

## Philobus, Egyptian Coptic Priest and Missionary (part 2 of 2)

**Description:** A priest who at one time actively spread misconceptions about Islam accepts Islam (part 2).

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Now that same night, Mr. Khalil dramatically concluded:

"I took my final decision. In the morning I spoke with my wife from whom I have three sons and one daughter. But no sooner than she felt that I was inclined to embrace Islam than she cried and asked for help from the head of the mission. His name was Monsieur Shavits from Switzerland. He was a very cunning man. When he asked me about my true attitude, I told him frankly what I really wanted and then he said: Regard yourself out of job until we discover what has befallen you. Then I said: This is my resignation from my job. He tried to convince me to postpone it, but I insisted. So he made a rumor among the people that I became mad. Thus I suffered a very severe test and oppression until I left Aswan for good and returned to Cairo."

When he was asked about the circumstances to his conversion he replied: "In Cairo, I was introduced to a respectable professor who helped me overcome my severe trial, and this he did without knowing anything about my story. He treated me as a Muslim, for I introduced myself to him as such although until then I did not embrace Islam officially. That was Dr. Muhammad Abdul Moneim Al Jamal, the then undersecretary of treasury. He was highly interested in Islamic studies and wanted to make a translation of the Holy Quran to be published in America. He asked me to help him because I was fluent in English since I had got my M.A. from an American University. He also knew that I was preparing a comparative study of the Quran, the Torah and the Bible. We cooperated in this comparative study and in the translation of the Quran.

When Dr. Jamal knew that I had resigned from my job in Aswan and that I was then unemployed, he helped me with a job in Standard Stationery Company in Cairo. So I was well established after a short while. I did not tell my wife about my intention to embrace Islam, thus she thought that I had forgotten the whole affair, and that it was nothing but a transitory crisis that no more existed. But I knew quite well that my official conversion to Islam needs long complicated measures, and it was in fact a battle which I preferred to postpone for some time until I became well off and after I completed my comparative study."

Then Mr. Khalil continued:

"In 1955 I did complete my study and my material and living affairs became well established. I resigned from the company and set up a training office for importing stationery and school articles. It was a successful business from which I gained much

more money than I needed. Thus I decided to declare my official conversion to Islam. On the 25th of December 1959, I sent a telegram to Dr. Thompson, head of the American Mission in Egypt informing him that I had embraced Islam. When I told my true story to Dr. Jamal he was completely astonished. When I declared my conversion to Islam, new troubles began. Seven of my former colleagues in the mission had tried their best to persuade me to cancel my declaration, but I refused. They threatened to separate me from my wife and I said: She is free to do as she wishes. They threatened to kill me. But when they found me to be stubborn they left me alone and sent to me an old friend of mine who was also a colleague of mine in the mission. He wept very much in front of me. So I recited before him the following verses from the Quran:

**"And when they listen to the revelation received by the Messenger, thou wilt see their eyes overflowing with tears, for they recognize the truth: They pray: 'Our Lord! We believe, write us down among the witnesses. What cause can we have not to believe in God and the truth which has come to us, seeing that we long for our Lord to admit us to the company of the righteous?'" (Quran 5:83-84)**

I said to him:

"You should have wept in humiliation to God on hearing the Quran and believe in the truth which you know but you refuse. He stood up and left me as he saw no use. My official conversion to Islam was in January 1960."

Mr. Khalil was then asked about the attitude of his wife and children and he answered:

"My wife left me at that time and took with her all the furniture of our house. But all my children joined me and embraced Islam. The most enthusiastic among them was my eldest son Isaac who changed his name to Osman, then my second son Joseph and my son Samuel, whose name is Jamal, and daughter Majida who is now called Najwa. Osman is now a doctor of philosophy working as a professor in Sorbonne University in Paris teaching oriental studies and psychology. He also writes in 'Le Monde' magazine. As in regards to my wife, she left the house for six years and agreed to come back in 1966, provided that she keeps her religion. I accepted this, because in Islam there is no compulsion in religion. I said to her: I do not want you to become a Muslim for my sake but only after you are convinced. She feels now that she believes in Islam but she cannot declare this for fear of her family, but we treat her as a Muslim woman, and she fasts in Ramadan because all my children pray and fast. My daughter Najwa is a student in the Faculty of Commerce, Joseph is a doctor pharmacologist and Jamal is an engineer.

During this period, that is since 1961 until the present time, I have been able to publish a number of books on Islam and the methods of the missionaries and the orientalist against it. I am now preparing a comparative study about women in the three Divine religions with the object of highlighting the status of women in Islam. In 1973, I performed Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) and I am doing activities preaching Islam. I hold seminars in the universities and charitable societies. I received an invitation from Sudan in 1974 where I held many seminars. My time is fully used in the service of Islam."

Finally Mr. Khalil was asked about the salient features of Islam which have attracted his attention most. And he answered:

"My faith in Islam has been brought about through reading the Holy Quran and the biography of Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him. I no longer believed in the misconceptions against Islam, and I am especially attracted by the concept of unity of God, which is the most important feature of Islam. God is only One. Nothing is like Him. This belief makes me the servant of God only and of no one else. Oneness of God liberates man from servitude to any human being and that is true freedom.

I also like very much the rule of forgiveness in Islam and the direct relationship between God and His servants.

**"Say: O my servants who have transgressed against their souls! despair not of the Mercy of God: for God forgives all sins: for He is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. Turn ye to your Lord (in repentance) and submit to Him before the Chastisement comes on you: After that ye shall not be helped." (Quran 39:53-54)**

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