

A Comparative Analysis of Christianity and Islam concepts of Angels: the Panacea to Religious Harmony

Babalola Emmanuel Oluwafemi

Lecturer, Pan African College of Education Offa, Kwara State Nigeria

Abstract: - Religious understanding and peaceful co-existence are the priority for a peaceful society. Places where terrorism is the order of the day are mostly perpetuated by religious groups. The cause of this act can be traced to a warped understanding of the Scripture. The emerging religious tension in Nigeria, with the problem of the *Boko Haram* and the effects on socio-economic situation of the country, calls for attention. The trendy religious hullabaloo in the country involving the two Abrahamic faiths makes this study important and expedient as it serves to illustrate the commonalities in the two faiths concepts of angels for the purpose of promoting religious harmony using thematic approach (the concept of angel). The study opines that to make the world a peaceful and saved place, there is need for a proper understanding and application of the different faiths' Scriptures. Proper understanding and application of the Scriptures will help in stopping heresy and the religious leaders who are using the Scriptures to cause religious crisis in the nation. It is believed that this study will open the eyes of the scholars and religious leaders to other areas of similarities and differences in the Qur'an and the Bible, and how this can be explained in a way that it will not lead to religious crisis but lead to unity, peace and progress which would also promote socio-economic growth of the nation. Since the Scripture is the basis of self-understanding of religious groups, it is believed that the study would serve as illumination and enlightenment for the adherents of Islam and Christianity to see their Scriptures' teachings on angels as a valuable tool in fostering mutual understanding, promoting tolerance, maintaining peaceful co-existence and ensuring harmonious relationship with one another to the overall benefits of Nigeria in particular and the world at large.

I. BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF ANGELS

There are a number of different words used in the Scripture to define angelic beings. The term "angel" derives from a Greek term *αγγελος* and in Hebrew *malak'* (*malak'*) means messenger. In Latin translation it is *Angelus* (Mckenzie, 1965). The basic meaning of the word is one who is sent. It can therefore be used in an ordinary way for a human messenger or a divine messenger. In the New Testament, the word *αγγελος* is found one hundred and seventy five times (fifty one times in the synoptic, twenty one in Acts, sixty seven in Revelation and thirty six in the epistles). It is used of men only six times (Colin 1986). In divine usage of the word, "angel" denotes a heavenly order of beings, below deity (Hebrew. 1:6), but above humanity (Hebrew. 2:7). Angels could be defined as the created, spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence, but without physical bodies

(Wayne, 2000). Other names used for angels include: Messengers, Watchers (Dan 4:13,17,23), Hosts (I Samuel 17:45; 1:11), and Sons of the Almighty, Sons of God (Job 1:6, 38:7), Holy ones *'oi(a&gioi* which in Hebrew is *'dq=,Kedoshim'*, (Psalm 89:5,7), Spirits (Hebrews 1:14), Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Authorities (Colossians 1:16) and Powers (Ephesians 1:21).

The existence of angels is uniformly presented in Scripture. Angels are creatures created by God (Ps. 148:2, 5). In the absence of explicit testimony a plausible opinion would be that they were brought into existence at the commencement of the creation week (Wayne, G. 2000). All created things came into being during the first week (Ex. 20:11), and since the angels "shouted for joy" when the "foundations of the earth" were laid (Job 38:4, 7), it is not unreasonable to assume that they came into existence during the initial stages of God's creative activity. To Paul, Christ created the angels that they might ultimately give praise to Him (Colossians 1:16).

The scriptural teachings on the nature of the angels show that they are not omnipresent (Luke 1:26-27; Daniel 10:12-14). The idea that an angel can be in only one place at a time is consistent with the fact that angels are created beings. Unlike God, who is omnipresent, they are finite creatures and therefore limited to being in one place at one time. The angels do not engage in physical relationships, for example in marriage (Matthew. 22:30). This is so because the angels are bodiless but may reveal themselves to mankind in the form of human bodies. They are powerful (Psalm 103:20; Hebrew 2:7; 2 Peter 2:11). The angels are spirit beings, but possess the nature of neither deity nor humanity. Scripture does affirm that they are "spirits" (Heb. 1:14) and higher than man in order (Hebrews 2:7). Therefore, they are not subject to human limitations, especially since they are incapable to death (Luke 20:38). They have greater wisdom than man (2 Samuel 14:20), yet it is limited (Matthew 24:36). They have greater power than man (Matthew 28:2, Acts 5:19). They are not created in the image of God. Therefore they do not share man's glorious destiny of redemption in Christ (Paul, E. 1989). At the consummation of age, redeemed man will be exalted above angels (1 Corinthians 6:3).

