

Analytical Discourse of Similarities between Christianity and Islam

As noted above, Christianity and Islam have links to Abraham who was revered and honoured by both religions. The two faiths share certain basic and fundamental aspects of belief, which further prove the link that they share with Prophet Abraham. Among such fundamentals include:

a. Monotheism

Monotheism is the belief in the existence of only One God Who is known as the Master, Creator, Provider, the Almighty and 'General-Manager' of all that exists. According to www.study.com (2018), "monotheism is a style of religious belief that asserts the existence of only one God. This may seem straightforward, but different religions interpret this in different ways". Asserting the place of monotheism in Christianity, the Bible says:

You alone are the LORD You have made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their host, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them You give life to all of them And the heavenly host bows down before You (Nehemiah 9:6).

The Qur'an also repeatedly affirms the Oneness of God (Allah) as the central theme of Islamic teaching. The majority of its verses are direct or indirect pointers to a strict, incorruptible and absolute monotheism, among such verses are Glorious Qur'an 7: 59; 10: 31; 13: 2; 112: 1-4. Similarly, the Holy Bible, Deuteronomy 6: 4 reports that Jesus (AS) said "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 2018).

Hence, monotheism is a central theme to both Christianity and Islam. This fundamental aspect of monotheism (God's indivisible unity) is principally shared by all Abrahamic faiths notwithstanding the theological arguments on the interpretation of God's unity among Jews, Muslims and Christians and the various perceptions that emerged with the growth of the human age.

While Judaism and Islam are seen as strict monotheistic faiths, Christianity is considered a liberal monotheism due to its concept of trinity (a concept that underlines the major source of friction between Muslims and Christians).

While Christianity presents Jesus as a part of the God's head (the son), revere and worship him as "God" or "Saviour" or "Messiah", most scholars of Islam consider the principle of trinity and representation of God in human bodily in a way that depicts Him as a person (anthropomorphism) acts of polytheism and blasphemy. Nonetheless, Islam commands all Muslims to believe in Jesus. Islam also places Jesus in an undeniable place among other Prophets and Messengers of God. Islam emphasises that the source of the teachings and messages of the Prophets including Jesus and Muhammad are the same i.e. God (Glorious Qur'an 2: 285).

Notwithstanding the context of the message though similar across board, the conception of Jesus between Islam and Christianity differs. The subject of "Jesus" in relation to trinity and monotheism is the underlining factor in the Christian-Islamic dichotomy.

b. Teachings on Ethics and Morality

Christianity and Islam espouse the significance of morality and ethics. Their holy scriptures contain lessons on morality, God's consciousness and good human relationships. Prophet Muhammad discussed the tenets of faith in Islam under three main headings, namely Islām (submission to Allah), Ḥikma (faith) and Iḥsān (righteousness) (Khan, 1997). Both Christianity and Islam frown at social vices and in some cases provide stern punishments for impunity against the divine laws contained in the Scriptures or communicated to mankind by the Prophets. Hence, the teachings of morality and ethics, Islam and Christianity are complementary.

The Bible also lays emphasis on morality as an integral part of righteousness and belief in God. For example, First Corinthians 15: 33 says "Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals".

Therefore, Christianity and Islam are similar in their teachings on morality and righteousness.

c. **Eschatology (Heaven and Hell; Life after Death)**

While Christianity and Islam interpret monotheism as well as other body of beliefs differently, there remains a striking resemblance in their understanding and teachings of morality and faith in connection with eternal punishment in hellfire or paradise for evil and good doers respectively. Nonetheless, Christianity sees death as consequence of the original sin but a passage to the realm of judgement and eternity in either hellfire or paradise (Tan, 2000). Islam teaches that death is the passage of the human soul to the next realm i.e. *al-Barzakh* where the soul shall abide until the appointed time of resurrection and judgment (Zaruq, 2015). Islam emphasises that the proceedings of judgement begins immediately one is deceased. Hence, from the deathbed to the grave and to the Day of Resurrection and final judgement, Islam affirms that humankind receive rewards or punishment of/for their deeds (Meyzami-Azad, 2017).

While Christianity affirms rapture for the followers of Christ, Islam affirms the intercession of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) for Muslims on the Day of Judgement. Qur'ān 7 verses 172-173 state:

And when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, (saying to them), "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." - lest you should say on the day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this unaware." Or (lest) you say, "It was only that our fathers associated (others in worship) with Allah before, and we were but descendants after them. Then would You destroy us for what the falsifiers have done?"

