

The islam and christian holy war religion essay



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For centuries Christians and Muslims have fiercely engaged in wars because they believed they will be rewarded by God for waging war in his name. In recent times we have become very familiar with the Jihad; as the media has covered this topic extensively after the September 11 attack that took place in the United States. This act of terror made the Islamic community a focal point of the media, which educated the populace on the violence of Islam or as they choose to call it " Holy War". The truth is that, Islam is not the only religion that has committed violence in the name of God. Christianity also has its history of violence and Holy Wars, they were called the Crusades. The reasons for the Crusades were; to free fellow Christians from incursion and discrimination, Conquering lands in the possessed by other religions and fulfilling promises to partake in a crusade. Today we refer to Holy wars as Killing in God's name, but war and religion have gone hand in hand for centuries. People go to battle after praying and making sacrifices to God, making them believe that God is on their side because they are fighting for his cause. An example is when Joshua destroyed the Anakites in the Bible. Involving God in such violent acts is not supposed to make a war holy.

In the past few centuries, since the first crusades began to recapture the holy land from the Muslims Saracens, holy wars between these two religions have evolved along different paths. In the Christians context, we see a gradual decline in violence, the opposite is witnessed in Islam, and there have been a few recent cases of killing in the name of religion in Islam, the September 11" attack is one of the most serious in recent time. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world and today it is amongst the religions with the highest amount of believers. The Jihad played a vital role in this

rapid growth of Islam. Battles that were fought and won over a large geographical area, the captives were either converted by the sword or willingly changed to the religion of the army that conquered them.

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress limits... And slay them wherever ye catch them. And turn them out from where they have turned you out; for persecution is worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the sacred Mosque unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who reject faith. But if they cease, Allah is oft-forgiving, most Merciful. And fight them on until there is no more persecution. And the religion becomes Allah's. But if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression" (The Qur'an, Surah 2: 190-193).

The Quran is the holy book of Islam; the above quote is from the Quran it encourages the Holy war. Partly this explains the numerous battles the Muslims were involved in few centuries ago, fortunately in modern times the Jihad is no longer carried on a large scale as compared to the past but there are still some exceptional cases. The Hadith is another important book in Islam and it is second to the Quran. The Hadith contains the sayings and activities of the Prophet Muhammad and he encourages the Jihad, saying that anyone who dies fighting for Allah will be rewarded, by going to paradise. Many of these sayings have been interpreted in different ways and people have acted according to these interpretations which have lead to brutality and wars. Although in this modern age, with the help of globalization and westernization the frequency and scale of religious wars have declined over time. However, a small percentage of Muslims, the

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extremists and anti-western ones still dwell on the verses in the Quran that talk about war, conflict and violence. This is what has led to terrorism and suicide bombings in recent times.

In addition, the duty of all Muslims is to do the utmost against those who do not believe in Allah, this was meant for nearest enemies of Muslims but as more foes arose with time, the statements supporting the Jihad were updated. The Muslims are acting according to what they read in their Holy books, most do not feel remorseful for whatever damage they have caused because they believe these are divine instructions of the holy book. Today we do not hesitate to link the word Jihad which means struggle in Arabic to Terrorism, especially after the September 11 attacks. Religious wars and violence happen in some other countries like Nigeria which is one of the most religious countries in the world. In Nigeria, Muslims and Christians clash frequently, fighting and rioting over one problem or the other, but yet the opposing religion knows very little about each other's beliefs. Religious wars in Nigeria are fueled by ignorance, tribalism, poverty, politics and struggle for power. Another country that has experienced religious war this modern time is India; with a high population of Hindu, a small number of Muslims and a few Christians. Approximately hundred Christians were killed in a recent religious battle and another ten thousand left without a roof over their head, telling us that religious wars may have reduced but still occurs in some societies.

