

Destruction of Copts Is Islamically Correct

I am looking at a reproduction of an old engraving of Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It is in Bat Ye'or's book *The Dhimmi*, which collects primary documents from history to chronicle the impact of Islamic law on non-Muslims through the centuries.

What is notable about the image, which is based on an 1856 photograph, is that the church, said to be at the site of Jesus Christ's crucifixion and burial, has no cross and no belfry. Stripped of its Christian symbols, the church stood in compliance with the Islamic law and traditions of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, which ruled Jerusalem at the time.

I went back to the book to find this image for a reason. It had to do with last weekend's massacre of two dozen Coptic Christians in Cairo by Egyptian military and street mobs, which also left hundreds wounded. The unarmed Copts were protesting the destruction of yet another church in Egypt, St. George's, which on Sept. 30 was set upon by thousands of Muslim men following Friday prayers. Why? The trigger was repair work on the building—work that the local council and governor had approved.

Does that explanation make any sense? Not to anyone ignorant of Islamic law. Unfortunately, that criterion includes virtually all media reporting the story.

Raymond Ibrahim, an Islam specialist, Arabic speaker and author of *The Al Qaeda Reader* (Broadway, 2007), catalogs the key sequence of events that turned a church renovation project into terror and flames. With repair work in progress, he writes online at Hudson New York, "It was not long before local Muslims began complaining, making various demands,

including that the church be devoid of crosses and bells—even though the permit approved them—citing that ‘the cross irritates Muslims and their children.’”

Those details drove me to re-examine the de-Christianized 19th-century image of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher—no cross, no bells. It becomes a revealing illustration of Islamic history repeating itself in this “Shariah Autumn,” the deadly but natural harvest of the grotesquely branded “Arab Spring.”

Given our see-no-Shariah media (and government), we have no context in which to place such events. That context is Shariah society, advanced (but by no means initiated) by “Arab Spring,” where non-Muslims—“dhimmi”—occupy a place defined for them by Islamic law and tradition.

Theologian, author and Anglican pastor Mark Durie elaborates at : “Dhimmi are permitted to live in an Islamic state under terms of surrender as laid out in the ‘dhimma’ pact.” Such terms, Durie writes, “are a well-established part of Islamic law and can be found laid out in countless legal text books.” When non-Muslims violate these terms, they become subject to attack.

To place the dhimmi pact in comparable Western terms is to say the West has its Magna Carta, Islam has its Pact of Umar. Among other things, this seminal pact governing Muslim and non-Muslims relations stipulates, Durie notes, the condition that Christians “will neither erect in our areas a monastery, church or sanctuary for a monk, nor restore any place of worship that needs restoration.”

Thus, this anti-Coptic violence, which for the moment has caught the world’s attention, is Islamically correct. This is the piece of the puzzle Westerners fail to grasp. But Durie takes us through the theological steps: “For some pious Muslims in Egypt today, the act of repairing a church is a

flagrant provocation, a breach of the peace, which amounts to a deliberate revocation of one's right to exist in the land." As such, it "becomes a legitimate topic for sermons in the mosque (where) the faithful are urged ... to uphold the honor of Islam."

In Islamic terms, then, the destruction of the church is no injustice, as Durie writes. It is "even a duty to destroy the church and even the lives of Christians who have the temerity to repair their churches." That's because dhimmi who take to the streets to protest the Islamically just destruction of the church "are also rebels who have forfeited their rights (under the pact) to 'safety and protection.'" As violators of the "dhimmi" pact, they become fair game.

It's quite simple, but the theology eludes us. Why? I think the answer is that to expose the facts about Shariah in the Western milieu is to invite their criticism. Such criticism is forbidden under Shariah. So, we remain silent—which is what good "dhimmi" do.

Diana West writes a weekly column that appears in about 120 newspapers, including the Washington Examiner on Sundays. Her work has appeared in many publications including The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Times, The New Criterion, The Public Interest, The Weekly Standard, In Character and The Washington Post Magazine, and her fiction has appeared in the Atlantic Monthly. She has made numerous television appearances as a CNN contributor to Lou Dobbs Tonight and Lou Dobbs This Week. She is now at work on her second book for St Martin's Press, The Hollow Center.