 6 months in a cave which became, in the Coptic era, the altar of the Church of Virgin Mary; the altar stone was the resting place of the Child Jesus during the months He dwelt there; it is the place where “*an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt*” exists; it was here, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, asking him to return to the land of Israel (Matt. 2:20,21)



- The route they took back deviated slightly from which they had come. It took them to Mount Dronka; the blessed area which has the mountain-top Monastery of St. Mary
- The whole journey from Bethlehem to the return to Nazareth lasted over three years and they had covered about 2000 km (1250 Miles)



- Moved by the spirit of prophecy, Hosea foresaw the flight from Bethlehem where there was no safe place for the Christ Child to lay his head, and the eventual return of the holy refugees from their sanctuary in Egypt, where Jesus had found a place in the hearts of the Gentiles, when he uttered God's words, "Out of Egypt I called My Son" (Hos. 2:1)



Evaluation of the Visit

1. Fulfillment of the prophecies
2. Sanctification of Egypt to play its unique great role in Christendom
3. Blessedness of the Copts, people of God
4. Destruction of idols, as a beginning of vanishing paganism, and a preparation for Christianity
5. Egypt became a representative of Gentiles who believed in Him
6. Many churches and monasteries were built in the locations which have been blessed by the visit
7. Valuable blessed monuments



- On the 24th day of the Coptic month of Bashans, which corresponds to the 1st of June, the Coptic Church celebrates the entry of the Lord Jesus Christ into the land of Egypt



An icon of the Holy Family
Cathedral of St. Mark - Anba Rueiss - Cairo

The See
of
St. Mark

Christianity Introduced to Egypt

- St. Mark The Apostle and Evangelist is our founder
- Christianity was introduced to Egypt before St. Mark, on a very small scale:
 - Jews of Egypt at Pentecost (Acts 2:10)
 - Apollos, Alexandrian Jew, at Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28)
 - His Excellency Theophilus, a Christian believer, from Alexandria (Luke 1:3)

St. Mark the Apostle

- African native of Jewish parents who belonged to the Levites' tribe
- His family in Cyrenaica were attacked by barbarians and lost their property
- Educated in Jerusalem, and became conversant in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew
- The Lord chose him among the 70 apostles
- Accompanied St. Peter in his missionary journeys in Jerusalem and Judea
- Accompanied Sts. Paul and Barnabas in their 1st missionary to Antioch, Cyprus and Asia Minor (Acts 13)
- Preached with Barnabas at Cyprus (Acts 15:36-41)

- St. Paul needed him and he preached in Colossi (4:11), Ephesus (2Tim. 4:11), Venice and Rome (Phil. 24)
- Established the church of Alexandria in 61 AD and ordained a bishop, 3 priests and 7 deacons
- Preached in Pentapolis for 2 years
- Stayed with Sts. Peter and Paul in Rome until their martyrdom in 64 AD
- Was martyred on Easter 68 AD by being dragged to death around the city
- Christians secretly buried him in a grave engraved on a rock under the altar of the church

St. Mark in Alexandria

- Alex. was a great city, and a center of education
- Filled with great philosophers and scientists
- Its library filled with hundred thousands of manuscripts
- Occupied with $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ Million Egyptians, Greek, Jews, Romans, Nubians and others
- St. Mark faced a very complicated religious situation (numerous religions, various deities)
- He started his ministry there alone, but supported by the Divine power working in him and with him

- Isaiah prophesied of the coming of St. Mark to our country saying, “In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the Land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border. And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt.” (Isa. 19:19,20)
- Surely there can be no more demonstrable, concrete proof of the fulfillment of this prophecy than that the Patriarchal See of the Apostolic Church in Egypt was established by St. Mark himself

- But the prophecy foretold also the future of Christianity in Egypt as it continues, “Then the Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day and will make sacrifice and offering.” (Isa. 19:21)
- As Christianity in Egypt spread, churches were built throughout the length and breadth of the land; and the sites chosen were, primarily, those which had been visited and blessed by the Holy Family’s sojourns

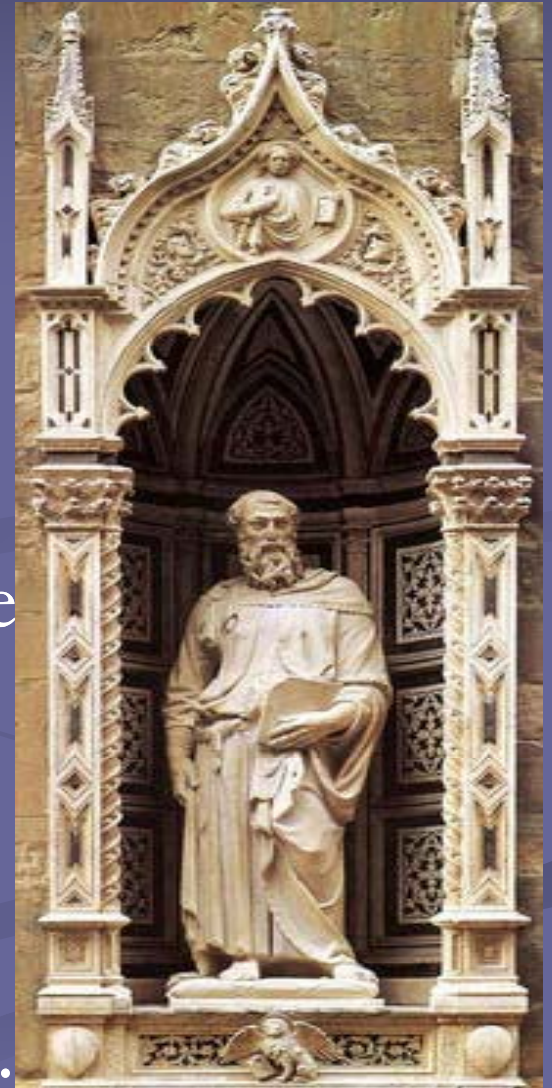
St. Mark's Achievements

- Preaching in Egypt and Pentapolis, next to Judea, Antioch, Cyprus, Asia Minor and Italy
- Ordained bishops, priests and deacons
- Writing the oldest Gospel, most probably in Egypt (65-68 AD)
- Authoring the Holy Liturgy
- Establishing the Catechetical School of Alexandria, to defend Christianity against its secular philosophical School



Falsifying History

- Catholics tried to rob St. Mark of his apostolic dignity, and to credit all his efforts to St. Peter
- They claim:
 1. He didn't follow Christ during His ministry
 2. St. Peter converted him after the resurrection
 3. His Gospel was written by St. Peter
 4. Crediting all his preaching, even that in Egypt and Pentapolis, to St. Peter



■ Proven facts:

1. He was one of the 70 apostles appointed by the Lord Christ
2. The Lord Christ celebrated the Passover with His disciples and established the Holy Eucharist at his house
3. He was the person who carried the pitcher of water followed by the two disciples according to God's plan (Mark 14:13, 14)
4. He was the young man who followed Lord Christ the night He was arrested (Mark 14:51,52)
5. He was one of those who received the Holy Spirit

6. The fact that Peter called Mark his “son” (1 Peter 4:13), didn’t mean that St. Mark was a son in the faith, but as a son to a father because of his age and being relatives (Peter’s wife was the cousin of Mark’s father)

7. The Gospel was St. Mark’s and it wasn’t dictated by St. Peter, but by the Holy Spirit



8. St. Mark the apostle had no need to know any information from St. Peter about the Lord Christ since he was an eye witness
9. St. Peter didn't direct St. Mark to preach in Egypt and Pentapolis because it is known that the Holy Spirit directed the apostles in their preaching as it was shown in the Book of Acts (Act. 13:2,3 ; 16:6-10)
10. St. Peter didn't ordain him a bishop (in 3 different continents!)



11. In his mother's house, great Christian events took place:

1. Our Lord Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples, washed their feet, and established the first Eucharist

2. The Lord appeared to His disciples after His resurrection many times

3. The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in Pentecost



Early Successors to St. Mark

- Anianus, and the 9 prelates, who succeeded him, were wise, meek and simple
- The 3 Priests ordained by St. Mark were elevated to be the 3 successors after Anianus
- Justus, who was appointed the dean of the School of Alex. By St. Mark, became the 6th Pope
- The next popes were selected from the deans of the School
- They taught the people with diligence and singleness of heart

- Because of the peaceful times they enjoyed, they succeeded in increasing the number of the faithful greatly
- Heraclas (13th) (230-246 AD) was the 1st to carry the title “Pope” in the whole Christian world, even before Rome [Siricius (384-399) was the 1st Bishop of Rome to be called pope]
- 1st Papal residence was Anianus’ house, then the church of St. Mark (Pokalia), where St. Mark was buried
- Alexandria remained the center of the See for many centuries (except during persecutions)

- The pope of Alexandria was called “The Judge of the universe”

- Rev. John Neale says:

“The true Faith took deep root in the hearts of the people of Alexandria, and, in due season gave forth fruit to perfection. During the first two centuries, Egypt enjoyed unusual quiet, and little is known of its ecclesiastical history beyond the names of its Patriarchs.”

-“History of the Holy Eastern Church” Vol. I, p.12

The See of St. Mark

- Coptic Orthodox Church is an Apostolic Church
- Also known as “*The Church of Alexandria*” or “*The See of St. Mark*”
- It is one of the earliest four “Sees” or “Patriarchates”: Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome (The see of Constantinople was founded in the 4th century)
- St. Mark is considered its 1st Pope
- His successors have continued in unbroken line since his martyrdom until the present day

- St. Mark's successor was called "Bishop of Alex.", and no other bishop, beside him, in all Egypt
- Pope Demetrius (12th) was the 1st to ordain 3 bishops with him at the end of 2nd Century
- In other reference, it is Pope Eumanius (7th) who ordained some bishops for Egyptian cities, Nubia, Libya, and Pentapolis
- Heraclas (13th) was the 1st to be called "Pope" by his people; and Athanasius (20th) to be called Patriarch
- From that time forth, St. Mark's successor was called archbishop, patriarch, and Pope

- Number of bishops increased e.g. 100 bishops under Pope Alexandros (19th) 312-328 AD; 64 bishops under Pope Simon I (42nd) 692-700 AD
- The throne of St. Mark was occupied with some Syrians beside Copts e.g. Popes Simon I (42nd), Abraam (62nd), Mark III (73rd), and Youannes X (85th)
- Pope Cyril V (112th) had the longest papacy (52 years), while Pope Archilaos had the shortest (6 or 7.5 month)
- Occupancy of the throne used to happen in a very short time after the vacancy

- The shortest vacancy was 1 day between Pope Theophanes (60th) who departed on Dec. 6, 956 to be followed by Pope Mina II (61st) who was ordained on Dec. 7, 956
- The longest vacancy was 19 years after the departure of Pope Youannes VI (74th) on 1216, to be followed by Pope Cyril III (75th) on 1235
- Pope Christodolos (66th) in 11th Century relocated his throne to the Hanging Church in Cairo
- Pope Cyril I (24th) was the 1st monk to be ordained on 412 AD, from St. Macarius Monastery

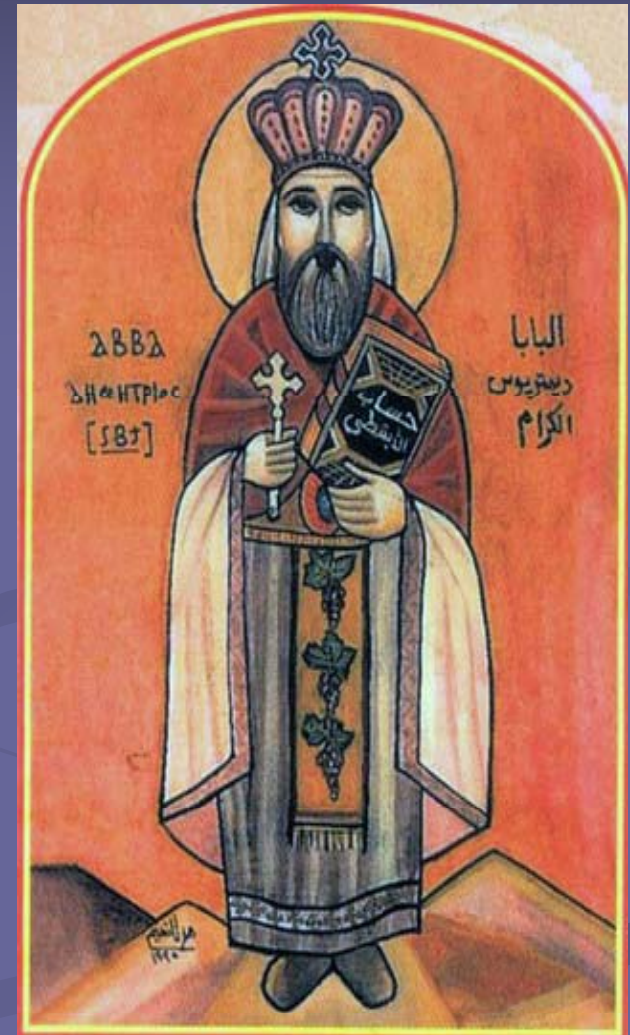
- Out of the Monastery of St. Macarius 28 monks were elevated to succeed St. Mark
- For this reason, St. Macarius was called, “The father of the patriarchs and bishops”
- Traditionally, at that time, the 1st visit of the new patriarch used to be to this monastery
- Some Popes were laymen (after monasticism) e.g. Popes Abraam (62nd), Gabriel (70th), Mark (73rd), and Youannes VI (74th)
- Others were priests e.g. Popes Zacharias (64th) and Youannes XI (89th)

Famous Characters

Pope Demetrius (12th)

- An illiterate vinedresser chosen miraculously by his predecessor, Pope Julianus (11th)
- He kept his virginity (48yrs) in spite of his marriage
- His 1st goal was to seek learning diligently
- He devised the method, called “Epact,” for calculating the date of Easter to always follow the Passover, which was approved by the Holy Synod and later by the 1st Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (325 AD)
- It was followed by all churches till 1582 AD, when Pope Gregory XIII changed the calendar

- Persecutions by Emperor Severus broke out, and many believers were martyred; among them Leonidas, Origen's father
- During the persecutions, a Roman Prefect marched with his troops into the Church of St. Mark and robbed it of all its holy vessels



- He seized Pope Demetrius, and sent him into exile to *Wissim*, where he remained until the persecutions ceased
- On his return, he appointed Origen Dean of the School of Alex. after St. Clement's departure
- He sent Origen on an evangelistic mission to *Achaia*, to teach and preach
- Origen, on his return, was ordained bishop by both Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, one of his former fellow students, and Theostite, Bishop of Caesarea, without asking the permission of Pope Demetrius

- Pope Demetrius excommunicated him because he was ordained as a priest, while unworthy, by these Bishops without the agreement of the Pope of Alexandria, and because of some theological heresies in his writings
- He used to know the hidden sins, and rebuke those who committed them for repentance
- He lived to be 105 years old, and he was carried to teach his children at church
- He departed after leading the church for 42 years, leaving 20 bishops in Egypt

Pope Heraclas (13th)

- Born in Alex. from pagan parents, and later they all converted to Christianity
- The most famous student and helper of Origen, and his successor as the Dean of the School
- Pope Demetrius ordained him a priest, and then a hegomen, because of his capability for teaching, giving him permission to preach in the Cathedral
- Led many of the pagans to the faith
- Chosen to be the successor of Pope Demetrius (230-246 AD)

- Spent his first few years in teaching his people
- He visited his people all over Egypt, during the persecution, to strengthen them
- On his visits, he ordained 20 bishops, over new bishoprics, for the number of believers had been constantly growing after persecution
- Was saved, though Emperor Maximinus was keen to get him
- Because of the love of his people, they called him “Pope;” thus he was the 1st one to carry this title in the whole Christian world, even before Rome

- Through his efforts, he succeeded in restoring back many of those who denied their faith
- Julius Africanus, a Lybian traveler and historian, came to Alex. attracted by the fame of his learning and spiritual serenity
- Julius attended the teachings of this aged Pope, who resumed his work of edification
- Tradition asserts that Julius was baptized on his return from this visit
- Pope Heraclas departed after 16 years of striving in his ministry

Pope Dionysius (14th)

- He was born in Alexandria 190 AD to pagan parents
- He was a star worshiper and a clever physician
- His love for reading had lead him to convert to Christianity; when he found few papers from St. Paul's epistles
- He studied at School of Alex. as a student of Origen
- He became its dean, after Heracles, for 16 years (231-246 AD) and became one of its bright stars



St. Dionysius of Alexandria

- Pope Demetrius ordained him a deacon, and Pope Heracles ordained him a priest
- He became Patriarch in 247AD, and his papacy was characterized by persecution
- Dionysius was well versed in philosophy, theology and even in the heretic writings

- He sent an epistle to Gaius, the new Emperor, describing the tortures that had been inflicted on the Copts by his father, the late Emperor Decius
- The epistle had a soothing effect on Gaius, and so he declared that he would leave the Christians in peace
- He ordained priests and deacons, and consecrated several new churches during his visit throughout the country to comfort his people
- He held a 3 day council in Arsinoe with both clergy and people, confronting Bishop Nepos regarding his millenarian controversy

- On his return from Arsinoe, Abba Dionysius wrote an epistle entitled “The Divine Promises,” explained the divine promises mentioned in the book of Revelation
- Having succeeded in establishing unity and peace among his people, he directed his energies further to the sister churches
- He was exiled in the Libyan desert, during the persecution of Valerianus, for 3.5 years
- Once in exile, he resumed his intellectual and spiritual activities, writing, teaching, and preaching

- The persecutions ceased with the death of Valerianus, but Alexandria was left a prey to famine and plague prior to Easter
- He sent his Paschal message lauded the Christian charity toward the afflicted Christian and non-Christian
- He protected the universal church from many heresies, and he was called the “Teacher of the Universal Church” by St. Athanasius
- He died in 265 AD ending 17 years in Papacy
- Losing majority of his writings is a great loss

ΥΔΡΟΣ
ΠΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ



The Theological School of Alexandria

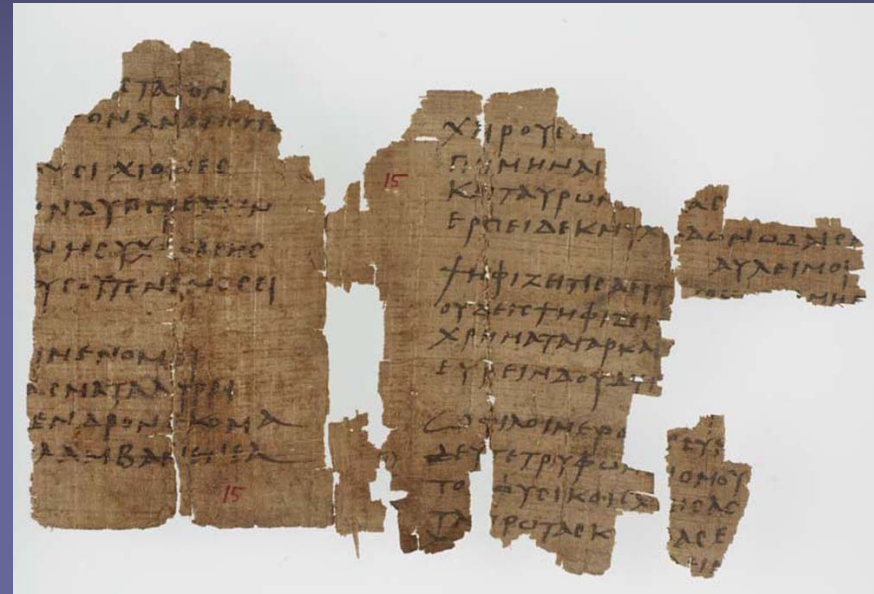
School of Alexandria

- It was founded by Ptolemy Soter at 323 BC
- His successor Ptolemy Philadelphus attracted the Greek philosophers to it at 288 BC
- During his era, the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, was accomplished, according to his decree, by 70 Jewish Rabbis
- He was very eager for the Hellenic knowledge, believing in his ability to convert the Egyptian culture into the Greek one

- The ancient Egyptians rejected the Hellenic culture because they were proud of their language, culture and civilization
- They were willing to absorb and perfect other cultures, but not at the expense of nationality or heritage
- Their rejection gave them a lot of trouble; at the same time, they didn't stop studying the Greek culture and studies
- On the other hand, the Jewish teachings had a great influence on the Egyptians because of the presence of many Jewish Rabbis and philosophers, like Philo of Alexandria

- Alexandria had, for long time; 3 schools before Christianity:

- “Museum”
- “Serapeum”
- “Sebastion”

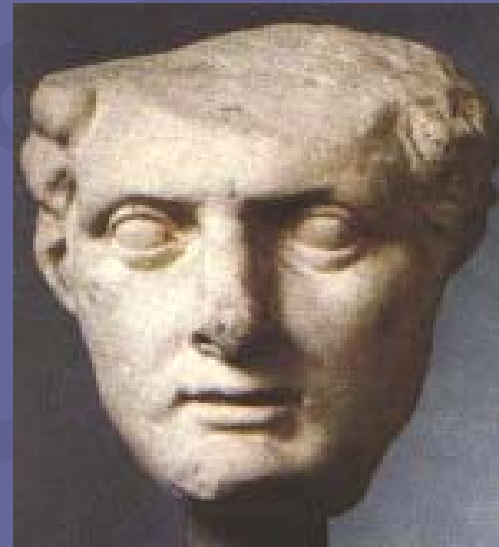


- “Museum” was considered as nowadays university; and it had the most famous teachers of sciences and philosophy
- Its huge library contained between 200,000 and 500,000 books and manuscripts in the days of Ptolemy I

- Different teachings and cultures were mixed at Alexandria e.g. the Egyptian, the Hellenic, the Jewish, and some Eastern civilizations
- In such an environment, there was no other alternative but to establish a Christian Institution center to enable the church to face the battle fought by those powerful scholars



Ptolemy II Philadelphus



Ptolemy I Soter

The Catechetical School of Alexandria

- St. Mark established the Theological School in the 1st century (68 AD)
- Aim:
 - to teach, explain and consolidate the Christian faith
 - to be counterpart to the philosophical school which was the center of the contemporary idolatry cultures and philosophies of the time such as Gnosticism
- He appointed Justus the Erudite to be responsible for the School

- It is considered the 1st school to teach Theology, Biblical studies and interpretation
- Among its students were big number of those who seek knowledge beside the catechumens and the new believers
- Christianity was studied in the form of knowledge, wisdom, and research
- St. Jerome stated that St. Mark was inspired by the Holy Spirit to establish the School of Alexandria, since it was the only method to spread Christianity on strong bases

- The School was opened for all people regardless of their religion, nationality (Jews or Gentiles) or gender (men or women) and also regardless of the age, culture or education
- It became a center for the Christian education by teaching the Holy Bible and doctrine in addition to philosophy, logic, medicine, engineering, math, physics, astronomy and music
- The reputation of its teachers was spread east and west, and their works were translated into different languages such as Latin, and Syrian
- This enriched the Christians with the religious knowledge and encouraged them to study and search

- At the beginning of the 2nd century, it had a great influence on:
 1. Satisfying the needs of the Alexandrian Christians to learn, preach and defend their faith
 2. Graduating a large number of the most famous church leaders who, later on, became among the patriarchs of the See of St. Mark
 3. Attracting many to convert to Christianity, whether from Egypt or abroad
 4. Attracting many students from different countries who, later on, became leaders and bishops in their countries

5. Emphasizing the importance of systematic education as the main method for religious teaching
6. Using philosophy as a tool for convincing the philosophical pagans
7. Purifying the Greek Philosophy in conformity with the Christian thought
8. In spite of the spiritual and intellectual effect of the School of Alexandria, it didn't interfere with politics, in contrast to what happened in Rome

Many philosophers had studied Christianity to be able to refute it, but they were delved into it like Athenagorus

- Alexandria, through its School, teachers and students, became the minaret of Christianity for 5 centuries with famous reputation in science and religion
- It was also great support for the Alexandrian popes, and a great center for wisdom, trust and faith that all the churches, east and west, followed in spirit and thought, scientifically but not administratively
- Besides the School curricula, it taught also fasting, and praying. Teachers and students also shared their belongings, teaching asceticism, purity and chastity

“They were all ascetics, uninterested in the world with all its worthless wrecks, and they cared only about God. They were united in pure love, enjoying the peace of the heavenly spirits. Among them, there was no rich and poor, for the rich gave their money to the poor so that each of them would think of what makes one rich in God. Some of them fasted three or five running days, and their food and drink was only bread and water.”

