Research paper: Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

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Christianity, Judaism and Islam are the three most popular religions of the world. Other religions, mostly, are limited to their respective localities and lands while these three enjoy following across the globe. This paper will aim to answer some key questions regarding the three religions in the cultural and political context of the twenty-first century.

# Question 1

For us Christians, the story of the birth of Jesus starts well before Mary and Joseph in the little town of Bethlehem. It starts from the prophesies and promises found in the Old Testament and the old Jewish traditions. The predictions found in Isaiah, which was written roughly 700 years prior to the date of the birth of Jesus is one of the many reasons the Jewish people of the time were waiting for a messiah.

“Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and his name shall be Emmanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)

The story of the birth of Jesus has been told in the Gospel of Luke to an audience which is largely familiar with the Jewish tradition and has prior knowledge of the Old Testament. At the time of Jesus, everybody knew that a messiah was coming and were waiting for him. That is the reason some of the apostles and some Jews as well believed in Jesus as the messiah. The majority, however disagreed. That is why the Jewish tradition continues to exist in some form to this day and they are still expecting the messiah to come.

In the gospel of Luke, the story begins by a man speaking to the virgin Mary by saying that, “Hail! Full of grace, the Lord is with you.” Afterwards the virgin Mary was given the news of a child and she asked how. She was told that for God, nothing is impossible. She then conceives him and the story continues in the Gospel. The gospel of Luke does not end with the birth of Jesus two centuries ago, but it only provides the beginning of the ideas that capture the minds of approximately half of mankind today.

# Question 2

Jerusalem remains a place where Christians, Jews and Muslims have remained to be a part of a very diverse and ethnically rich community. The power struggle however, has proved to be a very important issue for all religions. All faiths have a claim on the land, as for the Jews, it hosts the Jewish kings of David and Solomon. The Muslims also have a claim on the land as these people are mentioned as prophets in the Quran and Jerusalem served as a direction for prayer(qibla) in early Islam. The mosque of Aqsa is even mentioned in the Quran, which is the most sacred text for the Muslims. Previous governments of the United States had an idea of this reality and was thus conscious in its behavior. Donald Trump on the other hand does not seem to care. His decisions across the board, are an evidence of this as he even went on to say this year that the Americans were planning to bring the Taliban over to the USA to sign the final agreement and call it a victory. The move by Donald Trump, in December 2017, an extension of this behavior, to announce the transfer of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, sparked a wave of anger as well as outrage from Muslims across the world as they do not recognize the state of Israel as a legitimate state. The very reason that former administrations did not go this far was that they held their position that the status of Jerusalem should be decided by negotiations between Palestinians and the Israelis. This sense of middle ground in policy was left by the Trump administration as he made the speech on 6th December 2017 to move the US embassy to Jerusalem and recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

# Question 3

Islamophobia is the term used to explain the idea of unreasonable hatred or fear of the Muslims and the religion of Islam in a more general sense. The definition of ideological imperialism is a complex one. In the past, people have used a number of ideologies for their imperialistic purposes. Studying the colonial era in hindsight, it seems that Christianity has been the ideology which have been manipulated the most by imperialistic powers. There are some imperialistic traits which are common amongst all imperialistic powers, one of them is the use of fear. Imperialistic powers use the power of fear of the significant “other” to aggravate the feelings of the common public towards that particular ethnic or ideological group. The art of building a narrative and demonizing enemy to wage war on others is not a new idea. The American narrative building campaign of dehumanizing the Muslim population in order to gain the support of the American public for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has proven to be the nipping bud for islamophobia. Listening to the American propaganda, we have seen European nations becoming afraid of Muslims and Islam and taking radical steps. Islamic symbolic clothing such as hijab was banned in France by the government as the layer of Islamophobia swept across Europe. This needs to be understood in the context that Muslims make a considerably significant minority in France. Recent events in which the anti-Muslim party of Norway planned to burn the Quran can be seen as the symbolism of the reality we know as Islamophobia.

# Question 4

At the beginning if my semester, I defined religion to mean the set of actions a person does for his or her own spiritual fulfilment. My definition has changed a lot over the course of this semester. I have realized that for people who want to embody their faith, religion encompasses all major aspects of human life. The decisions ranging from personal life to the idea as to how the state should be run can all be found addressed in one form or another in all of the major world religions. Similarly, if we take a look at all of the conflicts in the world right now. It is all related to ideology in some way, shape or form. For the atheist, it is all about the resources while for all the religious people out there, it is all about the spiritual journey. There are many states in the world which predicate themselves on religion. The two most notable being Israel and Pakistan.