



The Light

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Ahmadiyya Anjumans Ishaat Islam

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Call of the Messiah

by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad,
the Promised Messiah and Mahdi

(Ayyam us Sulah, continued from last month.)

Declaration of Faith

Lastly, it should be remembered that our opponent Islamic religious scholars effort, to create, in the minds of the people, feelings of bitterness and hatred against us, and call us heretics and faithless, alleging that I and my organisation have turned back and apostatized from Islam and the true principles of faith, is such a foul falsehood of these invidious religious leaders which no person, having even a grain of piety in his mind, will ever dare to fabricate or concoct. The five things which form the basis of Islam, constitute the articles of our faith; and we hold fast and grasp firmly the Word of the Most High God i.e. the Holy Quran which it has been commanded, to cling to and grasp; and like Hazrat Umar Farooq (God be pleased with him), it is on our lips: The Book of God is sufficient for us; and like Hazrat Ayesha (God be pleased with

her), we give preference to Holy Quran if a difference or inconsistency should arise between the Quran and the hadith, particularly in stories which, having been generally accepted, are not therefore, abrogable. We believe that excepting the One True God there is no other deity and that our Holy Master, Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (peace and the blessings of God be upon him) is His Messenger and the Last of the Prophets (*khatam al nabiyyin*). We believe in the existence of angels, the resurrection of animated bodies, the Day of Judgment, Heaven and Hell and we believe that whatever the Most High God has said in the Holy Quran, and whatever has been said and stated by our Holy Prophet (peace and the blessings of God be upon him) is all true, in accordance with the above mentioned statement. And we believe that a man who should care to diminish even a jot from the Law of Islam, or add thereto even a tittle, or lay the foundation of abandonment of its obligations, or any innovation or change, is devoid of faith and a renegade from Islam. We enjoin upon and advise our group to repose full faith in (the Kalima): لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

and hold fast and adhere to it up to the last breath of their life, and believe in all the prophets and all the Books the truthfulness whereof has been verified and vouched for in the Holy



Derawar Fort, Choolistan, Pakistan

I Shall Love All Mankind.

Quran, and observe prayer and fasting, and pay the poor-rate, and perform the pilgrimage, and discharge obediently all the obligations appointed by the Most High God and his Messenger, looking upon them as imperative duties, and abstain from all forbidden things, regarding them as unlawful prohibitions, and walk strictly in the straight path of Islam. In brief, it is obligatory to believe in all those matters on which the righteous and pure personalities of old had generally agreed, doctrinally as well as practically, and also on those matters which, by the consensus of Ahl-i-Sunnat

are called Islam; and we call the heaven and the earth to witness that this is our faith; and one who imputes to us any faith other than this, fabricates a filthy lie against us, departing from piety and honesty, and we shall, on the Judgment Day, charge him, saying, when did he rip open our heart to see that

in spite of this express affirmation of ours, we were, in our heart of hearts, opposed to this statement: **أَلَا إِنَّ لَعْنَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ وَالْمُفْتَرِينَ**

Beware, the curse of God falls on the liar and the fabricator.

Jesus is Dead

It should be remembered that there is, between these people and us, no other dispute than that they, forsaking the clear, decisive verses of the Holy Quran and the hadith, believe that Jesus the Christ is still alive, whereas we, in accordance with the clear, categorical statements of the holy Quran, the traditions mentioned above, and the consensus of the Imams endowed with spiritual vision, believe that Jesus the Christ is dead, and that the term *nazool* we interpret to have the same sense and significance which Jesus the Christ himself had given it previously with reference to the second coming

and descending of prophet Elias from heaven;

فَسَأَلُوا أَهْلَ الدِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

So ask the followers of the Reminder (i.e. the Jews and the Christians) if you know not (16:42). And as for us, we believe, in accordance with the basic principle laid down in the Quranic verse: **وَيَمْسِكُ الَّتِي قَضَىٰ عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ** Then

He withholds those on whom he has passed the decree of death (39:42), that people who pass



Shrine of Bibi Jawindi, Uch Shareef, Pakistan, founded by Alexander the great in 325 B.c.

