Christian Ethics and Islamic Ethics: A Critical Comparative Study in the Ghanaian Context.

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Abstract: Christianity and Islam are two major religions that have gained a lot of adherents in the world. In Ghana, adherents of Christianity and Islam have the highest percentage among the three main religions.Albeit both Islam and Christianity claim to be monotheistic,believing inone omnipotent and omniscient supernatural God, their ethical norms and principles, however, manifest similarities and dissimilarities. This paper endeavours to do a critical comparative study of Christian ethics and Islamic ethics, in the Ghanaian context, with the hope that the similarities will strengthen harmonious coexistence while the dissimilarities will task us to target and develop collaborative measures that can ensuremutual understanding and beef upreligious tolerance for the benefit of both religions and their numerous adherents.

Keywords: Christian ethics, Islamic ethics.

I.   INTRODUCTION

This study compares Christian ethics with Islamic ethics identifying some of the ethical values and principles that are common to both and those that are different in the Ghanaian context.

GHANA

Ghana,[1] is a West African nation that is bordered on the North by Burkina Faso, on the South by the Gulf of Guinea, on the East by the Republic of Togo, and on the West by La Cote D'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). Geographically, it is located between the Latitudes $4^{o}44$" and $11^{o}15$" N, of the Equator, and between the Longitudes $3^{o}15$" W and $1^{o}12$" E of the Greenwich Meridian. In fact, Ghana can be located precisely on Latitude 5 degrees, 36 minutes North and Longitude 0 degrees, 10 minutes East.[2] The total area of Ghana is 238,537 km2 (92,100 miles2) comprising land: 230, 940 km2 and water: 8,520 km2.[3] Ghana has two major seasons, namely, the wet and dry seasons. With its proximity to the equator, Ghana has a climate that is characteristically tropical and humid. Actually, the climate is tropical. The eastern coastal belt is warm and comparatively dry; the southwest corner, hot and humid; and the north, hot and dry. There are two distinct rainy

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[1]Appiah-Sekyere, P. (2016). Environmental Care in Ghana: A Moral Duty for Ghanaian Christians. *International Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, Vol.3,*Issue 11, p.55.

[2]See http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/geography/nature.php. RetrievedJuly 16, 2017.

[3]Cf. http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/general/statistics.php.Retrieved July17, 2017.

seasons in the south, May-June and August-September; in the north, the rainy seasons tend to merge. A dry, northeasterly wind, the Harmattan, blows in January and February.[4]Ghana`s population is about 24,658,823 (2010 Census).[5]According to the 2010 Census, the ethnic groups in Ghana are Akan (47.5%), Mole-Dagbani (16.6%), Ewe (13.9%) and Ga-Dangme (7.4%), Gurma (5.7%), Guan (3.7%),Grusi (2.5%), Mande (1.1%), other (1.6%).[6] As regards the religions in Ghana, the 2010 Census declared that there are Traditionalists, (5.2%), Christians (71.2%), Muslims (17.6%) and others (0.8%), none (5.3%).[7] As typical Africans, Ghanaians are notably religious.[8]

II. CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Geisler, in a very simple but profound way, says that"Christian ethics deals with what is morally right and wrong for a Christian."[9]It actually studies in the "light of Christian faith and of reason the guidelines which man must follow to attain his final goal."[10]Christian ethics can also be defined as that part of "theology whose object is the foundations, attitudes, and guidelines which enable a person to attain his or her final goal in the light of Christian faith and reason."[11]According to Bernard Haering, the first concern of Christian ethics should not be with individually distinct acts nor with decision-making. Rather, "its basic task and purpose is to gain the right vision to assess the main perspectives, and to present the truths and values which should bear upon the decisions to be made before God."[12]It also studies the free acts of man in his response to God's invitation. Its context includes all humans and created values and norms based on God's revelation and their consequences for Christ-like living. Its ambit extends from revelation about man's destiny and personal dignity before God to such specific applications as war, racial justice, abortion, lying and divorce.[13]

Christian ethics, deals with the norms observed, the presuppositions and ideas expressed in the behaviour that Christians endorse and believe about God, Christ, the world, each other, the history of Christian salvation and the hope of eternal redemption.[14]

The nature of Christian Ethics

Christian ethics has a distinguished nature. It has a special form, namely, "a form of divine-position."[15] It is based on God's will. The main bedrock of Christian ethics is the bible and so the Holy Scripture becomes a vital source for Christian ethics. Christians consider the bible as the word of God. Hence, Christian ethics is based on God's will with biblical examples and norms, rules and ideas, revelations of judgment, promises and leanings beingconsidered as the foundations of morality in Christian ethics.[16]

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[4]http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/geography/nature.php. RetrievedJuly 16, 2017.

