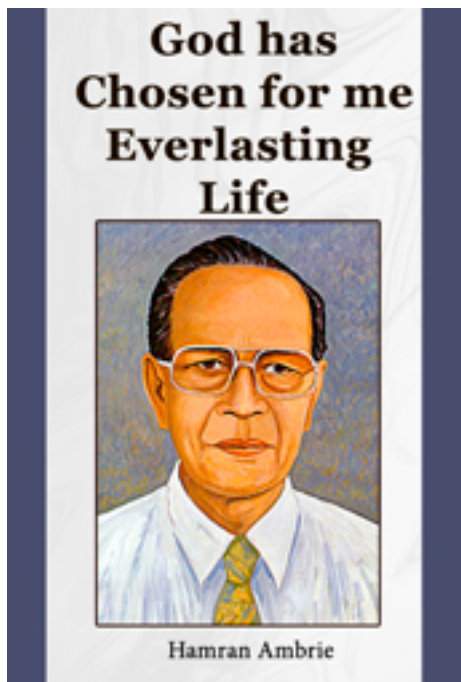


GOD HAS CHOSEN FOR ME EVERLASTING LIFE

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1. God Speaks to Me Personally

During former days I was an active Muslim, an organizer of the Muhammadiyah movement and a preacher of Islam. In 1947, I was chosen to be the Chairman of the Kalimantan Muslim Congress in Amuntai, together with K.H. Idham Chalid. In 1950-51 I became a Muslim priest in the army in Banjarmasin, with the rank of Second Lieutenant. My articles were published in Islamic magazines such as *Mingguan Adil* in Solo; *Mingguan Risalah Jihad* in Jakarta and *Mingguan Anti Komunis* in Bandung. I cooperated with aggressive anti-Christians from 1936 in Muara Teweh (Barito) and until 1962 sympathized with groups who intended to establish Islamic rule over Indonesia, which would have automatically stood against Christians.

Actually, I had owned a Bible since 1936. However, I did not read in it to find its

truth, but to search for paragraphs which could support my standpoint as a Muslim with an anti-Christian attitude, and thus be able to attack the Christian faith more effectively.

I was a slanderer of Jesus Christ until the age of 40, completely rejecting his divinity. I purposely ridiculed and rejected the truth. But the love of God was so great, that he sought, found and saved me.

In 1962, while writing a copy of my sermon for the mosque I meditated over a verse of the Sura Al-Ma'ida 5:68, which says:

"Say, O people of the Book! You will be nothing unless you uphold the Torah and the Gospel, and all that is revealed to you from your Lord."

«قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ
تَقِيمُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ
مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ»

(المائدة ٥ : ٦٨)

I had read this verse a hundred times, but at last God whispered to my soul that the "Torah and the Gospel" which are mentioned in the Qur'an are the same Torah and Gospel found in the Bible now. I had always thought that the Torah and Gospel mentioned in the Qur'an no longer existed physically, and that their contents had been summarized in the Qur'an. I was convinced that the Torah and the Gospel, which form the Bible now were false, and that the original contents had been misarranged, forged or added to by people.

However, my soul told me that the Torah/Gospel now presented in the Bible is true. My mind constantly opposed this

inner voice: "No! The Torah and the Gospel in the Bible have been falsified." My thoughts contradicted my soul and conscience, and I became uncertain and doubtful as to what was right.

To make peace with my conscience, I took the problem to midnight worship (tahjud-prayer), which is a prayer to God requesting definite signs for the truth. I wanted God to help me recognize which of the two beliefs was right. This was my prayer:

"Oh God, Creator of heaven and earth, God of the Muslims, Christians and Buddhists; God of the moon and the stars, valleys and mountains; God of the universe; please show me the truth about what is mentioned in the Qur'an concerning the Torah and the Gospel. Does it mean that the original Torah and Gospel which no longer exist have been summarized in the Qur'an? If that is true, I beg you God to strengthen my heart that I may never study the Bible. But if the 'truth in the Torah and the Gospel' mentioned in the Qur'an, means the truth found in the Bible now, I beg You to open my heart so that I will be more eager to study the Bible honestly."

I did not ask anyone to help me make my decision. I did not ask a preacher, a pious Muslim, nor my wise and intelligent friends. I asked the omniscient God directly to choose for me, so that I would make the right decision according to his divine will. I prayed fervently and earnestly hoping for God's guidance that he would choose the truth for me and help me know and confess the right religion.

Every religious person hopes that there is real life after death. And being one of

these people, I put my hope in God. I believed that after death, there would be only two places we could go to: hell, with its endless punishment of eternal fire; or heaven, to be with God in everlasting glory. I could not think about my eternal future lightly.

For example, let us suppose we have bought 10 grams of pure gold. We would have to examine it carefully, to make sure that nobody had cheated us so that we would have no regret in the future. How much more have we to think very carefully about the future of our soul. We must study and test the truth of our worship in accordance with the will of God, the owner of that heavenly life. Otherwise, we will forever regret our carelessness. I was always sure that the maker of heaven and hell is God himself. For this reason I did not ask the advice of a man -- neither Christian nor Muslim preachers. They are human beings, and cannot know the exact truth that is in accordance with the will of God. I approached God, the possessor of all truth, directly, begging him with hope and trusting that he would give me true guidance.

Praise God all my prayers were answered! This proves that he gives his truth to everyone who wants to know it, asking for it earnestly.

It must be noted, that besides verse 68 in Sura Al-Ma'ida, there were many other verses in the Qur'an, which impressed me at that time. For instance:

Sura Al-Sajda 32:23:

"And surely we have given Moses the Book (the Torah), so do not (you Muhammad) hesitate to accept it."

«وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَلَا تَكُنْ فِي مَرْيَةِ
مَنْ لِقَائِهِ»

(السجدة ٣٢ : ٢٣)

Sura Al-Ma'ida 5:46:

"And we let their (those of the previous prophets) footsteps follow Jesus, the son of Mary, fulfilling what he had in his hands from the Torah. And We have given him the Gospel containing guidance and light, and affirming all that he had in his hands from the Torah, as guidance and warning for people devoted to God."

Sura Al-Ma'ida 5:47-46:

"And the people of the Gospel must decide (judge) their matters in accordance with what God has revealed in it. And whoever does not decide (judge) according to what has been revealed by God, those are the rotten ones."

«وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا
لِّمَا بَيَّنَّ يَدِيهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ
هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيَّنَّ يَدِيهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ
وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ وَلِيُحْكَمَ أَهْلَ الْإِنْجِيلِ
بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ
فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ»

(المائدة ٥ : ٤٦ ، ٤٧)

Sura Al-Baqara 2:62:

"Truly the believers from the Jews, Christians and Sabians, whoever believe in God and the last day, doing the good deeds, they will have their rewards with their Lord, and fear will not press them nor despair."

«إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى
وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمَلُوا
صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ»

(البقرة ٢ : ٦٢)

Sura Al-Baqara 2:62:

There are still more verses in the Qur'an indicating that the Torah and the Gospel are a real way of truth in accordance with the will of God. These Qur'anic verses had awakened my mind to delve deeper into the Bible, because God had whispered to my soul about its truth.

The next day, after I had asked for the guidance of God at midnight prayer, I felt a distinct change in myself. From that time on I regarded the Bible as a friend, no longer as an enemy. In the morning I took the Bible with great expectation and paid attention to every word as I read in it because I wanted to know its truth precisely.

With the words:

"In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate"

«بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ»

Sura Al-Baqara 2:62:

I opened the Bible. At that time I intended to read Deuteronomy 18:15. This passage attracted my attention because I had previously used it as a hammer, to strike at the faith of Christians, whether they were preachers, or evangelists, with the intention that they would acknowledge and believe in Muhammad as the prophet who

had been prophesied by the Bible in this chapter. I had known this passage before, but now its meaning had totally changed for me. Truly the Bible remains closed and difficult to understand by everyone who does not believe in it, but on the other hand, it can be clearly understood by those who believe in it, and whose hearts are filled with the Holy Ghost.

The words in Deuteronomy 18:15 read as follows:

"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him."

Formerly I had considered this passage a prophecy about the prophet Muhammad. The words "a Prophet like me (Moses)" indicated to me the identity of Muhammad as the promised prophet because:

-- Moses was born of parents; Muhammad was also born like Moses, of a father and a mother. He was not like Jesus Christ, who was born only of a mother, without a father.

