

Christianity and islam analysis

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Introduction The religions of Christianity and Islam are among the most practiced religions in contemporary times. The two religions have common origins in Judeo-Christianity, where according to literature; they share a number of common beliefs. Being a Christian, the study will be based on understanding the two religions, by comparing the beliefs and history of the two religions. Islam Schimmel (1992, p.

1) observes that, among all the religions confronting Christianity, Islam was the most misunderstood and attacked intensely. For a long time, Islam was considered the major threat for the people of the West. This feeling was contributed by the fact that Islam and those who confessed it, the Muslims, were regarded as arch enemies of Christianity and western civilization. We ask ourselves, what brings about this misconception, and answer it by trying to understand the fundamentals of Islam as a religion. Esposito (2002, p. 2) observes that Islam is the one of the largest religion in the world, second after Christianity.

The religion began in the year 622 A. D, in Saudi Arabia, brought about by the Holy prophet Muhammad. Islam has two major branches, which as explained by Esposito (2002, p. 2) constitute of Sunni which makes about eighty five percent and Shii which makes up of the remaining fifteen percent of Muslims. The two branches have various schools of theology and laws within them.

Islam is the predominant religion in the Middle East where it originated and large parts of North Africa, and along the East Coast of Africa. These are among the first regions where Islam expanded to in the years following the

death of Prophet Muhammad (Schimmel 1992, p. 3). Christianity The term Christianity refers to a monotheistic religion that is based on the teachings and miracles of Jesus Christ. In Christian theology, the word Christ stands for the anointed one. Christianity is based on the belief that Jesus was sent to the world by God, the father so that he would die on the cross and lead to the salvation of the mankind.

Christianity teaches that there is only one God in all existence that God made the universe in six days and created Adam and Eve as the first human beings created in His image. This does not mean that God has a body of flesh and bones. Image means the likeness of God's character and rationality. Being made from the image of God; Christianity advocates for the respect and honour of mankind. This implies that, Christianity refutes the theory of evolution as the origins of man. Christianity teaches that God is Trinity that is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not three Gods.

Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity, that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead physically, and that all people are under the righteous judgment of God because all people have sinned against God. In an attempt to understand the religion of Islam in comparison to Christianity, the study conducted an interview with a practicing Muslim, a local Imam who is the leader of prayers in the mosque, to have an insight into the religion.

The study also conducted an interview with a practicing Christian in an attempt to understand Christianity and get a comparative view between the two religions. Interview summary Interviews with the local Imam and a

Christian The study used a similar interview schedule for both the Muslim and the Christian to have a comparison of the two religions. The findings are <https://assignbuster.com/christianity-and-islam-analysis/>

listed below. The first question was on the important holidays, where the study found out that Islam, the Sunni sect, has three major holidays namely Idd-ul-fitr, Idd-ul-Adha and Ashura.

Idd-ul-fitr is the celebration that comes after the month of Ramadan which is the eighth month in the Islamic calendar, and the holiday signifies breaking the fast. Idd-ul-Adha comes on the tenth day of Dhul-Hijja the twelfth month, which corresponds to the tenth day of the pilgrimage to Mecca. The holiday signifies the commemoration of Abraham, a prophet in Islam, who was ordered by God to sacrifice his son Ishmael. Ashura, comes on the tenth day of Muharram which is the first month of the Islamic calendar. The day is celebrated through fasting for three days, and commemorates the journey undertaken by the Israelites being led by Moses another prophet in Islam. In comparison, the Christian holidays constitute the Easter holiday, a celebration commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ after three days.

The other major holiday constitutes the Christmas, which falls on the twenty-fifth day of December commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. Secondly, the study wanted to know how religion has shaped the lives of the two respondents. The Muslim observed that Islam is a complete way of life that had guidance on every aspect of life. The major factor is the strength of humility and kindness to other beings. For the Christian, the importance factor is in the relationship with Jesus Christ that has totally changed his life.

He is the provider of life that everyone strives for: love, joy, peace among others, they all come from Him. The challenges faced by the Muslim in practicing Islam constitute the rigorous prayer requirement, where one is

supposed to perform the five obligatory prayers every day within their defined period. The recent association of Islam with terrorism is another major challenge facing Islam, where the respondent observed that he is totally against terrorism which is not accepted in Islam. For the Christian surrendering to the will of God for his life was challenging. This can be seen in comparison to others who practice selfishness and ridicule the believers of Christ. The study found out that the Muslim practiced Islam as a child drawn by the fact that he was born in Islam and finds spiritual fulfilment.

