Factors Influencing the Conversion of Ngiturkana People in Turkana County to Islam

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Abstract

This study investigated factors that contributed to Christian conversion to Islam among Ngiturkana people. Islam has been on record as the religion that is spreading at a faster rate in the world and attracting a lot of people from other religious backgrounds and cultures. This study aimed to determine the factors that influence the conversion of Ngiturkana people. The question this research intended to answer was what reason Ngiturkana Christians give for their conversion to Islam? The findings of this research reveal that there exists no single cohesive pattern that describes converts of Islam from Christianity. The study also reveals that there is denominational pluralism where some are from Catholic Church and others were Protestants. This appears to create a huge dissonance among young people due to different practices such as the place of Mary and the additional Books of the Bible. This research gives credence to Wayne Gruden's conclusion that religious conversion involves adopting a new sort of belief. It is critical to notice that the converts recounted adopted a new set of beliefs and abandoned the religious beliefs they previously clung to. All the converts in this study neglected their fidelity Christianity and its related practices and chose to adopt Islam. The findings of this research also conclude that the experiences of converts are not specific to Christianity. The experiences are not the exclusive sphere of Christian conversion. Christians should have awareness and come up with alternative explanations of conversion. Also, Christians converting to Islam reported felt needs as leading to their conversion. This is also not a preserve of Christianity since it goes both ways. The converts in this study reveal an individualistic mindset even though they came from a collectivist society. Collectivist and individualistic personalities or cultures play a role in religious motives. In view of these findings there is a need for the church to develop the knowledge and skills of pastors. From the interviews, it is evident that pastors could not convince those who attended debates between Christians and Muslims. Pastors and church leaders therefore need training through introducing theological studies to teach them on church doctrines. Churches should conduct workshops and seminars to sensitize members on the significance of spreading the gospel to the Muslims and defend their faith. There is need for return and revival of biblical theology through Bible studies in the church and the Sunday schools for discipleship.

Keywords: *Conversion, Ngiturkana people, Discrimination, Inequality, Materialism*

Introduction

This study is motivated by my experience among the Ngiturkana, being one of them. Growing up and living among my people the Ngiturkana, I noticed that those who had earlier converted and were professing Christianity were turning away to Islam. It appeared that some were wooed by opportunities to get food, and other basic provisions that were being offered by Islamic communities around. This observation over the years made me curious about the Christianity-Islam conversion, and more so among my people. I wanted to know more about the factors that led individuals to change their faith (i.e. from Christianity to Islam), and specifically among my people the Ngiturkana. This is the motivation for this study.

There are several ways of understanding an individual's religious conversion. A basic yet typical approach to religious conversion is that which likens it to a new building being built in the place where an old one stood: in this case, the new building is a new religion, whereas the old one is the one that had to be demolished to pave way for the new. Scholars of anthropology of religious conversion are concerned with three key issues: one is the connection between religious conversion and modernity, secondly, the consequences of conversion, and finally, the emphasis of conversion either as a rupture with the past or stressing elements of continuity.

Problem Statement

This research aims to investigate reasons influencing Ngiturkana Conversion to Islam. However, this contradicts the background that the majority of the Ngiturkana believe in Christianity which was settled by the missionaries in the year 1956 as well as the African indigenous religion (Rambo and Farhadian 2018, 227-34). As a result of church influence, Harton, in his theory "African conversion" reiterates that conversions are not Islam's external influence and Christianity, but the thought pattern that exists and values- the "traditional cosmology" insists upon the fact that Islamic conversion is sparked not by the social upheavals but the human condition (Rambo and Farhadian 2018, 227-34). On the contrary, the Ngiturkana worldview has been strengthened by external threats of religion, thus conversion (Rambo and Farhadian 2018, 227-34). According to Snow, and David, the relationship between the Islamic faith and the Christian religion has been in existence since the 14th century (Snow and Machalek 1984, 167-190), this reaffirms, the assertions that Islam existed in Turkana before the arrival of Missionaries in the early 1950s. The majority of Muslims were Sunnis Somali Cushites who predominately are traders and never bothered to Islamize the Ngitukana, they are the backbone of the Ngiturkana economy, and they practice both trade and pastoralism.

Conversion

When one is converted religiously, it means that they have abandoned the religious beliefs they previously held or clung to, and have adopted a new set of beliefs altogether, and in the place of the older ones. To this end, one who is religiously converted neglects their fidelity to one religion and its related practices and chooses to adopt another. An example of religious conversion might be from one to another denomination within the same, for example, from Christianity to Islam. Notably, religious conversion involves a fundamental change in one's soul.

Edwin Starbuck was one of the very first people to write about conversion, whereby he recognized conversion as the resolution for the psychological predicament. The crisis is resolved and a new self may occur immediately after the individual happens to be converted. This new self may include personal peace, wholeness, and a sense of completeness (Khan 1991, 149–57). Moreover, according to Coe, conversion is self-reorganization or self-realization that an individual finds a new self or ends up adopting. Consequently, indeed, conversion is not

integrally religious (Snow and Machalek 1984, 167-190). According to religious conversion, a social medium or religious framework where the process occurs is necessary.

