

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Similarities and Differences

Tina M. Allen-Abulhassan, James Moore
Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN, USA

This paper will explore the common origins and developments of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, known as the Abrahamic faiths. Drawing on the references of F. E. Peters and Huston Smith, this paper examines how these traditions are unified by monotheism, reverence for sacred scripture, and ethical principles, yet dives in their historical narratives, interpretations of covenant, and worship practices. Spiritual figures such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad are analyzed for their roles in shaping theology and guiding communities of faith. The study highlights the Torah, Bible, and Qur'an as sources of authority and identity, while comparing moral teachings and ritual expressions across the traditions. An emphasis is placed on the shared values and theological differences that have shaped both dialogue and conflict. Ultimately, the paper demonstrates how understanding these faiths together deepens insight into their enduring influence on culture, spirituality, and human history.

Keywords: Abrahamic faiths, Bible, Covenant, ethics, monotheism, Qur'an, Torah, prophets, sacred texts, worship

Introduction

F. E. Peters, author of *The Children of Abraham*, observes that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all worship the same God. Jews refer to God as Yahweh or Elohim; Christians as God the Father; and Muslims as Allah. All three believe that the same God created humans in his image, made a covenant with Abraham, sent instructions and warnings, and permitted punishment for their enemies. While these three major faiths that serve the same God share similarities, they are also quite different. This paper will examine the similarities and differences among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

People of the Book

According to Peters, Jews, Christians, and Muslims are "People of the Book". In Judaism and Islam, the belief is that God gave Moses the Law, or Torah. Peters explains that Jews do not write the New Testament and therefore do not hold the writings in high regard. To Jews, the Gospels are seen as the deeds and words of Christ recorded by His followers. In contrast, Christians view Jesus as the "Good News". His birth and death established a new covenant, a promise from God. The New Testament is a fulfillment of the Old Testament, holding many prophecies that needed to be fulfilled for the scriptures to be completed. However, Islam does not recognize the New Testament as a valid source of truth about the Gospels or the salvation brought through Christ.

Mohammad never mentions the New Testament in his writings but refers to the gospels, which are called "Injil" in Arabic (Peters, 2004, p. 3). Unlike Jews, Mohammad believed that the New Testament was a book written by Christ, just as Moses wrote the Torah. Mohammad was convinced that the Torah and the Old

Tina M. Allen-Abulhassan, Master of Liberal Studies (MALS), Graduate Student paper, Dept of Theology, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN, USA.

James Moore, M.Div., Ph.D., Professor of Theology, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN, USA.

Testament had become distorted and claimed that Allah revealed a new message, known as the Quran, along with messages delivered by the angel Gabriel over 22 years. The Quran was completed after Mohammad's death.

The Promise and the Heirs

The Promise and the Heirs—both the Bible and the Quran discuss creation and share similar stories of Adam, Eve, and Noah. Both agree on the story of Sarah being unable to have children, leading Sarah to allow Hagar to have a child with Abraham in hopes of having a son. Hagar, Sarah's mistress, gave birth to Ishmael, Abraham's firstborn. Sarah then told Hagar to leave Abraham's tent because of her jealousy towards Hagar. Hagar and her son Ishmael wandered into the desert but did not die. God promised that Ishmael would become a great nation, which is believed to be the Arab nation. Arabs know that both Ishmael (Abraham's first son) and Abraham helped build the Kaaba in Mecca, which is called the house of God (Peters, 2004, pp. 8-9). This is where Muslims perform their annual pilgrimage.

Peters informs us that Abraham had a second son named Isaac, whom Sarah conceived as the Lord had promised. The descendants of Isaac were to be the chosen people to live in the Promised Land. God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, to demonstrate his obedience to the Lord. This was confusing for Abraham after God promised to make his descendants as numerous as the stars. Abraham showed his obedience by placing Isaac on the altar to be slain. However, the Angel of the Lord stopped him and told him not to harm his son because he had proven his obedience and loyalty to God. Through Abraham's faith and obedience, God establishes a covenant with him.

Peters asks a question about the covenant made with Abraham and the rewards promised to his heirs, but who exactly are the heirs? Jews, Christians, and Muslims all claim they are the true inheritors of the promise.

Jews claimed the Covenant as their own by reason of both their linear descent from Abraham by his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob. The Christians, for their part, contend that, as God had forewarned, the promise had been redrawn as a New Covenant and they were its heirs through their faith in God's son, Jesus, the Messiah. Muslims, finally, claim the inheritance not so much by supersession, as the Christians do, as by a return to the pristine form of monotheism, the original religion of Abraham. (Peters, 2004, p. 21)

Christians follow the New Testament and Paul's letters. The New Testament begins with the four gospels, each telling a story of events from Jesus' life. These accounts include his baptism, temptation, teachings, divorce, prayer, forgiveness, fasting, judging, healing, exorcism, parables, miracles, warnings, and wisdom (Peters, 2004, p. 23). The teachings Jesus shared were meant not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. It is often asked what defines a Jew. Peters explains what a Jew is. This was the Pharisaic answer to a question about the identity of a Jew.

A Jew was someone who observed the law, both the written Torah given to Moses and the unwritten law, the tradition of the Fathers, that dated back to the same period and had the same authority, and whose interpreters were the rabbis. (Peters, 2004, pp. 45-46)

History of Mohammad

The Islamic faith is described as a "peaceful" or "surrender", with surrendering one's life to God as the core belief of a Muslim. Muslims assert that Islam began with God, not Muhammad (Smith, 1991, p. 146). According to the Quran, Hagar's son Ishmael traveled to Mecca, and his descendants thrived in Arabia, becoming Muslims. Meanwhile, Isaac's descendants stayed in Palestine, known as the Hebrews and later as Jews. In Islam, Muhammad is regarded as the last prophet, the seal of the prophets. Muhammad was said to be initially ignorant.

