

“A Christian by Religion and a Muslim by Fatherland”: Egyptian Discourses on Coptic
Equality

Thesis

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By

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Abstract

In the discourse concerning the social and political marginalization of the Egyptian Coptic Christian community, there is a widespread assumption that a secular, liberal Egyptian state is the only type of state that will respect Coptic interests and promote democracy and equality. However, contemporary Copts in Egypt have continued to exhibit traditional attitudes towards pivotal issues such as personal status law and the limits of personal autonomy, a trend that suggests that the type of secularism supported by Copts is complex and distinctive from secularism in a Western context. These distinctions can be attributed to Egyptian cultural values that Copts share with Muslim Egyptians as a consequence of the historical experience of Coptic integration into Egyptian society.

The increase in sectarian violence since the twentieth century and the pressures of an authoritarian state, along with persistent uncertainties about Egyptian identity and the divisive tenor of relevant scholarship have obscured the reality that Copts and Muslims share a particular Egyptian frame of reference. This thesis endeavors to take these circumstances into account while comparing the attitudes of Coptic intellectuals and activists with those of moderate Egyptian Islamists. While Copts and Islamists certainly differ on a number of issues, there are considerable commonalities that underscore the social and cultural integration of the Coptic community. Coptic intellectuals often

envision reform according to the shared values and interests of Egyptians as a whole; rather than approaching the issues as a distinctive, isolated minority group that is only preoccupied with promoting special interests. Moderate Egyptian Islamists have also provided extensive commentary on Coptic concerns and have used independent reasoning to support the validity of providing Copts with equal citizenship and political rights according to Islamic principles, an effort that underscores their recognition of Coptic Christians as an integral component of the Egyptian nation.

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Introduction

“The book is based on Zionist myths, and it contains insults towards Christ, insulting the Christian religion,” stated Coptic Member of Parliament Georgette Subhī as she addressed the People’s Assembly of Egypt in June 2006 (Shahine 2006). The book of interest was American author Dan Brown’s best-selling 2003 novel *The Da Vinci Code*, which was debated in the People’s Assembly at the request of several Coptic parliamentary members, along with parliamentary members of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Ministry of Culture banned both *The Da Vinci Code* and the film based on the novel within a month after the debate. This controversy was one of several high-profile protests during the last decade initiated by members of the Coptic Church and laity against books, films, and other media considered offensive to the community and its faith. In 2004 a group of Coptic priests requested that the state ban ’Usāma Fawzī’s 2004 *Baheb al-Cima* (“I Love Cinema”), an autobiographical film about the director’s childhood in a conservative Coptic household (Mazur 37). The clerics petitioned the film on the grounds that it disrespected the Christian religion and houses of worship, in part because of a scene showing a couple kissing inside of a church (El-Rashidi 2004). More recently, in 2008 a lawyer filed a lawsuit on behalf of the church to halt the publication of Muslim author Yūsuf Zaidān’s historico-theological novel *ʿAzāzīl*, which contained narratives

describing Coptic Christians persecuting Egyptian pagans in fourth-century Alexandria. Dissatisfied with the outcome of the 2008 legal proceedings, in 2010 international and domestic Coptic organizations filed a complaint with the public prosecutor against Zaidān, accusing him of insulting Christianity. The legal battle prompted Muslim writer ‘Ammār Alī Hassan to note in a 2008 editorial that “the church seems to be hardening its position on artistic creativity . . . it used to be that al-Azhar or the Muslim Brotherhood would clamor for books to be burned and banned” (Ali Hassan 2008).

These incidents of Coptic activism against materials considered offensive to the community and the religion are significant because they demonstrate how elements of the community wish to use the state and legal apparatus to safeguard the dignity of their religion by restricting speech and expression. Events such as these challenge the predominant scholarly assumptions regarding the nature of the Egyptian state in relation to Coptic well-being, namely the assumption that a secular, liberal state is the only type that will respect Coptic interests, promote democracy and equality and prevent the social and political marginalization of the community. While Copts are predominantly proponents of secularism, Coptic demonstrations against freedom of speech, an essential civil right according to the Western, liberal framework of secularism, demonstrates that the kind of secularism espoused by Egyptian Copts may depart from Western understandings with regard to its premises, sensitivities, and priorities.

The attitudes of Copts and Islamists are often described by scholars in terms of disparity and mutual exclusivity. According to Lebanese sociologist Fauzi Najjar, in the dialogue between Egyptian secularists and Islamists, “the arguments and methods used

by both sides are so contrary, warranting the delineation ‘two cultures,’ with hardly any communication or connection between them” (2). However, a critical examination of the diversity of positions on equality espoused by Coptic thinkers and moderate Egyptian Islamist intellectuals demonstrates considerable overlap originating in shared attributes and interests that developed during centuries of coexistence between the two religious communities in Egypt. In the last four decades, moderate Islamists have provided extensive commentary on Coptic concerns and have made promising statements about equal citizenship and political rights under a hypothetical political Islamic framework. Copts, while harboring concerns about the application of Islamic law and the potential implications of an Islamic state for the community, maintain a strong attachment to religion and traditional values and a desire to maintain church authority as well as the application of Coptic personal status laws as opposed to secular codes.

While the two sides have definitely demonstrated eagerness to engage in dialogue, their dialogue has admittedly been overshadowed by suspicion and mistrust. The origins of these tensions are ideological, political and societal. Externally, the discourse is challenged by the influence of assumptions from the dominant secular, liberal framework of rights in the West, which invalidates theocentric understandings of human dignity and rights (Freeman 382) and whose tenets cannot necessarily be universally applied (De Roover 4051). This liberal, Western framework tends to dominate how Coptic attitudes are interpreted by Western observers and increasingly by Egyptians themselves. Internally, the discourse is challenged by an environment of distrust, particularly misgivings that Copts and secularists have concerning the sincerity of Islamists who

claim to support tolerant views. As moderate political Islamism continues to develop, a diversity of positions among its proponents persists. Some Copts and secularists, however, interpret ideological inconsistencies as indications of duplicity on the part of the Islamists. The ongoing debate regarding the essence of Egyptian identity has also tended to polarize Egyptians and amplify division in ideological discourse. Finally, pressures from the enduring threat of violence from sectarian tensions, radical Islamists, and an authoritarian state have strained the ability of Egyptians to articulate their attitudes on these controversial issues. This paper endeavors to recognize the challenges facing the dialogue and transcend their influence to identify the differences and similarities in the Egyptian discourse on equality between Islamists and Copts on the issues and concerns that affect the contemporary Coptic community.

As Egyptians work to articulate their views on Coptic equality they have faced challenges from their environment of sectarian violence, state oppression, and persistent ambiguities about national identity and the relationship between Copts and the state. Notwithstanding these challenges, Copts and Islamists ultimately discuss equality from a uniquely Egyptian frame of reference that underscores their shared heritage and values. Chapter 1 describes the contemporary threats to the Coptic community that make this particular dialogue about improving Coptic welfare and securing equality one of crucial importance. Chapter 2 ventures to highlight the social and cultural integration of Copts and the circumstances that have obscured their inclusion. An analysis of the theories of two Coptic thinkers from opposite ends of the ideological spectrum demonstrates that in spite of recent sectarian conflict, Copts have historically been integrated into Egyptian

society. This integration is evident in the manner which Copts envision reform according to shared Egyptian standards and values. Chapter 3 discusses how moderate Egyptian Islamists, mindful of Coptic integration, use independent reasoning to justify Coptic inclusion in the hypothetical Islamic state and to maintain non-Muslim equality and political participation. Chapter 4 discusses contemporary Coptic responses to the Islamists' theories, recognizes the similarities and differences between Coptic attitudes and Islamist concepts, and examines how Coptic secularism is at times complicated by the community's espousal of traditional Egyptian values, specifically the emphasis on the family unit and collective welfare over the individual, characteristics that distinguish it from liberal, Western secularism. While it is certain that moderate Islamists and Copts do not agree on all points, the trajectory of their dialogue is promising because they share common objectives as Egyptians.

Chapter 1: A Historical Background of the Coptic Community and the Dilemma of Sectarian Conflict

The Egyptian Coptic community, decidedly the largest Christian community in the Middle East, was founded by Saint Mark in 64 AD according to church tradition. Christianity was the predominant religion in Egypt from the fourth century until the Islamic conquest in the mid-seventh century. While the exact number of Copts living in Egypt is unknown, the CIA World Factbook calculates that Copts made up 10% of Egypt's population in 2010, an intermediate figure between the Egyptian government's tendency to place the Coptic percentage at 6% and Coptic estimates that range from 14% to 20%. Copts cannot be distinguished from Muslims by language, geographical or professional distribution (Hatina 50). Approximately 95% of Egyptian Christians belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria while the remainder adhere to the Coptic Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations. For the purposes of this paper, any native Egyptian Christian, whether Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant is considered "Coptic."

In contrast to Muslim Egyptians who often associate the Pharaonic era with the shortcomings of the *jahiliyya*, or the period of ignorance before the advent of Islam, many modern Copts are proud to consider themselves the direct descendants of the original, Pharaonic Egyptians (Zeidan 56). The Coptic calendar begins in 284 AD as a tribute to the "Era of Martyrs" marking the ascension of the Roman Emperor Diocletian,

the last of the infamous Christian persecutors. This calendar demonstrates the Coptic appreciation of martyrdom and recognizes their pre-Christian heritage as each month of the year is named after an Egyptian god. Other milestones in Coptic history are the church's undertakings in Alexandria, home of the first catechetical school, which included the renowned theologians Origen (c. 185-254) and Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c. 215). Copts are also proud to include Saint Anthony (c. 251–356), founder of desert monasticism, and Saint Athanasius, opponent of Nestorianism, among their early church fathers (Kamil 200). The Coptic Church rejected the teachings of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD¹ and made its historic split from the Byzantine Church, which at the time consisted of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.

By the time of the Arab invasion of Egypt in 639 AD, Copts constituted approximately 80% of the Egyptian population (Malek 299). Because modern Copts are able to draw on their long, complex history, they have the ability to define themselves as “Egyptians,” “Copts,” “Arabs,” or “Christians.” The community has adjusted its identity in response to state pressures and shifting trends in Egyptian identity throughout history, including the ideologies of Egyptian Nationalism, secular Nationalism, Pan-Arabism, Arab-Socialism and Pan-Islamism. The interwar period (1918-1939) is often considered to be a “golden age” for Copts, primarily because of the relatively high rates of Coptic political participation and visibility in Egyptian economic and social life (Scott 166).

¹ The Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD was the fourth ecumenical council in which bishops decreed that Christ had two natures, both human and divine. The Coptic Church of Alexandria rejected this christological position and subsequently split from the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.

Coptic political participation decreased markedly during the presidency of Gamal Abdul Nasser (1956-1970), during which political influence primarily shifted to military officers, an institution that contained few Copts at the time. There was only marginal improvement during the presidency of Anwar Sadat (1970-1981), while sectarian violence and radical Islamism underwent a sharp increase. Sadat also maintained a tense relationship with the current patriarch Pope Shenouda III and even exiled him to the Monastery of Saint Pishoy in September 1981 due to disagreements over the state's inadequate response to radical Islamist attacks against Copts. In 1980 under pressure from Islamists, Sadat's government adopted by referendum an amendment of Article 2 of the constitution that stated that the principles of *sharī'a* were "the principal source of legislation" rather than "a principle source" according to the wording of the previous article (Peters 236). At the time this development caused considerable anxiety and protests among Copts and secular Muslims.

Vice President Hosni Mubarak became president following Sadat's 1981 assassination and was faced with the challenge of addressing the crescendo of sectarian violence that troubled Sadat's government. Copts were anxious about the threat of radical Islamism and dissatisfied with the state's ineffective countermeasures against these groups, while radical Islamists continued to express their contempt and suspicion against Copts (Ayalon 60). Shortly after Sadat's assassination, 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman, the infamous Egyptian "blind sheikh," issued the following *fatwā*, or religious ruling, regarding the appropriate treatment of Christians:

“Christians belong to three categories: those who kill Muslims, those who support the church with money and arms in order to harm Muslims, and those who do not cause any harm to Muslims. An eye for an eye must be exacted from Christians in the first category, while Christians in the second category must be deprived of their wealth. But no harm should come to Christians in the third category.” (Ayalon 60).

