

The Faiths of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - *Richard Smoley*

Handout 1

One-half of the world belongs to one of the faiths of Abraham.

Compared to Buddhism and Hinduism, faith is much more important in the religions of Abraham.

According to Jewish tradition, Abraham was born under the name Abram in the city of Ur in Babylonia in the year 1948 from Creation (circa 1800 BCE). He was the son of Terach, an idol merchant, but from his early childhood, he questioned the faith of his father and sought the truth. He came to believe that the entire universe was the work of a single Creator, and he began to teach this belief to others.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/biography/abraham.html>

According to Genesis, Abraham was born in Ur of the Chaldees and given the name Abram. He was the son of Terah and the brother of Nahor and Haran. He married Sarai, who was barren, and there also his brother Haran died after becoming the father of Lot. Terah, with his surviving sons and their families, then departed for Canaan, but settled in Haran, where Terah died at the age of 205.

Following the death of Terah, when Abram was seventy-five, the Lord spoke to Abram, telling him to leave his father's house and his kindred and the land of his birth and go "to the land that I will show you", where Abram will become a great nation. So Abram departed Haran with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot and all their followers and flocks, and they traveled to Canaan, where, at Shechem, the Lord again promised the land to him and his seed. There Abram built an altar to the Lord and continued to travel towards the south. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham>

The story of Abraham is contained in the Book of Genesis, 11:26 to 25:18.

Here is a brief telling of the story of Abraham from the online "Bible Tutor."

<http://demo.lutherproductions.com/bibletutor/level1/program/start/people/abraham.htm>

Abraham migrated with his father Terah from Ur to Haran. After his father's death God called Abraham to go to the land that he would show him where he would make of Abraham a great nation. Abraham went to Canaan with his wife Sarah and nephew Lot. As Abraham and Sarah grew older they had no children, so Abraham fathered a son, Ishmael, through Sarah's servant Hagar. The birth of Ishmael did not fulfill God's promise of a child to Abraham and Sarah so the promise of a great nation remained unrealized. God reaffirmed his promise to give Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars in heaven, however, and God made circumcision the sign of his covenant relationship.

When Abraham was 100 years old, Sarah bore a son named Isaac. God tested Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac. As they traveled, Isaac asked what they would sacrifice and Abraham replied that God would provide the lamb. As Abraham made ready to sacrifice the boy, God intervened and spared him, and Abraham sacrificed a ram caught in the bushes. The New Testament portrays Abraham as an example of faith, affirming that the promises God made to Abraham extend to all who believe.

Abraham - the Muslim view of Abraham

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/history/ibrahim.shtml>

By Dr Mona Siddiqui
Abraham in Islam

Abraham is called Ibrahim by Muslims and seen as the father of the Arab people as well as the Jewish people through his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael (Isma'il in Arabic).

The Muslim story of Ibrahim

Abraham is a very interesting figure because he is depicted in the Qur'an as somebody who, from a very early age, had problems trying to understand God and trying to discover God and being restless knowing that perhaps the pagan environment which he was in did not have the answers. That, ultimately, God was not the star or the sun or the wind or the moon - all these forces that he saw - God was in something else.

And so from that perspective, Abraham is considered to be neither a Jewish person, nor a Christian person nor a Muslim, but somebody who is a *hernif* - somebody who essentially and intrinsically knows that there is really only one God. And he is praised for this essential and innate yearning to discover the unity of God.

There have been thousands of prophets and numbers of messengers but there are only four or five that have been designated a specific title according to Islam: Jesus is one, Moses is one and the Prophet Muhammad is one but also Abraham, who is known as a friend of God.

Abraham had a specific allocation given to him by God, which is that from his progeny will be all the prophets and from them - for Muslims - comes Muhammad. But he does have a relationship with God: first of all he is baffled as to how he has a son at such a late stage through Hagar and then through Sarah.

The tradition of God testing Abraham's devotion to him by asking him to sacrifice Ishmael is the heart of the Abrahamic tradition and the Abrahamic stories. Abraham was the first Prophet who was asked for the ultimate sacrifice: "I want you to sacrifice your own flesh and blood for me." And he passed the test because he was prepared to do it, in his submission and devotion to God.

