

The comparative religious analysis of the phenomenon of asceticism in monotheistic religions

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Abstract: This article analyses the study of monotheistic religious teachings based on the interpretation of views related to asceticism and their comparative analysis of issues such as the human psyche and its impact on society.

Keywords: asceticism, monotheistic religions, judaism, buddhism, christianity, islam, zuhd, sufism.

The ascetic practices are used for a variety of purposes. Many religious traditions encourage or require asceticism at periodic or specific epochs in the religious calendar, usually for purification or preparation for a significant ritual event. Most religions have at least some practices that can be considered as ascetic: fasting, celibacy, seclusion, voluntary or complete abstinence from intoxicants, renunciation of worldly goods and possessions, and in some cases religious suicide.

In the teachings of the world religions, the phenomenon of asceticism is interpreted in different ways. The asceticism in these religions had a superficial trait, due to the elements of asceticism in ancient teachings, which were deeply associated with the notion of purity in the ceremonial order.

The concept of asceticism with its own specifications is possible to be found as well in the monotheistic religions. Due to the opinions of the researchers in the period of Judaism the asceticism itself was not considered as the prevailing issue, and specifically in the periods of the brutal persecution, which the Jews faced and in total the Judaism itself in the era of the second temple and long after its destruction the asceticism itself had become widely spread, it had found its reflection in "Talmud" and "Midrashah". One of the types of asceticism, which had got its deep spread and the well-known recognition, as it is possible to consider already in the Bible period is seen as the fasting, which is regarded as the "pacification of the soul" (Lev. 23:27, source: 58:3). Christian monasticism draws the influence of the Judaic tradition. The "Essence", a Jewish mystical sect, was similar to monks. However, as Christianity informs due to its foundation by Jesus Christ; the religion began in the life, including its ministry, death and resurrection of the founder, Jesus Christ, and hence, there were exhibited lots of ascetic practices. He commanded thus: If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (Luke, 9:23 NIV).

In Christianity, the asceticism is seen as a concept that governs the will of mankind. The basic principle of Christian asceticism is the spirit of man and his movement to fulfill the commandments, that is, in the divine and human synergy.

In Christianity the main goal of life is to love God and others: "Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all your soul and with all your mind: this is the

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first and great commandment; the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself; on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Heb. Matthew 22: 37-40).

From the point of view of Christian thought, evil arises from a lack of will and desire in the direction of the wrong purpose of the will or the way to achieve the truth in man. Therefore, it is important not to destroy a person's desires, but to educate them.

The mainstream Islam has not had a tradition of asceticism (*zuhd*), but its Sufi-sects, a minority within Islam, have cherished an ascetic life for many centuries (Pew Research 2012, p. 140). Among the Muslim "Sufists," the asceticism that they practice focused upon forms of spiritual excess (staying the night in prayer; doing supererogatory actions, machinations) bodily deprivation (fasting, extensive denial of sleep), and embracing holy poverty. That is to say that the Muslim ascetic was the one who embraced contempt of early Muslim elites, dressing in rags, associating with the poor, and performing base occupation (like herding animals, bloodletting and professional mendicancy). On contrary, the assertion that asceticism is limited to the Sufist, this study discovered that, in Islam, a fasting person empties his stomach of all the material things; to fill his soul with peace and blessings, his spirit with piety and faith, his mind with wisdom and resolution.

In Islam, fasting, prayers and other ascetic practices are considered as obligatory. (*Quran* 2:183-185; 4:103; 107:4-6)

The most favorable action for ascetics, who constantly push God to be, to live in peace with people and to be with them constantly with good manners, to fly to the desires of lust, not to increase their burdens on the shoulders of people, but on the contrary, to take on their shoulders the "burdens" of people, to resist the desires of the soul.

As it was mentioned above, the asceticism in one or another shape is possible to be observed in all religions. However, its meaning and essence in all religions as the achievement of the "Creator" (enlightenment), due to the wrong interpretation of this very concept of the indicated above character among people, religions and societies possesses with the indications towards a number of sins. As an example, it is possible to see the acquisition of the ascetic mood of the psyhiatry of the adept, it is obvious to consider their tendencies for the loneliness and indifference. In Islam, on the other hand, the misinterpretation of asceticism is questioned according to the law-based or in other words lawful aspects and also the unlawful matters, which are seen as the difference in opinions among the believers.

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