

Comparison of the Doctrines in Ethnic and Universal Religions: Case Study of Judaism and Christianity

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Abstract

This article focuses on the similarities and differences of Judaism and Christianity. Judaism is considered as an ethnic religion, which is followed by the Jews in Israel and some other areas, while Christianity is counted as a universal religion, which is also developed from Judaism but spreads around the world. Both of them are monotheism and based the teaching on the Ten Commandments. It found that they are similar in terms of belief in the creation of the world (Genesis) as well as the purpose of life, heaven rewarded by God after death. This article argues that the Jews' claim that their ethnicity being loved by God made Judaism become the ethnic religion that does not open to other ethnic believers. On the contrary, Christianity claims the true and universal love, which is not limited to any ethnicity. However, in terms of differences, Jews believe that Moses is the prophet, while Christians believe in Jesus. While Jesus is claimed by Christians as the Savior who died for the sin of mankind, Jews claims that Jesus is an ordinary man. In addition, both religious teachings have the different characteristics of reforms, revolutions, and modified doctrines.

Keywords: ethic religion, universal religion, Christianity, Judaism, comparative religion

Introduction

In this paper, the author has compared the similarities and the differences of two religions; Judaism and Christianity. Historically, Judaism is practiced by the Jews only, very few number of other ethnics have been following this particular religion. Therefore, it can be said that Judaism is an ethnic religion. It should be noted that some Jews also stay outside Israel. A total number of the Jews nowadays are approximately 14.5 million; 6 million in America, 3.5 million in Soviet countries, and 2.2 million in France, England, Canada, South America, South Africa, and so forth (Alan Unterman, 2010: p. 15). On the contrary, Christianity is considered as a universal religion that has been practiced by different groups of ethnics around the world. Its total number is about 2,100 million, which is also the biggest religion in terms of followers. Most Christians are in Europe, America and Australia. These two religions are suitable for the comparison because they are quite similar in terms of doctrines. Both of their teachings are based on the Ten Commandments. Only some emphases and interpretations have made the differences ultimately formed their religious identity.

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Concept of Universal and Ethnic Religions

World religion or universal religion is a religion that originated in one place but is followed by people in other places as well. This kind of religion is also practiced by different ethnic groups in several countries. That is because it always spreads beyond the border of its original place such as Christianity - initiated in Israel, Islam - started in Saudi Arabia for the Arabs in the beginning, Buddhism - began in India. Interestingly, those religions gradually spread to other regions (Wichean Senthong, 2019). To sum up, the universal religion is followed by not only one ethnicity, but also by other groups. In addition, the essence of those religions also opens for every ethnicity on the ground that everyone is created by God. In contrast, ethnic religion or national religion is a religion that originated in one country and is practiced by people in that particular country such as (1) Shinto - followed by the Japanese, (2) Confucianism - by the Chinese, (3) Taoism - by the Chinese, (4) Jainism - by the Indians, (5) Sikhism - by the Indians, (6) Hinduism - by the Indians, (7) Judaism - by the Jews, and (8) Zoroaster - originated in Persia but currently followed by the Indians. It clearly shows that these religions can be categorized as ethnic religions, which belong to one particular ethnic group. People in that group also hold such and such religions as their culture and the symbol of their ethnicity. Most members of that ethnicity also practice that religion.

Sometimes, that kind of religion is also called “tribal religion” such as several kinds of Chinese theistic religions namely Jade Emperor and the sect of Eight Deities, or “local religion” such as Scandinavians’ gods named Norse, Vikings, Odina, and Thor, European theistic religions such as Pagan, Central Asian theistic religions such as Tengrism, “animistic religion” of Southeast Asian countries, and so on. However, though Hinduism - a main stream religion of India - is the biggest ethnic religion of the world because Indians are the biggest population and most of them also identify themselves as Hinduism, this particular religion has been spreading around the world including western countries in forms of Yoga, meditation, and so forth (Sinchai Chaojaroenrat, 2015)

It clearly shows that ethnic religions play an important role in terms of helping each ethnicity to express some identities through the system of faith and religious ritual. Not only general religions such as Shinto of the Japanese, Confucianism and Taoism of the Chinese, Jainism, Hinduism and Sikhism of the Indians that we are familiar with, Judaism at this stage is also followed by the Jews, Zoroaster by the Iranians, Hellenism by the Greeks, Druze by the Druzes, Alawitism by the Alawits, Alevism by the Alevites, Mandaism by the Mandaens, Yazidism by the Yazidis, and so on. In addition, there are some African migrant groups in America, such as African traditional religions and Afro-American religions, still strongly preserve their ethno-religious identities (Oduah, 2011).

