Free essay on religious pluralism and islam

Religion, Islam

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Abstract

Religious pluralism is an act of practicing religious tolerance amongst individuals with different religious views. Religious history has been marked by terrible tales of intolerance leading to wars of diverse kinds. Often times, different religious views have been used to serve selfish interests for various groups such as colonialists. However, tolerances among the various religions including Islam continue to develop with time. Interactions between Islam and other religious faiths have continued to foster their understanding about customs, beliefs and practices making interactions much easier. Although there may not exist similar views tolerating those of others is significantly important for peaceful coexistence.

Origin of Religious Pluralism

Religious pluralism has its roots in the emergence of political liberalism in Europe. In the 18th century Europe, after having experienced terrible moments of religious persecution and wars, attempted to adopt a different ideology. The ideology which called for religious tolerance amongst Christians continued to develop and today it has continued to spread to other religions. Unlike mere tolerance religious pluralism must have a basis in religious doctrines. Various scholars among Islam developed ideologies which are today thought of as the basis for religious Pluralism.

Emergence of Religious Pluralism among Muslims

Islamic teachings form an integral part of religious pluralism. Islam teaches about human dignity, respect for life, and mutual respect among others. These teachings must be extended to all human beings forming the basis from which religious pluralism was built. Other scholarly works such as those by shi'a scholars attempting to give exceptions to the incapable may have also advised the emergence of Pluralism amongst the Muslims. Other dynamics that prompted pluralism includes arguments regarding those who had not had access to Islam. It was generally accepted that they could be treated as the incapable and were accorded special respect. Other complications emerged after interactions with other religions such as Christians. Questions such as whether Islam was the only right path and the destination of other faiths remained unanswered.

Various factors came into play before the emergence of a pluralistic ideology among the Muslim. They include: Continued warfare and tension amidst people from various religions, arguments regarding which religion was right,

an understanding of various norms and religious beliefs, the desire to live in accordance to Islamic teachings. These and many other factors contributed immensely to inculcation of Pluralism among the Muslim.

Pluralism and The Quran

Numerous explanations attempting to justify religious pluralism from the Quran continue to be offered. With regard to Jews and Christians, for example, there is a general understanding that they are referred to as the people of the book. Muslims who do not accept Jesus and Moses as Prophets of God are generally rejected. It is this understanding that indeed Jesus and Moses were integral members of the Islam society that extended the cohabiting of Christian and Jewish beliefs among the Muslims. The Quran and indeed Muslim teachings regard the rights of non Muslims living in a Muslim country. ˜Al| Za| nul ˜¤bid| n5, teaches in his writings that there must always be a barrier preventing Muslims from denying non Muslims living among them the rights which Allah has accorded them.

Chapter 109 of the Quran also contains recognition of other diverse religions. Prophet Mohamed's message to non- Muslims living in Mecca recognizes their existence and gives them the lee way to practice their own religion. Chapter 62 on the other hand justifies pluralism by giving others lee way. The chapter confirms that those who believe in Allah and the last day will indeed be safe and will have a reward with their lord. It also accepts that such people have no reasons to worry whatsoever.

Other similar religious beliefs propagated by both the Quran and Christian teachings in the bible include: the miraculous birth of Jesus, the belief that miracles do exist, the second coming of Jesus, the revelation of the gospel to

Jesus among others. Such teachings show a similar orientation of religion and further led to the tolerance of other religions by Islam.

Religious Pluralism and Islam Law

The largest hindrance to Pluralism in Islam as it seems is the Islamic laws. Various complain emanating from the treatment of non- Muslims living in Islamic lands are of great concern. Dhimmi laws have been faulted for enhancing isolation and thus crippling efforts to adopt Pluralism. Such laws, as is argued by different professionals, are discriminatory in nature and go along way into isolating other faiths. It is generally accepted that Islamic treatment of non-Muslims on legal matters does not reflect in any way the determination of Muslims to practice Pluralism. Dhimmi rules raise serious thematic questions regarding tolerance and do not portray what is practiced on other areas of life rather than the legal corridors.

Although this legal challenge may go along way into demeaning efforts to accommodate other religions it is not an isolated case. Research has showed that a similar challenge is experienced in Europe and US with regard to how minority religions should be treated on legal matters. Dhimmis generally enjoy freedom on diverse issues of life but are lack a legal backing.

Benefits of Religious Pluralism

Pluralism continues to accrue numerous benefits not only to Muslims but to all religions as a whole. The act of being moderate and expressing once religious views with tolerance boosts peaceful coexistence among individuals with different religious beliefs. Pluralism also enhances education in international schools and leads to self development among individuals. In

addition it fosters co-operation therefore contributing positively towards social political stability among various states. It goes a long way to protecting the dignity of life for various individuals . Pluralism has also contributed positively in the war against terrorism eliminating various extremism and religious animosities at different levels.

Conclusion

Pluralism is a product of a sincere understanding of a religions own teachings. It emanates from the respect of human dignity and goes a long way in making earth a friendlier habitat for all religions to live in. Extremism and religious animosities are continually being surmounted. Although there are many challenges hindering the adoption of pluralism in various sectors most Muslims are generally positive about the current trends. Modern Islamic teachings recognize the fact that there is need for continued cooperation among members of different religions. They also recognize that other intelligent individuals have the freedom to choose what to believe in without necessarily causing wars and other differences. Generally there is need for increased cooperation among religions in order to foster peace and enhance other developmental activities.

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