Iranian Association of the Qur'an and the Bible
http://qurabi.ir
Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible
Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir **Online ISSN:** 3060-7035

Cite this article: Fatehipeykani, Hamideh. (2025) Contentment and Submission in the Theology of the Abrahamic Religions: An Aesthetic Approach. Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible. Vol-2, Issue-1, 65-91. https://doi.org/10.22034/qb.2025.2058477.1041

Contentment and Submission in the Theology of the Abrahamic Religions: An Aesthetic Approach

Hamideh Fatehipeykani[1]

(Received: 4 April 2025 - Accepted: 21 August 2025)

Abstract

Thie present study aims to examine the concepts of contentment (*Riḍā*) and submission (*Taslīm*) within the religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Employing an aesthetic-theological approach, it seeks to elucidate the role of these concepts in human spiritual experience. The research focuses on the analysis of sacred texts, commentaries, and relevant intellectual sources from these three religions, demonstrating that contentment and submission possess not only ethical and devotional dimensions but also shape an aesthetic and theological experience within human relationships with God and the world. The article explicates the commonalities and differences in the perspectives of these three religious traditions regarding contentment and submission, showing that an aesthetic understanding of these concepts can provide a deeper and more comprehensive comprehension of spiritual experience. The study's findings can provide a theoretical foundation for future interdisciplinary research in the field of aesthetic theology and demonstrate the intimate and reciprocal relationship between beauty and spiritual experience in the Abrahamic religions.

1 . Lecturer, Language and Islamic Studies Center, Al-Mustafa University (Binte Al-Huda Higher Education Complex), Qom, IRAN. fatehi1455@gmail.com

OPEN ACCESS
CC BY

Iranian Association of the Qur'an and the Bible
http://qurabi.ir
Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible
Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir Online ISSN: 3060-7035

Contentment and Submission in the Theology of the Abrahamic Religions: An Aesthetic Approach

Keywords: Contentment and Submission, Theology of the Abrahamic Religions, Religious Aesthetics, Spiritual Experience, Sacred Texts.

Introduction

The concepts of contentment and submission are among the most fundamental concepts in religious traditions, playing a central role in shaping the spiritual and ethical experience of the faithful. In the Abrahamic religions, these two concepts are presented not only as ethical injunctions and devotional obligations but are also profoundly linked to the relationship between humanity and God and the manner of perceiving the divine presence in the world. In the Qur'an, submission to God is introduced as the foundation of faith, and divine contentment is regarded as the ultimate goal of the believer's spiritual journey: "Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him." (al-Mā'idah: 119) In Jewish texts, particularly in the Old Testament, obedience to divine law and acceptance of God's will are considered the essence of servitude, and contentment with divine decree is the criterion of true faith. In the Christian tradition, too, submission to the divine will holds a special place in the teachings of Jesus Christ and the writings of the New Testament, to the extent that suffering and the cross have become symbols of the pinnacle of contentment and submission to God's will.

Despite the importance of these concepts in the three Abrahamic traditions, most existing research has focused on their ethical, legal, or psychological dimensions. Consequently, the aesthetic and theological dimension of contentment and submission has received less attention.

Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible
Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir Online ISSN: 3060-7035

However, studying these concepts from an aesthetic perspective can open a new horizon in understanding the relationship between humanity and God. An aesthetic understanding of contentment and submission entails attention to the harmony, consonance, and sacred manifestation that these concepts produce in spiritual life. In other words, when a person attains contentment and submission, they rediscover an experience of divine beauty in their life—an experience that grants them peace, integrity, and deeper meaning.

The necessity of this research can be explained from two aspects: "First, from a theological perspective, which seeks to explain the place of contentment and submission in the sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; and second, from an aesthetic perspective, which attempts to demonstrate the connection of these concepts with the experience of beauty and sanctity." This combination can both fill a gap in comparative studies between the Qur'an and the Testaments and provide a foundation for the expansion of aesthetic theology in the contemporary intellectual sphere.

Furthermore, attention to the aesthetic dimension of contentment and submission can play a significant role in interfaith dialogue. All three Abrahamic religions emphasize the value of accepting the divine will and finding peace under the shadow of contentment. This commonality can serve as a point of synergy and strengthened coexistence among the followers of these religions.

Simultaneously, the present paper clearly defines its scope: the research focuses solely on theological and aesthetic analysis and avoids entering into psychological discussions or educational and social applications. Thus, its primary objective is to clarify the place of contentment and submission in

Iranian Association of the Qur'an and the Bible
http://qurabi.ir
Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible
Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir Online ISSN: 3060-7035

the theology of the Abrahamic religions, with an emphasis on the aesthetic manifestations of these concepts.

Accordingly, the main research question of the article is as follows: 'How can contentment and submission be understood as aesthetic-theological concepts in the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, and what commonalities and differences exist in the perspectives of these religions towards them?'

