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THE PATRIARCHATE OF ALEXANDRIA: A STUDY IN NATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

E. R. HARDY, JR.
Berkeley Divinity School, New Haven, Conn.

I.

The history of the patriarchates in the conciliar period of church history offers interesting parallels to that of the kingdoms and republics which had occupied the same territory in Hellenistic days. Like the Seleucid Empire, Antioch began with a leading position, which it gradually lost by secessions and internal divisions. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem revolted from Antioch in the fifth century A.D. as the Jews had under the Maccabees seven centuries before, although for less serious reasons. As the Hellenistic rulers of Asia Minor and Greece gradually lost out to Macedon and Rome, so the ecclesiastical jurisdictions of the same area were ultimately absorbed in the Patriarchates of Rome and Constantinople. But the closest parallel of all is in Egypt. As the Ptolemies built their power on a closely knit and almost impregnable kingdom, from which they ventured forth to take their part in the high politics of the Hellenistic world, so the patriarchs of Alexandria, backed by the united support of the Egyptian Church, took a leading part in the affairs of the great church for two centuries. After generations of splendor, the ecclesiastical, like the civil dynasty, was subject to internal divisions and harassed by external interference, and ended its career in war and catastrophe. The major aspects of this story are a familiar topic in church history, but it may repay another survey from the special point of view of the relation of church and state in Egypt.

The Egyptian priesthood had filled a large place in the life of the country under the Pharaohs, and this did not diminish during the frequent disturbances of the Persian period. The policy of the Ptolemies was to attach the native priesthoods to them by periodic benefactions while at the same time bringing the temple estates and other sources of revenue under government control. Whatever was lost under the weak rule of the

later Ptolemies was more than regained by Augustus, who succeeded to their position as titular Pharaoh. The income of the temples was now administered by the government under an official who, in spite of his title of High Priest of Alexandria and All Egypt, was a Roman civil servant whose duties were financial. The priests were supported by the state, which in return regulated the details of temple administration. The effect on Egyptian paganism in its relation to the state may be compared to the change in the Church of France from its endowed position under the old regime to government support under the Napoleonic Concordat.

For two centuries and more of Roman rule Egyptian paganism retained its outward splendor and enjoyed government support. The changes introduced by Septimius Severus and his successors affected Egyptian religion in several ways. The establishment of municipalities throughout the country in 200 A.D. seems to have involved the transfer to local hands of the care of the temples along with various other burdens of government. To the same reign, and almost to the same time belongs a persecution of the Christians at Alexandria, the first indication that the Egyptian church was important enough to have come to the attention of the government. This persecution, before which Clement retired and in which Origen's father was martyred, was sharp but short, and apparently local. It was followed by nearly fifty years of peace, during which, as Christianity spread, the vigor of paganism, and probably the interest of the authorities in its support, declined. In 250 the Edict of Decius requiring suspect persons, or perhaps all citizens, to sacrifice to the gods of the state produced its results in Egypt as elsewhere. The Decian persecution in Egypt is known to us from the certificates issued to those who had sacrificed which are preserved among the Egyptian papyri, and from the striking anecdotes described in the letters of Dionysius of Alexandria. This gentle-minded scholar is the first of the bishops of Alexandria whose position and activities, as known to us, resemble those of the later patriarchs. Dionysius himself was arrested at a small town some thirty miles west of Alexandria, but was rescued by the members of a wedding party who by a sudden rush scared away the soldiers who were guarding the Bishop. At first Dionysius thought these were robbers, who were only too common in third century Egypt, but finding he was among friends

rode safely away. He was thus enabled to direct his own church and advise others during the persecution and to take a prominent part in church affairs for some time afterwards.[1]

It is symbolically appropriate that Decius is the last of the Roman emperors whose image and title as Pharaoh appears on Egyptian temples. He is credited with the remark during his persecution, that he would rather see a rival emperor set up than a new bishop chosen to fill the vacancy in the Roman Church.[2] He might well have added that the prefect of Egypt could no longer secure such obedience to his orders as could the Bishop of Alexandria. In the following years the city of Alexandria was torn by civil war and ravaged by epidemics, so that Dionysius was barely able to communicate by letter with the flock which he could not visit in person. In times of quiet he was able to resume his pastoral visits. On one of these he dealt with the teaching of Nepos, an Egyptian bishop, which he found widely prevalent among the country clergy of the Arsinoite nome (Fayum) in Middle Egypt. Nepos seems to be the first recorded example of the simple-minded Coptic ascetic. Dionysius admired his faith and laboriousness, his devotion to the Scriptures and to psalmody, but could not approve of his literal interpretation of the Apocalypse and of the promises of the kingdom. Nepos had written a *Refutation of the Allegorists,* to which Dionysius replied with a treatise on *Promises.* By patient argument he was able to convince the Arsinoite clergy of his theological and critical positions, the latter of which included a carefully based distinction between the authorship of the Fourth Gospel and that of the Apocalypse. This is a remarkable episode in the annals of official dealings with heresy, and of equal interest to the historian as illustrating the authority of the Bishop of Alexandria in other parts of Egypt. The local clergy were headed by presbyters; apparently no episcopal see had yet been established in the Fayum.[3]

