

## My Journey to Islam

1. **Yusef Vanderkimpfen:** I was born in 1963 in Brussels, the capital of Belgium. My ancestors are of humble origin, mostly workers in the textile industry in the region of East Flanders. Like most Belgians at the time, they were Catholic, and so I was baptized as a Roman Catholic as a baby. During the 20th century and this 21st century, religion no longer plays a role in the lives of most people in Belgium and in Western Europe. And now I live in a country, France, which values laicity to such an extent that it can be said that this has become the state religion and runs counter to the individual freedom to identify in public space with a certain belief whether this would be Christian, Islamic or something else.

In the 1970's, Jehovah's witnesses called at our door and my non-religious mother accepted their proposal to study the Bible with them. Shortly after she began to study the Bible and the publication of Jehovah's witnesses, I also began to study the Bible with them. At the age of 13, I was baptized as one of Jehovah's witnesses in the city of Aalst at a local convention.

2. I quickly became a colporteur of the Watchtower or their interpretation of the Bible. The Watchtower is a religious organization that has its headquarters in the United States America - Brooklyn NY. The doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses is rooted in the Adventists, who emphasize the return or coming of Jesus Christ. When the Jehovah's witnesses were still called the Bible Students, their leader and founder was Charles Taze Russel, the son of a tailor.

3. I was a member of a local congregation named Tomberg in Woluwe-Saint-Lambert and as a young person, I quickly received privileges or tasks such as handling the microphone during meetings and answering discussions during the weekly meetings. Also I helped at the counter with distributing books and magazines. At 21 years old, married with a Jehovah's witness, like this is prescribed. We started as a couple in the pioneer service. This is a voluntary commitment for at least one-year 1000 hours of preaching (in that time). Together with my wife, we also visited the pioneering school, a two-week long intensive training for pioneers. I was also a Ministerial servant - "Ministerial servant" refers to one who serves as an assistant to the body of elders in the congregation. He must meet Bible standards to qualify for this privilege of service.

4. In 1996, I became an elder<sup>1</sup>\* in our local congregation, I was 33 years. It was expected that an elder could give public sermons in its own congregation and in other congregations in the country. The task of an elder exists that he controls the

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<sup>1</sup> Elder: A man of mature age, but in the Scriptures, one who primarily holds a position of authority and responsibility in a community or a nation. The word is also used of heavenly creatures in the book of Revelation. The Greek word *pre·sby'te·ros* is translated "elder" when it refers to those responsible for taking the lead in the congregation. - Quote: [Glossary.jw.org](http://Glossary.jw.org))

congregation members if they follow the rules imposed by the Watch Tower Society. If someone does not follow the rules, they may receive a public reprimand and lose their privileges or be excluded. As an elder, I have accomplished several tasks such as service overseer or the one who leads the preaching work in the congregation. Also, Watchtower overseer, this is the weekly discussion of an article with a question and answer from the official magazine of the Watch Tower Society.

5. Other projects I was involved in were building a multilingual complex (Kingdom-hall). My work was the coordination between the different congregations involved in this construction project (Dutch, French, German, Italian and Turkish). I was also the one who wrote the reports of the association that managed this building.

6. I also had the opportunity to serve as an elder in a German-speaking congregation in Brussels for 6 months. I was also head of the conference center of Jehovah's witnesses in Bornem (Belgium) for years and organized the gardening activities to which Jehovah's witnesses' volunteers from all over Flanders were invited. All this gives you an idea of how strongly I was associated or involved with Jehovah's witnesses.

### **But how come I left Jehovah's witnesses and am now a Muslim?**

7. One day, one of the Jehovah's witnesses I had given Bible study and was already member of the congregation found on the Internet a book written by a former leader of Jehovah's witnesses, Raymond Franz.

8. [Raymond Franz](#) realized that the work of the Organization of Jehovah's witnesses was not always in accordance with what the Bible teaches and his conscience forced him to withdraw from his leadership role as a member of the Watchtower's governing body. His intention was not to leave but have a low profile, but his co-directors insisted on his exclusion due to apostasy.