He was born into a prominent tribe, the Quraysh, in Mecca in 570 A.D. His parents died when he was young, and he was raised by his uncle. The story goes that God's angels opened Muhammad's heart, filling it with light and making Muhammad sensitive to the suffering of others. Muhammad later started a caravan business. At age 25, he married a wealthy widow named Khadija.

After 15 years of marriage to Khadija, Muhammad entered a cave on a mountain on the outskirts of Mecca. He was confronted by the desert Jinn. Here, he found Allah, who was worshiped by the Meccans. Muhammad became convinced that Allah was the God. He received his call around 610 A.D. An angel appeared to him in the form of a man and said, "Proclaim in the name of your Lord who created man from blood coagulated! Proclaim: your Lord is wondrous kind, who teaches by the pen, things men know not, being blind." (Koran 96:1-3; Smith, 1991, p. 149).

The Meccan leaders did not accept Muhammad's teachings. He gained few converts in his first three years of ministry. His preaching was aimed at those who were evil, urging them to leave their wicked ways and prepare for the day of reckoning. After some time of rejection, he gained a few followers from people described as "energy, talent, and worth" who became convinced of the truth of his message. Several families started to see him as Allah's spokesman. The Meccans still wanted nothing to do with Muhammad and hoped to stop his preaching (Smith, 1991, p. 151).

Muhammad's teachings gained popularity among pilgrims and visitors to Mecca. As his influence increased, so did the anger of the Meccans. While Muhammad lived in Medina, he took on an additional role—an administrative one. He lived in a simple clay house, milked his own goats, and welcomed people at all times. It was said that it was very difficult not to develop love for Muhammad. He was even gentle and merciful toward his enemies.

The Kabba is said to have been built by Abraham, which Muhammad rededicated to Allah and consecrated as Islam's geographical center. He accepted the city's mass conversion (Smith, 1991, p. 153). Muhammad died with Arabia knowing him as God's spokesman. His followers conquered Armenia, Persia, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, North Africa, and Spain. Today, over a fifth of the world's population has turned to Islam (Smith, 1991, p. 153).

Islam: Quran

The Quran: Judges the Old and New Testaments as having two flaws from which it, itself, is free. For circumstantial reasons, the Hebrew and Christian Bibles record only parts of Truth. Second, they were partially corrupted during transmissions, which explains the occasional discrepancies between their accounts and parallel ones in the Quran. (Smith, 1991, p. 154)

According to Huston Smith, author of *World's Religions*, some Islamic theological concepts that are familiar to Christianity and Judaism include God, Creation, Human Self, and the Day of Judgment. Muslims are monotheists in Islam, while Jewish teachings were historically confined to the people of Israel. Christian monotheism was also influenced by the deification of Christ (Smith, 1991, p. 157). Smith points out that the Quran honors Jesus as only a prophet born of the Virgin Mary. Islam does not accept the Trinity, which Christians identify as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Both Islam and Christianity hold the belief in original sin, which was inherited from the fall when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. As seen in Judaism and Christianity, God provided a way for humans to seek forgiveness for their sinful nature. In Judaism, this involved animal sacrifices, while in Christianity, Christ came to intercede on humanity's behalf by shedding His blood on the cross as a means for forgiveness and reconciliation with God. Islam has embraced the Five Pillars of Islam, which are good deeds aimed at seeking eternal paradise.

The Five Pillars of Islam

Islam suggests walking the straight path; “Guide us in the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast poured forth the grace.” (Smith, 1991, p. 160). Christianity speaks of the straight path as well. In Luke 3:4 John the Baptist says, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight.”¹ According to Islam, Smith tells us that:

God’s revelation to humankind as great stages: To Abraham, God revealed the truth of monotheism; To Moses, the Ten Commandments; and to Jesus, the Golden rule. The Quran Golden rule is known as the five pillars of Islam to establish guidelines in two sections. The first section regulates a personal relationship with God. And the next section will speak of the Qurans social teachings. (Smith, 1991, p. 160)

Smith notes the five pillars of Islam as:

- (1) The first pillar is known as the shahadah, which says, “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet.”
- (2) The second is performing five prayers a day towards Mecca (it is said that Moses and Muhammad debated the number of prayers from fifty to five).
- (3) Charity is the third pillar, which is two and a half percent of one’s holdings.
- (4) The fourth pillar is Ramadan—Every Muslim fasts for 30 days each year.
- (5) The final pillar is pilgrimage to Mecca, only if the Muslim is healthy or financially able to make the journey.

The first pillar Muslims must declare, “There is no God but God, and Muhammad is God’s prophet.” The second pillar is prayer. Both Jews and Muslims face toward Jerusalem during prayer until their relationship was strained. The third pillar of Islam is giving alms, called zakat, which is 2% of one’s income. Islam teaches that prayers are useless if you are not giving alms to help the poor or the needy. The fourth pillar of Islam is fasting. Fasting is observed on specific days. If someone is sick or traveling, they can delay fasting until they are able. During the month of Ramadan, according to the Quran, the moon signals the start of the fast. During fasting, Muslims are forbidden from having sexual relations with their wives, eating or drinking, smoking tobacco, or using profanity until the sun sets and the fast is broken. The fifth pillar of Islam is performing a pilgrimage to Mecca as a one-time life journey (Van Voorst, 2013, pp. 322-323). Although pilgrimage is a one-time event, many Muslims perform Hajj more than once in their lifetime.