Scripture shows that the angels have classifications. They can be classified into the: angels who are governmental rulers,

highest in ranking, prominent individuals and the angels who are divine attendants. Angels who are governmental rulers are mentioned in Ephesians 6:12. This verse refers to ranking of fallen angels. Rulers are those who are first or high in rank, powers are those invested with authority; world forces of this darkness expresses or authority which they exercise over the world, spiritual forces of wickedness describes the wicked spirits, expressing their character and nature. Daniel 10:13 also refers to the Prince of Persia. Angels who are of highest ranking include Michael who is called the archangel (Daniel 10:13). Michael is the only angel designated archangel, and may possibly be the only of this rank. There were chief princes (Daniel 10:13) of whom Michael was one, as the highest ranking angels of God. The mission of the archangel is to protect Israel (Daniel 12:1). Ruling angels (Ephesians 3:10) are also mentioned, but no further details are given.

Morally, the angels are classified into two kinds: the holy or the elect (I Timothy 5:21) and the fallen, who are described in the Bible as evil spirits or demons (Gaebelein, (1987). These rebellious angels will not be redeemed (Hebrew 2:11-17), and their final end is the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41). However, while some of these fallen angels are now free to roam, others are currently kept in eternal bonds (Jude 1:6; 2 Peter 2:4).

Angels who are prominent individuals include Michael (Daniel 10:13). The name means who is like God. He is the defender of Israel who will wage war on behalf of Israel against Satan and his hordes in the Tribulation (Revelation 12:7-9). He also disputed with Satan about the body of Moses. Angel Gabriel is another angel in this rank. His name means man of God or God is strong. He seems to be God's special messenger of His kingdom programme in each of the four times he appears in the Bible record. (Daniel 9:21-27; 8:15-16; Luke 1:26-27; 1:11-20).

Lucifer is the last angel in this rank and it means shining one or star of the morning. He may have been the wisest and most beautiful of all God's created beings and that he was originally placed in a position of authority over the Cherubim surrounding the throne of God.

The angels who are divine attendants are the Cherubim and the Seraphim. The Cherubim are of the highest order of class, created with indescribable powers and beauty. They were given the task of guarding the entrance to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24), and God himself is said to be enthroned on the Cherubim or to travel with the Cherubim as His chariot (Ezekiel 10:1-22). Over the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament were two golden figures of Cherubim with their wings stretched out above the ark (Exodus 25:22). The Cherubim had an extraordinary appearance with four faces, four wings and attended the glory of God preparatory for judgment (Ezekiel 1).

The Seraphim meaning the burning ones are another group of heavenly beings mentioned in Isaiah 6: 2-7, where they continually worship the Lord and call to one another. They are

described as each having six wings. In their threefold proclamation, holy, holy, holy (Isaiah 6:3), it means to recognize God as extremely, perfectly holy. Therefore they praise and proclaim the perfect holiness of God. The Seraphim also express the holiness of God in that they proclaim that man must be cleaned of sin's moral defilement before he can stand before God and serve Him (Dennis, 1989).

II. THE ROLES OF ANGELS

The roles or ministry of angels can be grouped into the ministry to: God, Christ, Believers and unbelievers. To God, the Cherubim are defending the holiness of God and Seraphim surrounding the throne of God as they attend to His holiness. They patrol the earth as God's representatives (Zechariah 1:10-11).

The ministry to Christ: as the angels surround the throne of the Father, so the angels attend to God the Son (David, H. 2006). Angels predicted His birth (Luke 1:26-38), protected Him in infancy (Matthew 2:13; 2:20). They ministered to Him after the temptation (Matthew 4:11). This ministry probably include encouragement following the exhaustion of forty days of temptation, as well as supplying him with food as an angel did to Elijah (1 Kings 19:5-7). The angels also strengthened Him at Gethsemane (Luke 22:43), they also announced his resurrection (Matthew 28:5-7) and attended his ascension (Acts 1:10). The angels will attend His second coming (Matthew 25:31; Luke 9:26, 2 Thessalonians 1:7)

Angels also have the ministry to the believers. This ministry include physical protection (Psalm 34:7; 91:11-13; Acts 5:19), physical provision (1 Kings 19:5-7), encouragement (Acts 27: 23-25), direction (Acts 8:26), assist in answers to prayer (Acts 12:1-11; Daniel 9:20-27; 10:10-12:13), carry believers to home (Luke 16:22).