Generally, conversion can be described as a transformation in the way one does one thing, to another way altogether. Indeed, returning and turning can be the literal meaning behind the biblical Greek and Hebrew for conversion. It's suggested by Tom Robbins (1988, 75) that individuals turn to convert steadily as a result of the influence of the social relationship, especially when faced with some challenges (Priest and Uchendu 2020, 121-132). Conversion also is seen as open to conversion and precarious in retort to ever-changing forms of relationship.

Snow and Machalek (1984), in their survey of sociological studies of conversion, settled into a conclusion that transfiguration involves variations in identities, dogmas, values, and most importantly, the world of an individual's discourse (Rambo and Farhadian 2018, 227-34). Although Machalek and Snow emphasize internal reform, they even accord a distinct focus to speech alterations in the styles of reasoning being major components for spiritual conversion. The Rastafarianism conversion emphasizes the need to view conversion as changes in reasoning and change in speech. This is because religion's great focus is on wordplay. Adherents should indeed contribute to this discourse on justice that seems to expand all the time as well as the landscape of the universe (Rambo and Farhadian 2018, 227-34). Moreover, Machalek and Snow made an argument that people who do not change their worldviews but participate actively in rituals truly cannot be termed as converts (Waddy 1990, 258-260).

Ngiturkana Christian-Muslim Conversion

The conversion of Ngiturkana Christians to Islam followed a bicultural bridge model, having two distinct cultures converge; however, Hiebert asserts that a model is not biblical if it depends on the relationship qualities of people and the missionaries (Hiebert 1994). He says that if that is what determines the mission's success, then the parent/child relationship model can be biblical because, according to him, Incarnation is the biblical model. Hiebert continues to argue that God became human and even dwelt with us to bridge the cultural gap that existed between the sinful earth and heaven. In order for us to pass the message of salvation to the people whom we go to, we must be just like God when he became one of us so that He could help us. Muslims have continued to grow in number, and their influence has spread beyond Saudi Arabia

After the review is made on the feast of Islam besides Christianity in East Africa and Kenya spreading, the history affiliation among the Christian and Islamic faiths will increase the conversion knowledge in these two beliefs and even the blowout to Ngiturkana persons in Turkana. It is important to give out an overview of the Christian-Muslim relationship while discussing them in Kenya. For almost the 14th century, the relationship between the Islamic faith and the Christian religion has been in existence (Snow and Machalek 1984, 167-190). From disagreements, it takes a mixture of events to work together. It's also interesting to note that the basic group for the linking between Christianity and Islam has remained antagonism, hating, and battles, instead of peacefulness besides cooperation. It's claimed by some researchers that the relation between these two religions has been harsh as a result of leader's failure in the prevention of the extremes of its associates, alike the outdoor Crusades and Jihad and even the whole crusader factors of these two beliefs (Rambo and Farhadian 2018, 227-34). The research, therefore may express that both religions a trying to change the population into their convictions.

All Muslims who change to Christianity are seen as apostasy, while on the other hand, a Christian who converts to Islam is viewed as denying Jesus as it is considered wicked against

the Sanctity by others. Therefore, this is the opinion in the change befalls Christianity and Islam across the world and Kenya in particular (Sim and Sharp 1998, 23–31). Indeed, both Islam and Christianity religions all over the world rely largely on their ideas to portray their relationship with one another. Verse 2 Cor.6:14, which explains the yoke of disparity with other beliefs, guides Christianity while, on the other hand, Muslims depend literarily on verses like sura 9:29 (Rambo and Farhadian 2018, 227-34). Moreover, Islam is a minor religion in Kenya that accounts for approximately 10.9 percent of the entire population or even about 5.2 million individuals (Priest and Uchendu 2020, 121-132). The spread of Islamic religion in Ngiturkana keeps on accelerating, especially in the eastern side of the region. In history, this region is known to be dominated by Christianity with a few Muslim populations. Therefore, this may be associated with the peaceful conversion of many people to the Islamic religion from Christianity. It may also be noticed that Islamic might be employing the peaceful existence among these two religions as the means to convert more individuals into their religion.

Reasons for Ngiturkana Christians Conversion

There were five themes that emerged from the converts as their reasons for conversion to Islam. The research discusses the five themes and their sub-themes as follows;

Table 1: Conversion Factors as Responses from Converts

Theme	Sub-Theme	No. of Converts
Comparative Examination	Muslim Knowledge of the Scripture	8
	Personal Search for Truth	20
	Openness and Provision of Quick Answers	6
	Discrimination and Inequality in Christianity	2
	Materialism and Moral Depravity	9
Clarity, Simplicity, and Unity of Muslims	Universal Oneness of God	20
	General Simplicity in Islam	9
	The Process of Conversion	4
	Worship Time	2
Islamic Practices	Direct access and knowledge of God	8
	Love and Equality among all Muslims	11
	Behavior and way of life	13
	Teaching and obedience to laws	6
Friendship		9
Search for the True God		11

As the researcher analyzes these themes, it is also possible to categorize these themes in other ways. For example, it is possible to categorize together the theme "search for the true God" with the sub-theme "personal search for truth." However, this research separates them to take note of the distinctions of the converts in the search for God as a way of worship and searching for the general truth by comparing the two religions. Also, the researcher separated the sub-

theme "openness and provision of quick answers" form the theme "clarity, simplicity, and unity of Muslims" for the same reason stated above. Additionally, the sub-themes "equality and love for one another", "way of life and behavior", and "discrimination and inequality in Christianity" can go together in the same category under Islamic practices.

