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Exploring ‘Irfān ‘AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ’s Methodology in the Study of Judaism and Christianity

Fatmir Shehu *

Abstract

This paper seeks to explore the methodology used by ‘Irfān ‘AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ, a contemporary Muslim scholar and thinker, in the study of Judaism and Christianity in the light of his two masterpieces on the historical development and major teachings of these religions. The goal of this research is to study Fattāḥ’s original works. Its significance lays in extracting the most important methods deployed by him in the study of these two religions. The descriptive and analytical methods are used through the entire work. The emphasis of discussion is on: (1) Fattāḥ’s brief chronology; (2) factors behind Fattāḥ’s objective of writing on Judaism and Christianity; and (3) Fattāḥ’s methodology. The findings of this research expand the existing literature on comparative religion with the insights of the original works of Fattāḥ on Judaism and Christianity. The contemporary young scholars, who involve themselves in inter-religious studies will benefit from this work remarkably.

Keyword: ‘Irfān ‘AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ, Judaism, Christianity, objective method, descriptive method.

Introduction

The appropriate understanding of one’s own religion and the sincere intention to study other religions have enabled people to coexist peacefully in a society characterized by religious diversity. To maintain a peaceful atmosphere in today’s pluralistic society people need to equip themselves with an accurate knowledge about the tenets of their own religion and the religions of others. Therefore, the study of religion is considered to be very significant as religion is *a powerful, dynamic and comprehensive way of life and a divine dictum on which peoples’ day-to-day activities are dictated and accounted*. Such characteristics of religion have motivated in the past many intellectuals from different religious backgrounds and ideologies to study other religions and produce significant writings.

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The classical and contemporary Muslim scholars have written outstanding works on the study of other religions by using different methods. The selection and application of the methodologies were done by them based on the inspiration they got from *al-Qur'ān* and the Prophetic *Sunnah*. Regardless of the challenges faced by them, Islam taught them to be just and fair with the subject of their study related to other religions in general, and revealed religions, i.e., Judaism and Christianity, in particular. According to the content of their works, *historical, descriptive, analytical, comparative, objective, fair, critical, disputive, polemical and refutive* methods can be identified as the most useful were approaches utilized by them. They employed these methods during their times in order to ease the difficulties faced by Muslims in their relationships with the adherents of other religions.

The objective of this research paper is to *explore, revive, discuss, analyze, and understand the methodology* employed by an eminent contemporary Muslim scholar of comparative religion, 'Irfān 'AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ (1933-2007), in the study of Judaism and Christianity. According to the researcher's knowledge, there are few works about Fattāḥ's legacy on Islamic Thought and Comparative Religion. Roa Mahmoud Hussein¹ asserts that Fattāḥ perceived the notion of Islamic philosophy based on *al-Qur'ān* and *al-Sunnah* and the Islamic tenets. Fattāḥ criticized the Muslim philosophers, who were influenced by the Greek and western philosophy. Sekou Toure, Wan Mohd Azam Bin Mohd Amin and Awad al-Khalaf present in their research paper² Fattāḥ's efforts, methods, and contributions towards comparative study of religion with special reference to his work about Christianity.

Adibah Abdul Rahim³ discusses the views of Fattāḥ on the religious thought and the need for its reconstruction in order to respond to the

¹ Roa Mahmoud Hussein, "Juhūd al-Duktūr Irfān 'Abdul-Ḥamīd Fattāḥ Fī Dars al-Falsafah al-Islāmiyyah wa Naqdiḥā – Qirā'atan wa Tahlīl Naqdī (Contributions of Dr. 'Irfān 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Fattāḥ in the Study of Islamic Philosophy and its Criticism - Reading and Critical Analysis)," *Majalatu Kuliyyah al-Imām al-A'zam al-Jāmi'ah*, (2010), 385-422.

² Sekou Toure, Wan Mohd Azam Bin Mohd Amin and Awad Al-Khalaf, "Juhūd 'Irfān 'Abdul-Ḥamīd Fī Dirasāt al-Adyān: An-Naṣrāniyyah 'Anmūdhajan (Contributions of 'Irfān 'Abd al-Ḥamīd in Comparative Study of Religion: Christianity as a Case Study)," *AL-ITQĀN: Journal of Islamic Sciences and Comparative Studies*, Vol. 1:1 (2017), 69-99.