9. At first, I took his book for lies, but with half reading and trying to refute what he wrote, I came to the disturbing conclusion that he was honest and good and wanted the best for the Organization of Jehovah's witnesses. Each Jehovah's witness and better every ex-Jehovah's witnesses who reads this knows how I felt then. Cheated! I had all my youth sacrificed for "The Truth", as Jehovah's witnesses call their Organization. But this was not the truth, but a human organization, a well-oiled machine. In terms of organization, there is no group that I know so well organized, but this is not in itself a sign of the truth. Jehovah's witnesses are very proud that they can build a new (prefab) kingdom-hall in a weekend! But Mormons do the same. After reading this book titled '[Crisis of Conscience](#)', I now had my own conflict of conscience. I could not keep this for myself and wanted to know if I was going mad. I asked my wife regardless of my comments to read the book and tell me what she thought of it. The result was the same, she was sick with the thought that we were deceived all this time and others were misled. My wife shared what she knew with another Jehovah's witnesses her best friend and she in turn with her husband, who was

also a fellow elder in our congregation. We also ordered his second book, '[In Search of Christian Freedom](#)', which is also very enlightening.

10. We decided to leave this organization and wrote a letter that we withdrew. All this had a major impact on our lives. My mother was Jehovah's witnesses and the parents of my wife too. All our friends were Jehovah's witnesses, because you are supposed not to have friends who are non-Jehovah's witnesses. But I also worked in a company whose boss was a Jehovah's witnesses, and many workers too. You can imagine the atmosphere was very tense, as an apostate in their midst, how could they deal with it. Finally, I resigned from my job.

11. As Raymond Franz, we were aware that the organization of Jehovah's witnesses is very elitist and that other groups who claim to be Christians are rejected as fake Christians. Now, what to do? Our view was wider and through Internet we found Christians in our area with whom we took contact. This proved to be sincere people with a great love for God and Jesus (peace be upon him). Yet there was something we didn't like and that was adhering to the Trinity. We were convinced that the trinity doctrine is not Christian. Jehovah's witnesses are not wrong in every point of their doctrines, and we could not reject what was correct. We must remain honest with ourselves and God. Not so many Christians we meet are actively concerned about the Trinity, but in their songs, this is still in some form present, and we could not get our hearts to sing those songs.

12. Because we could not thrive in these Pentecostal churches and others, we started a house church. House Churches was something that was new and came from America over to Europe. Independent of any institutional church, we were free as Christians and baptized anew by a Dutch Christian friend Timo K. with a Pentecostal background. We were discouraged because we were not successful, and a small group remained. We never asked ourselves if it was not better if we had stayed as Jehovah's witnesses, because it was impossible after we had taken knowledge of how the governing body functions and theological matters to stay as Jehovah's witnesses.

13. From then on my quest for real 'Truth' began. My wife and our friends who had also left Jehovah's Witnesses, came in a spiritual lethargy, but I was still hungry. I started to read a lot.

14. Ever since I started reading the Bible as a teenager, I have been attracted to Judaism. Since Jehovah's witnesses accept the entire Bible, including the Jewish portion, and base their rules on principles therein, all Jehovah's witnesses have some basic knowledge of the Jewish faith. An example: for a Jehovah's Witness it is forbidden to wear tattoos based on the text in the Old Testament or Hebrew scriptures: "You must not make cuts in your flesh for a dead person, and you must not make tattoo markings on yourselves. I am Jehovah." - Leviticus 19:28. Nowhere in the Christian New Testament is there anything like that.

I have studied Judaism thoroughly and have contacts in this community. Judaism is not interested in converts, and thus candidates are usually discouraged. For Jews, one

can also be a worshiper of the true God outside Judaism. Before Judaism came into existence, there was already a religion. This was the religion of Adam عليه السلام (peace be upon him) and his descendants. Judaism originated at Mount Sinai, after the Exodus of the descendants of Jacob عليه السلام from Egypt. What was there before? There were individuals, and perhaps entire communities, who worshipped only the One God as the majority turned to worshipping their dead, who were then called gods. Adam, Abil, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Melchizedek and many others were "subjected" (in Arabic Muslim, those who surrender to God) to this One True God. Judaism was a separate covenant with one specific people and is not intended for other nations. My thorough knowledge of Judaism would eventually lead me to Islam (Arabic: surrender or submission) in its basic form of religion is for the children of Adam عليه السلام.

