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This multi-authored volume comprises an impressive collection of thirty-two essays centered around the three “major” religions of the so-called “Abrahamic family”: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Since the 1970s, the contemporary expression “Abrahamic religions” has been employed in inter-religious dialogue for irenic purposes, in an attempt to establish common ground and reconciliation between the adherents of the three religions. By contrast, scholars have contested its use as a concept within the academy, because it generally ignores the fact that there are many “Judaized,” “Christianized,” and “Islamized” Abrahams, and that each tradition has a different perspective on the biblical figure of Abraham. To quote just one example of this debate, Sidney H. Griffith—who has also contributed an essay to the *Handbook* on the subject of God’s “Oneness” in the “Abrahamic faith communities” (pp. 315–331)—had previously criticized the expression as “a misnomer [that] misleadingly suggests a congruence of views about the significance of the biblical patriarch among Jews, Christians, and Muslims that does not in fact exist” (S. H. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013, pp. 213–214).

Notwithstanding, an increasing number of scholars, among them the editors of the *Handbook*, advocate a scholarly, comparative study of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and their mutual relationship “to identify differences and distinctions between them at least as much as similarities” (p. xiv). In fact, the three religions are bound together rather by competition and dispute than concord, even though—or precisely because—they raise similar questions about God and the human being (leading up to what Wittgenstein called “family resemblances”), but answer them differently. Howsoever one may refer to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, whether as “Abrahamic,” “monotheistic,” “scriptural” or “Mediterranean religions”—to name just a few competing labels—their historical and theological interconnectedness, as a result of sharing a common geographical area for centuries (under Christian or Muslim dominion, respectively) and of developing religious ideas in mutual exchange as well as in opposition to each other, is indeed an important and valuable field of research. The establishment of chairs devoted to the study of the “Abrahamic religions/faiths” (Oxford, Cambridge, and, most recently, Trier) is a further attestation to the institutional anchoring of what Peter Ochs dubbed the “academic project of Abrahamic studies” in his essay on “Jewish and Other Abrahamic Philosophic Arguments for Abrahamic Studies” (pp. 559–579).

The complexity and multi-disciplinary nature of studying all three traditions *together* and *comparatively*, as aspired by the editors of the *Handbook*, is a methodologically challenging task and possibly the reason why only “few are the scholars expert in the comparative study of all three religions in relation to their topic of choice, or daring enough to rise to the challenge of the comparative approach” (p. xvii). A broad philological training in several ancient and modern languages, combined with a profound familiarity with more than two faith traditions, is relatively rare among historians and scholars of religion today. Not all essays in the *Handbook* have succeeded in a comparative analytical reading and reflection on all *three* religions in nearly equal measure. The range of topics, grouped together in six parts (the concept of the “Abrahamic religions”; their interactions; scripture and its interpretation; religious thought and philosophy; practice and ethics; three epilogues by practitioners of each religion), can easily be expanded—a possibility the editors themselves suggest (p. xvii). To this we might add that sectarianism and the different denominations and branches of each tradition, as well as their non-textual, material culture, need to be taken into account more fully when studying the various Judaisms, Christianities, and Islams in juxtaposition to each other.

A good example for the advantage of a comparative scholarly approach to the three religions is Blidstein’s essay on “Purity and Defilement” (pp. 448–465), which offers new insights into the complex relationship between these traditions. Following an introduction to the social function of the “purity and defilement idiom” (p. 449) in religious discourse (as ritual, moral, and intrinsic impurity), Blidstein not only demonstrates that ritual purity concepts and practices were shaped differently in each tradition, but also in reaction to each other (as well as to Graeco-Roman traditions). An analysis of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim conceptions allows him to conclude that “[t]he Abrahamic religions utilized two main avenues to accommodate impurity in the monotheistic programme: either it is not evil, but rather a temporary result accompanying bodily processes (as in the dominant Jewish and Muslim ritual purity traditions); or it is indeed evil, but derives from sin—moral decisions made by free-willed agents, whether human or demonic (producing moral impurity in all three religions)” (p. 462). Naturally, Blidstein can only speak of general tendencies, because each tradition has a spectrum of views that are sometimes also at odds with each other. Nevertheless, his essay shows that a comparison between the concepts and practices of a tradition against the backdrop of other and assumed “similar” traditions can lead to a more nuanced understanding of each of them within the wider historical-theological context.

Ultimately, we may ask, what is the additional value of a comparative study of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam under the banner of the “Abrahamic

religions”? David M. Freidenreich concludes his essay on “Dietary Law” (pp. 466–482) by pointing out that the “use of this concept offers the opportunity to reflect critically on the conceptions that underlie both traditional and contemporary approaches to describing the relationship between [the] self and [the] other. The term *Abrahamic* is useful precisely because it does not conform to pre-modern sources, so long as the scholars who employ it do not presume that these sources acknowledge the scriptural or familial affinities implied by this term” (p. 480). I can only concur with that. The *Handbook* is a useful tool for students and scholars alike that gives a comprehensive insight into the current state of research as well as the *desiderata* in the field of Abrahamic studies.

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