³ Adibah Abdul Rahim, "Irfan Abdul Hameed Fattah's Discourse on Religious Thought in Response to The Challenges of Modernity," *AL-ITQĀN: Journal of Islamic Sciences and Comparative Studies*, Vol. 2: 2 (2018), 41-55.

challenges posed by modernity. She asserts that Fattāḥ's arguments against the views of modern Western thinkers and philosophers are not different from the principles of Islam. In addition, Mousa Abdullah Albalawi¹ discusses the efforts of Fattāḥ in the study of Judaism. He displays the main features of Fattāḥ's methodology and sources he used in the study of Judaism. Even though these writings have contributed greatly in the study of 'Irfān 'AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ's legacy, Fattāḥ's methodology in the study of Judaism and Christianity is not discussed in a separate work.

Therefore, this research paper attempts to explore briefly the methodology used by 'Irfān 'AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ in his two masterpieces about Judaism and Christianity with a focus on: (1) Fattāḥ's brief chronology; (2) factors behind Fattāḥ's objective of writing on Judaism and Christianity; and (3) Fattāḥ's methodology. The descriptive and analytical methods are utilized throughout this research. The findings of this research contribute greatly to contemporary scholarship of comparative religion with the insights of Fattāḥ's original works on Judaism and Christianity.

In addition, Fattāḥ's masterpieces on Judaism and Christianity will teach contemporary scholars of comparative religion and especially young intellectuals and students how to use appropriate methodologies in the study of other religions, cultures, civilizations, traditions, customs, and ideologies.

Fattāḥ's Brief Chronicle

The researcher has kwon 'Irfān 'AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ [may Allah (SWT) bless his soul] personally for a period of five years during the Doctorate Programme as being his student and supervisee. Fattāḥ was an exemplary and ideal Muslim scholar especially in the field of Comparative Religion. He would not hesitate to engage himself in a mutual dialogue with Muslims and non-Muslims in order to provide appropriate solutions to their problems. He was a person with a very high Islamic character, who loved others and cared of them on the one hand, and he was loved and respected by all his students and colleagues on the other.

Furthermore, he sincerely devoted his whole life towards his academic profession in the field of Islamic Thought, Mysticism, and Comparative Religion. Besides, Fattāḥ was known for his generosity as he used to assist

¹ Mousa Abdullah M. Albalawi, *Manhaj al-Ta'lif fī al-Yahūdīyyah 'Inda Aḥmad Shalabi wa 'Irfān 'Abdul Ḥamīd: Dirāsah Muqāranah*, Baḥth Mutatalab Muqadim Liniyl Darajah al-Dukturāh Fī Kulliyyah Ma'ārif al-Waḥyī wa al-'Ulūm al-Insāniyyah. International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, (Unpublished) Completed Date: May 20, 2019.

many students by providing for them a monthly financial support from his own monthly income. In order to know more about Fattāḥ's personality, a brief chronicle about his name, family, date of birth and death, academic career and works, and administrative adventure, is of a great importance to be discussed in this section.

Fattāḥ's Name and Family Background

His full name is 'Irfān 'AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ. His works do not talk about the origin of his family, except of the Iraqi citizenship, which has been mentioned in one of his writings on "Religious Thought and the Challenges of Modernity" – *Muḥāfazah al-Ta'mīm*¹ (Governorate), the city of Kirkūk, Kurdistan-Iraq.² However, based on the information the researcher received from Fattāḥ during his lifetime, he comes from a family of Kurdish origin with strong Islamic background.

Fattāḥ's Date of Birth and Death

He was born in the city of Kirkūk on 25th of December, 1933.³ According to the researcher, *Fattāḥ* left this world on Monday, January 29, 2007, around 23:30p.m., in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, while serving as full Professor of Islamic Thought and Comparative Religion, Department of Uṣūl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion, Kulliyah of Islamic revealed Knowledge and Humans Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The funeral prayer took place in the university's Mosque - Sultan Ahmed Shah, on Tuesday, January 30, 2007 and was attended by many especially his colleagues and students. He was buried at the University's Graveyard (Kampong Sungai Pusu).

