

# A Comparative Study of Christianity and Islam in the Contemporary Basotho Society

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**Abstract:** *The comparative and the historical methods in the study of Religions had long been pronounced a scientific study of the major religions of the world. Max Muller (1856-1900), founder of Comparative Study of Religions had declared the approach a formal and independent field of study that does not pass any judgmental sentence on the truth claims of religions. In the light of such proposals, our paper was motivated by the massive failure rate of our students in the course: T 403: Comparative Study of Religions. The poor performance indicated to us that Mosotho students and perhaps, their people have little or no knowledge of Islam. The situation is worrisome; especially when, in recent times, militant Islam and fundamentalist Christian groups are vitiating the belief systems of these religions in Africa and the world. It was felt that a research paper on the two faiths in Lesotho is opportune. The paper is therefore written to establish certain comparisons between Christianity and Islam as they manifest themselves in the kingdom of Lesotho. To achieve these objectives, we made disquisitions on the works of reputed scholars in the discipline to uncover the history and essential creeds and practices of both Christianity and Islam as well as on the place of the adherents and their interactions in the country. Comparative elements in the two religions are tabularized to showcase some real contacts. The paper concludes inter alia on the fact that both adherents worship the same God in spite of the names he is given in each tradition which is a boon for inter-religious tolerance and co-existence.*

**Keywords:** Monotheism, Caravan, Islamists, Jihadists, ISIL/S, Al Shabaab, Boko Haram, Canonical and non-canonical, Transcendence, Eschatology, Hajj, Shahadah, Caliphs, Crusades, Mosques, Revelations, *Homo Religiosus*

## 1. Introduction

As we live and have our being in Lesotho, the Mountain Kingdom, „the roof of Africa“; a far-removed Southern African nation of 2.8 million people with one language, Sesotho, but of many competing political parties and ideologies; the impact of the depredations of resurgent Islam in the world is not yet being felt. Some people only hear of the Islamist militants“ onslaught from the international media, social media, Radio or Television and the Internet. However, let no Mosotho make the mistake to think that AL Qaeda and its links cannot infiltrate into Lesotho. While this may not appear so nigh, as scholars of Religion, teaching and doing research in Comparative Religious Studies at the National University of Lesotho (NUL), we intend to put to public awareness and readership an account of the historical origins, basic similarities, commonalities and differences, as certainly there are, between Christianity and Islam. In the contemporary world, Christianity and Islam feature as the two largest Abrahamic religions.[1]As A. Ibrahim further amplifies, the two religions have many points of contact because both Religions had derived much from Judaism, the religion of ancient Jews from where they had borrowed the idea of monotheism, that is, belief in one God who created the world, who cares for it and who judges the behaviour and actions of humankind whom he had commissioned to take responsibility to preserve the sanctity of Mother-Earth.[2]Extra – scriptural sources indicate copiously that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) knew Christians during his lifetime in Arabia.[3] He respected both Jews and Christians as the “People of the Book” as they were believed to have had the revelation of God written in their Holy Scriptures. The Prophet (SAW) and his successors accorded Jews and Christians great freedom because of their monotheistic traditions than they did to

the idolaters in Arabia of their time. Do most Islamists know the significance of this glorious side of inter-religious history in the old world? Are they willing and disposed to accord similar respect to Christians today?

## 2. Context of the Study

The Basotho society provides the context for this study. Our intention is to investigate how the Basotho who are generally Christians or devotees of the Traditional Religion interact with the adherents of the Islamic faith in their country. Muslims are not natives of Lesotho except those who have sought naturalization in the country. There is however a tiny population of Sunni Muslims who live in some of the towns of Lesotho who may not constitute such a significant number that could breed radical jihadists. And where there are Muslims at all, they are generally migrant workers from Pakistan, India, Sudan and some other Asian peoples engaged in petty trades and importers of second-hand cars who are managing to secure both their residence and work permits through the watchful eyes of the Director of Immigration in the Ministry of Home Affairs. They have few Mosques and some of them say their prayers only in isolated corners of the cities where they are found [Fieldwork conducted by our Principal Investigator on the 19th January, 2016, two respondents, Shahzad Ahmad Tia and Mohammad Butt, Pakistani second-hand car dealers at Machacha, Maseru informed him of the availability of three Mosques in Maseru, the capital city of Lesotho alone; namely one at Thabong, one behind KFC and the third at Jackpot, all with sizeable worshipers during Friday Jumat Prayers. Our investigator was reliably informed of a sizeable Mosque at Leribe town and another at Qasha’s Nek who’s Imam has written a good deal on Islamic doctrines and faith for distribution in Lesotho. Another contact was made with Dr. S. H. Peerbhai, a

