

His Religion

**By Y. A. McTaggart
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**For my Grandparents and Kevin and Alison ,
Whom each in their own way helped me find myself in the truth.**

Bismillah Rahman a Raheem

Preface

For those of us who are willing to think and open our minds enough to embrace the wondrous truth of Islam, today will surely be big with blessings.

As a baby lies in bed he awakes with the first light of the sun streaming in his window, the sun is revealing the joys and happiness of another day. So many of us here in the west are awaking to the truth that God is one, has always been and indeed ever will be. With this very simple age old concept came the most beautiful Religion, a revelation to the prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be Upon Him) by the Angel Jibreel (the Arabic name for Gabriel) in the tribal lands of Arabia.

The Truth is there for those of us who search, brushing aside our own conditioning of false doctrines, gently knocking and awaiting. Contentment with the past and all its systems of capitalism Marxism socialism and incorrect doctrines are finally falling away. Ignorance is no longer a doorway to reject the truth. With today's communication explosion, false doctrines are on trial and must give justification if they are to survive.

Even with a book such as this, it may stir your mind to a new idea but it cannot make you understand. It is your choice to take these words and challenge your own mind to a new idea, old yet "forever new".

In this book I do not speak of emotional highs and lows in Religion - these things are best left to one's personal life and have no place in a Religion of truth, logic and science. Those emotions are best left to other creeds and doctrines. I give the truth bluntly and honestly of my life, my past, and my embracing of a Religion which guides my life every single day. From my early days of growing up in the West coast of Scotland to my life as a Roman Catholic Monk, to my turning point where I finally rejected this tyrannical mindset which exists around us and rejected western culture, even though it will always be part of who I am.

Although I am still a child in Islam having "reverted" (we are all born Muslim after all) only four years ago, I try to answer the question "what is truth?" in a straight forward way The Koran is my teacher and always has been, may Allah (all praise to him) forgive me if I say anything which is untrue. My Brothers in Islam have been so encouraging and supportive in producing this work. Without their teaching, I could not have completed it.

I began with jotting down my thoughts but those were only very minimal and still exist in various magazines and in the texts of speeches I gave in my early days where my knowledge was weaker than now. My earlier efforts highlighted my ignorance but mark memorials of my growth. As a certain poet from the old days said

"The Religion of our Fathers overhung our Children like the shadow of a mighty tree against the trunk of which we rested, while we looked up in wonder through the great boughs that half hid and half revealed the sky. Some of the boughs were already decaying; so that perhaps we began to see a little more of the sky than our elders; but the tree was sound at its heart. There was life in it which could never be lost to the world"

This strong conditioning did not vanish during the dark night of the searching soul but only with time and healing and supportive people whom, I'm sure did not really understand exactly what was happening to me but in the real style of the Arab way, listened patiently and commented appropriately, holding nothing back.

I give these pages to every honest seeker of truth

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Introduction

This book is written in such a style that you may open it at any given page and find something which you find pleasing to read. You don't have to read it from start to finish.

I talk particularly about the spiritual life and of the many people I met whilst travelling through these churches.

All through the book you will find my thoughts on aspects of both faiths, what the differences are and what they have in common whilst at the same time sharing with readers how I came to be in this most beautiful Religion of Islam.

This book is not written to condemn Christianity, merely to present the facts and to let the reader decide for himself. Islam stipulates that "there is no compulsion to believe".

Although written with a view of giving information to Non Muslims, I do hope that the Born Muslim is able to laugh with my happiness and cry with my tears as I share part of my life. It has not been easy sharing some of this information and my intention was that with this book may come a little healing not only for myself but for those who feel they have been misguided or abused spiritually.

It has given me immense amounts of pleasure putting this together book, some happy memories and some sad but most of all joy in knowing that I have found the truth pathway in life.

My Background and story

My ancestors were from both Scotland and Ireland; they came to Southwest Scotland in the mid 1800s to work in the famous ironworks which existed there until the 1980s. My Grandfather Andrew McTaggart whose family had come from the Islands off the west coast married Mary Lough ran whose family came from Northern Ireland. Both of their families came to Scotland to escape the famines which at the time were sweeping Northern Scotland and the potato famine of Ireland. However both of them brought a dysfunctional religious bitterness which stems from the history of both Scotland and Ireland which we will touch on later. As the author once said of Scotland it is “the most protestant county on earth”.

My Grandmother was raised in a strict Catholic family and had in her character that hard Catholic devotional love for the institution of the church and all its prose, whilst my Grandfather had a great love for protestant liberty. My family these days are related to almost every other family in the area since they all chose to stay, choose partners from, and indeed work in the same place. I was the first person in six generations to leave for a “new life” somewhere else.

My childhood was gladdened by their treasures of stories and artefacts of the past because they still lived in the village from where I came, the evidence was there to support everything they told me. Amongst grandmother's treasures were some photos, rosary beads and stories of religious wars in Ireland with Catholics being persecuted? She told them in the form of songs like “Fields of Athenry”. My Grandfather was from the “Bretheren” church a group who happily condemn anyone out with their own little circle. My Grandparents had to elope to get married since “mixed” marriages between the two Christian faiths was literally unheard of in those days and they were subsequently punished by both families. This strange phenomenon was to repeat itself with my parents, my Mother and Father found themselves in exactly the same situation. I never could understand how a family would find it difficult to respect a man because of his Religion and this question drove me to investigate both of these beliefs and to go further afield in my search for the truth.

