DBQ: Judaism, Islam and Christianity

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Historical Context

Islam and Christianity share a common root in Judaism. Though often on opposing sides in world history and though the two groups disagree on so many fundamental questions, these three religions have much in common that is often overlooked.

Task

- Identify elements of Judaism found in both religions.
- Discuss similarities between elements of the New Testament and the Quran.
- Discuss historical opportunities for cultural diffusion among these groups.

Some Recommended Outside Information

- Basic history and beliefs of Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and Muslims.
- Understanding of how the New Testament books and the Quran came to be.
- Understanding of how the New Testament books and the Quran are organized.

The Best Essay…

- Thoroughly develops all aspects of the task evenly and in depth
- Is more analytical than descriptive (analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information)
- Incorporates relevant information from at least **"half plus one"** documents
- Incorporates substantial relevant outside information
- Richly supports the theme with many relevant facts, examples, and details
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme

NOTE: Some documents do not have questions.

Document 1

"In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light." (Genesis 1: 1-3)

Document 2

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being … And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory." (John 1: 1-14)

1. To what event does this passage refer?

Document 3

What is the matter with you that you hope not for greatness and wisdom from Allah? And He has created you in different forms and different conditions. See you not how Allah has created seven heavens in perfect harmony, and has placed the moon, therein a light and made the sun a lamp? And Allah has caused you to grow out of the earth as a good growth. Then will He cause you to return, thereto, and He will bring you forth a new bringing forth. (71:14-19)

And We made from water every living thing... (21:31)

He Who has made perfect everything He has created. And He began the creation of man from clay. (32:8)

1. According to the Quran passages quoted here, what is every living thing made of?

2. According to the Quran passages quoted here, how is the story of creation different from the Torah?

Document 4

"Christianity's presence in the Arabian Peninsula […] must have had a significant effect on the pagan Arabs. It has often been noted that the biblical stories recounted in the Quran, especially those dealing with Jesus, imply a familiarity with […] the Christian faith."
P.12

"The picture that emerges from this brief outline of the pre-Islamic Arabian religious experience is that of an era in which Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Judaism intermingled in one of the last remaining regions in the Near East still dominated by paganism […]. The relative distance that these three major religions enjoyed from their respective centers gave them the freedom to develop their creeds and rituals into fresh, innovative ideologies."
P. 13

"Muhammad aligned his community with the Jews in Medina because he considered them, as well as the Christians, to be part of his Umma [Community of believers]. Consequently, […] he made Jerusalem […] the direction of prayer […] for all Muslims. He imposed a mandatory fast upon his community, which was to take place annually [… according to] the Jewish calendar […]. He adopted many of the Jewish dietary laws and purity requirements, and encouraged many of his followers to marry Jews, as he himself did. (5:5-7).

And while it is true that after a few years, Muhammad changed [some of these things] these decisions should not be interpreted as a 'break with the Jews', but as the maturing of Islam into its own independent religion"
P. 100

Aslan, Reza. *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam.* Random House. 2005.

1. How did Muhammad know about the faith of Jews and Christians?

2. According to Aslan, what was the early relationship between Jews and Muslims like?

3. What kinds of things does Aslan note were borrowed into early Islam from Jews?

Document 5

"Relate in the Book the story of Mary, when she withdrew from her family, to a place in the East. She screened herself from them; then We sent to her Our spirit (angel Gabriel) and he appeared before her as a man in all respects. She said: I seek refuge from you in God Most Gracious (come not near) if you do fear God. He said: Nay, I am only a Messenger from your Lord, to announce to you the gift of a pure son. She said: How shall I have a son, when no man has ever touched me, and I am not unchaste? He said: So it will be, your Lord says: 'That is easy for Me; and We wish to appoint him as a sign unto men and a Mercy from Us': It was a matter so decreed" (19:16-21).

1. What story, familiar to Christians, is being told here?

Document 6

"I do call to witness the Resurrection Day." (75:1)

"Does man think that We cannot assemble his bones?" (75:3)

"That Day will Man be told (all) that he put forward and all that he put back." (75:13)

1. What future event, familiar to Christians, is alluded to in these passages from the Quran?

Document 7

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from the other, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." (Matthew 25:31-32)

Document 8

"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee names Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the House of David. The virgin's name was Mary." (Luke 1:26-27)

"Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know man?' and the angel answered and said to her 'the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you…" (Luke 1:34-35)