away from this world, are not returned to this earth for resettlement, and it is for this reason that the Most High God has, in the Quran, given no direction with regard to them that how will their distributed wealth and property be restored to them on their return. It is regrettable indeed

that our opponents still continue to harp on the same silly string that Jesus is alive in the heaven, and will return when Christianity will have exterminated Islam from all over the surface of this earth; and they assert that although millions of books have so far been written against Islam, and millions of Muslims have renounced Islam and recanted, and hundreds of millions of people have become evil-minded, impious unbridled and uncontrolled, yet Islam has not so far been completely annihilated, and that it was for this reason that Jesus could not come at the head of this century; for he had been waiting in heaven for the day when Islam would be completely extirpated and effaced from this world? But the people of this way of thinking should, first of all, take into consideration and reflect that the Most High God has, in clear and categorical terms, stated the fact of Jesus's death in the Holy Quran. Just see how clear and decisive is the verse: **فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي** on the

death of Jesus the Christ; and if a man should, after hearing this verse, say no and gain-say the fact of his death, he shall have to admit that the Christians are correct and true in their doctrines, for the verse indicates that they will go astray and deviate from the right path after Jesus' death. And when the fact of his death has been established and proved from this verse, the question of his descent from heaven does not arise. Dead persons surely can not stay in heaven.

A Plain Question

Moreover, when the Messiah's mission is to deal a destructive blow to the Cross, what useful purpose his coming will serve at a time when, instead of the Cross, Islam itself will have been dashed to the wall. *پس ازا کھ من نما نم بچے کار خواہی آمد* when I shall not be, what purpose will you come to fulfill?

Now that only after sixty years of predominance of the Christian religion over the Punjab, apostasy has touched such a high mark, and that fourteen years have also passed from the 14th century, but the Promised Messiah has not come, which means that a period of another 100 years has been given to the padres: for, according to authentic traditions, it is essentially necessary that the Promised messiah shall make his appearance at the head of the century. It is for you, therefore, to ponder over and think whether anything of Islam will remain during this long period of time. It (God forbid) leads us to understand that the Most High God Himself perhaps wants to wipe off Islam from the surface of this earth; for, it was the time for showing mercy, when Islam had been subjected to severe attacks, and held in scornful contempt, and millions of Muslims had renounced Islam and apostatized. In the matter of physical epidemics, too, it has been observed that, for instance, when plague breaks out in any part of the country, wise men begin to think that they, their children and dear ones, may, in the near future, become the victims of plague, and therefore, they adopt proper, preventive plans. Authorities also devote their full attention to the eradication of the disease. Physicians, too, wake up. Now state with even-handed justice and equity, has not plague

broken out in the country; have not as many as hundred million books been compiled against Islam; have not millions of people, up to this time, fallen victims to this plague? Is it not a fact that many millions of people, suffering from materialism, philosophy, denial, creature worship, doubts and misgivings, indifference and apathy, are lying on death bed? How is it, then, that even in such a critical time, the Most High God remembers not His word of promise: *إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ*

Eid ul Fitr Sermon

By Mustaq Ali M.Sc.

My Khuthba is taken from chapter 2 v 143 of the Holy Quran of which the English translation is

Thus have We made of you a Middle Ummah, that you might be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves . . . (al-Baqarah: 143)

Muslims here are called the *Ummatan Wasatan*. The commentators of the Qur'an explain the word *wasat* as "justly balanced",

Linguistically, the word *Wasat* means the just, the best (in goodness), the top choice, the finest, the best (in quality), and the most honorable. It was stated in *Lisaan Al-Arab*: "The most *Wasat* of a thing is the best of it, the finest of it and the most just of it". Ibn Katheer said: "The *Wasat* is the top choice and the best quality", as it was said: "Quraysh is the most *Wasat* of the Arabs in lineage and in quality of living", i.e. the best. And it is said:

"Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, (s) , was the *Wasat* amongst his people (r) i.e. the most honourable amongst them in lineage."

This beautiful attribute to the Muslim Ummah is due to characteristics we develop over time by observing the pillars of Islam in our daily lives. Fasting is possibly the



Rush hour on Pakistan Railways.

most difficult of these and this is why Allah himself rewards the individual for their efforts.

