

A Comparative Study of Altruism in Christian and Islam

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Abstract

This article compares the concept of altruism in Islam and Christianity, with the specific aim of identifying their similarities and differences. The research methods employed are descriptive, comparative, and analytical within the qualitative context of literature review. Altruism itself is a philosophy that advocates the spirit of assisting others. In societal life, altruism teaches prioritizing collective interests (of others) over personal interests. When a follower of altruism is asked to help, they assist the person without discrimination. In the context of Christian teachings, altruism is at the core of Jesus' teachings found in the Gospels, particularly in the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain. From biblical traditions to medieval Christianity, the tension between self-affirmation and self-worth values is sometimes debated in terms of "unbiased love," as expressed by Paul through his phrase "love seeks not its own interests." Meanwhile, in Islam, altruism is known as *īthār*, meaning "preferring others over oneself." The significance of *īthār* lies in the sacrifice for a greater good; in Islam, the practice of *īthār* is considered an action reaching the highest level of nobility.

Keywords: Altruism, Egoism, Islamic, Christian.

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Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkomparasikan konsep altruisme dalam Islam dan Kristen, dengan tujuan spesifiknya mengidentifikasi kesamaan dan perbedaan dari keduanya. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif, komparatif, dan analisis dalam konteks penelitian kepustakaan yang bersifat kualitatif. Altruisme sendiri merupakan paham yang mengajarkan semangat membantu orang lain. Dalam kehidupan masyarakat, altruisme mengajarkan untuk mengutamakan kepentingan bersama (orang lain) dibandingkan kepentingan pribadi. Seperti seorang penganut altruisme diminta tolong untuk membantu, maka ia akan menolong orang tersebut tanpa pilih kasih. Dalam konteks ajaran Kristen, altruisme menjadi inti dari ajaran Yesus yang terdapat dalam Injil, terutama dalam Khotbah di Bukit dan Khotbah di Dataran. Sejak tradisi Alkitab hingga Kristen abad pertengahan, ketegangan antara afirmasi diri dan nilai diri kadang-kadang diperdebatkan dalam istilah “cinta yang tidak memihak,” seperti yang diungkapkan oleh Paulus melalui frasanya “cinta tidak mencari kepentingan sendiri.” Sementara dalam Islam, altruisme dikenal sebagai *īthār*, yang artinya “lebih memilih orang lain daripada diri sendiri.” Pentingnya *īthār* terletak pada pengorbanan demi kebaikan yang lebih besar; dalam Islam, praktik *īthār* dianggap sebagai tindakan yang mencapai tingkat kebangsawanan tertinggi.

Kata Kunci: Altruisme, Egoisme, Islam, Kristen.

Introduction

Numerous predicaments emerge during this epoch, encompassing crises in manners, morals, and ethics. Individuals strive to satisfy not only their personal (selfish) needs but also the interests of others (altruists). Presently, a majority is more preoccupied with personal concerns than those of others and the collective. Consider, for instance, a surplus of food. The egoistic individual hoards the food for personal consumption, even when the abundance is far from depletion or spoilage. In contrast, the altruistic

individual willingly shares the food with others, acknowledging their own need for sustenance.¹

The term Altruism was initially coined by the French sociologist August Comte as "le Bien d'altru," signifying the kindness of others. The etymological root of Altruism is "Lainism," denoting a sincere effort or capability to act for the benefit of others. Comte posits the existence of two distinct motives in every individual: selfishness and altruism. The self-serving motive of assisting others, driven by personal gain, is termed egoism. In contrast, social behavior aimed at aiding others without expecting rewards is labeled Altruism or altruistic conduct.²

Examining scriptural sources reveals robust support for Altruistic behavior across various religions, advocating a substantial role in societal service. Islamic teachings, encapsulated in the story of Prophet Muhammad's lifelong struggle for the welfare of mankind, underscore the precedence of self-sacrifice over personal interests. The Qur'an elucidates the principle of *īthār 'ala al-nafs*, emphasizing the subordination of personal interests for the benefit of others.³ In Islam, *al-īthār* (*at-tafdhil*) defines a form of social behavior treating others as oneself, with al-Jurjani positioning *īthār* as the epitome of prosaic behavior (*ukhuwah*).⁴ *Īthār*, deeply rooted in Islamic values, transcends psychological and social virtues, extending into spiritual realms. It serves as an indicator and testament to the completeness of faith and obligatory charity for a Muslim.