[5]Ghana Statistical Service, (May, 2012), 2010 Population & Housing Census. Summary Report of Final Results.Accra: A Publication of the Ghana Statistical Service (Sakoa Press Limited).

[6]Ghana Statistical Service, (May, 2012), 2010 Population & Housing Census. Summary Report of Final Results, *Op. Cit.,*p. 34.

[7]Ghana Statistical Service, (May, 2012), 2010 Population & Housing Census. Summary Report of Final Results, p. 40.

[8]See Pobee, J. S. (1992). Religion and Politics in Ghana: A Case Study of the Acheampong Era. Accra: Ghana Universities Press, pp. 1-3.

[9] Geisler, N. L. (2001). *Christian ethics.*Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, p. 17.

[10]Peschke, K. (1981). *Christian Ethics*. Alcester: C. GoodliffeNeale.p. xv.

[11]Peschke, K. (1996).*Christian ethics. Moral theology in the light of Vatican II.* Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, p. 1.

[12]Haering, B. (1978), *Free and faithful in Christ*, Vol. 1. Middlegreen, Slough: N.J.:Paulist Press, p. 6.

[13]Regan, G. M. (1971). *New trends in moral theology*. New York: Newman Press, pp. 3-5.

[14]Peschke, K. (1996), pp. 4-6.

[15]Geisler, N. (2001). *Christian ethics. Options and issues.* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, p. 22.

[16] Biblical foundations/sources such as the Decalogue (*Exodus* 20:1-17); the Beatitudes (*Matthew* 5:3-12; *Luke*, 6: 20-26) and the love commandment (*John* 13:34).

In Christian ethics, divine revelation in the Old and New Testament forms the substratum and fundamental sources of the moral knowledge and guidance in Christian ethics.[17]Christian ethics and moral philosophy have similar presuppositions. They both presuppose the freedom of the will (autonomous beings), accountability to an ultimate value (immortality of the soul), the reality or existence of God[18] and that individuals (and groups) are responsible for their decisions and actions.

As rightly affirmed by Geisler, Christian ethics is absolute.[19] It is absolute in the sense that since God's moral character does not change (*Malachi* 3:6; *James* 1:17), and the moral obligations that flow from God'snature are absolute. Thus, Christian ethical principles have cross-cultural significance.This connotes that Christian ethical norms "are always binding everywhere on everyone."[20] Actually, Christian ethics is based on God's revelation (general and special).

> General revelation contains God's commands for all people. Special revelation declares his will for believers. But in either case, the basis of human ethical responsibility is divine revelation. Failure to recognize God as the sourceof moral duty does not exonerate anyone, even an atheist, from his or her moral duty. For 'when Gentiles, who do not have the law (of Moses), do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts' (Rom. 2:14-15). That is, even if unbelievers do not have the moral law in their minds, they still have it written on their hearts. Even if they do not know it by way of cognition, they show it by way of inclination.[21]

In a further perspective, Christian ethics points out what God, the lawgiver, expects of his people. Since "moral rightness is prescribed by a moral God, it is prescriptive."[22] Hence, Christian ethics is prescriptive in nature and not descriptive. From a Christian perspective, a purely descriptive ethic may not be very helpful for the Christian way of living. Basically, when we describe human behaviour that is sociology but when one attempts to prescribe human behaviour then one enters into the arena of morality. For some Christian ethicists including David Bohr,[23] George V. Lobo,[24] John Paul II,[25] Christ is the concrete and universal norm of moral life.

Christian ethics is deontological in that it is duty-centered.[26] Deontological ethics "looks to one's obligations to determine what is moral."[27]Deontological ethics objectifies one's obligations or moral duties, thereby answering the question what should I do? Actually, deontological ethics regardsduty as the basis of morality. Christian ethics as a form of deontological ethics underscores the importance of assessing human actions by "reference to particular rules, duties, or norms which ask primarily whether the*means* constitute or violate such duties."[28] The Ten Commandments and Kant's categorical imperatives[29] are examples of deontological ethics.