However outside of Fasting we are urged by the merciful God not to exceed the limits:- we read in chapter 7 v 31

O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters.

The Quran here asks us to maintain moderation in our clothing at every time and place of prayer and that we should eat and drink but do not exceed the limit and do not waste.

It is as though this one verse of the Quran encourages us not to lose the discipline and *taqwa* that we have learnt from the rigours of fasting and thus keep our guard against evil. This is how we continue with the message of Islam which was started by the Holy Prophet Muhammad in that we are embodiment of his character the verses of the Quran.

Sahih Bukhari states:-

The religion is easy and whosoever will deal with religion harshly, it will defeat him. So be straight, follow the middle course, give good news and make use of the morning, the evening or part of the night (in prayer and remembering Allah)."

The Quran goes on to say about the Muslim Ummah (the people of the Middle course)

You are the best of the nations raised up for men; you enjoin good and forbid evil and believe in Allah; and if the people of the Book had believed it would have been better for them; of them (some) are believers and most of them are transgressors. (Ch 3 v110)

So here the Quran outlines why the People of the book have lost their previously lofty position they once had in the sight of Allah.

God says in his book: *O people of the Book, do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary was but a Messenger of Allah and his word. .. And do not say "Three" desist it is better for you. Indeed Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son. (Ch 4 v 171)*

Moderation is the assumption of a middle position in between two forbidden extremes

often defined by Muslim scholars as the modes of excessiveness (*ifrat*) and laxity (*tafrit*). It is in this regard that moderation is a just, excellent and balanced concept. This a far cry from the common understanding of being in the middle of two goods or assuming a middle ground between a worst condition and an excellent one when excellence should be the national choice of a righteous Muslim. Moderation is striving to uphold all that is good and commanded in Islam and to achieve excellence (*ihsan*) in everything.

A twist of Faith

By the grace of Allah we have lived to see another Eid and experience one of the most difficult fast we have had for long time. Such was the difficulty that Muslims were forced to discuss alternative timings for the duration of the fast. Some have suggested that we fast for the duration that the Arabs fast. Others suggest that we shorten the fast as "*Allah desires not hardship for you but ease*" as is outlined in ch 6 v 59.

In a strange twist of Faith we were being forced to be the ummah of the Middle Course and as such we were having to discuss alternatives to the 18 hours of fasting. Some Muslims in London were starting the fast at 02:20 in the morning.

Fasting has long been established as a great spiritual exercise as it has been prescribed to those before us. Those who do not understand the real spirit of fasting(our colleagues and friends) often use expressions such as "you must eat the whole night to make up for your starving all day". However if we demonstrate gluttonaceous behaviour at the time of the breaking of the fast then we haven't really benefitted from the fast. Fasting is designed by the Gracious God not only to become righteous but to discipline ourselves and to demonstrate to us that we could accomplish anything we put our mind to. We have the will power to do great things. This will power lies deep within us but we have to want to bring about change in yourself. Whether we want better health, more wealth, deeper knowledge, or control of our baser self- the Merciful God says in his book- "I will not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition" Ch 13 v 11. Fasting creates the

Utopian individual if observed correctly and brings about changes of humility, leadership and steadfastness.

However those of us who fast but in actual fact only starve ourselves we are the ones who have truly failed “to cause it to grow” ch 91 v 9- *He indeed is successful who causes it to grow and he indeed fails who buries it”.*

We are told in the hadith that this is the month in which the devils are placed in chains and the doors of Heaven are open. So are we so futile in this fertile month of blessings and revelation. This question you need to ask yourself when you lie in bed at night!

In this month there is a night that is greater than one thousand months- Did we even come near to benefiting from this blessed night of power!

The power for change is in your hands, just as the difficult fast drove us to think of alternatives and wanting to change the duration of the fast, so to nearness to Allah is a choice, living for Allah is a choice, loving the HP Muhammad more than your own parents is a choice in relation to this type of love the HQ says Ch 9 v 24 Say : *If your fathers and your sons and your brethren and your wives and your kin folk and the wealth you have acquired and the trade whose dullness you fear and the dwellings you love are dearer to you than Allah and his Messenger and striving in his way, then wait till Allah brings His command to pass. And Allah guides not the transgressing people.*

No other faith offers you a greater choice than “*there is no compulsion in religion for surely truth is distinct from falsehood*” (ch 6 v 69). No other scripture has these words except the Holy Quran.