Comparative Examination

Knowledge of the Quran by Muslims

This research revealed that 8 converts view a connection between truth and knowledge; "Ever since I was a little kid, I used to hear the Muslim 'Athana' calling for prayer, so it was natural that Islam existed even before I was born. I grew up knowing that there is Islam. My Somali community friends would always brag about their religion as the best."[1] The other convert related their encounter with Islam through a public debate between Muslims and Christians in Lodwar. It was in the meeting that the convert realized the Muslims have one God and the Muslim Holy Book, the Quran, contains Prophet Mohammed's Pbuh miracle which fits all generations as well as the concept of embryology.[2] Also, another convert came to know Islam through reading Islam literature which bases its teachings on the Quran and as a little boy, he could hear 'adhana' call for prayer from where they lived.[3] "I came to know about Islam through the Quran book because I once read it and it spoke to me."[4]

Although these converts revealed the knowledge of the Quran as a reason for conversion, they did not ascertain the differences between scholars or professional Muslim speakers, or even acquaintance with teachings of the Islam religion through the "public debates" or friends and other ordinary Muslims. These factors impressed them and created a move toward converting from Christianity to Islam. The converts compared the Islamic teachings of the Quran through its flow from the first chapter to the end with the Christian doctrine. The converts claimed that it seems like someone sat down and formulated his rules for people to follow as well as the Bible which does not have a flow.[5] According to these converts, the Islamic teachings are deeper and more elaborate than Christian teachings. This seems to have attracted the converts to the Islamic religion.

Personal Search for Truth

According to Roger Straus, conversion does not necessarily result from internal or external destabilization. It could also result from an individual strategizing and striving toward the achievement of a meaningful change in their life experiences. They therefore treat others and the groups involved in their conversion process as helpers, guides, coaches, and salespeople.[6] The interviewed converts seem to reflect a similar description of their experiences. Their journey toward conversion to Islam began with their search for truth. Their act of strategizing and striving to achieve a meaningful change in their experiences in life possibly triggered the search for truth. This search encompassed various activities. One convert revealed that he

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[1] Th1.1/TCL1a

[2] Th1.1/TCL2b

[3] Th1.1/TCL5a

[4] Th1.1/TCL8a

[5] Th2.2/TCL1a

[6] Roger A. Straus, "Religious Conversion as a Personal and Collective Achievement," *Sociological Analysid 40*(2), 1979, p.158.

started by reading books and attending public gatherings where Muslims and Christians held debates on various issues of the two doctrines."[7] The search could also begin through simple listening and engagement with Muslim friends as one of the converts revealed that he could hear the Muslims praying the 'adhana' from where he lived and he had many Muslim friends who he engaged with.[8]

It could also begin through daily life experiences while growing up. New convert also revealed that his personal search for truth began after the death of his mother. Although his mother was a Muslim, he embarked on his own journey of conversion as he grew up in an orphanage which imparted on him the good virtues about Islam religion. In the orphanage, he could actively listen to well-wishers who told them about Islam religion.[9] Another one grew up following the religion as he was born a Muslim.[10] The search could also happen through teachings and lessons. "I researched through reading online teachings."[11] For another, the search involved active inquiry and comparison as he first attended a public debate and participated in asking questions about the Bible and Quran.[12]

External forces do not appear to influence conversion in this research. The converts' conversion is not a passive process but active people who are in search of the truth. The process of conversion often arises from within a person. As one of the converts says, "I was interested in Islam in 2020. The conviction was too loud that I converted."[13] It is difficult to ascertain what triggered this search yet it is possibly a varied reason. However, this is not an external influence. The converts also revealed a varied duration for the search. For one convert, it only took two weeks to regularly observe how Muslims carry themselves around[14] while for another one it took two years from 2011 to 2013 to read literature and got the conviction to follow the Islam religion.[15] Others continued to follow their previous religions despite the passion and the drive to shift to Islam. They read many books concerning Christianity and took a long time to decide which direction to follow in matters of religion.[16]

These arguments bring to the discussion when conversion happens. Questions arise about whether conversion is gradual or immediate. Many people think that the process is immediate. However, this research reveals that conversion is gradual. Conversion involves transformation and hence is only complete if transformation occurs. It is not possible to measure transformation since it involves the inner person. However, it is agreeable that an individual's search for truth is one reason that led to conversion to Islam.