15. I was also interested in Buddhism and especially Zen Buddhism from Japan. It should also be known that Buddhism, as practised in the West, is far from Buddhism in the Far East. Focusing on human suffering and being liberated from it or breaking through karma and the absence of a purpose for this life contrasted sharply with my analytical mind. What struck me is that many Westerners idealize Buddhism as a peaceful religion but forget that in predominantly Buddhist countries there have been wars as in all cultures. (Proof the genocide by Buddhists of the Muslim Rohingya in Burma.)

16. Nobody can imagine how hungry I was for spirituality. In retrospect, I think I have become very depressed because I saw no way out and sometimes, I went to lonely places in fields and forests to call on God. I asked, "Whoever You are and whatever You call, show me the way, show me what is Your will and I will carry it out."

17. But then I did not know that the whole quest, getting to know Buddhism, New Age, Rosicrucians and even atheism, had one goal, to try everything or take note of it. My nature is to test everything and had I not studied all religions before I became a Muslim, this might lead to new unrest.

18. Sometimes people think that believers are weak people who need something to cling to. This may be true for some, but I do not believe because it gives me support. Often the religious requirements run counter to my own desires, and it is just an ordeal to be a believer.

I believe because I see evidence of this in nature / the universe. I have studied the different theories of evolution and the reason why people like to believe in evolution, and it is mainly speculation and wishful thinking. Atheism is a belief in the absence of a god. This belief can only exist by inventing evidence against belief in a Creator, and therefore fraudulent discoveries and fabricated evidence of evolution have also been made. See the fraud of [the Piltdown Man](#) and who cannot assure you that more of these fraudulent alleged scientific discoveries will be presented?

19. As a Jehovah's witness I had already learned what the theory of evolution stood for and how to fight this scientific lie. To claim that pure coincidence, without an intelligence, everything arose requires a greater faith than belief in the hand of a source of life, which we call Allah. Often the answers from scientists who believe in evolution (and I say believe it because this is a belief) are more philosophical than facts. They are models and speculations. One of the following facts has always kept my belief in a Creator strong, which is symbiosis or the co-existence of two or more life forms that need each other have to survive.

“In southern Europe, there are several wild orchids whose fertilization depends on their mimicking female bees. These orchids need to send “parcels” of pollen to fellow orchids. Bees are the ideal carriers. But since the orchids do not have any tasty nectar to attract the bees, the orchids must resort to trickery, as it were. And the trick is that the flower looks and smells so much like a female bee that the male bee tries to mate with it! Each species of these orchids has its own disguise and aroma.

By the time the bee realizes his mistake, the orchid has deposited a sticky packet of pollen on his body. The bee then flies off, only to be fooled again by another orchid, which receives the pollen. After several such deceptions, the bee realizes that these orchids are not to be trusted. By then, he will likely have pollinated some of the flowers.

How did these unthinking orchids acquire the right smell and appearance to fool the bees? Such remarkable mechanisms testify to an intelligent Designer, whose creation never fails to astonish and fascinate.” Quote from Awake! Magazine 1997, 12/08 p. 31.

20. After shopping the different religions and spiritual groups I finally just wanted to believe in Jesus عليه السلام because that man was a man of integrity for me who stood up for the poor and exploited and against the organized manipulative religion of the religious elite and that appealed to me. I certainly did not want to be a Christian anymore, but just believe in all the prophets of God. Then I started reading the Bible again, especially the Four Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Together with a lexicon and the Greek body text I started looking for Jesus عليه السلام real message. Through books and magazines that gave a scientific view of the period in which Jesus عليه السلام lived and the surviving texts, I came to the conclusion that Jesus عليه السلام was not the son of God nor that he wanted to experience sacrificial death, but was "just" a prophet of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael and Jacob. عليه السلام

21. Then I came to realize that this is also what Islam teaches about Jesus عليه السلام. As a Jehovah's witness I had previously shown an interest in Islam, but this to convert Muslims to Christianity. Praise said to Allah, I never got a Muslim to do that! I admired the Muslims for the way they pray. Kneeling and with his forehead on the floor I found the most beautiful way to draw close to Jehovah and as a Jehovah's witness I sometimes prayed that way privately.