1. Research Background

The study of contentment and submission (yielding to the divine will) from the perspective of the Abrahamic religions is an engaging interdisciplinary field between theology and religious aesthetics. In the Islamic tradition, contentment and submission hold a foundational place in mysticism, ethics, and even theology. "*Riḍā*" is introduced as one of the highest stations in the mystical path (Qushayri, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 362), and "*Taslīm*" is emphasized in the Qur'an as the essential identity of a Muslim (al-Baqarah: 131). In Persian mystical literature, aesthetic concepts such as the "Sweetness of Contentment" or the "Beauty of Submission" are frequently encountered (Jami, 1991 AD/1370 SH: 225).

In the Christian tradition, the idea of submission to God's will is often known by the concept of "Surrender to the divine will" or "Spiritual submission" and is described in mystical texts, such as the writings of Teresa of Ávila or Jean Vanier, with the language of love and spiritual beauty (Vanier, 1998: 112).

Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir Online ISSN: 3060-7035

In Judaism, too, submission, as "Accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven,"[1] holds a deeply rooted place in religious literature and in the Talmud and the mystical writings of Kabbalah, an aesthetic connection has been established between servitude, contentment, and spiritual pleasure (Green, 2004: 96). However, a comparative study of these concepts from an aesthetic approach has not yet been conducted systematically, and the present research seeks to address this gap.

2. The Conceptualization of Contentment and Submission in the Abrahamic Religions

In the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), contentment and submission (surrending to the divine will) are key concepts in the relationship between humanity and God. These concepts, within sacred texts and religious traditions, are explained through teachings concerning trust in God, acceptance of His will, and finding peace in divine providence. Despite commonalities, each of these religions offers a specific interpretation of these concepts.

In Judaism, the concept of "Bittachon" (בִּטָּחוֹן) signifies deep trust in God and acceptance of His wisdom. This concept is particularly emphasized in the Book of Psalms:

"Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you." (Psalms 55:22)

"Bittachon" is connected to the concept of "Emunah" (אמונה), or steadfast faith in God. In Jewish thought, contentment and submission find meaning when a person traverses the path of life with faith and trust in God, even without understanding the divine reasons (Kellner, 2006: 87).

[1]. קבלת עול מלכות שמים

Iranian Association of the Qur'an and the Bible
http://qurabi.ir
Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible
Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir Online ISSN: 3060-7035

Contentment and Submission in the Theology of the Abrahamic Religions: An Aesthetic Approach

In Christianity, the concept of submission is often presented in the form of faith in divine grace and wisdom. One of the most significant moments expressing submission in the Bible is the statement of the Virgin Mary during the Annunciation by the Angel Gabriel:

"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38)

In the Pauline tradition, too, submission to God's will is interpreted as acceptance of divine grace and liberation from worldly anxieties. The Apostle Paul writes in his Letter to the Romans:

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good." (Romans 8:28)

In Christian thought, contentment signifies the harmony of the human will with divine providence, which ultimately leads to inner peace (Murray, 2008: 134).

In Islam, however, contentment and submission are fundamental principles of faith. In the Qur'an, submission to God is introduced as the path to tranquility:

"Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured." (al-Raʿd: 28)

The concept of "*Tafwīḍ*" (entrusting matters to God) and accepting His wisdom is also a key aspect of submission in Islam. Imam Ali (AS) states in *Nahj al-Balāghah*:

"The best life is that in which you are content with divine decree." (Nahj al-Balāghah, Wisdom 228)

Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir Online ISSN: 3060-7035

Islamic mystics also emphasize that true submission does not mean passivity but rather a conscious and loving acceptance of the divine will, accompanied by patience and gratitude (Nasr, 2007: 245).

Therefore, in the Abrahamic religions, *Riḍā* and *Taslīm* are concepts related to trust, faith, and acceptance of the divine will. In Judaism, "Bittachon" signifies active trust in God; in Christianity, submission signifies harmony with divine grace; and in Islam, *Riḍā* and Tafwīḍ indicate the path to attaining spiritual peace. These commonalities and differences show that these concepts have been interpreted within specific theological contexts in different religions.

3. Examples of Submission and Acceptance in Sacred Texts

In the sacred texts of the Abrahamic religions, submission and acceptance of divine providence are among the most important themes expressed through stories of prophets, ethical teachings, and mystical prayers. These concepts are not only introduced as a path to achieving spiritual peace but also indicate the profound relationship between humanity and God. Below, examples of submission and acceptance in the Torah, the Gospel, and the Qur'an are examined.