It seems best to notice here two traditions, if they may be called such, about the episcopate in Egypt. The first is the alleged privilege of the presbyters of Alexandria of electing their chief, a custom known to us from a statement of St. Jerome. If Jerome reports an actual fact of the third century, and not mere-

1 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History,* V, 40-42, 44-46.
2 Cyprian, *Epistles,* 51 (55), 9.
3 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History,* VII, 21-25.

ly a misunderstanding of his own about the customs of episcopal elections, it would seem that the Alexandrian presbyters of that age, probably already representing churches which might be called parochial, governed the church of the city as its council governed the municipality. The well-known turbulence of the Alexandrians may have led to some hesitation in entrusting to the Christians of the city their customary share in the government of the Church. The heresy of Arius ended any special privileges of the Alexandrian presbyters, and is even supposed to have led to their being deprived of the right to preach. In any case, in the fourth century and later, the canonical installation of bishops at Alexandria, as elsewhere, was by nomination by the clergy, acclamation by the laity, and approval expressed in the act of consecration by the bishops of the province.[4]

The other tradition is that which informs us that there were no bishops in Egypt outside Alexandria until the time of Origen's contemporary, Demetrius. Though in itself not improbable, this comes to us only in the annals of the tenth century Patriarch Eutychius, who is a poor authority for matters of ancient history not otherwise confirmed. Perhaps, however, the fact that Eusebius knows Nepos, the anti-allegorist, only as "a Bishop of those in Egypt" indicates that other Egyptian bishops in the early third century were merely auxiliaries or *chorepiscopi* to the bishop of Alexandria. By the end of the century they appear in the usual manner as bishops of cities, but throughout ancient times are in an unusually subordinate position.

The accession of Diocletian to the Empire in 284 has given the Coptic Church the "era of the martyrs" which it still uses in its official dating. Though he is remembered as the Emperor of the great persecution, his governmental reorganization of Egypt was no less important for the future of the church. At his accession one might not unfairly have compared the position of the prefect of Egypt and the bishop of Alexandria. The imperial viceroy was in a real sense the successor of the Pharaohs as the civil and military ruler of their realm. By 284, the au-

4 The presence of these three elements of a canonical election is noted or their absence explained in the accounts of a number of Alexandrian elections from Athanasius on. The statement that presbyters did not preach at Alexandria is in Socrates' list of divergent local customs (*Ecclesiastical History*, V, 22); it contradicts another statement in the same list about sermons on Wednesday and Friday, and like several other items in it may be due to a traveller's misinterpretation.

thority of the bishop was comparable, extending over a body of faithful which would soon be a majority of the population of Egypt and the adjoining territory to the West, and enforced for them by spiritual sanctions made all the stronger by their rejection of the divinity still claimed for the Emperor. In 296-297, one Domitius Domitianus rebelled against Diocletian and was for a short time recognized as Emperor at Alexandria. The suppression of this revolt brought Diocletian in person to Egypt, and led to the reorganization of the country along the lines which he was working out for the Empire generally. Deprived of its special privileges and its personal relation to the Emperor, Egypt was divided into three provinces, and the military authority in each was separated from the civil. The masterful bishops of the fourth and fifth centuries thus had a competence much more extensive than that of any of the corresponding political officials, and a special concentration of civil and military authorities at Alexandria was needed when the government wished to overawe them.

The persecution which began in 303 continued with varying intensity in Egypt for some ten years. The fullest accounts of martyrdoms which are preserved come from the two extremes of the country—Alexandria and the Thebaid. This is as one might expect, since all movements in Egypt appear vigorously at the capital, while in Southern Egypt Coptic Christianity was beginning to succeed the old paganism as a tenaciously held national religion. There is no doubt, however, that the persecution affected all parts of the country and all classes of the population. Its victims varied from Bishop Peter of Alexandria, "the last of the martyrs," to the strange confessor-bishops with Egyptian names who later showed their wounds at the Council of Nicaea. From it the Church emerged firmly grounded in the loyalty of the people, although somewhat disorganized. The parties which vexed the Church of Egypt after 313 represented potentially serious divisions at the two extremes of its membership. The Meletians as a party of rigorists claiming to be the Church of the Martyrs might have had the same appeal to native Christians that the Donatists did in Africa, while Arius as a theologian of the Origenist school might have carried with him the more learned Christian circles of Alexandria. That the Meletians remained a minority and that Arianism did not really become an Egyptian movement at all must be ascribed largely to

the closely-knit unity which the Egyptian Church already possessed, and to the spirit of independence which made it possible for the Church rather than its rivals to be the expression of the national spirit. When Athanasius came to the front ready to assume leadership of the Egyptian Church in its struggles, there was a compact body for him to lead; and as one who was outstanding both as a Greek theologian and as an Egyptian ascetic he was well prepared to lead it.