dentist and a devotee of Islam in Maseru, himself an Indian Muslim, aged 68 years, naturalized in Lesotho, plies his profession without any disaffection or discrimination against any person on religious grounds. Interviewed on 5th February, 2016. The same informant deposed that the Leribe district has a Mosque with rather introverted adherents. The big Mosque at Qashas Nek is guided by an outstanding liberal Imam who had all along occupied himself teaching fellow Muslims by propounding and propagating true Islamic doctrines; especially those on deliverance, the last judgment and the need for true Muslims to shun crimes, radicalization and man's inhumanity to man. Informant, Dr; Peerbhai, date of the second interview: Saturday, 13th February, 2016. We register with gratefulness the literature on Islam; seven works, donated to us by Dr. Peerbhai that had made our research meaningful and with accurate facts on the religion of Islam.]. This does not mean that militant Islamists; especially the Taliban groups cannot penetrate here through them before long, otherwise, how may one critically rationalize what the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/S) claimed responsibility of and sponsorship for the Jakarta attackers that carried out such a deadly bombing mission that wasted the lives of eleven Indonesians on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2016? Is it not baffling when one thinks of the distance between Indonesia and the Syria-Iraq region of the world where ISIL/S operates? But if they could, as migration facilitates movements of peoples in recent times; would the Basotho consider Islam demonic like Donald Trump, the Republican Presidential hopeful in the United States of America or would they simply hold them and their religion as false and deceptive or indeed as precursors of future vibrant inter-racial and inter-religious communities in Lesotho?

This article is occasioned by the dismal performance of the Fourth Year students on the course: T.403: Comparative Study of Religions in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the National University of Lesotho, Roma Campus in the last December, 2015 Examinations. In one of the final year examination questions on the course, the students were asked to: "Outline the basic Teachings of Islam and show how some Muslims are misrepresenting Islam in the world today". In spite of the good tutoring on the course content given by a competent Professor of Religious Studies in the Department, we reached the conclusion that the awful performance of the students is reflexive of the stark ignorance of many of the Basotho families and people; especially the youths, on basic Muslim religious doctrines due to their lack of knowledge of the scale or size of the Religion of Islam in Lesotho. What is the take of the majority of the people on the horrendous havoc being wreaked out on unsuspecting persons by Islamist extremists in the world and in many parts of Africa today? Are people of Lesotho not yet aware of the atrocities the so-called Islamists have done in Bamako, Mali, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in recent months or the latest havoc done by AL Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) where over eighteen persons: fourteen civilians, four Europeans and two soldiers were gravely shot by armed gunmen in three Hotels at the Beach Resort in Grand Bassam, Ivory Coast on Sunday, the 13<sup>th</sup> of March, 2016? Besides, we discover that there has not been any previous in-depth research done on Islamic

Religion, its adherents, the pre-occupation of their groups, their places of worship<sup>1</sup> and the possibility of the rise of fanatical as well as insurgent militant groups in their folds in Lesotho except for a few journalistic write-ups in some of the national dailies [4]. In the wake of ISIL/S, its threats to international peace and security the world over; especially in Africa - from Libya to Sudan and the claims of Boko Haram in Nigeria that it now has allegiance and connection with ISIL and with South Africa now being perceived as a key financial source for ISIL, who then can doubt the vulnerability of Lesotho given its closeness and affiliation with South Africa?

### **3. Christianity and Islam as Abrahamic Religions**

The Abrahamic Religions consist of three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. As religions with strong backgrounds in the traditions of the first patriarch and the traditional ancestor of the Hebrews, Abraham, the Arabs and many other nations as well as many theists in Africa still thrive today. Their sacred history is derived from the life of Abraham as is generally narrated in Gen 11-25. The initial belief in one God, the God of Abraham remains the foundation of their teaching on monotheism. The three religions maintain that the existence of only one God, no doubt, indicates the manner in which humankind associates and interprets the world around it; especially the invisible aspects of that world as are known in African peoples' beliefs in the spirit beings, divinities, demons and ancestral spirits which still direct the lives of many Africans whose backgrounds remain in the African Traditional cultural settings. There is no doubt that the two religions; Christianity and Islam, claim to assist adherents to find meaning in their environments and in their individual lives; as well as to seek and find life solutions for humankind's innumerable weaknesses and failings. Both religions offer varieties of meanings on salvation as much as protection from natural disasters, from fear of agents of death and from ravaging hunger; especially in the African world; on forgiveness of individuals; communal crimes and liberation from the machinations of the malevolent agents that control the impersonal mystical powers/forces, indeed a dominant creed and article of faith in African Traditional Religion whose users can „do and undo“ in the African world [5].

### **4. Methodology**

The sub-title of our paper indicates the methodology we have adopted; namely the Comparative Study of Religions, which is the branch of non-normative study of religions that scientifically critiques and investigates the similarities and differences between Religions. As it applied in our paper, it is being used to study what differentiates Christian Religion from Islamic Religion: especially as they manifest themselves as human phenomena in Lesotho society. With this approach, we, not only wish to arrive at the comprehensive perception of their objects as such but also to determine how the two religions relate and influence or demonize each other in the Basotho society.

