

# Bible Lands

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## John Clark's review of *Unexpected Grace* (2017)

On 5 May 1978 in St Paul's church Tehran, Miss Farifteh Hafezi (now Robb) was baptised and confirmed by the Rt Revd Hassan Dehqani-Tafti, Bishop in Iran. It was the culmination of a long and unusual journey to Christian faith. Written to explain her unusual life and background for her children and grandchildren, this is a captivating, vibrant and highly readable account of that journey and her life as a Christian in two cultures.

Born in Geneva to an Iranian Muslim family, and educated at an international Swiss school, becoming trilingual in Farsi, English and French, she graduated from Tehran University in English literature before gaining a doctorate on the romantic poets from Nottingham University. Returning as a university lecturer to Tehran, her baptism took place nine months before the turmoil of the Islamic Revolution obliged her to leave the country for Britain, where, with no job prospects she changed career to train as a nurse/midwife. During that time, she renewed friendship with a Scottish orthopaedic surgeon ('the man of my dreams') now her husband, and moved to Edinburgh where she is an active member of the Scottish Episcopal Church and an accomplished viola player.

Her journey to Christian faith took her via participation in the welcoming warmth of the Methodist Student Society and Church in Nottingham, experience of Roman Catholicism (including time in a convent and experience of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises in Wales as part of her doctoral researches into the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins) to a spiritual home in the Anglican/Episcopal Church.

In writing for her family, the book introduces Iranian culture, customs, religion and cuisine, as well as outlining the story of Christianity in Iran and developments since the Revolution.

*John Clark*