In this research project, the author focuses on Judaism, a religion that can be categorized as the ethnic religion and is followed by the Jews in different regions. Torah is its religious scripture, can also be called The Old Testament, which has been referred as the original book in Hebrew language. It contains of the first five books in Judaism and Christianity.

It is also viewed as the Law or Revelation (Office of the Royal Society, 2005, 591 and Deuteronomy, Bible Standard Version 2011). This book starts with the Jews' history and Abraham who saw God. God commanded him and his family members to travel to the Promised Land that will be given to their clans. This is the beginning of Israel. Based on this claim, Judaism was created for the Jews only according to the commandment of God in Torah.

Moreover, Judaism is also viewed as the Jewish ethnic religion of Israel in terms of its implementation of the teaching in Torah as its law such as The Law Concerning Sin Offerings, The Law Concerning Leprosy and The Law Concerning Nazirite (Leviticus, 6:25; 14:57; Numbers, 6:13; Deuteronomy, 31:10-12). As a result, it can be confirmed that Judaism has emphasized the teaching and practices that were adopted as the law. This doctrine later becomes the foundation of Christianity as well. The difference is that Christians claim that Jesus is the prophet, while the Jews referred to Moses. In addition, Christians centralize in Jesus and the Bible (Old and New Testaments), while the Jews also perceive Talmud as another important scripture. This particular book can be counted as the influential Jewish literature that had been transmitted from the Jews' ancestors (Sinchai Chaojaroenrat, 2012).

In fact, Christianity was also included as a sect of Judaism in the mid-first century. Its original place is in the banks of Eastern and Middle-Eastern Mediterranean, known as Israel and Palestine nowadays. Later, it spread to Syria, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor and Egypt. It can be said that the main teaching of Christianity was split from Judaism by remaining the Old Testament but also emphasizing the New Testament. These two books are called Bible or Holy Bible. In consequence, the word "Holy Bible" also implies the scripture of Judaism and Christianity. Historically, the Old Testament is called "old" because it originated at the time that Israel was under the testament that God made with Israelis on the Mount Sinai, while the New Testament is identified with the word "new" because it originated in the time of Jesus, who came as a new savior. Christians are therefore under the new testament that God, who died on the cross, made with humans in order to purify them from the sin. The system of faith in Christianity is based on the concept of Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Relationships among these three things can be understood by scrutinizing the New Testament. Nevertheless, the general faith of Christians is that all men are the sons of God. It is not limited to any specific ethnicity as found in Judaism. As a result, Jesus is considered as the representative of God who was born in the world for the benefit of all human beings. In addition, Christianity has the successful missionary work because it has the well-trained missionaries, budget, as well as political power. Christianity always promotes universal love, which was so much emphasized by Jesus himself. Love can be classified into several kinds, for examples, love your God, love all humans, love your neighbors, and love your family. According to this idea, love is the most important thing on the ground that if we give love to the others, we will get love in return. Christianity was gradually more powerful, till the fourth century became the main stream religion of Roman Empire. Most European countries also

accepted Christianity. However, Christians in some regions such as the Middle East, North Africa, Ethiopia, and some parts of India, were still minority after the frontier period. Indeed, Christianity had penetrated America continent, Australasia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and some other places through missionary works and colonization (Robinson, 2000: 229; Rives, 2006: 196).

Then, Christianity spread to Asia Minor and Western Europe. After that the Jesus's pupils propagated their faith at the Roman kingdom and other areas such as Europe, North and South America, Africa, as well as Asia, ultimately Christianity becomes popular around the world.