Idris Ajani ONI
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Therefore, the belief in resurrection and judgement is a common tenet in Islam and Christianity albeit with differences in narrations or accounts of prophecies embodied in Islam and Christian traditions.

d. **Mutual Love and Respect**

Mutual love and respect are cardinal points in Christianity and Islam. Islam recognises Christians and Jews as People of the Scriptures, made marriage with them permissible and their food ḥalāl (lawful) for Muslims. In cases where specific instructions were given to Muslims not to take Jews and Christians as ally, bodies of evidence have shown that those were in response to the hypocrisy of certain elements within the Christian and Jewish community at the time of revelation. In relation to this, the Glorious Qur'ān 60: 8 says:

God does not forbid you from being good to those who have not fought you in the religion or driven you from your homes or from being just towards them. God loves those who are just.

Hence, enmity with Jews and Christians is not an institution in Islam. Enmity is established only against those who reneged on agreements made with the Muslims and joined the idolaters against them. Islam also recognises the wisdom of God (Allah) in the creation of humans with different races, colours and beliefs. He therefore enjoined love, goodness and righteousness (Glorious Qur'ān 5 verse 48).

Through numerous verses of the Glorious Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions, Islam emphasises mutual understanding, love and good inter-personal relationship as obligations for the faithful. It is important to also note here that Islam specifically emphasises good relationship with Christians (Glorious Qur'ān 5 verses 82-86).

In the same vein, Christian traditions also emphasise love and mutual respect. Notable among Biblical teachings on this subject are 1 John 4:8 and 2:9-11.

Therefore, despite the differences in Christian-Muslim interpretations of some salient topics in faith, they both emphasise the need to love one's neighbour as one loves himself irrespective of the latter's faith. This concept often re-echoes in the moral and spiritual teachings of all the Abrahamic faiths.

Sources of Disagreement between Christianity and Islam: An Exposition

a. Theological Friction

As noted earlier, Christianity is built on monotheism with trinity as its vertebrate and nucleus as most Christians believe. Although, some Christian denominations and Muslims reject trinity, and consequently, termed it polytheism, the vast majority of the Christians the world over promote and strongly hold trinity in high esteem. Under the theological differences between Islam and Christianity, the following are considered:

i. The Place of Abraham

Abraham holds an inestimable position in both Islam and Christianity. Christians refer to him as the “father of faith” while Muslims refer to him as *Abūnā Ibrāhīm* (our father, Abraham). According to Christian and Islamic sources, Abraham was the father of Isaac (the ancestor of Jesus, AS) and *Ismā'īl* (the ancestor of Prophet Muhammad, SAAS). Abraham was referred to as *an-nafan-Musliman* (a sincere Muslim) in the Glorious Qur'an 22 verse 78. The attribute aptly detached him from being a Jew or a Christian as the Glorious Qur'an 3 verse 67 indicates.

Some people believe that Islam started with the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) or that he was the founder of Islam. Islamic traditions maintain that Islam is a single religion that came in phases; the phases were completed and made wholesome and perfected by the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) as the last Prophet of God on earth.

Islam establishes the place of Abraham as one of the first persons to be called “Muslim” (Qur'an 6 verses 163; 39: 12). It consciously reiterates the significance of believing in all Prophets and Messengers of God (AS), starting with Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and others.

Christianity also reveres Abraham and holds him in high esteem. The Holy Bible like the Glorious Qur'an gives enormous account of Abraham's life and personality and presents him as the symbol of faith. However, discrepancies in the accounts of Abraham stemmed from the story of the sacrificial-child (*Dhabīḥ*) (Ghauri & Ghauri, 2007). Christians believe that Isaac (the son of Sarah) was the chosen child whom was to be used as a sacrifice to God but was replaced with a ram. Exegetes of the Glorious Qur'an such as Ibn-Kathir (2000), Al-Baydawi (2016) and Al-Baghawi (2008) interpret the account rendered in Glorious Qur'an 37 verses 99-113 as proof that renders *Ismā'īl* (Ishmael) rather than *Ishāq* (Isaac) as the sacrificial-child. Islamic traditions also hold that both *Ismā'īl* (Ishmael) and *Ishāq* (Isaac) were chosen as Prophets of God and blessed. Alongside Abraham, *Ismā'īl* also had the honour of building the Ka'abah which is a symbol of faith for all Muslims until the end of the world (Qur'an 2 verse 127). Hence, the Christian-Muslim rivalry along the Isaac/Ishmael and Sarah/Hagar argument is one of the factors that conspicuously divides Christians and Muslims across the world. Such division can only be bridged through frequent dialogue and mutual respect (Hussain, 2011).

