

## Analysis of the Reasons for the Integration of Hellenism and Hebraism

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**Abstract:** Hellenism and Hebraism, which have long been regarded as cradles of western culture, have huge different elements from each other from the very beginning, but they have finally merged into the Christian culture that has exerted a great influence on the whole world. There are many reasons for the integration, such as the common ultimate goal, war, and social psychology.

### 1. Introduction

In the thousands of years of civilization in the West, the status of ancient Greek culture and Hebrew culture is unparalleled and widely regarded as the source of Western civilization. Ancient Greece, the "spiritual garden" of the Westerners [1], with the spiritual wealth of myths, epics, tragedies, philosophy, democracy, etc. left to future generations, still inspire people today; the Hebrew culture has brought people the unique piety, faith, and obedience in religion. These two different cultures have gradually recognized each other and collaborated in the long-standing collision and competition of hundreds of years. The emergence of Christian culture is the achievement of this brilliant fusion, in which there are both unique speculative philosophy in ancient Greek culture and monotheistic elements in Hebrew culture. In the next two thousand years, this religious cultural system has exerted immeasurable influence on the political, spiritual, literary and other aspects of Westerners, and this influence has now spread to almost all parts of the world.

Cultural integration is not a coincidence, not an accident, and a heterogeneous one is even more so. Therefore, there must lie certain reasons accounting for the integration of Hellenism (the ancient Greek culture) and Hebraism (the ancient Hebrew culture), two original and distant cultures.

### 2. The Same Ultimate Goal

For a long time, people have always regarded Hellenism and Hebraism as two types of opposites and even confrontation: the ancient Greek culture as a representative of pure reason, the Hebrew culture is an irrational religious culture; ancient Greek Culture emphasizes the desire to indulge humanity, while Hebrew culture requires people to abstain from sex; ancient Greek culture is a culture of multi-god worship, on the contrary, the worship of one god is the essence of Hebrew culture. All of this gives the impression that Hellenism and Hebraism are fundamentally antagonistic, and may only be repelled, struggled, and impossible to merge. It is true that we must admit that there are huge differences between the two cultures. After all, they are generated in different geographical regions - one in the Mediterranean region of Europe and one in the Asian continent; they were formed among different races - one Indo-European The Mycenae-Cret, the other one a Semitic; they each have different native language - Greek and Jewish. However, there is one of the most critical similarities between the two to make the integration of these two heterogeneous cultures possible, that is: they have the same ultimate goal of "human perfection or redemption." [2] This is consistent with other human civilizations.

Since human beings have consciously carried out civilized activities, all the starting points are no longer simply for survival, but for better survival. For that purpose, human beings carry forward their own beautiful humanity and make it develop harmoniously with all the values to achieve the best and the most beautiful. All successful and influential cultural traditions are based on this. Ancient Greek and Hebrew cultures are no exception. "They have profoundly and impressively

demonstrated human life, trends and strength” [2] .

Ancient Greek epics and myths praised humanity's unrestrained pursuit of primitive desires in human nature; ancient Greek philosophical speculations showed that human beings could not suppress the desire for infinite world; ancient sports games in Greece showed people's vitality and energy. The abstinence in the Hebrew religion shows people's strong self-control ability; the infinite worship of God by believers is the manifestation of human attachment; and the obedience in human nature is the center of the Hebrew cultural system. .

All of these are the manifestations and excavations of human nature in the two cultures, and meet the needs of humanity through their own channels, promoting humanness and demonstrating the charm of human nature. The two cultures also start from the brilliance of humanity, so that the world can achieve self-value improvement through practice, and also make the whole human society go further, get rid of the initial state of obscurity, achieve universal order, and reflect the advantage of being a "human", and to "perfection". It is precisely because of this same ultimate goal that these two seemingly repulsive cultures have the possibility of integration, and it is precisely because of this same goal that they form a good complementarity between them: ancient Greek culture from Hebrew culture gained a unified faith, and Hebrew culture gained a rational spirit from the Hellenism to establish its theological theory.[13] Therefore, in the later Western world, when people only immerse themselves in exploration, or indulge themselves, and pursue interest, the Hebrew spirit will guide everyone to regain morality, to love each other, and to save the uncontrollable soul; When blinding the eyes of the world and obedience becomes a hindrance to human development, the original impulse of the thriving spirit of the Greek spirit will come forward and sweep away the haze. Therefore, it can be said that the two are like guiding and restraining tracks of the trains of the Western Express. They support each other and restrict each other. Losing any force will cause social chaos and even overturn. Although the directions they take seem to be very different, the results are the same, and from them is Christianity born as the heir to their legacy.

