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THE COPTS - A NECESSARY EVIL?

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## THE XEIPOTONIA AMONG THE COPTS - A NECESSARY EVIL ?

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The purpose of this essay is to investigate some of the reasons for the mediaeval Coptic practice of the χειροτονία, with special reference to its ecclesiastical - administrative necessities for sheer survival and the moral imperative based upon the prohibition of this practice as spelled out in the *Acts of the Apostles* and in the Canons of the Early Church. The burdensome tension between the practical necessities and the attending moral implications has often led to unfortunate generalizations and irresponsible judgments and condemnations, both by contemporaries and later generations. While we maintain that a more discriminating corrective of these generalizations is in order, we do not intend to offer an all-inclusive justification or excuse for the χειροτονία. On the contrary, for the sake of historical accuracy, it is our aim to present a balanced view and to call to mind some of the reasons which have led to such harsh criticisms against the mediaeval Coptic hierarchy. A fair evaluation of the practice of the χειροτονία must consider the circumstances and the situation of each and every case. Thus, it is impossible to compare the ecclesiastical-administrative situation of the mediaeval Coptic Church from the 9th - 14th century with that of the Jerusalem Church of the first half of the 1st century. It is true, of course, that the social ethical norms set forth in the Holy Scriptures, the Canons of the Church and the Sayings of the Fathers are binding in so far as they prescribe a line of intentional conduct for the believer and the Church — an ideal which should always be considered authoritative and according to which each and every decision should be evaluated. At the same time, however, St. Peter's reply to Simon Magus was issued in an altogether different context from the simonic decisions of such Coptic patriarchs as Khail III or Gabriel I, who solely for the sake of the survival of the Church, which after all was entrusted to them, had to employ means which were contrary to apostolic practices.

— 437 —

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It is our contention that at least in some cases — certainly not in all — the mediaeval practice of the *χειροτονία* by the Coptic patriarchs, bishops and archons was a necessary evil, and as such comparable with such necessary evils, as for example, the so-called white lie or the stealing on account of need or poverty. In these cases, the end justifies an otherwise prohibited act of conduct. It is noteworthy, that this principle was acknowledged and accepted by the canonical jurists of the mediaeval Coptic Church. For example, the Nomocanon of Michael, the Bishop of Malig, states regarding saying the truth, that, in principle, the lie is one of the most serious sins as the Apostle intimated when he said: «Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds» (Col. 3 : 9). He, who speaks the truth, in him is the grace of the Holy Spirit, and he should be strengthened by the Divine Mysteries of Jesus Christ, while he, who lies, in him is the devil, and he shall have no part in the Divine Mysteries. At the same time, there are differences between an occasional and a habitual lie, moreover, there are distinctions as to the motivations for lying. There are those, who lie as to evade a grave sin, like the lies of Shiphrah and Puah, the Hebrew midwives, who were ordered by Pharaoh to kill the sons of the Hebrews, but who lied to the king of Egypt and thereby saved the lives of the men children (Ex. 1 : 15 ff.). Moreover, lies that are expressions of self - humiliation are to be rewarded, for he who does good, shall do it in secret<sup>1</sup>. In the case of white lies, namely statements of untruth which benefit another or the self, they are not only tolerated but even rewarded.—Regarding stealing on account of need or poverty, the Coptic jurists adhere to a more conservative position in so far as they consider it a sin, though a pardonable offence. Theft is a grave sin, since it was the cause of the misery of Judas, who, according to the Gospel, was a thief (John 12 : 6). Punishment of theft was severe under the Mosaic Law, as in all pastoral countries where property was chiefly in flocks. The thief was compelled to make restitution, five - fold for a stolen ox and four - fold for a sheep (Ex. 22 : 4), and to kill a thief, caught in the act, was not a capital offence. Moreover, St. Paul admonished, let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good (Eph. 4 : 28). Those who steal on account of need or poverty or for the mere maintenance of life should be judged with consideration, provided they have demonstrated penitence. The ignorant and the young, provided they are penitent, shall be temporarily suspended from receiving the Divine Mysteries<sup>2</sup>.

