South Sudan the first Egyptian missionary, Dr. Sawaylim Sidhum.

The administrative structure of the church consists of the basic unit that is “the local church,” the Synod of the Nile comprising eight presbyteries. The moderator of the Synod is elected annually, and the secretary of the Synod is appointed for three years.

The activities of the Evangelical church include bible publishing, education (sixty schools), social work, health care (hospitals in Cairo, Tanjä, and Assyut), and Sunday schools. The church owns the largest Christian publishing house in the Arab world. The Evangelical church has been a member of the World Council of Churches since 1963 and the Middle East Council of Churches since 1974.

SAMUEL HABIB

COPTIC LANGUAGE, SPOKEN. Coptic was the spoken language of ancient Egypt until the Arab conquest of Egypt in the seventh century. It was recorded first in the hieroglyphic (sacred) script, the earliest form of Egyptian pictorial writing, and succeeded by the hieratic (priestly), which was the simplified running script, and the demotic (from "demos," meaning people), which became the popular form of Egyptian writing. Later, during the reign of the Ptolemaic dynasty, approximately in the third century B.C., instead of the still complicated demotic script, Egyptians began to adopt the Greek alphabet, which became distinguished as Coptic. Because the Greek alphabet could not cope with all the Egyptian sounds, it became necessary to add seven letters from the demotic script to express the full range of the Coptic language. These were, of course, the final seven letters of the new Coptic alphabet, that is, ι (ἰαθ), ι (ἰαγ), ι (ἰαγ), ι (ἰαγ), ι (ἰαγ), ι (ἰαγ), and ι (ἴον). It should be noted, however, that the letter ι (ἰαγ) existed only in the Bohairic dialect, not in the Sahidic, and that the Akhmimic dialect used the form ι to express the sound of the letter ι (ιαγ). In the meantime, the new script was the only form that comprised the vowels unknown in the other ancient Egyptian writings. Consequently, the Coptic script expressed, for the first time, most of the sounds of the hitherto unknown vowels in the ancient Egyptian language.

The influence of the Greek vocabulary on Coptic began with Alexander's conquest of Egypt in 332 B.C., when the government administration adopted Greek terminology. In the meantime, the government employees learned the Greek language, as did most classes of society in Lower Egypt. This led to the progressive incorporation of Greek words into the local demotic, ending up with the establishment of what is known as Proto-Coptic. This was mainly spoken Egyptian written in Greek characters. The Papyrus Heidelberg 414 from the third century B.C. is the oldest document known to represent this phase in the development of Coptic. The next stage is known as Old Coptic. In Roman times, from the third to the second century B.C., we find stelae as well as mummy labels and even papyrus documents containing Egyptian demotic names written in Greek letters interspersed with demotic signs beyond the seven aforementioned letters. They were mainly the product of pagan mystic, symbols, and horoscopes. Since the Alexandrian population was conversant with Greek as well as with Coptic, many Greek theological terms were used in all attempts to translate the scripture into Coptic. With the spread of Christianity among the inhabitants of the Delta and Upper Egypt where people were not conversant with Greek and only knew the native tongue, it became necessary to translate the scripture into Coptic with fewer Greek influences.

We must assume that the purely Coptic version of the scripture, as well as the liturgies, must have emerged in the course of the third century A.D. Saint Antony, who was himself totally illiterate in Greek, was influenced by the Coptic Gospel dictate to sell all one's possessions and distribute them among the poor (Mt. 19:21). A Coptic translation must have instructed the native followers of Saint Pachomius. However, the full translation of the scripture from Greek into Coptic must have been completed only in the course of the fourth century A.D. After the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the Copts lost their interest in Greek and concentrated on their native tongue.

With the Arab conquest of Egypt in the seventh century, use of the Arabic language began to appear among the Egyptians. However, Copts started writing their own theological treatises in Arabic in the thirteenth century. Coptic as a spoken language of the country folk persisted in numerous regions of Upper Egypt to the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth.

The factors at work in the gradual disappearance of the Coptic language may be enumerated as follows:

1. The decision in 706 of Abd-Allah ibn Abd al-Malik, the Arab viceroy of Egypt, to use Arabic as
the only language of the administration. To keep their places in the administration, the Coptic functionaries learned the language of the rulers and this led to the appearance of bilingual documents at first, ultimately giving way to Arabic as the sole mode of expression in the government.

2. The gradual apostasy of the Copts to Islam as a result of the successive waves of financial pressures and religious persecution. The change was accelerated by the promise of promotion to all Islamized members of the community and the desire to escape from the imposition of a progressively heavy capitulation tax known as Jizyah on those who clung to the old faith and resisted apostasy to Islam.