The Social Teachings of Islam

The social teachings of Islam are centered around four areas of Islamic law, and these social teachings can also be found in Judaism as well as Christianity.

Economics. Islam does not oppose profit motives, economic competition, or entrepreneurial initiatives except for interest. Interest is viewed as earning income without work, which is considered forbidden in Islam. The Bible also has several scriptures discussing the topic of interest, such as Deuteronomy 23:19-20, Leviticus 25:37, and Luke 19:20-23. These scriptures emphasize the unfairness of charging interest.

The Status of Women. Due to the plurality of wives, Islam has been accused of degrading women. Women are included in inheritance but with a smaller share than men. However, women have equal rights to education, voting, and employment as men. In marriage, a woman gives her consent to marry. Women often enter into

¹ Bible-Luke 3:4

arranged marriages. Islam permits mutual divorce by both husband and wife. Usually, there is a dowry for the wife in case of divorce, serving as security so she is not left penniless. However, the Quran does support polygyny, with certain conditions. The Quran states, “If you cannot deal equitably and justly with [more than one wife], you shall marry only one.” (Smith, 1991, p. 167) Most Muslims practice monogamy, believing it’s difficult to equally share affection, finances, or attention among multiple wives. Muslim women veil their faces to protect themselves from exposing their silhouette. The Quran suggests, “Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks closely round them when they go abroad” (33:59) (Smith, 1991, p. 167). The Bible suggests similar dress codes found in 1 Timothy 2:9-10, where the apostle Paul emphasizes modesty, decency, and propriety for those professing to be true worshippers of God. Deuteronomy 22:5 also addresses dress codes for both men and women in Judaism.

Race Relations. Muslims welcome interracial marriages when they consider the example of Hagar and Abraham. When Malcolm X discovered that Muslims disregarded skin color and did not embrace racism within their religious sect, he was impressed (Smith, 1991, p. 168).

Judaism and Christianity Speak to Race Relations. In Deuteronomy 10:17, Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11, Ephesians 6:9, race relations are addressed in these scriptures, highlighting that God shows no partiality, favoritism, or respect of persons. All are created and loved in God’s eyes. Both Matthew 25 and John 13:34 emphasize loving others with high standards and remind us that what we do for the least of His brothers, we do for Him.

Globally, Muslims are 1.6 Billion. One out of five or six people is Muslim, whereas Judaism has about 13 million, and Christianity has 2.2 billion.

The Origins of Islam

Peters discusses the origins of Islam to understand how it developed. Peters points out that the Quran is not a historical document but an unconditioned revelation of God’s will for mankind, expressed by God Himself. Conversely, Western scholars view Islam less as God’s direct revelation and more as a reflection of Muhammad’s religious mission, often constructing a biography of the Prophet of Islam as part of their interpretation (Peters, 2004, p. 31). Peters highlights that non-Muslim scholars reflect modern Western attitudes of reconstructing the past, especially after early Muslims developed a biography of Muhammad. Regarding Christians, who see Jesus as the Messiah with teachings in the gospels of the New Testament, Muslims regard Muhammad as a prophet who conveyed God’s words in the Quran. However, “whose other words and deeds, though important for understanding the Quran and the direction of the Muslim community, are not immediate instruments of salvation,” (Peters, 2004, p. 32) making their significance different.

Peters compares the life of Christ to the life of Muhammad. The life of Christ was “played out against a Palestinian and, with increasing insistence, a Galilean background of which we have an ever more detailed and concrete understanding.” (Peters, 2004, p. 32). Peters highlights the evidence of uncovering the very streets and deserts Jesus traveled in Jerusalem and around Galilee. Peters argues, “Nothing remotely like this is available for sixth and seventh century western Arabia or for the town of Mecca in its midst.” He further states that there is valid evidence that is not seen in regard to the Islamic faith.

No contemporary Josephus has written its history, no Bedouin has found sealed scrolls in nearby caves, no archaeologist has turned over even some spadeful of its soil. We have only later Muslim recollections, or imaginings, of that time and a different place—Baghdad—and of a different milieu—the cosmopolitan capital of a great political and religious empire called “the Abode of Islam. (Peters, 2004, p. 32)

Peters further compares the Quran to similar texts from both Jewish and Christian traditions. He mentions throughout the Quran, there are passages about the “Garden of Eden” and the “Virgin Birth” of “Isa ibn Miryam”, which can be described as “Biblical”. Peters goes on to say the accurate conclusion is that,

Some Jewish, Christian, or Jewish-Christian influence was at work here. Muslims, equally sensibly, reject this. For the Muslim, it is a core belief that Muhammad had absolute originality, far from texts or informants, and was in communication with God alone. (Peters, 2004, pp. 32-33)

Peters points out that if Muhammad delivered the Quran without the teachings of other earlier faith books or stories, “the same issue merely surfaces in a different form.” (Peters, 2004, p. 33). Peters argues, how could the Muslim audience in early seventh-century Mecca develop an understanding of the Quran’s references to Abraham, Moses, Jesus, as well as other prophets without some “familiarity—oral, certainly, not textual—with biblical material and related Apocrypha?” (Peters, 2004, p. 33). Peters’ notes, “And where and how would they acquire such knowledge” (Peters, 2004, p. 33)? We cannot readily answer our own question. Mecca remains an almost closed book. Peters poses a critical question about the accuracy and credibility of Muhammad’s message. One of the questions posed is, “How, then, does the historian, Muslim or non-Muslim, proceed?” Peters’ inquiries challenge the text of the Quran and highlight the difficulty of reading it chronologically; because of this, the Quran could be best read from the end to the beginning (Peters, 2004, p. 33). Peters sees the results of the arranged Suras as how Muhammad’s audience heard them, connecting his revelations with the events of Muhammad’s life. Peters continues, “We have a very rough idea of the chronological order of the Suras, and if they are laid lightly and cautiously, like a template, on the earliest preserved biography of the Prophet, it is possible to sketch life.” (Peters, 2004, p. 33).

