

Comparative analysis of judaism and christianity

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Research Paper: Comparative Analysis of Judaism and Christianity When a person hears the terms Jew or Christian we recognize those terms as a name for someone who belongs to a certain religion. What many people do not realize is that a Jew is born into their religion, Judaism, whereas a Christian is baptized into Christianity (Fower, 7). In the world today there are approximately 14 million Jews (Oxtoby, 63) compared to approximately 1.5 billion Christians, making them the world's largest religions group (Oxtoby, 131). Judaism and Christianity are similar in many ways. Both religions are considered to be monotheistic religions because they both believe in one God and one God only.

They, along with Islam, are also known as the Children of Abraham because all three religions share the belief of the covenant Abraham made with God (Peters, 1) two thousand years before the time of Christ (Soltes, 11). In this covenant God promises Abraham a long life with many descendents and the land of Canaan in return for keeping faith with God (Oxtoby, 67). In both the Jewish and Christian religion there is a ceremony that is held to mark the day in which you become a part of your religious community. Jew's are born into their religion but on the Sabbath closest to a boy's thirteenth birthday a Bar Mitzvah takes place. When a boy turns thirteen it is expected that he should practice and know all the commandments and religious rites. This is the day in the Jewish religion that a boy becomes a man (Fowler, 13).

In the Christian religion as a child or as an adult, you are initiated into the Christian community by Baptism, the act of pouring on, or immersion in water (Wilkins, 66). The Baptism ritual symbolizes the bathing practised during the time of Jesus. The bathing was a symbolic washing away of sins

and impureness before beginning a new Christian life (Oxtoby, 176). Both of these rituals signify the beginning of a person's life in their religion but they are very different. After the Jews Temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians they had no place to worship so they would meet in gatherings.

As long as there were ten or more adult males a Synagogue could be formed. Synagogue comes from the Greek word "synagein" which means "to gather together". Today these gatherings may also be called The House of Assembly, House of the People or House of Study (Fowler, 40). Centuries after the Temple had been destroyed synagogues were no longer just a gathering of Jews they were being built into a physical place for the Jews to go and pray three times a day (Oxtoby, 82). Today most synagogues in western countries are built so that they face east towards Jerusalem (Oxtoby, 83).

Synagogues today also continue to teach and educate and they contain libraries and classrooms. They also contain large social areas that can be used for Bar Mitzvahs and weddings (Oxtoby, 106). Christians do not need a certain number of people to pray. Service called masses are held every Sunday and most practicing Christians will attend Mass every week. Prayers are said and then everyone says the Lord's prayer and then everyone will line up and go to the front of the church for communion where they will drink the wine which symbolizes the blood of Jesus and eat the bread which symbolizes the body (Fowler, 82).

There are many different kinds of churches and their appearance differs depending on which type of church it is. Gothic churches were made mostly

from stone and had stone and wood carvings on the interior as well as on the outside of the building. Roman churches contain fourteen pictures along the inside of the church depicting the events from Jesus' trial right up until his body was placed in the tomb (Oxtoby, 178). Judaism and Christianity are similar in the way where both religions each have a special place to pray but the types of prayers and the architecture definitely sets them apart. In Judaism and Christianity both religions follow a certain "dress code". For the Christians there isn't a ceremonial dress that they wear each time they pray but some, especially the Roman Catholics wear a rosary.

A rosary is a string of 58 beads arranged in five groups of ten and a crucifix. The person who is using the rosary will say the Lord's prayer followed by ten Hail Mary's (Oxtoby, 175). In Judaism during prayer there are certain items of clothing that the males wear, they wear a blue and white prayer shawl called a tallith. Jewish males also cover the top of their heads during prayer with a kippah. Traditional Jews wear tefillin during prayer.

Tefillin are two boxes which are tied to the left arm and forehead by leather straps. Inside the boxes are certain passages of scripture. Jews wear tefillin every day except for on Saturdays because the act of wrapping the leather straps would be considered work (Oxtoby, 103). There are many different groups within both Judaism and Christianity. There are three main types of Jews, the Orthodox, the Conservative and the Reformed Jews. Orthodox Jews are much more traditional than the other two types of Jews.

They follow the Torah and observe Sabbath in a very strict sense. They follow Kosher and in the Synagogue prayers are led in Hebrew, they wear

their traditional dress and the men are separated from the women (Wilkins, 155). The Conservative Jews are also traditional but they adapt their rules if there is precedence for change. They make changes based on their communities needs and on time and place. They only wear their kippahs during services. In terms of tradition the Conservatives are somewhere in the middle of the Orthodox and the Reformed.

Reformed Jews, also known as Liberal Jews only practice a couple of religious practices of Judaism. They do not follow the dietary laws or dress codes and they do not believe in separating the men from the women (Wilkins, 157). In Christianity the main groups are the Roman Catholics and the Protestant Catholics. The Protestant Catholics are broken down further into four groups, Lutheran, Reformed, Radical and English. Lutheran's follow Martin Luther's thought that some of the Roman Catholics teaching contradicted the Bible.

The Reformed believe only in things which were expressly contained in the bible. The Radical take scripture very literally and the English were as close to the Roman Catholics as you could get except they didn't speak Latin (Wilkins, 55). One Major way that the two religions differ is in diet. Christians do not have a diet of certain food they are and are not permitted to eat. Jew's on the other hand are restricted to certain foods.

The Jewish have a dietary law which is kosher. Kosher foods are foods that are prepared in a certain way, come from certain animals and certain foods that can be combined in a meal. Pig is not allowed to be eaten or used at all. Any animal that is considered to be ritually acceptable has to have a cloven

hoof and eat cud. Any food that comes from the sea must have scales and fins.

The animals must also be killed in a way that is ritually acceptable and any meat that is to be eaten must be completely drained of all blood (Oxtoby, 104). Judaism and Christianity each celebrate a major holiday for their religion close to the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year (Dice, 2). For the Jews it is Hanukkah, the celebration of the Maccabees taking back Jerusalem (Oxtoby, 76) and the restoration of the Temple (Oxtoby, 106). For Christians the major winter holiday is Christmas, the holiday which celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ (Dice, 3). Both Hanukkah and Christmas are closely associated with light.

In the Christmas story the star marks the stable where Jesus was born. Lighting is also used to decorate homes and public places at Christmas and candles are used in special church services (Dice, 2). During Hanukkah Jews light Menorahs containing eight candles to commemorate the days supply of oil which amazingly lasted eight days (Oxtoby, 106). Both religions separate many different holidays unique to their own religion. The other major holiday that the Christians celebrate is Easter which celebrates Jesus' resurrection (Dice, 4). Passover is a very important festival for the Jews.

Passover is celebrated in the spring and remembers the Exodus from Egypt and is celebrated by a special meal called a Seder at home (Oxtoby, 107).

Judaism and Christianity are similar and different in many different ways. From where they originated to how their services are held, the celebrations they have, what they wear, where they pray to what they eat. They may

have many differences and believe different things but the most important thing which they believe and agree upon is that there is one God and one God only and that's what links them together and separates them from other religions.