

# Factors that led to expansion of religious communities

[Religion](#)



Faiths such as Islam and Christianity arose and established over time. With the help of Silk Roads, merchants, and missionaries these religions spread to distant lands. These new beliefs systems were introduced to various places far from their origin by the help of many contributing factors. These religions became principal world religions rapidly after they spread. Explicitly, both Islam and Christianity spread and expanded until 1500 C. E. because the two religions had missionaries and merchants/trade to spread the message about their faith.

However, unlike Islam which had no monastic life, Christianity had many monasteries that encouraged the spread of the Christian faith. Both religions, Christianity and Islam had missionaries that helped spread their faiths far from their home-land. Missionaries are people sent on a religious mission, or one sent to promote their religion in a foreign country. In Christianity, Jesus, the Messiah, and his followers used to spread the word around the world but when they died, countless missionaries, like Paul worked zealously to attract converts.

The missionaries such as Paul and Gregory the wonderworker not only preached the Christian doctrine but also expelled demons, moved boulders, diverted a river in flood and persuaded observers that he had supernatural powers and those were all fascinating new people to change and also spread the messages of God (Bentley and Ziegler 296). So these missionaries helped make Christianity a vastly popular religion by the wonderful works they were doing. Similarly, Islam missionaries also helped spread their religion to a variety places.

The Islam missionaries helped to bridge differences in cultural tradition and to spread Islamic values throughout the Dar al-Islam. Dar al-Islam are areas where Muslims are in the majority. But the most Islamic missionary for Muslims were the Sufis. A Sufi is a Muslim who seeks to achieve direct contact with God through mystical means, and they often spread Islam. Sufis were especially effective as missionaries because they emphasized devotion to Allah above mastery of doctrine. So they allowed people to revere Allah in their own ways.

Also when the Turkic speaking people were invading Anatolia they played a huge role in the process of conversion (Bentley and Ziegler 365-366). So the missionaries in Islam helped the religion of Islam become notice around the world. Sufi missionaries adopted local cultural practices into the practice of Islam to attract converts. It is not surprising that both Christianity and Islam were significantly good when missionaries spread their beliefs far from their origins. Both Islam and Christianity had founders and that was Jesus and Muhammad.

So Jesus and Muhammad both had followers and when they died their followers continued their works by spreading their faiths and then Jesus's followers died everyone else that received the word spread the word or messages around make missionaries. So the fact that others spread the messages of their faiths and then it passed on made it easier for the religions to spread faster. However in contrast unlike Islam which had no monastic life, Christianity had many monasteries that promoted the spread of Christian life.

Monasteries is a community of persons, monks or nuns, living under religious vows. For example, Christianity monasticism began in Egypt when they were held captive by the pharaoh. So many Christians lead ascetic and holy lives in the deserts of Egypt because they felt like it was the only solution so they can get out of being captive. So they lived alone and some formed communes where they devoted themselves to the pursuit of holiness rather than worldly success. But when the Christians were not being persecuted anymore and Christianity become legal.

Also the monastic lifestyle was said to become an increasingly popular alternative throughout the Roman Empire (Bentley and Ziegler 452) So basically Christians lived a monastic lifestyle because they wanted to get closer to God and monasteries help to provide order in the countryside and expand agricultural production which attracted some people. On the other hand, the Islam religion had no monasteries. A Sufi novice said, among the thing to must possess, my brother, is (the grace) not to live at the expense of other people, to be a burden to one, to accept (Francis E. Peters 1).

The Islamic abstemiousness (zuhd), which means leading a simple life, eliminating luxuries and not becoming a captive of wealth and rank, is in no way related to the issue of monasticism. This is so since monasticism means segregation and alienation from the society whereas abstemiousness means liberation for a more social living. So Muslims did not have any monastics because it was against their religion. In Christianity they were okay with it but in the Islam community it was not allowed. It is not surprising that

Christianity had or supported monasteries but Islam didn't because of what the two religions believe in.

In the Quran it teaches that it is bad but in the Bible it teaches that it is okay. So the religious meanings make them differ. Another similarity of how Christianity and Islam spread far from their origins is the fact that they used merchants/trade to spread their beliefs. For instance, Christian missionaries took full advantage of the Romans' magnificent network of roads and sea-lanes which enabled them to carry their message throughout the Roman Empire and the Mediterranean basin. The young now growing faith traveled the trade routes and found followers.

Before you knew it there were Christian communities throughout Mesopotamia and Iran (Bentley and Ziegler 296-297). This shows that the trade was effective in spreading the word across not just by missionaries but by trade because it is easier and you get more followers. Also one merchant or a group of merchants became known as Nestorius. They lived during the early fifth century and emphasized the human as opposed to the divine nature of Jesus. The Mediterranean church authorities rejected his views but they soon became prominent in local churches and they spread their faith across the silk roads.

In addition, Islam spread was both rapid and extensive because when the Turkic speaking people came and invaded other empires the merchants would stay to trade goods and spread the message/ word of Islam. The merchant leaders of the new Islamic community wanted to capture profitable trade routes and wealthy agricultural regions (Strayer 481). So the

<https://assignbuster.com/factors-that-led-to-expansion-of-religious-communities/>

merchants traded as well as spread their beliefs. It is not surprising these two religions spread in this similar way because trade routes were accessible at that time and it was easier for the merchants to go around spreading the word of their faith than it is walking.

In conclusion, both Islam and Christianity spread and expanded until 1500 C. E. because the two religions had missionaries and merchants/trade to spread the message about their faith. However, unlike Islam which had no monastic life, Christianity had many monasteries that encouraged the spread of the Christian faith. Basically, the two religions Islam and Christianity attracted a lot of converts and today these are the two most known religions because of missionaries and trade the main factors that led to the expansion and the wide spread appeal of the religions.