



Book Review

I Dared to Call Him Father

The Miraculous Story of a Muslim Woman's Encounter with God

by Bilquis Sheikh & Richard H. Schneider

"...Suddenly I recalled a childhood experience of walking with my father through a marketplace. Father cautioned me to stay by his side but, always active, I wanted to run off. A flower display caught my attention and I ran over to it. Suddenly I realized that my father was not at my side. Panic filled me and I burst into tears. 'Oh, Father,' I said, 'come find me and I won't ever run away from you again!' Even as I spoke, there he was, his tall slender figure coming quickly toward me through the crowd. I was with him again! All I wanted now was to stay by his side.

"As I sat in the hotel room, I realized that in fact I had left my heavenly Father again. By allowing myself to become anxious, I had run off from His comforting Presence...."

Bilquis Sheikh was born in 1912 to conservative Muslim parents. As she grew up, she did not reject her Muslim faith, but acquired a disdain for anything spiritual or supernatural. If she could see it and explain it, she would believe it. Married to General Khalid Sheikh (for a time Pakistan's Minister of the Interior), she was active in politics and social work. After her marriage fell apart at the age of 48, she retired to her family's land in Wah, Pakistan, where she lived the life of a hermit, aloof and alone.

It is here that the book begins the story of her search for God and how she found Him. Through a rash of super natural occurrences

and strange dreams, she begins to read the Bible for herself. As she continues to read the Quran alongside of it, questions arise in her mind. How can the Quran and the Bible both be true, if they disagree with each other? Why does the Bible insist on pointing to Jesus? Why does the Bible bring her peace, which the Quran never did? Can she really call God Father?

Finally, determined to get answers, she goes to the house of some American missionaries.

"Mrs. Mitchell,' I continued, my throat tight, "forget I am a Muslim. Forget the problems we have with Jesus being called the Son of God. Forget about our believing that the Bible has been changed. Just tell me one thing: what has Jesus done for you?"

And so she hears, for the first time, the story of the gospel.

The story is miraculous, as it claims to be. From encounters with evil spirits to narrow escapes from death, it is both dramatic and breath-taking. I had trouble putting the book down once I had started it. But it is not all dreams and miracles. I was astounded, over and over, at how, with a minimum of human instruction, (for the missionaries had to leave on furlough) God led Bilquis to discover the very same truths I have learned in my Christian life.

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She learns by experience to “live in the Glory.” She finds what things help her to stay in the Presence of God – things like fellowship with other believers, reading the Word, obeying, and forgiving those who have wronged her, including her ex-husband. She also discovers the things that seem to take her away from her Father: pride, stubbornness, selfishness, disobedience. Hers is no surface-level conversion. She finds Jesus to be One Who demands everything – but gives everything.

It was faith-building to read how God met her where she was and answered her deepest questions in a way that no human ever could have done. She shares how she was clearly shown that that God is triune, that Jesus is the only way to God, that the Bible is God’s true Word, and that God did, indeed, want to be her Father. She shares the heartbreak of being ignored and shunned by her family (the most important unit in Islamic society), but also the goodness of God in providing her with so much more spiritual family – brothers and sisters in Christ – than the natural family she lost. She tells how her relationships with her servants changed, and how she was led to give up her comfortable house, her lovely gardens, and her privacy and leisure time for the sake of Christ.

In this book you will also read about how Bilquis learned to share her faith – not as an intellectual superior, but as a humble woman; not arguing, but testifying. Read about the western and eastern Christians that become part of her life as she leaves her shell and begins to reach out to others. Read how she was able to bless her family, even as they were cursing her.

There were still many questions: would she be allowed, as a Christian, to keep Mahmud, her grandson, whom she had adopted? Would she be allowed to keep her house? Would she even be allowed to keep her life?

As threatening phone calls and letters escalate, learn with Bilquis how to trust the Lord, wait on His timing, and rely on His protection. Should she put bars on her bedroom

window? Should she pick up that hitchhiker? Should she try to flee the country?

How long can she hold out under the new Socialist government?

What will she hold dearer – her new-found Father, or her own country and family?

The book also contains a valuable section on some of the major differences between western and eastern cultures, written by one of Bilquis’ missionary friends. It shows the value in each culture, how each can enrich the other, and how both are perfected in Christ.

While not a book on missionary strategy or reaching Muslims, *I Dared to Call Him Father* does answer many of the questions that Muslims frequently ask, from their own perspective, as Bilquis tells of her quest and its result. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it, and can recommend it for anyone who is interested in God’s work and the salvation of souls.

– reviewed by Rebecca Hansen