Comparison of Teaching in Judaism and Christianity

As has been mentioned, it can be said that Christianity becomes one of the world religions or universal religions that has been followed by the majority, while Judaism still maintains its ethnic religion among the Jews. Though these two religions are different in terms of a number of followers, their teachings and practices are quite similar. The Ten Commandments and some other doctrines are excellent examples for this claim, which will be demonstrated in the sub-sections.

(1) Emphasis on Righteousness

Judaism teaches that the life dedicated to God is the life that loves righteousness and protests injustice, loves truthfulness and protests untruthfulness, loves purity and protest evil. As it quoted, O men, what is the righteousness? What should be done in order to satisfy God? That is justice, loving-kindness, and being humble to God (Joseph Gaer, 1990: 193). Similarly, Christianity also emphasizes on morality, for example, "be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you (Matthew, 6: 1-4).

(2) Emphasis on living with love

Both religions focus on several kinds of love. Judaism writes that "hatred is the cause of quarrel, but love can eradicate all kinds of evil. Even though there is only vegetable food in the group of those who love each other, it is better than having elaborate meat among the group of those who hate each other (Joseph Gaer, 1990: 189-190). Likewise, this morality is also emphasized in Christianity as written, "but I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you, if you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them" (Luke, 6: 27-32).

(3) Emphasis on appreciating family members

In Judaism, parents, sisters and brothers are persons we should pay respect. It said that you all must respect your father, mother, sister as well as brother, you must stand up

and respect the elderly (Joseph Gaer, 1990: 172). Anyone who hits his parents, he must be put in the death penalty (Bible Version 1971: 140). You must open your hands for relatives (Joseph Gaer, 1990: 189). Friends are those who love you in the normal situation, while your relatives were born (to help) even in the bad situation (Joseph Gaer, 1990: 189). Similarly, loving family is also taught in Christianity as followed. “But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell” (Matthew, 5:22). “Therefore if you bring the gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother is still angry with you, leave there your gift in front of the altar, and go to reconcile to your brother, and then come and offer the gift” (Matthew, 5:23-24). “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” (Matthew, 7:3)

(4) Emphasis on loving-kindness

There are many teaching of Judaism related to loving-kindness can be cited, for examples, when other people stay with you, do not trouble them, but treat them as those who were born in the same home, love them like yourself (Joseph Gaer, 1990: 173). The best road led you to heaven is the generosity, when you want to harvest, do not take all, but leave some for the poor and strangers (Joseph Gaer, 1990: 164). Do not say to your neighbor, “go and come again, tomorrow I will give it” when you have it with you (Proverbs, 3:28). Every life deserves to be respected because it was from God (Joseph Gaer, 1990: 171).

Christianity also provides the teaching in the same way. To serve God is actually must serve humans. Christians are taught to eradicate selfish behavior and work for other people, which is considered as one of the condition in becoming Jesus’s followers. Jesus said, if you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me (Matthew, 19:21). Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you (Matthew, 5:42). Be merciful even as your Father is merciful. Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put in to your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you (Luke, 6:36-38). The more you forgive, the more you are able to love other (Joseph Gaer, 1990: 215). The giver is happier than the receiver (Joseph Gaer, 1990: 214). Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not condemn them back (Luke, 6:30). Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God (Matthew, 19: 23-24).

(5) Emphasis on self-control

Judaism teaches its followers to control their negative emotions for example, the one who is rarely angry is better than the one who has power, however, the one who can control his emotion is better than those who conquer the war. For those who cannot control their

emotion, they are likely the city without the wall (Joseph Gaer, 1990: 190-191). In parallel, Christianity insists that do not resist the one who is evil, but if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles (Matthew, 5: 38-41).

(6) Emphasis on justice

Judaism views justice as an important morality, because God is also the justice (Joseph Gaer, 1990: 171). You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. Give far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked. And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right (Exodus, 23:6-8). Similarly, Christianity also teaches its follows to maintain in justice on the ground that we will get the result as we have done the cause, for example if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you (Luke, 6:33). Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measure to you (Matthew, 7: 1-3).

