

Christianity in the east and its close relationship with other religions (especially Islam)

Christianity is present in the east (Middle East) since the first beginnings of its appearance which was in the land of Palestine and from there was conveyed by the messenger of the Christ (apostles) and their disciples to the near countries.

It is said that Thomas who was one of the Christ's messenger had reached India eastwards passing over Iraq. So the first church for the Christian was built in Baghdad's suburbs (saliq and kotaisfon) the region corresponding (kisar as arch) the other side of the Tigris and was named (kokhy) which was established before the end of the first hundred years (a. c) and its remains are present till now.

Christians lived with positive mutual understanding and interaction with Islamic conquests after seven centuries of the spreading of Christianity. But who wants to stay Christian he has to pay tribute for the sake of services and protection provided by the Islamic state at that time.

Then, with the passage of time, Christians have established a distinct and important position in the Islamic state. One was the doctor of the caliph and his family, others are responsible for translation, and many of them (Christians) worked in the caliph's court and (book store) which called (wisdom house) and also they worked in the rest of the most important positions in the Islamic state to the extent that the patriarch was one of the close Muslim caliph's companions and as a result of this attendance many and long conversations were held some of which about faith and religious affairs and Islamic thought, these conversations were held with forgiveness, quiet mutual listening from the two sides (Christians and Muslims) and acceptance of thesis and antithesis and not to impose the new belief or thought (Islamic thought) upon Christians as long as they pay the tribute and respect the new belief (religion) and this is according to Quran 'there is no compulsion in religion' (surat albakara 256) and the other verse which said 'your religion is for you and mine is for me' (alkaferon 6) or 'the closed to god is the one that of more faith' (surat al hajarat 13) or 'the believers are brothers' (hajarat 10) and much more of this and on the other side we see some things make it easy for the Christians to deal with others like the written verse that call for loving the relatives and even to love enemies.

As a result of the sincerity and loyalty of the Christians in the works assigned to them, they had the respect and the good reputation throughout history particularly in Iraq as the history did not record considerable events of persecuting of Muslims against Christians, but what was happening is that the foreigner who occupied Iraq (holaco, taemourlank, ottoman state, Persian state) is the reason behind the persecution of Christians and the massacres which was extended for tens of years just as what had happened in the fourth century at the time of king (shabour) king of Persia.

But every one, Muslims and Christians are aware that conversations and dialogues should reign the relationship between them and also the respect for each other and not humiliating the thoughts and beliefs of each other for the Christians believe that to love relatives and to love any one in general reaching to love even the enemy as we have mentioned before to the extent that not to give any one the opportunity or a reason to persecute Christians or annoy them .

As for Muslims there are many verses of Quran and talks which call for the respect of the neighbors right to live in peace and quiet and we can simply say that Christians in the Islamic state deserves the respect or recommendation. After the first and the second world wars and the stability of the region about certain and district geographic borders which was included in the international bills and the legislation of human rights and other covenants that govern the relationship between the state (government) and its people and between individual and groups as well was set.

Christianity had been stabilized in the now exiting form in the well known countries (like) (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine, Egypt etc) and the composition of religious references that belong to the major religious doctrines which are: catholic, orthodox, protestant, and the eastern Assyrian churches that are called (the Nestorian church) as well and this all is an orthodox team in its origin.

There was an obvious role of the leaderships of these churches to find a mutual way of understanding with others (other religions) and especially with Muslims. This understanding and solidarity of (mutual) common affairs which are important for the country and the (common) mutual fate makes the relationship between Christians and other religions very strong and built on the mutual respect in spite of Islamic firms which can't be overlooked or changed for Muslims believe that prophet Mohammed is the last of prophets and Islam religion is the most perfect that impossible for anyone to leave or to divert to another religion otherwise he or she becomes apostate and should be punished according to Islamic law.

The problem of Christians in the Islamic states or countries is not with quranic verses themselves in spite of their sharpness particularly Medina verses compared to Mecca ones but the problem is with Islamic exterememism or with Islamic Muslims diligent scholars who give an interpretation or a meaning which doesn't match the meaning of the quramic verse itself and if those scholars were right in their interpretation the matters are going well and in positive way but if not we will see that the relationship with other (other religions) would collapse and persecution is happened here and there and see a limited understanding for the meaning of Islam among Muslims in general when the Muslim is restricted to understand Islam as anyone who pronounces the two testimonies and believes in God and the prophet and does not do the forbidden and we can see many examples in the following verses of Quran.

(Surat al bakara, al Maida, al tawba) and many other verses, but there are two other meanings of Islam that are more comprehensive which are: the

Muslim is anyone who make people safe from his hand and tongue or the Muslim is any one who resign oneself to God in the light of this last meaning Muslims say that (our father is Ibraheem) and he is the first Muslim even though he did not pronounce the two testimonies and in this way any one who is similar to our father Ibraheem is Muslim on his special way as well as who does not commit a hostile act against others rights is also Muslim to see the way opened wide before all people can see even of different religions specially those who have faith in one God as Christians and order of amicably and do not do the forbidden (Gods commitments) and believe in prophet (Jesus the Christ) who the Quran believe in, and every Muslim should believe, in the light of what mentioned in the Quran

We as eastern Christians are looking forward to make dialogues with others according to our bibles principles which said 'one should love others' 'love your relative as you love your self .' 'Love for your relative what you love to your self' 'pray for your enemies' 'bless and don't damn" and many others.