In addition to premeditated attacks against Copts perpetrated by radical Islamists, notable sectarian conflicts during the Mubarak regime were also instigated by financial disputes, confrontations over church constructions and repairs, or the specter of interfaith romantic relationships. In 1987 after a lengthy respite from communal violence, rumors concerning Copts spraying crosses on the clothing of Muslim women ignited the resumption of violent clashes between the two communities (Phillipp 380). Most of the confrontations occurred in Upper Egypt, where large riots and vandalism spread throughout the villages. A pamphlet campaign entitled “Wipe Out the Disgrace, Oh Muslims!” was distributed in Upper Egyptian villages in response to rumors concerning an illicit romantic relationship between a Coptic boy and a Muslim girl. The campaign incited tensions further and accused Coptic youth of enticing Muslim girls with drugs and money to act in pornographic films (Ayalon 61). After the worst of the violence, Mubarak requested that a “national reconciliation meeting” be held in Abu Qurqas, and Coptic and Muslim leaders peacefully marched through the town together chanting “Long Live the Crescent with the Cross” (61). This measure was only a temporary conclusion to the sectarian strife in the early 1990’s, and since the fundamental tensions endured the violence shifted to Cairo briefly afterwards. Rural immigrants from Upper Egypt were once again the main aggressors in the conflicts, carrying animosities that originated in the

villages to the stressful, overcrowded environment of Greater Cairo. Radical Islamists were able to install “semiautonomous strongholds” in several locations and imposed a poll tax resembling *jizya*² on neighboring Christians (Ayalon 61). The Cairo suburbs of Ayn Shams and Imbaba also witnessed outbreaks of violent clashes from 1990-1992, typically instigated by routine disputes between Muslim and Christian neighbors that escalated into large-scale riots with numerous injuries and casualties on both sides. The wave of radical Islamist terrorist attacks targeting tourists and foreign businesses beginning in mid-1992 was also a threat to Coptic security. In 1992 alone, thirty-seven anti-Coptic attacks were reported, although national attention was more focused on the threat that Islamist radicals posed to state security rather than addressing the Coptic issue in particular (62).

The 2000’s were characterized by prolonged periods of peace punctuated by serious attacks in both urban and rural areas alike. In January 2000 an argument between a Coptic merchant and a Muslim customer snowballed into an armed conflict in the Upper Egyptian village of al-Kosheh. Muslims and Christians in neighboring villages joined the violence, which resulted in the deaths of twenty-one Copts and one Muslim. Of the ninety-six defendants, the court failed to find anyone guilty of murder and found only four defendants guilty of lesser charges (Saleh 83). It is also notable that security forces failed to appear for two entire days after the violence commenced (Scott 75).

In May 2004 a priest and two other Copts died after they were taken into police custody for attempting to repair a church wall at night without proper permission from

² Abolished in Egypt in 1855, *jizya* was a poll-tax levied on non-Muslims residing in Muslim states according to traditional Islamic law.

local authorities (85). In another conflict related to church construction, sectarian violence erupted in the village of Banha near Giza in May of 2007 over Coptic plans to convert a home into a church, ostensibly without state clearance. Ten Copts were hospitalized and a substantial amount of Christian property was destroyed.

In May 2008 roughly sixty armed Muslim men stormed the Abu Fana monastery in Abu Fana village, south of Cairo. The attackers burned monastic cells and a chapel located in an area of disputed land and kidnapped and tortured three monks. A lengthy dispute over state-owned desert land preceded the conflict, with both the monastery and neighboring Arab Bedouin attempting to reclaim the same area of land. As the monastery expanded, the monks erected a wall for protection and to delimit the land that belonged to them. The local Bedouin, however, claimed that the wall was damaging their crops (Leila “Agreement falters”). Complicating matters further, the monks had purchased the land through *‘urfî* contracts, which are settlements between two parties that are not officially recorded. The governor rejected the *‘urfî* agreements and the monastery continues to face bureaucratic hindrances to the construction of its protective wall. With the challenges to the monastery’s land ownership and the slow response of law enforcement during the conflict, many Copts felt that the incident in Abu Fana demonstrated the tendency of the state to thwart Coptic projects while facilitating Islamic institutions. The media also presented the conflict in a primarily sectarian manner and the financial tensions surrounding it were widely overlooked (Scott 19).

In recent years Coptic holiday masses have also become a popular target for sectarian attacks. On January 7, 2010, Muslim gunmen opened fire on Copts exiting

Christmas mass in the Upper Egyptian city of Nag Hammadi. Eight Copts and one Muslim bystander were killed. The attack was reportedly motivated by rumors of an affair between a Muslim woman and a Coptic man. On New Years Day 2011, a suicide bomber killed twenty-three Copts and injured ninety-seven as they were attending midnight prayer at a church in Alexandria. In a disturbing development, the state identified a foreign branch of al-Qaeda as the perpetrator, following al-Qaeda's threats against Middle Eastern Christians after the October 2010 attack against Christians in Iraq (El-Hennawy, "Analysts"). Many Copts, however, were skeptical about the government's claim, and characterized it as another attempt by the state to ignore the domestic tensions triggering sectarian violence and to attribute it to external factors.

Although Mubarak's leadership was, for the most part, secular in nature, and both his regime and the Coptic community shared a common threat from Islamic extremism, Mubarak never made addressing Coptic issues a high priority in official communications and resorted to the typical use of denial and "externalization" when discussing sectarian violence. Despite the numerous clashes between Copts and Muslims during his presidency, Mubarak publicly claimed that sectarian conflict was "not an issue in Egypt," but rather a product of social and cultural disparities amplified a hostile media in an attempt to discredit his regime (Ayalon 62).

In spite of Mubarak's attempts to deflect attention away from sectarian conflict, the increase in global attention to international human rights standards and the influence of international human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International provided a wealth of current information concerning civil rights during his

presidency and placed the regime under constant international scrutiny. Mubarak, however, conducted his entire presidency under “emergency law” (Law No. 162 of 1958) and this legal status granted state security forces a broad basis on which to make arrests. Furthermore, according to the international advocacy organization Freedom House, as of 2010 state restrictions on church building remained more extensive than those required for the construction of mosques. Contemporary restrictions on church construction and repairs originated from the 1856 Ottoman-era Humayun Decree. In 2004 Mubarak removed the requirement of presidential approval for church repairs and construction. Despite this concession, churches are still required to get approval from governors and local security services, which is often described as a tedious and bureaucratic process.

The government also exercised severe restrictions on opposition parties, which was especially evident during the arrests of thousands of Muslim Brotherhood members in 2007. Even though the state did not deliberately or explicitly target Copts for discrimination, some Egyptians believe that the state’s refusal to deal decisively with the Coptic issue indicated its implicit encouragement of sectarian violence (Brown 1049). In 1992 Bahī el-Dīn Hassan, secretary-general of the Cairo-based Egyptian Organization for Human Rights reflected on the detrimental influence of the state’s apathy towards Coptic issues:

“If restoration of church toilets requires a special decision by the president of the republic, and if Christians, having started to restore their churches after long years of waiting, find themselves confronted by Central Security [Forces] soldiers, why should we be surprised when the calls of some

Islamic groups to attack churches are received positively by simple people, resulting in sectarian strife?” (Sherry, 2).

In addition to its inadequate response to sectarian violence, the Mubarak regime was also accused of not taking measures to deal with discrimination against Copts in the political and employment sectors. As of 2010 no Copt had been appointed to the position of governor in almost three decades and Copts constituted less than 1.5% of the Egyptian Parliament (Farid, “Egypt Christians”). In 2007 the International Labour Organization issued a report which claimed that Copts were being discriminated against in the fields of education and employment, with few Coptic appointments to top government positions and parliament, low Coptic enrollment in police and military academies and low numbers of Coptic teachers and professors (34). The state dismissed these accusations by pointing out in an official statement that three Copts had been included in that year’s list of wealthiest Arabs in *Forbes* magazine (“Al-Milaf al-Tamyīz”).

It is likely that the Mubarak regime refused to prioritize Coptic issues in order to maintain its authority. Several scholars have also discussed the connection between social conditions in Egypt and the interactions between Coptic self-perception, Egyptian identity and the state. David Zeidan argues in his article “The Copts—equal, protected or persecuted? The impact of Islamization on Muslim-Christian relations in modern Egypt” that the “lack of a clear definition of the Egyptian national identity and political community and the lack of a national consensus on such an identity” was the primary catalyst of modern day sectarian strife (57). Paul Sedra also observes in his article “Class Cleavages and Ethnic Conflict: Coptic Christian Communities in Modern Egyptian Politics” that the Egyptian state found the idea of a “distinct” Coptic identity threatening

to its security (219). This ambiguity regarding identity is significant because the modern state has consistently relied on it to divide the population and maintain power. While embracing a variety of identity ideologies throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Copts in Egypt have always been careful to avoid presenting themselves as a “minority,” whether in ethnic, numerical or religious terms. The Coptic anxiety of the term “minority” originates from the Coptic experience of the Arabization and Islamization of their homeland during the Arab conquest. These historical events have yielded a variety of interpretations concerning the pre-colonial welfare of non-Muslims during Islamic rule, but one consistent consequence is the Coptic apprehension of their social status returning to the *dhimma* status of this period.

Dhimma is the term used to classify the kind of contract through which the Muslim community grants hospitality and protection to members of other divinely revealed faiths, on the condition that they recognize the domination of Islam (Cahen, “*Dhimma*”). The recipients of the *dhimma* contract are called *dhimmīs*. The textual basis for this arrangement is found in Qur’ān: “Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued” (9:29). The arrangement known as the “Pact of Umar” (*‘ahd ‘Umar*) and commonly attributed to the caliph ‘Umar I (d. 644) has also been consulted by many rulers over the centuries when developing policies concerning to non-Muslims. However, neither the

Qur'ān nor the *hadīth* (traditions attributed to the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad) provide specific or explicit guidelines delimiting the freedoms and obligations of non-Muslims under the *dhimma* (Scott 31). For instance, there is no consensus among scholars that *jizya* was intended to be paid in lieu of military service (21). Over time, the interpretations and implementations of *dhimma* varied according to the inclinations of different Islamic rulers and historical circumstances (32). While non-Muslims were frequently able to acquire administrative positions and the stipulations of *dhimma* were erratically applied, there was always an underlying degree of social and legal discrimination. According to versions of the “Pact of Umar,” *dhimmīs* agreed to build and repair churches under extensive limitations, ensure that their churches and synagogues were not taller than mosques, maintain a low social profile, keep their religious rituals inconspicuous and to observe restrictions in dress and physical appearance (Tritton 7). Conversion was also discouraged and resulted in the loss of property and inheritance, and could, in some circumstances, result in expulsion (136). Historian Clifford Bosworth notes that while non-Muslims were subjected to these constraints, the intent was to regulate a society in which Muslims and non-Muslims lived side-by-side, conditions that indicate a higher degree of integration than Jews experienced in medieval Europe (Bosworth 46). In Ottoman Egypt (1517-1867) the *dhimma* developed into a formalized, collective agreement between the Sultan and the various religious communities that was called the *millet* system. Under this arrangement, religious leaders administered the educational, social, judicial and religious affairs for their own communities (Scott 28). While all of these features imply a flexible coexistence

between multiple religions and established a precedent for Christian autonomy, non-Muslims endured social and political limitations and discriminatory practices that complicate the legacy of *dhimma* and *millet*. As a consequence, few contemporary Egyptians are willing to liken *dhimma* and *millet* to full, equal citizenship for non-Muslims in the modern world.

The Coptic community of today faces an abundance of pressures on many fronts. Copts constitute regular targets for radical Islamists and mundane conflicts with Muslims frequently escalate into violent, sectarian clashes. Copts also endure, to varying degrees, both state and non-state discrimination in the domains of politics, education and employment, and the historical precedents of *dhimma* and *millet* substantiate limitations on full citizenship for non-Muslims. Meanwhile, prioritizing these issues has not been a strategic interest of the state for quite some time; therefore maintaining an open and straightforward dialogue on Coptic issues is an imperative undertaking for ordinary Egyptians. Sectarian violence has steadily increased since the mid-twentieth century and both Copts and Muslims have observed that Copts as a whole appear to be retreating into their own community. These circumstances have prompted scholars to consider Copts a homogenous minority that is socially and culturally disconnected from Muslim Egyptians. In spite of persistent sectarian conflict in contemporary Egypt, Copts have actually historically been integrated into Egyptian society. The assumption that Copts are entirely disconnected from the Muslim majority and that their intellectual output is predominantly a response to Muslim domination or antagonism is an overstatement.