Conversely, within Christianity, service to others stands as a pillar of the faith. Jesus imparted teachings that underscored the significance of assisting those in need as a fundamental aspect of life. Jesus went to the extent of lauding those who sacrificed so much for the destitute that they themselves faced impoverishment. The New

¹ Abu Bakar Jabir Al-Jazairi, *Minhajul Muslim*, Penerjemah: Fedrian Hasmand (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2015), p. 263

² Ruben L.F Habito & Keishin Inab, *The practice of Altruism Caring and Religion in Global Perspective*, (New York: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2008), p. 117

³ Muhammad Al-Utsaimin, *Syarah Riyadhus Shalihin Jilid II*, (Jakarta: Darul Falah, 2005), p. 531-533

⁴ As Syamail, A. L., *As Saqafah al Islamiyah*, (ringkasan kuliah Aidh Al-Qarni), Maktabah Syamilah, 2007

Testament strongly emphasizes altruism, suggesting that contemporary Christians should prioritize altruistic actions, contributing to positive societal transformation.

The Historical Genesis of Altruism

There exist numerous narratives concerning Altruism in the Hadith and the Al-Qur'an, featuring instances from the lives of previous prophets and companions who exemplified Altruism. This inclination towards Altruism is attributed to Allah's creation of the prophets and their guardians with qualities of benevolence and generous morality. Altruism, viewed as a commendable and magnanimous deed, has been extolled by many, serving as a model for emulation.⁵

Islam embodies an ethical framework inclusive of principles related to virtuous conduct, encompassing traits such as honesty, commitment fulfillment, truthfulness, and Altruism. Conversely, undesirable attributes include deception, reneging on promises, betrayal, and selfishness. Morality is fundamental to human development, shaping individual personalities and contributing to a virtuous life. In turn, moral conduct elevates humanity, fostering positive interpersonal relationships.⁶ Altruism facilitates robust interpersonal connections, epitomized in Islamic brotherhood, promoting unity and mitigating avarice and bias among individuals.⁷ The manifestation of Altruism in human interactions garners esteem, resonating with the inherent human need for assistance during times of vulnerability. However, such acts are conditional, requiring feasibility, immediacy, ethical alignment, and an absence of harm, particularly that which jeopardizes religious commitments.

Fundamentally, humans are inherently social creatures, incapable of solitary existence, reliant on communal ties for survival. Collaborative, caring, and supportive behaviors are pivotal for harmonious social integration. Acts of assistance, lightening the burdens of others, and aiding those in distress fall under the purview

⁵ Yasir Abdurrahman, *والرفائق موسوعة الأخلاق والزهد*, (Cairo: Part One, 2006)

⁶ Ali Farid Dahrouj & Hana Aran Al-Qaterji, *دراسة تراخية فكرية إسلامية*, p.

⁷ Yasir Abdurrahman, *والرفائق موسوعة الأخلاق والزهد*, (Cairo: Part One, 2006), p. 258

of Altruism, defined in psychology as voluntary, selfless assistance or benevolent deeds. Altruistic actions transcend preferential treatment based on familial or friendly ties, embodying equalitarian provision of aid according to individual capacities.⁸

The term 'altruism' was initially coined by French philosopher Auguste Comte, derived from the French 'Altruisme,' serving as an antonym to egoism.⁹ Comte derived the term from the Italian 'altrui,' itself originating from the Latin 'alteri,' signifying 'other people.'¹⁰

Christian Perspectives on Altruism

Altruism constitutes the fundamental aspect of the teachings conveyed by Jesus, as documented in the Gospels, particularly expounded in the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plains. Spanning from biblical traditions to medieval Christianity, the dialectic tension between self-affirmation and self-worth is occasionally deliberated under the rubric of 'impartial love,' succinctly encapsulated in Paul's dictum 'love does not seek its own interests.'