Openness and Provision of Quick Answers

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[7] Th1.2/TCL1a

[8] Th1.2/TCL5a

[9] Th1.2/TCL6a

[10] Th1.2/TCL9a

[11] Th1.2/TCL7a

[12] Th1.2/TCL1b

[13] TSL10/SRQ2

[14] Th1.2/TSL8d

[15] Th1.2/TCL2d

[16] Th1.2/TCL1d

This study reveals that some converts responded to the inner conviction to convert due to openness and quick response to questions. Out of the twenty converts, six alluded to openness of Islam. One convert said that he converted to Islam through a friend who encouraged him with the belief that everything happens through the permission of Allah.[17] Another one responded that the Islamic teachings are clearer and more open, unlike Christian doctrines.[18] A convert said he had a Muslim friend who one day openly invited him to join him for the noon prayer. His other friends also invited him and persuaded him to join Islam.[19] Another claimed that the Islamic center was open and nearby where they lived.[20] Another convert stated that while in form 3, he started questioning most of the church doctrines since they no longer appealed to him. He had a desire to convert to protestant churches but on reading various books supplied to him by a friend, he got all the answers he needed and got convinced to join Islam.[21] A convert attended various debates and one of the debates in Mombasa was through an invitation by a friend, which proved the open nature of the Islam religion.[22]

From these responses, it appears that conviction arises as a result of the perception of quick responses and openness. For example, if a Muslim is ready to invite a person of different faith to their mosque or prayer, it seems that the Islam religion is open to all and has nothing to hide. The conviction arising from this concept is the foundation for trusting the Quran or members of the Islamic religion, and trust is undoubtedly the basis for faith. Doney and Cannon argue that there are two ways to build trust. First is the objective credibility of an exchange partner or the expectancy to rely on a written statement or word of the partner. The second way is benevolence, which means the extent of a partner's genuine interest in the welfare of another partner and gets a motivation to seek mutual gain.[23] Converts depicted both credibility and genuine interest during interactions with Muslims.

Discrimination and Inequality

Some converts perceived presence of discrimination and equality in Christianity that they experienced or saw before converting to Islam. Two converts alluded to this as a reason for conversion to Islam. One convert said that he experienced a lack of support from family since they are Christians. The wife declined to his directive of giving Muslim names to their children.[24] The other convert argues that for someone who was born a Christian, there is pressure that comes with having to constantly think about what people are going to say or how to tell the family about conversion.[25] For this convert, he faced ridicule from peers as they assumed that his conversion was for a while and he would turn back to Christianity. These responses show that some Christians discriminate against other religions, specifically Islam.

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[17] Th1.3/TCL5b

[18] Th1.3/TCL7b

[19] TH1.3/TSL3a

[20] Th1.3/TSL6a

[21] Th1.3/TSL1a

[22] Th1.3/TSL1b

[23] Patricia M. Doney, & Joseph P. Cannon, "An Examination of the Nature of Trust in Buyer-Seller Relationships," *The Journal of Marketing 61*(2), 1997, p.36.

[24] Th1.4/TCL2/SRQ3.

[25] Th1.4/TCL3/SRQ3.

This is in comparison to their claim about Islam that there are no different denominations and there are no scandals in mosques like in Christianity.[26]

Many influences impact a human. People have different expectations and drives toward a certain act. From the foregoing, it appears that the drive toward equality and a non-discriminative doctrine further influenced the process of conversion, although such influences seem to lack some form of objectivity.

Materialism and Moral Depravity

Several converts alluded to moral depravity in Christianity as a factor that influenced them to convert to Islam. One convert stated that Christian doctrines have some elements of individuals interfering with it.[27] The Bible has prohibited various things but Christians seem to overlook, for example, eating pork.[28] Another convert stated that Muslims dress neatly to cover the whole body before Allah unlike Christianity which does not rebuke inappropriate dressing before God.[29] Another convert was a staunch Catholic and his church had sponsored his high school education. He, therefore, knew that the church would feel betrayed if he converted.[30] This is in contrast to Islam which a convert said that the Muslims help all people without asking which religion they follow.[31] Another convert found Islam more reasonable than Christianity since there are no different denominations, Christians have more scandals while Islam does not, and there are no fake Imams or Sheikhs.[32] Also, another convert alludes to lower cases of bribery in Islamic doctrines than in Christianity.[33] Islam prohibits bribery.[34]

However, one can hardly say that the issues of bribery and the presence of scandals as the converts mentioned are exclusive to Christians or Christianity or any religion whatsoever, including Islam. This is in agreement that the earlier assumptions that conversion may not all the time result from a truth conviction. This reveals that conversion results from many influences, bringing to mind the earlier claim in this research that humans have diverse influences.