- Philo, the Jewish philosopher

Famous Characters of the School

- 16 famous deans succeeded on the school in order:

1. Justus

2. Eumenius

3. Marcianus

4. Pantaenus

5. Clement of Alex

6. Origen

7. Heracles

8. Dionysius

9. Theognostus

10. Pierius

11. Archillas

12. Peter

13. Serapion

14. Macarius

15. Didymus the Blind

16. Rodon

- Most of these deans were ordained patriarchs on the See of St. Mark like: Justus (6), Eumenius (7), Marcianus (8), Heracles (13), and Dionysius (14)
- Others were ordained priests like Clement of Alex, Pierius, and Theognostus
- On the other hand, many of its students were ordained patriarchs like: Julian (11), “The Seal of Martyrs” Peter I (17), Archilaos (18), Athanasius “The Apostolic” (20), “the Pillar of Faith” Cyril I the Great (24), and Dioscorus (25)
- Many philosophers, scientists or bishops were among those who graduated from it

Scholars' Achievements

■ Athenagorus

- Was a pagan leader and the supporter of the modernized Platonic Philosophy
- Converted and was called the “Christian Philosopher” who defended Christianity
- Sent his apologetic writings to Emperor Marcus Aurelius and Commodus his son (176AD)
- He also wrote a treatise “On the Resurrection of the dead” in 25 chapters
- Among his students Pantaenus and Clement, both of whom outshone him as leaders of thought and became Deans of the School

■ Pantaenus

- Introduced philosophy and sciences into the School to gain the educated pagans
- Preached in India, Ethiopia, Yemen and Arabia
- Brought to Egypt a hand written copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew in Hebrew
- Developed Egyptian Language by using Greek letters in addition to 7 Hieroglyphic letters
- Translated the Holy Bible from Hebrew and Greek to the Egyptian Language (190-193AD), helped by Clement and Origen, his students
- His Biblical interpretations were lost

■ Clement Of Alexandria

- 1st to muster the evidence for Christianity from all Greek cultural sources and all the speculations of heretics
- Most important writings (150-216 AD) are:
 - *Protreptikos* (Exhortation) which invitation of pagans for accepting Christian faith
 - *Paidagogos* (Tutor) learning Christian morals and principles (3 volumes) under the guidance of its Teacher, Christ the Lord
 - *Stromateis* (Miscellanies) expressed different thoughts in 8 volumes

- He also wrote the “*Hypotyposes*” (outlines), Paschal letter, and other works
- Converted his students to be Christians, and Martyrs through his teachings and writings
- Was considered the father of the Christian philosophy
- Unfortunately, very little of his original writings remained
- 1st person to use the fish as a sign for Christianity



■ Origen the Erudite

■ Wrote around 6,000 books including:

- Symbolic Biblical interpretation

- “Principalities” (4 books)

- “Contra Celsus” (8 books)

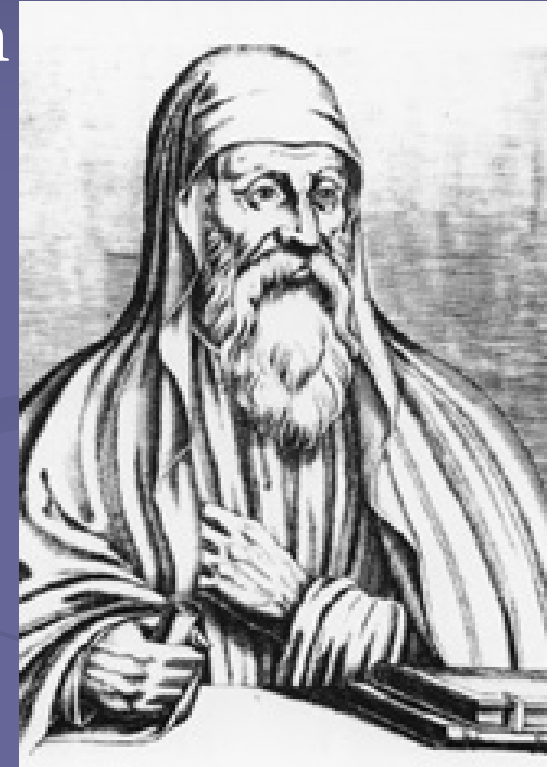
- “Exhortation to Martyrdom”

- “Resurrection”

- “On Prayer”

- He also wrote the “Hexapla”

■ Jerome said that it is impossible for any one to read all Origen’s writings



- Fr. Pierius (Peros) the Martyr

- Wrote in different aspects like “Hosea the Prophet,” “St. Luke’s Gospel,” the “Mother of God” & “The Word”
- Pope Peter (17th) called him “Origen Junior”

- Didymus the Blind

- Invented a method for writing and reading using carving litters; 15 centuries before Braille
- Wrote interpretations of the Holy Bible
- Skilled in rhetoric, philosophy, logic, math & music

- Dom. D. Rees states, “The most renowned intellectual institution in the early Christian world was undoubtedly the Catechetical School (*Didascaleion*) of Alexandria, and its primary concern was the study of the Bible, giving its name to an influential tradition of scriptural interpretation. The preoccupation of this school exegesis was to discover everywhere the spiritual sense underlying the written word of the Scripture”

-Nelson: A New Catholic Comm. on the Holy Scripture, 1969, p.15

Fading Out

- After Didymus, an obscure period in the School history followed and its greatest days were over
- The great schism of the Council of Chalcedon in 451AD caused the terminal blow to the greatest school of theology, science, and intellect
- The Emperor closed the School as an avenue of persecution against the Copts
- The School deteriorated soon after its transference to Sidon of Pamphylia, while Rodon was dean

Flourish After Deterioration

- Nothing however can be taken away from the wealth of teaching and scholarship that the School of Alexandria offered to the early church
- Pope Kyrillos 4th (Cyril IV) (110th), a.k.a. the “Father of Reform” (1853-1862), thought to establish a theological school similar to the famous one; but he died before fulfilling his dream

- Pope Kyrillos 5th (Cyril V) (112th) (1874-1927), who respected this idea, opened the School in November 29, 1893
- It was headed by its dean Yousif Manqarius, followed by Archdeacon Habib Girgis, who was succeeded by Hegomen Ibrahim Attia
- Pope Kyrillos 6th (Cyril VI) (116th) (1959- 1971), immediately after his ordination, opened the Theological Seminary School of Pope Kyrillos to commemorate 100 years on the departure of Pope Kyrillos 4th

- He also ordained a bishop of Theological School and Ecclesiastical Teaching, the Late H.H. Pope Shenouda III (117th), in Sept 30; and another bishop, the Late Bishop Gregorius for the scientific research and Coptic culture, in May 15, 1967
- Pope Shenouda III supported the ecclesiastical education by establishing 7 branches of the Theological Schools abroad (in U.S., Australia and England) besides 11 in Egypt
- He had also established specialized institutes in Cairo such as Biblical Studies, Hymnology, Coptic Language and the Pastoral Care

Famous Characters

Clement of Alexandria

- Born at 150 AD of pagan parents
- He was a student under many teachers, scientists and philosophers in different countries
- He converted to Christianity and became Pantaenus' disciple, then his helper and finally Dean of the School after his death (190 AD)
- He was ordained a priest in Alex.
- He succeeded in harmonizing between the Hellenic philosophy and Christian teachings
- Among his students were Origen and Bishop Alexander of Jerusalem
- He succeeded to convert the rich Alexandrians to Christians and even into martyrs

- He continued his teaching and writings during the persecution by Septimus Severus 202 AD till he was convinced by his friends to leave his country to Palestine
- It was a divine plan so that the believers there would benefit by his presence
- He died between 211-216 AD away from Alex. and its School which he loved so much



Origen the Erudite

- Born of Alexandrian Christian parents at 185 AD
- His father, Lionedus, had a great role in his life
- Achieved a lot in different sciences, and recited majority of Biblical texts at a young age
- He wished to be martyred like his father (202 AD), but his wish did not come to completion
- Appointed as a dean by Pope Demetrius for the Theological School at the age of 18
- He became a teacher in the morning and student in the evening at the School of philosophy

- By his eloquent “*Exhortation to Martyrdom*” he gave encouragement to his friends imprisoned and tortured by Maximinus
- A great number of his students were martyred
- He was visiting them at prisons, courts and places of martyrdom to strengthen their faith
- Devoted himself to study the Bible allegorically
- He was a role model in pity and chastity beside asceticism and spirituality
- He literally fulfilled the words of the Gospel “There are eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake” (Matt. 19:12) a word which the tradition of the Church did not understand literally

- He made 3 missionary trips to Arabia (212-244 AD) in addition to Rome, Palestine, Antioch and Greece
- Ambrose, a rich Alexandrian who had been converted by Origen and was one of his great admirers, helped to publish his writings
- He left many works in theological studies and philosophy beside Biblical interpretations
- He established a theological school in Caesarea and headed it for 20 years
- He accepted ordination of priesthood by the bishops of Caesarea Palestine and Jerusalem at age of 43

- Pope Demetrius excommunicated him because of his irregular ordination, while he was ordained without the agreement of his Pope of Alexandria, and for some theological heresies in his writings
- Pope Pontias of Rome held a council which also approved the excommunication decision (232 AD)
- Other churches excommunicated him and his followers in the Council of Constantinople in 553 AD, after his death
- He was tortured severely during the persecution by Decius (245 AD) at age of 60
- He died at 254 AD at the age 69 in Tyre

- Among his students:
 - Pope Heracles (13th)
 - Bishop Alexandros of Jerusalem
 - St. Gregory Nazienzen (the Theologian)
 - Historian Eusabius of Caeserea
 - St. Didymus the Blind
 - St. Gregory of Neocaesarea (the wonders performer)
 - St. Basil the Great
- All the philosophy of St. Ambrosius of Milan and St. Augustine depended on Origen's teachings

Way of dictating his books:

- To realize his thoughts in tangible form, 7 tachygraphers (old-time stenographers) noted down what he dictated
- Then gave it over to as many copyists to transcribe it
- An equal number of girls, well-trained in calligraphy, wrote it out in its final form
- All these workers were amply provided for by Ambrose, a rich Alexandrian who had been converted by Origen and was one of his great admirers

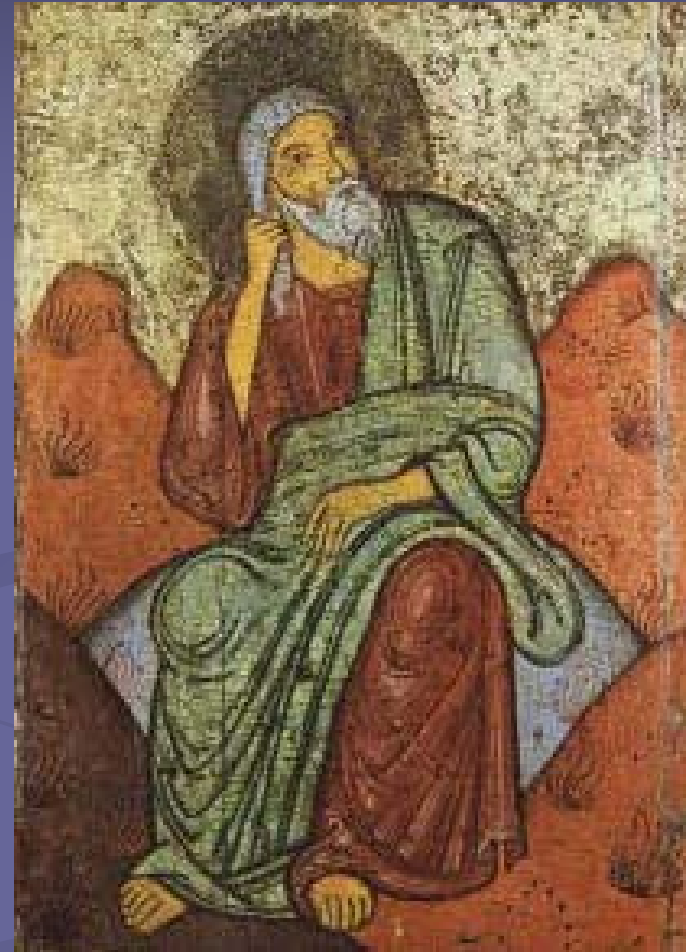
Origen's condemnation for some heresies in his teachings such as:

1. Souls were created before the bodies (the pre-existence of souls), and they are bound to bodies as a punishment of previous sins they had committed; the world is for them only a place of purification
2. The soul of Christ had a previous existence before the Incarnation and it was united with the Divinity

3. All creation, even Satan and demons, will return back to its origin in God, (eternal punishment has an end) i.e. salvation of the devil and universal salvation of all humans
4. The dead bodies will not rise on judgment day but rather they will be substituted by other bodies
5. Reincarnation of the souls (transmigration of souls)
6. Many universes were created before this world, and others will be created after this world

The Anti-Origenists:

1. Pope Demetrius (12th) of Alex
 2. St. Methodius of Olympus
 3. St. Eustathius of Antioch
 4. St. Epiphanius of Salamis
 5. St. Jerome (Hieronimus)
 6. Pope Theophilus (23rd) of Alex
- St. Jerome says that all the bishops endorsed the attack on Origen except the Bishops of Palestine, Arabia, Achaia and Phoenicia



Defenders of Origenism

1. Pope Dionesius (14th) of Alex
2. St. Didymus the blind
3. Pamphilus of Caesarea of Berytus (Beirut)
4. The Great Cappadocians: Sts. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa
5. St. Gregory the wonders performer, of Neocaesarea
6. St. John Chrysostom



- Some defenders built their opinion depending on their belief that these heresies are not documented in his original works, but only in the Latin translations
- The Latin translations of Rufinus of Aquileia are by no means trustworthy, since he, assuming that Origen's writings had been tampered with by the heretics, considered himself at liberty to omit or amend heterodox statements
- He attempted to clarify Origen's thought where he found it obscure and admitted that he had abridged the text of Origen
- Others says that he didn't review his voluminous writings after scribing

Origenism and Conflict between Egypt and Constantinople:

- 4 Egyptian monks called the “Tall brothers” and their followers (around 50) adopting Origen’s beliefs were excommunicated by Pope Theophilus (23rd) of Alex
- St. John Chrysostom accepted them in his communion, defending them in a letter to Pope Theophilus
- Misunderstanding lead St. John to be exiled in 403 AD by “Council of the Oak” headed by Pope Theophilus

Didymus the Blind

- Born in Alexandria around 312 AD
- Lost his sight at the age of 4, but his disability did not deter him from developing the visions of the mind and soul
- Succeeded in mastering the whole gamut of the sciences then known (grammar, rhetoric, poetry, philosophy, mathematics and music) in addition to the ecclesiastical subjects
- Not only recited both Old and New Testaments, but also compare and comment on them
- Became a student of Origen at the School of Alex.

- In 340 AD, St. Athanasius (20th) appointed him Dean of the School, leading it for about half a century
- Among his disciples Gregory Nazienzen, Jerome, Rufinus, and Palladius
- Became ecclesiastical writer; among his writings:
 - *De Trinitate* (On the Trinity)
 - *De Spiritu Sancto* (On the Holy Spirit)
 - *Adversus Manichaeos* (Against the Manichaeans)
 - Notes and expositions of various books, especially Psalms and Catholic Epistles

- Invented a method for writing and reading by raised letters; the same method invented 15 centuries later by Braille (1809-1852)
- St. Anthony visited him several times in Alex. staying at his house, and Palladius 4 times
- Julian's death was revealed to him after fasting, prayer and sadness for the persecuted
- Died about 395 AD, at age 83, leaving behind the world of darkness which could not conquer his soaring spirit, to live in the world of Light
- Entitled the "Blind Seer of Alexandria"



of Moor and Bedl

Genesis
Chapter 1
In the beginning, God created
the heaven and the earth.

Rita

Martyrs and Martyrdom

Concept of Suffering

- Christianity is the religion of pure sacrificial love
- Christ's love led Him to suffer unto death for us
- Our suffering is considered a fellowship of Christ sufferings (Phil. 3:10 ; Col. 1:24)
- Indeed we suffer with Him to be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17)

“To you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Phil. 1:29)

- Persecution is not expected for certain group or certain time because “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2Tim. 3:12)
- The term “martyr” (Greek μάρτυς “witness”)
- The Martyr is someone who loved his Christ, witnessed for Him and was killed because of his faith
- Martyrs are honored in heaven (Rev. 6:9,11)
- They proceed before all ranks of saints
- Church should be build on the relics of martyrs (under the alter)
- We celebrate their feast of martyrdom

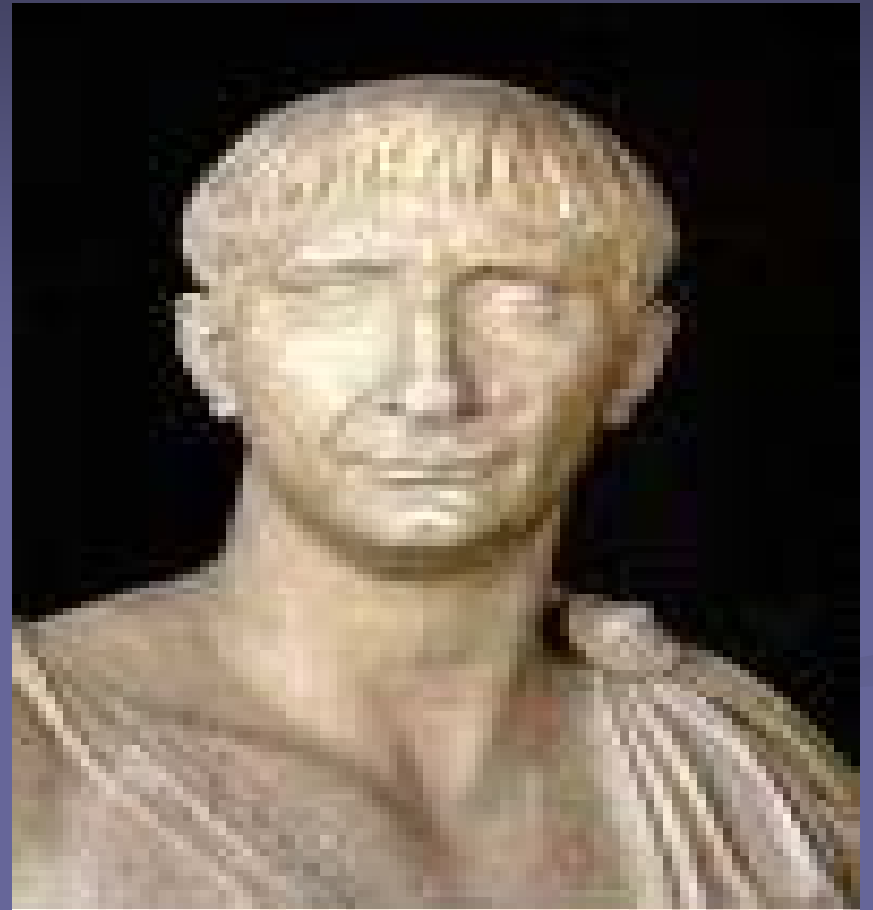
Roman Persecution

Historians, since 5th century, counted 10 great persecutions under the Emperors:

1. Nero (64-68)
2. Domitian (81-96)
3. Trajan (98-117)
4. Marcus Aurelius (161-180)
5. Septimius Severus (193-211)
6. Maximinus (235-238)
7. Decius (249-251)
8. Valerian (253-260)
9. Aurelian (270-275)
10. Diocletian (284-305)



Nero



Trajan

- The Roman persecution was concentrated on Egypt, especially Alexandria, for the following reasons:
 1. The success of the Church of Alexandria and its School in attracting even philosophers to the new faith
 2. Avoiding any revolution that could stop providing Rome with Egyptian products
 3. Egyptians courage and their sincere desire to attain the crowns of martyrdom perplexed the persecutors
- The Copts started their calendar by the beginning of the reign of Diocletian, the most tyrant, in 284 AD, calling it “*Anno Martyri*”

Church of Martyrs



- “If the martyrs throughout the world were to be put on one side of the scale and the Coptic martyrs alone on the other side of the scale, the latter would outweigh the former.”