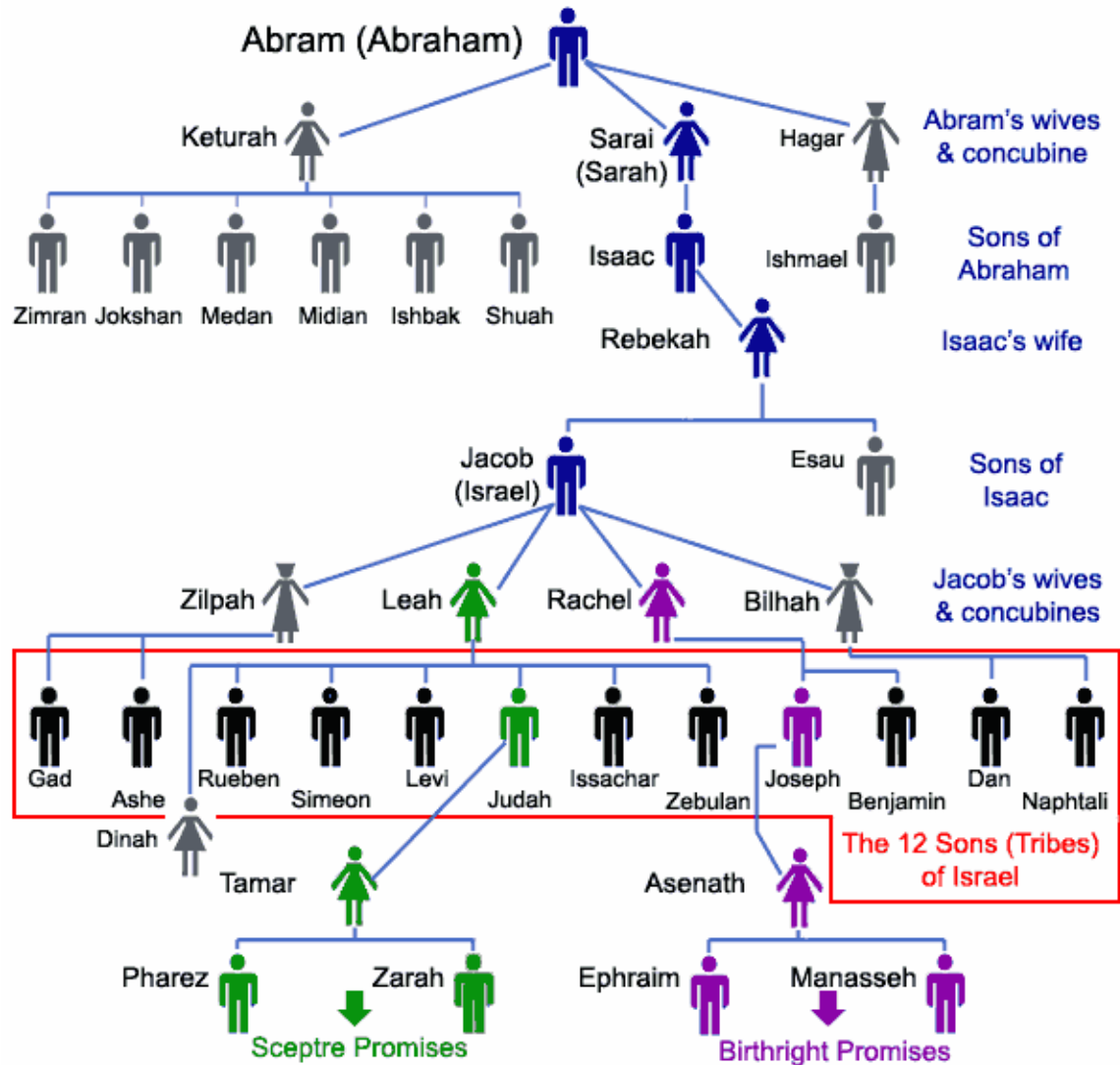
What are the stories told about Abraham in the Qur'an?

Many of the stories that relate to Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael are about their flights from Sarah and also about Abraham trying to set up another dwelling, another place with Hagar and his son Ishmael.

Much of what Islamic tradition is about - and even some of the rituals such as the Hajj - stem from the pre-Islamic era and are translated into Islamic rituals through Abraham. Hagar looked for water and ran between two hills which is enacted in the Hajj ceremony as a symbolic gesture of what Hagar was doing - looking for water - and pilgrims do that.