1. Michael of Malig, *Nomocanon* § 13 & 24.

2. *Ibid.*, § 17.

Similar arguments could be advanced regarding the practice of the χειροτονία following the Arab Conquest with its more or less oppressive measures against the Coptic Church, especially against the Coptic hierarchy. For our primary source of study we have used the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church* from the days of the Patriarch Joseph (831 - 849) to those of the Patriarch Theodosius II (1294 - 1300)<sup>3</sup>. The twenty - eight biographies inform us that the practice of the χειροτονία was explicitly mentioned in connection with seven patriarchs or 25 % of the patriarchs who administered the Coptic Church for 470 years, from 830 - 1300. In two cases, those of Khail III and Gabriel I, it is unequivocally stated that they practised the χειροτονία entirely from unselfish motivations and exclusively for the survival of the Church. In this connection it is interesting to note that the practice of simony increased in its extent from the 9th century onwards, and that the word χειροτονία, which originally meant «consecration», received its new connotation, namely that of a Divine Blessing or consecration for moneys received, during the patriarchate of Shenudah I (859 - 580), who was known for its strict condemnation of the χειροτονία<sup>4</sup>. Five patriarchs, namely, Philotheus, Shenudah II, Christodoulus, Cyril III and Theodosius II, are severely criticized and censored by their biographers for having personally engaged, participated with others or condoned the practice of the χειροτονία, and, are therefore referred to as «lovers of money». Historians have often placed the blame entirely upon the shoulders of the members of the clergy, whereas in fact the aristocratic laity, the archons, was just as guilty of this practice as the hierarchy. In addition, at least one instance is recorded of a Muslim governor demanding advance payment from the Christians for the permission to instal a patriarch.

The fact that in the cases of the majority of the patriarchs the biographers were silent about the practice of the χειροτονία proves nothing. There is good

3. Evetts, B.T.A., «History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church», *Patrologia Orientalis* X (HPCC). Burmester, O.H.E. Khs- and Yassa 'Abd al-Masih, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*. Cairo, 1943, II, i (HPEC, II, i). Aziz Surial Atiya, Yassa 'Abd al-Masih, O.H.E. Khs-Burmester, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*. Cairo, 1948, II, ii (HPEC, II, ii), 1959, II, iii (HPEC II, iii). Antoine Khater, O.H.E. Khs - Burmester, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*. Cairo, 1968, III, i (HPEC, III, i), 1970, III, ii (HPEC, III, ii), 1970, III, iii, (HPEC, III, iii), 1974, IV, i, (HPEC, IV, i), 1974, IV, ii (HPEC, IV, ii).

4. Spuler, B., *Die Morgenländischen Kirchen. Handbuch der Orientalistik* I, VIII, 2, Leiden, 1961, p. 290.

reason to believe that throughout the period under discussion the χειροτονία was a well established practice in response to the economic needs of the day, but that it did not turn into a stumbling-block for the Christian community or a public scandal for the community-at-large. It is also easily forgotten that four patriarchs, Shenudah I, Abraham, Cyril II and Gabriel II prohibited the practice either by patriarchal order or by the issuance of ecclesiastical canons.

Beginning with a brief statement of the apostolic and canonical position, we shall discuss the practice of the χειροτονία as a necessity for the survival of the Church, then the motivations for personal gains by the patriarchs and the archons, and finally the various attempts by the Coptic hierarchy to abolish the practice.

The biblical passage cited by the Coptic jurists and the biographers of the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church* condemning the χειροτονία is recorded by St. Luke in the *Acts of the Apostles* 8 : 14 - 25. Here, Simon, who had previously practised magic in the city and amazed the nation of Samaria after believing and being baptized desired the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles' hands for which he offered them money, saying 'give me also this power, that any one on whom I lay my hands may receive this Holy Spirit.' But Peter said to him: 'Your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money. You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity'. And Simon answered, 'pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me'.

Besides giving his name to the practice of simony or the use of money to attain spiritual ends, Simon came to be regarded in Christian tradition as the father of all heresy. Thus, for example, in Justin's day, about one hundred years later, there were heretics called «Simonians».

