

## Muslim Response to the Church Missionary Society's Activities in Egypt: 1936-1959

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### Abstract:

The Church Missionary Society's (CMS) work in Egypt is eye-catching and thought provoking. The CMS crystallised an interest in the Muslim world germinated in the nineteenth century. This early interest, followed by efforts of Missions to Muslims in the Middle East arose as a result of an alarming feeling of anxiety that the Society developed *vis à vis* its neglect and lack of interest in the evangelisation of Muslims. The CMS missionary activities in Egypt from 1936 to 1959 used different approach. It approached Muslim Egyptians through the mediums of education, medical work, literature and Church activity. The latter revealed much about the nature and work of the CMS Egypt Mission and its policy in Egypt for that period. The present article highlights the CMS missionary activities and considers particularly the nature of the Muslim response to the CMS missionary activities in Egypt from 1936 to 1959. The Muslim response considered is that of the Egyptian government, the Egyptian press, the *Azhari Ulema* and their opposition to the CMS and all missionary work in Egypt from 1936 to 1959.

**Keywords:** The Church Missionary Society; Missionary activities; Muslim Response ; Egyptian Government; *Azhari Ulema*, Egyptian Press

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## **Introduction :**

The Church Missionary Society's work in the Muslim world and in Egypt was the outcome of an alarming feeling of anxiety that the Church Missionary Society developed *vis à vis* its neglect and lack of interest in the evangelisation of Muslims. The CMS missionary activities in Egypt from 1936 to 1959 were of a multi-faceted approach. It used different mediums and methods to evangelise Muslim Egyptians through education, medical work, literature and Church activity. The latter revealed much about the nature and work of the CMS Egypt Mission and its policy in Egypt for that period. The present article gives an overview of the CMS missionary activities and concerns itself with the nature of the Muslim response to the CMS missionary activities in Egypt during the twentieth century notably, from 1936 to 1959. The Muslim response highlighted is that of the Egyptian government, the Egyptian press, the *Azhari Ulema* and their opposition to the CMS and all missionary work in Egypt from 1936 to 1959. The research method adopted is the qualitative, chronological and thematic approach. It highlights the nature of Muslim response to the CMS missionary work.

## **2. Overview of the CMS Missionary Activities in Egypt: 1936-1959**

### **2.1 The CMS Educational Work**

The Church Missionary Society or the CMS is a British missionary society that initiated work in Egypt in the nineteenth century. Its early interest and efforts of Missions to Muslims in the Middle East arose as a result of an alarming feeling of anxiety that the Society developed concerning its neglect and lack of interest in the evangelization of Muslims. The CMS Egypt Mission's activities in Egypt from 1936 to 1959 were a multi-faceted approach. It used different mediums and methods of approach to evangelize Muslim Egyptians. It approached them through education, medical work, literature and Church activity which revealed much about the nature and work of the CMS Egypt Mission and its policy in Egypt for that

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period. This article gives an overview of the CMS missionary activities and considers the nature of the Muslim response to the CMS missionary activities in Egypt from 1936 to 1959. The Muslim response highlighted is that of the Egyptian government, the Egyptian press, the *Azhari Ulema* and their opposition to the CMS missionary work in Egypt for the period stated above. The Egyptian response to foreign missions started as early as the 1920s and continued throughout the 1930s to the 1940s and epitomized in the 1950s. Muslims were not alone in opposing foreign missions; some of the Coptic clerics were, likewise, critical of the type of Christianity propelled by foreign missionaries.<sup>1</sup>

During the period of 1936 and 1959, the CMS Egypt mission continued its administration to its previous schools and established new ones. Nevertheless, the CMS Egypt educational activity remained within the perspective of evangelism.<sup>2</sup> The aim of CMS schools was expressed as follows:

“Our aim is that the school should be a home, where English and Egyptians live together in terms of sincere personal friendship, and it is easy to conceive what contribution they thus make towards peace and happiness between the two nations. However, "Our schools wish to be known as being Christian in aim and character. No one is admitted except on the understanding that he (or she) receives Christian instruction and preserves a reverent silence during school prayers." <sup>3</sup>

### **2.2 The CMS Medical, Literature & Church Activities**

The CMS medical work did also place evangelism at the heart of the strategies of approach. Medical missions were motivated by a religious incentive; that of being at the image of Jesus in his miraculous curative acts for bringing about conversion.<sup>4</sup> The CMS medical work from 1936 to 1959 in Egypt established various medical institutions for evangelizing Muslim Egyptians.