Angels ministry to unbelievers include meting out judgment on unbelievers and sinners (2 Samuel 24:16-17; 2 Chronicles 32:21; Luke 19:12-13; Acts 12:23; Revelation 14:4,7, 8-9.). Angels will also be instrumental in judgment at the end of the age when they cast unbelievers into the furnace of fire (Matthew 13:39-42; Revelation 16: 2-17). They carry out war against demonic forces (Daniel 10:13; Revelation 12:7-8). John records that an angel "seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit" (Revelation 20:1-3).

After the exile, belief in angels greatly increased. This may well be explained by Israel's greater contact with other religions and increasing stress on Yahweh's transcendence, without any diminution in his activity in the world. This may have been the factor in the growth of belief in intermediate beings. (Zechariah 14:5; Psalm 89:5). In Daniel, they appear as powerful intermediate beings with personal names, archangels, watchers, and angels of the nations. Many millions surround God's throne (Daniel 4:13; 12:1).

In later Judaism, popular belief in angels greatly increased. It was not hindered by the Rabbis, but was rejected by the Sadducees. They were linked with stars, elements, natural phenomena and powers, which they ruled as God's representatives. The individual had his guardian angel. National Guardians were set over the peoples. In the scroll of the Qumran community angels are a feature of a cosmic dualism. God has created two kingdoms, light and darkness, and each has a prince or angel set over it. Under these princes are all men and also other angelic beings. The angel of light are often called "sons of heaven" and "sons of God".

III. THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

In the Old Testament, one often find the phrase "the angel of the Lord". In almost every case, the messenger is regarded as deity and yet is distinguished from God (Genesis 16:7-14; 22:11-18; Exodus 3:2-5; Judges 6:11-23; 1 Chronicles 21:15-17). The angel who appears to Jacob says "I am the God of Beth-el". Jacob wrestles with the angel and says, "I have seen God face to face"; (Gen 32:24). Here Jacob speaks of God and the angel as identical. The angel appears to Moses in the burning bush. A study of these passages shows that while the angel and Yahweh are at times distinguished from each other, they are with equal frequency, and in the same passages, merged into each other. It is obvious that these apparitions cannot be the Almighty Himself, whom no man hath seen, or can see.

In seeking the explanation, special attention should be paid to these two passages (Exodus 23:20-23). God promises to send an angel before His people to lead them to the Promised Land; they are commanded to obey him and not to provoke him "for he will not pardon your transgression: for my name is in him." Thus the angel can forgive sin, which only God can do, because God's name, His character and thus His authority, are in the angel. Further, in the passage Ex 32:34-33:17 Moses intercedes for the people after their first breach of the covenant; God responds by promising, "Behold mine angel shall go before thee"; and immediately after God says, "I will not go up in the midst of thee." In answer to further pleading, God says, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give you rest." Here a clear distinction is made between an ordinary angel, and the angel who carries with him God's presence.

These references show that the angel of the Lord is the Lord Himself adopting a visible form for the sake of speaking with people. His appearances ceased with the Old Testament and no occurrence of Him in the New Testament, suggesting that the Theophany is limited to the Old Testament era. While himself holy as God is holy, the angel expresses the Holy One's condescension to walk among sinners (Exodus 32:34; 33:3). He is also the executants of divine wrath (2 Samuel 24:16; 2 Kings 19:35). In all these ways, as one can see from the New Testament perspective, the angel is part of the Old Testament preparation for the Lord Jesus Christ (Douglas and Merrill, 1987).

IV. CONCEPT OF ANGELS IN JEWISH TEXTS OUTSIDE THE OLD TESTAMENT

Jewish texts outside of the Old Testament testify to an expanded understanding of the nature and role of angels in some sectors of Second Temple Judaism. Much of this was simply an extension and development of what was to be found in the Old Testament. Angels protect individuals (1 Enoch 100:5), execute judgment (1 Enoch 56:1-8), act as an heavenly scribe (Jub. 1:27-29), populate the heavenly court (Enoch 14:18-24), take part in the heavenly liturgy (1 Enoch 61: 9-13), come to the aid of Israel in warfare (3 Macc 6:18-21), are differentiated by rank and name (1 Enoch 61:10) and guide heavenly visions and interpret mysteries (1 Enoch 17-36). In Apocrypha, Raphael, Uriel and Jeremiel are also named. Of Raphael it is said (Tobit 12:15) that he is "one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints" to God (compare to Revelation 8:2).