God says to Abraham, "I'd like you to build my house for me..." - that is a Kaaba - "...here on this mound of earth, in this sacred place and I'd like you to erect the walls and I want you to purify this place." Part of this purification is what we see today in the Kaaba. The Islamic tradition has restricted this purity ritual to Muslims only. However the second ambulation that pilgrims do in praise of God is actually a legacy left from pre-Islamic days when pilgrims also came to the Kaaba - not to worship the one God, but to worship idols.

There are various things that are part of the Abrahamic story, culminating in the ultimate sacrifice which is carried out on the last day of Hajj. As a symbolic gesture, Muslims reenact what Abraham was going to do with Ishmael by sacrificing a lamb or sheep.



Abraham (*1900-1700 BC) was a wanderer, belonging to a semi-nomadic people. People lived in tents (Tabernacles) and lived off flocks.

*Most serious modern scholarship does **not** believe there was an historical Abraham.

Abraham's son was named Ishmael, an ancestor of the Arabs.

1800--1500 BC --The **Hyksos** (Egyptian *heqa khasewet*, "foreign rulers"; Greek Ἰκσῶς, Ἰξῶς, Arabic: *قاعرا لكوولملا*, shepherd kings) were an Asiatic people who invaded the

eastern Nile Delta, in the twelfth dynasty of Egypt initiating the Second Intermediate Period of Ancient Egypt.

1200 BC first mention outside of Bible of Israelites (Egypt)

Judaism—Proselytizing Religion (getting connected)

700-400 B.C. Most of Old Testament –oldest texts pertaining to Exodus

1st Five books of Bible

Assemblage of several earlier texts

Different schools—approaches

Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly and Deuteronomic

J— Yahwist

E- Elohist

P-Priestly

D- Deuteronomic

Genesis 1- (written by) Elohist

Genesis 2—(written by) Yahwist

Faiths are more important in religions of Abraham than it is in Buddhism and Hinduism. What is of paramount importance in Hinduism and Buddhism is the goal of attaining a kind of knowledge.

Final form of New Testament was in 367 AD.

Athanasius lists the New Testament writings

The 27 books of the New Testament are the Scriptures of the church. They are understood to be written by the apostles or their close associates, such as Luke and Mark. Along with the Old Testament they comprise the official canon of the church.

But in the early centuries of the church, before the New Testament canon had been established, there was a significant variety of opinion among Christian churches about what writings should be considered authoritative. Because of this, some Christian leaders were concerned that heretical writings might carry an undeserved authority. For example, a writing called the Gospel of Peter, which was a product of a Gnostic group that claimed to possess a secret knowledge of God, circulated in parts of the world in the early centuries.

Some leaders also doubted the apostolic authority of certain writings, such as the book of Revelation and the second letter of Peter. The question about which writings should be considered authoritative for the whole church became more and more pressing as certain influential leaders began to form lists of their own to support their heretical teachings. Marcion, for example, teaching in the middle second century, rejected the Old Testament and most of what is today our New Testament, creating his own truncated version of just a few New Testament writings.

Other heretics wrote compositions that claimed to record the acts of apostolic figures. Since some claimed the status of sacred Scripture for these writings, it's not surprising that this created confusion in the church.

Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, addressed this problem on Jan. 7, A.D. 367, when he wrote his annual Easter letter to his churches. It was a landmark letter because it contained the same list of 27 books of the New Testament that are found in our Bibles today. So far as we know, Athanasius was the first Christian leader to compile a list of New Testament books exactly as we know them today. Bruce Metzger, New Testament scholar, wrote, "The year 367 marks, thus, the first time that the scope of the New Testament canon is declared to be exactly the twenty-seven books accepted today as canonical."

Here are portions of Athanasius' letter, in which he lists the books of the Old and New Testaments that he considered authoritative. The English translation is the work of the late F.F. Bruce: "Inasmuch as some have taken in hand to draw up for themselves an arrangement of the so-called apocryphal books and to intersperse them with the divinely inspired scripture, concerning which we have been fully persuaded, even as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered it to the fathers: it has seemed good to me also, having been stimulated thereto by true brethren, to set forth in order the books which are included in the canon and have been delivered to us with accreditation that they are divine."

[Athanasius then gives his list of Old Testament books and lists the 27 New Testament books.]

"Let no one add to these or take anything from them. . . . No mention is to be made of the apocryphal works. They are the invention of heretics, who write according to their own will, and gratuitously assign and add to them dates so that, offering them as ancient writings, they may have an excuse for leading the simple astray."