3.1. Judaism: The Submission of Job and Abraham

In Judaism, Job is one of the most prominent figures demonstrating submission and acceptance of the divine will. In the Book of Job, he faces numerous tribulations, such as the loss of his children, wealth, and health, yet he does not lose his faith and ultimately says:

"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21)

Iranian Association of the Qur'an and the Bible
http://qurabi.ir
Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible
Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir Online ISSN: 3060-7035

This verse represents the pinnacle of acceptance and trust in God, recognized in the Jewish tradition as a prime example of "Bittachon" (trust and submission) (Kellner, 2006: 95).

Furthermore, the story of Abraham and the binding of his son (Akedah) is another example of conscious submission to God's command (Genesis 22:2-12). This narrative reinforces the concept of trust in divine wisdom in Judaism.

3.2. Christianity: The Submission of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane

In the New Testament, one of the most profound moments of submission and acceptance occurs in the Garden of Gethsemane[1], where Jesus Christ prays on the night of his arrest:

"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39)

This statement of Christ demonstrates the pinnacle of "Fiat[2]" or acceptance of God's will. Christ, despite being aware of the suffering ahead, prioritizes the divine will over his personal desire (Murray, 2008: 156).

1. The Garden of Gethsemane is a garden located on the slopes of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem and is recognized as a holy site in the Christian tradition. According to the Gospel accounts, this is the garden where Jesus Christ (PBUH) prayed and meditated on the night before his arrest, experiencing the difficult moments of surrendering to the Divine will. Gethsemane is a symbol of surrender, suffering, and faith in Divine providence and is portrayed in Christian art as a place filled with sorrow, yet imbued with spiritual peace.

2. "Let it be" or "Let it be done"
In Christian theology – particularly in the Catholic tradition – *Fiat* refers to the acceptance of the Divine will, most notably in the "Fiat of Mary," which refers to the response of the Virgin Mary (PBUH) to the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation of the birth of Christ (PBUH):
"Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum" ("Let it be done to me according to your word").
This statement represents surrender and contentment (*Rida*) in the face of the Divine will.

Additionally, in the Pauline epistles, the concept of submission to divine grace is emphasized:

"For my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

This verse shows that accepting human limitations and relying on divine power is a fundamental principle of Christian faith.

3.3. Islam: The Submission of Prophet Abraham and the Acceptance of Divine Will in the Qur'an

In the Qur'an, Prophet Abraham is presented as a paragon of submission and acceptance of God's will. When he sees a dream about sacrificing his son, he submits to the divine command:

"O! My son! I have seen in a dream that I [must] sacrifice you. So tell me what you think." He said, "O! My father! Do as you are commanded. You will find me, if God wills, of the steadfast." (al-Ṣāffāt: 102-103)

This story exemplifies absolute faith in God and acceptance of His wisdom, which is considered in Islam to be one of the signs of true servitude (Nasr, 2007: 267).

Furthermore, the concept of contentment is emphasized in the Qur'an:

"And of the people is he who sells himself, seeking the pleasure *Riḍwān* of God; and God is kind to [His] servants." (al-Baqarah: 207)

This verse indicates that acceptance of the divine will brings a person closer to divine peace and love. In all Abrahamic religions, these examples illustrate that the conscious acceptance of divine providence, rather than being passive, is a path to strengthening faith and achieving inner peace.

4. The Views of Abrahamic Religious Thinkers on Submission and Contentment

Iranian Association of the Qur'an and the Bible
http://qurabi.ir
Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible
Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir Online ISSN: 3060-7035

Contentment and Submission in the Theology of the Abrahamic Religions: An Aesthetic Approach

Submission and contentment in the Jewish tradition are deeply connected to faith, trust in God, and acceptance of divine providence. Jewish philosophers throughout history have addressed this issue, offering diverse perspectives on the relationship between human will, free choice, and submission to the divine will.

Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE – 50 CE), influenced by Platonic and Stoic philosophy, interprets the concept of submission as harmony with the divine order. In his work "On Providence," he states:

"The wise man is he who aligns his will with the divine will, for this harmony is the greatest happiness and true salvation." (Philo, 2001: 342)

Philo believed that submission in Judaism should not signify passivity, but rather the voluntary acceptance of the divine order and the alignment of one's life with it.

Sadia Gaon (882-942 CE), a Jewish philosopher and theologian, argues in his book "The Book of Beliefs and Opinions" that submission and contentment before God should not be mistaken for determinism. He emphasizes:

"God has granted man free will, but has asked him to align his will with divine providence in the light of reason and revelation." (Sadia Gaon, 1976: 185)

He believed that accepting divine commandments is not only a sign of submission but also a sign of a deeper recognition and understanding of the divine order. In this view, submission is a conscious and rational process.

