While Writing Anti-Islam Book He Became Muslim! - The Story of Joram Van Klaveren

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> Joram van Klaveren, a former Dutch anti-Islam politician and Protestant activist, recounts his transformation into a Muslim through rigorous theological research, scholarly correspondence with Islamic teachers, and a profound encounter with the character of the Messenger Muhammad that ultimately led him to accept Islamic monotheism and prophethood.

SAŽETAK

This testimony documents Joram van Klaveren's complete spiritual and ideological reversal—from a Dutch Freedom Party politician and vocal Islam critic to a practicing Muslim. Born into a Protestant Reformed Church family and radicalised against Islam following 9/11 and the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh, van Klaveren set out to write an anti-Islam book from a Christian perspective. As he began comparing Christian and Islamic theology, his suppressed doubts about the Trinity resurface when confronted with the Islamic concept of Tawhid (the oneness of God). Guided by correspondence with Islamic scholar Sheikh Abdul Hakim Murad from Cambridge, van Klaveren undertakes systematic study of Islamic primary sources alongside Christian texts. His encounter with Martin Lings' biography of the Messenger Muhammad and particularly the story of the Prophet's forgiveness toward Hind—who had orchestrated the death of his beloved uncle Hamza—convinces him of Muhammad's prophethood. After accepting the shahada internally, a Qur'anic verse (22:46) about blindness of the heart rather than the eyes confirms his decision. Van Klaveren details his family's mixed reactions, his early experiences with Islamic prayer, the challenges of raising children across two faith traditions, and his deep regret for statements calling Islam 'a lie' and 'poison.' He now leads the Islamic Experience Center, using virtual reality to counter misconceptions about Islam in European schools and institutions.

KLJUČNE PORUKE

Van Klaveren's conversion was driven by logical and theological inconsistencies in Christian doctrine—particularly the Trinity—which became apparent when

compared against Islamic monotheism and Old Testament affirmations of God's oneness (Qur'an 22:46).

Methodological approach to religious study proved crucial: reading Islamic primary sources written by Muslim scholars rather than non-Muslim polemics revealed how distortions of Islam had been introduced through mistranslation, omission, and misrepresentation.

The character and example of the Messenger Muhammad □—specifically the story of his forgiveness toward Hind, who had orchestrated the death of his uncle Hamza —became the decisive moment confirming his prophethood in van Klaveren's mind.

Van Klaveren experienced a divinely-guided moment when a falling Qur'an opened to Surah 22, verse 46 ('It is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts'), which he understood as addressing his ego's resistance despite intellectual conviction.

Conversion brought severe social consequences—over two thousand death threats from former political supporters, family trauma, and employment complications—yet van Klaveren describes finding greater peace, security, and spiritual fulfillment as a Muslim than in his previous faith.

Five daily prayers transformed van Klaveren's awareness of his relationship with his Creator in a way Christian practice had not, creating constant mindfulness of divine presence and accountability.

Van Klaveren now advocates against his own past statements by founding the Islamic Experience Center, using virtual reality and engagement with educational institutions to counter misconceptions and present Islam authentically rather than as he once caricatured it.

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Background and Early Life

Joram van Klaveren was born on January 20, 1979, in Amsterdam in a regular family consisting of his father, mother, two brothers, a younger sister, and a cat. He was born and raised in Amsterdam within a practicing Protestant family from the Reformed Church. The family read from the Bible, gave all the children biblical names, had them baptized, and attended church regularly. After finishing high school, van Klaveren studied comparative religion and worked as a teacher for a few years.

Path to Political Activism

The turning point in van Klaveren's life came on September 11, 2001—the same day he began university to study comparative religion. The attacks reinforced a conviction already forming in his mind: he thought Muslims were "kind of crazy" and that Islam was not true. A few years later, the murder of Theo van Gogh, a famous Dutch filmmaker who was shot and nearly decapitated in the street with a knife bearing a threatening message, further solidified van Klaveren's anti-Islam sentiment. This tragedy motivated him to become politically active. He joined the Freedom Party, eventually becoming a member of Parliament. His political engagement was driven entirely by concerns about Islam, which he viewed as a danger to the country.