Somme examples in the Torah (Old Testament):

“Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,” - Genesis 17:3 (New American Standard Bible)

“Neither,” he replied. “I have now come as commander of the LORD’s army.” Then Joshua bowed with his face to the ground in worship and asked him, “What does my lord want to say to his servant?” - Joshua 5:14 (Christian Standard Bible)

“And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. Then all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.” - Nehemia 8:6 (New King James version)

“David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between heaven and earth with his sword drawn, reaching out over Jerusalem. So, David and the leaders of Israel put on burlap to show their deep distress and fell face down on the ground.” - Chronicles 21:16 (New Living Translation)

“While I was still prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah suddenly died. Then I fell face down on the ground and cried out, “O Sovereign LORD, are you going to kill everyone in Israel?” - Ezekiel 11:13 (New Living Translation)

Somme examples in the Christian part of the Bible (New Testament):

“He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, “My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.” - Matthew 26:39 (New Living Translation)

“All the angels stood around the throne with the leaders and the four living creatures. They bowed in front of the throne with their faces touching the ground, worshiped God,” - Revelation 7:11 (Gods Word Translation)

Then I started reading more about Islam and the conclusions I had made about Jesus عليه السلام corresponded to what the Qur’an teaches and the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

22. As a former Christian, how could I accept Muhammad (ﷺ) as a Prophet of God? I thought of words that were attributed to Jesus عليه السلام and that we can read in the Bible book Matthew 7: 15-20: “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but are actually predatory wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Surely one does not pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? So every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, just as a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Any tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and put on fire thrown. So you can recognize them by their fruits.” If I apply this rule of Jesus عليه السلام on Muhammed (ﷺ) then he is a true Prophet of God. He preached against idolatry and the exclusive obedience and submission to the one God (compare Exodus 20: 1-6 8), against practices that discriminated against women (such as burying newborn girls alive because a girl was a disgrace to the Quraysh tribe of

Mecca. Women could not inherit, what is possible in Islam. He (ﷺ) was against fitnan (chaos) he promoted rules that allow a peaceful, safe society (fair trade, no interest that puts anyone in debt anymore, honorable behavior between the sexes, warfare when necessary and with mercy for the vanquished, etc). Muhammed (ﷺ) has, beginning with the Arab tribes, led many peoples of idolatry to the worship of the one true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael and Jacob. عليه السلام This is not the work of a false prophet! And for Christians who say he's possessed was from the Devil, the Satan. In Islam many times a day the following is said before praying or reading the Qur'an: "A'udzoe bi-Llaahi minash-shithanir-radim." which means: "I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan." It is strange that a religion that would be from Satan repeated many times a day that he was cursed by God. In Satanism Satan is blessed many times a day and God is cursed. These are just some of the things that I thought about that led me to become a Muslim.

Muslims follow the Ten Commandments, as it were, except for the Sabbath given to the children of Israel. Also, unlike Christians, Muslims have dietary laws that protect the health of the body and mind.

I then worked at Brussels National Airport in Zaventem and there is a small prayer room in each terminal for Muslims as well as for the Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Christians and even a room for atheists. I then went to that Islamic prayer room in Terminal A and did the shahada or creed all alone there. I had written the shahada in Arabic on a piece of paper: "I testify that nothing is worshipped in truth but God, I testify that Mohammed is God's messenger." I became a Muslim without the help of any Muslim. I had the feeling of being connected to Abraham, who had a simple but spiritual relationship with God. عليه السلام

I came home then and my wife who knew about my search, I told her, "I'm a Muslim now". She couldn't laugh at this, because she knew that if I do something I would do it thoroughly and since the many negative publicity against Islam (this is all after 9/11) this was a no go for her.