History of Jesus: Christianity

Houston Smith provides an analysis of the historical Jesus. Smith shows that the Christian faith revolves around the life of Jesus. He tells readers that Jesus was born in Palestine around 4 B.C. and grew up in Nazareth. Jesus was baptized by John to declare the coming of God’s judgment. Christ’s ministry was focused on teaching the good news, healing, and performing miracles for about three years before his crucifixion.

Like Muhammad as seen in the Islamic faith, Jesus also had a life outside of his ministry years, but what was it? Smith tells us that Jesus was a charismatic wonder-worker dating back to Jewish history. When Jesus stood in the temple, he was seen by his followers as he said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... today this scripture has been fulfilled.” (Smith, 1991, p. 206). Smith alludes to an important historical fact about Jesus’ career: he stood among Spirit-filled mediators. His first mediator was John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus. After Jesus’ baptism, his spiritual eyes were opened to see into the spiritual realm. The Spirit of God then led Jesus into the wilderness where he fasted and prayed for forty days and was tempted by Satan. After Jesus’ time in the wilderness with God, he was now empowered to undertake the ministry assigned to Him by God.

Smith points out that Jesus was closest to the Pharisees. Smith states, “The Pharisees stressed Yahweh’s holiness while Jesus emphasized Yahweh’s compassion. The difference seems small at first, but in reality, it proved too big for a single religion to hold.” (Smith, 1991, p. 209). The Pharisees were seen as devout and holy, but Jesus could not accept the boundaries that the holiness program created between people (Smith, 1991, p. 209). This radicalism of the Pharisees divided people into categories of “clean and unclean, pure and defiled, sacred and profane, Jew and Gentile, and righteous and sinner.” (Smith, 1991, p. 209). Jesus viewed these divisions as

barriers to Yahweh's compassion and therefore disregarded the Pharisees' teachings. His rejection of their teachings drew the attention of the Roman authorities, which led to Jesus's arrest and death.

Jewish History

Smith points out that the Jewish historical significance is based on the context of life and how life is lived. Second, if the context has significance, so does social action, which involves working together through planning, organizing, and acting. Third, the Jewish history is governed by God with nothing happening accidentally. Finally, Jewish history is essential from Abraham's call and the Exodus. Smith points to scripture and tells us that Abraham was obedient to Yahweh's call and became the first Hebrew, the first of a "chosen people" (Smith, 1991, p. 186).

Smith states, "The Jews established history as both important and subject to review. For the Jews, history was always in tension between Yahweh's intentions and man's failure to cooperate with those intentions." (Smith, 1991, p.186). Consequently, Judaism has served as the foundation for social conscience, a hallmark of Western civilization. Smith highlights that the prophets set the pattern of the Jewish tradition. Smith states, "protected by religious sanctions, the Hebrew prophets were a reforming political force which history has never surpassed, and perhaps never again equaled." (Smith, 1991, p. 186).

Miracles

Muslims today do not mention Muhammad's name without first blessing his name. The word Quran means recitation. This was the only miracle God had worked through him. The language of the Quran came to Muhammad in reverberating bells, which became a voice that identified itself as Gabriel. The words spoken to Muhammad were recorded on bones, bark, leaves, and scraps of parchment, with God preserving their accuracy (Smith, 1991, p. 154).

In Judaism and Christianity, many miracles are performed. In Judaism, miracles are seen when God works wonders through Moses to free the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, where they had been held for over 400 years. In the Torah, these miracles include Moses using the rod given by God to bring plagues, part the Red Sea, and close it again, as well as God providing manna from heaven. In Christianity, miracles are viewed as God's wondrous works through Jesus to reveal His glorious power. These include opening the eyes of the blind, healing the sick, casting out demons, feeding the multitudes, freeing captives, and more.²

Worship--Islam, Judaism, and Christianity

F. E. Peter highlights the confusion of Jesus across the three faiths. Christianity presents Jesus in the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which are called the "Good News" of Jesus the Messiah. The Gospels narrate the events in the life of the historical Christ, who performed miracles, cures, healings, and raised the dead (Peters, 2004, p. 23). Jesus' teachings are found in parables, which tell stories of everyday life as examples of Christian ethics and virtues. Essential Christian practices, like baptism and the Eucharist, have become crucial rituals. The death of Christ is seen as a sacrificial act for mankind to reconcile with a Holy God.

Without the shedding of blood from a lamb without blemish, reconciliation with God was impossible for a sinful nature³ (Peter, 2004, p. 19). Jesus' baptism was necessary to reveal his dual nature—being both fully man

² Book of Exodus, the N.T.

³ Exodus 12:15.

and fully God. This is evident after Jesus rises from the baptism water and the Holy Spirit descends on him, demonstrating his divine attributes. Jesus chose 12 disciples to follow him and preach the “Ethics of Social Justice and compassion.” (Peters, 2004, p. 25). Prophet Isaiah also foretold the coming of the suffering Messiah, depicted as the despised servant without beauty who died and shed his blood on the cross as a ransom for our sins⁴ (Peters, 2004, p. 24). Without Christ’s bloodshed, humans would still need to sacrifice animals to be reconciled with God.

In the Islamic tradition, “Jesus is taken alive into heaven, where he will remain until his return on the Day of Judgment—and the Christians for worshiping this exalted prophet who was nevertheless, like Muhammad, merely mortal.” (Peters, 2004, p. 25).

