

MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS in TERMS of ENVIRONMENT and SUSTAINABILITY¹

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Abstract

The term of religion can be defined as total rules of material and spiritual worlds which people must obey. Religions consider whole of the rules in daily life. The arrangements of religions not only about the relations between God, holy institutions and people the arrangements also consider the human relations and human and nature relations. According to frame of religion people believe that the nature has created by God in a harmony and the nature can restore the spoils if there is not interference from out. When the holy sources are examined people can see arrangements in terms of elements of nature (air, fire, water, soil, animals and plants so on). The sources of religion arrange rules of how the elements of nature will be used by people. On the other hand, the elements of nature are used to punish by the God to society which do not obey the rules in Holy sources. This study contains monotheistic religions in terms of environment and sustainability. The aim of this study is to examine Jewish, Christianity and Islam religions how consider the environment and elements of nature and the potential of these religions to solve environmental issues.

Keywords: *Environment, Sustainability, Jewish, Christianity, Islam*

ÇEVRE VE SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİRLİK AÇISINDAN TEK TANRILI DİNLER

Öz

Din kavramı, insanların uyması gereken maddi ve manevi kurallar bütünüdür. Dinler günlük hayata ilişkin bütün kuralları düzenlemektedir. Dinler sadece Tanrı, insan ve kutsal kurumlar arasındaki ilişkileri düzenlemez aynı zamanda insanların birbirleriyle ve çevreyle olan ilişkilerini de düzenleyen kuralları bütünüdür. Dinlerin çizdiği çerçeveye göre insanlar, çevrenin Tanrı tarafından yaratıldığına ve çevrenin dışardan gelen müdahaleleri onarabileceğine inanırlar. Kutsal kaynaklar incelendiğinde çevrenin unsurlarıyla ilgili bir takım düzenlemelere rastlanabilir (hava, ateş, su, toprak, hayvanlar ve bitkiler gibi). Kutsal kaynaklar çevresel unsurlardan insanların nasıl yararlanacaklarına ilişkin kuralları da düzenlemektedir. Diğer taraftan, çevresel unsurların, dini kurallara uymayan toplulukların cezalandırılması amacıyla Tanrı tarafından kullanıldığı kutsal kaynaklarda belirtilmektedir. Bu çalışma tek tanrılı dinlerden Yahudilik, Hıristiyanlık ve İslamiyet'i çevre ve sürdürülebilirlik açısından ele almaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı Yahudilik, Hıristiyanlık ve İslamiyet'i çevre ve çevresel unsurlar açısından ele almak ve bu dinlerin çevre sorunlarıyla mücadelede ne gibi fırsatlar getirdiğini ortaya koymaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Çevre, Sürdürülebilirlik, Yahudilik, Hıristiyanlık, İslamiyet*

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INTRODUCTION

Environment have damaged as a result of industrialization, fast grow of population and urbanization which do not respect to environment. Environmental issues are the one of the important problem of all people in recently world which must solve. When the environmental issues become an important problem states have started to researches how eliminate these problems. In this case, states have built up command and control policy, economic incentives to solve this important problem, but these efforts cannot achieve the aim of environment what states and people wants. In the early eras people did not damage the environment or the damage on environment was not important as in recently world. Because the population of the world was not crowd, there was not an industrialization process also urbanization or people obeyed the rules which shaped by their beliefs that respect to the nature.

Beliefs are one of the most important elements to obey the rules in terms of most arrangement also the environment. In this respect religions are the one of the most important belief system which sent by God via prophet to indicating rules which people have to obey for this world and the next world. Religions consider the entire human acts for example, human and human relations, human and state relations and human and nature relations. Holy sources contain a lot of arrangement about how to use elements of nature. People believe that environment has a harmony which given by God and this harmony can restore the spoils if there is not an interference from out.

Monotheistic religions, Jewish, Christianity, Islam, as a belief system have considered how the people use the elements of nature. Monotheistic religions not only consider the using of elements of nature but also they consider a sustainability consumption habits to establish a sustainable community. In this respect, monotheistic religions can help to solve the problem of consumption to a sustainability environment. In this study, Judaism, Christianity and Islam religions have examined in terms of environment and the capacity of these religions to solve environmental problems and to establish a sustainable community.

First section of this study includes Judaism and environment. In this section the term of eco-kosher which is a traditional ritual of Judaism will introduce. After the introduction of the term, the eco-kosher can be a solution to environmental issues is debated.

Second section includes Christianity and environment. In this section the main two approaches anthropocentric and ecocentric/biocentric are discussed on the behalf of Christianity.