-Tertullian

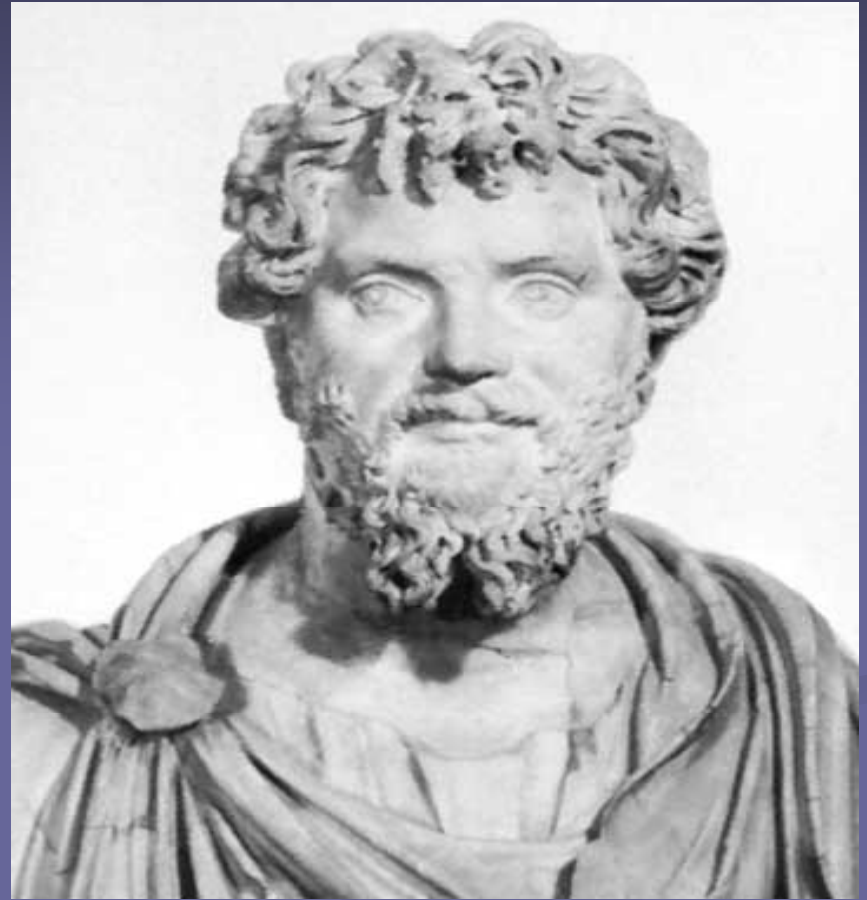
- “Church of Martyrs” for two reasons:
 1. Myriads of martyrs
 2. Ardent desire

- When they were prevented from worship in churches, they never fled to catacombs or tombs to worship
- They worshiped openly and fearlessly in the fields
- Women and children were no less courageous than men
- Both Septimius Severus and Dioclitian visited Egypt to increase the persecution and to prevent preaching at all cost
- Many spiritual leaders devoted themselves to strengthen the martyrs and confessors; and as eye-witnesses, they wrote their biography and preserved their relics



Diocletian

(Gaius Aurelius Diocletianus)



Septimius Severus

Diocletian's Edict

- In 297/298 AD, Diocletian ordered all soldiers and administrators to offer sacrifices to the gods; and anyone who refused to do so, will be immediately dismissed
- On February 24, 303 AD, another edict was issued and posted on the walls of the palace, ordering the destruction of all churches and scriptures within the empire
- So, the great church of Nicomedia, which was built on a hill facing the palace, was destroyed

- Persecution became more furious because the palace was burned twice within 2 weeks (may be by Galerius according to Lactantius)
- 2 more edicts followed in March of that year; the 1st was ordering all Christian clergy to be thrown in prison, and to be released only after offering sacrifice to the Roman gods, and the 2nd to torture them to renounce their faith
- In April 30, 303, Maximianus Heraculius issued the 4th edict, to wipe out Christianity from the entire world, ordering all Christians to worship the Roman gods, or would be executed

- Diocletian played his role in this last persecution for only 2 years and 2 months (303-305)
- Maximinus Daza (305-313), Caesar of Egypt and Syria, Sustained the persecution inaugurated by Diocletian
- His reign was the most prolific in bloodshed of any period in the whole history of the church persecutions
- The martyrs of his reign were usually attributed to the “Diocletian Persecution”

- Monsignor Guerin, a French Roman Catholic Cardinal, mentions in his “Dictionnaire de Dictionnaires” that the number of those martyred is estimated at 800,000; the last of whom was the Coptic Patriarch, Pope Peter I, the 17th Pope of Alexandria, in 311 AD. He was rightfully named, “The Seal of Martyrs”



Great Examples

- Governors: Mennas, Hermogenes
- Officers: Mena, Tadros of Shatb
- Bishops: Besada, Abadion
- Priests: Abba Clog, Abba Begol
- Deacons: Timothy, Apollonius
- Mothers: Rebekah, Dolagi
- Virgins: Demiana, Botamina
- Monks: Dioscorus & Esculapios
- Children: Abanoub, Chenousi
- Cities: Akmim, Esna, Ansena



The Influential Factors

1. The world is temporal compared with eternity (2 Cor. 4:17 ; 1 Cor. 7:29,30 ; 1 Jhn. 2:17)
2. We are sojourners in this world (1 Pet. 2:11 ; 2 Cor. 5:6,8 ; 1 Pet. 1:17 ; Heb. 11:13)
3. The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one; and life here is full of pain, sorrows and tribulations (1 Jhn. 5:19 ; Jhn. 16:20,33)
4. Our sufferings will be changed into great heavenly glory (Jhn. 12:25 ; Rom. 8:18)

Evaluation of Martyrdom



1. A sacred desire
2. A proof of courage
3. A way of preaching
4. An evidence for the truth of Christianity
5. Declares the Christian virtues
6. The motive to protect the Orthodox faith
7. The initiator of Monasticism

Outcome of Persecutors Conduct

- “We ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is righteous thing with God to reply with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.” (2Thes. 1:4-7)

- Lactantius had a successful public career in teaching rhetoric in Latin
- At Diocletian's request, he became an official professor of rhetoric in Nicomedia
- He became tutor in Latin to Constantin's son Crispus
- He was a pagan and convert and became a Christian apologetic
- He wrote a book, after the era of Diocletian, called "*De Mortibus Persecutorum*" or "On The Death of the persecutors"

- The book has an apologetic character, but has been treated as a work of history by Christian writers
- The point of the work is to describe the frightful deaths of the persecutors of Christians: Nero, Domitian, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, and the contemporaries of Lactantius himself, Diocletian, Maximian, Galerius, and Maximus



■ Examples:

- Nero: bereaved of authority, and precipitated from the height of empire at age 32, suddenly disappeared (suicide?), and even his burial-place is unknown
- Domitian: was delivered to his enemies, murdered in his own palace and the very memory of his name was erased
- Decius: was slain by the barbarians, together with his son and great part of his army; he was not honored with the rites of sepulture, but he was devoured by wild beasts and birds
- Valerian: imprisoned by the Persians in the vilest condition of slavery; he was flayed, and his skin, stripped from the flesh, was dyed with vermilion, and placed in their temple in remembrance of their triumph

- Aurelian: was assassinated by his familiar friends before his bloody edicts had reached the more distant provinces
- Diocletian: lived to see a disgrace which no former emperor had ever seen, and, under the double load of vexation of spirit and bodily maladies, he resolved to die. Tossing to and fro, with his soul agitated by grief, he could neither eat nor take rest. He sighed, groaned, and wept often. He lost both sight and mind, and killed himself in the same year (313) of Milan Edict
- Maximianus Heraculus: committed suicide (310)

- **Galerius:** was suddenly overcome by a serious disease. First his genitals suffered a severe inflammation, followed by the growth of a deep ulcer which was soon befallen by worms and began to swell and rot on his body. After only a few days following the signing of the decree to stop Christian persecution, Galerius succumbed to his gruesome illness (May 311 AD)
- **Maximinus Daia:** his army was utterly defeated by Licinius. He escaped the slaughter and disguised as a slave. Like Constantine, he issued his edict for Christian tolerance. Blinded and suffering, he died a miserable death in Tarsus in August 313 AD

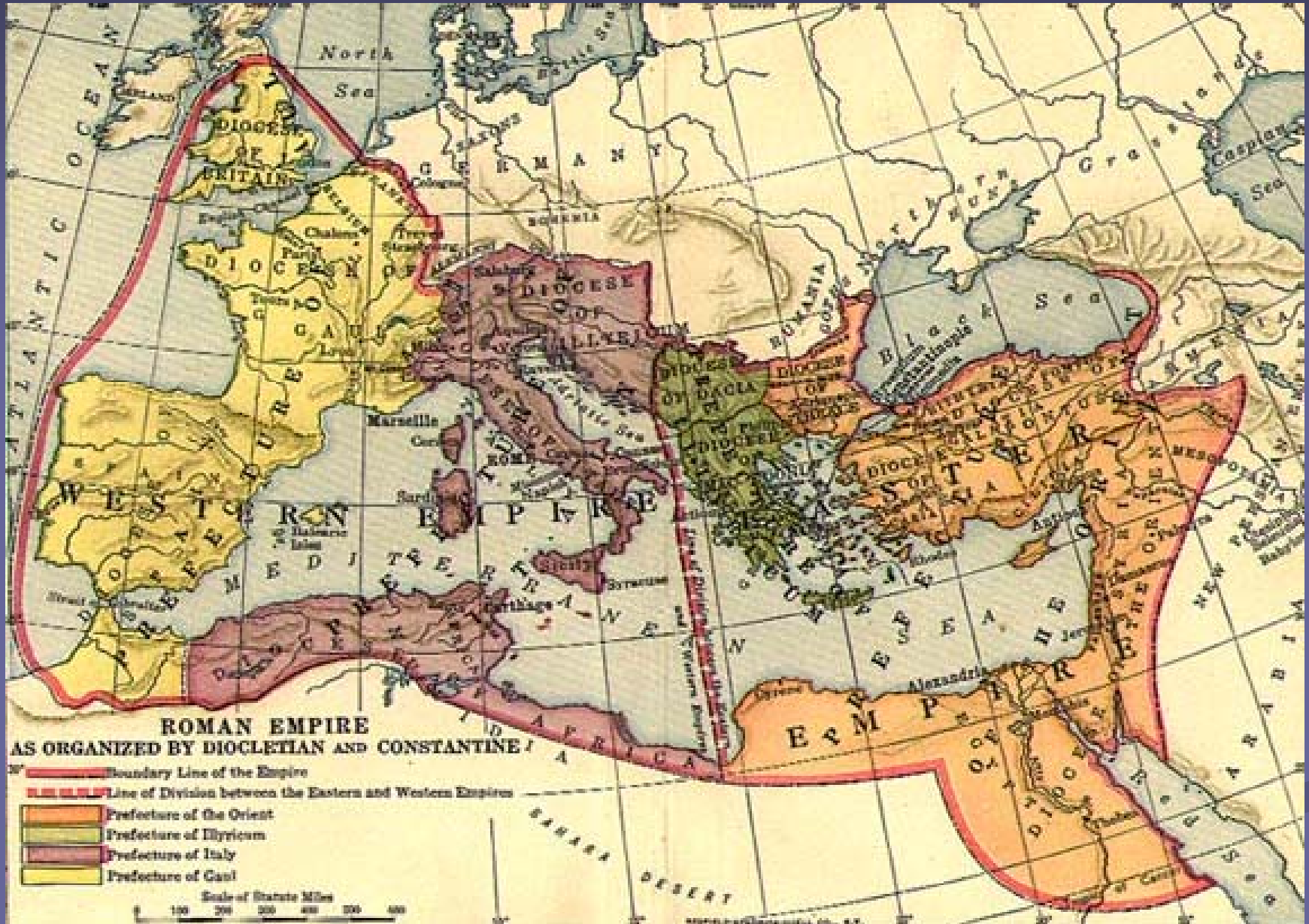
Constantine and Christianity

- The first Christian Roman Emperor
- His reign was a turning point for the Christian Church
- In 313 He announced, with Licinius, toleration of Christianity in the “Edict of Milan,” which removed penalties for professing Christianity and returned confiscated church properties



- Though a similar edict had been issued in 311 by Galerius, then senior emperor of the Tetrarchy, because of his illness
- Constantine's lengthy rule, conversion, and patronage of the Church redefined the status of Christianity in the empire.
- The 3rd and last edict Had been issued from Nicomedia by Maximinus Daia in 313 after his defeat by Licinius and before his suicide





Famous Characters



Arianus, Antinoe's Ruler

- The Roman Empire did not know a ruler more cruel than Arianus, who devoted all his strength to impose severe tortures upon Christians
- He invented new methods and instruments for torturing, and the rulers in the entire Empire sent to him those who refused to abandon their Christian faith



- As the grace of God worked with Saul of Tarsus, worked within this wolf converting him into a lamb for slaughter
- During torturing Philemon and Apollonius, Arianus ordered killing them by arrows
- One of the arrows reflected back to hit his eye
- Philemon told him, as he was crying for help, to wait until the next day and use dust from their tomb to heal his eye in Lord Jesus' name
- After the two Christians were beheaded, he used the dust and his eye was cured

- In sorrow and repentance, he accepted the Christian faith, and liberated all the imprisoned Christians
- Diocletian, while visiting Alexandria, was agitated when he heard
- Before traveling to meet Diocletian, he visited the martyrs' tomb, and the messengers who were with him heard a voice encouraging him to be martyred
- Diocletian ordered to bury him alive after tying his arms and legs with iron chains, and millstone to his neck

- When Diocletian saw Arianus alive after his burial the next day, he ordered to drown him and the messengers who were converted, because of this miracle, in sand bags in the sea and they were martyred at the beginning of the year 305 AD



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The Theban Legion

- One of the Egyptian legions that had won high repute (6600 members)
- Its members were Christians and natives of Thebes (Luxor), capital of Pharaonic Egypt
- Maximian requested Diocletian to send it over to him to quell the rebellion in Gaul (France)
- Upon arrival, Maximian divided them into two groups to encamp on the border of Gaul, and Switzerland

- On the eve of the battle Maximian ordered them to pay homage to his gods
- They unanimously refused to obey his order and declared they were Christians
- He therefore ordered to have them decimated, hoping thereby to intimidate them



- They wrote him a letter which they all signed, that says:
“Great Caesar, we are your soldiers, and at the same time we are God’s slaves. We owe you our military service, but our prime allegiance we owe to God. From you we receive our daily wages; from Him our eternal reward. Great Caesar, we cannot obey any order if it runs counter to God’s commands. If your orders coincide with God’s commands we will certainly obey them; if not, “we ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29), for our loyalty to Him surpasses all other loyalties. We are not rebels; if we were, we would defend ourselves for we have our weapons. But we prefer to die upright than to live stained. As Christians we will serve you. But we will not relinquish our Faith in our Lord, and this we openly declare.”

- Again he ordered a 2nd decimation, and once more asked the remnant to accompany him to the temple, but fearlessly they said, “We are Christians”
- Thereupon Maximian ordered his Roman soldiers to wipe out the whole Legion (303 AD)



St. Peter the Seal of Martyrs

- Was the only son who was born in answer to his parents' fervent prayers
- Was ordained deacon at 12, then priest at 16
- His knowledge, wisdom and understanding earned for him the surname of “Excellent Doctor of Christianity” and to be the School's Dean
- He defeated Sabellius, Bishop of Ptolemais, who denied the Holy Trinity, considering them as three modes of God self-manifestation
- He became the 17th successor to St. Mark in 300

- He interpreted the whole Bible; and wrote many treatises on “The Trinity,” “The Holy Spirit,” “Against the Manichaeans,” “Philosophy,” “Incarnations” ... etc
- His days were full of excessive stress because of persecution by Diocletian and Arianism
- He drew up 14 canons for accepting repentant apostates, respected by the Church both in East and West



- He ordained Arius deacon, then priest, but he excommunicated him and his fellows because of his teachings against the Divinity of Christ
- He knew by the Holy Spirit that his disciples, Archilaos and Alexandros, in turn, were going to succeed him
- He warned them against ever re-accepting Arius in the church
- Diocletian noticed that after so many years of persecutions, the Christians of Egypt had not been exterminated, but rather the converts were increasing

- He ordered to arrest and torture their religious leaders, including the Pope
- A large crowd gathered at the prison door to liberate Pope Peter
- In order to avoid any blood shedding, he sent secretly to the commander to plan for his martyrdom without killing his people
- He prayed fervently, before his martyrdom, asked God to accept his life as a ransom for his people, and a voice was heard saying, “Amen”
- He was beheaded in 311 AD, ending that persecution, giving him the name “The Seal of Martyrs”

Botamina, a Chaste Martyr

- A pretty Christian girl and one of Origen disciples
- She was a maidservant to a non-Christian man
- Her master failed to submit her to fulfill his lustful desire
- He accused her Christianity to the Governor during the persecution by Septimius Severus
- He bribed the Governor to increase her torture, that she may subject herself to his desire, or she may die
- The Governor ordered to be tortured severely

- She suffered severely to keep her faith and virginity
- He threatened her to be handed to mighty wrestlers
- Because of her reply, which the governor considered indecent, he ordered to put her in boiling oil
- Officer Basilidus protected her from the obscene terms of the angry people, and treated her nicely
- She promised to pray for him to receive the Crown of Martyrdom

- Her only request was to go into the oil slowly with her clothes, to avoid being naked
- After suffering for 3 hours, she was martyred
- She appeared to Basilidus in a vision, 3 days later, putting a crown on his head
- Next day, he confessed his Christianity because of her steadfastness in spite of her sufferings
- Origen and Tertullian mentioned that a great number of pagans converted to Christianity because of her great virtues



Monastic Movement

Non-Christian Asceticism

- Was known many centuries before Christendom
- There are major differences between the concepts

Indian Asceticism:

- Buddhism
 1. Salvation depends only on Asceticism
 2. Hand working is rejected but only for beginners
 3. Eating meat is prohibited
 4. No systems for communal worship
 5. Indian orders has no system to control its ascetics
 6. It was developed from loneliness to communal

Greek Asceticism

- Known in Orphic and Pythagorean systems
- Neo-Platonism represents great development in the Greek Asceticism in 3rd and 4th centuries
- It differs than earlier philosophy in emphasizing contemplation than work
- They believe that the soul could reach to contemplation in God if purified from earthly thoughts; and freedom from materialistic cares is achievable by solitude and asceticism
- Kept as individual activity

Ancient Egyptian Asceticism

- Small number of females in solitude in Serapis temple
 1. Solitude willingly ended at any time
 2. Able to be mingled with society
 3. Were not celibate
 4. No religious zeal
 5. Not for repentance
 6. Poverty for gaining material supplies

Jewish Asceticism

- “Essenes” and “Therapeutae” are two groups
- Essenes were vanished after Jerusalem destruction
- Scholars doubt Essenes ascetic practices
 1. Marriage is necessary for keeping mankind
 2. Insisting on external purity
 3. Huge gap between their 4 levels, who treated differently
 4. Using magic and worshiping the sun beside respecting Moses Law
 5. Denying the resurrection of bodies

- Therapeutae were Hellenic Jews near Alexandria during Philo's time
- This group differs completely from Essenes
 1. Cares about Greek Philosophy
 2. Hand work was prohibited
 3. Males and females were gathered on Saturdays after spending the entire week in solitude



Christian Monasticism

- “Monasticism” is expression used for Eremitical mode of life, and used later for Coenobitic life (Greek *μοναχός*, *monachos*, derived from Greek *monos*, alone)
- It is a life of asceticism made up of solitude, poverty, worship, contemplation, and purity of heart together with elements of manual labor
- Started at the end of 3rd century in a solitude form, and developed during the 4th century into Communal life
- Differs from all forms exists in Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Phoenician, and Ancient Egyptian

Principles of Monasticism

- Monasticism depend on Biblical principles
- 4 main principles:
 - Celibacy (Matt. 19:10-12 ; 1Cor. 7:8,32,33,38)
 - Solitude (Jhn. 15:19 ; 17:14 ; Mk. 6:46 ; Lk. 21:37)
 - Poverty (Lk. 16:13 ; 18:22 ; Matt. 19:29 ; 1Tim. 6:7)
 - Obedience (Heb. 13:17 ; Heb. 5:8 ; Phip. 2:8)
- The Life of our Lord Jesus is the perfect example for implementing these principles
- 2 important facts:
 - Marriage is a sacred sacrament (Eph. 5:32 ; 1Tim. 4:1-5)
 - Celibacy and monasticism are optional (1Cor. 7:6,7)

- Asceticism is not a goal in itself that believers desire to attain, but it is a practical response to divine love, to gain self-control (1Cor. 9:27)
- The ascetic life doesn't mean an enmity to the body, its senses and energies; but rather it looks upon the body in sanctity as a sacred temple
- “Monasticism” is not isolation from men but fellowship with God



Beginning of Monasticism

- All monastic forms started in Egypt
- Undoubtedly the various monastic forms did not start by previous church plan, but through instinct love that flamed the hearts of many early Copts
- Practicing asceticism appeared in Egypt at the end of 1st century, aiming to flourish the spiritual needs above the bodily desires (1Cor. 9:27)
- Some felt not only the need to live in virginity without family responsibilities (1Cor. 7:32,33), but also the need for a spiritual atmosphere

- Men preferred to leave the cities and live in simple huts in villages or in tombs outside the cities and villages, whether as individuals or groups
- Women lived together in a house to assist one another spiritually, but without spiritual program
- They were called “devotees”
- Some Coptic men escaped to the deserts to live in solitude (1st form of monasticism)
- We know only a small number of them such as St. Paul the 1st Hermit who lived in the desert more than ninety years (250-341 AD)

Establishing Monasticism

- Established during the latter part of the 3rd century and flourished in the 4th century under the example of St. Anthony (251-356 AD)
- He started his life of solitude in a tomb, then in a mountain cave in the wilderness for 20 years, where the 1st monastic community started in the Eastern Wilderness



- Antonian Monasticism or Communal order: a group of monks living in solitude under the guidance of a spiritual father, sharing Liturgy and praises
- Known as “Father of all Monks” in the world for many reasons:
 - Many attracted to his example, after 20 years of complete isolation, to form the 1st monastic group (305)
 - His disciples became leaders of monasticism
 - European monasticism appeared because of St. Athanasius’ book about St. Anthony’s life story (30 years after his departure)
 - He also was an active member of the Church during persecution and heresies

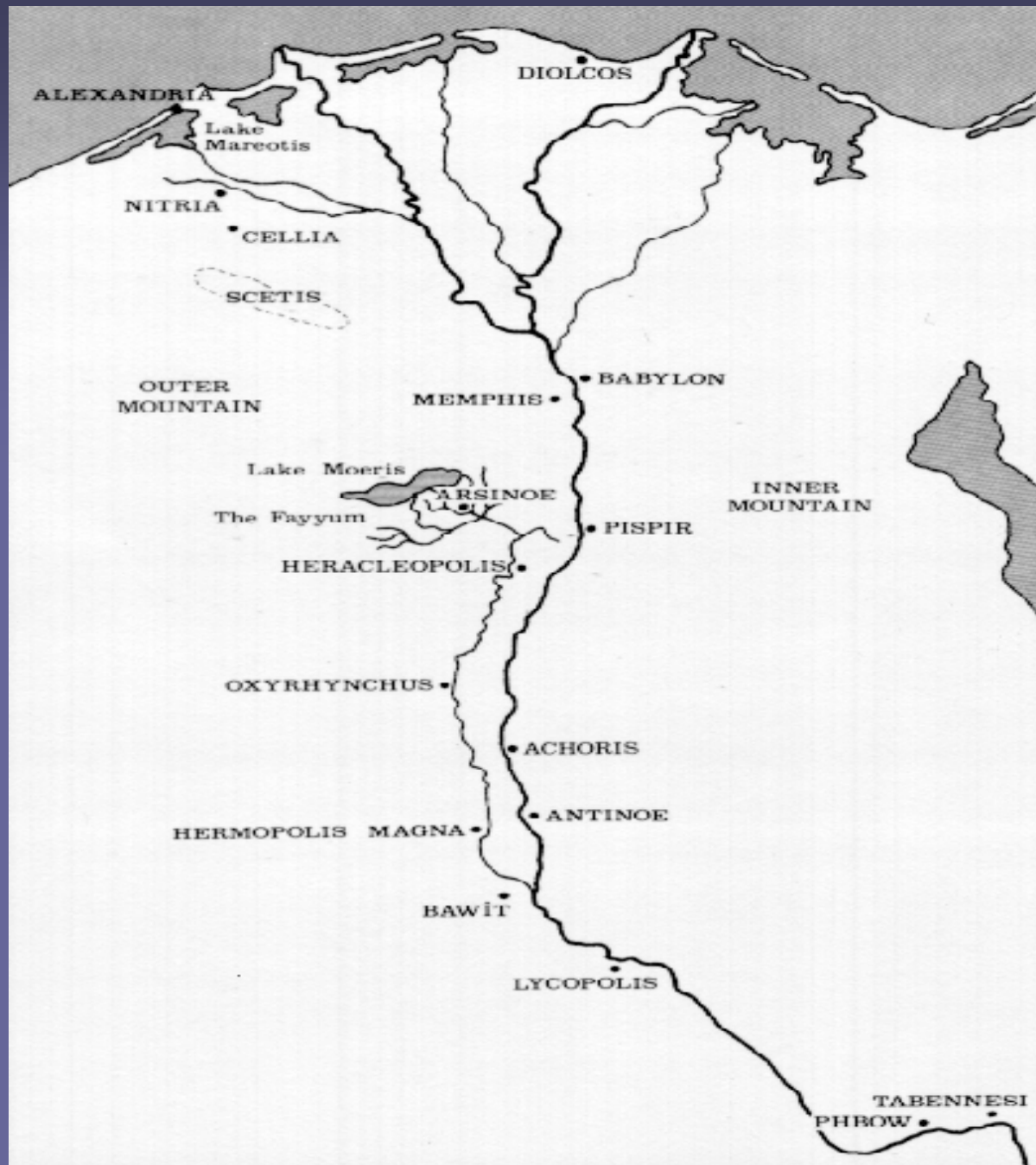
- 3 main communities in Western Desert (Wadi El-Natron):
 - Scetis: Under St. Macarius
 - Nitrea (Pernog): Under St. Amoun, around St. Macarius cell in 330 (4th and mid 5th centuries)
 - Cellia (Kellia): Under St. Amoun in 338