All along the period of its work in Egypt, the Old Cairo Hospital and the Menouf Hospital never ceased to make evangelism at the heart of its medical work. About the evangelistic nature of the Old Cairo Hospital and its desire at converting Muslims, Mrs Cutting argued:

“There is no doubt that the kindness of the staff, and the general the air of cheeriness and cleanliness which prevail, are the first things to be noticed by the patients who come to the hospital for treatment. But we who are interested in missionary work will realize that in the

case of a mission hospital these first external impressions are but the introduction to something deeper. In Old Cairo as a hospital, we do endeavour to put "first things first", and seek to train all the staff of nurses to realize their responsibility towards the hundreds of Moslems who probably might never be brought to hear the message

of salvation, apart from medical missionary work which is being carried on." <sup>5</sup>

The CMS Egypt's Mission was also active through the mediums of literature and Church activity. The CMS early literary production for Muslim evangelism was of a controversial approach. While it reaped few converts, it raised Muslims against missionaries and their activities. On the early character of the CMS literary production and the need for a shift in policy, it was argued :

“It aimed at exposing the weaknesses of Islam and showing the superiority of Christianity. Today we must take a different line" <sup>6</sup>

The shift emphasised a move from an apologetic approach to a devotional one through the translation and publication of colloquial literature focusing on prayers and devotions.

“This was not a move to a more anti-intellectual approach for the simple-minded; it was an attempt to develop depth in relations with other religions." <sup>7</sup>

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The Church activity for the period mentioned under consideration was evangelistic by vocation. The CMS Egypt Mission's work among the Copts was a means that targeted Muslims. In 1936, Morrison; the secretary of the CMS Egypt Mission argued about the aim behind the CMS revival of the Coptic Churches saying:

“Our purpose for supporting all movements for the revival of the Coptic Church is not merely that we consider the resuscitation of that Church to be of supreme importance, but also that we believe it to be the key to the problem of Moslem evangelization in Egypt.”<sup>8</sup>

The CMS and its church invested efforts in the training of voluntary evangelists to equip them for the highly specialized task of Muslim evangelism. In this perspective, monthly classes were provided for younger missionaries at the premises of the School of Oriental Studies of the American University at Cairo, and others were initiated for the Menouf Church members.

### **3. Egyptian Muslim Response to the CMS Evangelistic Activities :**

#### **3.1 The Egyptian Government Response :**

The Egyptian government, the press and the *Azhari Ulema* declared with a remarkable zeal that mission constituted a danger to the Muslims' faith. The Egyptian Government tackled the issue through the regulation of rules on missionary work and their teaching of the Christian religion to Muslims. The section of this article will shed light on the Egyptian Government response.<sup>9</sup>

The Egyptian Government and the Egyptian society, in general, perceived Christian missions, their educational work and their *Diakonia* activities as a threat to the Muslims' faith and culture. In this regard, it was argued :

“Missionary schools were experienced as provocative by many nationalists, Muslim activists and intellectuals, as well as officials of the Coptic Orthodox Church. The missionaries were regarded as a threat or at least as a competition and

stimulated the establishment of schools by Muslim and Coptic benevolent societies."<sup>10</sup>

The Egyptian government started its restriction to missionary work by issuing regulations to control foreign missionary education. The Montreux Convention (1937), agreed for a period of twelve years of Capitulatory system for foreigners living in Egypt. With the abolition of the capitulations in 1948, Christian missions' religious teaching for Muslims was verboten in 292 schools. After the 1952 revolution, measures were taken concerning the curricula in foreign schools.<sup>11</sup>

The Egyptian Government's policy was, initially, geared towards the control of all educational institutions and making illicit Christian teaching to Muslim pupils in Christian schools. Missionary schools were under the obligation of providing Muslim pupils with the teaching of Islam. Missionary schools active in Egypt, including those of the CMS, negotiated with the Egyptian Government on these issues. For the majority of Coptic primary and secondary schools, it is to be noted that as these schools received a government grant, they were under the obligation to comply with the Government's commands.