Mūsā ibn Maymūn (1135-1204 CE), known as Rambam or Maimonides, one of the greatest Jewish philosophers, explores the relationship between

free will, divine providence, and submission in his "Guide for the Perplexed." He states:

"The more a person's knowledge of God increases, the more peace they will have in the face of divine providence, for they understand that what God has decreed is the epitome of wisdom." (Rambam, 1995: 3, 231)

He views submission as the result of true knowledge of God and believes that a person attains true contentment when they comprehend the divine system. In this view, submission means not uncritical acceptance, but a rational submission to divine wisdom.

Yehuda Halevi (1075-1141 CE), an Andalusian Jewish poet and philosopher, describes submission in his book "Kuzari" as a loving relationship between humanity and God. He says:

"A person who lives with love for God accepts divine decree with joy, rather than fearing it." (Helvi, 2002: 198)

He believed that true submission is achieved when an individual connects with God wholeheartedly and places their life on His path. In this view, submission is a dynamic, loving, and passionate state.

Jewish philosophers have interpreted the concept of submission and contentment in different ways, but in all these views, submission is regarded as a conscious, rational, and in many cases, loving process. Philo of Alexandria saw submission as harmony with the divine order; Sadia Gaon described it as a rational decision to accept God's will; Rambam saw it as the result of knowledge of God; and Judah Helvi interpreted it as a divine love. Overall, in Jewish philosophy, submission and contentment are introduced not as passivity, but as a conscious and positive choice to accept divine wisdom.

Contentment and Submission in the Theology of the Abrahamic Religions: An Aesthetic Approach

In Christianity, "Saint Augustine" (354-430 CE) is one of the most important thinkers whose views on divine grace, free will, and submission had a profound influence on Western theology. In his works, he examines the relationship between human will and divine grace, stating that humanity requires God's grace for salvation, but this grace operates in a way that does not nullify human will; rather, it guides it toward the good.

In "Confessions," Augustine states that humans possess free will, but this will was weakened after Original Sin. He believed that after the Fall of Adam, humans cannot attain true happiness without the aid of divine grace (Augustine, 1991: 278).

In "The City of God," Augustine emphasizes:

"After the first sin, the human will is no longer capable of choosing the good by itself; rather, it can only move toward salvation with the guidance of divine grace." (Augustine, 2003: 12, 453)

This means that a person only attains true peace and contentment by submitting to the divine will and benefiting from His grace.

Thus, Augustine sees contentment as the heartfelt and conscious acceptance of divine grace. In his treatise "On Grace and Free Will," he explains that although humans have free will, this will is only beneficial on the path to salvation when it is aligned with divine grace. He believed that only submission to divine grace can liberate humanity from the bondage of sin and suffering (Augustine, 1998: 152).

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 CE), one of the most prominent philosophers and theologians of the Middle Ages, established a philosophical-theological system based on the ideas of Aristotle and

Augustine. In his "Summa Theologiae," he examines the relationship between reason, free will, and submission to God's will.

Aquinas sees reason as the instrument for knowing divine truth. He believed that by using reason, humans can understand the divine will and, by acting upon it, achieve perfection (Aquinas, 1981: 1, 423). Therefore, submission to the divine will should not be out of compulsion or coercion but should be the result of a rational and conscious process.

In his discussion on divine providence, he states:

"When a human being apprehends the truth with their reason and submits to the divine will, they attain true contentment." (Aquinas, 1981: 2, 531)

In Aquinas's view, human free will is not in opposition to the divine will; rather, divine grace enables humans to choose the good freely. He believed that through their free will, humans can choose the path of good, but this choice is ultimately guided by divine grace (Aquinas, 1981: 3, 287).

Contentment in Christian theology is closely linked to the concept of salvation. Christianity teaches that faith, grace, and contentment with divine providence are three key elements on the path to salvation. The Apostle Paul says in his Letter to the Romans:

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8: 28)

This indicates that conscious acceptance and submission to the divine will lead to true peace and happiness.

A major debate in Christian theology concerns the relationship between divine predestination and human free will. Both Augustine and Aquinas believed that God has a plan for the world from eternity, but this

Iranian Association of the Qur'an and the Bible
http://qurabi.ir
Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible
Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir Online ISSN: 3060-7035

predestination does not mean the elimination of human free will; rather, it guides it toward the good.

The views of Augustine and Aquinas on submission and contentment have greatly influenced Christian theology. Augustine saw submission as the conscious acceptance of divine grace, believing that humans cannot achieve salvation without this grace. Aquinas links reason and free will with the acceptance of the divine will, emphasizing that submission must be conscious and based on reasoning. These views show that in the Christian tradition, submission and contentment mean not passivity, but the active acceptance of divine grace and harmony with God's will.