- These communities were of great value and has important influence in the church history because:
 - This area was blessed by the Holy Family
 - Nearness to the capital Alex., where the pope residency attracted both Egyptian and Foreigners
 - Its monks had role in the religious events in Alex. (theological discussions at 4th & 5th centuries)
 - Shelter for the Popes during Byzantine persecution
 - Its great sacred fame
 - Making the Myron at St. Makarious Monastery for long time

- 5 monastic communities at Upper Egypt:
 - Pispir, where St. Anthony started
 - Oxyrinchus (Bahnasa) had 1000s of Monks (St. Jerome)
 - Antinoe (Malawi) had 1200 monk and 12 nunneries (Palledius)
 - Lycus (Assiut) famed by St. John of Assiut (Tabaisy)
 - Chenoboskion or Schenesit (Quena) famed by St. Palamon





Coenobitism

- St. Pachomius (290-348 AD) established the coenobitic system because the anchoritic order was not fit for all
- He established the 1st monastery (320 AD); and established various monastic constitutions or rules under the guidance of abbot or abness



- Soon more than 100 monks lived at his monastery; he came to build 6 or 7 more monasteries and a nunnery
- By the time of his death in 345, there were 3,000 monks in the Pachomian monasteries, according to Palladius
- In 420, this number grew to 7,000; and then moved out of Egypt into Palestine and the Judea Desert, Syria, North Africa and eventually Western Europe



- Monks combined manual labor with unceasing prayer both day and night according to the rules
- He wrote his Rules in Coptic; then translated to Greek by Palladius for the benefit of the foreign monks
- St. Jerome, a hermit from Bethlehem, translated it from Greek to Latin in 404 AD
- St. Basil visited the Pachomian monasteries and he was profoundly impressed by what he saw
- Both St. Basil and St. Benedict drew from the Pachomian Rules in setting forth their own ones

Anchoritism

- Established by St. Shenouda the Archimandrite (Greek: ἀρχιμανδριτης Head of Anchorites) (333-451)
- In his monastery, he combined both the Antonian and Packomian systems
- Through his influence, the population of the monks in the White Monastery jump from 30 to 4,000 monks and 1,800 nuns and occupied an area of about 12,800 acres
- Such an area included 2 churches, cells, kitchens, 2 schools, and storehouses

- The monk is practicing 4 types of prayers:
 - a. Short prayers before work
 - b. Private Psalms and Praises
 - c. Communal prayers 4 times a day
 - d. Divine Liturgy (laity are permitted to attend)
- St. Shenouda paid attention to education of both his monks and congregation; and provided them health care
- The Coenobitism was not mandatory, and solitude was encouraged
- Archimandrite is the head of these monasteries
- He lead 4 seminars yearly for all monks and Anchorites

Women Monastic Movement

- Started early in church history, and passed by different stages
- 1st Stage: living ascetic life at home (1Cor. 7:25)
e.g. Philip's four virgin daughters (Acts 21:8,9)
- 2nd Stage: at "Houses for Virgins" under church supervision e.g. Pope Demetrius' wife, St. Anthony's sister and St. Amoun's wife; devoted widows are included (1Tim. 5:3-10)
- 3rd Stage: at nunneries under certain monastic rules

- The 1st monastic women community in the world was founded in Alexandria by St. Syncletica, whose biography and teachings were preserved by Pope Athanasius
- St. Pachomius was the 1st to establish a nunnery in Upper Egypt, for his sister, contained 400 Nuns; followed by establishing another one
- Many foreign abbesses came to Egypt, like St. Melania the Great (374 AD) and her granddaughter Melania (418 AD)
- Many abbesses were endowed with the grace of the true leadership and spiritual discernment, like Mother Sarah, who lived in Pelusium, and her sayings were treasured by the desert Fathers

Upper Egypt Nunneries

- Amelineau in his book “Les Ouvres de Shenoudi” mentioned that St. Pachomius established 3 nunneries; and St. Shenouda established a center for Virgins contained 1,800 nuns by Akhmim itself
- At Antinoe, there was a great community for nuns under Abbess Talis (80 years in asceticism)
- At Bahnasa, 20,000 nuns under the bishop’s guidance
- Other nunneries at Licopolis, Queft, Faw, Fayoum and Giza

Lower Egypt Nunneries

- St. Demiana's in Belqas wilderness
- St. Jeremiah's by Menouf, contained 300 nuns
- In Cairo, there were 7 nunneries at 15th century
- West of Alexandria, there were many nunneries, beside many others in Delta area



Women in Wilderness

- Many Egyptian and foreign women were disguised in men's garments to live an ascetic life in men's monasteries, and they became pioneers in asceticism and spirituality e.g. Hilary, the daughter of Emperor Zeno (5th century)
- Many hermit women lived in the desert e.g. St. Mary of Egypt who was converted in Jerusalem, and dwelt in Jordan desert for about 45 years, seeing nobody except St. Zosima twice in the last two years of her life

Great Examples

- St. Macarius the great (Scetis)
- St. Amonius (Nitrea)
- St. Paphnutius (Bishop of Thebes)
- St. Isidore the priest
- St. Palamon (Quena)
- St. Serapion
- Abbes Sarah
- Abbes Syncletica (Alexandria)



- St. John of Assiut (Tabaisy)
- St. Wessa, St. Shenouda the Archimandrite's disciple
- St. Tadros, St. Pachomius' disciple
- St. Pambo (Abbot of Nitrea)
- St. Bishoy, the beloved
- St. Paul of Tamouh
- The strong St. Moses
- St. Paul, the simple



Non Egyptian:

- Sts. Maximus & Dometius, children of Emperor Valentinian I
- St. Arsanius, the tauter of princes
- St. Hilary, daughter of Zeno
- St. Anastasia of Constantinople
- St. Apollinaire of Constantinople



Coptic Monasticism Abroad

1. Through St. Anthony's Biography:

- Pope Athanasius' exile, in Treves (336-338 AD), and in Rome (340-349 AD) accompanied with two monks, gave an idea about monastic life
- Pope Athanasius' book "*Vita Antonii*" (about 357AD) which was distributed all over the world
- His numerous speeches about Egyptian virgins and widows encouraged for western women monastic life to start by Marcella, their host widow

2. By pilgrims and Ascetics:

- Many of them visited Egypt, during 4th century
- They transferred and established forms of monastic life abroad, whether by their speeches, writings or monastic life
- Among them:
 - Palladius: visited Egypt twice spending many years, and wrote “Paradise of the Holy Fathers” known as “Lausiac History” (420 AD)
 - John Cassian: met with many hermits for many years and wrote 2 books “Institutes” and “Conferences” in Marcelle (beginning of 5th century); and founded a monastery and nunary near Marcelle

- Rufinus of Aquileia wrote (translate) “*Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*” (394/5 AD)
- St. Jerome visited Egypt (385 AD) with Paula, who became a Roman Nun, and wrote many books about hermit Copts, Pachomian system and rules in Latin (404 AD), and sent these rules to Marcella and her group of nuns in Rome
- Among others: Sts. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory the wonder worker, John Chrysostom, Hilary of Poitier and Eusabius of Vercelli

3. By Coptic Monks:

- Some of them established monastic life abroad, whether by themselves or through those foreigners who became their disciples
- Mar Eugenius became a disciple of St. Pachomius; established a monastery in Nisibus Persia and translated St. Pachomius' rules to Persian and Syrian
- According to the Chaldean tradition, 70 Egyptian monks helped Mar Eugenius in building several monasteries at Mesopotamia, establishing many monastic communities in Armenia, Persia and northern Arabia

- Evagrius Ponticus (346-399) lived as a monk for 2 years in Nitria, then 14 years in the “cells”
- St. Hilarion of Palestine (291-371 AD) became a disciple of Sts. Anthony and Pachomius; and returned back with some Egyptian monks to establish monastic life that spread in Jordan and Syria



- Both Etheria (Egaria), a Spanish abbess (4th century) and St. Melania the elder, a Roman lady, visited the Egyptian desert
- St. Epiphanius (315-403 AD), bishop of Salamis Cyprus, had been instructed in monastic Coptic thought in Egypt; then built a monastery in Palestine his native land
- Some Coptic monks established St. Makarius Monastery on eastern mount at Cyprus
- Monasticism reached Ethiopia at 5th century by Coptic monks, 9 of them were St. Pachomius' disciples who founded many monasteries

Influence of Monasticism

1. Spiritual influence:

- Good example in repentance, virtues...
- Praying for both church, community & world

2. Doctrinal influence:

- Fighting against heresies e.g. St. Anthony and St. Shenouda the Archimandrite
- Protecting the Orthodox faith e.g. St. Samuel the Confessor
- Preaching Christianity

3. Religious studies:

- Many theologians and scholars wrote in different aspects

4. Educational influence:

- St. Pachomius & St. Shenouda insisted on education, and accepted only educated monks
- Teaching sermons & writings
- Revealing truth about myths and pagan cultures
- Encouraging to recite verses and Psalms
- Writing manuscripts

5. Social influence:

- Social community was affected by the ascetic and virtuous family life
- Leaders selection depending on such criteria
- Possibility of sacred life protect against desperation
- Comfort and help for the sick and sufferers inside the monasteries, specially during disasters
- Monasteries were centers for teaching sciences (medicine, chemistry, math, architecture...), artistic works (carving, decorating, music, painting...), and small industries (carpentry, textile, glazed earthenware, papyrus production...)

The eminent historian Stanley Lane-Poole says:

“We do not yet know how much we in the British Isles owe to these remote hermits. It is more than probable that to them we are indebted for the 1st preaching of the Gospel in England, where, till the coming of Augustine, the Egyptian monastic rule prevailed. But more important is the belief that Irish Christianity, the great civilizing agent of the early Middle Ages among the northern nations, was the child of the Egyptian Church. Seven Egyptian monks are buried at Desert Uldith... Everyone knows that the handicraft of the Irish monks in the 9th and 10th centuries far excelled anything that could be found elsewhere in Europe; and if the Byzantine-looking decoration of their splendid gold and silver work, and their unrivalled illuminations, can be traced to the influence of Egyptian missionaries, we have more to thank the Copts for than had been imagined”

Famous Characters



St. Anthony the Great

- Born in 251 to Christian wealthy landowner parents
- At age 20, when he became an orphan, he fulfilled the Biblical words (Matt. 19:21)
- He left to isolated locations on the outskirts of cities, then to the Eastern Desert after 20 years (305)
- The devil fought him with boredom, laziness, and the phantoms of women or wild beasts, which he overcame by the power of prayer
- Many came to visit him and hear his teachings, while others became his disciples
- The Lord granted him performing healings & miracles

- He used to fast till sunset to eat just dried bread and salt and to drink water
- Some times he was abstaining for 3 or 4 days continuously
- He had to combine manual work (making mats of palm leaves) and prayer to overcome boredom as the Angel taught him
- He also received the monastic uniform from an Angel
- St. Macarius visited him, and St. Anthony clothed him with the monk's garb, and foretold him what would be of him

- St. Hilarion, one of his disciples and great ascetic, was the founder of monasticism in Palastine
- St. Anthony visited St. Paul the 1st Hermit and buried him, after clothing him in a tunic which was a present from Pope Athanasius
- He lived for 105 years and departed in the year 356

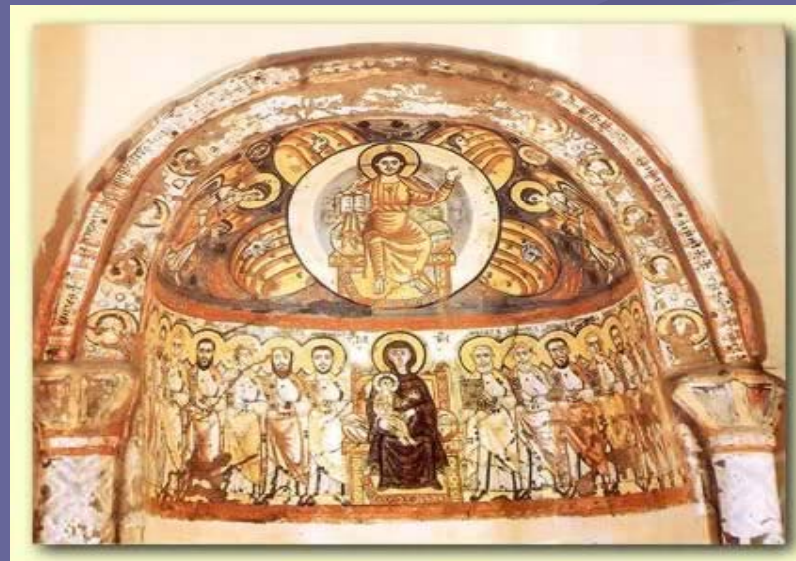


- He spent 85 years in solitude and worship
- He left his cave to Alexandria in 2 main events:
 - During persecution by Maximianus, to receive the crown of martyrdom in 311
 - During the spread of Arianism in 337/8 to support St. Athanasius in fighting this heresy
- He wrote to the Emperor asking the return of Pope Athanasius from his exile in Treves
- His monastery exists in the Eastern Desert, on the same spot where he lived in a cave in the mountain
- We celebrate his feast on Jan. 30th , Tobi 22nd

St. Pachomius of the Koinonia

- Born in 290 in Thebes (Luxor) to pagan parents
- Recruited in Roman Army at the age of 20
- Converted to Christianity in 314 in Esna (Latopolis) because of the generosity of its Christians towards their enemies
- Became a disciple of St. Palamon the Hermit
- An angel guided him to the Coenobitic system
- Established 8 monasteries in Upper Egypt, in addition to 2 nunneries under his sister's guidance; his coenobitic laws were translated into Greek and Latin

- Before his departure, the number of the Pachomian monks in Tabennesis 7000, in Wadi El-Natron 5000, and in Arsinoe (Fayum) 10,000
- Pachomian monasteries contained, beside the Copts, Greek, Romans, Libyans, Syrians, Nubians, Ethiopians, Cappadocians, and others



- In 348, Plague was the cause of death in Egypt
- St. Pachomius strengthened the faith of his children, served the sick, and buried the dead
- He continue this service without fear
- After the feast of Ascension, he got sick
- He advised all the responsible abbots to work for the salvation of everyone, and to protect the system he established
- At the age of 57, he departed in the Lord
- His body was buried by one of his disciples in undisclosed according to his will

St. Shenouda the Archimandrite

- Born of good Christian parents near Akhmim in 333 AD
- His father used to send him to tend the sheep while he was yet a little boy
- He spent his day in prayer and fasting
- He was put under the guidance of St. Pigol, his uncle and abbot of the Red Monastery, at age 10
- As a youth, he proved to be spiritually minded to a rare degree, and strove continuously after spiritual excellence, living in a cave for 5 years
- He was elected as abbot when St. Pigol departed in 383

- Under his guidance, the number of monks reached 4,000; 1,800 of them in the Red Monastery and the rest in the White Monastery, while a few of them preferred solitude, and 1,300 nuns
- He devised a system that was in fact a combination of St. Anthony's hermetic life, and St. Pacomius coenobetic monasticism
- He used to retreat to a remote cell and spend sometime in seclusion



- He encouraged his monks to withdraw to the desert after a few years of coenobitic life
- The doors of his monastery were opened to the villagers every Saturday evening, for prayer and learning from his sermons
- He went about feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and sheltering the homeless
- The schools attached to his monasteries served those living in the vicinity, and his doctors among the monks treated the sick
- He was also granted the gift of performing miracles in the name of the Lord Jesus

- Besides his deep spirituality he was a political leader and a social reformer
- He created Egyptian nationalism or Coptism, eliminating every Hellenistic culture from his Coptic literature
- For this reason, all foreigners seeking monastic life didn't admit to his monasteries
- During his life, 3 ecumenical councils were held:
 - a. Constantinople 381
 - b. Ephesus 431
 - c. Chalcedon 451

- He shared in the 3rd Ecumenical Council in Ephesus with St. Cyril the Great in 431
- He used his talents of speaking and writing to inflame the crowds, using the pure Sahidic Coptic dialect
- He lived to be 118 years old; departed on July 14th (Abib 7th) 451 AD, and his fatherhood over his children in the monasteries and convents lasted 66 years





Abbes Syncletica

- Was a rich beautiful young girl who lived in Alex (4th c.)
- Loved the beauty of virginity from a young age, refusing to marry, and spending her time in prayer and fasting
- Her parents died, leaving her and her blind sister a great fortune
- They distributed their inheritance to the poor



- She left the city, together with her younger sister, and lived in a crypt devoting themselves
- She, who had once been so rich, was living on bread and water and sleeping on the ground
- News of her ascetic deeds quickly spread throughout the vicinity, and many devout women and girls came to live under her guidance
- What most surprised everyone visiting her was her great happiness
- During the course of her ascetic life, she zealously instructed the sisters by word and by deed
- She was struck by an intense illness affected her throat for 3 years

- She was always joyful and grateful to God for letting her to share in the sufferings of His Passion
- She bore her ordeal with true Christian endurance
- The time of her death was revealed to her in a vision, 3 days before her departure
- The Lord gave her a little idea of the great glory and happiness prepared for her in heaven
- After giving final instructions to her nuns, she surrendered her soul to God around 350 AD at age 83

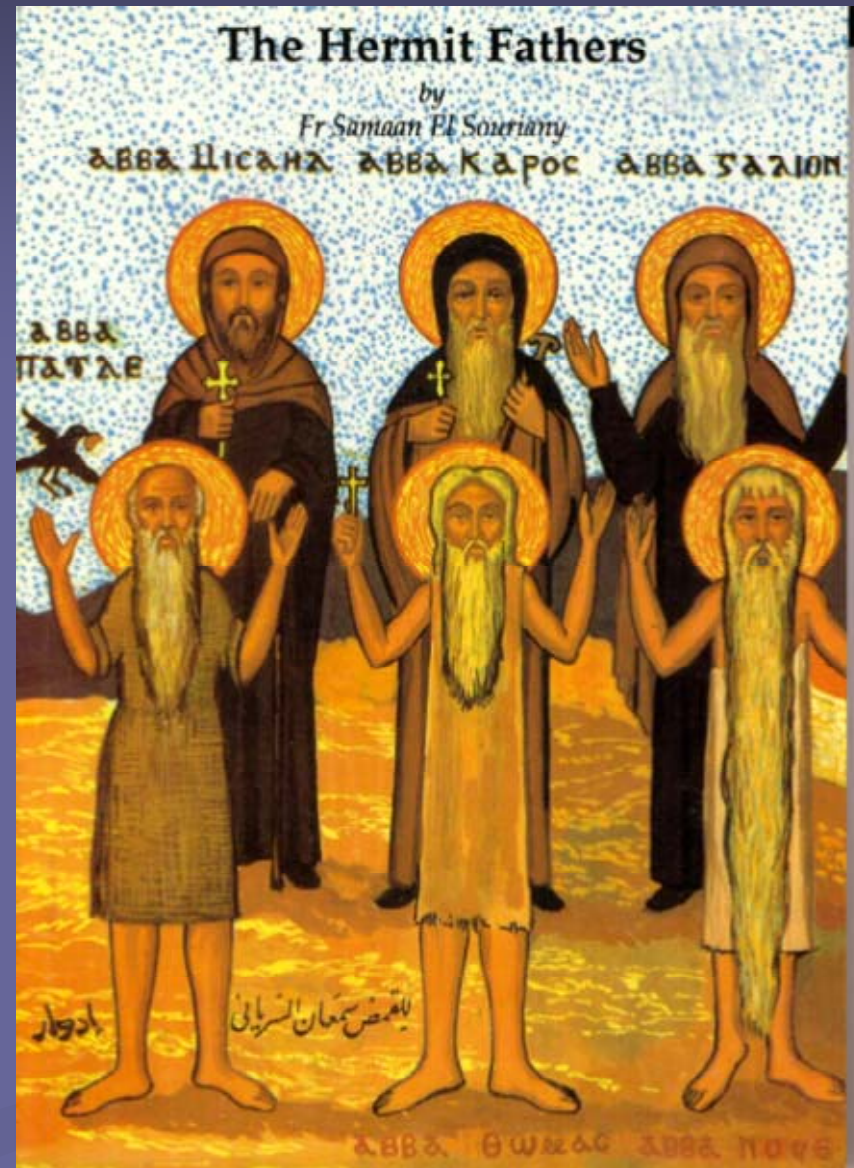


The Hermit Fathers (Anchorites)

- “Anchorites” from the Greek ἀναχωρέω, signifying “to withdraw”
- The hermit fathers withdrew from ordinary society and sought the solitude of the desert under spiritual father
- Their daily life was prayer, and it was a very simple life: a small stone hut or cave, a reed mat for a bed, a sheep-skin, a lamp, a vessel for water or oil, and food was reduced to a minimum, as well as sleep
- They had a horror of extra possessions

- They stayed without sleep because they were watching for the Lord; they did not speak because they were listening to God; they fasted because they were fed by the word of God
- They grew in spirituality and monasticism
- Then they have progressed from the communal life of the monastery, to solitude in wilderness
- For them, the aspect of warfare with the demons was a major concern in the desert
- The knowledge of how to deal with the passions was learnt slowly, by long hard living

- So, a “Hermit” is one who has reached a very high level of spirituality, where his spirit is heavier than his body because he is fervent in spirit and he rarely eats; and can move from place to another in a very short time, without anyone seeing him



Knowing Them

- St. Paul was the 1st hermit, who lived in the Eastern Wilderness for 90 years before meeting St. Anthony, who mentioned St. Paul's chronicle
- St. Mary of Egypt lived a recluse life 45 years, after her repentance, in Jordan wilderness, till she met St. Zosima twice in 2 years
- St. Bebnouda met St. Nofer, St. Timothy, and several other hermit fathers
- It was estimated he had walked for 15 hrs/day at 5 Km/hr, eating wild grass
- Thus he walked for hundreds of kilometers within the inner wilderness to meet these hermit fathers

