

Description: Margaret discusses how the Quran had impacted her life.

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Q: In what ways did the Holy Quran have an impact on your life?

A: One evening I was feeling particularly exhausted and sleepless, Mother came into my room and said she was about to go to the Larchmont Public Library and asked me if there was any book that I wanted? I asked her to look and see if the library had a copy of an English translation of the Holy Quran. Just think, years of passionate interest in the Arabs and reading every book in the library about them I could lay my hands on but until now, I never thought to see what was in the Holy Quran! Mother returned with a copy for me. I was so eager, I literally grabbed it from her hands and read it the whole night. There I also found all the familiar Bible stories of my childhood.

In my eight years of primary school, four years of secondary school and one year of college, I learned about English grammar and composition, French, Spanish, Latin and Greek in current use, Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra, European and American history, elementary science, Biology, music and art--but I had never learned anything about God! Can you imagine I was so ignorant of God that I wrote to my pen-friend, a Pakistani lawyer, and confessed to him the reason why I was an atheist was because I couldn't believe that God was really an old man with a long white beard who sat up on His throne in Heaven. When he asked me where I had learned this outrageous thing, I told him of the reproductions from the Sistine Chapel I had seen in "Life" Magazine of Michelangelo's "Creation" and "Original Sin." I described all the representations of God as an old man with a long white beard and the numerous crucifixions of Christ I had seen with Paula at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. But in the Holy Quran, I read:

"God! There is no god but He,-the Living, The Self-subsisting, Supporter of all. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is thee who can intercede in His presence except as He permiteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory)." (Quran 2:255)

"But the Unbelievers,-their deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water; until when he comes up to it, he finds God there, and God will pay him his account:

and God is swift in taking account. Or (the unbelievers' state) is like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean, overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by (dark) clouds: depth of darkness, one above another: if a man stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it! For any to whom God giveth not light, there is no light!" (Quran 24:39-40)

My first thought when reading the Holy Quran - this is the only true religion - absolutely sincere, honest, not allowing cheap compromises or hypocrisy.

In 1959, I spent much of my leisure time reading books about Islam in the New York Public Library. It was there I discovered four bulky volumes of an English translation of Mishkat ul- Masabih. It was then that I learned that a proper and detailed understanding of the Holy Quran is not possible without some knowledge of the relevant Hadith. For how can the holy text correctly be interpreted except by the Prophet to whom it was revealed?

Once I had studied the Mishkat, I began to accept the Holy Quran as Divine revelation. What persuaded me that the Quran must be from God and not composed by Muhammad (may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him) was its satisfying and convincing answers to all the most important questions of life which I could not find elsewhere.

As a child, I was so mortally afraid of death, particularly the thought of my own death, that after nightmares about it, sometimes I would awaken my parents crying in the middle of the night. When I asked them why I had to die, and what would happen to me after death, all they could say was that I had to accept the inevitable; but that was a long way off and because medical science was constantly advancing, perhaps I would live to be a hundred years old! My parents, family, and all our friends rejected as superstition any thought of the Hereafter, regarding Judgment Day, reward in Paradise or punishment in Hell as outmoded concepts of by-gone ages. In vain, I searched all the chapters of the Old Testament for any clear and unambiguous concept of the Hereafter. The prophets, patriarchs and sages of the Bible all receive their rewards or punishments in this world. Typical is the story of Job (Hazrat Ayub). God destroyed all his loved-ones, his possessions, and afflicted him with a loathsome disease in order to test his faith. Job plaintively laments to God why He should make a righteous man suffer. At the end of the story, God restores all his earthly losses but nothing is even mentioned about any possible consequences in the Hereafter.

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