ii. Interpretation and Understanding of the Divinity of Jesus

Muslims and Christians share belief in the divine birth and life of Jesus. However, while Islam holds Jesus in high esteem as one of the greatest Prophets and Messengers of God, many Christians consider him the very essence of God (Deedat, 1991; Douglas, 2009). Islam prohibits believers from the veneration or worship of any being except God and strongly condemns the Christians' belief in trinity and the worship of Jesus as God or a part of God's divinity in Glorious Qur'an 5 verse 73.

The belief in Jesus' divinity is the basis of most dissimilarities between Islam and Christianity. While the Qur'an constantly condemns trinity as polytheism, Christians constantly promote the belief; that it is the core of the true faith in God, the Almighty as the Holy Bible suggests in John 14: 6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me".

Hence, arguments and questions of "who is right?". The questions have led to hot theological arguments and thousands of books have been written by adherents of both religions as well as freethinkers to bicker in favour of each belief or lend their voices or ideas for or against either of the two interpretations. History shows that religious wars such as the Crusades of the 11th and 12th centuries stemmed from religious beliefs and politics. The argument lingers and remains the major cause of disagreement among adherents of the Abrahamic faiths. The Qur'anic account goes thus:

(Jesus) said, "Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet. And He has made me blessed wherever I am and has enjoined upon me prayer and Zakah as long as I remain alive. And [made me] dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me a wretched tyrant.

"And peace is on me the day I was born and the day I will die and the day I am raised alive." That is Jesus, the son of Mary - the word of truth about which they are in dispute. It is not (befitting) for Allah to take a son; exalted is He! When He decrees an affair, He only says to it, "Be," and it is (Qur'an 19 verses 30-32).

Like Muslims, Christian Unitarians (also called non-Trinitarians) are a group of people forming a Christian sect that rejects the idea of trinity (Hostlier, 1981). Christopher and Dvave (2020), Christadelphian Christian authors argue against the concept of trinity and consider it "illogical and flawed theory". Similarly, other Christian sects like Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons; Christian scientists, Armstrongists (followers of Herbert W. Armstrong, 1934, the founder of Philadelphia Church of God; Global Church of God, United Church of God) also reject the concept of trinity. Among other Christian denominations that also consider trinity heretic are Christadelphians and Oneness Pentecostals (Bernard, 1991; Christopher & Dave, 2020; Fairchild, 2017).

iii. Crucifixion

According to Deffinbaugh (2005), the death of Christ on the cross of Calvary is one the most important themes of the Christian faith. Christianity teaches that Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness and eternal salvation of humankind in the Holy Bible, Mathew 27: 35 – 50. Even so, Islam rejects the claims of death on the cross. The Glorious Qur'an clearly states that Jesus was neither killed nor crucified (Qur'an 4 verses 157 - 159). In support of that, Deedat (2007) in his famous work titled "*Was Jesus Crucified?*" argues that the crucifixion of Christ never occurred relying on Glorious Qur'an 4 verses 157–159 and Mathew 26: 38-39 of the Holy Bible. The views expressed by Deedat (2007) represent the position of Islam on the subject of crucifixion.

For rejecting the death of Christ on the cross for the salvation of humankind, many Christians consider Muslims as unbelievers. Hence, the constant need to evangelize not only the pagans but the Muslims as well (Qayrawani, 2010).

iv. Jesus' Concept of "Son of God"

While the Holy Bible presents Jesus as the son of God and son of man alternatively, the Glorious Qur'an constantly refers to him as the son of Mary and warned sternly against ascribing a son or children to God or comparing Him to any visible or imaginable picture of a being as a reprehensible abomination (Qur'an 4 verse 171). Also, Qur'an 6 verses 101; 9: 30; 10 verse 68; 17 verse 111; 18 verse 4; 19 verses 35, 88 - 92; 21 verse 26; 23 verses 91; and 112 verses 1-4 reiterate this belief. In the Holy Bible, some of the narratives of Jesus as a son of God are 1 Corinthians 15:28; Psalm 2:7 and Hebrews 1-5. It is pertinent to note that the Holy Bible also referred to the believers as children of God in 1 Chronicles 22:10; 28: 6; Job 1:6; 2: 1.