We also accept that our methodology is an objective presentation of the “principles and teachings” of Christianity and Islam so that the Basotho students and ordinary people can become able to best understand by comparison those principles and teachings, define, analyse, and reflect on their cardinal beliefs, doctrines, practices and rites as found in the two religions; especially as they are lived out in southern Africa. This is especially true of Islam because it is completely different from all other religions, different in its basic conceptions, its ideals, its teachings and its practice. It is an ethical code by itself. It suits every race, language, culture and status because it teaches men to live a life according to the law of nature.

On the spiritual side, it purifies the soul of evil desires and prepares it for its entry into Heaven. It does not believe in vain controversy with the followers of other religions.[6]

Our methodology is not oriented to finding what makes Christianity or Islam superior to each other at all as that would not accord with the principles of an objective study of religions. Rather, we adopt the method of comparison to help our audience come to understand and appreciate the benevolent teachings in the two religions. This is what explains why we have attempted to identify, isolate and present the common themes in a tabular survey. Quite understandably, Comparative Study of Religion is, as we have stated earlier, a non-normative approach because it does not provide a set of rules that help researchers to pronounce any judgment on the truthfulness of either religion or even each religious phenomenon or to examine what is false or right in the fundamental traditions embedded in the two religions under our critical study. According to C. I. Ejizu, the comparative approach aims at helping people achieve a more accurate and deep understanding of one another, their societies and institutions. Comparison is one of the elementary features of human thought and of science’s essential procedures.

The comparative approach seeks to remedy this shortcoming by paying due attention to what peoples and cultures have in common as well as their differences. .. Proponents of the comparative approach in religious studies often identify their features with such themes and elements which are common to all peoples like myth, ritual, symbol, sacrifice, etc, bringing out areas of agreement and disagreement.[7]

For us, this is the reason why the approach we are applying is usually classified and located into the field of Phenomenology of Religion because we are adopting it to mainly analyse the phenomena just as they appear to us in order to pick out the common themes; attempt to situate them in their contexts in order to bring out their fullest significance as creeds of living faith communities, this time, Christianity and Islam in Lesotho and thereafter briefly compare and contrast them. This is what we have attempted to do with the taxonomy chart presented in the table below. The table makes the similarities and the differences become visible. It is however pertinent to note that similarities in themes in the two religions do not forcefully imply influence and dependence because certain similarities can often eclipse the possibility of profound differences as much as superficial differences can equally

cover significant similarities. In sum then, one of the expected contributions of our use of the Comparative approach lies in our interest to equip the Basotho students and audience with a prudent approach to apprise themselves of the similarities and differences in the two religions in the country in order to douse possible tensions in preference of inter-religious understanding, tolerance and co-existence.

## 5. Christianity

The Christian Religion was founded on the teachings of Jesus Christ who was born about 4 BC during the administration of Judea by an Idumean by birth, Herod the Great, (75 BC-4 BC) who was gratified by Augustus Caesar to be King of the Judea. By 40 BCE, Rome had proclaimed him King though it is historically known that he was officially installed in 37 BCE.[8] Jesus was born during his infamous rule whose life he wanted to snuff off. As a baby, Jesus was brought into the Temple by the parents for consecration as the first born son before witnesses who testified to his divine election and mission [9]. After surviving the pogrom leashed out against the infants born two years under during that period through his refuge with his parents in Egypt, upon return to Nazareth in Galilee, he grew up as any Jewish boy and was well-tutored in the precepts of the Second Temple Judaism of his time. Later on as a young man, when he had drunk deep in the religious traditions, belief-system and culture of that period led by the Priestly class, the Sadducees and especially by an odiously pious religious sect, the Pharisees. At the age of thirty, he engaged himself in a power-packed moving public ministry in Palestine for which he met his death from the religious leaders who held him as an upstart. The words and events of Jesus, the Christ are remembered, re-interpreted first and foremost by Mark’s Gospel in whose narration is the hidden face of Peter, the chief of the Apostles. Much later the „remembered“ episodes were transmitted in the other two canonical gospels (Matthew and Luke). [10] Apart however from many supernatural deeds such like healings, exorcisms and the raising of the dead Jesus performed, he proclaimed a revolutionary gospel through which he „re-branded“ Judaism of his time. At the centre of his gospel was the proclamation of the Kingdom of God which he announced and inaugurated with his disciples.[11] Severally he ascribed to himself, the title, Son of Man; a concept which resonated with the Jewish Messianic expectations popularly conceived as the Messiah who would come to have a share in the divinity of God and one who would be endowed with the power to conquer enemy nations of Israel and to forgive sins.[12] He ate his Last Supper with his disciples at the celebration of the Jewish Passover. On that occasion, Jesus spoke of his up-coming death as a sacrifice which conferred on him the role of the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world and the one who had come to set up a new covenant with his blood. His arrest, trial and crucifixion on the cross of Calvary like he was a common criminal set a ceiling to his ultimate destiny as divine agent of realized eschatology [13].



