

A Journey within

Professor, Theologian, Missionary, Pastor, Church Planter, Licensed Ordained Minister, fundamentalist Christian; not a likely candidate for Islam. Yet, in October 1993, after having been raised in the Christian church all my life, (first as a Roman Catholic and then as a Born-Again, Spirit-Filled Christian) and having completed a Standard Ministerial Diploma, Bachelor of Theology and a Master of Divinity, I embraced Islam! What was it that brought about such a radical change?

I started to question Christian beliefs while I was studying for my Master's degree. As was my habit, I read through the Bible once every year for 12 years. I had done this along with multiple readings in connection with my preaching, teaching and studies. It was during these readings that I started to notice certain contradictions.

For instance, we teach the doctrine of Original Sin from Genesis 3 but it is contradicted in Ezekiel 18:1-22. If this basic doctrine is not true, the whole foundation of all Christianity falls. I saw these things as I read, and always stopped to ponder over them, but never had time to research on them because of my studies, etc. Yes, during my eight

years of study, we read through the Bible book-by-book, chapter-by-chapter and verse-by-verse; however, we never did a cross-study, so any contradictions that were apparent were never addressed. Also, this was the first time we studied **Church History** by actual history and not from the Bible.

It was at this point that I began to question Christian Doctrines that were not in existence during the time of Jesus; rather, they began 325 years later starting with the Doctrine of the Trinity. The word "trinity" is not found in any Bible in the world, neither is it in the original Greek and Hebrew languages [these were the original languages that the Bible was written in]. This Doctrine [of Trinity] was introduced at the first of four councils that determined Christianity today, but because the Catholics at that time would not accept it, it had to be reintroduced 68 years later, at the 2nd council of *Nicea*. Through the Doctrine of Incarnation, which makes Jesus both God and man, to the Doctrine of Propitiation, or perfect sacrifice, the formulation of all of these doctrines took more than 100 years.

I always had the hunger in my heart to know more of God. One day, I went to my professor and stated, "There has to be more to Christianity than what we teach. We tell the people they must be 'Born Again' (meaning you have made a personal

statement and commitment by asking **Jesus Christ** to come into your heart and forgive your sins and make you a new person), or you must be "Filled with the **Holy Spirit**"-in addition to being "Born Again" (the person has an experience called "glossolalia" or speaking in tongues). I had both of these experiences, although they are not recognized as necessary by all Christian churches or denominations.

There is a lot of in-fighting and theological differences between denominations. Protestants do not recognize Catholics as even being Christian because they worship **Mary**, the mother of Jesus [peace be upon him] along with various saints. **Baptists** do not have "fellowship" with non-Baptists. In addition, there are **Methodist, Wesleyan, Presbyterian, Congregational, Pentecostal** churches and a thousand independent churches that do not belong to any denomination. They all differ on points of doctrine or interpretation of the Bible.

I felt that if what we were teaching were genuine, there would be no need for denominations. There should be an apparent change in society around us. Instead, society is in a decline and in worse condition than it was even ten years ago! The so-called Christian countries are among the worst. My professor was lost for words and couldn't respond.

I went ahead and graduated with my **Master of Divinity** (a degree in Theology) in 1993. A month after graduating, I decided to study the German language. One of my classmates was a medical doctor who had spent six years in Dubai. We became friends and I noticed he was always asking me questions concerning the **Old Testament**. I was also always asking him questions concerning **Middle-Eastern cultures**. I was never interested in **Islam**, although my major throughout my studies was in missions. We had studied **Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Animism and Catholicism** along with **cults**. My interest was in **Animism**, or tribal worship.

When this doctor and I were together, I noticed he was different. He always wanted to pray, but in a Christian context. When we were out, he was always giving money to the beggars. He even had a plastic bag full of coins in the car for this purpose. One day I mentioned to him that if I hadn't known better, I would have thought he was Muslim.

He confessed to me that when he was in Dubai, he had embraced Islam, but had never told his family. When he returned to **the Philippines**, he apostatized and was no longer praying or practicing Islam. His family were devoted Catholics, although he was no longer affiliated with the Catholic Church, rather with the Protestant church.