Islam rejects both the literal usage of the phrase "child of God" and its contextual interpretations. Thus, it teaches that Muslims must refer to themselves only as servants of God. Glorious Qur'an 19: 93 says, "There is no one in the heavens and earth but that he comes to the Most Merciful as a servant". The Glorious Qur'an 2: 87; 3: 45; 4: 157, 171 and others refer to Jesus Christ only as "Son of Mary". It is worthy of note that both Mary and Jesus are revered in Islam, but Islam forbids Muslims to worship either of the Jesus or Mary or ascribe a child to Allah (Qur'an 4 verses 171-172) (Abdur-Rahman, 2022).

v. The Antichrist

Islamic and Christian traditions have similar reports on the prophecy of the apocalypse, which includes the emergence of the Antichrist. However, Islam presents the Antichrist (*Dajjāl*) as a one-eyed evil man that shall emerge towards the end of the world; live for only forty days which shall be tougher than forty years due to the pains and atrocities that the Antichrist shall afflict on the people of faith.

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Islam teaches that the Antichrist would falsely lay claims to prophethood and have many followers across the world (Al-Madkhalee, 2008; Ibn Kathīr, 2008; Al-Wābil, 2009).

However, the Christian theory on the apocalypse presents the Antichrist as a person or group of persons or institutions that do not ally with the Christians in their faith or beliefs. It presents the Antichrist as anti-Christians and anti-Christianity. This understanding erroneously places Muslims (who many Christians see as an opposing side or disbelievers to the person or message of Christ) in the position of the Antichrist (Akbari, 1997). Consequently, in many professional Christian texts, Prophet Muhammad is represented with the image of an Antichrist and Muslims as followers of an Antichrist or a false Prophet (Nata, 2015). Hence, many Church leaders teach congregants that Prophet Muhammad was an impostor and a false Prophet (Pearson, 2018).

It is worthy of note that Islamic primary traditions or sources consistently affirms that the Antichrist shall appear towards the end of time as one of the greatest signs of the end of the world and would be followed by multitudes as he would claim to be the expected Comforter. At this time, the Antichrist (*Dajjāl*) and his followers shall commit record-breaking atrocities, the likes of which had never happen. Islam also affirms that at that time, Jesus ('lsā) would return to the world to fight against the Antichrist, stop the consumption of pigs and destroy crosses (Al-Dājjāl, 1998).

vi. Divinity of the Holy Bible and Glorious Qur'an

Another major area of friction is the Christian claim that the Glorious Qur'an is an inspiration from a demon or a directly copied document from Judeo-Christian sources. It is an argument that Christian and Jews have sustained for many centuries. The Glorious Qur'an itself remains the only book in the history of humankind whose author has challenged the entire world of humankind and Jinn to disprove its claims or present verses similar to its own (Qur'an 2 verse 23).

Scientists, archaeologists, thinkers, have done many treatises and great research works and writers from other fields of study have written for or against the divinity of the Glorious Qur'ān. Majority of such writers, scientists and thinkers came out convinced that the Glorious Qur'ān could only be a divine revelation (Bucaille, 1995; Arion, 2018).

Similarly, Muslims strongly believe that the Bibles in circulation today are either not the ideal representatives or narratives of the Holy Gospel (*Injīl*) commissioned for Jesus (Īsā). This accusation often rattles the foundation of Christianity and often causes hatred between the two parties. Muslims and Islam have questioned the authenticity of the present-day Christianity on the basis of the differences between the old and new testaments vis-à-vis other divine scriptures i.e. Glorious Qur'ān and Torah (Deedat, 2000). The Glorious Qur'ān confirms the messages and scriptures that were revealed before Prophet Muhammad repetitively but also warned of distortions and twisting that it alleges had occurred over the books overtime (Qur'ān 4 verse 47).

The authenticity of the Bible too also has been put to scrutiny (Barron, 2016). Hence, there will always be the questions of what is and what not the word of God is but for the believers who are supposedly truly convinced about the Holy Bible and Glorious Qur'ān, only thorough research, education and sincerity can lead to the light of truth. Consequently, it should not cause disrespect, hatred or enmity as the true essence of faith is love and humanity. However, the accusation and counter accusations of forgeries and falsification, which have rattled the world of the faithful and caused frequent stir and endless enmity and in most cases, utter disrespect from professionals and non-professionals alike may inevitably remain a plague. It is therefore important for adherents of both faiths to accept that the two scriptures are inherently unique in their own perspectives. While studies are encouraged, respect and decorum as taught by both Books must always be put to practice.

