

Maria, Ex-Catholic, USA (part 2 of 2): Islamic Experience

Description: Her view after experiencing that God is the one reality.

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Coming Home -- Forties and Forever

I read about the principles of Islam. They made sense to me, with no contradiction. The descriptions of the Islamic way of life, the roles of men and women in society as complimentary rather than competitive were so logical. After reading this I understood that what I felt instinctively about myself as a woman was, in fact, true to my real nature. Rather than feeling demeaned, I felt uplifted, not only as a woman, but as a member of the human race. I started to feel my true self, for the first time in my life. I began to have the sense that I was coming home. I read the Quran. Although not in the Arabic original, I found that just reading the verses in English filled me with a tremendous sense of peace and quiet, in a most gentle way. The verses themselves answered many questions I had throughout my life, but could never get a clear answer to. Reading the Quran, I began to realize that this book must be the work and the word of God, because of its impeccable logic and its effect on me. I learned that this is one of the qualities of the Quran, a certain "barakah" or grace that has a very calming effect on the human soul.

Shortly afterward, I had surgery with the hope that I may be able to have a child. The surgery went well, but my chances for having a child were still slim to none. By this time I was reading the Quran regularly and trying to learn more about Islam. I asked questions constantly and immersed myself in the atmosphere of Islam - I loved hearing the daily prayer calls on every street and one day asked my husband to take me to Al-Azhar, world-renowned center for Islamic learning, to visit the mosque. I had seen this mosque on TV and felt curiously drawn to it. So one day we went. It was quiet; I walked around, read the Quran, sat quietly for a while. It was a nice peaceful time, and we left. About halfway down the street, I stopped and looked down - I wanted to make sure my feet were touching the ground, because I couldn't feel the sidewalk underneath my footsteps. I truly felt I was walking on air....this is the effect of Islam on me - the feeling of lightness was translated literally.

I had so many unusual experiences during this time, many just momentary things, that I truly began to believe in my heart that God was, indeed, with me and close to me. The best of all in the human sense was that the following year we had a beautiful daughter - truly a gift from God. Even the doctor who had performed the surgery was amazed. This was the first time ever for her to do this kind of surgery, and she had no way of predicting the outcome, except that the chances were small. (God was with me even then).

We moved to the USA and our daughter was born in the autumn, 4 months after our

arrival. The following year we went back to Egypt so my husband's family could meet this wonderful addition to our family. Before we left, I decided it was time to officially become Muslim - God had shown me so many signs, that I knew this was the clear path for me. And so, back in Egypt, I went to Al-Azhar to declare, "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is his Messenger." Now I'm in my forties and looking back through my life, particularly the last 10 years, I see the hand of God in all the hundreds of incidents and events along the way. As one always searching for the Truth, whether good or bad, I have found, through personal experience, that God is THE ONE REALITY. We need only to open our eyes, ears and hearts to recognize the Truth:

"We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, till it is clear to them that it is the truth. Suffices it not as to thy Lord, that He is witness over everything? Are they not in doubt touching the encounter with their Lord? Does He not encompass everything?" (Quran 41:53-54)

Discovering Islam has been like discovering treasure - a treasure of unlimited value. Because of Islam I have found myself. Through concrete experience I have found that God does exist; that He is kind, loving, merciful and ever-watchful over me. I have found clarity, meaning and clear direction in my life. God has given me so much, including a family beyond my dreams, a family that resonates perfectly with the deepest desires of my heart and soul, as only He can provide in the most perfect way. I have peace of mind and spirit only when I drink deeply of Islam and the Quran, a wondrous healing drink that only God can provide in the most perfect way. The greatest gift from God to me is that He has touched my soul and let me feel His gentleness, loving kindness and mercy. By the grace of God, I am becoming al-mahdayah, the rightly guided one. In order to become the best, the most productive and most compassionate human beings we can be, God has sent us His final message to mankind in the most perfect way - the way of Islam, the way of peace. My personal experience with Christianity left me feeling empty for so long that I could not acknowledge its value. However, Islam teaches us that Judaism, Christianity and Islam all come from God, each with a message sent from God, and therefore all are worthy of respect. Although born into Christianity, Islam is the true path of my soul. Because I am now firmly grounded in my relationship to God, I find that I can appreciate other traditions as well, from the perspective of Islam. There is no more conflict within, because I have come home.

**"In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate
Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all Being,
the All-Merciful, the All-compassionate,
the Master of the Day of Doom.
Thee only we serve; to Thee alone we pray for help
Guide us in the straight path,
the path of those whom Thou hast blessed,
not of those against whom Thou art wrathful, nor of those who go
astray." (Quran 1:1-7)**

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