It was within this same time frame that I met a woman who had embraced Islam while working in Saudi Arabia. I was living in Manila at the time, and although there are Muslims there, it's not as though I was out looking for them. I thought this was rather strange that I should meet two people who were Muslims within such a short time. Knowing how God works in my life through ordinary circumstances, I jokingly said, "Okay, God, what are you trying to tell me?"

I asked her about Islam, and the first thing I asked concerned how women were treated. It is well-known (as we are taught in the West and hear through the media) that Muslim women are second-class citizens with no rights. She must hide herself in an *abaya* / *purdah*² or covering because her husband does not want anyone else to see her. She must stay in the house and along with this, the husband has a right to beat her! I was stunned by her answer. She said the wife and mother are highly respected in Islam. She explained that women are covered because it is the command of Allah for the protection of women. She also explained that spousal abuse is not a part of Islam at all.



² Traditional outer coverings used by Muslim women.

I was so sure that what I had been taught was right and I was ready to give all of my sympathy to these poor and deprived Muslim women. Upon being told the truth, as opposed to the fallacy I had been taught, I proceeded to ask her other questions: **Who is Allah, and who is Muhammad (peace be upon him) in relation to the Muslims?**

At that time, I was teaching in Christian colleges, so my questions were quite deep. She admitted to somewhat of being a new Muslim and that although she could not answer all questions, she would accompany me to the Islamic Center where someone could. Upon hearing this, I prayed "Lord, (meaning Jesus at that time), if this is Satanic or Demonic (as Christians are taught that Islam is) then show me. I will not go even one time." After all, I wasn't about to open up myself to some demonic spirit. I didn't feel any hesitation, so I went with her rather cautiously.

I was quite surprised at their approach. I taught Church Evangelism. I know that there are many strategies and methods to be used when calling someone to follow your religion. They didn't use any of them! There was no psychological manipulation, no subliminal influence, no harassment, none of this "let's have a Qur'anic study in your house" as opposed to Christians using a Bible study, and no telephone calls. They were straightforward and honest.

They also gave me some books and said that if I had any questions they would be happy to answer them. I went home that night and read all of the books they had given me. I was fascinated and surprised.

This was the first time I was actually reading a book about Islam written by a Muslim! All the books we had ever read during my eight years of studies on Islam had been written by Christians. These books reflect what they think Islam is. But what they think about what Islam is and what Islam really is are two entirely different perspectives. **The Christians are sincere, but sincerely wrong!**

I went back the next day and discussed for three hours what I had read. They gave me some more books and I went home that night and read all of those books. I went back the next day and we had another three-hour discussion, this went on for a week. At the end of that time, I had read 12 books³ and had spent more than 15 hours in discussion. I had studied eight years in formal Christian theological studies yet at the end of that week, I knew cognitively (head knowledge) that Islam is true. **Did I embrace Islam then?** No, because even then I wasn't a hypocrite. It wasn't in my heart.

³ For non-Muslims and Christians we highly recommend Ahmed Deedat's books (available at Al-Bayenah Bookstore).

Among the first questions I asked that week was the question: **Who is Allah?** We had been taught the God of the Muslims is a pagan god (somewhat like a Hindu god, but His name is Allah and He is the one the Muslims worship).

I was surprised to find out that Allah is The **Omniscient** (All-Knowing), **Omnipotent** (All-Powerful) and **Omnipresent** (All-Present) God. He is the Creator, Sustainer and Provider. This certainly did not correspond with my studies in paganism, and I realized, "**Certainly, this is not a pagan god!**". There are neither rituals of secrecy, blood sacrifice (human or animal) nor any mediator. He is The One and Only God, without partners.

This is opposed to the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity where God is three beings: Father, Son (Jesus) and Holy Spirit, all co-equal and co-eternal.

We would like to ask our Christian friends who Jesus was when he was supposed to be dying on the cross and he said "**Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachtani? - My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**" (Matthew 27: 46). Was he talking to himself?