¹ Al-Ta'mīm, **Muḥāfazah** (governorate), in northeastern Iraq, created from the northern part of Kirkūk **Muḥāfazah** (governorate). It encompasses the eastern part of the alluvial plain of the Tigris River and the foothills of the Zagros Mountains. Its economy is based on petroleum and dry-farm agriculture, which produces wheat, barley, and fruits; sheep are grazed. Its capital, Kirkūk, is one of the largest oil-producing centres in Iraq and has oil pipelines that connect it with Tripoli (Lebanon) and with Yumurtalik on the Turkish Mediterranean. Area 3,737 square miles (9,679 square km). Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Al-Ta'mīm." Encyclopedia Britannica, November 29, 2011. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Al-Tamim>, accessed 12 Jun 2021.

² 'Irfān 'AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ, *Religious Thought and the Challenges of Modernity* (IUM -Kuala Lumpur: Research Centre, 2002).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Fattāh's Academic Career

He started his journey in the academia world with the completion of his secondary school in 1953. Latter he received a bachelor degree from the Department of History, Faculty of Education, Baghdad University, Iraq, for a period of five years, 1955 to 1959. He served as a teacher in a secondary school, for a period of four years, 1959 to 1962. In 1965, he completed his doctorate degree in Islamic studies at the Cambridge University. After finishing his doctorate, he worked as an academician in many universities inside Iraq as well as abroad, such as the University of Kuwait, from 1972 to 1978. *Finally*, he held the position of Professor of Islamic Thought in the International Islamic University Malaysia, from 1995¹ until he left this world in 2007. It is very significant to mention that Fattāh supervised many postgraduate students in both, Master and Doctorate Degrees in the Islamic Thought and Comparative Religion, Department of Uṣūl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion, Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia. In addition, he contributed greatly to the Department of Uṣūl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion.

His Administrative Adventure

Fattāh has been a successful administrator as he held many administrative positions throughout his life. He held the post as the Head of Department of Philosophy in the Faculty of Education, Baghdad University, for a period of ten years, 1979-1989. In addition, he was appointed as an advisor to the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs in Iraq.²

His Writings

Fattāh left behind a rich legacy on Islamic Thought, Sufism, Religious Thought, and the study of Judaism and Christianity for young scholars in the field of Islamic Thought and Comparative Religion. He participated and presented outstanding papers in many forums, seminars, and ecumenical conferences locally and internationally. He wrote 10 books and produced 24 researches and articles in the field of Islamic Thought, Mysticism, and Comparative Religion.³ Among the most significant writings of this great scholar are:

- *Athar al-Fikr al-'Iṭizālī Fī Fikr al-Shaykh al-Mufīd* (The impact of

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

Mu'tazila Thought on the thought of Sheikh al-Mufid) – *his doctorate dissertation – Cambridge University, U.K., 1965;*

- *Dirāsāt fī al-Firāq wa al-'Aqā'id al-Islāmiyyah* (Studies in Islamic Sects and Creeds), *published in various additions, 1st edition 1968, 2nd edition 1977, and 3rd edition 1984, and it has been translated to Turkish language;*

- *Al-Falsafah fī al-Islām – Dirāsah wa Naqd* (Philosophy in Islam – Study and Criticism), *1st edition 1974 and 2nd edition 1984;*

- *Nasha't al-Falsafah al-Şūfiyyah wa Taṭawuruhā fī al-Islām* (The Emergence and Development of Sufi Philosophy in Islam), *1st edition 1976 and 2nd edition 1993;*

- *Dirāsāt fī al-Fikr al-'Arabī wa al-Islāmī* (Studies in Arabic and Islamic Thought), 1992;

- *Al-Madkhal Ilā Ma'ānī al-Falsafah* (Introduction to the Meanings of Philosophy), 1993;

- *Al-Fikr al-Islāmī fī Muwājihati al-Da'wati Ilā al-Ḥiwār Bayna al-Adyān* (Islamic Thought in Encountering the Call for Dialogue between Religions), *Journal of Islam in Asia. Issue no. 1, June: 1999;*

- *Al-Naşrāniyyah: Nash'atuhā al-Tāārīkhiyyah wa Uşūl 'Aqāiduhā* (Christianity: Its Historical Growth and the Origins of Its Creeds), *1st edition 2000 and 2nd edition 2005;*

- *Al-Yahūdiyyah: 'Arḍun Tārīkhiyyi wa al-Ḥarakāt al-Ḥadīthah fī al-Yahūdiyyah* (Judaism: Its Historical Presentation and Modern Movements in Judaism), 2002;

- *Al-Fikr al-Dīnī wa Taḥad-diyyāt al-Ḥadāthah* (Religious Thought and the Challenges of Modernity), 2002;

- *Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah* (Islamic Studies), 1st edition, 2004.

