

Judaism and christianity essays example

[Religion](#), [Bible](#)



Judaism and Christianity

Religion influences lives of people very much. It provides them with purposes or becomes a reason for war. Religion defines nations and unifies people.

Religion is more than just a set of beliefs and stories that are told from generation to generation. Instead it is a way of living, a code of conduct and framework for human actions. Religion helps to understand, to sympathize and to build relationships of the fair basis. It also provides a society with moral virtues and common traditions. World religions shape the lives of nations especially. Those confessions that have large congregations have major impact not only on a particular nation's but on the entire continents. Among those religions there are Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism.

I was surprised that Judaism is one of the oldest religions. I did not know too much about it but the fact that the date of foundation is ca. 1300 BC made me stunned. Having so long history, hardly anybody can doubt the influence this tradition had on different aspects of human development since those times. “ Being socially sensitive, the Hebrews were very historical-minded” (Noss & Grangaard, p. 380). They wrote the Hebrew Scriptures, known to the Christians as the Old Testament, as historically complete as if historians did it. However, the emphasis was on the religious, not secular history. Their Scriptures contain lots of hidden symbols and meanings that every believer takes for granted. This writings are the revelation of the will of single, righteous God and they serve not only for Jews, but for all humankind. Taken together these Scriptures formed a sacred canon that was carefully examined afterwards and proved to be more authentic than the New

Testament for example.

Before reading, I had no idea that the origin of the biblical Hebrews “ can be traced to the Syro-Arabian desert” (Noss & Grangaard, p. 381) where people spoke Semitic languages and where Muslim people live now. The forefathers of Hebrews lived in tribes and mostly possessed polytheistic religion.

However, their heritage, beliefs and practices can still be found in the Bible.

But later some tribes made a distinctive decision that not all of the gods could be praised. Instead one, or at most several, gods chose, or were chosen by, a larger or smaller group (a clan) for closer, more intimate connection than that of all the gods to all people” (Noss & Grangaard, p. 382). It still does not make sense to me how people could choose their primary gods from the numerous amounts of others. It is also interesting that the belief in the Hebrew’s people exclusiveness and this sense of being “ chosen” they had from the very beginning. The historical and sociological nature of the religion can also be proved by the evolution of the main rituals such as the Passover and Sabbath. The Passover became a celebration the memory of the Israelites’ escape from Egyptian bondage. The Sabbath also has ancient origins and sets the idea of taking one day of every “ moon” for worship and recreation (Noss & Grangaard, p. 389). I found it interesting that the key idea is that people are forbidden to do anything during the Sabbath except resting and praying.

Abraham and Moses are often mentioned among the founders and the first leaders of the religion. According to the Bible story no one could doubt generosity, hospitality and ability to forgive of Abraham and that is why he was chosen by El-Shaddai (God) to do kindness and practice justice and

righteousness. The Abraham's trust and obedience to God were proved by readiness to sacrifice his son. It still makes me puzzled how God could request such a sacrifice from Abraham. Moses, in his turn, occupies even higher place in the Hebrew-Jewish tradition. He received the highest honor by revolutionizing the religious orientation of people and helping them to find the truth. And this orientation and these new views were completely subjected to the will of God. He was chosen to discover the new name to the Israelites: Yahweh (another name of God). " Jews have long considered the word too holy to pronounce, and when they come to it in their reading, they say instead " Adonai", Lord" (Noss & Grangaard, p. 386). Personally I cannot understand the existence of two different names for one God. Moses was the one who was chosen to liberate people and lead them to the Promised Land. He received the texts of the Commandments and called people to follow these injunctions.

Along the history the Hebrews suffered humiliation and tortures but these things strengthened their faith in being " chosen" nation. They were enslaved in Egypt, lived under Rome ruling and never had their own land. This is no surprise that under such circumstances lots of different groups appeared that had their own view on the religious injunctions. Even nowadays having Israel, Jews live in every country around the globe. In my opinion, it is difficult to be so dispersed and separated from the main congregation. I also found it interesting that Noss & Grangaard write that " the Muslims treated the Jews better" (p. 437) because nowadays we hear a lot about religious conflicts between Israel and Palestine.

Christianity is based on the same grounds as Judaism, but the main story is

shifted in time. “ Other religions have developed a conception of incarnation, but none has given it such centrality” (Noss & Grangaard, p. 452). The Christian doctrine is based on the belief that Jesus, the God’s son, is the clearest portrayal of the character of God. Revelation can be received from prophets and Jesus, the God’s incarnation. In Christianity the nature of God is based on trinity. It makes me wonder how it can be that there is one substance but three persons that have divine powers: God, the God’s Son and the Holy Spirit.

Christians have the Bible that comprises the Old Testament and the New Testament. The core religious text is the New Testament that includes Gospels and Epistles and describes Jesus’ life and good deeds. I found it interesting that a large number of scholars agree that the text were modified and changed the record of the religion of Jesus himself though no one can be sure about the extent of these modifications. The well-known fact is that Jesus did not write his statements and injunctions; he relied in this question on the disciples. Having read four main Gospels, one may come to conclusion that some information is missed or the chronology is not observed in one or another text. This leads to misinterpretation and ambiguity that I consider to be absolutely inadmissible in any religion.

Jesus is a central figure in the New Testament and in the religious doctrine as a whole. As it is mentioned in the book: “ the date of the birth of Jesus cannot be determined precisely” (Noss & Grangaard, p. 456). Roman and American tradition are not even unanimous about the exact date. He was born by a virgin and was brought up in the Jewish traditions. His childhood and youth is not described in details. This is unusual because the whole

religion is about one person's deeds but we all get to know him only as an adult. Being God's messenger and often referred to as "Son of God", Jesus "was drawn to John the Baptist and experienced a call to prophetic mission" (Noss & Grangaard, p. 457). It happened when he was 30. From the general background I know that Christians are baptized at a very young age. That is why it is surprising that the Prophet himself did this being adult. He started to deliver teachings to people trying to change and develop their religious orientation. Jesus aimed at liberation of the soul and forgiveness. God occupied the central place in Jesus's thinking. He "also transformed some aspects of the apocalypticism of his day" (Noss & Grangaard, p. 461). The main themes of his teaching were to persuade people that the Kingdom of God is near and that the Kingdom of God is in one's midst.

Jesus, by his direct word and people's admiration, became a real treat to authorities. In the end "Pilat turned Jesus over to a guard of Roman soldiers to be crucified" (Noss & Grangaard, p. 469). No single death in the world's history has so affected Western imagination. However, self-sacrifice of Jesus is considered to be made for the humankind salvation and today Christians of the whole world wear crosses as a symbol of recognition and gratitude. In my opinion, everybody can doubt the fact of the resurrection because it really sounds mystic. Personally, I think that the resurrection happened in the minds of every true believer and the evidence of this is the fact that around 2 billion of people still feel devotion to their Savior.

Consequently, I found that religions not only provide us with moral grounds but also tells a lot from the historical point of view. Despite the fact that sometimes religions become a subject of tensions and conflicts, no one can

doubt the necessity of righteousness it provides. The power of religion to unite and unify is far stronger than that of the government. Moreover, each religion delivers precious knowledge about the nation's life and its culture. I consider that knowing the origins of the world's religion is very important for understanding people around us.

Bibliography

Noss, David and Blake Grangaard. A History of the World's Religions. New Jersey: Pearson. 2007.