In addition, we can easily find that although the ancient Greek and Hebrew cultures are distinct, they do not exclude each other. On the contrary, there is an intersection between the two. For example, in the Old Testament Proverbs, Solomon also encouraged people to explore knowledge and said: "When you are wise, you are smart, and this person is blessed." In The Gospel of New Testament Luke, Jesus Christ also points to the importance of knowledge: "Truth makes us free," and in the New Testament James, the shortcomings of "listening alone"; Plato said that life is to learn to die. He uses almost the similar words of the New Testament or "Imitate Christ" [2].

It can be seen from the above that although ancient Greek culture and Hebrew culture have different starting points and development paths, they have a common pursuit of human nature, so they have a fundamental driving force for integration.

### **3. The Contact of Philosophical Thinking**

Philosophy is about the worldview and methodology. Through observation and thinking, each nation has made its own unique interpretation of the vast and innocent world. The ancient Greeks and the Hebrews described their world in their own way thousands of years ago, and we found similarities in their earliest recorded myths.[2]

In ancient Greek mythology, the gods reveled and possessed the supreme power of all, seemingly unrestrained. In fact, they are also controlled by a mysterious force, this is fate. No matter who it is, human or God, no matter how powerful it is, it cannot escape the shadow of fate. Even if he is Zeus's most beloved son, he can't escape death. Even the king who is admired by the world can't escape the ridicule of the fate of marrying his mother and killing his father. Here, fate masters everything, high above, listening, watching, and arbitrarily arranging all. In Hebrew's Old Testament, this abstract dominion was embodied in the concept of "God", and he also manipulated the power of life and death, and manipulated the rise and fall of honor and disgrace. Nothing is not within his arrangement, and nothing can escape from his mastery.[4]

In classical Greek philosophy, Pythagoreanism "represents the main tide of that mysterious tradition" [3] , with religious elements and abstinence tendencies. "Incorporating the spirit of reason,

the religion and reasoning are closely intertwined. This is simply a rehearsal of the fusion of Greek reason and Hebrew divinity." [4]

As a master of ancient Greek philosophy, Plato's thoughts have long dominated Christian philosophical thinking. D. F Strauss believes that "in the ancient times, there was no one more similar to Plato and Christ than themselves" [5] In Plato's theory, "idea" is just, eternal. It's easy to let people associate it with "God" because they are all synonymous with perfection. The "ideal world" is achieved through the "rational" analysis of the integrated real world. "This is a kind of power that God gives to people, so the source of reason should be traced back to the power of an all-powerful superman" [6]. The god of monotheism is just such a power. This has become the combination of Christianity and Greek thought. At the same time, his theory of the world, the real world and the theory of the literary world together provide a philosophical and theoretical basis for the Christian cosmology. And because Plato puts forward the argument that "the soul is immortal", advocating good people to go to heaven and bad people to hell, so that God who appreciates good and evil in Judaism can be easily accepted by the Greek ideology.[8]

Later, in the first century AD, Jewish theologian Philo of the city of Alexandria believed that the Old Testament was consistent with what Plato tried to achieve, except that different languages were used. He blends Hebrew theology with Plato's "ideology" and the Stoic's asceticism, creating a system of philosophical and religious integration with God as the supreme, combining the ancient Greek and Jewish thoughts.. Therefore, he also has the title of "Father of Christianity".

In the third century A. D., the new Platonist Berrocin "is both an end and a beginning" [3]. He developed ancient Greek mysticism to the ultimate result, while at the same time opening the door to the world of Christianity. He integrated the predecessors, such as Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle's thoughts and the Jewish view of God, to create a supreme, totally transcendent "One", and this "One" can be considered to be God, that is, God, is absolute perfection. Because it is the source of everything in the universe, it is beyond all existence and thought, and it is the highest truth, goodness, and beauty. This is no different from the Almighty God.[10]

In the Hellenistic era, due to the difficulties within the ancient Greek civilization, the political situation has gone from bad to worse, and the people's lives have been suffering. The philosophers have sought truth and pursued the goal of wisdom and began to invest in the real problems in the crowd. At that time, such as cynicism, the Epicurean and Stoic doctrines were secular and ethical, and began to pay more attention to the crowd, the people. "Compared with the classical period, the philosopher's gaze in the Hellenistic era has shifted from the distant universe to the surrounding world." [7] There is a Hebrew-style salvation. It is no wonder that Engels said that "Christianity was quietly produced from the universalized theology of the East, especially the Jewish theology and the vulgarized Greek philosophy, especially the mixture of Stoic philosophies."

Finally, Augustine, "Plato's dichotomy of the world of feelings and the kingdom of form was Christianized, transformed into a dichotomy of the natural world of destiny and the kingdom of divine order" [8]. At the same time, Augustine proposed that "God" is the unity of "Father, Son, Holy Spirit", so that Christian culture is firmly established on the basis of classical civilization. By the year 430 AD, Augustine died, "the integration of ancient Greek culture and Hebrew culture is basically completed" [5].

