**ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY:**

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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 Comparative studies are investigations to analyze and evaluate with quantitative and qualitative methods a phenomenon and facts among different areas. Natural sciences apply the methods of controlled experimentation to test theories whereas social and human sciences apply in general different approaches and or similarities between two or more objects and or subjects. Comparative studies are based on research techniques and strategies for drawing inferences about causation and or association of fact that are similar. The comparative and the historical method in the study of the religions had long been pronounced a scientific study of the major religions of the world. This paper is written to establish certain comparison between Christianity and Islam as they manifest themselves in the kingdom of Lesotho.

 Christianity was born from within theJewish tradition and Islam developed from both Christianity and Judaism. While there have been differencesamong these religions was a rich cultured interchange between Jews and Muslims that took place in Islamic Spainand other places over centuries. Christianity developedOut of second Temple Judaism in the first CenturyEC.It is founded on the life, teaching, death and resurrection -of Jesus Christ. The Abrahamic Regions consists of three monothetic religions, Judaism Christianity and Islam. Asreligion with strong background in the tradition of thefirst Patriarch and the traditional ancestor of the HebrewsAbraham, the Arabs and many other nations as well asmany theists in Africa Still thrive today. Their secrethistory is derived from the life of Abraham as in generally narrated in Gen 11-25. The initial belief is one God, theGod of Abraham remains the foundation of theirteaching on monotheism, Both Christianity and Islam maintain the existence of only one God, no doubtindicate the manner in which humankind associates and interprets the worldaround it especiallytheinvisible aspects of that world as are known in Africanpeople's belief in the spirit beings in lives of manyAfricans whose background remains in the African TraditionalCulturalsetting.

 Belief System and Philosophies have deeply affected the People and societies where they are practiced. There are roughly 4300 religions Practiced in this world today. Christianity and Islam are the largest religions with 2.8. Billion and 1.9 billion adherents respectively, both of which are similar yet incredibly different. Christianity which had come long before Islam is known to be the root of Islam which makes sense since the two religions. Share much common. They are both monotheistic, Abrahamic religions, which means they share the belief in only one true existing God (Allah) and Jesus Christ is an important revered figure in both religions. Their differences however are what make them two distinctive religions. The point of disagreement touch every important religious doctrine. To Know the similarities and differences between Islam and Christianity we should know these religions first.

**Islam:** Islam is a monothetic religion originating with the teaching of its founder Prophet Muhammad. The word Islam means Peace or the total surrender of oneself to God an adherent of Islam is known as a Muslim meaning one who submit to God. Islam is a Prophetic religion It has its origin in the teaching of prophet Muhammad who is taken by its followers as the messenger (Rasul) of God (Allah). Islam does not disbelieve in the authority of other prophets such as Abraham, Moses and Jesus. But Muhammad is considered as the last and the mightiest amongst prophets. His teachings are regarded as final andthey are to be observed and followed by all. Muslims believe in the Five Pillars. This includes Complete faith and trust in Allah, fasting Praying five times. a day, almsgiving and Pilgrimage to Mecca at least Once in a lifetime.

The Five Pillars can be compared to the eight fold path in the way it provides guidelines to achieve union with the creator. Their holy book is the Quran which gives them rules and regulations for moral conduct and behavior. Muslims must follow all five Pillars to live right and go to heaven. They must follow the guidelines of the Quran.

**Christianity:-** Another religion that greatly affected Society is Christianity. Of all the semiotic religions Christianity has proved to be the most influential and dominated a large Population of the world, specially the western world. It has its origin in the teachings of Jesus, a Jew by birth and reported to be born of a virgin mother Mary. The religion seems to be essentially monotheistic although the idea of Trinity found in it sometimes raises doubt whether it is really and strictly to be regarded as monotheism. All Christians believe that Jesus Christ was the only son of God and was born of the Virgin Mary. Also he was sent to earth to spread the word of God and Christianity. Christians follow their codes of law known as the 10 Commandments. Christians read their book the Bible and go to Church every Sunday. Lastly Christianity does not believe in any social classes. They believe that all people are created equal. Christianity provided a way of life, a close loving personal relationship with God and eternal life after death. These three statements caused Christianity to spread and affect almost everyone in the world. Christianity without doubt Originated in the teachings of Jesus Christ it took definite Shape as a religion at the hands of St. Paul. St. Paul not only propagated the teachings of Jesus Christ with full sense of devotion and honesty, but also added important ideas from his own side.

**Similarities and differences between Islam and Christianity: -**

To illustrate some of the similarities and differences between the two largest religions of the world, the followings are given:-

**Monothetic religion-** Christianity and Islam believe inthe reality of only one Supreme God. There is only oneGod who is the creator and the Sustainer of the Universe. Believe that God who is the righteous Fudge is also gracious and merciful According to Christianity. and Islam God is infinite, Omnipotent, omnipresent and Omniscient. He is eternal and his existence is necessary,

**Sovereignty of God:-** Both religions believe that God isnot only the Creator but also the sustainer and destroyer of everything. The world is entirely depending on him. He is all Powerful omnipotent,

**Believe in Prophets and Prophecy: -** Islam and Christianityboth have prophets and prophecy. Both believe God Sent prophets such as Adam, Noah Abraham Moses David, Joseph, John the Baptist Jesus Christ etc.