In Christian teaching, Jesus was believed to have been vindicated and glorified by God through his Resurrection from the dead after three days of entombment. It is strongly believed that his Resurrection is the divine proof of his divinity that conferred on him the power of forgiveness of sins. After his Resurrection, he appeared on many occasions to his disciples in various locations. After forty days on earth, he ascended into heaven and was believed to have been seated at the right hand of God. From his throne, he has continued to support and direct his followers till today and more so in Africa where the Christian Religion has become a vibrant phenomenon with over 190 million professing Christianity.[14] In the "Great Commission" stipulated in Matt 18: 18-20, the Risen Jesus gave his disciples directions to extend his gospel beyond Samaria and Judea to all nations. This is the foundation of Christianity's missionary enterprise from Jerusalem to Samaria, Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and to most of the Mediterranean coastal regions. In the third century, the Christian Religion had reached through the western Mediterranean to Spain, Persia and even India in the Far East. In the late first through to the fourth centuries CE, Christianity had suffered much pernicious persecutions from successive Roman Emperors and their Governments; especially that of the compulsive, corrupt and blood-thirsty Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus (54-64 CE). It was not until Emperor Constantine the Great (27<sup>th</sup> February, 272 to May 33 337 AD), the 57<sup>th</sup> Roman Emperor from 306 – 337 AD had proclaimed the Edict of Milan in 313 AD was Christianity able to be granted the status of Religio Licita in the Empire.[15]. From that time onwards, Christianity predominantly became a religion of the elites and spread like wildfire throughout much of the Middle East, Europe and the adjoining regions.[16]

Under the inspiration of and zeal for Jesus" "Great Commission"(Matt 28:18-20), there had occurred in history explosive modern missionary movements. As early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, hordes of European missionaries came with the Christian Religion to some parts of Africa, among them the Benin Kingdom of Nigeria and to the Bakongo in today's Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Championed by the German Pietists and the Moravian Christians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, waves of missionaries took it upon themselves to engage in the aggressive spread of the Christian Religion to many regions of the world. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a more serious effort to plant the Christian Religion in parts of the West African coastline took place. The agency of the Anglican Church Missionary Society; the (CMS) mostly pioneered by the liberated slaves of West African origin, brought the Christian Religion to Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gabon and Angola. Later on, on the mandate of the Propaganda Fidei, the Catholic missionaries through the French Spiritan Fathers brought the message of Jesus to parts of Igboland, Nigeria from Gabon in 1857.[17]

T. Mothibe and Maria Ntabeni inform us that Christianity was introduced to the Kingdom of Lesotho in 1833 by the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) led by Eugene Casalis, Constant Gosselin and Thomas Arbousset at the invitation of Moshoeshe I while the second entrants were the Roman Catholics who were led into the kingdom in 1862 by Bishop Allard and Father Joseph Gerard of the

Oblates of Mary Immaculate. According to the historians, the third wave of missionaries was spearheaded by the Anglicans who arrived under the leadership of Thomas Stenson and John Widdicombe in 1876 and that much later other pockets of Protestant church workers began to visit the country.[18] Christianity was solidly planted all over the nook and cranny of Lesotho. Today, African Christianity in the kingdom has distinctively become a force to reckon with thanks to the foresight of these "men of God". It is in the light of this brief history that we dare say the Basotho who had encountered the Christian gospel as much as many other African nations must brace up with the fact that man is a homo religious; a religious being and that religion has continued to occupy the centre of human civilizations. But for as much as we know, religion has, in fact, become not only a divisive force and a decisive source of political legitimacy but also a tool for massive appeal and mobilization in many regions of Africa.[19] And since we cannot encounter man except that he is met as a religious being; a homo religious, people in Lesotho must shine their eyes to appraise the mode of being an expression of humankind in the African world as religious persons who can get to the roots of their own existential situations. It is this understanding that will help shape the contemporary culture of the people in this part of the African continent.

## 6. Basic Teachings of Christianity

From the beginning of the Second Temple reconstructed under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah through to the Rabbinic Judaism from which Christianity had originated as a revealed religion, F. N. Nvumbi advises that it affirms God's existence, makes known his nature and attributes; it explains who he is in a way that we might know, love him and look for him. Christians believe that God is the Creator of heaven and earth; he guides the world, loves the world and directs it to himself [20].

