

Why I Became a Christian: An Interview with a Former Muslim

By Abu Alex

(Names and places as well as other information which could identify the converts have been omitted in order to secure anonymity. The interview was conducted 18/11/97.)

A reason why I became a Christian is that in 1989 I lost my mother and things were really going badly in my life and I moved away. I felt that there was no hope for me.

One Sunday morning I got up and went to a friend of mine and said that I feel like going to church, I want to see how it is in a church. My friend was involved in the church. That morning the pastor was speaking on John 3 where Nicodemus asks Jesus how can he be born again and enter his mother's womb for a second time. Jesus explains to him that you need to die of your own sins, and this is why Christ came, to die for our sins ... and for me coming from a Muslim background I did not understand the trinity and that morning it really struck me. The title of the message was "you must be born again" and the scripture was from Acts 2:38. I heard this message and it really spoke to me and the pastor mentioned that there are some Christians who think that they are born again, but we can not be born again unless we die from our old ways.

I couldn't understand why in Islam I had always to read the Qur'an and been to *madressa*. When my mother passed away, I used to read the Qur'an every night before I went to sleep because I never used to sleep well. Sometimes I used to come home drunk....

But on that morning August the 10th when I went to church, I gave my life to God. I said, "Lord Jesus, you can have it all." I didn't realise what I was doing ... I had good fellowship with many of my "brothers" at the church: I got on well with them all so this made it easier for me in my Christian walk. I always used to argue with my mother about having to learn things which I do not understand. I could recite things from the Qur'an but not get anything from it: you can do it when you are in any state of mind.

When I was still in school a friend and myself would go to the Mosque and we were high on all sorts of drugs. We would go to this mosque with no conviction, which I would not do today. I would never get intoxicated and go to the house of the Lord. Every day when I get up I have to pray and ask God to see me through this day, those are the realities of Christianity ... it's not something you are told to do, it's a part of you. It's like my wife and I having a relationship, it's the same sort of thing. I have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ today. It's a free open conversation. Even when you are having a hard time you can ask the Lord, "Why is this happening to me?" Like this morning I was reading from Psalm 138:

I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, *and* strengthenedst me *with* strength in my soul. All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great *is* the glory of the LORD.

Though the LORD *be* high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt

stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. The LORD will perfect *that which* concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.

I don't know why I turned to this Psalm, and the first three verses were very inspiring ... I was thinking about you last night and wondering how am I going to communicate with you today. What must I tell you? But God told me what to do, I have to glorify his name and look up to him, for his truth and faithfulness is always there.

And the things that I could see which were different in Christianity and Islam. With Islam it's more a moral issue; laws of what you must or must not do. Christianity teaches you something different, you have to follow the Lord and follow him in truth and faithfulness. For the Bible says "your loving kindness is better than life" and you must just look to Jesus alone. As long as you do all things in Christ's name it's enough to see you through anything.... In *madressa* if you didn't know something you would get punished for it.... Today I can see the difference between the two religions.

One day I was at my sister's house, and some of my sister's friends were there also. They were sitting there and drinking ... and the one guy asked me, "How come you were the one out of the whole family who became a Christian?" I said, "I can only thank the Lord Jesus Christ for showing me the truth and the right way to live." Then I asked him if he is a Muslim. He replied that he had grown up as a Christian, when he came to South Africa from Mozambique. Christianity was no help ... and Muslims actually helped him. So I said, "You see, you just wanted to become a Muslim so you can be on the 'gravy train'. You want things done for you. Take me for example; I'm unemployed but I still serve the Lord. No matter what goes through my life ... maybe tomorrow I will have to testify behind the pulpit about what I'm going through now."

In the book of Genesis when Adam and Eve sinned, God didn't tell Adam to go and look for work, God told Adam to work, you can do things. I help out some of my friends by selling cutlery to try and make a little bit ... I get about R900 commission every month, it gets me through, God always provides for me. That's what I was telling him, and I said, "Brother if you were Christian and you became Muslim, then you better go back to what you were. Because there is only one way, the Bible tells it to you. I would have been better off than you being a Muslim and not hearing the Gospel, but you were a Christian from birth." We need to pray about your situation privately because he was sitting and drinking and I said to him that if he was Christian before he could open a can of beer he would be convicted by the Holy Spirit. He could have been witnessing to five guys in the street instead he's sitting with them and drinking. I said there is a difference between you and me. I said that I hope what we've been speaking about here will convict you some day. He was shocked because he'd never heard someone speak about Christianity the way that I had especially someone who was a Muslim. He said that people won't believe it, I said it's not that the people won't believe ... it's what God wants the people to believe. I won't make the difference. It's what God puts in me to make the difference, I don't follow my way, I follow his way. As far as the Lord Jesus leads me that is what I will do not depending on other things.

The desire in my heart is to reach out to every Muslim friend of mine, no matter what it takes. Once before a friend ... and myself were confronted by guys from PAGAD. They actually beat us up and asked us if we are still going to be Christians and speak to other Muslims. I told them you can even kill me and you will be doing me a favour because I'm going to heaven. My brother and I will still serve Jesus Christ. And he has moved out ... he and his wife and kids are all staying there, they are a bit afraid since his parents every

second day were coming to his house and threatening him. Those are the things that made him move out of ... 75% of this community is Muslim. If we had even 10% of the Christians in this area with the same commitment to the Lord we could reach this whole area, but we need to make a stand and go for it.

That's why I have applied to Bible College next year. It's a two year course and after that they will see into which field you should go into from there.... it's not for free, it's about R3000 for the year and another friend of mine asked me how I'm going to manage since I'm unemployed. I said I don't have to worry about anything, if God is with me then I will get whatever I want. Because God won't let a child of his go without. Even if it means going to people and asking them to support me. Yesterday morning somebody phoned and told me there is a job available so I will be going for an interview. So I might get this job and then be able to pay for my studies.

Even if I have to work, I still want to help others ... every day on the street I see people who are throwing their lives away with drugs and alcohol. One morning I met a guy who is a complete alcoholic.... I went and prayed for him, he was in hospital. Another lady who works in the hospital told me that the doctors had no hope for him but three days after I prayed for him he was released from hospital.

I myself haven't been to a doctor for four years. When I feel ill I just pray. There are many others who are Muslims who want to be Christians but they are afraid of the Muslims: I just tell them that if the Lord is speaking to you then you must do what I did and follow him. All you have to do is look to Christ. Just walk with Christ that is the greatest testimony. I gave them the story of the tower of Babel ... they were trying to make a name for themselves...

I feel that whoever has been called by God to be a Christian, and if you are now a Christian and you were Muslim you must reach out to your Muslim brothers and sisters ... even to your parents ...and if he has Christ's wisdom he should convert each of them. The greatest desire in my heart is for me to reach out to my family first ... the Lord has been good to me so far, my one sister and her son and daughter have all converted. My other sister's daughter has also converted to Christianity.... From my family I have four but there is still a long way to go because 60% is still staunch Muslim and I know by the Lord's will and by his way that I will be able to speak to each and every one of them so that they can know the truth ... that's all what I can say.