In Christian ethics the human community plays a very significant role in morality. Birch and Rasmussen affirm that "it is true with even greater force for the Christian moral life, and for Christian ethics.

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[17]Peschke, K (1996). *Op. Cit*., p. 3.

[18]See Fagothey, A. (1972). *Op. Cit*.; See also Peschke,(1996),*Op. Cit*., pp. 4-5.

[19]Geisler, N. (2001), *Op. Cit* ., p. 22.

[20]*Ibid.,*

[21] *Ibid.*.

[22]Geisler, N.(2001), *Op. Cit* ., p. 23.

[23]See Bohr, D. (1998). *Catholic moral tradition (*Revised*).* Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor
 Publishing Division, p. 33.

[24]Cf. George V. Lobo, G. L. (1984). *Guide to Christian living*. Westminster: Christian Classics, p.11.

[25]John Paul II, (6th August, 1993), *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 15.

[26] Geisler, N. (2001), *Op. Cit* ., p. 24.

[27]Shannon &Kockler, (2009). *An introduction to bioethics*. Fourth Edition. New Jersey: Paulist Press, p. 31.

[28]Shanon&Kockler, (2009), *Op. Cit*., p. 30.

[29]Kant, I. (2002).*Groundwork for the metaphysics of morals*, (ed. & trans. Allen W. Wood). New Haven, CT:,
       Yale University Press.

The reason is this community is at the very heart of Christian faith itself."[30] The Christian community is known as the people of God. Thus, "the beginning experiences for both Jewish and Christian ethics are the experience of God as the One who generates community and the One who is experienced in community, as its deepest source and meaning."[31]Birch and Rasmussen rightly infer that one of the basic questions for Christian ethics is as follows: "what character and conduct is in keeping with who we are as a *people of God*?"[32] Hence, Christian ethics can be said to be communal and theocentric.[33]

Family ethics

Christian ethics teaches that marriage is the basis for the family which in turn is the fundamental cell of the human society. Through marriage the family if begotten. For Christian ethics, therefore marriage is of great importance to humanity. Christian ethics teaches that the ethically right form of marital union is monogamy (one man, one wife) and also heterosexual (between a male and a female).[34]

Abortion

Christian ethics teaches that human life is sacred and comes from God. In fact, according to Christian ethics "human life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes."[35]

According to Christian ethics, God is the author and giver of human life and only God can take it. Thus, the destruction of the human embryo in the womb is a grave sin.

> In reality, respect for the human life is called for from the time that the process of generation begins. From the time that the ovum is fertilized, a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor of the mother; it is rather the life of a new human being with his own growth. It would never be made human if it were not human already.[36]

The stance of Christian ethics is that direct induced abortion is ethically wrong.[37]This is because the unborn baby is known intimate and personally by God.[38]

Euthanasia[39]

Christian ethics posits that active voluntary euthanasia is morally wrong. This is because according to Christian ethical teachings, human is sacred. God is the author of human life.[40] God gives life to humans and only God can take it.[41] Thus, it is ethically wrong to destroy[42] human life through euthanasia.

III.   ISLAMIC ETHICS

Islamic ethics is the ethical system formed and based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) through his actions and words. The term "ethics" is literally translated by the Arabic word: *akhlaq* (singular, *khuluq*). *Khuluq* appears in the Qur'an, two times, (Sūrah, 26: 137, and Sūrah, 68: 4).

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[30] B. C. Birch, B.C. & L. L. Rasmussen, *Bible & ethics in the Christian life,* (Minneapolis MN.: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), p. 19.

[31]*Ibid..*

[32]*Ibid..*

[33] B. C. Birch, & L. L. Rasmussen, *Op. Cit*., (1989), p. 20.

[34] See *Gn*. 1:27.

[35]*GS*,no. 51.

[36]SCDF, *Declaration on Procured Abortion*, nos. 12-13: *AAS* 66 (1974),no. 725.

[37] For the arguments in favour of and against abortion see Geisler, N. L. (2001). *Christian ethics.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books House, pp. 135-155.

[38]Geisler, N. L. (2001). *Christian ethics, Op. Cit.,* p. 148; See also Jer. 1:5; Isa. 49:1, 5.

[39] Euthanasia is commonly known as "mercy killing." For some of the arguments that people present in favour of or against euthanasia cf. Geisler, N. L. (2001). *Christian ethics, Op. Cit.,* pp. 157-171.

[40] Cf. *Gn.* 1:27.