As the early church moved from its sectarian structure to an all-inclusive national cult, her members of the hierarchy were faced with new problems concerning the power-structure, and the temptation to sell and to purchase ecclesiastical privileges was a constant threat, especially since the selling and the purchasing of civic rights and privileges during the imperial age was a widespread and largely accepted custom. St. Basil of Caesarea, aware that his suffragan bishops accepted money for the ordination of priests, addressed

an open letter to the members of his clergy in which he warned them of ecclesiastical and eternal punishments if they persisted in the practice<sup>5</sup>. A number of such incidents must have been well known for Basil speaks of cases in which the sale of the grace of God was even interpreted as an act of worship, which he condemns as being punishable on two accounts. Moreover, it is less a sin for him who intends to purchase (the grace of God) in ignorance, than for him who knowingly sells the gift of God<sup>6</sup>. In response to this situation the Fathers of the Church addressed themselves both in canons and epistles. For the Copts authoritative are the two series of Canons of St. Basil, of which one canon (§ 45) is specifically devoted to the condemnation of the *χειροτονία*<sup>7</sup>.

Irrespective of the socio-political and economic climate in which the Coptic Church operated, these statements as set forth by the Apostle and the Fathers of the Church were to be rigorously applied. That this was sometimes impossible in view of a greater sacrifice will be seen from the fact that under certain circumstances the acquiescence to the *χειροτονία* was a lesser of two evils. An additional problem with which the Coptic hierarchy had to deal ever so often was the betrayal of Christians by turning to the Islamic authorities for assistance after their approaches with the accompanying simonic intentions to their own hierarchy had failed. Several instances of this kind of lack of religious loyalty are recorded.

During the patriarchate of Jacob (819 - 830) a certain Theodore paid a visit to 'Ali ibn Yahya the Armenian who served as governor and promised him money that he might compel the patriarch to raise him to the episcopate. The patriarch, however, resisted the appeal of the governor so that the governor became enraged and ordered the destructions of the churches of Fustât Misr, including the Muallaqah, the Church of the Holy Virgin at Qasr ash-Sham<sup>8</sup>. In order to prevent further demolitions, the patriarch had to pay the sum of 3,000 dinars for which the laymen furnished the money. Finally, the governor ordered the patriarch to consecrate Theodore, and he complied<sup>8</sup>.

5. Written in 370 at the beginning of his episcopacy.

6. *Ausgewählte Briefe des Heiligen Kirchenlehrers Basilius des Grossen, Bischofs von Caesarea*. (Bibliothek der Kirchenväter) München, 1925, Brief XXIII, pp. 107 - 108.

7. Crum, W. E., «The Coptic Version of the Canons of St. Basil», *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, XXVI, pp. 57 - 22. Riedel, W., *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien*. Leipzig, 1900, pp. 231 - 233, also p. 260.

8. *P.O. X, HPCC*, 519 - 521.

This incident illustrates the immoral ways which certain Copts employed to attain their ends. Had Jacob again refused to comply, additional destructions of churches and confiscations of church-property, chalices and liturgical objects would have been the result as it occurred in the days of the patriarch Menas I (767 - 774), when «the Copts were robbed of everything time after time by the adversaries who hated them, and all vessels had been taken from them»<sup>9</sup>.

As mentioned above, two patriarchs practised the χειροτονία for the pure purpose of saving the church from her financial and administrative ruin. In the days of Ahmad ibn Tulun (870 - 881) the See of St. Mark was occupied by Khail III (880 - 907), who was forced to pay 10,000 dinars to the Sultan. Not knowing from where to obtain the money, they counted the sees which were without bishops and found them to be ten. Then the archons appointed for them (the sees) ten bishops and presented them to Khail III after they had imposed upon them the obligation to pay, and the patriarch consecrated them bishops. They violated by their deed the canons of the Fathers, the Apostles and the saintly Doctors of the Church that say: «Neither gold nor silver is to be taken for the gift of God which is the priesthood, namely the laying on of hands, χειροτονία. Then they took from the ten bishops whom they had appointed what had been imposed upon them... later the patriarch went to Alexandria and asked the priests to allow him to take what was in the churches that he might sell it and take the price received for it to the Sultan... and they sold the houses belonging to the churches and delivered to the patriarch the price<sup>10</sup>.