II.

The century and a quarter from Athanasius to Dioscorus is the classic period of the Patriarchate of Alexandria; the six Alexandrian bishops of this period figure so largely in the church history and indeed the imperial history of the age that a general survey may suffice here. Chosen by popular acclamation from among the higher clergy of Alexandria (and doubtless actually at the nomination of that body), they were in effect a dynasty, well fitted to maintain the *esprit de corps* of the Alexandrian Church. Peter and Timothy had served under Athanasius, Theophilus as deacon under Timothy; Cyril was Theophilus' nephew and Dioscorus Cyril's deacon. The special rights of the bishop of Alexandria over the bishops of Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis were recognized by the Council of Nicaea,[5] and were not grudged by his subordinates. They formed the basis of the solid support of the Egyptian episcopate which is a permanent fact of the controversies of the period. Within Egypt the patriarch's power not only dominated the Church, but on occasion influenced or controlled the civil authorities.

In the early years of Athanasius (whom we are here considering neither as a theologian nor as a leader of the Catholic Church, but as a figure in Egyptian history), this position was still being built up. The years of quiet at the beginning of his pontificate were spent in visitations through his diocese,[6] and when his troubles began in 335 they had the character of a foreign attack on the Egyptian people. As recently published documents have shown, Athanasius was not adverse to appealing to

5 Canon 6.

6 *Chronicle of the Paschal Letters*, 2-6: "diocese" in the fourth century is not quite as technical as in modern usage, but is rather the most dignified word for "district"; it is used for the territory subject to a praetorian prefect or an imperial vicar—in the Church the area subject to an archbishop or (where there was none) to the synod representing one of these civil areas.

the civil arm (the local Egyptian military authorities) to help him in bringing the Meletians into line.[7] Though not extinguished, they survived only as a small sect which did not seriously break national Egyptian unity. It is worth noting that the charges brought against Athanasius at the Council of Tyre in 335 were violence against the Meletians and political interference, and what finally prejudiced Constantine against him was the report that he had interfered with the grain-fleet from Alexandria for Constantinople, which for three centuries was to be the chief interest of the Byzantine government in Egypt. The two exiles of Athanasius under Constantius each required a special concentration of military forces at Alexandria, and the Arian Bishops Gregory and George received no support from the rest of Egypt. The third exile (356-361) was marked by the most serious effort of the government to break the power of Athanasius and the most serious resistance to it. Five thousand soldiers attacked Athanasius and his congregation in church; after his escape violence reigned at Alexandria, and elsewhere sixteen bishops were banished and over thirty forced to flee. Yet even under these conditions the supporters of Athanasius recovered the churches of Alexandria for several months, and George had to console himself for his failure as a Bishop by dabbling in government monopolies.

On the death of Constantius, Julian the Apostate was unmoved by the lynching of Bishop George, who had made himself obnoxious to pagans as well as to Christians; but was disgusted that the people of Alexandria, once so dear to the gods, were now loyal to Athanasius, against whom he fulminated with no effect beyond driving him into the country.[8] Valens tried to revive the policy of Constantius against Athanasius in favor of Lucius, third and last Arian Bishop of Alexandria, but soon gave it up. After the death of Athanasius in 373 one more attempt was made at installing an imperialist Bishop, Lucius being escorted by a special mission under the finance minister (Count of the Sacred Largesses) Magnus. The scenes of twenty years before were repeated to no avail; Bishop Peter withdrew to Rome, and returned in triumph after the death of Valens in 377. Two generations were to pass before the imperial govern-

7 H. I. Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt* (London, British Museum, 1924), 38-71 (P. Lond, 1913-1914).

8 Julian, *Epistles*, 21, 23, 24, 46, 47.

ment tried again to install its candidate on the episcopal throne of the successor of St. Mark.

The attacks on Athanasius were technically based on political charges (and sanctioned by imperial edicts), rather than on the dogmatic questions involved. His defense therefore involves a certain amount of theory of Church and State. The Church should be free to govern itself, neither asking for imperial confirmation of its decisions nor accepting imperial regulation of its life. The people of Alexandria (or any other church) have the right to choose their bishop, and it is specially obnoxious that bishops should be sent to them from distant places. One hears the voice of the patriot as well as the ecclesiastic.[9]