As a religion of the Book; its beliefs are revealed by God through God-sent spokespersons; namely the Prophets and Jesus. Prominent biblical scholars agree that the Prophets documented the messages given to them by God to the people of faith as permanent records that eventually became canonized as Scripture. In spite of the fact that Christians uphold the unity between the Old and the New Testaments, Christians derive most of their basic doctrines from the writings of the New Testament. The divisions of the New Testament literature are various as each section attempts to clarify the essential impacts of the books on the Christian adherents. The Gospels describe the life and work of Jesus; his death, Resurrection and his "Great Commission" to his followers. The Acts provide information on the missionary activities of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, from Jerusalem to the utmost end of the world, Lesotho inclusive. The Epistles of Paul narrate how he maintained contacts through missives with the members of the churches he had founded during his missionary journeys. The Catholic Letters often regarded as General Epistles are supposedly believed to have been written by Peter, James, John and Jude and sent out like circular letters to churches founded in different parts of the Roman Empire. [21] Finally the New Testament literature closes

with an apocalyptic genre of writing authored by the “seer” to encourage Christians who were suffering from heartless persecutions from anti-Christian powers. These writings have been considered as inspired and authoritative works that contain basic teachings of the Christian Religion concerning matters of faith and morals. Christian teaching firmly holds that the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and the Prophets is the Creator, Judge and the Saviour of the world and all that there is. Christianity holds fast to faith in the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, that is, in the one Triune God who shares the same divine nature and Godhead but do exist as separate persons each with definite responsibilities; for example, in contemporary African Christianity, the Holy Spirit is associated with the dynamic force that burns out evil with Holy Ghost Fire as “Oku n” Erere” as Igbo Christians express his role.

B. R.Hill argues that top-most in Christian faith is the place God has provided humankind in the created order [22]. He was created to enjoy the world in which he has been mandated by God to take responsibility for. He is endowed with the free-will to obey or disobey his creator “but he has only one life in which to make his final decision, the effects which are eternal”. [23] Besides, it strongly believed that man’s sin decisively affects his relationship with God his fellow men and women and the world or community. Christian faith affirms that sin is a truncation from God as well as a violation of God’s given laws and thus an act of rebellion to God. It teaches to all who believe that it is humankind’s selfishness and disobedience to God that holds him or her in bondage. Christianity offers its adherents a doctrine of salvation based on God’s gratuitous grace to be guaranteed by humankind’s adequate response. And that since man cannot avoid the effects of his rebellion on his own, the Christian religion affirms that he depends on supernatural assistance. The vicarious or substitutionary death of Jesus on the cross avails humankind this wonderful opportunity. According to the Gospel of John, humankind has nothing else to do to save itself except to believe and accept the divine offer of redemption based on Christ’s sacrifice. As Paul would have us believe, humankind gains a new life in Christ Jesus. Liberated from the offensive consequences of sin, humankind is able to develop into a full humanity which becomes obvious in the behaviours, conduct, life-style, comportment, thought and expressions of the believer. While adherents of the Christian religion number about 1.6 billion in the world, Africa harbours 271, 035, 700 faithful spread all over the continent. The Kingdom of Lesotho’s share of this number may apparently look negligible but Islamic jihadist’s designs may not be underestimated.

## 7. Islam

Islam was founded by Prophet Muhammad who was born around 570 AD in Mecca of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. After the demise of his mother, he was raised by his uncle, Abu Talib, from his maternal side. In his youth, he travelled with “with his uncle in the merchants’ caravan” [24] that criss-crossed Syria and Egypt. Montgomery Watt informs us that it was during this time

that he distinguished himself as a promising trader and businessman.[25] Later on, he made the same journey in the service of a rich widow called Khadijah. At the age of twenty five, he was able to attract the love of his benefactress, Khadijah as a wife. When he had achieved a level of wealth and family stability, Muhammad submitted himself to regular meditation like many of his peers at the time. On one such occasion in a cave in the mountains east of Mecca, Angel Gabriel appeared to him and directed him to recite in the name of the Lord who had created man from the clot of blood. As the first of many revelations he received, he did not pay special attention to it. He feared that people would hold him as a banif; a kind of a religious fanatic possessed by evil spirits who were generally hated by people. The Holy Angel Gabriel prevented him from committing suicide, and thereafter the Prophet returned to his wife, took solace in her love and protection and soon began to realize that he had been called by Allah to become his messenger to the world.

Muhammad’s preachment of monotheism and coming judgment did not go down well with the people of Mecca who returned his ideas with serious opposition and persecution. In 620 the Meccan Muslims took refuge in the city of Yathrib where they were followed by the Prophet himself in 622. This flight by both Meccan Muslims and the Prophet called Hijrah marked the historic birth of Islam as a Religion. All Muslim dates are reckoned from this event known and called the year of the Hijrah (AH). The Community’s sojourn in Yathrib saw the development of the main social and religious practices of Islam such as the construction of the mosque, and the urgency of the five-time prayer a day facing Mecca.[26] As Yathrib became known as the city of the Prophet, it came to be renamed Medina. [27] It was from here that the Muslims amassed their military prowess and leashed out attacks on Meccan caravans. In 627 they recaptured Mecca and by 632 the Prophet died.[28] He lived for sixty two years. It was because of their longstanding acquaintance with and close descent from the Prophet, that Abu Bakr and ,Omar were nominated to succeed him and to lead the community as Caliphs and never as Prophets.

