

Hagar, Ex-Christian, Brazil



“Are those who know equal to those who know not? It is only men of understanding who will remember.” (Quran 39:9)

These were the first words from the Qur’an that touched me. And when I read that I could not stop thinking about it. I wondered what should I really know to be able to understand? What really is knowledge?

What is it in reading books and studying theories, philosophies and thoughts if at the end we still do not find any meaning for our existence? Western answers for this dilemma just made me frustrated, uncomfortable, hopeless and, at the end, depressed.

At that time I could not believe in God nor pray anymore. How I reached this stage, I am not really sure. One day I was a believer in God (I was Christian – a Protestant) and the next day even to think about the existence of a God, Creator, seemed like nonsense to me.

I used to read part of the Old or the New Testament everyday and also study it. I found nice words there but they were practically discarded, for no one that I know lived by them.

Observing the way people live, the way things happen, the way deals and arrangements are done around the world to make some superior to others, I, in my mind, concluded that this is a very unjust and unfair world. The Bible’s words, so nice, were not more than some man’s invention.

Religion was nothing more than a way to keep the poor and the oppressed people calm, satisfied and submissive, like cattle. It was the opium of life.

I thought, “If there is a God, he is cynical and unfair. I do not make deals with unfair people; and in contrast, I will not make deals with an unfair god.”

I wished I had never learnt how to read and wished just to be like other people around me. Going to work, coming back home, watching TV (and accepting all

what is said there), reading Sidney Sheldon, buying clothes, etc. I thought that I could live happily in this way. But I was in a path without return. After all I had seen, I could not find any reason to be alive anymore.

I stopped looking at the different possibilities as to how the creation came about and made my mind up that the entire world was all brought about 'by chance'. While I was in this state, I was still very upset with all the injustices that were taking place in the world; I decided that I should defend a minority. It so happened that I chose the Muslims and began learning about Islam. I had never heard about Islam before, but I was curious to know who those 'Terrorists' were, as they were often called by the West.. I knew if the TV was showing them as evil, it was necessary to investigate because something was hidden.

I knew that the only way I could learn about Islam was to be in touch with Muslims. In Brazil, my country, we do not have too many communities. Then I went to the Internet and met many in chat rooms.

One young Saudi Muslim told me about Nizar Qabbani and I researched about him and found a poem called "I am with Terrorism". The poet quotes many events and places totally unknown to me and I realized how ignorant I was. I had never heard about any of those facts.

One day, I was chatting with a chat friend and he showed me a site where I could read the Qur'an. I opened it and read a surah (chapter) to read.

The title was in Arabic and I asked him the meaning in English and he told me it was the "Day of Judgment". I remember him asking me why I had chosen that chapter of the Quran? .

I remember I said to him if there is a God and if He is Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, He knows that words of punishment cannot affect me at all. Instead I am looking for words of hope, reasonable and effective words of hope.

At that time I remember that every night I had the same wish: I wish I could not wake up tomorrow. But the next day my eyes were opened again. It was reaching an unbearable level.

I left Brazil and came to Germany.

One day I was really desperate. I made ablution the way I read Muslims performed it, I prostrated the way I knew Muslims did and said "God, if You are real, release me from this situation. Show me the way."

Al-hamdu lillah (All praise is due to Allah). He did. I felt such great peace in my heart.

In my German class there were some Muslim sisters and I asked them for some books on Islam, and they gave me a few. It was at this time that I got my first Qur'an. May Allah bless them all.

I read the Qur'an. And there I found:

“And I created not the jinn and the mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone).” (Quran 51:56)

“And We have made some of you as a trial for others; will you have patience?” (Quran 25:20)

And all the answers I was looking for were there.

My life didn't change. It was still hard most of the time. What changed was my attitude facing life.. The difference is that now I know that He is my Lord and my *Wali* (Guardian), and I am grateful for all that He has blessed me with.

Hagar is a 42-year-old Muslim convert. She holds a degree in linguistics and literature and is a specialist in Portuguese language and literature.