Christian Faith and Theological Doubts

Before becoming Muslim, van Klaveren was a Protestant Christian from the Reformed Church. He believed in a creator, heaven, hell, angels, and revelations. Like other Christians, he believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God—or more philosophically, that Jesus was God himself. He also believed in the resurrection and crucifixion of Christ and in the atonement. However, even from a young age, around sixteen or seventeen, van Klaveren began questioning Christian theological concepts. The Trinity, in particular, troubled him logically. He reasoned that if God is eternal as stated in the Bible, then God cannot also die and still be eternal or immortal at the same time. When he spoke with many priests, preachers, and even rabbis about these contradictions, their answers were not satisfying to him. Rather than resolve his doubts, van Klaveren chose to set them aside, telling himself that perhaps he was not intelligent enough to grasp the full picture, and he continued believing in God and in Jesus as an important person and the Son of God, leaving the complexities of Christian doctrine unexamined.

Motivation to Write an Anti-Islam Book

Van Klaveren's initial plan was to write a book explaining to people why Islam was a danger to the world. Although many assumed it would be a political book, it was fundamentally a religious book written from a Christian perspective. His goal was to demonstrate why Islam posed a threat as a religion. However, as he began writing and comparing Christian and Islamic concepts of God, the doubts he had suppressed about Christianity resurfaced. When he examined the Islamic concept of Tawhid—the oneness of God—he found it more logically coherent than the Christian Trinity. This prompted him to reread the Bible carefully. In the Old Testament, he noted that prophets repeatedly emphasized "one God, one God, one God." When he turned to the New Testament and read the account of a man asking Jesus what the most important thing in life was and how to gain Paradise, Jesus responded with two things: "Hear, O Israel, your God is one" and "Treat your neighbor as you want to be treated yourself."

Van Klaveren realized that even Jesus Christ affirmed the oneness of God, which aligned more closely with the Islamic concept than with Christian trinitarian theology as taught by the church.

Research and Scholarly Correspondence

After weeks and weeks of study, rereading numerous books and religious texts, van Klaveren began to think that perhaps the oneness of God was indeed true. He reached out to several authorities on religious matters to assist with his research. One of his correspondents was Sheik Abdul Hakim Murad, a professor from Cambridge University. It was unusual for a Dutch politician writing an anti-Islam book to ask a Muslim scholar for help, but van Klaveren was direct about his purpose. He asked Murad why Islam promoted terrorism, why it was anti-women, anti-Christian, and opposed to various other values. After approximately six weeks, Murad sent an extensive email addressing many of van Klaveren's questions and recommending specific articles, books, and other scholars to consult.

One of Murad's most valuable pieces of advice was methodological: he pointed out that anti-Islam books were written by non-Muslims, and if one wanted to understand Christianity, one would read books written by Christians explaining their own beliefs and reasoning, not books by atheists. Therefore, to properly understand Islam, van Klaveren should read Islamic books written by Islamic teachers and Islamic scholars. This way, by comparing books on the same topics by Muslim and non-Muslim authors, he could identify where the non-Muslim sources had taken wrong turns, mistranslated words, added or omitted information, sometimes intentionally but often simply through lack of knowledge. Van Klaveren followed this advice and discovered that these discrepancies had essentially created a distorted version of Islam in the minds of outsiders.

Reassessing the Prophet Muhammad

Van Klaveren also read "Life of the Prophet" by Martin Lings, based on the earliest sources about Muhammad and written by a convert to Islam. The author's approach, reasoning, and style appealed to him because they resonated culturally. For the first time, van Klaveren saw the Messenger Muhammad not as a warlord—which had been his previous mental image—but as a father, friend, teacher, and much more. He saw the person and his character, and he concluded that while he could say many things, he could not claim that this was not a good man. The prophet's character convinced him to read more and to want to know more.

As van Klaveren compared the Messenger Muhammad with Old Testament prophets on various grounds, he realized he had no logical arguments to accept Moses, Solomon, Abraham, and David as prophets while rejecting Muhammad. When he considered the objection that Muhammad had multiple wives, he noted that Solomon, King David, and

Abraham also had multiple wives. Historically and culturally, polygamy was practiced across Europe, Africa, Asia, and elsewhere for various reasons, so this could not be a valid distinguishing factor. One by one, all his reasons for rejecting Muhammad's prophethood fell away.