-- When Moses became an adult, he was married. Muhammed was also married, contrary to Jesus Christ who never married.

-- Moses had sons and Muhammad had children, too. But Jesus did not have any descendants, as he was never married.

-- Moses died in old age and was buried, and the same happened with Muhammad. But Jesus Christ never died. He ascended to heaven alive and was not buried.

Previously, it had been obvious to me that the verse in Deuteronomy 18:15 indicated Muhammad as the prophet promised by Moses, but did not prophesy Jesus Christ

as a prophet, and not at all as the Son of God, according to the Christian faith.

But on that day, I read these words slowly and earnestly to understand the real meaning. When I came to the expression, "... a Prophet like me (Moses)," the Holy Ghost whispered in my soul saying: "If you meant the similarity between Muhammad and Moses was that both were born of parents, then they were only similar to the rest of mankind who are born with parents." This characteristic cannot be used as a point to indicate the truth of the prophecy.

Furthermore, if Muhammad was like Moses because he was married, then both were like most others in this world! So this, too, could not be used to prove that Muhammad was a prophet.

If Muhammad was regarded the same as Moses because he had descendants, then this fact could also not be used to determine the prophecy, because most people in this world have children.

Muhammad, just like Moses, died in his old age and was buried. If this example was used to prove the meaning of the prophecy, then this point too could not be used to prove the similarities, as every person in this world has to die and be buried. To die and be buried is common to all and does not make a man unique.

It became more and more clear to me that the prophecy of Moses only indicated Jesus Christ as the promised one. For that reason I had to find unique and extraordinary similarities between Moses and Jesus Christ. Indeed, I found several outstanding similarities between these two men, not shared with others.

-- During the childhood of Moses, Pharaoh threatened to kill him, just as Jesus in his childhood was threatened to be killed by Herod. Not all people are born and threatened to be killed during their infancy.

-- During the birth of Moses, the Pharaoh was furious and ordered that all little boys under two years old should be killed. When Jesus was born, Herod was very angry and ordered the little boys under two years to be killed. In the whole world, only these two personalities have experienced such intense hatred and persecution.

-- During his childhood, Moses was protected by the daughter of Pharaoh. As a child, Jesus was protected by Joseph his foster father. Not all people were protected by people chosen of God during their childhood when their lives were threatened.

-- During his childhood, Moses lived far from his home country in Egypt. It was the same with Jesus, who during his childhood lived in exile in Egypt. Not all children have had to escape to a distant country, like Egypt, during their childhood.

-- When Moses served as the divine messenger of God, he received the power of the Lord to perform miracles, just as Jesus, who in his authority as the Living Word, received power from God to perform miracles by healing the sick and raising the dead from the grave.

-- Moses freed the people of Israel from the bondage of the Egyptian slavery, but Jesus freed his people from the chains of sin and death.

These special proofs allowed me to conclude that the unique prophecy

mentioned in Deuteronomy 18 was not intended to prove Muhammad as the prophet foretold, but to indicate that Jesus Christ was the Word of God incarnate.

Although the love of God was so great that he had enlightened me to see clearly the Bible as the true Word of God, I was still not ready to become a Christian. Why? Because there were some matters in the Christian faith I could not accept, especially the belief that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Since childhood I had been taught, and so I subsequently taught others, that:

"God does not give birth to children, nor was he himself born."

﴿لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ﴾ (الاخلاص ١١٢: ٣)

I also could not articulate that Jesus was Lord (Tuhan) because I had been taught, and I myself taught that:

"THERE IS NO GOD EXCEPT ALLAH."

﴿لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ﴾

I also could not grasp the meaning of the Trinity. I was taught that:

"Those who say Allah is the third of the three are heathen."

﴿لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ﴾

(المائدة ٥: ٧٣)

I also could not accept the Christian belief that Jesus really died on the cross. If Jesus, or "Isa al-Masih" was a prophet, the loving, faithful messenger of God, or the "Son of God" as the Christians called him,

how could the Jews easily torture and hang him on the cross until he died? Why did God not defend him, but let him die on the cross? Suppose I saw my own son tortured, or even hanging on a cross, I would surely fight those people who tortured him in order to save him, whatever the consequences. How could Allah lose his authority over the Jews? At that time I really could not accept this matter.

In order to get helpful explanations to understand this, I visited some preachers or evangelists and asked them why Jesus was called the Son of God or Lord (Tuhan) and what was the meaning of the Trinity of God. I investigated why Jesus the Son of God died on the cross and was crucified by the Jews. I also asked them about the dogma of the "inherited sins of the Fathers in the children" which I regarded an unjust punishment of God.

All the preachers I asked answered and explained my questions carefully, but at that time I could not accept their comments although these had been well-expressed. It was due to our different backgrounds, which were like a great gulf between us. The differences in the religions had not been studied well enough to find some meeting points. Surely we have to study the differences between the religions in order to find logical contacts to bridge over the misunderstandings. At that time I was like a radio receiver and the preacher like a sender. Both were in good condition, but because of our different wave lengths, his transmission and my reception were completely different. The receiver could not catch the voice of the announcer.

The explanations of the preachers and

evangelists went into my left ear and came out the right ear. They did not touch my heart, because I could not comprehend their vocabulary. The preacher himself could not understand precisely my background, so his explanations were not in accordance with what I hoped. This did not happen because the description of the preacher was wrong, but there were essentially different ways of thinking and explaining, so that each could not understand the other. In spite of this I was hopeful. I was still convinced that once God had helped me to choose the truth, he would surely open the door and give me guidance to understand fully the problems which had become my obstacle.

My constant prayer was: "God, I beg you that you reveal the truth to me concerning the word "Son of God" and the name "Lord" (Tuhan) for Jesus Christ. I also beg you to reveal to me the meaning of the Holy Trinity and the Secret of the Cross. God, you have given me an insight that the Bible is truly the Divine Book, so surely you will explain and clear all my obstacles through the Bible, which is the true Word of God which never changes from the beginning up to the present, for ever and ever, until the end of time."

Indeed! Many times, God helped me through his Spirit, the Holy Ghost, who worked in my heart. I will explain how God helped me to surmount the obstacles.

2. Jesus Is Called The Son of God

In John 1:1 and 14 is written: "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only,**

who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

In this verse the spiritual meaning of the expression "Son of God" was revealed. The "Word of God" had become a man in the birth of Jesus Christ. Therefore Jesus is called "the Living Word" as stated in 1 John 1:1.

It is obvious that Jesus is not called "the Son of God," because God has physically and biologically given birth, as many people mistakenly think, but because "the Word of God" was manifested in the Son of Mary by the Holy Spirit.

Muhammad himself testified several times to the truth of this verse by saying:

"Jesus is truly the Spirit of God and His Word." (Hadith Anas Ibn Malik -- Mutiara Hadith, page 353).

«عيسى فإنه روح الله وكلمته»

In Sura Al-Nisa 4:171 we read:

"Truly Jesus Christ the son of Mary, is the Ambassador of God and his Word, which he threw into Mary and (he is) a spirit of him."

«إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ»

(النساء ٤: ١٧١)

Concerning the expression "his Word" or the "Word of God" which became the body of Jesus, Dr. Hasbullah Bakry in his book *Nabi Isa dalam Al-Quran enz* (Jesus the Prophet in the Qur'an) page 109 says: "The Prophet Jesus is called "Kalimatu Allah" (the Word of God) because he is

the incarnation of the Word of God which was designated to Mary to bear the Prophet Jesus."

Hence, from that time on I no longer hesitated to say that Jesus is "The Son of God" because he is "the Living Word of the Almighty" incarnated. Formerly I had refused to confess that Jesus was the Son of God because I understood "Son" biologically and humanly.

Sura Al-Ikhlās 112 says:

"Allah is One. He does not bear children, nor was he born and no one is equal to him."

«اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ... لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ»
(سورة الاخلاص)

This "Sura of faithfulness" is often expressed by Muslim preachers, among them I myself in previous days, denying that God has a Son. This contradicts the Christian faith which states that Jesus is the Son of God. Anyway, a Christian can accept this Qur'anic verse, because Christianity never claims that God has a son in a biological sense, as mentioned in the Qur'an by the term "walad" which means a biologically born son. Jesus is called "the Son of God" by the Arabic Christians in a legal sense using the word "ibn". By this term, he is not called a biologically begotten son, as described by the term "walad" in the Qur'an.