Perhaps you will say, "**No, that was the human part of Jesus**" (Doctrine of the Incarnation where Jesus was made both God and man) **man**, you will say, to relate to human suffering. But if you say this, then Jesus was not the perfect Sacrifice (Doctrine of

Propitiation) because according to Christian Doctrine, all men are born with original sin (This is the Christian doctrine where sin is placed upon mankind because of Adam and Eve). If he was born without this sin, he would be less than man, and could not relate to temptation and suffering.

The second question I asked was: Who is **Muhammad (peace be upon him)** in relation to the Muslims? I was surprised to learn that the Muslims do not pray to Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the Christians pray to Jesus (peace be upon him). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not a mediator. Muslims ask Allah to bless him and his descendants as we likewise ask Allah to bless the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and his descendents at the end of our prayers. He came with the same message that all of the Prophets, including Jesus (peace be upon them all) brought.

This message is to worship The One True God - Allah. Moses spoke to the people of Israel, "*Hear O Israel! The Lord your God is ONE GOD and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength.*" (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Jesus (peace be upon him) also delivered the exact same message, "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is One God and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with*

all your strength." (Mark 12:29, 30) Note: Jesus said **ONE GOD**, *not* three in one! Jesus, himself, (peace be upon him) never claimed to be Son of God, which is what other people said of him. He always referred to himself as son of man.

Each Prophet came with the same message, but there was a distinction in the deliverance of their messages. The message of Moses (peace be upon him) was delivered with Plagues brought upon Egypt. The distinction of Jesus (peace be upon him) is the casting out of demons and raising the dead, all by the power of Allah.

The distinction of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is that the **Holy Qur'an** was revealed to a Prophet who could neither read nor write.

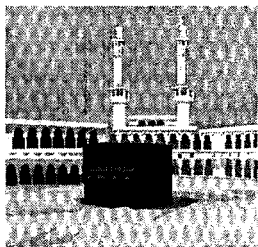
The message of Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them) was sent to a specific people, the **Jews**. In the Bible, the words "*Hear O Israel, Hear O Israel*" are repeated over and over by the Prophets, including Jesus. The Holy Qur'an was not sent to a specific people although Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was an **Arab** and the language is **Arabic**. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an (more than 22 times) that Islam was sent to **ALL MANKIND!**

The third question asked was: What are the words of the prayer?

Of course we have all seen pictures of Muslims praying toward the *Ka'bah* in *Makkah* (Mecca). We used to think that the Muslims believe that the black cube is their god or they think their god is in there.

This again shows the ignorance that many non-Muslims, the Christians in particular, have about Islam. Since prayer and sanctification (holiness) had always been of utmost importance to me as a Christian, I was very interested to know the way and the words of the prayer. They replied, "First of all, the approach to prayer is in cleanliness, both physical and spiritual." Allah, the Creator of man is the only one who has the right to say how we should come before Him in prayer.

Before, as a Catholic, I had genuflected and made the sign of the cross. Later, as a Protestant, we had raised our hands singing, clapping, shouting, dancing and crying. In our ignorance, we thought that this was the right way to



approach God. He tells us in the Holy Qur'an the exact way we are to approach Him (chapter 5 verse 6). We are to wash our hands, face, forearms, wipe over our heads and wash our feet. By doing so, the minor sins we committed from those parts of our body are washed away. We then assume a standing position while facing *Makkah* (the focal point of our

prayer), and raise our hands to our shoulders saying, "God is the Greatest". After that, we say the first *surah* (chapter) of the Holy Qur'an:

Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the world, The Most Merciful, The Most Compassionate, Master of the Day of Judgment. It is You we worship and Your aid we seek. Show us the straight way, the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray (Holy Qur'an 1:1-7).