Athanasius had, of course, battled for the Nicene faith in the church at large as well as for the freedom of the Egyptian Church. His successors, though not unskillful theologians, often seem to have confused the defence of orthodoxy with their rivalry with the rising imperial see of Constantinople. Four times the Alexandrians sailed forth to preside over the removal of Byzantine bishops; the geography, and sometimes the incidents, are reminiscent of the days when the Ptolemies sent out their fleets to control the Aegean. The grain-fleet regularly brought Egyptian ships to Constantinople; its sailors broke open the church where Egyptian bishops consecrated Maximus the Cynic by night in 380, and gave a triumphal welcome to Theophilus when he came to pass judgment on John Chrysostom in 403. But Ephesus was safer ground, as less under the the Emperor's eye, and itself disposed to be jealous of Constantinople. Here Cyril won his great victory in 431. Arriving in what might be called an ecclesiastical war-fleet, he threw imperial and papal legates into confusion, out-manoeuvered the Antiochene and other Eastern bishops who arrived more slowly by land, and soon had all points, dogmatic, administrative, and personal arranged to his satisfaction. The acceptance of these measures at court required considerable distribution of the treasures of the Alexandrian Church among high personages, and the ratification of the Council at Rome and Antioch called for a good deal of explanation. Perhaps this should have been a warning to Dioscorus when he attempted the same tactics against another bishop of Constantinople and the theology he endorsed at the same place in 449.

9 *Historia Arianorum*, 52, 74-75.

At home the Alexandrian bishop reigned without a rival. He was commonly styled pope and archbishop—the former title goes back to about 250, the latter (which in those days had a more definite meaning, since it implied superiority to other bishops, while *papa* was honorific) to the time of Athanasius. "Patriarch" comes in about the end of this period, and is never quite as official at Alexandria as the other two. To enemies of the Alexandrian bishop, or of any particular Alexandrian bishop, it came naturally to nickname him Pharaoh.[10] His civil rival, the prefect, received some accession of status about 380. Since Diocletian's time, the Egyptian provinces had been part of the vast diocese of the East, under the *comes orientis* at Antioch. Now Egypt (in this sense including Libya, and so coinciding with the Patriarchate) became a separate diocese, over which the prefect presided with some (though not all) of the rights of imperial vicars. The tendency to divide provinces continued, and ultimately there were seven in Egypt proper—Egypt I and II in the western Delta, Augustamnica I and II to the east, Aegyptus Herculia, later renamed Arcadia, in middle Egypt, and Thebais I and II to the south. As the Thebaid was a frontier area, the military commander (Duke) had general direction there; his feeble military forces were increasingly assisted by the fortified monasteries of the territory. At Alexandria the prefect, like the bishop, received an honorary addition to his title; he was now Augustal Prefect, and before long was simply referred to as the Augustal.

The resources of the Church of Alexandria included government subventions and endowments as well as the offerings of the faithful. It administered for the clergy and the poor of Alexandria a portion of the grain-tax of Egypt, and occasionally enjoyed special imperial benefactions—the great church of the Caesareum, built in the time of Constantius, was the most conspicuous. By donation or otherwise the Alexandrian Church became a considerable landowner, at a period when landed proprietors were coming to bulk large in the life of Egypt. An edict of 415, intended to restrain the practice of patronage by which peasants or whole villages chose to be serfs of the great rather than unprotected small owners, gives specially favourable treatment to the churches of Constantinople and Alexandria; they

10 E. g. Leo, of Dioscorus, *Epistles*, 131; Isidore of Pelusium, of Theophilus, *Epistles*, I, 152.

are allowed to retain what they have acquired, provided that obligations formerly owed to the government are duly discharged.[11] The monks of Nitria could on occasion come down to Alexandria and provide the Bishop with a fighting force; in the city he had the corps of parabolani, whose proper functions were to care for the sick and bury the dead, but who could use their strong arms to defend their chief or attack his supposed enemies as well.[12]

At the episcopal election of 412 some supported the archdeacon and some the nephew of Theophilus; in spite of the support of the duke Abundantius, Archdeacon Timothy lost and Cyril was duly installed. In connection with his pontificate the church historian Socrates observes that the bishops of Alexandria now began to press beyond their religious functions into secular matters—a remark he also makes of the contemporary bishops of Rome, with reference in each case to their suppression of the Novatians in their cities, contrary to the consideration with which these orthodox schismatics were treated at Constantinople.[13] Cyril soon distinguished himself by his feud with the Prefect Orestes, which reflected little credit on either official. Its victims were the Jews of Alexandria, the monk Ammonius, and the philosopher Hypatia. We have Cardinal Newman's authority for saying of Cyril that he would not have wished the correctness of his theology to be judged at all times by his personal character. He was the last great thinker of the Alexandrian School and the last Alexandrian bishop to be left in undisturbed possession of power over the Egyptians, a dominating position at Alexandria, and a leading one in the general affairs of the Church. As an ecclesiastical politician, he at least had a fine grasp of what was practicable, when he could win his point, and when it was wiser to yield.

