

Chapter 9. The people of the book.

*If the People of the Book accept the true faith and keep from evil, We will pardon them their sins and admit them to the gardens of delight. If they observe the Torah and the Gospel and what is revealed to them from Allah, they shall be given abundance from above and from beneath.*¹ The Koran

When I speak of religion in this book, I am generally referring to the three most influential religions in the United States: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. More than half the people in the world belong to these religions, 33% of the world population is Christian, 20% is Muslim, and .23% is Jewish.² Within the United States, Christians are the majority, at 78.4% of the population, Jews are 1.7% and Muslims are .6%.³ However, Judaism and Islam have impact beyond the number of adherents; Judaism, because it is the original monotheism upon which Christianity and Islam are based; and Islam, because its predatory dogma has impacted the lives of almost every American. Looking solely at the religiously motivated 9/11 attacks and the wars the United States has mounted in response, Islam has had wider impact than the small number of adherents living in the U.S. would seem to indicate.

Most Americans are aware of the close relationship between Judaism and Christianity. The Jewish scriptures form the first half of the Christian Bible, the “Old Testament.” The Jewish and Christian creation myths are identical. The stories of Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses and Noah are the same. However, fewer are aware that Islam traces its roots to the same characters.

As the quote at the start of this chapter shows, Muslims somewhat approvingly refer to Jews and Christians as “people of the book.” The Muslim religion is the most recent of the three, created around 622 CE,⁴ and just like Mormonism described in Chapter 8, it freely borrowed from Judaism and Christianity in its formation.

All of the “people of the book” (Jews, Christians and Muslims) believe that Adam and Eve were the first people. All three religions trace their lineage through Abraham and believe that their god reached a covenant with him. All three believe Moses was a prophet. All three believe there was a great flood and that Noah preserved life on an Ark.

All three religions arose in the same general area of the Middle East. Even the names of their god sound similar in their source languages, “Eloah” in Hebrew,⁵ “Elaha” in Aramaic, and “Allah” in Arabic.⁶ Jews, Christians and Muslims are all the children of Abraham. Perhaps the horrible way that Christians and Muslims have treated their parent religion makes people think they are unrelated. But this is not unheard of, certainly in life you have come across a child who was horrible to his parent.

Other similarities abound. Jews, Muslims and Christians believe in one, superior god, who excludes all others. They are collectively known as the three “great” monotheisms. They all believe the bearded man in the sky communicates with them and they all think they exclusively worship the correct bearded man. Similarly, each group believes communication with the bearded man is a two-way affair. “Proper” belief and conduct in each religion will lead to “salvation” and everlasting life.

Each has in the past blended the roles of church and state. Each religious group wants political leaders who belong to the same religion as the voters. Each has used military power to enforce or expand its authority.

They maintain similar rituals. Although Jews and Muslims despise one another, they mark their male children as separate with ritual circumcision. Circumcision is also practiced by a large number of American Christians.

Each group has prohibited food groups. Muslims are prohibited from eating pork, Jews avoid shellfish, and Catholics do not eat red meat on Fridays. Each group has previously allowed polygamy (and many Muslims still do) and animal sacrifice.

Each group has engaged in horrible hostility to people who hold other beliefs. Further, followers of each religion believe their religion entitles them to act outside of the law for religious purposes. For example, they feel religiously entitled to enter other countries to assassinate perceived enemies (Jews), to kill abortion providers (Christians), and to shoot and bomb businesses such as a hotel in Mumbai or the World Trade Center in New York (Muslims, more on this in Chapter 21).

Each group worships in a special house, labeled synagogue, church or mosque; and each has a seven-day worship cycle with a special day of worship: Friday (Muslims) Saturday (Jews) or Sunday (Christians). Similarly, they have special people, usually men, who interpret the scriptures for them: “rabbis” for Jews, “imams” for Muslims, and “priests, pastors or ministers” for Christians. Each religion considers Jerusalem a holy site. Each group believes in resurrection of the bodies of believers and destruction of the physical world. They all believe in heaven and the existence of angels and demons.

All three worship essentially the same god, they just disagree on the details of whether that god sent a messiah. Jews believe the messiah has not yet come, Christians believe he has, and Muslims believe that although Mohammed was a prophet, the messiah is yet to come. Regarding Jesus specifically, Muslims believe Jesus was a prophet, sent by Allah and they even buy into the tale of the virgin birth.⁷ Jews believe Jesus was a man.

And horribly, each believes in the “end times,” a time when their bearded man’s male representative will come to earth to reward the believers and punish the nonbelievers. All three believe the “end times” will be announced by a trumpet, their prophet will appear, life on earth will be destroyed, and the believers will be rewarded in heaven or paradise. A great danger of religion is that believers will act, including using nuclear weapons, to accelerate the arrival of these “end times.”

Finally, the “people of the book” not surprisingly rely on a holy book, a scripture they allege was at least inspired (if not dictated) by their god. The next chapter introduces a phrase I will use throughout this book, “the scriptures, written by men and fixed in time.”

1. Dawood, N.J., *The Koran*, 1990, at 87.

2. U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, Religion, undated,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2122.html>

3. Pew 2008 at 5,
<http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>

4. “The Big Religion Chart,” Religion Facts, August 9, 2009,
http://www.religionfacts.com/big_religion_chart.htm

5. “Elohim,” New Advent, undated,
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05393a.htm>

6. Wright, Robert, *The Evolution of God*, 2009, excerpt from Chapter 14, <http://evolutionofgod.net/allahphonetics/>

7. The Koran, 19:19-20.