One notable new development in the texts outside the Old Testament is the notion of two opposing forces of angelic powers: a force of good angels led by God or an archangel, and a force of evil angels led by an evil angelic power known as Satan, Mastema or Belial (Gerald, 1993).

V. THE PROBLEM OF THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

The Scripture clearly tells that God sends angels for protection (Psalm 91:11-12). But it appears that some people have gone beyond the idea of general protection reveals here and propose that God gives a specific guardian angel for each individual in the world, or at least for each Christian. Support for this idea has been found in Jesus words about many little children in Matthew 18:10. However, it could be inferred that Jesus may simply be saying that angels who are assigned the task of protecting little children have ready access to God's presence. When the disciples in Acts 12: 15 say that Peter's angels must be knocking at the door, this does not necessarily imply belief in an individual guardian angel. It could be that an angel was guarding or caring for Peter at that time. There seems to be therefore, no convincing support for the idea of individual 'guardian angels'.

VI. DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF ANGEL

In the time of Adam, it was easy to believe in God, and He was very near to man. In Paradise there is no thought of angels; it is God Himself who walks in the garden. A little later the thought of angels appears, but, God has not gone away, and as "the angel of Yahweh" He appears to His people and redeems them. In these early times the Jews believed that there were multitudes of angels, not yet divided in thought into good and bad; these had no names or personal characteristics, but were simply embodied messages. Till the time of the captivity the Jewish angelology shows little development. During that dark period they came into close contact with a polytheistic people, only to be more deeply confirmed in their monotheism thereby. They also became acquainted with the purer faith of the Persians, and in all

probability viewed the tenets of Zoroastrianism with a more favorable eye, because of the great kindness of Cyrus to their nation.

There are few direct traces of Zoroastrianism in the later angelology of the Old Testament. One result of the contact was that the idea of a hierarchy of the angels was more fully developed. The conception in Daniel of angels as "watchers" and the idea of patron-princes or angel-guardians of nations may be set down to Persian influence. It is probable that contact with the Persians helped the Jews to develop ideas already latent in their minds. According to Jewish tradition, the names of the angels came from Babylon. By this time the consciousness of sin had grown more intense in the Jewish mind, and God had receded to an immeasurable distance; the angels helped to fill the gap between God and man. The more elaborate conceptions of Daniel and Zechariah are further developed in Apocrypha, especially in 2 Esdras, Tobit and 2 Maccabees.

In the New Testament one finds that there is little further development; and by the Spirit of God its writers were saved from the absurdly puerile teachings of contemporary Rabbinism. One could find that the Sadducees, as contrasted with the Pharisees, did not believe in angels or spirits (Act 23:8). One may conclude that the Sadducees, with their materialistic standpoint, and denial of the resurrection, regarded angels merely as symbolical expressions of God's actions. It is noteworthy in this connection that the great priestly document (Priestly Code, P) makes no mention of angels. The Book of Revelation naturally shows a close kinship to the books of Ezekiel and Daniel.

VII. AN APPRAISAL OF BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF ANGELS

1. It furnishes a necessary safeguard against narrowness of thought as to the extent and variety of the creations of God
2. It helps in acquiring the proper conception of Christ, who is above the angels, and the object of angelic worship.
3. It gives a wonderful attractiveness to the conception of that unseen world to which people are hastening.
4. The concept sets before believers an example of joyous and perfect fulfillment of God's will. "Your will be done in earth as it is heaven". That is by the angels.
5. It puts to shame the horrible indifference of multitudes of mankind with respect to the great work of conversion. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents".
6. It broadens the believers' view of the manifold mercies of God, whose angels are "sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrew 1:14).

7. The Angelic concept reminds believers of their high rank as human beings, and their exalted destiny as Christians (Merill, 2005).