When my Brother Andrew was born, they decided that he would be a protestant Christian. This caused such an outcry in my family that when I was born it was decided that I would be Catholic, Andrew and I were sent to different schools, I was sent to a Catholic school, Andrew went to a protestant one, our relationship at different stages of our lives has been deeply wounded and hurt by our parent's choice of Religion for both of us. We were even given different surnames, me, the one of my Mother since my Father said no Catholic child could have his name.

My Father possessed a strong intellect but was a weak man who subsequently died age 49 after suffering from Schizophrenia for many years. Of my mother I can't speak because the pen wouldn't do it justice. She had a sympathizing heart and a cheerful light which she has to this day. MANY peculiar circumstances and events meant that my childhood was fairly sad particularly with my Father's illness.

Each time they decided to argue, Religion was always raised, with my Father accusing my mother of being uneducated because she was after all a “papist” which is a slang word for a Catholic. I also remember my Mother teaching us about purgatory and other Catholic doctrine which was much to the disgust of my Father. Family get togethers were always difficult with inevitably someone making some remark about Religion which would result in an argument.

Bizarrely enough, even in a small village like to the one my family still live in today, this tiny place still has two schools one for Catholic children, one for protestants, I suppose old habits die hard, even today.

I have been interested in Religion since I was a little boy, wondering why people killed each other in the name of a God, why my parents would fight over the same Religion called Christianity. Why at School I was taunted and called names because I was not of the same Christian denomination.

My Introduction to Christianity

My Introduction to Evangelical Christianity

By the time I was 16, like most teenage children I found myself searching and asking questions about things in life. I felt alienated, alone and distant. Again, nothing uncommon in that since I was simply growing up. We all go through these feelings at that age. I became very interested in Short Wave Radio and one day found a broadcast from Ecuador South America preaching “the love of God” and how important it was for everyone to be Christian. I was indeed very interested to hear this and this was my first encounter with “Religious people” since my parents had stopped practicing their faiths. This radio station was “evangelical” and was talking about how Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him) saves and God is love. They happily quoted from the Bible:

“For god so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son.....” John 3:16

“For ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free” John 8:32

As well as other heavily loaded emotional statements. After this, I started to attend a local church. In the beginning it went very well because it gave me a social circle and a “reason” to attend and to believe in what was being taught. In looking back, it was wholly dysfunctional. The people there were terribly middle class and there was an opinion that I was inferior or somehow not to that standard. Of course the fact that I was working as a legal assistant raised my status somewhat enough to be invited for “tea” after the services by little old ladies wearing frocks who seemed to be totally oblivious to the world. I also felt there was something terribly “eighties” amongst the younger members who were trying to somehow to recapture part of their youth which was lost. I also felt that the false spirit of bonding and the invariably large houses which I was taken to socialise was an inverted form of snobbery but of course that was never discussed. It was almost certainly engineered to give a certain atmosphere, one of bonding and togetherness. Neither were the shotgun weddings or the underlying sexuality issues discussed which were kept well away from any kind of discourse. Not to give a voice to one’s feelings is one of the most abusive things you can injure yourself with. These people needed real love and I felt that anyone looking in could see that, but I was caught up in it and blinded by it. Deep down though I knew something was wrong, but I just felt it was with me, not with them.

Another way this “love” was bestowed upon them was “baptism of spirit”.

“I have baptized you in water but he shall baptize you in spirit” Matt 3:11

A time when God allegedly pours out his love to man and I recall sitting watching them falling down one by one at the front. Once, when invited I went up to the front and had some woman beating on my head taking in a language they call “tongues” telling me she could feel the love of God being poured out on me. She was getting annoyed at the fact that I wasn’t about to fall down on the specially laid crash mat behind me, in fact because I was aware of what they were doing but the hypnotic

effect simply didn't work, nor did it ever on me. This of course meant in their eyes that God didn't love me as much as anyone else and I was shunned at that point and they became rather suspicious. But yet both they and I didn't fully understand what was happening, all I knew is that it was false shallow peace.

It was at this point that I started to read the Bible as directed by them and from what I read, it did look like the truth. The Bible is full of verses quoting God being love. There were however a few points which I didn't know at that time. The first thing I did not know was there are 26 different versions of the bible in print. Some with the additional books of the Greek version of the Torah and some without. The second thing I didn't know was that the Bible was highly contradictory in different parts. The third thing I didn't know was that the Bible had been changed throughout the years and I wasn't even sure where it came from. Perhaps the most important thing I didn't know was the history of Christianity, where it came from, how it started, how it spread and indeed the history of this "sect" I was involved with. . I also wanted to ask about the writings of the Bible. – How old was it? Did Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him) write anything? I asked these questions but got told "it's a mystery" and to be a good Christian you really need to just accept. "God knows what you don't know". What of the contradictions. What did it mean when the Bible said things like:-

"Verily I say to you, this generation will not have passed away until all these things shall have taken place"
Matt 24:34

When talking about the end of the world. Here we are two thousand years later and the end of the world still hasn't happened however it's a "mystery" in Christianity.