Furthermore, there are two forms of Jihad the greater and lesser Jihad. "Internal Jihad" or greater Jihad means the battle of believers to live their Muslim faith as the Quran instructs. This explanation is consequently, after a <https://assignbuster.com/the-islam-and-christian-holy-war-religion-essay/>

battle the prophet said “ We are finished with the lesser jihad; now we are starting the greater jihad. “ He explained to his followers that fighting against an outer enemy is the lesser jihad and fighting against one’s self is the greater jihad”. This means that the lesser Jihad will refer to the struggle against Unbelievers. (Heck) Muslims put in great effort to live the way Allah instructed them, the personal Jihad has to do with the teachings while the Jihad against unbelievers is the Practical.

However, some scholars find the Quran teachings of morality and encouragement of violence very contradictory. Many historians believe that the true meaning of Lesser Jihad does not necessary encourage fighting and brutality but states that Muslim should take a stand for their religion only when Islam is threatened. The misinterpretation of the lesser jihad, as a cause or reason to fight and engage in violence and brutality does not make it holy. If Islam is not threatened and Muslims wage war against non-believers then this cannot be referred to as Lesser Jihad. Over the years various people have interpreted the Quran, their interpretations were influenced by the struggles that they were experiencing at that time. Factors such as oppression, depression, anger, suffering, hunger for power, hatred and other factors have influenced the interpreter’s perception of the scriptures. For instance, the Taliban strict and extreme version of Islam has even made other Muslim countries view the Taliban with suspicion. Osama Bin Laden, the leader of the terrorist group Al Qaeda has quoted the Quran on several occasions to justify their violent actions on the west. Political leaders use religion to convince and justify their selfish desires. Using religion makes their argument convincing because they twist and interpreted

the scriptures to serve the purpose and believers easily embrace them and believe it is just. Al Qaeda has used suicide bombing as tactics for attacks and the Quran forbids this. (Burk)

The Crusades

By large, Christianity is a religion that preaches peace but the record of killings and destruction in the past is contradictory to its teachings. In the past, wars were fought against those who opposed Christianity; the wars were fought primarily against Muslims. This is because the rise of Islam slowed down and threatened spread of Christianity. Islam under the rule of the Umayyad Caliphate spread from what is now Saudi Arabia in the Arabian Peninsula to Spain and parts of France. This made Islam a treat to Christianity and the Catholic Church, which was very powerful during the medieval times. The Church had enough political backing to crush anything or anyone that disobeys or treating the beliefs of the Church. Scholars and historians have argued about the cause or reason for the crusades. Some say that the crusades were crucial reaction by Christians to the domination of pilgrims in Muslim-controlled Jerusalem. Others argue that it was political imperialism disguised by religious piousness. Furthermore, others say that it was a social liberation for societies that were overburdened by landless nobles. Whatever the reason, it does not change the fact that a lot of lives and property were lost in the process.

The first Crusades were organized by Pope Urban II in 1095. His main aim was to take Jerusalem from the hands of those he believed were non believers. Pope Urban II helped lay the foundation for many years of bitter and violent fighting between Christianity and other religions. The Crusades

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were triggered by popes at that time like Pope Urban II and Pope Eugene III who called for the second crusade. The Popes felt that the crusades were particularly their duty and under their motivation, even if some of the expeditions sometimes got out of control. They believed the crusades were God's work and that they were His instruments. Urban at Clermont used the following words:

I speak to those who are present, I shall proclaim it to the absent, but it is Christ who commands. Moreover, if those who set out thither lose their lives on the journey, by land or sea, or in fighting against the heathen, their sins shall be remitted in that hour; this I grant through the power of God vested in me.

