

LYNDA FITZGERALD, EX-CATHOLIC, IRELAND (PART 2 OF 4)

Rating: 4.8

Description: After reading the Quran, Lynda starts to struggle with the notion of accepting Islam and leaving her prior beliefs and way of life.

Category: [Articles](#) [Stories of New Muslims](#) [Women](#)

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Published on: 16 Jan 2006

Last modified on: 02 May 2010

The Quran

Two things happened to me while I was reading the Quran. Firstly, I was reading the following Surah (Surah II (Al Baqara - 21) and I just stopped reading. I shut my eyes and I thought about God. Suddenly I got a feeling of the oneness of God, of the superiority of God. I could see that he would have no reason to have a partner. I just couldn't see anyone there with him on the same level with him, why would he need anyone. He wouldn't, I was so sure of that. A strange peace came over me and I felt really sure that there is no God but God. I just wanted that feeling to last forever, but it went within a couple of minutes.

The second was when I was reading Surah Al Hajj (22-5). Again I closed my eyes and I had a picture of the world, barren and new born. I saw a mound of earth and a seed growing into a tree and I thought. "Where did that seed come from?" Where did all the beautiful variety of plants that you find all over the world come from. It could only have come from God. Again I felt peace, and I felt the wonder of God.

The Months Before I Reverted

These had to be the hardest and the best months of my life. Sometimes I was on a high and sometimes I felt utter despair. This is an extract from my diary in April:

"Something weird is happening to me and I just don't know how I feel about it, whether it's a good thing or a bad thing, whether my imagination is running away with me or whether I'm just letting myself be brainwashed. Then again, it could be what's right and what's meant to be.

The thing is, I've been studying Islam and I'm really thinking of reverting - God help me. At the moment, I just don't know what to think, the whole thing scares the living daylights out of me. I never thought this kind of thing could happen to me. I certainly didn't want to be reverted. I always considered myself a catholic, I always believed in

God and I always believed that Jesus was the son of God. Now I'm questioning all that, I'm questioning everything I was brought up to believe in and my whole way of life."

I would think about Islam from the time I got up in the morning until I went home in the evening. After a while, when I'd hear the adhan, I would get a really strong desire to pray, and in the beginning I would pray in the old Christian way. Then, I asked one of the guys in work for a book on how to pray and he gave me one. I read that book, I watched the people praying on TV, and I asked a lot of questions. Then I started praying. Still, no one knew about it except two guys at work. The Egyptian guy and another Jordanian guy who is also a really good Muslim.

In the beginning, I would pray without covering my hair. I didn't know that I was supposed to, and when someone finally did tell me I just couldn't figure out the reason why. I had a long argument about it with Khaled one day in work, and I still couldn't fathom it. Then, when I was going home that evening, I was walking up to catch the bus and I got a feeling of the superiority of God and how small and insignificant I was compared to him, I felt as small as an ant with the whole world stretched out before me, and I knew that I should cover my head when I was praying, because he could see every movement that I made, and I had no right to be proud, and I should do everything I could to please him. I never doubted again that I should cover my head whilst praying.

My diary 23 April 1995

"Well, I'm still not sure what I'm doing. Some times it seems so clear and I think 'Yes, I believe and I want to shout it out.' Then other times I feel really unsure and doubtful and afraid, and I just don't know what I'm doing. The thing is though. Besides anything else, it is a really good religion. The Quran is quite beautiful and everything is in there - how to behave, how to pray, what to do, what not to do. There's none of that in the Catholic church, besides the fact that they change it from time to time to suit themselves. If you follow this religion you can't be bad, not to anyone. You can only be kind and patient and tolerant and you can never forget God because you are worshipping him five times a day. I love to pray, I always did. It helps you to remember all the good things you have in life and where they came from and you should be grateful for that always. It brings peace in to your life."

Sometimes, I was really glad that I had found out about Islam, and sometimes I wished I'd never heard of it, because now that I knew the truth, I realized that I had no choice but to revert, but I was still hanging on to the old life; even though I had given up drinking and going to parties, I was afraid of losing my western friends and the prejudice I would have to face once I started covering my head. I talked about it to Khaled so many times, and each time I said, 'I'll never have the courage to wear the hijab' and each time he said, 'when God wills it, you'll have the courage.'

My diary: My problem is I'm a natural born coward. I dread the thoughts of people's reaction when I start covering my head. How could I ever tell my mother or Liz in Australia. How can I go to Australia or even Ireland and cover my head - I don't think I can face it you know. God give me strength.

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