The Worship of God

Peters informs readers that most religious faiths have mandated forms of worship within their faith communities. These worship methods can be seen as a prayer, a method of addressing God, by using God’s word, ritual, or specific acts in pleasing the creator. Worship can be addressed in public or private social settings.

Worship and Torah

According to Peters, surprisingly, the Torah mentions little about prayer but emphasizes ritual more. These rituals include offerings of animals, grains, or wine, which are made at specific times or places. Peters shows that these practices originate from the principles of the Israelites, as shown in the Old Testament when they received the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, as well as from other key Jewish encounters with God (Peters, 2004, p. 103).

According to Peters, “Jewish community sacrifices were offered daily, at each new moon—the Jews follow a lunar calendar—and on the three major pilgrimage festivals of ‘booths’ (Sukkoth) in the fall, and ‘Passover’ (Pesach) and ‘Weeks’ (Shavuoth) in the spring” (Peters, 2004, p. 103).

The worship practiced by Jews differs somewhat from that of Christians and Muslims.

Worship of the First Christians

Jesus participated in the Last Supper, a meal celebrated with His disciples before His death. This meal shares many similarities with the Jewish Passover but also has notable differences. Its reenactment, known as the Eucharist (meaning “to give thanks”), is the most important form of Christian liturgical worship. Peters explains the significance of the Eucharist, stating,

Jesus took bread—unleavened bread, matzoh, if it was indeed a Passover meal—gave thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to those present with the words “Take. This is my body.” Likewise, the cup of wine, he said, “This is my blood of the New Covenant which has been shed for many.” (Peters, 2004, p. 106)

Peters introduces Jesus as the biblical text confirms Him as the prescribed Lamb of God, the sacrificial animal for the Passover. This vital act of worship among Christians is not observed in Islam or Judaism because neither faith regards Jesus as the way to salvation through His body or blood.

Islam Worship

Muslims perform daily short prayers, which are held as a divine expression of praise in various postures. Prayers may be performed in a private or comfortable setting. Prayers expressed on Friday have a special place in the mosque as a congregational prayer. Peters points out that “The Muslims, like the Christians, possess a liturgical calendar that marks the occurrence of certain days of the festival (id) across the lunar years.” (Peters,

⁴ Isaiah 53.

2004, p. 112). Peters mentions there are two important feasts observed by the Muslims. The first one is the sacrificial feast (Eid al-Adha), a pre-Islamic hajj ritual. The second feast was the breaking of fast (Eid al-Fitr), celebrated on the first day of the month following Ramadan. Both celebrations involve community prayer (Peters, 2004, pp. 110-112).

Ethics of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity

Islamic Ethics

Ethics in Islam mirror the ethics (Ten Commandments) seen in both Judaism and Islam. The ethics of Islam begin with:

- Do not worship other gods.
- Be kind to your parents, especially in old age.
- Do not kill your children out of fear of poverty.
- Avoid committing adultery.
- Do not touch the property of an orphan dishonestly until he is an adult. Do not kill anyone that God has not commanded to be killed unless your actions are justified (Van Voorst, 2013, p. 323).

Islam portrays the ethics of women as suggesting that men are superior because they are providers. It explains marriage rules, such as exchanging a wife, rebuking disobedient wives for not sharing their bed, or even beating them. Islamic ethical guidelines also state that men are forbidden to marry idolaters until they convert to Islam. Additionally, Islamic teachings recommend that divorced women wait until they have had three menstrual cycles before remarrying, to ensure they are not pregnant from a previous marriage. Islam allows a Muslim man to divorce his wife verbally; if he says he divorces her twice, they can reconcile, but if he says it three times, they cannot remarry until she marries someone else first (Van Voorst, 2013, pp. 324-325). Muslim men may marry up to four wives if they treat each wife equally. Since achieving this equality can be challenging, most Muslim men opt to have only one wife. Maintaining such equality involves fair distribution of emotional, financial, spiritual, and physical time and resources among all partners.

The ethics of the Islamic Law Codes state that one should fear the Lord because the Lord has created you and hears your prayer. One should respect their mother because mothers give birth in great pain, and they should respect orphans and their property until they are of age. To prevent Muslim men from committing adultery, Islam allows men to marry up to four wives and provides dowries to the wives, treating them equally (Van Voorst, 2013, p. 324). Similarly, Islam and Judaism both demonstrate ethical traits, especially the forbiddance of worshipping other gods.

Judaism Ethics

Ethics in Judaism are reflected in the Ten Commandments. The children of Israel are to follow the law carefully and teach it to their children as a reminder that God delivered them from slavery in Egypt. God commands not to serve any other gods besides Him, not to create graven images for worship, not to swear falsely by His name, and to remember and keep the Sabbath day holy. The Lord reminded the children of Israel to honor their father and mother so that things may go well for them and they may live long lives. They are also instructed not to murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness against their neighbor, or covet their neighbor's house, wife, slave, ox, donkey, or anything that belongs to their neighbor (Van Voorst, 2013, p. 235). Jewish ethics are similar to Christian ethics, as Christians honor the Old Testament.

Christianity Ethics

Matthew 5: 1-48. Van Voost introduces Christianity with Ethics heard in the Sermon on the Mount. These wise teachings are taught in the form of parables, which Christ often charged those to have ears to hear. Van Voost appeared to have placed more emphasis on the ethical teaching of Christianity, more so than Islam and Judaism. The Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) is a moral teaching of Christ, which Matthew writes. This teaching aids in an understanding of Jesus and a direction of how one should live their life and what one can expect while on life's journey. The sermon contains "blessings, the law of Moses, the practice of piety, use of possessions, and obeying Jesus' words."