3. The excessive persecutions of the natives, notably by al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (996–1020) who issued an order to stop the use of Coptic not only in public places and offices but also at homes and in private circles. Those caught conversing in Coptic were liable to have their tongues cut. Consequently, the Copts were forced to screen their places of worship where religious offices were celebrated in Coptic. Nevertheless, the ruling class did not hesitate to attack these places of worship and to punish all Coptic worshipers without mercy. It is said that the establishment of mills at the entrance of churches in those days was intentionally done to drown out the sound of Coptic hymns within, as a means of degrading the government forces from without.

4. The decadence of the monastic institutions, which hitherto had been fortresses of strength for the Christian faith. The monks were subjected to heavy imposts, and it is said that in 710 those who paid the taxes were marked by cauterization of their hands. Consequently, monks unable to show their cauterization were subjected to the most severe persecution. In 732 a group of such monks had their hands amputated, and some died while their churches were pillaged.

5. The introduction of the Arabic language in the churches to cope with the gradual failure of the congregation to understand the Gospels and the liturgies in Coptic. This change was authorized by Pope Gabriel II in the twelfth century, and the arabization of the church offices has continued until the present.

The use of Arabic instead of Coptic in religious literature is best exemplified in the History of the Patriarchs compiled by Sawai, bishop of Ashmunayn in the tenth century. Again in the thirteenth century, the famous work on the story of churches and monasteries, ascribed wrongly to Abu Sali, the Armenian, and authored by Abu al-Makarim, appeared in Arabic. At this time, however, numerous treatises appeared bilingually in Coptic and Arabic. To this period also belongs the composition of the works known as Sulla (pl. Salala), that is, the Scala (glossary, vocabulary), which consisted of Coptic vocabulary rendered into Arabic. Abu Ishaq ibn al-Assal is responsible for one such work entitled Al-Sulaam al-Muqaffa wa al-Dhanab al-Musafir (Rhymed Glossary). His brother, Abu al-Faraj ibn al-Assal, wrote a famous introduction in Arabic on the rules of the Coptic language (see Anneal Al-Assal). Al-Samanuddi, the pen name of Anba Yu’annis, bishop of Samannud, wrote another Sulaam, the vocabulary of which is derived from the Gospels, the Epistles, the Psalms, and the liturgical works. He also composed an introduction on the Coptic Bohairic dialect, as well as other works on the Sahidic dialect. Ibn Kāril Qaysar wrote Kitab al-Tabīr (Guide Book) and al-Qalūbī wrote another similar work entitled Al-Kiftāyūn (Sufficiency). Ibn al-Duwayri, otherwise known as Anba Christodoulos, archbishop of Damietta, wrote a work in which he criticized the works of former grammarians.

In the fourteenth century, Shams al-Riyāsah al-Quss ibn Kābal (d. 1324) wrote his Al-Sulaym al-Kabīr (Major Glossary), a Coptic lexicon classified in subjects. Anba Athanasius, bishop of Qāys, wrote a work entitled Qudlat al-Tahīr fī-lilm al-Tahīr (The Art of Interpretation), another introduction to the Bohairic and Sahidic grammars.

In the fourteenth century, a remarkable work entitled Triadon, a didactic poem in Sahidic Coptic, appeared by an anonymous writer, possibly an Upper Egyptian monk. The original poem was in 734 verses, of which only 428 survived, with an Arabic translation that is somewhat artificial and not always clear. It was an attempt to glorify the monastic Coptic language and eulogize biblical personalities and Coptic saints.

In the fifteenth century, the Arab historian al-Maqrizi (d. 1441) points out in his famous work Al-Khitab wa-al-Aḥār (On History and Geography) that women and children in Upper Egypt knew almost no other tongue for communication but Sahidic Coptic (Vol. 2, p. 507). Again in the same work (Vol. 2, p. 513), while discussing the region of Durunkah in the province of Asyût, he mentions that the inhabitants of the Upper Egyptian Christian villages were all conversant with the doctrines of their faith, as well as with the Coptic language.