23. Eventually I went to the [Merkes Islaami in the Grand Mosque](#) in the cinquantenaire in Brussels, where my conversion to Islam was recorded. A year after my conversion to Islam I went on Hajj - the Pilgrimage in Arabia. (December 2006). It was a very blessed time. The first eye contact with the Kaaba cannot be described. This House of Allah (BeytAllah) build by Abraham عليه السلام is a witness to His eternal bond with His worshipers. The idea of Such a house was not strange to me as the Bible says that Jakob عليه السلام, one of the great-grandsons of Abraham عليه السلام built an altar for Jehovah in Bethel (literally: House of Allah). (See Genesis 28: 10-22) Also the dedicatory prayer that King Salomon asking that anyone who prays in the direction of the house (Temple of Allah) in Jerusalem should be answered. "You must listen to the entreaties of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place, that you yourself may hear from the place of your dwelling, from the heavens; and you must hear and forgive." Jehovah responded: "When I shut up the heavens that no rain may occur and when I command the grasshoppers to eat up the land and if I send a pestilence among my people, and my people upon whom my

name has been called humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn back from their bad ways, then I myself shall hear from the heavens and forgive their sin, and I shall heal their land.”—2 Chronicles 6:21; 7:13, 14.

Also walking where, the prophets Abraham, Ishmael and Muhammed (ﷺ) walked was a unique experience. Most important, however, was the fact that Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and may Allah accept my Hajj with all the limitations I had then.

25. After about one month after my conversion to Islam I was circumcised and this because those who belong to the religion of Ibrahim عليه السلام must be circumcised. This was a sign in the flesh between Allah and the descendants of Ibrahim عليه السلام (See Genesis 17: 22-27). And the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said as Abu Hurayrah narrated: “Five (things) belong to the fitrah (natural disposition); Shaving the pubic area, circumcision, cutting the moustache short, epilating the armpit hair and cutting the nails. ” (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

26. You may be asking yourself what happened to my wife? She could not accept that I had become a Muslim and especially that I put this faith into practice. For her, this total turnaround in our lives since we left JG has been a very emotional time, and it was too much for her. She was also pressured by friends and colleagues to go against my desire to be a Muslim. Perhaps she was overwhelmed with stereotypical remarks that Muslim men succeed their wife or that I would oblige her to accept Islam. Nothing could be further from the truth. I never asked her to accept Islam and this consciously so as not to be blamed for putting pressure on her. Should the non-Muslim partner accept that the other becomes Muslim? No you shouldn't, but it would be nice. It is to be understood that if one marries someone, one marries that person as he or she is. If there is a radical change, such as a change in religion or political affiliation, there is a chance that there is no common ground for continuing the marriage or technically speaking ‘continuing the contract’. One must understand this. At that time, as I said, my wife was unable to live with the idea that her husband had become a Muslim. After six months, we decided to end our marriage, as we both wanted peace in our lives. We are therefore peacefully separated, and everyone is now going his way. Since it was my choice to become a Muslim, I thought she could keep the house we bought. I only left the house with my personal items, such as clothes.

27. As a non-Muslim, it may all seem very strange and exaggerated. But I can say that those who study Islam and do it with an open mind will find much spiritual satisfaction. Islam is an all-encompassing way of life, which insists man on balance in thought and action. The true Muslim is a gentleman when dealing with others. He is also aware that the Earth with everything on it deserves respect and is thus environmentally conscious. Planting a tree is highly valued in Islam. He or she does not drink intoxicants and therefore lives healthier and does not endanger the lives of others.

28. After I got to know the Muslims better, I discovered that like everywhere there are people who claim to be Muslim and there are people who are really Muslim. It is a pity that the non-Muslims take their bad example as a reference for what Islam is. I

also discovered the different tendencies or sects in Islam, but to me it is clear that the water is purest at the source and the further away the more pollution, ballast will be in the water. Likewise, Islam, the closer to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and his early followers, the purer Islam will be. I also saw people who are so concerned with the letter of the law that they forget the spirit of the law.

29. I hope to rise every morning as a Muslim and die as a Muslim. This biography is very brief and there may be things that can be told better or differently, but Allah knows better and with Him is the knowledge. I am absolutely a sinner and seek Allah's grace and compassion. I am absolutely a sinner and seek Allah's grace and compassion.

Finally, I invite you (if you wish and of your own free will) to accept Islam and start a wonderful journey and build a personal relation with your Creator.

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