While the Egyptian Constitution safeguarded religious freedom, evangelism and attempts at converting Muslims were strongly opposed and prohibited. On account of the Egyptian Constitutional article which makes Islam the religion of Egypt, the Egyptian State's obligation was that of preserving the country from any subversive activity. The future of the younger Churches founded in Egypt by the Western missionary enterprise was, also, to come under the Government consideration. About the Church, Morrison argued:

"Our own small Egyptian "Episcopal Church" puts Moslem evangelism first and does everything in its power to encourage all movements for reform within the Coptic Church. It tries to be a bridge between the ancient and younger Churches, and to promote the work of reunion." <sup>12</sup>

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During the Third Government of Al Nahas (May 6th 1936-June 31<sup>st</sup> 1937), in Upper Egypt, Inspectors of the Ministry of Education litigated the parents of children who adhered to Christian Schools. They called the pupils to attend the local compulsory schools, and both Muslim and Christian parents were charged with fines.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, in 1937, the Under Secretary of State for Education clarified the conditions for the recognition of Christian Schools, notably, their providing of an education that should be equivalent in standard to that of Government schools.

The Under Secretary, also, pointed out that Muslim children had to attend Government schools which curricula were based on Islamic teaching. This position was tantamount for missionary schools with withdrawing Muslim pupils from missionary schools. Nevertheless, the contact of Morrison; the CMS Egypt's Mission Secretary with the British Embassy and the discussion of the latter with the Minister of Education resulted in an affirmation that missionary schools would pursue their work under prescribed conditions.

It was also confirmed that Muslim pupils would not be removed from Christian schools provided that they conform to the Government required standards. The Minister rehearsed the conditions stated by the Under Secretary of State for Education. However, he emphasised that if Christian schools refused to give teaching in Islam to Muslim pupils; they would, inevitably, be attached to the Government schools. The Minister rejected the alternative of pursuing the education of Muslim pupils in Christian missionary institutions and providing for their Islamic education outside the schools.<sup>14</sup>

Morrison noted that the situation improved after the meeting of the Official of the British Embassy with the Minister of Education.<sup>15</sup> In 1938, Senator Abdel Khaliq Selim introduced into the Parliament a draft bill prohibiting missionary propaganda to pupils under the age of sixteen. The content of the bill included the following:

“- Art.1. Missionary propaganda to the youth of both sexes under the 16 years of age aiming at conversion by preaching, inducement, by making comparisons between two faiths or by allowing them to join in prayers or take part in religious ceremonies other than those of their creed or that of their parents, or by the employment of any other means intended for their conversion is forbidden.

- Art.2. Any infringement of this law is punishable by imprisonment for one year or a fine of £.100. - Art.3. In the event of a second offence, the term of imprisonment becomes 5 years, and the fine is raised to £1000.

The institution in which the offence is committed for the second time shall be closed, and no permission shall be granted for the opening of one of its kind. - Art.4. The Ministers of Interior, Justice public Health and Education are charged with the execution of the present law." <sup>16</sup>

Senator Selim further explained that according to the Egyptian Constitution, missionary propaganda was not prohibited. He pointed to the fact that proselytism should be directed to adults who could grasp and perceive the meaning of the faith. Accordingly, the law protected the youths under sixteen, whose conversion to Christianity was deemed of harmful consequences. Schools and hospitals had no right to interfere with the faith of the youths to effect an illegitimate alteration of their faiths. The Senator concluded on the note that:

