The Secret World of God: Aesthetics, Relationships, and the Conversion of ‘Frances’ from Shi’a Islam to Christianity

Duane Alexander Miller

Abstract

On a relatively sunny, summer morning (for Scotland) I met with Frances at a coffee shop in what I will call Castle City. We had met through a mutual acquaintance at a university and the local Episcopal parish. She is a slight woman possessing a strong if introspective personality and at ease with words that made conversation enjoyable. She looks completely at home in the UK (and this would also have been the case 100 years ago) reminding us that the nation’s name Iran is related to the English word Aryan. I do not claim that this is a complete picture of her conversion, which as with many conversions out of Islam—whether to Christianity, atheism, or humanism—took place over many years and I try to give due weight to the various phases in this complex process. Moreover, it must be noted that this is the account of a diaspora conversion, because many of the key events took place outside of Iran.

Francis Beckwith, a scholar of Christianity, makes several arguments that are paradigmatic of modern Christian responses to the Bahá’í faith. Using mostly, though not exclusively, biblical sources, Beckwith critiques Bahá’í doctrine and beliefs, devoting chapters to “The Bahá’í Use of the Bible” and the “Truth of Christianity.” The interactions of these three faiths over the past 150 years have settled into the pattern of hostility from Islam, a grudging tolerance by Christianity, and a slightly positive acceptance by Judaism. This can be explained by the threat the Bahá’ís purportedly posed to each religion, a hypothesis which finds parallels in the relations between the first three Abrahamic faiths.