Clarity, Simplicity, and Unity among Muslims

The second key theme that developed from the converts' attitude during an interview is clarity, simplicity, and unity of Islam. This theme seemed to influence their conversion. The research discusses this theme under various sub-themes;

Universal Oneness of God

The perception of God as one appeared to influence converts to Islam. All the converts did not agree with the concept of the Triune God for Christians. They could not understand how God exists and manifests in three Persons. They also had a major issue with how Christian churches

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[26] Th1.4/TCL3/SRQ2

[27] Th1.5/TCL2b

[28] Th1.5/TCL3d

[29] Th1.5/TCL7b

[30] Th1.5/TSL1/SRQ3

[31] Th1.5/TSL3/SRQ1

[32] Th1.5/TSL5/SRQ2

[33] Th1.5/TSL7/SRQ1

[34] Th1.5/TSL8/SRQ1

lack unity. According to them, Islam has universality of their practices with guidance from only one Quran. One convert said that he was attracted to Islam due to the concept of Allah as the most supreme deity above everything else and the presence of one Quran which flows from the first chapter to the end. To this convert, the Bible does not elaborate more about Jesus as the Son of God.[35] Another convert disagreed with the Trinity and the death f Jesus on the cross to save humanity. He perceived that it was inappropriate to direct worship to Jesus rather than God. This is in contrast with the concept that appealed to him about the Islamic belief in one God without associating him with other partners; all acts of worship are directed to him alone.[36]

It is elaborate in Islamic teachings that Christ is not the Son of God. However, Muslims respect Him as a prophet.[37] One convert clearly explained that what appealed to him is the belief in one God which convinced him to join Islam. He said that God is only one and others are His messengers. This arose from the lack of conviction in Christianity that Christ is also God and the Son. The convert could not comprehend this concept in Christianity while Islam convinced him.[38] Also, the plurality of prayer in Christianity is one aspect that a convert disagreed with. He did not believe in praying to God through someone such as Mary and perceived that prayer is a conversation between an individual and God and therefore there are no different ways about it.[39]

Another convert expressed the same understanding. He expressed that Christianity has various cardinal doctrines including the divinity of Jesus, the divine sonship of Christ, and the Trinity. Islam has no place for such doctrines since Muslims believe in the oneness Of God as against the Triune God in Christianity. To Islam, the deification of Jesus is a reversion to paganism. These converts claimed that the Quran clearly explains that Jesus was not an incarnation of God but a prophet or the messenger of God. The perception that Islam rejects the divine sonship of Jesus but explains that He is a son in the sense in all righteous humans are the children of God appealed to this convert.[40]

The Islamic belief in one universal God prominently convinced the converts concerning the authenticity of this religion. One convert expressed that he came into contact with Islam through public opinion since Islam is an open religion that is practiced everywhere in the same way.[41] According to a convert, he found Islam more reasonable than Christianity since it is more direct and anybody can understand in terms of God and various teachings of all prophets.[42] Therefore, from the foregoing, it is evident that some Christians even today struggle to understand the doctrine of the Trinity. While Islam preaches about the oneness of God, it appears like an easy and logical concept. This hence gives potential converts a reason to change their faiths.

General Simplicity of Islam

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[35] Th2.1/TCL1a & TCL1e

[36] Th2.1/TCL2b

[37] Th2.1/TCL4b

[38] Th2.1/TCL5b

[39] Th2.1/TCL3b

[40] Th2.1/TCL4b

[41] Th2.1/TCL5e

[42] Th2.1/TCL8f

The concept of simplicity in Islam appears to express the Islamic teachings as straight. One convert expressed the non-definitive nature of Christian doctrine while Islamic doctrine is elaborate. The story has a beginning and an end, unlike the Bible which has no continuity and flow.[43] Another convert explained that Islam doctrine does not change and is the same as the messenger of Allah passed it to humanity while humans have interfered with Christian Doctrines. He also claims that Paul contradicts the teachings of Jesus, hence making Christians confused and not know what to believe.[44] The simplicity concept appears in the expression of another convert that Islam is more reliable as seeking knowledge is easy and one can interact with others regardless of age and knowledge.[45]

One convert stated that Islam has no complications such as that in Christianity. Islam is open and direct and explains the creation of God and therefore one cannot get lost in Islam.[46] A similar opinion appears from another convert that Islamic doctrine is more understandable and very easy to follow.[47] There is a concurrence to the issue of straightness of the Islamic religion with a convert's statement that "you talk directly to God through prayers, read and understand the Quran, ask a question, and get a response."[48] Similarly, another one says that Christian churches have so many bible versions which sometimes bring about confusion while Muslims' Quran speaks one language.[49] One convert summarized the simplicity of Islam by demonstrating his own knowledge of Islamic universality with the statement that, "there is only one version of the Quran worldwide which gives guidance on what one needs to do in every aspect of life."[50] The converts, in their perception, found Islam simpler to follow than Christianity, and this led to their conversion.