On his death in 444 the precedent of 412 was reversed; the Archdeacon Dioscorus succeeded and Cyril's nephews were left in disgruntled opposition—aggravated by Dioscorus' success in recovering from them money belonging to the see. The next seven years saw an ecclesiastical revolution; Dioscorus seemed to repeat Cyril's triumph at Ephesus in 449, and then two years later at Chalcedon, Emperor, Pope, Antioch, Constantinople and apparently the whole Eastern episcopate were arrayed against

11 *Codex Theodosianus,* XI, 24, 6
12 Cf. regulation of their number in *Codex Theodosianus,* XVI, 2, 42-43.
13 Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History,* VII, 7, 11.

him. Neither theologically nor politically was the catastrophe of 451 as complete as at first appeared, although the great days of the bishops of Alexandria were over. But when Dioscorus passed into exile none remained loyal to this cause but the bishops and people of Egypt, and not even quite all of them. Of the seventeen bishops who accompanied him to Chalcedon, thirteen protested that they could not subscribe its decisions until they had a Patriarch to lead them in doing so. But four had passed over to his opponents during the Council, and these now set off for Alexandria to install his successor.

III.

For the next two centuries the affairs of the Patriarchate of Alexandria possess less general importance, but scarcely less interest. As episodes in the history of Egypt its religious crises are of no less moment than before. The Monophysite theologians were acute rather than profound and failed to influence the West, but were important in the East. Though the Church of Alexandria was now led at best by politicians rather than statesmen, the events its leaders influenced are of some importance in the general stream of Byzantine history. And the last period of Roman Egypt is by no means the least fascinating in the story of that ancient land.

As throughout ancient history, we must distinguish between the Alexandrians and the Egyptians. Alexandria was always an island off the coast of Greco-Roman Egypt rather than part of the country. The Alexandrians of 451-640 are as much disposed to "descend into the streets" as ever; they are normally supporters of the national patriarch, but some adherents of the imperial Church can be found among them, or feelings among different groups rise so high as to bring their common cause into disrepute. The Egyptians—we may as well now call them Copts—gave a steadier if less exciting support to the national cause. A third group to be reckoned with is the Egyptian aristocracy, sometimes drawn into the orbit of court influence, but usually local in its interests and loyalties. From this class of landowners (to whom should be added the merchants of Alexandria) the higher officials were usually drawn, except when moments of crisis led to the sending of a foreign commander to Alexandria. In the fourth century the rule that provincial governors should not be natives of their provinces had been strictly

followed.[14] It prevented the agents of the central government from becoming the leaders of local separatist movements, but invited friction and encouraged exploitation by officials who might hope to retire elsewhere with their ill-gotten gains. In the fifth century the rule became obsolete, and in the sixth there were even some experiments with election by the bishops and other local magnates. Elements of self-government and of feudalism were finding their way into the autocratic structure of the Empire.

Proterius, the new Bishop of Alexandria, might, if anyone could, have rallied support against Dioscorus and for the Council of Chalcedon. Archpriest of Alexandria, he had been in charge of the Church in the Patriarch's absence. He belonged to the circle from which bishops of Alexandria had been chosen for the last century. He was a loyal enough Alexandrian to support vigorously and successfully against Leo of Rome the correctness of the Alexandrian date for Easter in 455, which fell on a day later than those on which it was then customary to celebrate Easter at Rome.[15] He could count on the support of a number of groups at Alexandria—opponents of Dioscorus inside the clerical body, and any who were moved by the doctrinal issue involved, the authority of the Emperor, or the two centuries of close connection between the Alexandrian and Roman Churches. There was in fact a Proterian party at Alexandria for the next generation. But nothing could secure the real acceptance at Alexandria of a bishop imposed from without after the deposition of their own Patriarch. The imperial emissaries found the city in full revolt and lost two thousand men to the insurgents; only reinforcements sent post haste from Constantinople were able to establish Proterius uneasily on the patriarchal throne. It does not appear just how things stood outside Alexandria; there were a few Proterian bishops, but probably only passive acceptance of the situation was demanded of the rest.

In 457 the Emperor Marcian, patron and supporter of the Chalcedonian Council, died; Dioscorus had already died in exile in 454. In the absence of the Duke, the Alexandrians elected, popularly but irregularly, a rival Bishop—a priest named Timothy, formerly a monk, nicknamed the Cat (Aelurus), supposedly

14 See list of the prefects of Egypt in the *Chronicle of the Festal Letters of Athanasius.*

15 See detailed account of this discussion in C. W. Jones, ed., *Bedae Opera de Temporibus* (Cambridge, Mediaeval Academy, 1943), 56-60.

from his quietly slipping from cell to cell to organize the opposition to Proterius. In their traditional manner the Alexandrians moved from protest to violence; Proterius was lynched in the baptistry of the Caesareum. When order was restored in the name of the new Emperor, Leo, Timothy was banished and an official Bishop, also named Timothy, installed at Alexandria. His nicknames were Salophaciol, which is obscure but seems to refer to some peculiarity of headgear, and Basilicus; the latter is the Greek for royalist, a significant term in this connection. In the Syriac form, Melchite, it later became the common name for the representatives of official Orthodoxy in Egypt and Syria. For the next twenty years the two Timothies alternated in possession at Alexandria according as imperial policy in church affairs varied at Constantinople. Timothy Salophaciol was content enough to retire to his monastery when his rival was in power, and was not disposed to force matters when in possession himself. This attitude won the friendship, though not the support of the Egyptians, and brought the gentle Patriarch under some suspicion at Rome.