The Turning Point: The Story of Hind

A particular story became a decisive moment in van Klaveren's internal struggle. The story involved Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, one of the enemies of the Messenger. Hind had given money to have Hamza killed—Hamza was the favorite uncle of the Messenger. On the battlefield, Hamza was indeed killed, and his body was desecrated; people paraded with his severed ears, cut off his nose, and committed other horrible acts. The Messenger was deeply grieved. Years later, when the Messenger gained power in Mecca, van Klaveren expected to read that Hind was crucified, beheaded, or otherwise severely punished. Instead, the Messenger said he could not look at her in that moment, but everyone was forgiven. He told her that if she wished to stay and live among the Muslims, she could do so; if not, she could leave. But bloodshed was over. Van Klaveren was struck by this act of forgiveness. If someone could forgive a person who had orchestrated the killing of a beloved relative—someone who had then paraded with parts of that relative's body to humiliate him and everything he stood for—that demonstrated an extraordinary character. It was something van Klaveren had never witnessed before. In that moment, he thought to himself that this was truly a special person, and combined with the arguments for his prophethood he had already considered and the character he had witnessed, he believed the Messenger Muhammad was indeed a prophet.

Crisis of Acceptance

But immediately van Klaveren's thoughts turned alarming: he had already accepted the oneness of God, and now he was saying that Muhammad was a prophet. To say "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger" was essentially to recite the shahada. This terrified him. He thought to himself that this was going in the wrong direction, so he decided to close the books and stop his research. By this point, he was no longer the anti-Islam person he had been; what he had read, seen, and experienced had changed him.

What happened next, van Klaveren acknowledges, sounds like a fairy tale, but he insists it really occurred. As he sat with all these books on the table, seized by the realization that he was approaching the shahada, he decided to put all the books away on the highest shelf. However, there were so many books that many fell off. One of the books that fell was the Qur'an. When he picked it up, his hand landed on a page containing Surah 22, verses 46. The verse read: "It is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts." Van Klaveren immediately understood the message as personal. His

problem was not that his eyes were blind—he could see everything he had written himself. Nobody had forced him to write the anti-Islam book; he had done so of his own will and had seen it all with his own eyes. Yet he still could not accept the reality of what he had discovered. It was not his eyes that were blind; it was his heart. His nafs, his ego, could not accept what reason and evidence had shown him to be true.

The Divine Sign

At that moment, van Klaveren addressed God—whether the God of the Bible or the Qur'an, he did not specify—and asked for a sign. He said to God: "Give me a sign so that I am 100% sure this is the way." He then went to bed. When he woke up, he felt utterly secure within himself—more secure than he had ever felt about anything else in his life. The doubt had lifted, and he had found his answer.

The Moment of Realization

The whole anxiety and doubting dissolved like snow before the sun. I thought to myself, "Well, I think I'm a Muslim." Of course, after that I had to tell other people about this decision.

Reactions from Family and Community

Most people's reactions were very negative. For many relatives—uncles and aunts—it came as a shock, especially when they heard about it on the news. I told my mother, and she started crying. My wife, however, was very open about it. She said, "Islam is what you really believe in. That's in your heart. Who am I to judge?" But people from my old work were really aggressive. I received over two thousand death threats from people who used to support me and had voted for me. People said the most horrible things—"we will rape your wife, shoot you, we know where your children go to school"—that kind of thing. Of course, most of it is nonsense because there are crazy people writing things on their computers.

It was a hectic time. I had to tell my employer, a Christian organization. The leader said he couldn't believe it. He mentioned noticing a change in how I spoke about certain topics on the radio—I had become milder and less harsh. When I confirmed I had become Muslim, he said he couldn't sleep for two days. He couldn't accept it. It was very strange to him.

The hardest part was telling my grandfather, who was dying and was ninety-three or ninety-four years old, lying on his deathbed at home. My mother told me I had to tell him, so I asked her to come with me as support. I said, "Grandfather, I became a Muslim." He closed his eyes, and I thought he stopped breathing because of his age. He really did stop breathing for a while, then started again. He looked at me and said, "Well, at least you became a Catholic." It was very funny.