The third section includes Islam and environment. In this section environment and the Islam on the Holy Quran and the hadiths explained first after that the arrangements of Islamic sources is/or a solution to environmental issues is debated.

1. JUDAISM AND ENVIRONMENT

Judaism is the first monotheistic religion chronically. The main source of environment in Jewish religion is Pentateuch/Hebrew Bible that is Jews' Bible. According to Hebrew Bible the environment is important for people to live healthfully and to supply their foods requirement and to transfer to the next generations so, it can be said that the human being is bottomed in the center of environment.

The importance of environment given by Hebrew Bible can be understood clearly by trees that are given a special means by Hebrew Bible. Because tree is symbol of power of life. Notably acacia, oak and cedar trees are given a special means and quality (Oztekin, 2008: 67). Nevertheless, it is known that the convention between God and Moses occurred by bush, the angels sat under the acacia and oak trees. It is remarked their powerful states are liken to huge trees and that the Kingdom of God is consubstantiate with tree (Oztekin, 2008: 67-68). It can be concluded that the importance of environment given by Hebrew Bible is proved by the way of attaching great importance to tree. In a sense, the nature is sanctified.

1. 1. The Rituals for Environment: Eco-kosher and Tu-bishvat

Composition of relationship between human health and food has provided a basis for concept of Kosher. On the other words, Kosher is a traditional ritual of Jews which refers to diet rules includes relations between nutrition and health that important for Jews. Nowadays Jews want to establish this ritual to establish sustainability and the preserve the environment. Eco-kosher focus on protection of environment, consumption and nourishment friendly to the human health and nature. Eco-kosher will add to tradition of Judaism a contemporary meaning.

“Bal Tashchit, Tzaar Baalei Chayyim, Shmirat Haguf are the rituals which related with Kosher and these rituals can be extended according to eco-kosher. In this respect, Bal Tashchit refers to not being an extravagance person wants to extend the mean of this ritual as do not use the materials in all human activity that cannot recycle. Tzaar Baalei Chayyim forbids the cutting or hunting the animals unjust, this ritual can contain farm animals. Shmirat Haguf means that people have to take care to their health, can be used to prohibition of pesticides” (Gardner, 2010b: 49).

Eco-kosher is the divine reference from God to resolution of global warming, air, water and soil pollution in the Pentateuch. This term can use for reducing the high rate of consumption which pollute the environment. In this way the environment will be used according to principle of sustainability.

The ritual of Tu bishvat is another important ritual in Judaism. This ritual gives importance to consumption of local foods and materials and plant trees in this Holyday. In this way we can say, Tu bishvat indicates the nature is a bestowed from God to people

and they have to use environment without damage and transferring the nature to next generations without damage (Oztekin, 2008: 67).

1. 2. Sustainability in Pentateuch

The verse which transferred by Gardner (2010a: 42) in Pentateuch/ Hebrew Bible, said that “do not give me poverty, do not give me richness.” According to this verse we can say the Pentateuch has a frame which contains sustainability. This verse also contains the right to food, the right to water and so on. On the other hand, it also contains do not be ambitious for money and damage the environment to be a rich man.

2. CHRISTIANITY AND ENVIRONMENT

There are two main approaches about environment which based on Christianity. The first approach can be define as anthropocentric approach based on the idea of people has priority and can use environment for the purposes of them. Second approach can be defined as ecocentric (biocentric) is based on the idea of people are the one of the creatures in the world and duty of them is protect the environment. Anthropocentric scholars lean on the some verses in the Holy Bible. These verses are; “ God said, We will create human look like us, human will dominate fishes in the sea, birds on the air, cows and the world and everything which crawl around the world”, “ people, grow in number and fill the world, make world dependent on you⁵.” Also ecocentric approach scholars lean on verses in the Holy Bible. These verses are, “God take the man and put the man in heaven for protect this area⁶.” According to this verse we can suggest that Christianity has an arrangement which aimed the protection of environment. In this way people are steward of environment and the environment bestowed from God to the people.

2. 1. The sustainability in Christianity

“Nobody serve to two major ... people cannot serve both money and God⁷”. This verse shows that the Holy Bible has a frame for sustainability.

Wealth and materialism which can be define as the key elements of consumption society are seen greed, debased and selfishness according to the Christianity over many years.

2. 2. The Greening of the Christianity

An example of environmentalist movement in the Christianity is the Green Bible. In the Green Bible, the verses related with the environment has been written green and it includes environmentalist texts which written by priests and the ink of the Green bible is base of soybean also the paper is recycled paper (Gardner, 2010a: 40).

⁵ These verses are translated from Under, 1996: 146.

⁶ These verses are translated from Under, 1996: 146.

