

Thomas Webber, Ex-Christian, UK



Like most reverts to Islam my story is simple from the perspective of an outsider. Young man finds a religion that's different to his family's and eventually tells them and reverts.

However, like many things in life, it is the travelling of the journey and not the getting to the destination that seems most hard. Of course with Islam the journey will never be complete until it is ordained by Allah, the Exalted, but, instead we reach milestones along the way. So I shall tell the story of my life until now and my hopes and aspirations for the future.

I was born in the UK to a family of two loving parents and one brother (Colin), shortly to be followed by my twin sister (Linda) and later by my other two sisters Melissa (who died when I was very little) and my youngest sister Emily.

I was never baptized, as my father did not believe in putting a baby who could not object, through such a religious ceremony. However, my mother would send us to a Christian Sunday school to learn about Christianity.

Well, what can I say about that? Unfortunately for my mother my mind was relatively astute at a young age and as a result I could never understand why a loving and all powerful God could kill His son to forgive us our sins.

This was surely not right when if He was so all powerful and all sins were against Him He could just have forgiven us all! Surely this is not what a loving God would do.

As the years drew on I disregarded what I was taught about God. Religious holidays became all about presents and time off to relax. I was lost but I didn't know it. After all, these religious people would never be able to prove their religions like the sciences we were taught at school. To me they were just weak-minded or stupid.

As time went on I would continue to be successful at school and get good grades pleasing my parents, and everything was fine. It wasn't until sometime after my 13th birthday that I would start to become religious.

When I say religious I don't mean in the sense of being a practicing Christian. This, I could never be. But I did begin to hope to some form of God that I would be successful and attain all the things I needed. It was more a trust in something for the things I was unable to engineer for myself.

As I progressed through school I learnt about various religions, Buddhism sounded like a good one, for there was no God and it was all about being a good person, and after all that is basically what I had learnt from Christianity.

I began to think that religions were all about one thing and that was about making people become more moral. I continued to try and be a good person but couldn't quite shake the thought that something was missing.

A year or so before I left Senior School my brother became a born-again Christian. Unfortunately for me this was a somewhat negative experience as he would keep trying to convert me to his religion, and I still could not accept that Jesus, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, was killed to forgive us our sins.

So I withdrew any signs of religious thinking away from my family and friends to avoid further arguments with them and also to avoid being branded a weirdo, (which was just one of the cruel jibes I now heavily regret having landed upon my brother.)

My soul searching would continue to be repressed and hidden even from me for the next year or so. And then came the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in America. At first when I was told about it I didn't believe it could happen, but it had.

The news continued to report stories about it, but as it hadn't affected me particularly I merely continued with my life. It wasn't until reports of Islamic terrorists, reprisals against Muslims and the attack on Afghanistan and later on Iraq that I began to question my government and the US. This ultimately pushed me towards discovering the truth of Islam.

I simply couldn't believe that Muslims could be terrorists capable only of hatred and murder. This was just strange. So I ignored this, but maybe this was when my mind became truly willing to learn about religion for the first time.

It wasn't until I reached my first year of sixth-form College until I was to make friends with a Muslim. At first I would never believe she would be a friend as she said little until I got to know her. In this friend lay the clear and defined

evidence that Muslims were not just crackpots and loonies and were in fact normal people.

Eventually, I began to explore Islam on the internet when nobody was around; as I was not prepared to let people know I would consider any religion, let alone Islam of all religions. I began to believe what I read but was still a little confused and my journey to understanding was slow.

Eventually, the summer vacations came and I was on the edge of belief in Islam. I wanted to believe it was true but how could I prove it. From my years of good grades and trying to be perfect in my parents' eyes, I hated being wrong.

As it was the summer I could not easily meet my Muslim friend but had so much I wanted to ask her. Occasionally she would call and I would talk to her for hours trying to build up the courage to tell her I needed her help.

Eventually I managed the courage to explain I was confused about religion but could never admit I wanted to be a Muslim, as I didn't know for certain that this was no whim as I had so much fear in my mind. Well, eventually I managed to tell her and she had only good things to say.

So, I was now certain that I had to become a Muslim but how would I tell people and find out more? I knew I couldn't tell my family yet, as I remembered the cruelty I and my sisters had inflicted on my brother upon his becoming a Christian. I was afraid I would receive the same or worse.

After all he at least followed the religion of my country and that we had been raised in, this would be totally different. Wouldn't it? My journey from this point on was the hardest part. How can you find out more if you couldn't tell anyone for fear your family would find out? Well I'm glad to say eventually over a long period of time I slowly managed to confide in friends and family.

I decided to say Shahadah on my 20th birthday, knowing if I didn't set a date I would never do it. So the weekend before I went to the Global Peace and Unity Conference in London, which was really amazing. I went knowing that the following Monday I would pronounce the Testimony of Faith, but it wasn't until the Saturday night spent at a friends place that I knew for certain I was going to say the Shahadah on Monday.

For that night I lay trying to sleep and all I could hear was the Adhan ringing through my head. It was the best thing ever. The next day I saw people making their own Shahadah and longed for Monday to come. When the Monday finally did come and I finally did say the Shahadah it felt odd. Almost like I was me at last!

I know the best stories all have a beginning middle and an end but you'll have to wait a little longer for the end, but this journey still hasn't finished. I still have the Quran and hadiths to learn and so much more besides that as well.