Chapter 2: Copts and the Egyptian Identity Debate: The Case for Coptic Integration

Coptic socialist Salāma Mūsā (d. 1958) is oft-quoted for his apparently enigmatic statement regarding the nature of his confessional and nationalist allegiances: “I am a Christian by religion and a Muslim by fatherland” (Rowe 87). Coptic politician Makram ‘Ubaid (d. 1961) also famously declared, “I am a Christian, it is true, by religion, but through my country I am a Muslim” (Nisan 141). These quotes demonstrate one of the many ways that modern Copts have attempted to express their complex conceptions of self-identification, which has undergone considerable elaboration since the turn of the twentieth century. Since that period, Egyptians, undergoing transition in practically every facet of their society, have at one time embraced the identities of Pharaonism, Mediterraneanism, Easternism, Pan-Arabism and Islamism. These ideological shifts have influenced and shaped a vast assortment of identity perceptions among Egyptians. Many observers, however, are concerned that the post-independence trend of orienting society towards an exclusively Islamic identity and the reposition of private devotion into the public sphere is fostering an Egypt in which Copts are increasingly marginalized (Van Doorn-Harder 23). The move away from secularism has also been accompanied by a decrease in Coptic political participation.

This chapter examines some of the ways that Coptic intellectuals frame their interests in the face of this marginalization. Not surprisingly, most communal responses

to this marginalization have been to intensify identification within the Coptic community, which often includes the strengthening of church hierarchy, community services and interest in Coptic history. Moreover, many scholars, in light of the expanding presence of Islam in Egyptian society and the corresponding increase in sectarian violence, describe the Coptic heritage as one of complete social, religious and cultural opposition to that of their Muslim counterparts. This understanding is often accompanied by the widespread assumption that due to the cultural detachment between Muslims and Christians, a secular society with a minimal awareness of religion is the only type that will permit the fruitful coexistence of the two communities (Zeidan 1999; Wakin 2000; Karas 1985).

In challenging these assumptions, it is meaningful to identify how Coptic intellectuals express their ideas in an Egyptian context of common cultural values and interests. This characteristic challenges the conventional understanding of Islamic and Christian ideologies as thoroughly incompatible and more accurately reflects the centuries of coexistence and mutual influence between the Coptic and Muslim communities in Egypt. In many cases, the reforms Coptic intellectuals propose to improve the welfare of the Coptic community are also intended to benefit Muslim Egyptians as well. The experiences of interconnectedness between the Muslim and Coptic communities have also been obscured by the polarizing discourses of the Egyptian identity debate, in which ideologies such as Pan-Arabism and Pharaonism unsuccessfully attempt to reduce Egyptian identity to one element of the nation's diverse heritage. While Coptic intellectuals have certainly accepted and participated in the propagation of these reductionist ideologies, a closer look at their writings and statements reveals admissions

(whether deliberate or unconscious) of shared interests, practices, and identifications with their Muslim counterparts. These nuances are evident in the thought of Coptic socialist Salāma Mūsā during the first half of the twentieth century and in the contemporary thought of Coptic intellectual and politician Rafīq Habīb. During the 1920's, Salāma Mūsā promoted Pharaonism and the secular Westernization of the Egyptian state and society, all while criticizing what he considered to be common obstacles originating from both Muslim and Christian traditional practices. While Mūsā's promotion of Western and secular values may make his ideas appear confrontational to Islamic society on the surface, his extensive writings confront the challenges facing Egypt through a framework that emphasizes the shared experiences, values and concerns between Christians and Muslims. Although his ideology supported an evolution of Egyptian culture and civilization realized through the adoption of Western cultural models, Mūsā remained receptive to the notion of Islamic and Christian institutions maintaining a role in an "evolved" Egyptian society. The intended target of Mūsā's criticisms was not Islam or religion in general but rather the oppressive religious leaders and institutions that he felt were restricting individual freedoms and intellectual vitality in Egypt (Egger 149). More recently, contemporary Coptic sociologist Rafīq Habīb, facing the growing influence of Islamic revivalism and increasing sectarian violence, has developed a position on society and governance that is practically the inverse of what Mūsā proposed. It is Habīb's belief that Copts and Muslims in Egypt share an Arab-Islamic heritage, and that Copts would not benefit from a secular, centralized state based on a Western model (Negus). Habīb's ideology garnered considerable attention when he joined a number of Egyptian Islamists

in forming a party called *al-Wasat*, or “the Center.” While Ḥabīb’s claims of integration are expressed more explicitly than Mūsā’s, both intellectuals are keen on developing an Egyptian society that they consider to be inclusive of both Christians and Muslims, and neither of them calls for the rejection of religion or Islam as the solution to Egypt’s problems.

The ongoing debate over the role of religion in Egyptian society and the nature of Egyptian identity demonstrates sociologist William Sewell’s description of culture as a “system of symbols possessing a real but thin coherence that is continually put at risk in practice and therefore subject to transformation” (Sewell 52). The ability of Copts to draw on the diverse elements of Egyptian heritage and revise Egyptian identity underscores the nature of cultural meanings as “contradictory,” “contested,” and “permeable” (52). The continuing efforts of political, religious and ethnic groups to employ the past as they contend for power provide momentum for this transformation of cultural meanings. In societies facing political and social change, the past assumes an enhanced significance that results in its utility for legitimizing ideological claims on Egyptian identity (Hassan 201). These Coptic thinkers were compelled to envision an integrated past and theorize a compound Egyptian identity that is inclusive of Copts and Muslims lest the Coptic community become thoroughly marginalized by the triumph of other exclusionary ideologies.

All of the modern attempts to define Egyptian identity have ultimately left significant segments of the population dissatisfied. Egyptian intellectuals, politicians and religious leaders have championed the ideologies of Pharaonism, Mediterraneanism,

Easternism, Pan-Arabism and Islamism with the motivation to legitimize claims and access to power with varying degrees of success. The challenge that these ideologies present is that they are essentially polarizing; their concentration on one aspect of Egyptian heritage manages to at once obscure actual similarities and threaten ethnic, political, and religious segments of the population that consider them to be exclusive. In their interactions with these movements, Mūsā and Habīb added additional layers of complexity to these already elaborate discourses by making them inclusive of the Coptic community and beneficial, at least in theory, for all Egyptians. What is paradoxical about their work is that it attempted to minimize boundaries between Egyptians while using the language and framework of polarizing ideologies. Mūsā's active period was during a time when Pharaonism, Mediterraneanism and Easternism were the primary contenders among intellectuals. The development of Pharaonism, or Egyptianism, in the 1920's and 1930's was energized by the archaeological breakthroughs of the early twentieth century, especially the 1922 discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb, and was primarily popular among middle and upper class Egyptians and especially among Copts (Reid 234). Proponents of this ideology, including Muslim playwright Tawfik al-Hakim (d. 1989), also argued that Egyptians were a distinct nationality, and that religion and language were insufficient indicators of unity between Egypt and other Arab-Islamic states (Carter 98). Some of the Copts who embraced Pharaonism considered it a means to achieve the empowerment of all Egyptian people and a way to preempt allegiances to Islam and Arab culture that could potentially exclude Copts from the public sphere (Carter 99). Many Muslims, however, resisted accepting Pharaonism as unequivocally as the Copts did. While some

sympathized with the tenets of Pharaonism, Muslims were hesitant to reconstruct a pre-Islamic Egypt that was culturally superior to modern, Islamic Egypt. It was also difficult for them to avoid acknowledging the cultural superiority of Islam in favor of a pre-Islamic period.

Mediterraneanism, like Pharaonism, developed out of a desire to bolster Egypt's cultural legacy but was distinguished from Pharaonism by its attempt to merge Egyptian heritage with European heritage through the Mediterranean region (Carter 102). Muslim novelist and intellectual Taha Hussein (d. 1973) was a prominent supporter of Mediterraneanism, but the ideology ultimately lacked appeal outside of elite circles. The notion that the quality of Egyptian heritage was contingent on its connection with Europe was potentially Eurocentric and implicative of European superiority.

A transnational challenge to Pharaonism called "Easternism" also emerged during the same period. Easternism developed in post-World War I Egypt out of a desire to maintain a feeling of cohesion and cooperation with other lands once belonging to the Ottoman Empire. Unlike most other identity movements, its objectives varied enough to be attractive to secularists, modernists, and Islamic traditionalists. There was, however, no consensus on the definition of the "East" in Easternism, and its proponents viewed the East as an approximate term for the Islamic world, the Middle East, or even the entire regions of Africa and Asia (Egger 123). The political element of this ideology claimed that solidarity among Eastern lands was rooted in the shared experience of oppression under Western imperialism, and cooperation between these lands could result in their recovery of control over Eastern resources. The cultural aspect was the maintenance of a

distinctive cultural legacy in the East shaped by similar historical backgrounds, attitudes, and practices (Jankowski 258). Easternism, despite its initial wider appeal, eventually lost momentum as well because its ambiguities weakened the rationale of its tenets. Basing solidarity between Eastern people on a common experience of maltreatment by the West was not as powerful as a solidarity based on actual “internal bonds” (Jankowski 257). Mūsā’s thought comprised elements of Pharaonism and Mediterraneanism and vigorously opposed Easternism, but his influence declined as all three ideologies lost prestige in favor of Pan-Arabism and Islamism.

Pan-Arabism and Islamism were the most influential movements during Habīb’s time. Supporters of Pan-Arabism fell into two categories: those who characterized Egypt as “Arab” by citing linguistic and religious commonalities and the secular theorists that defined Arab identity along the lines of common history and language. The proponents of Pan-Arabism saw Egypt as a strategic state for the promotion of the ideology. The country’s wealth and large population made it one of the more influential states in the Arab world, and the Syrian intellectuals who developed Arabism from Egyptian scholar Muhammad ‘Abduh’s (1849-1905) Islamic modernism found an amicable environment in Egypt for developing and disseminating their theories (Ernest 80). Most Egyptians, however, found it difficult to separate Islam from Pan-Arabism, especially because of the Muslim reverence of Arabic as the original language of the Qur’ān and the *hadīth* (Chejne 16). This was also evident in the exclusion of Copts from the Dār al-‘Ulūm, the training institute required for language instructors, and from teaching the subject in Egyptian schools (Carter 105). Although many Copts were skeptical of the

appropriateness of Pan-Arabism for integrating Copts in the Egyptian national identity, in external conflicts Copts often sympathized with other besieged Arabic speakers such as Syrians, Palestinians and other communities who experienced similar struggles with colonial powers (Carter 108). Coptic politician Makram 'Ubaid was the most vocal of Coptic supporters of Pan-Arabism. He argued that Pan-Arabism would lead to national unity by minimizing the differences between Copts and Muslims (108). By the 1950's the viability of Egyptianism and Mediterraneanism had dwindled and was considerably overshadowed by Pan-Arabism along with Nasserism, a syncretic, pan-Arab ideology. Egyptianism continued, however, to play a significant role in Coptic self-perception, even if it lacked the Islamic connection needed to compete on a nationwide scale with Pan-Arabism and the enduring challenge of Islamism. Although Pan-Arabism would dominate Egypt during Nasser's presidency, influential Islamist segments were always dissatisfied with the ideology. This discontent with Pan-Arabism and other ideas associated with Nasser eventually transcended disgruntled Islamists and was felt all over the country.

Islamism, the principle that Islam should be the primary guide of social, political and personal life, gained momentum in Egypt with the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood by Hassan al-Bannā (d. 1949) in 1928. Al-Bannā formed the Brotherhood in response to the perceived ills of "Westernization" in Egypt, which included increasing materialism, neglect of Islamic principles and general moral decline (Said Aly 337). The Muslim Brotherhood, while officially banned in Egypt, was the primary opposition group to Mubarak's secular government, and its demand for an Islamic government currently

maintains considerable support among conservative Egyptians. As for the Copts, however, it is unclear whether the realization of the goals of the Brotherhood would result in an Islamic state that would restrict their rights as citizens.