The German philosopher Max Scheler discerns two modes through which the powerful can aid the weak. One mode involves the manifestation of authentic Christian love, 'driven by a profound sense of inner security, strength, and salvation, emanating from the invincible plenitude of one's life and existence.'¹¹ Conversely, the other mode is perceived as 'one of the many substitutes for modern love..., merely the impulse to avert one's attention from oneself and immerse in the affairs of others.'¹² Under more adverse circumstances, Scheler posits that 'love for the small, the poor, the

⁸ Sears, David, O., Letitia Anne Peplau, Shelley E. Taylor, *Psikologi Sosial ed. Kedua Belas*, Terj. Tri Wibowo B.S. (Jakarta: Kencana, 2009), p. 457

⁹ Teske, Nathan, *Political Activists in America: The Identity Construction Model of Political Participation*, (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), p. 101

¹⁰ Cicilioni, Ferdinando, *A Grammar of the Italian Language*, (London: John Murray, 1825), p. 64

¹¹ Scheler, Max, *Ressentiment*, (Free Press of Glencoe, University of California, 1961), p. 88–89

¹² *Ibid*, p. 95–96

feeble, and the oppressed is essentially a form of repugnant hatred, suppressed envy, the inclination to diminish, etc., directed at the antithetical phenomenon: wealth, strength, power, generosity.¹³

The paragraph delineates the centrality of altruism in the teachings of Jesus, particularly highlighted in the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plains as chronicled in the Gospels. It traverses the trajectory from biblical traditions to medieval Christianity, elucidating the dialectical tension between self-affirmation and self-worth under the concept of 'impartial love,' succinctly articulated in Paul's aphorism that 'love does not seek its own interests.' Max Scheler, the German philosopher, delineates two distinct modes through which the powerful can assist the weak. One mode involves the authentic manifestation of Christian love, driven by an intrinsic sense of security, strength, and salvation emanating from the invincible plenitude of one's life. In contrast, the other mode is characterized as a mere substitute for modern love, an impulse to redirect attention from oneself and engage in the affairs of others. Scheler suggests that under adverse circumstances, love for the marginalized may mask repugnant sentiments such as hatred, suppressed envy, and the inclination to diminish, directed at the perceived opposite: wealth, strength, power, and generosity. The paragraph, overall, presents a comprehensive exploration of altruism within the Christian context, weaving together biblical foundations, medieval perspectives, and Scheler's philosophical insights.

Altruistic Themes in the New Testament

Altruism, characterized by an altruistic act arising from a concern for the well-being of others without consideration of personal interests, frequently entails significant sacrifice.¹⁴ The Gospel of Luke provides a detailed account of the Samaritan's sincerity and willingness in performing altruistic deeds:

"He went to him and bandaged his wounds, after he had poured oil and wine on them. Then he put the man on his donkey and took him to the inn and looked after him. The next day he gave

¹³ Ibid, p. 96–97

¹⁴ Paul Gunadi, *Psikologi Sosial*. Materi Kuliah Kelas yang Tidak Diterbitkan; (Malang: Seminari Alkitab Asia Tenggara), p. 11

two denarii to the owner of the inn, saying, take care of him and if you spend more than this, I will pay for it, when I return."¹⁵

Empathy, on the other hand, involves the ability to vicariously experience situations and feelings as those undergoing them.¹⁶ An intriguing aspect arises when considering the scribe's question, "And who is neighborly?"¹⁷ Jesus returned to himself, "Which of these three, in your opinion, is a fellow human of the one who fell into the hands of thieves?"¹⁸

Altruism, as an embodiment of selflessness, stands in contrast to egoism, though the prevalence of the latter term has diminished in contemporary discourse. Altruism, or love, serves as an expression of devotion to God, transmitted to those in suffering. It encapsulates the essence of Jesus' teachings, echoing the biblical injunction:

"Jesus answered him, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second commandment, which is the same, is: Love your neighbor as yourself. On these two laws the whole law and the prophets are dependent".¹⁹

This principle is exemplified, for instance, in the narrative of a young man seeking the path to heaven. Recognizing the young man's adherence to God's laws, Jesus advised him to sell all his possessions, distribute to the poor, and then follow Him, as stated in the Bible:

"When Jesus heard this, Jesus said to him, there is one more thing left to do: sell all that you have and share it with the poor, and you will receive treasures in heaven, then come. Come and follow me."²⁰

The Influence of Altruism on Christians

Altruism exerts multifaceted influences on the daily lives of Christians, manifesting through behaviors that prioritize the interests of others over their own. The Gospels elucidate the ministry of Lord