Athanasius' letter was important because he was the bishop of a prominent city, Alexandria. He was one of the most influential theologians and apologists of the church at the time. Athanasius had spent much of his life battling the infamous Arian heresy, which had denied the co-essential divine nature of Christ.

We shouldn't think of Athanasius as sifting through a stack of writings, and pronouncing this one as Scripture and the next one as unscriptural. He was merely recognizing and recording what amounted to the general but unofficial consensus of the churches.

Some of the books not listed among the 27 continued to be considered something like devotional writings, such as the Shepherd of Hermas and letters of Clement. But these also needed to be defined for what they were so they would not be confused as having the same authority as the writings of the apostles and their colleagues.

The first church councils to approve the New Testament canon met in A.D. 393 at the Synod of Hippo Regius and in A.D. 397 at Carthage, in North Africa, some 30 years after Athanasius published his list. The councils merely endorsed what had already become the consensus in the churches of the West and most of the East about the extent of the canonical books of Scripture.

<http://www.christianodyssey.com/history/athanasius.htm>

The Nag Hammadi Library, a collection of thirteen ancient codices containing over fifty texts, was discovered in upper Egypt in 1945. This immensely important discovery includes a large number of primary Gnostic scriptures -- texts once thought to have been entirely destroyed during the early Christian struggle to define "orthodoxy" -- scriptures such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, and the Gospel of Truth.

<http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/nhl.html>

Protestants believe that scripture alone can be the only trusted authority because otherwise there will be corruption by influence from the church.

But how does one interpret it?

ISLAM

Islam is a monotheistic, Abrahamic religion originating with the teachings of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, a 7th century Arab religious and political figure. The word *Islam* means "submission," or the total surrender of oneself to God (Arabic: إسلام, Allāh). An adherent of Islam is known as a Muslim, meaning "one who submits [to God]". The word *Muslim* is the participle of the same verb of which *Islām* is the infinitive. There are between 1 billion and 1.8 billion Muslims, making Islam the second-largest religion in the world, after Christianity.

Muslims believe that God revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad, God's final prophet, through the angel Gabriel, and regard the Qur'an and the Sunnah (words and deeds of Muhammad) as the fundamental sources of Islam. They do not regard Muhammad as the founder of a new religion, but as the restorer of the original monotheistic faith of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other prophets. Islamic tradition holds that Jews and Christians distorted the revelations God gave to these prophets by either altering the text, introducing a false interpretation, or both.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam>

Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullāh (Arabic: مُحَمَّد; Transliteration: *Muḥammad*;

IPA: [mʊħɑmmæd]; ⓘ pronunciation (help·info); also spelled **Mohammed** or **Muhammed**) (ca. 570 Mecca – June 8, 632 Medina), is the founder of the religion of Islam and is regarded by Muslims as a messenger and prophet of God (Arabic: الله *Allāh*), the last and the greatest law-bearer in a series of prophets. Muslims consider him the restorer of the uncorrupted original monotheistic faith (*islām*) of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and other prophets. He was also active as a diplomat, merchant, philosopher, orator, legislator, reformer, military general, and, according to Muslim belief, an agent of divine action.

Born in 570 CE in the Arabian city of Mecca, he was orphaned at a young age and brought up under the care of his uncle Abu Talib. He later worked mostly as a merchant, as well as a shepherd, and was first married by age 25. Discontented with life in Mecca, he retreated to a cave in the surrounding mountains for meditation and reflection. According to Islamic beliefs it was here, at age 40, in the month of Ramadan, where he received his first revelation from God. Three years after this event Muhammad started preaching these revelations publicly, proclaiming that "God is One", that complete "surrender" to Him (lit. *islām*) is the only way (*dīn*) acceptable to God, and that he himself was a prophet and messenger of God, in the same vein as other Islamic prophets.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad>

Islam:

Primary tenet:

Unity of God

Islam, ironically, closest to Judaism than any other religion

Islam. A Study Guide

1. Islam in History

The Age of the Prophet

570 (?) Birth of the prophet Muhammad

610 Beginning of the revelation of the Quran

622 *Hijra* (emigration or flight from Mecca to Medinah)

630 Surrender of Mecca

632 Death of Muhammad

The Period of the Caliphate (Arab dominance)

632 - 661 Period of the "Rightly Guided Caliphs" (Medinah)

661 - 750 The Umayyad Empire (Damascus). Continued in Spain (Western Caliphate).