Salāma Mūsā's formative years coincided with the period of the British Occupation (1882-1922), which is often looked on nostalgically by Copts as a time of Coptic prosperity, expanded political representation and inter-communal cooperation. The nationalist period is remembered as a time of public displays of solidarity between Copts and Muslims, with Muslims attending Easter services while Copts participated in *Īd al-Fitr* celebrations (Carter 58). This period witnessed unprecedented cooperation between Christian clergy and Muslim sheiks in opposition to the British and a conspicuous Coptic presence in nationalist movements, evidently to counter the British strategy of "divide and conquer" that many Egyptians anticipated (Chitham 103). Both Coptic and Muslim newspapers distributed articles praising "national unity" and commemorating the unprecedented level of interfaith cooperation. The British occupation, like the Egyptian experience with the Crusaders, Ottomans, and the French, constituted a setback to national unity that in some instances inspired cooperation and mutual sentiments between Copts and Muslims (Henderson 157). Conservative segments of both Coptic and Muslim communities were offended by the post-war appearance of brothels and institutions that were considered immoral and associated with the West (157). The Coptic presence in the 1919 revolution was vital and prominent, and Copts were included in all of its aspects, including strikes, demonstrations, propaganda, and coordination and policy-making (Carter 62).

Mūsā was born into a wealthy Coptic family in the Lower Egyptian town of al-Zaqaziq in 1887. Mūsā attended both a Muslim school (*kuttāb*) and a Coptic school for his primary education, relocated to Cairo for secondary school and finally made his first contact with Europe in 1907 when he traveled to Paris to study French. It was his experience in Europe that enhanced his awareness of his own Egyptian heritage, as Mūsā became distressed when unable to answer the inquiries of curious Europeans about ancient Egypt (Haim 12). Following his time in France, Mūsā spent four years in London where he studied Egyptology, law, geology, biology and economics, and most importantly joined the socialist, reformist Fabian Society. At this time Mūsā was exposed to Russian literature and to the works of H.G. Wells, Henrik Ibsen and Bernard Shaw. His first essay, “Muqaddimat al-Sūbermān” (“The Advent of Superman”) was published in 1909. Mūsā adopted the concept of the “Superman” from Shaw, the idea that man is intended to further the creative, progressive evolution of the universe. Egypt, which Mūsā considered to be “Western” (the “East,” in this orientation, consists of India, China and Japan) was only different from Europe in that its civilization remained static while Europe, since the Renaissance, had been advancing (Ibrahim 348). What Mūsā admired about Europe was its progressive way of life that if applied in Egypt would minimize the corruption and incompetence of the Egyptian state. The replacement of traditional superstitions with modern sciences and the realization of gender equality would combat these weaknesses, counter poverty and help Egypt realize its appropriate role in the modern “West” (Haim 13). Extreme Westernization would not only be beneficial for Egypt, but also a matter of survival in the economically menacing modern world.

Westernization was a prerequisite for Egypt becoming an industrial nation, and an agricultural Egypt would remain susceptible to the control of the industrialized nations of Europe. Mūsā's understanding of Pharaonism and Mediterraneanism was that knowledge of the Pharaonic age had passed through the Greeks to modern Europe, thus Westernized Egyptians would be reclaiming their original destiny rather than adopting something foreign (Egger 137). Mūsā also believed that Egyptians, Western Europeans and Mediterranean peoples belonged to the same "racial stock," a link that further legitimized the connection between Egypt and the dominant West (138).

In "Salama Musa: An Essay on Cultural Alienation," scholar Ibrahim A. Ibrahim attributes Mūsā's views to "cultural alienation" rather than frustration with poverty and government corruption. This apparent alienation from a traditional, Islamic culture that "could not form part of his inner life" and remained "alien to his mind" was a consequence of his being a Coptic Christian (Ibrahim 346). According to Ibrahim, Islamic society constantly reminded Mūsā of his "minority" status as a Copt, and it was this reminder that motivated him to embrace and promote the secularization of Egyptian society (346). However, Mūsā's statements in his 1961 autobiography, *The Education of Salāma Mūsā*, do not indicate a lifetime of opposition to or cultural alienation from Islam. In reflecting on his childhood, Mūsā describes learning both Coptic Orthodox prayers and Qur'ān lessons from a Muslim instructor at an Islamic *kuttāb*, and how his family's Muslim servant bought him to the local tomb of the Muslim saint Abū 'Āmir to pray for intervention during a childhood illness. On the problem of Egyptian women at the turn of the century, Mūsā states:

“In those days the women, whether Muslim or Copt, still lived in the darkness of the veil, and did not appear to sit with male guests . . . The long veil was still in general use; no woman would go out without first covering her face with it, so that only her eyes appear. I remember that my mother and my two married sisters wore the long veil until about 1907 or 1908, when its use was finally abolished. I believe this abolishment must have been a by-product of Protestant influence, too-- for those belonging to that sect were more quick to follow western usage” (Musa 15).

Mūsā’s concern with the Muslim and Christian persistence in veiling and gender segregation demonstrates two important factors: 1) conservative attitudes towards women were one of the many shared cultural elements between the two communities at the time, and 2) both Copts and Muslims would benefit from the more progressive practices of the West, as shown by the role of the Western Protestants in the abandonment of the veil in the Christian community. These factors indicate that Mūsā’s criticisms were not directed at a distinct Muslim tradition, but more appropriately at the consolidated practices of both communities that he perceived to be hindrances to the evolution of Egyptian society and culture as a whole. Mūsā’s criticisms did not address the female wardrobe alone. Mūsā himself wore the *fez* until it was banned in Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1925. This development encouraged Mūsā to call for the abandonment of the *fez* in Egypt as well, not particularly because of its association with Islam but because it had been identified to him as a form of non-Western headwear (Egger 144).

Towards the conclusion of his autobiography, Mūsā describes his syncretic view on religion: “tracing now the origins of my religious conscience, I find that it is rooted in Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism as well as psychology, biology,

anthropology and history” (Musa 177). Mūsā believed that all religions, in addition to philosophy and the social sciences, shared the common aim of promoting progress and love among mankind. This outlook on religion is not only accommodating to all faiths but leaves room for a productive role of faith along with the sciences in his secular, socialist theory. Mūsā even quotes Sufi philosopher Ibn ‘Arabi extensively, whose writings on divine love he considers to have captured the “very essence of religion” (Musa 183). These enthusiastic references to works of Islamic mysticism contradict Ibrahim’s claim that Mūsā “only knew and admired one Muslim writer, Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, but his admiration went merely to the secular nationalism of al-Sayyid” (Ibrahim 347). Because Mūsā believed that religion occupied the same rational realm as the sciences, his secularism was directed at the struggle between reason and uncritical religious belief among Muslims and Christians alike (Egger 149). Religion, according to Mūsā, was intended to be a personal experience, while the excessive control over this experience by religious leaders and institutions was an impediment to Western-style social progress (150). Mūsā demonstrated his openness to moderate institutions in 1920 when he wrote to the Fabian journal *The New Statesman* to defend al-Azhar and Islam against British claims that the faith had “a fanatical contempt for research” and that the university incited the murder of prominent Copts (124). Mūsā wrote that the British presence in Egypt was more harmful to intellectual freedom than Islam and that al-Azhar was “no more obscurantist than the Roman Catholic Church” (124).

While Mūsā admitted that his attraction to socialism was inspired to some extent by his experiences as a Copt, he clarified that it was the economic and social hardships

that disproportionately affected Copts under a retrogressive government that were most significant to him, rather than a sense of disconnectedness from the Muslim majority (Mūsā 125). After the 1930's, however, Mūsā and his ideas began to wane in prominence and acceptance. The racial basis for the Egyptian connection to the West and his naïve sense of moral imperative proved to be the weaker components of his ideas. Many Egyptians weren't as convinced that the industrialized world would be supportive of an industrialized rather than economically weak Egypt (Egger 134). In addition to the skepticism, the chronological distance of the Pharaonic period was not a compelling influence for many contemporary Egyptians outside the intellectual elite. For them the present visibility of Islam was more persuasive than a distant Pharaonism. Despite the limited influence of Mūsā's ideas, they demonstrate a Coptic thinker whose theories were not entirely motivated by confessional, partisan concerns. Beneath the apparently divisive discourse of the Egyptian identity debate, Mūsā's ideas targeted what he considered to be the shared social, cultural and political problems of an integrated society.

Habīb's ideas and activism represent a major departure from the secular, Westernized thought of Salāma Mūsā, reflecting the diminished role of Pharaonism and the more prominent influences of Pan-Arabism and Islamism during Habīb's era. Rafīq Habīb was born in 1959, just one year following the death of Salāma Mūsā, in the Upper Egyptian town of Minya. At that time Coptic political participation was subsiding under Nasser's presidency and improved little under the subsequent presidency of Sadat (1970-1981), which actually saw a sharp increase in sectarian violence. Habīb's father was Bishop Samuel Habīb, leader of the Evangelical Church of Egypt and president of the

Egyptian Protestant Church Council. The young Habīb was impressed by his father's developmental initiatives in both Coptic and Muslim villages, and these efforts had a profound influence on his outlook (Hatina 51). As a young man, Habīb criticized the tendency among church members to devote their time and resources to the church alone, which was a response to the increase in sectarian violence and the political marginalization facing Copts. Habīb, however, felt that this reaction actually contributed to increasing Christian exclusivity and the decline in social and political influence among Christians (51). These criticisms, however, were not well received by most of his fellow evangelicals, and attempts were made to excommunicate him from the church (51). In spite of this resistance from his coreligionists, Habīb persisted in his theorizing and concluded that the cause of the corrupt economic conditions in Egypt (the same ill that concerned Mūsā) could be treated by supplanting the current nation state with a more "authentic polity based on the ancient Arab-Islamic civilization" (54). The adoption of the more "authentic" Arab-Islamic state would eliminate the artificial boundaries being erected between Muslims and Christians in contemporary Egypt (55). Habīb found inspiration in the communal efforts of the Muslim Brotherhood. He also contributed the popular association of Islamist politics with violence to a secular, Western "crusade" to undermine all Islamist activity by identifying it with terrorism (54). Habīb argued that the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, if properly channeled, could result in an Egyptian state that demonstrated the mutual values of divine authority, family values and social justice shared by Muslims and Christians (54).

A 1998 article in *Cairo Times* profiled Habīb and increased public awareness of his social theories. In this article Habīb advocated contracting the role of the state, or *dawla*, and expanding the religious community, or *umma*, to gradually replace state functions with voluntary organizations such as religious charities, professional associations, and neighborhood assemblies (Negus). In Habīb's view, reducing the role of the state would be ideal for the revitalization of traditional, paternalistic Egyptian institutions because this type of institution inspires greater loyalty among its members and is less likely to experience internal division (Negus). The shortcomings of Muhammad Ali, according to Habīb, are historical validations of the importance and effectiveness of state decentralization. In his view, the "modernization" undertaken by Muhammad Ali actually entailed the inappropriate adoption of the Western secular state model, a structure that would eventually absorb the functions of other institutions and result in state tyranny. Habīb believed in a distinctive, Arab-Islamic framework for the management of Egyptian society. He considered the imitation of an unsuitable Western model to be responsible for the inequality and bureaucracy experienced in contemporary state institutions and the civil service. Habīb envisioned the Arab-Islamic concept of *takāful*, or social solidarity, as a culturally inherent requirement that equips Egyptian civil society to manage public health and education systems as opposed to depending on a centralized government to offer these services (Negus). Differing from mainstream historical opinion, Habīb glorified the social organization of the Mamluk and Ottoman periods because they supposedly empowered the local population to maintain private

social services. The ensuing state centralization, according to Habīb, was a Napoleonic innovation (Negus).

Habīb's ideology and activism have been widely discussed if not widely accepted. Central to Habīb's worldview is the shared Arab-Islamic identity of the Coptic and Muslim Egyptians, a heritage replete with sociocultural "values" that are not interchangeable with Western ones (Negus). The fundamentals of *sharī'a* reflect these unique, shared values, and Habīb points out that in Egypt "morals and ethics are religiously derived, unlike the secular and humanist tradition which prevails in the West" (Scott 136). Habīb expects Copts to accept and identify with a national identity that is both Arab and Islamic because Islamism is only threatening in conjunction with the current, centralized state, a government that is actually based off of ill-fitting, foreign models. Only after accepting the community's attachment to Arab-Islamic society will Copts overcome their "besieged minority complex" (Negus).

In January of 1996 Habīb, in cooperation with young Egyptian Islamists, many of whom were former members of the Muslim Brotherhood, founded a party called *al-Wasat*, or "the Center." According to a 1996 interview with Karim al-Gawhary in the *Middle East Report*, the party was fashioned as a "civil party" with "an Islamic identity" that maintains more of a "social" than "political" outlook (Ila-Madi 31). *Al-Wasat* interprets Islamic society as a cultural rather than exclusively religious structure that is capable of including non-Muslim elements. *Al-Wasat* perceives itself as an innovative movement because most of the party's participants are relatively young and are able to contribute novel ideas that differ from what preceding Islamist groups and competing

political parties have to offer (31). Habīb sees no difficulty in using the term *umma* when referring to Egyptian society in a manner that includes Egyptian Copts, in spite of the term's traditional association with the Islamic community.

