

(CE:1911a-1912a)

PATRIARCHAL ELECTION. The Coptic Orthodox church is an apostolic church, and its first patriarchs were selected from a limited number of priests of whom the first group of twelve were appointed to help ANIANUS (68-85), who succeeded Saint Mark as second bishop of Alexandria. According to Sa'īd IBN AL-BITRIQ, the tenth-century Melchite patriarch also known as Eutychius, and the thirteenth-century Coptic historian ABU AL-MAKARIM, it was decreed that when a bishop died, the twelve priests selected a successor from among themselves, and the other eleven laid hands on their choice while selecting a new patriarch. Later, this gave birth to the established tradition of the selection of a simple monk of great sanctity and considerable learning for the patriarchate. Other bishops were barred from this selection, since a bishop was supposed to be espoused to his eparchy and could not be moved from his seat. EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, the father of church history, made this clear in his life of Constantine (3.62.3). This rule was strictly applied through the Middle Ages and was further confirmed by the Holy Synod convened in 1873, which elected Bishop Mark (Murqus) of the Beheirah province only *locum tenens* for handling church affairs after the decease of Pope DEMETRIUS II (1862-1870), the 111th successor of Saint Mark. The same synod comprising nine bishops enacted that the bishop who sought elevation of himself to the patriarchal dignity should be excommunicated.

The Holy Synod that was convened on 18 July 1928 with eleven bishops present, departed from the rule of excommunication and opened the door for the elevation of a bishop to the patriarchate. It was on this basis that Pope JOHN XIX (1928-1942), formerly bishop of Beheirah province, was the first to be elected patriarch, and this caused a great protest in the Coptic community. Jirjis Philuthawus 'Awaḍ published a painful brochure under the title "Pitfall of the Coptic Church in the Twentieth Century." Others such as Yassa 'Abd al-Masiḥ, Nazir Jayyid (SHENOUDA III), and Wahib 'Atallah (Bishop Gregorius) joined the protesters, and the eminent jurist Albert Barsum Salamah wrote in support of the old

tradition. Nevertheless, Pope John XIX was succeeded by the bishop of Asyut as MACARIUS III (1944-1945) and again YUSAB II (1946-1956), bishop of Jirja.

After the death of Pope CYRIL VI (1959-1971), a former solitary monk, the Coptic patriarchal seat was claimed again by six bishops of whom three bore the title of bishops suffragan or general (otherwise bishops without a fixed eparchy). This was a novelty to promote their case without breach of the established tradition that a bishop could not leave the eparchy to which he is married for life. But this innovation was criticized as contrary to church usage, for a bishop should always be identified with an eparchy, and the bishop without one is like a head without a body. Nevertheless, Bishop Shenouda, as suffragan entrusted with the supervision of theological education, was a candidate for the patriarchal seat to which he was elected as Shenouda III, the 117th patriarch.

But the fact remains that the patriarch must legally be selected from the community of monks. This was made explicitly clear during the tenure of Pope Cyril VI on the occasion of granting the Ethiopian church the privilege of selecting its own patriarch. This document laid down the condition that the Ethiopian clergy must select their candidate from among their monastic community in unison with the established tradition of the mother church in Egypt.

Since the ARAB CONQUEST OF EGYPT (640), confirmation of the election of the patriarch by the ruler has been a matter of official formality. During the twentieth century, this confirmation was granted by virtue of a royal decree, and, after the 1952 revolution, by virtue of a presidential decree, pursuant to the presidential act of 2 November 1957, which is currently in force and also allows both orders of monks and bishops to be candidates in the patriarchal election.

Today the patriarch is chosen by means of casting lots or *al-Qur'ah al-Haykaliyyah* (the choice of God from the altar). The names of three candidates are placed in a sealed box by the patriarch's representative. Before the Sunday liturgy following the choices, the box is placed upon the altar of the patriarchal Church (see PATRIARCHAL RESIDENCES). Following the liturgy and communion, the priest selects a very young boy from the audience.

He is blindfolded, the box is opened, and he picks one of the three cards. The first name picked is that of the new patriarch. The other two names must also be shown to the congregation.

The liturgy of consecrations takes place one or two weeks later on a Sunday (see PATRIARCH, CONSECRATION OF).

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