In addition, he left some unpublished papers presented by him in forums and seminars. Also, Fattāḥ was well versed in Arabic, English, Turkish, and Kurdish languages.

Factors behind Fattāḥ's Objective of Writing on Judaism and Christianity

Fattāḥ considered the contemporary study of religion as an important discipline with its own distinctive features, methods, and significance. According to him, it is for the first time in the human history that the study of religion has a universal perspective. The contemporary claims on "Transcendental Unity of Religions," "Religious Pluralism," and "Inter-Faith Institutions," do not allow religious thought to be any longer

in a splendid isolation, or in a sealed compartment.¹ The main factors behind Fattāḥ's objective of writing on Judaism and Christianity are shown as follow:

The First Factor

It is the Islamic general ruling on: (1) common humanity rooted in common human nature; and, (2) universal human kinship.² This is supported by the *Qur'ānic* Verse: "*O mankind!*³ *We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other).*" (al-Ḥujurāt: 13).⁴

The Second Factor

It is the Divine and Infallible origin of religion, regardless of how its followers represent it.⁵ Although Jews, Christians, and Muslims, have differences in their perception of God, all of them believe in the Oneness of God, Who revealed Himself to humanity through Revelation communicated by all His prophets. However, the originality of *al-Dīn* (the revealed way of life assigned by God to every human being) has been distorted and altered by both Jewish and Christian communities as well as other religious communities. The history of Christianity has witnesses during the 19th century different attempts done by certain Christian theologians to change Christianity back to its first origin.⁶

The Last Factor

It is the western legacy of the study of religion that emerged as a result of the clashes between science and religion. The western scholars in their scientific study of religion used various methods that studied religion, its norms and values one by one and not as a whole. Their views on religion were affected by Darwin's theory of "Organic Evolution".⁷ Indeed, these three main factors have motivated Fattāḥ and other contemporary

¹ See, 'Irfān 'Abdulḥamīd Fattāḥ, *al-Naṣrāniyyah: Nash'atuhā al-Tārīkhiyyah wa Uṣūl 'Aqā'iduhā* (Mālīziyā: Dār al-Tajdīd, 2nd ed., 2005), p. 11.

² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³ The term "mankind" includes all humanity even though they differ among one another in terms of race, colour, culture, location, beliefs and classes.

⁴ Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1989).

⁵ See, Fattāḥ, *al-Naṣrāniyyah: Nash'atuhā al-Tārīkhiyyah wa Uṣūl 'Aqā'iduhā*, p. 17.

⁶ See, *Ibid.*

⁷ See, *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Muslim scholars to study other religions. It can be argued that the last factor had a great impact on the scientific study of religion as the methodologies used by most of western scholars deprived religion of its real sense of spirituality and sacredness.

Their methodologies were based on the areas of their expertise, which led to the development of various major disciplines. Among the most useful methodologies, are: (1) *Philosophy of Religion*¹; (2) *Anthropology of Religion*; (3) *Sociology of Religion*; (4) *Psychology of Religion*, and *Phenomenology of Religion*.³ In addition, most of these methodologies evaluated religion(s) from their own point of view. They claimed that religions are product of religious communities instead of Divine. They studied religions through religious communities, i.e., the way they practiced religions.

It can be argued that they might be right as some of religious communities do not live according to the teachings of their religion(s), or might be wrong as many other religious communities live based on what is taught by their religion(s). Religion is not a part of one's culture as claimed by the scholars of these methodologies; rather, it is a way of life as religious people govern all their affairs based on the teachings of religion(s). Therefore, it is unfair to use such general view on the study religion(s) scientifically.