- St Isaac, Abbot of Qalamoun Monastery wrote the chronicles of Sts. Misael, Ghaleon & others
- St. Shenouda the Archimandrite wrote the Chronicle of St. Bejimi; and his Disciple Wessa wrote that of St. Thomas
- Among the Anchoress (female hermits) St. Anna-Simon the queen and St. Mary of Egypt
- God sends someone to bury their bodies and record their blessed life stories e.g. St. Anthony with St. Paula, St. Bemwa with St. Karas, and St. Abahor with St. Hermina

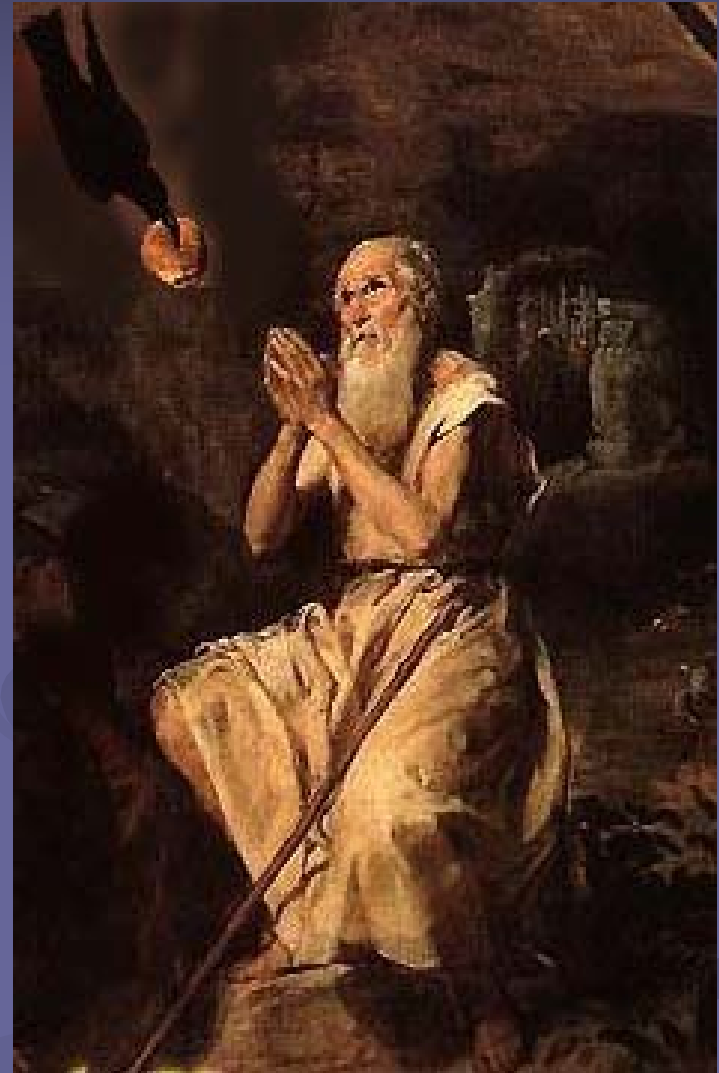
Famous Characters



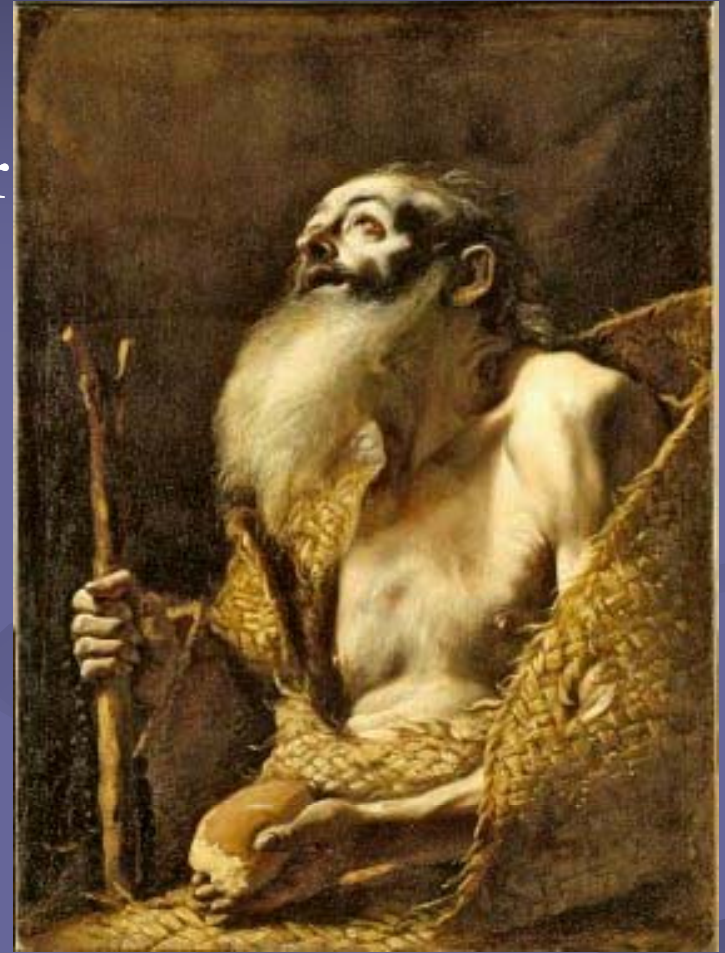
St. Paul the 1st Hermit

- Born in Thebes 235 AD to a rich family
- At age 16, became an orphan under the custody of his brother in law, who planned to stole him
- He learned both Greek and Egyptian intellectual and religious subjects
- He left the world after thinking that he is not belonging to it, but to the heavenly kingdom after passing by a great funeral of a rich man
- Stayed the first 3 days in empty tomb in prayers
- Moving from one place to another till reaching the eastern wilderness near the Red Sea

- Lived in solitude beside water well and palm trees; and a raven brought a half loaf to him every day
- St. Anthony met him (341 AD) according to the Divine plan
- They praised the Lord because the raven brought entire loaf for both of them



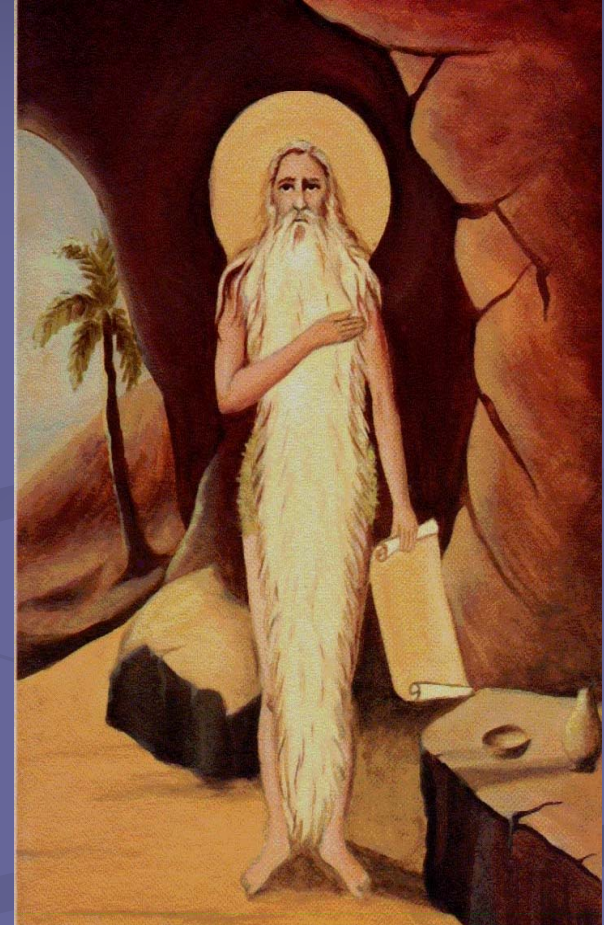
- He asked St. Anthony to bring the gown Pope Athanasius will give him, for with it St. Anthony must wrap his body for burial
- “I am a sinner and unworthy, for indeed the Lord has revealed to me someone much greater than I.” said St. Anthony to his disciples after 2 day journey back from his 1st visit



- On arrival to St. Paul cave, he saw a host of angels carrying the soul of the blessed St. Paul
- St. Anthony found the saint kneeling with his hands outstretched like a cross
- He prayed by the saint thinking that he was alive until he realized his death
- He then carefully wrapped the pure body within the gown, and prayed over him with heartfelt tears
- Two lions dug a burial grave for St. Paul
- He spent 90 years in complete solitude

Abba Nofer the Hermit

- St. Bebnouda (Pavnotius/Paphnutius) wrote his biography
- After long journey in inner desert, he saw the saint near a water well and palm tree
- He feared the saint who came to him, naked, and the hair of his head and beard covered his body



- St. Nofer encouraged him, made the sign of the cross, and prayed the Lord's prayer, then called him by name
- They prayed together, and talked about the greatness and goodness of God, telling St. Bebnouda his story
- He was living in a monastery among righteous monks, who praised the anchorites before him
- He prayed, took a little bread and went out from the monastery
- He dwelt with a righteous hermit who taught him all about the life and the ways of the anchorites

- He came to this place, where he found a palm tree, and a water well
- One cluster of dates is enough food for a month
- He lived there for 60 years in complete solitude
- While they were talking together, the angel of the Lord came down, and told St. Nofer that his departure was near
- Straightway, his color changed and became like fire, then he knelt worshiping God
- After he embraced St. Bebnouda, he delivered up his pure soul

- St. Bebnouda wrapped him, and buried him in his cave
- He wished to live in the place of Abba Nofer, but the palm tree dried and fell down and the water of the well dried up
- That happened by the will of God, so St. Bebnouda would return to the world and tell us about the holy hermits that he had seen



St. Mary of Egypt

- Was born in Egypt in the year 344 AD
- In Alex., she willingly surrendered herself to lusts and bodily desires at age 12
- Joined pilgrims going by ship to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Holy Cross
- Mysterious force prevented her from entering the church; and the more she persisted in trying to enter, the more it would throw her back
- Suddenly guilt filled her heart and began to cry bitterly while beating on her chest, praying, asking St. Mary's intercessions, and deciding to repent

- The Lord permitted her entry into His holy church
- She heard a voice saying, “Cross the River Jordan and there you will find the place of your salvation”
- She lived 45 years in asceticism in wilderness without seeing a man, till she met St. Zosima
- She called him by name, asking him to throw his garment to her, to cover her nakedness



- She told him that the trials and satanic wars she faced were severe, and she still remembered them and trembled
- She knelt before St. Zosima to take his blessings asking him to bring her communion next year, and she'll meet him at the shore of Jordan river on Holy Thursday since he'll not be able to come during the Holy Lent
- Her words were fulfilled because he was sick
- He reached the Jordan to see her in the distance making the sign of the cross on the water, then walked upon it until she stood before him

- After taking Communion, she told him to meet her next year at the cave where he first saw her
- He prayed for her, and she re-crossed the river
- Reaching her cave, on the next year, he found her kneeling towards the east; and she had already passed away in 421 AD, and he noticed a message engraved beside her, “Abba Zosima, bury the body of Mary the Repentant in this place and leave this body of sin for the dust.”
- He was comforted by this message and marveled when he saw a lion sitting by, guarding her body



Missionary Enterprise

Coptic Objective

- “Evangelism” comes from the Greek word “εὐαγγέλιον Good News”
- Church of Alex. never intended to admit other churches to her, or seek for unity to attain authority
- She sincerely longed to serve every soul through love, desiring the salvation of everybody, regardless of his nationality
- The early Copts, clergymen, monks, deans of the School of Alexandria or laymen, were known for their inflamed desire to witness to Christ

Coptic Efforts

- Copts, at least in the 1st four or five centuries, proved to be extremely active in the spreading of the faith beyond their frontiers in practically every direction
- Since the foundation of our church, St. Mark built the relation between the Church of Alex. and Pentapolis
- No wonder that Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais (370-414 AD), who was ordained by Pope Theophilus, was one of the students of School of Alex.



1. School of Alexandria

- Played a great role in preaching and teaching Christianity
- Attracted people from abroad, who carried their faith to their countries
- Pantaenus preached in India, Ethiopia, Arabia Felix (Yemen) and Arabia (190 AD)
- Clement visited Italy and Greece and went to Jerusalem and Antioch (202 AD) to teach there till the end of his life

- Origen visited Rome (211 AD), Greece and Antioch, and made 3 missionary trips to Arabia (212-213 AD) and established a theological school in Caesarea and headed it for 20 years



2. Roman Army

- Coptic officers and soldiers witnessed to Christ among their pagan colleges, in Egypt or abroad, and many were martyred
- St. Verina is the patron saint of Switzerland
- Numerous miracles accompanied the martyrdom of the Theban Legion led the inhabitants of Switzerland, Germany, France, and Northern Italy to Christianity



- Spread of Christianity in these countries by this Legion happened 300 years before the arrival of the Irish preachers to Eastern Switzerland and western Austria
- No wonder that a large number of these martyrs are counted among the European saints



3. Monastic Movement

- A by-product of historic significance to the monastic movement among the Copts was their early missionary endeavor
- The rise of ascetic monasticism furnished the new religion with pious emigrants who penetrated the southern regions as soldiers of Christ
- Main Coptic preaching movement in Africa started through Syene (Aswan) across the southern border of Egypt

- Archeological discoveries of some monasteries, e.g. that of St. Simeon near Aswan (St. Hedra), beside some Christian discoveries proves the effort of Coptic hermits in preaching Christianity to these areas



- Recent archaeological excavations in the lower Sudan prove that Christianity had struck root in those distant regions by 4th century
- In 5th century, good relations are recorded between the monastic order of the great St. Shenouda and the Nubian and Baga tribes of the south
- Mar Augin of Clysma (Suez) introduced monastic life to Mesopotamia and Persia, beside his great role in supporting the new faith in Syria and Assyria

4. Personal Evangelism

- Some Coptic merchants and sailors played a great role through their trips, transferring their faith, culture and art abroad
- Ethiopia remained pagan until 4th century when the authentic evangelization of the kingdom took place by Frumentius, who was ordained by the name Abouna Salama by St. Athanasius
- A Coptic missionary reached as far as the British Isles, a long time before the arrival of St. Augustine of Canterbury (597)



- In 6th century there was a further Indian adventure by Cosmas Indicopleustes, another Alexandrine, who later became a monk on Sinai and left an account of his travels, now in St. Catherine's monastery
- He speaks of Christian communities with their bishops on the Persian Gulf, the existence of Christians in the island of Socotra, and the yet more numerous Christians of St. Thomas in India
- He is reputed to be one of the 1st travelers to Ceylon



5. Clerical Efforts

- The first 2 exiles of the great Alexandrine patriarch, Athanasius were excellent opportunity for preaching in Constantinople and Trier (336 - 337) and in Rome (339 - 346)
- St. Athanasius carried out some missionary work by introducing into Roman religious life the highly developed monastic rule of the Fathers of the Egyptian deserts
- The stream of pilgrims coming from the west to visit the Egyptian wilderness included many who may well be regarded as missionaries of Coptic religious culture, since they transplanted Coptic teachings to their native countries



Ecumenical Councils

Church Councils

- The idea behind such councils came from the early church at the Apostolic era (Acts 15)
- Jerusalem Council was the 1st in Christianity
- In spite of the sensitivity of the subject, they kept the unity of heart, spirit and mind
- Church councils are important for Christian unity
- Three types of church councils:
 - “Diocesan” from Greek “*διοίκησις* administration”
 - “Provincial”
 - “Ecumenical” from the Greek “*Οικουμένη* inhabited”

- Diocesan councils: by the Bishop, priests and deacons to arrange and decide for the parish
- Provincial councils: by Archbishop of the province (pope) e.g. the one headed by Pope Demetrius against Origen (231 AD), 2 councils by Pope Alexandros against Arius (319 ; 321 AD)
- Ecumenical councils were held to discuss ecumenical problems, and church regulations
- Coptic Church recognizes only the first 3 Ecumenical Councils

- Scholars and Historians are able to distinguish the Alexandrine Theologians as leaders and pioneers of the Christian faith on the ecumenical level
- We respect and follow the canons of such councils; unless they contradict the Bible, orthodox doctrines or other councils canons
- Examples of rejected councils:
 - Provincial council at Tyre headed by Arians against Pope Athanasius (334 AD)
 - Provincial council at Constantinople headed by Alex. Pope Theophilus (23rd) against St. John Chrysostom, corrected by Pope Cyril the Great

Ecumenical Council at Nicaea

- Convened in Nicaea on May 20 to Aug 25, 325 AD by Emperor Constantine's invitation
- To discuss:
 - Arian heresy against the Divinity of Christ
 - Deciding Easter date
 - Re-baptizing the heretics
 - Priests Marriage
 - Melitius, Bishop of Assiut
- Attended by 318 bishops (310 from the East)

- Alexandrian dignitaries are Pope Alexandros and his deacon Athanasius with some bishops, among them Sts. Pavnotius of Thebias and Botamoun of Heraclias
- St. Athanasius entered into a dialogue with Arius and his followers, and completely defeated them with his zeal, strong theological knowledge and reasoning
- He formulated the Orthodox Creed, which was agreed upon by more than 300 convening bishops



- Arius and his fellows disagreed upon the Creed; and they were anathemized
- When the council was over, St. Athanasius (<30 years) won the admiration of all the bishops, and the hatred of the heretics
- He amazed the Emperor, who told him, “You are the hero of the church of God”



- The council also studied the other issues, and decided:
 - Easter will be on Sunday next to Passover; and Pope of Alex. is responsible to declare it to other Bishops
 - No re-baptism for the heretics after their repentance; but those who were baptized by heretics should be re-baptized
 - Allowing the marriage of priests before ordination and no re-marriage for widow priests; while bishops should be celibate
 - Regarding Melatius, the council insisted on the authority of Pope of Alex. over his bishops

- All the attending bishops agreed on 20 other canons that controls the general policy of the church
- St. Gregory of Nazienzen said, “When I praise Athanasius, virtue itself is my theme; for I name every virtue as often as I mention him who possessed all virtues. He was the true pillar of the Church. His life and conduct were an example for bishops and his doctrine represents the Orthodox Creed.”

Ecumenical Council of Constantinople

- Convoked in Constantinople on May 381 AD by invitation of Emperor Theodosius the Great
- To discuss 3 heresies:
 - Apolinarius: Divinity of Christ replaced the human soul, and suffered with the humanity; beside disbelief in equality of the 3 Hypostasis
 - Eusabius: the Holy Trinity is one Hypostasis
 - Macedonius: The Holy Spirit is not a Hypostasis differentiated than the Father and the Son; and that He was created like angels of higher rank

- Attended by 150 bishops from the East
- Most prominent are Pope Timothy of Alex., Melatius Bishop of Antioch, Gregory The Theologian, and Gregory Bishop of Nisus
- Damasus, Bishop of Rome, didn't attend nor delegate some representatives, but he agreed upon all its canons
- The council decided that the Holy Spirit is the 3rd Hypostasis, equal to the Father & the Son
- They formulated the end of the Nicene Creed, beside 7 other canons that controls Church policies
- The 3 heretics were condemned and anathemized

- During the council, Pope Timothy of Alex. was asked in many church aspects
- All his answers have been considered canons for the Universal Apostolic Church
- Vol. 14 of “Nicene and Post Nicene fathers” contains these canons, in addition to other canons by Coptic Popes like Dionesius (14th), Peter the Seal of Martyrs (17th), Athanasius the Apostolic (20th), Theophilus (23rd) and Cyril the Great (24th)

Ecumenical Council of Ephesus

- Convoked in Ephesus on June 431 AD by Emperor Theodosius II
- To discuss 2 heresies:
 - Nestor: Jesus was 2 persons, and St. Mary is mother of Jesus
 - Pelagius: Original sin did not taint human nature
- Attended by 200 bishops
- St. Cyril The Great, Pope of Alex., fought against Nestorianism, before this council, through his sermons and Papal messages

- Before the Council:



- St. Cyril sent many messages to Nestor personally, and he refused to receive it
- St. Cyril held a Provincial Council in Alex. discussing Nestorianism; and he put 12 Anathemas to differentiate between the true faith and heresy
- Clestinus, Bishop of Rome, held another Provincial Council, agreeing on St. Cyril's message to him
- Nestor rejected the Anathemas of St. Cyril, and responded with his belief, supported with some Antiochan Bishops
- St. Cyril send to the Emperor asking for Ecumenical Council

- Alexandrian dignitaries are Pope Cyril I accompanied by 50 bishops, St. Shenouda the Archimandrite and St. Peter, abbot of Monastery of Faw
- Nestor, who attended with 40 supporting bishops, refused to change his mind before attending the Council
- Emperor didn't attend, delegating Count Candidian who was Nestorian
- He seized St. Cyril by night and imprisoned him together with his friends
- Representatives of Bishop of Rome came late

■ During the Council:

- Nestor refused to attend until the presence of John of Antioch and his bishops
- They had read St. Cyril messages, his 12 Anathemas, Nestor's responses, and the Canons of Provincial Councils in Alex and Rome; then they discussed Nestor's teachings
- The Council approved these Canons, anathemizing Nestor and Pelagius, with their supporters, after discussions
- They adapted St. Cyril expression of Christ's nature as, "*The One Nature of God the Incarnate Word*"
- Introduction of the Nicene Creed was formulated and approved, calling St. Mary "Theotokos"

- Canon 7 decreed those who do not abide by Nicaea are anathemized
- After all the correspondence between St. Cyril and John of Antioch, the latter reached to the agreement with St. Cyril in 433 AD



Continuation of Nestorianism

- Nestorianism was not ended; and its continuation shattered the church in Chalcedon
- Eutyches (380-456 AD), while fighting Nestorianism, fell in another heresy
- Eutychianism (Monophysitism) is that Christ had only one confused mixture of human and divine
- Bishop Eusebius of Dorylaeum, while correcting him, fell in another heresy that separates the 2 natures in Christ after the union (Dyopthesis)

- Bishop Flavianos of Constantinople held a Provincial Council (Nov 448 AD) against Eutyches
- After the discussions, they anathemized him
- This Council adapted the belief in 2 natures & 2 wills after the unity, renewing Nestorianism
- After Eutyches appeal, Emperor Theodosius II ordered a synod of bishops to study this case
- They met in April, 449 AD under Bishop Flavianos
- Most of these bishops were the same of the previous council, and they came with the same decision; but they came up with another form of faith

Second Council of Ephesus

- After the 2nd appeal from Eutyches, the Emperor ordered a general council in Ephesus
- Attended by 130 bishops
- Presided by Pope Dioscorus of Alex., who was accompanied with 20 Metropolitans & bishops
- Leo I, Bishop of Rome, sent a bishop, a priest and a deacon as his representatives
- Convoled in Ephesus on Aug. 449 AD
- Eutyches had declared that he held the faith of Nicaea and Ephesus, and was crafty enough to seem Orthodox at the time

- They absolved Eutyches and his monks
- Flavianos insisted on his belief in 2 Natures in Christ after the union
- He was anathemized, with other 6 bishops after long discussion
- The Roman Bishop considered this omission as a despise for his Petrine authority, describing the council as “the Robbers’ Council,” a title which is still used by many westerns!