This was of course said by a sixty year old lady who was pouring tea, serving cream biscuits and wearing a pink patterned dress. She of course had never married and looked sixty years old since she was seventeen and was always smiling insincerely. It was at that point that I knew something was very wrong. Nothing made sense. How could people simply "believe" in something they knew nothing about? It was like an "off" switch which some of them applied to their own minds. On looking back at that point I really wish I knew someone, who could have helped me understand more, my parents were "absent" because of my Father's illness. I don't suppose they would've been the best people to ask anyway given my family's track record on Religion. It wasn't until later I discovered answers to all of these questions which we will look at later. With regards to the sect, well it was 150 years old and my great grandparents used to go there, I had emotional ties to it and I got respect because of those family ties but that was it. It was emotional nothing else. When I realised that I left.

A Little Suffering

My Granparents died, as did my Father which really convinced me that life is too short not to search for answers and I committed myself to keep looking until I found them.

It was not until I left my involvement with evangelical Christianity did I realise exactly why I was attracted to it in the first place. It was nothing to do with God. It was actually an emotional “high”. The people who were involved with it including myself had never received love from their family circle or peer group. My relationship with my Father was bad to say the least, he spent much time in a psychiatric hospital and all I ever remembered about him was his very bad temper. So it was quite convenient to be told “God loves you” because to truly believe this meant that I received a “high” and a sense of belonging with like minded people. This was enough for me to overlook the questions I had for those years. These questions about what the Bible was REALLY saying. The churches were full of people who smiled insincerely, who were really out of touch with their feelings and obviously came from very injured backgrounds. I suppose rather than face one’s problems in life it is very convenient simply close your eyes and forget that exist. To allow oneself to be consumed by ecstasy is highly commendable in Christian circles which is “proof” that God is there watching. I never did really fully fit in to that kind of environment. I came to the very sad awareness that I was simply looking for some kind of healing, not some kind of God. Even more frightening was the fact that we all were, all of those young men and women had obviously gone through their own fair share of difficulties in life. Western Culture has a price.

By the time I was 20, Life had thrown some of its worst moments at me, a friend was killed in a car crash, another committed suicide, my Father and Grandparents had died, those emotional issues which I had were still there and the question was still burning inside of me, what about Religion what is the truth? Growing up in a dysfunctional family left me with one question “why?” “Why the suffering? Why my Father’s illness? It was at that time that I moved forward in my quest to know more of the truth and as it is written “seek and ye shall find”.

It was at that time I started my trek, to find the “truth” as I called it. The next Church I looked at was Spiritualism.

MY INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUALISM

For those of you who don’t know, spiritualism is the “darker side of Christianity for those people who try to communicate with the dead.

I was always very suspicious of this but when someone claims to talk to the dead, you can’t help but become curious, it is after all “proof” that there is something after death. I somehow managed to ignore the fact that scientific tests have proved most of them a fraud over the years and those who haven’t been, tests have proved “inconclusive”. That alone should have been enough to make anyone suspicious.

I was invited there by a friend who was into that kind of thing. We sat in what looked like a Church while a woman or man would be on the platform giving a “demonstration” of her powers to communicate with the dead.

Here is one example:-

“I’m seeing Rosa.... Who knows someone called Rosa who’s passed away?” Of course there was someone, the place was standing room only why wouldn’t there have been someone.... Was I the only person ever who could see that she wasn’t saying or giving information on the dead person but was “asking” for the information? Rosa is a common name.

A lady raised her hand “I knew a woman called Rosa”

“Was she an old lady when she died?”

“No”

“Well she’s appearing as old which meant she died a long time ago?”

“No, she died last year”

“OK well she’s appearing as an old lady to signify the fact that we don’t live forever...”

“She comes with a message – she’s showing me photographs do you have photos of her?”

“No”

“Well, do you know someone who has?”

“Her family”

“ahhh ok – she’s also telling me about how you used to talk”

“Yes we did”

“And how she died so young. It seemed to be quick and unexpected”

Well, I mean we can read between the lines here and see what’s happening. Now, the fact that this person who raised her hand was there in the first place would suggest that she was feeling a little bit insecure after all; why else would you want a message from the dead? Hope perhaps? So, it was no surprise that she couldn’t see what I could, a woman who was actually “asking” her questions, not giving her answers from a so called dead woman, just feeding back what she had been told.

It’s interesting to note that “the dead” seem to be hung up on photos in the house or lost property. Very little is said about huge worldwide affairs. After all, if it was really possible to communicate with the dead, would we not now in the 21st century be using this in a major scientific fashion to better humanity?

Probably the worrying part of this is that these speakers actually BELIEVED that they had a gift.

I was fooled to begin with but then I started to wonder about science. Was it technically possible for a dead person to “come back and talk”? The answer was a long study of metaphysics, none of which offered me “conclusive” evidence that it was possible to communicate with dead people. I think it works on very basic psychological techniques mentioned above or mesmerism involving simple mind reading tricks.

The Bible condemns this practice as do most churches.