“It is to avert such tragedies and put an end to an unsatisfactory state of things, that the above draft bill is submitted," <sup>17</sup>

In 1938, the Minister of Education Mohamed Mahmud Pasha: (June 24th 1938- August 1939) consented to the recognition of Christian elementary schools and the attendance of Muslim children to Christian elementary schools. He argued that the children could receive instruction in Islam in their homes or elsewhere, provided that :



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“a- they take an examination in these subjects at the end of each year, to prove that the instruction is so given is of the standard required of pupils in the Government compulsory schools;

b- the headmaster of the local Government schools has the right to ascertain that such instruction is being given in their own homes or elsewhere”<sup>18</sup>

In June 1938, Abdul Khaliq Salim introduced a bill to the Egyptian Senate which content stated the following:

“It is forbidden to make any appeal to young people, male or female, who has not yet reached the age of sixteen to change instruction, or inducement, or comparison between their religious faith and that which they are invited. It is also forbidden to allow them to take part in any religious services or their religion, whether the appeal is made in the way of 296 ceremonies which are contrary to the religion or sect of their parents or guardians. Similarly, there is forbidden any other course whose purpose is to effect a change of sector religion. [Accordingly, charges and warning against missionary institutions declared the following:] It is no small disgrace for parents to find that their children, whom they sent in full confidence to these propagandists for instruction or medical treatment or help, for example, have constantly become repudiators of their parents' religion and disrespectful of their beliefs. Would that the matter ended at this point. Very often these children disappear if they anticipate reproof from their parents or guardians.”<sup>19</sup>

Another measure taken by the Government was the holding of an examination for teachers in non-Government schools, successively, for the years 1938 and 1939. Teachers taking these examinations had to be in schools inspected by the Government. On passing the examination, the teachers received recognition as qualified teachers. As some teachers in missionary schools expressed a desire to take the

examination for recognition, accordingly, it was suggested that missionary schools ought to be inspected by Government.<sup>20</sup>

In 1939, the Egyptian Government tightened its measures against missionaries by abolishing "resident status" for missionaries and permission to remain in Egypt had to be renewed annually. Those who had been in Egypt for more than five years were attributed visas according to the Montreux Convention. About these impediments, Morrison argued:

"Difficulties had, however, been experienced in securing permission to enter Egypt for a new missionary doctor for the CMS. And it appeared that the Egyptian The government was anxious to press for the engagement of Egyptian doctors instead of foreign missionary doctors."<sup>21</sup>

The attitude of the Egyptian Government towards missionary work compounded with the call of the Egyptian press to the Ministry of Education to exercise control over all foreign schools. Suggestions emphasized the conformity of their curricula to that of the Government schools, notably concerning Arabic, the history and geography of Egypt and civics. It was also suggested that missionary schools were under the obligation of providing teaching of the Quran.

The Ministry of Education issued a circular that Muslim pupils, in primary schools, had to take their examination in the Quran as a rudimentary step for to higher levels. The Ministry of Education further emphasized that all teachers of the Arabic language in Government schools and those supported by the Government had to be Muslims for the reason that: *the teaching of this subject is concerned with the Koran and the sacred traditions.*"<sup>22</sup>

The Minister of Education, under the Government of Hasan Sabry Pasha (28th June November 15th 1940), met in a Conference, August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1940, with the heads of foreign and missionary schools regarding the teaching of Arabic, history-geography, civics, and Islam in their schools. The CMS was for a deliberate acceptance of a 'Conscience Clause', which content would exempt Muslim pupils from Christian

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missionary teaching based on a written application from the parent or guardian; the application was subject to annual renewal.<sup>23</sup> The Minister of Education concluded on the 28th October 1940 the following regarding foreign schools :

a- The inspection of the Ministry of Education to foreign schools and the preparation of students for Government examinations. The Ministry was also emphatic about inspecting; in all foreign schools, subjects like Arabic, Egyptian history and geography, and civics to Egyptian students.

b- Language of Government Examinations: The Minister declared that from 1942 to the future language of Government Examinations would be in Arabic.