Timothy Aelurus died first, and his place was hastily filled by one Peter, a former deacon of Dioscorus. He is known by another of these Alexandrian nicknames—in this case Mongus, the Hoarse, or the Stammerer. Whatever the limitations of his throat, he was the ablest leader the Monophysites had yet had. There were still enough Proterians at Alexandria to provide a rival claimant, in 482, in John Talaia. John lost support at court for personal reasons, and retired to Rome, where he ended his days as Bishop of Nola. The Emperor Zeno was following a policy of compromise, a not unnatural one in the interest of the unity of the Eastern Empire. Peter secured imperial recognition as Patriarch of Alexandria on accepting the Henoticon, a formula of union which sidestepped the Chalcedonian decisions without formally renouncing them. The result was schism between Constantinople and Rome, which mattered little in the East at the moment. For his complaisance Peter had to face a protest from the more rigid Egyptian monks and bishops, but met it by indicating that as for him he renounced Chalcedon as firmly as ever.

Such was the situation in the Eastern Church for a generation. Zeno was succeeded by Anastasius (491-518), whose sympathies were definitely on the Monophysite side. After

Peter a series of Alexandrian bishops bore great names without distinction—Athanasius II, John I and II, Dioscorus II, Timothy II. The Church of Egypt had little to do but enjoy its peace and say its prayers—apparently by now struggle was needed to call forth any energy. Civil affairs were also uneventful; the local magnates governed the country, and a few of them rose to take part in imperial affairs. But on the whole Egypt was quietly drifting into isolation from the rest of the Empire.

In 518 the aged guardsman, Justin, came to the throne, and his nephew, Justinian, at once assumed direction of ecclesiastical affairs. Imperial policy in these matters was rapidly reversed; Chalcedon was again proclaimed at Constantinople, the schism with Rome was ended, and the Chalcedonian confession succeeded the Monophysite in official favour throughout the East —except in Egypt. Timothy II peacefully succeeded Dioscorus II about this time, although Pope Hormisdas had suggested that his legate Dioscorus would be a suitable candidate for the Alexandrian see. (Dioscorus knew Egyptian conditions, which may well mean that he had come to Rome with John Talaia.) After thirty years of ecclesiastical independence, Egypt was too hard a nut to crack at once. Indeed it became for a time a center for Monophysite refugees from other parts of the Empire. The result was to make church life in Egypt more exciting by importing into that country disputes which had arisen among Monophysites elsewhere.

These Monophysite divisions must not be thought of as distinct sects; indeed the Monophysites themselves were still a party within the Eastern Church rather than a separate body. Orthodox writers sometimes list a number of subdivisions—partly because that is the way one writes about heresies, partly because their interest is in the varying degrees and manners of divergence of different Monophysites from the Council of Chalcedon.[16] At this period three groups are significant. Egypt had produced for herself the *Acephali,* out-and-out partisans who opposed all compromise and were ready to renounce their own patriarchs if they were guilty of such. After 518 two leading Monophysite theologians came to Egypt, and each acquired a following. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch from 512-518, was, unlike his brothers of Alexandria, a vigorous preacher and teacher. His theology, which ultimately became Monophysite

16 Cf. treatment in Timotheus, *De receptione haereticorum,* by a presbyter of Constantinople about 600.

Orthodoxy, agreed with that of Rome and Constantinople in confessing one Christ, true God and true Man; but he broke with Rome and Chalcedon in refusing to recognize "one person in two natures" as a suitable formula for expressing this belief. In contrast Julian of Halicarnassus was more of a Monophysite as the term is generally understood. For him the "one nature of the incarnate Word" (in a famous phrase of Cyril's) could have left no room for the weaknesses of humanity in the body of Christ. In Egypt the doctrines of Severus became those of the official and fashionable element in the Church, and, perhaps as a result, Julianism was for a while the creed of the common man and the monk at Alexandria and the adjoining parts of Egypt. In the last years of Timothy, Severus withdrew from Alexandria to live with one of his supporters in the Delta town of Xois. At the time of the Patriarch's death he was actually at Constantinople, where he had been summoned for one of the religious conferences which Justinian (Emperor since 527) took pleasure in convening.