MY INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

I loved the idea of studying Christian Science because it was the link between science and Religion. I had and still have a huge admiration for the woman who founded it, Mary Baker Eddy. What she founded was a study of a scientific principle not a Religion but because of the period within which she was born, it was very important for her to bring a religious slant to her discovery. It was amazing at the time, (which was Victorian England) as it swept over the people. It obviously was not as effective as she believed else it would have worked and would be widely used today. Basically Mrs Eddy wrote a text book called "Science and Health" which does indeed clear a lot of matters up in the ling between science and Christianity. Basically it involved metaphysics. .It was formed as part of the New thought movement which became as we know today the New Age Movement.

They called it "the cult for the cultured" because of the high number of more affluent people who seemed to get involved with her Church, founded in Boston USA. . It was no accident that she actually targeted affluent people to become members. It is really for those who needed deeper and logical answers, operating on a deeper level. I studied it for a time.

Basically her teachings are as follows:-

1. It is possible to heal people using metaphysics
2. God is one impersonal entity in whom all exists
3. sin and sickness don't exist as we don't – we are all living in a dream
4. By denying the senses, we are waking ourselves up to reality thus healing ourselves and others from illness.

Mrs Eddy explains in detail but one can be healed and has "evidence" in the form of people who were healed.

I was very happy to be involved in this VERY middle class group because they seemed to have answers for everything. Nothing exists in their eyes except a spirit which we are all part of and God is good so we are good also. Sin evil and anything opposing good doesn't exist.

There was just one small issue I had with Christian Science, if sin and evil doesn't exist, well why so we see all of this suffering all around us? I asked this question while sitting in a very large mansion style house sipping tea from a china cup with a couple who looked like they belonged in the set of an American TV Drama.

"oh that's because we can't trust our senses you see its all a dream...by the way which part of Scotland do you come from – we own a small Island there".

After a while I simply could not reconcile the suffering around me and my life with their teachings so I left.

MY INTRODUCTION TO CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

Having been involved with Christians for quite some time, I had become very knowledgeable on part of the Bible, not all of it but enough to know which bits I could make sense of and which bits were “mysteries”. To be a good Christian one must be able to sit in a large circle with a group and agree that “Life is hard” and “everyone is going to hell” except of course this small elitist group. Somehow though we were all blinded to this fact that the world might have some good in it too.

The Catholic Church was of course condemned for being an institution and having a different interpretation of the Bible and this was mentioned at all of the Protestant services I attended (protestant being the word used for any church which isn't Catholic in western Europe). The pastors and ministers felt it very important to mention the evils of this particular part of Christianity. A lot of this was because of history and that suspicion of Catholicism was passed down through the generations. This in turn made me even more interested; after all it was my heritage, my birthright, even though I never ever was taught anything about it. So I began to attend the Catholic Church. Although they had a different slant on things, I felt that since they were the ones who could trace their ancestry back to the time of Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him) and claimed to be founded by Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him) then they must have in some way more of the truth than the last church I was involved with. After all, they had the scholars and they existed as the only church in Christianity for the first 1500 years of the Religion.

I found that they did have something, they were steeped in culture and heritage and intellectual writings which were so lacking in the other church but they were still a little emotional. The other one difficulty I had was that most of the people didn't take it seriously, being Catholic was something a person “did”, not something a person believed.

My Life as a Monk

I was happy in Catholicism but again did not equate the happenings in my life to why I was doing this. It's true I was searching but it was also true that I was grieving for some of the most important people in my life who had died. Catholicism gave me a structure, a reason to live. Something which I needed so badly.

I was still desperately unhappy emotionally, and that confused me, after all if I was in God's true church founded as mentioned in the Bible when Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him) allegedly said to Peter:-

“Thou art Peter, and on this rock I build my Church...” Matt 16:18

Then why or how could I possibly be unhappy? Surely I should be bouncing off the walls. I decided that this must be because of the World's influence on me and immediately set out to become a better person. I don't ever remember making that

choice to actually join a Monastery; I do remember however that the path was laid for going. I was working for an Insurance company who had announced they were closing and it was only a matter of time had I stayed before I would have been unemployed so it all made sense. On looking back though, although it is very distant, I was hurting very badly and wanted a reason to leave home, where life was very difficult. Before my Father died, my parents had separated, I was supporting my Mother and like my Father she was drinking heavily and depended a lot on me to look after her. I had been forced into taking my Father's role in life.

So, I applied and was accepted to join a Monastery in Dublin Ireland where I was to spend the next six years of my life to obtain a degree in theology and philosophy.

Life there was highly dysfunctional. The idea was that the more you sacrifice, the closer you will get to God which is a basic Christian fundamental principal. So I led the life, I entered the system whereby we were taught to dig our graves in the garden (one spoon a day) to teach us humility, to remain silent and speak for only half an hour each day and whatever we were told to do, we had to do it. We took vows of poverty chastity and obedience and we lived the life as we thought God (in the form of the Church) commanded it. The most bizarre thing about it all was the fact that this style of life was not mentioned in the Bible – it had appeared earlier in the Church but was an innovation.