[41] See *Job.* 1:21.

[42] Because euthanasia goes against God's commandment, "Thou shall not kill," *Exod*. 20:13.

Another Arabic word that is synonymous and used almost interchangeably with *akhlaq* is *adab*. *Adab* has to do with "manner, attitude, behaviour and the etiquette of putting things in their proper place."[43] Though these two terms are, in some cases, used interchangeably in Arabic language, some Muslim scholars identify some fundamental differences between *akhlaq* and *adab* in terms of application and source. *Akhlaq* as ethics refers to "moral philosophy," but *adab* as morality connotes the actual practices of moral philosophy. A. A. Hashi identifies the following two meanings of *akhlaq,*

Firstly, *akhlaq* (ethics) means the science that deals with the standards of right and wrong of human conducts, particularly "what humans ought to do." Secondly, *akhlaq* means "good character" or good human behaviour. In this understanding, ethics is the human character that prescribes that one refrains from all forms of immoral behaviour.

From these two conceptual significations, Hashi argues that Islamic ethics (*akhlaq*) involves those universal standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do. These universal standards that Hashi talks about are grounded on the Qur'an and exemplified in the life, actions and words of the Prophet Muhammad. Thus, *akhlaq* (ethics) "subsumes all actions that are characterised as virtuous deeds in the terminology of the Qur'an."[44]

Hashi also makes two important observations about Islamic ethics: (1) ethics and personality and (2) ethics and religiosity. In the first instance, he contends that ethics and personality are intertwined. Ethical actions are those conducts that are characterised as good deeds. Good conducts are those conducts that are in line with the primordial human nature (*fithra*). Islam holds the belief that human beings are born with good character (*fithra*) that disdains from immorality and instills morality, thus good morals are equivalent to human nature.[45] In this understanding, Hashi equates *akhlaq* (ethics) with human nature (*fithra*), unless the human nature is corrupted.

Secondly, ethics is also interrelated with religiosity. He argues that Sūrah, 78:4 equates ethics and religion, while Sūrah, 30:30 likens human nature (*fithra*) to religion (*din*). Thus, religion and ethics are part of the human primordial disposition (*fithra*). In Islam, having good morality is seen as a reflection of religious faith, while lack of good morality is a sign of weak religious faith.

The Right to life

In Isamic ethics, right to life is very important and considered a sacred human right. Therefore, Islamic ethicsendeavours to protect it. The human blood sustains life, and nobody dares shed it. Life is venerated and guarded so much so that no one is allowed to neither cut it short nor threaten it. The Qur'an says,

> ... that if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind....[46]

Furthermore, "Anyone who kills a believer deliberately will receive as his reward (a sentence) to live in Hell forever. God will be angry with him and curse him, and prepare dreadful torment for him."[47]However, taking retaliation for murder or any other offences can only be decided by a competent court of law. The Qur'an says, "...and kill not anyone whom Allah has forbidden, except for a just cause (according to Islamic law). This He has commanded you that you may understand."[48]

In this context, the destruction of human life has been regarded as a great sin in Islamic ethics. It is also considered as endangering all humankind. The Prophet declared "homicide is only next to the polytheism," "the

[43]A. A. Hashi, "Islamic Ethics: An Outline of Its Principles and Scope,"*Revelation and Science, Vol. 1* (03), pp. 122-130.

[44]Sayed Sikandar Shah Haneef, *Ethics and Fiqht for Everyday life: An Islamic Outline*, Research Centre: IIUM, 2005.

[45]Hashi, "Islamic Ethics: An Outline of Its Principles and Scope, *Op. Cit.*, p. 123.

[46] Al-Qur'an, Al-Maida : 32.

[47] Al-Quran, An-Nisa : 93.

[48]Al-Quran, Al-Anaam : 151

worst sins: associating something with God (Allah)."[49]The Qur'an condemns explicitly polytheism and so calls it "*shirk*" meaning, "associationism" (the act of attributing associates to Allah). Polytheists are referred to as *mushrikūn,* meaning "associationists." The error of the polytheists and people who engage in homicidal activities is that they associate other deities with Allah, which is the worst sin any human being could commit. Allah is One and has no partners.[50] Anyone who takes human life is associating with Allah. Life belongs and comes from Allah and Allah alone takes life away.

