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**SYMBOLISM IN MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN
WORSHIP IN THE LIGHT OF
BIBLICAL REVELATION**

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP
IN THE LIGHT OF
BIBLICAL REVELATION

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary
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**In partial fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Divinity in Theology**

By

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ABSTRACT

The study is purely empirical in nature. It is a comparative study of the two prominent religions (Islam and Christianity) in Nigerian society. The study was carried out essentially in order to explore or appraise symbolism in religion. In other words, to appraise the use of symbols in religion.

Also an attempt was made to explore whether or not there is difference between the world-views held by Muslims and Christians.

Furthermore, the study tried to determine the influence of doctrinal beliefs on the use of symbols (symbolism). In addition to these, the study explored the effect of certain demographical factors such as educational background, socio-economic status, age and status in Church or Mosque.

The subjects for the study were both Muslims and Christians (forty Muslims and forty Christians) respectively making a total of eighty subjects. All these completed questionnaires while twenty (20) of them were interviewed (ten Muslims and ten Christians) respectively.

The instruments used for the collection of data comprised the following:

1. Questionnaire On Doctrinal beliefs and Symbolism in Christianity (QODBASC).
2. Oral Interview On Christians' Doctrinal Beliefs and Symbolism (OIOCDBAS).
3. Questionnaire On Doctrinal Beliefs And Symbolism in Islam (QODBASI).
4. Oral Interview On Muslims' Doctrinal Beliefs and Symbolism (OIONDBAS).

The measuring instruments were administered to the subjects . Data collected were analysed using Chi-Square test, percentages and Pearson's Product – Moment Correlation Coefficient Statistical measurements.

The outcome of the study revealed the followings:

1. Symbolism is still very much practised in the two religions (Islam and Christianity). Symbolism in Islam include the facing of Ka'aba when praying, pilgrimage to Mecca, ablution, use of tirah, concurtion, prayer beads chain, kissing of Black Stone, use of amulets among others. (Table 1).
Symbolism in Christianity include the use of anointing oil, water baptism, cross with or without Icon of Jesus Christ, Lord's Supper, Holy Water, mantle, candles incense among others (Table 2).
2. Adherents of both religions (Islam and Christianity) are still very much attached to their doctrinal beliefs. In other words, they still hold on tenaciously to their doctrinal beliefs some of the doctrinal beliefs in Islam are Shahada (confession), Salat (Prayer), Zakat (Almsgiving), Hajj (Pilgrimage), Qur'an as a "wonder", Jihad (Holy war) among others (Table 1).
Some doctrinal beliefs in Christianity include Trinity (God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit), water baptism, varied use of anointing oil, cross as a sign of salvation and redemption, the Holy Bible as the sole authority of Christians' doctrinal beliefs among others (Table 2).
3. All the subjects used in the study both Muslims and Christians alike believed that there is world-view and that the world-view is formed as a result of his/her interaction with the things (animate and inanimate) around him/her.
The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the world-views held by Muslims and Christians was rejected on the basis that the calculated Chi-Square value of 9.46 was greater than the tabulated value of 5.99. This implies that Muslims and Christians hold different world-views.
4. The study further revealed that there is no significant difference between the monotheism practiced by Muslims and Christians. The implication of this is that

Muslims and Christians are worshipping one God however the ways they worshipping the same one God is different.

5. Lastly the study equally revealed that certain demographical factors such as educational background, age, socio-economic status and status in Church or Mosque have profound effect on symbolism and doctrinal beliefs in both religions (Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13,). For instance the higher the age the more one becomes fearful of the unknown.

On the basis of the research findings the following recommendations were made:-

1. Religious Leaders (Bishops, Pastors, Prophets, Imams, Lazans, Alfas, Mushins) should be more conscious of the fact that they represent God to their followers. They should also realize that they will be accountable to God pertaining the role they play in the lives of their followers.
Hence, they should make sure that they do not present symbols as God to their followers.
2. Religious leaders should be "balanced" in treating doctrinal beliefs. They should search their Holy Books (The Bible and Qur'an) well and let them be their sole authority over doctrinal matters.
3. Adherents of these religions (Islam and Christianity) are strongly advised to desist from seeing symbols as objects of worship. The symbols are not objects of worship, only God our Creator should be worshipped.
4. Also, adherents of both religions should not just take the doctrines presented to them by their religious leaders on face value without cross checking whether these doctrines are in line with the Holy Bible and the Qur'an. They should refuse to be brain-washed by religious fanatics in their midst.

5. Since this study is exploratory in nature, it is recommended that it be replicated in other areas in order to confirm or disconfirm the findings of this study. In other words the study should be replicated in other parts of the country in order to confirm or disconfirm these findings.

The influence of other factors apart from those considered here should be examined e.g. career aspiration, location – rural or urban among others.

B. **Conclusion**

This study has attempted to explore or appraise the use of symbols in Islam and Christianity. Also an attempt was made to examine whether there is a difference between the world-views held by Muslims and Christians. Furthermore, the influence of doctrinal beliefs on the use of symbols, was determined. Lastly, the effects of certain demographical factors like educational background, socio-economic status, age and status in church or mosque were explored.

Statistical analysis of the data collected reveals that:

1. Muslims hold different world-view from their Christian counterparts.
2. There is no significant difference between the monotheism practiced by both Muslims and Christians, in that both claim to worship one God.
3. Adherents of Islam and Christianity still use symbols in their religions.
4. Adherents of Islam and Christianity are still strongly influenced by their doctrinal beliefs.
5. There is a strong positive correlation in the practice of symbolism between the male and female Muslims.
6. There is also a strong positive correlation in the practice of symbolism between the male and female Christians.
7. Indeed, some of the people Muslims and Christians alike ascribe the status of God to these symbols. This is because some of the people have their faith in symbols than in God.
8. Certain demographical factors such as educational background, age, socio-economic status and status in church or mosque affect the practice of symbolism and doctrinal beliefs.

It is hoped that future studies in the area will find the outcome of this investigation a veritable platform for further research work.