Submission and contentment are fundamental concepts in Islamic mysticism and theology, playing a significant role in human spiritual education and psychological peace. Submission means entrusting matters to God with complete trust in His wisdom, while contentment is a state of heartfelt acceptance of divine decree without complaint or dissatisfaction. These two concepts are emphasized in Qur'anic teachings and the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS), and Islamic scholars have considered them among the stages of spiritual perfection. On the mystical path, reaching the station of contentment is considered higher than submission, as it indicates the union of the human will with the divine will.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said in a hadith:

"Islam is that you submit your face to God and purify your heart for Him." (Biḥār al-Anwār: 68, 278)

Imam Ali (AS) also stated regarding the importance of submission:

"The essence of religion is submission to God." (Ghurar al-Ḥikam, Hadith 324)

Iranian Association of the Qur'an and the Bible
http://qurabi.ir
Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible
Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir **Online ISSN:** 3060-7035

Contentment in Islam means heartfelt satisfaction with the divine will and accepting what God has decreed without objection. This state is considered among the highest degrees of faith and leads to peace of soul and proximity to God.

Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) also emphasized the lofty status of contentment, stating:

"Whoever attains the station of contentment has reached the highest levels." (al-Kāfī: 2, 64)

In Islamic narrations, submission and contentment are always mentioned together. Submission means accepting the divine will, and contentment is a higher stage where the human heart is content with divine decree. Imam Ali (AS) said in this regard:

"Indeed, contentment and submission are the light of the heart and the lamp of the intellect." (Ghurar al-Ḥikam, Hadith 358)

These concepts are introduced in the *Sīrah* of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) as a way to free oneself from anxiety and attain happiness. In the thought of Islamic philosophers, submission and contentment also hold a central place and have been examined in connection with ontology, epistemology, and human felicity. *Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā* (Avicenna), and *Mullā Ṣadrā* with their philosophical approach, interpreted submission not merely as passivity, but as a conscious harmony with the divine system. Thus, submission and contentment play a key role not only in the individual sphere but also in the intellectual and social system of Islam.

Fārābī (d. 339 AH) in his philosophy depicts the world based on a rational and hierarchical system in which every level of existence is a

Iranian Association of the Qur'an and the Bible
http://qurabi.ir
Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible
Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir Online ISSN: 3060-7035

reflection of the Active Intellect. He believed that human happiness lies in harmonizing oneself with this order and gaining a correct understanding of one's place in existence.

In "The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City," *Fārābī* states that the individual who reaches the highest degree of happiness is one who, through theoretical intellect, comprehends the truth and lives in accordance with it in practice (Fārābī, 1969 AD/1389 SH: 108). This harmony with the rational order is considered a form of conscious submission, which, unlike passive submission, requires knowledge and reasoning. In other words, the acceptance of the divine order must be based on a philosophical understanding of it, not on imitation or determinism.

Avicenna (d. 428 AH), also influenced by Neoplatonic teachings, sees happiness in connection with the intellectual knowledge of God and the acceptance of His providence. In his book "*al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*," he states that the perfect individual is one who reaches the stage of conscious contentment and submission, for in this state; their soul is freed from material attachments and joins the rank of the Active Intellect (Avicenna, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 3, 358).

Avicenna also introduces the concept of contentment as the acceptance of divine wisdom in all life circumstances. In *al-Shifā*, he explains that a rational person must accept that all events in the world are in line with the overall order of good, even if they appear unpleasant to the individual (Avicenna, 1965 AD/1385 AH: 219). This view is similar to the Stoic doctrine in Greek philosophy, which emphasizes that contentment with one's fate leads to inner peace.

Iranian Association of the Qur'an and the Bible
http://qurabi.ir
Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible
Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir **Online ISSN:** 3060-7035

Furthermore, *Mullā Ṣadrā* (d. 1050 AH), by presenting the theory of Substantial Motion, introduced a new perspective on the relationship between humans and God. He believes that the entire existence is in motion and evolution, and this motion is guided towards the absolute good, which is God. Within this framework, submission and contentment mean accepting this evolutionary motion and harmonizing with divine wisdom.

In *al-Ḥikmat al-Muta'ālīyah fī al-Asfār al-Arba'ah* (The Transcendent Philosophy of the Four Journeys), *Mullā Ṣadrā* states:

"Everything in this world, even pain and suffering, is part of the most excellent system which ultimately leads to good and perfection. Therefore, contentment and submission are not surrender to determinism, but a conscious acceptance of divine wisdom." (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1963 AD/1383 AH: 7, 325)

This view shows that, from *Mullā Ṣadrā*'s perspective, passive acceptance and submission are worthless, but if this submission is based on an intellectual understanding of divine wisdom, it can lead to human spiritual growth and true happiness.

In the thought of Islamic philosophers, submission and contentment are interpreted not as passivity, but as a conscious harmony with the rational order of the world and the acceptance of divine wisdom. *Fārābī* emphasizes harmony with the Active Intellect, Avicenna sees submission as a path to attaining happiness, and *Mullā Ṣadrā*, with his theory of Substantial Motion, introduces the acceptance of divine wisdom as a path for human evolution. These views show that in Islamic philosophy, submission and contentment are valuable when they are based on knowledge and reasoning, not on determinism or passivity.