St. Mary Church housed the 3rd Ecumenical council at Ephesus

Prior to Council of Chalcedon

Before the Council:

- Leo was frustrated with those results, defending the anathemized belief of Flavianos
- He failed to convoke a council in Rome
- He also accepted Nestor's fellows
- Out of his holy zeal, Pope Dioscorus anathemized him in a Provincial Council in Alexandria
- On 450 AD, Emperor Theodosius died heirless and his sister Pulcheria and her consort Marcian were declared emperors

- Leo tried again with Emperor Marcian who agreed to convoke a council in Constantinople
- Pulcheria respected Flavianos' teachings, and feared from Dioscorus "Egyptian Pharaoh," and separation of Egypt from the Empire
- Pope Dioscorus attended that meeting, which was also attended by big number of Nestorian Bishops, at the palace
- He disagreed with Leo's message, explaining the faith of Sts. Athanasius and Cyril
- The Emperor decided to convoke a council in Chalcedon

Council of Chalcedon

- Convoled on Oct - Nov 451 AD
- Attending bishops counted between 330 to 630
- Prominent attendees are Pope Dioscorus and his bishops, Bishop Juvenal of Jerusalem, Maximus of Antioch and Anatolius of Constantinople
- Bishop Leo of Rome sent 2 bishops and a priest
- Marcian and Pulcheria attended all sessions with their guards, army leaders and judges
- The party of Leo & Flavianos was the majority

- Roman Representative request to judge Pope Dioscorus, because he dared to conduct a council without the authorization of the Apostolic See, was rejected; and that Eutychus lied about his faith
- Stephen of Ephesus and some bishops said that they were forced to sign blank papers, through violence
- St. Dioscorus openly blamed them because it is the bishop's duty to be brave to protect the precious Faith
- Coptic Bishops said, "Christ's soldier shouldn't fear power; start a fire and we'll teach you the meaning of martyrdom."

- During discussion, St. Dioscorus clarified the Alexandrian point of view
- Before the 2nd session, a small number of bishops held a meeting to arrange themselves
- They summoned Pope Dioscorus who was in custody, he refused to attend unless he was given permission by the authorities
- He put conditions for his attendance: the presence of the judges, commissioners and those who were condemned with him
- At his absence, and at the end of the session, the word of the Roman legates declared that his disposal had been issued by Leo

- In fact it was not a statement for theological dogma but for defending the Roman Papal supremacy
- A new formula of faith concerning Christology was not discussed except after the deposal of St. Dioscorus
- They refer to Leo's formula not as contrary to the faith of the church but as a defense for it against Eutychianism
- Pope Dioscorus anathemized those who agreed upon the changes of the Orthodox faith

- The Emperor sent him into exile to Island of Gangra, where he spent 5 years in preaching and healing the sick
- This council was the beginning of the schism of the Christian Church until now
- The council had also passed a canon over the objections of Leo which gave the archbishop at Constantinople official oversight over the whole east



The Church of St. Euphemia in Chalcedon

Famous Characters



St. Athanasius the Apostolic

- Raised under the care of Pope Alexandros (19th)
- Studied grammar, logic, oratory, Homer, Greek classics, philosophy and Roman law from Alexandrian Teachers e.g. Clement and Origen
- Was ordained deacon and employed secretary of the Pope while he was still young youth
- Served St. Anthony for 3 years
- During those years, he wrote “On the Vanity of Idols”, “On the Existence of the One God” and “The Incarnation of the Word”

- Attended Nicaea Council, as Pope's secretary
- He defeated Arius and his fellows with solid theological proofs
- Formulated the Nicene Creed, approved by the council, to affirm the Divinity of Christ
- Became 20th Pope (age 28) in 326 AD
- During his first 3 years, he ordained Fromentius, an Egyptian, the 1st Bishop of Ethiopia



- He made 2 pastoral tours throughout the country
- Was exiled for 5 times on account of his vigorous opposition to Arianism
- Presided for 46 years, of which 17 years in exiles
- Once he was told that the whole world was against him, he answered, “And I am against the world;” so was called “Athanasius contra mundum”



- During his exile, he wrote his defense against Arianism in 4 volumes, 3 volumes expounding the Faith, and refuting Apollinarius, and St. Anthony's biography, beside many Papal and theological letters
- Spent the last 7 years in peace among his people
- Departed on May 15, 373 AD after he had fought the good fight
- In gratitude for his unique contribution, the Church Universal conferred on him the titles of "The Defender of the Upright Faith," "Champion of Orthodoxy" and "The Apostolic"

St. Cyril the Great



- Was the nephew and successor of Pope Theophilus (23rd)
- As a lad, his uncle sent him to St. Macarius Monastery where he learned the wisdom of the desert fathers in 5 years
- Returned to Alexandria, where he was ordained priest and later elevated to be the 24th Pope

- From then on, he began to combat the Nestorianism
- He even refuted Emperor Julian when he tried one last time to remove Christianity from the Roman Empire
- His letters and writings circulated far and wide in the Christian world, edifying and thrilling the Orthodox believers
- He confronted Nestor and his fellow in the Council of Ephesus, ended by their excommunication and approving the Creed introduction

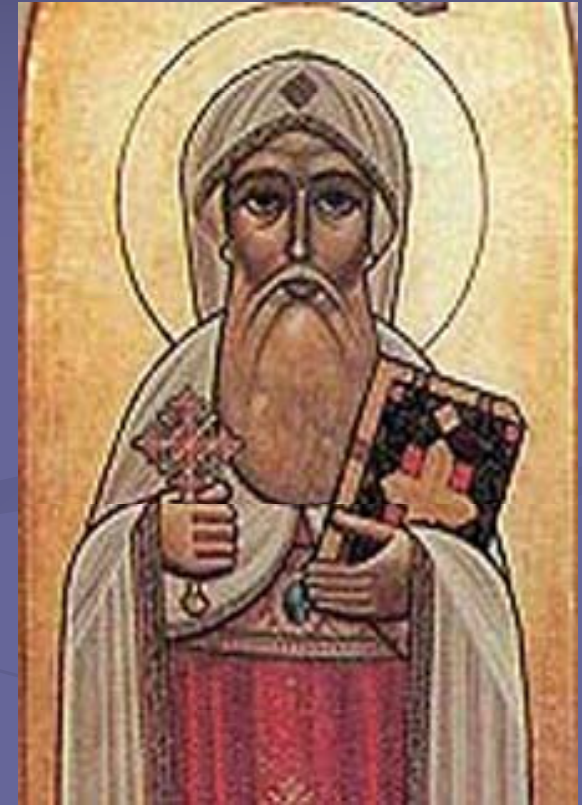
- Among his many writings commentaries on all the books of the Old and the New Testaments, a treatise in dialogue form “On the Trinity”, a book “On the Right Way” and another “On the Incarnation”, and numerous others
- He was conferred descriptive titles of honor such as “The Daring Lion”, “The Burnished Lamp”, “The Great”, and more specifically “The Pillar of Faith”
- Died in 444 AD after 30 years in Papacy



St. Dioscorus, Defender of Orthodoxy (25th)

- Elected 25th pope to succeed St. Cyril in 444 AD
- He had accompanied his predecessor to the 3rd Ecumenical Council as his secretary
- Eutychus heresy started the series of actions and reactions that involved St. Dioscorus and finally led to the schism of the Church
- Emperor Theodosius sent a letter to St. Dioscorus requesting him to preside over a council in Ephesus to reconsider the sentence passed on Eutyches by Flavianos council

- Bishop Leo of Rome wrote many letters to the Emperor, his older sister, and Falvianos against convoking this council
- The Council reconfirmed Eutychus Since he confessed the Creed of Nicea and accepts canons of the great Council of Ephesus; and condemnation of Flavianus and his fellows



- He fought the great fight in the council of Chalcedon, with fiery zeal for his faith, without swerving from his Orthodoxy
- The Chalcedonians asked him, “If Eutyches has uttered by mouth what was contrary to the written confession submitted to you, what would your judgment be?” He replied, “If Eutyches has, indeed, denied the faith written by him and submitted to us, I would not decree his excommunication only but would order burning him too”

- The Chalcedonians submitted Leo's Tome to him; and he found it to be more Nestorian than Orthodox
- Immediately and without any hesitation he declared that it deviated from Orthodoxy, and hence he excommunicated it and its author
- They deposed him of his Episcopal dignity, and he was exiled in Gangra, accompanied by two bishops, an archdeacon and his secretary
- He converted many natives and perform many miracles
- He sent his 2 molars and some plucked beard hair to Alex. as fruits of protecting the faith
- He departed 5 years after his sentence 457AD



From “Chalcedon”
to
the “Arab Invasion”
451 -641 AD

Influence of Chalcedon

- Church schism between “Monophysites” and “Dyophysites”
- The theological dialogue between them was severely damaged
- They accused the Church of Alexandria with Eutychianism, while we condemn this heresy
- Constantinople through its political authority put pressure on the Eastern Churches to adapt Chalcedon belief
- These churches showed continuous resistance unto death to preserve their faith without changes

A New Persecution

- Security disturbance happened in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia and Persia
- In February 452, Marcian made a law enforcing the canons of the council, and threatening heavy penalties against all who disputed them
- After Pulcheria's death (453), Marcian started a severe persecution against the Non-Chalcedonians
- Many bishops, priests, monks and believers were martyred
- It is recorded that 30,000 were martyred

1st Martyr after Chalcedon

- A messenger arrived at Alexandria announcing the exile of Pope Dioscorus, and the appointment of Proterius, an Alexandrian priest, as the Alexandrian Patriarch
- This Patriarch, appointed by the Emperor, was supported with power to punish those who might disobey the Imperial command
- The ruler of Alexandria, an agent of Constantinople, asked to hold individual meetings with the bishops to convince them separately

- St. Macarius of Edko refused to submit to the ruler's orders
- The imperial officer killed him with a fatal stab to be the 1st martyr of the Coptic church, martyred by Christian hands
- This was an example how the Coptic bishops, priests, abbots, monks and many laymen suffered oppression and martyrdom by the hands of their brethren the Chalcedonians
- Pope Dioscorus departed in his exile on Sept. 457 AD

- With the exception of a few churches forcefully taken and given over by the Emperor to the supporters of Chalcedon, all churches were closed
- Proterius, mindless of the people or their feelings, proceeded to despoil the churches relegated to him and his partisans
- Marcian died in February 457 AD, followed by Leo I (457-474)
- Copts considered it a good opportunity to ordain a pope to succeed Pope Dioscorus

The Melkites

- Pope Timothy II, being a well known theologian and an ascetic zealous man, was ordained the 26th Pope on March 457 (aka Timothy Aelurus)
- Now Alex. had 2 series of patriarchs; the Copts (Natives) and Melkites (Royal or Imperial)
- The ruler of Alex. considered it as a rebellion against Byzantium (Constantinople), and he took the side of Proterius, persecuting the Egyptians
- Pope Timothy II held a council in Alex. which anesthetized Chalcedon's council and Proterius as well

- The ruler exiled the Pope to Taposiris, that led to more violence and more martyrs
- The angered people killed Proterius and burned his corpse on March 457 AD
- The Pope and his brother were exiled to Gangra on 460 AD
- He sent letters to his people explaining the faith of the church and cautioning them from the Eutychianism
- The people of Gangra loved him and called him “the miracle performer” and “the charitable”

- Emperor Zeno appointed “Timothy Salophaciolus” as Patriarch, but the people boycotted him to pray at the monasteries
- Basiliscus, Zeno’s successor, freed the Pope on 467 AD, who visited Constantinople to thank him
- The Emperor agreed upon the Pope request to return the exiled bishops, to receive the relics of Pope Dioscorus for burial, and to hold a council
- He was received with a great celebration in Alexandria

- The council was held in Constantinople; and was attended by 500 bishops, among them Pope Timothy II of Alex., Peter II of Antioch, Paul of Ephesus, and Anastasius of Jerusalem (700 bishops)
- The council confirmed the faith of Nicaea which was approved by 3 Ecumenical Councils, and the anathema against the Eutychian heresy and the rejection of the Tome of Leo
- Acacius of Constantinople was reluctant to sign
- Basiliscus cancelled his previous decree after being accused by Acacius that he is a heretic

Zeno and Non-Chalcedonians

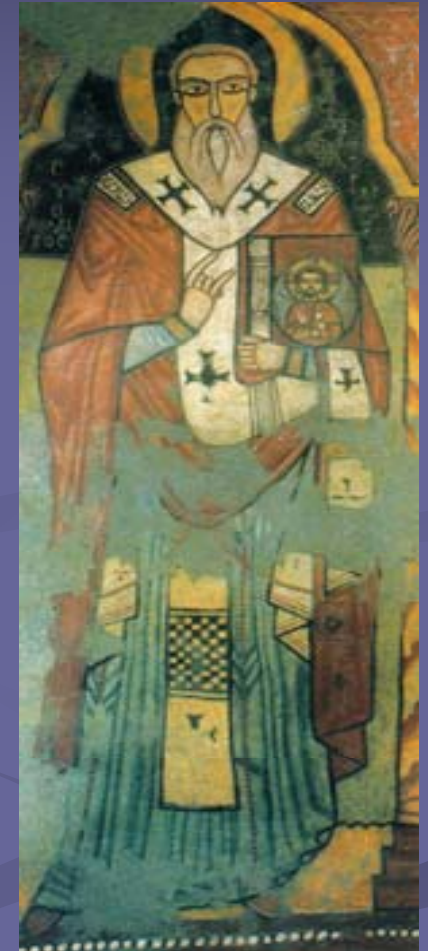
- After restoring his throne (Sept 476), he cancelled the religious decree of Basiliscus, and exiled Paul of Ephesus and Peter of Antioch, while threatened Pope Timothy II
- Pope Peter III (aka Peter Mongus) was ordained (27th) after the death of Pope Timothy (477 AD)
- He held a council in Alex. which anesthetized Chalcedon's council, Leo and his Tome and Zeno threatened him
- Zeno rejected the Copts' request to have only 1 pope, and he appointed John Talaia, after the death of Salophaciolus, who fled to Rome

Henoticon

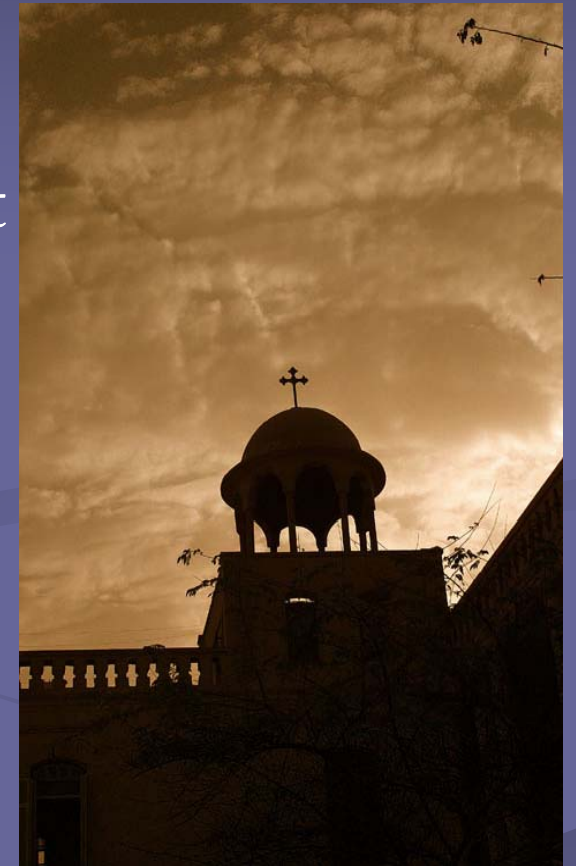
- It is Zeno's proclamation issued on July 482 AD after realizing the importance of gaining the Non-Chalcedonians
- In fact, Acacius formulated that proclamation, in agreement with Zeno, to the theological understanding prior to Chalcedon and Leo's Tome
- It confirmed the canons of the first 3 councils, anathemized both Nestor, Eutychus and their followers, or those who believe in any different belief; and accepting St. Cyril anathemas
- No mentioning about the point of schism

- It was a very great step for the churches of Alex. and Constantinople to come closer, in spite of the rejection of the Henoticon (the “act of union”) by the Church of Rome
- Pope Peter signed it, after a through study, while Felix of Rome held a council in Rome (484 AD) anathemizing Acacius of Constantinople
- This step separated between the churches of Rome and Constantinople for 35 years, and removal of the name of Pope of Rome from their Liturgies
- Every Bishop of Constantinople should sign it during ordination

- Emperor Justin I (518-527 AD) tried to enforce the churches of Alex. and Antioch to accept Chalcedonian belief
- St. Severus of Antioch was exiled to Egypt, during the Papacy of Pope Timothy III, because he rejected that belief, traveling from one city to another strengthening the faith
- Pope Timothy III was exiled for 3 years; while 200,000 were martyred
- He departed in 535 AD



- The Church of Alexandria lived in peace together with the other Sees in the East
- This lasted until the enthronement of Justinian when the troubles newly began, and martyrdom started again
- Apollinarius appointed by Justinian 541 AD, and was invested with civil authority to fulfill his religious duties, that led to severe slaughtering



Last Byzantine Ruler

- Cyrus was a Greek Nestorian Bishop appointed by Heraclius as a governor and a Melkite Patriarch on 631 AD
- Within 10 years, he became the most hated tyrant in Egyptian history
- While Cyrus was on his way to Alexandria, Pope Benjamin had a vision in which an angel advised him to leave his Metropolis and seek refuge in the desert, and to advise his bishops to do likewise

- Failing to find the Pope, he arrested his brother Mena, who was tortured and martyred
- The Copts were brave enough to resist torture, imprisonment, confiscation, and martyrdom to keep their precious faith without changes
- Historians mentioned that Cyrus received a letter from the prophet of Islam inviting him and Copts to convert to Islam, and he replied with gifts
- Among the most prominent characters during this period, St. Samuel the Confessor, Bishop Pisentaius (Psenthaisus) of Queft, Bishop John (Youannes) of Borullus, and St. Daniel Priest of Scetis

Prof. Meyendorff says,

“Emperors tried to solve the dispute by force . For us, today, there is no doubt about the fact that the military repression of monophysitism in Egypt, and in other places, the imposition of a Chalcedonian hierarchy in Byzantine (politics), the frequent exile of the real popular leaders of the Church of Egypt, all played a decisive role in giving the schism the character of a national resistance to Byzantine ecclesiastical and political control of Egypt, Syria and Armenia.”

- *Christology according to the Non-Chalcedon, p. 2,3*

Evaluation

- Copts have been forgotten after the tragedy of Chalcedon (451 AD) which was followed by a new wave of persecution inflicted upon them by fellow Christians and Byzantine rulers
- Western Christendom appears to have lost sight of the Copts until 1860 when a Presbyterian mission came to convert them to Christianity, and the Coptic Metropolitan of Asiut asked them the rhetorical question, “We have been living with Christ for more than 1800 years, how long have you been living with him?”

- The Copts preserved their precious faith courageously with the highest price
- They proved their intimacy and loyalty to their church and clerical leaders
- Many historians recorded that the Copts have witnessed extreme humiliation on the hands of the Christian Roman emperors in a way never seen since the Martyrdom era on the hands of the atheists Roman Emperors
- The gap between the Coptic and Byzantine churches became wider
- This period ended by the Arab Invasion

Famous Characters



Bishop Macarius of Edko

- One of the great ascetics and Copts' heroes at this century
- Ordained the Bishop of Edko
- Delivered his sermons with his tears, because the sins of his people were revealed to him
- Converted and baptized many pagans
- Walked to Alex, deciding to continue to Ephesus
- Attended both councils in Ephesus and Chalcedon, playing a great role

- Voluntarily accompanied St. Dioscorus in his exile post Council of Chalcedon
- St. Dioscorus told him, “Go back to our beloved country, for the Crown of Martyrdom awaits you”
- St. Macarius readily complied and returned
- Proterius was sent to Alexandria accompanied by imperial troops, and they went to each bishop alone ordering him to sign the Chalcedon decrees
- St. Macarius was the 1st bishop approached
- The saint rebuked him severely

- The imperial officer struck him to death upon his refusal to sign the document
- His martyrdom heralded a wave of persecutions in which an estimated 30,000 were martyred



Abba Daniel, Priest of Scetis

- This biography is a great testimony for the greatness of Coptic monasticism at 6th century
- Born 485 AD, and leaved to Scetis in young age
- Was captured 3 times by Barbarians because of his eagerness to live in the inner desert
- Was a perfect and pure father to the monks of the western desert, and to a number of nuns, both Egyptian and foreign, guiding and teaching them

- Guided St. Anastasia in her monastic life, who came to Egypt with St. Severus and was disguised in a man's apparel, for 28 years
- Saved Eulogius, the stone-cutter, through his prayers and tears (525 AD)
- Revealed the personality of St. Anna-Simon the anchorite, who lived as a mad girl in a nunnery; and great saint called Marcos, who was a beggar
- Was beaten, almost to death, for rejecting Leo's Tome before Justinian's messenger and strengthening the monks' faith

- Left Scetis to Tambok, where he established a monastery, living in ascetic life till the death of Jestintian (565 AD)
- Returned to his monastery in Scetis
- Lived 40 years in wilderness in spiritual struggling
- Performed many miracles
- He knew in advance the time of his departure from this world
- He gathered all the monks around him, commanded, strengthened, and comforted them and then departed in peace in Bashons 8th

St. Samuel the Confessor

- Born at the beginning of 7th century by a divine promise to his father, a priest
- Went to Scetis to be St. Aghathon's disciple
- Ordained a priest for St. Macarius church in Scetis
- A commander arrived carrying Tome of Leo, threatening the monks if they rejected it
- St. Samuel replied, "We do not agree to the Tome or accept the Council of Chalcedon. We also do not recognize any archbishop other than our father Pope Benjamin."