What does the term Caliph mean? The term, Caliph, needs to be known as some Islamist militants like ISIL and Boko Haram use it as their grand design to establish Caliphates in the regions they are currently waging their jihadist against. Ordinarily, Caliph means a successor. In the Qur’an it is used to designate God’s vice-regent on earth, see for example, Surat 2. 28 where Adam is designated as a Caliph and in Surat 38. 25 David is presented as a Caliph. In the history of Islam, the title was conferred on the successor of Muhammad who was granted absolute authority in all matters of state, both civil and religious, as long as he ruled in conformity with the law and the Hadith. [29] There must be one Caliph at a time. Muhammad ordered that where there were two Caliphs, the second must be beheaded for he is a rebel. This order raised much controversy that ended up in the first major rupture in Islamic unity. In fact, the schism brought about the rise of many Islamic sub-groups that exist in contemporary Islam such as the Sunni who defend correct teaching (notice is taken of their offshoots such as Wahhabism – the Sunni fundamentalist movement that had begotten the current

ISIL) and adherence to tradition make up ninety per cent of all Islam, the Shiites, the followers of Ali who claim direct descent from the Prophet. The sect constitutes ten per cent of Islam and are best found in Iran, Iraq and Yemen. Under the leadership of the first three Caliphs; namely Abu Bakr 632-634, Omar 634-644 and „Othman 644-656, Islam had a remarkable unity and expansion to such lands as Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Egypt. [30] Three functionaries; namely the Governor who was in-charge of war and religion, the „Urafa who were experts and judges and the Qur’an readers who ensured that the Qur’an was taught and memorized by converts and children; especially the Almajiris; a practice that is still held today which the Boko Haram endorses in preference to Western education, were firmly established.

## 8. Basic Teachings of Islam

Islam which means wholeness, submission and safeness boasts of a corpus of doctrines. Five teachings and five duties essentially constitute Muslim dogmas and their belief-system. Islam affirms belief in only one God, Allah. This is Tawhid the doctrine of pure monotheistic worship; indeed a radical form of monotheism. The absolute unity of Allah allows no room in sharing divinity with any other being. Islam does not venture into the description of God’s essence though Allah is believed to be all-seeing, all-hearing, all-knowing, all-willing and all-powerful. Islam acknowledges the existence of angels, the chief amongst them being Angel Gabriel who first appeared to Muhammad and gave him the Qur’an. Apart from this cardinal belief, Islam believes in the existence of Iblis, the fallen angel and in a series of satanic entities and spirits who prevent humankind from submitting to and obeying Allah. Islam believes in the efficacy of God’s revealed and inspired Books; especially in four books; namely The Torah of Moses, the Zabur of David, the Injil of Jesus and the Qur’an. They accept that all the four books contain Allah’s truth but that the Qur’an contains God’s final message addressed to all humankind. For Muslims, the Qur’an’s revelation supersedes all previous books and even abrogates any conflicts in their truth claims about the Deity. All Muslims believe that the Qur’an is a replica of the original copy still in heaven so that any translations cannot sufficiently substitute for the original Arabic text in heaven. It is composed of 114 Suras or chapters with larger and longer Suras put first and the shorter ones placed last in the Holy Book.

Islam believes in prophecy and the role of prophets and the Messengers of God had long been acknowledged. Islam teaches that there are 28 prophets of Allah amongst which are Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, Moses and Jesus. Islam proclaims that the greatest of all of them is Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah and the “mother” of all prophets. Islam has a doctrine of the last things; that is, eschatology. The Qur’an presents a sharp eschatological doctrine. Muslims believe in the resurrection of the body, a final judgment and final destiny of humankind in paradise or in hell.

The five pillars of Islam or duties constitute the kernel of Islamic faith and religion; namely (a) Confession of faith