I learnt a lot in the monastery, mainly about self control and denial, and also the importance of silence in daily life. Strangely enough I wasn't taught much about the Bible in itself, which is a tradition stemming from the Reformation which we will talk about later. I was taught more about the Catholic Church and its teachings which, because of the history were long standing and honoured. Also because many of the authors of the old times had now become "saints" and had achieved that elevated status which meant their writing were completely infallible and worthy of study in the eyes of the church..

One thing I do remember studying well is the various councils of the church such as the Second Vatican Council. This one reformed religious life for Monks and Priests.

THE JOURNEY TO ISLAM

It was while studying to be a monk and having completed a large part of my training that I was allowed out for one day on a mission. Generally speaking, the life as a Monk means that you are not allowed out under any circumstances and would be very similar to a prison in that respect. Mail is censored and you cannot receive any calls. If you have a visitor you may only speak with them through an iron grill and they are not allowed to see your face.

One particular day it was decided that I should be allowed out with another Monk in order to try and talk to the Arabs about Christianity over at the Islamic centre. We were given strict instructions and for us it was very exciting because we had been not allowed out for a very long time. The fact that it was on the other side of Dublin as well made it even more exciting because we would have to catch the bus and would be outside.

I can remember arriving on the bus at the area called Clonskeagh. It was a Friday and everyone even on the bus seemed to be dark, obviously all going to the Mosque as I was. As I stepped off the bus with the other Monk there was an immediate frenzy and all of these dark skinned people started to run off into the distance obviously because they were late for their prayers.

I began to walk towards the Mosque and as I reached the gate was greeted warmly with the words “asallaam alaikum” to which I responded “hello” because I didn’t know anything about Islam at this point. The people there were very friendly and I entered the mosque took off my shoes and sat down at the back. Prayer was in progress and I couldn’t help but notice how everyone was on the floor not on seats like a Church and they were performing all these actions, bowing and then prostrating with their heads on the floor. It was very reverend but it scared me because I didn’t understand what was happening. I was surprised how busy it was and how many people were coming in though. I had no idea Islam was like that.

Within a short time, the prayers were finished and the people vanished almost as quickly as they came. I could hear them all taking in Arabic which sounded very aggressive and I thought they were fighting with one another. Only when I saw them putting their arms around each other and showing strong signs of affection did I realise that they weren’t arguing at all. I felt very uncomfortable with these outward displays of emotion since culturally this is not something British people ever do, or at least not in public. Also, living as monk, where we could only speak for half an hour each day everything was quite overwhelming.

I remember one man coming over and beginning to talk to me. If I recall, his name was Omar and he was the caretaker there, I was really surprised because he was so friendly. He didn’t have that cold false sting which many English Religions people have, he was very open and almost child-like. I had already been trained in what to say to him but I was so overwhelmed by simply being there that I didn’t tell him where I was from, I simply started to open a dialogue about Christianity.

Because of the colour of this man, I assumed he was Arab but was surprised to hear him talking with a very strong English accent. It seems that was actually from the West Indies and he was a convert to Islam. Therefore he was immediately able to talk about his conversion and different portions of the Bible and his experiences of the Churches he attended with which I too had an affiliation in my past.

After talking for a few minutes, another Arab man came over and he started a conversation with me and without any dialogue or arrangements they both invited me to join them for dinner. By this time the sun was setting and it seemed that they were breaking their fast since it was Ramadan. The other Monk and I made our excuses but then Omar said “BUT YOU MUST” . I could see from his expression that he genuinely wanted to have my company and I felt very pleased about that. I wasn’t used to that kind of attention, in fact even before my time in Religion. This was new for me.

We all went underneath the mosque which was obviously a gym hall. It was only then I learnt of the School they had attached to the centre. They had set up long tables and food was being served. I felt embarrassed at first because everyone was dark and I was very white and I felt I stood out from the crowd. They were all very friendly and I was so struck by that. Particularly since most of the British or Irish people I knew wouldn’t be able to do the same for Arabs. On talking to them I realised that many were from Libya, some were working there and they came from all backgrounds and all walks of life. I also met a few others who had converted. The biggest and most impressive thing was the fact that they accepted me just for being me, there was no pressure to convert me but they wanted to tell me what they felt about Christianity and what Islam was. I was given a Koran as a gift and lots of telephone numbers to keep in touch with them.

On returning to the Monastery, I was late, had missed two sets of Christian Prayers and my superiors weren’t happy. I was never allowed out again in my time there and was punished by being put on dinner duty, denied visitors and had to eat dinner on the floor which was a sign for all of the others that I had misbehaved. The Koran was confiscated since we were not allowed personal property and I became more involved with Christianity again, but a few of the questions the Muslims I had met really made me begin to question:-

“How can God have a son?”

“We are born with knowledge that God is one and taught that God is three”

“Why is Christianity so divided?”

“The Prophets in the Bible are the same in the Koran”

“How can God be three, father son and Holy Ghost in one?”

“The Bible wasn’t predicting the coming of Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him) in all of the prophecies; some of them were obviously referring to another prophet by the words used”

“Why are there so many different versions of the Bible?”

“Why do Christians date?”

“Why are monks aesthetic?”

The bizarre thing was I had already asked these questions a few years ago but realised that I had stopped asking – now I was just accepting.