Most criticisms of Habīb's thought address his supposed naiveté rather than his sincerity. While criticisms of Habīb's ideology have deemed it "racist" due to his argument that disparate societies are incapable of espousing each other's values, others point out the historical limitations of defining Egyptian heritage as Arab-Islamic at the expense of the Pharaonic, Greco-Roman, and Coptic periods (Negus). Coptic reactions to Habīb's theories and *al-Wasat* remain mixed. While socially conservative Copts may agree with the fundamentals of the party, they are skeptical that they would maintain citizenship equal to that of Muslims as promised if the Islamists were to actually gain power (Abdelhadi "Egypt may"). While his analysis, like many other ideologies in the debate about Egyptian identity, may not be historically comprehensive, it is important to recognize how Habīb endeavors to eliminate sectarian boundaries through the reconstruction of history.

While Mūsā and Habīb's proposals for the advancement of Egypt lie on opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, the premises at the foundation of their ideas are nearly identical. Implementing their recommended reforms would benefit Egypt as whole, because the Coptic and Muslim communities are not entirely detached. Religion can also play a role in their idealized version of Egypt, and their attitudes towards Islam range from tolerance to admiration, rather than alienation and discomfort. Because their ideas are expressed in the divisive terms of Egyptian identity movements, the integrated nature

of Copts and Muslims is not always evident. The same identity debate continues at present, influencing the attitudes of both Egyptians and the tone of Western scholarship as sectarian differences are exaggerated and intercommunal boundaries are fortified. It is also intriguing that while both intellectuals theorized reform on the foundation of composite identities intended to include all Egyptians, both their theories currently have limited traction; Mūsā's ideas have lost influence and Habīb has been the widespread target of criticism from his own coreligionists. It is conceivable that although their unique employments of Pharoanism and Islamism are certainly compound, their audience does not recognize them as sufficiently compound to form a consensus around them. As Egyptian archeologist Fekrī Hassan notes: "a stable political future of Egypt depends upon an ability to integrate its pasts and recognize its Pharaonic, Hellenistic, and Islamic heritage, and to place that variegated heritage within the course of a global civilization" (Hassan 212).

Chapter 3: The Equality and Welfare of Non-Muslims in the Moderate Islamist Framework

While it is not always apparent, Copts have been historically integrated in larger Egyptian society, share many cultural values and practices with Muslims and currently possess *de jure* equality with Muslims. Do moderate Islamists, however, envision a theocentric state that intends to reverse this integration and render the Coptic community second-class citizens? Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, Tāriq al-Bishrī, Fahmī Huwaidī, Muhammad ‘Imāra and Muhammad Salīm al-‘Awwā are among the Egyptian Islamist intellectuals that historian Raymond Baker deems the “New Islamists.” While these scholars do not constitute a monolithic, formal school of thought, they are “centrist” academics belonging to the moderate Islamist tradition spearheaded by nineteenth century scholar Muhammad ‘Abduh. These intellectuals are laymen with secular educational backgrounds, and their readership is primarily educated, urban males (Scott, *Citizenship* 7). Huwaidī is a journalist who regularly contributes to the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* as well as the London-based newspaper *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*. Al-‘Awwā is an eminent Egyptian lawyer and al-Bishrī is a historian and retired judge. ‘Imāra is a prominent writer and member of al-Azhar’s Islamic Research Academy and al-Qaradāwī is a popular theologian. The moderate views of these thinkers are arguably the most influential Islamist intellectual trend in Egypt today, and their influence can be seen in

the evolving views of the younger generation of pragmatists in the Muslim Brotherhood. Their opinions are also important contributions to the discourse regarding Coptic rights because their vision of an Islamic state maintains both the compatibility and the desirability of democratic practices, as well as numerous values that are associated with classical liberalism, such as restrictions on state power, public participation in politics, upholding the rule of law, and the respect of civil and political rights. These intellectuals also claim that Islam offers numerous rights and individual freedoms, many of which precede their recognition in the West, such as the right to life, dignity, property, security and equality (Rutherford 716). Islamist notions of liberal concepts such as tolerance and pluralism, however, are modern innovations in Egypt and have developed in a distinctive Islamic context that differs from Western, liberal assumptions that are grounded in terms of universal, natural rights. For instance, *tasāmuḥ* and *samāḥa*, the Arabic terms most commonly used for “tolerance,” essentially mean “patience” and “kind treatment,” and are considered with respect to conventions of kind treatment in Islamic tradition (Scott 96). *Taʿadudiyya*, the Arabic word for “pluralism,” is derived from the word *taʿadud*, which means “to be numerous” (96). *Taʿadudiyya* was first utilized by Arab nationalists in the mid-1980’s, but the term maintains more of a quantitative connotation rather than one of acceptance among disparate faiths. While the centrist intellectuals are often criticized for neglecting discussion on the practical application of their ideas, their positions demonstrate a relatively high level of intellectual flexibility and openness, and they articulate a considerable interest in using Islamic principles to adapt new concepts,

promote national unity and citizenship in an Egyptian context and to include Copts in their vision of an Islamic state.

Centrists, like other Islamists, are opposed to secularism and consider the establishment of an Islamic state and the application of *sharīʿa* to be paramount. They believe that Islam is grounded in not only the revelation but also the implementation of *sharīʿa*, the conventions and laws contained in the Qurʾān and the Sunna (Rutherford 710). In his seminal work *Min Fiqh al-Dawla fī al-Islām (On the Jurisprudence of the State in Islam)*, al-Qaradāwī stated that “a believer must live within a community governed by Islamic law in order to integrate fully the principles of the faith into his life.” (710). It was the deviation from *sharīʿa* initiated during the ninth century, when the non-Arab leadership wavered from the *sharīʿa* and “manipulated it to serve their personal ambitions for wealth and power,” that set the stage for the decline of the Islamic world (710). This trend of deviation from the *sharīʿa* was aggravated further by the advent of European culture in the nineteenth century, as Egyptian leaders attempted to modernize through their uncritical imitation of European institutions. According to al-Bishrī, this adaptation of Western laws “drove a wedge between the governments and their peoples,” promoted the division of Egyptian society and left it more vulnerable to Western incursions (710). The consensus among these moderates is that a return to *sharīʿa* would naturally define and limit the powers of the state, include citizens in the law-making process, and provide for the uniform application of laws to both the ruling authority and the populace. One of the characteristics that sets New Islamists apart, however, is their

enthusiasm for *ijtihād*, or independent reasoning, as a valuable means to attain inspiration directly from the revelation, as opposed to the history of its misapplication (Baker 172). New Islamists agree through their *ijtihād* that the fulfillment of justice is the top priority in an Islamic political system, and that democracy in contemporary Egypt is the most effective means to realize this justice (171).

Although the revival of *sharīʿa* is crucial for restoring the nobility of the Islamic world, there is room for flexibility in the introduction of “man-made laws” (Rutherford 711). The immutable is limited only to issues on which the Qurʾān and Sunna are straightforward, such as matters of prayer, fasting and the payment of *zakāt* (almsgiving) (711). The process for exercising *ijtihād* consists of building consensus among believers (*ijmāʿ*), determining analogy (*qiyās*) and the combination (*talfīq*) of concepts from various schools of law (711). In contemporary political life, the theorists consider democratic institutions, including multiple political parties, elections, and parliament as the most suitable means for executing *shūrā* and *ijmāʿ*. Centrist intellectuals are not only receptive to considering ideas from the four schools of jurisprudence, but they are also open to the influence of Shīʿa thought, as well as non-Muslim concepts, provided that they do not contradict *sharīʿa* (Rutherford 711). Because the Qurʾān and the Sunna did not provide many particulars on mundane matters of governance, centrists support the utilization of *ijtihād* in law-making, which should endeavor to fulfill the community’s interests while not contradicting *sharīʿa*. A similar emphasis on *ijtihād* has also been expressed by members of the Muslim Brotherhood, with former general guide Māʾmūn

al-Hudaibī writing that the fixed and permanent principles of *sharīʿa* are few, leaving *ijtihād* to guide modern social and economic changes (Scott 95).

Democratic processes also complement the Islamic concept of *shūrā*, or consultation with the ruler. Unlike some conservative Islamists, such as Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Bannā, the centrists recognize the wealth of experience with democratic institutions in the West and acknowledge that Egypt can utilize knowledge from these experiences as a source of wisdom on the democratic process (Baker 171). Centrists have also refuted the controversial arguments related to *wilāya*, a concept of authority frequently cited to support authoritarian claims to leadership and to exclude both women and non-Muslims from assuming command. In a 1995 interview published in the periodical *al-Shaʿab*, al-ʿAwwā explained why he considers the contemporary application of *wilāya* to be problematic. According to al-ʿAwwā, Muslim concerns regarding the participation of non-Muslims and women in parliament stem from misunderstandings perpetuated by outdated interpretations of *wilāya*. Al-ʿAwwā explained that the term *wilāya* originally concerned the head of the Islamic state whose duties were only religious and military; responsibilities such as leading prayers that would be improper for women and non-Muslims to execute. He went on to state that “the concept of government, its mechanisms and institutions have changed in such a way today that no one can be considered to have *wilāya*,” and that potential candidates, even female and Coptic, should be evaluated on qualities such as “honesty, absence of corruption, and courage facing evils” (179). In the domestic realm, however, the concept

of *wilāya* takes on a different significance for New Islamists. None of the centrist intellectuals support interfaith marriage between Muslim women and non-Muslim men, a circumstance in which a non-Muslim would have *wilāya*, or authority over a non-Muslim in the household. Al-Qaradāwī reasons that this restriction is valid because Islam is the only Abrahamic faith that requires its followers to respect Judaism and Christianity, and this respect is solely incumbent on the man as the head of the household (Scott 157).

Centrists also interpret the institution of the Caliphate as a confirmation of democratic activity in an Islamic polity. Al-‘Awwā writes that the caliph was chosen through *shūrā* among Muslims, and the prospective caliph did not assume power without the explicit support of the community (Baker 180). The contemporary circumstances of the caliphal selection process indicate that democracy and direct elections are the optimal means to determine leadership, in addition to the fact that mankind has yet to develop better alternatives (180). They also emphasize that *shūrā* is a crucial attribute for realizing proper Islamic governance. *Shūrā* is mentioned in the Qur’ān (42:38) as one of the admirable attributes of Muslims and the centrists, as well as other Muslim thinkers, have extrapolated from this verse and prophetic *hadīths* to validate the importance of the role of consultation in legislation and the state (al-Baghdādī, “Consultation”). Centrists believe that *shūrā* requires that the leader consult with senior members of the *umma* (community) on critical issues. They reason that if the Prophet was required to consult with his followers, then it is imperative that the average Muslim follows suit (Rutherford 713). Muslims are also invested with the right and the responsibility to monitor the practices of the ruler. This obligation is derived from each Muslim’s duty to “enjoin good

and forbid evil” among the *umma* as well as the ruler. According to al-‘Awwā in *Fī al-Nizām al-Siyāsī*, “The right of *shūrā* . . . and the obligation of each believer to enjoin good and forbid evil constitutes a duty by every member of the *umma* to question the ruler” (714). The people have the right to choose their rulers and to participate in daily governance according to the stipulations of *shūrā* and *ijmā’*. Al-‘Awwā writes that these privileges originated in the appointment of Abu Bakr as the first caliph. Two crucial events constituted his election: two senior members of the community demonstrated their approval with an oath of loyalty; then the community expressed its support in the same manner. Al-‘Awwā asserts that the initial oath represented a nomination, while the following one represented the popular vote. The significance of this process is that it confirms the idea that leaders can only be appointed following consultation (Rutherford 715).

Authority figures and the *‘ulamā’* (Muslim legal scholars) are not especially privileged to draft laws, and it is vital that the public also participates in this task. The *‘ulamā’* especially have demonstrated throughout history that they should not be the exclusive drafters of law considering their proximity to authority and inclination to support oppressive rulers (711). Civil society organizations and an independent judiciary can also function as additional constraints on state power. Al-Bishrī explains that although judges are designated by the executive, they are required to interpret the law in agreement with *sharī‘a*, which cannot be modified by a human ruler. Consequently,

judges have a degree of separation from executive authority that is fixed and divinely ordained (714).