Therefore, I would like to state that there is no single verse in the Qur'an which rejects the teaching of the Bible concerning the name "Son of God" in the legal meaning of "ibn" for Jesus Christ. The Qur'an only rejects the assertion that Jesus is the Son of

God with the meaning of "walad" as a son born by a sexual act between God and Mary. We all reject such an idea too.

3. Jesus Is Called Lord (Tuhan)

(Tuhan is the Indonesian word for Lord)

Why is Jesus called "Lord"? As previously explained, I was not able to pronounce that "Jesus is Lord" for a long time. I also could not say "The Lord Jesus Christ!" Since my childhood I have been taught and afterwards I taught others that

"THERE IS NO GOD EXCEPT ALLAH."

«لا إله إلا الله»

Maybe Jesus was called "Lord" because he was born without a father? No! Adam was also born without a father and even without a mother, and yet Adam was never called "Lord". Or, was it because Jesus had performed many miracles? No, this could also not be the answer. Moses had done many miracles, too, yet he was never called God. Was it because Jesus could heal the lepers and raise people from the dead? No, because Elisha could heal lepers and raise people from the dead also, and yet he was not called God. Was it because Jesus ascended directly to heaven? No, Elija had had the same experience and he was not called Lord. Then why is Jesus called Lord?

Jesus is called Lord, as we read in John 1:1 and 14, because the "Word of God" became man in the birth of Jesus Christ. For that reason in 1 John 1:1 Jesus is called "the Living Word" or in other verses "God incarnate in man".

The word "incarnate" and similar terms in connection with "God" should never be translated or explained with its meaning in the dictionary or according to its secular meaning. For example: "God exists -- Man also exists." The word "exist" in connection with God, has a different meaning from the word "exist" in connection with man. God exists by himself (zat wajib al-wujud). He existed from the very beginning, but men exist because they were made to exist -- they are created.

For that reason the word "incarnate" for God, should not be translated or used according to its secular meaning. According to the dictionary, if a cat incarnated into an elephant, the cat would disappear and an elephant would appear. If a stone was transmuted (incarnated) into gold, then the stone would no longer exist, but the gold would. The word "incarnate" in connection with God has a different meaning. The incarnation that is connected with God does not mean any change in the existence of God because God never changes (Malachi 3:6).

God incarnated as a human being. This does not mean that God no longer exists, and only the man would exist. This idea is wrong. God does not change. God incarnated into a man means that God continues to exist, and that the man exists too. So the word "incarnate" is used analogically, as a likeness for an act and fact exceeding logic, yet its meaning is not the same as in the language of man.

God incarnated into a man means that God has manifested himself, his full being into a man, and that he has revealed his will, power and love in the personality of that unique man, Jesus Christ. Now we can

understand the statements of Jesus:

"The Father is in me, and I in the Father" (John 10:38b).

"I and the Father are one." (John 10:30).

"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9b)

The Apostle Paul said:

"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9).

The second verse stating that Jesus is really God can be read in Matthew 28:18, where Jesus says:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Jesus is the Almighty, the controller of everything.

The Apostle Paul confessed:

"Christ... is the head over every power and authority" (Colossians 2:10).

God himself is Lord as we read in the Qur'an:

"God is the Lord of the Universe."

«الله رب العالمين»

In the gospel we read that God the Almighty has made Jesus "Lord" (Acts 2:36). Here we can distinguish the difference between God and Lord: God means "Theos" in Greek and "Allah" in Arabic, but Lord means "Kyrios" in Greek and "Rabb" in Arabic. The meaning of the latter words is always "authority" with the legislative and executive aspect of it. The authority of God reveals itself in Jesus Christ in many ways:

1. Creating
2. Lawgiving and Commanding
3. Guiding (with help and providence)
4. Forgiving and Saving
5. Renewing by his spirit
6. Judging
7. Glory

The authority of God to command, to guide and to save is found in the personality of Jesus. For that reason Jesus is called "the Living Word of God" and "our only Saviour." As the Living Word, Jesus performs the divinity of God by preaching and forgiving. For that reason Jesus is made "Lord" by God (Acts 2:36; Colossians 2:10).

Jesus is Lord, in a sense that he has the authority to save completely. Jesus is the Saviour of us all, the Living Word. Jesus reminds us: **"I am the way and the truth and the life"** (John 14:6).

It should be remembered that the obstacle which had made me unable to say that Jesus is Lord was the Islamic testimony. I was taught and had been teaching others:

"THERE IS NO GOD, EXCEPT ALLAH."

«لا إله إلا الله»

By that time I understood that this Islamic confession does not have to contradict the Bible. In Exodus 20:3 it is written: **"You shall have no other gods before me."** For that reason I see that the divinity of Jesus is even suggested in the words of Muhammad which confess that Jesus Christ is the spirit of God and his word, the acting authority of God:

"Jesus truly is the spirit of God and his Word."

«عيسى فإنه روح الله وكلمته»

4. The Monotheism (Tauhid) of Christianity

The term "Tauhid" sounds strange to Christian believers, because it is seldom used in Christian theology. The Tauhid in Christianity explains the oneness of the Trinity of God. This oneness of the Trinity, the core of the Christian faith, was often discussed, but is in general not well-understood by most of our brothers who have a Muslim education and background.

4.1. The Only One True God

Every Muslim believes in the existence of only one true God. It is a well-known fact in the Islamic doctrine, that this issue can never be changed, or eliminated.

The same conviction exists in the Christian religion too. Christians also confess the only one and true God. Are Muslim and Christian ideas regarding the term "the only one true God" actually the same?

In the teaching of Islam, the oneness of God is explained in Sura Al-Ikhlâs 112:1, Sura Al-Baqara 2:163, Sura Al-Ma'ida 5:73b and others.

In the Bible the oneness of God is explained in:

Isaiah 45:5 -- "I am the LORD, and there is no other..."

John 17:3 -- "Now this is eternal life:

that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

1 Corinthians 8:4b -- "We know that... there is no God but one."

2 Corinthians 8:6 -- "Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live."

After reading these Bible paragraphs, I was no longer in doubt. I was convinced that my belief concerning the oneness of God previously as a Muslim and now as a Christian did not have to be changed at all. In other words, although I profess to be a Christian, I have not left nor rejected the truth concerning the oneness of God. I feel that after becoming a Christian I understand it more purely. I reject only the claim about Muhammad being a prophet.

The Muslims always assume that Christians violate the doctrine of the oneness of God. They are wrong. I confirm that the Christian teaching actually purifies the doctrine of the oneness of God.

The Christian monotheism (Tauhid) is the purest and best teaching about God. We can test this point by explaining the meaning of polytheism (Shirk) below.

4.2. The Problem of Polytheism

In Islam polytheism is an essential matter. We should pay careful attention to it, so that the oneness of God in Christianity will not be mixed up with polytheism.

Polytheism in Islam is one of the three unpardonable sins. For that reason this question became crucial in my attempt to

compare the two religions. I always looked carefully to see whether the Christian doctrine contained an element of polytheism or not.

First of all I found an outstanding verse in the Bible saying: **"You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me"** (Exodus 20:3-5)

John reminds us: "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). Concerning these idols, there must be a clear definition when something is called an "idol". Not every statue can be called an idol. Not every column is called an idol. Not every gravestone can be called an idol either, just as not every historical building can be called an idol. All those buildings could become idols or be idolized, if people perform religious duties to them, or worship and pray to them.

Occultists, fortune-tellers, and witches with all sorts of incantations and instruments such as incense to call or to exorcise the spirits of dead people, are indications of participation in polytheism. The Bible emphatically reminds us never to get involved in such practices and to avoid persons performing such divination, as asserted in Deuteronomy 18:10-13: **"Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or**

spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God."