the Shahadah in the formula: La ilah illa Allah, Muhammad rasul Allah. This is considered the most hallowed profession of faith of the Islamic belief in one God. By reciting that “there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet” makes one become a Muslim. God is one and the only deity. Muslims worship only this one Supreme Being who is Creator of heaven and earth. This is a Qur’anic teaching as the unity of Allah is non-negotiable and is noted in almost all the suras as a way to concretize the importance of the belief in the Shahadah in Islam.[31]The unity of God, tawhid, is strictly embedded in its Arabic formulaic expression: La ilaha illa Allah, which means there is no god save Allah. This cardinal article of Islamic creed carries with it the transcendence of God. As Nvumbi has correctly noted “Indeed, the Islamic monotheism also includes the transcendence of God. God is one and transcendent. Being the creator of all things, God is not only different from all creatures but he is above all. And there is none like unto him” (Sura 112, 4). [32] Actually Islamic concept of God’s transcendence does not mean that he is distant from the world. Allah is close to humanity. The Qur’an affirms that God always invites man to come close to him.(b) the Salat (prayer) recited five times a day facing the Holy city of Mecca. In the beginning of every Salat: al-Fatiha draws attention to the most prestigious content of Islamic doctrine [33]and in other forms of prayer in Islam. With the formula, Bi-smi-llahi ar-Rahmani ar-Rahim found on top of every sura except sura 9, indicates that the God preached by Muhammad not only exists but also is the most Gracious and the most Merciful; (c) the Zakat, Alms-giving of a specified percentage on certain properties to certain classes of needy people through which Muslims raise money for practical purposes; especially for the support of the needy within the Umma, the Muslim community; (d) Fasting – which usually happens during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim Lunar year when Muslims are obliged to fast from sun-rise to sun-down abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations. The fast is seen as a means of spiritual self-purification. Good Muslims believe that “by cutting oneself off from worldly comforts, even for a short time, a fasting person gains true sympathy with those who go hungry, as well as growth in his or her spiritual life”. [34] (d) The annual Hajj, is an official pilgrimage to Makkah expected from Muslims who can afford it financially and physically once in a lifetime though it is not a must but is encouraged. About some two million faithful travel to Makkah each year from all parts of the world. The annual Hajj is performed in the twelfth month of Islamic lunar month. The pilgrims; especially the males, wear special simple white cloths which remove distinctions of class, race and culture so that all stand equal before Allah. Pilgrims go round the Kaaba seven times and go seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa to commemorate what Hagar did when she was searching for water in the desert. After this, the pilgrims stand together in Arafat to haul stones to Iblis (shaitan) and to put up their requests to God on what they want and ask for his forgiveness in anticipation of the Day of Judgment.[35] A festival, Eid Al-Adha generally celebrated with prayers concludes the Hajj. Apart however from militant Islamists who are distorting Islam, the latter is otherwise a religion of justice and peace (Qur’an 4:58; 49:9) and its deep sense of brotherhood and harmony in this “one world” as



William Montgomery Watt had observed; the total number of Muslim faithful in the world today is 1.6 billion while Africa has about 245, 110, 500. [36]

## 9. Comparative Tabular Presentation: Effort in Taxonomy of Contacts

We design a tabular presentation of the contacts between Christianity and Islam. In the survey, we indicate in summary, most of the commonalities and differences we

have passed in discussion on the two religions. Besides, the tabular overview goes a long way to supplement more of the numerous points of contact in the two monotheistic religions that we have not sufficiently drawn attention to in our paper. The survey demonstrates what religion scholars hold as similarities and differences in the Comparative Study of Religions. The data present the origins of the Faiths, some of their beliefs and practices.

Historical	Facts of Christianity	and of Islam
Date Founded	c. 30 AD	In 610 of the Common Era (CE)
Place Founded	Palestine	Makkah in the Arabian Peninsula
Founders & the Earliest Leaders	Jesus, Peter, James & John, Paul	Muhammad
Original Languages	Aramaic & Koine Greek	Arabic
Major Regions Where Established today	Europe, North & South America, Africa	Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa
Adherents worldwide today	2 billion	1.6 billion
Current Size in the world	Largest in the world	Second Largest in the world
Major Branches	Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants: Pentecostals, Charismatics & Evangelicals	The Sunni & the Shiites
<b>2. Major Religious</b>	Items of	Authority
Sacred Texts	The Bible: The Jewish Bible = The Old Testament, The New Testament	The Qur'an, the Sunna and the Hadith
Attitude to Sacred Texts	Views vary: Written down Word of God as Inspired human accounts of revelation; for some, the texts are only of human origin	Exact Word of God in its original Arabic as dictated by Angel Gabriel to the Prophet (SAW)
Status of the Prophets and other beings	Prophets are truth-bearers from God. Belief in Incarnate Son of God, (Jesus) from Heaven	Prophets are truth-bearers of Allah. Incarnation is denied in the Qur'an and in Islam
Regard for the Hebrew (Jewish) Bible	For Christians, it is canonical	For Muslims, it is non-canonical but useful as inspired revelation
Regard for Jewish Apocrypha	Catholics regard them as canonical; for Protestants they are non-canonical	In Islam, they are non-canonical
Regard for the New Testament	Word of God and very canonical	Non-canonical but useful as an inspired literature
The summaries of Doctrines are:-	Found in the Apostles Creed & the Nicene Creed	Found in the Five Articles of Faith
Sources of Religious Laws	From the Canon Law for Catholics and the Book of Commons for Protestants	From the Sharia
Sources of Other Accepted Written Authorities are:-	Found in the Church Fathers, Declarations of Church Councils, the Creeds of Ecumenical Councils, Papal Decrees and Encyclicals & Canon Law for Catholics	In Islam, they are found in the Sunna and the Hadith
<b>3. Religious</b>	Rituals	and Practices
The Houses of Worship are:-	Churches, Cathedrals, Basilicas & Church Halls	Mosques
Days of Worship:-	Sundays	Fridays
Religious Leaders:-	Priests, Bishops, Archbishops, Patriarchs, The Pope, Pastors, Ministers, Deacons & Evangelists	Imams and the Ulama
Major sacred rituals:-	Baptism, Confirmation, Communion or the Eucharist.	The Five Pillars: Confession of Faith, Prayer, Pilgrimages, Charity and Fasting
Head-covering during Prayers:-	Generally there are no hard and fast rules	Muslims cover heads
Essential Religious Holy Days:-	Christmas, Ash Wednesdays, Good Fridays, Easter Sundays and Easter Mondays (Galilee)	Eid-el-Fitr, Eid-el-Adaha, Eid-el-Malud, and the Holy Month of Ramadan
Other Major Religious Symbols:-	Water, the Cross, Crucifix, Dove, Anchor, Fish, Alpha and Omega, and the Chi-Rho	Mawlid, Ashura Crescent, Minaret & the name of Allah in Arabic.

