

Jihan's translation

Everybody knew that Islam had a close relationship with other religions, especially Christianity and Judaism. The history recorded the peaceful coexistence among the three religions, which contributed peace and tranquility in the area. It is not uncommon that the recent readers of history might wonder at the great differences that they are witnessing between the past history and the current reality.

When war broke out between the Roman Catholics and the Zoroastrian Persians, Muhammad was called to be a prophet. Muhammad called upon his God and asked him to help the Roman Catholics gain victory in their battle against the Zoroastrian Persians. But the opposite happened. The Catholics were defeated. This defeat caused the prophet Muhammad to be filled with sorrow and anguish. God revealed to Muhammad his words that are recorded in Quran in a chapter titled the Romans. The purpose behind revealing this chapter was to cheer up the prophet Muhammad, Peace and blessings of God upon him, and to lift up his spirit. The almighty God said:

“The Roman Empire has been defeated. In a land close by; but they, even after this defeat of theirs will soon be victorious. Within a few years, with Allah is the decision, in the past and in the future, on that day shall the believers rejoice. With the help of Allah they will become victorious. He helps whom he will, and he is exalted in might, most merciful. God promised, never

does Allah depart from his promise, but most men understood not.”

Muslims honored and revered Christianity. Muslims were not pleased by the acts of the Jews. Jews sought to tarnish the Image and reputation of Mary (Jesus' mother.) They considered Mary and depicted her as a sinful woman. Muslims opposed the claims of the Jewish regarding Mary's divinity and holiness. So God revealed an entire chapter about Mary, to defend the reputation and honor of this pure woman. Islam considers anyone who tries to destroy the reputation of Mary as an unbeliever.

The chapter, which is titled, “Mariam,” and recorded in Quran, is a historic evidence that Islam honors and reveres Virgin Mary. When the prophet Muhammad, Peace and blessings be upon him immigrated to Al-Madina AlMunawarah, the Jewish people began to stir up contention by spreading false and audacious rumors that Jesus is an illegitimate child, born because of the illegal relationship between Mary and Joseph, the Carpenter. Muslims wanted to end those endless and infinite rumors. Therefore, this chapter recorded in Quran, declares the purity of Mary and protects her reputation. The almighty God said: “Relate in the book (the story of Mary, when she withdrew

from her family to a place in the East. She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then we sent her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects.”

Mary's character is so important to Muslims, to the extent that the almighty God dedicated an entire chapter to honor her.

In the Quran, God expressed his sympathy and compassion toward the Christians of Najran. (Now Najran is a city located south of the Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.) Before the existence of Islam, Christians of Najran endured severe persecution. Their persecutor, the King Al-Nawas, who was a Zoroastrian used to put them in ditches and burn them alive. Those sad incidents were recorded in the Holy Qur'an, and were mentioned again and more clearly in another chapter in Quran titled, "Al-Buruj," verses 1 through 8.

Here is the true story of those people, which is not mentioned in the Holy Bible, but recorded in the Holy Quran:

“By the sky, (displaying) the Zodiacal signs. By the promised day of judgment. By one that witnesses and the subject of the witness. Woe to the makers of the pit of fire. Fire supplied abundantly with fuel. Behold! They sat over against the fire. And they witnessed all that they were doing against the believers. And they ill-treated them for no other reason than that they believed in Allah.”

The relationship between Christianity and Islam was not centered upon religious perspectives only, but focused on the importance of developing a brotherly relationship among people from both religions. The Prophet Muhammad accepted a gift from the ruler of Egypt Al-Muqaqash. The Egyptian ruler gave the prophet two women as a gift. The prophet married one of them and her name was, "Maria, the Coptic." Maria was a Christian woman. The prophet gifted the other woman, whose name was Sirin to Hassan Ibn Thabit. Maria gave birth to a baby boy. That was the only boy the prophet ever had. The boy was named Qasim. Later the boy died in infancy. After the Prophet accepted her, he told his companion Omar Ibn Al-Khatab: "Omar, Islam will spread in Egypt, because of your diligence and victory. If Islam spreads in Egypt, I urge you to take care of Maria's family and not to disturb them or force them to believe in Islam..."