750 - 1258 The Abbasid Empire (Eastern Caliphate: Bagdhad).

The Period of the Sultanate (Turkic and Mongolian dominance)

1258-1517 Mamluks (Turkic, Cairo. Religious: Sunni)

16th - 20th century:

Ottoman Empire (until 1923, Turkish, Istanbul)

Safavid Empire (until 1736. Political: Il Khanid. Cultural: Persian, Isfahan; Religious: Shi'ite)

Mughal Empire (until 1857. Political: Il Khanid. Cultural: Indian, Delhi; Religious: Shi'ite)

Revival Movements in the 18th and early 19th century (internally motivated)

Arabia: Wahhabi Movement

(revival of equation of Arab and Muslim; return to original 7th-century Islam)

Africa: Jihad Movements in Nigeria, Morocco, Libya, Sudan

(Sufi leadership; fight against Afro-Islamic syncretisms)

India: Social and moral reform of Mughal empire on Islamic basis

Modern Movements (Arab nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism, motivated by confrontation with Western colonialism and industrialization)

- Westernization: founding of secular (Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk), Muslim (most Arabic states), and Islamic (Saudi Arabia; post-revolutionary Iran) states

- Reaction to Westernization: establishment of Muslim Brotherhood and other organizations that lead the struggle for re-Islamization and Islamic revival

2. Major Aspects of the Muslim Faith

Islam means "submission." *Muslim* is someone who submits to *Allah*, God, the one, unique, and omnipotent creator and judge who is merciful and just. For Islam, God has revealed his will to human beings since Adam through a series of prophets and messengers. The ultimate messenger (*rasul*) and seal of the prophets is Muhammad. God's law (*sharia*, literally "the path to the watering hole") was revealed to Muhammad in a series of speeches that he was to recite and which are collected in the *Qur'an* (the recitation). For Muslims, the Qur'an is the flawless representation of the uncreated eternal word of God. Its language is regarded as the pivot of linguistic perfection and can therefore not be appreciated in translation.

The cardinal sin of human beings is unmindfulness or forgetfulness and hence arrogance and an attitude of self-sufficiency. The perfect antidote is the remembrance (*dhikr*) of the words and deeds of the prophet, the Quran and the *hadith*. The message of the prophet concerns the establishment of a perfectly just and God-pleasing society on earth, the constitution of the religious community-state (the *umma*). But the submission of the individual in this life will also be rewarded with eternal happiness in paradise; the refusal

of submitting to God's will, and the sins of associating God with another being (idolatry) and of apostasy will be punished in hell.

Popular Islam cherishes the belief in *djinn* and angels. Shii Islam also knows the worship of saints and martyrs, especially of members of the holy family (Ali, Fatima, Hysayn), as intercessors between humans and God. This belief and its practices are rejected by Sunnis.

As a revealed legislation, Islam emphasizes conduct. Religious and moral obligations are determined by the Islamic legal tradition according to certain principals or sources of the law (see above).

The five pillars of Muslim faith are:

1. Confession of the monotheistic faith (*shahada*): "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger (rasul)." The oneness and uniqueness (tawhid) of God is the basic creed of Islam.
2. Ritual prayer (*salat*); kneeling and bowing five times a day at precisely the same moment symbolizes the ritual unity of the Muslim community (*umma*) all over the globe.
3. Fasting during the month of Ramadan (*saum*); due to the lunar calendar the fast during Ramadan occurs at all seasons over time and is thus completely dissociated from the natural cycle of the solar year. In comparison, Jewish and Christian festivals retain a certain association with much older animistic and fertility-religious cults due to their seasonal occurrence.
4. Almsgiving (*zakat*); Muhammad's revelation concerned the establishment of a social system of trans-tribal solidarity
5. The obligation to make pilgrimage (*hajj*) to the Ka'ba in Mecca. By choosing Mecca as the direction (*qibla*) of Muslim prayer, Muhammad founded both a new religion and a pan-Arabic (and pan-Muslim) focal point, uniting ancient Arabian piety with the message of ethical monotheism. Pilgrimage to Mecca is to be made at least once in one's lifetime and constitutes a pivotal religious experience for the Muslim.

Quranic law also concerns diet (no pork, nor alcohol), finance (no lending on interest), criminal law, civil law, laws of inheritance, and, most prominently, family law. The status of women was greatly improved compared to their situation in pre-Islamic patriarchal society.

