

Of Weavers and Rug-Makers

In the outskirts of Beni Suef I came to a village that was entirely Coptic. I was given a tour of the church in that town, and I visited some of the homes and shops. In one of the shops I stood watching a number of rug-makers at their trade. They sped a shuttle back and forth on a Coptic loom, built like those that were used in Pharaonic times. It was fascinating; it was amazing.

I said to one of the rug-makers, "what if you make a mistake with the shuttle? You are going so fast that you will not see the error in the design until you have woven several layers over it. What will you do then? Will you unwind the carpet and remove the layers of thread that you have added?"

"No," said the rugmaker, "we would never do that; that would take far too much time. I'll tell you a secret. The most beautiful rugs with the most elaborate designs, the most expensive weavings, are the ones with mistakes hidden inside."

"How's that?" I asked. "Well, once we notice the mistake, we have to integrate it into the pattern. We have to change the pattern to include the mistake and make it part of a new design. Sometimes the new design is far more complex, far more embellished than anything we could have created ourselves. That's why the most beautiful rugs are the ones with mistakes hidden deep inside."

A great deal of wisdom in this Oriental art! Perhaps it's like the Providence of God, for something the people with the deepest wounds or the most serious flaws exhibit the greatest glory of "God."

By Mark Gruber