My Christian training had taught me to say “It’s a mystery” to all of these questions and statements. To be a good Christian involved not questioning, just accepting but suddenly I was confronted with these questions which unsettled me and wouldn’t go away. I had rediscovered that questioning part of myself which my religious training in becoming a Monk had killed.

I spent my half an hour recreational time each day reading as much as I could about Islam from the Koran in the library until my superiors noticed that I wasn’t “conforming”. The proverb in religious life that you should “eat well, sleep well and drink well” really describes life as a monk. I began to refuse to drink which immediately made them suspicious of me. I don’t recall why I refused to drink but I knew in Islam it was wrong and I knew also that Christianity didn’t encourage it. So again I found myself on cleaning duty. But this time, I didn’t stop; I continued to refuse to drink. I tried to write to get information on Islam and some books but I could not because my mail was censored and I knew that they would then know what I was trying to do so I waited.

The housekeeper used to come and cook once in the week for the monks and she was the one if anyone could, who was able to get me what I wanted. Because I was on cleaning duty I was allowed to be in the kitchen the same time as she was and she really didn’t like my superiors. So I asked her to get me some books on the subject. She thought it was normal since I was a monk anyway.

I got the books and hid them in my room but during an inspection one of them was found but they didn’t actually suspect I was reading it, they just thought I forgot to return it to the library because they didn’t look at it they just saw a book. I was safe for a few more moments. But was punished anyway.

So now I had the details on how to pray. I started to say my prayers but because I was living in a Church I knew that my prayers would not be valid there. I was allowed in the Garden and that was the opportunity I took to pray. I asked permission to be allowed to the Garden and other parts of the building at different times (especially before sunrise) but it was refused.

Obviously this was tearing me apart because I was leading a double life so eventually I decided to leave. The one problem I had was that I was still held by my vows of poverty chastity and obedience to the church so I decided that since I had made these promises before God then they should be honoured and it was to be at least another 12 months before they expired to be renewed, this time with permanent ones.

So, I discussed the matter with them and then left. The problem was I had nothing, nowhere to go and not even enough money in my pocket to get a place to live. Monks live a life of poverty so when you go in, all personal possessions are taken from you, everything, even my pension benefits from my previous employers had to be assigned

to them. I asked my family to cable me some money through and I eventually found a place to live and got a job.

The week I left I went to the Mosque and took my shahada and put my Christian Life firmly behind me.

Even after leaving my life as a Monk I continued to work in areas of welfare helping people before finally leaving Ireland three years later. It made a change working as a Muslim rather than as a Christian. I met many other Muslims in Dublin. Then came the next big event, circumcision. I was circumcised at Beaumont Hospital Dublin and felt joyous at this step towards Islam.

Islam for me has been a journey which doesn't stop. Here I am four years later trying to learn Arabic so that I can read the Koran properly. Still learning.

CHRISTIANITY

So, where did it all go so horribly wrong?

A History of Christianity

Basically, Christianity began with the Birth of Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him) (Esa is his name in Arabic, peace be upon him), in the early days Christianity was simply a sect or group within Judaism. It was not until 200 years after the time of Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him) that it evolved into a separate group in its own right. It had to, in order to survive since this new minority Religion was being attacked by the Roman Emperor. At this time, the words "Priest" or "Bishop" appeared.

The next big thing to happen was the conversion of a Roman Emperor in the 4th century which gave Christianity the push it needed in order to spread its message throughout Western Europe. When it arrived in the UK it immediately dismantled the pagan Religion by creating festivals to coincide with their own. This is the reason why they use Christmas trees because the festival of the birth of Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him) replaced the old worship festival of the pine tree. It is common knowledge that Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him) (peace be upon him) was not born in December and history tells us that that the pagans would only convert if it was mixed with their Religion so they could identify with it.

Let's look at the early Church and see the traces of the divisions:-

Catholicism

The word Catholic means "Universal" and was the first and only church in the old days. As mentioned earlier, it quickly grew and spread becoming richer with every country which embraced it. This "one true and holy Church" as they describe themselves caused tyranny and reigned over the people with a mighty sword. Government, Church and State was the same thing and the Kings of our countries answered directly to the Pope. They had control over everything ranging from the welfare of the people to the education system. The divide between the Priests and the people was a mighty gulf. The Priests were very rich and lived in what seemed like huge palaces of the day while the people lived in dire poverty and were almost dying in the street.

This continued until by the 10th Century the moral standards of the clergy was so bad that people were beginning to ask serious questions about the control and power they had. Quickly, the Church formed an army called the "Inquisition" which killed anyone who questioned the Church's authority on any matter. An English man was the first casualty when he tried to translate the Bible into English from the Roman Language of Latin. Immediately he was arrested and put to death as a heretic.

Much later Galileo the Italian scientist was placed under house arrest for his writings which said the tides of the sea were influenced by the gravitational pull of the moon.

This questioning continued however until the church went a step too far. They wanted to build the Vatican in Rome and in order to raise the money, began a tax which in exchange for money would give you a certificate that would enable you to get to paradise. This raised very big questions about the authority of the Church and whether a person could go directly to God or else through an Institution in all things. After all the Bible had said that Peter was the first leader of the Christians and whatever he said and did would be acceptable in heaven and this belief was passed from Pope to Pope by something called "apostolic succession". Finally in different countries throughout Europe, people within the Church began to ask questions. A few men were very important in this movement which became known as the reformation.