Family ethics

Islamic ethics affirms that marriage between manand woman is the basis for the human family. Thus, Islamic ethics endorses heterosexual marital relations and frowns upon homosexuality,though according to Scott Allan Kugle, some *ahadith* portray contrary views.[51] A heterosexual marriage must be either monogamous or polygynous.[52] Islamic law could permit a man to marry up to four wives.[53] However, Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d.1905) argues that the Islamic ideal was monogamy on the basis of Sūrah, 4:3 and 4:129.[54] Up to four wives were allowed on condition of fair treatment. Since fair treatment was impossible, the Muslim should only take one wife. The former head of al-Azhar Maḥmūd Shaltūt (1963) said that this reasoning violated the plain meaning of Sūrah, 4:3 and that this verse permitted polygyny.[55] According to Shaltūt, the purpose of the second verse (Sūrah, 4:129) is not to state the impossibility of fairness. Instead, its purpose is to explain the "equality" enjoined in the first verse (Sūrah, 4:3). The equality imposed by Qur'an (Sūrah, 4:3) is not an absolute equality; that would be impossible. Rather, it simply means not favouring one wife completely over another.

In the family, a woman enjoys the same status as that of man. The Qur'an says, "Humankind, fear your Lord who created you from one soul and created man's mate from the same soul, from these two scattering on earth many men and women"[56] This verse of the Qur'an, implies that a woman is a full and equal partner of man in marriage as well as in procreation. She is also equal to man in bearing personal and common responsibilities and in receiving rewards for her deeds. As such, she has equal right to be educated and be knowledgeable because seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim.

In Islam, the role of guardian (*wali*) of a woman in matters of marriage (usually the father) is highly regarded and well-known.[57] In case of Marriage, a w*ali* is someone who has been granted an authority to consent to marriage on behalf of someone. The concept of guardianship (w*ilaya*) could be seen to undermine equality of partners in marriage. Islam also teaches the w*ali* must not impose his will upon the woman under his guardianship; her permission must be sought.[58] Without her permission and consent the marriage is invalid.[59] The permission of a divorcee or a widow must be plain and unequivocal.[60] A virgin's silence is often considered as her consent. With regard to marriage, when her natural guardian as *wali* (father or grandfather) gave her into marriage with an adult or infant husband, after the girl has attained maturity, she is at liberty to confirm the previous *nikah* or to refuse to accept it.[61]

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[49] Haven, C. J., (2007). *Conveyance of eternal love.* Boulder (Colorado): Owl Creek Press, p. 181.

[50] Sūrah, 4: 48.

[51] Scott Allan Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam: Critical Reflection on Gay, Lesbian, and Transgendar Muslims*, London: One World Publications 2010.

[52] That Islamic ethics permits a man to have more than one wife, cf. Sūrah, 4:3.

[53]Sūrah, 4: 3.

[54]Cosmas Ebo Sarbah, "Christian-Muslim Marriage in Ghana", in *Journal of Applied Thought*, 5 (2), 103-114.

[55]Shaltūt, A. (1988).*Al-Islām: ʿAqīda wa Sharīʿa*. Cairo: Dar al-Sharouk, p.185.

[56] Sūrah, 4: 01

[57] Sūrah, 4:25; Sūrah, 24: 32

[58] Sahih Bukhari, 7:67

[59]Aayesha Rafiq, "Role of Guardian in Muslim woman's Marriage: A Study in the Light of religious Texts", in *International Journal of Innovative Science, Engineering & Technology*, Vol. 2 (4), pp. 1254-1261

[60] Sūrah, 2:232 & 234; Also see Mohammad Tahir Mansoori, (2009).*Family Law in Islam.*Islamabad: Sharia Academy.

[61]Aayesha Rafiq, Role of Guardian in Muslim woman's Marriage: A Study in the Light of religious Texts, pp. 1254-1261.

Abortion

Pronouncements on abortion have a long history in Muslim thought.[62]Some scholars agreed that abortion is allowed while others disagreed. Four main positions on abortion prior to ensoulment currently exist across the various schools of thought: i). abortion is allowed; ii). abortion is allowed under certain circumstances; iii). abortion is disapproved of and iv).abortion is forbidden.[63] Support for abortion and the belief that life begins at ensoulment is based primarily on the following Qur'anic verse, which discusses the different stages (semen, blood clot, bones and flesh) of fetal development:

> Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay); then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (fetus) lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature. So blessed be Allah the Best to create![64]

According to Zoe Whaley, the last line in the above quotation from Surah, 23:12-14, "We developed out of it another creature," is vital to the discourse on abortion in Islamic history and tradition.[65] Many are the historians and scholars who have deemed this line as an indication of the unavailability of the soul of a human being immediately upon conception.[66] The line gives the impression that the infant is given a soul sometime after conception. Whaley is of the view that this interpretation clearly has important implications for the practice of abortion. He argues that if a fetus does not have a human soul until sometime after conception, then there must be a period of time before that moment when the fetus is merely 'an unformed biological entity' and so abortion ought to be permitted.