The centrists have not only established the Islamic validity of limited state authority and consultation in law-making and governance, but they have also justified the benefit of political pluralism. Al-Qaradāwī compares the function of multiple political parties to that of the multiple schools of jurisprudence within Islam, which he argues demonstrate varied approaches towards implementing and comprehending the Qur’ān and Sunna (716). Al-Bishrī also explains that different political parties and institutions in civil society reflect the diverse interests that naturally develop in society, and that maintaining social order requires that those interests be communicated through these entities (716). The support of political pluralism is another probable influence of centrist intellectuals on the members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who are increasingly making statements in favor of political pluralism and multiparty politics in contrast to the organization’s previous promotion of political unity.

Centrist intellectuals are also distinguished from other Islamists in their promotion of citizenship for non-Muslims. *Muwātana*, or “citizenship,” like “tolerance” and “pluralism” is also relatively recent introduction to Islamic thought. Bernard Lewis argues that before the advent of nationalism in the Islamic world, *muwātana*³ lacked a political significance (qtd. in Scott, “Citizenship” 5). Consequently, in the centrist Islamic discourse, the idea of modern citizenship associated with non-Muslims is usually contrasted with the historical practices of *dhimma* contracts and *jizya* payments. The

³ *Muwātana* is derived from the Arabic trilateral root *w-t-n*, which connotes “homeland” in *watan*, its most essential meaning.

theorists resist the application of the discriminatory institutions of *dhimma* and *jizya*, and argue instead that full citizenship is extendable to non-Muslims. Huwaidī disputes the theological necessity for imposing *jizya* payments and the *dhimma* contract in modern times and emphasizes that these practices are actually pre-Islamic in origin (Scott 129). Huwaidī also argues that the theological justification for *dhimma* is tenuous and that *dhimma* was not a genuine Islamic convention but rather one that actually preceded Islam. Al-‘Awwā also argues that the early Islamic community adopted *dhimma* as a way to define interactions between the Muslim conquerors and their non-Muslim subjects, and *dhimma* was modified to mean that God and the Prophet were providing the protection rather than tribes. Al-Bishrī reasons that because Muslims were a numerical minority at the time, it was necessary for them monopolize leadership (129). Through their reinterpretation of historical events and rational attention to historical contexts, the centrists have established the compatibility between an Islamic state and citizenship for non-Muslims and have rejected discriminatory conventions by discrediting their status as Islamic conventions. These perspectives counter the occasionally retrograde Islamist discourse regarding the status of Copts, with segments of Islamists, especially the formerly extremist group *al-Gamā‘a al-Islāmiyya*, calling for the reinstatement of *dhimma* status and *jizya* payments for Copts.

For the theorists, the need to protect the rights of non-Muslims is a compelling one that possesses doctrinal and scriptural support. Since religious diversity is a divine creation, these differences should be defended and respected. Al-Bishrī concludes that although Islam constitutes a part of Egyptian identity, it does not predominate in a

manner that renders Copts second-class citizens. Al-Qaradāwī also writes that Egyptian Muslims and Christians share a “national brotherhood that is grounded in respect and tolerance.” He argues that in civil matters, Copts and Muslims are equal before the law and that Copts have the right to impose their own laws on religious matters and personal status (Rutherford 719). Copts are also entitled to occupy senior posts in government, work as civil servants, and participate in parliament. He stipulates, however, along with ‘Imāra, that the office of president must always be occupied by a Muslim in order to guarantee that the state remains Islamic. Al-Qaradāwī also specifies that although non-Muslims are encouraged to run for elections, the majority of candidates must be Muslims. This same proportion applies to women in parliament, and the majority of those serving must be men (Scott 110).

The positions of these theorists share many attributes with classical liberalism and democracy, such as limitations on state power, public participation in politics, upholding the rule of law, and the respect of civil and political rights. These theories, however, are not fully developed to explain in detail how an Islamic government should operate. The concept that only God is sovereign and the *umma* possesses the right to create laws underscores a belief in man-made law but does not identify what entity in particular should decide which subjects are appropriate for man-made law, or what process would decide the community’s interest or how exactly unjust rulers would be deposed (Rutherford 719). There are also apparent contradictions regarding the centrists’ evaluation of freedoms protected under Islam, which include life, property, security, equality, and freedom of choice. Al-‘Awwā wrote in *The Right of Expression (al-Haqq fi*

al-Ta'abir) that the freedom of Muslims to leave Islam is disallowed because the Qur'ān has a clear position against apostasy (65). Apostasy is of particular concern to the Coptic community, because Copts who convert to Islam in order to get divorced face resistance in the event that they decide to return to the church. The Qur'ānic commandment that there is "no compulsion in religion" (2:256) is frequently cited by centrists as evidence of the religious freedom of non-Muslims, but this concept is also best understood within its particular Islamic framework. Because "no compulsion in religion" is defined by interpretations of the *dhimma* in Islamic jurisprudence, it should not be mistaken for a general principle of religious freedom. The principle of "no compulsion in religion" is based on the standard of religious brotherhood for "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitab*), and there is not strong support among the centrists for its application to non-Muslims outside of the Abrahamic faiths. The concept of public order is also used by Islamists to justify constraints on the individual behavior of both Muslims and non-Muslims in a theoretical, democratic Islamic state. The Egyptian Court of Cassation defines public order as "the social, political, economical or moral principles in a state related to the highest interest of society." These principles are informed by *sharī'a* in Egypt. Huwaidī explains that a political party cannot be formed that calls for "apostasy, freethinking, or atheism, or that discredits the heavenly revealed religions or Islam in particular, or makes light of the sacred things in Islam" (qtd. in Scott 154). Al-ʿAwwā also mentions that respecting public order would serve to protect religions other than Islam as well, because Muslims would not be permitted to attack other religions" (154). These stipulations

indicate that although the centrists have facilitated the articulation of non-Muslim rights and citizenship in moderate Islamist discourse, important complications and questions remain unresolved and underdeveloped.

As the Muslim Brotherhood started to build political momentum in the 1990's, these tensions and ambiguities were also evident to observers who sought specific, consistent statements from the Brotherhood on the status of non-Muslims. Internal ideological struggles, in addition to the pressures of interference from the state and electoral politics intensified the Brotherhood's challenge of specifying its position on non-Muslims and increased the unease of concerned Copts and their sympathizers.

During the September 1995 parliamentary elections, which proceeded with an atypical lack of interference from the state, the Muslim Brotherhood was able to win a total of eighty-eight seats in comparison to the eleven seats won by all the secular opposition groups combined (Antar 4). In the following weeks, the responses of Coptic and secularist intellectual Milād Hannā were widely quoted in the Egyptian and international press; Hanna guaranteed that should the Muslim Brotherhood come to power he would leave the country and that circumstances in Egypt would resemble those of Iran or Sudan (Stacher 350). This statement represents the general post-elections climate of anxiety and concern among observers, especially Copts and Muslim secularists, regarding the intentions of the Muslim Brotherhood and their stance on issues such as citizenship, equality, and political participation. Much of this concern was the consequence of years of reluctance on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood to explain its platform on these views with precision, gradual departures from the organization's

original tenets, and contradictory statements made by its members. It is evident that the modern, politically-oriented Muslim Brotherhood of today is in significant contrast with its hierarchical, reticent, and antidemocratic past. The Muslim Brotherhood, like many other contemporary political parties in Egypt, deals with a number of internal struggles, including generational divides and disagreements on strategy and ideology (El-Ghobashy 374). In her article “The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers,” political scientist Mona El-Ghobashy explains the circumstances that influenced these modern changes, and rejects accusations that the changes represent ideological insincerity or a shrewd strategy to acquire power by misrepresentation. By describing the ramifications of an authoritarian regime on electoral competition, El-Ghobashy explains how these conditions influence the ideological development of the Muslim Brotherhood. Particular changes include the higher visibility of the middle-aged members of the Brotherhood in parliament and professional syndicates and their domination of policy creation, while the influence of older, “prison generation” members with more extreme views is gradually diminishing (374). This transformation was especially evident in the organization’s 1969 repudiation of the thought of Sayyid Qutb and in contemporary endeavors to reinterpret the thought of founder Hassan al-Bannā along the lines of moderate Islamist thought in order to bolster democracy within the framework of Islam. El-Ghobashy marks the genesis of this transition to electoral politics in the 1980’s, when the Brotherhood was influenced by its desire for optimal participation in the democratic system as well as its decision to attempt to engage and cooperate with the authoritarian regime (374). El-Ghobashy makes sense of these changes with the sociological theory of Roberto Michels,

specifically the “iron law of oligarchy,” which argues that when a bureaucratic organization’s survival relies on maximizing membership, an oligarchic leadership will use its authority to orient the organization in the direction that is most likely to engage new members (Leach 319). Political scientist Otto Kirchheimer discussed a similar phenomenon in his conceptualization of the “catch-all party,” a theory that the necessity of maximizing votes leads organizations to move to the ideological center (El-Ghobashy 375). While it is difficult to determine the relative sincerity of the Muslim Brotherhood in their ideological transitions, if the concepts of the “iron rule of oligarchy” and “catch-all party” are indeed pertinent, they suggest that in the hypothetical event of fair elections along with the absence of an authoritarian regime, the Muslim Brotherhood would have an even greater incentive to maintain ideological moderation because the importance of securing votes would be even more immediate (391).

Prolonged repression and imprisonment under the Nasser presidency had led to an extensive absence of the Muslim Brotherhood from Egyptian politics. In the 1980’s the Brotherhood realized its opportunity to reenter the realm of politics. The outlawed Brotherhood, however, needed to counter the Electoral Law 114/1983, which prevented candidates from running as independents. The law also prevented candidates representing different parties from competing on the same lists, a requirement that essentially hindered parties from combining their efforts. In addition to these obstructions, the law established a threshold of eight percent of the national vote in order for a party to qualify for representation in parliament. In the event that an opposition party fell short of this threshold, their votes would be automatically transferred to the ruling National

Democratic Party (NDP). It was this delicate environment of political competition that warranted the collusion of the Wafd Party and the Brotherhood (El-Ghobashy 378). The alliance made them the only opposition party to prevail over the eight percent threshold in the 1984 elections, with the Wafd gaining fifty-eight seats, eight of which went to Brotherhood candidates (378).

By 1987 the Muslim Brotherhood became aware of the limitations of allying with a party like the Wafd that maintained such a clear and consistent ideology. When Ibrahim Shukrī, chairman of the Labor Party, proposed an alliance to the Brotherhood's new general guide Muhammad Hamed Abū al-Nasr, the Brotherhood took advantage of the opportunity to become the dominant force in an alliance with a group that was promoting a less coherent ideology (379). In response to criticism about their combined ideological vagueness, the alliance issued a booklet explaining their electoral platform. It stated that Copts are full citizens and also expressed their intent to close government liquor factories and ban discos and casinos (379).

In 1994 the Brotherhood made additional ideological clarifications, specifying that they supported the right of women to run for public office (with the exception of president). To explain this adjustment from the conservative views of al-Bannā, they cited the Qur'ān, especially 4:34, reasoning that men's guardianship over women in this verse concerns relations in the household rather than interactions in public life (382). This opinion also contrasts with former general guide 'Umar al-Tilmissanī's previous statement in 1985 that "a woman who believes that she is equal to a man is a woman who has lost her virtue and dignity" (382). It wasn't long before this progress in revising

Brotherhood ideology encountered a setback from the state, and in 1995 there was a significant government crackdown on the Brotherhood, with eighty-two of the leading activists from the younger generation detained in January, and additional arrests and convictions following the assassination attempt on Mubarak in Addis Ababa in June. This was likely done to prevent these younger activists from winning parliamentary seats as they comprised a significant threat to the NDP. The crackdown initially encouraged the Brotherhood to disseminate additional documents specifying their views, ostensibly to gain public support against their suppression. In a pamphlet entitled “Statement on Democracy,” the Brotherhood described its views on the citizenship status of Copts; “We the Muslim Brothers always say that we are advocates and not judges, and thus we do not ever consider compelling anybody to change his belief, in accordance with God’s words: ‘No compulsion in religion’ . . . Our position regarding our Christian brothers in Egypt and the Arab world is explicit, established and known: they have the same rights and duties as we do . . . Whoever believes or acts otherwise is forsaken by us” (Ghobashy 385). It is probable that this attention to full citizenship rights for Copts was influenced by the pan-confessional idea of citizenship promoted by Tariq al-Bishrī (385). Despite these concessions, many Copts remain troubled by compromising statements made by other Brotherhood members in positions of authority, especially Sheikh Muhammad ‘Abdullāh al-Khatīb, member of the Executive Office of the Egyptian branch. In a 1980 publication of the magazine *al-Da‘wa*, al-Khatīb stated that non-Muslim houses of worship cannot be built or repaired in cities that Muslims founded, which, according to al-Khatīb, even include the Cairo suburbs of Maadi and Helwan (‘Alī 24).