Concerning polytheism, I summarize:

1. The Christian religion professes that God is only one. Everybody is obliged to worship and to be devoted to this one God. Any deviation to other gods is a great sin (read Luke 4:8; Matthew 4:10; Deuteronomy 6:13; Joshua 24:14-15).
2. In realizing the oneness of God, the Christian doctrine does not justify the existence of other gods besides God in any form, such as idols, buildings or statues of nature made by men, not even the Kaaba (Baitullah) on pictures or carpets printed in white, red or black colours. There is no justification for kneeling down in front of it, nor at its bottom, in a form of worship (read Exodus 20:3-5).
3. According to the Bible, a real Christian avoids going to or trusting in fortune-tellers, the incantations of witches, mascots, (even if they are made from a Bible), and the burning of incense in order to call or to drive away spirits of the dead. He must be free from the fear of superstitions and the influences of dark spirits (read Deuteronomy 18:10-13).
4. A devoted Christian shall and will not fear the influence of evil spirits or something which could be interpreted as magic or dark powers. In many cases the Bible has stated that the power of Christ has defeated and

conquered all the power of evil spirits. Finally, all those evil spirits must submit to Christ the Lord and his followers (read John 14:12; Mark 16:17).

5. Christians will not regard certain objects, like precious stones in a ring, creese, amulet or other things as if they have special supernatural power. The only power in Christianity is the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost. (Read Romans 14:17-18).
6. Fear, uneasiness, worry, as well as other problems in the life of a Christian are matters which must be brought only into the presence of God in prayers. He alone can understand our requirements and answer our prayers. (Read Psalm 5:3; Matthew 6:25-34; Matthew 7:7-8). Do not go to the holy graves, even not to the graves of the prophets, whatever their names are.

Finally, with a good conscience, I can profess and believe that the Christian Tauhid is the most excellent and purest Tauhid. There is no room for spirits, idols or man-made gods. There is only one God the Father and his active, living, Word, Jesus Christ the Lord.

5. The Trinity of God

Before I accepted conversion to Jesus Christ, the trinity of God was another obstacle for me. It had also become an obstacle to many. This obstacle is due to the misunderstanding of the Christian faith.

I found that the truth in the meaning of "The Trinity of God" does not at all violate the doctrine of the oneness of God

(Tauhid).

Sura Al-Ma'ida 5:73 says:

"Truly these are the unbelievers who say that God is the third of the three."

«لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ»
(المائدة ٥: ٧٣)

Sura Al-Nisa 4:171c also says:

"Do not say that God is three."

«وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةٌ»
(النساء ٤: ١٧١)

These Qur'anic verses are often expressed by our Muslim brothers, including myself before my conversion, as a fixed formula to reject the Christian understanding of the Trinity of God. Actually, these Qur'anic verses reject only the belief in three different Gods and not the oneness of the Holy Trinity in Christian belief.

We Christians can appreciate these Qur'anic verses because Christianity rejects every form of polytheism, including tritheism, which is an unbiblical belief in three separate Gods. Moreover, Christianity also rejects atheism and pantheism.

The Bible has sealed the basic belief in God as follows: "**Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one**" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). Jesus confessed this creed publicly (Mark 12:29-30).

In Isaiah 45:5 it is written: "**I am the LORD, and there is no other.**"

In John 17:3 it is written: "**Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom**

you have sent."

There is not even the slightest proof that the Christian belief in the trinity of God, contradicts the oneness of the only true God. It does not even mean that there are three united gods, as some people interpret it.

The Trinity of God can be explained as follows:

1. GOD the Creator, called "the Father" is the Creator of the universe, similar to the word al-Qadir with the meaning of "the Mighty" in Islam.
2. His WORD, also called his "Son" became flesh in the birth of Jesus. He is the LIVING Word, to reveal God's laws and will, to state God's promises to men, and to talk in the language of human beings. (His being the WORD is similar to the adjective "Murid -- Willing" in Muslim doctrine).
3. THE SPIRIT OF GOD, or "the Holy Ghost," who gives help and guidance -- the true Spirit -- to believers who devote themselves to him. (This SPIRIT of God is equivalent to the adjective "Muhyi -- lifegiver" in Islam).

The three appearances of God (the Father, the Son/Word and the Holy Ghost) are portrayed and described as three Persons (equal to the word "Sifat" in Islam) but they are in one essence of God's existence. Each one is inseparable from the others, each has the same might, immortality, and neither one existed before or after the other. Father, Son/Word and Holy Ghost, all can be expressed by one word: God.

It is obvious that the oneness of the Trinity of God in Christianity does not violate the doctrine of Tauhid, and it does not mean a

unity of several Allahs or gods.

The Qur'an does not object to or reject this meaning of the Christian Trinity of God. What is rejected by the Qur'an appears in Sura Al-Ma'ida 5:73 or Sura Al-Nisa 4:171, which is a belief in three different gods or Tritheism. The Christian religion itself rejects Tritheism or the belief in three gods completely.

For that reason I think that there is not a single verse in the Qur'an which really conflicts with the Christian Trinity of God.

6. The Death And The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Sura Al-Nisa 4:157 says:

They said, "Indeed we have killed Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, the Ambassador of God; actually they did not kill nor crucify him, he appeared only so to them. Truly the people who quarreled about Jesus, the murderers of Christ were doubtful about whom they had killed."

«وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا»
(النساء : ٤ : ١٥٧)

This Qur'anic verse is very often used by Muslim preachers, and I had often used it myself formerly, to reject the fact that Jesus Christ really died on the cross.

Previously, I had thought that it is impossible for the favorite of God, who became his prophet, to die on the cross without any protection. Moreover, as the Christians call him the Son of God, it is

impossible that God the Father had not given him his protection at all.

After being convinced that the truth of the Bible was supported by the Qur'an as I had been inspired by Sura Al-Ma'ida 5:68 and others, I considered the subject of the Death of Jesus on the Cross, studied again and researched fairly, in accordance with what was written in the Qur'an, as well as in the Bible:

1. According to the Qur'an, we read about an event where someone had been crucified and died, but the identity of the person who died was not confirmed. The Qur'an teachers deny that it was Jesus Christ who died. They say that the person who died on the cross was Judas.
2. The Qur'an says the Jews were indeed convinced that they had actually "killed Jesus".

Now I had to look for better and more convincing information about who had actually been crucified and died; Jesus or another. In order to get this information, we had to find a proof of objective historical documents. This can be found in the Bible, which is an open documentation that can be used as a source for true historical information.

The story of the death of Jesus on the cross can be studied in the four books of the New Testament, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The testimonies of these writers are based on the actual events which three of them had witnessed themselves.

If we accept the condition of the law that two or three eyewitnesses for a certain event are enough to confirm that this event is true according to the law (Deuteronomy

17:6-7), then the testimonies of three of these four writers who had witnessed the crucifixion and the death of Jesus are true, legal and believable compared with the testimony of Muhammad or the Qur'an, which was written six centuries after the event, as an unconvincing supposition, because the writer did not witness it himself.

Another testimony can be added: when Jesus was pronounced dead by the commander of the guard, Joseph of Arimathea entered into the presence of Pontius Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. The request was granted (Mark 15:42-46). Suppose the body which was taken down from the cross was not the body of Jesus, surely Joseph of Arimathea would reject and deny its genuineness.

Another proof is that the Jews had asked Pontius Pilate to guard the grave of Jesus. Pilate would not have guarded it if anyone other than Jesus was buried in it, because he had heard Jesus saying that on the third day he would rise from among the dead.

Suppose the person who was crucified was not Jesus. It was impossible that he would utter such loving words which revealed his true character: "Father, Forgive them!" and, "It is completed." All this proves that the man who was crucified was none other than Jesus Christ himself.

Thus I come to the convincing conclusion that the man who "was crucified and died," as related in Sura Al-Nisa 4:157, was undoubtedly Jesus himself, not any other person such as Judas. The true testimony of the four writers of the gospel is quite convincing, legal and true.

6.1. The Resurrection of Jesus from among the Dead

The Qur'an nowhere denies the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. According to the Qur'an, Muhammad received a revelation about Jesus as follows:

"Blessed I am, the day I was born, the day I die and the day I will be sent alive (from dead)" Sura Maryam 19:33.

«وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا»

(مریم ۱۹: ۳۳)

This verse convinced me that Jesus had indeed experienced the real death, although his death at the cross is denied by some. I became sure that Jesus had risen again (ub'athu hayyan). The words "ub'athu hayyan" mean to be sent alive after experiencing the real death -- amutu.

On the third day Jesus really rose from among the dead -- resurrected with his body, observable and touchable (Philippians 3:21). The death of Jesus would not mean anything if it were not crowned with his resurrection from among the dead.