The Reformation

This began with a handful of men in a number of European Countries who were extremely dissatisfied with the way things were. They caused one of the greatest chasms in history and some of the bloodiest battles the spirit of which is still alive today. One of these men was called Martin Luther and he was a German Monk. He died crying saying that he wanted a reform of the Catholic Church, not to create his own church. But it was too late, what these men started was something they themselves couldn't finish. Martin Luther set up Lutherism in Germany and Northern Europe, John Knox founded the Church of Scotland, and Calvin in Switzerland founded the Presbyterian movement.

To give a few examples of how strong the Reformation was, let's take Scotland as an example:-

Scotland, like the rest of Western Europe at the time of the Reformation was governed by a king who would have answered to the Pope. The church controlled every affair of Government and Education through this means.

John Knox was studying to a Priest when he began questioning Doctrinal Issues such as this new Tax to build the Vatican. Glasgow Cathedral was the main Catholic Cathedral in the city, during the Reformation, those people who tried to break away from the Catholic Church were executed and their heads placed on display on the fence around the building.

After the Reformation

After the Reformation, his new Church, the Church of Scotland became wholly responsible for the education system as well as the judiciary system. Catholicism was then declared illegal and anyone found practicing it was put to death if found guilty. Only in the mid 1800s was this law repealed because of the number of Irish Immigrants who came over to the west coast and brought the Catholic Religion with them. As this change has been fairly recent, many people still living in Scotland hold stories from their parents about how Catholics and protestants treat each other - they

tell stories of discrimination and still hold long harbouring grudges about the Catholic and protestant churches respectively.. It is common to still hear people referring to “Papists”.

The Reformation in Scotland was not only about Religion, it was about power, tyranny, the right to choose and the democratic system of the United Kingdom is based heavily on that. This is the reason why people are very defensive about it.

Although this spirit is beginning to die with time, a lot more work needs to be done to try and appease the situation. Many of the older people will still refuse to live and work with Catholics and when young people try to get married to a member of the other faith they still face a lot of opposition.

King Henry VIII of England started his own Church since the Catholic one wouldn't allow him to divorce and he wanted to marry number two of the six wives. He loved the Catholic Church however and made sure that his new Church the Church of England would be very similar except on the Pope as leader. That's why the Queen is leader of the Church of England today. This was not the case for the other Churches who each have very different beliefs.

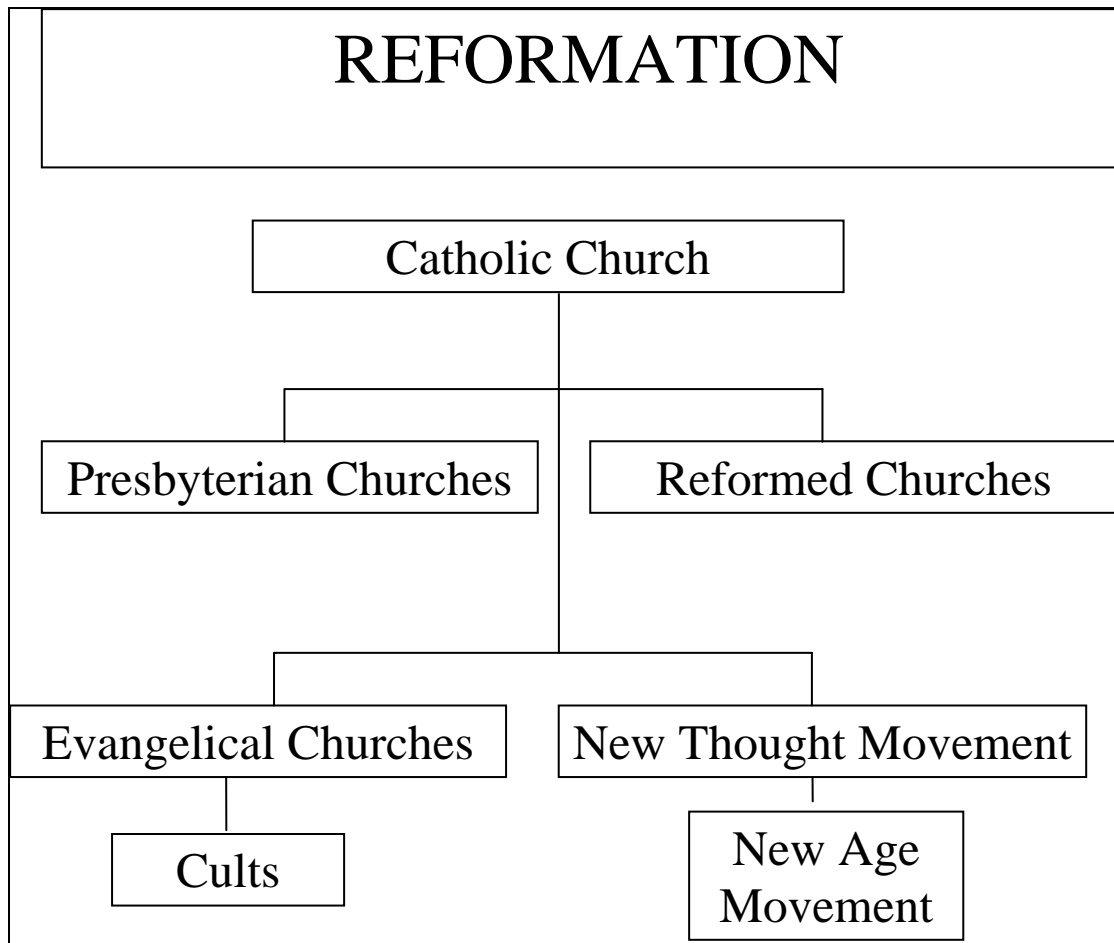
The spirit of the Reformation is still very strong and among these “protesting” churches (from which we get the name protestant) further splits developed until we see today that a new church appears every day each with its own interpretation of what Christianity is based on its own interpretation of what the Bible says.