Fattāḥ's Methodology in the Study of Judaism and Christianity

'Irfān 'AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ's methodology in the study of Judaism and Christianity is discussed in this section. Fattāḥ is considered among contemporary Muslim scholars, who took the initiative to revive the methodologies used by many classical and contemporary scholars of comparative religion scholarship in their writings about other religions. Therefore, he produced two splendid masterpieces on the historical background and the main teachings of both Judaism and Christianity, which are very important writings related to contemporary field of comparative religion. His methodology in the study of these two religions would be understood in the light of a brief description about the content of these two works, which is then followed by a discussion on his methodology.

¹ John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1st ed., 1990).

² William L. Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction* (Belmont: Wadsworth Pub, 1993).

³ Hillary Rodrigues and John S. Harding, *Introduction to the Study of Religion* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2009).

The Content of Fattāḥ's Masterpieces on Judaism and Christianity

Fattāḥ's book on Judaism - *al-Yahūdiyyah: 'Arḍun Tārīkhiyyi wa al-Ḥarakāt al-Ḥadīthah fī al-Yahūdiyyah* (Judaism: Its Historical Presentation and Modern Movements in Judaism),¹ consists of three hundred and twenty-one (321) pages. It starts with a foreword and an introduction. It contains two main parts. *First Part* consists of five chapters that discuss the historical presentation of Judaism. *Chapter One* explores Judaism as it is seen and believed by its own people. *Chapter Two* provides a brief history of the children of Israel. *Chapter Three* talks about the Holy Books of the Jews; the Old Covenant in light of contemporary scientific investigation as it is viewed by its scholars; the Talmud; and the pillars of the Jewish religion. *Chapter Four* explains Jewish doctrines as well as traditional and contemporary sects, such as Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, Karaites, Samaritans, Kabbalah, Ashkenazim, and Sephardim.

Chapter Five deals with the issues related to religious life of the Jews, namely: (1) the identification of Jewish identity; (2) the permissible and forbidden rules; (3) family life; and (4) religious holidays and celebrations, like Passover, Sukkoth, Shavuoth, Yum Kippur, and Purim. *Second Part* discusses modern movements in Judaism based on a chapter taken from the book "Judaism: A Historical Presentation" of the Jewish Rabbi Isidor Epstein, which is translated by Fattāḥ and considered as a conclusion for his book. *Finally*, Fattāḥ provides an index of all Hebrew terms used in his book, bibliography and table of contents.

Fattāḥ's book on Christianity - *al-Naṣrāniyyah: Nash'atuhā al-Tārīkhiyyah wa Uṣūl 'Aqāiduhā* (Christianity: Its Historical Growth and the Origins of Its Creeds),² comprises three hundred and four (304) pages and contains ten different chapters. *Chapter One* includes a general introduction about the methodologies used in the comparative study of religion. *Chapter Two* deals with an important subject related to the Messiah, i.e., Jesus (p.b.u.h.), his birth, his upbringing, and his tragic end. *Chapter Three* discusses the Christian scripture – the Bible/The New Testament and its canonization. *Chapter Four* talks about Jesus (p.b.u.h.) and the Judaism of his time. *Chapter Five* deals with the main periods related to the general history of Christianity.

Chapter Six address issues that concern the religious councils of Christianity. *Chapter Seven* focuses on the monastic orders. *Chapter*

¹ See, 'Irfān 'AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ, *al-Yahūdiyyah: 'Arḍun Tārīkhiyyi wa al-Ḥarakāt al-Ḥadīthah fī al-Yahūdiyyah* ('Ummān: Dār 'Ammār, 1st ed., 2002).

² 'Irfān 'AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ, *al-Naṣrāniyyah: Nash'atuhā al-Tārīkhiyyah wa Uṣūl 'Aqāiduhā* (Mālīziyā: Dār al-Tajdīd, 2nd ed., 2005).

Eight explores the seven Christian Sacraments, i.e., Eucharist, Baptism, Confession, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Holy Marriage, and Anointing of the Sick. *Chapter Nine* covers the Christian reformation movements, which started during the sixteenth century. *Chapter Ten* elaborates the changes that did take place in Christianity from the time of Protestant Reformation until today. Fattāḥ provides at the end of each chapter his views and comments related to each topic discussed in every chapter. He concludes his masterpiece on Christianity with a comprehensive bibliography that includes sources written by different scholars in both Arabic and English languages.

