

A Study the construction of "otherness" across Abrahamic religions (e.g., Orientalism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia).

Aim

To critically examine how Christian theological frameworks and Western scholarship have historically constructed Judaism and Islam as religious "others," with a focus on how Orientalism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia became embedded in theological, academic, and colonial discourse.

What is the Middle East? Birth of Abrahamic Religions



Journey

I began this project as part of a broader initiative to decolonise theology by interrogating how religious traditions construct "the Other" — particularly across Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. My initial focus was on how theological binaries have historically fuelled exclusion, but recent global events, such as the ongoing violence in Gaza, Islamophobic rhetoric in the post-9/11 era, and the politicisation of Jewish identity, deepened my commitment to tracing the real-world consequences of these theological frameworks.

One of the first stages of my research involved **visiting both churches and mosques** across the UK and Türkiye. These visits allowed me to not only observe the living practices of faith, but also to reflect on how sacred spaces shape identity, belonging, and perceived difference. In both traditions, I found echoes of the same yearning — for justice, for peace, for connection — despite how often institutional or state discourses use these religions to divide.

I then turned to **scriptural analysis**, reading the **Bible (Old and New Testaments), the Qur'an, and key Jewish texts** side by side. I focused especially on Aramaic-rooted traditions and linguistic overlaps, investigating how these scriptures frame concepts such as "enemy," "truth," and "chosen people." My aim was to understand whether the source of conflict lies within the texts themselves, or within the ways they have been historically weaponised. This comparative work revealed more shared moral frameworks than it did contradictions — complicating the notion that religion is inherently a cause of violence.

This project has been both academic and deeply personal. It has pushed me to question the frameworks I inherited and to see religious texts not just as doctrine, but as living archives — shaped by power, politics, and people. I have come to believe that the real work of decolonising theology is not to discard religion, but to **reclaim it from those who have used it to divide**, and instead ask: what truths remain when we stop reading each other through a lens of fear?

Looking ahead, I intend to expand this work by collaborating with students and scholars across faith backgrounds, particularly those engaged in Middle Eastern and diasporic studies. By centring lived experience and plural readings, we can challenge reductive narratives and help build a theology that resists domination — and remembers its deepest roots in justice, humility, and care.

Methodology

I used academic databases like JSTOR and ATLA to research themes such as Orientalism, supersessionism, and interfaith theology, focusing on how Christian thought has historically constructed Judaism and Islam as "others." Key sources included Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Dan Jones' *Crusaders*, and comparative studies of the Bible, Qur'an, and Jewish texts.

I reviewed bibliographies to include non-Western and translated sources, ensuring diverse perspectives. Fieldwork involved visiting churches and mosques in the UK and Türkiye to observe lived religious practices and spatial theology.

I conducted close textual analysis of Abrahamic scriptures and examined post-9/11 political rhetoric and media coverage—particularly on Gaza—to trace how theological narratives persist in shaping power, violence, and identity today.

Why it Matters?

In today's political climate—marked by rising Islamophobia, resurgent anti-Semitism, and the ongoing crisis in Gaza—examining how religious traditions have been used to justify exclusion, violence, and power is more urgent than ever. Within academia, theology must move beyond Eurocentric frameworks to confront its historical complicity in colonialism and cultural erasure. This research challenges dominant narratives and encourages a more ethical, inclusive, and globally conscious approach to the study of faith, identity, and difference.