c- The teaching of Islam to Muslims in foreign schools through Muslim teachers provided by the Ministry of Education. The majority of mission schools including the CMS; not only did they oppose the idea of the teaching of Islam to their Muslim pupils but strongly contended the teaching of Islam in their schools. It seemed that the foreign schools felt empowered by the Montreux Convention which gave them the right to be governed by their curricula.<sup>24</sup>

The heads of the missionary schools were categorical in their refusal for providing teaching on Islam in their missionary schools. Regarding the uncertainty facing missionary work, Morrison argued :

"I do believe, however, that our work should be continued, whatever happens, if only for the sake of the Christian Church in Egypt." <sup>25</sup>

On 1st April 1940, the Ministry of Education sent a letter to the Controller of District requesting the appointment of Muslims as teachers of Arabic in non-governmental schools. Its content stated the follows :

“A review of some of the Reports on the Arabic Language in Free Schools has shown that some of these schools have entrusted the teaching of the Arabic Language to certain non-Moslem teachers. Seeing that the teaching of this subject is concerned with the Koran and the sacred traditions, we ask you to take care not to entrust this subject to non-Moslems. We also ask that the attention of inspectors be called to the observance of

this rule when selecting uncertified teachers.”<sup>26</sup>

In 1940, a draft law was submitted to Parliament forbidding evangelism in schools, hospitals and charitable institutions not only to minors but to adults as well. However, the Senate was adjourned, giving place to procrastination for the legislation to see light.<sup>27</sup> However, the Ministry of Education, under the Government of Hasan Sabri Pasha, expressed its determination in 1941 at fulfilling its intentions through the important clauses of draft-law which stated the following :

“No free (i. e. non-government) school may teach its pupils, male or female, a religion other than their own, not even if their guardian has given his consent in writing to such teaching.”<sup>28</sup>

Within the Government response in February 1941, the Ministry of Education passed the Pharmacy Law which forbade the sale of medicines to out-patients in any Pharmacy attached to a hospital. The Law placed CMS Hospitals in Egypt in a tight spot as the CMS generated income from these sales. The Egyptian Government officials resorted, also, to the closing of some Christian worship centres in rented premises and private houses in Upper Egypt. The latter were opened without a Royal Decree.<sup>29</sup>

For the safeguard of public order, the draft law of 1941, aiming at bringing non-government schools under the control of the Ministry of Education was revived in January 1942. The Law enhanced the role of the Ministry of Education in inspecting and supervising non-

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Government schools. It also made illegal the teaching of Christianity to non-Christian pupils and enforced the teaching of Islam to all Muslims attending missionary schools.<sup>30</sup>

However, while CMS missionaries approached the British Embassy for intervention, a change of Government occurred; and the new Minister of Education, under the Government of Nahas Pasha (February 6th 1942- October 10th 1944) called for a reconsideration of the draft laws. This measure was received with appreciation from CMS missionaries and the Minister of the Wafd Party was described as "*a man of broad sympathies, bent on reform.*"<sup>31</sup> In a public address that the Minister delivered in 1942, the Minister stated the following:

“Nothing gives me greater pleasure than to see the right kind of free educational establishments flourish In this countryside by side with the State-controlled schools, the latter catering for the great bulk of the nation, and the former specializing in transmitting a peculiar culture tinged with the colours of the West, but both types striving to impart the same common national ideals. It would be a bad day for Egypt if all the schools belonged to the State followed a standardized pattern of education

Each school should be left free to develop characteristics of its own, and thus evolve a school tradition which is so distinctive a feature of every public school worthy of the name." <sup>32</sup>

In 1942, the Wafd Ministry withdrew the draft law for the supervision of non-government schools for more consideration and showed signs for more liberal treatment to missions. The results were, however, fruitless. Eventually, the Minister of Education requested written commitment for the forbiddance of Muslim pupils from Christian teaching in the Mission Schools.<sup>33</sup> In 1943, the Minister of Education called for the exclusion of children from Christian teaching in Mission schools. The Ministry of Education took no other initiative save that Inspectors visited Missionary schools, and threatened them

with closure if Muslim pupils were not exempted from Christian teaching.<sup>34</sup>