Suppose Jesus had been crucified, died and yet remained dead. This would have been a terrible blow for Christians, for their God would have died and vanished. The Christian religion would have not stood firmly until now, since Christians would have had no hope for their salvation in heaven.

Also, if Jesus had died and remained dead, and if his bones were still in the grave

today, why should Christians worship a dead God? For what purpose would a Christian be baptized in the name of a dead person? For what purpose should Christians meditate on a dead person? Meditation would be nonsense if the Christians regarded Jesus as their Saviour, while he himself had not been delivered from death and was still lying in the grave.

To prove God's love, Jesus had to be crucified, not in order to remain dead forever but to be resurrected victorious and to live eternally even after the end of time.

Jesus was resurrected from the dead, and lived again, not as a figment of someone's imagination, but in reality, as seen and witnessed by many people.

The death and the resurrection of Jesus is the essence of the faithful testimony of the churches in the whole world. Our faith is full of hope. We have a Saviour who lives forever. We have a faith based on love, and we inherit the promises of God through Jesus. We suffer together and will be glorified together with him (Romans 8:17).

For that reason we must be convinced as the followers of Christ that we will be raised from all different kinds of death:

- We rise from the death of family discord, disagreement and hate.
- We rise from the death of earning our living with pain.
- We will be raised from the death of an anxious heart.
- We will be raised from the death of a weak faith.
- We rise from the death of egoism.

-- We rise from the death of fear, illnesses, and suffering.

6.2. The Meaning of the Cross of Jesus to Us

The Apostle Peter writes by inspiration what follows: "For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps: For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:19-25).

The cross of Jesus was the culminating point of his suffering. To die on the cross was not something that he sought, but it was in accordance with the destiny

designed by God. The deep meaning of the suffering of Jesus had been prophesized by the Prophet Isaiah (53:4-12) 700 years before it actually happened:

SURELY He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life

conviction of the Muslims in general, as this event is foretold in the tradition among others in:

1. Hadith Bukhari from Abu Huraira, book 11, page 256:

"What will be your situation, if the Son of Mary descends and becomes your religious leader and priest?"

«كيف أنتم إذا نزل ابن مريم فيكم وإمامكم منكم»

2. Hadith from Musnad Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, book 2:240, 411:

"Soon will come down to you the Son of Mary as the leading Priest and righteous Judge."

«لبوشكن أن ينزل فيكم ابن مريم إماماً مهدياً
وحكماً عدلاً»

3. The Prophet Muhammad once swore to convince others that Jesus Christ the Son of Mary would come again to become the Righteous Judge. Muhammad said:

"By God, truly the Son of Mary will descend as the righteous Judge" (Hadith Muslim, book 1, page 76).

«والله لينزل ابن مريم حكماً عدلاً»

The explanation of this Hadith is the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of time. The word "hakaman" (being a judge), suggests that Jesus Christ will not come a second time as a Prophet bringing the law of God in the Bible or the Qur'an, which are used at the present, but he will come as a Judge of all people with a new book, "The Book of Life" (Revelation

20:11-15).

The verse from Hadith al-Sahih Bukhari-Muslim above can be compared with the verse of the Bible, Romans 2:16:

"This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares."

For that reason there was no other obstacle which hindered me from accepting Jesus as my God and personal Saviour, and waiting for his second coming as the Righteous Judge.

For the salvation of the followers of Jesus, the Qur'an has given the following testimony:

God said to Jesus:

"I have let you die, and ascended you to me, I have purged you from the unbelievers and raised those who follow you above those who do not believe until the end of time."

«إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنِي مَتَوَفَّيْكَ وَرَأَفَعَكَ
إِلَيَّ وَمَطَّهَرْتُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَجَاعَلُ الَّذِينَ
اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ»
(آل عمران ٣: ٥٥)

Obviously, the Qur'an testifies that the salvation of the followers of Christ is guaranteed which means eternal life in heaven, as Jesus himself has said:

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." (John 5:24)

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through

me." (John 14:6)

7. The Truth Of The Bible

As I described in the beginning of this testimony, the first thing that stimulated me to look for the truth of the Bible was one verse in Sura al-Ma'ida 5:68, that confirms that the Bible (the Torah and the Gospel) is the right book for all people who worship God in truth, according to the will of God.

There are more verses in the Qur'an which are often used by the Muslim preachers, as I had used them formerly, which are misinterpreted as a proof, that the Bible (the Torah and the Gospel) has been falsified and changed by the soiled hands of ignorant people.

After all I wanted to learn the real meaning of those Qur'anic verses in the original, just as I wanted to understand the contents of the Bible by itself.

I tried truthfully to check how much truth was contained in these Qur'anic verses which led me to the conclusion:

1. Sura al-Baqara 2:75

«أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ
مَنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ
مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ»

(البقرة ٢: ٧٥)

"Do you still expect them to believe you, while some group of them hear the word of God, then change them after they learn them, just as if they are clever."

In general the Muslims interpret the term "a group of them" (fariqun minhum) as Bible experts (Jews or

Christians) who have changed those words of God, the texts of the Torah and the Gospel.

According to my investigation, the meaning of Sura al-Bakara 75 is not so. What was meant as "a group of them" are Muslims who originated from among the Jews or Christians, then rejected Islam after they had learned the real teaching of Muhammad. The Qur'an accused them of changing the meaning or interpretation of the Qur'anic texts not the Bible.

This can be understood by the verse saying, "... Do you (Muhammad) still expect them to believe you?" "You" in the sentence clearly means Muhammad. But after they (the Jews or Christians) had accepted Muhammad as their prophet, they rejected Islam and were accused of changing the meaning of the words of God, "the Qur'an," and were also accused of foolishness, lying and ignorance.

This Qur'anic verse had not been written against the experts of the Jews or the Christians and does not claim that they have changed the Bible, but speaks about the text of the Qur'an itself.

2. Sura al-Baqara 2:106

«مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا
أَوْ مِثْلَهَا»

(البقرة ٢: ١٠٦)

"Whichever verses that We have wiped out or We have made people to forget them, We will change them with better

or equal ones..."

With the "wiped out verses" referred to in Sura al-Baqara 2:106, Muslims in general mean the verses of the Bible in the Torah and Gospel.

But from some Islamic interpretation of the Qur'an, you can find that the "wiped out verse" means several Qur'anic verses, because their laws and commands have been abolished. The book "Al-Tadjudid Fil-Islam" says that there are five to 50 verses in the Qur'an that have been abrogated.

Other people say that the meaning of the "wiped out verses," are those which concern the miracles of Muhammad, because Muhammad as a prophet with the revelation from God, was unable to perform miracles like Moses and Jesus, prophets who had come before him. Therefore the verse of Sura al-Baqara 2:106 cannot be used as a proof to reject the truth of the Bible as a Divine Book which is the real foundation of truth for every one who will worship God truly.

3. Sura al-Ma'ida 5:13

«فَبِمَا نَقَضْتُمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَانَهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَائِنَةٍ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ»

(المائدة ٥: ١٣)

"... Because they violated their promise, We curse them, and made their hearts stiff as stones. They enjoy to change the words of God from their places and they (intentionally) forgot some of that they had been reminded of, and you (Muhammad) will always

see betrayal from them, with the exception of a few of them who will not betray."

To the word "they" in Sura al-Ma'ida 5:13 they generally add "Jews/Christians" in parentheses intentionally, and from the contents of the sentence, "They enjoy to change the words of God from their places...", they interpret that the truth of the Bible in the Torah/Gospel has been changed and wiped out.

Actually this verse, just as the words in Sura al-Baqara 2:75, is applied to some Muslims during the life of Muhammad, who were originally believers in the Jewish or Christian religion, turned to Islam and later on converted again to their own religion and rejected Islam. The Qur'an accused them of betraying the Qur'anic verses by changing their words. They rejected the message of Islam, after they learned the real teaching of Muhammad. The subject can be read in the context of Sura al-Ma'ida 5:7-14.

Obviously, the verses of the Sura al-Ma'ida 5:13 too cannot be used as a basis for rejecting the truth of the Bible.

Conclusion

There are more verses in the Qur'an with the same tone as the ones above which seem to reject the truth in the Bible. After studying them fairly, I confess that there is not a single verse in the Qur'an which unequivocally states that the Bible (the Torah and the Gospel) has been falsified or changed from its original truth.

