

Oum Abdulaziz, Ex-Christian, USA (part 4 of 4): Conversion from Christianity to Islam

Description: She found inner peace with true understanding of the nature of God through an uncorrupted religion: Islam.

By Oum Abdulaziz

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Really, I am indebted to all those who have asked me why I am today Muslim because writing this reply encouraged me to reread the Bible (after all these years) and clarified for me again in my own mind the many arguments I initially encountered and the reasons why I did eventually embrace Islam. Reading the Bible today, as a Muslim, I am surprised by what I find in it. I am certain that I had read every verse in the Bible as a Christian, yet how can it be that I never heard its whole message?

I had been a "born-again" Christian. One tearful and exhilarating night I felt that the Holy Spirit had awakened me. I was saved and baptized and thereafter, for years, attended church services several times each week. I wanted to increase my faith. I had so many questions, but once one goes beyond that salvation experience where does one find the answers? Every sect and denomination teaches something different. Which one was right? I heard many different teachings; most sounded good to me, but when I asked where in the Bible I could find those teachings I rarely received sufficient answers.

From relatives, friends and neighbors I came to know something about a number of different Christian groups. I also knew some Jews and Atheists. Through friends, I eventually became drawn to the Catholic Church. Its reputation as the "oldest" and "original" church appealed to me along with the teachings (perhaps unorthodox) of some priests that God is to everyone something different (or, in other words, God is to you whatever you want Him to be). They told me that I could be Catholic without having to believe everything coming out of Rome.

The Catholics were not having the salvation experiences that I had witnessed among the Born-again Christians. Yet, they were having apparent "miracles" of their own. A group had traveled to Yugoslavia where several youth were having periodic visions of the Virgin Mary. During the trip, the ordinary metal links in the rosary beads of one pious woman from our church had turned to pure gold, and a Protestant newscaster traveling with them to cover the story had witnessed a statue of the Virgin Mary shed tears.

On visits to my aunt and uncle I attended with them their Pentecostal church. There I witnessed my relatives and their fellow worshippers "speaking in tongues." They were literally, physically "overcome by the Holy Spirit" preaching and crying out in some unintelligible language, in a voice not their own. For them it was a very personal, life-changing experience. I admired their high moral standards.

I had also heard about some new-age groups who were having "out of the body" experiences, "transcending" their physical bodies to become one with "God" (if they believed in God) or "Light" or "Peace." Several new books about experiences in transcendentalism made this subject popular conversation.

About this time, I became acquainted with some Muslims for the first time in my life. I heard from them stories about miraculous victories the ill-armed Afghan freedom fighters were having over the might of their Soviet oppressors. The stories coming out of Afghanistan were incredible and supernatural. I did not know if I could believe all of it, but I did know it was true that with minimal loss of life on their side, the Afghans were pushing the Soviet army off their territory to establish a "Muslim" country.

I was questioning all of this. How can people of different and conflicting faiths all be receiving these signs? Can God be telling each one of them that they are following the right path?

Today, as a Muslim I do not have to live in doubt or confusion. I know that the powers of both good and evil are able to perform "supernatural" wonders. (The Bible says so, too - Mathew 24:24) Experiences with good and bad spirits, demons, demoniacs, etc. (by the Muslim all called "jinn") are real. The Jinn are another type of creation with free will like man. Islam teaches that Satan is one of the jinn, not a fallen angel as claimed by Christians. (According to Islam, Angels do not have the free will to disobey God.) Some Christians deny the existence of jinn though they are repeatedly mentioned in the Bible. (Mathew 4:24, 7:22, 8:28-33, 11:18, 12:28, 17:18; Mark 1:34; I Timothy 4:1; James 2:19; Revelations 18:2) Their "powers" are real, and they have been described to us in the Quran as able to even "whisper" into our hearts. (Quran 114:1-6) But God has created our souls in the best possible fashion inspiring them with knowledge of Him and of good and evil. God has also endowed us with intellect as the confirmation of faith, and true faith is at peace with both our innate nature and our intellect.

By the grace of God (exalted be He), Islam had conquered my heart and my mind. Once I recognized the fundamental errors of my former path and recognized the absolute truth of Islam, I knew that I needed to make major changes in my life. To make my faith acceptable to God, I knew that I had to live it. I had to allow the convictions of my heart to rule the actions of my body. I could no longer deny that my life, my health and everything else I had came to me only by the grace of God. I also could no longer allow myself to associate anything or anyone with God in his divinity. With my special Muslim friend, I also went to the local mosque (Muslim house of worship) to make a verbal and public confession of my conviction that there is only one God, Allah, and none worthy of worship except Him and that Mohammed is His servant and Messenger (peace be upon him.).

Ironically, my choice of Islamic dress - the thing that immediately tells other Americans that I am "different" - should not seem strange at all to Christians. The New Testament teaches that Christian:

"Women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel not with...costly

attire." (I Timothy 2:9)

It also instructs them to cover their hair.

"Any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head. It is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair, but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, then let her wear a veil." (I Corinthians 11:5-6)

There was a tradition of veiling among Jewish women, as well.

As a convert to Islam, rather than finding it to be oppressive, I have found the hijab itself to be liberating. I feel a much greater sense of respect leaving my house in hijab than I did in my pre-Islamic dress. The hijab frees women from the confines of non-Islamic society where her "worth" is primarily determined by her physical appearance. Of course, there are other reasons why I continue to put my faith in Islam. The more I learn about both Islam and other faiths, the more certain I am that I have made the correct decision to follow Islam. I pray that God will bestow His Mercy on me, forgive me my faults, increase me in faith, and keep me from temptation. I encourage you to read the Quran and seek the truth for yourself.

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