State intervention intended to thwart Brotherhood participation in the political process also continued to influence the ideological direction of the organization. In the period from 1995 to 2000, with many of the young activists detained, a conservative general guide was elected, a circumstance that advanced ideological setbacks and disputes in the organization. In 1996, Mustafā Mashūr replaced the ailing Muhammad Hamed Abū al-Nasrīn as general guide. A young Mashūr had belonged to the controversial Special Apparatus, the paramilitary wing of the Brotherhood founded in 1940 that later fostered the creation of Islamist militant offshoots (El-Ghobashy 386). The disconnect in ideology was especially evident during an interview of Mashūr in 1997, in which he stated that in a theoretical Islamic state, Copts should be prohibited from holding top posts in the army in order to guarantee total loyalty in conflicts with Christian states, and that Copts would ultimately pay *jizya* in exchange for state protection (El-Ghobashy 386). Mashūr's divisive tenure also prompted the estrangement of prominent younger members, several of whom formed the *al-Wasat* party in 1996.

During the late 1990's, the remaining younger activists continued to make considerable efforts to revise the ideologies promoted by the conservative elements in the organization. These members once again encouraged the organization to address its stance on "controversial" topics, such as the rights of women and Copts, in an effort to address the criticisms and negative publicity suffered under the authority of more conservative members. The state responded negatively to these clarifications and limited the dissemination of this literature, detained members and attacked student unions and professional syndicates (Rutherford 721). In 2000, Brotherhood members 'Issām al-

‘Iriyān and ‘Abd al-Mun‘īm Abū al-Futūh attempted to counter Mashūr’s impact by issuing additional statements, clarifying that the Brotherhood would accept a Coptic president in Egypt in the event that the elections were fair, and that the matter of Egypt being an Islamic state was already settled because Article 2 of the Egyptian Constitution states that Egypt is an Islamic state and that *sharī‘a* is the basis of legislation (El-Ghobashy 389). In 2005, Brotherhood spokesman ‘Issām al-‘Iriyān stated his desire for the group to create a political party with a “civil character” that could extend membership to all citizens, including Copts. The objective was to establish interfaith trust and bolster national unity (Rutherford 724).

By 2004 both Mashūr and al-Hudaibī had passed and additional activists had been released from prison. These events provided for the enhanced visibility of the moderate views of the younger generation of the Brotherhood (Rutherford 721). Because the parliamentary elections of 2005 were relatively less repressive than those that preceded it, Brotherhood candidates were permitted to run openly as members and to support independent candidates (721). During the election, the Brotherhood continued to explain its agenda by issuing pamphlets and participating in newspaper interviews. Like the centrist intellectuals, the Brotherhood stressed their general aims of expanding civil society, bolstering the judiciary and limiting executive authority. Regarding legislation, they explained that in their view, laws must remain “within the framework of *sharī‘a*” (Rutherford 722). They also expressed their desire to encourage multiple political parties by eliminating limitations on party formation and state interference with party

administration, even for the benefit of Coptic political parties (724). In 2005 the Brotherhood issued a reform initiative that explained that Coptic Christians constitute a vital part of Egyptian society and are “partners in the nation” along with Egyptian Muslims (726). It also confirmed that Copts have complete freedom of belief and worship, and are allowed to partake in activities that are prohibited for Muslims, such as the consumption of pork and alcohol (726). The initiative also guaranteed that Brotherhood assistance would not be limited to the Muslim community alone, but that services would be provided for the entire nation (726). It also explained that the Brotherhood would support the creation of Coptic political parties that would prioritize Coptic interests in particular (726). These opinions differ from the attitudes of Hassan al-Bannā and Sayyid Qutb, who persistently stressed the importance of ideological unity in maintaining a strong society. Recognizing this inconsistency, Mā’mūn al-Hudaibī explained that political pluralism does not counter al-Bannā’s rejection of a multiparty system because it was merely the result of al-Bannā’s contemporary situation (Scott 107).

Because *sharī‘a* is not a static, codified body of law, moderate Islamists have the flexibility to reinterpret its principles and isolate their essence from historical practice through the process of *ijtihād* (Scott 12). In this manner, New Islamists and progressive members of the Muslim Brotherhood can reject the modern-day implementation of *dhimma* and *jizya* as requirements and in their place justify equal citizenship and democratic, political participation for Copts according to the fundamentals of Islamic law. These endorsements, while promising, fall short of absolute equality and civil rights. Islamists do not share a consensus on whether or not a Copt can become president in an

Islamic state, and some of them consider the maintenance of Muslim majorities in parliament to be a requirement. While Christians are entitled to their own personal status laws, their autonomy is also limited by the Islamists' endorsement of punishment for apostasy and disapproval of interfaith marriages between non-Muslim men and Muslim women. Other positions remain vague and underdeveloped, such as the obligation of Muslims to "protect" non-Muslims, which evokes the concept of *dhimma* and *jizya* for some Copts, and the concept of shared but unspecified "rights and duties." While the younger generation of the Muslim Brotherhood has been influenced by the centrists' call for the equality of non-Muslims, their credibility is compromised by the inconsistency of their public statements and their strategic maneuvering in delicate electoral politics. As for the centrists, their brand of moderate Islamism is a relatively young discourse and consequently their ideas continue to develop. Additionally, much of their analysis concerns theoretical circumstances, which can also account for the lack of particular details concerning the administration of an Islamic state. Ultimately, centrist Islamists recognize the integrated nature of Copts in the national framework and they have prioritized the interpretation of *sharī'a* principles in a way that generally supports the equality of non-Muslims in an Islamic state. The Muslim Brotherhood is gradually making similar endeavors, and their evident commitment to participating in the democratic electoral system suggests that this trend of increasing moderation will continue.

Chapter 4: Coptic Responses

Coptic scholar Samīr Murqus is one of the most prolific Egyptian supporters of a secular, religiously neutral state and public space. Murqus insists that equal citizenship only lies at the core of the civil state (*al-dawla al-madaniyya*) as opposed to an Islamic or theocratic state. He defines citizenship as the people's implementation of social, economic, cultural and political rights rooted in equality (*musāwā*) and an absolute lack of discrimination on any grounds (Murqus, "al-Muwātana" 59). True citizenship also encompasses full participation in the political processes that determine how public resources and wealth are allocated (Morqus, "The Coptic"). Because true citizenship requires an absence of discrimination, it surpasses concepts of religious communities and minorities (Murqus, "al-Muwātana" 59). The civil state, according to Murqus, is the only entity that is capable of comprehensively embodying all Egyptians, while other forms of affiliation, such as religion and ideologies like Pharaonism, inevitably generate division and isolation (Morcos, "Handling religious"). Murqus, unlike Rafīq Habīb, is disenchanted with Islamic revivalism, and emphasizes that its emergence in the 1970's coincided with the social, political and economic decline of the Coptic community. He claims that Islamic revivalism has resulted in a confrontational atmosphere in Egypt that is characterized by suspicion and anxiety between Copts and Islamists (Morcos, "Citizens").

The primary fault of political Islamism is that it has caused religion to invade the public and political space. What Murqus deems the “sanctification” of public space is undesirable because it promotes sectarianism, conformity, and the re-categorization of Egyptians according to their religious affiliation as opposed to citizenship (Morqos, “The Coptic”). This change in the character of Egyptian public space leads to competition in social and political activity “between Islam and non-Islam, or Muslims and non-Muslims, instead of than one that takes place between different currents and ideas that hold room for diversity” (Morcos, “Citizens”). Murqus explains that in response to these changes, Copts had no choice but to retreat into a politicized isolation and act as a “minority group” rather than “individual citizens” (Morqos, “The Coptic”). Murqus also compares minority groups to the historical concepts of *dhimma* and *millet*, which in his view represent the antitheses to full citizenship (Morcos, “Citizens”). Murqus is concerned with the notion of the Coptic community constituting a minority because it implies that the community is a “closed, autonomous, homogeneous socio-political entity” (Morqos, “Bridging”). This assumption belies the reality that Copts maintain diverse social and political interests and are present in all social and economic classes. Murqus opposes the presidential appointment of Copts to parliament and the judiciary and insists that genuine Coptic political participation be advanced through grassroots activism. Murqus is not alone in his opposition to identifying Copts as a minority; this resistance was especially reflected during the controversy surrounding the proposed “Minorities in the Arab World” conference that was organized by the largely Western-backed Ibn Khaldun Center for Developmental Studies (ICDS) in 1994. The purpose of the conference was to

discuss Egyptian Copts, along with Berbers, Kurds, Armenians, Druze, and Christian Sudanese as minorities and was unexpectedly met with aggressive debate from Copts and Muslims alike. Egyptian intellectuals such as Muhammad Hassanein Haikal warned against the divisive nature of the term “minority” and compared the initiative of the foreign funded ICDS to earlier British claims that protecting Coptic “minorities” legitimated their colonial intervention (El-Gawhary 21). Even Pope Shenouda warned against referring to Copts as “minorities,” stressing that they are “part and parcel of the Egyptian nation” (21).

The contemporary status quo for Egyptian citizenship contrasts with Murqus’s opinion of the 1919 Revolution, which he describes as ideal because it succeeded in uniting diverse social groups. Public and political space became increasingly religious during Sadat’s presidency, in part because the state began to rescind many of its social services, which prompted Egyptians to seek education and healthcare services from religious organizations. Murqus describes this transition as regrettable because the interaction between the individual and state disintegrated and society became more divided according to religious affiliation (Morqos, “Bridging”).

With respect to Islamists, Murqus has at times acknowledged the efforts of al-‘Awwā and other New Islamists and even praised al-‘Awwā for discrediting the contemporary application of *dhimma* (Murqus, “al-Akhar” 162). However, Murqus reserves most of his skepticism for the Muslim Brotherhood and their attitude towards Copts. He describes the political ascendancy of the Brotherhood in ironic terms; noting that their electoral successes coincided with Coptic political marginalization and

considers their 1984 alliance with the Wafd Party disappointing because of the Wafd's historical association with "national unity" (Morcos, "Citizens"). Murqus also emphasizes what he considers to be the Brotherhood's consistent avoidance of discussing Coptic issues, and characterizes their public statements as "vague and confusing slogans that exacerbate worry" (Morqus, "Bridging"). Murqus believes that the Brotherhood's intentions to protect "People of the Book," permit them freedom of belief and practice and treat them with kindness (*tasāmuh*) fall short of full citizenship. He cites the stipulations on Coptic rights that Brotherhood members have endorsed throughout the organization's history, including mixed messages on the requirement of *jizya* and the controversial statements made by former Supreme Guide Mustafā Mashūr regarding limitations on Coptic military service in 1997 (Murqus, "Citizens"). Murqus also considers the Brotherhood statement that Copts and Muslims share the same "rights and duties" to be ambivalent.

According to Murqus, reversing the sectarian trend requires Egyptians to extend public and political space so that it encompasses all citizens regardless of religious affiliation. This is best accomplished through grassroots activism and the bolstering of non-religious syndicates and associations that would unite Christians and Muslims under artistic, intellectual and political objectives (Morcos, "Handling religious"). Murqus even admits that religious values are an essential feature of Egyptian cultural identity, but insists that strengthening non-religious civil society organizations would counter sectarianism without impinging on these fundamental values ("Handling religious").

