## *SHAYKH IBRAHIM AL-BAJURI (1784-1860)*

A noted Azhar professor who became Shaykh al-Islam in July 1847. He authored many works on Islamic jurisprudence, logic, and Arabic grammar, as well as works of religious commentary. He is noted for his resistance to 'Abbas I's attempts to exile all Copts from Egypt.

Al-Bajuri became the imam of the Islamic community (Shaykh al-Islam) in the latter years of Muhammad Ali's reign (1805-1849) and during the regency of his son Ibrahim (1849), as well as in the reign of his grandson and successor 'Abbas I (1849-1854). During the rule of both Muhammad 'Ali and Ibrahim, the Copts enjoyed a great deal of influence and occupied principal posts in the administration of the state of Egypt, notably in finance and taxation.

However, with the accession of 'Abbas, the situation began to change radically. The new khedive is known to have been an outspoken bigot. Besides being out of humor with all of Egypt and having no sympathy for Egyptians, he especially hated Christians and aimed to rid the state of them. He dismissed the French officials who had been engaged by his grandfather, and was restrained from the wholesale dismissal of the Copts from the government because of their importance in the financial machinery of the state.

During his administration he once contemplated exiling all Copts from Egypt to the Upper Sudan. But such a drastic and massive enterprise could not be undertaken without a religious *fatwa* (juristic consultation) issued by the highest Muslim authority. Shaykh Ibrahim al-Bajuri, who was asked to issue such a *fatwa*, rejected 'Abbas's scheme by saying, "If you mean by your project the people of the Covenant who are the dwellers of the land and its owners, then grace be to Allah, no change has occurred to the Islamic Covenant and no breach thereof to incur their victimization and they must be left under the Covenant to the day of doom."

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