In the sixteenth century, according to statements
made by the famous Egyptologist J. Maspéro in 1909, the Copts still spoke Coptic. During the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715), it is tradition that a priest and an old Coptic woman were introduced to a seventeenth-century French tourist as the last Egyptians who were thoroughly acquainted with Coptic as a spoken language. Afterward, Coptic survived only as the language of the liturgy. Moreover, the Dominican traveler J. M. Vansleb points out in the account of his travels in Upper Egypt in 1672-1673 that Anbā Yu'annis, archbishop of Asyūt, introduced to him a certain Mu'allim Athanasius, who was the last Copt to be conversant with the Coptic language as a speaking medium in the country. Nevertheless, the English writer James E. Quibell reports in the year 1901 that the Reverend David Strang of the American mission at Bani Suef informed him that when he first came to Egypt some three decades before that date, Coptic had been spoken in Upper Egypt within living memory. As a concrete example, a certain Jam Es Stephanos, an old man from Qūs, stated that he remembered as a boy hearing his parents converse in Coptic, which was probably true of the inhabitants of both Qūs and Naqadah (Worrell, 1942, p. 306). W. H. Worrell quotes an oral tradition about Coptic in the village of Ziniyyah, a village in the same neighborhood. A carpenter by the name of Ishāq is credited with the importation from Asyūt of Coptic to Ziniyyah. One Tānyūs, a Coptic-speaking person, came to Ziniyyah from Naqadah, where he died a centenarian around the year 1886. Another by the name of Muḥārīb, who also spoke Coptic, came from Naqadah at the age of eighty. Khalīl abū Bīsādah, who knew spoken Coptic from his parents at Ziniyyah, is said to have been taught written Coptic by both the aforementioned Tānyūs and Muḥārīb. He continued to live at Ziniyyah until his death around the year 1910. From Naqadāh again, a certain Mītās came to share the teaching of Coptic at Ziniyyah with Khalīl abū Bīsādah. At Farshūt in the nineteenth century, the cantors and priests spoke only Coptic within the church sanctuary. Yassā'ūb al-Mashī, who died in 1959, reported that his grandfather used only Coptic within the church. The Ziniyyah tradition of the use of Coptic as a speaking medium does not mean that Coptic had survived in Egypt as a spoken language that late, but only that it was employed in spots for the glorification of a defunct institution (Worrell, 1942, pp. 301-304). Strictly speaking, the survival of Coptic appears in the vocabulary and sentence construction of the modern spoken or colloquial Arabic of Egypt (see EGYPTIAN ARABIC VOCABULARY, COPTIC INFLUENCE ON). It must also be stated that liturgical Coptic has been preserved within the church as an established tradition, though the use of Arabic has been growing.

In fact, the discovery of the Coptic ecclesiastical heritage and the revival of the study of the Coptic language appears to have been made in modern times by Western scholarship in Europe. The first work to be published in the West in this field was written by the Jesuit priest Athanasius Kircher, and was entitled Prodomus Coptus sive Aegyptiacus (1636). He also created a grammar of the Coptic language entitled Lingua aegyptiaca restituta (1643-1644). In 1659, T. Petreus published Psalm 1 in Bohairic Coptic supplemented by phonetic Latin characters under the title Psalmus Primus Davidis, Coptice, Arabice at Latine (London, 1659). Since then, several other Coptic grammars have appeared —by Blumberg (1716), Christian Schultz (1778), and the Catholic Coptic scholar Rūfāllī al-Tūkhī (1778)—together with the first Coptic lexicon by Lacroze (1775). In Egypt itself, the study of Coptic in schools was sponsored by Cyril IV (1854-1861), who insisted on the use of Coptic in churches as the official liturgical language. Outside the church, Ḥqalīdīyīt Labīb became a champion of the use of Coptic among the laity as a spoken language. In the meantime, Cyril IV entrusted the Hegumenos Takla with the teaching, on a scientific basis, of the Coptic language, liturgy, and hymnal to priests. He was succeeded in this capacity by Mu'allim Ṭrayān Muṭlah. Unfortunately, the latter was responsible for departing in his system from the old Coptic phonology and the elimination of the Greek influence that is foreign to traditional Coptic.

In the late twentieth century, a new trend has been encouraged by Shenouda III. Emile Mahir Ishaq, as head of the Coptic language section in the Cairo Clerical College, is promulgating the return to the original Coptic phonology and the elimination of the Greek influence that is foreign to traditional Coptic.

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Coptic Museum (Old Cairo). Courtyard. Courtesy Coptic Museum, Cairo.

be seen from the entrance of the museum.

The nucleus of the Coptic collection consisted of a number of historic items assembled from Coptic homes, old Coptic churches, and ancient monasteries, as well as from a number of archaeological sites. With the support of Patriarch Cyril V (1874–1927) it was possible to acquire some painted ceilings, marble columns, mosaic floors, and fountains, as well as a few samples of elaborate carved woodwork from old palaces and private residences. With the transfer of the museum ownership from the church to the Department of Antiquities, the collection was further enriched by moving the considerable Coptic objects of archaeological distinction accumulated in the Egyptian Museum to the newly established Coptic Museum.

Initially the museum consisted of a relatively small wing that was later extended by a substantial modern building inaugurated in 1947 by King Fouad I, thus providing the needed space for the increasing archaeological and artistic collections. It was therefore possible to devote certain halls to special collections such as stonework, woodwork, metals, and textiles.

The library proved to be the pride of the museum, since it contained a rich collection of Coptic sources. In addition to published materials, a vast number of Coptic manuscripts were assembled from the ancient churches and monasteries. An enormous collection of Coptic ostraca and rare