My old boss from the radio asked how he could know I wouldn't become Hindu or something else one day. I told him, "I never chose a religion one time before. I was born into a Christian family and raised in a Christian way. I'm grateful for all the good things that came from that, but it was not my decision. The only time I made a decision was when I became Muslim, and it was the most important and the most rational decision I ever made. I never took years and years to decide anything—only becoming Muslim."

First Experiences with Islamic Practice

When I made my first Salah, it was a beautiful moment but very strange. As a Christian, you're not used to praying like that. You pray with your hands together, perhaps on your knees in front of your bed. But I think it's very beautiful that you really prostrate and bow down in the deepest way for your Lord. That's a very humbling and beautiful thing. It made me feel very happy.

Major Challenges in Conversion

Becoming Muslim was a big challenge because I had to tell the world and my family. I also worried it would be very hard because, especially as a Protestant Christian, there weren't many religious requirements like there are in Islam. As a Muslim, it's required to pray five times a day, eat in a certain way, and think in a certain way. You have to be your best in every moment because of your relationship with your creator. The five daily prayers serve as a constant reminder of the Creator, making you much more aware that you have a Lord in a way I didn't experience as a Christian.

I thought to myself, "Wow, five times a day praying—I cannot do this. I cannot do that." It made it hard mentally. But after I became Muslim, it wasn't hard at all.

Raising Children in Islam

I try to raise my children as Muslims, though I'm not sure when you can truly say children are being raised as Muslim. It's a very difficult job, especially these days. When I married, I wasn't Muslim, and I promised in a way that my children would be raised as Christians. After I became Muslim, I'm not raising them as Christians anymore. If the kids have questions about Christianity, they ask my wife and get Christian answers. If they ask me, they get Islamic answers. Most of the time they ask their father. My wife cooks halal for everybody. She says, "I'm not going to cook five meals, so everybody eats the same. You want halal, everybody eats halal." In a way, it's like an organic process.

Regrets About Past Statements

The heaviest and most regretful expression I used for Islam was saying "Islam is a lie." That's something I used to say. "Islam is a lie. Islam is poison." When I said Islam is a

lie, I meant the whole religion and everything that comes with it—the highest level of jahiliya in a way. That's something I regret because it was like an umbrella, and everything else fell under this concept that Islam is a lie. Of course, I blame myself for it.

I know that many people who don't practice Islam still say things like this. In a political, social, and cultural sense, everything that was said and done is still there. I sometimes even hear arguments from people in my old party that I invented myself. That bothers me. It's one of the reasons we founded an organization called the Islamic Experience Center. We go to primary schools, high schools, colleges, universities, government departments, social organizations, and churches to take away misconceptions about Islam, to share the message, and to show Islam in its true colors. We do this using virtual reality with glasses, making it a very engaging experience. In this way, we try to erase the things I said and did in the past.

How to Research Islam

When asked how people should research Islam, I would certainly not advise Google—it's the last thing I would advise. I would say shut down the computer. I think it's very important that people read real books with pages. I would recommend "Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources" by Martin Lings, which is a green book I mentioned earlier. I think it's very important for people not to dive directly into the Qur'an because it's a very complex book. If you don't have somebody who can teach you what you're reading, especially if you don't know anything about Islam and aren't fluent in classical Arabic, you will read an interpretation or translation of the Qur'an—and most of the time that's not the real deal.

I would advise people to study the Sirah—the character and life of the Prophet—because that's what the tradition teaches us as well. His life was the Qur'an. He was the living Qur'an in a way. Just study his Sunnah. I think that is the best way of discovering Islam.

Final Reflections

I became much more happy after I became Muslim. I would like to invite everybody to become Muslim just because it brings peace to your soul and peace to your heart. It is the truth. It resonates with heart and soul. At least look at it from an Islamic perspective. Try to read and study the life of the Prophet. Try to understand what Muslims believe—not so much the behavior of Muslims, because there are many Muslims who don't live like Muslims, including myself. I don't always live like a Muslim. We all fall short. But you should look at the example of all examples, which was the Prophet. If you study his life, perhaps you will find guidance that leads you to the truth.

Qur'an 22:46 #Conversion to Islam #Anti-Islam activism and ideological reversal #Islamic theology and Christian-Muslim comparative religion #Tawhid (Islamic monotheism) vs. Christian Trinity #The character and example of the Messenger Muhammad #Family and social reactions to religious conversion #Islamic practice and daily worship (Salah)

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