The extreme difficulty of the abolition of a practice like the χειροτονία is demonstrated by the events which befell Khail's successor, Gabriel I (910 - 920). When the Copts of Alexandria had consecrated Gabriel, they demanded of him the thousand dinars which Khail III, the deceased patriarch, had agreed to pay in place of what he had taken from the sale of the houses belonging to the Church, but he could not pay anything. The circumstances thus made it necessary for the newly consecrated patriarch to journey through the see and to violate the canons, and the word of God became as a merchandise which is sold for dinars to him who asks to be ordained priest<sup>11</sup>.

9. *P.O.* X, *HPCC*, 487.

10. *HPEC*, II, ii, 109, 110.

11. *HPEC*, II, ii, 117.



Once established and accepted as a necessary evil, it was difficult to surrender the practice of the χειροτονία in times of relative prosperity and peace for the church. The motivations for the collection of money for the ordination or consecration were no longer for the survival of the institution, but for pure personal gains. Thus, it is recorded that «there was great peace for the churches in the days of the king al-Mu'izz until he died, and likewise during the days of his son who ruled after him, namely, Nazâr Abi 'l-Mansûr al-'Azîz bi'llah, but Philotheus (979 - 1003), the 63rd Patriarch of Alexandria, decided to take money for the consecration of bishops<sup>12</sup>. For several years, even under Zachariah (1004 - 1032), the 64th Patriarch of Alexandria, the church was tranquil and in peace, but the practice of the χειροτονία was so universally accepted that «they invented pretexts for collecting money by every means, and they trafficked in the Church of God on account of the love of silver and gold, and they sold the gift of God for money, but they lost and did not gain»<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, we are told, that a number of people bought the episcopate for money<sup>14</sup>. In spite of the simonic practices during the patriarchate of Zachariah, we are informed that the patriarch was a modest and humble shepherd and «that he had not done anything of what we have mentioned of his own accord»<sup>15</sup>, for his relatives and his disciples dominated him and directed him in everything and took the money from him whom they presented to him for ordination or consecration.

To illustrate the complexities of this practice we shall cite only one of several instances which shows that the χειροτονία involved not only the Christians, but also the Muslims. The See of Banâ was vacant, and there was a man whose name was Yustus, and he had a nephew whose name was Raphael. He arranged with the patriarch Shenudah II (1032 - 1046) about the See for 600 dinars, but he had not anything except half and a quarter of a dinar, and he went to certain Muslim people, and he borrowed that sum from them at interest, and he wrote a document, whereby he obliged himself to pay to them for that sum in almonds at the rate of one and a third ardab a dinar. Thereupon, Shenudah II consecrated him bishop and he remained two years in his See, and he died. For the patriarch had already annulled what had been ar-

12. *HPEC*, II, ii, 150.

13. *HPEC*, II, ii, 177.

14. *HPEC*, II, ii, 181.

15. *HPEC*, II, ii, 181.

ranged with him that he should not take the *χειροτονία*. He loved money and collected a great amount of it and gave it to his family. He was a lover of the glory of this world <sup>16</sup>.

That there was always a voice of caution and protest even at the height of simonic involvements is evident from the warnings of Bukairah, the deacon and owner of the cross, who scolded the patriarch: «It is essential that thou shouldst forsake this *χειροτονία* which thou takest, and that thou shouldst not sell the gift of God for money». Then, Shenudah said to him: «From whence shall I have wherewith to spend on myself and my disciples and on what I need in the way of provisions and necessities, and for what I have to give to the Alexandrians and for what I have to pay on account of the tax on the lands which I owe?» But the patriarch did not accept the words of his deacon and said: «If I do not take *χειροτονία* the patriarchate will pass away from me» <sup>17</sup>.