Still another influence now appears on the scene, that of the Empress Theodora, patron and protectress of the Monophysites, as her husband was of the Catholics. When Timothy died, a chamberlain of her household had already arrived in Alexandria to urge the choice of a successor to her (and perhaps her husband's) liking. Clergy, magnates, headed by the Prefect Dioscorus and the Duke Aristomachus, and the Chamberlain Calotychius agreed in the election of the gentle and learned deacon Theodosius, a disciple of Severus in theology. But when he appeared in public to conduct the obsequies of his predecessor he was met by a popular uprising, and the Archdeacon Gaianus, who professed himself a Julianist, soon took his place on the episcopal throne. All elements in Alexandrian society supported him—landowners, merchants, soldiers, the common people. Familiar scenes in Alexandrian history were reenacted; the Chamberlain Narses arrived with troops and full authority, and after severe street-fighting reinstalled Theodosius as Patriarch. No one gained by this except Narses, who first won in the streets of Alexandria the military laurels he was later to add to on Italian battlefields. Gaianus was exiled to Africa, and later to Sardinia. Theodosius remained at Alexandria under military protection for about a year, and then late in 536 was invited to Constantinople, which under the circumstances had the

effect of a command. He went to the imperial city, and there he was to remain for the rest of his life.[17]

Justinian had decided on a thorough reorganization of the long-neglected Egyptian province. He would strengthen the imperial authority, and again install an Orthodox Patriarch at Alexandria. The former task was easier, and was carried through by Edict XIII, issued in 538. The Prefect became the Augustal Duke, with civil and military authority over the two provinces of Egypt; similar arrangements were made in the Thebaid, and probably in Augustamnica and Arcadia as well. Diocletian's division of powers was definitely abandoned, as in many parts of the Empire at this time. In place of balancing civil and military authorities, Justinian seems to have followed a policy of balancing political and ecclesiastical, the two independent of each other, but almost equally subject to his control. There is a trace of this system in the provision in Edict XIII that the Bishop of Alexandria is not to issue certificates of asylum to fugitives from justice unless the Church will guarantee payment of their debts to the state, when finally determined.[18]

Doubtless Justinian's detailed ecclesiastical legislation was meant to apply to Egypt as to other parts of his realm. But first he must find an imperial patriarch for Alexandria. Theodosius was offered the position if he would conform, but refused. In his place Paul, Abbot of the Pachomian Monastery at Canopus, some twelve miles east of Alexandria, was found willing; he was consecrated at Constantinople in 537 and returned to Egypt for a brief and stormy pontificate. A political scandal led to his removal in 539. His successors, Zoilus and Apollinaris, were as much concerned with the imperial councils to which they were summoned from time to time as with the affairs of Egypt. Zoilus, a Palestinian monk, was removed in 551; Apollinaris, a former officer, remained in possession until his death in 570. Later accounts credit him with a massacre of the faithful assembled in church on his arrival; but the story is incredible in detail, and is best taken as a fictional statement of the mixed military-ecclesiastical character of these prelates. The authority of

17 The best contemporary source for these events is Liberatus, *Breviarium Causae Nestorianorum et Eutychianorum*, 20; the account in *History of the Coptic Patriarchs of Alexandria* (ed. and trans. B. Evetts in *Patrologia Orientalis*, I, [Paris, 1904], Parts II and IV), the *Liber Pontificalis* of the Coptic Church, adds interesting details, but as the official Theodosian version must be read with care (455-469).

18 Edict XIII, 9-10, 28.

Justinian's bishops did not extend much beyond the churches of Alexandria, which were secured and kept at their disposal by the necessary force. Probably of more importance to Justinian than the spiritual leadership of the Egyptians was the control of the wealth of the Alexandrian Church. As far as it was administered by the patriarch through his *oeconomus,* this was now at the disposal of the Emperor's nominee. Under Apollinaris there was an official investigation of the management of this property, which shows the interest taken in it at Constantinople.[19] After a while the Emperor was perhaps not unwilling that two such sources of power as the loyalty of the Egyptians to their Church and the wealth of the see of Alexandria should be in different hands. The Copts, of course, controlled the lesser but considerable resources of dioceses, monasteries, and parish churches outside Alexandria.

Meanwhile Theodosius lived on at Constantinople under the protection of Theodora, spending much of his time in the palace itself. The apparent counter-policies of Emperor and Empress puzzled contemporaries as they have later historians. It seems more likely that there was some mutual agreement than that a family quarrel was really allowed to affect affairs of state so extensively. The continuation, even increase, of the backhanded encouragement of the Monophysites at Constantinople after Theodora's death in 547 seems to confirm this interpretation. We need not ascribe to Justinian a deliberate plan to divide and rule. But he may well have calculated that, since the total suppression of the Monophysites was unlikely, it was better to keep their leaders in some kind of touch with himself than to drive them into complete opposition. In the case of Theodosius the arrangement worked well for both sides. Without actual discomfort, the unpopular Patriarch acquired the status of a confessor of the faith, and by the time of his death had become a national hero. As the ranking Monophysite prelate he was the formal leader of his party, and was able to send out foreign missions. In 542 he consecrated the redoubtable Jacob Baradai, who reconstituted the Monophysite party in Syria and gave it some help in Egypt as well. Theodosius administered his patriarchate to some extent but, perhaps by agreement, did not consecrate bishops for Egypt. From Justinian's point of view he was safer in Constantinople than leading an opposition at home, and year

