

Testimony of Ahmed Abaza (*Abridged*)

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I write this testimony to those who are earnestly searching for the truth in response to the invitation of God, the Truth Himself. I responded to the call of Christ to carry my cross without fear of what I would face in leaving my earthly religion. Was it not the Lord who said, 'Do not fear those who kill the body'? I follow the Lord, carrying my cross, knowing that in the cross of Christ I will find, not only my salvation, but also my strength. It is the road to his Kingdom. In the cross, we have eternal life, virtue, sanctification and daily abundant life. Think of all the saints and martyrs of Christianity. Did any of them live without carrying his cross? Was it easy to do so? But look how the eternal peace flowed from their faces as they faced torture and death. Even the Lord of glory Himself lived through pain every minute of His life on earth. 'For Christ must also suffer and die and then rise from the grave.' Thus, if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him also. What a blessed thought. Should we then ask for a life of complacency and comfort here? Of course not!

After I accepted Christ as my Saviour, took off my old clothes and put on Christ, I continued to live with my beloved family. I prayed and cried to the Lord to give me courage, strength and wisdom that I might bring happiness to my family, and that they might receive the Light. I started talking to them gradually. Sometimes they ignored me; other times they

threatened me. Several times, they called me crazy. The Holy Spirit in me continued to prompt me to talk to my family despite their ridicule. I never became angry with them. In January 1987, I was able, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to overcome the satanic spirit in my father and brother and announce to them that I had become a Christian and that I had one God and one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. My father continued to ridicule me and called me names. He tried to bribe me to convince me to denounce Christ. I refused. How could I turn back to darkness after receiving the light?

My father called a family council to discuss this very important matter, which reflected on the family name and its social status. Among them were my uncles; one of them being the Minister of Hydro in Egypt, another being a famous writer and historian. The discussion started quietly but then turned to screams and mutual accusations. My beloved father was in hot water because of the family honour. No conclusion was reached. The family delegated my father to deal with me and to work on restoring family honour. I noticed the silence of one uncle who seemed convinced of my answers. Suddenly my father stood in the middle of the room and vowed to solve this problem at its roots, even if he had to kill me and bury me in his garden. He denied my

sonship, saying I was a bastard. Over the next few weeks, our house turned into hell, showing its real face when it was exposed to the light of Christ.

My father started beating me with his hands. Mercy had no place in his heart. In contempt, he tortured me in the name of Islam. At times, he despaired of breaking me. All manner of attempts were made to make me submit. Ultimately, my body collapsed, full of wounds and injuries, but inside, my soul was clinging to hope and trust in God. For four months, fever ravaged my body, ending with my father leaving me to die. Yet my mother stayed near me; her soul was close to mine, trying to console my soul. My greatest comfort came from God Himself.

On the night of July 13, 1987, God glorified and raised my weak, poor body, asking me to move. I looked at Him, saying, 'I can't, my Lord'. But He said, 'Wake up, give me your hands.' As I did this, a great power revived my body. On that day, I escaped from the place of captivity, the family house where I had spent over nineteen years. I put my hands on the steering wheel but did not know where to go or which road to take. Yet, I found the way to my professor, who hugged me with compassion.

Then my father pursued me in another way, this time through Islamic guards. Coming to the professor's house, they told me that my father was sick and dying and wanted to see me. I said, 'Give me five minutes.' I

entered my room to pray and asked God to lead me, and coming out, I said to the guard, 'Let's go.' The officer took me to the Public Security building, welcoming me to enter. Thereupon followed seventeen months of suffering and torment. Every day I had a visitor, a sheikh, various committees from Al Azhar or other famous names trying to get me back by friendly ways, as my family had charged them to do. When the first three months proved fruitless, they used more brutal means. I do not know how many days I spent suffering. In the end, I found myself in a dungeon like a dog cage, with a pail of water and another where I could relieve myself.

At one point, the brigadier brought in a well-known sheikh, but his visits produced nothing. I had hoped to see my father coming to see me, but this did not happen. None of the pressures produced the desired result; the victory was for Jesus.

In the prison, the keepers became my friends when they understood what it meant to be faithful to the Truth in spite of increasing torture. They told me of many others whom they had witnessed being tortured for the sake of Christ. Christ was my only companion in the prison, but the prayers of the saints were my support. I felt the presence of my Lord and was comforted. In His time, I was released from prison, seeing the sun for the first time after seventeen months. After spending some time in a mon-

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astery in the Egyptian desert, I fled my country, hidden inside a container.

I have written elsewhere of my experiences, but I would like to encourage all Christians and free people everywhere to take a coura-

geous stand on behalf of those who are unjustly accused and tortured for the Name of Christ. May we all call on God to save His people and glorify His Name in the lands of Islam.