This is then followed by another short chapter of the Holy Qur'an. Then again we raise our hands to our shoulders and say "*God is the Greatest.*" This is followed by bowing and placing the hands on the knees while saying "*Glorified is my Lord the Great*" one time or more. When rising to a standing position, we say: "*God hears who praises Him. Our Lord, for You is all praise.*" Again the words, "*God is the Greatest.*" Now the worshipper will prostrate before God on the ground while saying, "*Glorified is my Lord the Most High*" one time or more. After that, he reclines to a sitting position on his feet while asking God to forgive him his sins and assumes again the prostrating position

while repeating again "*Glorified is my Lord the Most-High* " one time or more. I was so stunned at hearing the words of this prayer that I blurted out "There is nothing objectionable about this prayer! It is a prayer of praise to God!!!"

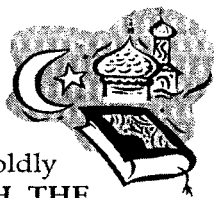
The words of the prayer and the execution are by direction of Allah as shown to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by Angel Gabriel (peace be upon him). This is the way the Angels in heaven pray before the throne of God. Imagine!

The Muslims are the only people in the world who pray the way the Angels in heaven pray! In addition, when one stops to think, the Muslims are instructed to pray at stated times which correspond with the positions of the sun. This means that with the rotation of the earth only the Muslims are in continuous prayer before the ONE AND ONLY MOST HIGH GOD - ALLAH 24 HOURS A DAY!

The last question I had concerned the authenticity of the Holy Qur'an. The Bible is made up of 66 books (the Catholic Bible has 73) and was compiled by over 40 different authors. For some books the author is either unknown or not stated, for instance, the *Book of Ruth* in the Old Testament and *Hebrews* in the New Testament. Although *Hebrews* is attributed to Paul, his signature does not appear on it, and in the middle of *Hebrews*, the style of writing changes.

Of course, the average Christian is not aware of this and unless you are studying for a theological degree, you will not ordinarily find this out just by reading the Bible. In the Bible, you are also dealing with two languages: Hebrew in the Old Testament and Greek in the New Testament. Neither of these languages is to be confused with the colloquial or spoken languages of today. I have also never heard that Jesus spoke Greek! I had to study both languages in the course of my studies.

I was impressed to find out that the Holy Qur'an had only one author, that being Allah - God Himself! At the beginning of every chapter, except for one, it boldly states, **IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL,** unlike the Bible which states in the Old Testament: *The Book of . . .*, or in the New Testament which states: *the Gospel according to . . .* (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John). By the way, according to Biblical scholars, Matthew, Mark and Luke were not the disciples of Jesus. They were disciples of Peter and Paul. *Mark* is the first gospel written around 68 AD. Many Biblical scholars feel that Matthew plagiarized from Mark and that Mark had gotten some of his information from another source called "Q". Luke states in both his gospel and the *book of Acts* that his accounts are only second-hand. John's gospel was written about 100 AD.



Like I said, unless you are studying theology, you don't find these things out. It should likewise be pointed out that the Holy Qur'an is written in only one language, and that is Arabic, because that was the language in which it descended upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) from Allah.

Another thing that impressed me is the fact that **the Holy Qur'an has remained unchanged for the last 1427 years!!** What is read today is exactly verbatim as it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Those who are reading the translation of the meaning of the Holy Qur'an will usually find the Arabic next to it. It must be remembered: a translation is not a transliteration.

In every language, there will be variations in grammatical style and structure, as well as phrases that cannot be translated exactly. Therefore, translation is accomplished through finding the closest meaning of what is said as well as the exact words that are used. This is why every Muslim is encouraged to learn the Arabic of the Qur'an.

Not only are our prayers said in the original language, but this also means that Muslims are the only people on earth who are drawn together by a common language! For instance, if a Chinese Muslim came to the United States and could not speak English and the American Muslim could not

Speak Chinese; they could communicate by using the Arabic of the Qur'an.

Although, I did not embrace Islam that week, I started to attend the Islamic lectures. Again, I sat there stunned by what I was learning. Everything I had learned about Islam while studying for my Master's degree was refuted in these classes.