¹⁵ Luke. 10: 34-35

¹⁶ Paul Gunadi, *Psikologi Sosial,*, p. 11

¹⁷ Luke 10: 29

¹⁸ Luke 10: 36

¹⁹ Matthew. 22: 37-40

²⁰ Luke. 18: 22

Jesus, where the assistance rendered consistently converges towards holistic well-being. Whether addressing physical, spiritual, social, or mental facets, the healing interventions within the ministry invariably culminate in a state of wholeness. For instance:

- a. Lord Jesus heals many people,²¹
- b. Healing of a royal servant's son,²²
- c. He forgave a woman who committed adultery,²³
- d. Show His concern for Zacchaeus, a tax collector, whom his people dislike.²⁴

Howard Clinebell proposed a conceptual framework delineating various functions of aid to others and the corresponding benefits they accrue. These functions are categorized as follows: Healing, Guidance, Support System, Tranquility, and Care/Maintenance Functions.²⁵

Islamic Perspectives on Altruism

In Islam, the concept of altruism is denoted as *īthār*: (إيثار), signifying the act of "preferring others to oneself". For Sufis, this entails dedicating oneself to others while completely disregarding personal attention, viewing concern for others as a demand placed by Allah (i.e., God) on the human body, and considering it His exclusive domain. The significance of *īthār* lies in sacrificing for the greater good, and Islam venerates those practicing *īthār* as embodying the highest echelon of nobility.²⁶

This mirrors the chivalry concept; however, unlike the European notion, in *īthār*, attention is directed toward everything that exists. Persistent mindfulness of God results in a circumspect disposition toward humans, animals, and other entities in this

²¹ Matthew. 4: 23-25

²² John. 4: 46-53

²³ John. 8: 1-11

²⁴ Luke. 19: 1-10

²⁵ Howard Clinebell, *Basic Type of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, (Nashville: Abington Press, 1984), p. 43

²⁶ M Fethullah Gulen. *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism: Emerald Hills of the Heart*, (Tughra Books, 2004), p. 10-11

world.²⁷ Sufi luminaries like Rabiah al-Adawiyyah emphasized this concept, distinguishing between devotion to Allah and to humans. The thirteenth-century Turkish Sufi poet Yunus Emre encapsulated this philosophy as "Yaratılanı severiz, Yaratanı ötürü," meaning "We love the creature because of the Creator." For many Muslims, *ithār* must be observed as a religious obligation during specific Islamic holidays. Nevertheless, *ithār* remains an enduring Islamic ideal that all Muslims are enjoined to uphold consistently.

In Islam, altruism extends beyond humans to encompass animals, plants, and all entities in the universe.²⁸ Prioritizing the interests of others over oneself finds validation in the Quran, specifically in the 9th verse of Surah al-Hasyr. This verse showcases the generosity of the Ansar in relinquishing wealth and providing shelter to the Muhajirin, even though they themselves were lacking in wealth. The concrete evidence of altruistic behavior (*ithār*) recorded in Islamic history is embodied in the brotherhood between these two groups.

Īthār: Altruistic Principles in the Al-Qur'an

The Quran serves as a comprehensive source of Islamic teachings encompassing various aspects of human life, providing guidance on Aqedah, law, worship, and morals. While altruism is not explicitly mentioned in the Quran, representative verses allude to its meaning.²⁹ One of the terms in the Quran emblematic of altruism is *ithār*, signifying 'putting the interests of others first.' This definition aligns with the perspectives of psychological figures who characterize altruism as a benevolent behavior prioritizing others over oneself. However, a distinction exists between altruism and *ithār*. Unlike altruism, *ithār* entails specific regulations concerning how one may prioritize the interests of others, particularly within the framework of sharia law. These regulations are elucidated in the

²⁷ Neusner, Jacob Eds, *Altruism in World Religions*, (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), p. 79–80

²⁸ Mosalam Shaltout, *Atruism In Islam and Holy Quran*, (Research Paper: Minufiya University)

²⁹ Al Qur'an (QS (59): 9); (QS (2): 2); (QS (9): 71)

branch of fiqh rules, as agreed upon by the majority of scholars, encapsulated in the fourth principle:³⁰

Al-itsar bi al-qarabi makruhun wa fi ghairiha mahbubun

Meaning: "Prioritizing others in matters of worship is makruh and in matters other than that (world affairs) is to be liked."³¹