(7) Emphasis on woman's issue

Judaism believes that God does not create woman from the man's brain in order to rule the man, in addition, woman is also not from the man's feet, therefore she is not the man's slave, but God created her from the man's bone for the sake of being his companion. Among ten speeches, nine issues are said by women, while only one issue by men (Satian Phantharangsi, 1973). In Christianity, it mentions that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Matthew, 5:32).

Reviews

Judaism is viewed as the mother of Christianity, therefore they have close relations. At this stage, the author will compare the similarities and differences between these two religions.

1. Comparison of Similarities

(1) Monotheism: both Judaism and Christianity are categorized as monotheism, which believe in the only one God, named Jehovah in Judaism. It is not allowed to believe or take a refuge in other gods. Moreover, that kind of faith must be so strong, with all our heart, till our lives can also be sacrificed. It wrote that you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might (Deuteronomy, 6:5). Of course, this emphasis can also be found in Christianity, as mentioned, hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one, and you shall love the Lord you God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength (Mark, 12:29-30).

(2) On God: Judaism is the religion of Jehovah, who is the founder and gave teaching to Moses. In consequence, Moses is only the prophet, not the founder. Christianity also shares

this similarity. That is Jesus is only the prophet, as mentioned in John (7:16) that my teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.

(3) On beginning of the world: Judaism wrote that God created the day and the night on the first day, heaven on the second day, earth on the third, sun, moon and stars on the fourth, animals on the fifth, humans, who are the owners of all kinds of animal and vegetables, on the sixth, finally and God rested on the seventh day and made this day as the holy day (Genesis, 1: 1-3). Christianity also follows this belief because the Old Testament becomes the Christian book as well. The difference is that Judaism counts the seventh day as Saturday, while Christianity as Sunday.

(4) On afterlife and purpose of life: Judaism teaches that when human dies, the soul does not, because it is immortal and will wait for the Day of Judgment. When that time comes, God will judge and reward the good with seven levels of heaven, and punish the sinful with seven levels of hell. Of course, it is said that the heaven is beautiful and luxury, while the hell is miserable. Christianity also teaches the same thing. The soul will dwell around the tomb waiting for the last judgment. On that day, Jesus will be sent by God and judge in the name of him on the reason that all people may honor Jesus – God’s son- as they respect God (John, 5:22-24). For those who believe in Jesus, they will be rewarded with heaven, while those who do not believe, will go to hell. On the judgment day, these phenomena will happen; the sun will be dark, the moon will not shine, all stars will fall down from the sky, and the sky will shake. Humans will be horrified and they will see Jesus coming from the cloud. Angles, by his commandment, will play the trumpet with the loud voice calling all souls to receive the judgment.

2. Comparison of Differences

In Christianity, the amount of teaching is not much because Jesus’s missionary work was only three years and then he was killed. Most teachings of Jesus were from the sermon on mountains. Indeed, general characteristic of his doctrine is also based on the Ten Commandments that taught in Judaism. Only some interpretations and additional explanations are given. In consequence, his teaching carries the characteristics of reform, revolution, modification, as well as maintaining the old interpretation.

(1) Reform

Judaism believes that Jehovah is Father (God) of the Jews only, but he was claims as the father of all humans in Christianity. In this regard, the relationship between God and Humans in Judaism is like master and slave, while in Christianity is like father and son. In Judaism, the term “neighbor” in the sentence “love your neighbors as yourself” refers to the Jews, while it refers to all human beings in Christianity. Judaism teaches not to conduct adultery, but Jesus provided more explanation that anyone who looks at women with sexual desire, he already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew, 5:28).