**Founders:-**The Lord Jesus Christ is the founder of Christianity. Prophet Muhammad is the founder of Islam. According to Islamic scripture all People who followGod's revealed guidance and the messages sent with it submit to the guidance and are Considered Muslims. Muhammad was born in Arabia in the year 570 A.D. At that time the Arabia was a land of polytheism and many kinds ofritualism and idolatry were present there againstthese Muhammad preached a strict monotheismand a life of rigorous discipline devoid of anyritualism and idolatry. Thus the religion ofMuhammad came to Arabia in the form ofreformation of prevalent religious belief and practices.

**Believe in Angels:-** Islam and Christianity both believe in Angels. They also believe in an evil being Called Satan. Angels are always ready to carry out Gods Orders. There is no distinction of sex amongst the angels, as they are all spiritual. Christians knows Satan as the Devil and Muslims know Satan as Iblish.

**Judgment Day:**Christians and Muslims believe a life after death comprising of the resurrection of the dead on the Day of Judgment and retribution of reward and punishment by good in the form of membership of heaven and hell according to one's earthly deeds.

**Heaven and Hell:-** Heaven and Hell are regarded by Islam and Christianity as permanent abodes of the righteous and the evil doers respectively after their Physical death. Hell is eternal damnation and heaven is the symbol of eternal peaceful life in constant followship with God.

**Birth of Jesus:** Both religions believe in Virgin birth according to the Quran and the Bible, Jesus was conceived by a miracle of God himself before Jesus's mother, Marry never had any sexual relationship. Muslims and Christians both believe that it was just a miracle by the Almighty God.

**Second Coming of Jesus:** Both religions have affirmed the second coming of Jesus. An anti-Christ will appear on earth before the Day of Judgment. Jesus Christ will return by descending from heaven and will kill the anti-Christ.

**Nature of God:** Most Christiansbelieve in the Trinity meaning that God has three forms ie Father, Son, Ghost/ spirit. While in Islam Trinity is totally rejected. Jesus Christ is neither God nor son of God. Jesus was a human prophet. Muslims worship only God (Allah), -The one and only the Creator of the Universe.

“In the beginning was the word,and the world was with God and the word was God- - the world became flash and dwelt among us Isa (Jesus) was simply a Created human being and slave of Allah”.

**Status of Bible:-** The holy scripture of Christians is the Holy Bible and the holy Scripture of the Muslims is the Holy Quran. Muslims Considers Christians as the people of the Book. To be a Muslim one must believe in the existence of the Holy Bible From a Muslim stand point belief in the 'Injil (the original Gospel of Jesus) is important part of the Islamic theology although Muslims view the current Gospel is corrupted. The basic principles of Islam as religion Contained in one book called Quran. Quran is said to be the word of God revealed to Muhammad through Gabriel.

**Death of Jesus:-** The Christians believe that Jesus Christ died by Crucifixion followed by resurrection, "we preach Christ crucified a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to Gentiles". The Muslims believe that Jesus did not die but ascended to heaven during Crucifixion.

**Day and Place of worship:-** Worship should bea continual process in the lives of Muslims and Christians. Sunday is considered the Sabbath Day' and Set apart for church service. The Muslims observe five obligatory prayer times a day including Friday prayer. The place of worship in Christianity is called Church. On the other hand the place of worship in Islam is called Mosque.

**Means of Salvation:** The concept of means salvation in Christianity differs depending which sect or denomination is followed. Some believe that salvation is secured through Prayer and faith alone in Jesus Christ. Salvation is a completely free of gift from the lord and comes by grace.

alone through faith in Jesus Christ but one must accept Jesus into their heart and be born again to receive salvation. The concept of means of salvation in Islam is correct belief good deeds and observe the five pillars regularly.

 **Conflict between Islam and Christianity:** Muslim- Christian relations have over the Centuries, Oscillated between conflict, co-existence and Conversation Christianity and Islam's conflict marred with conflict. This originated with the Muslim conquest of the Middle East in seventh century. Even in recent times the mutual distrust between Christians and Muslims has gone hell- wire resulting in conflict and suspicions in so far as some radicalized militants present Islam is a Religion of Resistance. The waves of insurgencies such as those wreaked out by Al Qaeda, related ISIL/s who now target spots frequently visited by foreigners in African countries west Africa inrecent times and on The Continental levels like Al Shabaad Boko Harem etc. It may however be true as some people assert that the Conflict have been much more to do with Politics and some emergent cultural worldviews than with religion itself. In spite of this possibility we do not deny the fact that honest efforts are being made by Sincere Christians and Muslims leaders and Scholars of Contemporary religions to reach Common grounds and todeclare the urgency to engage in ameaningful dialogue such as have been initiated by the Vatican and in Africa by the Several National Catholic Bishops conferences and by other Muslims and Christians Scholars.

 It may be concluded that both Christianity and Islam Share much common grounds. Both trace their roots to Abraham. Both believe in prophecy, God's messages, revelation, Scripture, the resurrection of dead and The centrality of religious community. Both Muslims and Christianity have communitarian dimension. Despite these significance similarities however these two religions have a number of significant differences as well. Religion is a major part of people's lives. Many ideas, cultures and religions have risen and fallen but Christianity and Islam remains most dominant religions of the world. Finally I would like to suggest to both Muslims and Christians that they should study the Bible and the Quran and compare their messages and Content in a Critical unbiased and rational manner. They must avoid Prejudices and fanaticism as these are the Obstacles between man and truth. May God/Allah guide us to His obedience and to truth and righteousness.

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