Although the Reformation was needed (no one questions that). The problem meant that everyone formed their own beliefs. In the first few hundred years, there were only a few Christian systems in operation but as time went on and particularly in the 19th century, people again were searching and questioning their leaders.

The Industrial Revolution and its effect on Christianity.

Work was becoming available, the economy was picking up and people were enjoying a standard of living, after a long period of poverty. This meant that their belief systems were evolving and ignorance of God was no longer simply a stepping stone to faith. A small number of people were questioning authority because it was felt that on certain political levels, none of the churches which had been formed after the Reformation had stayed on the “true path”. So more churches started to be formed, each like the last but with a slight variation.

It was at this time that evangelism came on the scene where “Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him) saves” and gives an emotional high as we discussed in detail earlier. These are the churches which are still formed today because they make people feel good.



THE BIBLE

As mentioned in various parts of this book, we know from history that even before the various parts of the Bible were put together, there were huge issues over where some of the parts actually came from. The old part of the Bible, known as the Old Testament for example contains the Jewish Scriptures called “the Torah”. There are two versions of the Torah, the Greek and the Hebrew version. It depends which version of the Bible you read as to which version of the Torah you will read. The Greek one contains extra parts which initially were contained in the Catholic Bible. These books which are generally only contained in the Catholic Bible are:

- 1 Esdras
- 2 Esdras
- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees
- 3 Maccabees
- 4 Maccabees
- Susanne and the elders

There are more however these would be the main ones which are included.

After the Reformation, it was translated into English and many other languages. Generally speaking however, we know that the Catholic translations of the Bible are

the versions which will contain the extra books since they always recognised the Greek version of the Torah.

In the new part of the Bible known as the New Testament, we know that the oldest book was written 150 years after the time of Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him), and like the Torah, we can only speculate who wrote it because Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him) never wrote anything or at least nothing which survived. The Bible as we know it today didn't exist until 500 years after the time of Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him), many books were left out of it which came to light only recently.

Perhaps the most frightening thing is that some Churches which are being formed these days are reading it, taking it literally word for word and forming beliefs on it. These Churches are always the same type, that is Charismatic and Evangelical and they always attract the same types of people, those who haven't received a lot of love in their life and therefore feel the need to say "God is Love" "God Loves you" "Jesus (Peace be upon Him) (Peace be upon Him) saves you". These very strong emotions make it easy for the people to close their eyes to clear evidences and disregard for history.

BIBLE PROPHECIES ABOUT THE ADVENT OF MUHAMMAD

Abraham is widely regarded as the Patriarch of monotheism and the common father of the Jews, Christians and Muslims. Through His second son, Isaac, came all Israelite prophets including such towering figures as Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon and Jesus. May peace and blessings be upon them all. The advent of these great prophets was in partial fulfillment of God's promises to bless the nations of earth through the descendents of Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3). Such fulfillment is wholeheartedly accepted by Muslims whose faith considers the belief in and respect of all prophets an article of faith.

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5) The full legitimacy of Ishmael as Abraham's son and "seed" and the full legitimacy of his mother, Hagar, as Abraham's wife are clearly stated in Genesis 21:13 and 16:3. After Jesus, the last Israelite messenger and prophet, it was time that God's promise to bless Ishmael and his descendants be fulfilled. Less than 600 years after Jesus, came the last messenger of God, Muhammad, from the progeny of Abraham through Ishmael. God's blessing of both of the main branches of Abraham's family tree was now fulfilled. But are there additional corroborating evidence that the Bible did in fact foretell the advent of prophet Muhammad?

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BASIC INFORMATION RELATING TO ISLAM

Let'S list the basic Islamic beliefs

- Belief in God
- Belief in Angels
- Belief in God's Revealed Books
- Belief in the Prophets of God
- Belief in the day of judgement
- Belief in predestination (Al-Qadar)

Lets look at what it means to be Muslim

- Testimony of faith
- Prayer
- Giving Zakat (a tax for the poor)
- Fasting in Ramadan
- Pilgrimage to Mecca - once in one's life

I can testify that Islam is the one true religion and that God, who is one, who has no partners and no sons or daughters sent a revelation to his final prophet Mohammed (peace be upon Him).

Dear Readers:

May the light of truth shine in your heart and mind. May it lead you to peace and certitude in this life and eternal bliss in hereafter.

AMEEN