⁷ These verse transferred from Gardner, 2010a: 42.

Religion, Science and Environment (RSE) has established in 1995 by Bartholomeos which aims build up dialogues between religions and science on the behalf of environmental issues especially issues of big rivers and seas(Gardner, 2010a: 39).

According to circulars of Papacy, the aim of the economy has to be benefit of society, and capitalism has criticized because of only thinking the profit (Gardner, 2010a: 47).

According to these efforts in Christianity and verses from Holy Bible, this monotheistic religion gives a chance to people change their habits in the name environmental sustainability.

3. ISLAM AND ENVIRONMENT

Islam is the last monotheistic religion which arranges all human acts about the world and the next world also how use the elements of environment sent by God to all people via Prophet Muhammad. The information about Islam religion can be learned from Quran and the hadiths. This study, firstly, examines what is the general arrangement about environmental elements in Quran and the hadiths, secondly, the Islam religion has an opportunity to solve environmental issues or not.

3.1. Environment in the Quran and Hadiths

Quran is the main source of Islam belief which sent by God (Allah) to the Prophet Muhammad and the hadith is another source of Islam which said by the Prophet. In this sources can be found a lot of arrangement about environment. In this study, these arrangements cannot be examine in detail, but the giving arrangements are sufficient to understanding what the frame of Islam in terms of environment and sustainability are.

When the Quran is examined can be seen there are three types of verses about the environment. The first type of verses are about the harmony of environment, second type of verses are about preserve in the environmental harmony and the third type of verses are about forbid to damage environment.

There are a lot of verses in Quran about the harmony of environment so these verses do not give in detail in this paper, some of verses will examine⁸.

“He who created the seven heavens one above another: No want of proportion wilt thou see in the Creation of [Allah] Most Gracious. So turn thy vision again: seest thou any flaw?” (Mulk Verse, 67/3)⁹.

⁸ The English version of verses will translate from the translation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali, From a version revised by the Presidency of Islamic Researches, IFTA, Call and Guidance. Published and Printed by the King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex in 1987.

⁹ The first number is the number of Sura in Quran and the second is the verse number in the Sura.

“The sun and the moon follow courses [exactly] computed; and the herbs and the trees - both [alike] prostrate in adoration. And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance [of Justice], in order that ye may not transgress [due] balance. So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance. It is He Who has spread out the earth for [His] creatures: Therein is fruit and date-palms, producing spathes [enclosing dates]; Also corn, with [its] leaves and stalk for fodder and sweet-smelling plants” (Rahman Verse, 55/5-12).

“Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens your canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith Fruits for your sustenance; then set not up rivals unto Allah when ye know [the truth]” (Baqara Verse, 2/22).

From the verses which given above can be seen clearly, God (Allah) created the nature in a harmony and for sustainability of nature the measure exceed when the using the nature.

There are also verses in the Quran about preserving the harmony of the nature.

“Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just [balance] between those [extremes]” (Furqan Verse, 25/67).

“Those who invoke not, with Allah, any other god, nor slay such life as Allah has made sacred except for just cause, nor commit fornication; - and any that does this [not only] meets punishment” (Furqan Verse, 25/68).

“Give just measure, and cause no loss [to others by fraud]. And weigh with scales true and upright. And withhold not things justly due to men, nor do evil in the land, working mischief” (Shuaraa Verse, 26/181-183).

These verses define the people do not kill anybody (people, animals and plants) unjust, not extravagance and not miser so these characteristics can be seen as environmentalist characteristics of people (Karakas, 2011: 24).

There is not only verses about the harmony of environment and preserving this harmony but also forbidden the damage of environment in the Quran. The punishment of Prophet Lut society is an example to polluter to environment and people, the God will punish the other society like as Prophet Lut society (Karakas, 2011: 26).

“Each one of them We seized for his crime: of them, against some We sent a violent tornado [with showers of stones]; some were caught by a [mighty] Blast; some We caused the earth to swallow up; and some We drowned [in the waters]: It was not Allah Who injured [or oppressed] them:” They injured [and oppressed] their own souls” (Ankabut Verse, 29/40).

Environmental elements sometimes can use for the punishment of the people who do not obey the rules, also these elements also used for polluters. The main frame of Quran

about environment was given above. Another important source of Islam religion is the hadiths. In this section environment and its elements will examine according to hadiths.

“Animals cannot kill unjust, using for hunting, left hungry and thirsty. When kill an animal for sacrifice people must feel compassion for and do not give pain to it (people must use sharp knife, do not show the knife to animal and cutting the animal quickly). People cannot load extreme materials, slap or pulling from ears of beast of burden” (Under, 1996: 159- 151).