In this context, the act of prioritizing others in assuming a leading role in congregational prayers is deemed *makruh*. However, favoring or praising others in terms of receiving *infaq* (charitable donations) is endorsed by religious principles. The act of placing others above oneself may be considered haram in the domain of worship, an obligatory matter for every Muslim. Conversely, it becomes permissible and even highly recommended when practiced in the realm of muamalah or interpersonal relations.³²

The Qur'an introduces the term "īthār," resonating with the concept of altruism, which entails prioritizing the interests of others over oneself. Although the term īthār is mentioned only once in the Qur'an, precisely in Surah Al-Hashr verse 9, related terminologies and their relevance can be explored in the context of altruism, given that Islamic teachings offer a substantial framework indicative of altruistic behavior.

Historical records attest to the early adoption of īthār during the era of Prophet Muhammad and his companions, as articulated in Surah Al-Hashr verse 9:

"And those (Ansar) who have occupied the city of Medina and have believed before (arrival) them (immigrants), they love those who immigrated to their place. And they do not put a desire in their hearts for what is given to them (Muhajirin); and they give priority to (Muhajirin), on themselves, even though they also need. And who is guarded from stinginess, then they are the lucky ones."

This verse elucidates that the hearts of the Ansar harbored no inclination to acquire what Prophet Muhammad bestowed upon them. Instead, they prioritized the Muhajirin over themselves,

³⁰ Duski Ibrahim, *Al-Qawa'id Al-Fiqhiyah (Kaidah-Kaidah Fiqih)*, (Palembang: Penerbit Noerfikri, 2019), p. 104-105

³¹ As-Suyuthi. t.t: 80

³² Duski Ibrahim, *Al-Qawa'id Al-Fiqhiyah (Kaidah-Kaidah Fiqih, ..., p. 105*

despite having pressing needs related to their own priorities.³³ The preceding verse clarified that Prophet Muhammad distributed the *fa'i* (booty) acquired from Banu an-Nadhir to the Muhajirin, reserving it for only three individuals among the Ansar who were genuinely in need.

Allah commended the Ansar for embodying the virtue of prioritizing the Muhajirin, leading to the revelation of this verse. Muslims, as brethren and sisters, are encouraged to assist each other in the pursuit of truth, guide one another on the path of virtue, and prioritize others (*ithār*) in times of joy and sorrow. They are advised to offer solace during challenging moments, exhibit mutual respect, and perform benevolent acts solely for the love of Allah, with no ulterior motives.³⁴

Allah does not overlook even the slightest kindness performed by His servants, be it in deeds or words. Therefore, individuals are enjoined to engage in acts of kindness and strive to outdo one another in goodness. In Islam, benevolence is known as *ihsan*, etymologically derived from root words signifying providing pleasure or kindness to others. When Prophet Muhammad was asked about *ihsan*, he responded: 'Worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, know that He surely sees you' (Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim).³⁵

Thus, *ihsan*, according to Prophet Muhammad, is a form of worship that transcends mere formalities and engages with Allah earnestly. According to Al-Ragif al Ashfahani, *ihsan* denotes goodness with dual objectives: first, providing enjoyment or benefit to others, and second, enhancing one's conduct based on knowledge, with the benefits accruing back to the individual.³⁶

³³ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Vol. 14, Lentera Hati, 2012), p. 116-117

³⁴ Wahbah Az Zuhaili, *Ensiklopedia Akhlak Muslim: Berakhlak dalam Bermasyarakat*, (Jakarta: Noura Books, 2013), p. 118-119

³⁵ Muhammad bin Ismail al-Bukhâri, *Al-Jâmi' Ash-Shahîh*, Juz. 1, Cet. 1, (Qâhirah: al-Mathba'ah as-Salafiyah, 1400 H), Hadits No. 50, p. 33. Muslim bin al-Hajjaj bin Muslim an-Naisaburi, *Shahîh Muslim*, Vol. I, 1st mold, (Riyadh: Dâr Thayyibah, 1427 H/ 2006 M), Hadits No.1 (8), p. 23

³⁶ Asep Usman Ismail, *Integrasi Syariah dengan Tasawuf*, *Jurnal Ahkam*, Vol. 12, No.1, (Jakarta: Universitas Paramadina, 2012), p. 130

According to the Qur'an and Sunna, the concept of *ihsan* encompasses two primary objectives: *ihsan* to Allah, involving goodness towards Allah through unwavering belief and comprehensive obedience in worship, encompassing physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions in an integrated manner, as elucidated in the aforementioned elements articulated by Prophet Muhammad.