While the Muslim society and Islamic law regard non-Muslims as second class or "protected" citizens (*dhimmi*), Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists, and others within the Muslim sphere of influence have generally been treated tolerantly. The Islamic conquest "by the sword" brought Muslim rulers but not forced conversions, nor even an immediate Arabization of the recognized minorities.

3. Major Islamic Groups: Sunna and Shia

Sunna means custom, tradition. A *Sunni* Muslim is someone who seeks to live according to the custom of the prophet Muhammad that is documented in the *hadith*, a collection of words and deeds of the prophet. Every Muslim is in this sense a *Sunni*. Historically speaking, however, the Sunni Muslim must be distinguished from the *Shii*.

The difference between these groups concerns fundamental questions such as the constitution and character of the *umma* (the religious community-state), leadership (caliph vs. imam), the authority to determine Islamic law (consensus of the *ulama* vs. infallible interpretation by means of divinely inspired reasoning, *ijtihad*), and worldview (optimism vs. pessimism; Shii emphasis of martyrdom, suffering, apocalyptic return of the Mahdi, the hidden Imam).

From the outset, i.e., from the Suras of the Quran and Muhammad's life in Mecca and Medina, Islam addressed religious and political themes: the relation between God and the human being, and interhuman relations. Sunna and Shia emphasize different aspects of Islam without, of course, disregarding the complementary element. While 7th-century Sunni Islam solved the problem of leadership through the establishment of electing a successor to the prophet (*khalifa*, caliph; constitutionalism), Shii Islam recognizes only descendents of the prophet as divinely invested leaders (*imami* theocracy). While 9th-century-Sunni Islam developed Islamic law based on four sources of the law (Quran, Sunna of the prophet, analogical reasoning, consensus of the religious layers, the *ulama*), *Shia* Islam invests the Imam and, in his absence, his representatives with the authority of the divinely guided ultimate and infallible source of legal decisions.

Shii Islam resembles some branches of Christianity with its focus on the martyrdom of the first Imams, Ali and his son Husayn. Shii piety is expressed in public display of mourning over the death of the righteous Imams. Shii Muslims consider themselves a sacred remnant fighting the good fight against Satan and the powers of evil until the day when the Mahdi (the expected one) will return and set things right.

Offshoots of Shii Islam are the Zayidis (Yemen), the Ismailis (Aga Khan in Bombay as head of an international community), the Ithna Asharis ("Twelvers"; mainly in the contemporary Iran, but also in Iraq, Lebanon and elsewhere) and the semi-Islamic religions of the Druze (Israel, Lebanon, Syria) and the Bahai (international; center historically in Persia, now in Haifa, Israel).

Sunni Islam is internally differentiated according to the four major schools of Islamic law: the Hanafi in the Arab Middle East and South Asia; the Maliki in North, central, and West Africa; the Shafii in East Africa, Southern Arabia, and Southeast Asia; and the Hanbali in Saudi Arabia.

4. Islamic Culture

With the establishment and stabilization of the Muslim empires, especially during the Abbaside caliphate and within the later non-Arab sultanates, many aspects of culture flourished. The Abbasid Empire saw the emergence not only of a variety of Islamic sects but the development of two major Islamic movements: Islamic law and Sufi mysticism. The *sharia* was developed by an emerging class of religious lawyers (the *ulama*) whose consensus rather than imperial decree decided the scope and principles of Islamic law until today. Sufism arose from the ranks of popular Islam but soon augmented the rational and intellectual pursuit of jurisprudence by emphasizing the "duties of the heart," the communication of the individual with God, etc.

Aside from these inner-Islamic movements, the Abbasids (a dynasty deriving from Abbas, an uncle of the prophet), supported as they were by an elitist Persian administration, were patrons of the arts and sciences, philosophy and medicine. Under their rule, ancient Greek and far Eastern texts were translated into Arabic and philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and other disciplines were studied for their own sake. (Islamic renaissance) The Arabic commentaries and expositions of Aristotelian philosophy by Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and others laid the groundwork for medieval Jewish philosophy and Christian European scholasticism alike. The European languages are a repository of memories testifying to the fact of European indebtedness to the Arabs for such elements of culture, now considered basic, as *Al-gebra*, *Al-cohol*, *Al-chemy*, *Sugar*, *al-cove*, the Arabic numbers, the cipher zero and many more.