## 10. Conclusions

Our findings draw attention to the need to re-visit the Christian-Muslim relationship in history. In nearly 1,300 years of existence and since the time of the Prophet (SAW), the relationship between Christianity and Islam has neither been cordial and nor shall it be cordial in our

age talk less of when militant Islam enters Lesotho. The Muslim Empire had waxed strong and had spread fast. In its trail, it had conquered much of the Christian Holy Lands, unsettled and finished the Christian Byzantine Empire. In another guise, this sort of jihadism is still continuing unabated today. In Christianity's bid to recover the lands conquered and dominated by the Turks, Christians launched a wide-flung warfare known in history

as the Crusades that happened from the 11<sup>th</sup> through to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries in order to re-conquer the “Holy Lands” annexed by Muslims.[37] Is this not like what the Allied Forces are doing to ISIL today? However, Constantinople, the “New Rome” and the capital of the Eastern Orthodox Christianity fell to the Turks in 1453 and its inhabitants have lived under Islamic rule since that time till today. Is such a depredation not repeatable today in any Christian nation that does not know this past so that its future can begin to be safeguarded?

Even in recent times the mutual distrust between Christians and Muslims has gone hell-wire resulting in conflicts and suspicions in so far as some radicalized militants present Islam as 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 in West Africa in recent times and on the international levels by those of their kithon the continental levels like AL Shabaab (now called the Ugus) in Somalia and Kenya and Boko Haram in Nigeria, its neighbours Cameroon, Chad and Niger as well as the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan have continued to aggravate the age-old distrust forcing other nations they have not yet reached to be ever on red-alert to engage in the global fight against terror. It may however be true as some people assert that the conflicts have 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 Christian and Muslim leaders and scholars of contemporary religion to reach common grounds and to declare the urgency to engage in a meaningful dialogue of life; often tagged “Inter-religious Dialogue” such as have been initiated by the Vatican and in Africa by the several National Catholic Bishops Conferences and by other Christian progressives.

Finally this research in the Comparative Study of Religions which we have devoted to a possible rapport between Christianity and Islam in Lesotho is intended to draw our attention to the reality of the basic religious differences and similarities between these two religions in the kingdom. For the Mosotho Christians and politicians, this sort of comparison opens up challenges. It behests all to review our inclination towards religious fanaticism, bigotry, extremism and fundamentalism, to evaluate options in the interest of our context and to make some pertinent choices as we live our lives as faith people in the kingdom. Having gained insight into the values embedded in the two Religions, we can now ask: have people who live in today’s Lesotho become able to understand and come to know God as the Creator of all things including the country and ourselves; have our people become empowered to interpret with the skill of Hermes, the hermeneut, the world around us where militant Islam is returning to the decadent spirit of conquest that provoked the emergence in history of the dastard Crusades; have we become able to evaluate our needs in the aftermath of the daily rumours of violence and war provoked by religions, and when all is said and done, are we now enabled to derive hope for a cordial and peaceful future for humankind, love for all God’s created persons and security of nations, individuals, hallowed institutions and esteemed

values of humankind? Our comparison if it has not achieved much because of its complexion as an academic exercise, at least, it is supposed to make Basotho individuals to become mindful of certain choices required in daily life experiences: (a) the choice between meaning and meaninglessness which only the religions of Christianity and Islam that regard the world, man and the cosmos as real and God-made which can give meaning to humankind’s existence; (b) the choice between real guilt and illusion as both Christianity and Islam, apart from recent aberrations, have taken humankind’s sinfulness seriously and had struggled through their beliefs and practices to provide satisfaction to humankind’s spiritual hunger; (c) the choice between self-help and salvation achievable through rituals and practices. Here is a special distinction for Christianity, It is the only Religion, and not Islam, that has continued to offer that which humankind cannot achieve by itself; namely contriteness and forgiveness by a God-sent Saviour. In this light, the Comparative study on Christianity and Islam in the Basotho context has helped to inspire our readers to begin to acquire some measure of wisdom required to avoid calamity that do arise from frosty inter-religious relationships and to begin to indulge in some measure of reflective life that is imbued with the spirit of meditation that disposes oneself to be ever ready to believe in the supremacy of God, call him, Allah or Theos. He is Creator and Sustainer of life on planet earth.

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