And it happened, and as recorded in the Islamic history, Islam did reach Egypt (or) Islam did spread in Egypt. When the two successors, Omar Ibn Al-Khatab and Amro Ibn AlAss, managed to conquer Egypt, Omar remembered the counsel of the prophet Muhammad and did not bother or disturb the lives of the Coptic Christians in Egypt. Now, they have their own center in Alexandria. This is historic and clear evidence that the prophet cared for the safety, unity, dignity and honor of the Coptic Christians Community.

When the followers of the prophet underwent persecution that was inflicted upon them by the people of Quraish in Mecca, they decided to escape to Ethiopia (Al-Habasha) and request political asylum. The Ethiopian Christian Ruler succeeded in providing the prophet's followers with protection. This incident is recorded in the Quran in the chapter titled, "Al-Ma'idah," verse 82.

Muhammad was not the only one who worked hard to preserve and enhance the relationship with Christians. Also Omar followed the Prophet's teachings and policies. When the military forces, led by Abu Ubaydah Ibn Al-Jarah invaded Palestine, Omar commanded his soldiers not to be brutal. When the Ruler of Palestine handed Omar the Keys of his country, The Palestinian ruler invited Omar to perform his Islamic prayer inside the church. The Successor Omar refused and said: "I am afraid that if I do pray inside the Church the next generation of Muslims will follow my footsteps and this will give them the opportunity to occupy the church and claim that it belongs to them, because Omar Ibn Al-Khatib prayed inside it."

Once, the prophet received Christian delegates from Najran to hold a religious meeting to inquire about the truth. The prophet did not accept the idea until he sought guidance from God.

God's response is recorded in the chapter titled, "Saba'," in the holy Quran, verse 24. God the almighty said:

Say, "Who gives you sustenance from the heavens and the earth? Say: It is Allah; and certain it is that either we or ye are on right guidance or in manifest error."

Through this divine inspiration, the prophet decided to practice forgiveness and openness that are preached in today's religious dialogues. This forgiving attitude, shown by the prophet Muhammad is based on the words that are recorded in Al-Baqarah chapter in Quran, verse 143. God the almighty said:

"Quote from Quran."

This means that the prophet has placed himself as a mediator. This is a basic doctrine in Islam, to always apply moderation in life.

In another historic story, Osama Ibn Zayed, arrested a woman from Khatmoon tribe, while stealing. (The prophet's foster-mother, Halima Al-Sa'diah was from Khatmoon tribe.) When Osama realized she is related to the prophet, he suggested that they release her instantly. When the prophet heard his suggestion he became angry with him and said, "By God, if Fatimah my daughter stole, I would command that they cut her hand." This prophetic decision proves that the law is above everything regardless the family and ethnic relationships.

Leaders and kings are obligated to follow this principle and apply it among their people and in their societies to meet the demands of justice.

Islam is based on the absolute monotheism; which means that God dominates the Islamic belief. This faith was brought to existence by the Prophet Muhammad, who lived in Mecca in the pre-Islamic society, known as the age of ignorance. At that time, people worshiped Idol. Their way of their worship affected the political and social status in their community. Their civilization was based upon inequities and slavery. This composed a great challenge to the prophet peace and blessings upon him.

The prophet lived in Mecca for 13 years hoping that he can preach the divine principle to the people, which is, "There is no God but one God." This means that we worship one God and that he is the ruler of heaven and earth. It also means that we acknowledge our faith, which with no doubt affects the political and social aspects of life. This principle also means that we completely reject slavery and occupation, which threaten the lives and rights of human beings, because according to Islam, humanity was established upon the basic principles of unity, freedom and equality.

After spending 13 years preaching in Mecca, the prophet immigrated to Yathrib, which was called later Al-Madina. It was called Yathrib, because the first person, who immigrated to Yathrib and established this city, was called Yathrib. This city was known for its cultural and social diversity and pluralism. Several ruling tribes resided in it such as AlAws and Al-Khazraj; Al-Quniqa', AlQurayda and Bani AlNadir. Its residents believed in different religions such as Islam, Judaism, in addition to few Christians from Najran. The Muslims had two prominent tribes, the first was known, Al-Muhajiroon (Those who immigrated from Mecca and its different territories) and AlAnsar (Those who are led by AlAws and Al-Khazraj tribes.) The Jewish people belonged to several tribes such as Bani AlNadir, AlQuniqa', and AlQurayda.