Is the Imam in Islam like the priest in Christianity?

"Imam" is a word that means the one who leads his people in prayer or manages their affairs and their leadership. It is not a religious rank restricted to certain people. In Islam there are no classes or priesthood; rather, religion is for all. and all people are equal before Allah, i.e., there is no difference between an Arab and a non-Arab except in terms of piety and righteous deeds. The one who is more entitled to lead people in prayer and be their Imam is the one who memorizes more of the Qur'an and is well-informed about the rulings related to prayer. No matter how much Muslims revere the Imam, he, in all cases, does not listen to the confessions and does not forgive sins like the Christian priest does.

{They have taken their rabbis and monks as lords besides Allah, as well as the Messiah, son of Mary, even though they were commanded to worship only One God; none has the right to be worshiped except Him, glorified is He far above what they associate with Him.} [170] Surat at-Tawbah: 31.

Islam stresses the prophets' infallibility in what they convey from Allah, yet no priest or saint is infallible or receives revelation. It is totally forbidden in Islam to resort to anyone but to Allah when seeking aid or making a request, even if the request is addressed to the prophets themselves; as one cannot give what he does not have. How could man seek help from another man if he cannot even help himself?! All honor lies in asking Allah, while humiliation lies in asking other than Him. Is it logical to put the king on an equal footing with his subjects in terms of request?! This idea is totally unacceptable to both mind and logic. Seeking help from other than Allah despite belief in the existence of an Omnipotent God is frivolity and constitutes Shirk (polytheism), which contradicts Islam and is deemed the gravest sin.

Allah Almighty said, reporting the Prophet's words:

{Say, "I have no power to benefit or harm myself, except what Allah wills. If I had knowledge of the unseen, I would have acquired much good, and no evil would have touched me. I am only a warner and bearer of glad tidings for people

who believe.”} [171] Surat al-A‘rāf: 188.

{Say, “I am only a man like you; it has been revealed to me that your God is One God. So whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous deeds and associate none in the worship of his Lord.”} [172] Surat al-Kahf: 110.

{The mosques are for Allah alone, so do not supplicate to anyone along with Allah.} [173] Surat al-Jinn: 18.

Questions and Answers about Islam
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