The tension between the apostolic-canonical imperative and patriarchal greed and avarice is brought out in so many incidents which cannot be all recorded. Michael, Bishop of Tinnis, who as a deacon compiled the biography of Shenudah II, supported clearly the views of Bukairah when he added: «It is not allowed to an overseer or to a priest who makes himself worthy for God to pay for this money or to take anything from him whom he ordains for the service of God, as the saying of Christ through His exalted mouth to His disciples, when he commanded them to baptize the nations and to announce to them the good tidings of the Gospel for their salvation. He, Christ, said to them the well known commandment in the Gospel and He said to them at the end of it: «Freely ye have received, freely give» (Matt. 10 : 8), that is, ye have received this grace without a price, demand not then from him to whom ye give it a price. The patriarchs of the Copts and their fathers did not cease from acting according to this commandment up to the time of the oppression by the authorities of the Muslims from Ahmad ibn Tûlûn up to the days of al-Hâkim. . . Necessity caused them to do what they did in this matter on account of what was demanded of them in the way of money and of what they undertook in the way of burdens» <sup>18</sup>.

In order to maintain a decent and honorable image some patriarchs

16. *HPEC*, II, ii, 232.

17. *HPEC*, II, ii, 236.

18. *HPEC*, II, ii, 233.

invented various schemes to camouflage their simonic practices. When Christodoulos (1047 - 1077) became patriarch, he used to say to him whom he appointed bishop: «These Sees belong to Mark the Evangelist, and this See to which I appoint thee bishop, the half of it shall be for my lord Mark the Evangelist and the half for thee. Lend to me so and so much from the half which belongs to my lord Mark the Evangelist, and do thou collect money until thou hast received thy due in full, and after this, whatsoever is collected in the See, convey the half which belongs to my lord Mark to the Cell. Christodoulos collected for himself from all whom he appointed bishops much money. . . and he used to do this, so that it should not be said that he practised χειροτονία and he firmly believed that he was absolved by God <sup>19</sup>.

Several times patriarchs, bishops and archons had attempted to abolish the practice of the χειροτονία. In the days of al-Mu'izz (972-975) the patriarch Abraham, the 62nd successor of St. Mark, «abolished simony which the patriarchs used to practise and to take dinars as a loan on the ordination. He gave alms of all that he possessed, and he had great wealth, and his memory was honoured more than that of those who were before him.»<sup>20</sup>. But it was not until the latter part of the 11th century, that by order of the illustrious Amir al - Guyûs a council of bishops was convened, which dealt with the matter, and the first of the Canons of Cyril II, 67th Patriarch of Alexandria, deals explicitly with the issue of the χειροτονία <sup>21</sup>.

«It has reached my humility that certain people seek a bribe for conferring the priesthood. Whoever does this and accepts for the gift (of the priesthood) a bribe, or who promises a bribe, so as to bring this to pass by means of deceit and fraud, his authority shall not be accepted, and he shall not be accepted, and he shall not be to you other than in the condition of a heathen and he shall be excommunicated and anathematized and expelled from the Church of God, both he and the one who does it. And his society shall be avoided, as our father Peter avoided the society of Simon the sorcerer and expelled him from the Church of God at the command of the Holy Spirit, and as he said in the canons: Let the chief instruct the people, and let him bind them together by means of the Cross, not by anathema,

19. *HPEC*, II, ii, 269.

20. *HPEC*, II, ii, 136.

21. *HPEC*, II, iii, 339.

and he shall not interdict or anathematize, except for a necessary reason<sup>22</sup>).

Yet despite the recently established canon, many clerics still felt insecure about the designs of their bishops and the patriarch. Thus, priests and archons forced the successor to Cyril II, Michael IV (1092 - 1102), to state that he would abstain from the *χειροτονία*, and they said: «And thou shalt mention in the writing that thou wilt not practise simony with anyone of those whom thou shalt place in a rank of the episcopate or other rank besides it of the rest of the ranks of the priesthood, because the holy Canons forbid this, and they order to be excommunicated him who practises it, for he who receives the money and he who pays it are both of them anathematized and excommunicated. . . for thou knowest that the patriarch is but the bishop of Alexandria, and he has the presidentship over the bishops of the Sees of Egypt, but he is not a sharer with them in their Sees; and even as it is not permitted to him who has a wife to be a sharer with another in his wife, so likewise, it is not permitted to be a bishop to be a sharer with another bishop in his See which is his bride. . . »<sup>23</sup>.