The Egyptian Government requested from the CMS in 1943 the removal, from their hospitals, all evangelistic texts from the walls of the wards.<sup>35</sup> The Ministry of Education declared that after June 1944, there was no room for unrecognized teachers to be recruited in schools in Egypt. The running argument was that:

“Several CMS teachers have not obtained recognition, and others have applied for it. But the outcome of the measure is that the choice of staff for the mission schools will be severely limited in future, and the majority of those eligible would be Muslims.”<sup>36</sup>

In June 1944, the Minister of Justice in the Wafd Cabinet introduced a bill for the alteration of the Community Councils in Egypt. These Councils were instrumental in the resolving of issues relating to personal status. Egypt counted twelve Community Councils; ten Christian and two Jewish. The Government put forward their reorganization through the introduction of Muslim judges into their Courts of Appeal and the transferring of cases to the Muslim Courts of Personal Status, nevertheless, the bill was met with opposition from Egypt and abroad.<sup>37</sup>

In 1945, the Egyptian Government, under Mahir Pasha (October 10th 1944- February 24th 1945) issued a law mandating the registration of all charitable societies and social institutions. The Minister could, by Law, order for the dissolution of any institutions with activities that ran contrary to public order or good morals. The CMS, however, was affected by another law which:

“forbade any public appeal for contributions to any Charitable or social institution, whether registered or not, without the consent of the Ministry of Social Affairs.”<sup>38</sup>

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In 1946, Under the Government of Ismail Sidqui (February 17<sup>th</sup> December 9th 1946) Miss King, the Principal of the CMS Girls' School, at Rhoda Island, received a letter from the Ministry of Education which content stated the following:

“a- It is the duty of the H E the Minister of Education to prevent anything contrary to public order;

b- For children to attend religious exercises or lessons of a religion other than their own is contrary to public order, even though the parents or guardians have consented to such teaching being given to their children.

c- it was contrary to the law for Muslim children to attend Christian worship or lessons, and threatening legal action against any school which continued to permit this.”<sup>39</sup>

CMS missionaries argued that from 1940 to 1946, the Egyptian Parliament received several bills aiming at making Christian evangelism illegal along with Muslims' attendance to Christian teaching and worship, nevertheless, they noted that some of the draft laws received Parliamentary approval.<sup>40</sup> Regarding Christian Services, the Egyptian Government passed a law necessitating a Royal Decree for the erection of a Church. However, in 1946, the Government made it clear that the law concerned Services held in private houses.<sup>41</sup> On May 1947, under the Government of Mahmoud El Nokrashy Pasha (December 9th 1946- December 28th 1948) Morrison received a letter from the Ministry of Education stating the following:

“It is clear from the investigations which the Ministry has carried out in the schools connected with the Society, that these schools are undertaking the teaching to Moslem children of religions other than their own, which is contrary to Public Order. The Ministry directs the attention of the Society to the necessity of refraining from teaching pupils a religion other than their own, and hope that the Society will

write to the schools connected with it, about the necessity of preventing the Moslem

pupils from attending the lessons of the Christian religion, or attendance at church during the time of prayer, notwithstanding that parents have been asked to sign the forms of agreement that allow the children to attend religious exercises. The Ministry will exercise every care to see that the Society and the schools

belonging to it carry out these instructions." <sup>42</sup>

The Minister of Education did also submit another bill to Parliament aiming at the control of all non-Government schools; with one of its articles making it illegal for a Muslim child to be taught a religion other than his, despite the parent or guardian's written consent to it. Missionaries guessed that the bill would not be enforced until 1949; the date indicating the end of the interim period fixed by the Montreux Convention. <sup>43</sup> The CMS Mission felt threatened by the Ministry of Education's law targeting Private Schools. On the Egyptian Government's response, Morrison argued: "*No one questioned the right of the Ministry of Education to supervise private schools in Egypt.*" <sup>44</sup>