The Beatitudes begin with Jesus addressing the crowd, saying,

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth; blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for, in the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Van Voorst, 2013, p. 282)

Other aspects of Christian ethics are revealed when Jesus teaches obedience by reminding his followers that they are the Salt of the Earth. Jesus explains that salt must stay flavorful, and a person's light should not be hidden but kept visible so others can see their good works and glorify God in heaven. He also reminds his followers that he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. Christ goes beyond instructing the crowd not to commit murder, extending his teaching to include anger, insults, and calling someone a fool. Jesus emphasizes that prayers cannot be offered to God if one has not first forgiven and reconciled with a brother or sister first (Van Voorst, 2013, p. 283).

Christ teaches that it is easier to settle your debts and disputes with others first before taking matters to court. The court will serve its own interests by charging large amounts of money before your issues can be properly resolved. Jesus lays down ethical guidelines on committing adultery. Christ goes as far as saying that even looking at a woman with lustful eyes means a person has committed adultery in his heart. To prevent sinful actions, Christ symbolically tells believers,

If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; and if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off because it is better to lose one of your members than to have your entire body thrown into hell.

Christ also sets the rules and ethics for divorce by telling the crowds that divorce is permitted if there is a certificate of divorce. The grounds for divorce are based on unfaithfulness. If someone divorces for reasons other than unfaithfulness, he causes his wife to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Van Voorst, 2013, p. 283).

More Christian ethics are evident when Jesus warns the crowds about not swearing falsely and emphasizes the importance of keeping your word. Jesus also explains that you should not swear at all by heaven or earth, since heaven is God's throne and earth is His footstool, but instead, you should give a simple answer of yes or no. Any other reply is considered evil. Christ shows that the principle of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" becomes outdated and that forgiveness should be practiced by turning the other cheek, giving to those who want to sue you, and going the extra mile with those who seek to take advantage. Christ also instructs the crowds to give to beggars and borrowers.

Christ teaches us about further Christian ethics—that we should love our neighbors as well as our enemies and pray for those who wish to persecute us. By doing so, we are regarded as the children of God. Christ also explains that God is a just God. God sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous. He also instructs us to be perfect, just as our heavenly Father is perfect.

Christ teaches us to be careful about how we display our charity, prayer life, and righteousness to be seen by others. These acts of righteousness should be done in secret so that God can see what is done for His eyes only, and He will reward us openly. We are not to let our left hand know what our right hand is doing, or we act like hypocrites who enjoy being seen by others for their good deeds and seek praise from men instead of God. God instructs us to go to our closets and close the door to pray so only He sees and hears our prayers from our hearts, without babbling on with many words. Jesus taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer,

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name
Your Kingdom come
Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have
Forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us to the time of trial, but
Rescue us from the evil one. (Van Voorst, 2013, p. 284)

Christ discusses religious ethics as a sense of forgiving others so that God will forgive us. If we choose not to forgive others, then God will not forgive us, which means our prayers remain unanswered. Jesus teaches the crowds about fasting by saying they should keep it hidden from others. One should go about their daily routine and avoid talking or bragging about fasting to God. Christ advises us to wash our faces and comb our hair so that our fasting goes unnoticed by others. If fasting is a sacred practice, then it should be done privately without seeking human approval. The praise of men forfeits God's rewards.

The teachings of Christ are full of wisdom and prophecy. Christ offers much more ethical guidance by referencing serving two masters, because one master will take priority over the other. Here, he is talking about serving God and money. Both services demand a significant amount of time, and a person will get exhausted trying to serve both and will end up disliking one or the other.

As much as we worry, God tells us not to. Christ reminds us not to worry about clothing, food, or drink, or life in general because God knows our needs and will supply them, just as He provides for the birds, flowers, and nature. If we are considered more important than animals and nature, then surely God will provide for our needs and clothe us with His grace and mercy. We should not worry about tomorrow when today has enough problems. Christ tells us that tomorrow will take care of itself. We should just focus on today because today is all we can handle. Finding great joy and comfort comes from reading the morals Christ has laid out for those willing to receive His teachings.

Judging is for God alone. Knowing that God judges everyone can bring relief and comfort to those who feel that life is unfair and that justice does not always happen. Christ tells us not to judge, or we will also be considered by the same standard we use. We all have specks of dust in our eyes and have no right to look at the dust in our brother's eye. Only God should examine that speck. Christ shows compassion when he warns about those who are offended or hurt by others—he shows that we should not cast pearls before swine, or they will gobble up your pearls and trample you down. In saying this, one must discern truth from error by recognizing who the "swine"

are on their life journey and how to tell the difference. This judgment is essential to avoid unnecessary burdens in life.

Christ demonstrates other Christian ethics by telling us to ask, seek, and knock. If we ask, we shall receive; if we seek, we shall find; and if we knock, the door will be opened. If we know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will God give to those who ask, seek, and knock? The formula of prayer involves building a relationship with God and finding the door open to enter salvation and establish a connection with Christ. God tells us through His Word that we will face trials and tribulations on our faith-filled journey, and life will not be perfect. God offers great comfort to believers—He will be their comfort, guide, and provide His strength through hardships through belief and faith.