VIII. ISLAM CONCEPT OF ANGEL

Angel in Arabic ملاك *malak* and in plural form ملائكة *malā'ikah* are celestial beings, created from a luminous origin by God. Gibb and Kramers (1974) trace its etymological root to the word mal'ak, meaning messenger and the Ethiopic verb l-'k which means to send. The two etymologies refer to the angels' spiritual function of acting as intermediaries between God and man. The reality of angelic existence is not disputable if one admits overwhelming Qur'anic evidence on the subject. Surah 2:117 is one of the numerous Qur'anic verses enjoining belief in the existence of angels. It read thus:

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces toward the East and the West but righteousness is to believe in Allah, the last day, the angels, the book and the prophets. This shows that belief in angels is one of the five main articles of the faith. Ajjola (1978) inferring from this Surah rightly points out that to be a Muslim, it is necessary to belief not only in God, in the life hereafter, in the prophets and in the books of God, but also in the angels of God.

The Qur'an, Hadiths, Mi'raj literature, Islamic theology and Islamic theology have much to say about their existence and functions. The significance of the belief in angels as required by the Qur'an lies in their role in the spiritual development of man. According to Islamic belief, every man develops his spiritual life by working in accordance with the promptings of angels as well as by bringing into play the faculties which God has given him (Opeloye, 2014). The Qur'an requires belief in angels to enable believers imitate the good suggestions of the angels because they lead to man's spiritual development and it requires a disbelief in the Devil to enable man shun the evil suggestions of the devil as they lead to spiritual debasement.

In reference to the activities and duties of angels, Gibb (1964) writes;

In the imagery of the Koran, the angels are represented generally as God's messengers. They are His creatures and servants and worship Him continually; they bear up His throne, descend with His decrees on the Night of Power, record men's action, and receive their souls when they die, and witness for or against them on the Last Judgment, and guard the gates of Hell. At the battle of Badr they assisted the Muslims against the vast superior forces of the Meccans.

From Gibb, one can deduce that the angels perform functions like praising God in heavens, interacting with human's ordinary life and carrying laws of nature. Islam acknowledges the concept of angels both as anthropomorphic and

abstract. The angels differ from other spiritual creatures in their attitude as creatures of virtue in contrast to impure jinn

Islam believes that Angels are created by God, numberless and dwell in the heavenly spheres. Although the Quran does not mention the time when angels were created, they are generally considered as the first creation of God, created on Wednesday, while other creatures on the following days. The Angels were created out of light and the Jinn out of a mixture of fire. That they are created by God as rightly observes by Kausar (1975) indicates that they are beings who flinch not from executing the commands they receive from God, but do precisely what they are commanded to do.

Islam believes that the angels are lack of bodily desires; they never get tired, do not eat or drink and have no anger, pure and obedient to God. However, their constant loyalty, towards God, emphasised by some Quranic verses such as 16:49, does not necessarily imply impeccability and the motif of erring angels is also known to Islam. Angels are usually described in anthropomorphic forms combined with supernatural images, such as wings, being of great size, wearing heavenly clothes and great beauty (Burge, 2015). Some angels are identified with specific colors, often with white, but some special angels have a distinct color, such as Jibril being associated with the color green.

Angels are believed to keep a distance from humans, who polluted themselves by certain actions such as sexual intercourse. However, angels might return to an individual as soon as the person ritually purified himself or herself. The absence of angels may cause several problems for the person. If driven away by ritual impurity, the Kiraman Katibin who records people's actions and the Guardian angel will not perform their tasks assigned to the individual. Another Hadith specifies, during the state of impurity, bad actions are still written down, but good actions are not.

In addition to the numberless multitudes of angelic beings, it is believed among the Muslims that Angels are not equal in status and consequently, they are delegated different tasks to perform. Islam believe in four archangels; Jibril (Gabriel), the angel of revelation, also recognized as the Holy Spirit, who is believed to have dictated the Qur'an word by word to the prophet Muhammed (Geisler and Abdul, 1993). Jibra'il is the angel who communicates with all of the prophets and also descends with the blessings of God during the night of Laylat al-Qadr (The Night of Divine Destiny). Jibra'il is also acknowledged as a magnificent warrior in Islamic tradition, who led an army of angels into the Battle of Badr and fought against Iblis as he tempted Jesus (Isa). Jibril therefore holds the most prominent place, due to his function as the bearer of divine revelation.

Next to him is Mikail, also spelled Mīkāl or Mīkā'il (Michael), the archangel of mercy and the guardian of the Jews is often depicted as providing nourishment for bodies and souls while also being responsible for bringing rain and thunder to Earth (Matthew, 2014). This shows that he is in

charge of angels who carry the laws of nature. Some Muslims believed that he never laughs. This is traced to the shock he received at the sight of hell when it was created.