- He tore the Tome announcing the excommunication of the Tome, the Council, and whoever accepted it
- He was beaten without mercy until one of his eyes was scooped out, and was left between life and death
- He left, accompanied by 4 other monks, to the Mount of Qalamon
- Cyrus, while visiting Fayuom, struck him on his mouth, and commanded him to be beaten, and expelled him from the monastery



- Some Barbers from Libya invaded the region, and took St. Samuel captive
- They mistreated him when he refused to worship the sun with them
- He healed his master's son, and others as well
- He was freed, and returned to his monastery
- Many were gathered around him to be his disciples
- 8 days before his death, an angel announced to him that he will depart in the Lord
- His disciples, who were numbered about 120, surrounded him at that moment



Arab Invasion

640 AD

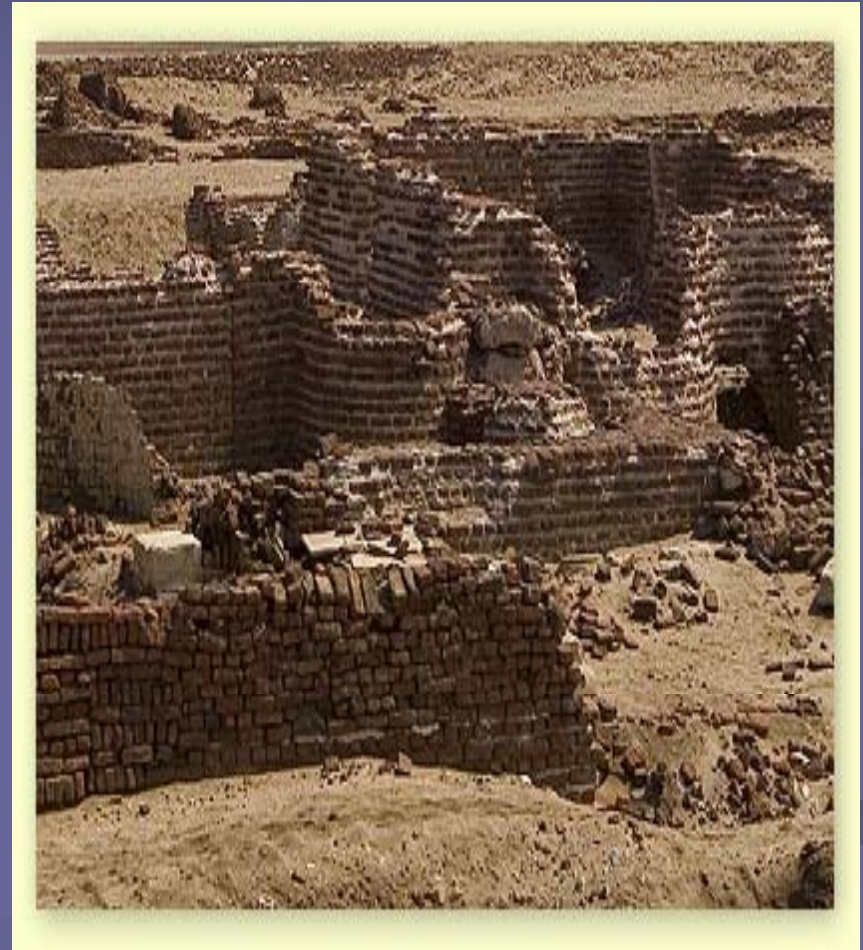
Egypt in Their Dreams

- Egypt was well known country to the Arabs and they heard about its wealth and civilization
- Quraish merchants used to sell the eastern merchandise in Egypt to buy expensive cloth, glass, textile, crops (wheat and corn) ...etc
- Amr Ibn El-As had visited Alexandria as a merchant youth and had himself witnessed Egypt's enormous wealth
- Learning the roads to Egypt and knowing its important and wealthy cities helped him later in invading Egypt

- Mohammed Invited Cyrus, and his fellow Copts to Islam or otherwise, by a message carried by Hatib Ibn Abi Balta'ah
- He married Maria the Copt, sent as a gift by Cyrus, 10 years before the Arab Invasion
- Maria was born in upper Egypt of a Coptic father and Greek mother and moved to Cyrus' court when she was still very young. She arrived in Medina to join Mohammed's household
- She bore him a son, Ibrahim, who died in infancy
- Mohammed's words in Quran and Hadith revealed his expectations that his fellows will occupy Egypt

Arab Conquest

- Amr Ibn El-As invaded Egypt with a force of only 4,000 soldiers
- Egypt had a large Roman legion, with many forts; including the famous fort of Babylon
- Pelosium fort fell after 1 month, and Bilbeis fort after another month



- Roman legion had lost 1,000 soldiers for slaughter, and 3,000 prisoners
- They easily reached Babylon
- The Arabs kept the fort of Babylon under siege, while Cyrus was inside it, for 7 months



- Cyrus requested from Amr to negotiate
- Amr responded by giving only 3 options:
 - 1- Convert to Islam and become our brothers
 - 2- Pay a tribute (Jeziah) and be fully subdued to the Muslims
 - 3- To be killed
- The surrounded troops rejected these 3 options
- During the siege, reinforcements were sent to the Arabs to reach 20,000 troops, while the Emperor in Constantinople sank into a state of complete apathy

- The fort fell in the Arabs hand by trickery
- On April 6, 641 AD, a treaty was signed by Amr and Cyrus (*both alien to Egypt*) which stated that:
 - Every Copt who does not convert to Islam is to pay 2 Denarii per year (old people, women, minors, and the disabled are to be exempted)
 - The Arabs are not to harm the Copts or their Churches in any way
- During their march Northward, the Arab troops encountered the Byzantine troops stationed at different towns of the Delta

- Romans had no plan of action and were loathe to fight
- Facing resistance from the Copts, the Arabs destroyed villages, killing resistant villagers, stealing their belongings, and taking the remaining alive slaves
- The Arabs moved to Alexandria (50,000 soldiers), the capital of Egypt, and kept it under siege for 14 months, when it finally fell into their hands because of Cyrus' the traitor
- Great massacres in many districts e.g. Fayuom
- Cyrus died in his sadness

- By the autumn of 642 AD, Egypt had passed from the hands of the Constantinople Emperors into those of the Arabs
- From that point onwards, Egypt was ruled by governors sent by the Caliph
- Amr granted the Copts freedom of worship on the condition that they pay the Jeziah (tribute)
- He requested the return of Pope Benjamin and his bishops to their parishes
- After meeting the Alexandrian Patriarch, he said, “Verily, I have not seen a man of God so upright and so majestic in all the provinces through which I passed.”

Reasons of Victory

1. Byzantine suppression and persecution to the Copts for 190 years
2. Islamic zeal to spread their new religion, delighted by their easy victory over Persia
3. Arab ardent desire to enjoy other countries' wealth
4. Low self esteem of the Roman army after many defeats
5. The Empire treasury was empty
6. There wasn't a unified Roman army in Egypt but rather different separated units

7. Roman leaders were fighting with each other to win governing Egypt, while Emperor Heraclius dying
8. Division inside the Empire palace for the coming Emperor
9. Good timing for invasion, most probably due to receiving these strategic information by Amr
10. Cyrus' negotiations and surrender, thinking that they'll help fulfilling his dream
11. Fleeing of the Roman leaders from their units facilitated more victory for the Arabs, and more blood shed for the Copts

“The ease with which this valuable province (Egypt) was wrenched from the Roman Empire appears to have been due to the treachery of the governor of Egypt, Cyrus, patriarch of Alexandria, and the incompetence of the Roman generals.”

- Encyclopedia Britannica (14th ed., vol. 8, p. 78)



Their Main Objective

- Leading Egypt to Islamic Arab dominion
- Gaining:
 - Zakah from converters to Islam
 - Jeziah from Copts rejecting Islam
 - Loots belonging to the killed people
- There is a consensus among both Muslim and Christian historians, that the number of those who had to pay tribute to the Arabs to be 6 Millions. Since the Women, the minors, the old, and the disabled were exempted, it was estimated that the number of Copts at that time was between 25 to 30 Million!

Alfred Butler says,

“Amr’s great distinction is that he was made military commander direct by the Prophet. In appointing him Mohammed said, “I am sending you forth as commander of a troop. May God keep you safe and give you much booty.” When Amr answered, “I did not become a Muslim for the sake of wealth, but for the sake of submission to God,” the Prophet rejoined, “Honest wealth is good for an honest man” -- a maxim which Amr doubtless remembered.”

- “The Arab Invasion of Egypt” P. 202

Welcomed for Their Help?

- Uninvited people
- Their declared objective contradicting
- Resistance unto death: 1st resistance was at Bilbeis, where they had to fight for a month
- Considering Cyrus a traitor (even though his identity is not clearly known)
- New Christian dogma was unaccepted, and for sure the new religion
- Pope's return after 3 years

- Trusting in God not in men (Jer. 17:5 ; Ps. 118:8 ; 146:3)
- Didn't happen during the Egyptian history
- No common language for communication
- Humiliation and destruction



هل رحب الأقباط
بافتح العربك ؟

بجول باسمك

Encountering Injustice

- Amr ordered the Copts to pay the Jeziah, and increased taxes 3 folds
- Caliph Omar Ibn El Khatab wrote to Amr to humiliate the Dhimmi people (Christians & Jews) (distinctive cloth, and side-riding horses/donkeys)
- Looting their wealth; Amr said, “Any one hiding a treasure from me, I will attack him and kill him”
- Dr. Mohammed Emara says, “It was widely believed in Islamic theology that the Dhimmi people are of second class to Muslims, hence they did not have the same rights as the Muslims.”

- Defend the Jeziah by saying, “The Jeziah was not imposed on the Dhimmi people for religious reasons, but only because they were not allowed to fight with the Muslims.”

- “Islam and the national unity”

- However, he admits that the Copts were forced to dress in distinctive cloth from that of the Muslims, and that all Islamic books concur on forbidding the building of new Churches for Christians, and Synagogues for Jews, and that the most that should be allowed is renovating the existing ones without any increase of space

- Amr decreed the Copts to offer 3 day hospitality for every soldier wherever they existed, providing care and food for the horse
- He also ordered the Copts to provide his troops with crops and clothes, beside the Jeziah, yearly
- He encouraged conquering Alex. by allowing every soldier to occupy every luxurious house he succeeded to take
- Arab governors humiliated the Copts, leaving all the hard work for them e.g. digging the canal of “Prince of the believers” by Amr’s order, building the Arabic warship by Abdallah Ibn Saad’s order, and building new cities with luxurious mansions for the Arabs

- Amr asked the Copts to prepare a road from Babylon to Rosetta, building bridges using the wreckage steel and wood remained after destroying the Luxurious houses of Alex.
- Burning many cities and villages e.g. burning Rosetta after their failure to defeat it, which was very horrible; and burning Damietta after their tough resistance
- Killing everybody they met (men, women and children) without mercy, beside those they enslaved, like what happened in Niquis
- Disturbance and horror everywhere

Collecting Jeziah

- Arab troops were struggling with each other because of the huge difference between the wealth they got (between 2,000 and 300)
- Amr used his authority to collect a huge wealth in a short time
- Caliph Omar asked him about the source of this wealth, sending Mohammed Ibn Mosallama to get half of his wealth
- Omar didn't ask him to decrease the Jeziah, but rather to increase it, and send it to Medina
- Omar's famous saying, "May God destroy Egypt for the sake of Medina's development."

- The historian Dr. Saida Ismail Elkashif said, “The Arabs focused on collecting as much Jeziah as possible from the Copts, who in many cases had no choice but to convert to Islam to get rid of it. Consequently, this led to a decrease in income for the Government, who acted to double the Jeziah on the Copts who remained Christian
- It was said that the Caliph Omar Ibn Abdel Aziz (*known to the Muslims as being “Second to Omar Ibn El Khatab” because of his fairness*) ordered the Waly of Egypt Haian Ibn Sheriek to collect the Jeziah of dead Copts from their families

- “As well, the Waly of Egypt Abdel Aziz Ibn Marwan (685-705 AD) imposed a Jeziah of one Denarius per person on the Coptic monks, he also ordered to count all the monks in the monasteries after which no one was allowed to become a monk.”

- “Egypt at the time of the Walys” By S. I. Elkashif

- Dr. Saida continued to mention the many financial injustices that the Copts encountered, which forced many of them to convert to Islam

- 3rd Caliph Osman Ibn Affan (644 AD) removed Amr and appointed Abdallah Ibn Saad in Egypt
- He collected Large Jeziah, 14 Million, in his 1st year, with an increase of 2 Million
- People were suffering, while the Caliph was very pleased
- At the beginning of Ummayyad Dynasty, Caliph Mo'awya Ibn Abi-Sufian (661 AD) re-appointed Amr when the Copts complained from injustice of Abdallah
- Mosallama Ibn Mokhallad ordered burning those who wouldn't pay Jeziah

Islam and Dhimmitude

- Paying Jeziah, even for the dead too
- Special custom code
- No building of new churches or monasteries
- No rebuilding for the destroyed ones
- Excluded from governmental offices
- No restrictions for conversion to Islam
- Death penalty for converting/re-conversion of a Muslim
- Not allowed to carry weapons



Visitors to the mosque of Amr Ibn El-As, in Cairo, would easily recognize that it was built with columns taken from Coptic Churches, as the columns are totally different in style and length; this mosque was designed by a Copt called Boctor

Burning the Famous Library

- In 642 AD the Arabs took the city of Alexandria
- Upon learning of “a great library containing all the knowledge of the world, ancient and recent”
- Amr, the conquering general, asked Caliph Omar for instructions
- The Caliph responded, “If their content is in accordance with the book of Allah, we may do without them, for in that case the book of Allah more than suffices. If, on the other hand, they contain matter not in accordance with the book of Allah, there can be no need to preserve these. Proceed, then, and destroy them.”

- So all the manuscripts were allegedly destroyed by using them as tinder for the 4,000 bathhouses of the city for the Arab use
- It took 6 months to burn all documents



- This incident has been the subject of continuous controversy
- Those who presume that the army of Amr was not responsible, should be reminded by:
 - Burning Alex. after his 2nd, and final, victory
 - Writings of Abdul Latif Al-Baghdady (1200 AD) and Abul Farag Bin El-Ebry (died 1231AD)
 - 3 ancient historians, Sozomen, Theodorit, and Rufinus declared that the Library was still existing during the 4th and 5th centuries
 - Arabs already destroyed the Persian books by burning some and throwing others into rivers

“That (Islamic) nation likes gold, silver, women,
(riding) horses, and pleasures of life.”

- Old Coptic manuscript



Famous Characters

Pope Benjamin I (38th)

- 38th Pope of Alex. (620-659 AD)
- From a wealthy family from Maryut (1st non-Alexandrian)
- Became a monk in a monastery near Alex. (Qabrius)
- Became a priest and the secretary of Pope Andronicus (37th)
- The pope recommended him to be his successor
- His Papacy could be divided into 3 periods:
 - From ordination to disappearance (620-631 AD)
 - During his disappearance (631-644 AD)
 - During Arab occupation (644-662 AD)

- He visited his people in Babylon during 1st period
- The Lord revealed to him the events to be during the 2nd period, asking all Bishops to shepherd their people from exile, while praying and fasting
- He visited many monasteries during 2nd period
- He shepherd his people and restored his churches during the 3rd period
- He restored those who became Chalcidonians
- He ordained more bishops
- He restored St. Mark's head
- He consecrated church of St. Macarius Monastery

- He sent a Metropolitan and a righteous monk, called Tekla Hymanot to Ethiopia
- The Ethiopians respected this monk as the 1st one to introduce monasticism in their country
- When Cyrus died, his successor Peter (Botros) left Egypt to Constantinople with others
- No one succeeded Peter for 60 years
- A great famine was ended through his prayer before perishing of all people
- Pope Benjamin departed in 659 AD after spending 39 years in his papacy

Sts. Abraam & Gawargi

- St. Abraam was born in 608 AD in a pious family as the only son
- During the famine (616), his father spent his assets and crops on the poor
- His mother was captured by the Persians (616)
- She met him after 13 years joyfully
- At age 35, he decided to go to Scetis, and unexpectedly she encouraged him
- Hegomen Youannes guided him in his spiritual struggling

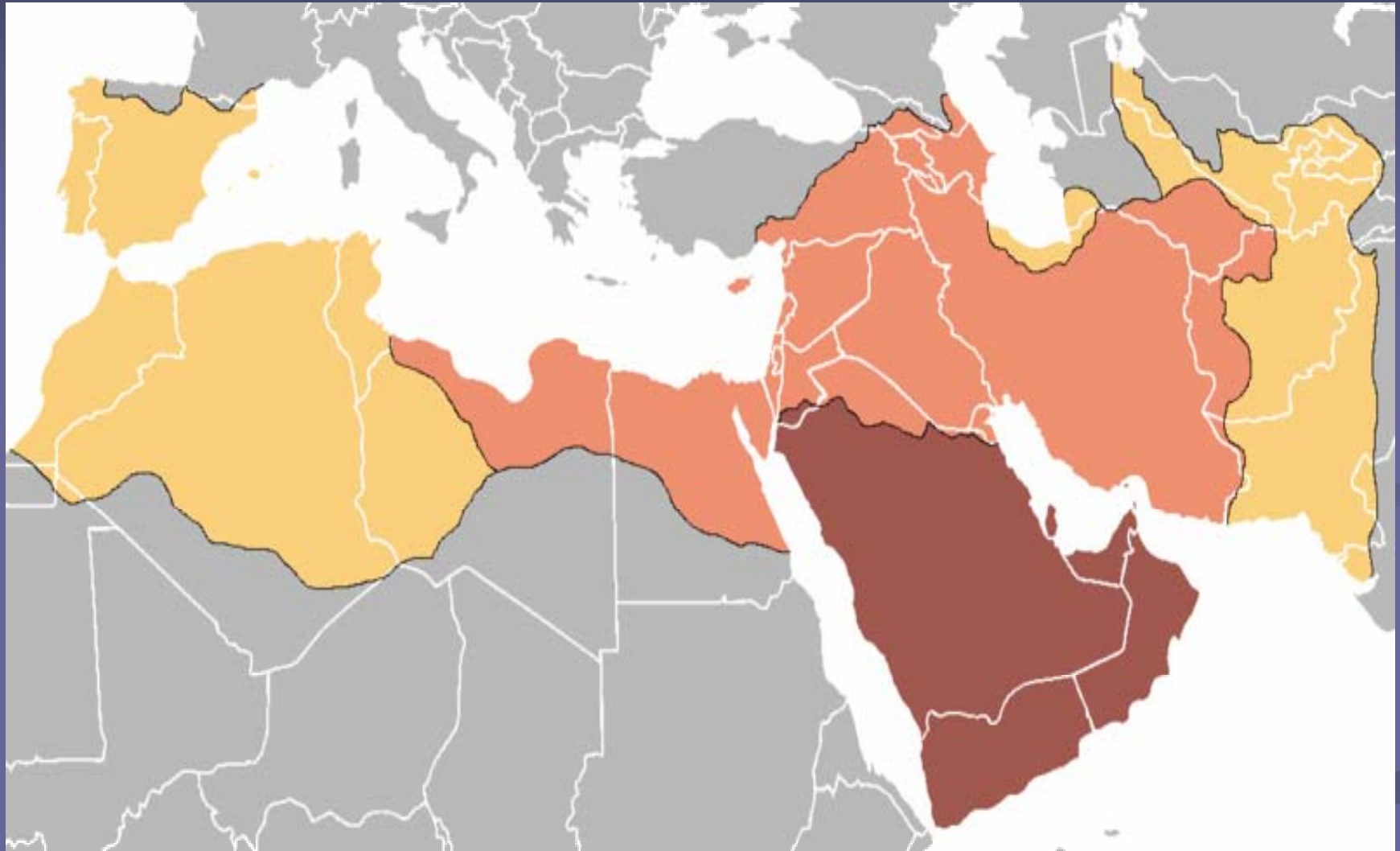
- He stayed in solitude every week till Sundays
- The Lord appeared to him because of his simplicity and purity of heart
- Many times he saw his Guardian angel supporting, encouraging or rebuking him
- He was gifted by casting out demons
- He met with Gawargi, who started this life at age of 14, led by Archangel Gabriel to his spiritual father
- They prayed all night to be guided what to do

- St John the Baptist appeared to them, guiding them to live together in Scetis, guided by Heg. Youannes
- They lived together in spiritual love, encouraging each other
- St. Gawargi served St. Abraam while sick for 18 years, and prayed for him
- When his time comes (693 AD), he took communion, and was visited by Sts. Macarius and Youannes with some angels to receive his soul at age 85
- St. Gawargi departed 5 months later at age 72



The Umayyad Dynasty

661-751 AD



The Umayyad Dynasty

- Umayyads saw a great expansion of Islamic Empire
- Caliph in Damascus sent Walys to govern Egypt
- 21 Walys govern Egypt during this Dynasty (2 govern twice, 1 Trice)
- The Caliph killed or fired 11 of them
- Each one tried to send big money to the Caliph, and to keep fortune for himself during his short time of reigning
- Burning and destruction of cities and churches was their common strategy for disciplining the Copts

Abd El-Aziz Ibn Marwan

- Known for being one of the most just Muslim rulers that governed Egypt (661-751 AD)
- Arrested and humiliated Pope John of Samanoud (40th), who was an elderly person, because he did not go to greet him
- Built Helwan City, moving to it the treasury, headed by a Copt called Antinas
- Encouraged all rich Copts to build their mansions in his new city, allowing Pope Isaac (41st) to build 2 beautiful churches there
- Good relation started between the Pope and Emir, that Pope visited him many times at Helwan

- Established his authority, while the Roman Empire weakened, and then the good relation deteriorated
- He ordered:
 - Increased Jeziah, ordering 1 Dinarius on clergy, and 3,000 Denarii on Pope
 - Pope's election should be in Babylon not in Alex.
 - Destruction of all the crosses in Egypt
 - Placing statements, on the gates of churches, saying “Mohammed is the great prophet of God, Eisa (Jesus) is a prophet of God, and God is not begotten and does not beget.”
 - Banned the Copts from holding Divine Liturgies

- Threatened Pope if he failed to pay 10,000 Dinarii
- Copts collected and gave the money to the Waly
- His son died next day after spiting and mocking the icon of the Theotokos, and threatening to root out the Copts from Egypt
- This Waly died after 40 days of his son's death



Abdallah Ibn Abdelmalik

- Like a wild beast ruling Egypt (705-709 AD)
- He was the Caliph's Cousin
- Copts were tortured in his presence while eating so that their blood was splattered on his plates
- Ordered to torture Pope Alexandrous (43rd), who came to welcome him, until the Pope agrees to pay 3,000 Dinarii
- The Pope remained in jail for 3 days till Girgis, a Coptic Deacon, pledged to bond him for 2 month collecting the money

- Ordered that dead Copts are not to be buried unless their relatives pay their Jeziah
- Many Copts immigrated, others converted to Islam, and others died of hunger
- He decreed Arabic to be the official language instead of Coptic
- The city names changed to Arabic names
- The Copts became well versed in Arabic writing and math
- Many churches were destroyed and worshipping was stopped in many districts
- The Copts didn't rest till he was fired

Quorra Ibn Shereik

- Ruled Egypt (709-714 AD)
- Took the same actions of the previous Waly against Pope Alexandrous
- Ordered the Pope to pay 3,000 Dinarii for the 2nd time
- The Pope tried to explain that he did not have any money, and that he still owes 500 Dinarii to the previous Waly
- “These are useless excuses, you have to pay even if you have to sell your own flesh” said the Waly

- Many trials and tortures came to this Holy Father, but he endured them patiently
- This Waly used to steal the gold and silver sacred vessels, and seized the goods of the dead Copts as well
- Men fled from place to another with their wives and children, but no place would harbor them because of the troubles and the exaction of taxes
- His tyranny was greater than that of any of his predecessors
- A great plague came and the majority of the dead were Muslims; while Qurra died suddenly a painful death after the death of his wives and children

Usama Ibn Zaid

- Humiliated the Copts to a large extent, killed and gouged the eyes of many Copts, and many of them also died eaten by his hungry dogs
- Ordered all monks to shave their beards, mutilated them, and branded each one of them on his left hand
- Ordered cutting the hand of any unbranded person
- Commanded the governors to execute Copts unjustly, and bring him their wealth
- Through anguish and distress men were minded to sell their own children

