

For the longest time, I felt my experience had been perhaps, 'not normal', but, certainly not unusual. I was wrong. As a new Christian, I would tell my story of conversion to fellow Christians and to un-churched friends only to receive a puzzled look followed by a patronizing comment. Recently, I vowed to stop telling the story. I was wrong again.

Just over half of my 57 years have been Christian. The first 26 were agnostic followed by atheist. Agnostic; that is a good word. It literally means 'no knowledge'. It was not because I had no knowledge that I claimed the title. It was because the word 'atheist' was too controversial. It was a 'cop-out'. However, my atheism grew more open and militant.

Science was god to me - there was no God. "Can't people just see?", I would say. "We are a product of chance and evolution. This short life is all there is!" I felt religion was a crutch for the weak - for those who could not face reality and death. I began to despise religion and I especially hated Christians and Jews. I am ashamed to say that, given the right circumstances, I might have taken part in persecution.

This was my morality: "We owe it to society to leave this place better than we found it." Judeo-Christian values were a good basis for the law as far as I was concerned, and I did enforce the law. A product of the Houston Police Academy, I set out to leave this place better than I found it. After a couple of years on the street, it became obvious that it would not take much effort to reach my goal - things looked pretty bad. By 1972, at least 5% of my Academy class had been killed. Their deaths angered me because I felt they were robbed of the only life there was. I was still young and bulletproof - I would take up their share of the load.

Hardened by death and suffering, there was nothing unusual about 1972 that I recall. I was working hard to earn a decent living for my young family. Our second son had been born in '71 and we needed more money. Police extra jobs were plentiful. It was not abnormal to work a hundred hours a week, counting overtime, court time, and extra jobs. This was a strain on the marriage, but we were getting by.

I was working in an elite division of the Police Department. We handled all traffic fatalities and city vehicle accidents. Our investigations were some of the best in the nation. We had four of the most professional supervisors, (sergeants), that I have ever had the pleasure to work with. Their immaculate uniforms were indicative of their values and work ethic. One was an evangelical Christian - he was my least favorite. This sergeant always had a Bible and always had some tracts. He made sure there was always a bible where we worked extra jobs.

I was into reading but certainly not the Bible. There was a popular author named Eric Von Daniken who was making the TV circuit at the time. He wrote a book called 'Chariots of the Gods'. Von Daniken theorized that visitors from outer space had visited Earth from time to time, imparted knowledge, and improved the gene pool. I fell for his garbage - hook, line, and sinker.

So here I am working an extra-job at the Southwestern Bell toll building at 1407 Jefferson Street in downtown Houston. It is 11:00 PM and I'm at a desk in the lobby. It is a quiet, easy job because there is nothing to do but sit and read. There is no one around. The room is a large, long hall with a high ceiling and the look and feel of a vacant train station.

A Touch

Von Daniken is telling me about a flying saucer that Ezekiel saw and recorded in the Bible. I had always been amenable to the notion that the Bible could have some historical truths, and I was certainly willing to be impartial, so I would check Von Daniken's reference. After all, a Bible is handy.

Von Daniken's reference and quote was correct, but for some reason, I flipped forward in the Book to a random page in Luke and started reading. I did not read more than a few paragraphs when something happened. This is so difficult to put into words. Something entered the lobby of that building and filled the room with a presence. I was afraid at first but a feeling of purity and goodness overwhelmed me. My fear left me immediately. And then something was said. It was not audible, but this presence spoke directly to me, and I could hear the words in my head. "What you are reading now is the absolute Truth." That is all that was said. The presence remained another thirty seconds or so and then withdrew. I was in utter shock - In an instant of time, I went from atheist to Christian. There was no mistaking the supernatural nature of the visit and message. I never finished Von Daniken's book, (sorry Eric).

The next few weeks were hectic. I read more of the Bible and bought books on angels and prophecy. I read everything Christian I could get my hands on. Even as a new Christian though, I did carry some prejudice with me. I said, "OK God, I'm yours, but I can never be a Baptist or a Catholic". Somehow a pamphlet entitled 'What Baptists believe and Why' found its way to me. I read it and was baptized at the First Baptist Church in Magnolia Texas several months later.

I know my conversion was a miracle, but there can be no pride in that for me. Jefferson Street is not the road to Damascus, and I will never be a Saul, but God has a plan for me. I have felt the touch of an angel. Too often we forget they are actually here.

So there you have it. You can believe it or you can reject it. I was a devout, militant atheist and I was changed in an instant. I was so wrong. There is a God and there are angels. The Bible is the word of God and it is without error or flaw. I know this is true because I have it on Good authority.