

HEARTPRINTS

The riveting book, "I DARED TO CALL HIM FATHER," tells the fascinating and true story of Bilquis Sheikh, a very prominent woman in the Pakistanian culture, and her miraculous encounter with God. At one time, her husband, General Kahlid Sheikh, was Pakistan's Minister of the Interior. When he told her one day that he didn't love her anymore and then deserted her, Bilquis began to see her world falling apart. She felt deserted by Allah as well. Her confusion prompted her to ask one of her servants to get her a Bible.

When her grandson, Mahmud, whom she had officially adopted, became very ill and needed to be hospitalized, she had an encounter with Dr. Pia Santiago, a Catholic nun, who was in charge of the whole hospital. When she saw her with her Bible, she asked her, "Begum Sheikh, what are you doing with a Bible?" She answered, "I am earnestly in search of God." In the course of their conversation, Dr. Santiago said something that shot through Bilquis's being. The doctor leaned closer and took her hand and with tears streaming down her cheeks, "Talk to Him as if He were your father" she said very quietly to Bilquis.

Bilquis kept her Bible and the Koran side by side on her bedroom table. One night she said, "I am confused, Father. I have to get one thing straight right away." She reached over and picked up both books and lifted them, one in each hand. "Which, Father?" she said, "Which one is Your book?" Inside the depths of her heart she heard a Voice ask her, "In which book do you meet Me as your Father?" She found herself answering with total certainty, "In the Bible."

As she continued reading the Bible and talking to her Father, she knew God was calling her to be baptized. She also knew that baptism in that culture was an offense often punishable by death. But her love for the true God was more powerful than her fear of death. (Her baptismal story is in itself a very intriguing but deeply inspiring one!) While her family and friends boycotted her, verbally abused her, and voiced death threats, God spared her life.

She became a believer in 1966 at the age of fifty-four. In 1973, her Father led her to move to the United States, to bear witness to what God did in the life of one Muslim woman who dared to call the God of the Bible, Father! She lived in Thousand Oaks, California, until 1989. After suffering a heart attack, she moved back to Pakistan, to live near her three children until her death in 1997. She was buried in an old Christian graveyard nestled in the Himalayan Mountains. Her simple white marble tombstone is engraved with a prominent cross, underneath which is written, "Bilquis, 12-12-12, Died 9-4-97, Loving the Lord?" This story so deeply reminds me of the song, "IN CHRIST THERE IS NO EAST OR WEST!" AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS THE GROUND IS ALWAYS LEVEL!