

A NOTABLE COPTIC PRIEST

by

Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston

In previous articles about the Monophysites, we have provided some information about their origins, history and the problems that remain today in restoring communion with these believers, who, in many ways, are probably closer to us than any other religious group.

We wanted to mention one remarkable Coptic priest, Father Zakaria Botros, who has been extremely effective in bringing the words of the New Testament to millions of Moslems. He grew up in a Christian family in Alexandria. Moslems killed his older brother when he was still a teenager. In the 1950's, Father Zakaria was ordained as a Coptic priest. Now in his seventies, he has learned the Moslem sources — the Koran and the Hadiths — inside and out, and he has found many discrepancies in them. Quoting directly from authentic and widely accepted Islamic sources regarding the person of Mohammed, Father Botros' writings have had devastating effects on Moslem believers.

Using these sources, he now broadcasts to some 60 million Moslems in Arabic, Turkish and Farsi [the language of Iran]. Hundreds of thousands of Moslems have converted to Christianity because of these broadcasts. This has earned him the enmity of many Jihadist groups, who have posted a bounty of \$60 million on his head. But they cannot find him. Nor can they refute his sources. His broadcasts are beamed to the Moslem world via the Cyprus-based satellite channel Al-Hayat. He says repeatedly, "My program is to attack Islam, not to attack Moslems, but to save them because they are deceived. I love Moslems; I hate Islam."

As *World* magazine reports (December 13, 2008):

One recent episode of *Truth Talk*, [Father Botros' TV program], aired Nov. 21, cut to 20 separate clips — most clips were of Cairo's respected Sheikh Khaled El-Gendy of Al-Azhar University — to debate the age of Aisha when she became Muhammad's second wife. Islamic Hadiths [the sayings and actions of Muhammad] say she was six years old when married and nine when the marriage was consummated [and reportedly returned to play with her

toys afterward]. Yet many scholars — and a controversial new novel about Aisha, *The Jewel of Medina* by Sherry Jones that was dropped from Random House's list because of Muslim threats — have tried to paper over the obvious morality issue of child marriage with assertions that Aisha was fourteen or even eighteen. What's at stake, it becomes clear as the episode unfolds, is whether the Koran and the Hadiths can be both true and exemplary.

In one clip, El-Gendy argues that "the Koran is enough" and the Hadiths on Aisha aren't needed. Another scholar cites a recent magazine article claiming she was a teenage wife. As Islamic authorities shout at one another onscreen, Botros calmly asks,

"Are these holy books or not?"

Father Botros' early studies led to deep discussions with leading Islamic scholars. He learned that the scholars doubt some of their own "official" teachings, because no one can agree on which version of the Koran is authentic and which teachings are original. He began to learn more about what he calls "the ugly face of Islam," the contradictions between Muhammed's own life and his teachings, between Islam's earlier and later writings, and he began to speak about them and point them out.

Here is what he and others have concluded:

The trouble with Islam is that, by its own definition, it is not a religion of peace. It is not a religion of war either. In fact, it is not a religion at all, as most people in the West understand the word "religion." Rather, it is a *totalitarian system* that combines religion, politics, a legal and financial system, and a way of life — in short, everything. In a way, Orthodox Christianity is the same, with one huge difference. Christianity teaches that this way of life is to be espoused *voluntarily*. "Whosoever *willeth* to come after Me, let him take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). Islam, on the other hand, condones, nay *endorses*, the use of violence in order to impose upon people its coercive totalitarian ideology. The Koran, the Sira, and the Hadiths testify to this.

A good Muslim must kill "the infidels", if necessary, in order to achieve Islam's aim: the conquest of the world.

It is also, like all coercive totalitarian systems, intolerant. It brooks no criticism, and those who defect from Islam are subject to the death penalty.

Also, since Islam is "at war" with the rest of the world, it is permitted to lie to the infidel in order to deceive him, as you would try to deceive your enemy in the time of war in order to gain an advantage over him. We should always remember that surprise and *deceit* are the two keys to success in warfare. For Islam, this deceit is perfectly legitimate.

In his book, *An Analysis of the Hadith*, Dr. Robert Morey writes:

While most people understand that the "Bible" of the Muslims is called the Koran, they do not generally know that the religion of Islam has other sacred writings which record the words and deeds of Muhammad according to his wives, family members, friends and Muslim leaders, which are not usually found in the Koran.

The famous Muslim scholar, Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah, in his book, *Introduction to Islam*, states that "the custodian and repository of the original teachings of Islam" are found "above all in the Koran and the Hadith" (p. 250). To this he adds that the Koran and the Hadith" are "the basis of all [Islamic] law" (p. 163).

The reason, according to Dr. Hamidullah, that Muslims revere the Hadith as well as the Koran is that the Hadith is as divinely inspired as the Koran itself:

The teachings of Islam are based primarily on the Koran and the Hadith, and, as we shall presently see, both are based on divine inspiration (p.23).

That is to say, for Muslims, both the Koran and the Hadiths are authoritative and divinely inspired.

Here are more quotes from Dr. Hamidullah's book on the Hadith:

Allah's apostle was asked, "What is the best deed?" He replied, "To believe in Allah and his Apostle." The questioner then asked, "What is the next (in goodness)? He replied, "To participate in Jihad (religious fighting) in Allah's cause." (vol. 1, no. 25).

Allah's Apostle vanquished them by force and their warriors were killed; their children and women were

taken as captives. Safiya was taken by Dihya Al-Kalbi and later she belonged to the Allah's Apostle who married her (vol. 2, no. 68).

The Prophet said, "If somebody (a Muslim) discard his religion (of Islam), kill him (vol. 4, no. 260).

There is more — much more.

(Father Zakaria Botros has a great deal of information on Islam and Mohammed available online.)