Second, *ihsan* accentuates the charity for fellow human beings by doing various kindness to others as reflected in verse 77 Surah Al-Qasas affirms:

"And seek (reward) the land of the hereafter with what Allah has bestowed on you, but do not forget your part in the world and do good (to others) as Allah has done good to you, and do not do damage to the earth. Indeed, Allah does not like people who do damage".

The Qur'an underscores the imperative for humans to perform *ihsan* not only towards Allah but also towards all of Allah's creations, encompassing humans, nature, including animals and plants.³⁷ The term *ihsan*, along with its various derivations, is recurrently articulated 186 times across 53 surahs in the Qur'an. Simultaneously, in its masdar form, it is explicitly referenced 12 times. The exhortations to engage in virtuous deeds, as articulated by Allah in Surah an-Nahl verse 90:

"Indeed, Allah tells (you) to be fair and do good, give relief to relatives, and He forbids (committing) heinous acts, indecency, and enmity. He teaches you so that you can take lessons".

"The essence of *ihsan* resides in the awareness that humans are perpetually subject to the authority of Allah and the angels, both within and beyond the scope of worship. This consciousness is rooted in the heart, which harbors two faculties, namely *al-quwwah al dzawqiyyah* (emotional sensitivity) and *al-quwwah ar-ruhiyyah* (spiritual sensitivity). Hence, *ihsan* can be construed as spiritual capital essential for cultivating virtuous human qualities and assuming responsibility for fostering goodness towards fellow humans and the environment.³⁸

³⁷ Ibid, p. 131

³⁸ Ibid, p. 132

Engaging in acts of goodness (*ihsan*) constitutes an obligation for all, irrespective of the motivations. If a benevolent deed is propelled by a specific personal agenda accompanied by self-interest, it undermines the sincerity of the action. An altruistic individual manifests care and willingness to assist even in the absence of offered benefits or the anticipation of reciprocal gains from their benevolent actions.³⁹

Practically, performing *ihsan* represents the most prevalent and straightforward means of charitable contributions. Almsgiving, derived from the Arabic term '*sadaqah*,' meaning giving, encompasses spontaneous and voluntary gifts, unrestricted by specific temporal or quantitative constraints. *Sadaqah* also conveys the notion of correctness or justification, indicating that individuals who partake in charitable acts authenticate their faith.⁴⁰

Sadaqah serves as a comprehensive term encompassing various forms of benevolence bestowed upon others, ranging from material goods, services, to expressions of sentiments or attitudes that elicit joy, such as a smile. Within the realm of practice, the term '*infaq*' also holds significance. Originating from the Arabic '*anfaqa*,' signifying the act of expending or allocating property for the benefit of something, *infaq*, as per Sharia terminology, involves diverting a portion of assets or income for a purpose ordained by God. Almsgiving, in this context, extends beyond material generosity to encompass non-material forms.⁴¹ Quraish Shihab defines *sadaqah* as a genuine outlay of assets aligned with Sunnah or recommendation. While *infaq* pertains to material considerations, *sadaqah* encapsulates a broader spectrum beyond mere materiality.⁴²

Scholars distinguish *sadaqah* into two categories: obligatory (*zakat*) and recommended (*sunnah sadaqah*). Obligatory *sadaqah*, commonly referred to as *zakat*, includes both *zakat fitrah* and *zakat*

³⁹ David G. Myers, *Social Psychology, 10th ed.*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 2012), p. 187

⁴⁰ AN Ubaedy, *Hikmah Bersedekah: Kata Siapa Sedekah Itu Bikin Hidup Makin Susah?*, (Jakarta: Bee Media Indonesia, 2009), p. 9

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 13

⁴² M. Quraish Shihab, *Quraish Shihab Menjawab; 1001 Keislaman Yang Patut Anda Ketahui*, (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2008), p. 191

maal, as stipulated in the Quran (Surah At-Taubah, verse 60).⁴³ The term *sadaqah* appears 12 times in the Quran, encompassing both obligatory and recommended acts,⁴⁴ while *infaq* is mentioned 73 times. In Islamic jurisprudence, *infaq* is delineated from *zakat* and *sadaqah*, with *zakat* being a mandated form of charity characterized by predetermined types, amounts, and timing, whereas *infaq* lacks specific provisions regarding the type and amount of assets expended and is not constrained by the designation of recipients.⁴⁵

The Influence of Altruism on Muslims

Altruism holds significant implications, particularly within the Muslim community. This altruistic disposition contributes to the development of robust individuals among Muslims, as they consistently extend assistance to family members, friends, relatives, and the broader society, aligning with the teachings of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad.

