

Christian Arab Finds Her Roots

All praises be to Allah Who opened my heart to the Light of Islam and blessed me with His Grace unto the True Path.

To begin with, I would like to say that the ultimate conclusions that I reached in my quest were in fact a natural result of my initial disregard and indifference. My story begins before my birth with the marriage of my father, a Gulf-Arab Muslim, and my mother, an Arab Christian. She had promised to convert to Islam after the wedding, and thus they married in Europe where they were both studying at the time.

However, six months after the wedding my mother refused to accept Islam, and since my father had stipulated her conversion as part of their marriage, he decided to divorce her. My mother was pregnant with me at the time. After the divorce, she returned to her country.

When I was born, my father demanded to take me with him, but my mother's maternal instincts prevented her from allowing it. She insisted and he acquiesced, thereby relegating my relationship with him to financial matters, holiday phone calls, and biennial visits. The effect of my isolation from him was that while I bore certain Muslim traits, most noticeably my Muslim name, I nevertheless knew next to nothing about Islam. My knowledge was confined to geography lessons, history books, and what I witnessed of the dealings of Muslims and Gulf-Arabs in my mother's country in which I lived.

From my early youth until the age of 18, I studied in a Catholic school and would attend church regularly with my mother. I had a Muslim name but I was Christian in faith. I admit that my devotion was halfhearted and I would not look forward to going to church, except occasionally. Nevertheless, I would rebuke myself for my indifference and would vow to attend church at the nearest opportunity.

I spent my adolescence recklessly, going out all the time and staying out all night in mixed company. My mother simply advised me against this but otherwise remained aloof. I finished high

a Muslim name and had a Muslim father yet was raised on Christianity with a Christian mother, my sympathies were torn.

I resolved to decide the matter once and for all, thus for almost two months I would enter each chat room daily for two hours each listening to what the members had to say without commenting. After that period, I was full of questions, so for an additional month I would ask a series of daily questions to the members of the two rooms. Oddly, I found the Muslims to be much warmer and more welcoming than their Christian counterparts. In fact, the only thing I heard in the Christian chat room was “liars!” or “that’s taken from the Old Testament!” I was confused that there should be two distinct heavenly books in a single religion, the later of which was acknowledged to be written by human hands. At the same time, the Muslims were offering me the Qur’an, a single divine book with no contradictions.

I compared the two religions and found Islam to conform to my intellect and nature, in addition to my ideals of modesty, cleanliness, justice, and dignity. After three months, I officially chose Islam as my religion and entered an Islamic chat room to declare my new faith. The people in the chat room were eager to offer their complete help and assistance, particularly two brothers whom I will never forget; may Allah reward them generously.

I learned more about the details of Islam from my new brothers and sisters online, in addition to several other books and sites. I experienced little difficulty in my embracing the Sacred Law, as Islam conforms to human nature. After pronouncing my shahada (declaration of faith) online, I took a shower and prayed.

After three days, I donned the veil and thereby let my mother know of my decision. I cannot repeat what she said to me and what she tried to do to bring me back to Christianity, as her attempts and arguments were enough to fill volumes. Essentially, she called me to secular ideals, saying that I should be able to live my life as I pleased without restrictions. At one point, she even tried to tear apart my copy of the Holy Qur’an, but I fortunately stopped her just in time.

Ultimately, my mother realized that she could not change my mind nor break my spirit, and thus we reached a truce in which I agreed that my Islam would not affect her life. She left me to do as I pleased.

I write this story three months after my reversion, and I feel that during this time I have learned more about my religion than if I had been raised Muslim. I entered Islam by my choice and free will and have subsequently rid myself of the bad influences in my life and have found a new definition of “freedom,” that is freedom from the worship of my base desires. Allah has become my adoration for Whose sake I struggle to purify all my actions in order to achieve His Pleasure.

I am currently working to develop my practice, and I am studying correct Qur’an recitation and have committed various parts of Allah’s Book to memory. I also try to be very punctual in my prescribed prayers.

I urge all of humanity to ponder Islam in the same manner that I did – with an open mind and a desire for sincere Guidance from Allah.

Aisha