

So You Think You Know Christianity (and Islam before the Prophet)

Many Christians believe that the way they have been taught about their religion is the way it has always been. Not so. Find author Bill Allin at <http://billallin.com>

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We casually refer to those who attend worship at a place called a "church" Christians, and their religion as Christianity. Not much to argue about there.

What about the origins of Christianity, recorded to some extent in the Bible, and followed to some extent by Muslims (for whom the Bible was the word of God before the writing of the Qur'an)? It only makes sense that those who lived closest to the lifetime of Jesus of Nazareth, especially those who were contemporaries, such as the Apostles, would know the most about the origins of Christianity.

What we know today as Christianity and its Bible are more accurately a product of the Church of Rome, written or revised in the Fourth Century CE, not long before Roman emperor Constantine adopted Christianity as the official religion of Rome (aka the Eastern Roman Empire, or the Byzantine empire). The Apostles and St. Paul played significant parts in what became known as the Bible, but only so far as what they wrote conformed to what the church wanted the world to know.

Even the Bible books by the Apostles were written between 90 and 110 years (some say even more) after the death of Jesus on the cross. Think about your experience with elderly people, especially about how accurate their memories are. You probably don't know people who have written anything at that age, let alone books that are followed to the letter by followers who believe they are transcribed words from God.

Religious books produced at the time of Jesus or shortly after his death (not necessarily on a cross, it turns out) differ markedly from the story passed along to us from the hallowed halls of head offices of Christian churches. In fact, the cross was not adopted as a Christian symbol for more than two centuries after Jesus. Before the change the accepted symbol was a fish, though some evidence exists that the cross (similar to the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet--thau, made in the shape of a cross--note the significance of that as "this is as far as you need to go, the Cross) was used by Christians who were persecuted by the Romans as a way to identify themselves to each other.

Religious books that were written shortly after the life of Jesus were widely read and believed by Followers of Jesus in the Holy Land. The fact that the Church of Rome (based in Greece and Rome) conducted what amounts to a genocide against the Followers of Jesus in the Holy Land after 150 CE is immaterial to this story. Except to note that followers of Jesus in the Holy Land did not have the same "history" of their religion as the Church of Rome, and they paid for that with their lives in most cases. They were exterminated by Rome, their greatest competitor.

Their holy books were, for the most part, not components of the Bible of today, as compiled by the church in the Fourth Century. They were too varied and heretical.

For example, Followers of Jesus--those who lived in the land that Jesus called home--believed there were two, 12, even as many as 30 gods, as recorded in their holy books. They did not believe in one God, all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful. They did not necessarily even believe that one God created the world and everything else they knew. (Beyond the creation story in Genesis, Judaism dwells very little on beginnings as well.)

The death of Christ had nothing to do with salvation. The concept that "He died for your sins" never appears in those early books. Indeed, some believed that Jesus didn't die on a cross at all. History records that Mary of Magdala lived in France for a while. Some even say she had children there, with Jesus as the father. Enough evidence exists in France today to support at least the Mary part of that claim. She may have fled to France to escape the Roman church, who wanted her dead as she was one of the leaders of the Followers of Jesus and women leading religious groups was forbidden by male-dominated Rome.

Some Christians adhere to the Bible as the only book worth reading and believing, just as Muslims believe that of

their holiest book, the Qur'an. Is the Bible really no more accurate as a source for Christian doctrine than our daily newspapers today? That is, was the Bible edited and rewritten to say what its publisher wanted people to read and believe?

History records that some religious books were rewritten by Christian scholars at the time the Bible was first assembled, in the Fourth Century. The original books were destroyed. In fact, history records that the Church of Rome scoured the empire searching for the original versions of the books it adapted and rewrote, as well as books that did not conform to their new Bible, to have them destroyed. Some believe that the burning of the library at Alexandria--the greatest library of the ancient world--was set by Roman Christians because it held too many books written by the Followers of Jesus.

The ancient scrolls known as the Nag Hammadi, the name of the Egyptian city where the scrolls were discovered in 1945, bear witness to the deceptions carried out by the Church of Rome in order to formulate and consolidate its religion in the Fourth Century.

German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche famously declared "God is dead" in several of his books. He didn't mean that a real God had died. He meant that the fictitious God perpetrated by religions had been revealed as unreal. In other words, the more educated people become, the more they realize the fiction of religion, and the more they will search for a true religion.

While untold numbers of people argue over whether God must exist because they have faith he does, or maybe not, almost no one pays attention to what a real God must be like, in accordance with science that even the most atheistic scientists can't debate.

Most of those who have experienced God are quiet about it. They know it may not be good for their health to make declarations that go against the teachings of a great religion.

Bill Allin is the author of ***Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems***, a guidebook for parents who want to know when to teach their children the truth about life, instead of leaving much of the life education of their children to street chatter. Learn more at <http://billallin.com>

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