As a Christian we never knew that the Muslims believe in the **virgin birth of Jesus**. We didn't even think that they believed in Jesus at all! But if a Muslim does not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, he/she is not a Muslim. I was also surprised to know that Muslims believe that Jesus was taken into heaven and will come again! **Mary, the mother of Jesus**, has a whole chapter in the Holy Qur'an named after her, yet the Muslims don't worship her or pray to her as the Catholics do! The Catholic and Protestant Bibles have only a small paragraph devoted to her, "*The Magnificat*". The Holy Qur'an has a whole chapter named after her called *Surah Maryam* (Mary the mother of Jesus). Mary, the mother of Jesus is mentioned many times throughout the Holy Qur'an.

I would go home from these classes and meditate, contemplating what I was learning. **Christianity had raised a lot of questions in my mind, yet Islam was giving me the answers!**

Everyday I attended the lectures and every night I read the Bible and every night I prayed, "**God, show me if this (Islam) is true.**" Somewhere along the line I had stopped saying Jesus, stopped saying Holy Spirit, and stopped saying "father".

I was just saying "**GOD WHOEVER YOU ARE SHOW ME IF THIS IS TRUE.**" When you ask the Omniscient God to show you the truth, will He play a joke on you? It is not easy to change your religion. I didn't want to lose my salvation, but what if there was no salvation to lose?

One night, about two months from the first time I had gone to the Islamic center, I had prayed this prayer as I had been doing every night and went to bed. Somewhere between the state of wakefulness and sleep I physically felt something come into my heart. Immediately being fully conscious, I sat up on my bed and spoke out loud, "**Allah, I believe that you are ONE GOD AND ONE GOD ONLY.**"



This was the first time I had used the name of Allah. Although I heard others use it, I never had spoken it myself until that time. After saying that, there immediately descended upon me a peace that has never left me to this day.

My decision was not to be without repercussion. The Christians who profess the love of Jesus and who so readily accuse others of persecuting people for becoming Christian were the very ones to perpetrate persecution on me. Of course, the first thing to go was my job. I would no longer be able to teach in the Christian Colleges. You can have a Christian teach about Islam, but you can't have a Muslim teach about Christianity. I had already been a widow for seven years at the time I embraced Islam. That meant I must support myself. I still had three children out of nine I was financially responsible for.

The second thing to occur was that my husband's family disowned me. My husband came from a very prominent family. His grandfather is in the history books as a recognized hero, and his father had at one time been governor. Although all three of them were dead, I had a close relationship with his family, so much so that I was actually closer to them than to my own family. After becoming a Muslim, I was told (in no uncertain terms) that I was no longer a part of the family and not to join in any of the family gatherings.

There were members of the family still in politics, and it was certainly not to their advantage to have a Muslim in the family. I felt very hurt by this, as for many years I had a close relationship with them. It was not on the basis of my being a

Christian, but because I was part of the family. When my husband died, it was his family that I counted on for help raising my children, only now to be turned away. I cried for three days, but whenever I made *salah* (obligatory prayer) I had the peace of knowing I had made the right decision.

My own children were to be another source of contention. At this point, all of my children, except for one son who was with me, were in the United States. As I was attending the Islamic Center, I was sharing with them through letters what I was learning.

After I embraced Islam, my oldest daughter (who happened to work for the headquarters of the church I was affiliated with for 18 years) wrote me a letter and said, "Don't you know that Islam is one of the most Satanic religions?" I responded by sending her some booklets and she wrote back and said, "DON'T TRY TO CONVERT ME!" I explained to her that it was forbidden for us by Allah to force our religion on anyone, but that I had thought she might like to read them to see what it was I believed in.

As a parent, when you are experiencing some difficulty with one of your wayward children, you usually call a meeting of the close relatives [grandmother, aunt, cousin] who might have some

influence over the situation. Well, I found out later that my children had a meeting about me! **Mother is the problem and Islam is the culprit!**

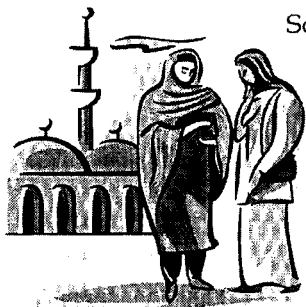
Like most big families, there is a dividing line among sets of children. The three oldest are the bosses, the three middle ones are the fighters and the younger ones have no say. While the discussion was in hot pursuit, the oldest ones were vehemently opposed to the whole situation, the middle ones said, "This is our mother and it is her decision. She is not forcing it on us. We want to continue to be close to her and we want her also to be close to her grandchildren."