Iranian Association of the Qur'an and the Bible
http://qurabi.ir
Journal of Interreligious Studies on the Qur'an and the Bible
Volume. 2, No. 1, Spring and Summer 2025, PP. 65-91 https://qb.qurabi.ir Online ISSN: 3060-7035

5. The Aesthetics of Submission and Contentment in Christian Art

The aesthetics of submission and contentment in Christian art, particularly in paintings, sculptures, and religious music, demonstrate the manifestation of inner peace and the acceptance of the divine will.

5.1. Religious Paintings: Depicting the Moment of Submission and Liberation in Renaissance Works

The Renaissance was a period in which Christian art flourished, and divine concepts such as submission and contentment were portrayed artistically in paintings. Artists of this period used light, composition, and facial expressions to display moments of peak faith and submission. A prominent example of this approach is the painting "The Crucifixion of Christ" by El Greco. In this work, Christ is seen on the cross in a calm and luminous state, representing His conscious contentment and submission to the divine will (Gombrich, 1995: 227).

Furthermore, Leonardo da Vinci, in his painting "The Last Supper," depicts the moment Christ announces His acceptance of His fate. His calm gaze contrasted with the excitement and anxiety of His disciples displays the contrast between faith and doubt, submission and resistance (Hall, 2011: 189).

5.2. Paintings with the Theme of Christ's Crucifixion and the Concept of Contentment

Another prominent painter who well depicted the concept of submission and contentment is Rembrandt. In his work "The Descent from the Cross," he portrays the lifeless body of Christ being lowered from the cross with

serenity. The lighting in this work emphasizes Christ's face, displaying a state of spiritual peace and acceptance (Hoekstra, H,1990:88-91).

In the painting "The Descent from the Cross" by Peter Paul Rubens, Christ's submission to the divine will is seen in the gesture of His arm and eyes gazing towards heaven. These paintings not only show the dramatic aspect of the event but also depict a profound manifestation of peace and acceptance amidst suffering (Warner, 2013: 314).

5.3. The Quran and the Aesthetics of Contentment and Submission

In the Holy Quran, the concept of contentment and submission is repeatedly mentioned as a characteristic of God's chosen ones. A key verse in this context is from Surah *al-Fajr*:

"O! Reassured soul, Return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him]."

(al-Fajr: 27-28)

This verse presents an image of spiritual beauty in which a reassured soul that has submitted to God returns to its Lord with complete contentment. This indicates that in the Islamic tradition, submission to divine providence and acceptance of divine decree are not only a religious virtue but also an element of aesthetics. Accordingly, the concepts of contentment and submission in the sacred texts of the Abrahamic religions are presented as fundamental principles that not only bring spiritual peace but also possess aesthetic aspects. In the Torah, trust in God is a form of liberation from anxiety and an entry into spiritual beauty. In the Gospel, submission to divine providence is introduced as a source of peace and divine love, and in the Quran, acceptance of God's will is a path to attaining the reassured soul and spiritual perfection.

6. The Aesthetics of Submission and Contentment in Islamic Art

Islamic art is one of the richest contexts for reflecting spiritual concepts, including submission and contentment. These concepts, which hold a fundamental place in Islamic theology and mysticism, are manifested aesthetically in architecture, calligraphy, and artistic ornamentation; Geometric order in architecture, balance in calligraphy, and the use of symbolic forms express human acceptance before the divine order and the manifestation of monotheistic concepts in art.

6.1. Islamic Architecture: Geometric Patterns and Order as Symbols of Accepting the Divine Order

Islamic architecture, with its emphasis on geometry, symmetry, and repeating patterns, offers a reflection of the cosmic order and submission to the divine will. According to many scholars of Islamic art, this order in architecture signifies the acceptance of God's will and harmony with the universe (Burckhardt, 1976: 91).

In Islamic religious buildings, geometric patterns and continuously repeating arabesque motifs indicate the infiniteness of God and human acceptance of His order. For example, in the Complex Mosque of Isfahan and the Alhambra Palace in Andalusia, the repetition of geometric shapes like octagons and circles are signs of God's oneness and submission to His will (Critchlow, 1976: 57).

One of the most prominent aspects of Islamic architecture is the use of arches and domes. These elements are not only structurally important but also symbolically refer to the movement from multiplicity to divine unity.

In the Sultan Ahmed Mosque in Istanbul, successive and interconnected domes guide the eye towards the center and the apex, symbolizing human movement towards submission and unity with the Creator (Necipoğlu, 1995: 188). This concept is also evident in Iranian architecture, where in the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque; the light entering from the openings in the dome is designed to induce a state of mysticism and peace (Grabar, 1987: 144).