The Best Example of change.

Most people are afraid of change. They are happy with familiarity but familiarity breeds contempt. History tells us that the Arabs were Bedouins, they buried their girl children alive, when they passed each other in the street they would do so with drawn swords. They were alcoholics who mistreated women and some still do today as is evident from the King locking up his daughters in a compound. They worshiped idols and heaps of stones and each tribe had their own sacred stones.

The Quran describes the Arabs in *the dwellers of the desert are hardest in disbelief and hypocrisy, and most disposed not to know the limits of what Allah has revealed to his Messenger. And Allah is Knowing Wise.*

And the dwellers of the desert are those who take what they spend to be fine, and they wait for an evil turn of fortune for you. And Allah is Hearing Knowing.

And of the desert Arabs are those who believe in Allah and the Last day, and consider what they spend and the prayers of the Messenger as bringing them nearer to Allah. Surely they bring them nearer to Allah; Allah will bring them into His Mercy. Surely Allah is Forgiving Merciful.

And of those around you of the desert Arabs, there are hypocrites; and of the People of Madinah – they persist in Hypocrisy. Thou knowest them not, We know them. We will chastise them twice and they will be turned back to a grievous chastisement. (ch 9 : v 97 - 101)

We are also aware that the Arabs at his time offered the Holy Prophet Muhammad all the wealth of Arabia, the leadership of all the clans and the finest of their women if he would stop preaching the Oneness of God. His famous words were: *If you place the Sun in my right hand and the Moon in my left hand I will not give up the word of Allah.*

The treachery and opposition to the HP did not stop there. They plotted to kill the HP Muhammad and fought several wars against him and his handful of followers. Eventually they had to succumb to the Acts of Kindness and the Magnanimity of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and the Message he brought to them..

The world at the time of the raising of the HP Muhammad was so steeped in darkness that we read in the quran in “*Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on a ccount of that which men’s hands have wrought*” (Ch 74 v 86)

The people of Arabia was steeped in barbarism and lewdness, they considered it lawful to marry their mothers and that is why Allah said your mothers are unlawful to you. (ch 4 v 22 -23) Historically when the father died the son would inherit the mother and thus Allah revealed the verses above to abolish this practice.

Many western writers have commented on the change that the Quran and the Example of the HP Muhammad had on the Arabs- below are

a few quotes:-

H.G.Wells in his Outline of History, London 1920 States: *Through the Arabs and not by the Latin route that the modern world received the gift of light and Power.*

Napoleon Bonaparte (Bonaparte et Islam, by Cherfils, Paris, France,1914,pp 105-125.

Arabia was idolatrous when, 6 centuries after Jesus Christ, Muhammad introduced the worship of the God of Abraham, Ishmael Moses and Jesus. . . Muhammad was a prince; he rallied his compatriots around him. In a few years the Muslims conquered half of the world. Here Napoleon directly attributes the change and success of the Arabs to the Message of the HQ and the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

One of the more profound expressions of change of the Arabs is written by Dr. Lucien Leclere (History de la Medicine Arabe, Tome I pp 91-92): *Never again will the world see so marvellous a spectacle as that which the Arabs afforded during the ninth century. This pastoral people whom religious enthusiasm had suddenly made masters of half the world, having once founded their empire, immediately set to work to acquire that knowledge of the sciences which was lacking to their greatness.*

Everyone has the power to change and the message of the Quran and the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad took these people from the abyss of civilisation to conquerors of mind, body, soul, actions, geography and sciences undiscovered.

Essentially Islam took the worst people on the face of the earth and changed them to create the Utopian society which we read of today. Ironically today we see the worst Muslims trying to create a Utopian society by forcing non-muslims out of their homes and forcing them to adopt Islam as an ultimatum, death being the alternative.