For all this we wish to help all, to participate and speak to reach the fruitful work and for general welfare and best future for our country. but our future in the east is in danger because of the instability of the region as well as disturbance and wars, for the Christians social system does not depend on tribal order which exists in the one of Muslims especially the Arabs, for Christians get used to live in the state of law, respect it, and it gives them security and let them work and live in peace.

Christian's life was flourished in the east and most of them are obtained high scientific certifications and of high incomes as well to the extent that we can say most of them are of middle social class and many of them are of high social class and there were professional doctors among them as well as engineers and lawyers and trade men and so on

Christians played on important role in the settlement of the borders of Iraq (as in its form nowadays) especially the problem of the twentieth century when the patriarch of (Chaldean church) Emanuel the second Played an important role and took the decision in the league of Nations to make Mousil part of Iraq that was happened in first quarter of the twentieth century.

Christians in the east with support of western organizations had played a big role in the suppression of poverty , disease and want , this was happened throughout the establishment of hospitals and schools and scientific colleges that graduated groups of Iraqi citizens few of them were Christians and the most were Muslims and many of them are now of high positions in the government in addition to establish Christian hospitals which had been run by nuns ; these hospitals were still working in Iraq in spite of all bad circumstances that passed through Iraq, spatially during Iraq –Iran war 1980-1988 and after that the war of Kuwait 1991 ,and blockade on Iraq .these hospitals were the best resort in the way of providing treatment for all ,despite their religion ,in addition to love fraternity of Caritas which had played an important role to help

every one with no discrimination and this consolidate the position of the Christian in their Muslims brothers hearts.

The Christ had said "I have come to bestow life" this means that the Christianity does not call for punishment even if one was a disbeliever or a reluctant ,spiteful, enemy or disobedient to Gods law because this is dead in the Christian belief and he or she is in need for life to see God and live with .

From all this Christianity in Iraq is opening its heart to others to create a state of harmony ,to make a progress in the right way of life and it (Christianity) does not want anything but the blessings of God firstly and secondly the satisfaction of relatives and human being who live near ,whatever his race ,sex ,religion ,doctrine ,or sect.

Christians also had played an important educational role for they were the first that bring the press to Iraq at the end of the ninth century and they published the first official magazine (Ekleel al ward) (laurel of rose) and established Christian educational saloons and they were concerned in Arabic language .

Many of noticeable historians, scientists, and archeologists were Christians that appeared in Iraq like father(Anistas Mary Alkarmaly) and they occupied the ministry of finance for a long time(semi permanently) in the royal age.

Christians of Iraq are considered its original dwellers that come from Chaldean, Assyrian, Sumerian, and Acadian origins that have their special language which came from Aramaic (Syriac language in its two parts eastern and western)that is still the language of prayers and religious ceremonies and even it is the only language of conversation in the Christian villages and considered the language of the Christ (Glory for).

For many centuries and since the glad tidings of the birth of Jesus the Christ ,Christianity had given many martyrs like(Archbishop Paul Faraj Raho) who is not the last of Christian martyrs of Iraq where the crisis intensity is getting bigger and bigger and the attack on Iraqi Christians after the process of political change that happened in Iraq during the spring of 2003 is increased ,after that date and till this day ,a large number of churches are blowing up in all the regions of Iraq, and where the Christians be, expulsion by force of Christians from their places that led to a huge immigration to other places (villages) where they lived originally ,but the terrorism was not satisfied of this only but also following them to their new places and did its brutal deeds against them as well last of which was the expulsion by force of more than two thousands of Christians families from Mousil only , and many archbishops and deacons were killed and even Christian individuals had been killed by the terrorists just because they are Christians .

The Iraqi church in this context had given a large amount of blood (martyrs) to be fixed and strong on the land of Iraq in spite of the bleeding which is caused by the immigration of Christians to the neighboring countries

and also the western ones ,but Christianity is remaining and interacting and is living to give alive evidence of its true principles existence.

There was another thing that exhausted the financial capabilities of many people who lived in Iraq which is the process of kidnapping in the exchange of payment to have freedom, otherwise be killed, large sums of money were paid for the sake of freedom and many of individuals were and still of vague fate in spite of paying big sums of money by their families that are frightened that their sons might have been killed.

The year 2006 had witnessed increasing of violence in many cities and towns in Iraq, one of which is the capital Baghdad that witnessed a huge attack that took different shapes and types against Christians, either threatening of killing or leave everything and go away within few hours , "either paying tribute or be Muslim", otherwise go away and leave everything or be killed .

But , in spite of all this Christianity considers Muslims as believers that worship God alone and obey God's law and respect Jesus the Christ as a prophet and honor his mother (virgin Mary) and waiting for the judgment day (as Christians do) and pray to God and almsgiving and fasting Ramadan which they call the month of mercy and forgiveness .

From all that mentioned above we hope that eastern Christianity can pave its way to be firm and steady on the land of Christians parents and ancestors , to produce, to be flourished and be fruitful One gives thirty, the other gives sixty and hundred and so... on .

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