The articles pertinent to missionary concern were articles eleven and twelve. Article twelve declared the teaching of pupils any religion other than their own illegal regardless of the parent's consent. As for Article eleven, it stipulated the binding of the schools preparing pupils for the public examinations to adopt the syllabus enjoined by the Ministry of Education. This injunction was for the CMS schools and all missionary schools in Egypt as tantamount to providing:

"Instruction in the doctrine, worship and practice of Islam for their Muslim Pupils'. The Minister of Education has made it clear that Article XII will be rigorously enforced, and that there will be no concessions." <sup>45</sup>



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In 1949, all missionary schools were under the obligation of including a teacher of Islam in their schools, or the Muslim pupils had to receive their instruction in Islam in Government schools in their districts. In 1949, a new Minister of Education, under the Government of Hussein Sirri Pasha (July 26th 1949- January 12th 1950) was elected, who was for the instruction of children in their religion.<sup>46</sup>

With the rise of the tide of anti-British feelings in 1952, Jesse Hillman, the new CMS Secretary after Morrison, noted that Christian institutions were not attacked.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the Suez Crisis in July 1956 was of important effects on the CMS Mission; Rev Mathew described the situation as follows:

“It was not long, however, before events were to have a greater impact on CMS personnel. British doctors were struck off the Egyptian medical register. Their telephones were disconnected and radio sets were confiscated. Naturally, the question arose as to whether the remaining CMS missionaries should leave Egypt. In a letter of 1st November 1956, CMS left this decision to the missionaries themselves but expressed the hope that they would remain in Egypt as long as they were permitted to do so by the Egyptian authorities.”<sup>48</sup>

By November 1956, the British Consular warned missionaries for leaving. Max Warren, the General Secretary, phoned the CMS Egypt Mission Secretary; Jesse Hillman; the CMS missionaries' decision was that of not leaving Egypt. Nevertheless:

“A few days later, CMS missionaries were among the 713 British people and 740 French who were deported by the Egyptian Government. They were treated courteously but their passports were marked 'no return'. Some were asked to sign a paper saying they were leaving voluntarily but they refused.”<sup>49</sup>

In 1940, a movement in the Arabic Egyptian press called for the restriction of missionary work in Egypt. Articles in the press called for:

- a- A shortening of the "interim" period guaranteed under the Montreux Convention during which missionary institutions are promised certain Safeguards
- b- The bringing of foreign schools under the more direct control of the Ministry of Education
- c- The conformity of the curriculum in foreign schools to that of equivalent Government schools, especially as regards the teaching of the Arabic language, history and geography
- d- A regulation that Muslim pupils in Christian schools must be instructed in the Koran." <sup>50</sup>

### **3. Non-Government Response to the CMS Missionary Work**

#### **3.1 The Egyptian Press Response**

The Egyptian press directed accusations to British missionaries for being the agents of British imperialism. In this respect, it was pinpointed that :

"This charge was sometimes used to undermine the Wafd Party which was sometimes seen as sympathetic to missionaries rather than to the growing nationalism within Egypt." <sup>51</sup>

The Press Censorship, at the break of WWII, was active at hampering and restricting Christian publications.<sup>52</sup> In 1943 the Egyptian Press called for the revival of the bill for the suppression of all forms of evangelism in hospitals and schools.<sup>53</sup>

#### **3.2 The Azhari Ulema's Response**

The Egyptian Ulema's response took three aspects against missionary activity in Egypt. A response through literature, the opening of private schools, advice, admonition, and warnings about the danger of missionary activity. They felt very concerned about the issue of the evangelisation of Muslims. Their response was, primarily, through literature published in the form of articles, letters, and fatwas. The

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Azhari Council for fighting against Evangelism in Egypt, founded in 1935, was very active and was represented in the different regions of Egypt. Later, the escalation in opposition led to the dismissal of more than seventy Azhari from their posts. Sheikh Tantawi was in favour of the legislation of laws that targeted the closing of all foreign schools<sup>54</sup>