When I finally went to the States, the older ones wanted to argue and had put up a wall that prevented any discussion. On the other hand, the middle ones were open and full of questions. Our conversations were just that - meaningful conversations that took place in the course of natural conversation. One daughter even made a statement that I was nicer as a Muslim than when I was a Christian! This surprised me because, as a Christian, I had always tried to exemplify what I believed.

After seven years, the older ones finally accepted that I was a Muslim and, by the Will of Allah, would not change back to Christianity. They accepted, not approved. The others said that they

saw Islam as a way of life unlike Christianity where you go to church, then go ahead and do anything you like. In other words, it calls for a change of lifestyle.

My son, who had been living with me when I embraced Islam, was not interested in religion, Christianity or Islam. He had his own band and at this time his music was being played on the radio. He was 18 and religion was not a part of his lifestyle.



Sometime after I had lost my teaching position, I was asked to start and manage a women's section at the Islamic Center. Every week, I would bring home books and neatly put them on the dining table and every day they were still

there. Periodically, I would change them, hoping that he would read them and ask me some questions. He never did. Several times that year, I had some of the Muslims from the Islamic Center come and talk to him. He was always polite, but uninterested. Still I had them come to talk to him and this time we read to him from the Holy Qur'an.

As we were reading you could see a spirit of conviction come on his face, he asked me, "Why didn't you tell me this before?" I was stunned and mentioned that I had left the books there, hoping he would read them and ask me questions. He then told me that when I would leave the house, he and his friends would read them and then put them back! His name is now Omar.

I have never regretted becoming a Muslim and pray that Allah will give me the *Iman* (faith) of the *Sahaba* [companions of the Prophet, (peace be upon him)].

Say: Indeed my Lord has guided me to a straight path - a correct religion, the way of Abraham, inclining toward truth. And he was not among those who associated others with Allah. Say: Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds. No partner has He. And this I have been commanded, and I am the first (among you) of the Muslims. (Holy Qur'an 6:161-163)

All praise is for Allah

We praise Him, we seek His aid and we ask for His forgiveness. We seek Allah's refuge from the evils of ourselves and the evils of our actions.

Whomsoever Allah guides, there is no one to misguide him and whomsoever Allah misguides, there is no one to guide him.

I testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah alone, who has no partner and I testify that Muhammad is His Prophet and Messenger.

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

"Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave."

Jesus (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

"Seek the Truth and the Truth shall set you free."



الدراسات الإسلامية و الدعوة و الإرشاد بالفلبين

ISLAMIC STUDIES, CALL & GUIDANCE Certificate of Declaration of ISLAM

I Mary Sue Dda De Masfar the undersigned,
hereby affirms my acceptance and adoption of ISLAM as my religion and faith from
this 23 th day of October, 19 93 and hereby declares;

ASH-HADU-AN-LA-ILAHA-ILL-ALLAH, WA-ASH-HADU-ANNA-MUHAMMADAR-RASULULLAH,
I bear witness that there is no god but ALLAH, & I bear witness that Muhammad is
the messenger of ALLAH. I do take this oath from heart and in my own free will to
follow as my guide the tenets of Islam as based on the Holy Qur'an and the example
(Sunnah) set by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) and I adopt
Khadijah as my Muslim name.

Khadijah Watson

DECLARANT

This is to certify that the declarant Khadijah Watson has given
His/Her oath of allegiance to the universal faith of ISLAM, MAY ALLAH, the Most
High, guide and keep him/her in the Straight Path.



Abdul Karim P.

WITNESS

Alvin A. R. Anigo

WITNESS

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Certificate of Declaration of Islam

شهادة اعتناق المؤلفه للإسلام في الفلبين