For the sake of clarification we must distinguish between the various sources of revenue collected by the patriarchs. There were the revenues from the patriarchal lands; the *diyâriat*, revenues from the monasteries and the dioceses; and lastly the prohibited simony. Since the *χειροτονία* was forbidden by canon law, we discover that in some instances the promise for the payment of the *diyâriat* was tied to the consecration of a bishop, which resulted in a *de facto* pseudo-simony. Instances of this are recorded in the biography of Macarius II (1102 - 1128). Although it is related that neither the disciples of the Patriarch nor any scribe accepted a single dirham for the consecration of a bishop, the patriarch declined to finish making (him) bishop until he received the signature that he would convey half of the revenue of the See every year to the cell of the Patriarchate for the *diyâriat*, namely fifteen dinars and for the scribes and the disciples two dinars, in all seventeen dinars a year<sup>24</sup>.

The tendency among the bishops and patriarchs to circumvene the canons continued, and exceptions to the rule stand out in the biographies of the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*. One of the firmest opponents to the practice of the *χειροτονία* was Gabriel ibn Turaik, the 70th Patriarch

22. Burmester, O.H.E. Khs-, «The Canons of Cyril II», *Le Muséon*, XLIX, 1936, 279.

23. *HPEC*, II, iii, 383.

24. *HPEC*, III, i, 34.

of Alexandria, who «had forbidden the taking of simony for the priesthood, and he did not take anything for the consecration of a bishop or for other than him, and he did not approve of this in others, and he followed in this what the Holy Gospels say: «Freely ye received, freely give»<sup>25</sup> for the grace of God and His gift and the authority of the priesthood is not sold with money. In this connection it is mentioned that Gabriel II consecrated fifty-three bishops<sup>26</sup>, and that he wrote a document about the practice of the χειροτονία. The thirty - two canons of Gabriel ibn Turaik are considered canon law by the Copts, and it is significant that the first canon deals with the issue of the χειροτονία.

«I have begun first by judgment upon myself, that it may not be said to me: «Thou who judgest another, why dost thou not judge thyself»?<sup>27</sup> and as the Holy Scripture saith: Physician, heal thyself<sup>28</sup>. And so I say with every patriarch who shall come hereafter, that he who has received money (χειροτονία) for ordaining a bishop for the provinces of Egypt, or a priest or deacon or for any rank of the priesthood, and who has paid a sum of money to receive it, or who owes it to a gift before or after ordination, beyond food or drink, shall have his lot with Judas Iscariot, and shall have no part with our Lord Christ. Everyone who pays for the priesthood by means of simony, and buys the gift of the Holy Spirit, let the words which Peter spoke to Simon the sorcerer apply to him and fall upon him. For the root of all evil is the love of money<sup>29</sup>. This is a command which warrants no concession nor dispensation at all, for freely we received and freely let us give<sup>30</sup>».

These canons<sup>31</sup> reiterated in every respect the previous statements by Cyril II, and still sufficient incidents of simony occurred for the historians to record the cases, though for the next one hundred years—until the days of Cyril III—at least the patriarchs abstained from practising the χειροτονία.

25. Matt. 10 : 8.

26. *HPEC*, III, i, 54,

27. James 4 : 12.

28. Luke 4 : 23.

29. I Tim. 6 : 10.

30. Matt. 10 : 8.

31. Burmester, O.H.E. Khs-, «The Canons of Gabriel ibn Turaik, LXX Patriarch of Alexandria», *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, I, 1935, 5 - 45, especially 15 - 17.

During the patriarchate of Michael V (1145 - 1146), Mark, bishop of the See of Shubrâ al-Khaïmah, «continued to demand from the priests the ordination - fee which he who was before him used to take, and he took it from them»<sup>32</sup>. Special mention is made by the 15th century Islamic historian al-Maqrizi that John VI, the 74th Patriarch, forbade all fees for ordinations<sup>33</sup>.