The Christian did not practice Christianity as a child but the Holy Spirit drew him into Christianity by revealing that he was a sinner in need of salvation. The Muslim observed that his family would dismiss him if he chose another faith; this is due to the teaching of Islam that there is no other true religion apart from Islam, and his family will not entertain him practicing another faith. On the other hand, the Christian confided that his family will not dismiss him if he chose another to practice another faith. The study found out that for both the Muslim and the Christian, the faith influenced on their voting patterns. The two admit that they will vote for candidates who share similar standards and will not vote for any person who is blatantly against what God's word teaches. In terms of conversion, where an individual is interested in their religion, both Islam and Christianity allow for new converts.

For the Muslim, the new convert is expected to declare the shahada, which is declaring the belief in the sole worship of Allah (God) and acknowledging that Muhammad is the messenger of God. For Christianity, one convert by believing in their heart that Jesus Christ is God's son and that he came to

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earth, lived a perfect, sinless life, and died on the cross for the sins of mankind, and rose on the third day. Both Islam and Christianity advocate for missionary work since the two religions teach on the importance of conveying the word to all nations and the followers are required to live like witnesses. Each of the two religions is required to proclaim the good news to the world. For the Muslims, the study found out that they go for prayers five times a day and a congregational prayer on Friday. On the other hand, the denomination of the Christian attends Church services three times a week.

Both the religions advocate for the importance of converging with other followers and giving back what God has given to mankind. Comparing and contrasting Islam and Christianity Islam and Christianity share a number of things in common, Parshall (2002, p. 15-16) observes that the two religions are similar in many ways; the unity of God is a foundational truth discernible within both. Allah, like the Christian God, is a deity of mercy, truth and judgment. Parshall (2002) continues that the ninety-nine names ascribed to Allah are, for the most part, in harmony with the Biblical description of God. In Islam, Jesus is described as virgin-born and a performer of miracles.

He is alive in heaven today and will return to earth in the end times. Muslim ethics, with few exceptions, parallel those of Christianity. James-Sow (2009) observes that both Islam and Christianity believe in the existence of one Supreme God who has the power that is above and beyond all other forces and sources on earth. The believers of the two religions are expected to worship only God without associating other beings with His worship. The history of both Christianity and Islam are intertwined, for example, the

Muslims celebrate the holiday of Ashura commemorating the Israelites flight from Egypt.

Christianity also acknowledges of the phenomenon, as well as the existence of Abraham as one of the earliest prophets. The miracles stated in the Quran are more or less similar to those found in the Bible, for example, when God spoke to Moses from a burning tree, the episode is discussed in the two scriptures. Parshall (2002) asserts that the ethical distinctive of Islam that is in conflict with the New Testament are in harmony with those of the Old Testament. According to Esposito (2002) both Islam and Christianity belief in the creation of man by God. Both the Bible and the Quran teach that God created Adam, the first man, and Eve the first woman. Eve was created out of the rib of Adam.

The two religions share the same history in terms of Adam and Eve, who lived in the garden of Eden before they committed sin leading to their eviction. On creation, the two religions agree that God created the universe in six days, with both religions agreeing on the order of creation in the six days. The two religions also have similar teachings on the judgment day, where God will judge mankind and reward the believers while the disbelievers are punished. Another major agreement in the two religions is found in their acknowledgement of prophets who were sent by God to spread His word. Starting from Noah all through Muhammad, the two religions have a large number of prophets in common. Parshall (2002, p.

12) observes that both Islam and Christianity have much in common, while the same can be said of the difference. The main difference comes in the

belief of what is held in common. The major contention between Islam and Christianity revolves around the divinity of Jesus Christ and the trinity. Much as the two believe about the virgin-birth of Jesus Christ, Christianity acknowledges the death and resurrection of Jesus after three days. On the other hand, Islam teaches that Jesus did not die but is still alive in heaven.

The other contentious issue cutting across the two religions is based on the teachings of trinity by Christianity which is refuted by Islam. Much as Christians understand the unity of God in trinity; Islam teaches on one God.

Conclusion The study of Islam and Christianity faces a number of challenges, where the researcher of the topic in most cases finds himself at crossroads. This is portrayed by Parshall (2002, p. 17) who states that ‘ some readers will feel I have been soft on Islam’. He also observes that he has a firm conviction that Muslims are spiritually lost unless they place their faith in Jesus Christ.

The major problem arises out of the teachings by the two religions on their absolute truth, where Islam sees all other religions be misguided while Christianity claims absolute truth in itself. For one to have an objective view of the religions there is a need to study both from an insider’s perspective, by using information from practicing members of the religion. Based on this method, the study finds that Islam and Christianity share a large number of beliefs in common, while both have a common history. The major antagonism between the two religions comes from a number of shared beliefs such as the trinity and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This creates antagonism where we find Islam refuting the two and claiming that

Christianity is not the absolute truth, while Christianity on the other hand claims absolute truth and sees Islam as the wrong religion.

Based from the findings of the interview and the literature discussed, we can observe that Islam and Christianity share a common origin, but are differentiated by a few doctrines. Much as they share a lot, the few differing doctrines have made the two religions distinct from each other.