Finally, I conclude that what the Qur'an

says in Sura al-Ma'ida 5:68, al-Baqara 2:62, al-Sajda 32:23, and others, which I expressed previously, is convincing that the Bible (the Torah and the Gospel) is the real truth for everyone who wants to worship God in accordance to his will.

8. My Struggle Against The Environment

Although I became firm and convinced about this truth, and was ready to accept Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour, yet I had not been christened in an official way, because there was the influence of the environment which had become an obstacle to me. I was haunted by fear and anxiety.

My experience shows that there are many people who express their willingness to accept Jesus as their personal Saviour, yet they often stumble against the influences of their environment, maybe because they are unwilling or afraid to oppose their parents. Sometimes they fear that their bosses will fire them if they become Christians. There was a believer who clashed with his wife-to-be because he wanted to accept Jesus together with her; there are other obstacles that hinder people from allowing Jesus to reign fully in their heart.

The fearful influence of environment was pointed out in a warning by Jesus, written in Matthew 10:34-36. He describes the sufferings which may be faced by every one who wants to follow Christ: he may be hated by his parents; his family ties may be severed; his own life may be threatened. However, for those who made the decision to accept Jesus as Lord and let him reign in their hearts, such anxiety

should not long exist. Each anxiety will be overcome by the help of God. I myself experienced such environmental pressures. Yet God always opened a way of escape.

From 1961 until 1964, I still performed dual religious duties. I prayed according to Islam and went to the mosque every Friday. I went also to church every Sunday and on Saturdays I worshipped in an Adventist Church. At that time I did not go to a church out of conviction. It was more that I wanted to study the truth. I had often read descriptions from non-Christians which said that the people in the church worship idols, such as statues and pictures. For that reason I visited each church around Jakarta by turn on those Sundays. I even visited more than one church on a Sunday, to find out whether there were idol-worshippers in front of statues or pictures.

Finally, I could draw a conclusion and prove that my suspicions were unfounded. There was no idol-worship in any church that I visited.

Since 1964, my soul had actually been filled by the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost or the Spirit of Truth. From that time I decided to accept Jesus as my Saviour wholeheartedly. Yet there was still a weakness. I did not dare to state my conviction openly. I still kept my Christianity a secret. I visited the Christian Church of Indonesia in Kwitang for the first time asking to be baptized in secret, as I did not want it to be known by my family, nor among others, or even by my wife. I did not know who the church warden was, yet my special request was rejected, as no one could be baptized in secret.

Several weeks later, with the same intention in mind, I went to meet Rev. J. Sapulete, at the Bethel Church in Jatinegara. He was ready to baptize me at once, on condition that I would bring two or three Christian neighbors, who could guide me in my spiritual life so that I would live as a Christian. I could not accept this condition, as I still could not declare publicly that I was a Christian. This was due to the influence of the environment, especially my own household. I was afraid there would be a great disturbance in my home. I was also afraid to ask my wife to accompany me to church, out of fear that as revenge she would ask me to go to the Islamic marriage official for a divorce. I was fearful of facing divorce procedures. For that reason I had wanted to accept Jesus Christ only in secret.

Yet my soul was not undecided anymore.

I had no doubts about accepting Jesus Christ.

Therefore I did not perform dual religious worship any longer. I only went to church. Yet there persisted some fear and worry concerning the reaction of my family. I did not know the way to overcome this. I did not go to anyone to ask for advice in my case. At that time I felt my struggle keenly.

Nevertheless God in his timing helped me to overcome my struggle. Formerly I had assumed that if I discussed with my wife the matter of changing our religion from Islam to Christianity, this would cause us trouble. But God graciously opened the door of truth even through my wife herself. She was given peace through the light and the beauty of Christmas trees

which by that time were shining brightly in the homes of many Christians. It became a sign to her of how beautiful life in a Christian family can be. She felt the peace in the Christmas songs and the warmth and brightness of the Christmas spirit.

To express her feelings, my wife and one of my daughters came to me, to tell me about their eager-ness to become Christians in a Christian family. It was the opportunity I had been waiting for!

The next day was Christmas and I met Rev. J. Sapulete for the second time, telling him that I and my family wanted to be baptized and receive Jesus Christ. My request was granted immediately and we -- myself, my wife, and seven of our children -- were baptized as one family on Dec. 26, 1969 by Rev. J. Sapulete, at Gereja Bethel Jemaat GPIB. One week later our son followed us. He also had often gone to the church in secret, as he was afraid I would find out the truth. I myself had been going to the church in secret too, as I was afraid my wife and children would learn about it. So actually we had been playing hide-and-peek! Praise God, all the members of my family eventually became followers of Jesus and let him reign in their hearts.

8.1. The Many Blessings

After I and my family were baptized on December 26, 1969, our household experienced happy and joyous changes. We received many blessings which changed our life.

The Apostle Paul says: "**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**" (2

Corinthians 5:17).

When someone accepts Jesus as his Saviour, God makes a change in his life. The image of Christ will be imprinted in him. The Bible says: "**So God created man in his own image...**" (Genesis 1:27). From this new character originates a new joy and love and different longings. What he formerly loved, he now hates; and what he formerly hated, he now loves. His life has changed. This change is apparent visually, and will be seen by the people around him. His ways of life will be changed, and these will even bring changes in the words he utters. How wonderful!

I experienced these changes and felt them in our life as a family. Hot tempers disappeared and changed into loving ones. In our spiritual life we felt peace and happiness. We had no more doubts. Our souls were secure and full of joy. Even in our material life we were blessed abundantly. This experience proves the truth of God's promises that are fulfilled by Jesus Christ in his followers.

"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:37-38).

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10b).

The change in our household was obvious and happened so fast that we became an object of slander. Our neighbours and our relatives thought that we had received aid from the church as a reward for becoming Christians. People mocked us, saying, "If you want to become rich quickly, just follow the attitude of Mr. Ambrie and

become a Christian, and you will get support from the church in millions of rupiahs."

They suspected that our life was blessed through the donations of the church, as a bribe for becoming Christians. No, not at all! We never got any help from the church nor from anybody as coercion to accept Christ. We got no money, materials, nor promises of work; not even a cent. Indeed our blessed life at that time was through the generosity of God only. This is a standing promise of God that all who believe will be blessed abundantly.

8.2. My Passive Christian Years

I was a passive Christian from 1970-1972. I was busy maintaining my business and supporting my household. I only went to church on Sundays, and read the Bible in my spare time. God has convicted me for such an attitude. I felt it clearly that at that time God warned me: If you want to be a Christian, it is not enough to have such a passive attitude. It is not proper for you to sit idly, enjoying the blessings of God that have filled your life. As a Christian disciple of Christ, you must stand up and give a clear testimony telling the gospel of Christ as he has commanded you in Matthew 28:19-20.

How could I begin to give an open testimony and tell the gospel plainly? Indeed I was willing to do so, yet I did not know how to start. For this, God once again opened the way, and this is how he did it:

One day, my best friend from Banjarmasin came to spend the night with us. He was a true friend in the full meaning of the word, for he stood with me during good or bad

days. Whenever arrests were made by Dutch soldiers, we always met each other in prison or the camp of the prisoners.

He greeted us as usual, as in our house there was no sign that we had become Christians. When he said "*Assalamu alaikum*" I replied, "*wa alaikum asalaam.*" My friend had heard from neighbors that I had become a Christian. He had declared that this could not be possible, and had nearly convinced my neighbors of this. He told them, "I have known my friend Hamran Ambrie well, not only in Jakarta, but in Banjarmasin too. He is not an ordinary Muslim believer -- he is conscientious in his faith. In the province he is known as a militant Muslim fighter; he is even an anti-Christian, one of the Muhammadiyah leaders, a Muslim journalist and preacher of Islam who is well known in Central as well as in East Kalimantan. Moreover, in the Islamic Congress of the Whole Kalimantan in Amuntai 1947, Hamran Ambrie was one of its promoters. In the Indonesian National Army, he was appointed as the Muslim Head Preacher of the Army in Banjarmasin. So I am convinced that Hamran Ambrie will never consciously change his Muslim religion to Christianity."

But my neighbor convinced him that for several years the people in my village had seen me going to church regularly and set up a Christmas tree during the Christmas season. They told him to ask me directly for further explanations.

