

# Strange Similarities between Christian & Muslim Histories

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Excepting for the conception of the son-ship of Jesus, there is no fundamental difference between Christianity and Islam. In their essence they are one and the same; both are the outcome of the same spiritual forces working in humanity. One was a protest against the heartless materialism of the Jews and the Romans; the other a revolt against the degrading idolatry of the Arabs, their ferocious customs and usages.

Christianity, preached among a more settled and civilized people subject to an organized government, had to contend with comparatively milder evils. Islam, preached among warring tribes and clans, had to light against, all the instincts of self-interest and ancient superstition.

Christianity, arrested in its progress towards the East by a man of cultured character, who, although a Jew by birth, was by education an Alexandrian Greek, was carried to Greece and Rome, and there gathering up the pagan civilization of centuries, gave birth to new ideas and doctrines, (Christianity ceased to be Christian, the moment it was transplanted from the home of its birth. It became the religion of Paul...

Alas for the latter-day professors of Islam! The blight of patristicism has ruined the blossom of true religion and a true devotional spirit. A Christian preacher has pointed out with great force the distinction between religion and theology, and the evils which have followed in his Church from the confusion of the two.

What has happened in Christianity has happened in Islam. Practice has given way to the mockery of profession, ceremonialism has taken the place of earnest and faithful work, — doing of good to mankind for the sake of doing good — good, and for the love of God. Enthusiasm has died out, and devotion to God and His Prophet are meaningless words. The earnestness without which human existence is no better than that of the brute creation, earnestness in right-doing and right-thinking, is absent.

The Moslems of the present day have ignored the spirit in a hopeless love for the letter. Instead of living up to the ideal preached by the Master, instead of "striving to excel in good works; instead of being righteous; instead of loving God, and for the sake of His love loving His creatures, — they have made themselves the slaves of opportunism and outward observance....

The present stagnation of the Mussulman communities is principally due to the notion which has fixed itself on the minds of the generality of Moslems, that the right to the exercise of private judgment (ijtihad) ceased with the early legists, that its exercise in modern times is sinful, and that a Moslem in order to be regarded as an orthodox follower of Mohammed should belong to one or the other of the schools established by the school-men of Islam, and abandon his judgment absolutely to the interpretations of men who lived in the ninth century, and could have no conception of the necessities of the nineteenth.

Among the Sunnis it is the common belief that since the four Imams, no doctor has risen qualified to interpret the laws of the Prophet. No account is taken of the altered circumstances in

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which Moslems are now plumed; the conclusions at which these learned legists arrived several centuries ago are held to be equally applicable to the present day.

Among the Shiah, the Akhbari will not allow his judgment to travel beyond the dictates of "the expounders of the law." Mohammed had consecrated reason as the highest and noblest function of the human intellect. Our schoolmen and their servile followers have made its exercise a sin and a crime....

*A fair reputation is a plant, delicate in its nature, and by no means rapid in its growth. It will not shoot up in a night; but it may perish in a night. Jeremy Taylor*

Like many of the ecclesiastics of Christendom, not a few [Muslim jurists and scholars] were the servants of sovereigns and despots whose demands were not consistent with the precepts of the Master. Canons were invented, theories started, traditions discovered, and glosses put upon his words utterly at variance with their spirit.... justly observes an English writer,

*"Just as the Hebrews deposed their Pentateuch in favor of the Talmud, so the Moslems have abolished the Koran in favor of the traditions and decisions of the learned. We do not mean to say that any Mohammedan, if asked what was the text-book of his religion, would answer anything but the 'Koran;' but we do mean that practically it is not the Koran that guides his belief or practice.*

*In the Middle Ages of Christendom it was not the New Testament, but the Summa Theologica of Thomas Aquinas, that decided questions of orthodoxy; and in the present day, does the orthodox churchman usually derive his creed from personal investigation of the teaching of Christ in the Gospels? Probably if he refers to a document at all, the Church Catechism contents him; or if he be of a peculiarly inquiring disposition, a perusal of the Thirty-nine Articles will resolve all doubts. Yet he too would say his religion was drawn from the Gospels, it was filtered.*

*In precisely the same way modern Mohammedanism is constructed, and a large part of what Moslems now believe and practice is not to be found in the Koran at all."*

(Excerpts from "The Spirit of Islam" by Justice Syed Ameer Ali)

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- Identify three reasons for our rigid mentality?

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