Conversion Process

The nature of conversion to Islam is another reason that converts gave for shifting their faith. One convert took two years to decide, but when he made the decision, the process of conversion was as simple as taking the Shahada. He only needed a conviction after reading more about Islam.[51] The converts perceive the process as easy. This is according to a convert's statement that, "there are no rituals involved actually, it is a very easy process. The conversion process occurs in a private venue with only a few people who act as witnesses, as well as the presiding Muslim leader alongside a member of the Cambridge Crescent." This convert says that one recites the shahada and immediately joins the Islamic community.[52] This concurs with another convert's perception that it only took 5-10 minutes for the conversion process. The Sheikh or

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[43] Th2.2/TCL1b

[44] Th2.2/TCL2b

[45] Th2.2/TCL5b

[46] Th2.2/TCL5e

[47] Th2.2/TCL10b

[48] Th2.2/TSL1b

[49] Th2.2/TSL3b

[50] Th2.2/TSL3d

[51] Th2.3/TCL2a

[52] Th2.3/TCL3a

Imam asks if the conversion decision was forceful or voluntary, introduces the shahada, and one joins the Muslims through choosing a Muslim name. [53]

To one convert, it was even interesting since the process did not take time. All one needed was to make a decision from the heart of joining Islam and have the readiness to live upon the Islamic teachings and see an Imam recite the Shahada.[54] These converts seem to agree that the Islamic conversion process only requires an inner conviction that one wants to join Islam, approach an Imam, and recite that there is only one true God with the mouth. There is no ceremony, baptism, or catechism as there is in Christianity. Their comments reveal that in Christianity, there is something extra that one should do other than a simple confession with the mouth, such as baptism and a long explanation of how to receive salvation. Therefore, Islam has a clear-cut conversion process that attracted these converts.

Length of Worship Time

Few converts perceived the duration of worship as a factor that influenced their conversion. One convert said that praying five times a day takes lesser time than going to church from morning to evening.[55] Another convert alluded to attraction to Islam through their prayers every day without fail. One prays for five minutes in the mosque and goes back to work. For Christians, they stay in church the whole day till evening without work, hence have nothing to eat.[56] However, here it appears that the length of time is not the problem but the unmet need. The Muslims have to attend prayers at the mosque five times a day as opposed to Christians who attend the church mostly on Sundays only. For Christians, it is only once a week while Muslims pray in the mosque five times within a day. Therefore, the desire to meet the daily physical needs of the day might have led to converts appreciating a shorter worship time that the Islam mode of worship provides. Perhaps, the length is not the concern, but this does not suggest that the duration should not pose an issue. This point exposes the multifaceted nature of the conversion process where all the influences exerted on a person drive the process.

Islamic Practices

Direct Access and Knowledge of God

From the responses, it appears that Christians do not access God directly as Christians go through a medium. One convert stated that Muslims worship God directly without associating Him with other partners. This convert had a desire to worship God alone which attracted him to join Islam. It did not appeal him that he had to go through Jesus while praying to God.[57] Another convert stated that the five pillars which help a Muslim to have a close connection with Allah. These include the profession of faith, zakat, fasting, and pilgrimage, and praying five times a day. This convert also thinks that it is inappropriate to pray to God through someone such as Mary who Catholics pray through to God. His perception is that prayer is a conversation between God and an individual; hence the Islamic religion provides direct access to God.[58]

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[53] Th2.3/TCL4a

[54] Th2.3/TCL10d

[55] Th2.4/TCL3c

[56] Th2.4/TCL6d

[57] Th3.1/TCL2b

[58] Th3.1/TCL3c

The Muslims bow before Allah during the prayer session and direct their prayers only to him. They do not have to use a medium to reach God. The Muslims have a deep understanding of God from the Quran which guides them.[59] There also appears a belief that it is only Islam that can provide direct access to issues of worshipping as another convert suggested. He stated that Christians worship the cross and other idols which they put before their churches. The Christians have no clear path to follow while some do not even believe in the prophets of God and have completely focused on Jesus Christ.[60]

The converts create an impression that praying through Christ does not imply directly accessing God. There is also a clear misunderstanding of the Catholic practice of praying through Mary and the images that Christians erect in their churches. One convert said that nothing compares to God and no carrier of burdens shall carry another person's burden.[61] This seems to create an impression that Christianity is not right when Christians pray and cast their burdens on Jesus Christ. Islam seems to relieve that confusion by praying only to Allah without intermediaries. However, this does not reveal a perception of idolatry. Yet, it appears as a driving force behind conversion of Christians who were not comfortable with this way of worship and access to God.

Love and Equality among Muslims

Several converts perceived Islam as a religion that incorporated love and equality, hence influencing several people to accept the religion. This is clear in a convert's statement that the respect that Muslims accord to each other attracted him. They perceive fellow brothers as great and help one another in times of hardship or when any problem occurs.[62] Muslims do not only help fellow Muslims but also people from other religions. This is according to this convert's statement that when his father died, the Muslim friends are the ones who prepared and arranged the burial while the Christian brothers and friends did not.[63] The convert was attracted by the teachings of love in the Islam religion. According to the convert, Islam means one is thee for a brother and a neighbor. Generally, Muslims care for their Muslim brothers. They teach what to do to fellow Muslims who is in need of help and always welcome a Muslim into any Muslim home.[64]

Respect for other religions by Islam portrays love and equal perception for others. This is in accordance to another convert who stated that the Quran allows Muslims to respect other people's religions.[65] Another convert claimed that his conversion was propelled by the Muslims' celebration of the month of Ramadan where Muslims celebrate with everyone despite religious divides.[66] Similarly, another claimed that Muslims shared food with others, especially in the month of Ramadhan.[67] This appears to portray Islam as a religion that reflects love for one another through sharing with others. One convert was direct in saying that the care and

