The Odd One

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Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph:

As a child, it was routine for my family to have morning devotions where my parents would not only read passages of scriptures, but also break down verse by verse what they mean. This helped shape my spiritual life. My parents made it their duty to instill the belief of Yahweh in me. However, growing up under this strict religious background was bitter-sweet.
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As a child, it was routine for my family to have morning devotions where my parents would not only read passages of scriptures, but also break down verse by verse what they mean. This helped shape my spiritual life. My parents made it their duty to instill the belief of Yahweh in me. However, growing up under this strict religious background was bitter-sweet.

I was living on a small island called St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where the main religion is Christian. The religious group I am a part of is not Christian. We call ourselves the Assemblies of Yahweh, where we use the true name of our heavenly father. When I tried explaining this to others, my religion was thought of as a cult. It was difficult for others to grasp that we worship the same being; I just call him by a different name. It made me stand out from all classmates while growing up.

Then I tried to fit in with a group. When I chose the group with ‘worldly’ friends, my mom made it clear to me that I was not going to fit in. They were inviting me to parties, they were having boyfriends, they were wearing belly breakers and halter tops and they were listening to non-religious music. My mom on the other hand said ‘no’ to me going to parties, told me to return the halter top I bought at the store and made me turn off the TV when I was dancing to music videos on BET. I did not even have to mention the word boyfriend to her.

Therefore, I tried to fit in with the more religious groups. For a while, when I was ten, I was part of a Christian club my friends and I made up. Way to fit in! However, things started going south for me, when I felt guilty using the name God and Jesus, when I know I should have stronger mind and use Yahweh and Yahshua, the names I was accustomed to using. Then they made a big deal about Christmas, and the food and the gifts and the celebration of Christ’s birthday. On the other hand I learnt not to celebrate Christmas because it was really not Yashua’s birthday. I
remember feeling envious when they talked about all the gifts they got. I remember even pretending that I did celebrate Christmas at a point in time, just to fit in. They also talked about how much they loved ham for that time of year. I was not allowed to eat ham. It was against the diet laws. I actually did on several occasions, knowing and unknowingly. Then when the Christmas talk was over, it was Easter. I did not celebrate Easter because I was taught that it was pagan and it was not commanded in the bible. Then there was the keeping of the Sabbath, the one time in the week when everyone had fun. I was either stuck at services or stuck at home, not watching TV or not desiring any form of entertainment.

I think the hardest for me was the keeping of Yahweh’s holy days. During September – October I had to stay away a total of 3 random days; well at least random to others who did not understand. In addition, I had to dress in church attire. Therefore, I was in the middle of a working or school week, on my way to services and dressed in service attire. I could not have explained that, nor could I have explained why I was staying away from school. No one never really understood. The teachers accepted it because they did not have a choice.

Throughout my life, I have read the scriptures, in efforts of challenging my parents to these observations that were making life a little bit difficult for me. When I raised what I thought was a good argument, they would shoot me down with even better arguments. Luckily my parents were understanding of why I would feel this way and allowed me to ask questions and challenge them. Therefore, the more explanations I got from them, the more I understood why I was observing these practices. The more I understood it, the more I was brave enough to stand in what I believed and not to conform to anyone else’s beliefs. And I must say, I would not have become the person I am today without my strict religious background. It may have made me upset at times as a child, but it makes my life so much better as a woman.

Church of St. Josn in Ragusa Ibla, Sicily

(Photo by MC)