How short sighted can Muslims be? If you study the Quran and Islamic history you will see that you cannot have a utopian society without non-Muslims. If Allah wanted to create a utopian society he would have done so Himself. We read in Sahih Muslim, the Prophet Mohammad said: *I swear by Allah in whose hand is my soul, if you were a people who did not commit sin Allah would take you away and replace you with a peo-*

ple who would sin and then seek Allahs forgiveness so he could forgive them. (Hadith 6^{0 2 1})

The Holy Quran say (Ch 14 v 19): *Have you not seen that Allah created the heavens and the earth with truth? If he wills he can do away with you and produce a new creation.*

Disunity- “Do not take your doctors of law for Gods beside Allah”

Today more than ever the disunity of the Muslims World to stop killings in the name of religion makes one embarrassed to be a Muslim. These atrocities continue to occur even in the month of Ramadhan. It is as though Fasting has lost its place in the hearts of Muslims and the revelation of the Quran and the character of the example of the HP is a distant memory. Some people find it easier to kill for the love of their Prophet when he is maligned with offensive cartoons. How many of us choose to live to be a reflection of his conduct and character. Our Prophet said: *The ink of a scholar is holier than the blood of a Martyr.* How many of us choose to become scholars?

Ironically, the Quran says about the previous nations that they *took their doctors of law for Gods besides Allah* ch 9 v 31. Today the Muslims have succumb to this. They take their Sheikhs, Maulvis and Ayatolahs for Gods besides Allah.

Offending the HP Muhammad has always been a favourite pastime of disbelievers.

The Quran tells us that he was called a mad man (ch 68 v 51), some translations translate this as he was he is possessed and he is insane. He is accused of marrying a 9 year old, and many offensive things have been said about the Holy Prophet (s) to numerous and to callous to mention on Eid day.

But how did he respond, did he kill anyone who annoyed or tarnished his character No, here again the Quran answers this question beautifully when it says (Ch 73 v 10-12) *And bear patiently what they say, and avoid them with a gracious withdrawal, And leave me and the deniers, possessors of plenty and respite them a little, Surley with Us are heavy fetters and a Flaming Fire.*

How simple is the Quranic Command - Allah said he will deal with them! None of us have the right to kill any one for defamation or character assassination of the Holy Prophet. Perhaps this is self-gratification for anyone who wants to get their

name in the news.

It is only this Jamaat, in the next century, which will continue to demonstrate what True Islam is and in order to achieve this we too have to follow the dictates of the Holy Quran and the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad by doing the following: *do not fault with each other, nor call one another by nicknames* and we must *hold fast to the rope of Allah and be not disunited* (ch 3 v 102) in our strive to be the ummah of the Middle course and the party who invite to good and forbid evil. It is only in this way that our fasting will benefit us in this life and the next.

I was forced to accept Islam

By Danielle LoDuca

From : The Muslim Observer

I never aspired to be a Muslim.

I didn't even want to be a Christian.

The whole concept of 'organized religion' was distasteful. I sought to use my mind, not resort to some ancient book for assistance in living my life.

If you had offered me millions of dollars to join one faith or another, I would have declined.

One of my preferred authors was Bertrand Russell, who maintained that religion is little more than superstition and generally harmful to people, despite any positive effects that it might have. He believed that religion and the religious outlook serve to inhibit knowledge and promote fear and dependency, in addition to being accountable for much of our world's wars, persecution, and misery.

I remember laughing out loud while reading "Hey, Is That You God?" By Dr. Pasqual Schievella, in which he derided the concept of God through satirical dialogue. It all seemed so logical. Thinkers like us were surely above religious devotees, I thought smugly.

But, for me, it wasn't enough to just think I was better off without religion. I wanted to systematically prove religions were no more than a hoax. I purposefully set out to do just that.

Yet, here I am. Muslim.

Sure, I made the declaration of faith, but the choice I had was really no choice at all. Essentially, I was compelled – forced to accept Islam.

Interestingly, in my talks with followers of religions, especially those other than Islam, I have often noticed that they clearly desire to believe. As if, no matter how many contradictions or errors are pointed out in their scriptures, they brush them aside and maintain their unquestioning faith.

