

CRAIG ROBERTSON, EX-CATHOLIC, CANADA (PART 2 OF 2): LEARNING TO ACCEPT

Rating: 4.2

Description: After finding his way back to Christianity, Craig is betrayed by his friends and again becomes lost, until his encounter with a Muslim at work.

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By: Craig Robertson

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I still remember to this day my first encounter with a Muslim. One of the boys brought his friend to the youth house. He was a Muslim kid whose name I forgot. What I do remember is the boy saying "I brought my friend 'so and so', he's a Muslim and I want to help him become a Christian". I was absolutely amazed by this 14 year old kid, he was calm and friendly! Believe it or not, he defended himself AND Islam against a dozen Christians who were hurling abuses at him and Islam! As we sat there fruitlessly thumbing through our Bibles and getting angrier and angrier, he just sat there, quietly smiling and telling us about worshipping others besides God and how, yes, there is love in Islam. He was like a gazelle encircled by a dozen hyenas, yet the entire time, he was calm and friendly and respectful. It blew my mind!

The Muslim kid left a copy of the Quran on the shelf, either he forgot it or left it on purpose, I don't know, but I started reading it. I soon became infuriated with this book when I saw that it made more sense than the Bible. I threw it against the couch and walked away, seething with anger; yet, after I read it, I had a nagging doubt at my core. I did my best to forget about the Muslim kid and just enjoy my time with my friends at the youth house. The youth group used to go to various Churches on weekends to prayer events and Saturday nights were spent in a huge Church instead of at the bar. I remember being at one such event called 'The Well' and I felt so close to God and wanted to humble myself and show my Creator my love for Him. I did what felt natural, I prostrated. I prostrated like Muslims do in the daily prayers, yet I didn't know what I was doing, all I knew was, that it felt really good... it felt right, more than anything else I had ever done. I felt very pious and spiritual and continued on my path but as usual, started to feel things slipping away.

The Pastor always taught us that we must submit our will to God's, and I wanted nothing more than to do that; but I didn't know how! I always prayed "Please God, make my will Yours, make me follow Your will" and so on, but nothing ever happened. I felt myself slowly slipping away from the Church as my faith ebbed away. It was at this time that my best friend, the Christian man who had helped me come to Christ, along with another close friend of mine, raped my girlfriend who I had been with for two years.

I was in the other room too drunk to know what was happening and unable to stop anything. A couple of weeks later, it was revealed that the man who ran the youth house had molested one of the boys that I was friends with.

My world was shattered! I had been betrayed by so many of my friends, people who were supposed to be close to God and working towards Paradise. I had nothing left to give, I was empty again. I walked around as before, blindly and without direction, just working and sleeping and partying. My girlfriend and I broke up soon afterwards. My guilt, rage and sadness encompassed my entire being. How could my Creator allow such a thing to happen to me? How selfish was I?!

A little while after, my manager at work told me that a "Moslem" would be working with us, he was really religious and we should try to be decent around him. The minute this "Moslem" came in he started Da'wah. He wasted no time in telling us all about Islam and everyone told him they didn't want to hear anything about Islam, other than me! My soul was crying out and even my stubbornness could not squelch the cries. We started working together and discussing our respective beliefs. I had given up on Christianity completely, but when he started asking me questions, my faith surged and I felt I was a 'Crusader' defending the Faith from this evil "Moslem".

The fact of the matter was that this particular "Moslem" wasn't evil like I had been told. In fact, he was better than me. He didn't swear, he never got angry and was always calm, kind and respectful. I was truly impressed and decided that he would make an excellent Christian. We went back and forth asking things about each others religions, but after a time I felt myself getting more and more defensive. At one point, I became very angry... here I was trying to convince him of the truth of Christianity, and I felt it was he who was on the truth! I started to feel more and more confused and didn't know what to do. All I knew was that I had to increase my faith, so I jumped in my car and roared off to 'The Well'. I was convinced that if I could only pray there again, I could get the feeling back and the strong faith and then I could convert the Muslim. I eventually got there, after speeding the entire way, and found it was closed! No one was in sight, I frantically looked around for another similar event so I could 'charge up' but found nothing. Dejected, I returned home.

I started to realize that I was being pushed in a certain direction, so I prayed over and over to my Creator to surrender my will to His. I felt that my prayer was being answered; I went home and laid in bed and at that moment I realized that I needed to pray like never before. I sat up in bed and cried, *'Jesus, God, Buddha, whoever You are, please, please guide me, I need You! I have done so much evil in my life and I need Your help. If Christianity is the correct way then make me strong, and if it is Islam, then bring me to it!'* I stopped praying and the tears went away and deep within my soul I felt calm, I knew what the answer was. I went to work the next day and said to the Muslim brother "how do I say 'hi' to you?" He asked me what I meant and I said, "I wanted to become a Muslim". He looked at me and said "Allahu Akbar!" We hugged for a good minute or so and I thanked him for everything and I began my journey into Islam.

I look back at all the events that happened in my life over time, and I realize that I was being prepared to become a Muslim. I was shown so much mercy from God. Out of all that happened in my life, there was something to learn. I learned the beauty of the Islamic prohibition of intoxicants, the prohibition of illegal sex, and the need for the *Hijab*. I am finally on an even keel, no more am I too much in one direction; I am living a moderate life, and doing my best to be a decent Muslim.

There are always challenges, as I am sure many of you have felt, as have I. But through these challenges, through these emotional pains, we become stronger; we learn and, I hope, turn to God. For those of us who have accepted Islam at some point in our lives, we truly are blessed and fortunate. We have been given the chance, a chance for the greatest mercy! Mercy which we don't deserve, but still will God willing be given on the Day of Resurrection. I have reconciled with my family and have started looking to start my own God willing. Islam truly is a way of life, and even if we suffer poor treatment by fellow Muslims or non Muslims, we must always remember to be patient and turn only to God.

If I have said anything incorrect it is from me, and if anything that I have said is correct it is from God, all Praises are due to God, and may God bestow His mercy and blessings upon his noble Prophet Muhammad, *Amen*.

May God increase our faith and make it in accords to that which pleases Him and grant us His Paradise, *Amen*!

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