

Conversion and Repentance in Muslim and Christian Perspectives:

A Comparative Exercise

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The purpose of this presentation is to compare Muslim and Christian theological understandings of conversion and repentance. Common themes to both of these Abrahamic faiths, Islam and Christianity also envision somewhat differently these two interrelated themes.

The plan of the paper is simple and straightforward: First, I will seek to introduce succinctly and accurately the main teachings about conversion and repentance in Islam. Along with the Qur'anic materials, I employ particularly the formative theology of al-Ghazali, and take notice of some leading contemporary scholars as well. Thereafter, I will outline very briefly a sketch of Christian theology of conversion and repentance based on commonly shared ecumenical convictions. The third and main part of the paper will engage the Islamic views from the perspective of what I believe are leading Christian theological points of view.

Part of a larger constructive project in which I have engaged from a Christian perspective conversion and repentance (as well as forgiveness, a theme not treated here) in four religious traditions, namely Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist, the current presentation seeks to make a contribution to comparative theology and missiology. It focuses on a limited and focused comparative exercise (in this case) between two faith traditions, similar enough to make the comparison meaningful - and different enough to make it interesting.