(2) Revolution

Judaism emphasizes in oath, as it wrote, again you have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn. But I say to you, do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simple, “yes” or “no” based on the fact; anything more than this comes from evil (Matthew, 5:33-37). Moreover, Judaism teaches that anyone who wants to divorce her wife, make the certificate to her. Also, it emphasizes on revenge; an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, whoever makes other people disables, he must be punish as such. In terms of love, love your friends but hate your enemy. In turn, Christianity resists that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Matthew, 5:32). Do not resist the one who is evil, but if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well (Matthew, 5:38-39). Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew, 5:44 and Chatchawan Chingchai, 2008)

(3) Modified doctrine

1. On justice: it is emphasized in both religions. In Judaism, God is the justice, he loves justice. Therefore, we are told that the life for God is the life dedicated for justice and protested injustice, loved truthfulness and denied untruthfulness, loved purity and resisted evil. In the process of judgment, it also wrote, you shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God’s (Deuteronomy, 1:17). But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burnt for burnt, wound for wound, stripe for stripe (Exodus, 21: 23-25). However, Christianity was developed from Judaism, as a result, disagreeing on something such as the concept of justice and revenge is quite normal. Christianity seems to deny the violence in all cases and encourages its followers to base their lives on compassion and forgiveness. It wrote that God created the sun for all the good and the bad, as well as sent the rain for both the good and the bad (Matthew, 5:45).

2. On prohibited food: it mentioned in Judaism that you may eat any animal that has a divided hoof and that chews the cud. However, of those that chew the cud or that have a divided hoof you may not eat the camel, the rabbit or the hyrax. Although they chew the cud, they do not have a divided hoof; they are ceremonially unclean for you. The pig is also unclean; although it has a divided hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses. Of all the creatures living in the water, you may eat any that has fins and scales. But anything that does not have fins and scales you may not eat; for you it is unclean. You may eat any clean bird. But these you may not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, the red kite, the black kite, any kind of falcon, any kind of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the cormorant, the stork, any kind of heron, the

hoopoe and the bat. All flying insects are unclean to you; do not eat them. But any winged creature that is clean you may eat. (Deuteronomy, 14: 6-20). In fact, Christianity also has such kind of prohibition, but Peter claimed that God came to his dream and allowed to eat all those animals, because they had already been purified by God.

3. On circumcision: In Judaism, circumcision is an important rite that all men must conduct. As Jehovah talked to Abraham that you and your clan must follow the testament between you and I (God). This means that all men must cut off the foreskin of their penises on the eighth day. Anyone who does not conduct this rite, he will be expelled from the Jewish ethnicity because he has broken my commandment (Holy Bible Version 1971: 25). Similarly, this ritual is also emphasized in Christianity. It said, on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah (Luke, 1: 59). Jesus himself was actually circumcised on the eighth day after birth as well (Luke, 2:21). Nonetheless, as mentioned above, Christianity can be counted as the revolution of Judaism, some of its teachings have therefore been changed. Paul, an apostle, wanted to spread Christianity in Corinth and Galatia. He said that circumcision is not necessary, the most needed thing is to follow what has been taught by God (1 Corinthians, 7: 19; Galatians, 5: 6). As a result, circumcision is generally not practiced by Christians.

Conclusion

Judaism is also known as the mother that gave birth to Christianity. The God in Judaism is also the God of Christianity, as well as the scriptures. The fundamental teachings of these two religions base on the Ten Commandments namely, (1) I am the Lord, the God, no other gods before me, (2) no graven images or likenesses, (3) do not take the Lord's name in vain, (4) remember the Sabbath day, (5) honor your father and mother, (6) do not kill, (7) do not commit adultery, (8) do not steal, (9) do not bear false witness, and (10) do not covet.

In terms of the purpose of life, these two religions provide the same aim, staying with God in the heaven after death. The paths for reaching that aim will be elucidated as followed. In Judaism, humans must be loyal, worship and follow the Jehovah's commandment that had been transmitted through Moses. In Christianity, the commandment is also important. However, those teachings can be concluded into three points; (1) love your God with all your heart, (2) love your neighbors as yourself, and (3) give things to the poor. In terms of differences, Christianity had been adding some new teachings and interpretations that cannot be found in Judaism. Jehovah is the Universal God, God of all humans, not only of the Jews, is the excellent example. Consequently, the relationship between God and humans also changes from "the master and slaves" to "the father and sons." In addition, the Trinity; Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit, is employed to explained the characteristic of God in Christianity.

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