

Religion and Cultural Identity

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Is it possible to be a Muslim without believing the validity of the prophecies of Mohammed? Is it possible to be a Christian without believing in the resurrection of Jesus? My definition of religion transformed greatly during my studies the past few months. Even as a religion major at St. Olaf College I thought of religion very narrowly, as a construct of metaphysical beliefs. But I've come to realize that religion runs far deeper than my [Lutheran](#) mind previously conceived.

By studying cultures and religions other than my own in Turkey, [Morocco](#), Egypt and Greece it became clear to me that religion plays a huge part in shaping ones cultural identity. Bringing this "cultural identity" viewpoint to its fullest extent one could effectively be a Muslim or a Christian without really even believing the fundamental precepts of the faith. Of course this is not always or even usually the case. The point is, religion as a determinant of culture identity goes far beyond the agreed upon truths of the faith.

For the purposes of this study I have defined cultural identity as the [feeling](#) of self-definition an individual has which is formed through a sense of belonging to a certain

group. In this presentation I will be looking specifically at the effects of religion to this sense of cultural identity.

Because of the colossal impact of religion in the countries surveyed the only accurate way to peek at how these people understanding themselves and their place in the world is to first have an understanding of the major religion or religions that are at work within a given society. But that statement demands the question, how is it that through religion we define ourselves? My research relies heavily on the inte...

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