Fattāḥ's Methodology:

The researcher observes that Fattāḥ has used a *scholarly-descriptive-objective-neutral* methodology in his writings about Judaism and Christianity, which is of a historical nature. According to him, the appropriate utilization of this method will enable people of different religious backgrounds to equip themselves with the right knowledge about the nature and characteristics of others' religious doctrines and creeds.¹

Fattāḥ has made a great effort to be *fair, moderate, neutral, and objective* in the study of both Judaism and Christianity. He provides a historical development and growth of each religion's major doctrines starting from the early age of their foundations till contemporary times. In the writing of these two masterpieces, Fattāḥ avoids the use of *argumentative, disputative, defensive and apologetic methods*,² which were used by most of classical and some Muslim and other scholars of comparative religion.

He urges Muslims to adapt themselves to the Islamic norms in dealing with others especially the People of the Book, Jews and Christians, which is to: (1) *understand and accept them as they are and why they are so; and (2) avoid imposing subjective, normative claims in the form of why they are not*. In other words, they have to replace the monopolistic methodology of the early Muslim scholars, which was built on *refutation versus justification*, with a better methodology based on *moderation, objectiveness and fairness*.³ In this sense, this approach will enable Muslims to study other religions as they are presented by their adherents with a special reference to the works written by their own scholars.

¹See, *Ibid.*, 11.

²See, Fattāḥ, *al-Naṣrāniyyah: Nash'atuhā al-Tārīkhiyyah wa Uṣūl 'Aqāiduhā*, 13&17.

³'Irfān 'AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ, *Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah*:2 (Mālīziyā: Dār al-Tajdīd, 1st ed., 2004), pp. 307-308.

Fattāḥ views that the fair utilization of *scholarly-descriptive-objective-neutral* methodology in the study of other religions will take place only if Muslims adapt themselves to the following rulings:

- to *commence an openness* with the followers of other religions, who believe in One God, on the Judgment Day, and do good deeds, which ought to be consistent with the *Qur'ānic* stance and the Prophetic way of conduct;
- to *recognize the purpose of al-Qur'ān* through its twin stances: *confirmation and ratification*, otherwise, its coming after the Torah and Gospel becomes insignificant;
- to *acknowledge the eternal Qur'ānic attitude of honouring* the children of Adam as the family of God regardless of their languages, races, cultures, or religious convictions;¹ and,
- to *build their stance towards others* on foundations that maintain the *human dignity* in every aspect of life, and not on the foundations of *militant dogmatic confrontation*.²

Fattāḥ's use of *scholarly-descriptive-objective-neutral methodology* is very apparent in both of his writings and it is explained as follow:

Firstly, his *scholarly approach* is shown in the selection of the titles for his writings, which are: (1) **Judaism**: “إِلْهُودِيَّةٌ: عَرَضٌ تَارِيخِي وَالْحَرَكَاتُ الْحَدِيثَةُ فِي”

إِلْهُودِيَّةٌ – *al-Yahūdiyyah*: ‘Arḍun Tārīkhiyyi wa al-Ḥarakāt al-Ḥadīthah fī al-Yahūdiyyah (Judaism: Its Historical Presentation and Modern Movements in Judaism); and (2) **Christianity**: “النَّصْرَانِيَّةُ: نَشَأَتُهَا التَّارِيخِيَّةُ وَأَصُولُ عَقَائِدِهَا” – *al-Naṣrāniyyah*: Nash’atuhā al-Tārīkhiyyah wa Uṣūl ‘Aqā’iduhā (Christianity: Its Historical Growth and the Origins of Its Creeds).

The projection of such unique titles reveals the creativity of Fattāḥ in the selection and design of the topics that are very convincing and attractive in nature. In addition, he has been very careful in the selection of appropriate topics, which encompasses the historical development of both, Judaism and Christianity, where each religion’s growth of main doctrinal teachings and practices and development of classical and contemporary sects are presented.

Secondly, the nature of his methodology has been mentioned by him in

¹ See, Ibid., 321-325, and ‘Irfān ‘AbdulḤamīd Fattāḥ, “al-Fikr al-Islāmī fī Muwājiḥati al-Da‘wati Ilā al-Ḥiwār Bayna al-Adyān,” *Journal of Islam in Asia*. No. 1, (1999), pp. 85-89.

