

Review: Lisa Anne Nichols, *Egypt: Steadfast Witness to Christ, Living Sacrifice* Book Co., Bartlesville, OK, 2014

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Land of Islamic Darkness

While Egypt has a rich history, glorified by the West in the Pharaohs, Islam's impact is shockingly ignored.

Persecution was there from the start when Mark brought the gospel in AD 43 according to tradition. The Roman empire sought to honour its gods, with one infamous story of the whole Theban legion executed in Gaul under Diocletian for refusing sacrifice to the pagan gods.

After pagan Rome, the Eastern Empire also found cause to persecute the Copts (Egyptians), since Alexandria did not submit to Constantinople's authority.

Into this environment came Islam, conquering the land in 641. The so-called 'liberators' quickly reduced the Copts to dhimmitude, beginning a nightmare which endures to today.

Freedom of worship is restricted, Muslims abduct and 'marry' young Copts, and there is continual political pressure from the Muslim Brotherhood for an Islamic State, something only held back by the military.

Despite the above, up to a quarter of the population is said to be Coptic.

It is estimated up to 25% of Egyptians are Coptic, although only 13% are openly so due to persecution.

Many Jews went to Egypt during the 6thBC diaspora, then after Alexander the Great's conquests, Alexandria became a centre for Jews.

Copts claim that Mark was born in Egypt and returned there in AD 43 to establish the church as patriarch.

Tradition has Mark being killed by Serapis worshippers in Alexandria, AD 68.

A Jewish revolt which spread to Alexandria was crushed by the Romans in 117.

Clement of Alexandria and Origen were successive leaders in the Alexandrian Catechetical School, founded in 180.

Clement was heavily influenced by Jewish philosopher Philo.

Origen wrote *Against Celsus*, and compiled the *Hexapla*. He was tortured under the Diocletian persecution and died in Tyrenian prison as a result, aged 69. Diocletian sought the old glory of Rome and its old gods.

In 259, Emperor Gallienus issued an edict of tolerance.

Two Egyptians, Anthony (b. 250) and Pachomius (b. 290) are credited with creating monasticism.

The Copts' calendar dates from the first year of Diocletian's reign in 284 (1 AM [Anno Martyrium]).

In 286, a Theban legion of 6,600 left to serve Diocletian in Europe in his campaign against the Gauls. His second-in-command, Maximian, was enraged at their refusal to sacrifice to Roman gods so had them all executed.

Egyptian archdeacon Athanasius was one author of the Nicene Creed, later becoming patriarch of Alexandria.

At Chalcedon in 451, Constantinople overtook Alexandria as second in authority to Rome, creating the Chalcedonian controversy. The Melchite ("royal") church of Alexandria joined itself with Rome, while the majority of Copts stayed independent from both. This caused the Byzantine Empire to persecute them.

In 641, Muslims under Amr ibn al-As defeated the Byzantines, and the Copts supposedly welcomed them as liberators. However, they were immediately reduced to *dhimmi* status and had to pay the *jizya* (poll tax) and *kharag* (property tax).

In 706, the Coptic language was suppressed and replaced with Arabic, and many Copts converted due to the pressure.

The centre of power in Islam was in Baghdad, but this changed in 969 when the Fatimids took power. Caliph al-Moiz created a new capital in Cairo and built the al-Azhar mosque, which became the hub of Sunni Islam.

The Copts were forced to side with the Muslims during the fifth crusade in 1218-22.

Coptic recorded history was snuffed out in the 14thC.

The Ottoman Turks took over from the Mamluks in 1517, with Egypt to be ruled by a *pasha* (“governor”).

In 1798, Napoleon invaded and defeated the Turks, however, he stressed this was only a political expedition, even thinking of proclaiming himself a Muslim. After three years though, he returned to Europe and the Turks regained power.

Muhammad Said (1854-63) abolished the *jizya* and allowed Copts to serve in the military.

In 1882, Britain gained colonial control of Egypt, which they held through WWII. Lord Cromer believed Islamic customs should be honoured and preserved, and made the Quran the only officially recognised religious book in the country.

In 1917, the British installed Faud I as sultan.

In 1928, Hassan al-Banna established the Muslim Brotherhood, with the goal of reestablishing the caliphate.

Salaf means “companion”.

During the 1952 Egyptian revolution, the British-installed monarchy collapsed against a coup by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser.

In 1978, Nasser was succeeded by Anwar Sadat, who made a peace accord with Israel in 1978. This led to his assassination in 1981.

Hosni Mubarak took over and lasted till 2011. In June 2012, Muslim brotherhood Muhammad Morsi became the first democratically-elected president, which only lasted till a military coup in June 2013.

The current leader is Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, who came to power in June 2014.

Egyptians must have ID cards, and it is not permitted to change one's religion.

Contrary to Leviticus 19.28, many Copts have a cross tattooed on their wrists.

Current Muslim tactics in Egypt is to abduct and force Christian girls into marriage.