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[59] Th3.1/TCL8b

[60] Th3.1/TCL9c

[61] Th3.1/TSL1b

[62] Th3.2/TCL1c

[63] Th3.2/TCL1d

[64] Th3.2/TCL1e

[65] Th3.2/TCL4e

[66] Th3.2/TCL8b

[67] Th3.2/TSL5b

love that Muslims have for one another led to his conversion. He collaborated further to say that their good conduct of sharing and caring is pleasing.[68]

Behavior and Way of Life

Some converts reported that the behavior and way of life of Muslims attracted them to conversion. One convert revealed that Islamic burial rites go hand in hand with the Turkana way of culture. This converts stated that the way Islam bury their dead on the same day they die impacted his conversion, unlike other tribes and religions which keep the dead for a long.[69] This may mean that this convert desired a religion that incorporates the way of life of his tribe. Another convert stated that the kindness to each other attracted him to join Islam. They treat one another as brothers and members of one family.[70] Another one also stresses on the issue of brotherhood where he said that Muslim brothers practice good deeds of charisma toward fellow Muslims who are in problems.[71]

One's behavior is a mirror of what he believes in. A convert's statement captures this statement as he stated that he grew up in an orphanage which impacted good virtues about Islam religion. He converted on his own despite having a Muslim mother. He made that decision as a result of learning the good virtues and seeing Muslim well-wishers supporting the orphanage. He also stated that the Quran teaches realistic morals which appealed to him.[72] Some stated that what attracted them to Islam was their humility in conducting prayers and the act of giving good advice to other Islam brothers.[73] Muslims value unity and properly conduct way according to one convert.[74]

One convert got a scholarship on his O level from the Islam community and wanted to explore Islam as it was a peaceful religion.[75] This paints a picture of Muslims as people who love and care for each other. Before conversion, they treat others the same, and even after conversion, they maintain a cordial and sympathetic relationship. However, it is not clear whether the Christian religion which they shift from love for one another. Therefore, this brings us to the conclusion that conversion is multifaceted and results from various influences.

Teaching and Obedience to Laws

Several converts perceived obedience to religious laws and consistency in adhering to teachings as influences that attracted them to the Islamic religion. One convert clearly emphasizes this opinion with the statement that, "the most important aspect that attracted me to Islam is the manner in which they regard Allah as the most supreme and great deity above everything else. This is in accordance with the Quran that Allah is the most powerful God and there is no other creator but Allah."[76] Similarly, another convert bases his conversion on the belief in one God, acknowledgment of Prophet Mohammed as a prophet, and doing righteous

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[68] Th3.2/TSL3a

[69] Th3.3/TCL1/SRQ1

[70] Th3.3/TCL4b

[71] Th3.3/TCL5c

[72] Th3.2/TCL6a

[73] Th3.2/TCL7c

[74] Th3.2/TSL9c

[75] Th3.2/TCL10e

[76] Th3.3/TCL1c

deeds. He claims that doing righteous deeds is always inert in people through the guidance of the Quran.[77]

There is consistency in the message that Abraham, Moses, and Jesus taught. This is about directing all acts of worship to God, which Muslims follow keenly.[78] Islam has various pillars that are mandatory for all believers. These are the profession of faith, the belief in only one God, zakat, five times prayers in a day, and pilgrimage and fasting. The Muslims observe these pillars without failure which attracts converts.[79] Also, another convert stated that the respect of Islam for other religions in accordance with the Quran attracted him. The Quran recognizes the presence of different religions.[80] Islam religion has its way of worship, language, calendar, and book that has the laws and guidelines for its followers.[81] One convert was very direct in claiming that one factor that influenced his conversion to Islam was the staunchness of Muslims in their religion.[82]

However, it appears that many converts do not understand the difference between the teachings and compliance to those teachings. If one is not compliant with the law, it does not mean that the law is problematic. Indeed, the individual is often the one with a problem. From the comments, however, it is apparent that complying with the laws increases value to the one keeping it and the law itself. Followers who appear as having fidelity to a religion show that it is genuine and may satisfy those hungry for its truth. The Christians living with them did not portray this fidelity.

Friendship

Friendship is the fourth key theme that converts revealed as a strong aspect influencing them to convert from Christianity to Islam. A touch of friendship often makes the heart to respond. This is probably the situation with the converts. They explained that the friendly attitude that Muslims exhibited towards them influenced their conversion. One convert stated that he had Somali community friends who were Muslims and who made him learn about Islam religion.[83] Another convert said that he came to know Islam by growing up around Muslims where he made a lot of Muslim friends. He also went to school with them and they are friendly.[84] One convert grew up in an orphanage where he received a lot of kindness and care. This left an indelible mark through the hospitality of Muslim well-wishers who supported the center. Also, this convert was appealed by the Islamic teachings of supporting people's needs which signifies a lot of kindness and hospitality by Muslims.[85]