Furthermore, the *Encyclopaedia of Qur'an* indicates that well known hadith - found in both the Sunni and Shi'i collections - sets a time period of forty days for each of the three stages of development (drop, clot and tissue). After the completion of development, "God dispatche[s] an angel to breathe the soul into the fetus at which point its fate on earth and in the hereafter [is] ordained."[67] As a result, Muslim jurists in the past issued a strict prohibition against abortion after the fetus had been in the womb for 120 days. A good reason is needed for terminating a pregnancy, such protecting a breastfeeding child, socio-economic concerns or health reasons.[68] However, it must be stated that various scholars and jurists continued to disagree over the permissibility of abortion before this allotted time.[69]

Notwithstanding the above different interpretations among Islamic scholars, generally Islam gives the right to life even to the child in the womb of its mother. Islamic ethics teaches that if a person ends the continuity of baby's life by inflicting such a damage on its mother that the baby's conception is aborted in either of the three forms, (sperm, embryo, and fetus), he has to pay a specific blood money and compensation as per the Islamic regulations, as the baby has died. This blood money will be paid to its parents; if one of its parents causes the miscarriage, the blood money is received by the other.[70]The commandments of the Qur'an and the Prophet, read together, accorded full protection to human life, neither an individual would be allowed to take away the life of another individual, nor shall the state destroy any human life except in either case, when the law so requires or permits. All forms of abortion, man slaughter, homicide, infanticide, etc, are therefore, regarded in

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[62] Hessini, L. (yr**). Abortion and Islam: Policies and Practices in the Middle East and North Africa, *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 15, No 29, pp. 75-84.

[63]Musallam, B. F. (1983). *Op. Cit..*

[64] Sūrah, 23: 12-14.

[65]Zoe Whaley, Birth Control and Abortion in the Practice and Tradition of Islam,*Macalester Islam Journal*, Vol. 2 (3), pp.28-33.

[66] Whaley, *Birth Control and Abortion in the Practice and Tradition of Islam*, p. 3.

[67]Encyclopedia of the Qur'an

[68] Asman, O. (2004). Abortion in Islamic countries: Legal and Religious Aspects, *Medicine and Law, Vol, 23*, 73–89.

[69]Musallam, B. F. (1983). *Sex and society in Islam.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[70] Global Health Council. Promises to Keep: The Toll of Unintended Pregnancy on Women in the Developing World (Washington, DC: Global Health Council, 2002).

Islamic ethics as heinous crime.[71] Allah denounces murder and says in the Holy Qur'an: "kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin."[72]

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Euthanasia

According Mehran Narimisa of the Department of Humanities, Islamic Azad University, Islamic jurisprudence does not recognize a person's right to die voluntarily.[75] The Islamic arguments against euthanasia are grounded on two Qur'anic verses which in effect mean that: (1) life is sacred and euthanasia and suicide are not included among the reasons allowed for killing in Islam.[76] (2) Allah decides how long each person will live.[77] Thus, Narimisa contends that Islamic ethics teaches that life is a divine trust and cannot be terminated by any form.[78]

Some leading Muslim Jurists have likened euthanasia to murder and therefore concluded that the practice is *haram* (forbidden) in Islam.[79] Al-Qaradawi, for instance, issued a fatwa (jurisprudential decree or legal opinion) equating euthanasia to murder.[80] Furthermore, the Late Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Abdul-Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz equally declared that it is un-Islamic for anybody to decide the death of a person before their time of death.[81] In its document the *Islamic Code of Medical Ethics,* the First International Conference on Islamic Medicine equated euthanasia to suicide stating:[82]

> Mercy killing like suicide finds no support except in the atheistic way of thinking that believes that our life on this earth is followed by void. The claim of killing for painful hopeless illness is also refuted, for there is no human pain that cannot be largely conquered by medication or by suitable neurosurgery…[83]

Thus, the moment of death (*ajal)*, is under the control of Allah and the human being has no say in this matter; the human being cannot and should not attempt to hasten or delay the *ajal*. The prohibition on euthanasia applies equally to suicide, homicide and genocide.[84] The concepts of autonomy, freedom and individual choice does not apply here because in Islamic ethics, human life does not belong to the individual person and so taking life will cause harm to the family and society in general. An individual's freedom of choice is constrained by the harm it causes to others.