The hadiths there is not only about the animals but also there is some hadiths about the trees. The Prophet Muhammad have also stressed on the trees. A tree in life cycle of it when the other people and other animals, birds, wolves, insects benefits from it, the owner of tree earns alms every day (Yeniceri, 2009: 153). In this respect, people also have to consider the assist of eliminate air pollution and producing of oxygen as a benefit (Yeniceri, 2009: 153).

Consequently, Islam religion has a lot of arrangements about environment and using the environmental elements also Islam religion contains punishments to disobey the rules in terms of environment which determined in Quran. The Prophet Muhammad has also stressed on the animals and plants in the hadiths and the prophet has given high priority to them. In this case, the sources of Islam religion contain arrangements about environment. On the other hand, Islam can assist to the sustainable consumption with verses in the Quran.

3.2. Can Islam Solve the Environmental Issues?

As mentioned above Islam religion has a lot of arrangement in case of environment. Are these arrangements sufficient for the solving environmental issues? Before the answering this question, we must to tell human is superior opposite the other creatures or human and the other creatures are equal.

Human in the general frame of Islam in terms of environment is equal as well as other creatures. The environment is entrusted to human for using but respectful to the other creatures. In this case relation between human and the other creatures is a “*primus inter pares*” relation. Human has a right to use environmental sources, but this right restricted by God (Allah) (Under, 1996: 151). People are the caliphs who have to preserve the environment and the other creatures, as shown above rules in the Quran and hadiths. People who believe to the Islamic perspective give high priority to the entrusted materials because The Prophet Muhammad stressed on the importance of entrusted materials also The Prophet was called trustworthy. In this respect, Muslims have to attend to entrusted environment. People who believe to the Islamic perspective know that in the next world they will take rewards in heaven if they obey the rules, or not the will take a punishment in the hell (Misiroglu, 1994: 177).

As discussed above Islam have a lot of arrangement about environment and the using of environmental elements. But the Islam religion has not only arrangements about environment and environmental materials also Islam has arrangements which can assist to the sustainability. In this case, Islam can assist to establish sustainable consumption habits.

Wealth and materialism which can be define as the key elements of consumption society are seen greed, debased and selfishness according to the religions over many years (Gardner, 2010a: 42). The seventh verse in the Araf Sura is related with this situation. "O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters"(Araf Sura, 7/31). As seen clearly in the verse, God has forbidden the extravagance and Muslims have to get out of extravagance.

On the other hand, some rituals on the Islam religion can assist to change consumption habits to sustainability. In this respect, "*Greening the Ramadan*" gives an importance. Greening the Ramadan refers to extend the fast (Sawm) as consumption of nourishments which has grown in the region, reducing the carbon emission, using the cleaner energy supplies and using bicycles (Gardner, 2010b: 56).

All things considered, the perspective of Islam gives importance to the environment. Moreover, Islamic way can be an efficient instrument to solve environmental issues. Also Islamic way will obstruct the new environmental crisis.

CONCLUSION

As discussed before religions are the frame of human life. Religions contain the human activities in terms of everything also the environment. As showed people damaged the environment to meet their materials or nutrition. Over decades the environment damaged as impossible to return the balance which established by God. Nowadays most of discussions about environmental issues emerge. In the discussions there are solutions to these important environmental problems. One of the solution to the environmental issues can be arrangement of monotheistic religion about environment. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the monotheistic religions in the world over the centuries. These religions have a lot of arrangement about environment as showed above.

Eco-kosher which is a traditional ritual of Judaism contribute to establish sustainability consumption habits. In this respect Judaism can be a solution to environmental problems with its rituals. Anthropocentric approach shaped by Christianity stresses on the using the environmental elements only for human and the human has a high priority across the other environmental elements. Ecocentric approach which shaped by Christianity as anthropocentric approach, emphasizes on human is a member of environment like the other creatures so man has to be respectful to environment and its balance given by God. According to Christianity human is a steward of environment so human must preserve the environment. In this way, Christianity can be a solution to

environmental issues. Islam has a lot of arrangement about environment and Islam has some arrangement which can contribute to sustainability. The holy Quran and the word of the Prophet Mohammad which called hadith contain a lot of arrangement about environment from the animals to plants and so on. Cutting or hunting the animals unjust, the importance of trees in the hadiths, being respectful to the balance of environment given by God are some of important arrangements in Islam.

Some rituals of Islam can contribute to sustainable consumption habits, as discussed above the Greening Ramadan is an example of this. To sum up, monotheistic religions can be a solution to the environmental issues and contribute to the sustainability consumption process if human obey the rules which arranged in holy sources of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

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