Israfil or Israfiyl (Raphael), is the one who summons to resurrection and the archangel of music often depicted with a trumpet, he will signal the coming of Qiyamah ((Judgment Day) in the end time by blowing a horn.

Izrail or Azrail, is the archangel of death. He and the angels under him are responsible for parting the soul from the body of the dead and will carry the believers to heaven (Illiyin) and the unbelievers to hell (Sijjin).

Other groups or individual angels mentioned in the Qur'an include Naziat and Nashiat, helpers of Azrail who take the souls of the deceased. The Hafaza (The Guardian angels) Kiraman (The Recorders), two of whom are charged to every human being; one writes down good deeds and another one writes down evil deeds. They are both described as 'Raqeebun 'Ateed' in the Qur'an. Mu'aqqibat (The Protectors) who keep people from death until its decreed time and who bring down blessings.

The angels of Hell include Maalik, the chief angel who govern Jahannam and nineteen others who are known as Zabaniyya. These angels are to torment the sinners in Hell. The Hamalat al- Arsh carries the Arsh (Throne of God) and are comparable to the Christian Seraph. Ar-Rad is said to be the angel of thunder, mentioned in Quran (13:13).

In canonical Hadith are the Jundullah, those who helped Muhammad in the battlefield, those that give the spirit to the foetus in the womb and are charged with writing down his or her, the angels of Mountains, met by the Prophet after his ordeal at Taif, Munkar and Nakir who question the dead in their graves. Others include Ridwan, the keeper of Paradise, Artiyail who removes grief and depression for man, Darda'il (The Journeyers), who travel the earth searching out assemblies where people remember God's name.

IX. A COMPARATIVE APPRAISAL OF THE QUR'AN AND BIBLE CONCEPTS OF THE ANGELS

Belief in the existence of angels is an important doctrine common to both the Qur'an and the Bible. In terms of the functions performed by the angels as well as their attributes, the two Scriptures agreed to a large extent, while their few ideas of differences are seen in: the Biblical classification of the angels into the good and the evil ones. The reason for the contradictory teachings of the two Scriptures in this regard can be traced to the different perceptions of Satan to whom the two Scriptures agreed in the functions ascribed the promotions of evil deeds. Since the two Scriptures agree in the functions ascribed to the devil and his agents, their disagreement in their understanding of the nature of their being should not be viewed with any seriousness. What is important therefore is the unity in belief of the two scriptures that there exist some natural forces that are responsible for evil deeds. It is generally accepted that anything evil is

devilish, while anything good is angelic. In the light of this, one can safely say that the Qur'an and the Bible are much more in harmony than otherwise in their teachings about the angels. Another key difference is the relationship of Christ to the Angels. In the Bible's teaching, Christ is supreme over the angels because He is their creator and therefore their controller. From the Biblical point of view, Angels are not to be worshipped nor be invoked. Moreover, to some Christians, angel Michael is the archangel while to the Muslims, Angel Jubril is the archangel.

As a matter of fact, the attributes and functions of the Biblical good angels agreed with the Qur'an teaching on good angels in general as evident from the following observations:

- The two Abrahamic faiths teach that angels (the ones that are good from Biblical point of view) are sinless and obedient to God (Psalm 103:19-21; Surah 16:49).
- From Surah 13:11 and Psalm 68:17, it can be inferred that angels are uncountable
- Surah 97:4 and Matthew 12:25 reveal that heaven is their abode
- The recognition of the archangels proof that both faiths believe in ranking among the angels

With regard to their functions, the two Scriptures establish the fact that:

- The angels are bearer of God's messages Surah 19:17 and Luke 1:26-38
- Bring divine revelation to the people of God Surah 16:2; Acts 7:35
- Fight on behalf of the believers II Kings 19:35; Surah 3:123
- Praise God and proclaim his holiness Psalm 103:20; Surah 16:49
- Punishing the unbelievers and the wicked ones Acts 12:23; Surah 11:81-82

From the study, it can be deduced that Islam and the Bible concept of angels have much similarities. Belief in existence of angel is common to both. Both faiths belief in existence of angels and share the view that they are created by God, numberless, powerful, and intelligent

Another noticeable similarity is that Islam and some of Christian Denominations like the African Indigenous churches belief in the four archangels: Jibril to the Christians is known as Gabriel, Mikā'il is called Michael, Israfil or Israfiyl is Raphael, Izrail or Azrail the fourth archangel in Islam is Uriel.