One of the last scandalous affairs involving a patriarch occurred during the second quarter of the 13th century. By this time, Coptic church historians saw in the ill - practice of the χειροτονία the cause for other adversities due to the divine punishment. In the case of Cyril III ibn Laqlaq the biographer describes the patriarch as a possessor of a number of divers virtues, «except that he was a lover of money, and he practised the χειροτονία, and there befell him adversities on account of it»<sup>34</sup>.

A contemporary account of the tensions which existed within the Coptic Church at this time is recorded in the recently published MS. Arabe 302 Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, according to which «there was not anyone of all the bishops who had been consecrated in the time of this patriarch (Cyril III), who had not given a bribe, except two, and they were the metropolitan of Damietta and the bishop of al-Khandaq, and none other»<sup>35</sup>. And their bribe was from 200 dinars—and they were the majority—down to 50 dinars—and they were the minority, and this was beside what used to be paid to the son of the brother of the patriarch, and it was a fixed amount and was beside the gifts in the way of goods and beasts of burden and other than these, of kinds particular to the various districts. In addition, «he ordained him who wished to be ordained, only the ordination fee was a necessity, and this occurred in the Monastery of St. Macarius»<sup>36</sup>. Repeatedly, bishops and archons criticized and condemned the practices of their patriarch, until finally they convened a synod and the bishops came from Lower Egypt and assembled in the Church of the Hârat Zuwailah, and they discussed about the affair of the patriarch, and they mentioned that they did not approve of the things which resulted from him, and they confirmed them in a script which they wrote in his stead, and his signature was written at the head of it in the manner of what is above.

32. *HPEC*, III, i, 65.

33. Malan, S. C., *A Short History of the Copts and their Church. Maqrizi (transl.)*. London, 1873, 96.

34. *HPEC*, III, iii, 227.

35. *HPEC*, IV, ii, 201.

36. *HPEC*, IV, ii, 152.

And among the canons which were set forth and binding for the Coptic Church, we read:

A bishop shall not be consecrated from henceforth, except he who is educated, and a psephisma (tazkīah) has been made for him, and his people have agreed to him. And χειροτονία shall not be taken from him, nor shall the Holy Spirit be sold or bought. And likewise, this injunction shall be executed with regard to the ordination of priests and deacons and of all the ranks of the priesthood. And none of the judges shall accept a bribe or what is equivalent to it in any judgement of all the judgements, be he patriarch, or bishop or a deputy of either of them, nor show partiality in judgment on account of respect or mediation, and he who does this shall be suspended<sup>37</sup>.

Despite this last attempt to outlaw the χειροτονία, the practice as such seems to have prevailed off and on until the end of the 13th century. No direct references to this practice are found in the brief biographies of the late 13th century patriarchs and the immediate successors of Cyril III who suffered greatly from the oppressive measures of the Sultan seemed to have abstained from engaging in simony until the days of Theodosius II (1294-1300), the 79th Patriarch of Alexandria. «It was mentioned that he obtained the patriarchate by what is against the law and the precepts, and that he was a lover of taking bribes. And there occurred in his days mortality and great dearness and the people ate the dead of one another»<sup>38</sup>.

In conclusion one can only re-emphasize that the motivation for the practice of the χειροτονία, which in the beginning could have been justified in so far as it saved the Coptic Church from its certain collapse on account of Islamic political and economic pressures, soon degenerated into patriarchal and episcopal greed. We have noticed that even in times of peace and tranquility for the Church pretexts were invented to justify the χειροτονία so that again and again synods and episcopal assemblies convened to establish canons to enforce order in the process of consecrations and ordinations. Finally, Coptic historians and theologians began to interpret adverse and destructive political and economic events in terms of a divine punishment for disobedient and greedy patriarchs. What may well have begun as a necessary evil resulted in an unpardonable offense which assailed the integrity of the Coptic Church for several centuries.

37. *HPEC*, IV, ii, 176. These canons were signed on the 6th of Tût 955 A.M. or the 3rd of Sept. 1239 (Julian).

38. *HPEC*, III, iii, 230, 231. Lane-Poole, S., *A History of Egypt*. London, 1925, 289-290.

