

The Seeking Muslim

by Timothy Abraham

I am Ibrahim who, for the sake of my family's security, go also by the nickname Timothy Abraham. I am a simple Egyptian from the Delta region. Farms surrounded me from every side with streams of the luxurious Nile River endowing life with fertility. I had a strong Islamic upbringing in my childhood, studying in the village shop for teaching the Quran (al-Kutaab). They taught me to fear God (Allah in Arabic) who created the Heaven and the earth in six days. There was not a single reason to doubt a religion which emphasized fearing God, doing good work and living a moral life. The recitation of the Quran was meant to produce a sense of tranquillity. I enjoyed the Sufi circle of worship, as they adored the person of Muhammad. This was Abu-al-Azayem's group. I was searching for more closeness with Allah Almighty.

One evening around 7:00 p.m. in al-Mahatta mosque, having finished praying al-Maghrib prayer, I was introduced to Muhammad Imam and Sulleiman Kahwash. They were vitally influential in incorporating me into their group "The Muslim Brotherhood—i.e., al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin." They encouraged me to be a devout Muslim and fast on Monday and Thursday of every week and break the fast with them in the mosque where we ate bread, cheese, palm dates (tamr), and delicious salad. I diligently imitated every thing the Prophet Muhammad did, even the sitting posture of the Prophet as he was eating. They were so kind to me. They also saw in me the potential of being an eloquent speaker. Therefore, Sulleiman Hashem, the leader at the time, approached me gently, "Ibrahim, you are called by the Quran's teaching to proclaim the message of Islam "da'awah."

"My Allah!" I pondered. "I am just 14 years old and I am easily intimidated." Nevertheless, Sulleiman gave me a stack of books to study in preparation for the sermon I was to deliver the next day. From then on, it became customary for me to preach a sermon on the first Monday of every lunar month. I was filled with zeal as my leaders had arranged for me to go across the neighboring towns, preaching from mosque to mosque. I zealously wanted everyone to follow the Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, and subsequently, my sister had no choice but to obey my Quranic command and wear the veil which indicated modesty.

I needed my father's approval. I wondered if he had ever heard his son, the 14 year old Muslim evangelist, preach. To my astonishment my father was sharply criticized by people for having a son who was now a "fanatic." The Islamic Brotherhood was regarded as a religious gang by the majority of regular Muslims. My father, therefore, became wrathful over my Islamic radicalism and angrily punched me in the teeth. Today my front tooth is a fake one. It reminds me of my former perseverance, to the point of death, to be a zealous Muslim fundamentalist and my willingness to be persecuted for my commitment. My father burnt my Sunni (mostly wahabi and salafi) Islamic library. He knew quite well that Mohammad Mansour, a security police informer, was recording my sermons from the bathroom in the mosque.

I was so strict in the fashion of the sunnah of Muhammad that I did not shake hands with women. I simply wanted to be a devout Muslim. Having finished their prayers in the mosque, my father stopped one of the leaders in my group, Sulleiman Hashem and asked him pleadingly to leave me, his son, alone. When my father swore an oath of divorce (hilif

alaya bi al-talaaq) that I will not be permitted to enter the mosque where the Islamic Brotherhood is praying, I obeyed my father, but asked for mercy in letting me hear their sermons while sitting outside the mosque. I was never daunted by any of this and continued to preach Islam everyday in the morning parade (taboor as-sabah) as well as in every mosque where I went to teach. It never occurred to me for a second that Islam could be wrong. In my pursuit to propagate Islam everywhere, a magazine came into my hands which had pen pal addresses from the United States. I chose one at random and wrote, hoping to convert the man into Islam. I wrote to John from Pennsylvania, USA, back and forth for two years, each trying to convert the other. I read every book I could get hold of to refute the Bible.

To make things worse, I had no respect for the Bible as I put my feet and shoes on it since the Quran taught me it was corrupt. Then John surprised me by coming to visit me in my village. That was the first time I saw a real Christian. His sincerity, frankness, genuineness, and openness impressed me. John stayed with me for two months. He had an amazing prayer life which served as a model for me later in life. I did not know that Christians prayed until I saw a "living epistle" right in the middle of my house, a man from a far off land who became one of us and genuinely incarnated the love of Christ. John had an amazing prayer life, for he prayed more than he talked, speaking the words of the Bible.

I became jealous of John's intimacy with God and increased my recitations of the Quran. Islam is a religion that has to be credited for teaching its followers to be virtuous, chaste, and benevolent. There is no doubt that Muhammad remains a genius in history. One has to also note that a Muslim may do as many good works as possible in this world and on the Day of Judgment God weighs the deeds of every individual in a "balance." The good deeds will be placed in one pan of the balance, and the evil deeds in the other. If the good deeds are heavier, then the believer will go to the paradise described in Quran as a place of sexual pleasure and frolicking with the wide-eyed huris (sura al- Waqia 56:20-23). However, Christ our Lord said "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30).

My Muslim friend, according to Islam, if your evil deeds are heavier, you will be cast into the fires of hell. It looks like you would need to be only fifty-one percent good to get into paradise. Yet you remain absolutely unsure whether or not you are going to heaven. All you say, my Muslim friend, is, "Only God Knows!" You hope for the mercy of Allah and hope that the angels or the Prophet will intercede for you in the last day, so you will be saved from Hell.

I was like you, my Muslim sister or brother, until I knew that I could be absolutely sure of going to Heaven. Tears well up in my eyes just to recall how lost I was and now that I am found. While trembling in tears, seeing the majesty of God, I rejoice to know that I have eternal life for certain.

God in the Bible is both just and merciful. His justice requires that everyone be punished in Hell, for He is perfect 100 percent. No matter how hard we try to please God, we always fall short of His perfection. Our good works will not bring us closer to God. God saw our insufficiency, and decided to pay the penalty Himself. He sent His Word Isa Al Masih (Jesus Christ), who is absolutely sinless and faultless to carry the punishment of our sins on the cross. What can you say to the Judge when He chooses to pay your penalty for you? The Bible says in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." It is because God loves us that He sent His Word, Jesus Christ, to die for us. Islam never grants us the

assurance of going to Heaven, but Christ absolutely does! Praise God! Thank you, my Lord, for sovereignly choosing to pay the price Yourself in the Person of Your incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the express revelation of the nature of Allah Almighty.