Zakat, *infaq*, and *sadaqah* emerge as pivotal mechanisms in combating poverty. Effectively managed *zakat*, *infaq*, and *sadaqah* play a vital role in enhancing the societal quality and productivity, potentially fostering employment opportunities. The altruistic factors manifest in daily activities are delineated as follows:⁴⁶

a) Compassion towards the Poor

The inclination to feel empathy for and extend assistance to the impoverished is inherent in human nature. Allah has fashioned humans to exhibit mutual care, recognizing their interdependence. The manifestation of compassion through altruistic acts not only contributes to societal welfare but also augments individual success. Rational contemplation underscores

⁴³ Adil Sa'di, *Fiqhun-Nisa: Shiyam, Zakat, Haji*, (Jakarta: Hikmah PT. Mizan Publika, 2006), p. 216

⁴⁴ Yusuf Qardhawi, *Fiqhu Az-Zakah*, terj, Didin Hafidudin, et, al, *Hukum Zakat*, (Bogor: Pustaka Liter Antar Nusa, 2004), p. 40

⁴⁵ Ahsin Al-Hafidz, *Kamus Ilmu Al-Qur'an*, (Jakarta: Amzah, 2005), p. 117

⁴⁶ Irfan Syauqi Beik, Analisis Faktor-Faktor yang Mempengaruhi Tingkat Partisipasi dan Pemilihan Tempat Berzakat dan Berinfak, *Jurnal Ekonomi & Keuangan Islam*, 2012, p. 67

that the presence of the destitute, needy, and orphaned serves as a guiding beacon towards the path to heaven and the pleasure of Allah.

b) Zakat as an Expression of Gratitude

Zakat stands as a mechanism to express gratitude to Allah while simultaneously purifying oneself from sins and the allure of material wealth. The Qur'an affirms that Allah bestows His mercy upon those who exhibit gratitude:

"And (remember) when your Lord announced, "If you are grateful, I will add to you, but if you are ungrateful, then surely my punishment is severe".⁴⁷

c) Purification of Wealth through Zakat

Zakat is not a benevolent gift from the affluent to the indigent but an obligatory right of others. Allah elucidates that zakat serves to cleanse and purify one's possessions and soul from impurities and sins:

"Take zakat from their property, in order to cleanse and purify them, and pray for them. Lo! Thy prayer is peace for them. God is All -Hearing, All -Knowing".⁴⁸

d) Contentment in Assisting the Needy/Poor

Aiding the destitute embodies the realization of one's faith. Islam places considerable emphasis on alleviating poverty through zakat, donations, sadaqah, and endowments. Easing the burdens of others becomes a source of internal satisfaction for the giver.

e) Conscience of Obligation in Zakat/Donation

In Islam, neglecting to fulfill zakat obligations (known as *infaq*) constitutes a grave sin, tantamount to a betrayal of faith. Beyond its ritualistic aspects, zakat holds a social dimension as a form of *qadhi* worship, wherein the failure to execute it results in the deprivation of the rights of the *mustahik*. Consequently, individuals

⁴⁷ Al-Qur'an, 14: 7

⁴⁸ Al-Qur'an, 9: 103.

who neglect zakat face severe consequences and punishments, both in the earthly realm and the hereafter.⁴⁹

The Differences in Altruistic Orientations between Christian and Islamic Societies

There exist notable distinctions in the altruistic attitudes manifested in Christianity and Islam. Within Christianity, genuine altruistic behavior is perceived as the willingness to self-sacrifice for the attainment of a collective good. Such sacrifices encompass the relinquishment of possessions, time, energy, and even one's life, with the aim of fostering a harmonious and tranquil society.