#### **4. The Needs of the Ruling Class**

As the direct heir to the splendid ancient Greek culture, the Roman Empire spread the ancient Greek culture to a wider field through conquest. However, in the later period of the Roman Empire, the nobles lived in luxury and moral corruption, while the lower classes were suffering, and slavery went to the end, an irreparable crisis. The contradictions between the various classes have intensified, the slaves have risen up, the civilians have resisted one after another, and even the slave owners have split within. The senior members of the governments and the knights have also caused civil strife in order to compete for more interests. In such an era of constant social crisis and turmoil, the ruling class has fallen into a very embarrassing situation. They tried to maintain such a ruined Empire State Building, but because of the heavy burden, they were unable to do anything. From the

perspective of external social conditions, the demise of the empire is inevitable, but in order to delay the arrival of this result, they turn to the people who control the turmoil from the ideological and internal control, so the religious beliefs with broad foundation become the last life-saving straw.

At that time, the Christian culture, which had already completed its self-construction in theory, has not yet fully entered the mainstream thinking of ancient Greek and Roman society. Actually early Christianity was the product of class oppression, a religion of the poor, representing the hope of the people who were oppressed and enslaved at the time. It originated from the hard-working lower-level masses, rooted in the oppressed and hard-working people, and had deep hatred against the ruling class, so it was suppressed several times. But Christianity itself does not call on people to resist, but advocates patience, obedience, and rebellion. People are passively waiting for the arrival of the Savior. In this way, the "Millennium Kingdom" that everyone used to pin their minds moved from the ground to the sky, becoming an illusory ideal that cannot and does not have to work hard in reality. This "actually played a role in paralyzing the people's fighting spirit and laying the groundwork for the use of the rulers" [9]. The ruling class also wisely changed the use of Christianity from repression to use it to preach the "sacred authority", saying that secular rulers are arranged by "God" and that their power comes from God. If you oppose the ruler, it is the rebellion against God and will be punished. For example, in the New Testament Romans: "Everyone must obey the power of superiors, because no power is not from God, and the power of superiors is God-given, so whoever resists power is the command of God. The rebels will be punished." In the New Testament Matthew, he said, "If someone hits your right cheek, even the left cheek turns to let him fight," and in the New Testament to Peter, it exhorts people to "fear God. Respect the king, you servants, to obey your masters with complete awe, not only to obey those kind and gentle, but also to obey those violent masters." These words are naturally very useful to the ruling class, so they began to spare no effort to promote Christianity. First, in 313 A. D., two Roman emperors, Constantine and Licinius, signed the "Edict of Milan" to give Christianity a legal status. In 325, Emperor Constantine the Great convened the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, Asia Minor. After the first public consultation in the history of the church, it officially adopted the Nicaea Creed, which is considered to be "recognized universally", explicitly affirming the co-essential divinity of the Son. In 392, Emperor Theo finally conquered Christianity as the state religion. Prohibit the legal existence of other religions other than Christianity. At this point, "Christianity has become the only ideological pillar of the crumbling empire" [10]. It has also since opened the rule of Christianity in Europe for more than two thousand years.

## **5. The Needs of Human Spiritual Life**

The unification of Rome played a role in continuing to promote Greek culture, and the complementarity between Rome and the Greek spirit promoted the further development of slavery to some extent. The Roman Empire also reached his unprecedented height, but in the middle and late stages of the Roman Empire, the rich or the poor, the noble or the slaved, fell into the abyss of corruption the history had rarely seen. The whole society has also fallen into the crazy chase of lust, the Roman world is declining, and all moral directions are lost. "The cruel exploitation and suppression of the Roman ruling class has caused the increasingly strong hatred and resistance of the ruling people. The Roman war of foreign aggression and the internal struggles of power within the ruling class have been incessant for many years, which has weakened the strength and financial resources and prevented production which deepened the suffering of the people" [11]. The slaves and civilians in the lower classes lived in poverty and were extremely scarce in materiality, which led to a mental depression and frustration. But at the same time, they cannot get rid of the ruthless treatment of the ruling class. "The entire empire is full of locust-like secret agents and informants. Only because of the accusation of a casual person, once... the chief Roman aristocracy will also be tied up, escorted in a car and rushed to meet the emperor. Confiscation of property, exile, or simply execution, is seen as tolerance to him. For some unfortunate victims, Emperor will order to sew in the newly killed cow skin, while others are thrown to fierce beasts, or with sticks. Killed" [12]. At the same time, those ruling nobilities did not receive spiritual satisfaction from the material, and the