So as soon as he came into my house for a visit, he asked me directly whether the news that I had become a Christian was true. I answered the question without any doubt: "Yes, that is right. I and my whole

family have been baptized."

Hearing my answer, he wept. He was very sorry because something he deeply regretted had taken place. But he could not do anything and just stood in astonishment for a moment. After his return to Banjarmasin, he told other people, especially my good friends about my conversion to Christianity.

News of the event was inserted in *Harian Utama* a newspaper published in Banjarmasin by another of my good friends, who was a Muslim journalist. In capital letters H. Arsyad Maran wrote:

A PROMINENT FIGURE OF THE MOVEMENT BECOMES A CHRISTIAN

A prominent figure of Muhammadiyah in the thirties. He was once the Chief Editor of *JIHAD*

Js. Antemas wrote among others:

THE CONVERSION OF A MUHAMMADIYAH FIGURE INTO CHRISTIANITY:

Very surprising news!

Another journalist, Arthum Artha expected: "We hope the news is not correct; the faith of Hamran Ambrie, pioneer of independence is still in question."

The Muslims in Banjarmasin also gave a prejudiced reaction to this exciting news: "Recent economic problems can make one change his religion." The name of this Muslim was not given.

Even the Muslim university I.A.I.N. Antasari reacted to the news of my conversion. Meanwhile the Secretary of

PMW (Muhammadiyah) of Banjarmasin tried to deny that I had been a Muhammadiyah figure, but acknowledged me as a Muslim fighter.

All the news of my Christianity was published in the said newspaper with the intention of making me ashamed, and consequently they expected me to return to Islam. But their will was different from the will of God. God had used them in such a way to stir me up, that I could become an active Christian and give testimony about the truth of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

In that way for almost two months the event of my conversion to Christianity became a topic in public discussions and the headlines of the newspaper *Harian UTAMA* in Banjarmasin. I got news that bloodshed almost occurred. Some of my friends who thought the news was just slander were ready to attack the writer. Fortunately, I soon wrote "An open letter" -- A Statement of Confession -- to *Harian UTAMA* in Banjarmasin, which was published as follows:

AN OPEN LETTER for the readers of *Harian UTAMA*

Assalamu 'alaikum

Dear Sirs:

I hereby acknowledge that it is true that I now adhere to the Protestant Christian religion and that I have been a convert since 1964.

The news in your newspaper has been exciting, because it described me as a figure of Islam or as a fighter for freedom.

I am grateful for all the response and the appreciation that my friends have shown me, although until this moment I have

never felt and never declared myself to be a figure of Islam or a fighter for freedom. If in the past I joined in the fight as was written by my friends, it was nothing more than a duty of the son of our motherland. For that reason, it has become my principle not to ask any title of service, either as a Veteran or a Pioneer for Independence. I have only done my duty.

Thank you to all my friends, especially H. Arsyad Manan (I have not accepted your letter), Js. Antemas and Arthum Artha, who have written as necessary. There is nothing in your writings which I should deny or react against except the correction, that I never signed the form requesting the title as Pioneer of Independence.

To Arthum Artha, I have sent "The Notes of Faith" which has become my foundation in adhering to the Christian Protestant religion.

Whatever has happened, friends remain friends and good friendship cannot be broken off.

So long and thank you to all the parties concerned.

Jakarta, 6 May 1972

Yours Faithfully, Hamran Ambrie

8.3. The Beginning of my Active Testimony-giving Christian Life

After the publication of the "Open Letter" above, many letters came from my friends in Banjarmasin and Hulu Sungai, all with a tone of regret, accompanied with advice and warning from Qur'anic verses. There were also some letters asking for the events that had led me to my conversion to Christ.

These were the initial reasons for me to rise up and give my witness clearly. At first I replied with a typewriter to each letter personally. These letters developed into an explanation about "the notes of faith" in stencil. It became more developed so that I had to publish an essay about "GOD, JESUS AND THE HOLY GHOST" which was printed with a handpress. The next publication, "CHRISTOLOGY AND THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S ONENESS," was completed in 1973. Consequently, more letters in the form of questions and sympathy were received, and there were also some in the form of discussion in the search for truth.

Moreover there were several Islamic magazines published in Java attacking my faith. Because of those articles, more and more letters came to me. The letters I received came from all parts of Indonesia, from Banjarmasin and the Muslim areas in West Java, Central Java and East Java, and also from Sumatra (Palembang, Medan, Padang, Aceh). Some even came from abroad (Egypt and Malaysia).

It was the guidance of God that I had to stand up and give my witness naturally.

Some of those contacts lasted for more than six months. Various problems about Christianity were discussed. Some answers and questions I have compiled into books and published as a documentation of truth:

1. The Correspondence with H.M. Yoesoef Sou'yb, a Muslim journalist from Medan (Assistant to the Editor of Kiblat Magazine Jakarta).
2. The Correspondence with Samudi, (a teacher of Islam religion in Salatiga).
3. The Correspondence with Imam Musa

Projosiswoyo, (Editor of the Studi Islam Magazine, Jakarta).

4. The Correspondence with Wahyono Hadi (Darul Kutubil Islamiyah Jakarta).
5. The Correspondence with Ali Ya'kub Matondang, (a Muslim Student in Cairo, Egypt).
6. The Correspondence with A. Hasan Tou, (Speaker of Islam Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia in Denpasar Bali).
7. The Correspondence with Ezif Fahmi and others (a group of Muslim Students in Surabaya).
8. The Correspondence with M.A. Fadly, (Head of Mesjid Agung, Central Mosque, Cimahi -- Bandung).

Up to 1979, I had replied to thousands of letters from brothers with a Muslim background from all parts of Indonesia. Every day the incoming letters encouraged me. They indicated that the writers were looking for truth, and that they felt satisfied after I gave them explanations. Praise God! There were even some who visited me personally.

As I saw how much attention was paid to my conversion and the search for truth, I arranged special times for visitors for consultation about the Christian faith and truth, every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, from morning until evening.

Praise God for all these. He has used me as a go-between to explain the truth of the Bible and the divinity of Jesus Christ, especially to my Muslim brothers, in order that they could understand Christ properly.

Out of this answering questions and rejections, I felt that the recent

misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Bible and the divinity of Jesus Christ should soon be corrected by showing the truth clearly.

8.4. Starting Outside Service

Since 1973 up to February 1978, I gave my testimony only from my desk, by replying to letters questioning Christianity. I published the answers to these letters as a documentation of the truth.

But in February 1978 I prayed: "Oh God, please give this movement a new field, as my field of correspondence has almost been deserted." Praying thus, I directly got an answer in my heart that the next day I should go out of my house, and from there I would find the new field.

Early next morning, I went out of my house without knowing which way I should go. When I came to the main street, I asked God that he would direct my steps the way I should go. My soul told me that I had to go to the north. As I did not know the direction precisely, I went on walking. I did not take any vehicle or a bus. When I arrived at the front office of the Bible Institute of Indonesia, the Lord told me to enter the office. I was full of doubt as I did not know any one well. There once had been Rev. B. Probowinoto, but he had been removed to Salatiga. Hence if I entered the office, to whom could I speak, and what should I say? But as my soul pressed me to go on, I entered the office.

One of the friends who saw me coming in recognized me, and immediately addressed me: "Mr. Ambrie! Praise God, what guidance! Someone wants to meet you." Soon we were able to talk. Later I met Rev. M.K. Tjakraatmadja who had heard

about me and wanted to meet me, too. I was blessed from this conversation. They wanted to buy some of my books.

I wondered if this was the new field and decided that it was not. I wanted to go home but my soul urged me to continue my walk further to the north. I kept on walking until I stood in front of Kramat V. My soul told me to go in and to meet Rev. Dr. Ais M.O. Pormes. I wondered how I could possibly talk with Rev Pormes, as I had not known him well and we did not belong to his organisation. We had met each other, but that was three years ago. But as the Spirit spoke to me, I turned towards Kramat V. Before I entered the house, I was in doubt. Previously this house was full of God's servants, but now it was rather quiet. Probably Rev. Pormes had moved. However, Rev. Pormes had seen me, for he came to welcome me at the front door, and said: "Hello Mr. Ambrie! Indeed, since yesterday, I have thought of you and wanted to see you as there is something I want to discuss with you. I was expecting you -- perhaps we could work together." I was rather astonished. How could Rev. Ais Pormes remember me? We never had become well-acquainted. But I remembered my prayer the day before. Possibly the Spirit had led me to enter the new field here.