X. CONCLUSION

From the study, it can be deduced that Islam and the Bible concept of angels have much similarities than the dissimilarities. The major point of conflict between the two are in the Biblical moral classifications of angels to good and evil and the Christian belief that the angels are under the control of Christ. These ideas are absent in Islam. The Qur'an

teaches that angels are generally sinless while the Bible holds that there are evil angels and the abode of such angels is hell as evident in 2 Peter 2:4. Be as it may, the differences are insufficient for promoting disunity and hatred. The overwhelming similarities therefore could be used as a basis in promoting unity and harmony among the Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. From the Biblical and Qur'anic review of the angels, one can assert that the Angels are part of the universe God created. While both the Abrahamic faiths affirm that the angels are created creature, yet their Scriptures suggest that their existence is not like that of man. They are spirits, powerful, immortal, eternal, wise and intelligent, take an interest in the affairs of men, have will and emotions, and bodiless. However, from time to time, they do take human form to appear to people. It has also been affirm that there are classifications of angels with hierarchy. It has also being revealed that angels are not omnipotent, omniscient nor omnipresent. Nobody knows the number of angels.

While there are obviously many things about angels that are not known, it is clear that these rational beings exist and affirm the reality of the unseen world. The reality of the angels' existence should remind the adherent of Abrahamic faiths that the unseen world is real despite the disagreement of some of the scientists and the philosophers who believe in the things that are visible and can be proof empirically. Just as the Sadducees said that there is no resurrection of the dead, angel nor spirit (Acts 23:8), many still deny the reality of anything that cannot be seen or empirically proof. It was only when God opened the eyes of Elisha's servants that he was able to see the angels that he could not see before. Scripture makes it clear that God wants His worshippers to be aware of their existence, nature and their activities. One should not therefore assume that the teaching about the angels has nothing whatsoever to do with believers today. Rather, there are ways in which believers can enrich their lives by the awareness of their existence and ministries.

Their heavenly worship of God enriches the Abrahamic faiths sense of reverence and joy in God's presence if they appreciate the fact that angels join them in the worship of God. Moreover, the two faiths should be aware that angels are watching their obedience or disobedience to God through the day. As God sent the angels to deliver some believers from danger, the adherents of Abrahamic faith should be fearless of the demons or the evil spirits that are believed to be operating in Africa. They should put their confidence in God who is always ready to send his angels that will deliver them from Satan and his forces.

Despite the usefulness of the angels, there are lots of cautions for worshippers of God. The angels should not replace God in their hearts. They are not to worship angels at the expense of God who created them. Doing this would implicitly give them a status equal to God with indication of unhealthy curiosity and diversion of God's love and devotion.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Ajjola, A. (1978). *The Essence of Faith in Islam*. Lahore: Pakistan Islamic Foundation.p.71.
- [2]. Burge, S. (2015). *Angels in Islam: Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti's al-Haba'ik fi akhbar al-mala'ik*. Routledge. p. 99.
- [3]. Collin B. (1986). *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House. p.103.
- [4]. David, H. (2006). *The Portable Seminary*. Minnesota: Bethany House. pp. 121-123.
- [5]. Dennis, M. (1989). *Bible Doctrine Survey: Course Manual for Pastors and Church Leaders*. Atlanta: GA.
- [6]. Douglas J. and Merrill T. (1987). *New International Bible Dictionary Based on the NIV*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House. p.47.
- [7]. Gaebelein, A.C. (1987). *What the Bible Says About Angels*. Grand Rapids: Baker. pp. 29-35.
- [8]. Gerald Hawthorne. (1993). *Dictionary of Paul and His letters*. Leicester: InterVarsity Press. p.21.
- [9]. Gibb, A. (1964). *Mohammedanism*. London: Oxford University Press.
- [10]. Grudem, W. (1994). *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. England: Intervarsity Press. pp 500-555.
- [11]. Kausar N. (1975). *Creation of Man*. Karachi: Ferozoono. p.12
- [12]. Mckenzie, J.L. (1965). *Dictionary of the Bible*. Lagos: Macmilian Publishing Company. p.30
- [13]. Opeloye, M. (2014). *The Qur'an and the Bible: Common Themes for Peaceful Co-Existence*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books. p67.
- [14]. Paul Enns. (1989). *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. Chicago: Moody Press. pp.287-292.
- [15]. Wayne G. (2000). *Systematic Theology*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press. pp 397-411.