soul was still full of anxiety and despair, so indulged in carnal pleasures, drunk in wine and lust. Tacitus has described in the *Chronicles*: "The Nero emperor, he dressed himself as a slave, accompanied by a group of attendants strolling in the streets of the capital, the shops, and the wine cellars; these people secretly steal the items displayed in the shops and attack the pedestrians on the road... The night of Rome is the same as the night in a city occupied by an enemy." [13] In such an era of social turmoil and intoxication, the people began to seek the relief of the soul, the comfort of the soul, and the desire to obtain relief through various means. This kind of mentality at that time was just a convenient spiritual soil in which Judaism entered the Greek-Roman cultural circle. On the one hand, the tragic fate, the cruel reality let people "know" the "original sin" of the ancestors and caused the punishment of the people at that time, and God is seen as a way to stop the flood of human desire caused by "original sin". The savior of punishment, only God can be accepted by everyone. On the other hand, the lower class people have completely lost their confidence in the ruling class, the previous reliance on the upper level and loyalty have disappeared, so it is necessary to have another spiritual sustenance. In Christianity, idolatry is strictly prohibited, so that people no longer have to be blinded by plain humanity, and conveniently God, being mysterious and omnipotent happen to be able to fill the emptiness of the human heart and becoming a new belief.

Therefore, when the secular spirit is becoming increasingly helpless and the society is weakening, the new and sacred, and pure faith world provided by Christianity has made people see hope and become the only force that can exert social cohesion at that time. "In the sky above the collapsed Roman world, a strange voice from a distant country is ringing. This voice is so faint at first, so gentle, full of ethereal and melancholy dreams, with the sensual world of the Roman world. Roughness and violentness form a strong contrast. This distant dream song quickly touched the people who swayed in the abyss of suffering with the soothing gospel and the wonderful heavenly music. It used the ideal of idealism to fight the material of Rome. Doctrine, with an ascetic attitude towards life, resists Roman indulgence...and ultimately destroys the incomparable Roman Empire" [14].

## 6. War

There have been countless people in the world who lost their homes and land in the war-torn era and migrated everywhere. Most races have a decreasing population during the migration process, and "the rest are assimilated, so this nation does not exist. The only exception is the Jews" [6].

Jew people is a smart and intelligent crowd, but at the same time it is a disaster-ridden group. They were conquered by a number of aliens and were sent to other countries to act as slaves. They were also forced to leave their homes and flee their homeland. A Bible is a history book that records the blood and tears of the Jews for thousands of years.

For the Jews, the war has never been interrupted, and these wars have created opportunities for the exchange and integration of Hebrews with the ancient Greeks.[13] Since the Roman Empire was strong and began to expand from the fifth century B. C., Hellenism was spread more widely. The Alexander's eastward expedition is a decisive historical event. He conquered Palestine in 332 BC and incorporated Israel into his territory. In the three centuries-old conquest of the Romans, countless Jews were forced to migrate to various parts of the Mediterranean, mixed with the local people, and began to use Greek language to accept Greek culture. Because the Greeks have a very strong sense of superiority to the "barbarians", both Plato and Aristotle think it is reasonable to let the barbarians be slaves, but because Alexander's empire was too vast, it was impossible to completely distribute the troops. To rule, he decided to break this sense of superiority for political interests, in order to maintain a relatively stable relationship with the conquered nation. Therefore, he treated the alien culture more moderately and advocated intermarriage. He himself married two barbarian princesses. Therefore, the fusion of the two cultures developed rapidly in Alexander's hegemony. Here, the New Testament in the Bible is written directly in Greek, and the chapters of Ecclesiastes, Job, and Song of Songs are full of strong Greek consciousness. The erotic descriptions that have never been involved in the Old Testament shocked the world. At the same time, the emerging Greek-style metropolises have become the center of culture. The Jews in Alexandria in

Egypt are particularly Hellenized. They almost forgot the Hebrew language, so they have to translate the Old Testament into Greek.

Although Hebrew countries were conquered, the Hebrews had a strong national self-respect. They still maintained their devout faith and had revived several times, but they were conquered. Although in the early days of the Roman Empire, the period of the rise of Christianity, the reigning Antioch IV, who had forced the Hellenization, did not succeed, but led to the Maccabee uprising. Although the uprising was extinguished, it also forced the upper class to compromise. In this way, the Hebrew culture is not immersed in the strong culture of ancient Greece, and the two sides are integrated in an equal position.

## 7. Conclusion

The fusion of Hellenism and Hebraism is the result of both historical contingency and inevitability. Though different and distant from each other at the beginning, through a combination of various reasons, including wars, spiritual comfort, political help and so on, the two great human spiritual and cultural trends finally reached a balance in communication and promoted each other, eventually forming a highly rationalized religious culture of Christianity, which affected the thousands of years later. Western world.

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