Architecture and poetry flourished not only under the Arabs but under the Turkish and Persian sultans as well. Arabic story-telling and the fantastic world of popular Islamic imagination can be encountered in the *Arabian Nights*, detailing exploits at the court of the paradigmatic Abbasid caliph Harun Al-Rashid (786-809).

For other uses, see Faith (disambiguation)

Faith is a belief in the truth of or trustworthiness of a person, idea, or thing that is characteristically held without proof. Informal usage of the word "faith" can be quite broad, and may be used commonly in place of "trust", "belief", or "hope". For example, the word "faith" can refer to a religion itself or to religion in general, where in this context faith would encompass not only a belief without evidence but also a belief which can oppose scientific evidence. As with "trust", faith involves a concept of future events or outcomes.

The English word faith is dated from 1200–50, from the Latin *fidem*, or *fidēs*, meaning trust, akin to *fidere* to trust.

Faith is often used in a religious context, as in theology, where it almost universally refers to a trusting belief in a transcendent reality, or else in a Supreme Being and said

being's role in the order of transcendent, spiritual things. In Christianity it derives from the Greek *pistis* or root word *peitho*, meaning to trust, to have confidence, faithfulness.

Epistemological validity of faith

There exists a wide spectrum of opinion with respect to the epistemological validity of faith. On one extreme is logical positivism, which denies the validity of any beliefs held by faith; on the other extreme is fideism, which holds that true belief can only arise from faith, because reason and evidence cannot lead to truth. Some foundationalists, such as St. Augustine of Hippo and Alvin Plantinga, hold that all of our beliefs rest ultimately on beliefs accepted by faith. Others, such as C. S. Lewis, hold that faith is merely the virtue by which we hold to our reasoned ideas, despite moods to the contrary.

Judaism

Main article: Jewish principles of faith

Although Judaism does recognize the positive value of *Emunah* (faith/belief) and the negative status of the *Apikoros* (heretic), faith is not as stressed or as central as it is in other religions, e.g. Christianity. It is a necessary means for being a practicing religious Jew, but the ends is more about practice than faith itself.

The specific tenets that compose required belief and their application to the times have been disputed throughout Jewish history. Today many, but not all, Orthodox Jews have accepted Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Belief.

A traditional example of faith as seen in the Jewish annals is found in the person of Abraham. On a number of occasions, Abraham both accepts statements from God that seem impossible and offers obedient actions in response to direction from God to do things that seem implausible (see Genesis 12-15).

For a wide history of this dispute, see: Shapira, Marc: *The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised* (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization (Series).)

Christianity

Main article: Faith in Christianity

Faith in Christianity is directed toward a person and God, Jesus Christ. In this way Christianity claims not to be distinguished by its faith, but by the object of its faith. Faith is an act of trust or reliance on God. Rather than being passive, this leads to an active life of obedience to the one being trusted. Faith causes questions and seeks answers from God and transforms. It sees the mystery of God and his grace and seeks to know and become obedient to God. Faith is not static but causes one to learn more of God and grow. Faith causes change as it seeks a greater understanding of God. Faith is not fideism, or simple obedience to a set of rules or statements. Before the Christian has faith, one must understand in whom and in what one has faith. Without understanding, there cannot be

true faith. Understanding is built on the foundation of the community of believers: the understanding of the scriptures and traditions of the community of believers and on personal experiences of the believer.

Islam

Main article: Iman (concept)

Faith in Islam is called Iman. It is a complete submission to the will of Allah which includes belief, profession, and the body's performance of deeds consistent with the commission as vicegerent on Earth, all according to Allah's will.

Iman has two aspects

- Recognizing and affirming that there is one Creator of the universe and only to this Creator is worship due. According to Islamic thought, this comes naturally because faith is an instinct of the human soul. This instinct is then trained via parents or guardians into specific religious or spiritual paths. Likewise, the instinct may not be guided at all.
- Willingness and commitment to submitting that Allah exists, and to His prescriptions for living in accordance with vicegerency. The Qur'an (Koran) is the dictation of Allah's prescriptions through Prophet Muhammad and is believed to have updated and completed previous revelations Allah sent through earlier prophets.

In the Qur'an, God (Allah in Arabic), states (2:62): Surely, those who believe, those who are Jewish, the Christians, and the converts; anyone who (1) believes in GOD, and (2) believes in the Last Day, and (3) leads a righteous life, will receive their recompense from their Lord. They have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faith>