6.2. Calligraphy and Submission to the Revealed Word

Calligraphy in Islamic art is the most important visual manifestation of the revealed word. Calligraphy is not only an art but also considered a form of worship and submission to the divine word. The Quranic script, designed in the most beautiful form possible, demonstrates complete submission to the revealed word and an effort to display transcendent beauty (Blair, 2006: 49). In Islamic calligraphy, order and harmony in composition are signs of submission and acceptance of divine unity. One important style is Kufic script, which, due to its simplicity and solidity, expresses monotheism and the divine order in the universe. Particularly in ancient Qurans, verses related to submission and contentment are emphasized with Kufic script (Déroche, 1992: 83).

In contrast, *Naskh* script, which has flexibility and a fluid flow, was used more for writing Qurans in the medieval period. This script, with its soft curves and balanced composition, expresses peace and acceptance of the divine will (Safadi, 1978: 112). In Ottoman and Safavid mosques, Quranic inscriptions in Thuluth script are also seen, representing grandeur and conscious submission to the Divine Essence.

From this perspective, Islamic art, both in architecture and calligraphy, has symbolically and intuitively reflected the aesthetics of submission and

contentment. Islamic architecture, through symmetry and geometric patterns, shows the path of movement from multiplicity to unity, and calligraphy, through the grandeur of Quranic words, expresses submission to the revealed word. These artistic manifestations indicate the deep connection between Islamic theology and art and provide a way to directly experience spiritual beauty and the peace resulting from submission.

7. Theological and Aesthetic Analysis of Contentment and Submission in the Abrahamic Religions

In all three Abrahamic religions, contentment and submission are seen not only as an ethical duty or a requirement of faith but also as an aesthetic experience that leads the person towards union with the transcendent. In the Islamic tradition, contentment is a state in which the individual has no objection to divine decree, and in this acceptance, reaches a peace that mystics call the "Beauty of submission." Imam Ali (AS) said, "Whoever is content with God's decree has tasted the flavor of faith." (Nahj al-Balagha, Wisdom 328) This "Tasting" of contentment with decree is not only a sign of faith but also a manifestation of inner peace and a heartfelt presence before the divine will.

In the Christian tradition, Teresa of Ávila writes in "The Interior Castle": "The soul, upon submitting to God, sees within itself a gentle and sweet light that is more beautiful than all worldly pleasures." (Teresa of Ávila, 2007: 88) Such descriptions indicate a link between submission and aesthetic experience.

In Judaism, narratives from Rabbi Nachman of Breslov describe the moment of accepting God's will as "a moment of endless illumination."

(Green, 2004: 101) In these narratives, the moment of submission is accompanied by a feeling of pleasure and transcendence, which directly relates to the realm of religious aesthetics.

The semantic system of Islamic mysticism also considers this peace not merely a psychological state but a divine and sacred experience; so much so that in mystical literature, the peace resulting from contentment is depicted like a flower blooming in the garden of proximity to God (Suhrawardi, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 75). In the modern era, the concept of beauty is often linked to visual appearances, but the Abrahamic religions have shown that beauty can be a spiritual and inner experience. The beauty of submission is the beauty of accepting truth unconditionally. Hans Urs von Balthasar writes in "The Glory of the Lord": "True beauty is revealed not in victory, but in sacrifice and submission." (Balthasar, 1982: 1, 34)

This perspective on beauty, especially in today's world where humanity is amidst crisis and despair, provides an opportunity to rethink beauty as a spiritual refuge. In these three religions, the moment of submission is not only the end of human resistance against the divine will but also the beginning of a new observation of reality; an observation experienced from within and from the perspective of the heart. In Islamic mysticism, submission is accompanied by seeing with the eye of the heart. Suhrawardi writes in "*Mūnis al-'Ushshāq*": The lover, in the station of contentment, "Transitions from the darkness of nature to the light of innate disposition, and from the light of innate disposition to the divine radiance." (Suhrawardi, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 112) This language is explicitly aesthetic and utilizes words like "Light" and "Illumination."

Contentment and Submission in the Theology of the Abrahamic Religions: An Aesthetic Approach

In the Christian tradition, the concept of the "Vision Beatific" is also linked to beauty. Balthasar sees submission as "A window towards seeing the absolutely beautiful." (Balthasar, 1982: 1, 67) From this perspective, beauty is the quality of the relationship between humans and God. In Judaism, "Shalom" symbolizes inner peace and connection to God, described with words like sweetness and gentleness. Thus, contentment and submission are experiences filled with an inner beauty harmonious with the whole of existence; a beauty of the kind of peace, sacrifice, and the ecstasy of presence in the transcendent.