19 Theophanes, *Chronographia, anno* 6059.

by year the death of its prelates disorganized the Egyptian Church, although the ministrations of Jacob Baradai and other wandering Syrians saved its priesthood from extinction. One of the famous anecdotes of the period is the story of the rival missions, Chalcedonian and Monophysite, which Justinian and Theodora sent to the King of the Nubians. At a hint from Theodora the Duke of the Thebaid delayed the imperial mission by official red tape while Theodora's, headed by a missionary bishop consecrated by Theodosius, was speeded on its way.[20] Though recounted by one of the best writers of the period, this story is probably not to be taken quite literally. In the first place, the Duke would have been a Copt himself, and already on Theodora's side in such a question; and Justinian can scarcely have really expected that the Christianity of Constantinople would appeal to the Nubians as against that which prevailed in the adjoining sections of Egypt. In any case, the Nubian mission was considered one of the achievements of the reign. The Romans and Nubians allied themselves against the intervening tribe of the Blemmyes, and in 543 Narses ended his military career in Egypt by closing the temples of Philae, which had remained open till then that the Nubians might descend the Nile for the worship of Isis.

Justinian died in 565, and the Patriarch Theodosius followed him in the next year. The authorities at Alexandria hinted that the election of a successor would not be objected to, as long as it was not brought to their official attention by being held publicly.[21] Though strong in the faith, the Egyptian Church was in administrative confusion, and nine years elapsed before a generally recognized Patriarch, Peter IV, took office. He at once filled up the Egyptian episcopate, and the succession of the Coptic Church and its bishops has continued unbroken from that day to this. The government returned to its older policy of toleration in Egypt. The Melchite Patriarch Eulogius (581-608), friend and correspondent of Gregory the Great, had some success with gentleness where violence had failed, and built up some solid support for his Church in northern Egypt. The conversions he reported to Gregory, however, probably represented a drift of

20 John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 4, 6-7.

21 *History of the Patriarchs*, 470; as the official account, however, this history suppresses the disputed election, which has been studied by W. A. Wigram, *The Separation of the Monophysites* (London, 1923), 175-179, and more profoundly by Jean Maspero, *Histoire des Patriarches d'Alexandrie*, (Paris, 1923), 212-249.

aristocratic elements among the Copts to the imperial Church rather than a serious popular movement.[22] In general, peace prevailed between the two divisions of the Egyptian Church. The Copts of Alexandria itself, who had long worshipped in secret chapels, were able to build a public church, the Angelion, or Church of the Angels, and in 616-622 the Patriarch Andronicus resided in his former cell there instead of in the suburban monasteries where his predecessors had lived. His Melchite contemporary, usually called in English John the Almoner, was notable for the generosity with which he distributed the great wealth at his command. The *sobriquet* Joannes Eleemon might be translated John the Kind-hearted—certainly not by Gibbon's John the Eleemosynary. John's character was enshrined by a contemporary admirer in one of the most charming of the lives of the saints.[23] The period was by no means one of general peace in the country. Egypt suffered from civil disorder verging on anarchy, and was the scene of important fighting in the revolution which brought Heraclius to the imperial throne in 610. Fortunately in those days the state of the Church was such as to mitigate rather than aggravate the distress of the land.

IV.

Our story ends amid the series of crises which marked the last generation of Roman Egypt. First came the Persian invasion, before which John the Almoner fled to die in his native Cyprus. The Coptic Patriarch Benjamin began his pontificate in this period of confusion, and continued it under still worse conditions. When Heraclius recovered his provinces, he was shocked by the ease with which the Monophysites had abandoned their Roman allegiance, and determined on a new effort to unite the Churches by imperial manipulation. The scheme adopted was the artificial confession of one energy, or one will, in Christ, which won few real adherents and served mainly to annoy both sides. Its agent in Egypt was the Patriarch Cyrus, who was entrusted with civil and military as well as ecclesiastical authority. He reconciled a few "Theodosians," but to the Copts generally was little but a second Diocletian. For the first time, I believe, in the three centuries of imperial intervention in ec-

22 Gregory, *Epistles*, VII, 37; VIII, 29.

23 Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almoner* (ed. by H. Gelzer, *Leontios' von Neapolis Leben des heiligen Iohannes des-Barmherzigen*, 1893).

clesiastical affairs in Egypt there was a serious attempt to secure obedience to the imperial confession throughout the country. When the Moslem invasion came in 639 the Copts accepted it with passive relief if not with active enthusiasm. Cyrus had neither great military forces nor strong popular support behind him, and could only sign with dignity the surrender of Egypt, soon after which he died. The Caliph's general 'Amr took possession of Alexandria in succession to the long line of Roman prefects, and the Patriarch Benjamin returned in peace. As the new stage of their history began, the Copts were for a while more contented under the Caliph than they had been under the Byzantine Emperor; what happened to them afterwards is another story.

With these events terminates the ancient history of Egypt and its Church. The ancient Church of Alexandria has an important place both in the general history of Christianity and in the national history of Egypt. Its rise and decline is on the whole a glorious story of resistance to either pagan or officially Christian imperialism, and a valuable exhibition of the strength and limitations of a predominantly national form of Christianity.