Both Murqus and Rafiq Habīb are concerned with promoting an entity that is inclusive of all Egyptians and the common bonds that unite both Muslims and Copts. The essential difference between their approaches is how they conceptualize religion; Murqus is convinced that whether Christian or Islamic, conspicuous religion in the public and political space divides Egyptians. Habīb, on the other hand, believes that religion and the values associated with it unite Egyptians under what he calls an “Arab-Islamic” cultural framework. Habīb argues that the value system of Islamic civilization includes Christianity and unifies all Egyptians under a common civilization (Takayuki 153). In contrast, Murqus argues that only the secular, civil state and secular, civil bonds are capable of serving this function of uniting Egyptians. While Murqus and Habīb share an enthusiasm for bolstering civil society, Murqus’s is limited to the non-religious institutions of civil society, which he considers more likely to foster interfaith cooperation. Habīb, however, appreciates the retreat of the state-provided social services while Murqus is dismayed by the extended role of religious institutions in the provision of social services since the 1970’s. This difference originates in Habīb’s focus on communal bonding over individual interests, bonding that he believes will enhance national unity even if the bonding is according to one’s religion affiliation (Hatina 51). Habīb’s expectation for Muslims and Christians to engage in social solidarity (*takāful*) is not farfetched, as the Muslim Brotherhood has expressed willingness to serve Christians in their social programs and Coptic non-governmental organizations such as Coptic Orphans have provided social services for Egyptian Muslims. Not surprisingly, Habīb, along with Islamists, supports Article 2 of the Egyptian Constitution that states that

sharī'a is the main source of legislation. Murqus rejects Article 2 and belongs to the increasing minority of Copts who advocate secular personal status laws for Christians (Scott 169).

In fact, Copts have demonstrated a variety of attitudes towards this demonstrably Islamic portion of the constitution, many of which are associated with the relationship between *sharī'a* and Coptic affairs that has developed throughout history. Mamdūh Nakhlah of the Coptic Nation Party explained in a press interview that the party's program does not demand the abolishment of Article 2, but rather an amendment that specifies *sharī'a* as one source of legislation with positive law constituting the primary source (Atmaca 4). In a similar vein, Bishop Murqus, former official spokesman for the church, stated that making *sharī'a* one source among multiple sources of legislation would ensure influences from other references (11). Coptic writer Mamdūh Halīm, on the other hand, wrote in a May 2006 issue of the Coptic newspaper *Watanī* that Article 2 precludes a civil state based on citizenship (6). Coptic intellectual Amin Iskandar is at ease with the article in its current form because he considers it a logical consequence of the reality that the majority of the Egyptians are Muslim, and he believes that the provisions of Article 2 do not affect Copts negatively (6). The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, however, petitioned Mubarak and parliament to amend Article 2 in a way that underlines the religious neutrality of the state and references religious diversity in Egypt (8). Despite the multitude of Coptic attitudes towards Article 2, Pope Shenouda has not spoken out against it and even publicly censured Bishop Murqus for criticizing

the article and removed the bishop from his position as church spokesperson. Shenouda's acceptance of Article 2 is likely related to Coptic resistance against secular personal status law, which is a significant feature of a modern, secular state (Scott 169). Maintaining Coptic religious identity through the execution of Coptic personal status law is important to the Coptic community and the *sharī'a* provisions of Article 2 permit the community to execute many of their own religious personal status laws in Egyptian courts, as opposed to the alternative of an entirely secular personal status law. Overall, the decisive issue for Copts, even Coptic secularists, is whether or not they consider *sharī'a* to be an entity that includes Christianity. Some Copts believe that the freedom to implement their own personal status laws is an inherent feature of *sharī'a*, while others either disagree or want the state to reaffirm that this freedom is included the way it interprets *sharī'a* principles. These concerns can be clarified by examining the significance of Coptic personal status laws in the Egyptian context.

As evidenced in the centrist Islamists' respect for the legal concept of public order, Egyptian culture is relatively oriented toward the benefit of the group as opposed to the individual (Harris 2). The significance of fulfilling social roles rather than satisfying individual desires is also evident in matters of Coptic family and personal status. Coptic stipulations on divorce also suggest that the community considers stable marriages to be a requirement for communal stability (Rugh 211). Because marriage in Orthodox Christianity is also a sacrament as opposed to a contract in Islam, it cannot be dissolved according to the will of either spouse. Copts who wish to divorce and remarry

within the Coptic Church are not able to do so if they obtained a divorce outside of the church's stipulations. In 1938, Articles 50 to 58 provided multiple conditions for granting Coptic divorces, including mental illness, adultery and immoral behavior, and shared many similarities with Islamic personal status laws (Joseph 41). In 1971 Pope Shenouda released Papal Decree No. 7, which required the Clerical Council for Family Affairs (CCFA) to abridge the conditions of divorce, essentially limiting court divorce rulings to cases of adultery. Approximately 98% of judges in Egypt are Muslim, and in light of the prevailing Islamic understandings of divorce, divorces have been granted to Copts relatively easily (Guindy 4). Furthermore, the People's Assembly has yet to pass or even discuss the papal decree, making the 1938 law still effective. Media sources have estimated that approximately 12,000 Copts have pending cases for remarriage within the church (4). In addition to the sacramental significance of marriage, the church is also concerned that civil marriage would produce more interfaith marriages and therefore increase the rate of conversion (Scott 171). To this end, the church even supports the inclusion of religious affiliation on state-issued identity cards as an additional measure to prevent interfaith marriages. Although many secular Copts oppose this requirement on identity-cards, conversion and interfaith marriages are generally frowned upon in the Coptic lay community as well and commonly result in social ostracism for the converting individual and humiliation for their families (171).

These negative attitudes towards interfaith marriage and conversion were especially evident during the church's 2004 detention of Wafā' Qustantīn. In the delta town of Abu al-Matamir, Wafā' Qustantīn, the wife of a local priest, petitioned for

divorce from her allegedly abusive husband. When she was refused a divorce she threatened to convert to Islam and disappeared shortly afterwards. Local Copts protested her disappearance for two weeks, under the suspicion that she had been forced to convert to Islam (Nafie, “When”). After Qustantīn’s brother reported her missing, local officials told her family that she had converted to Islam and was residing in Cairo with a Muslim family. The scope of the demonstrations expanded and the issue caught the attention of expatriate Coptic activist groups and the Western media. In December Pope Shenouda retreated to the monastery in Anba Bishoy to protest the arrests of Coptic demonstrators. Eventually the state acquiesced to the church’s demands and security forces returned Qustantīn to church custody, where she was detained in a monastery in Wadi al-Natrun for closed-door advisory sessions. According to church statements, Qustantīn did not reconfirm her Christianity under duress, although she stated in a telephone interview with London-based newspaper *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* that she had indeed converted to Islam (Scott 2). Although it is difficult to ascertain the precise nature of Qustantīn’s conversions, the incident brought attention to the increasingly political role of the church and many Egyptians questioned the legality and the constitutionality of Qustantīn’s detention (2). These developments indicate that there are nuances in Coptic secularism that are particular to the Egyptian context, such as the widespread rejection of secular personal status law and absolute freedom of religion and conscience.

The controversy surrounding Qustantīn’s conversion and disappearance highlights the fact that Copts and Islamists can both exhibit compromising attitudes towards personal autonomy. These shared attitudes were also apparent during the parliamentary

protest against *The DaVinci Code*, in which Copts and Islamists made a joint effort to restrict freedom of expression on the same pretext of sensitivity toward religion. Coptic attitudes towards interfaith marriage and conversion also help contextualize Islamist restrictions on these practices in terms of Egyptian sensitivities. It is important to recognize that many Copts are not enthusiastic about the freedom to marry outside of the faith, and the Coptic support for the ability to convert is often diminished when it applies to Copts converting from Christianity to another faith. Coptic support of religious personal status laws are motivated by the Egyptian emphasis on the family as the foundation of society and the desire to preserve the community through Coptic marriage motivates Copts to support Coptic personal status law as opposed to secular personal status law, which constitutes a key component of the modern, secular state. This position on personal status law complicates the notion of secularism in the Egyptian context and even prompts some Copts to support the implementation of *sharīʿa* if they believe it will permit them that type of autonomy.

Murqus's writings demonstrate that some Copts are suspicious of Islamism because they believe that the arrival of Islamic revivalism coincided with the decline in Coptic political participation. This suspicion is also exacerbated by the perceived tendency of Islamists to avoid specificity and the contradictory statements made by the Muslim Brotherhood. Even Habīb, when discussing his own party, has stated that he is not entirely confident that *al-Wasat* would actually nominate a Copt for president, even though the party's platform states that it is willing to do so (Scott 151). Murqus's secularism shows that some Copts are not willing to compromise on any type of

discrimination, and for them Islamist stipulations that the head of state must be a Muslim and that Muslims must compose the majority of parliament are unacceptable. While the common ambition is a polity that will unite Egyptians and include all segments of the population, secularists and Islamists do not agree on whether a secular or Islamic framework is adequately diverse to accomplish this goal.

Conclusion

Realizing equality for Egypt's Copts is not merely a special, minority interest, but an effort to secure the best interests for all Egyptians. Copts compose an integral part of the Egyptian social and cultural framework, share traditions and values with Muslims and even dwelled alongside Muslims under the discriminatory *dhimma* system. Consequently, modern Coptic intellectuals often approach their theories for reform in the context of national unity and for the benefit of the entire populace. Coptic marginalization is a relatively recent phenomenon and to exclusively attribute its cause to the predominance of political Islamism is an oversimplification; throughout Egypt's history as a republic, the Coptic community has been adversely affected by economic and political policies that were not religious in nature. Likewise, arguments that Copts prospered socially and politically in the early twentieth century entirely because of secularism also overlook the factor that Copts and Muslims were preoccupied with uniting against their British opponents during that period.

Coptic integration is also reflected in the emerging discourses of moderate Egyptian Islamists, who have prioritized the discussion of non-Muslims in their theory. These intellectuals have utilized *ijtihād* to rationalize progressive developments according to Islamic principles and to depart from historical precedents. In this manner, they are able to reject or modify discriminatory practices such as *jizya* and *wilāya* and

make pragmatic changes from the views of early Islamists like Hassan al-Bannā in order to adapt Islamist theory to the modern priorities of democracy, citizenship, pluralism and tolerance. The realm of personal status also represents an area of common interest in the discourse between Islamists and Copts. Many Copts, in light of their traditional values that uphold the family unit, have expressed support for *sharīʿa* on the condition that it provides for the implementation of Coptic personal status laws. This conciliatory acceptance of *sharīʿa* is seldom acknowledged in scholarship. These common interests indicate a potential for accord in what scholar David Zeidan calls “the perpetual struggle between Islamists and secularists” (64).

While there is a degree of reciprocity between the positions of moderate Islamists and Copts, there are also many issues and concerns that remain unresolved. The most evident is the disagreement among Egyptians over the essential capacity of religion to unite or divide the nation. Additionally, the positions of moderate Islamists, while relatively pragmatic, are not entirely conciliatory because they propose specific limitations on personal autonomy and political participation. The flexibility of *sharīʿa* that centrist Islamists rely on for their *ijtihād* is also a disadvantage for Copts and secularists who want specific details on the Islamists’ understanding of an Islamic government. The challenges of electoral politics in an authoritarian regime hampered the ability of the Muslim Brotherhood to develop and articulate its positions on non-Muslims, and these challenges, coupled with internal ideological struggles, have made them a target of suspicion. After decades of suffering attacks perpetrated by Islamist extremists, it is not surprising that many Copts are concerned by the apparent

contradictions and ambiguities in the moderate Islamist message. There is also tension between the desire to maintain Coptic personal status laws, which some observers criticize as remnants of the *millet* system, and Coptic interest in a secular state (Scott 39). The complex question of Egyptian identity also lingers, which has maintained a state of flux since the advent of modernization.

In any case, the advancement of this dialogue is significant not only within its immediate context but also for other groups as well. Islamist efforts to accommodate Coptic rights can also indicate prospects for women, which is especially demonstrated by the Muslim Brotherhood's trend of issuing clarifications on Copts and women in tandem. This dialogue can also inform the conditions of other plural societies in the Muslim world and highlight the nuances that secularism and Islamism can develop according to particular cultural, historical and religious contexts.

Recent developments indicate that this dialogue has the potential to progress in the post-Mubarak era. On February 19, 2011, only eight days following Mubarak's resignation, the *al-Wasat* party was granted official recognition, making it the first legal Islamist party in Egypt. On April 30, 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood also achieved legal recognition with its establishment of the "Freedom and Justice Party." Free and open elections could provide an opportunity for Islamists to openly develop and articulate their positions on non-Muslims and demonstrate consistency to skeptical Egyptians. Much like the revolution in 1919, demonstrations of solidarity between Christians and Muslims were widely reported in the international media, as Egyptians collaborated to demand democracy and equality. It remains to be seen if the public will be able to maintain this

shift away from sectarian division that was so apparent during the revolution and continue to cooperate under shared interests to realize comprehensive reform.

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