The Pope organized the crusades, deciding the time, participants and also presents privileges to those that partook and threatened them with exile to all that do not realize their vow. (Dana) The crusades were used as a means of reclaiming the lost lands of Christians and acquiring more power for the Church. The age of the crusades was from 1095-1291 CE. In total, there were either eight or nine Crusades, depending on your view. Most historians consider the 9th Crusade to be part of the 8th. It was not only believers of other religions that suffered persecution, some Christians also suffered. Church theologians or leaders dealt with anybody who followed another religion or come up with rational thoughts that threatened Christian beliefs an example is the case of Galileo. Galileo's teachings during the 17th century threatened the geocentric view of the universe. He said that the earth revolved around the sun. The church maintained that the earth was stationary and the sun and heavenly bodies revolved around it and this was

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an accepted fact. Thus were Galileo's claims, labeled as the ranting of a heretic and he was confronted by the church leaders and told to recant his theory or face the consequences. The crusades also helped the Church and Popes acquire much wealth, with Crusaders freely giving to the Church before embarking on their journey. Crusaders were frequently taxed and this was handled by the Church. Consequently, the Popes became much more powerful, mainly because of their control over the appointment of the officials. (Dana) Heresy easily spread because of increasing mistrust of the Church, due to many reasons. For instance, all teachings in England, France and Germany had been carried out by the clerics and the crusaders discovered that they were continuously lied to. Others learnt that they misinformation, and began to doubt. The political crusades brought discredit and dishonor upon the Church and the Popes. Many men realized that they were being used and the Popes were using their power for worldly ends. In the thirteenth century it became more difficult to persuade men to take the Cross and fight.(Dana)

In any case, there has been more recent violence attached to Christianity. Right after the civil war in the United States, the protestant-led white supremacist Ku Klux Klan members engaged in destruction of property, cross burning, beating, arson, murder rape and whipping against Jew, Catholics and African Americans and other social ethnic minorities. These are grave crimes exhibiting extreme violence and brutality. The mission of the Ku Klux Klan is to reestablish protestant Christian view in the United States. They believed that Jesus was the first Klansman. (Robert) They exhibited pure Christian radicalism. Similarly, the Arm of God (AOD) is an underground

Christian terrorist organization active in the United States. This group has been involved in anti-abortion violence such as murder, property crimes and kidnapping. All these organization believe they are fighting for the morals of their religion and in the name of God. (Windle)

Social Ramification

Consequently, religious violence has lead to religious and ethnic profiling in society. The recent terrorist attacks have found to be rooted to religion and ethnicity thus causing countries to use profiling as a context for law enforcement and counter terrorism. Profiling can be defined as the use of racial, religious or ethnic stereotypes, rather than individual behavior, as a basis for making law enforcement and investigative decisions about who has been or may be involved in criminal activity. The global generalizations about a particular ethnic or religious group's propensity to commit a crime has made life difficult for people with certain ethnicity or religion. Society begins to look at such people as potential threats and this has negatively affects their daily lives at school, work and social interaction.

Conclusion

Finally, today religion is not considered an act of violence, Christians especially Catholics are not proud of the crusades that happened in the past. This point in history, are now looked upon as a dark period In Christianity. A group of Western Christians recently formed a body, their aim is to repair the damage caused by the crusades by apologizing to the other religions that were affected during that time. (Robin)

But when have Christians demonstrated this love to Muslims or Jews? We have gone to them with swords and guns. We have gone to them with racism and hatred. We have gone to them with feelings of cultural superiority and economic domination. We have gone to them with colonialism and exploitation. We have even gone to them with the Gospel cloaked in arguments of superiority. Only a few have ever gone with the message of Calvary... We must do more than carry the message; we must be the message.

This kind of movement helps to show that Christians are not willing to carry out the crusade; no recent case has been heard. Today's Christians want to practice their religion without harming anybody. The same can be said for most Muslims, although some Muslims extremists are obsessed with fighting the west. As the study has shown religious violence was greatly influence my politics and selfishness desires of leaders. Over the course of time leaders have used religion as a tool and have twisted the word of God to suit their agenda and accomplish their desires. Without this influence, misinterpretation and deceit violence would have not been so wide spread in religion. Most religions preach God is of peace and we humans with our selfish ways have used religion as a way to control people and their beliefs. If we do not let our human imperfection influence the word of God and we follow the teaching of our scriptures diligently the world will be more peaceful. Ironically, our imperfections are barely curable and even the greatest men fault. This is the paradox of life.

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