Ahmed Amine (1886-1954), an Egyptian historian and writer, argued in his article "*Al Madaris Al Gharbiya fil Bilad Asharqiya*" about the impeding of the establishment of foreign missionary schools and saw in them a shelter for both evangelism and colonialism. They were invited to a religion other than Islam. Foreign and missionary schools were divisive and created antagonism among the citizens of the same country.<sup>55</sup>

When the CMS Egypt Mission initiated the policy of the Village Centre in Menoufia (1937) to provide an education that would meet the needs of Egyptian villagers, their activities were met with opposition from Muslims. In this regard, it was argued:

“Our activities have called forth some opposition on the part of the Moslems, and they get a special preacher down from Cairo to preach in the mosque against us. They also visited the parents of some of the children in the school and asked them to withdraw them.”<sup>56</sup>

During the anti-missionary campaign of the 1930s, the *Azhari Ulema* issued a fatwa in which they condemned Muslim parents for sending their children to missionary schools. Likewise, families were warned from joining a missionary hospital.<sup>57</sup> In the 1950s, the political and educational conditions were marked by deep changes. After the Suez crisis, the Egyptian Government's regulations, its supervision of the curriculum and its determination on the recognition of qualified teachers culminated in the conversion of the foreign schools' syllabi into that of the Government schools.<sup>58</sup>

## Results :

The article's findings regarding the nature of the Muslim response is that it was a three-dimensional response represented in the response of the Egyptian government, the Egyptian press, the *Azhari Ulema* and that of the Muslim Brotherhood and their opposition to the CMS and all missionary societies' work in Egypt for the period under consideration. Muslim response points to the remarkable zeal that characterized the Egyptian government, the press and the *Azhari Ulema's* response. Their response emphasised that the work of Christian missions constituted a danger to the Muslims' faith. The Egyptian Government tackled the issue through the regulation of rules to counter-face missionary work and their teaching of the Christian religion to Muslims. all missionary schools were under the obligation of including a teacher of Islam in their schools, or the Muslim pupils had to receive their instruction in Islam in Government schools in their districts

The Egyptian press directed accusations to British missionaries for being the agents of British imperialism. The Press censorship, at the break of WWII, was active at hampering and restricting Christian publications. As for the *Azhari Ulema's* response, it took three aspects against missionary activities in Egypt. The Ulemas' response via literature, the opening of private schools, advice, admonition, and warnings about the danger of missionary activity. It displayed a high sense of concern about the issue of Muslim evangelism. The *Azhari Ulema* did also issue a fatwa (a legal ruling) in which they condemned Muslim parents for sending their children to missionary schools or joining a missionary hospital. The Egyptian Government's regulations, its supervision of the curriculum and its determination on the recognition of qualified teachers culminated in the conversion of the foreign schools' syllabi into that of the Government schools.

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### **Conclusion**

Muslim response to the Church Missionary Society's activities was a three-dimensional response represented in the response of the Egyptian government, the Egyptian press, the *Azhari Ulemas*. It points to the remarkable zeal that characterized the Egyptian government, the press and the *Azhari Ulema's* response. Their response emphasised that the work of Christian missions constituted a danger to the Muslims' faith. The Egyptian Government's policy was, initially, geared towards the control of all educational institutions and making illicit Christian teaching to Muslim pupils in Christian schools. Missionary schools were under the obligation of providing Muslim pupils with the teaching of Islam. The CMS Egypt's work in Egypt is a very thought provoking Mission. In addition to the missionary aspect of the CMS Egypt Mission, is it not also making an effort at alienating a Muslim country with a deep-rooted heritage in Islam. The CMS Egypt Mission' schools were evangelical in nature and from a Muslim perspective losing one Muslim to Christianity was, is and will remain synonymous with shaking the individual Muslim belief of an Egyptian Muslim and his conversion to Christianity; accordingly, the shaking of the integrity of the *Ummah* on an international scale.

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