The differences between the Glorious Qur'ān and Holy Bible cited by Schirrmacher (2013) in his work *The Koran and the Bible* are enough proofs that there may never be an agreement on the accuracy or inaccuracy of the two Holy books from the views of each opposing sides. Hence, respect is inestimably pivotal.

b. Politics

Another major factor in the cause of the rift between Christians and Muslims is politics. Politics has played prominent roles in creating a dichotomy between Christians and Muslims especially in Nigeria. Adherents of each religion from past to present are trained with the desire to establish a system of government that recognises God as the Supreme source of power and rule. Hence, Christianity was for the Romans and Crusaders a state religion and source of political power (Brice, 1891; Mueller, 2012). Christian colonial masters also entrenched Christianity as an official religion of the conquered nations and promoted Christian values through constitutions and education. Similarly, the Qur'ān exhorts Muslims to establish the law of Allah (God) on earth. Hence, Islam since it emerged a state religion in *Madīnah* in the 7th century continues to spread and challenge existing authorities economically, socially and most importantly, politically (Qadri et.al., 2016; Akhter, 2019).

Hence, both Islam and Christianity consider politics *sine-quanon* in the propagation of faith and the spread of their beliefs. Hence, the struggle for political power or systemic dominance becomes imperative especially in multi-religious nations like Nigeria. Consequently, through the use of religion for political gains, adherents of Islam and Christianity have often been set against one another, properties and lives have been lost as mischievous politicians constantly hide behind religion to instigate citizens and cause crisis (Afolabi, 2015).

Nigeria as a nation recognises the role of religion in power sharing, thus the federal character purportedly always requires an equal representation of Christian and Muslims as well all major ethnic nationalities in governance and political offices. In nations such as Lebanon, political power is shared among Muslims, Christians and citizens who are adherents of other faiths in the country. In other nations like the United States of America, France and United Kingdom, Islamophobic rhetoric has been used for political purposes (Akinrinde, 2021).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The human races have the same origin and root according to the three notable Abrahamic faiths. This automatically makes every man the brother of another. Although, the source of the prominent Abrahamic religions, particularly, Christianity and Islam, is the will of Allah (God), Christians and Muslims would always differ. However, the differences should only reveal their uniqueness and never be a reason for hatred and bloodshed. Therefore, this research presents recommendations for engendering mutual respect and better relationship between Christians and Muslims.

Abrahamic faiths have closely related history and teachings. Therefore, they are closest to one another in faith than the pagans and idolaters can ever be. They also constitute over half of the total world population, a fact that makes it compulsory for them to find a common ground to jointly save and preserve the world. To achieve a lasting peace in the world and better relations among adherents of the Abrahamic faiths, this paper recommends:

- a. mutual love and respect;
- b. regular inter-religious dialogue and inter-religious education;
- c. an agreement on a proportionate share of power and a system of ruling in multi-religious nations that allows adequate representation of people of different faiths and protect collective interests;
- d. a very stern response against hate speeches and misinformation and/or deliberate misrepresentation and ill presentation of others by some groups of a faith and so on.

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Idris Ajani ONI
Oyekolade Sodiq YESANYA, Ph.D

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ARABIC LANGUAGE IN MULTICULTURAL DYNAMISM: CHRONOLOGICAL EFFECTS ON NIGERIA'S HERITAGE

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Abstract

Arabic language is the language of the Qur'an. Today, it is the most important language of the Semitic group spoken by millions of people and understood by many more. It is globally applauded due to its effective recognition and

relevance in other culture sand all human strata. History shows that the place of Arabic language in a multicultural society is very applausive, especially after the emergence of Islam, when Islam spread beyond its do main to other continents like Asia, Europe, Africa, America, etc. Apparently, the position of Arabic language in multicultural societies, especially Nigeria which has predominant ethnic groups, cultures more than 400 ethnic dialects ,is given a high recognition for its uses and usefulness. The entry of Arabic Language into the country dated back to the seventh century of the Hijrah when Arabic was used for religious, social, economic, and cultural purposes. Methodologies employed in this paper were historical and sociological approaches. The paper observed that the importance of Arabic languages cut across all disciplines particularly history and documentation, economy, religious, education, languages, socio-cultural nexus and so on. Finally, the paper affirms that the significance of Arabic as a language transcends the religious sphere and concludes on the note that Arabic should be given its prime place in the school system because it has a lot contribute to the development of Nigeria.

Keywords: Arabic, contributions, Nigeria's heritage.