The concept of "Contentment and Submission" in the Abrahamic religions is not merely an ethical principle or religious duty, but a profound and sacred experience that brings humans closer to the realm of divine presence. This experience is inherently aesthetic in nature; because in contentment and submission, the believer finds a harmony between their own will and the divine will, and this harmony is a manifestation of sacred beauty and harmony.

In the Holy Quran, submission is introduced as the foundation of faith, and "Islam" – meaning complete acceptance of the Divine will – is a gateway to entering peace and witnessing Divine beauty. "Contentment," in the Islamic tradition, is expressed by mystics as the blossoming of a flower in the garden of Divine proximity; a state in which the human, with the eye of the heart, gazes upon the light of truth and experiences beauty not in appearances, but in the acceptance of God's will.

In the Christian tradition as well, Jesus Christ, through his complete submission to the will of the Heavenly Father, reveals the beauty of faith in the moment of sacrifice and self-transcendence. Saints like Teresa of Ávila

considered this submission to be the source of a gentle light and an experience higher than any worldly pleasure. Such an experience is a sign of the connection between truth, beauty, and faith in Christianity.

In Judaism, submission to God's will is linked with the concept of "Shalom" – a sacred peace described by Jewish mystics as "A moment of endless illumination." This expression shows that contentment is not merely accepting the status quo, but rather a presence within the Divine light and a discovery of absolute beauty.

From a theological perspective, all three Abrahamic traditions emphasize the truth that contentment and submission are a sacred and aesthetic experience that transports a person beyond their own limitations and places them within the embrace of the Divine will. This experience is not the end of the path, but rather the beginning of a new perspective on existence; a perspective in which absolute beauty is revealed through acceptance and sacrifice. Thus, "Contentment and Submission" is a bridge between faith, beauty, and spirituality, and at its core, bears witness to the eternal connection between humanity and the transcendent.

References

The Holy Quran.

Nahj al-Balāghah.

The Bible.

Aquinas, T. (1981). *Summa Theologiae.* (F. Copleston, Trans). University of Notre Dame Press.

Balthasar, H. U. (1982). *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*. (Vol. 1). Ignatius Press.

Blair, S. (2006). *Islamic Calligraphy*. Edinburgh University Press.

Burckhardt, T. (1976). *Art of Islam: Language and Meaning*. World Wisdom.

Critchlow, K. (1976). *Islamic Patterns: An Analytical and Cosmological Approach*. Thames & Hudson.

Déroche, F. (1992). *The Abbasid Tradition: Qur'ans of the 8th to the 10th Century*. The British Library.

Fārābī, A. (1969). *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City.* (J. Mojtabavi, Trans). Hekmat Publishing.

Gombrich, E. H. (1995). *The Story of Art*. Phaidon Press.

Grabar, O. (1987). *The Formation of Islamic Art*. Yale University Press.

Green, A. (2004). *A Guide to the Zohar*. Stanford University Press.

Halevi, J. (2002). *The Kuzari*. (H. Hirschfeld, Trans.; A. Shear, Ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hall, J. (2011). *The Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Christian Art*. HarperCollins Publishers.

Hoekstra, H. (Ed.). (1990). *Rembrandt and the Bible: Stories from the Old and New Testament, illustrated by Rembrandt in paintings, etchings and drawings*. Magna Books.

Ibn Sīnā, H. (2006). *al-Shifā.* (A. Aram, Trans.). University of Tehran Press. (Original work published 1385 SH)

Jami, A. (1991). *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*. Scientific and Cultural Publications.

Kellner, M. (2006). *Must a Jew Believe Anything?* Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

Mullā Ṣadrā, S. (1963). *al-Ḥikmat al-Muta'ālīyah fī al-Asfār al-Arba'ah*. Institute for Islamic Studies.

Murray, P. (2008). *Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate*. Yale University Press.

Nasr, S. H. (2007). *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*. New York: HarperOne.

Necipoğlu, G. (1995). *The Topkapi Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture*. Getty Publications.

Qushayrī, A. (1960). *al-Risāla al-Qushayrīyya.* (N. Pourjavady, Trans.). Ney Publishing.

Rambam (Mūsā ibn Maymūn). (1995). *The Guide for the Perplexed*. (S. Pines, Trans). University of Chicago Press.

Safadi, Y. (1978). *Islamic Calligraphy*. Thames & Hudson.

Suhrawardi, Sh. (1962). *Mūnis al-'Ushshāq*. (H. Nasr, Ed). Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.

Suhrawardi, Sh. (1962). *The Collected Works of the Master of Illumination*. Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.

Teresa of Ávila. (2007). *The Interior Castle*. (M. Starr, Trans). Riverhead Books.

Vanier, J. (1998). *Becoming Human: The Journey toward Wholeness*. (1st ed.). New York, NY: Paulist Press.

Warner, M. (2013). *Christian Art: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.