Rarely do I ever find that the scriptures themselves convinced them, but rather they decided to have faith, and then the studies began after that decision, if at all. They knew what they believed, either by having been raised upon it, or like a friend of mine told me, "Islam seems foreign, so I never looked into it. Christianity is more familiar and convenient, because most of the people around me are Christian. So when I was seeking God, I chose Christianity."

Personally, I never considered myself to be seeking God, but if I had, the last place I think I would have looked would have been in an old book, or a building, or a person.

Some people, who decide to believe in something at the outset, may then develop selective vision when it comes to learning the faith they've chosen. I had also decided to believe something; I chose to believe that religions were simply fabricated delusions of grandeur.

In actuality this notion was not built on hard facts, it was an assumption. I had no evidence. When I undertook reading the religious books, I was not biased towards them, but my intentions were to look for flaws. This approach helped me manage to maintain a fair amount of objectivity.

My paperback translation of the Quran had been acquired for free. I didn't even stop to chat with the MSA students standing at the table stacked with books. I curtly asked, "Is it free?" When they replied in the affirmative, I grabbed one and continued on my way. I had no interest in them, only the free book to assist me in accomplishing my goal of debasing religions once and for all.

But, as I read that Quran; as its cover became worn and its pages tattered, I became more and more subdued. It was distinct from the other religious books I had also collected. I could understand it easily. It was clear.

A friend of mine once began ranting about how God in Islam is angry and vengeful. I came to its defense without even realizing it, opening it up and easily flipping to one of the many pag-

es that said, "Surely, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

It was if the Quran was speaking to me directly – responding to my life. It was an "old book" but somehow, it was entirely relevant. Something about its cadence and imagery and the way it communicated to me intimately; It was exquisite beauty I hadn't really felt before, reminiscent only of the moments I had spent out west, staring out over a seemingly endless desert landscape. I found it exhilarating; comparable to the way it felt running barefoot in the sand under the stars with powerful waves crashing at my side.

The Quran was appealing to my intellect. Offering me signs and then telling me to think, to ponder and consider. It rejected the notion of blind faith, but encouraged reason and intelligence. It directed humanity towards goodness, recognition of the Creator, plus moderation, kindness, and humility.

After some time, and life-changing experiences my interest intensified. I began reading other books about Islam. I found that the Quran contained prophecies, as did many of the hadiths. I found that the prophet Muhammad was corrected several times in the Quran. This seemed strange if he had in fact, been its author.

I had begun walking down a new path. Led by the amazing Quran, paired with the beautiful paradigm of devotion; the Prophet Muhammad. This man showed no signs of being a liar.

Praying through the nights, asking forgiveness of his oppressors, encouraging kindness. Refusing wealth and power and persevering with the pure message of devotion to God alone, he endured unfathomable hardship.

It was all so uncomplicated, easy to understand. We've been created; all this intricacy and diversity could not pop out of nothing. So follow

the One who created us – Simple.

I remember the warm artificial lighting in my apartment and the weight of the air on the night I read this verse:

{Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We split them asunder and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe?} (Quran 21:30)

My mind was split asunder when I read this. It was the Big Bang – suddenly not just a theory... And every living thing from water... wasn't that what scientists had just discovered? I was astonished. It was the most exciting and yet frightening time of my life.

Is this Dubai? No, it is Karachi Pakistan!



I read and studied and double-checked book after book until one night I sat in my library at Pratt Institute, staring wide-eyed at the piles of open books. My mouth must have been dropped open slightly. I couldn't believe what was happening. I realized I had in front of me, the truth. The truth I had been so sure did not exist.

Now what?

There were only two choices and one was no choice at all. I could not deny what I had discovered, ignoring it and going on with my life as before, though I did consider it briefly. That left only one option. I knew I had to accept it, because the only alternative was denying truth.

(Editor's note: Danielle LoDuca is a third generation American, raised in a homogeneous, white, suburban community. Although raised as a Catholic, she considered herself agnostic and was disdainful of religion in general until she chose Islam in 2002. She is an artist with a BFA from Pratt Institute, as well as a wife and mother of five. Her views are her own.)

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