Binding Faiths Together

Three Faiths, One God: Judaism, Christianity

According to interfaith films, all three faith-based communities have developed similar ideas about the divine and have asked similar questions about God. It is noted that there are other ways to express religion beyond just one faith. Islam and Judaism share commonalities, especially in their references to God as compassionate. Although the three faiths have different ethnic groups and communities, religious communities should get to know each other. The film highlighted how one religion can love and worship the same God while criticizing another faith. People of “goodwill” within the Abrahamic communities are breaking down barriers to gain respect for each other’s faith. It is noted that the opening prayer of the Quran is seen as the Lord’s Prayer in Islam. Shared heritage and dialogue enable Muslims to pray the Lord’s Prayer in their language. Jesus and Moses came to teach us to love God with all our mind, soul, heart, and strength. We are instructed to love the Creator with all our being. It is pointed out that our commonalities are greater than our differences. God is regarded as a moral deity who calls us to love one another (Auteur Productions, 2008).

Jerusalem: Three Religions, Three Families, Faith Matters

The mentioned title functions as a documentary that compares the three faiths within social settings in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, the three religious communities live side by side, sharing a core belief. Christians regard Jerusalem as a sacred place, noting that it is where Jesus died and rose from the dead. Jews also consider Jerusalem a holy place, believing that God granted them the land. Although many are not devout, the rituals are still respected as tradition. Jews honor the Western Wall, remaining of the Second Temple destroyed by the Romans 2000 years ago, which they believe was given to them by God, where they offer prayers. Jews also believe that Mount Zion is the place where they will return. The Dome of the Rock, located in Jerusalem, is believed to be the site where Muhammad ascended into heaven on a white horse to receive God’s commandments. The Dome of the Rock is considered the holiest place for Muslims after Mecca and Medina. Like Islam, Jewish men and women are separated in worship by gender. Although all three religions regard Abraham as their father and worship the same God, there are differences. The Torah is read three days a week, beginning early in the morning. All males over age 13 must attend the readings. Women are separated from men during worship, similar to practices in Islam. The Rabbi believes that all of God’s prophecies have been fulfilled and that the Jews are God’s chosen people. Children are taught respect, honor, and obedience to God’s word from a very young age. Regarding Islam, it is claimed that the children of Abraham initially embraced Christianity until Muhammad received his revelation from heaven, unifying all three faiths so there is no confusion about God’s divine message,

which is said to be written in the Quran. Islam rejects the idea that Jews are God's chosen people and rejects the Christian concept of the Trinitarian God as blasphemous.

Conclusion

All three faiths are considered devout and followers tend to marry within their own religion. If someone chooses to marry outside their faith, it is highly recommended that the non-believing partner convert to the other's faith so the family can bless the marriage. Christian beliefs closely resemble both Islam and Judaism in their focus on family values. The most prominent family value shared among the three religions is respect for parents, oneself, and the community. Silence is also a common theme in all faiths because God's word resides in silence. A common cause of conflict between Jews and Muslims living in the same region is that Jews see Jerusalem as their land alone. For true peace to be achieved, both faiths will need to reconcile. In conclusion, this paper shows that one often seeks God through tradition, especially in Judaism and Islam. Christianity appears to be less strict among its followers. Judaism and Islam have set prayer times, rituals, and festivals that are observed faithfully as acts of worship, which can be seen as mandatory. Although Christians also practice prayer, rituals, and festivals, they are often seen more as choices rather than obligatory. All three monotheistic religions claim to serve the same God with respect, virtue, and devotion, and they all seek peace for humanity. They are connected through the Abrahamic lineage via both Isaac and Ishmael—Isaac as the ancestor of Judaism, and Ishmael as the ancestor of the Arab nations. We know that the God worshiped by all is a God of love, mercy, and grace.

References

- Auteur Productions. (2008). Three faiths, one God: Judaism, Christianity, Islam. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJJuYW1CGV0>
- Faith Matters The Church Program. (2015). Jerusalem: Three religions, three families | faith matters. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3inhQffPIAI>
- Peters, F. E. (2004). *The children of Abraham*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Press University.
- Smith, H. (1991). *World's religions—A guide to our wisdom traditions*. New York, NY: Harper San Francisco.
- Van Voorst, R. E. (2013). *Anthology of world scriptures*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Appendix

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Similarities and Differences

Tina M. Allen-Abulhassan | Professor Dr. James Moore | Valparaiso University

Monothism – One God

While Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all serve one Creator, there are multiple similarities and differences within the faiths that are displayed in this chart.

God Names

Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Yahweh Elohim	God the Father Jesus Christ	Allah
G-d is called by name according to action	900 Plus	99 other names

Faith Overview

	Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Holy Book	Torah and Talmud	Bible	Quran and hadith
Meaning	Of the Kingdom of Judah	Follower of Christ	Submission to Allah
Founded Regions	Israel, Palestine, Jordan	Israel, Palestine, Jordan	On the Arabian Peninsula
Dates	c. 7 th Century	c. 30 CE	622 CE
Founder (s)	Moses, Abraham	Jesus, Peter, Paul	Mohammed
Followers	14 million	2.2 billion	Over 1 billion

Worship

Judaism	Christianity	Islam
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synagogue G-d Saturday Prayer – 3X daily Hebrew 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church God and Jesus Sunday Not mentioned Prayer, Praise Aramaic, Greek 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mosque God Friday Prayer – 5X daily Five Pillars Arabic



History

Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Begins with Abraham who journeyed from Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) to Palestine. He is promised by G-d His descendants will form a great nation in Canaan and nations will be blessed through his seed. Abraham obeys G-d and forms a covenant. God tells Abraham, "I will be your G-d, and you will be my people". G-d freed the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt through Moses. The Jews do not see Jesus as the Messiah. Genesis 12: 1-9 and Exodus 19: 1-8	In the Gospels of the New Testament, Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit of God through the Virgin Mary presenting the Son ship of God. Jesus performed miracles, teachings and spoke in parables. Jesus was arrested, put on trial, and put to death as a sinner man. He was resurrected after the third day and ascended to God forty days later promising He will send the Holy Spirit to teach all things in His absence. (Matt 1: 18-25, Luke 24:26-56, Mark 14:15-41, Mark 16:7-8, and Acts 1:6-11, 2:1-27)	While Muhammad was meditating in a cave, he was visited by an angel Gabriel who commanded him to recite (Surah 96). Muhammad is Allah's messenger who proclaims to honor submission to God alone and warns of the awaited hell for those who reject this message. There are no miracles associated with Muhammad other than the Quran itself. Islam regards Jesus as only a honored prophet of God and not the Son of God.

