

# The Penumbra Series (4 of 6): Christianity and Other Religions

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Perhaps the most sinister penumbra in our culture is to believe that Christianity is just another religion. Christianity in one form or another is followed by about a third of the world's population. In Europe, the Americas, Australia and several countries on other continents, Christianity is the overwhelmingly large majority. Any culture that derived from European culture has the imprint of Christianity going back 1,700 years. And since most people don't really know what the pagan religions were really like, it is natural to assume they must have been just like Christianity.

The thought is that, if two things look similar, then one must have been copied from the other. This is a linear approach as it assumes one result can only have one influence. And since Christianity is almost the youngest of all surviving major religions in the world, that it must have copied itself from pre-existing ones. Neo-pagans are especially keen on this assumption, as they claim that Christians stole beliefs and rituals from the previous pagan cultures.

But there is another theory we can work with here. If two things are similar to each other, then the two might have been copies of a third. If I may use a famous scientific example to prove my point, the Great Missing Link hoax of 1912 fell into the linear trap. Despite obvious signs of animal skull tampering, evolutionary scientists were very happy to accept a forgery for 104 years! It was exactly what anthropologists had been looking for, so they ignored what should have been obvious inconsistencies. Since that embarrassing time, evolutionists now accept that evolution looks more like a tree than a line, with branches rubbing up against other branches. For most religions, the same could be said. But Judaism and Christianity are different.

Almost all primordial cultures knew and worshiped a one true God, who was faceless and usually nameless. As most cultures gave names and faces (or forms, if you want to be technical instead of poetic) to this God, He diminished before them because the culture began viewing God as *they wanted* instead of how *He was*. The notable exception was the Hebrews, who actively refused to give this God a form. So, right at the beginning, paganism was a movement to the dark while the Hebrews, however imperfectly at times, strived to remain in the Light.

From here, we see another shadow exposed for what it is. While both the pagans and the Hebrews would offer sacrifice, the pagans offered sacrifices *to* animals while the Hebrews used animals *as* the sacrifice. For pagans, humans were servants of the animals (and in many pantheons, animals *are* the gods). For Hebrews, humans had dominion over animals. We also see that the Hebrew priests were often called to be philosophers of sorts, while pagan cultures deliberately kept the priest class and the philosopher class as equal but separate professions. While the Hebrews had mixed results from this union, the creation of the philosopher-priest was perfected in Jesus the Christ for the Christians (more on this in **Part 6** of this series).

As the pagan priests were not philosophers, the mythology was very deficient in morality. Some pagan gods were benevolent and others were cruel, but all of them embraced their divinity as being superior to man. The best a human could hope for from their god was to be treated like a pet, but more often it was more like a master-slave relationship. In contrast, the Hebrew God took the role of a father figure while Jesus told His followers they were His friends and even siblings. Pagan gods taught humans things so humans could be more productive servants of the gods; Jehovah taught humans how to live better so they could prosper. Pagan myths warned humans not to upset the gods; Hebrew and

Christian myths taught humans how to be more God-like. All pagan gods were fickle, and humans who interacted with them invariably had bad endings; Jehovah is unchanging, and promises an eternal reward.

But we also see an interesting dynamic among different religions as well. All religions either die or grow weary, but Christianity keeps being reborn. If one looks at the myths of pagans, the earlier traditions are invariably filled with hope and energy, while the later ones are tainted with cynicism and resignation. But while Christianity has fallen down many times (metaphorically dying), it has never stayed down. Instead, it renews itself with fresh energy. When Caesar Constantine replaced Jupiter with Jehovah, Jupiter never really came back. When Julian the Apostate tried to do just that, he failed despite wide public support. Not long after Caesar Julian, the Catholic Church would be the only empire-wide organization that survived the Western Roman Empire. Even in our lifetimes, we saw a massive Christian comeback from the Atheism of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries thanks to the works of Christian heroes such as Saint John Paul II pope, Saint Teresa of Calcutta and Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. Christianity has never grown old because it has died many times and come back to life, much like the Christ Himself.

The most dangerous belief to come out of the penumbra, however, is the assumption that anything bad done in the name of religion must be a Christian thing, as the idyllic pagans would have been too simple to do harm. When Christians do unchristian-like things, there is one and only one sense in which Christians are worse than pagans. And that is, being Christians, they knew better. In every other sense, the pagans have proven to be far worse. The Carthaginians would burn children by the hundreds at the furnace altars of Baal. The family-loving Romans stopped the Carthaginians, yet instituted the gladiator games in its stead. Christians put a stop to the gladiator games in Europe and stopped child sacrifice in Central America and other places, and have waged an endless war to care for the widows and to stop infanticide worldwide.

To blame Christianity for all the world's ills misses the fact that it was Christianity that identified the world's ills as evil, and only Christianity has had any degree of success against these same ills. While the Bible was written in cultures where slavery was taken for granted, it was Christianity that named their savior and God as a slave. The entire letter of Saint Paul to Philemon was written to convince a slaveholder to set his slave free. While Christian lands are being criticized today for being slow in eliminating slavery, no other religion or philosophy has made any effort to do so at all.

It was the light of Christianity that brought the world out of the dark of paganism.

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