In contrast, the altruistic ethos in Islam is governed by Shari'ah, a set of principles that adherents must follow. Muslims are enjoined to assist others without jeopardizing the safety or life of the helper. For instance, an individual committing a suicide bomb act in the name of assisting fellow Muslims is deemed contrary to true altruism, as both Allah and Prophet Muhammad explicitly prohibit the act of self-killing. Allah's decree states:

“O you who believe! Do not devour each other's wealth in a false way, except in trade that takes place on the basis of mutual love between you. And do not kill yourself. Indeed, Allah is Most Merciful to you”.⁵⁰

Another distinction arises in the realm of worship practices. While many Christians advocate for fellow Christians to engage in worship, the compliance with these calls often falls short. In Islam, adherents are not only encouraged to invite fellow Muslims to engage in worship but are also obligated to do so. This includes actions such as the call to prayer (*Azan*), sermons, missionary activities (*da'wah*), and more. However, certain calls are considered impermissible in Islam, such as urging a friend to fill an empty space in the prayer row or soliciting marriage within close familial ties.

The final difference pertains to social relations or *muamalah*. In Christianity, individuals seek forgiveness for wrongs or sins committed against their neighbors by attending church for acts like

⁴⁹ Mardani, *Hukum Islam: Zakat, Infak, Sedekah dan Wakaf*, (Bandung: PT. Citra Aditya Bakti, 2016), p. 60

⁵⁰ Al-Qur'an (4): 29

the forgiveness of sins or baptism. Conversely, in Islam, the emphasis is on encouraging individuals to forgive one another and reconcile relationships that may have been strained due to mistakes or sins.

The Similarities in Altruistic Orientations between Christian and Islamic Societies

Not only disparities but also similarities in altruistic orientations manifest within the practices of these two religions. Both Christians and Muslims engage in acts of charity or share their material resources with others, such as contributing to the relief efforts for victims of natural disasters, constructing places of worship, and fundraising for orphans, the impoverished, and the destitute. Furthermore, both Christians and Muslims uphold religious harmony, recognizing its role in fostering collaboration, mutual assistance, and an altruistic disposition toward individuals from either religious community. This is exemplified by Muslims refraining from interfering with Christian worship practices, and vice versa, as articulated in the Quranic verse:

“Allah does not forbid you to do well and be fair to those who do not fight you in matters of religion and do not expel you from your hometown. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.”⁵¹

Moreover, Christians and Muslims share similarities in their commercial relationships. These religious communities collaborate and adhere to principles of fairness in profit-sharing, extending assistance to fellow traders when their merchandise faces low demand or struggles in the market. In social spheres, Christians and Muslims exhibit analogous altruistic behaviors. In collective endeavors involving both groups, irrespective of their societal standing, they collaborate harmoniously, striving for mutual benefits within the communal framework. This collaborative spirit contributes to the cultivation of altruistic tendencies among adherents of both Christianity and Islam.

Conclusion

Altruism, an ethical stance prioritizing the interests of others above self-interest, manifests in diverse realms encompassing social,

⁵¹ Al-Qur'an (60): 8

economic, moral, psychological, and religious domains. Coined and popularized by Auguste Comte in the 19th century, the term altruism remains widely employed by scholars and researchers. Christian teachings emphasize altruism, exemplified through Jesus' actions such as healing the afflicted, forgiving an adulterous woman, and expressing concern for societal outcasts like Zacchaeus. Similarly, in Islam, the Prophet Muhammad advocates altruistic behavior towards fellow humans, particularly articulated through the concept of *īthār* in the Qur'an. The Qur'an delineates various levels of altruistic conduct, including *īthār*, *ihsan*, and *infaq* or *sadaqah*.

Christianity integrates altruism seamlessly into both religious rituals and daily social life, in contrast to Islam, where altruism is primarily recommended in the worldly context of social life, with rituals regarded as sacred and not subject to altruistic gestures. For instance, Islam discourages allowing others to fill the front row in congregational prayers as an altruistic act, deeming it distasteful. The legitimacy of *īthār* in Islam is derived from both the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad. Hence, religious adherence calls for the cultivation and implementation of altruistic attitudes in daily life to mitigate selfishness and its detrimental societal consequences, such as fostering corruption, collusion, and nepotism, ultimately jeopardizing the well-being of the state and national integrity.

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