Abrahamic Religions

All three faiths believe in the creation, Adam and Eve, the serpent, the fall, the flood, and the story of Moses.

All three faiths are Abrahamic Religions and accept the story of Abraham seen having two sons. One son (Ismael) through Hagar, his mistress and other promised son (Isaac) through Sarah his wife.

Ismael was born of Hagar by the hand of Sarah due to her impatience of waiting on God's timing to bare a child. Sarah insisted Abraham take Hagar as his mistress so Sarah would have a child by having Hagar give birth on her knees.

After much dispute in Abraham's tent, Hagar went her way with her son Ismael. God promised Hagar that Ismael would become a Father to a great nation which God promised to bless. In Islam both Abraham and Ismael are considered builders of the Kaaba (the House of God in Mecca).

Isaac became a great nation who was also blessed by God. Ismael became the children of the Arabian people because Hagar was Egyptian and Isaac became the nation of the Israelites forming the 12 tribes of Israel through Jacob. The descendants Abraham were lured into Egypt and enslaved for hundreds of years and was led out of Egypt by Moses who received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, which is the Jewish Law, observed by the Jewish people.

Genesis – Chapters 17 and 21

Popular Symbols

Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Star of David Used to express Jewish identity	Fish Christians used Greek word for "fish" as an acronym for "Jesus Christ God's Son, Savior."	Mosque Silhouette The Mosque is a symbol of a center for Islamic worship in the Islamic community.
Chai Related word in Hebrew – "chaya", which means life or long life	Dove Symbol for the Holy Spirit	Star and Crescent The Star and crescent is the best-known symbol used to represent Islam.
Hand of God ancient Middle Eastern symbol of the Hand of God. In all faiths it is a protective sign. It brings to power happiness, luck, health, and good fortune.	Alpha and Omega First and last letters of the Greek alphabet, and also shown as the title of Christ in the book of Revelation.	Allah in Arabic The word Allah in Arabic script is regarded as visually representing Islam
Tree represents as a series of divine emanations God's creation itself	Cross Represents and memorializes Christ's death on the cross	

Practices and Rituals

Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Circumcision Genesis 17:9-14, 23-17	Baptism Matthew 28:16-20	Confession of Faith Sura 57:1-7, 37:32-39
The Passover Exodus 12:1-18, 24-27	The Eucharist John 6:25-40, 52-59	Prayer Sura 2:142-149
Sabbath Observation Exodus 31:12-17	Confession James 5:13-18	Alms Sura 107: 9-53-60
Day of Atonement Leviticus 16:1-5, 11-19, 29-34	Anointing of the Sick James 5:13-18	Fasting Sura 2:183-186
Kosher/Non-Kosher Foods Leviticus 11:1-31, 41-45	Prayer 1 Thessalonians 5:17	Pilgrimage Sura 2:125-129, 2:196-199
Prayer Siddur Prayer Book		

Holidays

Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Rosh Hashanah The first day of the Jewish New Year is celebrated the 1st of Tishrei month (Sepher, Sept 1-18, 2013) celebrating the creation of the world (Genesis 1:1-5) and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:1-17) and observing the day of atonement.	Lenten Season A time of fasting and prayer in preparation for Easter. Holy Week (Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday)	Al-Hajj Celebrated on the 12th day of Muharram. The results of Hajj are believed to be equivalent to that of Mecca in Mecca (Sura 2:197-203).
Yom Kippur The most sacred day of the Jewish calendar. It is observed by fasting, prayer, and repentance. It is the day of atonement and the day of judgment. It is the day of atonement and the day of judgment.	Easter The most important Christian holiday is Easter, which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.	Eid al-Fitr Major Islamic holiday which marks the end of the fast of Ramadan.
Yom HaZikaron The day of remembrance for the fallen soldiers of the State of Israel. It is observed by lighting candles and holding a moment of silence for the fallen soldiers.	Christmas Celebrates the birth of Jesus, observed on December 25.	Eid al-Adha Celebration of the sacrifice of Abraham, the father of Islam.

Conclusion

Although Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all differ in prophet leaders, all come to the monotheistic conclusion of the worship of one God. Each faith is derived from the Abrahamic tradition seen with Abraham's son's Ismael and Isaac. Ismael is the Father of the Islamic tradition, and Isaac the Jewish tradition. The Christian tradition is derived from the New Testament Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) with the birth and death of Jesus Christ in which salvation is seen. All three faiths share common beliefs such as prayer, worship, rituals, practices, love, compassion, charity, forgiveness and greatly respect one another for their beliefs.

Works Cited

Chabag.org
Heavy.com (image)
Islamic-web.com (image)
myjewishlearning.com
religious-symbols.net/christian-symbols.html
Peters, F. E. *The Children of Abraham*. New ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Press University, 2004.
Smith, Haxton. *World's Religions: A Guide to Our Wisdom Traditions*. New York, NY: Harper San Francisco, 1991, 1994.
Van Voorst, Robert E. *Anthology of World Scriptures*. Eight ed. Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2013.