For one, his attraction to Islam was as a result of how Muslims good advice from Islam brothers. They also strongly support others in terms of finances without discrimination.[86] One

[77] Th3.3/TCL1a

[78] Th3.3/TCL2b

[79] Th3.4/TCL3c

[80] Th3.4/TCL4/SRQ2

[81] Th3.4/TCL5/SRQ1

[82] TSL1/SRQ1

[83] Th4/TCL1a

[84] Th4/TCL3a

[85] Th4/TCL6g

[86] Th4/TCL7c

convert received scholarship when he converted which gave him a chance to get knowledge about Islam. This touched him to convert to Islam.[87] There is also a convert who started questioning church doctrines in form 3. He wanted to convert to protestant churches but a Muslim supplied him with books about Islamic religion. The Muslim was ready to create a friendship through inviting the convert to read about Islam. He read the books and got a conviction to convert.[88] There is also the friendship that led to another convert to come into contact with Islam he stated that he had a Muslim friend who they used to spend a lot of time together. He revealed that the friend invited him for a noon prayer in the mosque and this was a turning point for him in terms of religion. His other Muslim friends also persuaded him to convert to Islam.[89] These comments show the friendly nature of Muslims which the converts failed to get from the Christian brothers.

Search for the True God

The fifth major theme that influenced converts from Christianity to Islam was the search for the True God. One convert questioned the idea of going to church on Sunday after reading a book, "The Sunday Law." He disagreed with the issue and decided to search for the truth from the Islamic religion. Also, the convert found that Christianity failed to elaborate the birth of Jesus and his lineage. This left the convert without an understanding of where the truth is.[90] Another convert attended a public debate between Muslims and Christians. He intended to know the truth about God and hence he learned how Muslims believes in one God. He had disagreed with the doctrine of the Trinity by Christians. The aspect of Jesus' death on the cross and how Christians direct their worship to Jesus had left him confused. He revealed that Islam provided the answers he needed for worshipping one God without associating him with other creatures.[91]

A convert revealed that he had doubts which he cleared through reading online sources of Islamic information. He read literature concerning embryology in Quran which it clearly established. His knowledge in the medical world brought him to study things related to the medical world. He revealed that he cleared doubts regarding prophet Mohammed and came to the conclusion that whatever he passes to his followers was the actual message of God to humanity.[92] Before converting, one converts disagreed with the aspect of intermediaries during worship in Christianity. He stated "I do not think it is okay that we have to pray to God through someone for example Mary. Prayer is a conversion between an individual and your God." Joining Islam led to the conviction that there is only one God and Mohammed is His servant and messenger.[93] Therefore, it appears that how people act and behave can reflect the God they serve. Dissonance occurs when people do not see a reflection of the concept of God they have or expect. This sows the seed of conversion and people begin to search for this true God as the interviewed converts showed.

Summary of Themes

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[87] Th4/TCL8e

[88] Th4/TSL1d

[89] Th4/TSL3b

[90] Th5/TCL1d

[91] Th5/TCL2b

[92] Th5/TCL2c

[93] Th5/TCL3d

To summarize the themes, comparative examination, clarity, simplicity and unity among Muslims, search for God, and friendship are key themes that many converts reported. Specifically, all converts reported the personal search for truth and universal oneness of God. It is significant to state that more than ten converts indicated that search for the true God, the way of life and behavior, and love and equality among Muslims as reasons influencing their conversion. Only two converts reported discrimination and equality in Christianity and the length of worship time as factors that led to their conversion. Muslim knowledge of the Scripture, friendship, direct access to God, and materialism, and moral depravity are strong factors that the revealed attracted them to the Islamic religion.

It is also significant to note that some converts seem to lack an understanding of salvation. through grace under the theme of Islamic practices. Additionally, we can conclude that it is the exclusive preserve of one religion to have good behavior. What people refer good behavior is possibly susceptible to subjectivity. Nonetheless, the converts revealed that Muslims' way of life and behavior held a strong image of real religion and led to a shifting of allegiance by individuals in this research since Christians did not portray this in their lives.

Moreover, Islam does not have the monopoly of care and equality for one another as their preserve. This statement is possibly the same for Buddhists, Christians, Traditional African Religions, and Hindus. There is an influence of exposure and proximity as strong factors influencing conversion in this case. When the converts compared what they saw among Christians close to them, there were satisfactory reasons to assure them that Muslims had more love and equality among them, leading to their conversion.

At this point, it is essential to note that these converts may have an aim of evangelizing through their justification of conversion. They would therefore present Islam as a better and ideal religion than Christianity. They may even hide what motivated them to convert to Islam. However, the study must present the findings of the data. However the case, the study reveals the complex nature of the conversion process. Therefore, it is difficult to create one theory that can incorporate every dimension of the conversion process that the converts reported. Rambo's stage model of conversion centers on a single intricate while Lofland and Skonovd model centers on another. There are various reports of different experiences of conversion. New theories would emerge from influence of various changes in society and different influences exerted on an individual. Therefore, psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists would continuously have an interest in the conversion phenomenon.

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