Obaid Allah Ibn Higab

- Collecting Jeziah under Hisham Ibn Abdel Malek
- Ordered to tattoo the mark of a lion on the hands of the Christians
- If anyone is found in any place without the mark on his hand, his hand shall be cut off, and he shall be heavily fined
- Pope Alexandros II (43rd) refused to have this sign; asking Obaid Allah to grant him a delay of 3 days

- He prayed to God to take his soul without being branded, and the Lord accepted his request
- Tortured Bishop Samuel of Oseim after he failed to pay 1,000 Dinarii
- Soldiers removed the Bishop cloth, clothed him in a hair-cloth, hanged him in front of St. George Church in Old Cairo, and kept flogging him on a daily basis for a week
- He was finally released after the Copts pleaded to the Waly and agreed to pay him 300 Dinarii

Famous Characters



Pope John III (40th)

- Ordained the 40th Pope in 677 AD during Caliph Mo'awya Ibn Abi Sufian
- He restored his churches in Alex. from the Chalcedonians through the effort of 2 Christian scribes for Waly Abd El Aziz Ibn Mo'awya
- Characterized by righteousness and purity
- Gifted by power of healing
- At the Waly's 1st visit to Alex. to collect tribute ordered to torture him, at beginning of Holy Week, till paying 100,000 Dinarii because the Pope failed to welcome him

- A priest and a deacon were imprisoned with him
- They let him stand above inflamed coal quietly even when the fat of his feet melted and kept praying
- The Waly's wife sent to her husband not to harm the Pope because she was troubled in a dream for him, while the Copts were trying to rescue him
- After threatening and negotiations, the Waly reduces the sum to 10,000 Dinarii
- The Christian scribes asked the Waly for his release promising to collect this sum, who accepted the idea

- After long discussion, the Waly told him, “I perceive that you are an honest man. Therefore, whatever the Christians have collected to ransom you, that I will accept, but henceforth I will require no tribute from you.”
- On Great Thursday, he was released in great honor, received by his people with hymns till they came to church and prayed the day’s rite
- God gave him favor in the Waly’s sight, ordering to honor him
- He rebuilt and repaired his churches with his people

- The ill Waly resided at Monastery of Tammuh and the Pope hosted him
- The Waly donated 20,000 Dinarii to the monastery
- The Pope departed in 686 AD after his final illness while praying, and was buried in a place he prepared for himself at St. Mark church
- The Waly ordered to elect the new Pope in Babylon instead of Alex. and to be ordained in Alex. (used to happened till 11th century)

Bishop Youannes of Niquius

- Raised in Niquius at the beginning of the 7th Century
- His monastic life at St. Macarius Monastery was characterized by holiness, spiritual depth and administrative skills
- Acted as secretary of 4 popes, from Pope Agathon (39th) to Pope Simon (42nd)
- Pope Simon ordained him the Bishop of Niquius
- Appointed the director of the Scetis monasteries in 694 AD by Pope Simon
- He led many to the Orthodox faith

- We don't have any of his sermons and teachings
- Suspended from his duties, by a council of bishops (698), because he ordered to beat a monk who committed adultery, and the monk died
- It seems that he didn't live more after this incident
- Witnessed the intense persecution during the Umayyad Dynasty
- Was exiled to Nile's island because of his strong faith, apologetic efforts and defended nationality
- Being elder, he lost his sight and died at the beginning of 8th Century
- Was a well known Coptic historian

- Wrote in Coptic “The History of the World” in 122 chapters from the creation to the end of 7th century (post Arab Invasion)
- It is considered one of the reliable references
- Unfortunately, the original Coptic copy was lost
- Zotenberg translated the Ethiopian edition, translated from the lost Coptic edition, into French and published it in Paris 1883 AD



Virgin Febronia

- A story of heroism of a religious woman mentioned by the Muslim historian Makrizi
- During the troubles happened in Egypt 749 AD, Marwan Ibn Mohammed fled to Upper Egypt
- His soldiers robbed a convent near Akhmim after dragging the virgins out of it
- Febronia was a virgin of such surpassing beauty that her captors couldn't decide who was to own her
- Whilst they were consulting, she asked them to allow her to pray

- After praying, she got a wise trick to keep her purity
- She begged them to leave her life of worship, and in return she'll reveal to their leader the secret of oil with which her ancestors used to anoint themselves, and thereby they became invulnerable
- The Captain agreed if she let him prove the efficacy of this oil upon herself
- She prayed before the icon of our Lady, asking to assist her to obtain deliverance

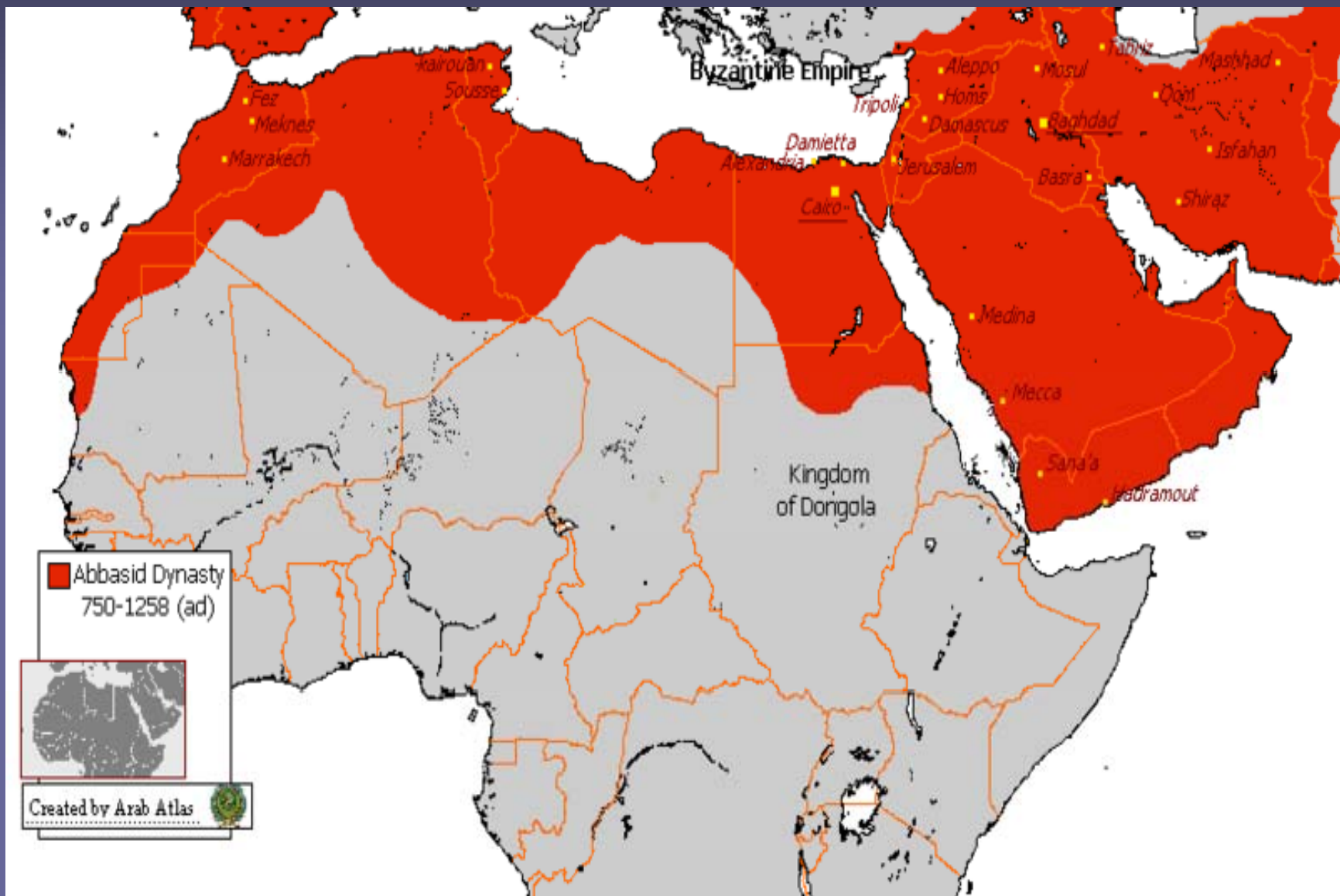
- She anointed her neck with the oil, knelt down, and exposed her neck to a soldier with a sharp sword to strike her
- The man struck with all his might, and her head fell down immediately
- Being very sad and troubled, the soldiers left the convent, without harming any of the nuns, and leaving behind the things they robbed





The Abbasid Dynasty

751-870 AD



The Abbasid Dynasty

- Dynastic name given to the Caliph of Baghdad
- Started with good relations with the Copts
- The biggest problem was the Walys' greediness
- 46 Walys governed Egypt; 24 of them during the reign of Harun El-Rashid (Caliph for 23years)
- The Caliph feared the separation of Egypt if any Waly stayed for long time, and succeeded to attract the people around him
- Injustice acts was the method to collect large mount of tribute in short time

Story of Brutality

- Prince Ibrahim sent Lazarus, a Nestorian, with some men to Egypt with orders to collect the columns and marble from the churches to decorate the Palaces of the Caliph and princes
- They were marveled and amazed at the building of the church of St. Mena at Maryut and its ornaments, and the beauty of its columns and colored marbles
- They destroyed the church and took its marble and columns
- Pope didn't cease to mourn thus night and day

- He took care to restore it quickly
 - The Lord struck Lazarus speedily with a plague in Alex. for long time, and became very poor, but Pope Joseph (Yusab) (52nd) supported him
- «Who is he that resists the Lord? For he shall be crushed.»



Coptic Revolutions

- During the period 725-825, we can count 7 major Coptic revolutions
- Done in protest of their deteriorating conditions, rejecting the injustice of the Walys
- It proves their patriotism
- The last Coptic revolution against the Abbasid ended with a horrible massacre
- In that period, the women were forced to wear prostitutes' attire; men had to wear funny clothes and to ride donkeys only

- Large houses of the Christians were seized and turned to mosques
- The “Poll” tax on the Christians went sky high
- Great numbers of Copts were kicked out of their jobs
- Some Churches were destroyed, and others were banned from praying in them
- The Islamization rate had a sharp rise due to financial hardship, social restriction, insecurity, legal inferiority, and Muslim hostility
- The number of Muslims exceeded the number of Christians at that period

Arab Immigration

- 4,000 soldiers came with Amr 641 AD
- Another 4,000 soldiers were sent by Caliph Omar
- They didn't mingle with the Natives, but they lived in new Islamic cities, like:
 - Fustat near Babylon Fort (641 AD), divided into divisions occupied by different tribes
 - Giza was the 2nd city occupied by Arabs
- Others went to Alex. and lived there
- Omar didn't permit them to work as farmers or to own lands, in order to focus on war and politics

- Therefore they had no influence on Copts either by spreading religion or language
- Arab immigration continued for long time for the wealth achieved by the 1st comers
- Many Walys were accompanied by Arab armies till the end of Umayyad Dynasty (750 AD)
- During Abbasid Dynasty, they brought solders and their families other than Arabs, Turks and Khorasans
- Obaid Allah Ibn Alhabhab, a Jeziah collector, on 728 AD brought 3,000 Arabs to East of Delta, by permission of Caliph Hesham Ibn Abdallah

- They were mingled with Copts, working in farming and living in Egyptian villages
- This change affected the Copts severely



Coptic Language Catastrophe

- Coptic stayed the official Language at Governmental offices till the Arab invasion
- After the invasion, the Arabs used translators
- Many Coptic words were mingled with Arabic language due to the slave Coptic women serving at the houses of the Arabs
- These words still used till now in Arabic
- During Caliph Alwalid Ibn Abdelmalek, and the rule of Abdallah Ibn Abdelmalik (705/706), the Arabic Language became the official one

- The Copts learned the language to keep their governmental jobs
- The Coptic names of the cities changed into Arabic
- Al-Asbagh son of Abd El-Aziz Ibn Marwan ordered to translate the Christian and Coptic books into Arabic, to review its contents
- The Arabic became the language of politics, administration, culture and religion; while Coptic still used in villages, at least for 4 centuries after the invasion

- In a serious precedent, the Fatimid caliph Al-Hakim Bi-Amr Allah issued a decree to stop using Coptic even at houses and public places, and to cut the tongues of those who refused to speak the Arabic language over Coptic
- Using Coptic at churches shouldn't be heard outside, otherwise the building will be destroyed
- Pope Gabriel Ibn Treik, 12th century, ordered to read the scriptures at churches in Coptic then Arabic

- At the 13th Century, Famous writers wrote grammatical roles and vocabulary of the Language e.g. Sons of Al-Assal, Girgis Ibn Al-Amed (Ibn Al-Makin), Deacon AbuShaker Ibn Arraheb, Fr. Botros Alsedementy... etc
- Coptic Language stayed in use for communications in Lower Egypt till 17th Century, and till 16th in Upper Egypt
- At 18th Century, Copts wrote Coptic in Arabic letters, while it stayed in use as Church's Language



The languages on the various ostraka include Arabic, Greek, and three scripts used in the Egyptian language: Coptic, Demotic and Hieratic

Famous Characters

Pope Khail I (Michael) (46th)

- Ordained the 46th Pope (744 -768 AD)
- Lived during end of Umayyad and beginning of Abbasid Dynasties
- Suffered severe afflictions and persecutions
- 24,000 converted to Islam, and Pope was severely mourned till the Lord perished the responsible
- Chalcedonians failed miraculously to own St. Mena's Church at Maryut
- Started 1st discussions for unity between Copts and Greeks in Egypt (March & April 749); which failed because of Greek deacon

- Byzantine Bishop Constantine of Misr converted to Coptic Church, after these discussions
- Pope spent 1 month at prison (Sept 8 - Oct 9, 749), accompanied by Bishops Moisis of Oseim and Tadros of Misr
- Pope had favor in eyes of Muslim and Christian prisoners, that they confessed their sins to him
- He told them that they will be freed within the year if they offered true repentance, which was fulfilled

- He made peace between the Waly and King of Nubia, who came with 100,000 soldiers to free him
- He made many healings and miracles
- He cast out demons from Abd Elmalek's daughter
- Nile water level increased 3 feet miraculously after he prayed the liturgy and threw the washing water into the river, when the Muslim and Jews failed to do so
- He lived his last days in peace, after 23 years of papacy, and departed in 767 AD

Bishop Moses of Oseim

- Learned church subjects, loved purity and was ordained a deacon
- Trained and served a saintly elder in Scetis for 18 years, growing in virtues and asceticism
- Became a brave and righteous bishop, a man of fasting and prayers, and eager to keep Orth. faith
- Gifted with doing miracles and healings
- Perfectly prophesied about the awful end of the evil Waly, Abdallah Ibn Abdelmalek
- Hefs Ibn Alwaleed permitted pope election according to his demand

- Visited Giza and Misr to strengthening the believers during persecution
- Perfectly prophesied the perishing of the persecuting Waly within 1 month, because of conversion of 24,000 Christians to Islam
- Hawthara, the new Waly, built a good relation with him when he knew about his prophecies
- He refused to pay bribe to prove their right of owning some churches against Chalcedonians, trusting God's might, which finally prevailed
- He wished to be martyred, leaving his Parish to accompany Pope Khail

- He was tortured before the Waly, refusing to pay bribe for his release
- He defended Pope Khail, then the Waly ordered to behead him
- Was imprisoned with the Pope with many other bishops, and prophesied that they'll get out safely, which happened when Marwan, their persecutor, was defeated in his war
- He accompanied the Pope during his sufferings
- He knew his day of departure, and he blessed his people while suffering from certain illness, and rested in peace



The Tulunid and
Ikhshidid
Dynasties
868 – 969 AD



The Tulunid Dynasty

- 868-905 AD
- Founded by Ahmad Ibn Tulun (868-884), a Turkish officer, who triumphed over the Abbasid's Waly, and added Palastine and Syria to Egypt under his autonomy
- Egypt became an independent state governed by a Muslim ruler after it was ruled by 108 Walies during 229 years according to Stanly Lanpoole
- Once the tax income no longer had to go to the Caliph in Baghdad, it was possible to develop irrigation works and build a navy, which greatly stimulated the local economy and trade

Ahmad Ibn Tulun

- Muslim historians imply that Ahmad was a virtuous person who loved charity, and was known to have learned the Qoran very well
- They however agree that he was very quick in using the sword
- During the 16 years of his reign, he killed, directly and indirectly, 18,000 persons
- Ahmad was the acquisition of an army that would be independent of the caliph and loyal to him
- To build such an army, Ahmad purchased Mamluks who could be trained as military units loyal to their owner

- The source of huge surplus (10 Million Dinarii) he left in the state treasury at his death in 884, in very short time (16 years), beside the numerous buildings, is questionable
- Built his great Mosque, as the norm of every new ruler, spending large sums of money
- Some Muslims refuse to pray in it, doubting the source of the money
- Stanley Lanpoole, an English historian, says, “ It is almost certain that Ahmad Ibn Tulun had levied huge amounts of money on the Coptic Patriarchs, especially Pope Shenouda I (55th).”

- It is fair to say that the actions of some Copts were a reason for some of the problems the Pope and his people faced
- However, whenever there was a rumor about the Pope, Ahmad would quickly make it an excuse to torture him, and impose a monetary penalty on him
- He used to visit a monastery and stayed in solitude in a cell for contemplation
- He gave the monks some privileges
- He was moved when all people prayed for his healing before his death

Khumarawayh

- Ahmad's son and successor, different than his father
- Expended huge sums on luxurious apartments for his residence and paid a fortune as a dowry for a daughter he married to the caliph Al-Mu'tadid (reigned 892–902) in 895
- Was able to maintain the Egyptian armies in the field, leading them to victory both in Syria and in Mesopotamia
- He resolved his father's conflict with the Caliph by a combination of arms and diplomacy

- While visiting St. Macarius Monastery, he ordered to uncover his body, and catch his beard; and the saint opened his eyes looking at him that he fainted, fell and wasn't able to talk for 1 hour till he was anointed with the blessed oil above the relics
- He treated the Copts nicely
- Country's apparent strength evaporated when he was murdered in 896, leaving no funds with which his 14 years old heir could pay the troops
- The entire country fell into anarchy, which lasted until 905 when a Caliphal army invaded Egypt and momentarily restored it to the status of a province ruled by governors sent from Baghdad

The Ikhshidid Dynasty

- For 30 years the governors were unable to restore stability in Egypt; till this dynasty (935–969 AD)
- It was a period of extreme poverty in Egypt's history; to a great extent it was the Copts who suffered the most
- In general, it was a period of good relations between the Copts and the Muslims, although whenever the Byzantines win a battle against the Muslims in the East, the Muslims would attack the Copts, destroying many churches and monasteries
- In many occasions the government would quickly calm the crowds and bring peace and order to the streets

Famous Characters



Saeed Ibn Katib Elfaraghani

- A Coptic architect during the Tulunid Dynasty
- Designed the Nile gauge at Rodah during the days of Al-Mutawakil the Abbasid (864 AD) and an irrigation system of water reservoirs connected by channels to provide water to Al-Qata'ie city during the days of Ibn Tulun (873)
- As A. Ibn Tulun was inspecting the reservoirs, his horse tripped on some dirt left by the workers; so, he ordered to scourge Saeed 500 times and to put him in jail instead of rewarding him
- While in jail, Saeed heard that Ahmad had decided to build his grand mosque with 300 columns

- Saeed was concerned that, likewise to many other grand mosques, Ahmed will get the needed columns to build the mosque from the Coptic Churches
- He made a model for a grand mosque design that would only need 2 columns
- Ahmed was very amazed; and gave him 100,000 Dinarii to start building (876/877)
- The genius engineer built it in 2 years
- He asked for his reward, and Ahmed granted him 10,000 Dinarii



- He invented the use of pointed arches, appeared 2 centuries later in Europe (Known as the Gothic Architecture)
- Even the motifs and ornaments in Ahmad's Mosque are similar to that of the El Suryan Monastery in Egypt



- Some historical sources said that Ahmad asked Saeed to convert to Islam
- When Saeed refused, Ahmad ordered to behead him and he was martyred on Kiahk 7th
- His relics is kept at St. Kolta's Church



Pope Cosmas III (58th)

- Monk Cosmas was ordained Patriarch 919 AD
- He was righteous, pure and compassionate
- He served his flock faithfully, offering them aids to comfort them from their severe suffering
- The relation with the Ethiopian Church was weakened because of the hardships the Coptic Church faced
- The Ethiopian King asked him to ordain a bishop to look after his two sons after his death
- Bishop Peter (Botros) was ordained

- The bishop inaugurated the younger son to be king
- Two Egyptian monks, Boctor and Mina, having a conflict with the Bishop, convinced the older brother that Pope Cosmas disagreed about the inauguration and that Peter is a false bishop
- The older brother became a king after exiling Peter and his younger brother, considering Mina the rightful bishop
- Boctor stole valuable things, at the absence of Mina, returning back to Egypt and converted to Islam

- As soon as Pope Cosmas knew it, he sent to restore Bishop Peter, and to excommunicate Mina
- The King killed Mina, and found that Peter died in exile, so he fixed Peter's disciple as a bishop, without sending him to Alex. to be ordained
- Pope Cosmas became mad and decide not to ordain a bishop for them
- This decision was adopted by the next 4 popes, for a period of 70 years
- Pope Cosmas departed in 933 AD

St. Severus of Ashmunein

- One of the great Copts during the 10th Century
- Born 915 AD in Old Cairo
- Learned different sciences (like Greek and Islamic philosophy, astronomy, medicine) beside Theology
- 1st to publish Christian books in Arabic
- Collected the Coptic Popes' biography from Coptic and Greek manuscripts, and finished it at age 80
- “History of the Patriarchs” was translated into English and Latin

- Wrote on a wide range of subjects from history to philosophy, religion, theology, and even psychology
- Promoted in governmental offices during the Akhshidid, and became a clever script
- Left his great job to live a monastic life
- His writings declare his excellent studying of the Bible and Patrology, both in Greek and Coptic
- Ordained a Bishop of Ashmunein (Hermopolis)
- Had many debates with Muslim clerics
- Played a great role during the Papacy of Pope Abraam (62nd)

- Exact Number of his books is not known
- Graff, a German Egyptologist, compared historians' different lists, concluding losing of some of his works
- Beside essays and homilies, we have, at least, 26 books of them, like:
 - “Book of Unification” (Al Ittihad)
 - “A book of Elucidation” (The Lamp of the Soul)
 - “The Councils”
 - “Explanation of the Creed”
 - “On Education of the Children of Believers”
 - “Instructions on Confession”



Basilica of Hermopolis Magna

Evaluation

- Positive influence:
 - Removing the Byzantium yoke
 - Restoring the right to choose church leaders
 - Restoring many church buildings and repairing the destroyed
 - Good relations between some rulers and popes
 - God granted the power of healing and punishing
 - Gaining numerous martyrs and confessors

- Negative influence
 - Changing the social structure
 - Each ruler was never concerned about public welfare or future resources growth
 - Injustice, destruction and persecution acts at most times
 - Higher Jeziah at times
 - Bad influence on Coptic Language
 - Loosing the famous Library of Alexandria



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