² See, Fattāḥ, *al-Naṣrāniyyah: Nash’atuhā al-Tārīkhiyyah wa Uṣūl ‘Aqā’iduhā*, p. 12.

the introductions of his books. This is made very clear in his sayings about:

(1) **Judaism** – “القسم الأول: يقدم عرضاً وصفيّاً لتاريخ اليهود...”¹; and (2) **Christianity** – “وهذا المنهج السّويّ القائم على دراسة عقائد الآخرين الدّينيّة، دراسةً

– وصفيّة علميّة، وموضوعيّة – محايدة...
'Alā Dirāsati 'Aqā'id al-Ākharīn ad-Dīniyyah, Dirāsatan Waṣfiyyatan 'Ilmiyyatan, wa Mawḍū'iyyatan-Muḥādadan - This standard methodology based on the study of others' religious creeds, it is a *scholarly-descriptive-study* and an *objective-neutral one*".²

The terms used by Fattāḥ to describe his methodology are very exclusive as they portray the very nature of the discussion used by him in the content of his works. This methodology enables him to avoid injustice that might take place if he uses the evaluation approach in light of his Islamic identity. Although he has used supportive information from the writings of classical and contemporary Muslim scholars, he has maintained the Islamic objective approach in the entire of his discussion.

Thirdly, Fattāḥ's *fair application* of his methodology in his writings about Judaism and Christianity is displayed through the entire content of his two masterpieces. This is shown especially through Fattāḥ's use of authentic sources in his works as he has referred to the most authentic classical and contemporary writings about the two religions produced by Jewish and Christian theologians and other scholars related to this subject.³ In addition, Fattāḥ has cited from the content of Jewish and Christian scriptures, the Old Testament and the New Testament, in Arabic and English versions, which are considered as the prior sources in the study of these two religions.⁴ Besides, this proves Fattāḥ's thoughtful understanding of Judaism and Christianity.

It is remarked from the above comprehensive discussion on Fattāḥ's methodology used in the study of Judaism and Christianity that his Islamic identity has not made him to utilize exclusive approach towards the teachings of these two religions. Rather, the content of his writings

¹ Fattāḥ, *al-Yahūdiyyah: 'Arḍun Tārīkhiyyī wa al-Ḥarakāt al-Ḥadīthah fī al-Yahūdiyyah*, p. 5.

² See, Fattāḥ, *al-Naṣrāniyyah: Nash'atuhā al-Tārīkhiyyah wa Uṣūl 'Aqāiduhā*, p. 11.

³ See, Fattāḥ, *al-Naṣrāniyyah: Nash'atuhā al-Tārīkhiyyah wa Uṣūl 'Aqāiduhā*, pp. 293-304, and Fattāḥ, *al-Yahūdiyyah: 'Arḍun Tārīkhiyyī wa al-Ḥarakāt al-Ḥadīthah fī al-Yahūdiyyah*, pp. 309-319.

⁴ See, *Ibid.*,

reveals Fattāḥ's high Islamic character in the light of *al-Qur'ān* and the Prophetic *Sunnah*, which made him to maintain objectiveness in dealing with this subject.

Conclusion

This paper has arrived at the conclusion that Fattāḥ's *scholarly-descriptive-objective-neutral methodology*, which is utilized in his two masterpieces about Judaism and Christianity, provides the best platform to be used by contemporary scholars of comparative religion. The appropriate utilization of this methodology is necessary as it provides better understanding of the religious norms and teachings of both religions. Fattāḥ's writings on these two revealed religions have greatly contributed to the field of comparative religion. His fair methodology in dealing with the historical development and doctrinal issues of Judaism and Christianity has made him to achieve fruitful findings in his works and to construct a new way of dealing with this subject of comparative religion and religious thought. Fattāḥ's high Islamic awareness, which is to treat others with Allah (SWT)'s Divine Justice and the Prophet (SAWS)'s exemplary attitude, has greatly inspired him to maintain objectiveness and fairness in his excellent research works about these two religions. His approach will motivate contemporary young scholars in the field of comparative religion to change their attitudes from that of disputative and apologetic to objective and fairness. Also, it will help them to distinguish between the teachings of their own religion(s) and the teachings of other religion(s) and promote better understanding and peaceful coexistence.

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