There were many things that refreshed my heart and feelings in this talk. Rev. Ais Pormes expected me to work together with him in the service of God. Also he took care of my health which at that time was not good.

Finally Rev. Pormes asked me to take his letter to M.K. Sinaga, the Director of Bumi Asih at Solo Street 4. I took the letter and handed it personally. From K.M. Singa's

house I was requested to go to Hotel Indonesia on Friday morning, as he said several preachers wanted to get to know me.

On Friday morning, February 24, 1978 I went to Hotel Indonesia, to a prayer group meeting held by the Christian Businessmen of Jakarta, which was known as "C.B.M.C."

It seemed from the introduction that some of these people had known my name, and wanted to meet me personally on that day! From that time on I was invited to serve in many home meetings which developed into a cooperation in church services. I had to give my testimony in many churches around Jakarta and Bandung. Until now I have served outside Jakarta too, visiting South Kalimantan, (Banjarmasin, Amuntai), and Central Kalimantan, (Palangkaraya), East Java, (Surabaya and Malang), Bandung and others.

This was my new field. I will continue to serve in it faithfully, making the gospel of Christ known through all sorts of meetings and altars.

Although now I have got a new field in the form of services outside my home, the correspondance has never stopped and it even multiplies. Praise God! The letters are a blessing to me and I can serve many inquirers joyfully.

8.5. The Lord Increased my Services Greatly

On May 13, 1979 with a written invitation, I was asked to deliver a lecture in Darussalam Mosque, Batanghari Street, Jakarta, in front of a group of Muslim youth who had joined in the Lembaga

Pengajian Islam Al-Furqan. The subject of the discussion was: "The Divinity of Jesus Christ". The chief debaters were Drs. Abunyamin Roham and Sany Ardi. The attendance was about 100 people, consisting of students and teachers of Islam. I came to give the answers alone. The final impression was good. The meeting was friendly and ended with handshakes.

On July 22, 1979 the lecture continued between me and several Islamic leaders from the Majelis Ulama (Muslim Theologian Council). The subject of discussion was "God the Almighty -- One in Trinity?" There were 10 persons listed as debaters, among them Professor Dr. H.M. Rasyidi, Dr. Abunyamin Rohan, Dr. Tagor, Dr. Asmuni. The moderator was Dr. Marmansyah Rahman. The visitors were about 150 people consisting of Muslim leaders and teachers, intelligent men.

Within two months after August 15, I went to visit several places outside Jakarta in West and East Java. On September 1, I led a Gospel Mission visit to Menado, Ujung Pandang, Tanah Toraja, Palopo, Balikpapan, Banjarmasin and Kapuas.

9. CONCLUSION

Salvation is the most important goal for every man. Salvation for himself, salvation for his family, salvation for his property and other kinds of salvations. All these purposes become the leading objectives in his life's happiness.

For a religious man, salvation is not limited to this worldly life, it includes the salvation of his spirit from the influence of sin into freedom. His spiritual salvation is

closely connected to love, which is the base of life in heaven.

Suppose Adam and Eve had not fallen into sin, men would still be living eternally. But because of the original sin of Adam and Eve, who violated the prohibition of God, mankind along with Adam and Eve has been excluded from eternal life, and has fallen into a life that decays and experiences spiritual as well as physical death.

This decaying life with its spiritual and physical death is due to the sin of Adam and Eve which we inherited. This takes in all men in our world, including you and me.

But God the Merciful and Compassionate will not let us remain dead, separated from him. God promised to give us eternal life which will be far better than the one Adam and Eve had when they were originally created.

THE FIRST STEP:

God has commanded through the prophets a long time ago, that we should repent, come back to him, obey him, and follow his laws in the books of Moses and the Prophets (Hebrews 1:1a).

THE SECOND STEP:

God incarnated his Word in Jesus Christ, who is the "The Living Word" and is also called "the only Son of the Father" (Hebrew 1:1b, John 1:1,14, 1 John 1:1).

THE THIRD STEP:

God leads men by his Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God himself, to deliver divine guidance and help many people in our world, so that they too can obey the words

of God that are written in the Bible. Hence, for all men who accept the divine laws and the wonderful promises of God, he grants them eternal life.

It Must Be Understood That:

" For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16)

Jesus says:

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20).

The angels said to the disciples of Jesus:

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

In this case Jesus by himself said:

"At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27).

The second coming of Jesus Christ was not only told in the Bible, its truth is supported and believed also by the Muslims as we can read it in the Hadith of Muhammad's statements, on page 33 of this book. There we can read about the

second coming of Jesus as the Righteous Judge.

There are three promises which are guaranteed to God's children:

1. Eternal life in heaven, and a life even more glorious than Adam and Eve in the original creation. In order to get the right of eternal life and heavenly salvation, men have to believe in Jesus Christ, become his loyal disciples and be baptized.
2. Full life, spiritually, physically as well as materially, in the form of blessings from heaven. Followers of Christ will not lack anything but will always experience his fulness in abundance.
3. The Spirit of God or the Holy Ghost will abide forever in every one who confesses Christ, and becomes a loyal follower of him, wherever he is, until the end of time.

For these reasons allow me to suggest to you my dear reader:

Make your decision now! Decide to receive the promised and ready salvation. Accept Jesus Christ to reign in your heart, so that in your new life you will remain secure and peaceful in him. Then, we will live together with God eternally.

Don't neglect this opportunity. Don't wait until tomorrow. Do what you should do today. Tomorrow it may be too late. The door for repentance can be shut and you will live in everlasting regret and suffer punishment. Come with your sincere heart, and accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and personal Saviour in order to enter the door of heavenly salvation forever and ever.

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to

men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

My respect and kind regards in Jesus Christ,

Hamran Ambrie

10. Quiz

Dear Reader,

If you have carefully studied this exciting biography, you will be able to answer the following questions.

1. Write down the key verse from the Qur'an which shows that "the Torah and the Gospel" are the same ones found in the Bible now.
2. Which four important passages in the Qur'an indicate also that the Torah and the Gospel are the truth according to God's will?
3. What are the unique and extraordinary similarities between Moses and Christ?
4. What special signs show that the unique prophecy mentioned in Deuteronomy 18 indicates that Jesus Christ was "the Word of God" incarnate?
5. After Hamran Ambrie saw that the Bible is the true Word of God, he was still not ready to accept Christ. Why?
6. Why could he not fully accept the answers and explanations of the preachers and evangelists?
7. How did Hamran Ambrie overcome the three main obstacles that he had?
8. In what way did God help Hamran Ambrie to surmount these obstacles?
9. Why is Jesus called "Lord"?
10. Why did the belief of Hamran Ambrie

- concerning the oneness of God not have to be changed when he became a Christian?
11. How does the Christian teaching purify the doctrine of the oneness of God?
 12. What does polytheism mean?
 13. Why can Christians not be regarded as polytheists?
 14. Why is the trinity of God an obstacle to Muslims?
 15. Explain the unity of the Holy Trinity from a Christian viewpoint.
 16. How can we indicate that Jesus Christ actually was crucified on the cross?
 17. How can we know that Jesus was resurrected from among the dead?
 18. What are the different kind of deaths we can be raised from?
 19. Summarize the meaning of the cross of Jesus.
 20. Write down Isaiah 53:4-12 five times and memorize it.
 21. What will happen to all those who "take the sword?"
 22. Does the Qur'an object to the ascension of Jesus to heaven?
 23. What will Jesus do when he comes back to the world?
 24. How are some Qur'anic verses misused to show that the Bible has been falsified?
 25. Is there one verse in the Qur'an which unequivocally states that the Bible has been falsified or changed from its original truth?
 26. What kind of suffering will we face if we follow Jesus?
 27. What changes took place in the life of Hamran Ambrie and his family after

they gave their lives to Jesus?

28. What four promises are guaranteed to God's children?
29. Write down John 3:16 and Acts 4:12 five times each and memorize them.
30. Have you decided to follow the Living Christ?

If you have any question about this testimony, you may write us directly.

[Please use our Email-Form to contact us or write to:](#)

The Good Way

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Switzerland

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This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. JOHN 17:3