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[71] Sūrah, 5: 32.

[72] Sūrah, 17: 31.

[73] Sūrah, 5: 32.

[74] Sūrah, 17: 31.

[75] Mehran Narimisa, M. (June, 2014). Euthanasia: An Islamic View, *European Scientific Journal,* Special edition, Vol. 2, pp. 170-172.

[76] Sūrah, 6: 151; Sūrah,17: 33.

[77] Sūrah, 3: 145.

[78] Mehran Narimisa, Euthanasia: An Islamic View, *Op. Cit.*, p. 170.

[79] Mahmud Adesina Ayuba, (2016). Euthanasia: A Muslim's Perspective,*Scriptura 115,* pp.1-13.

[80] M. Robert, M. &Stuart, E. (1999).*Euthanasia: The Moral Issues. Contemporary Issues in Philosophy*. New York: Prometheus Books, p. 91.

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IV.   SIMILARITIES IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISLAMIC ETHICS

The following are some of the ethical norms that are similar in both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics:

- Both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics have a supernatural source, namely,God for the former and Allah for the latter as the divine origin of its respective ethical norms.

- Divine revelation is the basis for the ethical principles in both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics.

- Christian ethics and Islamic ethics are both deontological.

- In both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics, there is a written sacred literature, the Holy Bible and the Holy Qur'an respectively,that serves as the source of their respective ethics.

- Both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics cherish moral values that are very important for human relations.For example,fidelity, honesty, love, truthfulness, sincerity and the like.

- Furthermore, as regards marriage, both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics affirm heterosexuality as the ethically right marital union.

- Both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics abhor homosexual relations.

- As regards abortion, both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics regard direct induced abortionas ethically wrong and an offense against the author of life (God and Allah respectively).

- Both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics detest adultery.

- Almsgiving, as well as, helping the poor and needy are considered good moral values that are cherished by both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics.

- Christian ethics is prescriptive and Islamic ethics is also prescriptive.

- For living good moral life in this physical world, both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics anticipate a supernatural heavenly reward in the life hereafter.

- In both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics, if one fails to follow the respective prescribed ethical norms one will end up in hell in the life hereafter.

- Both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics see active voluntary euthanasia as ethically wrong.

V.   DISSIMILARITIES IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ISLAMIC ETHICS

The differences that can be identified between Christian ethics and Islamic ethics include the following:

- Whereas in Christian ethics, the morally right marital relationship is monogamy and heterosexual, that is between one male adult and onefemale adult, in Islamic ethics, albeit the ethically right marital union is heterosexual that is between the opposite sexes, the husband has the option to marry up to four wives. Thus, in Islamic ethics marriage is heterosexual and monogamy or polygyny.

- Christian ethics is based on the life and teachings of Christ whom Christians believe to be God.[85] In Islam, Jesus is a servant and messenger[86] of God and not God as espoused by Christians.

VI.   EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

From the above discussions, one can deduce that the similarities in Christian ethics and Islamic ethics seem to outnumber the differences. There are several ethical values that are common to both ethics. This fact should help Christians and Muslims to see each other as people that have ethical values in common for peaceful and harmonious co-existence. Furthermore, acknowledging with mutual respect and juxtaposing the few differences with the many ethical values that the two ethics have in common can facilitate the promotion of religious tolerance among adherents of these two major religions, namely, Christianity and Islam.

Another significant deduction is the fact that Christians and Muslims in Ghana are both entrenched in the Ghanaian cultural milieu which as Africans, is notoriously and incurably religious. This similarity, namely, the Ghanaian cultural background, coupled with the influence of Traditional African Religion with its traditional ethical norms and values, have fostered a suitable religious environment for both Christian ethics and Islamic ethics within the Ghanaian context to co-habit harmoniously contributing, to a large extent, towards the peaceful Christian-Muslim relations in Ghana.

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[85] Cf. John 14:9.
[86] See Qur'an 19; 28:34.

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